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## Preface

Epigraphy deals with ancient inscriptions and manuscripts revealed by archaeology; it is an auxiliary study to that of history. It studies the texts, languages and scripts from diachronic and synchronic points of view, and thus yields additional data on the cultural background of the people who produced the written sources. This book contains a selection of articles by the author on West-Semitic scripts and inscriptions published during almost forty years.

In Section I, there are eight papers dealing with various script-branches. In five (1–2, 6–8) of the eight, published before 1982, the reader may find detailed discussions of the ideas summarized by the author in his *Early History of the Alphabet (=EHA)*. Three later studies deal with the scripts used by the Philistines (3), the Samaritans-Samaritans (4) and with the lapidary Aramaic script (5). Thus they complement the knowledge gathered in *EHA*. The generally accepted view is that the latest use of the lapidary Aramaic script was in the fourth century BC, but Paper 5 demonstrates that it was still practiced in the third and second centuries BC. Therefore the inscribed building stones in Mount Gerizim – both in early Jewish and in lapidary Aramaic – should be dated to the early Hellenistic period.<sup>1</sup> The use of these two scripts – as well as the Palaeo-Hebrew one – was so interwoven that they should be considered as belonging to the same period.

In Section II, three articles (9–11) discuss the crucial problem of the time of the adoption of the West Semitic alphabet by the Greeks. Was it in the eighth century BC, as the classicists maintain since Carpenter's paper in 1933, or in the mid-eleventh century BC, as has been argued by the author's comparative study of the archaic Greek inscriptions with the script evolved by the Canaanites and the Phoenicians. My assumption was based on the theory of Albright and Cross, i.e. that the Byblos inscriptions were related

1 See J. Naveh and Y. Magen, *Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions of the Second Century BCE at Mount Gerizim*, *Atiqot* 32 (1997), pp. 9\*–17\* *pace* Y. Magen and H. Misgav, *Mount Gerizim Excavations, I. The Aramaic, Hebrew and Samaritan Inscriptions*, Jerusalem 2004, p. 41.

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to the tenth century BC and the inscription on the Ahiram sarcophagus was dated to ca. 1000 BC. In a recent study Benjamin Sass<sup>2</sup> surmises that the Byblos inscriptions were engraved about two centuries later, namely in ca. 800–750 BC. Should this new dating be confirmed, I would be ready to withdraw my theory on the transmission of the alphabet to Greece in the mid-eleventh century BC. However, so far the problem remains unsolved.

Section III deals with inscriptions in various Aramaic scripts and dialects: Old Aramaic (21, 28–29), Imperial Aramaic (12), Jewish Aramaic (13–18), Nabataean (22), Aramaic employed in the second century BC in Armenia (23), in the second century AD from Doura Europos and Edessa (24) and from North-Syria (30), as well as in Late Antiquity by Christians in Syria (25–26) and in Palestine (27); a Mandaic fragmentary amulet is also discussed (20). Paper 19 is devoted to the palaeography of the Hermopolis papyri ca. 500 BC. Epigraphic Miscellanea (31) – among inscriptions in Aramaic dialects – includes also a Hebrew letter on papyrus from Egypt of Late Antiquity.

The papers of Section IV deal with inscriptions in Phoenician (34–35), some pottery inscriptions in Aramaic, Samaritan Hebrew and Syriac (36); two ostraca from Elath which were identified as Phoenician and Edomite respectively (32); the Edomite seal from ‘En Hazeva (40) as well as a with an eight-century BC Ammonite name-list found at Nimrud (33). Papers 38–39 discuss the dedicatory inscription from Ekron. The way of writing 100 in Phoenician (41) and the meaning of the units after the *beth* designating *bat* in the Arad ostraca (42) are also discussed. The magic nature of the graffiti is dealt with in paper 37.

Section V contains a paper dealing with the relationship between graffiti and dedicatory inscriptions (43); in this paper ‘YHWH šomrenu’ should be emended to ‘YHWH šomron’. This section also deals with the three systems of word division in the Phoenician, Old Hebrew and Aramaic writing traditions (44); with inverted writing employed in magic texts including inscriptions written on ancient lamps (45); with various texts demonstrating that in Semitic society people often used a person’s informal name, e.g., his patronymic alone while omitting his proper name (46); and

2 B. Sass (*The Alphabet in the Turn of the Millennium*, Tel Aviv 2005) relates the recently found Proto-Canaanite inscribed bowl from Kefar Veradim to the ninth century BC, whereas the archaeologist who published the bowl – to the tenth century; see Y. Alexandre, A Canaanite Early Phoenician Inscribed Bronze Bowl in an Iron Age IIA–B Burial Cave at Kefar Veradim, Northern Israel, *Maarav* 13.1 (2006), pp. 7–41.

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argues that in West Semitic writing, informal spelling very often did drop the unpronounced gutturals (47). Article 48 shows that letters and words written on a piece of leather found in Qumran do not comprise a medical document; rather it is a writing exercise produced by a scribe while examining his pen before writing a scroll. 'Gate' may designate both in Hebrew and Aramaic a market-place (49). A Greek inscription was inlaid in a mosaic pavement of a Samaritan synagogue in Beth-Shean, in Samaritan letters (50). Paper 51 discusses two terms, both in Hebrew and Aramaic, for 'receipt'. This according to fourth-century BC inscribed tallies from Afghanistan.

In Section VI, two papers deal with forgeries imitating Aramaic inscriptions from Egypt (52) and pretending to be Philistine inscriptions and a Samaritan amulet, both written in Palestine (53). Two inscribed sherds in the collection of Moussaïef happen to be forgeries (54).

These are only a part of the author's writings. The List of Publications at the end of the book specifies the scope of the author's activity in the course of forty years.

\*

I am greatly indebted to my colleagues Professor Shaul Shaked and Dr. Matthew Morgenstern for their initiative to publish a collection of my articles. They discussed the matter with Mr. Hai Tsabar, Director of the Magnes Press, who undertook the publication of this volume. My thanks are also due to the editors and publishers who granted me permission to republish the papers which first appeared in their journals and books.

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Joseph Naveh

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