A SHERD INSCRIBED WITH ARAMAIC SCRIPTS UNEARTHED AT TEL ZEROR

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Introduction

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Introduction

During the first season of excavations at Tel Zeror in 1964, an inscribed sherd was found on July 24 while washing sherds unearthed the previous day.⁽¹⁾ Into the outer face of a fragment of what appears to have been a plate or bowl, just inside the base ring, a line of scripts had been scratched. The scripts, written in an ancient style, were clearly discernible: "...b/r(/d)'·l'smk..."

1. Physical Characteristics

This inscribed sherd (TZ 136/1, see photograph), in outline a bit like a sombrero ( ), measures 8.7×6.7cm. The base ring, of which about a quarter remains, runs across the lower part. The radius of the original base ring, calculated from the arc that remains, is approximately 10 cm. Both the internal and external surfaces are reddish- to light-brown. It was baked at a temperature fallen on the way and carefully burnished. Since only a part of the base remains intact, a slightly slanted plane, it is unclear whether the original vessel was a plate or a bowl. Judging from Samaria Ostraca examples, it could

(1) Kiyoshi Ohata, ed., *Tel Zeror* (abbreviation: *TZ*), I, 1966, p. 7 (in English).

be either.⁽²⁾

If a plate, it would appear to have been a thick one in the form of a shallow parabola, gradually tapering outward yet ending in a rather thick brim. An example of a whole plate of this shape is the one identified as TZ 304/1 (TZ I, Pl. VII 5, Stratum VIIb), of which the corresponding area is very similar to our

- (2) G. A. Reisner, C. S. Fisher, and D. G. Lyon, *Harvard Excavations at Samaria 1908-1910* (abbreviation: *HES*), *Text*, 1924, pp. 232-238 and 274-281. The sherds of the Samaria Ostraca originated in breaks of jars, jugs, bowls, and saucers belonging to the Israelite period (900-700 B. C.), the majority consisting of jars and flat bowls or saucers. The bowl most similar to the inscribed sherd of Tel Zeror is a type with a flat bottom which extends beyond the base ring with a slight slant, then turns abruptly upwards: p. 280, 11, Fig. 156, 11a and b, Ostrakon 56. Besides this, a similar type but with a flat base may be found on pp. 277 f., 14, Fig. 154, 2-7, Ostraca 1, 3-12, 14, 24-25, 27-28, 30-31, 35, 37-38, 41-49, 51-52 and 58 (all of which have straight sides slanting 30°-45°), p. 278, 15, Ostraca 25, 29 and 60, p. 278, 18, Fig. 154, 11 and 12, Ostrakon 40 (all of which have curved sides) and a type with a base ring: p. 278, 19, Fig. 154, 13, Ostrakon 39 (with curved side).

Among the Samaria Ostraca, while there are some examples in which the lines of the sentences run parallel to the upper rim of the original pottery (e. g., 1, 24, 27-30, 35-37, 43-44, 47-48 and 58), we find none in which they run parallel to the base ring and, moreover, inside it. Cf. 1, 9, 12, 27, 29, 39, 42, 45 and 50.

Concerning the date of the Samaria Ostraca, we depend on Crowfoot in J. W. Crowfoot, G. M. Crowfoot, and K. M. Kenyon, *Samaria Sebaste* (abbreviation: *SS*), III, 1957, pp. 467 f. and on G. E. Wright, "The Archaeology of Palestine," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 1961, pp. 73-112 (pottery period) in view of archaeological and comparative-stratigraphical considerations. Cf. Tomoo Ishida, "A Study in the Samaria Ostraca," *Oriente* 8/3-4 (1966), pp. 90-126 (in Japanese), who, on the basis of a compromise between the theories of Aharoni-Amiran and Crowfoot-Kenyon, on the basis of the reign year of a supposed king of Israel mentioned in the writing on the Samaria Ostraca, and on the basis of stratigraphy, puts the Ostraca in the reign of Jehoash, i. e., the beginning of the eighth century B. C. The writer thinks it most likely, in view of the disturbances of that time and the scarcity of goods, that scribes had to use pottery sherds instead of precious papyrus in order to prepare administrative documents. But the northern kingdom under Jehoash was comparatively well off, as under his son Jeroboam II who recovered territory from Syria (cf. II Kings 13-14). This writer prefers, therefore, to assign the Samaria Ostraca either to the reign of Jehoahaz, father of Jehoash, who suffered from the attacks of Hazael and his son Beh-Hadad II, or to the reign of Menahem, who was threatened with invasion by Tiglath-pileser III, for both periods fit better the situation of the Samaria Ostraca. Moreover, while Ishida writes critically of Yadin's thesis as presented in "Ancient Judaean Weights and the Date of the Samaria Ostraca," *Hierosolymitana* 8 (1961), pp. 9-25, the latter's argument, based on calculations of the weight of weights with royal signs, is clearcut. H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (abbreviation: *KAI*), 1964, 183, assign the Samaria Ostraca to c. 738/7 B. C. during the reign of Menahem.

With regard to *SS* III, pp. 11-24, Pls. I-II 1-10, bowls 1, 6, and 10 (compared with Fig. 13, 11-13) have a base ring; bowls 2 and 7 (compared with Fig. 14, 6-10) have a high ring base and upper part like the Samaria Ostrakon 56 of *HES*. All belong to the eighth century B. C.

Hereafter, in order to distinguish the ostraca of *SS* III from those of the *HES*, the former will be identified by their registration numbers, e. g., Samaria Ostrakon C1011.

sherd: red-slipped, burnished, and baked at a temperature fallen on the way leaving the core black. This plate is similar to a burnished plate found at Samaria (SS III, Fig. 4, 18 [approx. 880–840 B. C.], p. 110), which in turn has a brim like that found on the burnished Samaria Ostrakon HES 56. Likewise a Samaritan plate (Hazor II, Pl. LV 32, Stratum VIII, ninth century B. C.)⁽³⁾ has a brim of this kind and a surface processed in a similar way. The plate TZ 304/1 also parallels objects excavated at Megiddo, Tell Beit Mirsim, and elsewhere. Pottery of this type may be presumed, therefore, to date from the ninth to seventh centuries B. C., particularly the ninth and eighth centuries. The same date was arrived at through an examination of two other parabolically shaped plates unearthed at Tel Zeror (TZ 552/2 and 729/1, both Stratum VIIc).

If a bowl, it would appear to have been of such a type that the material of the nearly flat saucer-like base, changing into an almost perpendicular wall some distance beyond the base ring, ended in a comparatively low, flat brim somewhat thicker than the wall and protruding beyond it both inwards and outwards. Three bowl sherds found at Tel Zeror (TZ 292/1, Stratum IX; 520/1, picked up on the surface of the tel and tentatively assigned to Stratum VIII or VII; and 740/1, Stratum VIIb-c) were found to be from the same period as the plates described above.

Whether bowl or plate, the inscribed sherd under discussion can be classified as one typical of the Late Iron Age, dating from the ninth or eighth century B. C. and showing the influence of Samaritan pottery.

The scripts, carefully aligned inside the base ring, suggest that this sherd was not an ostrakon, i. e., a piece of broken pottery on which letters were later scratched, but part of an earthenware product in which the letters were inscribed while it was still a complete whole.

2. Stratigraphical Assessment

A problem arises in the stratigraphical assessment of this sherd. According to the Graphic Basketlist for July 23, the sherd was found in square T16, level 30.9–8 m, while clearing the south side of a red, sun-dried brick wall of Stratum VII that traverses the square from west-northwest to east-southeast. This location, near the surface of the tel, together with difficulties in stratigraphical inter-

(3) Y. Yadin, Y. Aharoni, I. Dunayevsky, T. Dothan, R. Amiran, and J. Perrot, *Hazor*, II, 1959.

pretation, make the assessment somewhat complicated.

Square T16 was located on the south slope of the northern tel in an area where T trench traversed a steep incline. We first began to dig in the northern half of T16, but toward the center of the square we encountered a considerable mass of red clay of a type used for bricks, this leading us to suppose the existence of some construction beneath or nearby. Consequently, we divided the untouched southern half of the square (1 sq. = 5×5 m) into two parts, making a total of three steps conforming to the slope, and dug down bit by bit, cleaning carefully and repeatedly. On July 22, in the northwest sector of T16 at level 32m, we found the northern edge of the wall of red, sun-dried bricks and in the central part of the square, at a level about 20 cm higher, a pilaster and connected length of wall. Searching for its southern edge, we lowered the level of the southwest sector of T16 (the main part of Locus 8) to 30.8 m. The next day, the day our sherd came to light, we merely cleaned sections in the newly lowered southwest part. It was on August 3 that we were able to locate the southern edge of the wall. For the rest, according to the writer's field notes and photographs, on the day we began digging in the southern half of T16, we identified, in its eastern section, a boundary between the surface soil and the red clay, a boundary which ran down the slope parallel to the incline of the hill from a point 1.95 m north (level 31.7 m) of the square's south marker to the southern limit of the square. The northern end of this mass of red clay coincided precisely with the northern edge of the wall. Considering this fact and the situation in which the northern edge of the wall was found on July 22, we may infer that the surface soil on the eastern side of T16 was comparatively shallow. Again, with reference to the western section of T16,⁽⁴⁾ the work found on July 23 in the southwest part to T16 (Locus 8) appears to have belonged either to a revetment (Stratum VIIc)⁽⁵⁾ added to strengthen the original wall of sun-dried brick (Stratum VIId) from outside, or to surface soil containing brick clay that had fallen from the wall. Judging from the area exposed, the more probable inference is that our inscribed sherd derived from the former. Considerable probability attaches, that is, to the inference that the sherd under discussion belongs to the period of the red, sun-dried brick wall of Stratum VII, namely, from the latter half of the ninth century B. C. through the first half of the eighth, particularly to the period when the revetment was constructed: the end of the ninth century B. C. or the

(4) *TZ* III, 1970, Pl. IV.

(5) *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8 (in English).

beginning of the eighth.

3. Paleographical Assessment

Eight scripts remain on the Tel Zeror sherd, but since an "l" occurs twice, seven separate letters can be discerned. Presented in terms of phonetic values they are: b/r(/d), ' , l , ' , s, k, and m. Written in a "cursive" style preserving certain "formal" elements,⁽⁶⁾ they were painstakingly cut or scratched into the clay with a sharply pointed instrument. These scripts differ both from those on two ostraca of approximately the same period (Stratum VII, 800–732 B. C.) found at Tell Qasîl,⁽⁷⁾ located on the same coastal plain about 40 km south of Tel Zeror, and from those on ostraca from the mid-eight century B. C. found at a site which in all likelihood had close political, economic, and cultural ties with Tel Zeror, the royal city of Samaria, located 30 km to the southeast. The divergences are particularly evident in the case of the "m" and the "k." Frank M. Cross, Jr., who happened to be in Israel at that time,⁽⁸⁾ and the *Archeological News* published by the Department of Antiquities of Israel,⁽⁹⁾ suggested that the Tel Zeror inscription was Aramaic. The writer would like to propose, however, that while the sherd inscription clearly has many features in common with Aramaic, the points it shares with Phoenician and particularly with Hebrew writing should not be overlooked.

(1) b/r(/d). Part of the first script having been "amputated" as a result of the pottery break which formed our sherd, it is impossible to determine its original form, but it would seem to have been either a "b" or an "r" (or perhaps a "d"). One shaft, drawn from upper right to lower left, bends at the lower end to the left. When examined in relation to the sherd itself, however, it becomes evident that this seeming tail is a fault which took shape in the original pottery at the time of firing, a deep, narrow fault which drops away from the surface at such a sharp angle, over 45°, that the scribe, even if very skilful, could not have made such a groove with the same pointed instrument used to scratch

(6) J. B. Peckham, *The Development of the Late Phoenician Scripts*, 1968, p. 3.

(7) B. Maisler (Mazar), "The Excavations at Tell Qasîl: Preliminary Report III," *IEJ* 1 (1950/1), pp. 204 and 208–210, Pls. 37–38; idem, "The Hebrew Ostraca from Tell Qasîle," *JNES* 10 (1951), pp. 256–257.

(8) We wish to acknowledge with appreciation the useful suggestions made to us by Prof. Cross during his visit to Israel, a repetition of his kindness to us during our first season (1964).

(9) Department of Antiquities and Museums, Ministry of Education and Culture, Israel, *Hadashôth Arkhêlôgîyôth*, 11 (1964), p. 21.

Hebrew Scripts

k	m	s	'	l	'	d/r/b	Inscription (Date)
							Tel Zeror (mid-eighth century B.C.)
							Gezer Calendar (latter half of the ninth century B.C.)
							Hazor St. IX (c. 900 B.C.)
							Hazor St. VIII (ninth century B.C.)
							Hazor St. VI (800-760 B.C.)
							Hazor St. Va (740-732 B.C.)
							Tell Qasîl (800-732 B.C.)
							Samaria Ostraca (738 B.C.)
							Samaria Pottery (738 B.C.)
							Samaria Ostracon C1011 (c. 735 B.C.)
							Samaria Ostracon C1012 (c. 745 B.C.)
							Samaria Ostraca C689,1220, 1266,1307 (735-725 B.C.)
							Murabba'at Papyrus (eighth century B.C.)
							Siloam (c. 700 B.C.)
							Siloam Epitaph (c. 700 B.C.)
							Tell el-Hesi (eighth century B.C.?)
							Megiddo Pottery (c. 650 B.C.)

Moabite Scripts

k	m	s	'	l	'	d/r/b	Inscription (Date)
<p> </p>							<p>Mesha (mid-ninth century B.C.)</p> <p>Ammon (eighth to seventh centuries B.C.)</p> <p>Melcarth (c. 850 B.C.)</p> <p>Zakir (c. 800 B.C.)</p> <p>Panammuwa I (Hadad) (mid-eighth century B.C.)</p> <p>Panammuwa II (mid-eighth century B.C.)</p> <p>Hamath Bricks (mid-eighth century B.C.)</p> <p>Barrākib (latter half of the eighth century B.C.)</p> <p>Sfiré (latter half of the eighth century B.C.)</p> <p>Nineveh Weights (last quarter of the eighth century B.C.)</p> <p>Nērab (seventh century B.C.)</p> <p>Luristan Jug (eighth to seventh centuries B.C.)</p> <p>Luristan Bowl (c. 700 B.C.)</p>

Phoenician Scripts

k	m	s	'	l	'	d/r/b	Inscription (Date)
ⲕ	ⲙ	ⲥ	ⲁ	ⲗ	ⲉ	ⲃ	El-Khadr Javelin-Heads (twelfth to eleventh centuries B.C.)
ⲕⲕ	ⲙⲙ	ⲥⲥ	ⲁⲁ	ⲗⲗ	ⲉⲉ	ⲃⲃ	Aḥirām (c.1000 B.C.)
ⲕⲕ	ⲙⲙ	ⲥⲥ	ⲁⲁ	ⲗⲗ	ⲉⲉ	ⲃⲃ	Shipitba'al III (end of the tenth century B.C.)
ⲕⲕ	ⲙⲙ	ⲥⲥ	ⲁⲁ	ⲗⲗ	ⲉⲉ	ⲃⲃ	Byblos Spatula (tenth century B.C.)
ⲕⲕ	ⲙⲙ	ⲥⲥ	ⲁⲁ	ⲗⲗ	ⲉⲉ	ⲃⲃ	Inscription from Cyprus (ninth century B.C.)
ⲕⲕ	ⲙⲙ	ⲥⲥ	ⲁⲁ	ⲗⲗ	ⲉⲉ	ⲃⲃ	Kilamuwa (c. 825 B.C.)
ⲕⲕ	ⲙⲙ	ⲥⲥ	ⲁⲁ	ⲗⲗ	ⲉⲉ	ⲃⲃ	Karatepe (c. 720 B.C.)
ⲕⲕ	ⲙⲙ	ⲥⲥ	ⲁⲁ	ⲗⲗ	ⲉⲉ	ⲃⲃ	Ba'al Lebanon (773-738 B.C.)
ⲕⲕ	ⲙⲙ	ⲥⲥ	ⲁⲁ	ⲗⲗ	ⲉⲉ	ⲃⲃ	Nimrud Ostrakon (end of the eighth century B.C.)
ⲕⲕ	ⲙⲙ	ⲥⲥ	ⲁⲁ	ⲗⲗ	ⲉⲉ	ⲃⲃ	Carthage Pendant (c. 700 B.C.)
ⲕⲕ	ⲙⲙ	ⲥⲥ	ⲁⲁ	ⲗⲗ	ⲉⲉ	ⲃⲃ	Malta (former half of the seventh century B.C.)

the other scripts. The right end of this fault projects a bit beyond the point of junction with the oblique shaft. This raises the question whether the scribe consciously utilized the fault as part of the letter or simply happened to stop his stroke where it bumped into the fault. In view of the strangely elongated shape of this letter, the former alternative is the more likely. From the observation that the vertical stroke on the left is engraved more deeply than the righthand stroke, it seems that the scribe drew the righthand line first, contrary to the normal stroke-sequence which would have called for starting at the top left. Just before reaching the fault, he tilted his "stylus" to the right to widen the line in an effort to make the junction between the line and the right end of the fault as neat as possible. To balance this disproportionately long shaft, he also made unusually long the remaining stroke which, in a normal "r" (or "d"), would have been drawn horizontally or slanted to the left (i. e., in a counter-clockwise direction away from the vertical). It may be that this is how this letter with a stem topped by a triangularly shaped long head with a downward-pointing acute angle came into being.

If the script is an "r" (or "d"), i. e., if the scribe did not utilize the flaw as part of the letter, this would mean that the shaft's slant to the right (i. e., in a clockwise direction away from the vertical) is evidence of an earlier feature, namely, a feature of northwest Semitic scripts before the tenth century B. C.⁽¹⁰⁾

- (10) The Phoenician script: the Bronze Javelin-Head Inscriptions found by a villager of El-Khadr of the twelfth to eleventh century B. C. (J. T. Milik and F. M. Cross, *BASOR* 134 (1954), pp. 7 and 10; *KAI*, Taf. I, 21, the Bronze Arrow-Head Inscription found in Ruqissah of the eleventh century B. C. (*KAI*, Taf. I, 20, "d," upside-down in its obverse), the Bronze Arrow-Head Inscription bought from a peasant of the Biqâ' in Lebanon of the eleventh to tenth century B. C. (Milik, *BASOR* 143 [1956], pp. 3-6), the Sarcophagus Inscription of Ahirâm of the tenth century B. C. (L. H. Vincent, *RB* 34 [1925], Pl. VI-VIII; *KAI*, Taf. I, 1), the Shipîba'al Inscription of the end of the tenth century B. C. (M. Dunand, *Byblia Grammata*, 1945, p. 148, Pl. XV; *KAI*, Taf. II, 7), and the Inscription from Nora in Sardinia of the ninth (?) century B. C. (W. F. Albright, *BASOR* 83 [1941], p. 18; *KAI*, Taf. II, 46).

The Aramaic script: the Altar Inscription found in Tell Halâf of the tenth to ninth century B. C. (*KAI*, Taf. XII, 231).

The Hebrew script: the Gezer Calendar of the latter half of the tenth century B. C. (S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel*, 1913, Pl. I; M. Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*, 1915, Taf. VI; D. Diringer, *Le iscrizioni antico-ebraiche palestinesi*, 1934, Tav. I-II; S. Moscati, *L'epigrafia ebraica antica 1935-1950*, 1951, Tav. VII; *KAI*, Taf. XII, 182).

But in the Phoenician scripts of the Inscription from Cyprus of the ninth century B. C. (Albright, *BASOR* 83 [1941], p. 15), the Kilamuwa Inscription of c. 825 B. C. unearthed at Zenjirli (*KAI*, Taf. XXVII), the Aramaic scripts of the Melcarth Inscription of Ben-Hadad I of c. 850 B. C. (Albright, *BASOR* 87 [1942], pp. 24 f.) and the Zakir Inscription (*KAI*,

Later, during the tenth and ninth centuries B. C., especially the ninth, in Hebrew, Moabite, Phoenician, and Aramaic forms of writing the “r” or “d” with a shaft slanting to the right and to the left existed side by side, while after the ninth century, the slant to the left is predominant. This points to an earlier date than suggested by the general paleographic impression received from the other scripts on the sherd. Moreover, if one were to search for other examples of an “r” (or “d”) in which the left stroke stands in a vertical position (normally, this stroke comprises the slanted bottom line of a leftward-pointing triangular head), he would probably look in vain.

On the other hand, one can find sporadic examples of “b” in which if the shaft were slanted to the right, the head would take the form of a triangle with a downward-pointing acute angle.⁽¹¹⁾ In such cases, however, the head is actually of such a form that it, pointing leftward itself, is attached to the upper part of a leftward slanted shaft. If one were to tip the shaft rightward till it assumed the same slant as in the “b” of the sherd inscription or rather the bottom line of the triangular head assumed a vertical position, the now downward pointing acute angle ordinarily being larger than that in the Tel Zeror letter, the shaft’s angle of inclination would become sharper while the tail of the shaft would become horizontal or even slant upward.

The Phoenician and Aramaic “b” show a change in shaft direction from perpendicular or right slant to a left slant, this change taking place in the ninth century B. C. The Hebrew “b,” however, preserved the slant to the right, and this became an identifying feature of Hebrew writing. Both types mingle in the Moabite script.

(2) ‘. This letter consists of six short straight strokes in a tortoise-shell pattern, but it may be easily surmised from their arrangement that the idea in accordance with which the scribe made this ‘ayin was a circle. Moreover, as compared with the other scripts, this circle is rather large. Its diameter measures

Taf. XIII-XIV), the shafts of the “r”s and “d”s slant decidedly to the left. In the Hebrew scripts of the Gezer Calendar shafts slanting to the left mingle with shafts slanting to the right, while in the Moabite scripts of the Mesha Inscription (M. Lidzbarski, *Handbuch der nordsemitischen Epigraphik* [abbreviation: *Handbuch*], 1898, 1962 Nachdruck, Taf. I) they all slant left. A script identified as “d” in the Ammonite Inscription (Aharoni, *IEJ* 1 [1950-1], pp. 220-221), of which the angle made by a left-slanting stroke and a vertical right-hand stroke is sharper than the supposed “d” of our inscription, has lost its upper and lower parts, so it is difficult to consider it as a useful object of comparison. Though the “r” slants to the right, the shaft looks longer in inverse proportion to the smaller head.

(11) For instance, *Handbuch*, Taf. XLV; Peckham, *op. cit.*, Pl. VII 5.

7 mm, which contrasts with the comparatively short 13 mm shaft of the neighboring “l” (12 mm in the case of the next “l”), a ratio of more than 1 : 2, whereas in Hebrew and Moabite “‘”s this ratio between the diameter of the circle or longer diameter of the oval and the shaft of an “l” does not exceed 1 : 2 as the following data will show.

Hebrew.

The Gezer Calendar (latter half of the tenth century B. C.) — 1 : 3 ~ 1 : 4. A pupil practicing his writing made the “‘” by joining two arcs, one on the right and another on the left, thus making a nearly circular oval, its longer diameter slanting left.

The Samarian Ostraca (mid-eighth century B. C.) — 1 : 2 ~ 1 : 3 and, rarely, 1 : 4.⁽¹²⁾ Scratched “‘”s of a similar kind, i. e., consisting of two arcs, are found in ostracon C1011 (c. 735 B. C.)⁽¹³⁾ Though the “‘”s of ostracon C1011 are elongated downward and slant a bit to the left, those of the ostraca published in HES have a longer, rightward slanted diameter, which later became an identifying characteristic of the Hebrew “‘.”

The Murabba'ât Papyrus (eighth century B. C.) — c. 1 : 2. The longer diameter slants so far to the right as to be nearly horizontal.⁽¹⁴⁾

Moabite.

The Mesha Inscription (mid-ninth century B. C.) — 1 : 3 ~ 1 : 2.⁽¹⁵⁾

In contrast to the foregoing the Phoenician and Aramaic “‘”s are written in the form of a circle of which the diameter, when correlated with the length of the “l” shaft, stands in a ratio of more than 1 : 2 (or at least more than 1 : 3).

Phoenician.

The El Khadr Bronze Javelin-Head Inscriptions (twelfth to eleventh century B. C.) — 2 : 3 ~ 1 : 1.⁽¹⁶⁾

The Sarcophagus Inscription of Ahirâm (found in Byblos, dating from c. 1000 B. C.) — 1 : 2 ~ 2 : 3.

The Bronze Spatula Inscription (unearthed in Byblos, dating from the tenth

(12) *HES*, pp. 239–243; Diringier, *op. cit.*, Tav. III–VII.

(13) *SS* III, pp. 11–16, Pl. 1 (2).

(14) P. Benoit, J. T. Milik, et R. de Vaux, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, II: Les grottes de Murabba'ât, texte*, 1961, pp. 94 and 96, Pl. XXVIII.

(15) An Ammonite “‘” of the eight to seventh century B. C. is also a large distorted oval, but its longer diameter is near to horizontal.

(16) Milik and Cross, *BASOR* 134 (1954), pp. 10–11, assigned it to the late eleventh century B. C.

century B. C.) — 1 : 2 ~ 3 : 4.⁽¹⁷⁾

The Shipīḥa'al I Inscription (unearthed in Byblos, assigned to the end of the tenth century B. C.) — 1 : 2 ~ 3 : 4.

The Cyprus Inscription (original site unknown, ninth century B. C.) — 1 : 3 ~ 1 : 2.

The Kilamuwa Inscription (unearthed at Zenjirli, c. 825 B. C.) — 2 : 3 ~ 3 : 4.⁽¹⁸⁾

The Karatepe Inscriptions (c. 720 B. C.) — 2 : 3.

The Malta Inscription (latter half of the seventh century B. C.) — 1 : 2.⁽¹⁹⁾
Aramaic.

The Melcarth Inscription of Ben-Hadad I (c. 850 B. C.) — 1 : 2.

The Zakir Inscription (found at Āfis, dating from c. 800 B. C.) — 1 : 2 ~ 1 : 1.⁽²⁰⁾

The Hadad Inscription of Panammuwa I (found near Zenjirli; middle of the eighth century B. C.) — 1 : 2.⁽²¹⁾

The Panammuwa II Inscription (found between Zenjirli and Gercin; middle of the eighth century B. C.) — 1 : 2 ~ 3 : 4.⁽²²⁾

The Sfiré Inscriptions (middle of the eighth century B. C.) — 1 : 2 ~ 2 : 3.⁽²³⁾

The Barrākib Inscription (found at Zenjirli; latter half of the eighth century B. C.) — 1 : 2 ~ 1 : 1.⁽²⁴⁾

Another Barrākib Inscription (unearthed at Zenjirli; latter half of the eighth century B. C.) — 1 : 2 ~ 2 : 3.⁽²⁵⁾

The Nērab Inscription (seventh century B. C.) — 1 : 2 ~ 2 : 3.⁽²⁶⁾

(17) *KAI*, Taf. I, 3; Albright, *BASOR* 73 (1939), p. 11, dated it to the twelfth century B. C.

(18) In this case interlinear ruled lines restrict so rigidly the shaft of the "I" that it is often carved in relief in a lower position than usual.

(19) *CIS* 123; Peckham, *op. cit.*, Pl. VIII 3.

(20) *KAI*, Taf. XIII–XIV.

(21) *Handbuch*, Taf. XXII.

(22) *Ibid.*, Taf. XXIII.

(23) A. Dupont-Sommer and J. Starcky, *Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré* (abbreviation: *Sfiré*), 1958, Pls. II–XXIX; J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (abbreviation: *Sefire*), 1967, Pls. XII–XIII and XVII. Only rarely are there long "I"s.

(24) *KAI*, Taf. XXXII, 216; *Handbuch*, Taf. XXIV. Here too, as in the case of the Kilamuwa Inscription, interlinear lines restrict the shaft of the "I" so that it is generally lowered in position to fit into the space.

(25) *KAI*, Taf. XII, 217.

(26) *Handbuch*, Taf. XXV; *KAI*, Taf. XXIV–XXV. In the ostraca unearthed at Assur and assigned to the mid-seventh century B. C. it is a semi-circle open upwards. *KAT*, Taf.

On the basis of these data it may reasonably be inferred that the “ ‘ ” of our Tel Zeror inscription displays a marked similarity to Phoenician and Aramaic Scripts.⁽²⁷⁾

(3) 1. What has been established about the “ ‘ ” applies ipso facto to the “l” as well, but if we consider the two “l”s of our inscription in and of themselves, other features come to light. In both “l”s the shaft was drawn from the upper right and curves gently downwards, the shaft of one becoming vertical toward the bottom, from which point it joins with, or serves as the starting point for, the foot stroke. Of the two “l”s, the foot stroke of the first curves slightly upward. The second “l” likewise has a curved shaft but differs from the first in having a straight foot which at its left end extends a bit beyond the junction with the shaft.

Hebrew: as a general rule, the foot is short relative to the shaft.

The Gezer Calendar has two examples of the “l” of which one is formed not of two lines joined at their lower ends as in our inscription but of one continuous line in the shape of the Arabic numeral “6.” Its shaft is drawn from the upper right to lower left, bending then into a hook-like curve. In addition a horizontal line extends to the right from the point where the shaft bends, but it may be that this line did not belong to the original “l.”⁽²⁸⁾ At any rate, the curve or semicircle in the lowest part of the “l” goes back to the early northwest Semitic “l” of the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries B. C.⁽²⁹⁾ The sharp angle at the bottom of the letter means it was written in “cursive” style. The second “l” in the Gezer Calendar is cursive in this sense and among ancient Hebrew “l”s shows a marked similarity to those of the Tel Zeror inscription, though with its nearly straight shaft⁽³⁰⁾ and its shaft length / foot length ratio of 4 : 11, it is somewhat smaller than the two “l”s of our inscription, which have ratios of 6 : 13 and 7 : 12 respectively.

XXVI, 233; A. Dupont-Sommer, *L'ostrecon araméen d'Assour*, *Syria* 24 (1944-5), Figs. 1-2.

- (27) Though the differences in the size of the “ ‘ ” large or small, does not parallel differences of size in each of the other letters, it is important to reconsider methodologically whether mere relativity can be a reliable standard due to the slower rate of change in the “l” during the period under discussion.
- (28) Cf. Driver, *op. cit.*, Pl. 1; *KAI*, Taf. XII, 182. This is easily explained by the supposition that a pupil was not able to erase completely previous exercises which had been incised on a soft limestone tablet for drill purposes.
- (29) Albright, *Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and Their Decipherment*, 1966, Fig. 1.
- (30) A copy in *KAI*, Taf. XII, 182 shows both its strokes curved, but they appear straight in Diringer, *op. cit.*, Tav. I and Moscati, *op. cit.*, Tav. VII.

An example of a scratched "l" with a shaft curve and shaft length / foot length ratio more like those on our sherd is that of the inscribed pottery from the ninth century B. C. unearthed at Hazor (Area A, Stratum VIII).⁽³¹⁾

Two other pottery inscriptions from Hazor (Area A, Stratum VI, first half of the eighth century B. C.)⁽³²⁾ also contain an "l." One written in ink of them is very similar to the "l"s of our inscription as regards shaft length / foot length ratio (1 : 2), the way the strokes curve, and the angle made by shaft and foot. Though the top of the shaft on the second scratched "l" is missing, its ratio is estimated to be 1 : 3 or 1 : 2 in view of the shaft lengths of the "m"s and the "k" in the same inscriptions.

Another scratched pottery inscription from Hazor (Area B, Stratum Va, 740–732 B. C.) has two "l"s.⁽³³⁾ One, having a curved foot and straight shaft in a ratio of 1 : 2, is similar to the first "l" of our inscription. The other has a ratio of 1 : 3 or 1 : 2, the point of the angle being somewhat rounded.

Still another scratched pottery inscription from the same stratum has an "l" with a 1 : 2 ratio.⁽³⁴⁾

The first "l" scratched in semiformal style into Tell Qasîl Ostrakon 1 (assigned to Stratum VII, which is attributed to 800–735 B. C.) is quite like the "l"s of our inscription in that it has a 1 : 2 ratio, a similarly curved stroke, and a shaft / foot angle of approximately equal size. The other two "l"s on this ostrakon are written in formal style and comparatively short shafts.⁽³⁵⁾

Similarly, a pottery inscription from Samaria (HES, Pl. 55a) dated to the middle of the eighth century B. C., has two formal scratched "l"s with relatively short shafts.

The "l" in Samaria Ostrakon Cl011 has a shaft which, compared to its foot, is exceptionally long, the ratio amounting to 1 : 5. Furthermore, this shaft, contrary to those in our inscription, forms a slightly concave curve to the right.⁽³⁶⁾

(31) *Hazor II*, Pls. CLXIX 2 and CLXX 2. Though it is impossible to say precisely what the ratio is since the tips of both strokes are broken off, the ratio is presumed to be about 1 : 2 from the tapering and curve of the strokes.

(32) *Ibid.*, 5–6.

(33) *Ibid.*, Pl. CLXXII (below = 8).

(34) *Ibid.* (above = 7). Concave toward below of the shaft appears to have resulted from a scribe's habit to lay down the shaft almost horizontal as in case of the long shafts of "p" and "m", which are concaved also.

(35) Maisler (Mazar), *IEJ*, 1 (1950–1), p. 204, Pl. 37A.

(36) Moreover, through a formal "l" of the Tell Qasîl Ostrakon 1, many formal "l"s of the Samaria Ostraca, cursive "l"s of the Murabba'at Papyrus, formal "l"s in the Siloam Inscript-

Though the “l” in a pottery inscription unearthed at Megiddo and dated to about 650 B. C. shows some similarity to our “l”s in respect of shaft curve and shaft / foot angle size, its 1 : 3 ratio of shaft length to foot length is considerably smaller.⁽³⁷⁾

Moabite.

It is difficult to compare the “l”s of our sherd with those in the Mesha Inscription because the latter are completely formal. Generally speaking, however, it can be said that the lowest part of the Mesha Inscription “l”s, which look like fishhooks, are relatively small.

Phoenician.

The El Khadr Bronze Javelin-Head Inscriptions — formal in the shape of an incomplete circle.

The Sarcophagus Inscription of Ahirâm — formal “l”s mingle with cursive. In the case of the latter the shaft or foot or both curve, joining at sharp angles. Their ratio: 1 : 3 ~ 1 : 2.

The Bronze Spatula Inscription from Byblos — all “l”s but one are cursive, the exception being formal. Both strokes are straight and are joined with sharp angles in a ratio of 1 : 2 ~ 3 : 4.

The Shipîba‘al I Inscription — formal “l”s mingle with cursive. The latter are the same as those on the Ahîrâm Inscription.

The Cyprus Inscription — the “l”s are formal, but among them two or three may be found which manifest cursive influence. Each has a curved shaft and foot, a sharp angle with a blunt point, and a ratio of 1 : 2. One has a bent shaft somewhat like the first “l” on the Gezer Calendar.

The Kilamuwa Inscription — cursive “l”s, each with a curved shaft and foot joined at a sharper angle than those of our inscription. Their ratio: 1 : 3

tion of c. 700 B. C. (*Handbuch*, Taf. XXI 1; Diringer, *op. cit.*, Tav. XI, etc.), part of the cursive “l”s of the Ostraca unearthed at Meşad Hashavyahu and dated to the late seventh century B. C. (J. Naveh, *IEJ* 10 [1960], p. 130, Pl. 17, and 12 [1962], Pl. 6A and C), and the Lachish Ostraca of the sixth century B. C. (H. Torczyner, *Lachish*, I: *The Lachish Letters*, 1938; Aharoni, *IEJ* 18 [1968], pp. 2 and 5, Pl. 1), it appears that the concave shaft became characteristic of Hebrew “l”s in the late Israelite kingdoms. Soon after, it also appeared as a characteristic of Phoenician and Aramaic scripts of the fifth century B. C.: a vertical shaft with a horizontal foot drawn to the right or slanting down to the right, plus an added stroke which, from the end of the foot, descends vertically or in a clockwise slant. Subsequently, it passed through Aramaic writing into the post-second century B. C. scripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Cross, “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 1961, pp. 137-139 and 148-149).

(37) R. S. Lamon and G. M. Shipton, *Megiddo*, I, 1939, Pl. 115.

~ 1 : 2.

The Ba'al Lebanon Inscription (on a bronze bowl found at Limassol but of unknown derivation and dated about 773–738 B. C.) — has both cursive and formal "l"s, the latter influenced by the former. Both shaft and foot are straight, joined in such a way as to form a sharp angle and having a ratio of 1 : 2.⁽³⁸⁾

The Karatepe Inscriptions — a ratio of about 1 : 2, but formal.

An inscription unearthed at Chytroi in Cyprus, dating from the first half of the seventh century B. C. — cursive. Both shaft and foot are curved, the former rather markedly so toward the bottom. The angle thus formed is sharper than in the case of our inscription, and the ratio is 2 : 5.⁽³⁹⁾

The Malta Inscription — curved shaft forming a sharp angle with the foot, which is straight or makes a slightly upward concave line. Their ratio: 2 : 5.

It would seem, then, that the Phoenician cursive "l" shows a new development beginning in the seventh century B. C., the "l" most similar to those of our inscription continuing in use till the sixth century B. C.⁽⁴⁰⁾ On the whole, however, its foot becomes shorter.

Aramaic.

The Arslan Tash Ivory Inscription (latter half of the ninth century B. C.) — both straight and curved shafts, making sharp angles with the foot. Their ratio: 1 : 3 ~ 1 : 2.⁽⁴¹⁾

The Melcarth Inscription — cursive. The shaft is almost vertical, both shaft and foot being either straight or slightly curved and joined at sharp angles. Their ratio: 1 : 2 ~ 2 : 3.

The Zakir Inscription — entirely formal "l"s, some of which, however, manifest cursive influence (e. g., B2, 8). On the basis of such "l"s, the ratio may be tentatively set at 1 : 2.

The Hadad Inscription of Panammuwa I — cursive. Shaft and foot alike are curved, making sharp angles. Their ratio: 1 : 2 ~ 2 : 3.

The Panammuwa II Inscription — same as the preceding.

The Hamath Inscriptions (on bricks, dating from the mid-eight century B. C.) — cursive. Both strokes form sharp angles, but their ratio is comparati-

(38) *CIS*, Tab. IV 5; *Handbuch*, Taf. II 1; *KAI* 31 assigned it to c. 750–725 B. C.; Peckham, *op. cit.*, Pl. VII 1.

(39) Peckham, *op. cit.*, Pl. VIII 1.

(40) *Ibid.*, Pls. VII–X.

(41) F. Thureau-Dangin, A. Barrios, G. Dossin and M. Dunand, *Arslan Tash*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 16 (1931), Fig. 49.

vally low, being $2 : 5 \sim 2 : 7$.⁽⁴²⁾

The Sfîrê Inscriptions — formal influenced by cursive, with all kinds of intermediate grades between these two extremes. The angle made by shaft and foot shows considerable variation in size as does the ratio of their lengths, which varies from $2 : 5 \sim 3 : 4$.⁽⁴³⁾

The Barrâkib Inscription — also various in form, while the 'bent' shaft type "l's call our attention to themselves.

The Bronze Lion-Weight Inscriptions from Nineveh (last quarter of the eighth century B. C. or, more precisely, 727-722 B. C.) — cursive. Similar to the "l's of our inscription. Their ratio: $1 : 3 \sim 1 : 2$.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The Nêrab Inscription — cursive influence on the formal appears even more strongly. The shaft is lengthened, in some cases slanting to the left, while the foot stroke on some "l's slopes off to the right or, alternatively, ends in an upward swing. In several examples the shaft and foot form nearly a right angle. Their ratio: $1 : 3 \sim 1 : 2$.

It appears, therefore, that the angle formed by the shaft and foot of cursive "l's began to widen from about the late eighth century B. C. Not long after, the foot, formerly slanted to the right, began to swing clockwise until it came to be horizontal or slanted off downwards to the right. This feature came to be dominant in the sixth century B. C.

To sum up, this comparison of the "l's of our inscription with the Hebrew "l's, particularly those of the Hazor Pottery Inscriptions, indicates a gradual change in the length of both shaft and foot, and an increase of cursive over formal influence sometimes resulting in a "bent" shaft. These considerations suggest for our "l's a date no later than the seventh century B. C., possibly between the late ninth century and the mid-eighth. In addition they seem to have received rather strong influence from Aramaic.

(4) '. The shaft of the fourth script is comparatively long and slants left. Its lowest end is bent to the right to form a sliding tip 3 mm long — an original stroke by the hand of the scribe and not a surface crack like the seeming tail of the first half-broken script. This " ' " with a bent tip at the lowest part of its shaft is unusual. Two lateral strokes crossing the upper part of the shaft are joined at their left ends to make a narrow, horizontal "V" of which an imaginary

(42) J. Naveh, *The Development of the Aramaic Script*, 1970, p. 12 (7), Fig. 2, 1.

(43) The "bent" shaft type is also found sporadically.

(44) Naveh, *op. cit.*, p. 11 (4), Fig. 2, 2.

dividing line would cross the shaft at a point one-third from the top in nearly a right angle. Examples of this kind, in which two lateral strokes cut across the upper part of the shaft, may be found in the Mesha Inscription, the Hazor Pottery Inscription from Stratum IX of Area B (c. 900 B. C.),⁽⁴⁵⁾ the Hazor Pottery Inscriptions from Stratum VI of Area A,⁽⁴⁶⁾ the Tell Qasîl Ostraca, the Murabba'ât Papyrus,⁽⁴⁷⁾ the Samaria Ostrakon C1012 (c. 745 B. C.),⁽⁴⁸⁾ the Samaria Ostraca of HES, the Samaria Ostraca C1220, C1307, C1266 (all c. 735 B. C.),⁽⁴⁸⁾ C689 (c. 725 B. C.),⁽⁴⁸⁾ and the Siloam Inscription (c. 700 B. C.).⁽⁴⁹⁾ The two lateral strokes lying across the upper part of the shaft may be considered as characteristics generally typical of Hebrew and Moabite writing in this period.

In Phoenician writing these characteristics of the “ ’ ” are found only in the Kilamuwa Inscription unearthed at Zenjirli and dated about 825 B. C. This way of forming the letter came into general use in the sixth to fifth centuries B. C., especially after the fifth.

In Aramaic writing two of the “ ’ ”s on the Melcarth Inscription have the “V”-shaped head on the upper part of the shaft and, in addition, a right bend at the bottom of the shaft. Also, in the Zakir Inscription as well as in the Hadad Inscription of Panammuwa I and the Panammuwa II Inscription, “ ’ ”s with the “V” on the upper part of the shaft mingle with other types of “ ’ ”s. The Sfiré Inscriptions present only a few such examples.

Information presently available concerning the “ ’ ” can therefore be summarized as follows. The “ ’ ” with a “V”-shaped head lying across the upper part of its shaft is primarily a characteristic of Hebrew writing. As regards this characteristic, the angle made by the two lateral strokes, and their length relative to the shaft, we find that “ ’ ” examples approximating the one on our inscription exist in the Mesha Inscription, the Hazor Pottery Inscriptions from Stratum VI of Area A, the Samaria Ostrakon C1220, and the Samaria Ostraca of HES, the latter two containing the most markedly similar examples.

(45) *Hazor* III-IV, Pl. CCCLVII 1.

(46) Remembering that Hazor was a strong Canaanite city, constantly exposed to invasion from the north, it is interesting to discern Phoenician and Aramaic features in the “ ’ ”s of the pottery inscriptions from Stratum VIII (ninth century B. C.).

(47) The head is attached at the top of the shaft.

(48) *SS* III, Pls. I 4, II 5, and II 7-9.

(49) The head consists of two parallel lines, the upper longer than the lower, this becoming the most commonly found type of Hebrew “ ’ ” in later periods. The “ ’ ”s of the Gezer Calendar are similar to that of our inscription except that they have a wider angle in the V-shape of the head, its upper stroke being longer than its lower.

If, in addition, we take into account the data from the Aramaic Melcarth Inscription, we find that the “’” of our sherd can presumably be dated from the late ninth to the mid-eighth century B. C. This date agrees with that arrived at in the case of the “l.”

(5) *s*. This script is a formal one showing cursive influence. Its head consists of three parallel lateral strokes, each of which becomes slightly shorter as one descends. The scribe's instrument has made a short, 3 mm “approach” to the lowest stroke which starts at a point just below the left end of the middle stroke and descends obliquely to the left end of the lowest. The shaft starts from a point a bit to the right of the middle of the uppermost lateral stroke and, crossing the other two lateral strokes, descends vertically in a long tail. The script itself has a slight counterclockwise tilt.

Other examples with substantially the same features may be found in the Gezer Calendar, the Mesha Inscription, the Samaria Ivory Inscription (ninth century B. C.),⁽⁵⁰⁾ the Siloam Epitaph (c. 700 B. C.),⁽⁵¹⁾ the Ahirām Inscription, the Bronze Spatula Inscription of Byblos, the Kilamuwa Inscription, the Ba'al Lebanon Inscription B on a bronze bowl, the Zakir Inscription, an inscription on a bronze jug of Luristan (from the first half of the eighth century B. C.),⁽⁵²⁾ the Hadad Inscription of Panammuwa I,⁽⁵³⁾ an inscription on a bronze bowl from Luristan (c. 700 B. C.),⁽⁵⁴⁾ and the Sfiré Inscriptions.⁽⁵⁵⁾

The “s”s in the Samaria Ostraca of HES, the Samaria Ostrakon C1012, and the Karatepe Inscriptions show cursive characteristics. Every lateral stroke has at its right end a short slur leading toward the stroke below, each slur showing the direction the scribe drew his instrument.

The “s”s most similar to that of our inscription are those of the Gezer Calendar, the Mesha Inscription, the Siloam Epitaph, the Ba'al Lebanon Inscription B, the Zakir Inscription, and the bronze bowl inscription of Luristan. If the

(50) J. W. Crowfoot, G. M. Crowfoot, and E. L. Sukenik, *SS II: Early Ivories from Samaria*, 1938, pp. 6-8.

(51) N. Avigad, *IEJ* 3 (1953), Pls. 8-10, p. 149.

(52) Dupont-Sommer, “Trois inscriptions araméennes inédites sur des bronzes du Luristan,” *Iranica Antiqua* 4 (1964), Pls. XXXIII-XXXIV, p. 109.

(53) The “s” of the Panammuwa II Inscription displays a new characteristic: the shaft begins its downward course from the lowest horizontal stroke of the head, i. e., crossing no horizontal strokes.

(54) Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, Pls. XXXV-XXXVI, p. 113.

(55) Most “s”s of Stele I and II have the shaft protruding above the uppermost horizontal stroke of the head, though there are some cases in which the shaft does not protrude above. In Stele III the proportions of the two types of “s” are reversed.

Samaria Ostraca and Karatepe Inscriptions be taken as indicating the lower limit for this kind of "s," we can date the "s" of our inscription to the period between the late ninth and mid-eighth century B. C. This date agrees with that of the "l" and " ' " discussed above.

(6) *m*. The scribe who made this cursive script began at the upper left and first drew a semi-circle open at the top. Reversing direction from the upper right end of the semi-circle, he retraced the right-hand line for a short distance, then drew his instrument down to form a long shaft with a slight clockwise slant, the shaft seeming to end in a tail curved to the left. At its lowest part, however, this shaft is broken by the edge of the sherd. The scribe then added the last stroke in the middle of the semi-circle, a line running approximately parallel to the shaft, drawn to but not through the bottom of the semi-circle.

This type of "m" is distinctive of Phoenician and Punic scripts, but it is hardly typical of Palestinian scripts for the period to which this sherd is tentatively attributed. Similar "m"s can be found in an incised pottery inscription unearthed at Tell el-Hesi (eight century B. C.),⁽⁵⁶⁾ the Samaria Ostraca C1011⁽⁵⁷⁾ and C1307 (c. 735 B. C.),⁽⁵⁸⁾ the Siloam Inscription, and the Karatepe Inscriptions.⁽⁵⁹⁾

As will be evident from the foregoing, this type of "m" is not characteristic of Aramaic writing for the period under discussion. There do exist, however, a few rare examples such as those on the Bronze Bowl Inscription of Luristan and on a Nimrud Ostrakon (from the end of the eighth century B. C.).⁽⁶⁰⁾ The "m"s of the former appear to be of the "square" type, the horizontal bottom line of its square head reaching straight to the shaft in one stroke; it may, however, be of the "double L" type, as inferred from an "m" in the copy by Dupont-Sommer. The Nimrud Ostrakon also contains a square "m", but the middle stroke of its head protrudes below the horizontal line.⁽⁶¹⁾

It may be suggested that the "m" of our inscription exhibits, then, features characteristic of the Phoenician script. A process of development may be discern-

(56) Diringier, *op. cit.*, pp. 299 f., Tav. XVI 5.

(57) The head is of a "square" type. Its middle stroke does not cross through the horizontal stroke.

(58) SS III, p. 22, Pl. II 8. This too is a kind of "square" type, but it differs from the usual "square" type in that the head consists of two "L"s set on the same line. It is more accurately called the "double L" type. In the usual "square" type the middle stroke of the head is drawn last.

(59) The middle stroke of the head protrudes a little below the horizontal stroke. This is one of the earliest examples of such a type in the Phoenician "m."

ed in which the middle stroke of the head gradually comes to cross the horizontal line, protruding beyond it farther and farther till at last the section below the point of intersection becomes longer than the section above. Since the "m"s of the Karatepe Inscription and the Nimrud Ostrakon are like that of our inscription in projecting only slightly below the horizontal line of the head, they may be taken as our *terminus ad quem*.

A feature characteristic of Hebrew letters is that the shafts of the "k," "m," "n," and "p" are drawn disproportionately long and given a strong curve in the lower part. This feature is developed to a remarkable degree in the Mesha Inscription, the Hazor Pottery Inscriptions from Stratum VI of Area A, and the Samaria Ostraca of HES. Moreover, examples strikingly similar to the "m" of our inscription may be found in the Tell el-Hesi Inscription and the Samaria Ostrakon C1011. It seems doubtful, therefore, that the Tell el-Hesi Inscription should be antedated to 800 B. C., (as generally accepted,) for the "m" of our inscription has to be assigned to the mid-eighth century B. C.

(7) *k*. Only the head of the "k" remains, for the lower section of the script was borken away with a lost piece of the original bowl, a piece on which the rest of the sentence may have been incised. This script too has a peculiar form. Though the "kaph" originally represented a palm with five fingers, its pictographical form was simplified, prior to the period under discussion, to three fingers. In the case of the "k" in our inscription, the scribe first scratched the middle finger (drawn from upper left to lower right), then the slightly curving right finger (from upper right to the base of the middle finger and on). Finally, he added the left finger which, starting a little above the middle finger, crosses it in the middle and continues toward the lower left, slanting more clockwise than the shaft.

From the thirteenth to the eleventh century B. C., and to some extent even later, the "k" had been written to represent three fingers radiating upward from a single point like an intersected V. Subsequently, the right finger was elongated to form a shaft. Still later, the two remaining fingers, middle and left, were combined with one another in such a way that the lower end of the middle finger was attached to the left finger at points increasingly distant from the junction with the shaft, eventually arriving at the tip as in the "k"s of the Lachish Ostraca, or conversely, the attached end of the left finger was joined

(60) J. B. Segal, *An Aramaic Ostrakon from Nimrud, Iraq* 19 (1957), Pl. XXXIV, Fig. 1.

(61) In Phoenician scripts of the seventh century B. C., both types developed in parallel.

to the middle finger at points increasingly distant from the junction with the shaft, it too eventually arriving at the tip with the top pointing downward, the “k” of our inscription representing a mid-point attachment.⁽⁶²⁾

Examples of “k”s corresponding to this last-mentioned development may be found in the Samaria Pottery Inscription (HES Pl. 55a),⁽⁶³⁾ the Gold Pendant Inscription unearthed in Carthage (c. 700 B. C.),⁽⁶⁴⁾ the Hamath Brick Inscriptions, the Nineveh Lion-Weight Inscriptions, the Zakir Inscriptions, the Sfiré Inscriptions, the Barrākib Inscription, and the Bronze Bowl Inscription of Luristan.

The similarity between these “k”s and that of the Tel Zeror sherd indicate a close connection between the “k” of our inscription and Aramaic script. The present “k” can be assigned to the eighth century B. C., particularly the latter half.

To summarize the results of this paleographical examination, we can say on the whole that our inscription was written in Aramaic scripts. At the same time, however, some of them display characteristics so typical of Hebrew that a question arises whether it was really an Aramaean scribe or one who had received

Letter	Date	Character of the letter
‘		Phoenician and Aramaic
l	late ninth~mid-eighth century	Aramaic
’	late ninth~mid-eighth century	Hebrew
s	late ninth~mid-eighth century	Hebrew, Phoenician and Aramaic
m	mid-eighth century	Hebrew
k	latter half of the eighth century	Aramaic

orthodox training in Aramaic writing who incised our inscription. Taking into account the relatively lower date of the “m” and the “k,” it seems reasonable to assign our inscription to the mid-eighth, or the second third of the eighth century B. C.

4. Stratigraphical and Paleographical Findings Correlated

Our stratigraphical assessment was that this inscribed sherd probably derived from Stratum VIIc, i. e., from the last quarter of the ninth to the be-

(62) Cf. Peckham, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33 and 152-154.

(63) HES, p. 238, 64, Pl. 55a.

(64) KAI, Taf. III 73; Peckham, *op. cit.*, Pl. VII 4.

ginning of the eighth century B. C. Our paleographical assessment, on the other hand, has led us to a later date: the mid-eighth century B. C. Between these two results there is a gap of several decades. If, in accordance with one stratigraphical possibility, we assume that our sherd happened to fall into clay material of the revetment during its first construction when it was added to strengthen the original red, sun-dried brick wall, it would be dated about 825 B. C. This date conflicts with the paleographical conclusion. But it is possible to think of repairs to, or even reconstructions of the wall, repeated till its final destruction in the mid-eighth or latter half of the eighth century B. C., for it was proved that the wall stood on the same line throughout all phases of Stratum VII.⁽⁶⁵⁾

5. The Writing

As mentioned at the end of section one, the fact that our inscribed sherd is not an ostrakon but an inscription incised on a complete earthen vessel conditions the character of the sentence. Not being a memorandum or letter as in the Samaria Ostraca, the Tell Qasîl Ostraca, the Meşad-Hashavyahu Ostraca, etc., it is in all likelihood a sentence of dedication or presentation, or perhaps an indication of possession.⁽⁶⁶⁾ The "... b/r" before the word-divider is not complete as a word and calls for restoration.

Let us begin with something clear. The "l'smk" after the word-divider consists of a preposition "l" and a personal name "l'smk" meaning "l (God) supports." According to Noth, while personal names of the form "a noun + the perfect of a verb" occurred with considerable frequency before and to some extent during the Israelite kingdoms, it was the form "the perfect of a verb + a

(65) *TZ* III, pp. 8 and 10 (in English). We knew that the surface level inside the red sun-dried brick wall had gradually risen. To counteract this development, people seem to have tried to strengthen the foot of the wall, partly from inside. Of course we must also think of repairs and reconstructions of the revetment outside.

(66) For example, O. Tufnell, Ch. H. Inge, and L. Hording, *Lachish* II, 1940, Pls. LI and LX, 49-54 (dedication); the Hazor Pottery Inscriptions from Stratum VI and V (possession). Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome, the Centre of Power, Roman Art to A. D. 200*, 1970, pp. 12 and 399, Fig. 15, provides an example of an Etruscan bowl of the sixth century B. C. which has an engraved name (the name of its owner) running from right to left along and outside the base ring, the diameter of which measures about 8 cm. It is not easy to grasp the exact form of the pottery from a photograph alone. It may be a bowl of such a type that the bottom surface, which has a slight slant, extends beyond the base ring, then turning upward to form a widened rim which projects outwards a bit.

noun” which prevailed during the monarchy. The former type is far and away the dominant one in Phoenician personal names, while among Aramaic personal names neither is particularly prevalent.⁽⁶⁷⁾

Because the writing after the “’lsmk” is broken away, it is impossible to know whether this personal name was complete. If so, we have, as far as this writer knows, only one other example of this personal name. In the Aramaic Bronze Bowl Inscription of Luristan we read: “km[r’]lh br’ lsmk” (“Km[r’]lh, the son of ’lsmk”).⁽⁶⁸⁾ According to Dupont-Sommer, the shape of the bronze bowl with its beautiful, simple curve, is reminiscent of Phoenician vessels for offering. In its inside center are engraved a scarab, which spreads its four wings and holds two small sun-discs, one between the forelegs and the other between the hind legs, and forty-five miniature rosettes arranged in the space between two concentric circles which surround the scarab.

The scarab design originates in Egypt,⁽⁶⁹⁾ but it is also clear that people have found pleasure in reproducing it elsewhere. Taking a steatite scarab unearthed from Lachish as an example,⁽⁷⁰⁾ here we find a beetle spreading four wings and holding two discs accompanied by the Hebrew scripts “smk” in its upper large register and the scripts “l’hmlk” in its lower small register. The scripts resemble those of the late eighth century B. C., especially of the Siloam Inscription (c. 700 B. C.). It is evident that this scarab is a Palestinian imitation of the Egyptian scarab.

Again, the Bronze Bowl Inscription of Luristan makes use of the Aramaic “br” (“son”) instead of the “bn” found in Hebrew and Phoenician. The rosette design prevailed in Mesopotamia. If this bronze bowl was really made in Luristan, an Aramaic sculptor incised the Aramaic inscription on the bowl, which was, so to speak, a product of international cultural influences. Moreover, the metalworker himself may have received influences from more than one culture,

(67) M. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*, 1966, SS. 20–27.

(68) The writer would like to take this opportunity to express appreciation for the assistance so kindly rendered him by Prof. Dr. Röllig, formerly of the Department of Orientalistik at the Universität Münster, now at Tübingen, whom the writer visited on his way back from the second season at Tel Zeror. On that occasion he found this personal name in the *Iranica Antiqua*, p. 113. Eight days later, Professor Driver of Oxford University referred the writer to the same bibliographical source from his immense collection of vocabulary cards.

(69) For example, an ornament on the chariot of Thutmosis IV (the end of the fifteenth-century B. C.), H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 1948, Fig. 15.

(70) *Lachish III, Text*, p. 348, *Plates*, Pls. 44A and 45, 167.

for he signs himself the servant of G/'zr, the name of his master suggesting Phoenicia or somewhere to the south of Phoenicia.⁽⁷¹⁾ But there are too many uncertain elements to allow one to posit a connection between Luristan and Tel Zeror.

A white opal scaraboid, to take another example bearing a name somewhat similar to that on our inscription, found in Transjordan and belonging to the Reifenberg collection in Jerusalem, has an inscription in crude scripts "lsmky" running half way around what seems to be a scene of animal sacrifice.⁽⁷²⁾ Moscati assigned it to the eighth century B. C. The photograph available to this writer is somewhat blurred, but a close examination suggests for the "m" a higher date than the eighth century B. C. but a lower date for the "s." From the direction of the strokes, confusion between "k" and "y," and the writing of the "k" in a mirrored position we learn that an unskilled hand engraved them. Moreover, in view of the close resemblance between the "k"s on this scaraboid and those on the Siloam Inscription, the writer deems it advisable to ascribe it to the late eighth century B. C.

These two personal names, "Smk" and "lsmky," are the closest to the "lsmk" of our inscription both substantively and paleographically, except for the name on the Bronze Bowl Inscription of Luristan, which is precisely the same.

Besides these examples, personal names containing the component "smk" may be listed as follows:

- Hebrew:* Smkyw,⁽⁷³⁾ Smkyhw,⁽⁷⁴⁾ Ysmkyhw,⁽⁷⁵⁾ 'hsmk,⁽⁷⁶⁾ 'hysmk,⁽⁷⁷⁾
Mrsmk,⁽⁷⁸⁾ and the abbreviated forms Smk⁽⁷⁹⁾ and Smky⁽⁸⁰⁾
Aramaic: 'trsmk⁽⁸¹⁾

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- (71) Taking Dupont-Sommer's date of c. 700 B. C. as trustworthy, we find that the fall of Samaria occurred in 721 B. C. between the dates of our inscription and of the Dupont-Sommer's and that part of the exiles were moved into cities of Media north of Luristan.
- (72) Moscati, *op. cit.*, p. 54, Tav. XI 5.
- (73) Ibid., p. 112 Tav. XXIX 5 (the middle of the eighth century B. C.).
- (74) I Chronicles 26 : 7; Lachish Ostraca 4,6 and 11,4.
- (75) II Chronicles 31 : 13.
- (76) Moscati, *op. cit.*, pp. 76 f.
- (77) Exodus 31 : 6, 35 : 34, and 38 : 23, all belonging to P or later additions.
- (78) S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine*, 1930, pp. 56 f., Pl. IX 29-30 (after the sixth century B. C.).
- (79) Diringer (cf. *supra*, note 55); Moscati, *op. cit.*, p. 58, Tav. XII 7 = Lachish III (cf. note 69). Not everyone interprets the "smk" of this steatite scarab as a personal name: *ibid.* pp. 74 f., Tav. XVI 6.
- (80) Ibid., p. 81, Tav. XVIII 8, accompanying a scarab with four spread wings. Another example may be found in the Elephantine Papyri.

Assyrian: Samaku, Samak-ilu⁽⁸²⁾

It appears, therefore, that personal names containing "smk" are more frequent in the Hebrew. In addition, when we examine materials for which the dates are known, we find that occurrences of the "smk" component are comparatively recent, or conversely, that no occurrences of this component antedate the eighth century B. C. It is important to remember, however, that few extra-biblical Hebrew materials antedating the eighth century B. C. are extant. Moreover, all Hebrew names containing "smk" found in the Old Testament belong to the Priestly Code or subsequently written books, i. e., the fifth century B. C. and after. It is worthy of attention, however, that the personal name "Smkyhw" which appears in I Chronicles 26 : 7 occurs also in the Lachish Ostraca.⁽⁸³⁾ Both this person "Smkyhw" and the "Ysmkyhw" mentioned in II Chronicles 31 : 13 are Levites. Recent excavations have made it clear that the Levites took part in some way in the local administration of the coastal plain neighboring on Lachish and the northern Negev at least from the late seventh to the beginning of the sixth century B. C.⁽⁸⁴⁾ It would seem possible, therefore, to trace the name back even earlier.

Though the same personal name "lsmk" found in our inscription is indeed to be found in the Aramaic inscription from Luristan, the considerations stated above strongly suggest that the name or phrase on the Tel Zeror sherd is not Aramaic but Hebrew.

It would be rash to infer that the phrase "l'smk" means exclusively the owner of the pottery, for in such cases the customary procedure would be to give "1 + a personal name" either alone or at the beginning of a sentence.⁽⁸⁵⁾ When "1 + a personal name" comes in the middle of a sentence, it is usually in a sentence of dedication.⁽⁸⁶⁾

(81) Dupont-Sommer, *Sfiré*, Pls. III–IV, ls 1, 3 and 14 and pp. 23 f.; Fitzmyer, *Sefire*, pp. 12–13 and 191.

(82) Article "Smakhyāhū" in Gesenius, *Heb. u. aram. Handwörterbuch*; Köhler, *Lexicon*.

(83) *Lachish I: Letters*, IV 6, XI 5, and XIII 2.

(84) Naveh, *IEJ* 10 (1960), pp. 129–139. "lyšb" in Aharoni, "Hebrew Ostraca from Tel Arad," *IEJ* 16 (1966), pp. 1–7 and "lyšyb" in the Old Testament also had a relationship with the temples.

(85) In the case of letters, "1 + the personal name." E. g., the Lachish Ostraca 2 and 6 in Hebrew, and *KAI* 233 and 266 in Aramaic.

(86) There are examples of dedication in which "1 + the proper noun" stands at the beginning of a text. *KAI* 42 is a dedication to the goddess 'Anat and Ptolemy I Soter (305–285 B. C.), the latter being a king who was the object of a *Kaiserkultus* and here the one to whom an altar was dedicated. Also *KAI* 73: "1 + 'Aštart, Pygmalion" (the eighth century B. C.).

In Phoenician and Punic dedications we often find such formulae as “1 + ’dn (or “1 + rbt) [titles], 1 + a proper noun...” In such cases the proper noun is divine.⁽⁸⁷⁾

In Aramaic dedications we also find examples of the form “lū + a personal name”⁽⁸⁸⁾ or again a three-name form: the object, its dedicator, and the person to whom it is dedicated, the last being indicated by “1 + a personal name.”⁽⁸⁹⁾

From yet another angle, the writer heard through Moshe Kochavi what Frank M. Cross suggested with regard to our inscription during his visit to Israel in 1964, namely, that the “...b” might be “[G]b’,” which in turn might be an ancient name for Tel Zeror. This theory was repeated in a 1966 letter he sent to Kiyoshi Ohata, the director of our expedition, and this summer, 1973, when the writer could have a chance to exchange opinions on some essential problems common with him at the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research (the former American Schools of Oriental Research) of Jerusalem, but with a slightly different restoration, namely, “[P]r’.” This restoration presumably suggested itself to him by virtue of considerations similar to those advanced above in section three, item one: *b/r/(d)* and by two other reasons of which the writer heard first this summer: (1) there are some examples, unpublished seal inscriptions found at Gibeon, which exemplify a combination of “a place name + a personal name,” and (2) a tiny groove, 1.5 mm long, seen on the right-hand angular corner of our sherd (see photograph) and just right to the shaft of the probable “r” might be the remaining tip of the tail of “p”. Soon later, referring to the original sherd kept in a storeroom of the Department of Antiquities and Museums, the writer checked up this seeming remnant of the “p” and found it a part of an original flaw of the sherd. Besides it, the personal names in the seal inscriptions from Gibeon seemed to have no preposition “l” prefixed to them. Anyhow, the letter before the *b/r/(d)* is still open to some possibilities, including even “p”. The word “Gb’,” however, does appear both in the Old Testament and in the Samaria Ostrakon 8. While “Geba” in the Old Testament is usually identified with “Gaba’, 8–9 km north of Jerusalem, “Gb’” in the Samaria Ostrakon is normally identified with Jaba’,

(87) *KAI* 17, 18, and 47 (all in Phoenician), second century B. C., 63–64, 66, 71, 72a, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85–88, 94, 97–99, 102–111, 113, and 116 (all in Punic), from the fifth to the first century B. C.

(88) *KAI* 204.

(89) The Bronze Jug Inscription of Luristan; the Bronze Bowl Inscription of Luristan, c. 600 B. C. (Dupont-Sommer, *Iranica Antiqua* 4 [1964], pp. 115–118).

6 km east-northeast of Samaria.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Yet though on the one hand the “gb” or “pr” could be taken as a city name and included in the title of the receiver of this gift, it on the other hand could have some connection with the title of the dedicator or his dwelling place, not necessarily the dwelling place of “lsmk,” Tel Zeror. Consequently, unless the dedicator were from the same town as the receiver and went to the trouble to say so, it would seem that the “gb” or “pr” of our inscription, if a city name, is to be located outside Tel Zeror.

With regard to the “...b” or “...r,” it is possible to understand it not only in terms of city names but also in terms of verbs, nouns, personal names, numerals, and adjectives. As a result, nothing decisive can yet be said about the “...b/r.”

6. Conclusion

As indicated in the summation at the end of section three, we have dated our inscription to the mid-eighth century, more precisely, to the second third of the eighth century B. C., and characterized its script as generally Aramaic but preserving some features typical of Hebrew.

The repeated expeditions against Syria and the invasions of Damascus conducted by Adad-nirari III of Assyria freed the kingdoms of Israel and Judah from the pressures that had been imposed by the kings of Damascus, Hazael and Ben-Hadad II, since the middle of the ninth century B. C. Assyria did not have able kings until the middle of the eighth century B. C., while at the other end of the gamut, Egypt had fallen into decay and become involved, after the mid-eighth century, in a struggle against Ethiopia. In the first half of the eighth century B. C. the kingdom of Israel flourished under Jeroboam II, but in the latter half Assyria regained power, making its weight felt again in Syria and Palestine, while Assyrian expeditionary forces made repeated marches west and often to the south along the Via Maris.

The former half of the period to which Stratum VII, Area A of Tel Zeror has been assigned corresponds to the period of Syrian pressure. A sherd with the Aramaic inscription “lšqy” came to light from Stratum III of ‘Ein Gev,

(90) Cf. Aharoni, “Zephath of Thutmose,” *IEJ* 9 (1959), pp. 110–122, who seeks for locations of “Gb” and “Drr”, with which Tel Zeror can be identified along the street passing the hill between Tel al-Asawir in the Sharon and Tel Yoken‘am in the Valley of Jezreel. Cf. B. Mazar, “Topographical Studies I: From Geva to Beersheba,” in *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society Reader B*, 1965, pp. 46–48 (in Hebrew).

a town situated on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee.⁽⁹¹⁾ The excavators regarded the “šqy,” to which an Aramaic article had been suffixed, as the title of a high office in the royal bureaucracy. They dated the inscription to the middle of the ninth century B. C. on stratigraphical and paleographical grounds, further identifying the political situation as a time when ‘Ein Gev was under Syrian control but was recaptured at the beginning of the eighth century B. C. by Joash of Israel.

Though the latter half of the period to which we have assigned Stratum VII coincides mainly with the reign of Jeroboam II, it also appears to include the time when Assyrian pressure was again brought to bear on Palestine.

We cannot prove decisively from our inscription whether Tel Zeror ever stood directly under Syrian rule. But it is a fact that its scripts were strongly influenced by Aramaic writing and that Aramaic characteristics are prominent in them. At the same time, however, it is also a fact that these scripts preserve some features typical of Hebrew writing. This exemplifies the tenacious vitality of Israelite culture, struggling to keep alive in a crossroads town along the Via Maris where several powers vied for influence.

(91) B. Mazar, A. Biran, M. Dothan, and I. Dunayevsky, “‘Ein Gev Excavations in 1961,” *IEJ* 14 (1964), pp. 1-49.

Inscribed sherd unearthed at Tel Zeror