

Preface

At the first meeting of his class in Northwest Semitic Epigraphy at Harvard, Frank Cross would inform students that one of the things each of them needed was an “eye for form.” By that, he meant the ability to recognize typological or evolutionary change in letters and scripts. One year, immediately thereafter, a student went from store to store in Harvard Square searching for an “eifferform.” He was unable to obtain the object. The story sounds apocryphal, but it is nonetheless true, and Frank himself delighted in telling it.

In a tribute to his teacher William Foxwell Albright, Frank noted that Albright was a master of typological method (Cross 1970: 9; 1975: 16). So was Frank Cross. A few examples must suffice. His first published paper (Cross 1947; 1961; 1968) presented a typological study of the development of the priestly tabernacle. His magisterial *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (1973; 1997a; 1997b), detailed the typological development of the origin and history of the religion of Israel. And of course, typology is the dominant feature of his epigraphic work, from the origins of the alphabet to the development of the scripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Indeed, he has written about the importance of typology itself, illustrating how the typology of human creations has an imitative aspect (1982: 127; 1998: 238–39; 2003: 347): “I can think of nothing so imitative as an adolescent daughter in the selection of wearing apparel—unless it be an Ivy League professor choosing his wardrobe.”

Because Frank Cross has so dominated the study of the ancient Near East in the last 60 years, Aufrecht once asked him what he considered his primary field of study to be. Without hesitation, he said, “Epigraphy.” It seemed, therefore, that a volume about the field that he loved and to which he contributed so much should be the subject of a Festschrift in his honor. At his 80th birthday party, surprised by the first draft of the essays collected here, he made the observation, “I’m thankful that somebody has finally recognized what I do.”

In fact, many of us have recognized for a long time what Frank Cross accomplished. The problem has been that his work was so inventive and ground-breaking, that it is difficult to appreciate except by scholars with the necessary training; and even for these lucky scholars, it has been quite a task to keep up with him and impossible to move ahead of him. His bibliography lists his many articles on epigraphy. But it is not only the number of articles that overwhelm; it is their breadth and depth. Indeed, it takes 13 specialists in this volume to cover the material that Frank controlled by himself.

The discerning reader will notice that our authors sometimes differ in their interpretation of particular inscriptions; or use different nomenclature for describing letter forms; or have different dates for periods or inscriptions; or have changed their minds

from previously published work. We have consciously avoided harmonizing or calling attention to these differences; we wanted the essays to reflect the dynamism of our field. Behind the scenes, we may argue with each other over every “jot and tittle,” but this is the name of the game: knowledge advances in argument. In fact, the similarities among our international cast of authors are much more remarkable than the differences, and we are constantly cooperating with each other by sharing ideas and information. This volume is a testament to that cooperation and to our mutual respect. Frank Cross is the model of this behavior for epigraphers, and we do our best every day to emulate him.

It is no secret that this volume has taken a long time to see publication. The delay is entirely due to the editors. The authors and, above all, our honoree understand (understood) why it has taken so long to appear, and we are grateful to them for their patience and their willingness to stick by us through thin and thinner. Although this could be a memorial volume, and we have included the touching remarks to this effect by Peter Machinist, we have decided that, since the essays were written for a Festschrift, we would keep this format for the volume. In this spirit, we celebrate the wonderful scholarship of a wonderful man.

We are happy to acknowledge with appreciation and affection the special help given to us by John Huehnergard, Patrick Sisk, Margaret Cook, Sidnie Crawford, Ellen and Ted Gindele, Mark Smith, Christopher Rollston, and especially Dylan Johnson, who expertly indexed the volume. Finally, we are deeply grateful to Jim Eisenbraun, our publisher, for his encouragement, wise counsel, and patience; and to Beverly McCoy, our gifted editor at Eisenbrauns, who improved this book in countless ways and made us look better than we deserve.

This volume has been a labor of love by all concerned. For the editors, it has been this and more: it is the opportunity to honor a teacher and friend who has profoundly influenced our lives. If this volume has a similar, albeit smaller effect on the reader, it will have been well worth the labor and the delay.

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