SEMANTICS OF ANCIENT HEBREW DATABASE PROJECT

Minutes of the Meeting of the SAHD Executive Committee and Co-Workers held on Friday 20 July 2007 at 1.45 p.m. at the Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana

Present: Committee: G.I. Davies (Cambridge), A. Lemaire (Paris), T. Muraoka (Leiden, Chairman), H.G.M. Williamson (Oxford, Secretary), I. Zatelli (Florence). Co-Workers: J.K. Aitken (Cambridge), Dr F. Zanella (Florence).

Apologies: M. Di Giulio (Florence), M. Amadasi Guzzo (Rome), J. Hartley (Azusa), D. Reimer (Edinburgh), K. Spawn (Simpson University), I. Young (Sydney).

1.   Minutes of the last meeting (Oxford 2006)

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record, subject to the correction of 'semantic field' to 'lexical field' in Minute 3 (b).

2.   Matters arising and not taken elsewhere

(a) *Advisory Panel* [Oxford 2 (a)]. The death of Professor James Barr was noted with regret. The chairman reported that Professor Fabry (Bonn) had now agreed to join the Advisory Panel.

(b) *Archive* [Oxford 7]. There was no progress to report on the transfer of the paper files from Edinburgh to Oxford.

ACTION: DR and HGMW

3.   Reports from centres

(a) *Cambridge*. (i) Dr J. Aitken's book on *Blessing and Cursing* is in the final stages of production with Peeters and should appear before the end of the year. (ii) Work is under way to put the remaining completed entries (especially 'road, way etc.') on the website. (iii) Work has been actively resumed on the large group of entries in the 'salvation' group of lexemes. Professor Davies and Dr Aitken are editing work previously done, there are some others to be checked and possibly one or two entries to be prepared (פרק and cognate nouns). With help from Dr Aitken and Alison Gray, Professor Davies will then prepare a general comparative essay discussing the interrelations between all the lexemes covered. This is all scheduled for completion by the end of 2007 and should then be mounted on the website.

(b) *Florence*. (i) Dr Zanella now hopes to prepare his entries on 'gift' [Oxford 3 (b)]. (ii) C. Marzi has nearly completed his dissertation on the lexical field of justice, but has not yet started on his database entries. (iii) Two new students are just starting—on prayer and on health and sickness; it is hoped that these may be able to contribute to the project in the longer run.

(c) *Oxford*: (i) Dr Salvesen has now put her 7 remaining entries on kingship on the website. (ii) Mr Stökl should complete his doctoral research on words for prophets in the coming year, and it is hoped to raise some funding thereafter to allow him to prepare database entries on the basis of his thesis.

(d) *Leiden*. No further news, but see item 6 below.

(e) *Harvard*. See Oxford meeting minute 3 (e).

(f) *Rome*. See Oxford meeting minute 3 (f).

(g) *Azusa*. Professor Hartley has been continuing with his work on colour terms and hopes to submit a draft of the introduction to the projected monograph to the editor this month. Work on the lexemes themselves is basically complete.

(h) *Edinburgh*. Most work this year has been on the development of the website; see item 5 below.

(i) *Paris*. Daniela Gelbrich is continuing with her doctoral research. She faces some major decisions about future direction before the end of the summer, after which things should be clearer.

(j) *Sydney*. Professor Young (who had been at SOTS the previous week) has undertaken to try to extract the written material on viticulture from Dr Jordan. His understanding was that it had been basically completed before Dr Jordan left academic life.

(k) *Israel*. The chairman reported further correspondence with Dr Halevy [Oxford 2 (c)]. She was still trying to find candidates to establish a centre. Dr D. Talshir (who had attended the IOSOT) had agreed to try to help push the project forward.

(l) *Dr Kevin Spawn* had made a start on the preposition *kaph* but had been delayed owing to his move to a new position in Virginia.

(m) *Dr Zecharias Kötze*. He has also started a new job (at the University of South Africa) and has been busy preparing his dissertation for publication. However, he is still committed to working on רגז.

5.   Website and Electronic Database

Dr Reimer had prepared a detailed paper outlining progress on the website and on the development of a searchable database, and this is attached to these Minutes. After considerable discussion and expressions of appreciation, it was agreed in response to Dr Reimer's specific questions that (i) he should continue to explore the use of CMS. Ideally, comments sent in should go first to a private part of the site. Any changes to entries proposed by respondents should be forwarded to the editor, who would discuss them with the original author of the entry. Changes to the entry should be made only with the agreement of both. (ii) The suggestion of a unified bibliographical database was welcomed and Dr Reimer encouraged to explore means for implementation.

ACTION: DR

Technological progress (Unicode etc.) now means that encoded entries can be contemplated except for material prepared in Nisus, which resists conversion. This poses a problem, in that the editor uses Nisus. Consequently, it is requested that co-workers send their finalized entries in *rtf* to Dr Reimer so that he can be working on them. There is no problem about leaving entries in their present format on home websites as well.

Further development of the database will depend on securing some funding to undertake the work of conversion, encoding and so on. Professor Davies thought that some assistance for this might be forthcoming from Cambridge. The British Academy was another possible source.

6.   Leadership of the Project

[Oxford 3 (d)] Professor Muraoka indicated that he wished to step down from his role as chairman and editor when he reaches the age of 70 next year. Suggestions about a possible replacement as editor were discussed. It was noted that it was not necessary for the roles of editor and chairman to be combined as they had been in the past. If either scholar proposed were willing to take over as editor, the question of who should be chairman (a much less onerous task) could be handled separately.
ACTION: TM

7.   Next Meeting

In view of item 6 it was agreed that the 2008 meeting should be held in Leiden at a date to be agreed. It was further provisionally agreed that the 2009 meeting should be in Florence.

Appendix to the Minutes of the SAHD Meeting of 20 July 2007

SAHD Computing Developments

Some updates from the 26 June 2006 Report made at the Oxford meeting:

1. Unicode
The changeover now feels stable, with some useful conversion tools in place for encoding *some* of our current documents with Unicode fonts. See the *shebil* and *kerub* articles on the SAHD website for examples.

Unfortunately, the major *lacuna* is the means of converting the Nisus Writer documents edited by Professor Muraoka for the hard-copy publications. Any information which would enable us to get these documents into our new standard would be welcome!

2. Website/XML
The new "static" website launched July/August 2006; it provides a framework for mounting SAHD documents with a "modern" appearance to the interface.

An XML schema for SAHD articles has now been implemented (see 26.06.2006/para. 3.2; and further below). XML brings three particular benefits: (1) it is the current "portable" standard for data archiving; (2) XML documents can be readily used with a "content management system" (CMS); and (3) XML documents can be readily manipulated for different purposes (e.g., viewing only "exegetical" paragraphs, or all data related to a particular biblical book).

3. SAHD "Community"
Having our documents encoded with Unicode and structured via XML allows us to realize some of the original goals of the project (see especially 1994 Foundation document, paragraph 6).

It brings two further, and related, possibilities into reach: (1) to manage our data *via* a CMS; and (2) to use the tools of the CMS to encourage wider involvment in the SAHD project. I have in mind in number (2), the ability for visitors to the website to leave commentary on our entries, but without affecting the entry itself. By so doing, we might encourage a wider community of scholars and competent amateurs to make use of, and in some ways develop, the SAHD materials.

Some desiderata:
(a) continue conversion of backlog of print material -- how to do this more quickly and efficiently?
(b) to explore the best means of storing bibliographic information for use on the database (see note below on "Dublin Core")
(c) clarify position on use of CMS

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"Worklog"
[See "Glossary" at bottom for acronyms]

11.04.07

Meeting with Robert Muetzelfeldt (see
http://www.simulistics.com/aboutus/board.htm).
Robert has put together an XML-ified version of the "cherub" article from the SAHD
website. A demonstration of it with a couple XSLT stylesheets can be found at::
`http://apps.similette.com/multiguise/index.html`
Unfortunately, this site only works (at the moment) in Internet Explorer, to my
knowledge.

This represents a significant step forward for the project's web publishing efforts,
and very much in keeping with the project vision (see reference to the SGML
markup mentioned in the 1994 project document
http://www2.div.ed.ac.uk/research/sahd/descript.html#term).

Things to do:
- Think about original source (TNK, DSS, etc.) references: use ThML
  conventions for parsing scripture citations?
  [http://www.ccel.org/ThML/scripref.htm]
- Investigate "Dublin Core" (http://dublincore.org/) and related utilites for
  bibliographic Db.
- Consult more widely (e.g., Henry Thomson, Richard Tobin) regarding aspects
  of Robert's XML markup of the document.
- Look at alternatives for XSLT conversion for web-publication (CMS?
  Symphony21?)
- Explore "web 2.0" side of SAHD project - could a virtual community form
  around this material?
- Look for funding to get current article entries prepared for web/db
  publication.

26.04.07
- Ed Dee helping to get PHP and Unicode-aware mySQL capacity on holyrood
wwwsahd account
- attempting to configure Symphony to manage SAHD data, (1) on localhost; and (2)
attempted installs on UEd virtual webspace
- notified Hugh and Takamitsu about developments

06.07.07
- Symphony (XML-based CMS) installed with some difficulty on our EdUni
webspace; but unfortunately it's file/directory permissions do not allow it to be
used on the university servers; it has subsequently been removed after a trial period
(things were learned on both sides, though! Comp Services needed to upgrade both
mySQL to deal with Unicode data, and PHP needed extensions installed for the
XSLT engine)
- EdUni is adopting Confluence (http://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence/)
as a university-supplied, enterprise-level wiki solution; I am currently investigating
this as a possible CMS for SAHD's use
- have just been given a Linux desktop machine to use for evaluation; it is possible
that this might become a web-server for SAHD; if so, this would permit using
Symphony as our CMS!

CMS = **C**ontent **M**anagment **S**ystem
XML = e**X**tensible **M**arkup **L**anguage, a subset of "SGML" (Standard Generalized
Markup Language); see SAHD's 1994 Foundation document, section 10.
XSL(T) = e**X**tensible **S**tylesheet **L**anguage (**T**ransformations); for reformatting XML

data for "human consumption".

Submitted by:
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Edinburgh
6 July 2007