

# SEMANTICS OF ANCIENT HEBREW DATABASE PROJECT

Minutes of the Meeting of the SAHD Executive Committee and Co-Workers held on  
Tuesday 29 July 2008 in the University of Leiden

Present: Committee: G.I. Davies (Cambridge), H. Gzella (Leiden), T. Muraoka  
(Leiden, Chairman), H.G.M. Williamson (Oxford, Secretary).

Co-Workers: J.K. Aitken (Cambridge).

Apologies: J. Hartley (Azusa), D. Reimer (Edinburgh), K. Spawn (Simpson  
University), I. Young (Sydney), I. Zatelli (Florence).

## 1. Minutes of the last meeting (Ljubljana 2007)

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record.

## 2. Matters arising and not taken elsewhere

(a) *Advisory Panel* [Ljubljana 2 (a)]. See item 6 below.

(b) *Archive* [Ljubljana 2 (b)]. Progress on this matter was still awaited.

**ACTION: DR and HGMW**

## 3. Reports from centres

(a) *Cambridge*. (i) Dr J. Aitken's book on *Blessing and Cursing* had appeared during the past year and a copy was shown round. Warm congratulations were expressed. Dr Aitken would be developing one or two of the lexemes for the forthcoming *Qumran Wörterbuch* (see further 7 (2) below). (ii) Editorial work on *g'l* and *pdh* had been completed; comments from Alison Gray and Dr Zanella had been received. (iii) Progress was continuing on the preparation of a collected work on the 'salvation' group. Some entries need still to be completed and an introductory comparative essay prepared; it was hoped to complete all this by July 2009. (iv) Mr C. Thomson had completed a Masters on *tsedeq* in Isaiah and could develop this to cover the whole of the OT. However, there was a thought that this word was already assigned, so that its availability should be checked first.

(b) *Florence*. Professor Zatelli had reported that there had been no substantial progress on the project this past year. She had submitted a list of recently completed articles which the secretary would encourage her to submit to Dr Reimer for inclusion on the website.

**ACTION: HGMW**

(c) *Oxford*. Mr Stökl will submit his doctoral thesis on words for prophets in the coming weeks, and it remains his intention to prepare database entries on the basis of his research.

(d) *Leiden*. See item 6 below.

(e) *Harvard*. As previously reported, Harvard is no longer an active Centre, but the secretary was asked to convey best wishes to Professor Hackett with the hope that she continues to make progress following serious illness some time ago.

**ACTION: HGMW**

(f) *Rome*. Again, no longer active. Professor Williamson would be in Rome February-April 2009 and would hope to meet with Professor Guzzo.

(g) *Azusa*. Professor Hartley has been continuing with his work on colour terms. He had already received valuable editorial feedback on the introduction, and a revised version had been sent to Professor Muraoka two weeks ago. The work is now very close to being ready to submit for publication.

(h) *Edinburgh*. Unfortunately, the research of a graduate student which it had been hoped would contribute to the database in due course had taken a different turn. Dr Reimer will be on leave of absence during 2008-9, though he reported that Professor Barstad shared his interests in maintaining Edinburgh's participation in the project. The secretary was asked to clarify responsibility for the website during the coming year.

**ACTION: HGMW**

(i) *Paris*. No news had been received from Professor Lemaire.

(j) *Sydney*. Professor Young reported that before he left academic life Dr Jordan had made a good deal of progress in drafting entries on wine terminology (based on his thesis, which had since been published), that they needed a final polish and that he would be prepared to pass the material on to someone else to complete. As this was more advanced than the committee had previously realized, Professor Muraoka agreed that he would be willing to look at what had been done in order to assess how best it might be completed. The secretary was asked to approach Professor Young about taking this forward.

**ACTION: TM, IY and HGMW**

(k) *Israel*. No news of further progress had been reported. Professor Muraoka would be in Jerusalem later in the year and would contact Professor Talshir to find out what was happening. He is also in contact with Chaim Dihi of Ben Gurion University, who might be interested in assisting in the project.

(l) *Dr Kevin Spawn* had made a little further progress this year on the preposition *kaph* and hoped to be able to continue with this over the summer.

(m) *Dr Zecharias Kötze*. No further news had been received.

#### **4. Website**

Dr Reimer had reported that '(1) There have been no new developments here, although the infrastructure for the website is poised and ready to accommodate new content. My own sense is that until we either have (a) a reliable means of translating Nisus Writer files to a more accessible format, or (b) new content developed, then we will unfortunately be looking at a fairly dormant site. (2) The meeting in 2007 was informed of the possibility of using a "content management system" (CMS) to manage our online data. This is still a sensible way forward. However, given the agreed XML structure to our lexeme entries, no further steps need be taken here until we have more content to manage.'

#### **5. Electronic Database**

Dr Reimer had reported: '[See 2007/5(ii)] The possibility was mooted of using a cumulative bibliographic database for the project which individual lexeme entries would reference. This remain a desirable goal, and the set of tools available for this effort can be seen at the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative website (<http://dublincore.org/tools/>). Should funding be available, one of the tasks this could be put towards would be the entry of existing bibliographic data into one of these systems. The "database" produced would (like our own entries) be encoded in XML, thus ensuring portability and longevity.'

In discussion of items 4 and 5, it was reported that there was a good deal of material (especially in Cambridge) which was ready for mounting on the website except that its fonts were old and incompatible with current requirements. It would be a reasonable task to update these so that Dr Reimer could have sufficient material to convert into XML and to test search capabilities. It was hoped that Dr Tomas Frydrych could be able to modify the conversion program for changing fonts appropriately. The desirability of a unified bibliography was reaffirmed but would require funding. The importance of maintaining a sense of momentum on the website was agreed, especially as it had been cited occasionally in conference papers.

Some time ago Professor Davies had translated two entries from Florence which he still had in electronic format. It should be ascertained whether these might be sent for editorial approval and then added to the website.

**ACTION: HGMW**

## 6. Leadership of the Project

Following last year's meeting, Professor Muraoka had approached Professor Gzella about the possibility of his taking over chairmanship of the project, and he had agreed. Before handing over, Professor Muraoka briefly reviewed progress on the project since he had succeeded Professor Hoftijzer in 1995. All those present expressed their very great appreciation for all of Professor Muraoka's work in this regard, mentioning especially his editorial expertise and encouragement. Professor Gzella's appointment as chairman was then welcomed. It was agreed unanimously that Professor Muraoka should be invited to join the Advisory Panel, and he was glad to accept.

## 7. Other Business

(1) It was noted that Dr Zanella had moved from Florence to Bonn and that there had been some correspondence on this during the year. It was agreed that the secretary should write to Professor Fabry to establish whether and on what conditions Dr Zanella might be able to prepare material for the database under his auspices.

**ACTION: HGMW**

(2) It was thought likely that there would be the possibility for some collaboration with the *Qumran Wörterbuch*, which Professor Fabry is editing. For instance, some of those preparing entries for that project were also co-workers with SAHD, and others might in any case be collecting data on Biblical material as background to their Qumran research. It was agreed to inquire of Professor Fabry whether there could be liaison on this.

(3) It was agreed that database work as such was not attractive to funding bodies, so that it would be desirable to see whether more suitably attractive research projects could be devised that would then include database work as an essential component.

(4) The need to maintain wider publicity was agreed. It would be helpful, for instance, to have a session of database-related papers at the 2010 IOSOT in Helsinki. To achieve this would require ideas for papers to be developed during the coming year so that a programme could be sketched out at next year's meeting.

**ACTION: ALL**

## 8. Next Meeting

It had been provisionally agreed last year that the 2009 meeting should be held in Florence. This would be welcome. The secretary would write to see whether this was still convenient for Professor Zatelli and if so to establish a possible date.

**ACTION: HGMW**