Introduction

Grammatical Type: n.

Occurrences: Total 15x OT, 0x Sir, 5x Qum (1QM 5.6, 7, 6.15, 9.12, 4Q381[4QapPs b] 78.3), 0x inscr.

Text Doubtful:

A.1 The last three letters of רֹמַח in 4Q381 78.3 are marked as unclear by Schuller who comments (1986:227), “The end of the line is very difficult to read since the leather has become very dark.”

B.1 [nil]

Qere/Ketiv: none.

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 According to HAL (1159) רֹמַח is a “Primärnomen”. In support of this may be given its wide attestation within West and South Semitic. All authorities agree in connecting it with Arm רומחא and Syr rwmh’ ‘spear’ (Robinson 1855:982, Ges.:762, BDB:942, Zorell:775, KB:894, Aistleitner 1967:195, Ahituv 1968:975, HAL:1159). It should be noted that the gender of רֹמַח is unattested in Hebrew, but that Syr rwmh’ is feminine, and, according to Levy (1867-68:426), Arm רומחא is masculine.

as “Lancea qua utuntur ad percutiendum, non ad coniiciendum”. This seems to indicate a weapon that remained in the hands during combat. Robinson (1855:982) also gives the Arb verb ramaha “to pierce with a lance, to lance” as cognate, and Arb ramh.

A.3 BDB (942), Ges. (762), Brockelmann (734), Zorell (775), KB (894), and Aistleitner (1967:195) quote Eth ramh as cognate. HAL (1159) supports this and also quotes Tigre remh “Stab der mohammedanischen Priester, aus Holz mit Eisenspitze oder ganz aus Eisen”. Other Semitic cognates meaning “lance” exist in Sabaic rmh (Beeston:117), and Mandaic (Drower-Macuch:430).

A.4 Ges. (762), and Brockelmann (734) suggest that Eg mrh ‘spear’ is cognate. Erman & Grapow (1928:112), KB (894), Ahituv (1968:975), and HAL (1159) are more precise about the relationship and see the Eg word as coming from Semitic. Likewise, Černy (1976:90) sees Coptic mereh ‘spear, javelin’ = Eg mrh as a “loan-word from Semitic, cf. נֵרָה, [Arb] rumh, ‘spear’”. See also Aistleitner (1967:195) and UT (437-38). Albright (1934:44) regards the Canaanite form from which Eg mrh (vocalized muur'ha) has been loaned as *rumha. The connection of this Eg word with נֶרָה has received some confirmation in the occurrence of an Ug word mrh ‘spear, lance’ regarded as cognate with נֶרָה (Al-Yasin 1952:76, Aistleitner 1967:195, UT:437-38, Caquot et al. 1974:134, Driver & Gibson 1978:152, Healey 1983:48). UT (438) notes that Ug mrh is feminine. However, the occurrence of Ug mrh means that any relationship between Eg mrh and Hebrew נֶרָה is probably indirect. For more details of mrh see Müller (1893:303).

A.5 Brockelmann (734) also cites Gk λόγχη as a possible cognate. KB sees Gk λόγχη as possibly derived from Eg mrh, while HAL (1159) sees λόγχη as more probably derived from some Semitic form. Brown (1971:12-13) and Levin (1995:281) regard נֶרָה as a complete correspondence to λόγχη, but this must be regarded within their larger theories of repeated historical (Proto)Semitic and (Proto)Indo-European mutual influence. Lewy (1895:179) opposes the view that the words are cognate, citing further literature.
A.6 HAL (1159) suggests that since רומח is never written with Waw we must ask “ob es in Qumran wie im MT die Form qutl hatte”. Carmignac (1955:346) believes that at Qumran the pronunciation was different from that of the Masoretes, but we may ask whether the use of vowel letters is sufficiently understood to conclude this.

B.1 Brown (1971:13) regards Gk ῥομφαία as derived from רומח, though there is very little basis for this.

B.2 Haupt (1910:712) gives Akk nir’amtu as cognate, and this is cited as a possible cognate by Ges. (762). The fact that this word is not attested in AHw and CAD, along with the required metathesis, makes this an unlikely cognate.

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 רומח is a segholate noun and is always spelled defectively (despite Yadin 1962:135). Nevertheless the initial o/u vowel is attested by both Masoretic and cognate pronunciation.

B.1 [nil]

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 In Jdg 5.8 רומח is the joint subj of the niph of ראה. Obj לָקַח (Nu 25.7), כִּתֵּת (1Ch 12.9), מָרַק (Jr 46.4). In the last two cases the action of the verb is only applied to the metal of the spear. In 1Kg 18.28 it is by means of רְמָחִים that it is said of the prophets: וַיִּתְגֹּדְדוּ. Also mediated by the preposition Beth is the verb שלק Hiph ‘cause to go up in flame’ (Ezk 39.9). This action has particular reference to the wooden shaft of the spear. In Neh 4.10 (despite the Waw), 15, and 1QM 6.15 people are said to have hold of the רומח, (Hiph זָרַד). This again may point to a hand-held weapon. It is the nomen rectum following the Qal participle of עֲשָׂר (1Ch 12.9), נשא (1Ch 12.25,
(2Ch 14.7), and רֹמַח (2Ch 25.5). In each case the expression is a designation of a soldier who uses a רֹמַח and a shield.

### A.2

In Nu 25.7, 1QM 5.6, 6.15 we find the phrase בְּיָדוֹ or בידם with reference to רֹמַח. These occurrences may indicate that a רֹמַח was always a hand-held weapon, or at least that it was constantly connected in people’s minds with the hand. However, even javelin’s were held in hands initially.

### B.1 [nil]

### 4. Versions

### A.1

LXX has δόρυ ‘spear’ in pl in Jr 46(26).4, 1Ch 12.9, 2Ch 11.12, 26.14, and in sing in 2Ch 25.5. 2Ch 14.7 has δύναµις ὀπλοφόρων αἱρόντων θυρεώς καὶ δόρατα for MT’s נָשְׂא צִנָּה. This involves translating MT’s sing נָשְׂא רֹמַח by a pl, and the presence of a slight expansion in ὀπλοφόρων. Similarly, LXX 1Ch 12.25 has θυρεωφόροι καὶ δορατοφόροι for MT’s נָשְׂא צִנָּה. LXX Ezk 39.9, Neh (i.e. 2 Esdras 14) 4.7, 10, 15 has λόγχη in pl. The reading at Jdg 5.8 is complicated. The Cambridge LXX has λόγχη as equivalent of רֹמַח. However, Codex A et al. have a doublet involving the double use of σιροµάστης “barbed lance” (Lust et al. 1996:423; Muraoka 1993:213; see also Driver 1913:xliv). σ(ε)ιροµάστης occurs also in Nu 25.7 and in pl in 1Kg 18.28 and Jl 4.10. Dorival (1994:463) says that Nu 25.7 is the earliest attestation of σιροµάστης, but that it is improbable that the word was coined by the LXX. By derivation “un siromâstes est un ‘explorateur’ (-mâstes) de ‘silo’ (sirôs), une ‘sonde à silo’”. Dorival cites both military and agricultural uses of the word, and then concludes (1994:463), “Faut-il traduire par ‘sonde à silo’ ou par ‘lance à pointe de fer’? Il est probable qu’au IIIe siècle, le mot n’est pas encore usé: chacun de ses éléments garde
son sens...On doit ajouter que ce mot a peut-être été choisi parce qu’il évoque le mot du TM: siromástites fait écho à rômah.” (See also Liddell & Scott 1940:1600).

A.2 Aq κοντός ‘pole’ (Nu 25.7, Jr 46.4). This may be used because a רֹמַח was a long spear (see 1QM), and to distinguish it from חֲנִית, which Aq generally renders by δόρυ. Sym uses δόρυ (Nu 25.7).

Josephus represents רֹמַח by σιρομάστης in his discussion of 1Ch 12.25 = Antiquities VII, 2.2(55), 2Ch 11.12 = VIII 10.2(247), 14.7 = VIII 12.1(291). On Nu 25.7 = Antiquities IV 6.12(153) he uses ῥομφαία. His choice is thus independent of LXX.

A.3 Pesh translates רֹמַח by its cognate rwmh (Nu 25.7, Jdg 5.8). rwmh is used in pl (1Kg 18.28, Jr 46.4, Jl 4.10, Neh 4.7, 10, 15, 1Ch 12.25, 2Ch 14.7). rwmh is used in pl to represent sing רֹמַח in Ezk 39.9 where other weapons that are listed are also made pl. Pesh 2Ch 25.5 translates רֹמַח by syp ‘sword’, and in 1Ch 12.9 this same equivalence (in pl) may be maintained if we supposed that Pesh is reversing the order of a pair of items as it translates them (as it frequently does). Otherwise 1Ch 12.9 attests the translation of רֹמַח by pl of skr ‘shield’. In 2Ch 11.12, 26.14 due to the minuses in the Pesh of Chronicles רֹמַח is not translated.

A.4 All Tg authorities use the same word in Nu 25.7: TgO, TgPsJ and TgFrg (Klein 1980) have רֹמַחא, רֹמַחא, רֹמַחא, and the Samaritan Tg has רומח. Jdg 5.8, 1Kg 18.28, Ezk 39.9 have רֹמַחא in pl. Tg 2Ch 25.5 has מַרְדֹּרִים ‘spear’, and this same word occurs in pl in 1Ch 12.9, 12.25, 2Ch 11.12, 14.7, 26.14, Jr 46.4, Jl 4.10.

A.5 Vg uses hasta ‘spear’ in Jdg 5.8, 1Ch 12.9, 25, 2Ch 25.5, and in pl in 2Ch 11.12, 14.7 and 26.14. Vg has lancea ‘light spear, lance’ in pl five times: Jr 46.4, Jl 4.10, Neh 4.7, 10 and 15. It has pl of contus ‘long pole’ in Ezk 39.9, and lanceola ‘small lance’ in 1Kg 18.28. In Nu 25.7 in slight accord with Josephus Vg has pugio ‘dagger’.

B.1 [nil]
5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 רומח is an offensive weapon and frequently occurs in the context of other items of armour, though it never occurs in the same context as חנית.

In Jdg 5.8 רומח is coordinated with מגן, which precedes. Likewise in Neh 4.10 and 2Ch 26.14 the words are coordinated (both pl). In Neh 4.10 רומח precedes, and in 2Ch 26.14 מגן does. In 1QM 9.12 people are equipped with מגן and רומח (both pl). In Chronicles people are often equipped with מגן ורומח. The מגן, in contrast to מגן, seems to be a larger shield. This pair occurs in 1Ch 12.9, 25, 2Ch 11.12 (both words in pl), 14.7, 25.5 (רומח precedes מגן). The spear was thus used as an offensive weapon by people who also possessed a shield. In particular the use of the larger shield (מגן) indicates that at least some of those who used a רומח were not highly mobile troops, and thus supports the idea that a רומח is a large spear, used by heavy troops, which is retained during combat, not thrown. Both מגן and מגן occur in a list of seven armour nouns, with רומח as the final item (Ezk 39.9). In this list objects are set alight שלק hiph mediated by Beth. Beth occurs before the last four items, and before the first one חנית ‘armour’, but not before the clearly defensive items מגן and מגן. It may be that חנית is a superordinate term for offensive weapons and is introducing the final four items, the resumption of the use of Beth marking this syntactically in the list. This list does not include חנית, because there is no combustible element in this weapon. The omission of חנית may therefore be significant in that it is probably omitted due to its semantic overlap with רומח.
In four other places חֶרֶב ‘sword’ occurs with רֹמַח. In 1Kg 18.28 and 4Q381(4QapPs) 78.3 חֶרֶב (pl) is coordinated syndetically with רֹמַח (pl), and in Neh 4.7 asyndetically. In each case חֶרֶב precedes רֹמַח. In Jl 4.10 חֶרֶב is the A parallel to רֹמַח. Spear users would utilise swords once hand-to-hand combat began. In 1QM 5.6-7 we have the sequence וכידן רמח, where, since כידן in the War Scroll certainly denotes a sword, a similar remark may be made as with חֶרֶב. In Neh 4.7, 10 the pl of קֶשׁ ‘bow’ is coordinated in a list with רְמָח (see also Ezk 39.9).

B.1 [nil]

6. Exegesis

A.1 Yadin (1962:135) describes how the רמח was used by heavier troops. In 1QM 5.7 the רמח is said to be seven cubits in length, of which the socket (סגר) and blade (לוהב) take up half a cubit. In 1QM 6.14, 9.12 the רמח of other groups is said to be eight cubits (though the word for cubits is restored). Yadin discusses in detail the description of the seven cubit spear (135-39). The iron for the spear in 1QM was of a lower quality than that for the sword (136). In 1QM the רמח seems to denote the Roman hasta, which was not a throwing weapon (139), though it is slightly longer than the standard hasta. Any connection with the pilum is denied. In contrast to this Driver (1965:183) says that the רמח corresponds to the pilum “a missile weapon nearly 7 feet long”, and the חנית to the hasta. Driver is probably mistaken since there is no evidence that רמח was a thrown weapon. For a discussion of the רמח in 1QM see also Kuhn (1956:29-30). De Vaux (1960:51) maintains that in contrast to 1QM, in biblical times the רמח “ne devait guère dépasser la taille d’un homme, comme en Égypte et en Assyrie”.

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A.2 In Jl 4.10 the מַזְמֵרָה 'pruning knife’ is said to be the material from which a רֹמַח is formed when tools of peace-time are converted into weapons for war. In Is 2.4 and Mc 4.3 חֲנִית appears in the reverse relationship to מַזְמֵרָה, namely what a מַזְמֵרָה is made from in a time of peace. This suggests semantic overlap between רֹמַח and חֲנִית.

B.1 [nil]

7. Conclusion

A.1 Etymological, versional, syntagmatic and exegetical evidence points towards understanding רֹמַח to mean “spear” or “lance”. At Qumran the רֹמַח was certainly a large hand-held spear, and the evidence from Arb cognates and Aq’s κόντος, may point in the same direction for biblical occurrences. The use of the large shield צִנָּה with רֹמַח also may indicate a weapon used by heavy troops. However, a comparison of the saying in Jl 4.10 with that in Is 2.4 and Mc 4.3 indicates that a רֹמַח could be an equivalent of a חֲנִית. It is likely that the latter had a larger semantic range, including also smaller weapons, but that there was some overlap between the two terms. There is no evidence that a רֹמַח was ever thrown. It is also possible that חֲנִית was a hyponym of רֹמַח, which itself also served the function of denoting smaller spears that were thrown.

A.2 Eight of the fifteen biblical occurrences of רֹמַח are pl, whereas only three of the 47 biblical occurrences of חֲנִית are pl. It is possible that one lexeme was used more frequently to represent the pl, while the other was used more frequently to represent the sing, though neither of the lexemes was used in sing or pl to the exclusion of the other.

A.3 It is clear from the use of רֹמַח as the logical or grammatical object of verbs such as מָרַק and שלק hiph that רֹמַח could denote specifically both the point and the shaft of a spear, as well as denote the spear as a whole.
Bibliography


