

Semitic Linguistic: The State of the Art at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century

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- [1] Between the 11th and the 13th of January, 1999, Tel Aviv University hosted a symposium entitled “Semitic Linguistic: The State of the Art at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century.” (Symposium web page: <http://spinoza.tau.ac.il/hci/dep/semitic/symposium.html>) The symposium was conceived and organized by the editor of *Israel Oriental Studies*, an Annual of The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities at Tel Aviv University.
- [2] *Israel Oriental Studies (IOS)* is an annual devoted to the study of the Near East in various disciplines. Appearing under the auspices of the Faculty of Humanities at Tel Aviv University, it began publication in 1971, and quickly earned a reputation for its contribution to scholarship, with major concentrations in the study of Near Eastern languages, philology, history and religions.
- [3] For the year 2000, the editorial board of *IOS* have planned an ambitious project, and volume 20 of this annual will be devoted to the state of the art of Semitic linguistics at the turn of the 21st century. The editorial board hopes to convey the achievements, the drawbacks and the desiderata in the wide and diverse field of Semitic linguistics, i.e., to emphasize progress, conservatism and current gaps in research.
- [4] The symposium held in January was designed to serve as a preparatory meeting for the publication of this volume. The symposium provided an opportunity for contributors to the volume, many of whom are involved in large research projects, to offer oral presentations in the investigated areas and to discuss matters of mutual interest. Special emphasis was placed on identifying desiderata and on raising suggestions for future research. This symposium was convened to help make the outcome of our joint effort a coherent statement.
- [5] Semitic linguistics has always been associated with philology rather than with linguistics, with the deciphering of dead languages rather than with the study of modern living languages, and with diachronic and comparative linguistics rather than with synchronic analyses of languages. Volume 20 of *IOS* has been designed in

order to step out of this traditional view, and to present a different look at Semitic Linguistics.

- [6] The organization of the symposium, which will eventually be reflected in the resulting publication, was designed in a way which reflects this new look at Semitic Linguistics. The opening lecture has addressed the overall interest of this meeting, viz., the relationship between Semitic Linguistics and the general study of language. Then followed issues which have been the concern of Semitic Linguistics since its debut in the Middle Ages, issues which have been to various degrees the concern of scholars in this century, and issues which have become topics of research only recently and with the last lecture issues regarding the future of Semitic Linguistics. Thus, the symposium discussed research in ancient languages and comparative issues, different schools in the study of Semitic languages, various domains within the study of linguistic structure, the study of geographical linguistics, the relationship between linguistic study and other human capacities and the relationship of linguistic study to machines. The three day symposium concluded with a general discussion which tried to raise some questions with regard to Linguistics and Semitic Linguistics, some which had been raised in the individual lectures, some in the discussions which followed specific presentations.

- [7] The following presentations were given:

- Gideon Goldenberg (Jerusalem): Semitic Linguistics and the General Study of Language
- Jo Ann Hackett (Cambridge, MA): The Study of Partially Documented Languages
- Michael Patrick O'Connor (Washington, DC): The Study of Extinct Languages
- Baruch Podolsky (Tel Aviv): The Study of Rare, Dying Out and Extinct Semitic Dialects in the Modern World
- Peter T. Daniels (New York): Writing and Scripts in the Semitic World
- John Huehnergard (Cambridge, MA): Comparative Semitic Linguistics
- Helmut Satzinger (Vienna): The Egyptian Connection: Egyptian and the Semitic Languages
- Rainer M. Voigt (Berlin): The Hamitic Connection: Semitic and Hamito-Semitic

- Anna G. Belova and Victor Ja. Porkhomovsky (Moscow): The Russian School of Semitic Linguistics
- Joseph L. Malone (New York) < in absentia: The Chomskian School and Semitic Linguistics
- Geoffrey Khan (Cambridge, UK): Syntax
- Uri Horesh (Tel Aviv): TMA (Tense-Mood-Aspect)
- Baruch Podolsky (Tel Aviv): Lexicography
- Otto Jastrow (Erlangen): Dialectology: Arabic
- Otto Jastrow (Erlangen): Dialectology: Aramaic
- Olga Kapeliuk (Jerusalem): Languages in Contact: The Contemporary Semitic World
- Stephen A. Kaufman (Cincinnati): Languages in Contact: The Ancient Near East
- Bruce Zuckerman (Rolling Hills Estates, CA): New Finds in the 20th Century: The Semitic Languages of the Ancient World
- David L. Appleyard (London): New Finds in the 20th Century: The South Semitic Languages
- Edward L. Greenstein (Tel Aviv): Advances in Linguistic Study as an Aid for Other Disciplines: The Ancient World
- Victor Ja. Porkhomovsky (Moscow): Advances in Linguistic Study as an Aid for Other Disciplines: The Ethiopian and South Arabian Languages and Cultures
- Ruth A. Berman and Dorit D. Ravid (Tel Aviv): Insights into Semitics from Research on the Acquisition of Israeli Hebrew and Palestinian Arabic
- Yaacov Choueka (Ramat Gan): Computational Linguistics and Semitic Linguistics: Achievements and Desiderata

[8] In addition, the volume will include a paper that was not presented at the symposium:

- Marie-Claude Simeonne-Senelle (Meudon, France): New Finds in the 20th century: The Modern South Arabian Languages.