

## CONFERENCE REPORTS

International Syriac Language Project Ljubljana, Slovenia. July 2007

**TERRY FALLA AND BERYL TURNER, WHITLEY COLLEGE,  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE**

The annual meeting of the International Syriac Language Project (ISLP) was recently held at the XIXth Congress of IOSOT (International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament) in Ljubljana, Slovenia, where a number of the participants were also involved in the Bible of Edessa meetings and presentations.

The meetings and sessions were all held in the superbly appointed Faculty of Law Building. The organizers and the IOSOT president, Prof. Dr. Jože Krašovec, are to be congratulated on a splendidly well organized and resourced conference. Such was the efficiency that there was even a conference staff member present for the duration of every presentation and meeting to ensure that all needs were met. Conference delegates were generously treated to a number of musical entertainments and receptions in the city, including a welcome by the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Mayor of Ljubljana, and other dignitaries, and a thrilling rendition of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, performed under the stars in the city square.

The ISLP held its business meeting on the morning of Monday 16 July, and a dinner for any involved with Syriac and lexicography that evening. Papers were delivered and discussed in two sessions, on the Tuesday and Thursday, with Wednesday given to sightseeing. The next meetings will be at the Symposium Syriacum in Granada 2008, and the IOSOT congress in Helsinki 2010.

The following papers were given, and will be published as peer-reviewed essays in a volume edited by Bas ter Haar Romeny and Kristian Heal in the series *Foundations for Syriac Lexicography*, part of the ISLP series *Perspectives on Syriac Linguistics* published by Gorgias Press.

1. Janet Dyk, "The Hebrew and Syriac Cognate Verbs *sin*, *yod*, *mem* and *semkath*, *waw*, *mim* in the Books of Kings: Similarities and Differences"

2. David G.K. Taylor and Kristian S. Heal, "Towards an Electronic Corpus of Syriac Texts"
3. Deryle Lonsdale, "A Computational Perspective on Syriac Corpus Development and Annotation"
4. Michael Sokoloff, "The Translation and Updating of C. Brockelmann's *Lexicon Syriacum*: Progress Report"
5. Regina Hunziker-Rodewald, "On Polysemy and Homonymy"
6. Beryl Turner, "Towards a New Syriac Dictionary: Lexical Reconsideration of the Term "kay" in the Peshitta Bible, Old Syriac Gospels, and Harklean Text"
7. Reinier De Blois, "Wine to Gladden the Heart of Man: How to discover the meaning of different terms for wine"
8. Percy van Keulen, "Feminine Nominal Endings in Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac: Derivation or Inflection?"
9. Wido van Peursen and Dirk Bakker, "Lemmatization and Grammatical Categorisation: The case of "haymen" in Classical Syriac"
10. Terry C. Falla, "Towards a New Syriac Dictionary: Lexical Reconsideration of the Particle "kadh" in Classical Syriac"
11. Andreas Juckel, "Comparative features in a future lexicon of the Syriac New Testament"

# **1. JANET DYK, VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT, AMSTERDAM**

## **The Hebrew and Syriac Cognate Verbs *sin*, *yod*, *mem* and *semkath*, *waw*, *mim* in the Books of Kings: Similarities and Differences**

In a joint effort of the Peshitta Institute of Leiden and the Werkgroep Informatica of the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, an electronic database has been developed in which the Masoretic text and the Peshitta of the Books of Kings have been analyzed from morpheme level up through a clause-level synopsis. On the basis of the synopsis, sentence constituents are matched, providing the basis for matching phrases within clauses, and for matching words within phrases. One of the products is an electronic translation concordance which provides the translation correspondences occurring within Kings. It should be stressed that the item that occurs at a specific point in a particular text is not necessarily a lexicon-based translation; rather, it is a "correspondence" of that

item. In this manner, both similarities and differences are brought to light.

In Peshitta Kings the Syriac verb *semkath-wan-mim* is found as the rendering of the Hebrew verb *sin-yod-mem* in nearly half of the occurrences. These verbs, so similar in sound, shape and meaning do not overlap entirely. In an attempt to explain the observed data, the valence patterns of the Hebrew verb are compared with those of the Syriac verb. Both systematic tendencies and individual deviances from these are presented.

**2. DAVID G.K. TAYLOR, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,  
AND KRISTIAN S. HEAL, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY**

**Towards an Electronic Corpus of Syriac Texts**

The desirability of an electronic corpus of Syriac texts has long been recognized (most recently in Lucas Van Rompay's January 2007 *Hugoye* article). Several localized and limited steps have been made in this direction, most significantly with the Peshitta, and as part of the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon project. However, no coordinated and large scale effort has yet been attempted. This paper reports on a joint initiative by Oxford University and Brigham Young University to create a comprehensive electronic corpus of Syriac texts. We outline our plans for building the corpus, including our methodological approach. We describe the work that has been completed thus far, giving details of the 2.5 million word corpus that we have already assembled. The heart of our current initiative is the task of preparing a concordance to the complete works of Ephrem. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of the status of this particular project.

**3. DERYLE LONSDALE, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY**

**A Computational Perspective on Syriac Corpus Development  
and Annotation**

This paper discusses current efforts to develop the computational infrastructure for collecting, analyzing, annotating, and deploying large-scale lexical and textual resources for the Syriac language.

Since Syriac is a Semitic language, its morphological structure is complicated and multifaceted. We discuss our efforts to develop a morphological processor for Syriac word forms and compare the

result to previous efforts by others. The presentation mentions development of morphology rules, encoding of lexical items, and generation of analysis hypotheses. Of particular interest is the treatment of clitics and diacritics.

Lexical information for the morphological engine relies on an XML encoding of useful entries from dictionary resources for Syriac. We describe how we follow current best practices for lexical content markup, and how this information serves as a crucial resource for linguistic processing.

The text corpus situated at the centre of this effort is based on Ephrem's writings and has been introduced elsewhere. In this presentation, though, we discuss our choice for encoding and marking up the content of the text, and give examples of how interested scholars will be able to benefit from the final product of our efforts.

We also sketch our approach for annotating the corpus, particularly for part-of-speech information and morphological substructure. A state-of-the-art tagger is presented, and we discuss its use of salient features (including results from morphological parsing) for machine learning. An active learning approach allows us to maximize human annotator cost.

Finally, we discuss issues about user interface tools, data visualization, and other questions about deployment of the corpus and related lexical data to developers and to end users.

#### **4. MICHAEL SOKOLOFF, BAR ILAN UNIVERSITY, RAMAT GAN**

##### **The Translation and Updating of C. Brockelmann's Lexicon Syriacum: Progress Report (July 2007)**

Since my report at the Philadelphia SBL Meeting, much progress has been accomplished and the completion of the project is now in sight:

1. Approximately 95% of the primary references in *LS* (ca. 86,000) have now been checked in the original sources. A large number of errors was found in the original references and most of these have now been corrected. A residue of errors that could not be located has been marked as "n. fnd." [= not found].
2. Complete or partial citations of the cited texts have been added to the dictionary for a great majority of the references. As a

result of this, a great number of multivalent Latin glosses in the original have now been clarified.

3. The dictionary database has been completed and refined by the programmer employed on the project. A demonstration of it will be given during this presentation.
4. The speaker intends to begin working on the updating of the etymologies this summer and hopes to complete this phase of the project in 2008.

**5. REGINA HUNZIKER-RODEWALD,  
UNIVERSITY OF SWITZERLAND**

**On Polysemy and Homonymy**

Lexicographers of the Hebrew Bible are faced with the challenge of semantically categorizing a growing number of lemmas as homonyms and as hapax legomena. In doing so, roots need to be split up, which leads to some lexicons—e.g., HALOT and DCH—being flooded with so-called “new words”. This tendency may well be counteracted by using comparative etymology and by thus tracing polysemy. The presentation will exemplify how the Swiss team, working on KAHAL (a revision of HALAT), is proceeding with the task of reducing the number of homonymous roots.

**6. BERYL TURNER, WHITLEY COLLEGE,  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE**

**Towards a New Syriac Dictionary: Lexical Reconsideration of the Term “kay” in the Peshitta Bible, Old Syriac Gospels, and Harklean Text**

Our best comprehensive Classical Syriac dictionaries are more than a century old. Inevitably, their lexicalization of words is often partial or outdated in its taxonomy, parts of speech, and syntactic and semantic analysis. Thus today’s reader of Classical Syriac often encounters in a text a word or syntagm with a function and/or meaning that is not cited in Syriac lexic, or if it is, is either misleading or generalized to the extent that it is difficult to know whether it is applicable to the instantiation in question.

This paper examines the particle *kay* in its contexts in the Peshitta Bible, Old Syriac Gospels and the Harklean text, and in relation to the Greek underlying it. It will be seen that grammatical

classifications given to this term do not adequately define the quite distinctive ways in which it functions in the text. A new proposal will be offered as to how to define the term, and a lexical entry is presented that will appear in the third volume of the lexical work *A Key to the Peshitta Gospels*, and form a basis for its reconsideration in other early Classical Syriac literature and subsequent inclusion in a future comprehensive Syriac-English lexicon.

## **7. REINIER DE BLOIS, UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES**

### **Wine to Gladden the Heart of Man:**

#### **How to discover the meaning of different terms for wine**

Most modern lexicographers agree that the meaning of a lexical entry should be described in the form of a definition rather than a gloss or a set of glosses. Writing definitions, however, is an art in itself. What many lexicographers forget is that definitions should be formulated in a way that enables the user to compare the meanings of related words in such a way that s/he will be able to detect different nuances in meaning among the different words. This is not easy unless the compiler follows a clearly outlined methodology. This methodology is illustrated in this paper with the help of examples from the Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew. It focuses on the different terms for wine in the Hebrew Old Testament, and shows how this methodology helps both the dictionary compiler and its user to get a clear overview of all relevant aspects of the meaning of each individual word, including its metaphorical usage. This method provides the compiler with the building blocks on the basis of which a useful and helpful definition can be written.

## **8. PERCY VAN KEULEN, PESHITTA INSTITUTE LEIDEN**

### **Feminine Nominal Endings in Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac: Derivation or Inflection?**

It is in the interest of both morphological analysis and lexicography to have a clear perception of the nature of feminine endings in the absolute state. Classic dictionaries and grammars often appear to be inconsistent in their treatment of substantives with feminine endings. Still, on the basis of a strict distinction between derivational and inflectional endings a consistent approach seems possible.

**9. WIDO VAN PEURSEN AND DIRK BAKKER,  
PESHITTA INSTITUTE LEIDEN**

**Lemmatization and Grammatical Categorisation:  
The case of “haymen” in Classical Syriac**

Decisions concerning grammatical categorization have a considerable impact on the lexicographer's work. An example is the treatment of *haymen* in Syriac grammars and dictionaries: Is it a Payel (Payne Smith), a Pael (Muraoka) or a Haphel (Costaz) of the verb >MN? Or is it a denominative verb (Duval), or a Hifil borrowed from Hebrew (Brockelmann)? And how should we account for the He (rather than Alaph)? Is it part of the Hebrew loan word (Brockelmann)? Or is it due to strengthening (Duval) or the preservation of an ancient form (Nöldeke)? These questions will be addressed in our paper. It will appear that they are relevant also to other lexemes, because they touch upon the crucial interaction of lexicography and grammatical analysis.

**10. TERRY C. FALLA, WHITLEY COLLEGE,  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE**

**Towards a New Syriac Dictionary: Lexical Reconsideration of  
the Particle “kadh” in Classical Syriac**

Our best comprehensive Classical Syriac dictionaries are more than a century old. Inevitably, their lexicalization of words is often partial or outdated in its taxonomy, parts of speech, and syntactic and semantic analysis. Thus today's reader of Classical Syriac often encounters in a text a word or syntagm with a function and/or meaning that is not cited in Syriac lexica, or if it is, is either misleading or generalized to the extent that it is difficult to know whether it is applicable to the occurrence in question.

By way of example, this paper examines the grammatical classification, syntactic functions and meanings of the particle *kadh*. It will be argued that, in the Syriac Gospels alone, the uses and meanings of this term goes beyond those recorded in existing Syriac lexica. The lexeme is analyzed in its Syriac contexts and in relation to the Greek underlying it.

The study of this term has two specific aims: its preparation as an entry for the third volume of the lexical work *A Key to the Peshitta Gospels*, and as a basis for its reconsideration in other early Classical

Syriac literature and subsequent inclusion in a future comprehensive Syriac-English lexicon.

# **11. ANDREAS JUCKEL, INSTITUTE FOR NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL RESEARCH, MÜNSTER**

## **Comparative features in a future lexicon of the Syriac New Testament<sup>1</sup>**

By their history the Syriac versions of the New Testament (Old Syriac, Peshitta, Philoxenian, and Harklean) are a corpus of texts connected by revisional development towards an increasingly better formal adaptation to the Greek. This development is set out in comparative editions which cover (almost) the complete Syriac New Testament. A future lexicon of the Syriac New Testament (based on the Peshitta) should include comparative information to set out those translational properties of the Peshitta in greater detail, which are “essential to the study of the Peshitta as a translation of the Greek and as a literary work in its own right” (T. Falla, *A Key to the Peshitta Gospels I*, xix). These details refer to 1. orthography (esp. to proper nouns), 2. to word formation (esp. to adjectives, adverbs, and to the translation of Greek compounds), and 3. to semantics (esp. to the semantic difference existing between the Old Syriac/Peshitta and the Greek). The purpose of comparison is not to inscribe the revisional development of the Syriac NT corpus into the lexicon, but solely to serve the study of the Peshitta.

To set out the still idiomatic and non-formalized translation of the Peshitta as well as the linguistic restrictions of representing Greek word formation and semantics, the Greek correspondences and their Harklean calques should be given in a special “comparative section” (similar to the section of “Syriac-Greek correspondences” in T. Falla’s *Key*). The purpose of the Harklean calques is to represent the “corrections” to the Peshitta as they actually occurred in the history of the Syriac NT corpus. Although these “corrections” refer to translation technique only and intend the reduction of Syriac semantics to Greek semantics, they are helpful for understanding the translational limits, restrictions, and quality of the Peshitta.

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<sup>1</sup> This eleventh paper, while not delivered at the conference, will be published in the volume with the above.