

Berichte

An ESF Network on the Semantics of Classical Hebrew

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In March 1991 the Executive Council of the European Science Foundation (= ESF) approved a Network on the *Semantics of Classical Hebrew*. Since then there has been a meeting of the Coordination Committee of this Network in which a first workshop has been prepared. What are the aims of this Network?

Perhaps they can best be explained by giving a short survey of the previous history of this Network. A number of years ago a Dutch committee was formed which considered the desirability of a Thesaurus for Classical Hebrew in which all scientific literature would be referred to. At the same time the feasibility of such a project was discussed. It soon became clear that, although such a project would be desirable and such a Thesaurus a great help to the scholarly world, it could only be realized by internationalizing the project. Thus Prof. Dr. J. Barr and Prof. Dr. H.-J. Fabry were asked to join the committee. The new members agreed with the principle idea of a Thesaurus, but soon a new idea came up, to discuss not how to begin publishing a Thesaurus, but how to produce a data-base for Classical Hebrew semantics in which all scientific literature of a certain period (e.g. published since the second World War or quoted since) could be stored.

It also became clear that in realizing such a project one would not only meet with many practical and financial problems, but also with complicated theoretical and methodological ones. These problems could not be overcome unless they were studied for their own sake.

The committee decided to make an application for an ESF-Network to attack these problems. The idea of this Network was that three workshops and a symposium would be organized. The first workshop would be on the problems one meets in applying the different semantic methods on a relatively small text-corpus written in a language (phase) which is not spoken any more. Moreover the inter-relations of the different methods would be discussed in order to get a hierarchic system in which all methods involved could be inserted.

The second workshop would be on the formulation of a code system (functioning as a semantic meta-language) that would make it possible to incorporate the scientific literature using different semantic methods within the same framework. It has to be a symbol system that enables the collectors of the material to classify the facts, so that the problem of the different methods used in scientific literature could be

overcome and so that scholars will be able to find where there are still gaps in our understanding of the material.

The third workshop would be on how to write a computer program so that the code system mentioned above can be used for a semantic data-base.

At the end the result of the three workshops would be evaluated with a wider audience of scholars. This is necessary to reach a general synthesis and agreement that may function as the foundation for further actual study in the field of the semantics of dead languages.

At the background of this proposal lays the idea that the problems of those whose aim is the realization of a data-base of the above-mentioned type for Classical Hebrew are to a great extent the same as those with which one is confronted when one tries to realize a comparable data-base for any other dead language (phase). For this reason the workshops and the symposium are not aimed at the relevant problems of Classical Hebrew alone, but at those of every dead language (phase) of which only a relatively small corpus is preserved.

Now the application is approved, the work of the Network will start. The first workshop will be in June/July 1992. Before that in December 1991 the committee will have a discussion with three computer specialists who have been invited to help the committee with their advice.

Because this is an international project we will be very glad if scholars outside the committee who are interested in our work will contact us and will give us information and suggestions. The results of the workshops and the symposium will be published. The address of the secretary is: Dr. Davies, The Divinity School, St. John's St., Cambridge CB2 1TW, England.

The members of the Committee are: Prof. J. Hoftijzer, Leiden (Chairman); Dr. G.I. Davies, Cambridge (Secretary); Prof. B. Albrektson, Uppsala; Prof. M.G. Amadasi Guzzo, Rome; Prof. H.-J. Fabry, Bonn; Prof. E. Jenni, Basle; Prof. A. Lemaire, Paris; Prof. E. Lipiński, Leuven; Prof. M. Mayrhofer, Vienna; Prof. W. Richter, Munich; Prof. A.S. van der Woude, Groningen; Prof. I. Zatelli, Florence. Observers: Prof. J. Barr, Nashville; Prof. J.C. Greenfield, Jerusalem.

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