THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE DICTIONARY OF THE NORTHWEST-SEMITIC EPIGRAPHY

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Since the autumn of 1977 Dr. K. Jongeling and the author have been preparing a new edition of the dictionary of Northwest-Semitic epigraphy. It is expected that this new edition will be published before the end of 1994.

The moment such a large project nears completion is not only the right time to look back, but also the right time to look forward and to ask oneself the question: «What is the future of this type of project?».

As to type the new edition does not really differ from DISO. The only differences are the use of a new receptor language (English) and the use of one transliteration system.

In DISO an interpretational transliteration system (of the 1:1-type) into italics was used for the text of the entries[1].

For the headwords of the entries another system was used, namely a transliteration in square script[2]. In the new edition the first type of transliteration is used for both texts and headwords[3].

When DISO was published it differed on one essential point from the then current dictionaries of Classical Hebrew: there was no special part reserved in the entries for etymological information about every Semitic word occurring in the dictionary. This decision was also taken for the new edition. This does not mean that we considered a historical and comparative approach to the languages in question and an interest in the derivation and the cognate affinities of their lexemes (or lexeme sets) to be irrelevant. However, our epigraphic dictionary is mainly concerned with the meaning(s) of lexemes (or at least with indications of their meaning[s]; see below), not with their derivation or the cognate systems to which they belong. For the presentation of the results of these last-mentioned approaches special etymological dictionaries are needed.

Does this imply that we consider the use of etymology for the semantic interpretation of at least certain lexemes to be of no importance? The author agrees with Barr that a «word has meaning only within its own language and its own period of usage»[4]. This means that if the meaning of an etymologically related word in a

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[1] Cf. Richter (1983), p. 22, 27ff.

[2] Only a relatively small minority of the relevant texts is written in square script. This means that the use of this script type can for the representation of the huge majority of the text material be considered as transliteration as well.

[3] We could have used square script for the transliteration of the epigraphic material. The only disadvantage of the use of this script is that it could give an unjustified impression of reality.

[4] Cf. Barr (1992), p. 141. Cf. also n. 25.

cognate language is known, such knowledge gives us no absolute certainty about the meaning of the word we are concerned with[5]. Therefore we have to set «limits to the importance of etymology and to stress the distortion of semantic information that can follow from etymological explanation when it is factual correct»[6]. Still we must not conclude from the preceding remarks that for the study of the semantics of Classical Hebrew, or of other ancient Northwest-Semitic languages, we can renounce the use of etymology. Scanlin's remark that «at present one may confidently say that linguists generally no longer uphold the etymological approach for dealing with the relationship between words and meanings, or, for that matter, any aspect of the field of lexicography»[7], may be true for the study of, for example, modern languages. It would be wrong to apply it indiscriminately to the study of the semantics of ancient languages known to us only by a limited corpus of texts[8]. To give an example, how could one interpret (or at least try to interpret) the Deir-Alla plaster texts, written in a language/dialect not known to the scholarly world before, if one refused to make use of etymological means? What de Moor said about the study of Ugaritic («it may be said that from the start comparative philology was the most important tool of those engaged in the enravelling of Ugaritic ...»)[9] can also be applied to the study of the other ancient Northwest-Semitic languages known to us only by epigraphic texts. It is only when some basic knowledge has been acquired in this way and when enough textual material on the relevant point(s) has become available, that we can restrict ourselves to the use of more preferable ways of semantic approach[10]. For this reason etymology will, at least for a very long time, be an indispensable tool in the semantic study of the languages in question.

References to these etymological contributions in scholarly literature are given in the relevant entries. In these references only the name of the author in question is mentioned together with the relevant book/volume of the journal (with the pages con-

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[5] For the danger of an uncritical identification of the semantics of the gloss with that of the original lexeme, cf. Barr (1973), p. 113, de Moor (1973), p. 61, 68f., 85, Alonso Schökel (1991), p. 76. Related is the danger of presupposing the existence of one «true» meaning for every lexeme. On this subject, cf. e.g. Louw (1991), p. 126f., 129, Nida - Louw (1992), p. 2, cf. also Scanlin (1992), p. 134.

[6] Cf. Barr (1992), p. 141. Cf. also the remarks of Clines (1993), p. 17f.

[7] Cf. Scanlin (1992), p. 134.

[8] Cf. Barr (1973), p. 112, Barr (1992), p. 142; cf. also Alonso Schökel (1988), p. 382.

[9] Cf. de Moor (1973), p. 61; cf. also the remark of Lübbe (1990), p. 6 that at least for the interpretation of so-called *hapax legomena* one must use the help etymology offers. For the use of a cognate language to discover the sense of a lexeme, cf. also Greenfield (1993), p. 33ff. For the use of etymology see besides Greenfield (1993) also Albrektson (1993).

[10] Not only the help of etymology is available for interpretating difficult and rare lexemes in Classical Hebrew, but also the later phases of the language, as well as the exegetical and lexicographical tradition can help. In addition, there is the help offered, as far as Biblical texts are concerned, by the ancient versions. Cf. also Clines (1992), p. 175. (For the epigraphic material one sometimes is helped by parallel texts in Latin/Greek/Akkadian, etc. in bi- or trilingual inscriptions). The help offered by translations in other languages is not without its own problems, cf. e.g. the remark of Muraoka (1987), p. 259 speaking about the LXX: «the Greek of which we *assume* to know better» (italics mine).

cerned). The argumentation (also the etymological argumentation) is not mentioned in order to avoid the entries becoming overloaded with information.

In preparing DISO the author had to take the decision to exclude references to epigraphic texts and secondary literature published after a certain date, otherwise the book would never have been finished. In preparing the new edition we had to make the same decision that texts and scholarly literature published since the beginning of 1991 are not included. This means that the dictionary is already dated. But even if the book could include all the latest sources, right until the moment of publication, its literature and text references would within a few years become dated[11]. A comparable problem exists, for example, for the lexicography of Classical Hebrew. Alonso Schökel has omitted references to scholarly literature from his lexicon to avoid it becoming rapidly outdated[12]. In the author's opinion this is, however, only an apparent solution. Important and even fundamental changes in reading and interpretation are possible, especially in the field of Northwest-Semitic epigraphy[13]. After the publication of the work very convincing reading and interpretational proposals will be made forcing every open-minded author of a dictionary to change his or her mind. What we find in such a case is that the already published dictionary contains the outdated opinion of the author(s). Moreover after the publication of such a dictionary new texts will be published which are not included in the work. The only advantage of omitting the references to scholarly literature is that the fact that a such dictionary does not include new material, and/or new insights into the material is not so obvious.

Not only references to scholarly literature were given in DISO with which the author could agree, but also references to literature which he did not agree with or which he considered less convincing. In the new edition we have continued this policy. In our opinion the reading and interpretation of epigraphic texts still present so many difficulties, that giving only the authors' opinion at the moment of composing the entry in question would give a biased and sometimes very one-sided picture of the situation in the relevant field of study[14]. For this reason we have underlined that the interpretations which we indicate as preferable reflect our personal opinion. Another reason for us to give references to scholarly literature is that it is difficult to obtain a survey of the relevant publications, especially for those who are not specialists in the field of Northwest-Semitic epigraphy. However, because this field is still expanding, the time is not far away that in a possible future dictionary in this field it will be necessary to make a selection on this point, unless one wants the entries to be so overloaded that they become completely inaccessible.

In DISO as well as in the new edition every entry starts, wherever reasonably

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[11] For the problem, cf. e.g. Donner (1973), p. 129.

[12] Cf. Alonso Schökel (1990), p. 4; cf. also Alonso Schökel (1991), p. 382, Barr (1992), p. 140.

[13] In the new edition of the dictionary lexemes and texts have sometimes been read and/or interpreted in a completely different way than it was done in DISO, because of arguments in scholarly literature published since. So e.g. the *mn* in KAI 222A 30 is not interpreted as a pronoun or a preposition, as was done before, but as a noun meaning *caterpillar*, cf. Tawil (1977), p. 60f. And the idea that the texts KAI 225 en 226 started with the particle *š* was neither maintained, because of the arguments advanced in Kaufman (1970).

[14] The same is true of a dictionary of, for example, the Ugaritic language.

possible, with a morphological part, in which the attested forms of the relevant lexeme (with references to the texts in question) are presented and interpreted. This part is subdivided according to the different languages/dialects[15]. As to the references we have tried to be exhaustive, with the exception of high frequency. Possible reading differences are also presented in this section.

It could be argued that this morphological part does not belong in a dictionary and has to be presented only in a grammar[16]. A rigid adherence to such a principle would, however, not be very helpful for a dictionary about languages known to us (for a great part) only from epigraphic texts. Every user of such a dictionary has the right to know which readings of signs, which word divisions and which interpretations of forms are preferred by the author(s), because the whole of his/their semantic presentation of the lexeme in the second part of the entries depends on these decisions. To omit such information would be injustifiable, also for future specialized dictionaries in this field and related ones[17].

The second part of most entries in DISO and in the new edition is dedicated to the semantics of the lexeme in question. In this second part a survey is also given of the different context types for which the relevant lexeme is attested. After the mentioning of the part of speech type to which the lexeme belongs, the semantic value(s) of the lexeme is/are indicated by the use of glosses/translation equivalents. If these glosses are used correctly they are words from the receptor language which «sufficiently indicate the sort of area in which» the meaning of the Northwest-Semitic original must lie[18]. They are «approximate ... labels sufficient to enable one to identify which word it is»[19]. The original lexeme and the gloss(es) used to represent it in the receptor language belong to different language systems and it is certain that in most instances their semantic value is not (precisely) identical[20]. For that reason the gloss cannot be said to represent the/a *meaning* of the original lexeme[21]. It only gives the necessary

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[15] In the new edition the Deir-Alla language, Ammonite and Edomite are added.

[16] Cf. Lübbe (1991), p. 140, cf. also Lübbe (1993), p. 90, 92. It is clear that Lübbe's having this opinion is closely connected with his preference for a certain type of dictionary.

[17] This is also true for a dictionary of, for example, Ugaritic. For the problems of standard editions, cf. below n. 55.

[18] Cf. Barr (1992), p. 145. This type of dictionary in which the meaning of a lexeme is indicated by glosses must be an alphabetical one. We have abstained from composing an alphabetical dictionary arranged according to roots, because this approach offered many difficulties, for example, which roots to propose for the many loan words attested? Moreover, for «original» Semitic words the determining of the root is difficult in many instances, especially if one adheres to a triradical root system. On the problem of the semantic relevance of roots, cf. also Barr (1994), p. 33ff., Muraoka (1994a), p. 44ff.

[19] Cf. Barr (1972), p. 16; cf. also Barr (1973), p. 120.

[20] Cf. e.g. Lübbe (1991), p. 140, Nida - Louw (1992), p. 3. An uncritical use of a dictionary in which translation equivalents, the meaning of lexemes is indicated by users who are linguistically untrained could even work misleading, cf. Louw (1991), p. 127: «the procedure reinforced the idea that the meaning of a word in one language can be adequately explained by a word in another language ...».

[21] Cf. e.g. Barr (1972), p. 16, Gates (1972), p. 16, Barr (1973), p. 120, Louw - Nida (1988), p. VII, Louw (1991), p. 129f., 138f., Barr (1992), p. 145, Nida - Louw (1992), p. 3, Scanlin (1992), p. 134.

basic indication about this meaning. The consequence is that the same gloss can be used (and quite often has to be used) for the representation of different original lexemes from the same language, which most probably have a different semantic value. Another consequence is that the same meaning of an original lexeme can be represented by two or more glosses from the receptor language, which also show mutual differences in semantic value[22]. From this standpoint it would seem to be preferable to replace the glosses by descriptions of the semantic value(s) of the lexemes or even by a dictionary presenting descriptions of the semantic domains and subdomains of the languages in question and the lexemes belonging to these (sub)domains. Why did we decide to use the old-fashioned method of representing the original lexemes by a gloss or a number of glosses, «too loose a way of describing meanings, leading to confusion and error»[23]? Can one say that someone using the translation equivalent method for a dictionary of ancient Northwest-Semitic languages attested in epigraphical material is «trapped by the limitations of the uncritical acceptance of traditional lexicographical methods»[24]? In my opinion this is not the case.

If one does not use the translation equivalent method, two other ways of presenting the attested lexeme material are conceivable: a) one by which the translation equivalents are replaced by descriptions of the semantic values of the lexemes in question, and b) one in which the lexeme material is described in the same way, but is presented according to semantic domains and subdomains. Why did we not choose one of these methods for our new edition? Let me explain.

If one uses one of these two methods one has to proceed from certain starting-points, provided they are put into practice according to acceptable modern linguistic views. A lexeme is not an entity on its own, but is part of a system in which it functions. This system is different for every language (phase)[25]. The system can be divided and subdivided into different grades of subsystems (domains and subdomains). Since a lexeme functions in one or more subsystems (domains or subdomains), it is ultimately necessary (if one wants to define and describe the/a semantic function of any lexeme) to know which lexemes belong to the same domain or subdomain, which semantic features they share, and which distinctive features they have[26]. To decide which lexemes belong to which (sub)domain(s), in other words to subdivide the whole lexematic material of a language, it is also necessary to define the limits of all (sub)domains[27]. One has to concede that it is not necessary to know all

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[22] Cf. the remarks of Louw (1991), p. 130, 136f.; cf. also Lübbe (1990), p. 6, Muraoka (1994), p. 436.

[23] Cf. Lee (1990), p. 1.

[24] Cf. v.d.Merwe (1989), p. 235.

[25] Cf. e.g. Lyons (1977), p. 230ff. Cf. also Muraoka (1990), p. 33, Louw (1991), p. 130, Nida - Louw (1992), p. 4, Lübbe (1993), p. 93. Every language phase has its own system, Barr (1972), p. 17, speaks of the «diachronic succession of synchronic states». Every language also has its own system, cf. e.g. Lübbe (1991), p. 138.

[26] Cf. e.g. Barr (1969), p. 55, Louw - Nida (1988), p. VI, Nida - Louw (1992), p. 19; cf. also Muraoka (1987), p. 264, Lübbe (1991), p. 137, Clines (1992), p. 171, Muraoka (1990), p. 33, De Regt (1994), p. 164f.

[27] Cf. Nida - Louw (1992), p. 19. Lexemes can belong to more than one (sub)domain, cf. Nida -

these things in detail in order to give an at least acceptable description of the semantic function(s) of a lexeme. But a certain minimum of knowledge is indispensable. This becomes also clear when one has to make such a description. The best way to do it, is the componential description[28]. In my opinion it is not necessary when using this descriptive method to adhere to the theoretical presuppositions of componential analysis[29]. It is also possible to use it as a purely descriptive method to present the results of one's semantic researches, provided one does it in a systematic way. This implies, for example, that in describing the semantic functions of lexemes belonging to a same (sub)domain, the descriptive method clearly indicates (by standardized componential indication) which semantic features are shared by those lexemes. This is the only way to indicate the fact that lexemes function within a system[30]. The advantage of the use of purely descriptive components, as proposed here, is that if the material is in a certain way insufficient, one can use provisional components with a more «coarse» semantic indication, which later on, if there is additional information, can be replaced by a more exact one (or more exact ones). But, although one does not need to have all the information about a (sub)domain and its lexemes to give an (at least provisional) semantic description[31], some basic information is indispensable. One ought not only to know the majority of the lexemes belonging to a same (sub)domain, one ought also to have at one's disposal sufficient context material for at least most of these lexemes.

Sufficient text material can inform us, for example, about pecularities in the grammatical paradigm of a lexeme, the knowledge of which can be used as a tool to obtain more information about its semantic value[32]. (This is also a reason why it is helpful that an entry has a morphological part). To give an example: in Classical Hebrew there is sufficient context material to indicate that there probably was no feminine form of the adjective *zkr* or a masculine form of the adjective *nqb*. This fact informs us that both adjectives respectively probably indicated the belonging to the male and female sex and did not indicate a special behaviour expected from male or

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Louw (1992), p. 29.

[28] Cf. Scanlin (1992), p. 134; cf. also Gates (1972), p. 16, Barr (1973), p. 121, Louw - Nida (1988), p. VII, Muraoka (1990), p. 26, Louw (1991), p. 128, 139, Muraoka (1993), p. XII. It goes without saying that it is undesirable that one has recourse to the gloss in the receptor language for the componential description, cf. Nida - Louw (1992), p. 42. The defining of the (sub)domains is the last step and not the first one in semantic study, cf. Lübbe (1991), p. 138.

[29] For the method of componential analysis, cf. the recent survey in Fronzaroli (1993).

[30] In Louw - Nida (1988) the first subdomain («Universe, Creation»; belonging to the domain of geographical objects and features) consists of four items which are respectively described as follows: «the universe as an ordered structure»/«the universe perhaps with some associated meaning of 'era' or 'age' in the sense of transitory nature of the universe»/«the totality of God's creation»/«the universe as the product of God's activity in creation». I will not discuss the question whether these descriptions are satisfactory or not, but I want to underline the fact that in these descriptions it is not clearly indicated which common semantic feature(s) the lexical items in question have.

[31] Cf. also Scanlin (1992), p. 135.

[32] Cf. Gates (1972), p. 3, 59, 61.

female persons respectively.

Sufficient context material gives us information about the distribution of the lexeme in question. So the fact that the Qal of *brʾ* is always used in Classical Hebrew with a divine subject could indicate that an action of divine beings is concerned. In this way the knowledge provided by the context material could again be a helpful tool to obtain information on the semantics of this verb[33]. For this reason one can only applaud Clines' decision to present in every relevant entry of his dictionary of Classical Hebrew a systematic survey of «the relationship of words within phrases and sentences», thus providing proper tools for linguistic semantic research[34]. Therefore the author cannot agree with Lübbe that a description of the contextual possibilities is irrelevant, unless it helps to establish that the lexeme in question has more than one meaning or if «it is exclusively used with a particular subject or object»[35]. This is an undervaluation of the role which the description of the context situation can play as a tool in semantic research. For a semantic description of, for example, a verbal lexeme it is as important to know that it occurs with a very special type of subject, as to know that it can occur with every conceivable type of subject[36].

Sufficient context material also gives us information needed to distinguish between the possible differences in semantic functions of a lexeme[37].

As we already said above, a lexeme has a semantic function within the system of a (sub)domain (or: of [sub]domains). This implies that for the description of the semantic function(s) of a lexeme sufficient information about the semantic function of (the) other lexemes belonging to the same (sub)domain(s) is indispensable.

These considerations on what the necessary prerequisites are for an approach by

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[33] Cf. however Barr (1993), p. 5. For a good example of how to use context material as a tool to arrive at a semantic description of a lexeme, cf. Swiggers (1993), p. 47ff.

[34] Cf. Clines (1992), p. 169 (cf. also Clines [1993], p. 14f., 19ff.). This decision of Clines does not mean, however, that he presents a dictionary that is essentially different from former ones, cf. Lübbe (1991), p. 137, who speaks of Clines' innovations as «refinements rather than innovations». I will not discuss here the question whether Clines' presentation of the relevant material is completely satisfactory.

[35] Cf. Lübbe (1991), p. 141.

[36] For the usefulness of this type of syntagmatic description, cf. also v.d.Merwe (1989), p. 233f., Clines (1990), p. 74f., Muraoka (1990), p. 30. Clines (1992), p. 169f., Alonso Schökel (1991), p. 80, Clines (1993), p. 24ff., Muraoka (1993), p. XI (cf. also p. XIV). Cf. also Gates (1972), p. 58ff., 63ff., Bottéro (1973), p. 46, de Moor (1973), p. 81, Borger (1984), p. 112. For an example of syntagmatic description, cf. Barr (1993), p. 10f. The fact that certain syntagmatic combination types are possible for a lexeme (especially a verbal lexeme) and others not, can also be used as a tool for semantic description of that lexeme. For this use of valency sets, cf. Lyons (1977), p. 487f., cf. also e.g. Richter (1980), p. 40ff., 60ff., Richter (1985), p. 4f., 17. Also the extratextual context can be very helpful, cf. e.g. de Moor (1973), p. 83, Rüterswörden (1993), p. 19.

[37] Cf. e.g. Louw - Nida (1988), p. XVI. In this connection it is of great importance to make difference between lexical and contextual meaning, cf. e.g. Louw (1991), p. 133, 137, de Regt (1994), p. 161ff.; cf. the remark of Nida - Louw (1992), p. 184: «the meaning of a sign is the minimum of what a sign contributes to the context». (Cf. also Nida - Louw [1992], p. 70f. for the distinction between figurative and non-figurative meaning.) For the related problems of polysemy and homophony, cf. e.g. Hospers (1993), Lemaire (1993), Barr (1994) p. 36ff., Kedar-Kopfstein (1994), Muraoka (1994a), p. 46ff.

which the semantic function(s) of lexemes can be described in a more or less justifiable way, must lead, in the author's opinion, to the conclusion that dictionaries of a type presupposing the use of such descriptions cannot be written for the Northwest-Semitic epigraphic material, neither for the time being nor for the near future. This remains also true if the componential descriptions as mentioned above are replaced by non-componential descriptions/definitions, unless one uses an approximation which would only tell us (as the translation equivalents do) in which direction we have to look for the meaning of the lexeme in question.

The reasons for this conclusion are the following. The Northwest-Semitic epigraphic material described in DISO and the new edition does not form a linguistic unity. The texts are written in a number of languages and dialects. In the subdivision used in the morphological part of the entries the following languages/dialects are distinguished: Phoenician, Punic, Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Hebrew, Samalian, Deir-Alla language, Old Aramaic, Official Aramaic, Nabatean Aramaic, Palmyrenean Aramaic, Hatrean Aramaic and Jewish Aramaic[38]. Moreover, the material of each subdivision has no unity either. Under the heading of Phoenician one finds material from texts written in Official Phoenician as well as material from texts written in the Phoenician dialect from Byblos[39]. Neither is the Old Aramaic material a unity. The language of the Tell Fekheriye inscription is different from that of the other texts[40]. Moreover, these other texts are probably not written in the same language/dialect[41]. The Official Aramaic material has no linguistic unity either[42]. Under the heading *Hatra* the material from the Aramaic texts from Assur is inserted, which shows linguistic pecularities. Neither does the Jewish Aramaic material form a unity. Besides, texts written in the same language need not represent the same language phase. For a number of them this is even very plausible. The texts written in Official Phoenician cover a period of more than 700 years. The relatively small number of texts written in Byblian Phoenician cover a period of around 1000 years[43]. The inserted epigraphical Hebrew texts cover a period of more than 500 years[44]. In

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[38] I do not mention here the subdivision with the head *Waw*, in which the lexemes are treated which occur in an amulet in Syriac script published in Naveh - Shaked (1985), p. 62ff.

[39] Both incantations from Arslan Tash (published e.g. in Gibson [1982], p. 78ff.) are also written in a type of Phoenician that differs from the Official Phoenician and from the Phoenician from Byblos. The same is true of a Phoenician text from Cilicia published in Mosca - Russell (1987). One may also compare the situation in the Hebrew material where the Gezer calendar (for a publication, cf. e.g. Gibson [1971], p. 1ff., Aḥituv [1992], p. 149ff.) and the Samaria ostraca (for a partial publication, cf. e.g. Gibson [1971], p. 5ff., Aḥituv [1992], p. 163ff.) show clear dialectal differences compared with Classical Hebrew.

[40] Cf. e.g. Muraoka (1984).

[41] On the mutual differences between these texts, cf. e.g. Hoftijzer (1976), p. 287 n. 11.

[42] For the fact that Official Aramaic is no unity, cf. e.g. Kutscher (1970), Greenfield (1974), Greenfield (1978), p. 95ff. See also the study of Folmer (to be published in 1995) mentioned in n. 45.

[43] For grammatical differences within the Byblian Phoenician material, cf. e.g. Friedrich - Röllig (1970), p. 2.

[44] For a diachronic approach to Classical Hebrew semantics, by which different languages phases are indicated, cf. e.g. Hurvitz (1982) and Rooker (1990). On the problems one meets in applying

addition we have to consider the possibility that in texts attested for a large geographical area signs of different dialects are hidden. This applies, for example, to the texts written in Punic or Neopunic script, the Official Aramaic texts, or the texts written in Nabatean script. And we did not even mention possible sociolectic influences[45].

When someone starts composing a dictionary he also has to make a decision about what type of dictionary it will be. The specific way of presenting the material must be consistent as much as possible throughout the whole dictionary: it must show a reasonable grade of consistency. A work half composed according to one method and half according to another is unacceptable. It goes without saying that, if we would use one of both methods mentioned above in which a description of the semantic function of the lexemes is given, we would have to write separate dictionaries for the languages/language phases in question. (I leave out the difficult question as to how some of these further subdivisions ought to be made.) We could only skip this problem if we decide to ignore the principle that every lexeme has its own semantic function in the system of his own language/dialect and language phase, which would, in the author's opinion, be incorrect. This necessary subdivision of the material would mean that we have for each subdivision only a relatively small number of lexemes for which enough contextual material is attested[46].

Moreover this contextual material ought to be, wherever possible, of a differentiated type: contextual material of a uniform type can be misleading as to the distribution of the lexemes in question. (To give an example: the more or less contextually uniform final formula of the Punic votive inscriptions provides no information [how often it is attested] on the distribution of the Qal of *šmʿ*.) For the majority of lexemes insufficient material is attested[47]. And then I do not even mention the question

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this method, cf. Barr (1973), p. 105f., Barr (1993), p. 12, Barr (1994), p. 42, Muraoka (1994a), p. 49f. Against this background Clines' decision (Clines [1993] p. 16) to treat the Classical Hebrew material «as if it were a synchronic system» is less acceptable, how understandable it may be from a practical standpoint.

[45] In 1995 a study of M.L. Folmer will be published (*The Aramaic language in the Achaemenid Period, a study in linguistic variation*) where also this difficult point is tackled for Official Aramaic text material. For «associative meaning», cf. also Louw - Nida (1988), p. XVII, Nida - Louw (1992), p. 7, 31ff. (cf. also Scanlin [1992], p. 134). I did not mention the problems of other modern ways of linguistic semantic approach, cf. Nida - Louw (1992), p. 5; cf. also Zatelli (1993) and Petöfi (1993).

[46] For some subdivisions like those of the Deir Alla-language, Ammonite and Edomite there is insufficient material for every attested lexeme. For sufficient material, see the next note.

[47] One is not far of the mark when one states that for a basic description of the/a semantic value of a lexeme in a certain language/dialect (phase) one needs at least 10 attestations. For the majority of the lexemes treated in the new edition one does not have this number of attestations in any of the subdivisions. I will give some examples from the lexemes beginning with an *alef*. For Phoenician 81.5% of this type of lexemes have less attestations than ten, for Punic nearly 82%, for Hebrew 82.2%, for Samalian 91.6%, for Old Aramaic 82.2%, for Official Aramaic 70.7%, for Nabatean 60%, for Palmyrenean 79.3%, for Hatrean 84.8%, for Jewish Aramaic 87.5%. We have not considered here the possibility that the relevant lexemes can have more than one meaning, neither the fact that not all subdivisions show a linguistic unity or belong to the same language/dialect phase.

whether sufficient contextual material is attested for lexemes belonging to the same (sub)domain. Therefore any dictionary type giving descriptions of the semantic function(s) of the lexemes ought to be excluded for the presentation of Northwest-Semitic lexematic material until this situation is changed, unless one presents as such a description an approximation (see above), which is undesirable[48].

The only way, for the time being, to present the relevant lexematic material in a dictionary, is to give it in a form in which the meanings of the lexemes in question are indicated by the use of translation equivalents/glosses. It is true that this semantic presentation belongs to «coarse semantics», and it does not «teach us the finer semantic analysis»[49], but even when one uses this «coarse» presentation method there are quite a number of entries for which no translation equivalent can be presented with reasonable certainty[50]. The fact that we use this presentation method makes it possible to combine the material from different languages/dialects within one dictionary. The last-mentioned fact could not be a justification, however, for combining this epigraphic material in one dictionary, if there were enough material for one (or more) of the relevant languages/dialects to justify the composition of a dictionary which presented semantic descriptions instead of glosses.

This raises the question whether it would not be preferable to treat the ancient Hebrew epigraphic material together with other Classical Hebrew text material in one dictionary, the more so because one would have sufficient context material for many lexemes. Clines has started the publication of a dictionary in which this is the case[51]. However, as long as such a project is not finished there is room for Hebrew in a dictionary of Northwest-Semitic epigraphy (moreover Clines offers few references to scholarly literature). One has to consider also the fact that the description of the whole Classical/Ancient Hebrew material presents its own problems[52].

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[48] One can concur with Scanlin's remark (Scanlin [1992], p. 135): «Whilst it may not be possible to isolate every possible component, the necessary and sufficient features that distinguish the meaning of any form from every other can be determined in most cases» as far as Classical Hebrew material is concerned, be it with certain reserves. It is, however, not applicable to the majority of the Northwest-Semitic epigraphic material, see the description of the situation given in the preceding note. For the problems of a small text corpus, cf. e.g. Barr (1973), p. 103f., de Moor (1973), p. 101, Nida - Louw (1992), p. 8, Barr (1993), p. 5f., Rüterswörden (1993), p. 16. Cf. also Scanlin (1992), p. 132.

[49] Cf. Barr (1973), p. 119.

[50] I will give some examples from the lexemes in the new dictionary beginning with an *alef*. In some instances there is a high number of lexemes for which for interpretational and/or reading problems it is impossible even to present a gloss with any reasonable certainty: for Phoenician 9% odd, for Punic 15% odd, for Hebrew 0%, for Samalian 0%, for Old Aramaic nearly 8.9%, for Official Aramaic 11.5% odd, for Nabatean 10%, for Palmyrenean 4.75% odd, for Hatrean 8.4% odd, for Jewish Aramaic nearly 9%.

[51] Cf. Clines (1993), p. 14, 30ff., cf. also Clines (1990), p. 73f., Barr (1992), p. 138. Cf. already the remarks of e.g. Gates (1972), p. 109, Barr (1973), p. 110.

[52] Here we are not only concerned with the problems of diachrony and language phases (cf. n. 44), but also (as far as the Biblical texts are concerned) with the problem from which text to proceed: a vocalized Masoretic text (e.g. the Tiberian one) or the «original» unvocalized text which may not always represent the same language type, to say the least. On this problem, cf. also Barr (1992), p. 146f. For the problems of defining what is Classical Hebrew, cf. also the remarks of Müller

Another reason that in the future a semantic presentation of part of the relevant epigraphic material could be treated exclusively outside an epigraphic dictionary is the fact that a comprehensive Hebrew dictionary and a comprehensive Aramaic dictionary are in preparation[53]. It could be argued that Hebrew and Aramaic epigraphic semantic material should in future ought only be treated in such types of dictionary, as soon as these projects are realized. Without anticipating further developments, the author wants to remark that both dictionary projects offer semantic material from different language phases[54], and in the case of the Aramaic project, material from different languages/dialects. On this point there is no real difference with DISO and the new edition, the only difference being that the material in DISO and the new edition is undoubtedly more heterogeneous linguistically than the material presented in both comprehensive dictionaries. On the other hand, these comprehensive dictionaries will contain less room for references to secondary scholarly literature which, in the author's opinion, is indispensable for a study of the relevant epigraphic material[55].

A dictionary which uses translation equivalents/glosses to give an indication about the semantic function(s) of the relevant lexemes can, to a certain extent, be compared with the glossaries one finds at the end of some text editions or chrestomathies[56]. However, this is no reason to use another type of dictionary when the situation of the available material makes this use inadvisable and undesirable. Moreover, in DISO and the new edition extensive information is, wherever possible and necessary, provided about the contextual situation(s) for which the relevant lexemes are attested. So every user of the dictionary is informed about the distribution of these lexemes as far as the available text material enlightens us about the subject. This means that every user of such a dictionary has to exercize some discretion in using it. He/she has to be constantly aware that the semantics of the translation equivalent (generally) do not overlap with those of the «original» lexeme. He/she has to be aware that for that reason two (or more) glosses can be presented to indicate the same lexical meaning of an «original» lexeme, which semantically do not overlap. He/she also has to be aware that even extensive information about the contextual situations for which a

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(1994), p. 31f. and cf. Knauf (1990), p. 11f., 20f.

[53] For the Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew language, cf. Merkin - Busharia - Meir (1989) and Goshen-Gottstein (1991), p. 86ff. For the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon, cf. the Newsletters published by the relevant organization (eleven Newsletters are published now).

[54] This is clear from the one tantalizing sample published from the Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew Language: Hamilon hahistori lalshon haʿivrit, hashoresh *ʿrb* in *Leshonénu* xlvi fasc. 3-4 (p. 165-267). For the differences within Aramaic, cf. the remarks of Macuch (1992), p. 205, applauding the decision of Sokoloff to write a dictionary of only one Aramaic dialect (Sokoloff [1990]).

[55] It seems probable that the collaborators of the comprehensive Aramaic dictionary will base themselves on text editions which will be considered as standard editions. However, even if these editions have such an excellent quality as those of Porten and Yardeni (cf. Porten - Yardeni [1986], [1989], [1993]), the quality of whose work is really unequalled, there is a danger in accepting every reading decision in such an edition as definite.

[56] Cf. Muraoka (1990), p. 25.