

Gene Gragg

Within the general context of the Cushitic-Afroasiatic Index project, **Gene Gragg** has focused on the challenge of setting up a morphological database: how a database of paradigms can be set up and how the structures it contains can be queried, contrasted, and configured, in what in some ways might be called a “spreadsheet application for paradigms.” As the current phase of the project he is proposing a comparative-historical reference archive of *all* available morphological information on the Cushitic-Omotic languages in their Afroasiatic context (selected Semitic and Berber to begin with, eventually others). The interest and importance of the planned archive lie in the fact that it will be:

- A compilation of linguistic information otherwise widely scattered or unavailable. An archive of this kind would provide a unique pool of typological-areal-genetic linguistic information. It would also be an indispensable tool for comparative Cushitic and Afroasiatic morphology, and hence for exploration of the linguistic pre-history of the ancient Near East.
- A tool for the organization, manipulation, and contrastive and analytical display of paradigmatic data, both within and among these languages, and thus an instructive model for ways of dealing with large amounts of comparative morphological data.

- With the addition of a way of accessing and comparing underlying paradigm structuring generalizations, a tool of interest to general linguistics for the exploration of the synchronic and diachronic aspects of paradigm-based approaches to morphological structure.

In this context, a relevant article from a recent conference has appeared in published form: “The ‘Weak’ Verb: Akkadian and Beja” *The Akkadian Language in Its Semitic Context: Studies in the Akkadian of the Third and Second Millennium B.C.*, edited by G. Deutscher and N. J. C. Kouwenberg, pp. 19–29 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2006).

Still in linguistics, but on a different tack, he gave a final summarizing talk, “Synthèse: The Dynamics of Case — Recapitulation and Future Directions,” at an international colloquium on Variations, concurrence et évolution des cas dans divers domaines linguistiques, held in Paris, April 2–4, 2007, at the Institut Catholique and the University of Chicago, Paris Center.

Finally, continuing also with the problem of the design, publication, systematical exploration, and maintenance of a lexically and grammatically annotated corpus, he attended a colloquium “Les archives de Persépolis” held jointly at the Collège de France and the Chicago Paris Center on November 3–4, 2006, where he gave a joint presentation with Matt Stolper and Mark Garrison of the OCHRE interface for the digital publication of the archive (concentrating on questions of glossary maintenance and of querying the corpus for grammatical and lexical information).
