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 As the current phase of the project he is proposing a comparative-historical reference archive of all available morphological information on the Cushitic-Omotic languages in their Afroasiatic context (selected Semitic and Berber to begin with,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.


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).

Rebecca Hasselbach

This academic year saw the publication of several articles by Rebecca Hasselbach: “Interpreting Early Akkadian Orthography — A Note on Pronominal Suffixes in Sargonic Akkadian” in the Zeitschrift für Assyriologie; “The Ventive / Energic in Semitic — A Morphological Study” in the Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft; and “The Affiliation of Sargonic Akkadian to Babylonian and Assyrian — New Insights Concerning the Subgrouping of Akkadian” in the Journal of Semitic Studies. She also wrote several book reviews on books dealing with Akkadian grammar and Comparative Semitics in general. In addition to these publications, Hasselbach started to work on a new research project — a detailed study of Semitic case and grammatical relations — that will be the subject of her next book. This project will make use of typological studies — studies that establish cross-linguistic tendencies on the basis of large samples of the world’s languages — regarding case marking, grammatical relations, head and dependent marking, and word order, and compare these to Semitic languages in order to determine whether Semitic languages conform to typological tendencies, and whether it is possible to use typological studies to reconstruct the earliest stages of the Semitic nominal system and case inflection, which until today remain a matter of dispute.

First results of Hasselbach’s ongoing investigation of the Semitic case system have been presented in March at the Colloque Cas in Paris, where she gave a talk about the development of case marking in Phoenician, concluding that the process underlying the loss of case inflection in this language can be explained by functional and typological tendencies. This study will be published in the conference proceedings. A similar discussion of the Akkadian case system will be presented at the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in July, which shows that Akkadian underwent the same basic processes in the loss of case inflection as Phoenician. The results of these two preliminary investigations strengthen the assumption that language typologies can complement internal Semitic evidence.