OTSEM
OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES:
EPISTEMOLOGIES AND METHODS

A NORDIC-GERMAN NETWORK FOR
OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

Minutes

From the Seventh Steering Committee Meeting, Helsinki, 22 May 2007

Present: Fredrik Lindström, Kirsten Nielsen (for Else K. Holt); Martti Nissinen, Kristin M. Saxegaard (for Hanne Løland), Hermann Spieckermann, Terje Stordalen. As invited guest during item 6: Reinhard Kratz.

1) Brief orientations

Under the new NordForsk grants, this is what we have obliged ourselves to do:

Two annual meetings; One concluding conference;
Local seminars etc. offered across the network; Tutoring across the network
Travelling in the network (each: EUR 1000/year)
Discussion groups etc. via member's website

2) The Fourth Annual Meeting in Helsinki

The Steering Committee thanks Martti Nissinen and the Helsinki Group for a very good organizing of the meeting!

As always, we ask ourselves if there is any adjustment that should be made to our meeting forms. This year, we have noticed that the younger members, esp. the ph.d. students did not speak very often during the short paper sessions. Are the senior members too active? Should we ask ph.d. students to serve as second opponents to various short papers? These questions remain, while the committee would remind all to restrict themselves in the use of time during short paper sessions. For the Lund conference, it will be considered whether there should be a time limit of 3 minutes for every speaker. Also, we would remind chairpersons, contributors and respondents of the time limits already set (10 min.) to both the presentation and the response. We also think that professors and advisers should encourage junior members at their institution to find a particular short paper that is of interest to them, and to prepare some kind of response to this paper.

3) The Fifth Annual Meeting Scheduled in Lund, 20–23 April 2008

Fredrik Lindström gave a brief report.

4) The Concluding Conference to be hosted by the Oslo People

Grananvolden and/or Oslo, Faculty or Theology, possibly in cooperation with MF.
December 7 to 11; or 6 to 10, depending on hotels and on our institutions.

The program will basically follow OTSEM standard, perhaps with some lectures with topics forwards and / or backwards in OTSEM history and OT interpretation. There may also be special panels by post doc. students and focused upon their interests in the trade cf. below).

5) How Could OTSEM Better Help the Situation of Its Post Doc. Members?

The number of post doc members in OTSEM has increased drastically and will have increased even more by the time our NordForsk period is over.

OTSEM aims to adjust to this situation. We have already broadened the range of people asked to be respondents, chairs, etc. OTSEM aims, furthermore, to be an academic network for presenting papers and projects, academically updating, etc. also for the post doc. members. However, we do recognize that OTSEM was conceived as a network for doctoral education, and that our anatomy as an organization and the program of our annual meetings still reflect this orientation. To a certain degree, it must be this way: we still are a network for ph.d. education. However, we aim to consider changes in our program to better facilitate also our post doc members.

• First, the issue should be discussed in the Helsinki Business Meeting, to give the post doc. members that are present the chance to air their views on this matter.

• Secondly, we should consider including in our programs; sections by and for post doc. members; workshop-type of sessions; perhaps a session on 'currents in OT studies' (or similar): a section designed to help post doc members orient themselves towards topics that could potentially form a basis for writings applications for further studies.

• We should encourage our post doc members to take advantage of the network facilities available (such as the OTSEM Members webpage many possibilities and also the fact that several young scholars know each other's interests and projects). Also, professors in OTSEM are of course willing to offer advice for planning further applications, etc.

6) Plans for Continued Expansion of the Network

We have two more years of NordForsk funding and the question naturally arises: what next. Our first conversation on this issue was rather preliminary and no firm decisions were made. This sums up our preferences and our working strategies:

• It is likely that the theological faculties of Scandinavia will attempt to form one or more trans-national schools of ph.d. and researcher education. Many of us, but not all, will be involved in this. The nature of such a network is likely to be rather different from what we now have. We would like to work also for a continuation of OTSEM in its present form – in addition to whatever else we might be involved in through our institutions

• We think it might be wise to broaden the number of participating institutions outside Norden / Baltics. We do not, however, initially aim to broaden the network by way of more topics (save for Qumran studies).

• It seems likely that in our next application we should emphasize the situation of the post doc students (which is now becoming a general problem, at least in the humanist disciplines) and describe how our network would serve to improve the situation.

• We did not decide (nor even seriously discuss) who is going to take responsibility for writing the application. Again, members from each institution should explore possible support for such an application process in their own home environment.

• We discussed the following options for further funding:

(a) European Research Foundation: We need to explore options and conditions.

(b) Germany: *Internationales Graduiertenkolleg* (funded by DFG), etc.: We would then need to find a topic then combine different subjects (into clusters like *Altertumswissenschaft*; or similar.) Again, we need to explore the options.

(c) NordForsk: We could try to mutate into a graduate / researcher school. It is presently unclear whether or not that is going to e possible.

(d) Research Council of Norway, and similar national options throughout Norden. These must be surveyed.

• The following assignments of explorations were taken: Hermann Spieckermann explores German options. Martti Nissinen, Else Holt and Fredrik Lindström, explore national research

foundations in Finland, Denmark and Sweden respectively. Terje Stordalen explores options with NordForsk and with the Research Council of Norway.

The Steering Committee will attempt to have a separate meeting in Copenhagen on this issue some time in late October / early November 2007.

In addition it is clear that we continue expanding the network. Uppsala and Stavanger are now invited to become regular member institutions and their members to serve as regular members in OTSEM. In addition, we invite Copenhagen to the next meeting, and Martti Nissinen checks whether it would be feasible for Tartu University to join.

For the future, it is now apprehended that there will be one national representative in the Steering Committee, regardless of the number of institutions participating from each country. (There will still be local coordinators for each group, and these will still be in charge of organizing their own groups.)

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