
History and Politics of Connected and Connecting Philology

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Connecting Two Assyrian Dictionary Projects (1930–1935): James Henry Breasted and Bruno Meissner

Abstract: In the 1930s, James Henry Breasted, director of the Oriental Institute of Chicago, and Bruno Meissner, professor for Assyriology in Berlin, were both leading Assyrian dictionary projects. The correspondence between Breasted and Meissner shows that they were not competing but instead connecting their projects. When Breasted approached Meissner, he was looking for collaborators for the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (CAD), the first *big science* project of Assyriology. On the other hand, Meissner was working on a concise dictionary (*Assyrisches Handwörterbuch*). This chapter analyses the interaction between the two scholars and argues that their relationship was unique, especially when compared to the CAD's association with other scholars. This chapter also examines the connection between two philological projects, and in doing so, offers a historical study of *Connected Philology*.

Keywords: big science, cooperation, collaboration, connection, Assyriology, dictionary writing

Note: This chapter is based on archival records I studied during my research visits to Berlin, Chicago, Leipzig, and New Haven. Firstly, I want to thank my graduate school, the IDK Philology, for funding these trips. Secondly, I wish to express my gratitude to the local archivists for giving me access to these materials, especially Dr Anne Flannery, archivist of the ISAC, the archive team of the Humboldt University of Berlin, Prof Dr Michael Streck (whose department at Leipzig University holds the remains of Meissner's lexicographical *Nachlass*), as well as Dr Agnete Lassen and Dr Ben Foster who are responsible for the letters kept at the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Yale University. Furthermore, I want to thank my supervisors at LMU Munich, Prof Dr Kärin Nickelsen and Prof Dr Karen Radner and my colleagues at IDK Philology and the chair of History of Science in Munich for their advice and enriching discussions while working on this chapter. I am extremely grateful for the language editing of this chapter done by Denise Bolton and Nanina Föhr. I had the idea for this chapter when I was in Chicago in autumn 2023, and Anne Flannery handed me the correspondence between Meissner and Breasted. I discussed the contents of these letters and Meissner's personal file with Dr Peter Raulwing, a specialist in the history of Assyriology during and after the Nazi era in Germany, who was kind enough to host me during my research visit in Chicago and provide me with many insights on his research as well as some excellent red wine.

1 Two independent Assyrian Dictionary Projects

The history of science¹ provides examples of *Connected Philology* in the sense that two or more philological disciplines, projects, or individuals interacted; they informed each other, incorporated each other's methods and practices, cooperated, or even collaborated. Large-scale projects are particularly interesting case studies since they relied on tackling scientific tasks in a team. This meant that in smaller disciplines, such as Egyptology or Assyriology, scholars from other universities, institutions, and sometimes even different countries cooperated in a joint effort.

The first large-scale project of Assyriology was the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (CAD) project of the former Oriental Institute (OI)² in Chicago (Roth et al. 1956–2010). James Henry Breasted (1865–1935), Egyptologist and director of the OI in Chicago, engaged Assyriologists from North America and Europe to work on a dictionary of the Assyrian Akkadian, which was only completed in 2010. The director's correspondences illuminate how scholars interacted with each other in the early times of the CAD. The later history of the dictionary, especially its development in the 1950s and 1960s, is depicted by Erica Reiner (2002), one of the editors of the CAD. However, the early history of the dictionary remains largely unexplored.³ Breasted decided to compile the dictionary in a team and to include cooperation partners in the late 1920s and 1930s. Therefore, a study of how Breasted incorporated others offers a historical analysis of Connected Philology alongside insights into the early history of the CAD.

Among Breasted's correspondences with cooperation partners for the CAD, there is one unique example especially worth investigating: in September 1930, Breasted wrote to Bruno Meissner (1868–1947), professor for Assyriology and Semitic Studies at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität⁴ in Berlin:

May I express to you our pleasure in cooperating with you in this great responsibility for the production of an adequate Assyrian Dictionary? In response to your inquiry I am glad to say that our plans are advancing rapidly and the Dictionary is making excellent progress. We have secured the cooperation of eighteen additional collaborators (fourteen of whom are abroad), besides our Chicago staff [. . .]. We should be grateful for any suggestions you might have to offer, and if there is

1 Here, the term *science* is used in the broad sense of the German term *Wissenschaft*, which also includes the humanities.

2 Since 2023, the Institute for the Study of Ancient Culture (ISAC). When discussing the Oriental Institute during Breasted and Meissner's time, I will refer to it with the abbreviation of the former name: OI.

3 With the exception of Meade (1974, 97–101), who describes the beginnings of the CAD based on published sources. In contrast, this chapter investigates archival records such as letters and focuses on the policies of the OI regarding the CAD project.

4 In 1949, Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität was renamed Humboldt University of Berlin.

anything that we can do which would be of assistance to you in your own Dictionary work I should be interested to hear of it. (Breasted to Meissner on 17 September 1930)⁵

This letter expresses that Meissner was also compiling an Assyrian Dictionary in the 1930s. While Breasted was looking for collaborators for the Assyrian Dictionary project of the OI (later called *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, or short CAD), Meissner was working on a concise Assyrian dictionary in Berlin. At first glance, one might assume that Breasted and Meissner acted as competitors because of the similarity of their projects. However, the quote above suggests that Breasted and Meissner cooperated instead of competing. A closer look at the interaction between Breasted and Meissner reveals that neither the terms *competition* nor *cooperation* are fitting descriptions of their interaction. Their relationship was much more complex. I will, therefore, first introduce the projects and protagonists, and then explore their relationship. This chapter investigates the extent of their association and argues that they did *connect*.

2 Why compile an Assyrian Dictionary?

First, it is essential to explain how the situation of two concurrent Assyrian dictionary projects came to be in order to understand the dynamics between Breasted and Meissner. Why were both parties compiling a dictionary of the Akkadian language, of which Assyrian is a prominent dialect (the other being Babylonian)? Despite multiple attempts to compile one, since the breakthrough in deciphering cuneiform⁶ in 1857, no sufficient dictionary had been completed by the beginning of the twentieth century. For example, Edwin Norris (1795–1872) published the first three volumes of an *Assyrian Dictionary* (1869–1872) but died before he could complete his task. The German Assyriologist Friedrich Delitzsch (1850–1922) tried to compile a dictionary based on all published and many unpublished cuneiform texts. However, the first three volumes of the resulting work (*Assyrisches Wörterbuch zur gesamten bisher veröffentlichten Keilschriftliteratur* 1887–1890) included many long discursions, making the books impractical for looking up words. Delitzsch soon realised that new cuneiform texts were being found and translated on a regular basis, repeatedly outdating his work. He eventually gave up on the idea of a dictionary based on a complete collection of cuneiform texts. Instead, Delitzsch wrote a concise dictionary (*Assyrisches Handwörterbuch* 1896). Except for these two attempts by Norris and Delitzsch at producing thorough dictionaries, only smaller lexicographical studies or concise dictio-

⁵ Emphasis in the original letter. All translations are my own if not indicated otherwise. At the end of this chapter, the two most relevant letters by Breasted and Meissner are fully transcribed in their original languages: one in German and the other in English.

⁶ Cuneiform is the wedge-shaped script that was used to write Akkadian and other languages such as Sumerian and Hittite.

naries were published. No single work of that time included all Akkadian words. Therefore, students of Assyriology had to consult various individual publications when translating cuneiform texts. In addition, individuals set up private lexicographical collections, usually in the form of card indexes (Meissner 1931a, 1–6; Breasted 1933, 378–383).

Both Meissner and Breasted recognised the need for an updated and extended Assyrian Dictionary that could replace the practice of using individual card indexes. Such a dictionary would make translating Assyrian Akkadian easier and the subject more accessible. Both parties aimed to fill this gap and thereby create an essential element of the necessary infrastructure⁷ for the field, an infrastructure that was already there or, at least, a work in progress in other (older⁸) disciplines.

Projects compiling dictionaries were quite popular in the humanities from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century, especially in Germany. However, many of these projects faced difficulties similar to those of the lexicographical studies described above. An early example is the German Dictionary (*Deutsches Wörterbuch*) by Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, often called “Grimmsches Wörterbuch.” The first volume was published in 1852, the last in 1961, more than a hundred years after the project’s initiation in 1838. Due to the long duration of the process, the German Dictionary was reorganised as a larger collaboration in 1908 (Hoffmann 2002, 113). The large scale of such projects called for a new organised work structure, best described with the modern term *big science*.

This term was initially coined by Derek John de Solla Price (1986) to describe large-scale projects in the natural sciences, particularly the Manhattan Project (Szölli-Janze and Trischler 1990, 13–14). Rüdiger von Bruch has argued that the first big science projects can be found in the humanities (2005, 128); the initiator of two large-scale projects in Ancient History, Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903), called the new work structure “Großwissenschaft”⁹ [big science]. His colleague Adolf von Harnack (1851–

7 In the sense of introductory books, dictionaries, important text editions, institutions, societies, conferences, and journals for a scientific discipline.

8 Assyriology was a young academic discipline at the beginning of the twentieth century: Eberhard Schrader was the first scholar of cuneiform who received the call as professor for the Studies of Semitic Languages at a German university (Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin) in 1875, even though Schrader originally studied the Old Testament. The first professionally educated Assyriologist was Friedrich Delitzsch, having qualified as a professor of Assyriology in Leipzig in 1874 (Renger 1979, 152–153). In the United States of America, the first Assyriologist was appointed to a professorship of Semitics at Johns Hopkins University in 1883; Paul Haupt had previously finished his studies in Leipzig under Friedrich Delitzsch (Foster 2006, 56–57).

9 “Auch die Wissenschaft hat ihr soziales Problem; wie der Großstaat oder die Großindustrie, so ist die Großwissenschaft, die nicht von Einem geleistet, aber von Einem geleitet wird, ein notwendiges Element unserer Kulturentwicklung” [Science, too, has a social problem; like the large state or large-scale industry, large-scale science, which is not performed by one person but directed by one person,

1930) used the term “Großbetrieb der Wissenschaft”¹⁰ [large scientific enterprise] to describe large-scale editions and dictionary projects like *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (initiated in 1853 by Mommsen) or *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* (initiated in 1893 by Eduard Wölfflin and Mommsen). Both terms describe a work form in which multiple people (not necessarily scholars¹¹) join forces under one leading organiser to accomplish large-scale scientific tasks. In addition to the Latin dictionary *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (first proposed in 1857, publishing agreement with the Oxford University Press in 1879) and the *Egyptian Dictionary* (originally *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache*, initiated by Ermann in 1897) were structured like this. The number¹² and scale of these projects and the fact that they received funding reflect how important the compilation of dictionaries was at the time. Furthermore, these projects were considered prestigious:¹³ firstly, they were crucial contributions to the infrastructure of the humanities, and secondly, they connected various scholars and students in order to accomplish the joint task.

To sum up, Breasted and Meissner started their projects independently and without initially being aware of the existence of the other project. Both recognised the need of an updated Assyrian dictionary, and, therefore, aimed to provide the field with an adequate one. At the same time, such projects had already been initiated for other philological disciplines, especially in Germany. Hence, the scholars were influenced by other philologies, such as Latin, English, and German Studies.

is a necessary element of our cultural development] said Mommsen in his response to Harnack’s inaugural speech for the Prussian Academy of Sciences (von Harnack 2001 [1890], 168–169).

10 “Den Großbetrieb der Wissenschaft, den das Zeitalter forderte, hat sie [die Akademie] aufgenommen und im Laufe der letzten Jahrzehnte mehr als zwanzig umfassende Unternehmungen ins Werk gesetzt, welche die Kräfte des einzelnen Mannes übersteigen und Menschenalter zu ihrer Durchführung erheischen” (von Harnack 2001 [1900], 193) [It [the Academy] has taken up the great enterprise of science demanded by the age and, in the course of the last decades, has launched more than twenty comprehensive undertakings that exceed the powers of the individual man and require ages to realise].

11 In addition to specialists, students, volunteers, and family members often worked for such projects (Jonker 2002, 131; Rebenich 1997, 88).

12 The dictionaries mentioned here are only examples. There were more dictionary projects emerging in the nineteenth century in Germany, such as *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch* (BMZ) or *Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch* (Hoffmann 2002, 101; Kössinger 2016).

13 In a letter to Breasted, Arno Poebel, a later editor of the CAD, suggested that he compile a list of Sumerian ideograms for the CAD. He explicitly mentions how this project would be a valuable contribution to the infrastructure of the field and add to the prestige of the Oriental Institute: “On the other hand, this list of ideograms, which, for the time being, would serve only the purposes of the Dictionary project, at some later time could be published separately and thus an old desideratum of Assyriologists could be realized. This would certainly greatly add to the prestige of the Institute” (Poebel to Breasted on 1 February 1932). Three years later, Poebel declares: “If we continue our work in the manner described, the writer of this report feels that he can state with full responsibility that the Dictionary will give American scholarship added prestige” (Poebel’s report about “the Importance and the Needs of the Assyrian Dictionary Project of the Oriental Institute” on 27 December 1935).

So much for the general reasons for compiling an Assyrian dictionary. But what were Breasted's and Meissner's specific reasons for beginning Assyrian Dictionary projects? What qualifications did they have for working on a dictionary? How were the projects structured, which philological practices were used, and what role did Meissner and Breasted play within these projects? By answering these questions, I will examine the similarities and differences of the projects in order to analyse the reasons for their interaction. The following pages will evaluate the careers of the two scholars and the development of their respective projects as they relate to each other.

2.1 James Henry Breasted and the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary

By training, James Henry Breasted was not an Assyriologist but an Egyptologist.¹⁴ He originally started studying theology under William Rainey Harper (1856–1906), a professor of Hebrew at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Harper encouraged Breasted to study Egyptology in Berlin because the emerging discipline was not taught in the United States at the time. Breasted followed his advice and received his doctorate from Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin in August 1894. He was trained and supervised by Professor Adolf Erman (1854–1937), who employed his students, including Breasted, to collect and translate texts for the Egyptian Dictionary (Abt 2011, 24–40, 78–79; Gertzen 2013, 223–244).¹⁵ After completing his PhD and a subsequent trip to Egypt, Breasted returned to the United States. His former teacher at Yale, Harper, had been appointed president of the University of Chicago. Harper wanted to expand the department for the studies of Semitic languages and hired Breasted as an Egyptologist. Breasted was the first person to teach Egyptology in the United States. According to him, there were not sufficient teaching materials for English-speaking students available, so he began to create his own;¹⁶ most prominent were his editions of the

¹⁴ Breasted and his works have been critically discussed recently. For example, Conrad (2024, 125) drew attention to Breasted's racist theories about the Egyptians belonging to the "white race" (Breasted 1926b, 43). Overall, Breasted argued that the roots of Western civilisation lay in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and, therefore, archaeological sites in these regions should be secured by European and American excavators (Breasted 2010 [1919], 115–117). In addition to these critical impulses, Jeffrey Abt provided a thoroughly researched biography of Breasted in *American Egyptologist* (2011) which superseded the first thorough biography of Breasted, written by his son Charles Breasted (1943). Short biographies can be found in Emberling (2010, 148), Larson (2010, 13), and Bierbrier (2012, 78–79), among others.

¹⁵ Breasted later secured funding for the Egyptian Dictionary from John Davidson Rockefeller Jr. For detailed information on Erman, the Egyptian Dictionary project, and Breasted's involvement in Erman's project, see Gertzen (2013, 194–260).

¹⁶ Breasted wrote in the preface of Luckenbill's *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*: "The present writer [i.e. Breasted], returning in 1895 from oriental studies in Europe and the Near East, found himself entirely without the tools and instrumentalities for teaching the ancient cultures he was sup-

Egyptian historical records with an English translation and a book on the history of Ancient Egypt.¹⁷ However, Breasted aimed not only to establish Egyptology as a discipline taught in the United States. Inspired by German academic institutions, he wanted to create an American institute for the wide range of what was then called “Oriental Studies.” In 1919, he founded the Oriental Institute (OI) in Chicago with funding from the American philanthropist John Davidson Rockefeller Jr. (1874–1960)¹⁸ (Abt 2011, 120–121, 228–231). Breasted acted as the OI’s director, supervising projects across various disciplines, including Assyriology. He described the first years after the founding of the OI as follows:

Following closely upon the conclusion of the war, therefore, our interests were absorbed in the development of our new Institute which was to mobilize the old Department of Oriental Languages and transform it into the investigating staff of a research laboratory. Prominent in its scientific program, as we desired to see it develop, was the compilation of an Assyrian-Babylonian Dictionary based for the first time on *all* of the known cuneiform documents. It was placed under the able editorship of Professor D. D. Luckenbill. (Breasted 1926a, viii)

Having worked for the Egyptian Dictionary in Berlin, Breasted initiated a similar project for Assyrian Akkadian and made compiling an Assyrian dictionary a central task of the newly formed OI. Since Breasted was an Egyptologist, he appointed his assistant, the Assyriologist Daniel David Luckenbill (1881–1927), as the first editor of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (CAD). The project was innovative for two reasons: its methodological approach and the fact that it was compiled by a team.

The project used the same method as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Erman’s *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache*, and the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*.¹⁹ This included collecting all known cuneiform texts, similar to Delitzsch’s approach for his never finished *Assyrisches Wörterbuch zur gesamten bisher veröffentlichten Keilschriftliteratur* (1887–1890). Furthermore, the CAD aimed to investigate the interpretation of words in different contexts, depending on the text category (legal, administrative, mythological, etc.) and any possible changes in the meaning of words over time. Every collected text was divided into smaller paragraphs that were printed on file cards with translitera-

posed to represent, especially the Egyptian. The University of Chicago was in 1895 the first and at that time the only university of America to offer studies in Egyptian language and civilization. The first task was an obvious one: to make the historical documents of ancient Egypt accessible in English. The task consumed ten years” (Breasted 1926a, vii).

17 See Breasted’s publications: *A History of Egypt from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest* (Breasted 1905) and *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest* (Breasted 1906–1907).

18 The Rockefeller family was already supporting the University of Chicago financially and took an interest in the exploration of the “Bible Lands,” as Breasted called them in his letter to Rockefeller on 30 May 1903 (Abt 2011, 120–121).

19 It should be noted that the *Egyptian Dictionary* is the only other dictionary that, as a first step, had to edit and translate texts. As Jonker already pointed out, the Latin dictionary *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* worked with texts that had been known for 300 years and repeatedly edited (2002, 129 n. 6).

tion and translation. In the next step, one word was highlighted and grammatically classified on each file card (see Figure. 1; Breasted 1922, 288–305; 1933, 383–387). The intention was that multiple file cards on the same Akkadian word would provide insights into the word's interpretation. Possible word meanings could be narrowed down by comparing the cards. For example, Luckenbill was able to correct a former translation of the Akkadian word *abul zinim* by using the CAD file cards. Luckenbill wrote the following philological comment on one of his translations of a cuneiform text:

But Meissner's rendering of *abul zinim* by "Kleinvieh-Tor" is questionable. [. . .] My suggestion that it was a postern gate is based on the Great Monolith Inscription of Assur-nāsir-pal (LAR, I, §493), Col. V, 11. 32 f., where we read: "Its beams he shall not break, its doorposts he shall not tear out, the passage of its *zini*-gate he shall not block (*mu-ši bâb zi-ni-ša la i-ka-si-ir*), its door he shall not close." Certainly in this inscription a sheep-gate would be out of the question. One does not need to be a specialist in military architecture to realize the importance of the postern. (Luckenbill 1927b, 212)

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Figure 1: CAD file card for the word *bâbu* (gate): the inspected word is written in the upper left corner of the card and underlined in the following transliteration (left box) and translation (right box) of the text passage. The ticks in the table at the bottom of the card give grammatical information about the inspected word.

Luckenbill compared the meaning of *abul zinim* from a historical record of king Irishum to *bâb zini-ša* (see CAD file card, Figure 1) from a historical record of king Assurnasirpal. Due to the military context of the second text, he interpreted the word as

“postern gate” (a type of fortification) instead of “Kleinviehotor” [gate for small livestock]. This shows that the CAD method relied on collecting and comparing texts to get more precise translations of the words.

That the dictionary was the result of the work of a team was not only unique for compiling an Assyrian dictionary but also for any other projects in Assyriology at that time.²⁰ From Breasted’s experience with the *Egyptian Dictionary*, he knew that such a “great task” must not be tackled by one person alone, as in previous dictionary projects of the Akkadian language (Breasted 1922, 305; 1933, 381). He formed a team in Chicago to prepare the file cards and to collect and translate cuneiform texts and secured cooperation from American scholars at other universities. They were asked to provide the OI with unpublished copies and translations of texts. Since Breasted was an Egyptologist, the Assyriologist and assistant director of the OI, Luckenbill, took on the leadership of the project (Breasted 1933, 378–383, 387). The CAD not only used the same method as the Egyptian or Latin dictionary projects in Berlin but was also organised in the same way. This makes the CAD the first big science project of Assyriology.

However, as Reiner has argued, the staff members underestimated the task of compiling such a dictionary in the early history of the CAD (2002, xv). For example, Luckenbill wrote the following about the timeline and the collaborators’ task on the CAD:

I am hoping that with my assistants and with the help of a few more collaborators the preliminary task of filing the cards will be completed by the end of 1929. If so I shall ask for an indefinite leave to bring the work to completion. I daresay this will take from a year to a year and a half. (Luckenbill to Dougherty on 11 March 1927)

Luckenbill believed he could write the dictionary by himself within, at most, one and a half years, with collaborators and other staff members merely preparing his work. He estimated two years to prepare the dictionary and another one and a half years to write it. He died unexpectedly in 1927, before he could be proven wrong. Following Luckenbill’s death, Breasted acknowledged that preparing the CAD was a bigger task than initially anticipated:

Owing to the death of my colleague, Luckenbill, the progress of the Assyrian Dictionary has been somewhat delayed, and it has proven a longer and much costlier project than we had at first planned. (Breasted to Meissner on 18 December 1930)

Breasted was, therefore, looking for more collaborators to speed up the preliminary work of collecting and translating texts when he approached Bruno Meissner in 1930. During Luckenbill’s time as editor, most of the collaborators were American. After Luckenbill’s death, Breasted invited European scholars to participate in the CAD proj-

²⁰ There had been earlier projects, such as *Vorderasiatische Bibliothek* (1900–1918), in which a group of scholars contributed to a series of editions. Still, each book was the work of one or two scholars.

ect because they had better access to unpublished texts in the museums in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. Another reason for recruiting European collaborators was to promote the OI abroad. The OI and the CAD could become more visible and gain greater recognition by including more collaborators. In numbers, the residential team of the CAD staff counted five people by the project's initiation in 1921. Edward Chiera (1885–1933), who took over as editor of the CAD after Luckenbill's death, added ten research assistants and four clerks to the workforce in 1932. In addition to the three American collaborators who had collected materials for the CAD since 1921, Breasted recruited twenty-three international collaborators until 1933. Consequently, between 1921 and 1933, a minimum of eight and a maximum of forty-two people were working for the CAD (Breasted 1933, 387, 390–392, 398–399).

2.2 Bruno Meissner and his *Assyrisches Handwörterbuch* [Concise Assyrian Dictionary]

Meissner was born in Graudenz (Grudziądz), a small city in former Prussia (now Poland).²¹ He started studying Assyriology in Leipzig with Friedrich Delitzsch as his teacher. After one academic year there, Meissner went to Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin for the 1889 summer term, where he met Breasted as a fellow student.²² Meissner completed his doctorate under the supervision of Eberhard Schrader (1836–1908) and habilitated in Halle in 1892. After that, he mainly worked in Berlin, teaching several Semitic languages. Meissner was first appointed professor for Oriental Languages in Breslau in 1904. He returned to Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin in 1921, where he succeeded his two former teachers, Schrader (professorship in Berlin 1875–1899) and Delitzsch (professorship in Berlin 1899–1921), as professor of Assyriology and Semitic Studies. Despite his interest in the historical and art historical aspects of Assyriology, Meissner was mainly a philologist. His primary interest becomes especially apparent in his inaugural speech for the Prussian Academy of Sciences, where Meissner announced his dictionary project:

In verschiedenen Publikationen habe ich sodann teils einzelne assyrische Wörter besprochen, teils lexikalische Texte, die uns der Boden Vorderasiens in reicher Fülle aufbewahrt hat, wiederhergestellt und ediert. Jetzt gegen Ende meines Lebens habe ich mich noch daran gemacht, unter Zugrun-

²¹ Currently, there is only one study on Meissner that exceeds a short biography (such as Renger 1979 and Weidner 1945–1951). In “German Assyriology: A Discipline in Troubled Waters,” Renger (2022) discusses Meissner's devotion to the Nazi regime (among other German scholars) and how the Nazi ideology influenced German Assyriology.

²² Breasted reminded Meissner about their shared times in Berlin in a letter: “My dear Colleague, You will perhaps recall that many years ago, when we were both students under Professor Sachau, we used occasionally to meet in his seminar at his house in the Wormserstrasse” (Breasted to Meissner on 18 January 1930).

delegung eigener, seit mehr als 40 Jahren vorgenommener Sammlungen und unter Benutzung des mir vom Hinrichsschen Verlage und Delitzschs Familie zur Verfügung gestellten DELITZSCHEN “Supplements” ein neues “Assyrisches Handwörterbuch” zu verfassen. (Meissner 1931b, cxxii)

[In various publications, I have discussed individual Assyrian words and restored and edited lexical texts, which the soil of the Near East has preserved in rich abundance for us. Now, towards the end of my life, I have started to compile a new “Assyrian Dictionary” on the basis of my own collections made over more than 40 years and using the DELITZSCH “Supplements” made available to me by the Hinrichs’s publishing house and the Delitzsch family.]

He edited and translated multiple cuneiform texts of different categories (e.g. legal texts, building inscriptions), wrote a short grammar of the Akkadian language (*Kurzgefasste assyrische Grammatik* 1907), a book on Assyrian ideograms (*Seltene assyrische Ideogramme* 1910), and advanced the lexicographical knowledge of Assyrian Akkadian. Meissner’s first lexicographical contribution was *Supplement zu den assyrischen Wörterbüchern* (1898), a book that added new expertise to Delitzsch’s *Handwörterbuch* (1894–1896). He continued his lexicographical research, which he published in multiple volumes²³ (Weidner 1945–51; Renger 1979, 157, 171–172, 177–178). Unfortunately, most of the unpublished material Meissner used for his dictionary is now lost. According to the quote above, these were his own lexicographical studies and an unpublished manuscript by Delitzsch. After Delitzsch’s death, the publishing house J. C. Hinrichs Verlag and Delitzsch’s family gave Delitzsch’s manuscript of a supplement to his concise dictionary to Meissner (Meissner 1931a, 3). Only a few word cards of Meissner’s lexicographical estate have survived to the present.

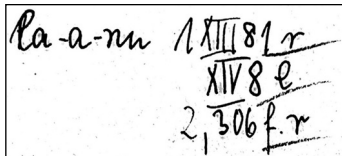


Figure 2: Meissner’s lexicographical card for the word *lānu* [form]: the numbers refer to a text edition of the Akkadian lists of synonyms by Wolfram von Soden (1933). For example, “1 XIII 81 r” refers to the collection 1 VAT, table 8, line 81, right column.

The surviving cards refer to only one edition of lists of Akkadian synonyms by Wolfram von Soden (1933). The cards have no translations of the Akkadian words (see Figure 2). Hence, Meissner used the surviving cards to find specific words in a published text edition. His publications on lexicographical studies illuminate the philo-

²³ Six contributions called *Assyriological Studies* (*Assyriologische Studien* 1903–1913), two volumes called *Assyriological Research* (*Assyriologische Forschungen* 1916, 1920), four books of *Studies on the Assyrian Lexicography* (*Studien zur assyrischen Lexikographie* 1925, 1929–1940).

logical practices that Meissner used for his dictionary. The following example is a comment by Meissner on the meaning of the Akkadian word *ušu*:

Es ist bekannt, daß die Steinnamen im Assyrischen häufig nicht eindeutig sind, sondern mehrere Bedeutungen umschließen. Bisher galt es als feststehend, daß der *ušu*-Stein nur den "Dolerit" bezeichnet [. . .]. Aber auch dieses Wort scheint nicht allein diesen einen Stein bezeichnet zu haben. Hilprecht hat BE. I Nr. 33 eine Inschrift veröffentlicht, die ein Diener des Königs Burnaburiasch auf einem vielleicht aus Hursagkalama herstammenden Mörser aus weißem Marmor [. . .] hat eingraben lassen. Z. 22ff. wird erzählt, daß der Stifter DUG.ZÁ.ESI "ein Gefäß aus *esi* (=semit. *ušu*)-Stein im Tempel von Hursagkalama, ihrem (der Göttin) geliebten Hause, am Ufer des Flusses Dan-Latarak, um reines (?) Wasser umzurühren (?) aufgestellt habe." (Meissner 1931a, 10)

[It is well known that the names of stones in Assyrian are often not unambiguous but encompass several meanings. Until now, it was considered established that the *ušu* stone only denoted the "dolerite" [. . .]. But even this word does not seem to have denoted this one stone alone. Hilprecht has published BE. I No. 33 an inscription that a servant of King Burnaburiash had engraved on a mortar made of white marble [. . .], perhaps originating from Hursagkalama. L. 22ff. tells us that the donor DUG.ZÁ.ESI "placed a vessel made of *esi* (=semit. *ušu*)-stone in the temple of Hursagkalama, her (the goddess's) beloved house on the banks of the river Dan-Latarak, to stir (?) pure (?) water."]

Meissner concluded that the word *ušu* referred not only to dolerite as previous dictionaries had stated. He argued that *ušu* could also designate white marble. His reference was a white marble mortar with an inscription that explains that the donor had gifted the goddess a vessel of *ušu*-stone. This exemplary entry reflects that Meissner compared Akkadian words in different cuneiform texts and that he also integrated materiality. Through this method, he got closer to individual word meanings. Consequently, Meissner and the staff of the CAD used comparison as a philological practice to enhance their knowledge of word meanings.

Meissner's dictionary was intended to be concise, whereas the CAD was designed as a more thorough study. A CAD entry was set up to provide the reader with information on all known texts in which the words appeared. Therefore, the CAD could also be used as a starting point for studies on specific topics. For example, if you wanted to study slavery in ancient Mesopotamia, you could find all the texts available at the time containing the word *ardu* (slave) under the entry for "slave" (Breasted 1933, 393). The dictionary that Meissner envisioned lacked this feature.

Meissner intended to list the dictionary entries using the Hebrew alphabet. According to Ernst Friedrich Weidner (1891–1976), Meissner abided by this order despite criticism from fellow Assyriologists (Weidner 1945–1951, 174). The CAD entries were organised by the Latin alphabet, making the dictionary more user-friendly for American and European audiences.

Another main difference between the two projects was the number of people involved. Meissner's concise dictionary was more or less a one-man-project. He temporarily involved his colleagues Erich Ebeling (1886–1955), Ernst Friedrich Weidner, and

Gerhard Meier (1913–1945? [reported missing in World War II])²⁴ (Meissner 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943; Weidner 1945–1951, 174). Still, Meissner, who compiled the collected material and made all decisions concerning the books, was the author of the dictionary. At the beginning of the CAD project, Luckenbill attempted a similar one-man-approach for compiling the dictionary. But in contrast to Meissner, the Oriental Institute soon realised that the task was too great to be tackled by one scholar and increased the working force. By 1933, the CAD staff and collaborators totalled up to forty-two people working on the project (Breasted 1933, 387, 390–392, 398–399).

In conclusion, even though Meissner and Breasted were both working on Assyrian dictionaries, there were several differences between the two projects concerning the alphabetisation, the publishing language (German or English), and the scale (the intensity of the research, length of each entry, and working force). The projects were, therefore, not in competition. Instead, Meissner even stated that his concise dictionary was not competing with the CAD due to their different approaches (Meissner to Breasted on 12 February 1930).

3 Why did Breasted and Meissner connect?

So why did Breasted approach Meissner concerning their dictionary projects? As already elaborated, Breasted was looking for collaborators in Europe to provide the residential staff of the CAD with texts and word meanings. He knew a dictionary project of this scale could not be executed by one scholar alone (as previous attempts to write Assyrian dictionaries and his personal experience from the Egyptian dictionary project had demonstrated). However, when he approached Meissner, Breasted extended an invitation to him to be a collaborator in the CAD. In addition, he offered Meissner the opportunity to publish the results of his lexicographical studies in an OI series. Accordingly, Breasted's offer to Meissner to cooperate stands out from his enquiries to other cooperation partners.

Breasted had recently recruited Arno Poebel (1881–1958), a German Assyriologist and specialist in Sumerian, to be the CAD's new editor. Poebel told Breasted about Meissner's plan for an Assyrian dictionary and that Meissner wanted to publish the first results of his research as soon as possible. Even though the two dictionary projects differed in their aim, Breasted was careful not to offend other professors and avoided any semblance of competition. In another instance, Breasted delayed a long-planned edition project at the OI (*Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, Luckenbill 1926, 1927a) because Albert Tobias Clay (1866–1925), professor of Assyriology and Babylonian Literature at Yale University, had publicly declared his intentions to do something simi-

²⁴ In the reports of the Academy for the years 1940–1942, Meissner explained that the slow process of the dictionary project was due to Meier being called to war in 1939 (Meissner 1940; 1941; 1942).

lar.²⁵ In this case, several other American Assyriologists were involved in the competing project as contributors for text editions. Breasted was afraid that continuing to edit the historical records of Assyria and Babylonia could lead to quarrels with the other scholars involved. He therefore sent a letter to Luckenbill, the designated editor of the OI's edition project, requesting a team meeting to discuss the situation:

We shall have to consider very carefully, however, how we treat the men who have consented to contribute his series and whose names as contributors have been published. They went in good faith, not knowing there was any competing series in the field and we must be careful not to drive them into Clay's arms by proceeding on any course which would be in the least disagreeable or unfair to them. If we did this Clay and his contributors would form a party hostile to us. You and Smith and Price and I must, therefore, sit down and canvass the situation very carefully in the endeavor to find some policy towards these contributors to Clay's series which will show them that we mean to be fair and straightforward with them. (Breasted to Luckenbill on 10 August 1923)

The correspondence demonstrates that Breasted dealt with competition strategically and cautiously. He wanted to be seen as upholding fair and collegial interaction with other scholars and was careful not to start disputes. The fact that the OI dropped their edition project temporarily shows that Breasted thought it would seem inconsiderate regarding Clay's project if the OI had gone on with their plans.

When Breasted heard from Poebel about Meissner's project, he faced a similar situation. But this time, the OI's CAD project was already in progress and involved many cooperation partners. Still, the first letter he sent Meissner shows that Breasted was afraid that Meissner might disapprove of the CAD as a competitor to his own concise dictionary. After reminding Meissner of their shared time in Berlin, Breasted complimented Meissner on his career and publications.²⁶ He then explained that he had just heard of Meissner's interest in composing an Assyrian dictionary:

I am writing you now especially because I have, within the last year for the first time, learned of your great interest in Assyrian lexicography. When my friend, Luckenbill, urged me to organize a staff in our Oriental Institute for the compilation of an Assyrian Dictionary, about eight years ago, I did not know of your interest in this subject, and it is only recently that I have heard from my colleagues that you have long been actually engaged in producing a dictionary of the Assyrian language. (Breasted to Meissner on 18 January 1930)

25 Luckenbill wrote the following to Breasted about their decision to delay the edition project: "I believe it was thought best, at our Departmental conference the other day, to drop for the present that part of our publication plans which called for a continuation of the Ancient Record series. This in view of the fact that Prof. Clay of Yale University is in the field with plans which would be duplicated if we proceeded with our series. This leaves our plans in the following shape:

1) Ancient Records of Babylonia and Assyria (dropped for the present)" (Luckenbill to Breasted on 15 May 1918).

26 For a complete transcription of the letter, see the appendix to this chapter.

The passage is crucial and deftly formulated. Breasted attempts to excuse himself for starting a project that might be perceived as standing in competition with Meissner's by claiming that he was unaware of Meissner's plans. At the same time, it does not include a genuine apology and comes off strong and confident. Breasted then strategically continues with a tempting offer:

Our mutual friend, Poebel, who is soon to join our staff here, has written us that you would be interested to begin to publish as soon as possible some of the results of your special studies of particular Assyrian words. We would be very glad if you would associate yourself with us in this enterprise, and the Oriental Institute would undertake to publish your investigations in a single volume [. . .]. (Breasted to Meissner on 18 January 1930)

Breasted knew from Poebel that Meissner wanted to publish parts of his lexicographical studies in advance. Thus, he deliberately based his invitation to collaborate on an offer that would be attractive to Meissner: the possibility of publishing a “volume of Word Studies in Assyrian.” Breasted informed Meissner about the honorarium (of 300 to 9,000 marks, depending on the number of sheets) he could pay him. He even offered to publish the volume in Meissner's native language, German. The standard proposal to cooperate with the CAD followed later, towards the end of the letter:

Meantime, if you have any manuscript translations of New Assyrian documents, or hitherto unsatisfactorily translated documents, would it be possible to make some arrangement with you by which your translations might be carefully typewritten at our expense and an appropriate remuneration paid to you? [. . .] I am quite well aware that the publication of your long-continued studies of the Assyrian language, and especially of rare and difficult words, will be a substantial contribution to science and one of the greatest value to all Orientalists.

We would look forward, therefore, with especial interest and pleasure to your association with the Oriental Institute in our efforts toward a better understanding of the Assyrian language. (Breasted to Meissner on 18 January 1930)

The usual task that Breasted had recruited other scholars for, sending new translations of cuneiform texts, seems like a secondary proposition. It is not as prominent in the letter as the publication offer, which becomes especially apparent in the last paragraphs; here, Breasted referred back to Meissner's planned publication. Furthermore, he mentioned the scientific value of Meissner's work for Oriental Studies twice (“substantial contribution to science,” “greatest value to all Orientalists”). In his last sentence, Breasted highlighted the benefits for the field of Meissner's cooperation with the OI (“in our efforts toward a better understanding of the Assyrian language”).

This letter reflects Breasted's strategy of inviting (possible) competitors to avoid competition, a typical habit for the mid-twentieth century (Nickelsen 2014, 362). According to the sociologist of science David Edge, many scientists strategically avoided competition by choosing research topics that were mainstream enough but, at the same time, very distinct in their scientific aims. Through this strategy, they tried to avoid duplication (Edge 1990, 214). The same goes for Breasted. For him, the association with Meissner was very important. Therefore, Breasted allowed Meissner to issue

his studies in German, albeit as part of an American series. Furthermore, in his letter to Meissner, Breasted dedicated considerably more space to the publication proposal than the proposition to work for the CAD. Breasted was avoiding competition with Meissner (and others) and made him a tempting offer instead. Especially since Meissner was a well-established professor in the field, cooperating with him meant that the prestigious German professor and a specialist in Assyrian lexicography supported the CAD project instead of asserting the superiority of his own dictionary project. The cooperation was introduced to the public by issuing Meissner's *Beiträge zum assyrischen Wörterbuch* in a series of the OI. Therefore, the publication was a statement of Meissner's consent to the CAD project. Breasted secured the support of an established and renowned professor in Berlin, an important centre of philology and Oriental Studies. Such cooperation between the OI and renowned scholars reflected well on the reputation of Breasted's newly founded institute.

In conclusion, the cooperation had many benefits for Breasted and his OI. But why did Meissner take Breasted's offer to publish his studies in an OI series? This question can be answered by a close reading of Meissner's reply to Breasted:²⁷

Ich freue mich sehr, dass Sie der Anregung von Prof. Poebel gefolgt sind und mir die Möglichkeit geben wollen, in Chicago "Studien zur assyrischen Lexikographie" herauszugeben. Wie Sie wissen, arbeite ich selbst an einem "Assyrischen Handwörterbuch"; aber dieses soll keine Konkurrenz zu Ihrem Unternehmen sein, sondern es soll nur den grossen Stoff des von mir gesammelten lexikographischen Materials zusammenfassen. Leider geht die Arbeit nicht so schnell vorwärts, wie ich es wünsche. Ich habe zwar bereits 530 Quartseiten Manuskript fertig; aber das ist kaum mehr als ein Zehntel des Ganzen. Ich fürchte, bis zum Abschluss des Buches werden, selbst wenn mir Gott Gesundheit und Kraft schenken sollte, noch 10 Jahre vergehen. Vielleicht können Sie, wenn ich vorher sterben sollte, mein Material für Ihr Werk übernehmen. (Meissner to Breasted on 12 February 1930)

[I am very pleased that you have followed Prof Poebel's suggestion and want to give me the opportunity to publish "Studies in Assyrian Lexicography" in Chicago. As you know, I myself am working on an "Assyrian Dictionary"; however, this is not intended to compete with your undertaking but merely to summarise the large amount of lexicographical material I have collected. Unfortunately, the work is not progressing as quickly as I would like. I have already completed 530 quarto pages of manuscript, but that is hardly more than a tenth of the whole. I fear that even if God should grant me health and strength, another 10 years will pass before the book is finished. Perhaps, if I should die before then, you could take over my material for your work.]

Meissner was hoping for a quick publication of his new interpretations of Akkadian words (in addition to his planned dictionary). He knew the value of his lexicographical research results and the need for an Assyrian dictionary for the field. At the same time, he knew that writing an Assyrian dictionary meant years of work. This is why he wanted his new results published in advance. He was not sure if he could finish

²⁷ For a transcription of the complete letter in German, see the appendix to this chapter.

his dictionary in his lifetime;²⁸ he even offered to give his collected materials to the OI in case he should die before completing his concise dictionary. Additionally, he claimed not to compete with the OI and its CAD project. Like Breasted, Meissner avoided competition and clarified this intent to Breasted.

However, there was another reason why Breasted's offer was advantageous to Meissner. In another letter, Meissner wrote the following to Breasted:

Was das Honorar anlangt, so bin ich natürlich mit Ihrem ersten Vorschlage, mir pro Bogen 300 M [Reichsmark] zu zahlen, einverstanden. Ich vermutete allerdings, dass in Amerika höhere Honorare gezahlt werden würden. Bei wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten erhalten wir ja hier in Deutschland nicht sehr viel für unsere Mühe [. . .]. (Meissner to Breasted on 11 April 1930)

[As far as the honorarium is concerned, I naturally agree with your first proposal to pay me 300 M [German Reichsmark] per sheet. However, I assumed that higher fees would be paid in America. Here in Germany we do not get very much for our efforts when it comes to scientific work . . .]

The correspondence shows that Meissner expected a better payment for publishing in America than he could get in Germany. He originally asked for 100 USD per sheet, an amount equivalent to 419.20 German Reichsmark (Lawrence 2024). When Breasted offered him 300 Reichsmark, he agreed reluctantly. Hence, Breasted's strategy of sending Meissner a publishing offer with an honorarium was successful.

4 Did Breasted and Meissner cooperate or even collaborate?

Meissner accepted Breasted's invitation to publish the results of his lexicographical studies in an OI series called *Assyriological Studies* (AS). The two resulting volumes appeared in 1931 and 1932 under *Beiträge zum Assyrischen Wörterbuch* I (=AS 1) and II (=AS 4).²⁹ When Meissner approached Breasted in 1935 with a manuscript for a third

²⁸ Meissner confessed similar fears and wishes in his inaugural speech for the Prussian Academy of Sciences: "Ob ich es aber allein werde zu Ende führen können, ist mir recht zweifelhaft geworden; denn die Arbeit geht leider nur recht langsam vorwärts. Vielleicht lassen sich aber doch Mittel und Wege finden, daß die Herausgabe des Buches sichergestellt oder wenigstens mein Material an einer Stelle deponiert wird, wo es nach meinem Tode von interessierten Gelehrten benutzt werden kann" (Meissner 1931b, CXXII) [Whether I can finish it alone has become quite doubtful; unfortunately, the work is progressing very slowly. But perhaps ways and means can be found to ensure the book's publication, or at least, to deposit my material in a place where interested scholars can use it after my death].

²⁹ Meissner suggested printing the books with the printing house J. J. Augustin at Glückstadt (near Hamburg) to save printing costs, which were higher in the US. J. J. Augustin specialised in foreign languages and non-Latin scripts such as Greek, Chinese, Arabic, Coptic, Hebrew, Japanese, Sanskrit, hieroglyphs, runes, and cuneiform (Böhning and Boldt 2019, 47, 79–83). The first volume was printed

volume of his *Beiträge zum Assyrischen Wörterbuch*, Breasted rescinded his offer to publish Meissner's research. The great depression affected the OI's publication funds, leaving Breasted with insufficient money to publish Meissner's work.³⁰

In return for publishing the first volume of *Beiträge zum Assyrischen Wörterbuch* (1931), Meissner acknowledged the CAD project in the preface, expressing the wish that its completion would not take too long. However, Meissner at first declined Breasted's invitation to collaborate in the CAD and translate unpublished texts for the OI: "An den Übersetzungen neuer assyrischer Texte, nach denen Sie fragen, möchte ich mich nicht beteiligen, weil ich sonst mit meiner eigenen Arbeit zu sehr ins Hintertreffen kommen [sic!] würde" (Meissner to Breasted on 11 April 1930) [I do not want to take part in the translations of new Assyrian texts that you are asking for because I would fall too far behind with my own work]. The correspondence between Breasted and Meissner, which lasted until 1935, shows that Meissner sent Breasted some of his publications that he considered useful for the CAD (Darr to Meissner on 25 April 1930).³¹ However, he did not send unpublished materials to the CAD until later.

In Breasted's description of the CAD project, he mentioned the connection with Meissner as follows: "Professor Bruno Meissner of Berlin agreed to furnish a series of contributions to our new 'Assyriological Studies,' and invitations to collaborate were sent to a group of other European and American scholars" (Breasted 1933, 390). With this sentence, Breasted implied a cooperation between Meissner and the OI. However, he did not include Meissner in the list of CAD collaborators.

Nonetheless, later records show that Meissner changed his mind about cooperating with the CAD. Even though he never abandoned his own plans for this dictionary, nor did he send the manuscripts for his concise dictionary to Breasted for the use of the CAD, he did prepare materials for the CAD. In a list of collaborators of the CAD and their payment in 1935, Poebel mentioned Meissner twice, once in regard to his publication within the OI series and a second time as a collaborator who provided the

and bound in Glückstadt and shipped to Chicago, where it was rebound in order to add some preliminary pages. The second volume was again printed in Glückstadt, but this time the unbound flat sheets were sent to Chicago, where they were bound and published by the University of Chicago Press (Correspondence of the University of Chicago Press about *Assyriological Studies* nos. 1–3 of the Oriental Institute 1930–1931). The OI and the University of Chicago Press maintained their connection to J. J. Augustin in Germany, and the CAD volumes were composed by the University of Chicago Press and J. J. Augustin until 1984.

30 "The deliberate and intentional depreciation of the dollar by the government of the United States has involved the Oriental Institute in difficulties. [. . .] I regret to say that we shall be obliged to terminate this arrangement for further publication of your Assyrian Dictionary contributions" (Breasted to Meissner on 6 June 1935). After this letter, the next volume of the *Assyriological Studies* series appeared in 1940, in contrast to the years from 1931 to 1934, when one or two volumes appeared each year. The situation Breasted described, referring to the impact of the Great Depression on the finances of the OI, concurs with the publication list of those years.

31 Robert J. Darr was Breasted's assistant, who replied to Meissner on Breasted's instruction.

CAD with texts (Poebel to Breasted on 1 February 1935). According to Poebel's list, Meissner contributed texts referred to as "Magic" and "Hittite Letter." In the first volume of the CAD, the later editor of the CAD, Ignace Jay Gelb (1907–1985), named Meissner as a collaborator of the CAD, who had submitted his assigned work at least partly. Many collaborators did not finish their tasks, and the OI staff had to edit and translate many texts initially assigned to someone else. According to Gelb, Meissner was assigned the Šurpu series and corrections of Leonard W. King's edition *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery* (1896). Both text collections fit Poebel's description of "Magic" assigned to Meissner. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Meissner ever prepared the Šurpu series, which is a collection of Sumerian and Akkadian incantations, prayers, and instructions for magical practices. These texts were later edited by Erica Reiner, who described the preliminary work that had been done by Chicago staff members on these texts in the foreword of her edition. She did not indicate that Meissner was a previous editor (Reiner 1958, III).

Consequently, the relationship between Breasted and Meissner regarding their dictionary projects differs from the cooperation between the OI and other scholars who only prepared unpublished materials for the CAD. This leads to the question of whether the term *cooperation* is an appropriate description of Breasted and Meissner's association. In a letter to Meissner, Breasted explicitly called their exchange cooperation: "May I express to you our pleasure in cooperating with you in this great responsibility for the production of an adequate Assyrian Dictionary?" (Breasted to Meissner on 17 September 1930). However, cooperation is a multifaceted notion.

In the theory of *cooperation*, the term refers to an interaction between two or more parties that have positively interdependent goals and act accordingly, often making sacrifices on an individual level. *Collaboration*, on the other hand, is a stronger form of cooperation that includes shared work contexts (Nickelsen 2014, 356). Applying this theory to our case study, we see that there is no shared work context in the case of Breasted and Meissner. They did not unite their dictionary projects or abort one project in favour of the other. Nor did either of the parties sacrifice anything in pursuit of a joint goal. On the contrary, the dictionaries differed in their aims. Since there was no duplication in the projects, the two scholars continued their individual projects in parallel. Therefore, neither the stronger term collaboration nor the weaker term cooperation describes Breasted and Meissner's interaction.

Nevertheless, they both benefitted from their arrangement: Meissner openly approved of the OI and its CAD project by publishing his lexicographical research in an OI series. By doing so, he diminished any claims to the superiority and originality of his own dictionary. Still, this was good for the OI's reputation: it publicly engaged a possible competitor in what they openly referred to as cooperation. This is especially crucial since Breasted avoided conflicts with other scholars and institutions. The CAD and, thus, the OI gained acknowledgement through the collaboration with, and the support of, many European and American specialists. Including others in OI publications was an important strategy that Breasted used to establish the newly formed OI

globally. Meissner benefitted from the arrangement both in terms of time (with the opportunity it provided to publish quickly), and financially, since he received a more generous honorarium than he could have earned in Germany.

So, what term would best describe Breasted and Meissner's relationship? I suggest using the term *connection*. Even though Breasted and Meissner did not collaborate in the sense defined above – specifically, they avoided combining their dictionaries into a joint effort – they did publicly support each other's dictionaries by publishing Meissner's preliminary lexicographical results within the OI series *Assyriological Studies*. Thus, this chapter describes connection as a new form of interaction, in addition to already established concepts such as collaboration and cooperation.

Connection is a form of public acknowledgement and support, denying any form of competition. It benefits both parties without sharing unpublished research results or working for the other party's project. Instead, a connection offers legitimisation by mutually recognising and supporting each other's project. Hence, in order to form a connection, both parties need to publicly acknowledge and promote each other (in a publication or a public speech). Furthermore, creating a bond between projects, institutions, or people can weaken other competitors. However, connections can be time-limited; they may gradually fade, be broken up by one or both parties, or evolve into a cooperation.

The case of Breasted and Meissner presents a very literal example of Connected Philology in the past. The two scholars connected their dictionary projects (two philological projects). This interaction shows how different philologies – in the sense of different philological disciplines – influenced, supported, and engaged with one another. When Breasted and Meissner studied Semitic languages in Berlin, their respective disciplines were part of a broader philological curriculum. During the 1930s, the time they (re)connected, the process of specialisation and differentiation of academic disciplines was further enhanced. While different scholarly backgrounds (disciplines, teachers, schools) defined applied practices, they were also influenced by connections, collaborations, or competition between scholars or projects within the same field or across disciplines.

But what happened to Breasted's and Meissner's dictionary projects? Despite the help of many international collaborators of the CAD, the first volume of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary was not released until 1956, and the final one of the twenty-one volumes appeared only in 2010. Breasted died before any of the results of his long-time project had been published. The same holds true for Meissner, who had almost completed the manuscript for the first volume of his concise dictionary when he died in 1947. His collected materials, however, were not given to the CAD project, as Meissner suggested in his letter to Breasted (on 12 February 1930). He left his academic legacy to the Inner Mission of the Evangelic Church for Berlin-Brandenburg, which gave the lexicographical materials to Wolfram von Soden (1908–1996), Meissner's successor to the chair of Assyriology in Berlin (von Soden 1965). Meissner was explicitly opposed to the appointment of von Soden as his successor because he considered him too inexperienced. Additionally, Meissner suspected that von Soden's supervisor, Benno Landsberger (1890–1968), a Jewish Assyriologist, had written large parts of his pupil's dis-

sertation. According to Johannes Renger, who evaluated Meissner's personnel file in Berlin, the scholarly rivalry between Meissner's Berlin School of Assyriology and Landsberger's Leipzig School was the underlying cause for Meissner's rejection of von Soden (Renger 2022, 311).³² The personnel file shows that Meissner originally suggested (1) Arno Poebel, (2) Erich Ebeling, (3) Ernst Friedrich Weidner, and (4) Carl Frank as possible candidates for the professorship of Assyriology in Berlin. The appointments committee replaced Meissner's suggestions of Poebel, Weidner, and Frank with Albert Schott and Wolfram von Soden. After that, Meissner tried to support the appointment of Ebeling, but he was disqualified by having refused to join the Nazi Party (Renger 2022, 311; in addition to Meissner undated, probably 1936). In the end, von Soden, a committed Nazi (Vacín and Raulwing 2025, 335–338), succeeded Meissner as the chair of Assyriology in Berlin and continued Meissner's work on a concise dictionary (*Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*), which he eventually published in three volumes (1965, 1972, 1981).

Both projects show that the compilations of Akkadian dictionaries were long-time projects that exceeded the capacity of a single scholar. The solution to succeeding with big science projects, therefore, lies in connection, cooperation, or collaboration.

Appendix

Copy of a letter written by Breasted to Meissner on 18 January 1930, Director's Correspondence, box 91, folder 3, ISAC Museum Archives, Chicago

My dear Colleague,

You will perhaps recall that many years ago, when we were both students under Professor Sachau, we used occasionally to meet in his seminar at his house in the Wormserstrasse. I have always remembered with pleasure this early association with you as I have watched your rise in the field of Assyriology to the commanding position in this science which you now occupy. Your two volumes on Babylonian and Assyrian civilization are the most comprehensive and valuable guides on this subject which I have in my library.

I am writing you now especially because I have, within the last year for the first time, learned of your great interest in Assyrian lexicography. When my friend, Luckenbill, urged me to organize a staff in our Oriental Institute for the compilation of an Assyrian Dictionary, about eight years ago, I did not know of your interest in this subject, and it is only recently that I have heard from my colleagues that you have long been actually engaged in producing a dictionary of the Assyrian language.

³² See Vacín and Raulwing (2025, 343–346) for more information on the controversy between the Meissner and Landsberger school.

Our mutual friend, Poebel, who is soon to join our staff here, has written us that you would be interested to begin to publish as soon as possible some of the results of your special studies of particular Assyrian words. We would be very glad if you would associate yourself with us in this enterprise, and the Oriental Institute would undertake to publish your investigations in a single volume, – let us say of twenty-five to thirty Bogen (450 to 500 pages). This volume would be published in the best possible form by our University Press, which is, mechanically speaking, one of the finest presses in America.

With reference to your remuneration, – let me say as you already know, that it is not easy in any country to secure publication subventions. Owing to the death of my colleague, Luckenbill, the progress of the Assyrian Dictionary has been somewhat delayed and it has proven a longer and much costlier project than we had at first planned. Nevertheless, the Institute would be able to offer you for a volume of Word Studies in Assyrian an honorarium of 300 marks a Bogen, – or, for a maximum total of thirty Bogen, a total honorarium of 9,000 marks.

If you find it possible to enter into this arrangement we would be glad to receive the material as fast as you find it possible to prepare it. If you wished to issue the publication in parts, as fast as you had put together four or five Bogen, we would be glad to arrange that these should be issued in this way, and after you had finished the series, that they should be bound together forming one volume under the general title, "Word Studies in Assyrian," or "Assyrian Word Studies." I take it that you would prefer to have the book appear in your own native German, rather than to have it translated, and if this is the case we can easily arrange to print the entire work in German.

Meantime, if you have any manuscript translations of New Assyrian documents, or hitherto unsatisfactorily translated documents, would it be possible to make some arrangement with you by which your translations might be carefully typewritten at our expense and an appropriate remuneration paid to you? I might add that the translation of a considerable range of ancient Assyrian documents for our Dictionary has already been made, and it would be necessary for us to take up with our Editor, Professor Chiera, the question of just what documents we could use, as we would like to avoid duplication with the work of other collaborators.

I am quite well aware that the publication of your long-continued studies of the Assyrian language, and especially of rare and difficult words, will be a substantial contribution to science and one of the greatest value to all Orientalists. We would look forward, therefore, with especial interest and pleasure to your association with the Oriental Institute in our efforts toward a better understanding of the Assyrian language.

Hoping that we may be able to make such an arrangement, therefore, I remain, with all good wishes and kindest regards

Very sincerely yours,

Letter by Meissner to Breasted on 12 February 1930, Director's Correspondence, box 91, folder 3, ISAC Museum Archives, Chicago

Sehr geehrter Herr Kollege!

Ich freue mich sehr, dass Sie der Anregung von Prof. Poebel gefolgt sind und mir die Möglichkeit geben wollen, in Chicago "Studien zur assyrischen Lexikographie" herauszugeben. Wie Sie wissen, arbeite ich selbst an einem "Assyrischen Handwörterbuch"; aber dieses soll keine Konkurrenz zu Ihrem Unternehmen sein, sondern es soll nur den grossen Stoff des von mir gesammelten lexikographischen Materials zusammenfassen. Leider geht die Arbeit nicht so schnell vorwärts, wie ich es wünsche. Ich habe zwar bereits 530 Quartseiten Manuskript fertig; aber das ist kaum mehr als ein Zehntel des Ganzen. Ich fürchte, bis zum Abschluss des Buches werden, selbst wenn mir Gott Gesundheit und Kraft schenken sollte, noch 10 Jahre vergehen. Vielleicht können Sie, wenn ich vorher sterben sollte, mein Material für Ihr Werk übernehmen.

Nun ist es ganz selbstverständlich, dass bei meinen Arbeiten eine Reihe neuer Funde zu Tage tritt, einerseits weil ich von der Interpretation meiner Vorgänger abweiche, andererseits weil ich eine Menge unpublizierter Texte zur Verfügung habe, wodurch vielfach strittige Fragen gelöst werden. Ich habe mir nun gedacht, diese neuen Funde, um sie nicht zu lange in meinem Manuskript zurückzuhalten, in Form von "Untersuchungen zur assyrischen Lexikographie" schon jetzt der Öffentlichkeit zu übergeben. Eine Anzahl derartiger Untersuchungen habe ich ja bereits in meinen "Asyriologischen Studien" und an anderen Orten veröffentlicht.

Mir persönlich würde es am liebsten sein und Ihnen vielleicht auch – schon um der Öffentlichkeit in Bälde etwas zeigen zu können –, wenn diese Untersuchungen in Lieferungen von etwa 5 Bogen erscheinen könnten. Ich habe bis jetzt im Manuskript etwa 4 Bogen fertig; dazu brauchte ich nur eine kurze Einleitung zu schreiben und noch einige weitere Artikel, zu denen das Material natürlich vorhanden ist, um dann in einigen Monaten bereits die erste Lieferung vorlegen zu können. Was die Sprache der Veröffentlichung anlangt, so wäre mir das Deutsche natürlich lieber. Mein Englisch ist jedenfalls zu mässig, um das Manuskript selbst in Englisch herstellen zu können. Falls Sie besonderen Wert darauf legen, müsste die Arbeit eben ins Englische übersetzt werden. Dass der Druck hier in Deutschland hergestellt wird, wäre gewiss praktisch; denn er würde dadurch [sic!] sicherlich sehr beschleunigt werden. Wir haben ja hier so gute Druckereien (ich erinnere nur an Drugulin, Pries, Holzhausen etc.), dass die Ausstattung gewiss würdig ausfallen wird. Das Honorar hätte ich lieber in Dollars als in RM., weil der erste gewiss wertbeständiger ist als die zweite. Ich möchte Sie bitten, mir als Honorar pro Bogen (etwa im Umfange des AJSL.) wenigstens 100 Dollars zu bewilligen, und verspreche Ihnen, dass Sie dafür wirklich Material erhalten werden, das Ihnen für Ihre Assyrisches Wörterbuch gute Dienste leisten wird.

An den Uebersetzungen neuer assyrischer Texte, nach denen Sie fragen, möchte ich mich nicht beteiligen, weil ich sonst mit meiner eigenen Arbeit zu sehr ins Hintertreffen kommen [sic!] würde. Aber vielleicht könnte ich Ihnen zwei meiner Schüler

empfehlen: Einer, Herr Dr. Schaawe, hat die Harper'schen Briefe auch sprachlich recht genau durchgearbeitet; ein anderer, Herr Dr. Krückmann, hat vor kurzem eine sehr hübsche Arbeit über die juristischen Texte aus der Seleuzidenzeit [sic!] gemacht, in der das sehr zerstreute Material vollständig gesammelt hat. Es würde ihm ein Leichtes sein, Ihnen eine Bearbeitung dieser Inschriften zu geben.

Anfang März gehe ich für etwa 4 Wochen nach Joachimstal, um dort Radiumbäder zu nehmen. Hoffentlich finde ich nach meiner Rückkehr bereits eine Nachricht von Ihnen vor, dass wir mit dem Druck dann bald beginnen können.

Mit den besten Empfehlungen bin ich

Ihr sehr ergebener

Bruno Meissner. [signed]

PS. Ich habe mir erlaubt, Ihnen das letzteHeft [sic!] meiner "Studien zur assyrischen Lexikographie" mit der gleichen Post als Drucksache zuzuschicken [sic!].

D.O. [signed]

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