

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE *BIBLIA HEBRAICA QUINTA* — AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD

#### 1. *Background*

When the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* reaches completion around 2010 (?), it will be a century since the appearance of the first editions of the *Biblia Hebraica*.<sup>1</sup> A century is a long time, and indeed the first editions are very primitive when compared with *BHQ*. *BHQ* also greatly improves upon *BHS* that will have been in print for some thirty years by that time. Many developments in the field of textual criticism, as well as in the realm of *Editionstechnik* necessitated a new edition of the type of *BHQ*. *BHS* remains the most frequently used edition in the field, but since much criticism has been voiced against it, the time was considered ripe for a change as the *BH* series is constantly being renewed. The organizing bodies<sup>2</sup> could not have found a better general editor than Adrian Schenker who embodies all the qualities needed for this job: insight and innovation in textual criticism, understanding of the delicate relations between textual criticism, exegesis, and literary criticism, organizational talent, and clarity of thinking. He and the organizing bodies behind the edition were able to gather a fine group of specialists, both the general editors and the individuals responsible for the biblical books. These scholars constitute an international and ecumenical team including, for the first time in the *BH* series, Jewish scholars.

*BHQ* (*Quinta* = Fifth) may not be the ideal name for this edition due to the ongoing confusion regarding the numbering of the editions in the *BH* series, and because of the possible confusion with the name *BQ* (*Biblia Qumranica*). Be that as it may, with the publication of a sample edition of

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<sup>1</sup> *BH* (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>d</sup> editions; ed. R. Kittel; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905, 1913; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; ed. R. Kittel and P. Kahle; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1929–1937; “7<sup>th</sup> ed.” 1951). The term “seventh edition” (see title page and p. XXXIX) is misleading, as *BHS* is considered to be the fourth edition and *BHQ* the fifth. For the confusion, see the title page: *editionem tertiam denuo elaboratam ad finem perduxerunt, editionem septimam auxerunt et emendaverunt A. Alt et O. Eissfeldt*.

<sup>2</sup> The initiative comes from the United Bible Societies, while the German Bible Society serves as the sponsor (see “General Introduction,” VII).

the book of Ruth in 1998<sup>3</sup> and now with the publication of Part 18 of *BHQ* (C + 96 + 168\* pp.), a beginning was made to this important edition. The present edition contains the following elements:

“General Introduction” in English (pp. VII–XXVI), German (pp. XXVII–L), and Spanish (pp. L–LXXI)

Figures (pp. LXXIII–LXXV) illustrating the system of annotation

List of sigla, symbols, and abbreviations (pp. LXXV–LXXXIV)

Definitions and abbreviations for the terms used to characterize readings (pp. LXXXV–XCIV)

Glossary of common terms in the Masorah Parva (pp. XCV–XCVII)

Table of Accents (pp. XCIX–C)

Edition of the Five Megillot (pp. 1–96)

Detailed introductions and commentaries to each of the Megillot (pp. 5\*–150\*)

Bibliography (pp. 151\*–68\*).

Altogether, this first fascicle contains 364 pages. The final edition of the complete Bible will be of different proportions, as the text editions will be separated from the commentaries.

## 2. *The System as Described in the “General Introduction”*

The history of the *preparations* for the edition and its background are well described in the “General Introduction” (pp. XII ff). Many details and principles that may not be clear to the first-time user are clarified. The extremely detailed, judicious work by HOTTP since 1969 has not been in vain, since the editorial principles of the present editorial board (Y. A. P. Goldman, A. van der Kooij, G. J. Norton, S. Pisano, J. de Waard, R. D. Weis, with A. Schenker as director) continue those of the earlier HOTTP committee (counting as members such eminent scholars as D. Barthélemy, A. R. Hulst, N. Lohfink, W. D. McHardy, H. P. Rüger, and J. A. Sanders). I say “has not been in vain,” since the masterpieces of textual scholarship edited by D. Barthélemy and others have not received the attention in scholarship that they deserve. Probably better known were the volumes which laid out the working principles of these scholars (HOTTP), while the volumes providing the detailed description of the text-critical cases (*Critique textuelle*) were less known, probably because the system followed was less practical for critical scholarship.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (ed. A. Schenker et al.), *Fasciculus extra seriem: Megilloth, Ruth* (ed. J. de Waard; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> These volumes commented only on textual differences between *modern* translations (RSV, NEB, *Bible de Jérusalem*, *Revidierte Luther Bibel*), discussed in great detail by the committee, which usually opted for the Masoretic reading. The very detailed discussion in these volumes was too technical for Bible translators, and the choice of readings discussed was unrealistic for the textual critic. At the same time, it should be noted that when taken

The “General Introduction” describes the history of the *BH* series, without entering into too much detail regarding the different philosophies espoused in earlier editions. The issues raised in this introduction are reviewed here, as judged from their application in the edition itself.

a. The presentation of the *base text* of the *BH* series, codex L, is brought to an absolute state of perfection. The editorial committee brought aboard A. Dotan, the connoisseur *par excellence* of the text and Masorah of that codex. The intricacies of the presentation of the codex are described in the introduction, but since Dotan participates in this edition (for the Masorah, as the title page states), the reader would like to know what the differences are in the presentation of codex L in *BHQ* and in the two diplomatic editions of the same codex which bear Dotan’s own name.<sup>5</sup> As *BHQ* deviates occasionally from L (note the remarks in the “General Introduction,” IX–X), how does the presentation of the text in this edition compare with Dotan’s system in his own editions? The editorial board is aware of the limitations of L (some mistakes, some missing vocalizations, its relative distance from Aaron Ben Moshe Ben-Asher’s system as opposed to the closeness of the Aleppo Codex to that system), and accordingly considered other options (the Aleppo codex or a combination of sources), but ultimately decided to adhere to L, not least because a proofread electronic version of that codex was already available (“General Introduction,” IX).

b. A major change in the *presentation of the Masorah* is that the Masorah Magna is now provided in full immediately below the printed text, in contrast to the conglomeration of cryptic numbers appearing in *BHS*, cross-referring to lists in Weil’s edition of the Masorah.<sup>6</sup> The system in *BHS* was indeed very unusual, and one wonders how many users ever looked up a detail in the Masorah Magna in Weil’s edition. The Masorah of L is now presented more or less diplomatically, including its mistakes and discrepancies with the text of L itself (commented upon in the notes), and with the addition of modern verse numbers, not needed by the masters of the Masorah themselves. A detailed commentary on the notes of the Masorah, in English (pp. 25\*–50\*), introduces the reader to its treasures and clarifies many an ambiguity.

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together, Barthélemy’s masterly introductions to the individual volumes form an almost complete introduction to textual criticism.

<sup>5</sup> A. Dotan, תורה נביאים וכתובים מדויקים היטב על פי הניקוד הטעמים והמסורה של אהרן בן משה בן אשר, (Tel Aviv: Adi, 1976); *Biblia Hebraica Leningradiensia* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> G. E. Weil, *Massorah Gedolah manuscrit B.19a de Léningrad*, vol. I *Catalogi* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1971).

c. As the principle chosen for the *inclusion of details in the apparatus*, “[t]he editors intend that, so far as possible, the apparatus will include all cases of variation in these witnesses that meet two general criteria for inclusion. First, such a variation is judged to be text-critically significant. ... Second, it is judged to be potentially significant for translation or exegesis” (“General Introduction,” XIII). The first criterion is seemingly self-evident,<sup>7</sup> although the significance of many readings included in the apparatus is not obvious, especially when secondary readings are involved. The second criterion probably encompasses almost all variations, since almost any variation is of interest at some exegetical level, if exegesis is understood to include linguistic development, orthography, and even scribal errors in Qumran scrolls (see below). These definitions have to be kept in mind as the following paragraph indicates that *BHQ* innovates in the direction of including more variations than previous editions.

d. *Formulaic explanations*. The apparatus contains a long series of formulaic explanations of the background of deviations from MT in the versions which are explained as exegetical rather than pointing to Hebrew variants. See further chapter 18\*, § 3 β 5.

e. *Exegetical variations*. The principle of including any variation that is “potentially significant for translation or exegesis” involves the recording of many variations from the versions and the Qumran scrolls which are indeed relevant to biblical exegesis and the history of the transmission of the biblical text (§ d above). In these cases, *BHQ* offers more than just the data, as a judicious analysis on the textual commentary usually rules out the possibility that these are primary (original) readings or (in the case of the ancient versions) that these exegetical renderings are based on Hebrew variants differing from MT (for examples, see § d above). However, one wonders whether the editors rendered the readers, especially the less experienced among them, a good service. Would it not have been better to record these readings in a separate apparatus, or possibly not at all? After all, many of these readings do not belong to a critical apparatus of a textual edition (see below). In my view, this type of recording should be left for *borderline* cases in which it is unclear whether the translational deviation reflects the translator’s exegesis or a Hebrew/Aramaic variant, and should not be employed when the editors themselves suggest that a reading in a Qumran scroll reflects an obvious mistake, or when a

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<sup>7</sup> The editors are aware that not all these variations reflect Hebrew variants: “In other words, the reading arguably, but *not necessarily* <my italics, E. T.>, represents a Hebrew text differing from the edition’s base text” (“General Introduction,” XIII).

translation reflects content exegesis. For example, in the case of Esther, the paraphrastic character of the LXX and Targum is well established, and therefore the exegetical notes referring to these translations probably should have been far fewer in number since almost certainly they do not bear on text-critical issues. However, *BHQ* decided to break new ground with this novel type of notation.<sup>8</sup>

The principles behind this system have been adopted from the *HUB*<sup>9</sup> and, more so than that publication, they make the edition less user-friendly.<sup>10</sup> However, while the *HUB* only contains borderline cases between exegesis and the reflection of possible variants in the translation, *BHQ* records many instances of exegetical renderings in the versions.

f. *Textual and literary criticism.* *BHQ* heralds a major change in approach towards textual data that, according to the editors, should be evaluated with literary rather than textual tools since they involve data that may reflect literary editions of a biblical book different from MT, and are therefore absolved from textual judgment.<sup>11</sup> For an analysis, see chapter 18\*, § 3 β.

g. *Cautious evaluation.* *BHQ* presents reconstructed variants from the versions more cautiously than in the past, but stops short of making a direct link between a reconstructed reading preferred by that edition, and the text of the version (this practice is carried over from *BHS*). For an analysis, see chapter 18\*, § 3 β.

h. *The manuscripts from the Judean Desert* are fully recorded in *BHQ*, including both significant readings—possibly preferable to the readings of MT and/or the LXX—and those that are secondary. For an analysis, see chapter 18\*, § 3 β.

i. *Medieval manuscripts.* The reduction in the number of medieval manuscripts covered is a distinct improvement. For an analysis, see chapter 18\*, § 3 β.

j. *Conservative approach to evaluations.* Textual evaluations in *BHQ* are very conservative when compared with earlier editions in the *BH* series.

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<sup>8</sup> The “General Introduction,” XIII, is well aware that the novelty of this type of recording transcends the textual treatment of the Hebrew Bible in the past, but the editors nevertheless decided to include notes illustrating the translators’ exegesis.

<sup>9</sup> Thus R. D. Weis, “*Biblia Hebraica Quinta* and the Making of Critical Editions of the Hebrew Bible,” *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 7 (2002) [<http://purl.org/TC>], § 16.

<sup>10</sup> The notation of *BHQ* is more complicated than that of the *HUB*, since in the latter edition the explanations are included in a separate apparatus of notes, while in *BHQ* the evidence is adduced *together* with its explanation in a single apparatus.

<sup>11</sup> See chapter 18\*, n. 61.

Thus, while in Canticles in *BHS*, 32 variants are preferred to MT,<sup>12</sup> the editor of *BHQ* makes only three<sup>13</sup> such suggestions (phrased as “pref”).<sup>14</sup> In all other cases, the text of MT is preferred.<sup>15</sup> By the same token, in Ruth, compared with seven instances of a preference for a non-Masoretic reading in *BHS*, *BHQ* prefers only one, in 4:4;<sup>16</sup> there are no conjectures in the apparatus. In *BHS* in Lamentations, 49 preferences<sup>17</sup> for readings other than MT are matched with only 7 similar preferences in *BHQ*. No conjectures are recorded in the latter apparatus.

k. *Ancient Versions*. The apparatus contains an extensive presentation of the evidence, fuller than in *BHS*, well documented and described in the Introductions (pp. 5\*–24\*). On the whole, the treatment of the versions is better and definitely more careful than in the past. Among other things, secondary versions made from the LXX such as the Old Latin are now quoted only when they differ from the Old Greek, and they are not quoted alongside that translation.

l. *Retroversions*. The apparatus contains an extensive presentation of the textual evidence that is at variance with the main text, MT as represented by codex L. For an analysis, see chapter 18\*, § 3 β.

m. *User-friendly edition?* On the whole, *BHQ* is much richer in data, more mature, judicious and cautious than its predecessors; this advancement implies more complex notations which almost necessarily render this edition less user-friendly for the non-expert. The juxtaposition in the apparatus of a wealth of exegetical readings and important variants as well as some of the complex explanations in the introduction will be grasped only by the sophisticated scholar. I do not think that *BHQ* can live up to its own ideal: “As was true for its predecessors, this edition of *Biblia Hebraica* is intended as a *Handausgabe* for use by scholars, clergy, translators, and students who are not necessarily specialists in textual criticism ... specialists in textual criticism should also find the edition of use, even though it is not principally intended for them” (“General Introduction,” p. VIII). The commentary

<sup>12</sup> Textual suggestions in *BHS* are phrased in different ways, sometimes in conjunction with question marks or words such as “probably.” I counted 23 cases of “lege,” one case of “prps,” 2 cases of a gloss, two instances of “transpose,” one case of “delete,” two suggestions of additions, and one of an insertion.

<sup>13</sup> Cant 4:12; 7:7, 10. Preferences of *Ketiv* to *Qere* or vice versa are not included.

<sup>14</sup> In addition, in Cant 2:14, the apparatus mentions a conjecture in vocalization.

<sup>15</sup> In the words of the editor, “The text of Canticles is well preserved,” p. 8\*.

<sup>16</sup> In the words of the editor (p. 5\*): “The Masoretic Text in M<sup>L</sup> has been very well preserved.” The author probably meant: The text of Ruth has been well preserved in MT according to codex L.

<sup>17</sup> I counted 19 cases of “lege,” 19 of “prps,” one instance of “transpose,” 7 cases of “delete,” one of “add,” and two of “insert.”

and the introductions (see below) go a long way in bridging the gap for the non-specialist, but I do believe that the specialist will grasp the finesses of the sophistication better than the non-specialist who will often be confused. Time will tell whether this assessment is correct.

### 3. *The Commentary and Introductions*

The publication of a detailed textual commentary (pp. 51\*–150\*) in which difficult readings are discussed, including an analysis of all readings preferred to MT, represents a great step forward from all other editions. The discussion describes all the relevant issues and is usually thorough and judicious. The readings discussed present textual problems, for all of which an opinion is expressed. One of the many advantages of this commentary is that it discusses conjectures such as those suggested for MT שָׁמַן הוֹרֵק in Cant 1:3 regardless of their acceptance by the editors. In the reading quoted from Canticles, the difficulties of the MT wording are analyzed, but the editor (P. D. Dirksen) does not feel that any other reading is preferable to MT.

The strength of a commentary is in the relation between the generalizations and the detailed remarks. Indeed, the authors of the commentaries constantly deduct generalizations from details, and explain details according to what is known from comparable instances.

Within this framework, much attention is given to the Hebrew and translational base texts, described at length in the “General Introduction” and the individual commentaries on the Five Megillot. The “General Introduction” describes codex L (pp. XVIII–XX) and eight other Tiberian manuscripts (pp. XX–XXV) at length. The other sources are evaluated in the beginning of the commentary to each biblical book. These descriptions are very useful as they describe in detail the character of the individual witnesses such as the LXX and especially their text-critical value. Although the descriptions are brief, they show that the editors have a real grasp of the material, and many a brief note may lead others to continue these investigations. Thus the note about the relation between the LXX and Peshitta in Ruth (“the translator of S apparently did not use G in any consistent way” [p. 7\*]) is very instructive. In Canticles, the introduction mentions orthographic variations not entered in the apparatus. On p. 9\*, the differences in intervals between the collated Tiberian manuscripts of Canticles are listed. One also finds a helpful summary of the main secondary features of the scrolls recorded in the apparatus itself. There is even a brief summary on the research of the relation between LXX-Cant and *kaige*-Th in that book. The

commentary on Qohelet contains a good critique of Rahlfs's edition that is accused of being too close to MT.

#### 4. *Sigla and Abbreviations*

The use of sigla and abbreviations in *BHQ* shows that this edition has entered a new era. No longer does it operate in a world of its own, but instead follows the *SBL Handbook of Style* and the *Chicago Manual of Style*. It no longer refers to the Septuagint but to the "Old Greek" (p. LXXVI). On the other hand, in the case of the Dead Sea Scrolls, *BHQ* uses the outdated list of J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Major Publications and Tools for Study* from 1990, and not the summarizing list in *DJD XXXIX* that is usually employed by scholars.<sup>18</sup>

For the first time in the history of the *Editionsgeschichte* of Hebrew Scripture, and possibly for the first time in the history of the textual criticism of that literature, the editors try to express in abstract terms the relation between the reading of MT and the other readings in categories of relevance and irrelevance. These relationships are explained in the "General Introduction" as "The typology underlying the characterizations" (pp. LXXXV–LXXXVIII). In these four pages, the editors summarize their textual *Weltanschauung* in a way that will be helpful only for the most sophisticated readers imaginable, but they, too, should be allowed to look inside the think tank of the *BHQ*.

The first category of relations between MT and the "other" reading pertains to the relevance of that reading or rendering (in *BHQ*'s terminology: the "case") to the text-critical problem. The following types of readings are characterized "as not bearing on the issue in the case" [strange English, incidentally]: "illegible", "insufficient", "indeterminate", "irrelevant" and "literary". "Literary" is a strange bedfellow with the other descriptions, but the principle is clear. The bottom line is that all these cases have no bearing on text-critical evaluation, although the categories themselves are very different.

The other groups of readings have some bearing on "the case" (thus explained on p. LXXXV): "II: characterizations of one reading as differing from another, identifying only the point of difference" (the only example given is "differ", with various sub-divisions). Group III contains "characterizations of one reading as representing a type of change from another reading, but not commenting on the motivation of the change."

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<sup>18</sup> For the biblical scrolls, the differences may be small, but not all scrolls appear in Fitzmyer's list. For the non-biblical scrolls, which are quoted in *BHQ*, the differences are more substantial.



The following phenomena are listed in this group: “conflation, double reading/translation, gloss, metathesis, omission, spontaneous, transposition,” but it is unclear why all these phenomena are named “changes.” All these phenomena describe textual situations that make a reading (usually a variant) different from the reading of MT, but a “difference” is not a “change,” as the latter implies an intention. But even if we mentally translate “change” to “difference,”<sup>19</sup> are these the only phenomena of this kind? In our view, the next group, IV, “characterizations of a reading as representing a change arising through accident” is also wider than indicated. The following phenomena are included in this category: dittography, haplography, homoioarcton and homoioteleuton. Indeed, all these phenomena have arisen through accident, creating a difference (named “change” in *BHQ*) between the variant and the reading of MT. But these are not the only readings that have been created by “accident”. Similar phenomena are mentioned elsewhere in *BHQ*’s categorization: conflation, double reading, metathesis, omission.

There is no need for further analysis of the categories, but the details in this particular categorization are problematical. It is hard to know for whom this abstract system of subdividing the descriptions into different categories is helpful. It almost sounds as if these pages were written primarily as guidelines for the collaborators in the project.

All the *abbreviations* of the sources and terms used (LXXVI–LXXXIV) are the standard abbreviations and are clearly explained.<sup>20</sup>

The description of the “alphabetical list of the characterizations and their definitions” is usually helpful and it definitely breaks new ground, enabling the readers to understand such standard explanations as “harmonization, interpretation, paraphrase, translational adjustment,” etc. Most of the “abbreviations” are briefly explained in the list of that name, and the explanations used in the apparatus (named “characterizations” on p. LXXXVIII) are explained in full on pp. LXXXVIII–XCIV. However, not all abbreviations and definitions are equally clear.

- Ampl(ification) is described as a scribal phenomenon. The definition on p. LXXXVIII

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<sup>19</sup> This problem in terminology obtains throughout the introduction, and the reader gets the impression that the wrong term is used all over: whenever *BHQ* mentions a “change,” probably a “difference” is meant. Furthermore, the lack of distinction between reading and variant (that is a Hebrew entity) on the one hand and rendering (in an ancient translation) on the other further complicates the use of this list.

<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the complicated explanations of “ast” and “obelos” are completely unintelligible. “Smr” for SP represents an unusual and probably misleading abbreviation.

adds: “‘Amp[er]’ is to be distinguished from ‘lit[er]’ in that the former refers to developments within the textual transmission of a single edition of a book, whereas the latter presupposes the survival of more than one edition of a book.” While the theory behind this description is acceptable, it seems that the reader/user will be confused by the terms used.

- Confl(ation) is described as “a reading arising from the merging of two otherwise attested readings.” Is one to assume that all confluations presuppose the survival of the two readings?
- Crpp “signals a judgment that the text is disturbed in some way...” Is “disturbed” the right term?
- Div: It is unclear what “div” stands for on p. LXXXI (“division of the consonantal text”) [to increase the confusion, this abbreviation stands for “divine” in the apparatus of the *HUB*]. Does this abbreviation refer to differences in word division?
- Interp(retation) is explained with a very long and sometimes unclear description (appearing next to “interpol[ation]”, the abbreviation “interpr” would have been better). Usually this term accompanies the text of one of the textual witnesses interpreting the lemma-word. Sometimes, however (Qoh 1:17; 12:5), the word also appears in the lemma itself, thus confusing the reader.
- Interpol(ation): “... the reading as having arisen from the insertion into the text of textual matter from another document, or another part of the same document.” Can a learned scribe not insert his own thoughts in the form of an interpolation?
- KR: Under this abbreviation (which, at first, I thought referred to the *kaige* revision, this being its standard abbreviation), the reader finds “the manuscripts described in the editions of Kennicott and de Rossi” (are these manuscripts really “described” or are they “collated”?).
- Midr(ash): “this term proposes that the reading is inspired by an extant midrashic tradition.” However, is the midrashic tradition always “extant,” and should we not occasionally surmise that a midrash-like tradition is involved?
- *Tiq(qun) soph(erim)*: The definition on p. XCIII (“... whether or not the case is judged actually to be such an emendation”) is preferable to that on p. LXXXIV (“... whether or not the emendation is judged to be genuine”).
- “Unconv”: Explanations need to be self-evident. Will every reader guess that “unconv” stands for “unconverted” rather than “unconventional”?

The annotated list of abbreviations is helpful, not only as a description of the phenomena described in *BHQ*, but also as a guide for textual criticism in general. Thus a copyist or translator may be “ignorant” of such data described as “ign-cultur,” “ign-gram,” “ign-lex.” If all these data were available to the readers of *BHQ* in electronic form as they are to those of *BHS*,<sup>21</sup> the reader could compare the various instances belonging to the same category, such as ignorance of the cultural background of the Hebrew Bible. Naturally, the reader would not have a grasp of the complete picture, since not all examples of a

<sup>21</sup> *Stuttgarter Elektronische Studienbibel* (ed. C. Hardmeier, E. Talstra, and B. Salzmann; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft and the Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 2004).

given category have been adduced in *BHQ*, but the combined picture would still be helpful.

*Summary:* This reviewer has found occasion to disagree with some major and minor details in the philosophy of the recording and in the explanations provided in the various sections of the edition. Without such disagreements, scholarship does not advance. However, it should be strongly stressed that, on the whole, *BHQ* is much richer in data, more mature, judicious and cautious than its predecessors. It heralds a very important step forward in the *BH* series. This advancement implies more complex notations which almost necessarily render this edition less user-friendly for the non-expert.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The reader is further referred to my summary statement in § 2m above.