ON THE ROLE OF SOUTH ARABIAN AND ETHIO-SEMITIC WITHIN A COMPARATIVE SEMITIC LEXICOGRAPHICAL PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

Genetic classification in general depends to a large extent on the criteria selected. Inspired by Kogan 2015 and other sources, this paper looks at specific lexical peculiarities and semantic traits in the South Semitic (mainly modern South Arabian and Ethio-Semitic) lexicon, in order to determine the value of the South Semitic lexicon for genetic classification within Semitic at large.

[1] INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the role and importance of the lexicon for genetic classification, more specifically on the role of (mainly modern) South Arabian and Ethio-Semitic in this context, a role which recently has been highlighted by Kogan (2015). It is a truism that linguistic classification to a large degree depends on the criteria selected, i.e. phonological, morphological, and other data. Therefore, the main criteria, or rather shared innovations that are usually cited in this connection, are summarized in the following (cf. Faber 1997: 7–12):

- East Semitic is characterized by the development of an adjectival ending *-ūt* (pl. m.) and by the dative suffixes *-kum* and *-šum*;
- West Semitic is characterized by the suffix conjugation denoting past tense (as opposed to the Akkadian stative) and a prohibitive negator *ʾal*;
- Central Semitic is characterized by a series of pharyngealized consonants, a prefix conjugation for nonpast without gemination of the second root consonant and the leveling of prefix vowels in this conjugation, the generalization of a *-t-* suffix (as opposed to *-k-*) in the suffix conjugation, and the development of a compound negative marker **bal*; the Northwest Semitic part of Central Semitic (as being distinct from Arabic) is characterized by the change of word-initial *w* to *y* (except for the con-

junction *w-*) and a doubly marked plural (internal and external); further internal isoglosses apply;

- South Semitic is characterized by the generalization of a *-k-* suffix (as opposed to *-t-* above) in the suffix conjugation and by the generalization of (?)*al* as a verbal negator; Eastern South Semitic (Modern South Arabian), as opposed to Western South Semitic (Old South Arabian and Ethio-Semitic) features a pre-fixed definite article *C(a)*, with *C* being one of the gutturals ʔ, *h*, or *h*.

Goldenberg (2013: 45f.) lists the following further classification criteria:

- the distribution of the intraflexion (“broken plural”) in Arabic, South-Arabian, and Ethio-Semitic;
- internal vowel lengthening in the *binyanim* (forms III and VI in Arabic);
- consistent use of *-a-* in all active forms of the suffix conjugation;
- the existence of two prefix conjugations (Akkadian, Modern South Arabian, Ethio-Semitic);
- the emergence of the *-na* ending (3pl.f, 2pl.f) in Central Semitic (cf. Hetzron 1976);
- the isogloss *p* (Akkadian, Aramaic, Canaanite) vs. *f* (Arabic, South-Arabian, Ethio-Semitic).

Representing the “traditional” criteria, Faber (1997) arrived at the following model (apud Huehnergard and Rubin 2011: 260):

FIGURE 1: Stemma according to Faber 1997.

Hetzron (1976), to whom we owe the concept of “archaic heterogeneity” and “shared morpho-lexical innovations” in Semitic, had arrived at the following genealogical representation (apud Huehnergard and Rubin 2011: 262):

FIGURE 2: Stemma According to Huehnergard and Rubin 2011.

Porkhomovsky (1997) and others have since then refined the previous model as follows. It is noteworthy that both Modern South Arabian (“MSA”) and Ethio-Semitic (“Ethiopian”) branch off at a quite high level in this model (apud Huehnergard and Rubin 2011: 263):

FIGURE 3: Stemma according to Porkhomovsky 1997.

Kogan (2015), who focuses entirely on the role of the lexicon, also ascribes quite early genealogical independence to both (modern) South Arabian and Ethio-Semitic. He arrives at the following model, curiously mirroring East and West in his representation (Kogan 2015: 600). The encircled language groups in Kogan’s model can be interpreted as representing linguistic areas in which contact phenomena are especially relevant. In terms of the goals of this paper, Kogan’s model underlines the linguistic distinctiveness of the South-Semitic area:

FIGURE 4: Stemma according to Kogan 2015.

[2] ISSUES OF LEXICAL CLASSIFICATION

One aspect clearly affecting the lexical distinctiveness of Ethio-Semitic is the Cushitic substratum in Ethio-Semitic (cf. Leslau 1945, 1952; Appleyard 1977). Appleyard (1977) identifies Cushitic loans especially in the following semantic fields: “man”, comprising general terms, kinship terms, and parts of the body; “the domestic environment”, comprising agricultural activities and implements, crops, domestic animals, food and its preparation, and the [realm of the] house; “the natural environment”, comprising natural phenomena, flora, and fauna; “social organization”, comprising law and government, economy, warfare, and religion; and “grammatical items”, comprising pronouns, numerals, and particles. In addition, the core Semitic stock of the Modern South Arabian and Ethio-Semitic vocabulary also displays specific semantic traits in its lexicon, traits that may be due to linguistic contact or may even reflect early retentions.

Before turning to look more closely at a selected sample of Ethio-Semitic data, here is a brief overview of some issues that have the potential to complicate lexical classification, keeping the Ethio-Semitic scenario in mind.

[2.1] *Issues of choice of lemmata: lexical lists based on genetic cognates vs. lexical lists based on target language*

Grosso modo, lexical lists can be based either on genetic cognates within a language family, irrespective of the precise meaning of the lexical items in the individual languages (e.g., Bergsträsser 1983: 210–223) or on lists of words with (approximately) the same meaning in a target language, which, however, need not be genetically related (e.g., Bennett 1998: 232–249). Kogan (2015) takes both strategies into consideration, but pays special attention to the second strategy, building his arguments on a kind of modified Swadesh list.

The lemma “sun” in Semitic may serve to illustrate the situation. While East and Central Semitic (and also Epigraphic South Arabian, “ESA”) use the root √ š-m-s in variations, the modern South Arabian languages resort to the lemmata for “day” (√ y-w-m) and “pre-noon” (√ ḏ-ḥ-y) respectively, roots which are also attested in other branches of Semitic but constitute lexical innovations in the cited South Semitic branches. Here is an overview of the lemma “sun” in Semitic (cf. also Leslau 1987: 149):

The lemma “sun” in Semitic

Akkadian	šamšum
Hebrew	šemeš שֶׁמֶשׁ
Aramaic	šemšā ܫܡܫܐ

ESA	šms
Arabic	šams شَمْس
Mehri	ḥə-yáwm (yum / šum)
Ḥarsūsī	ḥe-yōm
Jibbālī	yum
Gəʿəz	ḍahāy ፀሓይ
Amharic	ṣāhay ፀሐይ
Argobba	čāhed
Gurage	čet
(cf. Arabic ḍuḥā ضَحَى ‘pre-noon’ and Hebrew ṣaḥ πṣ ‘clear’)	

[2.2] Issues of diachronic inner-subgroup loan

Diachronic loans within the same genetic subgroup (e.g., from Gəʿəz to Amharic) can also create confusion in the realm of phonology. A well-known (probably universal) phenomenon is the fact that proper nouns (place names and personal names) tend to be phonologically (and orthographically) more conservative than correlating common nouns and verbs. Within Ethio-Semitic, one can observe that the phonological structure of nouns in Gəʿəz containing gutturals is still preserved in loaned terms in Amharic (at least orthographically), whereas the gutturals are lost in the respective verbal forms belonging to the same root. Here is an example comprising four terms (cf. also Edzard 2015b: 189):

guttural retained		vs	guttural lost		
ተምህርት	təmhərt	‘lesson’	ተማረ	tāmari	‘student’
መጽሐፍ	mäṣḥaf [mäṣḥaf]	‘book’	ጻፈ	ṣafä	‘he wrote’
ደኅና	däḥna [dä(h)na]	‘well’	ዳነ	danä	‘he recovered’
ሥልጣ	səʿəl	‘picture’	ሣለ	salä	‘he painted’

[2.3] Issues of inner-family loan

An especially intricate issue is the distinction between genetically related cognates on the one hand and inner-family loans on the other. The latter term refers to loan between languages of the same genetic subgroup, which may engender semantic specification of an indigenous term due to its interaction with a genetic cognate. In the case of the latter, usual *lautgesetzlich* correspondences need no longer obtain. Also the semantics need not be exactly maintained in the borrowing process. An example, featuring loans from Gəʿəz to Arabic, is the following (cf. Weninger 2007; Edzard 2015b: 187):

Gəʿəz			Arabic	
ወቅፍ	<i>waqf</i>	‘bracelet’	> <i>waqf</i>	‘bracelet’
ከበሮ	<i>kabaro</i>	‘drum, timbrel’	> <i>kabar</i>	‘(kettle-)drum’
መጽሐፍ	<i>maṣṣḥaf</i>	‘(any kind of) book’ (especially copy of the Qurʾān)’	> <i>muṣṣḥaf</i>	‘book’
መንበር	<i>manbar</i>	‘chair, throne’ (no root √ n-b-r ‘to sit’ in Arabic)	> <i>minbar</i>	‘pulpit’

[2.4] *Issues of autochthonous vocabulary vs. loaned vocabulary in target languages*

Of special interest is the case where lexical doublets emerge as a result of inner-family borrowing. In this case, the respective lemma is both attested autochthonously and in a loaned version (cf. Edzard 2015a for a contextualization of this issue). Typically, the borrowed lemma then has a specialized meaning. While Arabic, for instance, features the autochthonous word *θāba* ‘he returned’, one also finds the Aramaic loanword *tāba* ‘he repented’ (i.e. “returned” in a moral sense). Brockelmann had already examined this issue in his *Grundriss* (Brockelmann 1908–1913, vol. 1: 119). Examples are the following (cf. also Lonnet 2005; Tezel 2010; Leslau 1990):

Arabic	<i>bannāʾ</i>	> Mehri	<i>bənnāy</i> ‘bricklayer’ (loaned)	vs.
		Mehri	<i>mənnōy</i> ‘bricklayer’ (autochthonous)	
Aramaic	<i>tāb</i> ‘he repented’	> Arabic	<i>tāba</i> ‘he repented’ (loaned)	vs.
		Arabic	<i>θāba</i> ‘he returned’ (autochthonous)	
Akkadian	<i>uṣṣēšī</i> ‘he sent out’	> Aramaic	<i>šēšī</i> ‘he accomplished’ (loaned)	vs.
		Aramaic	<i>iʿā</i> ‘he grew’ (autochthonous)	
Arabic √	ʿ-x-r	> Ṭūrōyo	<i>mʿāxər</i> ‘to be late’ (loaned)	vs.
		Ṭūrōyo	<i>ḥrēno</i> ‘(an)other’ (autochthonous)	
Arabic	<i>madar</i> ‘clouds of mud’	> Amharic	መደር <i>mädär</i> ‘clay’ (loaned)	vs.
		Amharic	ምድር <i>mədər</i> ‘earth ground’ (autochthonous)	

[2.5] *Issues of semantic innovations in Ethio-Semitic*

First of all, the example of the lemma “sun” in Semitic has already been mentioned. Kogan (2015), who takes a modified version of the Swadesh list as a point of departure, points out the following further examples of semantic innovation in Ethio-Semitic (cf. Kogan 2015: 444–446):

√ l-ḥ-ṣ ‘to peel, bark’

Gəʿəz ለሐፀ *laḥaḍa*

Amharic ላጠ *laṭä*

Tigrinya ለሐጸ *läḥaṣä*

√ k-b-d ‘liver, stomach, belly’

Gəʿəz ከብድ *käbd*

Amharic ሆድ *hod* (*käbd* > **häbd* > **häwd* > *hod*)

Tigrinya ከብዲ *käbdi*

√ m-d-r ‘earth, ground, soil’

Gəʿəz ምድር *mədr*

Amharic ምድር *mədər*

Tigrinya ምድሪ *mədri*

√ b-l-ʿ ‘to eat, consume, devour’

Gəʿəz በለዐ *balʿa*

Amharic በለ *bälla*

Tigrinya በለዒ *bälʿe*

√ ḍ-ḥ-y ‘shine, sun’

Gəʿəz ፀሓይ *ḍahāy*

Amharic ፀሓይ *ḍahāy* [ṣāhay] / ጣይ *ṭay*

Tigrinya ፀሓይ *ḍahāy* [ṣāhay]

√ k-l-ʾ ‘both, two’

Gəʿəz ክልኤ *kəlʿe*

Amharic ሁለት *hulätt*

Tigrinya ክልቲ *kəlätte*

[2.6] *Ethiopian terms of uncertain origin (Swadesh list)*

The etymological origin of a given word cannot be determined with certainty

in every case. Ethio-Semitic examples include the following (cf. Kogan 2015: 446–448):

√ ḥ-m-d ‘ashes’

Gəʿəz ሐመድ ḥamad

Amharic አመድ amäd

Tigrinya ሐመድ ḥamäd

√ q-ṣ-l ‘leaf’

Gəʿəz ቁጽል q^wašl

Amharic ቅጠል qəṭäl

Tigrinya ቁጽሊ q^wäšli

√ s-b-ʾ ‘man’

Gəʿəz ሰብእ sabʾ

Amharic ሰው säw

Tigrinya ሰብኦይ säbʾay

√ q-y-ḥ ‘red’

Gəʿəz ቀይሕ qayyāḥ

Amharic ቀይ qäyy

Tigrinya ቀይሕ qäyyāḥ

√ m-w-q ‘warm’

Gəʿəz ምውቅ mawwəq

Amharic ሙቅ muq

Tigrinya ሞቅ moq

[2.7] Permutations

Cognate roots do not always appear in exactly the same order. The concept of “metathesis” is not meaningful in every case. Rather, at least in some cases, the semantics of a given term appear to be linked to the (non-ordered) set of the root consonants.

non-Ethiopic

Akkadian *epēqum* ‘enclose’

Arabic *falqaṭa* ‘hurry’

Soqotri *igʿalil* ‘roll oneself’

Arabic *jaraza/jazara* ‘tear, bite’

Arabic *fahāra/ḥafara* ‘dig, notch’

Gəʿəz

ሐቀፈ ḥaqafa ‘hug, embrace, ...’

ቀልፈ qalṭafa ‘hurry’

ዐገለ ʾagala ‘place in layers, ...’

ገረዘ/ገዘረ garaza/gazara ‘cut, circumcise’

ፈሐረ fahāra ‘dig (up), bury’

[3] THREE SAMPLE ENTRIES

In the following, four sample entries will be considered: √ n-f-s, √ d-b-r, √ r-k-b, and √ h-g-r, which shed light on the previously mentioned importance of South Arabian and Ethio-Semitic for classification.

[3.1] √ n-f-s

This root is attested across Semitic and is relatively straightforward in the distribution of its semantic range. As this root served as a model example within the Doha project, context is also provided in this case. For the semantic connection between “life” and “tomb”, see also Steiner 2015.

East Semitic

Akkadian √ n-p-š

- verb: *napāšum* ‘to breathe freely, blow, relax, expand’
- li-ip-pu-uš-ilum* ‘let him breathe, O God’ (personal name)
- noun: *napīšum* ‘breath(ing)’
- napištu(m)* ‘(essence of) life; throat’

West Semitic

Central Semitic

Arabic √ n-f-s

- verb: *نَفَسَ nafusa* ‘to be precious; *نَفِيسَ nafisa* ‘to be parsimonious, envious’
- noun: *نَفْسَ nafs*, pl. *نُفُوسَ nufūs*, *أَنْفُسَ ʿanfus* ‘soul, psyche, desire, appetite, being, person, self’
- نَفَسَ nafas*, pl. *أَنْفَاسَ ʿanfās* ‘breath, sip’

Nabatean √ n-f-s

nafs ‘tomb’

ty nfs mrʿw ʿl-qys bn ʿmrw mlk ʿl-ʿrb

‘This is the tomb of MRʿLQYS, son of ʿMRW, king of the ʿRB’
(an-Namāra inscription; cf. Retsö 2003: 467–470)

Northwest Semitic

Ugaritic √ n-p-š

- npš* ‘soul, (sexual) appetite’
- ʿap npš* ‘funerary document’

Phoenician √ n-p-š

npš I ‘person, personnel, emotions’

l-npš bt ʾš lʾ-štt mkl '[paid] to the personnel of the temple of the consorts of MKL'

npš II 'funerary monument, tombstone'

nʾpš šʿdyt '[this the] funerary monument of ŠʿDYT'

Northwest Semitic in general (Phoenician, Punic, Moabite, Ammonite, El-Amarna; Nabatean, Palmyra, Hatra) √ n-p/b-š

npš I 'life'

npš-k[y] ʾlqh 'I will take your life'

np/bš II 'person'

w-tbʿh nbš-k 'and you(r person) will seek'

np/bš III 'soul'

w-tšty nbš pnmw 'and may the soul of PNMW drink'

np/bš IV 'disposition'

np/bš V 'funerary monument'

Hebrew √ n-p-š

נֶפֶשׁ *nepēš* 'throat, neck, breath, living being, people, personality, life, soul'; ap-positional reflexive pronoun

נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה *nepēš ḥayyā* 'living soul' (Gen 1:20)

אֲנִי אֶפְעֹל אִתְּךָ *ʾāšim ʾet napšā-kā* 'I will deal with your life' (1 K 19:2)

לְנַפְשִׁי *la-napš-ī* 'for myself, for my own sake'

Aramaic

Babylonian Aramaic √ n-p-š

– verb: נִפְּשׂ *nāpāš* 1. 'to increase, to be numerous'; 2. 'to be empty'

– noun: נַפְשָׁא *nāpšā* 'soul, body, self, human being'; reflexive pronoun

Palestinian Aramaic √ n-p-š

נַפְשָׁא *nāpšā* 'soul, living, essence'

נַפְשִׁי *nāpš-ī* 'soul, living person, self, tomb, monument'

Syriac Aramaic √ n-p-š

– verb: נִפְּשׂ *nāpāš* 'to breathe out, exhale; perhaps also 'to desire'

– noun: נַפְשָׁא *nāpšā* 'breath of life, soul, person; funerary monument'; reflexive pronoun'

South Semitic

Eastern South Semitic

Modern South Arabian (Mehri, Jibbāli, Ḥarsūsi, Soqotri)

Mehri √ n-f(-s)

– noun *ḥə-nōf* ‘self’

– verb: *anōfes* ‘to make space’; *antəfūs* ‘to be safely delivered of a child’; *šənfūs* ‘to welcome s.o.’

– noun: *nafs/nəfáws* ‘individual, soul, person’

Jibbāli √ n-f

núf ‘self’

Ḥarsūsi √ n-f

– noun *ḥe-nōf/ḥe-nyehōf* ‘self’

Soqotri √ n-h-f (h = s/š; metathesis of C₂ and C₃)

nhof ‘soul’

Regarding the importance of South Semitic, Kogan (2015: 578) remarks: “The MSA terms with the meaning “self” are hard to separate from PS **napš-* (note especially the plural *nófoš* in Soqotri), but Jib. *núf* makes it clear that the Proto-MSA form should be reconstructed without *š-, which does not shift to *h* and cannot be dropped in Jibbali (cf. SED I [= Militarev and Kogan 2000, LE] No. 46_v and 51_v).”

Western South Semitic

Epigraphic/Old South Arabian (mainly Sabaic) √ n-f-s

– verb: *hfs₁* (assimilated *n*) ‘to open up (water channel)’

– noun:

nfs₁ I ‘soul, person, self, life’

nfs₁ II ‘funerary monument’

nfs₁ III ‘woman in childbed’

Ethiopian Semitic

North Ethiopic

Gə‘əz √ n-f-s

– verb: ነፍሰ *nafsa* ‘to blow (wind, spirit)’

አንፈስ *ʾanfasa* ‘to breathe, exhale, rest, give relief’

– noun: ነፍስ *nafs*, pl. ነፍሳት *nafsāt* ‘soul, spirit, breath, a person, life’; reflexive pronoun

ነፍሳት *nafsāt* ‘body, genitals’

South Ethiopic

Amharic √ n-f-s

– verb: ነፈስ *näffäsä* ‘to blow (wind, spirit)’

ተነፈስ *tänäffäsä* ‘breathe’

– noun: ነፋስ/ንፋስ *nāfas/nəfas* ‘wind’

ነፍስ *näfs* ‘soul, life’

ነፍስ ጡር *näfsä tur* ‘pregnant’

ነፍሳት *näfsat* ‘insect’

√ d-b-r

This root has a wider semantic range. Indeed, in the case of this root we are probably looking at a variety of different homophonic lexical entries. Ethio-Semitic presents the additional semantic aspect of “monastery”, i.e. something lying on the back of a mountain. In Mehri and Amharic, one can observe interesting cases of metathesis.

East Semitic

Akkadian √ d-b-r

– verb: *dupurru* ‘to depart, recede’

– noun: *madbaru*, *mud(a)baru* ‘steppe, desert’

dibiru ‘mischief’

dubur ‘fundament’

West Semitic

Central Semitic

Arabic √ d-b-r

– verb: دَبَّرَ *dabara* ‘turn one’s back, elapse’

دَبَّرَ *dabbara* ‘make arrangements’

– noun: دُبْرُ *dubr* ‘rump, backside’

دَبْرَةٌ *dabra* ‘turn (of fate)’

دَبُور *dabūr* ‘west wind’

دَبَبُور *dabbūr* ‘hornet, wasp’

Northwest Semitic

Ugarit √ d-b-r

– verb: *dbṛ* 1. ‘drive away’; 2. ‘to say, declare’

– noun: *dbṛ* ‘matter, thing’

dbṛ ‘plague, pestilence’

Phoenician √ d-b-r

- verb: *db̄r* ‘to say’
- noun: *db̄r* 1. ‘thing, matter, act’ 2. ‘word, promise’; 3. ‘pl. affairs, acts, history’; 4. ‘statement, declaration’

Hebrew √ d-b-r

- verb: דָּבַר *dābār* ‘to speak’; דִּבֶּר *dibbēr* ‘to speak’
- noun: דָּבָר *dābār* I. 1. ‘word, speech’; 2. ‘dictum, saying, speech’; 3. ‘words of a poet’; 4. ‘God’s words to the prophets’; 5. ‘promise’; 6. ‘assignment’; 7. ‘wish’; 8. ‘suggestion’; 9. ‘message’; 10. ‘appointment’
- II. 1. ‘thing’; 2. ‘incident’; 3. ‘doing, business, traffic’; 4. ‘matter’; 5. ‘portion’
- דֶּבֶר *deber* ‘cattle plague’
- דֹּבַר *dōber* ‘pasture’
- דְּבִיר *dəbīr* ‘the most holy’
- דְּבוּרָה *dəbōrā* ‘bee’

Aramaic

Babylonian / Palestinian Aramaic √ d-b-r

- verb: דָּבַר *db̄r* ‘to take, act’
- noun: דְּבָרָא *dabrā* ‘field’
- דְּבָרְתָא *dəbārtā* ‘despoiling (of animals, property)’
- דִּבְבֵּר *dibbēr* ‘divine speech’

Syriac Aramaic √ d-b-r

- verb: دָבַר *dābar* 1. ‘to lead, guide, drive, take with oneself, to merry, pass of time’; 2. ‘to move, bestir, depart, ride a horse, wander, go back, return’
- noun: دְּבֻרְתָּא *dēbūrtā* 1. ‘bee’; 2. ‘wasp, hornet’
- دְּבָרָא *dəbārā* 1. ‘cultivation of the ground’; 2. ‘plowing, tiling’; 3. ‘driving’; 4. movement, agitation’
- دְּבָרָא *dabrā* 1. ‘land, field’; 2. ‘desert’; 3. ‘pasture land’
- دְּבָרְתָּא *dəbārtā* 1. ‘booty’; 2. ‘band of captives’

South Semitic

Eastern South Semitic

Modern South Arabian

Mehri √ d-b-r

- verb: *adōbər* ‘to turn the back’
- dābar* ‘to think, reflect’
- √ r-d-b

– noun: *ʾardyīb/ʾardyōb* ‘nape of the neck and the top of the shoulders’

Ḥarsūsi √ d-b-r

– verb: *ādēber* ‘to turn away (from)’

Soqotri √ d-b-r

– noun: *ʾdber* ‘bee’

√ r-d-b

– noun: *ʾardīb* ‘nape of the neck and top of the shoulders’

Western South Semitic

Epigraphic/Old South Arabian

Sabaic √ d-b-r

– noun: *dbr* ‘payment in the form of work (?)’

Ethiopian Semitic

North Ethiopic

Gəʿəz √ d-b-r

– verb: ተደበረ *tadabbara* ‘to lie on one’s back’

ደበረ *dabara* ‘establish a monastery’

ደበረወ *dabrawa* ‘be well-developed, be well-grown (child), engage in illicit sex’

– noun: ደብር *dabr* ‘mountain, region where there is a monastery, convent, monastery’

ዳብር : ደብር *dābər, dabr* ‘territory, city, village’

ዳብር : ዳብር *dāber, dābir* ‘shrine, sanctuary, innermost room, ecclesiastic council’

South Ethiopic

Amharic √ d-b-r

– verb: ደበረ *däbbärä* 1. ‘to arrange or display goods in a shop’; 2. ‘to stack the packed merchandise to form a sort of shelter (merchant when setting up camp for the night)’; 3. ‘to raise the rank of a church to *däbr* (main church which provides sanctuary to individuals seeking refuge from persecution or prosecution)’; 4. ‘to delimit the sacred confines of a church’; 5. ‘to pile, stack, heap up, to put in a row or line’

ደበረ *däbbärä* 1. ‘to be chubby, to thrive (baby); 2. ‘to mature, reach full maturity, grow to full size’

– noun: ደብር *däbr, dābər* ‘main church (one of high status which is surrounded by a sacred grove, endowed with ample lands [until 1975] and served by many *däbtära*-cantors)’

𐎠𐎢𐎡 *dabre* 1. ‘a large pottery vessel, crock, ewer’; 2. ‘pet name a peasant gives to the ox that tramples the grain’

√ ḡ-r-b

– noun: 𐎡𐎠𐎢 / 𐎡𐎠𐎢 *ḡārba*, *žārba* 1. ‘back (part of the body), loins’; 2. ‘carcass of a chicken’; 3. ‘reverse (of a coin)’; 4. ‘the underside of the *anḡārā*, i.e. the part that lies against the griddle’; 5. ‘rear (back)’; 6. ‘behind (prep.)’

[3.2] √ r-k-b

The third sample root is again relatively straightforward, with equally broad attestation across Semitic, but features the additional semantic aspect of “taking possession” in Ethio-Semitic.

East Semitic

Akkadian √ r-k-b

– verb: *rakābum* 1. ‘to mount, ride on (chariot, boat, animal; of gods ‘ride’ wind, storm etc.)’, 2. ‘mount (sexually) of animal, man’; 3. ‘to be superimposed (of moon ‘cover, eclipse’ star)’; 4. ‘of plough share (*šinnum*) to cut furrow’

West Semitic

Central Semitic

Arabic √ r-k-b

– verb: رَكِبَ *rakiba* ‘ride, mount (an animal), travel’

– noun: رُكْبَ *rakb* ‘riders, horsemen’

مَرْكَبَ *markab* ‘ship, vessel’

Northwest Semitic

Ugarit √ r-k-b

– verb: *rkb* ‘to mount (especially a chariot)’

– noun: *rkb* ‘charioteer, (epithet of the god BʿL)’

Hebrew √ r-k-b

– verb: רָכַב *rākab* 1. ‘ride’; 2. ‘drive’; 3. ‘to get on, mount’

– noun: רֶכֶב *rekeb* 1. ‘convoy’; 2. ‘train’; 3. ‘wagon, chariot’; 4. the upper grinding stone of a hand mill’

רֹכֵב *rakkāb* 1. ‘rider’; 2. ‘charioteer’

Aramaic

Babylonian / Palestinian Aramaic √ r-k-b

– verb: רָכַב *rkb* 1. ‘to ride, mount’; 2. ‘to impose upon so.’; 3. ‘to copulate (of animals)’

– noun: מַרְכָּבָּתָא *markabtā* ‘chariot, saddle’
 רכב *rkb* 1. ‘rider’; 2. ‘upper millstone’

Syriac Aramaic √ r-k-b

– verb: رَكَبَ *rakēb* 1. ‘to mount, bestride, ride a horse, mule, camel’; 2. ‘to cover in breeding’

– noun: رَكْبَا *rakbā* 1. ‘the upper millstone’; 2. ‘the iron axle of a millstone’
 رَكُوبَا *rakūbā* 1. ‘conveyance, means of transport, vessel’; 2. ‘a mount, any animal for riding, horse’; 3. ‘riding, horsemanship’
 رُكْبَا *rūkābā* 1. ‘construction, composition, arrangement, fabrication’; 2. ‘esp. the compounding of medicines, a recipe’; 3. ‘structure of the body’; 4. ‘literary composition’

South Semitic

Eastern South Semitic

Modern South Arabian

Mehri √ r-k-b

– verb: رَعَبَ *rēbāb* ‘to ride’; 2. ‘to mount’; 3. ‘to sleep with a woman’
 ارَوَكَبَ *arōkēb* ‘to put (a pot) on the fire’
 رَتَكُوبَ *rtakūb* ‘to get on to the right road and go straight along it’
 – noun: رَكَبَ *rakb* ‘ledge on a cliff (of about the size one could sleep on)’
 رَوَكَبَ *rōkēb* ‘rider’
 مَرَكَبَ/مَرَاوَكَبَ *mārēb/marāwkēb* ‘boat’

Jibbāli √ r-k-b

– verb: رَعَكَبَ *rēkēb* ‘to ride, mount (also with a sexual connotation)’
 ارَوَكُوبَ *erōkūb* ‘to put (a pot) on the fire’
 رَوَتَكَبَ *rōtkēb* 1. ‘to jump on one another (in play or sexual intercourse)’; 2. ‘to commit an offence’
 – noun: رَكِيبَ *erkīb*, يَرْشَوَبَ *yuršōb* ‘riding-camel’
 رَوَكُوبَ *rōkūb* ‘rider’
 مَرَكَبَ/مِيرَكَبَ *mērēb/mirēbkēb* ‘boat’

Ḥarsūsi √ r-k-b

– verb: رَعَكَبَ *rēkēb* ‘to mount, ride’
 ارَعَكَبَ *arēkēb* ‘to put food in a pot to cook over the fire’
 – noun: رَعَكَبِي *rēkbi* ‘horseman’
 رَكِيبَ *rekīb* ‘riding camels’
 مَرَكَبَ *mārēb* ‘ship’

merkebét ‘saddle-sore’

Soqotri √ r-k-b

– verb: *rəkob* (*ríkub*) ‘to mount’

– noun: *rəkkeb* ‘knight’

márkeb ‘boat’

Western South Semitic

Epigraphic/Old South Arabian

Sabaic √ r-k-b

– verb: *rkb* ‘to ride a horse’

– noun: *rkb* 1. ‘rider, specifically cameleer’; 2. ‘camelry’; 3. coll. ‘riding animals’

Ethiopian Semitic

North Ethiopic

Gə‘əz √ r-k-b

– verb: ረከበ *rakaba* 1. ‘find, get, acquire, obtain, attain, receive, gain, reach, take possession of, possess, overtake, apprehend, invent, find out, discover, perceive, suppose’; 2. ‘come upon, fall upon, befall, occur, come to pass, happen, be becoming to, be proper’

– noun: ርከባት *rəkubāt* ‘beings’

ረከብ *rakb* ‘congregation, meeting, council, assembly’

ሩከቢ *rukābe* ‘joining together, intercourse’

ርከበት *rəkbāt* ‘discovery, finding, acquisition, existence’

South Ethiopic

Amharic √ r-k-b

– verb: ረከበ, ተረከበ *rākābā, täräkkābā* ‘take over (a business), take possession, be turned over (weapons)

አስረከበ *’asrākkābā* ‘deliver (merchandise), turn over (weapons), surrender (arms), hand in, hand over’

– noun: እርከብ *’ərkaḅ* ‘sirup’

[3.3] √ h-g-r

This root is primarily attested in South Semitic. Leslau (1991: 216) does not relate the South Semitic meaning “city, land” to the concept “migration”, as attested in Arabic, South Arabian, and Ethio-Semitic.

West Semitic

Central Semitic

Arabic √ h-ğ-r

هَاجَرَ *hāğara* ‘emigrate’

هَجْرَة *hiğra* ‘emigration’

Hebrew √ h-g-r

הִגְגֵּר *higgēr* ‘emigrate’, immigrate’

PN: הֶגְרָא *hāğār* ‘Hagar, Egyptian slave and concubine’

South Semitic

Eastern South Semitic

Modern South Arabian

Mehri √ h-g-r

– verb: *həğūr* ‘to buy food for one’s family’

hōğar 1. ‘to leave your family and emigrate’; 2. ‘to travel at midday, between 11 and 3 o’clock’

hēğar ‘to be hot at midday’

Jibbāli √ h-g-r

– verb: *hógór* ‘to (leave o’s family and) emigrate’

ohógur ‘to come, go at midday (between 11 and 3 o’clock)’

– noun: *həğar* ‘midday’

Western South Semitic

Epigraphic/Old South Arabian

Sabaic √ h-g-r

– noun: *hgr* 1. ‘town, city – administrative center of a s‘b (group of clans)’;

2. ‘settled territory’

hgrhmw ‘town-dwellers’

Ethiopian Semitic

North Ethiopic

Gə‘əz √ h-g-r

– noun: ሀገር *ḥağar* ‘city, town, village, province, district, country, homeland, inhabited, region’

South Semitic

Amharic √ Ø-g-r

– noun: አገር *ağār* ‘country, nation, territory, (region, land), district, state, land (country, fatherland)’

[4] CONCLUSION

Even this short glimpse at the South Semitic (South Arabian and Ethio-Semitic) lexicon is revealing and rewarding. Clearly, South Arabian often features different or at least additional semantic traits in the lexicon. A systematic evaluation of sources such as Cohen 1970 – as well as the Semitic dictionaries with comparative evidence (notably Leslau 1987), will certainly bring to light more interesting material. The usefulness of lexicostatistics for genetic classification continues to be a point of discussion.

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