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 \(\text{al}\) 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 \(^\text{3}\), \(h\), or \(h\).

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

- the distribution of the inflexion (“broken plural”) in Arabic, South-Arabian, and Ethio-Semitic;

- internal vowel lengthening in the \textit{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):
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 1: Stemma according to Faber 1997.](image1)

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 2: Stemma According to Huehnergard and Rubin 2011.](image2)
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:
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 relocations.

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” (√ḍ-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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Lemma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akkadian</td>
<td>šamšum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>šemeš šēmšū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aramaic</td>
<td>šemšā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Diachronic loans within the same genetic subgroup (e.g., from Gə'əz 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 Gə'əz 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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guttural Retained</th>
<th>vs</th>
<th>Guttural Lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ṭılmḥrt</td>
<td>‘lesson’</td>
<td>ṭṃ́larry ‘student’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṣəšḥəf [məšḥəf]</td>
<td>‘book’</td>
<td>əš. əšəf ‘he wrote’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḥə̀นə ḥə̀на [də(h)na]</td>
<td>‘well’</td>
<td>ḥə ḥənə ‘he recovered’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṣə̀ə</td>
<td>‘picture’</td>
<td>ə́lə ə́lə ‘he painted’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An especially intricate issue is the distinction between genetically related cognates on the one hand and 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 Gə'əz to Arabic, is the following (cf. Weninger 2007; Edzard 2015b: 187):


[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 ʿāba ‘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 Lonnert 2005; Tezel 2010; Leslau 1990):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Mehri</th>
<th>Aramaic</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Akkadian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bannā’</td>
<td>bannāy ‘bricklayer’ (loaned)</td>
<td>tāb ‘he repented’</td>
<td>tāba ‘he repented’ (loaned)</td>
<td>ušēṣi ‘he sent out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Mehri</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Arabic</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Aramaic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mannoy ‘bricklayer’ (autochthonous)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ḍāba ‘he returned’ (autochthonous)</td>
<td>šēṣi ‘he accomplished’ (loaned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Arabic</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Aramaic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ṭūrōyo m‘āxar ‘to be late’ (loaned)</td>
<td>hrēno ‘(an)other’ (autochthonous)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Aramaic</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Āmharic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[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):

\[\text{√ l-h-š ‘to peel, bark’}\]
Ge'ez \(\text{ለሐፀ laḥaḍa}\)
Amharic \(\text{ለ旅行社 laṭṭä}\)
Tigrinya \(\text{ለሐፀ lāḥaṣā}\)

\[\text{√ k-b-d ‘liver, stomach, belly’}\]
Ge'ez \(\text{ከብድ kabdi}\)
Amharic \(\text{የከብድ ካብድ} / \text{አእት *hābd > *hāwd > hod}\)
Tigrinya \(\text{ከብዲ käbdi}\)

\[\text{√ m-d-r ‘earth, ground, soil’}\]
Ge'ez \(\text{መድር mədr}\)
Amharic \(\text{መድር mədər}\)
Tigrinya \(\text{መድሪ mədri}\)

\[\text{√ b-l-c ‘to eat, consume, devour’}\]
Ge'ez \(\text{በልዐ balʿa}\)
Amharic \(\text{በላ bälla}\)
Tigrinya \(\text{በልዔ bälʿe}\)

\[\text{√ ḏ-h-y ‘shine, sun’}\]
Ge'ez \(\text{ﺩሓይ ḏahāy}\)
Amharic \(\text{ﺩሓይ} / \text{አሬን ṭaw} / \text{ስሬን ṭaw}\)
Tigrinya \(\text{ﺩሓይ} / \text{ስሬን ṭaw}\)

\[\text{√ k-l-tempt both, two’}\]
Ge'ez \(\text{ካልዉ kālė}\)
Amharic \(\text{ስぅን hulätt}\)
Tigrinya \(\text{ካልतtte kəlatt}\)

[2.6] Ethiopian terms of uncertain origin (Swadesh list)
The etymological origin a of a given word cannot be determined with certainty
in every case. Ethio-Semitic examples include the following (cf. Kogan 2015: 446–448):

\[ \sqrt{ḥ-m-d} \] ‘ashes’
Gəʾaz  \( ḥamad \)
Amharic  \( amäd \)
Tigrinya  \( ḥamäd \)

\[ \sqrt{q-ṣ-l} \] ‘leaf’
Gəʾaz  \( qas\)l
Amharic  \( qətäl \)
Tigrinya  \( qässli \)

\[ \sqrt{s-b-ʾ} \] ‘man’
Gəʾaz  \( sab\)́
Amharic  \( saw \)
Tigrinya  \( sāb\)́\(ay \)

\[ \sqrt{q-y-ḥ} \] ‘red’
Gəʾaz  \( qayyəḥ \)
Amharic  \( qāyy \)
Tigrinya  \( qəyyəḥ \)

\[ \sqrt{m-w-q} \] ‘warm’
Gəʾaz  \( məwəq \)
Amharic  \( muq \)
Tigrinya  \( moq \)

[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  \( Gəʾaz \)
Akkadian  \( epēqum \) ‘enclose’  \( ḥaqafa \) ‘hug, embrace, …’
Arabic  \( falqaṭa \) ‘hurry’  \( qalṭafa \) ‘hurry’
Soqọṭri  \( ig’alil \) ‘roll oneself’  \( ‘agala \) ‘place in layers, …’
Arabic  \( jaraza/jazara \) ‘tear, bite’  \( garaza/gazara \) ‘cut, circumcise’
Arabic  \( fahara/ḥafara \) ‘dig, notch’  \( ḥafara \) ‘dig (up), bury’
In the following, four sample entries will 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: napišum ‘breath(ing)’
napištu(m) ‘(essence of) life; throat’

West Semitic

Central Semitic

Arabic √ n-f-s

– verb: nafusa ‘to be precious; تُفسُن nafīsa ‘to be parsimonious, envious’
– noun: nafs, pl. nūfūs ‘nafs, pl. آنْفُس soul, psyche, desire, appetite, being, person, self’
نافس, pl. أنفس ‘nafas, pl. آنفاس ‘breath, sip’

Nabatean √ n-f-s

nafs ‘tomb’

ty nfs mrʾw l-qys bn ʾmrw mlk ʾl-ʿrb
‘This is the tomb of MRʾLQYS, son of ʾMRW, king of the ʾRB’
(an-Namāra inscription; cf. Retsö 2003: 467–470)

Northwest Semitic

Ugaritic √ n-p-š

npš ‘soul, (sexual) appetite’
ʾap npš ‘funerary document’

Phoenician √ n-p-š

npš I ‘person, personnel, emotions’
l-npš btʾšl-štt mkl ‘[paid] to the personnel of the temple of the consorts of MKL’
npš II ‘funerary monument, tombstone’
nʾps š’dyt ‘[this the] funerary monument of ŠDYT’

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

npš I ‘life’
npš-k[y] ’lqḥ ‘I will take your life’
np/bš II ‘person’
w-tb’h 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
nep̄š ‘throat, neck, breath, living being, people, personality, life, soul’; appositional reflexive pronoun
nep̄š hayyā ‘living soul’ (Gen 1:20)
naʾšim et naʾpšš-kā ‘I will deal with your life’ (1 K 19:2)
la-nap̄š-i ‘for myself, for my own sake’

Aramaic
Babylonian Aramaic √ n-p-š
– verb: napaš 1. ‘to increase, to be numerous’; 2. ‘to be empty’
– noun: nap̄šš ‘soul, body, self, human being’; reflexive pronoun

Palestinian Aramaic √ n-p-š
nap̄šš ‘soul, living, essence’
nep̄š ‘soul, living person, self, tomb, monument’

Syriac Aramaic √ n-p-š
– verb: napaš ‘to breathe out, exhale; perhaps also ‘to desire’
– noun: nap̄šš ‘breath of life, soul, person; funerary monument’; reflexive pronoun

South Semitic
Eastern South Semitic
Modern South Arabian (Mehri, Jibbāli, Ḥarsūsi, Soqōṭri)
Mehri √ n-f(-s)
- noun ha-nōf ‘self’
- verb: anōfes ‘to make space’; antāfūs ‘to be safely delivered of a child’; šānfūs ‘to welcome s.o.’
- noun: nafs/nafāws ‘individual, soul, person’

Jibbāli √ n-f
nuf ‘self’

Ḥarsūsi √ n-f
- noun he-nōf/he-nyehōf ‘self’

Soqōṭri √ 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 nōfoš in Soqotri), but Jib. nuf 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, and 51.).”

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
Go’aaz √ n-f-s
- verb: ṭnom nafsa ‘to blow (wind, spirit)’
ḥanfasa ‘to breathe, exhale, rest, give relief’
- noun: ṭnom nafs, pl. ṭnom nafsāt ‘soul, spirit, breath, a person, life’; reflexive pronoun ṭnom nafsāt ‘body, genitals’
South Ethiopic
Amharic √ n-f-s
- verb: እፋሰ nəffäsä ‘to blow (wind, spirit)’
 ተናፋሰ tənəffäsä ‘breathe’
- noun: እፋስ/ኽፋስ nəfas/nəfas ‘wind’
 እፋስ ምፋስ nəfs ‘soul, life’
 ተኽፋስ tənəfsə ረር ‘pregnant’
 ይኽፋስ tənəfsat ‘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: dupurrum ‘to depart, recede’
- noun: madbaru, mud(a)baru ‘steppe, desert’
 dibiru ‘mischief’
 dubur ‘fundament’

West Semitic
Central Semitic
Arabic √ d-b-r
- verb: َُرُبُد dabara ‘turn one’s back, elapse’
 َُرَّبُد dabbara ‘make arrangements’
- noun: ََرُب dubr ‘rump, backside’
 َُرُبُد dabru ‘turn (of fate)’
 َُربَد dabbūr ‘hornet, wasp’

Northwest Semitic
Ugarit √ d-b-r
- verb: dbr 1. ‘drive away’; 2. ‘to say, declare’
- noun: dbr ‘matter, thing’
 dbr ‘plague, pestilence’
Phoenician √ d-b-r
- verb: dbr ‘to say’
- noun: dbr 1. ‘thing, matter, act’ 2. ‘word, promise’; 3. ‘pl. affairs, acts, history’; 4. ‘statement, declaration’

Hebrew √ d-b-r
- verb: דבָר dāḇār ‘to speak’; דיבֶּר dibbēr ‘to speak’
II. 1. ‘thing’; 2. ‘incident’; 3. ‘doing, business, traffic’; 4. ‘matter’; 5. ‘portion’ דבֶּר debēr ‘cattle plague’
דבֶּר dibbēr ‘pasture’
דבֶּר dibār ‘the most holy’
דוֹבֵר dōḇēr ‘bee’

Aramaic
Babylonian / Palestinian Aramaic √ d-b-r
- verb: דָּבָר dbr ‘to take, act’
- noun: דָּבָר dāḇār ‘field’
דָּבַר tahāḇār ‘despoiling (of animals, property)’
דָּבֶּר dibbēr ‘divine speech’

Syriac Aramaic √ d-b-r
- verb: דבָר dāḇār 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: דבָּר dāḇār 1. ‘bee’; 2. ‘wasp, hornet’
דבָּר dāḇār 1. ‘cultivation of the ground’; 2. ‘plowing, tiling’; 3. ‘driving’; 4. movement, agitation’
דבָּר dāḇār 1. ‘land, field’; 2. ‘desert’; 3. ‘pasture land’
דבָּר dāḇār 1. ‘booty’; 2. ‘band of captives’

South Semitic
Eastern South Semitic
Modern South Arabian
Mehri √ d-b-r
- verb: adōbar ‘to turn the back’
דָּבָר dāḇār ‘to think, reflect’
√ r-d-b
- noun: ṣardīb/ṣardīb ‘nape of the neck and the top of the shoulders’
  Ḣarsūsi √ d-b-r
- verb: ḏēber ‘to turn away (from)’

Soqotri √ d-b-r
- noun: ṣidbeher ‘bee’
  ṣ r-d-b
- noun: ṣardīb ‘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
Goʿaz √ d-b-r
- verb: ṣ gā ṣ tadabbara ‘to lie on one’s back’
  gā ṣ dabara ‘establish a monastery’
  gā ṣ dabrawa ‘be well-developed, be well-grown (child), engage in illicit sex’
- noun: gā ṣ dabr ‘mountain, region where there is a monastery, convent, monastery’
  gā ṣ : gā ṣ dābr, dābr ‘territory, city, village’
  gā ṣ : gā ṣ dāber, dābir ‘shrine, sanctuary, innermost room, ecclesiastic counsel’

South Ethiopic
Amharic √ d-b-r
- verb: Ṣ ṣ dābbārā 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 dābr (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’
  Ṣ ṣ dābbārā 1. ‘to be chubby, to thrive (baby); 2. ‘to mature, reach full maturity, grow to full size’
- noun: Ṣ ṣ dābr, dābr ‘main church (one of high status which is surrounded by a sacred grove, endowed with ample lands [until 1975] and served by many dābtāra-cantors)’
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 (šinnūm) to cut furrow’

West Semitic
Central Semitic
Arabic √ r-k-b
– verb: rakiba ‘ride, mount (an animal), travel’
– noun: rakb ‘riders, horsemen’
markab ‘ship, vessel’

Northwest Semitic
Ugarit √ r-k-b
– verb: rkb ‘to mount (especially a chariot)’
– noun: rkb ‘charioteer, (epithet of the god B‘L)’

Hebrew √ r-k-b
– verb: rāḵāḇ 1. ‘ride’; 2. ‘drive’; 3. ‘to get on, mount’
– noun: reḵēḇ 1. ‘convoy’; 2. ‘train’; 3. ‘wagon, chariot’; 4. the upper grinding stone of a hand mill’
rakkāḇ 1. ‘rider’; 2. ‘charioteer’

Aramaic
Babylonian / Palestinian Aramaic √ r-k-b
– verb: ḫāḇ 1. ‘to ride, mount’: 2. ‘to impose upon so.’; 3. ‘to copulate (of animals)’
- **noun**: מַד־כַב־ךַָ markaḇtā ‘chariot, saddle’
  יב rkb 1. ‘rider’; 2. ‘upper millstone’

Syriac Aramaic √ r-k-b
- **verb**: רָקֶב rakeb 1. ‘to mount, bestride, ride a horse, mule, camel’; 2. ‘to cover in breeding’
- **noun**: רַקְבָּ rakbā 1. ‘the upper millstone’; 2. ‘the iron axle of a millstone’
  רָקָבָה rakibā 1. ‘conveyance, means of transport, vessel’; 2. ‘a mount, any animal for riding, horse’; 3. ‘riding, horsemanship’
  רָקָבָה 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**: רֵבָּ rebā ‘to ride’; 2. ‘to mount’; 3. ‘to sleep with a woman’
  arōkob ‘to put (a pot) on the fire’
  rtkūb ‘to get on to the right road and go straight along it’
- **noun**: rāk ‘ledge on a cliff (of about the size one could sleep on)’
  rōkāb ‘rider’
  mērkēb/ mērāwkāb ‘boat’

Jibbāli √ r-k-b
- **verb**: רֶקֶב rékob ‘to ride, mount (also with a sexual connotation)’
  erōkub ‘to put (a pot) on the fire’
  rōtkob 1. ‘to jump on one another (in play or sexual intercourse)’; 2. ‘to commit an offence’
- **noun**: ērkīb, yuršōb ‘riding-camel’
  rōkūb ‘rider’
  mērkēb/mīrēbkāb ‘boat’

Ḥarsūsi √ r-k-b
- **verb**: רֶּכֶּב rēkeb ‘to mount, ride’
  arēkeb ‘to put food in a pot to cook over the fire’
- **noun**: rēkbi ‘horseman’
  rekb ‘riding camels’
  márkeb ‘ship’
merkebêt ‘saddle-sore’

Soqọṭri √ r-k-b
- verb: rékob (rikub) ‘to mount’
- noun: rékkeb ‘knight’
märkeb ‘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
Gәәz √ r-k-b
- verb: ҹәә 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: ҹәә rәәkubәt ‘beings’
ҹәә rә/repository {congregation, meeting, council, assembly’
ҹәә rүәәkә ‘joining together, intercourse’
ҹәә rәәkәt ‘discovery, finding, acquisition, existence’

South Ethiopic
Amharic √ r-k-b
- verb: ҹәә, ҹәә rәәkәә, tәәrәәkkәәbә ‘take over (a business), take possession, be turned over (weapons)
ҹәә uәәrәәkәәbә ‘deliver (merchandise), turn over (weapons), surrender (arms), hand in, hand over’
- noun: ҹәә әә rәәkә ‘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-ġ-r

َرُبُد hāǧara ‘emigrate’
َجَرَة hiǧra ‘emigration’

Hebrew √ h-g-r

חִׂגפד higgēr ‘emigrate’, immigrate’
PN: ḥā ḡār ‘Hagar, Egyptian slave and concubine’

South Semitic
Eastern South Semitic
Modern South Arabian
Mehri √ h-g-r
– verb: ḥә gūr ‘to buy food for one’s family’
ḥә gōr 1. ‘to leave your family and emigrate’; 2. ‘to travel at midday, between 11 and 3 o’clock’
ḥә gәr ‘to be hot at midday’

Jibbāli √ h-g-r
– verb: ḥә gәr ‘to (leave o’s family and) emigrate’
oḥә gur ‘to come, go at midday (between 11 and 3 o’clock)’
– noun: ḥә gәr ‘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
Gә‘әz √ h-g-r
– noun: ṣ.vertical_whitespace. ‘city, town, village, province, district, country, homeland, inhabited, region’

South Semitic
Amharic √ Ø-g-r
– noun: ኢትር agār ‘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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