

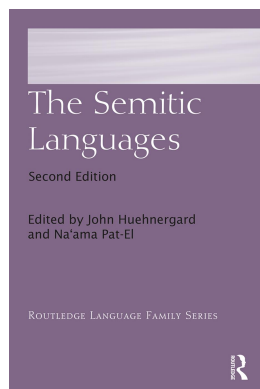
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The Semitic Languages

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMITIC LANGUAGES AND THEIR HISTORY

John Huehnergard and Na'ama Pat-El

1 INTRODUCTION

The Semitic languages have the longest recorded history of any language family, spanning some 4,500 years from the first Akkadian and Eblaite texts in the mid-third millennium BCE; through Ugaritic in the second millennium; Hebrew, Aramaic and Sabaic in the first millennium and continuing through the present day with Arabic, one of the most widely spoken of the world's languages; Amharic, Tigrinya and other related languages in Ethiopia and Eritrea; Hebrew in Israel; Mehri and other South Arabian languages in Yemen and Oman; and vestiges of Aramaic in Iraq, Iran, southeastern Turkey and Europe. The family's great time-depth, with ample documentation of several of its most ancient members, affords a unique opportunity to explore language change and diversification. Some of the individual languages, too, such as Akkadian and Aramaic, have very long recorded histories, and those histories are also instructive: Akkadian, at least the written version of it, underwent relatively little change in its morphology or syntax during its 2,500-year recorded history; Aramaic, after it ceased to be a *lingua franca* in the final centuries before the common era, diversified into a range of strikingly different varieties.

It is generally acknowledged that Semitic is a member of the Afro-Asiatic language phylum, whose other members include ancient Egyptian, the Berber languages, the Cushitic and Omotic languages and the Chadic languages. An overview of Afro-Asiatic, and of the relationship of Semitic to the other members, is presented in Chapter 2.

The earliest attestations of Semitic are words and proper names that appear in Sumerian texts of the first half of the third millennium BCE (Sommerfeld 2010) and, probably, a few short Northwest Semitic spells in Egyptian pyramid texts of the mid-third millennium (Steiner 2011). Since these early witnesses already exhibit features of the sub-branches of the family, the latest date for a uniform common Semitic must be the fourth millennium. Given the fact that all other branches of Afro-Asiatic are African, and given the comparative uniformity of Semitic vis-à-vis those other branches, it is likely that early speakers of Semitic entered southwest Asia from Africa,¹ perhaps in the late fifth or the early fourth millennium.² By the late fourth millennium, ancestral speakers of East Semitic (§2.1) had already moved into Mesopotamia.

Semitic, as just noted, is a relatively close-knit family, comparable to, say, Germanic. The paradigms of certain forms, especially in the ancient languages, are remarkably similar, as the forms presented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 illustrate.³

TABLE 1.1 PERSONAL PRONOUNS (INDEPENDENT NOMINATIVE FORMS)

	PROTO-SEMITIC	AKKADIAN (OLD BAB.)	ETHIOPIIC (GǝʕǝZ)	ARABIC (CLASSICAL)	HEBREW (BIBLICAL)	ARAMAIC (SYRIAC)
1SG	*ʔana, ʔana:ku	anāku	ʔänä	ʔana	ʔānī, ʔānōkī	ʔenō
2MSG	*ʔanta	atta	ʔāntä	ʔanta	ʔattā	ʔatt
2FSG	*ʔanti	atti	ʔānti	ʔanti	ʔat	ʔatt(y)
3MSG	*suʔa	šū	wəʔətu	huwa	hū	hu
3FSG	*siʔa	šī	yəʔəti	hija	hī	hi
1PL	*niħnu	nīnu	nəħnä	naħnu	ʔānaħnū	ħnan/naħnan
2MPL	*ʔantum(±u:)	attunu	ʔāntəmu	ʔantum	ʔattem	ʔatton
2FPL	*ʔantin(±a:)	attina	ʔāntən	ʔantunna	ʔattēnā	ʔatten
3MPL	*sum(±u:)	šunu	ʔəmntu	hum	hēm(mā)	hennon
3FPL	*sin(±a:)	šina	ʔəmantu	hunna	hēnnā	hennen

TABLE 1.2 NOMINAL DECLENSION: ACTIVE PARTICIPLE OF THE BASIC STEM OF THE ROOT √K'BR 'TO BURY'

	PROTO-SEMITIC	AKKADIAN (OLD AKK.)	SABAIC	ARABIC (CLASSICAL)	UGARITIC	HEBREW (BIBLICAL)	ARAMAIC (SYRIAC)	
MASCULINE								
SG	NOM	*k'a:biru-m	qābir-um	qbr-m	qa:biru-n	qābiru	qōḫēr	qōḫar
	GEN	*k'a:biri-m	qābiri-m		qa:biri-n	qābiri		
	ACC	*k'a:bira-m	qābir-am		qa:bira-n	qābira		
DU	NOM	*k'a:bira:-na	qābirā-n	qbr-n	qa:bira:-ni	qābirā-ma/i	qōḫərayim	–
	OBL	*k'a:biraj-na	qābirē-n		qa:biraj-ni	qābiray-ma/i	(qōḫəṛē)	
PL	NOM	*k'a:biru:-na	qābirū	qbr-n	qa:biru:-na	qābirū-ma	qōḫəṛīm	qōḫrin
	OBL	*k'a:biri:-na	qābirī		qa:biri:-na	qābirī-ma	(qōḫəṛē)	(qōḫray)
FEMININE								
SG	NOM	*k'a:biratu-m	qābirt-um	qbrt-m	qa:biratu-n	qābir(a)tu	qōḫəṛeṭ	qōḫrō
	GEN	*k'a:birati-m	qābirti-m		qa:birati-n	qābir(a)ti		(qōḫrat)
	ACC	*k'a:birata-m	qābirt-am		qa:birata-n	qābir(a)ta		
DU	NOM	*k'a:birata:-na	qābirtā-n	qbrt-n	qa:birata:-ni	qābir(a)tā-ma/i	qōḫirtayim	–
	OBL	*k'a:birataj-na	qābirtē-n		qa:birataj-ni	qābir(a)tay-ma/i	(qōḫirtē)	
PL	NOM	*k'a:biratu-m	qābirātū	qbrt-m	qa:biratu-n	qābirātu	qōḫəṛōṭ	qōḫrōn
	OBL	*k'a:birati-m	qābirāti-m		qa:birati-n	qābirāti		(qōḫrōṭ)

Notes: The forms with elements after hyphens are nonbound (free) forms; elements after hyphens are lost in bound (construct) forms (see §4 for these terms). Akkadian MPL participles may also inflect like adjectives: NOM *qābirūt-um*, OBL *qābirūti-m*. In Sabaic and Ugaritic, only the consonants were normally written; the Ugaritic forms listed here are based on transcriptions into syllabic cuneiform, where the vowels are evident. Aramaic nouns also occur in a form called the emphatic or full form, which ends in -ō (originally the definite article): MSG *qōḫrō*, FSG *qōḫartō*, MPL *qōḫrayō*, FPL *qōḫrōṭ*.

2 SUBGROUPING OF THE SEMITIC FAMILY AND SURVEY OF THE LANGUAGES

In this section we survey the Semitic languages, both ancient and modern, according to their genetic subgrouping. The internal classification of the Semitic languages has been the subject of much discussion. We – the editors of the present volume – subscribe to the model shown in Figure 1.1, which is based on shared innovations that will be described

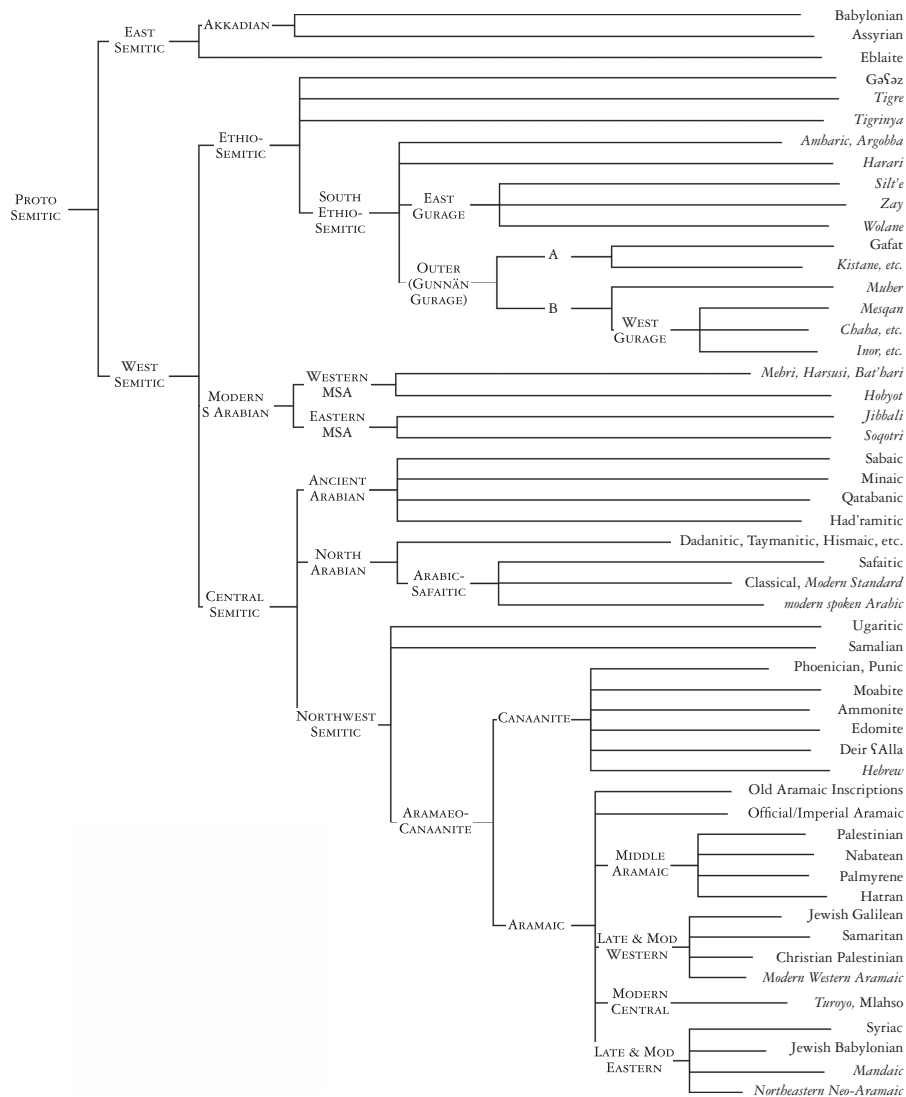


FIGURE 1.1 THE INTERNAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE SEMITIC LANGUAGES

This figure is available online as an e-resource at www.routledge.com/9780415731959.

in the following paragraphs.⁴ While that model in its broadest outline reflects a general consensus among today’s Semitists, it should be noted that some scholars – including some of the contributors to the present volume – prefer other models.⁵

For ease of reference, a tabular overview of the subgrouping of the Semitic languages is presented here; the overview is then followed by a more detailed review of the sub-branches and individual languages of the family. As both Figure 1.1 and the overview indicate, the oldest branching is between East and West Semitic.

Overview of the Semitic languages, by subgroup. Living languages appear in *italics*. Nodes are in SMALL CAPS.

EAST SEMITIC

Akkadian (Chapter 5)

Old Akkadian dialects (26th–22nd c. BCE)

Babylonian

Old Babylonian (22nd–16th c. BCE)

Middle Babylonian (15th–11th c. BCE)

Neo-/Late Babylonian (10th c. BCE–1st c. CE)

Assyrian

Old Assyrian (20th–16th c. BCE)

Middle Assyrian (15th–11th c. BCE)

Neo-Assyrian (10th–7th c. BCE)

Eblaite (24th c. BCE)

WEST SEMITIC

ETHIO-SEMITIC

Gəṣəz (Classical Ethiopic; 4th–10th c. CE; Chapter 6)

Tigre (Chapter 7)

Tigrinya (Chapter 8)

SOUTH ETHIOPIC

Amharic (Chapter 9), *Argobba*

Harari

EAST GURAGE

Silt’e

Zay

Wolane

OUTER SOUTH ETHIOPIC (GUNNĀN GURAGE)

SUBGROUP 1

Gafat (to 20th c. CE)

Kistane, *Dobbi*, Galila (to 20th c. CE)

SUBGROUP 2

Muher (Chapter 10)

WEST GURAGE

Mesqan

Chaha, *Ezha*, *Gumer*, *Gura*

Inor, *Ener*, *Endegagn*, *Gyeto*, Mesmes (to 20th c. CE)

MODERN SOUTH ARABIAN

WESTERN

Mehri (Chapter 11), *Harsusi*, *Bat 'hari**Hobyot*

EASTERN

*Jibbali**Soqotri* (Chapter 12)

CENTRAL SEMITIC

ANCIENT SOUTH ARABIAN (CHAPTER 13)

Sabaic

Early/Old Sabaic (10th–4th c. BCE)

Middle Sabaic (3rd c. BCE–4th c. CE)

Late Sabaic (4th–6th c. CE)

Minaic (10th–2nd c. BCE)

Qatabanic (8th c. BCE–2nd c. CE)

Hadramitic (7th c. BCE–3rd c. CE)

NORTH ARABIAN

Dadanitic (6th c. BCE?)

Taymanitic (6th–5th c. BCE)

Hismaic (1st c. BCE?–1st c. CE?)

“Thamudic” (ANA inscriptions that are none of the above)

ARABIC–SAFAITIC

Safaitic (1st c. BCE?–4th c. CE?; Chapter 14)

*Arabic*Classical Arabic (from 4th c. CE; Chapter 15); Middle Arabic; *Modern Standard Arabic*; *modern spoken Arabic: Iraqi, Gulf, Yemeni, Levantine* (Chapter 16), *Egyptian* (Chapter 17), *Moroccan* (Chapter 18) and others

NORTHWEST SEMITIC

Ugaritic (13th–12th c. BCE; Chapter 19)

ARAMAEO-CANAANITE

Canaanite (Chapter 20)

el-Amarna Canaanite (14th c. BCE)

Phoenician (10th c. BCE–2nd c. CE), Punic (8th c. BCE–5th c. CE)

Moabite (9th c. BCE)

Ammonite (9th–6th c. BCE)

Deir ṢAllā (8th c. BCE)

Edomite (7th/6th c. BCE)

Hebrew

Pre-modern (including Biblical; from the 12th c. BCE; Chapter 21)

Modern Israeli (Chapter 22)

Aramaic

Old Aramaic inscriptions (9th–6th c. BCE)

Official/Imperial/Achaemenid Aramaic (including early Biblical;

6th–4th c. BCE)

- Middle Aramaic (3rd c. BCE–2nd c. CE)
 - Palestinian (late Biblical; Qumran; early targums)
 - Nabataean
 - Palmyrene
 - Hatran
- Late and Modern Western Aramaic
 - Jewish Galilean (1st–11th c. CE)
 - Samaritan (1st–12th c. CE; Chapter 23)
 - Christian Palestinian (3rd–13th c. CE)
 - Modern Western Aramaic: *Maflula*, *Baxfa*, *Jubbšadin* (Chapter 24)
- Modern Central Aramaic: *Turoyo*, Mlahso (to 20th c. CE)
- Late and Modern Eastern Aramaic
 - Syriac (1st–14th c. CE; Chapter 25)
 - Jewish Babylonian (3rd–11th c. CE)
 - Classical/Old Mandaic (from 3rd c. CE); *(Neo-)Mandaic* (Chapter 26)
 - Northeastern Neo-Aramaic* dialects (Chapter 27)

2.1 East Semitic

East Semitic is an extinct branch, comprising only the ancient languages Akkadian (Chapter 5) and Eblaite.

Akkadian, along with the extinct isolate Sumerian, was the language of the great civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia (roughly, present-day Iraq). Akkadian was usually written in a cuneiform script, logo-syllabic in nature, that was borrowed from Sumerian. The first Akkadian texts begin to appear in the 24th century BCE, although Akkadian names and individual words appear in Sumerian texts already several centuries earlier. The Akkadian texts of the third millennium, which exhibit a variety of dialectal features, are grouped together under the term Old Akkadian. During the second and first millennia, two major dialects are reflected in the texts: Babylonian in the south of Mesopotamia and Assyrian in the north. See Chapter 5 for further, especially chronological, partitions of dialects. During the first millennium, Akkadian gradually gave way to Aramaic, and the latest-dated Akkadian texts are from the 1st century CE. But from the two and a half millennia in which it was recorded, several hundred thousand Akkadian texts in a very wide range of genres have been discovered. Akkadian and Sumerian speakers were in contact for centuries, and Sumerian had significant influence on Akkadian; for example, Akkadian became a verb-final language (Proto-Semitic was verb-initial; see Chapter 3, §4.1), and its repertoire of consonants was considerably reduced, especially in Babylonian.

Eblaite is attested in several thousand cuneiform texts of the 24th century from the city of Ebla (modern Tell Mardikh in Syria). Because most Eblaite texts exhibit a great many forms written in Sumerian logograms, and because the Eblaite syllabary reflects a different scribal tradition than those of most Akkadian texts, much of its grammar remains somewhat uncertain. What is clear is that Eblaite is very closely related to Akkadian, closely enough that some scholars consider it to be a dialect of Akkadian. A recent description of Eblaite grammar is Catagnoti (2012).

East Semitic exhibits several innovative features vis-à-vis Proto-Semitic. In phonology, the reconstructed Proto-Semitic consonant *x' merged with *x, whereas it merged with *ħ

TABLE 1.3 THE SHORT PREFIX CONJUGATION (PCS) OF THE BASIC (G) STEM OF THE ROOT *K'-B-R 'TO BURY'

	PROTO-SEMITIC	AKKADIAN (ASSYRIAN)	ETHIOPIIC (Gəḏəz)	MEHRI	ARABIC (CLASSICAL)	HEBREW (BIBLICAL)	ARAMAIC (SYRIAC)
1SG	*ʔak'bir	aqbir	ʔəkbər	l-ək'be:r	ʔaqbir	ʔəqbōr	ʔeqbor
2MSG	*tak'bir	taqbir	təkbər	tək'be:r	taqbir	tiqbōr	teqbor
2FSG	*tak'biri:	taqbirī	təkbəri	tək'be:ri	taqbiri:	tiqbārī	teqbrin
3MSG	*jak'bir	iqbir	yəkbər	jək'be:r	jaqbir	yiqbōr	neqbor
3FSG	*tak'bir	taqbir	təkbər	tək'be:r	taqbir	tiqbōr	teqbor
1PL	*nak'bir	niqbir	nəkbər	nək'be:r	naqbir	niqbōr	neqbor
2MPL	*tak'biru:	taqbirā	təkbəru	tək'be:rəm	taqbiru:	tiqbārū	teqbrun
2FPL	*tak'birna	taqbirā	təkbəra	tək'be:rən	taqbirna	tiqbōrnā	teqbrən
3MPL	*jak'biru:	iqbirū	yəkbəru	jək'be:rəm	jaqbiru:	yiqbārū	neqbrun
3FPL	*jak'birna	iqbirā	yəkbəra	tək'be:rən	jaqbirna	tiqbōrnā	neqbrən

Note: The Arabic forms also appear as *ʔaqbur*, *taqbur*, etc., with *-u-*.

in West Semitic (Huehnergard 2003). A common Akkadian feature is the dissimilation of two glottalic consonants within a root (it is unclear whether this also occurred in Eblaite); e.g., the Proto-Semitic root *l-k'-t' 'to glean' > Akkadian l-k'-t (*laqātum*). Morphological innovations include, *inter alia*, the rise of (a) dative pronominal forms, as in Old Babylonian *a-qbi-kum* (1SG-say.PCS-2MSG.DAT) 'I said to you'; (b) a TAM form, called the Perfect, from a derivational form that marked reciprocal/reflexive: *jV-ʔ<ta>xaḏ (3-<RECP/REFL>seize.PCS) 'he seized for himself' > 'he has seized' (Old Babylonian *itaḥaz*); a series of iterative verb stems, synchronically marked by an infix *-tan-*, as in *jV-ʔ<tan>axxaḏ (3-<ITER>seize.PCL) 'he keeps seizing' (Old Babylonian *itanahḥaz*). (See Huehnergard 2006 for details on these and additional features.)

2.2 West Semitic

Proto-West Semitic is characterized by an important innovation in the TAM system. In Proto-Semitic, the short prefix conjugation of the verb (PCS; Table 1.3), as in *ʔa-k'bir (1SG-bury.PCS), was used both for basic past expressions and injunctively, thus 'I buried; let me bury'. Proto-Semitic also exhibited a predicative construction consisting of a verbal adjective and a suffixed subject pronoun, as in *k'abir-ku (buried-1SG) 'I am/was buried'.⁶ In Proto-West Semitic, the latter developed into an active, perfective suffix conjugation verb (SC), often with a change in the quality of the second vowel, thus *k'abar-ku (bury.SC-1SG) 'I (have) buried'. This form eventually replaced the inherited *ʔa-k'bir as the basic unmarked perfective or past, the latter remaining in use as an injunctive form, but as a past only in syntactically restricted contexts. Paradigms of the Proto-Semitic and Akkadian predicative construction and the innovative West Semitic suffix conjugation are given in Table 1.4.

West Semitic comprises three branches: Ethio-Semitic, Modern South Arabian and Central Semitic.

TABLE 1.4 THE EAST SEMITIC PREDICATIVE CONSTRUCTION AND THE WEST SEMITIC SUFFIX CONJUGATION (sc). ROOT *K'-B-R 'TO BURY'

	PROTO-SEMITIC	AKKADIAN (ASSYRIAN)	ETHIOPIIC (Gəṣəz)	MEHRI	ARABIC (CLASSICAL)	HEBREW (BIBLICAL)	ARAMAIC (SYRIAC)
1SG	*k'abir-(a:)ku	qabrāku	ḳābārku	k'əberk	qabartu	qāḅartī	qeḅreṭ
2MSG	*k'abir-(a:)ta	qabrāt(i)	ḳābārkā	k'əbərək	qabarta	qāḅartā	qḅart
2FSG	*k'abir-(a:)ti	qabrāti	ḳābārki	k'əbərɸ	qabarti	qāḅart	qḅart(y)
3MSG	*k'abir-a	qabir	ḳābārā	k'əbu:r	qabara	qāḅar	qḅar
3FSG	*k'abir-at	qabrat	ḳābārāt	k'əb(ə)ru:t	qabarat	qāḅarā	qeḅrat
1PL	*k'abir-(a:)nu	qabrāni	ḳābārṇā	k'əbu:rən	qabarna:	qāḅarnū	qḅarn
2MPL	*k'abir-(a:)tum(u)	qabrātunu	ḳābārḳəmu	k'əbərḳəm	qabartum	qəḅartəm	qḅarton
2FPL	*k'abir-(a:)tin(a)	qabrātin	ḳābārḳən	k'əbərḳən	qabartunna	qəḅarten	qḅarten
3MPL	*k'abir-u:	qabrū	ḳābāru	k'əbawr	qabaru:	qāḅarū	qḅar(w)
3MPL	*k'abir-a:	qabrā	ḳābāra	k'əbu:r	qabarna	qāḅarū	qḅar(y)

2.2.1 Ethio-Semitic

While the common genetic origin of the Ethiopian Semitic languages is generally acknowledged, only a few innovative features vis-à-vis West Semitic have been noted (Bulakh and Kogan 2010, 2013; Weninger 2011): the replacement of common Semitic *Ca:CiC by *CaCa:Ci: as the active participle of the basic stem of the verb (but *Ca:CiC remains in Tigre; Chapter 7, §4.4.4); an ending *-o:t on infinitives; and the appearance of an existential verb with root *h-l-w. The last is in fact one of many lexical items that, according to L. Kogan's recent comprehensive study of Semitic lexical isoglosses, provide "reliable support" for the traditional identification of Ethio-Semitic as a unity (Kogan 2015: 601).

Although it has been suggested that the presence of Semitic languages in the Horn of Africa reflects the original homeland of the family (e.g., Hudson 2002), it is more likely that they are the result of movements back to Africa from the southern Arabian peninsula, in the first millennium BCE or earlier.

The only Ethio-Semitic language to receive written form in the ancient world was Gəṣəz (Classical Ethiopic), originally the language of the kingdom of Axum in the north of present-day Ethiopia (see Chapter 6). Gəṣəz was written in a modified form of the Ancient South Arabian alphabet (Chapter 13), to which diacritics were added to indicate vowels. In the modern period, other Ethiopian languages are also written with this alphasyllabary.

Ethiopian Semitic has traditionally been divided into northern and southern branches, the former consisting of ancient Gəṣəz and modern Tigre (Chapter 7) and Tigrinya, an official language of Eritrea (Chapter 8); it has recently been suggested, however, that these northern languages do not in fact exhibit any shared innovations (Bulakh and Kogan 2010, 2013). South Ethiopic is a group of over a dozen modern languages that do share innovations, especially in the verbal system;⁷ it includes Amharic, a *lingua franca* and official language of Ethiopia (Chapter 9); Harari, spoken especially in the predominantly

Muslim city of Harar; and languages that are grouped together under the label Gurage, but which in fact represent several distinct branchings, the nature of which is disputed (see most recently Goldenberg 2013: 55–7, Hudson 2013, Meyer 2018). One such language, Muher, is described in Chapter 10.

2.2.2 Modern South Arabian

The Modern South Arabian branch is a group of six closely related languages spoken by rather small, and diminishing, populations in present-day Oman and Yemen: Mehri, Hars’usi and Bat’hari, along with Hobyot, comprise a western subgroup, while Jibbali and Soqotri comprise an eastern subgroup (Rubin 2015, 2018: 12). The genealogical unity of Modern South Arabian is indicated by several morphological developments, such as a future participle, a masculine marker *-o:n* on nominals, and, in some of the languages, a negative circumfix, as well as by a remarkable number of lexical isoglosses (Kogan 2015: 468–597). Modern South Arabian is the only branch of Semitic with no ancient representative. Two Modern South Arabian languages are described in the present volume: Mehri in Chapter 11 and Soqotri in Chapter 12.

2.2.3 Central Semitic

Like its Proto-West Semitic ancestor, Proto-Central Semitic is also characterized by an important innovation in the TAM system, namely, the appearance of a new imperfective form. In Proto-Semitic, the imperfective form of the verb in the basic stem was the long prefix conjugation (PCL), whose base had a geminated middle radical, as in **jV-k’abbar* (3-bury.PCL) ‘he buries, will bury’ (> Akkadian *iqabbar*); this form also characterized Proto-West Semitic, as in Gəʕəz *yəkābbər* and Mehri *yək’awbər*,⁸ but it was completely lost in Proto-Central Semitic, where it was replaced by a form based on the inherited short prefix conjugation form **ja-k’bir* (Table 1.3), a form that was marked by an additional morpheme (with two allomorphs, **-u* in most singular forms and **-na* in most plural forms; thus 3MSG **ja-k’bir-u* 3-bury-IPFV, 3MPL **ja-k’bir-u-na* 3-bury-MPL-IPFV). Table 1.5 gives paradigms of the original long prefix conjugation in Proto-Semitic, Akkadian, (Classical) Ethiopic and Mehri, and its replacement in the Central Semitic languages, exemplified by (Classical) Arabic and (Biblical) Hebrew.

TABLE 1.5 THE LONG PREFIX CONJUGATION (PCL) OF THE ROOT **K’-B-R* ‘TO BURY’, AND ITS REPLACEMENT IN THE CENTRAL SEMITIC LANGUAGES

	PROTO-SEMITIC	AKKADIAN (ASSYRIAN)	ETHIOPIC (Gəʕəz)	MEHRI	ARABIC (CLASSICAL)	HEBREW (BIBLICAL)
1SG	<i>*ʔVk’abbar</i>	<i>aqabbir</i>	<i>ʔəkābbər</i>	<i>ək’awbər</i>	<i>ʔaqbiru</i>	<i>ʔeqbōr</i>
2MSG	<i>*tVk’abbar</i>	<i>taqabbir</i>	<i>təkābbər</i>	<i>tek’awbər</i>	<i>taqbiru</i>	<i>tiqbōr</i>
2FSG	<i>*tVk’abbari</i>	<i>taqabbirī</i>	<i>təkābbəri</i>	<i>tek’e:bər</i>	<i>taqbiri:na</i>	<i>tiqbārī(n)</i>
3MSG	<i>*jVk’abbar</i>	<i>iqabbir</i>	<i>yəkābbər</i>	<i>jək’awbər</i>	<i>jaqbiru</i>	<i>yiqbōr</i>
3FSG	<i>*tVk’abbar</i>	<i>taqabbir</i>	<i>təkābbər</i>	<i>tək’awbər</i>	<i>taqbiru</i>	<i>tiqbōr</i>

(Continued)

TABLE 1.5 (CONTINUED)

	PROTO-SEMITIC	AKKADIAN (ASSYRIAN)	ETHIOPIC (GƏSƏZ)	MEHRI	ARABIC (CLASSICAL)	HEBREW (BIBLICAL)
1PL	*nVk'abbar	niqabbir	nəḳəbbər	nək'awbər	naqbiru	niqbōr
2MPL	*tVk'abbaru:	taqabbirā	təḳəbbəru	tək'əbrəm	taqbiru:na	tiqbərū(n)
2FPL	*tVk'abbarna	taqabbirā	təḳəbbəra	tək'əbrən	taqbirna	tiqbōrnā
3MPL	*jVk'abbaru:	iqabbirū	yəḳəbbəru	jək'əbrəm	jaqbiru:na	yiqbərū(n)
3FPL	*jVk'abbarna	iqabbirā	yəḳəbbəra	tək'əbrən	jaqbirna	tiqbōrnā

Notes: For *aw* in the Mehri paradigm, see n. 8. The Arabic forms also appear as *ʔaqburu*, *taqburu*, etc., with *-u-*. The Hebrew form that corresponds to the Arabic in this table is mostly the same as the original short prefix conjugation (Table 1.3) because of the eventual loss of short final vowels (so that Proto-Hebrew **jak'bur* and **jak'buru* both yielded *yiqbōr*). The original distinction is better illustrated for Hebrew by some of the so-called weak roots, such as those that originally had *w* as their second radical: the IPFV form *yāqūm* 'he will stand' derives from **ja.k'u.mu* (from still-earlier **jak'wumu*), with the medial long vowel preserved in an open syllable; this contrasts with the original short prefix conjugation form *yāqōm* 'may he stand', which derives from **ja.k'um*, with short *u* in the closed syllable.

Proto-Central Semitic also exhibits several other innovative features, including the following (Huehnergard 2005): metathesis in the prefix conjugation of verbs with identical second and third radicals (e.g., **ja-mdud-u* > **ja-mudd-u*: 3-measure.PCS-MPL 'they measured'); the use of a presentative particle as an incipient definite article; and the use of the external MPL marker for the 'tens' (e.g., **θala:θ-um* 'three-NOM', **θala:θ-u:na* three-MPL.NOM = 'thirty').

Central Semitic has three subbranches: Ancient South Arabian, North Arabian and Northwest Semitic.

2.2.3.1 Central Semitic: Ancient South Arabian

The Ancient South Arabian languages (Chapter 13) are Sabaic, Minaic, Qatabanic and Hadramitic. They are attested in several thousand texts from the early first millennium BCE through the middle of the first millennium CE, written in a script that represents a branch of the consonantal alphabet that is distinct from the more familiar one used to write the Northwest Semitic languages (see §3). Diagnostic features of Ancient South Arabian include a suffixed definite article **-a:n* and the use of more than one bound form to govern a genitive (see Chapter 13, §5.4). Sabaic, but not the other languages of the group, underwent a change of Proto-Semitic **s* > *h* in 3rd person pronouns and the causative verbal stem.

2.2.3.2 Central Semitic: North Arabian

The North Arabian subbranch of Central Semitic includes both Arabic and a number of inscriptional dialects or languages from the Arabian peninsula and southern Jordan and Syria, collectively referred to as Ancient North Arabian. The latter, written on stone in alphabets related to that used for the Ancient South Arabian languages, are difficult to date, but probably span a period from the early or mid-first millennium BCE until the

mid-first millennium CE. Precise classification of the languages and dialects reflected in these inscriptions has been elusive, but recent scholarship identifies the following (Macdonald 2000, 2008, Al-Jallad 2018; as just noted, the dates of these are often uncertain): Dadanitic (from the oasis of Dadan, modern al-ʿUla; ca. 6th c. BCE?); Taymanitic (from the oasis of Tayma: 6th–5th c. BCE?); Hismaic (from the Hisma: desert of southern Jordan and northwestern Saudi Arabia; 1st c. BCE–1st c. CE?); Safaitic (from the lava deserts of northeastern Jordan, southern Syria and northern Saudi Arabia; 1st c. BCE–4th c. CE?); Thamudic (described as “a sort of ‘pending’ category” for ANA texts that are none of the others; Macdonald 2008: 492). The most prominent of these by far is Safaitic, which is described in Chapter 14, where it is noted that Safaitic and early Arabic probably comprise a dialect continuum. Innovative features of this Arabic–Safaitic subbranch include the merger of the Proto-Semitic consonants *s and *ts to *s; the change of *m to n as the marker of nonbound (free) forms of the noun (Arabic *tanwi:n*); generalization of the pattern *maC₁C₂u:C₃ as the passive participle of the basic verb stem; the use of NEG *lam plus the short prefix conjugation for past negation; the grammaticalization of the noun *pV: ‘mouth’ as a preposition, ‘within’ (Classical Arabic *fi:*); and modified syntax in the relative clauses (Pat-El 2014, Huehnergard 2017, Al-Jallad 2018). (In Arabic, in addition, an important phonological development is the change of the “emphatic” consonants from glottalic to pharyngealized or uvularized, as in [sʰ] > [sʰ̣]; there is insufficient evidence to determine whether this also occurred in Safaitic or in other Ancient North Arabian dialects.)

Arabic proper is attested in inscriptions from the last few pre-Islamic centuries in a consonantal alphabet derived from the Nabataean Aramaic script. As described in Chapter 15, the origins of Classical Arabic, including the Arabic of the Qurʾān, are complex. The codified grammar of Classical Arabic serves as the model for Modern Standard Arabic, which is used across the Arabic-speaking world in written media and in official broadcast media. Vernacular Arabic comprises a vast continuum of dialects (some would say, languages) spoken today by several hundred million people. While it is often assumed that the modern forms of Arabic derive from the classical language, the fact that they exhibit features inherited from common Semitic, but not found in Classical Arabic, shows that they derive from other early forms of Proto-Arabic (see, e.g., Pat-El 2017). Three representative varieties of modern spoken Arabic are described in the present volume: Levantine (Chapter 16), Egyptian (Chapter 17) and Moroccan (Chapter 18).

2.2.3.3 Central Semitic: Northwest Semitic

The earliest-attested subbranch of Central Semitic is traditionally referred to as Northwest Semitic (NWS). Among the diagnostic innovations that characterize NWS are the change of initial *w to *j (e.g., PS *warix- ‘month’ > PNWS *jarix-) and the generalization of -a- insertion plus an external ending to mark the plurals of substantives of the shape C₁VC₂C₃ (e.g., SG *kalb-um ‘dog-NOM’ ~ PL *kal<a>b-u:na ‘dog<PL>-MPL.NOM’). (See Huehnergard 1991, Hasselbach and Huehnergard 2007.)

It has recently been suggested that the earliest attestation of Northwest Semitic is embedded in Egyptian pyramid texts of the mid-third millennium BCE, specifically, in spells against snakes (Steiner 2011). NWS proper names and a few NWS words also occur in Akkadian and Egyptian texts from the late third millennium to the mid-second millennium; these vestiges are generally referred to collectively as Amorite (Streck

2000). The earliest alphabetic inscriptions, found in the Sinai peninsula, in Egypt, and in Syria-Palestine and dated to the first half of the second millennium, also reflect a Northwest Semitic language or languages. There is not enough of this early material, however, to reconstruct much of the grammar.

The earliest NWS language recorded in full, as opposed to the hints and vestiges mentioned in the preceding paragraph, is Ugaritic (Chapter 19), an indigenous language of the ancient Syrian coastal city-state of Ugarit. Ugaritic texts, which date to the 13th and early 12th centuries BCE, were written in an indigenous cuneiform alphabet.

The two most prominent forms of NWS are Canaanite and Aramaic, which have long been considered distinct branches. Recently, however, it has been suggested that they share a common ancestor within Northwest Semitic, distinct from Ugaritic. Innovative features of Aramaeo-Canaanite include an accusative marker **ʔaya:t*, the development of dative subjects with adjectival predicates, and the transfer of gemination to the first radical in the prefix conjugation of verbs with identical second and third radicals (Pat-El and Wilson-Wright 2018). Within this Aramaeo-Canaanite node, Canaanite is distinguished by several diagnostic features: the change of **-tu* to **-ti* to mark the 1SG of the suffix conjugation; the generalization of the suffix **-nu:* for 1PL regardless of case (vs. **-na:* in Aramaic); vowel harmony in the suffix conjugation of the verbal stem with doubled middle radical (the D stem; e.g., earlier **barrika* > **birrika* ‘he blessed’), the grammaticalization of a substantive with the meaning ‘place, trace’, **ʔaθar-*, as a new relative marker, and the development of a systematic morphological and syntactic distinction between two infinitive forms (Huehnergard 1991, Pat-El and Wilson-Wright 2016).

The oldest evidence of Canaanite appears in a mixed language, in 14th-century BCE letters written in cuneiform and sent to the Egyptian pharaoh by vassal rulers in Syria-Palestine. These letters, found at the Egyptian site of el-Amarna, exhibit Akkadian vocabulary but Canaanite grammar, especially in the TAM system (Izre'el 2012). While Canaanite is thus obliquely attested in the el-Amarna letters, actual texts in Canaanite languages first appear in the late second or early first millennium BCE (Chapter 20). The best-attested Canaanite language is Hebrew, known especially from the text of the Hebrew Bible, parts of which may date as early as the 12th century BCE (Chapter 21). Hebrew inscriptions, exhibiting grammar very similar to that of Biblical Hebrew, are attested throughout the first millennium. Both the biblical text and the inscriptions show evidence of minor dialect variation. The Hebrew of the Mishna, from around the turn of the era, also seems to reflect a different dialect strain. After its demise as a spoken language in the 3rd century CE, Hebrew continued in use as a literary language, until its revival as Modern Israeli Hebrew (Chapter 22). All of the other Canaanite languages are extinct. Phoenician is known from inscriptions dating to the 10th through the 2nd centuries BCE, though its Punic descendant is attested until the 5th century CE. The other languages – Moabite, Ammonite, Deir ʕAllā and Edomite – are all known from only a few inscriptions dating to the first half of the first millennium BCE.

Aramaic is the Semitic language with the longest continuous history, nearly three thousand years, from the earliest inscriptions in the early first millennium BCE through the various forms still spoken today. Innovative features in Proto-Aramaic include the suffix **-aʔ* for the definite article, the ending **-a:n* to mark FPL nouns and verbs, and the loss of the passive stem of the verb marked by a prefix **n* (Huehnergard 1995; see also Loesov 2012). The dialectal distribution of the different variants of Aramaic is debated; several attempts have been made to divide Aramaic into well-defined dialectal groups, but none of the divisions suggested has met with overall approval. The difficulty stems

from the uneven attestation of texts, the variation in linguistic features even in the same period, and the wide distribution of the language. The use of Aramaic as a *lingua franca* complicates the problem. We follow here the division suggested by Fitzmyer (1979); this subgrouping is chronological, but allows for additional breakdown by geography.

The early epigraphic material is called Old Aramaic (9th–7th century BCE), reflecting dialects spoken over a wide area stretching from Syria to Mesopotamia. The earliest inscriptions include a number of steles found in northeastern and central Syria. These steles show some linguistic variation, which, given the dialectal variety of Aramaic in later periods, has been taken to indicate a very early dialectal split between east and west (Kaufman 1982, Loesov 2102, Gzella 2015: 72–3). Old Aramaic texts are conveniently collected in Donner and Röllig (2002) and in Hug (1993), with some also in Gibson (1975); their grammar is succinctly described in Degen (1969).

Official Aramaic (or Imperial Aramaic; 700–200 BCE) was a *lingua franca*, serving as a chancellery language during the late Neo-Assyrian empire and throughout the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires. Official Aramaic includes the biblical book of Ezra, letters, official administrative documents and legal contracts, inscriptions, ostraca and other genres. Within this period, the material from the Achaemenid empire (~559–330 BCE), primarily found in Egypt but also from every other part of the empire, including the Arabian peninsula and Afghanistan, represents a distinct linguistic form (Folmer 1995). This period, therefore, provides us with ample texts, on a variety of materials in a variety of genres. A comprehensive grammar is that of Muraoka and Porten (2003).

After the fall of the Achaemenid empire, Aramaic is primarily found in Syria-Palestine and Mesopotamia. Middle Aramaic (200 BCE–200 CE) includes diverse texts, such as the biblical book of Daniel, biblical translations (targums) and texts and inscriptions from Syria, such as Palmyrene and Old Syriac; from Iraq, such as Hatran; and from Palestine, such as the Aramaic texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran.

The final pre-modern stage is Late Aramaic (1st–14th centuries CE), which is further divided into western dialects, including various Palestinian dialects, such as Jewish Galilean (especially in the Jerusalem Talmud), Samaritan (Chapter 23) and Christian Palestinian; and eastern dialects, which are Jewish Babylonian (the dialect of the Babylonian Talmud), Syriac (Chapter 25) and Classical or Old Mandaic.

Dialects of Aramaic were spoken until recently in parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, and there are still sporadic pockets of speakers in the Middle East and elsewhere. Modern Aramaic dialects are divided into four main groups: Western Neo-Aramaic, in a mountainous area near Damascus, Syria (Chapter 24); Central Neo-Aramaic in Turkey; modern Mandaic, located primarily in Iran (Chapter 26); and Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (Chapter 27), which was spread mostly over Iraq and Kurdistan with some holdouts in the Caucasus. Each of these has a number of distinct dialects.

Surveys of the history of Aramaic are Beyer (1986), Ferrer (2004) and Gzella (2015). *The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* at <http://cal.huc.edu/>, edited by S. Kaufman and others, is an online dictionary of all pre-modern dialects of Aramaic. It uses transliteration and incorporates material from a large number of standard reference dictionaries.

A few inscriptions in a separate Northwest Semitic language, Samalian, have been found in Turkey, some 220 km northeast of the city of Ugarit, alongside inscriptions in other Semitic languages. The inscriptions are dated to 900–700 BCE. Scholars have debated the classification of these inscriptions since their discovery (Pardee 2009). The language lacks any Canaanite or Aramaic diagnostic features and it is therefore likely to be an independent node of Northwest Semitic (Huehnergard 1991).

3 WRITING SYSTEMS AND transliteration SYSTEMS

The Semitic languages were, for the most part, written in three types of scripts.

The East Semitic languages, Akkadian and Eblaite, were written in logo-syllabic cuneiform system borrowed from Sumerian, for which it was originally invented (as the world's first writing system). The vast majority of cuneiform texts were written on moist clay tablets, the signs impressed with a reed stylus; but many texts incised into stone and a few on metal are also preserved. See Chapter 5 for more detail on the cuneiform system and its signs.

Most of the Central Semitic languages have been written in a consonantal alphabet, originally pictographic, that emerged early in the second millennium BCE, based on Egyptian hieroglyphic and hieratic writing (Hamilton 2006). While the latter was a logo-phonetic system, the earliest alphabet consisted solely of signs, 27 in number, that represented individual consonant phonemes on a one-to-one basis. The early pictographs eventually evolved into more abstract shapes. There were at least two lines of development. One led to the alphabet used to write the Ancient South Arabian languages (Chapter 13), an alphabet that was borrowed to write the various forms of Ancient North Arabian as well (Chapter 14). A different line of development led to the alphabet used to write most Northwest Semitic languages; at some point, one form of alphabet lost five of the letters, which were jettisoned as no longer needed because of consonant mergers; it is that 22-letter form of the alphabet that was used, from the late second millennium on, to write Phoenician, and borrowed by speakers of ancient Hebrew and Aramaic to write their languages as well (even though those languages still had more than 22 consonantal phonemes; some letters had to do double duty; see Chapters 20, 21 and 25). The Phoenician alphabet was also borrowed by speakers of Greek to write their alphabet, probably early in the first millennium. The order of the letters in the form of the alphabet used to write those Northwest Semitic languages is that familiar from Hebrew (*ʔalef, bet, gimel, dalet*, etc.) and Greek (*alpha, beta, gamma, delta*, etc.); the names of those letters reflect the original pictographs used to write the phonemes, on the acrophonic principle (**ʔalp-* 'ox', **bajt-* 'house', **gaml-* 'throwstick', **dalt-* 'door'). The Ancient South Arabian alphabet, however, exhibits a different order, namely, *h l ḥ m*, etc. (see Chapter 13, §2). Both letter orders have been found in *abecedaries* in the cuneiform alphabetic script that was created to write Ugaritic (Chapter 19). In several of the consonantal alphabets, some of the letters were also eventually used to indicate vowels, especially long vowels (in particular, <ʔ> and <h> for *a*.; <j> for *i*: and *e*.; <w> for *u*: and *o*:); these are referred to as "vowel letters," or, in Semitic language traditions, as *matres lectionis*, a translation phrase for 'mothers of reading' in the Arabic and Hebrew grammatical traditions. Systems of diacritical marks were also devised to indicate vowels, especially in sacred texts, in Arabic, Hebrew and Syriac (Chapters 15, 21, 25).

The Ancient South Arabian alphabet described in the preceding paragraph served as the basis for the writing system that evolved to write first Classical Ethiopic (Gəʕəz) and then other languages of Ethiopia, both Semitic and Cushitic. Diacritics were added to the consonantal letters to indicate the various vowels, resulting in an alphasyllabary (like Devanagari); for example, from the Ancient South Arabian consonant 𐩦 are derived the following letter forms: 𐩦 (without a diacritic) *bä*, 𐩦 *bu*, 𐩦 *bi*, 𐩦 *ba*, 𐩦 *be*, 𐩦 *b(ə)*, 𐩦 *bo* (see Chapters 6–9).

A number of Semitic languages, and many dialects, remained unwritten, most prominently the entire Modern South Arabian branch. Some of these are now occasionally written with modified forms of the Arabic script (see Chapter 12).

In the present volume, the chapters describing the modern Semitic languages use the IPA to represent phonetic systems; but the chapters on the ancient languages use traditional Semitistic transliteration systems, since we often have only approximations of how the ancient languages were pronounced. Several such systems have been used during the nearly two centuries of modern Semitic philological studies, and they often differ from one language tradition to another in details. But a number of features are common to most of them:

- the use of ʾ and ʿ , or ʾ and ʿ , to indicate IPA [ʔ] and [ʕ], respectively
- the use of underdots for the “emphatic” consonants, as in ṣ , ṭ ; these consonants are glottalic in some of the languages, pharyngealized or uvularized in others, so that ṣ , for example, may represent IPA [sʔ] or [sʕ]; for the “emphatic” velar, both k and q have been used (this is [kʔ] in most of the languages, but [q] in Arabic); ḥ , conventionally called “dotted h ,” is commonly used for the voiceless pharyngeal, IPA [ħ]
- ḥ (“h” with a “rocker,” conventionally called “hooked h ”) for the voiceless velar/uvular fricative, IPA [x]/[χ], and ḡ or ḡ for the voiced counterpart, IPA [ɣ]/[ʁ]
- š for the palatal fricative [ʃ], and ś for an “extra” voiceless sibilant in some of the languages; the latter was a voiceless lateral fricative, [ɬ], in Proto-Semitic and in some of the descendant languages, such as Biblical Hebrew; in Ancient South Arabian studies, where one transliteration system is based on that of Arabic cognate consonants, ś is used for the third voiceless, non-“emphatic” sibilant, which is a reflex of Proto-Semitic *š ; for Ancient South Arabian, and sometimes for Proto-Semitic as well, the three voiceless non-“emphatic” sibilants are sometimes simply transcribed with superscript numerals: s^1 for this volume’s PS *s , s^2 for PS *t , and s^3 for PS *š (see Chapter 13 for the various ASA transcription conventions)
- underlined $\underline{\text{d}}$ and $\underline{\text{t}}$ to indicate the fricative counterpart, IPA [ð] and [θ] respectively, to the stops d and t . In Proto-Semitic and some of the descendant languages, such as Classical Arabic, the fricatives are distinct phonemes; in other languages, such as Biblical Hebrew, they are post-vocalic allophones of the stops

A more comprehensive list of traditional Semitistic transliteration conventions for the consonants can be found in Chapter 3, §2.1.

There is a distinctive tradition for transliterating the vowels in each of the ancient Semitic languages; the reader is directed to the relevant chapters in this volume for details. An exemplary, and more comprehensive, survey of Semitic scripts than that presented above is Daniels (1997).

4 GRAMMATICAL TERMS USED IN SEMITIC STUDIES

Throughout the present volume, readers will encounter terms for a number of grammatical features that typify the Semitic languages. These terms are used by Semitists but are usually not familiar to linguists outside the field. For ease of reference, we explain these briefly in the following paragraphs.

Absolute: A morphosyntactic nominal state, the basic *nonbound*↓ (NBND) form of nominals, regardless of syntactic position. In languages with nunation/mimation↓, it will be marked with a final nasal. In languages with a definite article, this form is indefinite. In most languages, the opposite state is *construct*↓/*bound*↓. See further *state*↓. Example:

Arabic	<i>bajt-u-n</i> house-NOM-NBND 'house, a house'	vs.	<i>bajt-u-</i> house-NOM-BND 'house of'
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Annexation: A syntactic relation between a nominal head and a nominal (or nominalized) dependent. Each noun in an annexation retains its gender-number but the head noun is marked as *construct*↓/*bound*↓. Agreement with nominal modifiers and verbs is determined by the gender-number of the head noun. In languages with a definite article, the definiteness of an annexation is determined by the final nominal. Example:

Biblical Hebrew	<i>bātt-ē</i> house.MPL-BND 'the king's large houses'		<i>ham-melek</i> DEF-king.MSG.NBND		<i>hag-gəḏōlīm</i> DEF-big.MPL.NBND
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Asyndetic/syndetic: Syntactic terms referring to whether a relative clause is introduced with an explicit relative marker (*syndetic*), or not (*asyndetic*). Example:

Biblical Hebrew	<i>kāl yəḡm-ē</i> all day.M-PL.BND 'all the days during which we walked with them'		<i>hiḥhallak-nū</i> walk.SC-1PL		<i>ʔitt-ām</i> with-3MPL	(asyndetic)
	<i>wə-hay-yām-īm</i> and-DEF-day.M-PL.NBND 'the days during which we walked'		<i>ʔāšer</i> REL		<i>hālak-nū</i> walk.SC-1PL	(syndetic)

Binyan: Literally 'building', this is the medieval Hebrew term for verbal derivational classes, or verbal *stems*↓, which is used by Semitists in the description of Hebrew and other Semitic languages.

Bound/nonbound: These refer to whether a nominal is a head of a nominal (or nominalized) dependent (bound [BND], also called *construct*↓ [CST]), or not (nonbound [NBND], also called *absolute*↑). Example:

Old Akkadian	<i>in</i> in	<i>bēt-i</i> house-GEN.BND		<i>sarr-i-m</i> king-GEN-NBND
				'in the house of the king'

Construct: A morphosyntactic term, which refers to both the morphology of nominals and their syntactic function as head of other nominal (or nominalized) dependents. The morphology of construct nouns is language dependent. In Arabic, construct nouns lack the final nasal (*bajt-u-* vs. *bajt-u-n* 'house'), in Babylonian Akkadian, construct nouns lack the final nasal and case (*bīt-* vs. *bīt-u-m*; in Old Akkadian, the GEN case vowel *i* remains: *bēt-i-*), in (Classical) Ethiopic, these nouns are marked with a special suffix (*bet-ā* vs. *bet*), and in Hebrew they exhibit various phonetic changes due to word stress shift (*bēt-* vs. *bayit*).

Emphatic state: A term used in particular in Aramaic linguistics. It refers to the form of the noun with a historical definite article, which became defunct in Late Eastern Aramaic. In these dialects the *emphatic* is the default form of substantives; for example, Syriac *ʔarʕā* 'earth, the earth' < *ʔarʕ-ā* earth-DEF 'the earth'.

Imperfect: A finite verbal form where prefixes mark person, and suffixes mark gender-number (see Table 1.5). The term was borrowed from Indo-European linguistics and is used in Semitic for a wide range of tense and aspect functions; the term *prefix conjugation*↓ is often used instead.

Nunation/mimation: These terms refer to a morpheme that marks nonbound nominals (NBND). In Ancient South Arabian it is /-m/ on singular and FPL nominals, /-n/ on duals and MPL; similarly in early Akkadian dialects it is /-m/ on singular and FPL nominals, /-n/ on duals (lost in MPL); in Classical Arabic, /-n/ has been leveled; in Ugaritic and Hebrew, /-m/ has been leveled in duals and MPL (lost in singulars and FPL). Examples:

Classical Arabic	<i>bajt-u-n</i> house-NOM-NBND	Old Akkadian	<i>bēt-u-m</i> house-NOM-NBND
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Pattern, nominal: This term refers to nonconcatenative formatives that are at the basis of the Semitic lexicon. *Pattern* refers typically to nominals, while verbal patterns are referred to as *stems*↓; see also *binyan*↑. Each pattern is a combination of root consonants, fixed vocalic arrangements and sometimes additional affixation. Some patterns carry a semantic meaning (e.g., CaCCa:C is used for occupation, as in **k'abba:r-* 'grave-digger'), but many are fairly neutral (such as CaCC, as in **k'abr-* 'burial').

Pause, pausal: Terms used especially in Arabic and Hebrew philology and linguistics to refer to forms that occur before a pause in speech, especially clause- or phrase-final words, which may undergo special phonetic changes only in that environment, such as vowel lengthening or lowering.

Perfect: A finite verbal form where suffixes mark person-gender-number (see Table 1.4). The term was borrowed from Indo-European linguistics and is used in West Semitic studies for a form which typically expresses past tense, but can also refer to future and present in certain contexts. The term *suffix conjugation*↓ is often used instead.

Prefix conjugation: A purely morphological term, *prefix conjugation* (PC) replaces *imperfect*↑, in order to avoid using a semantically charged term. Many Semitic languages exhibit two prefix conjugations, a short form (PCS) that is usually perfective and a long form (PCL) that is usually imperfective.

State: This is a morphosyntactic nominal category that refers to the relationship between two nominals. Nominals in Semitic originally had two states: *bound*↑ (BND)/*construct*↑(CST), which marked a nominal as a head of a nominal dependent, and *nonbound*↓ (NBND)/*absolute*↑ (i.e., nonconstruct, NCST), which marked it as not having a dependent. These positions pose restrictions on the morphosyntax of the head. A head in Semitic cannot take more than one dependent (e.g., possessive suffixes), and in some languages it cannot take a definite article. In Late Eastern Aramaic, a third state is recognized, *emphatic state*↑.

Stem, verbal: A term used to identify derivational categories of the verb in most Semitic languages; the usual abbreviations of these are: G for the basic verbal stem (for German *Grundstamm*), C for the causative stem (usually marked by a prefixed *s*, *h* or *ʔ*), D for a stem in which the middle radical of the verbal root is doubled, N for a medio-passive stem marked by a prefixed *n*; and various forms with prefixed or infix *t* that are derived from the preceding, such as tD. See also *binyan*↑.

Suffix conjugation: A term that refers to a tense – aspect form marked by a verbal base followed by suffixes that mark person-number-gender; it replaces *perfect*↑.

Syndetic/asyndetic: See *asyndetic*↑.

Ventive: A verbal suffix marking action in the general direction of the speaker. It is attested primarily in Akkadian and is typically attached to motion verbs; e.g., Old Babylonian Akkadian *īrub* 'he went in' vs. *īrub-am* 'he came in'.

NOTES

- 1 But see also Chapter 2, §4, for a discussion of a suggestion that southwest Asia was the homeland of Afro-Asiatic.
- 2 It is thus assumed that Ethiopian Semitic represents a later return to Africa from the southern Arabian peninsula; see §2.2.1.
- 3 Throughout this chapter, words in individual languages are given in the transcription system used in the chapters devoted to those languages elsewhere in this volume.
- 4 The model is that proposed by Hetzron (1974, 1976), with subsequent modifications suggested by other scholars, for which see Huehnergard and Rubin (2011).
- 5 The main crux is the position of Arabic, since Arabic exhibits a number of features in common with the Ethio-Semitic and Modern South Arabian languages, in particular the use of pattern replacement for nominal plurals, the presence of a derived verb stem with a lengthened vowel after the first root consonant, and the change of Proto-Semitic **p* to *f*. Since the first two features may both be reconstructed to Proto-Semitic, they do not reflect shared innovations. The change of **p* to *f*, in our view, reflects an areal phenomenon, as do the expansion of the use of pattern replacement for nominal plurals and the similarities in those actual patterns in Arabic, Ethio-Semitic and Modern South Arabian. Indeed, since the Semitic languages were historically spoken in a relatively small geographical area – essentially, the Fertile Crescent – speakers of the various Semitic languages were often in contact with one another, and areal and other language contact phenomena are common, and naturally complicate attempts to establish the genealogical subgrouping of the family. See for example the articles by Al-Jallad, Beaulieu, and Pat-El in *The Journal of Language Contact* 6.2 (2013), a special issue devoted to contact among genetically related languages; further, chapters 17 and 43 in Weninger et al. (2011).
- 6 This Proto-Semitic construction is an Afro-Asiatic inheritance; it is also found in ancient Egyptian and in some Berber languages.
- 7 Some of these languages, such as Gafat, and dialects of others, have recently become extinct.
- 8 In Mehri and other Modern South Arabian languages, the original doubling of the middle radical in the PCL has been lost with the general simplification of geminated consonants throughout those languages. In most Mehri verbs, the PCL has a medial long *u*:, as in *ǰaku:ɬəb* ‘he writes’; in *ǰək’awbər*, the normal *u*: is replaced by *aw* because of the preceding glottalic consonant.

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