

A.G. BELÓVA / L.E. KÓGAN / S.V. L'ÓZOV / O.I. ROMÁNOVA *et al.*, *Jazyki Mira. Semitskie jazyki. Akkadskij jazyk. Severozapadnosemitskie jazyki* (Languages of the World. Semitic languages. Akkadian. Northwest Semitic). Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Linguistics, 2009, 825 pp. + maps. ISBN: 978-87444-284-2.

Being written in Russian, a language much less current among Western Semitic scholars and linguists in general than the impressive production of the Russian and Soviet academies would deserve, this collective survey requires a particularly meticulous review, no less so than those of Belova's monographs on the historical morphology of Arabic, sketches of its history and on Himyaritic¹. The authors announce a forthcoming complementary volume, devoted to Arabic, Epigraphic South Arabian, Ethio-Semitic and Modern South Arabian, i.e., the traditionally called South Semitic languages, so that, honestly speaking, a comprehensive and fair review of the whole enterprise should wait until both volumes are issued, especially because of the polemic character of some of the matters under consideration, which might perhaps be focused under a different light and reflect other authors' views in that second part. However, we also feel that, works of this nature being brought forth only once in a long while, there might be some gain in issuing a provisional account of its contents without further delay, pending of course the probable adjustments of judgements which the next volume will most certainly demand.

To begin with, and unlike what some readers might expect, the present volume is less a comparative treatise of Semitic, like Brockelmann's classical *Grundriß der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin 108-13) and, more recently, *An Introduction to the comparative grammar of the Semitic Languages* by Moscati *et al.* (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1964), than a loosely connected series of monographs on particular Semitic tongues, in agreement with the master lines of a comprehensive editorial project, reminiscent of similar previous enterprises in the USSR, like the series "Languages of Africa and Asia", founded by the late Prof. Serd'uchenko in 1959 and including almost one hundred monographs, some of them incidentally in English, e.g., the valuable *Afrasian Languages* by I.M. Diakonoff (= D'jákonov), or the encyclopaedia "Languages of the peoples of the USSR" of the sixties, directed by Prof. V.V. Vinogradov (= Vinográdov).

Consequently, for the aims of a review, this volume can be neatly divided into two sections, a first properly comparative one, on which our comments must naturally concentrate because of the important theoretical issues involved, and a second part, being a series of descriptive chapters on Akkadian (pp. 113-178, by L.E. Kogan and S.V. L'ozov, including chapters on Old Akkadian by J.V. Markina in pp. 178-195, and Old Assyrian by L.E. Kogan, pp. 195-204) and the various Northwest Semitic languages (Ugaritic by L.E. Kogan, pp. 205-238; Canaanite by L.E. Kogan, pp. 239-278; Phoenician by A.K. L'avdanskij, pp. 278-295, Ancient Hebrew by L.E. Kogan and S.V. L'ozov, pp. 296-375, Israeli Hebrew by L.M.

¹ Which we authored and published in *EDNA* 2 (1997) 242-5 and 4 (1999) 328-41.

Drejer, pp. 375-413; Aramaic by S.V. L'ozov, pp. 414-496: Imperial Aramaic by S.V. L'ozov, pp. 496-531, Jewish Palestinian Aramaic by A.V. Nemirovskaja, pp. 531-552, Classical Syriac by S.V. L'ozov, pp. 562-625, Classical Mandaic by A.V. Nemirovskaja, pp. 626-660; Neo-Aramaic by A.K. L'avdanskij, pp. 660-693: Modern Mandaic by A.K. L'avdanskij, pp. 693-704, Western Neo-Aramaic, i.e., Maṣlūlah Aramaic, by L.E. Kogan and S.V. L'ozov, pp. 705-751, and Turoyo by L.E. Kogan and S.V. L'ozov, pp. 751-805). The structure of these chapters is purposely very similar in every case, according to a scheme outlined in pp. 822-23 (Appendix II) with the following headings:

- I. Articles on linguistic family, group and dialects:
 1. Designation.
 2. Localization and main members.
 3. Approximate number of speakers.
 4. Principles and variants of genetic classification.
 5. Chronological divisions in the case of large linguistic families.
 6. Characteristic phonetic and grammatical features.

- II. Articles on particular languages:
 - 1.1.0 General information.
 - 1.1.1. Various designations.
 - 1.1.2. Genetic information.
 - 1.1.3. Diffusion; number of speakers.
 - 1.2.0. Geo-linguistic information.
 - 1.2.1. General dialectal set-up.
 - 1.3.0. Socio-linguistic information.
 - 1.3.1. Communicational and functional status and language rank.
 - 1.3.2. Degree of standardization.
 - 1.3.3. Educational and pedagogical status.
 - 1.4.0. Writing system.
 - 1.5.0. Short periodization of the history of the language.
 - 1.6.0. Inner structural phenomena conditioned by contacts with other languages.
 - 2.0.0. Linguistic features.
 - 2.1.0. Phonemic information.
 - 2.1.1. Phonemic basis.
 - 2.1.2. Prosodic status.
 - 2.1.3. Positional realization of phonemes and prosodemes.
 - 2.1.4. Syllable; presence and status of quantitative oppositions.
 - 2.2.0. Morphological information.
 - 2.2.1. Phonemic structure of morphemes and/or words; correlation between syllable and morphemes.
 - 2.2.2. Presence of phonemic oppositions between morphological units and categories.
 - 2.2.3. Types of alternances.
 - 2.3.0. Semantic-grammatical information.

2.3.1. Criteria for the division of parts of speech; categorical ways of expressing universal concepts (wide characterization).

2.3.2. Character and ways of expressing quantitative nominal classifications.

2.3.3. Category of number and ways of expressing it.

2.3.4. The concept of case and its expression; character of the category of possession and its expression.

2.3.5. Character and ways of expressing quantitative verbal classifications: modal, aspectual or aspect-temporal concepts, conjugation, transitiveness, measures and versions.

2.3.6. Deictic categories and ways of expressing them; the category of person in nouns and verbs; categories of definiteness and indefiniteness in nouns, categories of tense in verbs or their sentences; deixis and spatial orientation; anaphorical devices; expression of negative.

2.3.7. Semantic-grammatical word classes.

2.4.0. Models of paradigms.

2.5.0. Morpho-syntactical information.

2.5.1. Typical structure of word templates (for languages with a developed morphology); tendencies to suffixation and infixation; morphologically anomalous word classes.

2.5.2. Basic ways and rules of word formation.

2.5.3. Typical structure of simple sentences (or its equivalent in languages with unarticulated syntactical structure) and ways of expressing the subject-object relationship; syntactical taxemes; varieties of simple sentences.

2.5.4. Basic rules for the elaboration of complex sentences; characteristic types of complex sentences; basic regularities of word-order.

2.6.0. Source, volume and role of lexical borrowings.

2.7.0. Dialect system.

III. Articles on a dialect:

1. Designation of language.

2. Position in dialectal group (in relation with the literary or standard language, special linguistic features).

3. Diffusion; if possible, number of speakers.

4. Functional load.

IV. Articles on a particular language of minor extension.

1.0. Designation.

2.0. Localization (in the case of dead languages, dates of their existence).

3.0. Genetic connection.

4.0. Type of documents; writing system.

5.0.0. Linguistic features.

5.1.0. Phonemic information (including stress, tone, etc.).

5.1.1. Syllable.

5.1.2. Types of alternances.

5.2.0. Morphology.

5.2.1. Morphological type of language (agglutinative, flexional, etc.).

- 5.2.3. Basic ways of word formation.
- 5.3.0. Syntax.
 - 5.3.1. Structure of simple sentences (or equivalent).
 - 5.3.2. Characteristic types of complex sentences.
- 5.4.0. Genetic and areal features of lexicon.
- 6.0 Information on dialects.

This work also features some useful additional visual aids, such as maps, a glossary of linguistic terms, a table of symbols and abbreviations and an appendix on West Semitic writing, well in agreement with the presumption of eventual readers more or less unfamiliar with the subject matter.

It goes without saying that, the main bulk of this volume being taken by those monographical and almost exhaustive descriptions of particular members of this linguistic family, most of them dealt with over and over for as long as two centuries in some cases, the present reviewer's attention has been attracted above all by the introductory chapter on "Semitic languages", authored by L. E. Kogan and occupying pp. 15-112, i.e., roughly a tenth of the total extension of this volume. Let us be absolutely clear from the start about one point, namely, our rejection of the Central Semitic hypothesis, endorsed by our most respected colleague and against which we have recently and repeatedly expressed our "conservative" views in no less than four articles².

In our opinion, it has been sufficiently proved beyond any shade of doubt, particularly in the first one of those four articles, that the arguments levelled against the traditional classification of Arabic as a member of the South Semitic branch together with Old and Modern South Arabian and Ethio-Semitic do not stand a close examination, above all from the advantage-point of integrated Arabic linguistics, especially when combined with some expertise in other areas of the South Semitic branch. At the risk of sounding repetitive, upon examining the picture drawn, e.g., by Alice Faber in the chapter "The position of Arabic" of Hetzron's *The Semitic Languages* (London-N. York, Routledge, 1997, p. 9), and out of the five points which are supposed to connect it with Northwest Semitic, and separate it from South Semitic, we verify that, in open conflict with the very grounds of her reasoning:

1) The rather minor feature of glottalization instead of velarization is retained for /t/ by some Arabic dialects in Higher Egypt³ and has generated the substitution of /ʔ/ for /q/ in most Arabic urban dialects.

2) The seeming absence in Arabic of geminate imperfectives is a mere prescriptive mirage, generated by the native grammarians' views and descriptive

² Namely, "On the degree of kinship between Arabic and Northwest Semitic", in *AIDA 5th Conference Proceedings*, 2002, 71-75, "The phonemic system of Semitic from the advantage point of Arabic and its dialectology", in *Aula Orientalis* 23 (2005) 169-173, "Geminate imperfectives in Arabic masked as intensive stems of the verb", in *EDNA* 8 (2004) 35-57, and "Lexicostatistics and the Central Semitic theory" in *Aula Orientalis-Supplementa* 22 (2006) 139-144).

³ See *Handbuch der arabischen Dialekte*, ed. by W. Fischer and O. Jastrow, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1980, p. 209.

methods, above all a concept of analogy (*qiyās*), which excluded certain dialectal “freak features” from their selective canon⁴.

3) There is no generalization of vowels in the prefixes of imperfectives within entire paradigms as soon as we go again beyond the narrow limits of standard descriptions of Classical Arabic and discover that *taltalah*, i.e., palatalization of those vowels was common in Old Arabic dialects and regular in the modern ones⁵.

4) The generalization of {-tV} in the suffixes of perfective is again a minor feature, with exceptions in some old and modern dialects of Arabic of the Yemenite area⁶. On the other hand, the acoustic likeness between /k/ and /t/ may have facilitated their mutual substitution, as suggested by the case of some Moroccan Jewish dialects⁷.

5) There is no negative *bal* in Arabic, but only an adversative conjunction of that shape meaning “but”, this being besides a second-rate syntactical tool totally devoid of meaningful impact in any linguistic classification.

How, then, the point has been reached in which so many established American and some European scholars have adopted the Central Semitic theory and rejected the traditional classification of Semitic as old-fashioned and methodologically flawed? Possibly, as a natural or at least understandable reaction against the exaggerated role attributed to Arabic in the conceptions of the earlier generations of great Semitic scholars of the 19th century who, indeed mistakenly, nearly identified it with Proto-Semitic. When more and more was learnt about other Semitic languages during the 20th century, some specialist in the Eastern and Northern areas of the family appear to have felt that the time had come to introduce a new classification, more sensitive to the new data and their interpretation, and to pay less attention to the Arabic information, a change of opinion aptly described by G.M. Bauer⁸.

However, what was in principle a reasonable reaction to a bias, led to the opposite mistake because, in the same manner as it used to be said that German was the most important “Semitic” language, since so many basic works of obliged reading on this subject were drawn up in that language, it is even more obvious

⁴ As we expounded in the paper “From Old Arabic to Classical Arabic through the pre-Islamic koiné: some notes on the native grammarians’ sources, attitudes and goals” in *JSS* 21 (1976) 62-98. About this particular issue, we have provided hundreds of examples of such items in our aforementioned article “Geminate imperfectives in Arabic masked as intensive stems of the verb”, in *EDNA* 8.

⁵ See W. Fischer and O. Jastrow, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-74.

⁶ See Conte Rossini, *Chrestomathia arabica meridionalis epigraphica*, Roma, Istituto per l’Oriente, 1931, p. x, and W. Fischer and O. Jastrow, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-120.

⁷ See J. Heath, *Jewish and Muslim Dialects of Moroccan Arabic*, London, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 140, reviewed by us in *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 13 (2003) 152-157, with some comments on this particular phenomenon, and S. Lévy, *Parlers arabes des Juifs du Maroc. Histoire, sociolinguistique et géographie dialectale*, Zaragoza, Instituto de Estudios Islámicos y del Oriente Próximo, 2009, pp. 315-316.

⁸ In his excellent *Jazyk yuzhnoaravijskoj pis’mennosti* (“The language of South Arabian writings”, Moscow, Nauka, 1966, p. 16), certainly familiar to any Russian-speaking Semitic scholar.

that Arabic is by large the most important, now without any quotation marks, Semitic language, because of the incommensurably greater amount of information available on it in comparison with the rest of them, as well as on account of its geographical diffusion, dialectal dispersion comparable only with Indo-European parallels, etc. And when we say Arabic, we are not just thinking of the contents of Caspari's, Wright's or Fischer's excellent grammars, among others, nor the most comprehensive native or Western lexicographical works, but we also mean every available information on any kind of Arabic, literary or dialectal, old or modern, which possibly amounts to at least a 70% of all we know about the whole Semitic linguistic family. It must be remembered that all we have from Old Hebrew is one book, from Akkadian and Ugaritic, some hundred tablets, from Aramaic and Ethiopic a few dozen books and inscriptions, etc., while there are hundreds of whole libraries full of Arabic works, possibly running into the millions, many of them still waiting to be catalogued, hundreds of them containing not only Semitic texts, but also relevant linguistic information. None of this can be reasonably overseen upon trying to make any comparative study of the whole family, as apparently has been done by the proponents of the Central Semitic theory, by thoroughly overlooking the entire corpus of dialectal Arabic data, something equivalent to conducting a linguistic and historical survey of Greek on the mere basis of the Attic dialect.

However, the immediate source of this widespread misapprehension is likely connected with a constellation of linguistic hyperboles such as Garbini's peculiar "Amorite hypothesis", together with Hetzron's temperamental exaggeration of some minor differences between Arabic and the other members of the South Semitic branch, a possible by-product by his strong and fruitful concern with Ethio-Semitic, and some additional circumstantial ingredients, such as personal and group allegiances, only way to explain so many seasoned scholars' support for that innovative but fancied classification. Not surprisingly, most reputed Arabic scholars, who should know better about that alleged core of Central Semitic, have not subscribed this hypothesis, or rather mere fad, growing out of what Caesar called *cupiditas rerum novarum*, coupled with the aforementioned voluntary ignorance of the decisive witness of old and modern Arabic dialects in favour of its indeed tight kinship with Old and Modern South Arabian and Ethio-Semitic. In our opinion, although Brockelmann's treatise has not survived unscathed one century of Semitic studies and discoveries, he knew his job better when in his lexical appendix (*Grundriß*, I 643-647), included Arabic witnesses from its old and modern dialects, such as Safaitic, Maghribian and Bedouin, and those of Mardin, Damascus, Syria, Jerusalem, Iraq, Nejd, Hejaz, Oman, Hadhramaut, Egypt, Tripolitania, Tunisia, Algiers, Oran, Tlemcen, Morocco, Malta and the Iberian Peninsula.

Therefore, in our view, the genetic map inserted in the inside cover of this volume, while being absolutely correct in its presentation of East Semitic (Akkadian) and the inner branching of North West Semitic, offers a distorted picture of the different degrees of kinship inside the West Semitic branch, from which Ethio-Semitic, Modern South Arabian, Central Semitic and North West Semitic would be descendants of equal rank, while (North) Arabic and Epigraphic

South Arabian would have been the offspring of Central Semitic. Leaving linguistic data aside now, and it being a historically undeniable fact that the Semitic settlement in Ethiopia resulted from South Arabian colonization, it is hard to believe that Ethio-Semitic would not belong by that token to Central Semitic as well, unlike the two alleged branches of the latter, Arabic and Epigraphic South Arabian, and that Modern South Arabian would be closer to Ethio-Semitic than to Epigraphic South Arabian. We must agree with Garbini when he says: “In realtà, un criterio puramente geografico è di per se insufficiente a garantire una soddisfacente classificazione linguistica...⁹”; however, only historical and geographical criteria can explain the presence of English in Australia or of Spanish in Mexico, as of Semitic in East Africa and Arabic in Mauritania, and this kind of information is harder to ignore than those derived from certain disputable interpretations of linguistic facts.

As a knowledgeable scholar, Prof. Kogan is not indeed entirely unaware of the contradictions inherent to the Central Semitic hypothesis, like the witness of such morphologically relevant features like the broken plural system and the L (= *Cv:CvC*) verbal stems, conspicuously shared by the three traditional branches of South Semitic, and absent in the other two, as underscored by Alice Faber herself in that aforementioned chapter. However, and for some reason necessarily unrelated to his undoubted competence in this field, he prefers to dismiss that evidence by resorting to supposedly residual instances of broken plurals in Hebrew (p. 56), with such feeble pieces of evidence like the plural of segolates like *məlākīm* “kings” < *məlāk + im*, already mentioned by Brockelmann¹⁰. In fact, those instances have long since been satisfactorily explained as cases of *svarabhaktic* vowels, as given away by their decay in *status constructus*, e.g., in *malkē*, on account of the different prosodic environment. As for the L-stems, although forced to admit the morphological coincidence on this feature between Arabic and Ethiopic, he pleads the semantic levelling of those stems in Ethiopic in the aim of lessening the significance of this common morphological feature (p. 88). The truth is that *Cv:CvC* has become scarce and most of the time synonymous with the G-stem in Geʿez, but its correlate *taCv:CvC* is rather frequent and functionally efficient as a marker or reciprocity, which is more or less the situation in Arabic too. On the other hand, this is indeed a case of shared innovation, one of those which Hetzron and his followers have considered much more relevant than shared preservation upon classifying languages by kinship, the only problem being that it is often quite difficult to determine which features are one thing or another.

In fact, exclusive reliance on Classical Arabic data can at times detract from the solidity of conclusions derived for the entire Semitic family. This happens, for instance, in the following passages of an otherwise solid and excellent presentation of comparative Semitic grammar:

⁹ In his *Introduzione alle lingue semitiche*, Brescia, Paideia, 1994, p. 133.

¹⁰ *Grundriß* I 430-1, with inclusion of the diverse interpretations given in his days, about which see a more recent survey in our *Problemática de la pluralidad en semítico. El plural fracto*, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1971, pp. 21-23.

pp. 33-34, upon dealing with stress in Arabic, Prof. Kogan accepts the standard Levantine rules as universally valid, without any reference to several alternative stress systems, commonly practised in Egypt, Yemen, North Africa, etc., even for the traditional pronunciation of Classical Arabic, connecting with those described by H. Birkeland¹¹ and proving that there were diverse prosodic situations in Old Arabic, as well as in the modern dialects.

p. 35: upon dealing with spirantization of Semitic stops (*begadkefat*), he restricts this phenomenon to Old Hebrew and Aramaic, plus some isolated cases in Akkadian. On the contrary, we had detected traces of its residual effects in most Semitic languages, particularly, in Arabic and Ethiopic¹².

p. 86: again the reliance on Standard Arabic data only, though supported in this case by Akkadian, makes Prof. Kogan posit a Pan-Semitic marker **mu-* for the participles of derived stems. However, its shape in North West Semitic and Ethio-Semitic would rather suggest an original **ma-*, which merely suffered occasional labialization¹³.

p. 89: the presence of mixed derived verbal stems *ŠtD* is signalled exclusively for Ethio-Semitic and Modern South Arabian, in the absence of Arabic witnesses other than the Classical ones; however, in our aforementioned paper in *EDNA* 8, one finds nearly 40 instances of *{ista1a22a3}* in Egyptian Arabic, together with some Maltese instances, not totally ignored either by Brockelmann¹⁴. In our view, however, those geminations do not belong together with D-stems at all, as there is no semantic intensiveness in the meanings, but are remnants of geminated imperfectives, of the kind current in Akkadian and Geʿez, missed in Arabic by the supporters of the Central Semitic theory, and weighing so heavily on their reshaping of the Semitic classification. At any rate, this is again a “shared innovation” and, therefore, a strong link with Ethiopic and a possible explanation for the development of “mixed” stems in it and elsewhere.

The number of mistakes and oversights detected in such a thick volume is commendably low; we shall only point to some of them, eg.,

p. 19: **pVI-* “elephant” can hardly be Pan-Semitic, as its ethymon is Sanscrit or at least Indian *pīlu*, either directly or through Persian *pīl*. The same objection would apply to other words of non-Semitic etyma, like **paraš* “horse”¹⁵ and

¹¹ In *Stress patterns in Arabic*, Oslo, J. Dybwad, 1954.

¹² In the paper “A survey of spirantization in Semitic and Arabic phonetics”, in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 60 (1969) 147-171.

¹³ As we had propounded in our paper “À propos du prefix proto-sémitique **ma-* en fonction de morpheme participial dans les conjugaisons dérivées du verbe”, in *Arabica* 26 (1979) 189-192.

¹⁴ See *Grundriß* I 540-544, where such cases are called *Kreuzungen*, while Fischer & Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p. 71, prefer *Mischform*.

¹⁵ Apparently related to some kind of Persian, it being known that horses and their names were introduced in the Middle East by the Indo-Europeans invaders. It is therefore possible that horses were first called “Persian donkeys”, before those names, *sūs* and variants, were adopted by the Semites.

**dWm(V)m* “wild cat” (from Egyptian *t3 + mj.t*¹⁶) in p. 105, and **wayn* “wine, vine” in p. 107, a term of possibly Caucasian stock, simultaneously borrowed by Indo-Europeans and Semites¹⁷.

p. 49: the absence of assimilation of /n/ in Arabic might have known exceptions in some old dialects, as pointed by the imperative *ʕim* of the verb *naʕima* “to be well”, which presupposes an imperfective **ya(ʕ)ʕim* < *yanʕim*.

p. 50: *ʔiḏtarra* actually means “he forced”, while “he was forced would” require the non-agentive *ʔuḏturra*¹⁸.

p. 69: The fem. pl. of the 2nd p. pronominal suffix in Standard Arabic is *-kunna*, not *-kina*, possibly a misprint repeating the preceding Akkadian term. However, the vocalic alternance /u/ ~ /i/ in 2nd and 3rd pl. of pronominal and perfective suffixes is found in many old and modern (Bedouin) Arabic dialects, and might have been mentioned in pp. 67-68, as it strengthens the case for a similar situation in Proto-Semitic.

p. 83: upon describing the jussive constructions marked with the prefix *IV-*, e.g., Arabic *li-yaktub* “let him write”, it is surprising that it be connected with the directional (=inessive) preposition *li-*, instead of the optative Pan-Semitic **lū*. Curiously enough, the same case is correctly analysed for Akkadian in p. 147, with examples like *lu-prus*, *li-prus(ū)*, etc.

p. 94: the prefix *{ta-}* even in Standard Arabic is not restricted to the *maṣdar* patterns *{ta12i3}* and *{ta1a22u3}*, there being other combinations so common as *{ta12i3-at}*, *{ta/i12ā3}*, etc.¹⁹

p. 97: there is again a rare misprint in **ʕunṣūriyyat* “racism” for correct *ʕunṣuriyyat*, as well as a grammatical mistake in p. 98, as the correct *nisbah*-adjective of *malik + un* “king” must be *malak + iyyun* “royal”.

As stated above, our comments on the particular chapters of this work must be restricted to a few instances, in order not to exceed the proper limits of a review. But it would not be correct to suppress them thoroughly, and here are some:

p. 155: the occasional relative nuance of Akkadian Š-stems (causative verbs) in cases such as *šūturum* “excellent” and *šupšuqum* “extremely difficult” invites comparison with the Arabic relative pattern *{ʔa12a3 + u}*, which might provide its definitive explanation²⁰: as this pattern is also described by the native grammarians as “a verb of surprise”, coupled with the unmistakable imperative of a causative *{ʔa12i3 bi + }*, there can be little doubt that utterances of the type *mā ʔafḏala zaydan* (“what has made Z. excellent?” or *ʔafḏil bi + zaydin* “make Z. excellent”

¹⁶ See our *Dictionary of Arabic and Allied Loanwords. Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Galician and Kindred Dialects*, Leiden, Brill, 2008, p. lxx, fn. 105).

¹⁷ See W. Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Gəʕez*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1987, p. 623.

¹⁸ See Wehr’s *Arabic-English Dictionary*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1961, *vḏrr*.

¹⁹ As listed in Wright I 115 or, even within the limits of Russian bibliography, in Grande’s excellent *Kurs arabskoj grammatiki v sravnitel’no-istoričeskom osveščanii*, Moscow, Vostočnaja Literatura, 1963, p. 95.

²⁰ Missed by H. Fleisch (*Traité de philologie arabe*, Beirut, Imprimerie Catholique, 1961, pp. 408-415) and some of his forerunners, although correctly understood already by Wright I 98-100.

= “how excellent Z. is!”) in the old Semitic minds, as in the case of the stative, have crossed the blurred limits between verb and adjective, while preserving their semantic emphasis, which enabled $\{?a12a3 + u\}$ to become an elative adjective never, however, totally disconnected from its verbal origin, as it can be derived directly from verbs, e.g., Arabic *huwa ?aktabu minka* “he writes more or better than you”²¹.

p. 214: Arabic *kam? + at* “truffle” should not be quoted as a singular, it being the only exceptional case in which $\{-at\}$ is not a marker of the singulative or *nomen unitatis*, but of the plural (vs. sg. *kam?*).

p. 221: upon defining the vocalization of the imperfective prefixes in D-stems, the author of this chapter states that the characteristic vowel is *-a-* “instead of *-u-*”, expectable on account of comparative data. However, only Akkadian and Classical Arabic have this vowel, unlike Hebrew, Ethiopic, Modern South Arabian and Neo-Arabic, with *-i-*, reduced vocalism or other choices. Therefore Tropper’s hypothesis attributing *-u-* also to the matching items in Ugaritic, except in the case of the 1st sg. p., only instance in which its peculiar script must reflect a vowel integrated in the grapheme for *alef*, is quite questionable, since a *?a-* prefix does not imply a sequence *?a-*, *ta-*, *ya-*, *na-*, as shown by the Neo-Arabic paradigms of the type *?aktib - tiktib - yiktib - niktib* “I write, you write, etc.” It could very well happen that the *-u-* or Arabic and Akkadian has been contaminated from the aforementioned labialized participial prefix *mu-*, through a frequent syntactic alternance of verbal and nominal predicates (cf. Arabic *almaliku yukaffiru / mukaffirun* “the king expiates”). The reason why the same rule would not have applied to other than D-, L- and Š- stems would have been the different syllabic and prosodic structures of T-, N- and Št-stems, beginning with two consonants, and therefore favouring an *-i-* or other reduced kind of vocalization.

p. 259-230: the shape of interrogative pronouns in Canaanite is described as unprecedented in other Semitic languages, apparently on account of Hebrew *mī* = Ugaritic and Phoenician *my* “who?”, instead of *man* and extended shapes of Akkadian, Aramaic, Arabic, South Arabian and Ethiopic. However, Neo-Arabic *mī/in* has not been taken into account, let alone given an explanation, which introduces some distortion in that picture.

p. 288: the authors underscore that 3rd p. pronouns in Phoenician can exhibit $\{-t\}$ suffixes not only in the oblique case, as in Akkadian, Ugaritic and Sabaeen, but even in the nominative. It is worth mentioning that the same happens in Andalusī Arabic²², possibly as a relic of the “Yemenites” who invaded this country.

p. 327: the peculiar Hebrew series of ordinal numbers with *nisbah*-endings and an occasional $\{1v2i3\}$ pattern have another curious parallel in Andalusī Arabic²³.

p. 571: while describing the phonemes of Classical Syriac, the author states that emphatic $/t/$, $/s/$ and $/q/$ were likely glottalized, without giving any reason for this assertion. That feature is, nevertheless, quite unlikely considering, first, that Geers’

²¹ See Wright II 71-72.

²² See our *A Grammatical Sketch of the Spanish Arabic Dialect Bundle*, Madrid, Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1977, p. 97.

²³ See *A Grammatical Sketch*, p. 96.

law, forbidding a sequence of emphatic consonants and so active, e.g., in Akkadian, is not effective in Syriac (cf. roots like *{qtʿl}*, *{qtn}*, etc.), and second, that there is no glottalized /t/ nor /s/ in any of the many Arabic dialects of Syria and Mesopotamia with an Aramaic substract, unlike the case of glottalized /t/ in Higher Egypt, supposedly as a consequence of the South Arabian substratum. While the distribution of velarized and glottalized realizations of emphatic consonants is one of the basic arguments of the Central Semitic theory, separating Arabic from South Semitic, since it has not those glottalized phonemes, characteristic of Ethiopic and Modern South Arabian, the truth is that this is a minor phonetic development, like the evolution of /p/ into labiodental /f/, within the general frame of spirantization, totally insufficient to be considered a decisive isogloss dividing the subgroups of the Semitic family. It is well-known in Arabic phonetics that velarization tends to become a supra-segmental feature affecting the whole word containing one such phoneme²⁴, obviously because it is physiologically easier to keep the muscular tension on up to the word boundary than to release it immediately after the outset of the velarized consonant, while glottalization does not have any similar effect, because its realization only affects a point of the phonetic chain, and in fact requires an additional effort if there is a sequence of glottalized phonemes. In the light of this, Geers' law can be understood as the reaction of people who had shifted to a Semitic language, as was often the case in Mesopotamia, and tried to simplify some phonetic difficulties, such as pharyngeal phonemes and sequences of glottalized consonants, while in similar circumstances the usual reaction against velarization is its simple elimination, as in Maltese. In his instructive *Afrasian Languages* (p. 35), I.M. Diakonoff states that "the so-called emphatic phonemes ... are phonetically realized in different Afrasian languages as velarized or uvularized (e.g., in Arabic), glottalized, i.e., followed by a glottal stop (in some Ethio-Semitic and modern South Arabian), and so on. The original articulation was in all probability glottalized": if we accept his very reasonable judgment, the shift from glottalization to velarization would have happened in the diverse Semitic areas at different times²⁵, by mere drift or by effect of the substract and, consequently, the cessation of effect of Geers' law would point to the consummation of that evolution, as in the case of Syriac.

p. 616: we must take exception to the concept that the agentive suffix *{-ār}* in Syriac would be of Greek and ultimately Latin stock, it being much likelier, even on account of its frequent presence in Iranian loanwords, signalled by the author, that it merely reflects the very common Persian *{-ār}*.

p. 672: The true name of the famous Jewish Andalusí physician is Ibn Buqlāriš, which some people prefer to turn into Biklāriš, but none so far to the best of our knowledge, into Baklariš.

p. 690: The Arabic loanword *hawājib* "genitals" in Zaxo requires a folkloric explanation, since that term usually means "eyebrows". However, this is a metaphorical application in fem. pl. of *hājib* "gatekeeper, chamberlain" and

²⁴ See Fischer & Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

²⁵ The same is true of Berber, in which the shift from glottalization to velarization appears to be unrelated to the contact with Arabs since the Islamic conquest.

connects with a saucy Arabic proverb, “testicles are like door-knockers, useful for entering but staying outside”²⁶.

p. 692: Neo-Aramaic *gulla* “bullet” is closer to Turkish *gülle* than to Persian *gulūle*.

p. 695: the interpretation of Neo-Mandaic *mo + žur* “how?” as a half-translation of Persian leaves unexplained why the second constituent of *če + țowr* has turned into **žur*.

p. 748: Neo-Aramaic (from Maḥlūlah) *tīza*, euphemistically translated as “buttocks” is certainly not borrowed from Arabic; instead, good Aramaic *tīzā* “arse”, extant in Syriac, was adopted by Arabic as a substitute for *ist*, which had become too rude, among other short-lived euphemisms in the diverse dialects and epochs.

p. 802: the true Arabic etymon of *šəfra* “dining table” is *sufrah*; in the case of *meflakər* “to think” the Arabic equivalent is not Classical *tafakkara* (*t-D* stem), but the more frequent Neo-Arabic *iftakar* (*t-G* stem with infixation).

Such a lengthy review, with so many objections and discrepancies, might give the wrong impression of a disparaging judgement. However, the truth is that we only disagree with one main issue in this treatise, namely, the Central Semitic theory which, in our view, requires more serious discussion among Semitic scholars of diverse specialties, and with some minor points perhaps disputable. Needless to say, the intricacies of Semitic linguistics are too many and at times too complex: so, it is little wonder that scholars do not always entirely coincide on every point.

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²⁶ It appears under an abridged shape in Ahmed Salem Ould Mohamed Baba, *Estudio dialectológico y lexicológico del refranero andalusí de Abū Yahyà Azzajālī*, Saragossa 1999, p. 82, nº 635, “like the testicles, which get there but do not go in”, and in a shortened and mitigated version, “door-knockers spend the night outside” in the *Recopilación de refranes andalusíes de Alonso del Castillo*, by F. Corriente and H. Bouzineb, p. 53, nº 455.