Semitic languages

The **Semitic languages** are a branch of the Afroasiatic language family. They include Arabic, Amharic, Aramaic, Hebrew, and numerous other ancient and modern languages. They are spoken by more than 330 million people across much of West Asia, North Africa,[a] the Horn of Africa,[b][c] Malta,[d] and in large immigrant and expatriate communities in North America, Europe, and Australasia. The terminology was first used in the 1780s by members of the Göttingen school of history, who derived the name from Shem, one of the three sons of Noah in the Book of Genesis.

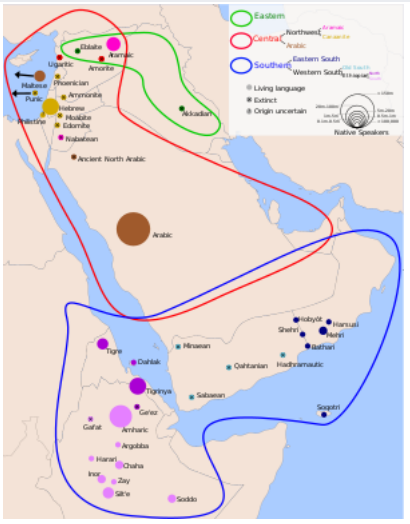
Semitic languages occur in written form from a very early historical date in West Asia, with East Semitic Akkadian and Eblaite texts (written in a script adapted from Sumerian cuneiform) appearing from c. 2500 BCE in Mesopotamia and the northeastern Levant respectively. The only earlier attested languages are Sumerian and Elamite (2800 BCE to 550 BCE), both language isolates, and Egyptian (c. 3000 BCE), a sister branch within the Afroasiatic family, related to the Semitic languages but not part of them. Amorite appeared in Mesopotamia and the northern Levant c. 2000 BC, followed by the mutually intelligible Canaanite languages (including Hebrew, Phoenician, Moabite, Edomite and Ammonite, and perhaps Ekronite, Amalekite and Sutean), the still spoken Aramaic, and Ugaritic during the 2nd millennium BC.

Most scripts used to write Semitic languages are abjads – a type of alphabetic script that omits some or all of the vowels, which is feasible for these languages because the consonants are the primary carriers of meaning in the Semitic languages. These include the Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and ancient South Arabian alphabets. The Ge'ez script, used for writing the Semitic languages of Ethiopia and Eritrea, is technically an abugida – a modified abjad in which vowels are notated using diacritic marks added to the consonants at all times, in contrast with other Semitic languages which indicate vowels based on need or for introductory purposes. Maltese is the only Semitic language written in the Latin script and the only Semitic language to be an official language of the European Union.

The Semitic languages are notable for their nonconcatenative morphology. That is, word roots are not themselves syllables or words, but instead are isolated sets of consonants (usually three, making a so-called *triliteral root*). Words are composed from roots not so much by adding prefixes or suffixes, but rather by filling in the vowels between the root consonants, although prefixes and suffixes are often added as well. For example, in Arabic, the root meaning "write" has the form *k-t-b*. From this root, words are formed by filling in the vowels and sometimes adding consonants, e.g. كِتَاب ***kitāb*** "book", كُتُب ***kutub*** "books", كاتِب ***kātib*** "writer", كُتَّاب ***kuttāb*** "writers", كَتَب ***kataba*** "he wrote", يكتُب ***yaktubu*** "he writes", etc.

Semitic	
Geographic distribution	West Asia, North Africa, Horn of Africa, Malta
Linguistic classification	Afro-Asiatic ▪ **Semitic**
Proto-language	Proto-Semitic
Subdivisions	East Semitic † West Semitic
ISO 639-2 / 5	sem
Glottolog	semi1276 (https://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/semi1276)

Modern distribution of the Semitic languages



Approximate historical distribution of Semitic languages

Name and identification

The similarity of the Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic languages has been accepted by all scholars since medieval times. The languages were familiar to Western European scholars due to historical contact with neighbouring Near Eastern countries and through Biblical studies, and a comparative analysis of Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic was published in Latin in 1538 by Guillaume Postel.[4] Almost two centuries later, Hiob Ludolf described the similarities between these three languages and the Ethiopian Semitic languages.[5] However, neither scholar named this grouping as "Semitic".[5]

The term "Semitic" was created by members of the Göttingen school of history, initially by August Ludwig von Schlözer (1781), to designate the languages closely related to Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew.[6][7] The choice of name was derived from Shem, one of the three sons of Noah in the genealogical accounts of the biblical Book of Genesis,[8] or more precisely from the Koine Greek rendering of the name, Σήμ (Sēm). Johann Gottfried Eichhorn is credited with popularising the term,[9][10][8] particularly via a 1795 article "Semitische Sprachen" (*Semitic languages*) in which he justified the terminology against criticism that Hebrew and Canaanite were the same language despite Canaan being "Hamitic" in the Table of Nations:[11]

> In the Mosaic Table of Nations, those names which are listed as Semites are purely names of tribes who speak the so-called Oriental languages and live in Southwest Asia. As far as we can trace the history of these very languages back in time, they have always been written with syllabograms or with alphabetic script (never with hieroglyphs or pictograms); and the legends about the invention of the syllabograms and alphabetic script go back to the Semites. In contrast, all so called Hamitic peoples originally used hieroglyphs, until they here and there, either through contact with the Semites, or through their settlement among them, became familiar with their syllabograms or alphabetic script, and partly adopted them. Viewed from this aspect too, with respect to the alphabet used, the name "Semitic languages" is completely appropriate.[12]

Previously these languages had been commonly known as the "Oriental languages" in European literature.[13] In the 19th century, "Semitic" became the conventional name; however, an alternative name, "Syro-Arabian languages", was later introduced by James Cowles Prichard and used by some writers.[10]

History

Ancient Semitic-speaking peoples

Semitic languages were spoken and written across much of the Middle East and Asia Minor during the Bronze Age and Iron Age, the earliest attested being the East Semitic Akkadian of Mesopotamia (Akkad, Assyria, Isin, Larsa and Babylonia) from the third millennium BC.[14]

The origin of Semitic-speaking peoples is still under discussion. Several locations were proposed as possible sites of a prehistoric origin of Semitic-speaking peoples: Mesopotamia, the Levant, Ethiopia,[15] the Eastern Mediterranean region, the Arabian Peninsula, and North Africa. According to a 2009 study, the Semitic languages originated in the Levant c. 3750 BC, and were introduced to the Horn of Africa c. 800 BC from the southern Arabian peninsula, and to North Africa via Phoenician colonists at approximately the same time.[16][17] Others assign the arrival of Semitic speakers in the Horn of Africa to a much earlier date.[18] According to another hypothesis, Semitic originated from an offshoot of a still earlier language in North Africa and desertification made its inhabitants to migrate in the fourth millennium BC into what is now Ethiopia, others northwest out of Africa into West Asia.[19]

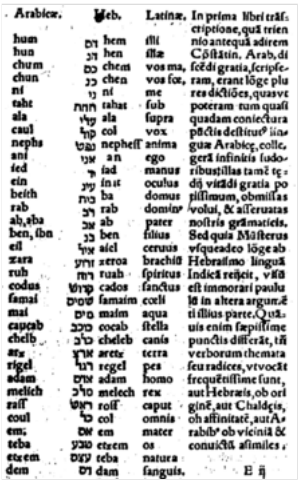
The various extremely closely related and mutually intelligible Canaanite languages, a branch of the Northwest Semitic languages included Edomite, Hebrew, Ammonite, Moabite, Phoenician (Punic/Carthaginian), Samaritan Hebrew and Ekronite. They were spoken in what is today Israel and the Palestinian territories, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the northern Sinai peninsula, some northern and eastern parts of the Arabian peninsula, southwest fringes of Turkey, and in the case of Phoenician, coastal regions of Tunisia (Carthage), Libya, Algeria and parts of Morocco, Spain and possibly in Malta and other Mediterranean islands. Ugaritic, a Northwest Semitic language closely related to but distinct from the Canaanite group was spoken in the kingdom of Ugarit in north western Syria.

A hybrid Canaano-Akkadian language also emerged in Canaan (Israel and the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon) during the 14th century BC, incorporating elements of the Mesopotamian East Semitic Akkadian language of Assyria and Babylonia with the West Semitic Canaanite languages.[21]

Aramaic, a still living ancient Northwest Semitic language, first attested in the 12th century BC in the northern Levant, gradually replaced the East Semitic and Canaanite languages across much of the Near East, particularly after being adopted as the lingua franca of the vast Neo-Assyrian Empire (911–605 BC) by Tiglath-Pileser III during the 8th century BC, and being retained by the succeeding Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Empires.[22]

The *Chaldean language* (not to be confused with Aramaic or its Biblical variant, sometimes referred to as *Chaldean*) was a Northwest Semitic language, possibly closely related to Aramaic, but no examples of the language remain, as after settling in south eastern Mesopotamia from the Levant during the 9th century BC, the Chaldeans appear to have rapidly adopted the Akkadian and Aramaic languages of the indigenous Mesopotamians.

Old South Arabian languages (classified as South Semitic and therefore distinct from the Central-Semitic Arabic) were spoken in the kingdoms of Dilmun, Sheba, Ubar, Socotra and Magan, which in modern terms encompassed part of the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Yemen. South Semitic languages are thought to have spread to the Horn of Africa circa 8th century BC where the Ge'ez language emerged (though the direction of influence remains uncertain).



1538 comparison of Hebrew and Arabic, by Guillaume Postel – possibly the first such representation in Western European literature.

Chronology mapping of Semitic languages

Common Era

Classical Syriac, a 200 CE[23] Eastern Middle Aramaic dialect,[24] used as a liturgical language in Mesopotamia, the Levant, and Kerala, India,[25] rose to importance as a literary language of early Christianity in the third to fifth centuries and continued into the early Islamic era.

Epic of Gilgamesh, an epic poem from ancient Mesopotamia, regarded as the earliest surviving notable literature, written in Akkadian.[20]

The Arabic language, although originating in the Arabian Peninsula, first emerged in written form in the 1st to 4th centuries CE in the southern regions of The Levant. With the advent of the early Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries, Classical Arabic eventually replaced many (but not all) of the indigenous Semitic languages and cultures of the Near East. Both the Near East and North Africa saw an influx of Muslim Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula, followed later by non-Semitic Muslim Iranian and Turkic peoples. The previously dominant Aramaic dialects maintained by the Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians gradually began to be sidelined, however descendant dialects of Eastern Aramaic (including Suret (Assyrian and Chaldean varieties), Turoyo and Mandaic) survive to this day among the Assyrians/Syriacs and Mandaeans of northern and southern Iraq, northwestern Iran, northeastern Syria and southeastern Turkey, with up to a million fluent speakers. Syriac is a recognized language in Iraq, furthermore, Mesopotamian Arabic is one of the most Syriac influenced dialects of Arabic, due to Syriac, the dialect of Edessa specifically, having originated in Mesopotamia.[26] Meanwhile Western Aramaic is now only spoken by a few thousand Christian and Muslim Arameans (Syriacs) in western Syria. The Arabs spread their Central Semitic language to North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and northern Sudan and Mauritania), where it gradually replaced Egyptian Coptic and many Berber languages (although Berber is still largely extant in many areas), and for a time to the Iberian Peninsula (modern Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar) and Malta.

Example of Arabic calligraphy

With the patronage of the caliphs and the prestige of its liturgical status, Arabic rapidly became one of the world's main literary languages. Its spread among the masses took much longer, however, as many (although not all) of the native populations outside the Arabian Peninsula only gradually abandoned their languages in favour of Arabic. As Bedouin tribes settled in conquered areas, it became the main language of not only central Arabia, but also Yemen,[27] the Fertile Crescent, and Egypt. Most of the Maghreb followed, specifically in the wake of the Banu Hilal's incursion in the 11th century, and Arabic became the native language of many inhabitants of al-Andalus. After the collapse of the Nubian kingdom of Dongola in the 14th century, Arabic began to spread south of Egypt into modern Sudan; soon after, the Beni Ḥassān brought Arabization to Mauritania. A number of Modern South Arabian languages distinct from Arabic still survive, such as Soqotri, Mehri and Shehri which are mainly spoken in Socotra, Yemen and Oman.

Meanwhile, the Semitic languages that had arrived from southern Arabia in the 8th century BC were diversifying in Ethiopia and Eritrea, where, under heavy Cushitic influence, they split into a number of languages, including Amharic and Tigrinya. With the expansion of Ethiopia under the Solomonic dynasty, Amharic, previously a minor local language, spread throughout much of the country, replacing both Semitic (such as Gafat) and non-Semitic (such as Weyto) languages, and

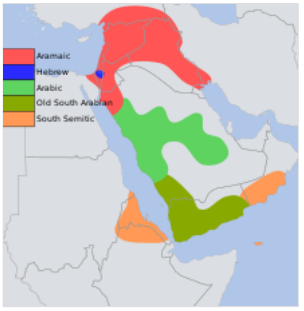
replacing Ge'ez as the principal literary language (though Ge'ez remains the liturgical language for Christians in the region); this spread continues to this day, with Qimant set to disappear in another generation.

Page from a 12th-century Quran in Arabic

Present distribution

Arabic is currently the native language of majorities from Mauritania to Oman, and from Iraq to the Sudan. Classical Arabic is the language of the Quran. It is also studied widely in the non-Arabic-speaking Muslim world. The Maltese language is a descendant of the extinct Siculo-Arabic, a variety of Maghrebi Arabic formerly spoken in Sicily. The modern Maltese alphabet is based on the Latin script with the addition of some letters with diacritic marks and digraphs. Maltese is the only Semitic official language within the European Union.

Successful as second languages far beyond their numbers of contemporary first-language speakers, a few Semitic languages today are the base of the sacred literature of some of the world's major religions, including Islam (Arabic), Judaism (Hebrew and Aramaic (Biblical and Talmudic)), churches of Syriac Christianity (Classical Syriac) and Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Christianity (Ge'ez). Millions learn these as a second language (or an archaic version of their modern tongues): many Muslims learn to read and recite the Qur'an and Jews speak and study Biblical Hebrew, the language of the Torah, Midrash, and other Jewish scriptures. The followers of the Assyrian Church of the East, Chaldean Catholic Church, Ancient Church of the East, Assyrian Pentecostal Church, Assyrian Evangelical Church and the Syriac Orthodox Church speak Eastern Aramaic languages and use Classical Syriac as their liturgical language. Classical Syriac is also used liturgically by the primarily Arabic-speaking followers of the Maronite Church, Syriac Catholic Church and was originally the liturgical language of the Melkites in Antioch and ancient Syria.[28][29][30][31][32] Koine Greek and Classical Arabic are the main liturgical languages of Oriental Orthodox Christians in the Middle East, who compose the patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria. Mandaic is both spoken and used as a liturgical language by the Mandaeans. Although the majority of Neo-Aramaic dialects spoken today are descended from Eastern varieties, Western Neo-Aramaic is still spoken in two villages in Syria.



Approximate distribution of the Semitic languages around the 1st century AD

Despite the ascendancy of Arabic in the Middle East, other Semitic languages still exist. Biblical Hebrew, long extinct as a colloquial language and in use only in Jewish literary, intellectual, and liturgical activity, was revived in spoken form at the end of the 19th century. Modern Hebrew is the main language of Israel, with Biblical Hebrew remaining as the language of liturgy and religious scholarship of Jews worldwide.

In Arab-dominated Yemen and Oman, on the southern rim of the Arabian Peninsula, a few tribes continue to speak Modern South Arabian languages such as Mahri and Soqotri. These languages differ greatly from both the surrounding Arabic dialects and from the languages of the Old South Arabian inscriptions.

Historically linked to the peninsular homeland of Old South Arabian, of which only one language, Razihi, remains, Ethiopia and Eritrea contain a substantial number of Semitic languages; the most widely spoken are Amharic in Ethiopia, Tigre in Eritrea, and Tigrinya in both. Amharic is the official language of Ethiopia. Tigrinya is a working language in Eritrea. Tigre is spoken by over one million people in the northern and central Eritrean lowlands and parts of eastern Sudan. A number of Gurage languages are spoken by populations in the semi-mountainous region of central Ethiopia, while Harari is restricted to the city of Harar. Ge'ez remains the liturgical language for certain groups of Christians in Ethiopia and in Eritrea.

Phonology

The phonologies of the attested Semitic languages are presented here from a comparative point of view. See Proto-Semitic language#Phonology for details on the phonological reconstruction of Proto-Semitic used in this article. The reconstruction of Proto-Semitic (PS) was originally based primarily on Arabic, whose phonology and morphology (particularly in Classical Arabic) is very conservative, and which preserves as contrastive 28 out of the evident 29 consonantal phonemes.[33] with *s [s] and *š [ʃ] merging into Arabic /s/ ⟨س⟩ and *ś [ɬ] becoming Arabic /ʃ/ ⟨ش⟩.

Proto-Semitic consonant phonemes[34]

Type	Manner	Voicing	Labial	Interdental	Alveolar	Palatal	Lateral	Velar/Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Obstruent	Stop	voiceless	*p [p]		*t [t]			*k [k]		
		emphatic	(p′)[e]		*ṯ [tʼ]			*q/ḳ [kʼ]		*ʾ,ˀ [ʔ]
		voiced	*b [b]		*d [d]			*g [g]		
	Fricative	voiceless		*ṯ [θ]	*s [s]	*š [ʃ]	*ś [ɬ]	*ḥ [x~χ]	*ḥ [ħ]	*h [h]
		emphatic		*ṯ[f]/θ̱/ẓ [θʼ]	*ṣ [sʼ]		*ś/ḍ [ɬʼ]	(xʼ~χʼ)[g]		
		voiced		*ḏ [ð]	*z [z]			*ġ/ǧ [ɣ~ʁ]	*ʿ,ˤ [ʕ]	
Resonant	Trill				*r [r]					
	Approximant		*w [w]			*y [j]	*l [l]			
	Nasal		*m [m]		*n [n]					

a. Arabic is one of the world's largest languages, spoken natively in West Asia and Africa by about 300 million speakers, and as a second language by perhaps another 60 million.[1]

b. Amharic has perhaps fifteen million speakers, in Africa probably fewer than only Arabic, Swahili, Hausa, and Oromo, and is the second most populous Semitic language, after just Arabic. It is the lingua franca and constitutionally recognized national language of Ethiopia, and the national language of instruction of Ethiopian public education in the primary grades.[2]

c. Tigrinya, not to be confused with the related but distinct language Tigre, is, like Amharic, a northern Ethiopian Semitic language, is spoken as a native language by the overwhelming majority of the population in the Tigre province of Ethiopia and in the highland part of Eritrea (the provinces of Akkele Guzay, Serae and Hamasien, where the capital of the state, Asmara, is situated). Outside of this area Tigrinya is also spoken in the Tambien and Wolqayt historical districts (Ethiopia) and in the administrative districts of Massara and Keren (Eritrea), these being respectively the southern and northern limits of its expansion. The number of speaker of Tigrinya has been estimated at 4 million in 1995; 1.3 million of them live in Eritrea (around 50 percent of the population of the country), in 2008 by an estimated 5 million.[3] Hebrew speaking about ~5 million native/L1 speakers, Gurage has around 1.5 million speakers, Tigre has c. ~1.05 million speakers, Aramaic is spoken by around 575,000 to 1 million largely Assyrian speakers).

d. Maltese has around 483,000 speakers,

e. Woodard (2008, p. 219) suggests the presence of an emphatic p in some disparate Semitic languages may indicate that such an emphatic was present in Proto-Semitic.

f. The emphatic interdental fricative is usually spelled *ṯ but is replaced here by *ṯ for better readability.

g. Huehnergard (2003, p.49) presents a minority opinion that an ejective velar fricative existed in Proto-Semitic.

Note: the fricatives *s, *z, *ṣ, *ś, *ṣ́, *ṯ may also be interpreted as affricates (/t͡s/, /d͡z/, /t͡s̠/, /t͡ɬ/, /t͡ɬʼ/, /t͡θʼ/), as discussed in Proto-Semitic language § Fricatives.

This comparative approach is natural for the consonants, as sound correspondences among the consonants of the Semitic languages are very straightforward for a family of its time depth. Sound shifts affecting the vowels are more numerous and, at times, less regular.

Consonants

Each Proto-Semitic phoneme was reconstructed to explain a certain regular sound correspondence between various Semitic languages. Note that Latin letter values (*italicized*) for extinct languages are a question of transcription; the exact pronunciation is not recorded.

Most of the attested languages have merged a number of the reconstructed original fricatives, though South Arabian retains all fourteen (and has added a fifteenth from *p > f).

In Aramaic and Hebrew, all non-emphatic stops occurring singly after a vowel were softened to fricatives, leading to an alternation that was often later phonemicized as a result of the loss of gemination.

In languages exhibiting pharyngealization of emphatics, the original velar emphatic has rather developed to a uvular stop [q].

Proto Semitic	IPA	Arabic				Maltese		Akka-dian	Ugaritic		Phoenician								
		Written		Classical[36]	Modern	Written	Pronoun		Written	Pronoun	Written	Translit.	Alt. Transl.	Written		Biblical		Tiberia
*b	[b]	ب	b	/b/		b	/b/	b	𐎁	b	𐤁	b	b	$\underline{b}$, b^5	ב	b^5	/b/	/v/, /b
*g	[g]	ج	ǧ	/ɟ ~ d͡ʒ/[9]	/d͡ʒ/[11]	ġ	/d͡ʒ/	g	𐎂	g	𐤂	g	g	$\bar{g}$, g^5	ג	g^5	/g/	/ɣ/, /g
*p	[p]	ف	p̄	/f/		f	/f/	p	𐎐	p	𐤐	p	p	$\bar{p}$, p^5	פ	p^5	/p/	/f/, /p
*k	[k]	ك	k	/k/		k	/k/	k	𐎊	k	𐤊	k	k	$\underline{k}$, k^5	כ	k^5	/k/	/x/, /k
*ḳ	[kʼ]	ق	q	/g ~ q/[9]	/q/[12]	q	/ʔ ~ q/	q	𐎖	ḳ	𐤒	q	q	q	קּ	q	/q/	/q/
*d	[d]	د	d	/d/		d	/d/	d	𐎄	d	𐤃	d	d	$\underline{d}$, d^5	ד	d^5	/d/	/ð/, /d
*ḏ	[ð]	ذ	ḏ	/ð/				z	𐎇	ḏ > d	𐤆	z	z	z	ז	z	/z/	/z/
*z	[z]	ز	z	/z/		ż	/z/		𐎆	z								
*s	[s]	س	s	/s/		s	/s/	s	𐎎	s	𐤎	ś	s	s^1	ס	s	/s/	/s/
*š	[ʃ]							š	𐎌	š	𐤔	š	š	š	שׁ	š	/ʃ/	/ʃ/
*ś	[ɬ]	ش	š	/ʃ/		x	/ʃ/							s^1	שׂ	$ś^1$	/ɬ/	/s/
*ṯ	[θ]	ث	ṯ	/θ/		t	/t/		𐎅	ṯ	𐤔	s	š	š	שׂ	š	/ʃ/	/ʃ/
*t	[t]	ت	t	/t/				t	𐎈	t	𐤕	t	t	$\underline{t}$, t^5	ת	t^5	/t/	/θ/, /t
*ṭ	[tʼ]	ط	ḥ	/tˤ/				ṭ	𐎉	ṭ	𐤈	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ט	ṭ	/tˤ/	/tˤ/
*ẓ	[θʼ]	ظ	ẓ	/ðˤ/		d	/d/	ṣ	𐎕	ẓ[13] > ġ	𐤑	ṣ́	ṣ	ṣ	צ	ṣ	/sˤ/	/sˤ/
*ṣ	[sʼ]	ص	ṣ	/sˤ/		s	/s/		𐎑	ṣ								
*ṣ́	[ɬʼ]	ض	ṣ́	/ɮˤ ~ dˤ/	/dˤ/	d	/d/											
*ġ	[ɣ]~[ʁ]	غ	ˊ	/ɣ ~ ʁ/		għ	/ˤː/	ḫ	𐎓	ġ, ʻ	𐤏	ǫ	ʿ	ǫ	ע[2]	ʕ	/ʁ/	/ʕ/
*ʻ	[ʕ]	ع	ʿ	/ʕ/				–[4]	𐎍	ʻ							/ʕ/	
*ʼ	[ʔ]	ء	ʾ	/ʔ/		–	–	–, ʾ	𐎀, 𐎛, 𐎜	ʾa, ʾi, ʾu[10]	𐤀	q̇	ʾ	q̇	א	ʾ	/ʔ/	/ʔ/
*ḫ	[χ]~[x]	خ	ḫ	/x ~ χ/		ħ	/ħ/	ḫ	𐎗	ḫ	𐤇	h	ḥ	h^2	ח[2]	$ḥ^2$	/χ/	/ħ/
*ḥ	[ħ]	ح	ḥ	/ħ/				–[4]	𐎔	ḥ							/ħ/	
*h	[h]	ه	h	/h/		h	/ː/	–	𐎄	h	𐤄	ḣ	h	$ḣ^2$	ה	h	/h/	/h/
*m	[m]	م	m	/m/		m	/m/	m	𐎌	m	𐤌	m	m	m	מ	m	/m/	/m/
*n	[n]	ن	n	/n/		n	/n/	n	𐎍	n	𐤍	n	n	n	נ	n	/n/	/n/
*r	[r]	ر	r	/r/		r	/r/	r	𐎗	r	𐤓	r	r	r	ר	r	/r/	/ʁ/, /r/ /ʁː/
*l	[l]	ل	l	/l/		l	/l/	l	𐎛	l	𐤋	l	l	l	ל	l	/l/	/l/
*y	[j]	ي	y	/j/		j	/j/	y	𐎉	y	𐤉	j	y	j	י	y	/j/	/j/
*w	[w]	و	w	/w/		w	/w/	w	𐎅	w	𐤅	w	w	w	ו	w	/w/	/w/

Note: the fricatives *s, *z, *ṣ, *ś, *ṣ́, *ṯ may also be interpreted as affricates (/t͡s/, /d͡z/, /t͡sˤ/, /t͡ɬ/, /t͡ɬˤ/, /t͡θʼ/).

Notes:

1. Proto-Semitic *ś was still pronounced as [ɬ] in Biblical Hebrew, but no letter was available in the Early Linear Script, so the letter ש did double duty, representing both /ʃ/ and /ɬ/. Later on, however, /ɬ/ merged with /s/, but the old spelling was largely retained, and the two pronunciations of ש were distinguished graphically in Tiberian Hebrew as שׁ /ʃ/ vs. שׂ /s/ < /ɬ/.
2. Biblical Hebrew as of the 3rd century BCE apparently still distinguished the phonemes *ġ /ʁ/ and *ḫ /χ/ from *ʻ /ʕ/ and *ḥ /ħ/, respectively, based on transcriptions in the Septuagint. As in the case of /ɬ/, no letters were available to represent these sounds, and existing letters did double duty: ח /χ/ /ħ/ and ע /ʁ/ /ʕ/. In both of these cases, however, the two sounds represented by the same letter eventually merged, leaving no evidence (other than early transcriptions) of the former distinctions.

3. Although early Aramaic (pre-7th century BCE) had only 22 consonants in its alphabet, it apparently distinguished all of the original 29 Proto-Semitic phonemes, including *ḏ, *ṯ, *ṱ, *ś, *ṣ́, *ǵ and *ḫ – although by Middle Aramaic times, these had all merged with other sounds. This conclusion is mainly based on the shifting representation of words etymologically containing these sounds; in early Aramaic writing, the first five are merged with *z*, *š*, *ṣ*, *š*, *q*, respectively, but later with *d*, *t*, *ṭ*, *s*, ʿ.[37][38] (Also note that due to begadkefat spirantization, which occurred after this merger, OAm. t > t̲ and d > d̲ in some positions, so that PS *t,t̲ and *d, d̲ may be realized as either of t, t̲ and d, d̲ respectively.) The sounds *ǵ and *ḫ were always represented using the pharyngeal letters ʿ *ḥ*, but they are distinguished from the pharyngeals in the Demotic-script papyrus Amherst 63, written about 200 BCE.[39] This suggests that these sounds, too, were distinguished in Old Aramaic language, but written using the same letters as they later merged with.
4. The earlier pharyngeals can be distinguished in Akkadian from the zero reflexes of *ḥ, *ʕ by e-coloring adjacent *a, e.g. pS *ʻ*ba*ʕ*al-um* 'owner, lord' > Akk. *bēlu(m)*.[40]
5. Hebrew and Aramaic underwent begadkefat spirantization at a certain point, whereby the stop sounds /b g d k p t/ were softened to the corresponding fricatives [v ɣ ð x f θ] (written *b̲ ḡ ḏ k̲ p̄ t̲*) when occurring after a vowel and not geminated. This change probably happened after the original Old Aramaic phonemes /θ, ð/ disappeared in the 7th century BCE,[41] and most likely occurred after the loss of Hebrew /χ, ʁ/ c. 200 BCE.[note 1] It is known to have occurred in Hebrew by the 2nd century CE.[43] After a certain point this alternation became contrastive in word-medial and final position (though bearing low functional load), but in word-initial position they remained allophonic.[44] In Modern Hebrew, the distinction has a higher functional load due to the loss of gemination, although only the three fricatives /v χ f/ are still preserved (the fricative /x/ is pronounced /χ/ in modern Hebrew).
6. In the Northwest Semitic languages, */w/ became */j/ at the beginning of a word, e.g. Hebrew *yeled* "boy" < **wald* (cf. Arabic *walad*).
7. There is evidence of a rule of assimilation of /j/ to the following coronal consonant in pre-tonic position, shared by Hebrew, Phoenician and Aramaic.[45]
8. In Assyrian Neo-Aramaic, [ħ] is nonexistent. In general cases, the language would lack pharyngeal fricative [ʕ] (as heard in *Ayin*). However, /ʕ/ is retained in educational speech, especially among Assyrian priests.[46]
9. The palatalization of Proto-Semitic gīm /g/ to Arabic /d͡ʒ/ jīm, is most probably connected to the pronunciation of qāf /q/ as a /g/ gāf (this sound change also occurred in Yemenite Hebrew), hence in most of the Arabian peninsula (which is the homeland of the Arabic language) ج is jīm /d͡ʒ/ and ڨ is gāf /g/, except in western and southern Yemen and parts of Oman where ج is gīm /g/ and ڨ is qāf /q/.
10. Ugaritic orthography indicated the vowel after the glottal stop.
11. The Arabic letter *jīm* (ج) has three main pronunciations in Modern Standard Arabic. [d͡ʒ] in north Algeria, Iraq, also in most of the Arabian peninsula and as the predominant pronunciation of Literary Arabic outside the Arab world, [ʒ] occurs in most of the Levant and most North Africa; and [g] is used in northern Egypt and some regions in Yemen and Oman. In addition to other minor allophones.
12. The Arabic letter *qāf* (ق) has three main pronunciations in spoken varieties. [g] in most of the Arabian Peninsula, Northern and Eastern Yemen and parts of Oman, Southern Iraq, Upper Egypt, Sudan, Libya, some parts of the Levant and to lesser extent in some parts (mostly rural) of Maghreb. [q] in most of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, Southern and Western Yemen and parts of Oman, Northern Iraq, parts of the Levant especially Druze dialects. [ʔ] in most of the Levant and Lower Egypt, as well as some North African towns such as Tlemcen and Fez. In addition to other minor allophones.
13. *ṯ* can be written *ẓ*, and always is in the Ugaritic and Arabic contexts. In Ugaritic, sometimes assimilates to *ġ*, as in *ġmʔ* 'thirsty' (Arabic *ẓmʔ*, Hebrew *ṣmʔ*, but Ugaritic *mẓmủ* 'thirsty', root *ẓmʔ*, is also attested).
14. Early Amharic might have had a different phonology.
15. The pronunciations /ʕ/ and /ħ/ for *ʿAyin* and *Ḥet*, respectively, still occur among some older Mizrahi speakers, but for most modern Israelis, *ʿAyin* and *Ḥet* are realized as /ʔ, -/ and /χ ~ x/, respectively.

The following table shows the development of the various fricatives in Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic and Maltese through cognate words:

Proto-Semitic	Arabic	Maltese	Aramaic	Hebrew	Examples				
					Arabic	Maltese	Aramaic	Hebrew	meaning
***/ð/ *ḏ**	*/ð/ ذ	*/d/ d	*/d/ ד	*/z/ ז	ذهب ذَكَر	deheb –	דהב דכרא	זהב זָכָר	'gold' 'male'
***/z/[1] *ẓ**	*/z/ ز	*/z/ ż	*/z/ ז		موازين زمن	miżien żmien	מאזנין זמן	מאזנים זמן	'scale' 'time'
***/s/ *s**	*/s/ س */ʃ/ ش	*/s/ s */ʃ/ x	*/s/ ס	*/s/ ס	سكين شهر	sikkina xahar	סכין סהר	סכין סהר	'knife' 'moon/month'
***/ɬ/ *ś**	*/ʃ/ ش	*/ʃ/ x	*/s/ שׂ	*/s/ שׂ	عشر	għaxra	עשׂר	עשׂר	'ten'
***/ʃ/ *š**	*/s/ س	*/s/ s	*/ʃ/ שׁ	*/ʃ/ שׁ	سنة سلام	sena sliem	שׁנה שלם	שׁנה שלום	'year' 'peace'
***/θ/ *ṯ**	*/θ/ ث	*/t/ t	*/t/ ת		ثلاثة اثنان	tlieta tnejn	תלת תרין	שלוש שתים	'three' 'two'
***/θʼ/[1] *ṱ**	*/ðˤ/ ظ	*/d/ d	*/tʼ/ ט	*/sˤ~ts/[1] צ	ظل ظهر	dell –	טלה טהרא	צל צהרים	'shadow' 'noon'
***/ɬʼ/[1] *ṣ́**	*/dˤ/ ض	*/t/ t */d/ d	*/ʕ/ ע		أرض ضحك	art daħaq	ארע עחק	ארץ צחק	'land' 'laughed'
***/sʼ/[1] *ṣ**	*/sˤ/ ص		*/sʼ/ צ		صرخ صبر		צרח צבר	צרח צבר	'shout' 'water melon like plant'
***/χ/ *ḫ**	*/x~χ/ خ	*/ħ/ ħ	*/ħ/ ח	*/ħ~χ/ ח	خمسة صرخ	ħamsa –	חֲמִשָּׁה צרח	חֲמִשָּׁה צרח	'five' 'shout'
***/ħ/ *ḥ**	*/ħ/ ح	*/ħ/ ħ			ملح حلم	melħ ħolm	מלח חלם	מלח חלום	'salt' 'dream'
***/ʁ/ *ġ**	*/ɣ~ʁ/ غ	*/ˤ̱/ għ	*/ʕ/ ע	*/ʕ~ʔ/ ע	غراب غرب	għorab għarb	ערב מערב	עורב מערב	'raven' 'west'
***/ʕ/ *ʿ**	*/ʕ/ ع	*/ˤ̱/ għ			عبد سبعة	għabid sebgħa	עבד שבע	עבד שבע	'slave' 'seven'

1. possibly affricated (/dz/ /tɬʼ/ /tsʼ/ /tθʼ/ /tɬ/)

Vowels

Proto-Semitic vowels are, in general, harder to deduce due to the nonconcatenative morphology of Semitic languages. The history of vowel changes in the languages makes drawing up a complete table of correspondences impossible, so only the most common reflexes can be given:

Vowel correspondences in Semitic languages (in proto-Semitic stressed syllables)[47]

pS	Arabic		Aramaic		Hebrew			Ge'ez	Akkadian
	Classical	Modern	usually[4]	/_C.ˈV	/ˈ_.[1]	/ˈ_C:[2]	/ˈ_C.C[3]		
***a**	a	a	a	ə	ā	a	ɛ	a, later å	a, e, ē[5]
***i**	i	i	e, i, WSyr. ɛ	ə	ē	e	ɛ, e	ə	i
***u**	u	u	u, o	ə	ō	o	o	ə, ʷə[6]	u
***ā**	ā	ā	ā		ō[note 2]			ā later a	ā, ē
***ī**	ī	ī	ī		ī			i	ī
***ū**	ū	ū	ū		ū	ū		u	ū
***ay**	ay	ē, ay	BA, JA ay(i), ē, WSyr. ay/ī & ay/ē		ayi, ay			e	ī
***aw**	aw	ō, aw	ō, WSyr. aw/ū		ō, pausal ˈāwɛ			o	ū

1. in a stressed open syllable
2. in a stressed closed syllable before a geminate
3. in a stressed closed syllable before a consonant cluster
4. when the proto-Semitic stressed vowel remained stressed

5. pS *a,*ā > Akk. e,ē in the neighborhood of pS *ʕ,*ħ and before r.
6. i.e. pS *g,*k,*ḳ,*χ > Ge'ez gʷ, kʷ,ḳʷ,χʷ / _u

Grammar

The Semitic languages share a number of grammatical features, although variation — both between separate languages, and within the languages themselves — has naturally occurred over time.

Word order

The reconstructed default word order in Proto-Semitic is verb–subject–object (VSO), possessed–possessor (NG), and noun–adjective (NA). This was still the case in Classical Arabic and Biblical Hebrew, e.g. Classical Arabic رأى محمد فريدا *ra'ā muḥammadun farīdan.* (literally "saw Muhammad Farid", *Muhammad saw Farid*). In the modern Arabic vernaculars, however, as well as sometimes in Modern Standard Arabic (the modern literary language based on Classical Arabic) and Modern Hebrew, the classical VSO order has given way to SVO. Modern Ethiopian Semitic languages follow a different word order: SOV, possessor–possessed, and adjective–noun; however, the oldest attested Ethiopian Semitic language, Ge'ez, was VSO, possessed–possessor, and noun–adjective.[48] Akkadian was also predominantly SOV.

Cases in nouns and adjectives

The proto-Semitic three-case system (nominative, accusative and genitive) with differing vowel endings (-u, -a -i), fully preserved in Qur'anic Arabic (see ʾIʿrab), Akkadian and Ugaritic, has disappeared everywhere in the many colloquial forms of Semitic languages. Modern Standard Arabic maintains such case distinctions, although they are typically lost in free speech due to colloquial influence. An accusative ending -n is preserved in Ethiopian Semitic.[note 3] In the northwest, the scarcely attested Samalian reflects a case distinction in the plural between nominative *-ū* and oblique *-ī* (compare the same distinction in Classical Arabic).[50] Additionally, Semitic nouns and adjectives had a category of state, the indefinite state being expressed by nunation.[51]

Number in nouns

Semitic languages originally had three grammatical numbers: singular, dual, and plural. Classical Arabic still has a mandatory dual (i.e. it must be used in all circumstances when referring to two entities), marked on nouns, verbs, adjectives and pronouns. Many contemporary dialects of Arabic still have a dual, as in the name for the nation of Bahrain (*baḥr* "sea" + *-ayn* "two"), although it is marked only on nouns. It also occurs in Hebrew in a few nouns (*šana* means "one year", *šnatayim* means "two years", and *šanim* means "years"), but for those it is obligatory. The curious phenomenon of broken plurals – e.g. in Arabic, *sadd* "one dam" vs. *sudūd* "dams" – found most profusely in the languages of Arabia and Ethiopia, may be partly of proto-Semitic origin, and partly elaborated from simpler origins.

Verb aspect and tense

All Semitic languages show two quite distinct styles of morphology used for conjugating verbs. *Suffix conjugations* take suffixes indicating the person, number and gender of the subject, which bear some resemblance to the pronominal suffixes used to indicate direct objects on verbs ("I saw **him**") and possession on nouns ("**his** dog"). So-called *prefix conjugations* actually takes both prefixes and suffixes, with the prefixes primarily indicating person (and sometimes number or gender), while the suffixes (which are completely different from those used in the suffix conjugation) indicate number and gender whenever the prefix does not mark this. The prefix conjugation is noted for a particular pattern of *ʔ- t- y- n-* prefixes where (1) a *t-* prefix is used in the singular to mark the second person and third-person feminine, while a *y-* prefix marks the third-person masculine; and (2) identical words are used for second-person masculine and third-person feminine singular. The prefix conjugation is extremely old, with clear analogues in nearly all the families of Afroasiatic languages (i.e. at least 10,000 years old). The table on the right shows examples of the prefix and suffix conjugations in Classical Arabic, which has forms that are close to Proto-Semitic.

Paradigm of a regular Classical Arabic verb:
Form I *kataba (yaktubu)* "to write"

		Past		Present Indicative	
Singular					
1st		katab-***tu***	كَتَبْتُ	***ʾa***-ktub-***u***	أَكْتُبُ
2nd	**masculine**	katab-***ta***	كَتَبْتَ	***ta***-ktub-***u***	تَكْتُبُ
	feminine	katab-***ti***	كَتَبْتِ	***ta***-ktub-***īna***	تَكْتُبِينَ
3rd	**masculine**	katab-***a***	كَتَبَ	***ya***-ktub-***u***	يَكْتُبُ
	feminine	katab-***at***	كَتَبَتْ	***ta***-ktub-***u***	تَكْتُبُ
Dual					
2nd	**masculine & feminine**	katab-***tumā***	كَتَبْتُمَا	***ta***-ktub-***āni***	تَكْتُبَانِ
3rd	**masculine**	katab-***ā***	كَتَبَا	***ya***-ktub-***āni***	يَكْتُبَانِ
	feminine	katab-***atā***	كَتَبَتَا	***ta***-ktub-***āni***	تَكْتُبَانِ
Plural					
1st		katab-***nā***	كَتَبْنَا	***na***-ktub-***u***	نَكْتُبُ
2nd	**masculine**	katab-***tum***	كَتَبْتُمْ	***ta***-ktub-***ūna***	تَكْتُبُونَ
	feminine	katab-***tunna***	كَتَبْتُنَّ	***ta***-ktub-***na***	تَكْتُبْنَ
3rd	**masculine**	katab-***ū***	كَتَبُوا	***ya***-ktub-***ūna***	يَكْتُبُونَ
	feminine	katab-***na***	كَتَبْنَ	***ya***-ktub-***na***	يَكْتُبْنَ

In Proto-Semitic, as still largely reflected in East Semitic, prefix conjugations are used both for the past and the non-past, with different vocalizations. Cf. Akkadian *niprus* "we decided" (preterite), *niptaras* "we have decided" (perfect), *niparras* "we decide" (non-past or imperfect), vs. suffix-conjugated *parsānu* "we are/were/will be deciding" (stative). Some of these features, e.g. gemination indicating the non-past/imperfect, are generally attributed to Afroasiatic. Proto-Semitic had an additional form, the jussive, which was distinguished from the preterite only by the position of stress: the jussive had final stress while the preterite had non-final (retracted) stress.[52]

The West Semitic languages significantly reshaped the system. The most substantial changes occurred in the Central Semitic languages (the ancestors of modern Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic). Essentially, the old prefix-conjugated jussive or preterite became a new non-past (or imperfect), while the stative became a new past (or perfect), and the old prefix-conjugated non-past (or imperfect) with gemination was discarded. New suffixes were used to mark different moods in the non-past, e.g. Classical Arabic *-u* (indicative), *-a* (subjunctive), vs no suffix (jussive). (It is not generally agreed whether the systems of the various Semitic languages are better interpreted in terms of tense, i.e. past vs. non-past, or aspect, i.e. perfect vs. imperfect.) A special feature in classical Hebrew is the waw-consecutive, prefixing a verb form with the letter waw in order to change its tense or aspect. The South Semitic languages show a system somewhere between the East and Central Semitic languages.

Later languages show further developments. In the modern varieties of Arabic, for example, the old mood suffixes were dropped, and new mood prefixes developed (e.g. *bi-* for indicative vs. no prefix for subjunctive in many varieties). In the extreme case of Neo-Aramaic, the verb conjugations have been entirely reworked under Iranian influence.

Morphology: triliteral roots

All Semitic languages exhibit a unique pattern of stems called Semitic roots consisting typically of triliteral, or three-consonant consonantal roots (two- and four-consonant roots also exist), from which nouns, adjectives, and verbs are formed in various ways (e.g., by inserting vowels, doubling consonants, lengthening vowels or by adding prefixes, suffixes, or infixes).

For instance, the root k-t-b (dealing with "writing" generally) yields in Arabic:

***k**ata**b**tu* كَتَبْتُ or كتبت "I wrote" (f and m)
*yu**k**ta**b**(u)* يُكْتَب or يكتب "being written" (masculine)
*tu**k**ta**b**(u)* تُكتَب or تكتب "being written" (feminine)
*yata**k**āta**b**ūn(a)* يَتَكَاتَبُونَ or يتكاتبون "they write to each other" (masculine)
*isti**k**tā**b*** اِستِكتاب or استكتاب "causing to write"
k**itā**b كِتَاب or كتاب "book" (the hyphen shows end of stem before various case endings)
k**utayyi**b كُتَيِّب or كتيب "booklet" (diminutive)
***k**itā**b**at* كِتَابَة or كتابة "writing"
k**utta**b كُتّاب or كتاب "writers" (broken plural)
***k**ata**b**at* كَتَبَة or كتبة "clerks" (broken plural)
*ma**k**ta**b*** مَكتَب or مكتب "desk" or "office"
*ma**k**ta**b**at* مَكتَبة or مكتبة "library" or "bookshop"
*ma**k**tū**b*** مَكتوب or مكتوب "written" (participle) or "postal letter" (noun)
***k**atī**b**at* كَتيبة or كتيبة "squadron" or "document"
*i**k**titā**b*** اِكتِتاب or اكتتاb "registration" or "contribution of funds"
*mu**k**tati**b*** مُكتَتِب or مكتتب "subscription"

and the same root in Hebrew:

***k**ā**ṯa**b**ti* כתבתי or כָּתַבְתִּי "I wrote"
k**attā**b כתב or כַּתָּב "reporter" (*m*)
k**atte**b**e**ṯ כתבת or כַּתָּבֶת "reporter" (*f*)
***k**attā**b**ā* כתבה or כַּתָּבָה "article" (plural ***k**attā**b**ōṯ* כתבות)
*mi**k**tā**b*** מכתב or מִכְתָּב "postal letter" (plural *mi**k**tā**b**īm* מכתבים)
*mi**k**tā**b**ā* מכתבה "writing desk" (plural *mi**k**tā**b**ōṯ* מכתבות)
***k**ə**ṯ**ō**b**eṯ* כתובת "address" (plural ***k**ə**ṯ**ō**b**ōṯ* כתובות)
k**ə**ṯ**ā**b כתב "handwriting"
k**ā**ṯ**ū**b כתוב "written" (*f* ***k**ə**ṯ**ū**b**ā* כתובה)
*hi**k**tī**b*** הכתיב "he dictated" (*f hi**k**tī**b**ā* הכתיבה)
*hiṯ**k**atte**b*** התכתב "he corresponded (*f hiṯ**k**atte**b**ā* התכתבה)
*ni**k**ta**b*** נכתב "it was written" (*m*)
*ni**k**tə**b**ā* נכתבה "it was written" (*f*)
k**ə**ṯ**ī**b כתיב "spelling" (*m*)
*ta**k**tī**b*** תכתיב "prescript" (*m*)
*m'ə'**k**utta**b*** מכותב "addressee" (*me**k**utte**b**eṯ* מכותבת *f*)
***k**ə**ṯ**ubba**b**ā* כתובה "ketubah (a Jewish marriage contract)" (*f*)

(Underlined consonants ⟨k̲⟩, ⟨ṯ⟩, ⟨b̲⟩ represent the fricatives /x/, /θ/, /v/ respectively.)

In Tigrinya and Amharic, this root was used widely but is now seen as an archaic form. Ethiopic-derived languages use different roots for things that have to do with writing (and in some cases counting). The primitive root ṣ-f and the trilateral root stems m-ṣ-f, ṣ-h-f, and ṣ-f-r are used. This root also exists in other Semitic languages, such as Hebrew: *sefer* "book", *sōfer* "scribe", *mispār* "number" and *sippūr* "story". This root also exists in Arabic and is used to form words with a

close meaning to "writing", such as *ṣaḥāfa* "journalism", and *ṣaḥīfa* "newspaper" or "parchment". Verbs in other non-Semitic Afroasiatic languages show similar radical patterns, but more usually with biconsonantal roots; e.g. Kabyle *afeg* means "fly!", while *affug* means "flight", and *yufeg* means "he flew" (compare with Hebrew, where *hap̄lēḡ* means "set sail!", *hap̄lāḡā* means "a sailing trip", and *hip̄līḡ* means "he sailed", while the unrelated *ʕūp̄*, *təʕūp̄ā* and *ʕāp̄* pertain to flight).

Independent personal pronouns

English	Proto-Semitic	Akkadian	Arabic		Ge'ez	Hebrew	Aramaic	Suret	Maltese
			standard	common vernaculars					
I	**ʔanāku*,[note 4] **ʔaniya*	*anāku*	أنا *ʔanā*	*ʔanā*, anā, *ana, āni, āna, ānig*	አነ *ʔana*	אנכי, אני *ʔānōḵī, ʔănī*	אנא *ʔanā*	*ānā*	*jiena*, *jien*
You (sg., masc.)	**ʔanka* > **ʔanta*	*atta*	أنت *ʔanta*	*ʔant*, ant, inta, inte, inti, int, (i)nta	አንተ *ʔánta*	אתה *ʔattā*	אנת *ʔantā*	*āt*, *āty*, *āten*	*int*, *inti*
You (sg., fem.)	**ʔanti*	*atti*	أنت *ʔanti*	ʔanti, anti, *inti, init* (i)nti, intch	አንቲ *ʔánti*	את *ʔatt*	אנת *ʔanti*	*āt*, *āty*, *āten*	*int*, *inti*
He	**suʔa*	*šū*	هو *huwa*, hū	*huwwa, huwwe*, hū	ውእቱ *wəʔətu*	הוא *hū*	הוא *hu*	*owā*	*hu*, *huwa*
She	**siʔa*	*šī*	هي *hiya*, hī	*hiyya, hiyye*, hī	ይእቲ *yəʔəti*	היא *hī*	היא *hi*	*ayā*	*hi*, *hija*
We	**niyaħnū, *niyaħnā*	*nīnu*	نحن *naħnu*	niħna, iħna, ħinna	ንሕነ *ʔnəħnā*	אנו, אנחנו *ʔānū, ʔănaħnū*	נחנא *náħnā*	*axnan*	*aħna*
You (dual)	**ʔantunā*		أنتما *ʔantumā*	Plural form is used					
They (dual)	**sunā*[note 5]	**sunī(ti)*	هما *humā*	Plural form is used					
You (pl., masc.)	**ʔantunū*	*attunu*	أنتم *ʔantum*, *ʔantumu*	*ʔantum*, antum, antu, *intu, intum*, (i)ntūma	አንትሙ *ʔantəmu*	אתם *ʔattem*	אנתון *ʔantun*	*axtōxūn*	*intom*
You (pl., fem.)	**ʔantinā*	*attina*	أنتنّ *ʔantunna*	*ʔantin*, antin, *ʔantum*, antu, *intu, intum*, (i)ntūma	አንትን *ʔantən*	אתן *ʔatten*	אנתן *ʔanten*	*axtōxūn*	*intom*
They (masc.)	**sunū*	*šunu*	هم *hum*, *humu*	hum, *humma*, hūma, hom, hinne(n)	እሙንቱ *ʔəmuntu*	הם, המה *hēm, hēmmā*	הנן *hinnun*	*eni*	*huma*
They (fem.)	**sinā*	*šina*	هنّ *hunna*	hin, hinne(n), hum, humma, hūma	እማንቱ *ʔəmāntu*	הן, הנה *hēn, hēnnā*	הנן *hinnin*	*eni*	*huma*

Cardinal numerals

English	Proto-Semitic[54]	IPA	Arabic	Hebrew	Sabaean	Assyrian Neo-Aramaic	Maltese	Ge'ez
One	**ʾaḥad-, *ʃišt-*	ʔaħad, ʔiʃt	واحد، أحد wa:ħid-, ʔaħad-	אחד *ʾeḥáḏ*, ʔeˈχad	*ʔḥd*	*xā*	wieħed	አሐዱ ʾäḥädu
Two	**ṯin-ān* (nom.), **ṯin-ayn* (obl.), **kilʾ-*	θina:n, θinajn, kilʔ	اثنان iθn-āni (nom.), اثنين iθn-ajni (obj.), اثنتان fem. iθnat-āni, اثنتين iθnat-ajni	שנים *šənáyim* ˈʃn-ajim, fem. שתים *šətáyim* ˈʃt-ajim	**ṯny*	*treh*	tnejn	ክልኤቱ kəlʾetu
Three	**śalāṯ-* > **ṯalāṯ-*[note 6]	ɬala:θ > θala:θ	ثلاث θala:θ-	fem. שלוש *šālṓš* ʃaˈloʃ	**ślṯ*	*ṭlā*	tlieta	ሠለስቱ śälästu
Four	**ʾarbaʿ-*	ʔarbaʕ	أربع ʔarbaʕ-	fem. ארבע *ʾárbaʿ*ˈʔaʁba	**fb'*	*arpā*	erbgħa	አርባዕቱ ʾärbaʿtu
Five	**ḫamš-*	χamʃ	خمس χams-	fem. חמש *ḥā́mēš* ˈχameʃ	**ḫmš*	*xamšā*	ħamsa	ኀምስቱ ḫämsətu
Six	**šiḏṯ-*[note 7]	ʃiðθ	ستّ sitt- (ordinal سادس sa:dis-)	fem. שש *šēš* ʃeʃ	**šḏṯ/šṯ*	*ëštā*	sitta	ስድስቱ sədsətu
Seven	**šabʿ-*	ʃabʕ	سبع sabʕ-	fem. שבע *šéḇaʿ*ˈʃeva	**šbʿ*	*šowā*	sebgħa	ሰብዐቱ säbʿätu
Eight	**ṯamāniy-*	θama:nij-	ثماني θama:n-ij-	fem. שמונה *šəmṓneh* ʃˈmone	**ṯmny/ ṯmn*	**tmanyā*	tmienja	ሰማንቱ sämantu
Nine	**tišʿ-*	tiʃʕ	تسع tisʕ-	fem. תשע *tḗšaʿ*ˈtejʃa	**tšʿ*	**učā*	disgħa	ተስዐቱ täsʿätu
Ten	**ʿaśr-*	ʕaɬr	عشر ʕaʃ(a)r-	fem. עשר *ʿéśer* ˈʔeseʁ	**śr*	**uṣrā*	għaxra	ዐሠርቱ ʿäśärtu

These are the basic numeral stems without feminine suffixes. In most older Semitic languages, the forms of the numerals from 3 to 10 exhibit polarity of gender (also called "chiastic concord" or "reverse agreement"), i.e. if the counted noun is masculine, the numeral would be feminine and vice versa.

Typology

Some early Semitic languages are speculated to have had weak ergative features.[57]

Common vocabulary

Due to the Semitic languages' common origin, they share some words and roots. Others differ. For example:

English	Proto-Semitic	Akkadian	Arabic	Aramaic	Suret	Hebrew	Ge'ez	Mehri	Maltese
father	**ʾab-*	*ab-*	*ʾab-*	*ʾaḇ-āʼ*	*bābā*	*ʾāḇ*	*ʾab*	*ḥa-yb*	*bu*, (*missier*)
heart	**lib(a)b-*	*libb-*	*lubb-*, (*qalb-*)	*lebb-āʼ*	*lëbā*	*lëḇ, lëḇāḇ*	ləbb	*ḥa-wbēb*	*ilbieba*, (*qalb*)
house	**bayt-*	*bītu, bētu*	*bayt-*, (*dār-*)	*bayt-āʼ*	*bētā*	*báyiṯ*	*bet*	*beyt, bêt*	*bejt*, (*dar*)
peace	**šalām-*	*šalām-*	*salām-*	*šlām-āʼ*	*šlāmā*	*šālôm*	*salām*	*səlōm*	*sliem*
tongue	**lišān-/*lašān-*	*lišān-*	*lisān-*	*leššān-āʼ*	*lišānā*	*lāšôn*	ləssān	*əwšēn*	*ilsien*
water	**may-/*māy-*	*mû (root *mā-/*māy-)*	*māʿ-/māy*	*mayy-āʼ*	*mēyā*	*máyim*	*māy*	*ḥə-mō*	*ilma*

Terms given in brackets are not derived from the respective Proto-Semitic roots, though they may also derive from Proto-Semitic (as does e.g. Arabic *dār*, cf. Biblical Hebrew *dōr* "dwelling").

Sometimes, certain roots differ in meaning from one Semitic language to another. For example, the root *b-y-ḍ* in Arabic has the meaning of "white" as well as "egg", whereas in Hebrew it only means "egg". The root *l-b-n* means "milk" in Arabic, but the color "white" in Hebrew. The root *l-ḥ-m* means "meat" in Arabic, but "bread" in Hebrew and "cow" in Ethiopian Semitic; the original meaning was most probably "food". The word *medina* (root: d-y-n/d-w-n) has the meaning of "metropolis" in Amharic, "city" in Arabic and Ancient Hebrew, and "State" in Modern Hebrew.

Of course, there is sometimes no relation between the roots. For example, "knowledge" is represented in Hebrew by the root *y-d-ʿ*, but in Arabic by the roots *ʿ-r-f* and *ʿ-l-m* and in Ethiosemitic by the roots *ʿ-w-q* and *f-l-ṭ*.

For more comparative vocabulary lists, see the Wiktionary appendix List of Proto-Semitic stems.

Classification

There are six fairly uncontroversial nodes within the Semitic languages: East Semitic, Northwest Semitic, North Arabian, Old South Arabian (also known as Sayhadic), Modern South Arabian, and Ethiopian Semitic. These are generally grouped further, but there is ongoing debate as to which belong together. The classification based on shared innovations given below, established by Robert Hetzron in 1976 and with later emendations by John Huehnergard and Rodgers as summarized in Hetzron 1997, is the most widely accepted today. In particular, several Semiticists still argue for the traditional (partially nonlinguistic) view of Arabic as part of South Semitic, and a few (e.g. Alexander Militarev or the German-Egyptian professor Arafa Hussein Mustafa) see Modern South Arabian as a third branch of Semitic alongside East and West Semitic, rather than as a subgroup of South Semitic. However, a new classification groups Old South Arabian as Central Semitic instead.[58]

Roger Blench notes that the Gurage languages are highly divergent and wonders whether they might not be a primary branch, reflecting an origin of Afroasiatic in or near Ethiopia.[59] At a lower level, there is still no general agreement on where to draw the line between "languages" and "dialects" – an issue particularly relevant in Arabic, Aramaic and Gurage – and the strong mutual influences between Arabic dialects render a genetic subclassification of them particularly difficult.

A computational phylogenetic analysis by Kitchen et al. (2009) considers the Semitic languages to have originated in the Levant c. 3750 BCE during the Early Bronze Age, with early Ethiosemitic originating from southern Arabia c. 800 BCE.[16] Evidence for gene movements consistent with this were found in Almarri et al. (2021).[60]

The Himyaritic and Sutean languages appear to have been Semitic, but are unclassified due to insufficient data.

Summary classification

- East Semitic
- West Semitic
  - Central Semitic
    - Northwest Semitic
    - Arabic
  - South Semitic
    - Western: Ethiopian Semitic and Old South Arabian
    - Eastern: Modern South Arabian

Detailed list

Semitic

- East Semitic (All extinct)
  - Akkadian
    - Old Akkadian
    - Babylonian
    - Assyrian
    - Canaano-Akkadian
  - Eblaite
  - Kishite
- West Semitic
  - Central Semitic
    - Northwest Semitic
      - Aramaic
        - Old Aramaic
          - Samalian (extinct)
          - Imperial Aramaic (extinct)

- Biblical Aramaic (extinct)
- Middle Aramaic
  - Eastern Aramaic (dialect continuum)
    - Eastern Middle Aramaic
      - Classical Syriac
      - Hatran Aramaic (extinct)
      - Central Neo-Aramaic
        - Turoyo (Surayt)
        - Mlaḥsô (extinct)
      - Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (dialect continuum)
        - Sureth
          - Assyrian Neo-Aramaic
            - Christian Urmi Neo-Aramaic
            - Bohtan Neo-Aramaic
            - Senaya Neo-Aramaic
          - Chaldean Neo-Aramaic
        - Koy Sanjaq Christian Neo-Aramaic
        - Hertevin Neo-Aramaic
        - Qaraqosh Neo-Aramaic
        - Jewish Assyrian Neo-Aramaic
          - Lishanid Noshan
          - Barzani Jewish Neo-Aramaic
          - Hulaulá
          - Lishana Deni
          - Lishán Didán
          - Betanure Jewish Neo-Aramaic
          - Koy Sanjaq Jewish Neo-Aramaic
      - Southeastern Aramaic
        - Mandaic
          - Neo-Mandaic
        - Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (extinct)
    - Western Aramaic (dialect continuum)
      - Western Middle Aramaic
        - Nabataean Aramaic (extinct)
        - Palmyrene Aramaic (extinct)
        - Western Neo-Aramaic
        - Palestinian Aramaic (All extinct)
          - Samaritan Aramaic
          - Jewish Palestinian Aramaic
            - Galilean dialect
          - Christian Palestinian Aramaic
        - Lebanese Aramaic (extinct)
    - Armazic (extinct)
- Canaanite
  - North Canaanite
    - Phoenician (extinct)
      - Punic (extinct)
  - South Canaanite
    - Ammonite (extinct)
    - Moabite (extinct)
    - Edomite (extinct)
    - Biblical Hebrew
      - Mishnaic Hebrew
        - Medieval Hebrew
          - Hebrew (Modern Hebrew) (revived)
      - Samaritan Hebrew (extinct (apart from modern liturgical uses))
- Ugaritic (extinct)
- Amorite (extinct)
- Taymanitic ? (extinct)

- North Arabian
  - Old Arabic
    - Pre-classical Arabic
      - Arabic
        - Classical Arabic
          - Modern Standard Arabic
        - Mashriqi Arabic (Eastern Arabic) (dialect continuum)
          - Peninsular Arabic (dialect continuum)
            - Old Hijazi Arabic
              - Hejazi Arabic
            - Gulf Arabic
              - Emirati Arabic
              - Bahraini Gulf Arabic
              - Kuwaiti Arabic
            - Bahrani Arabic
            - Omani Arabic
            - Shihhi Arabic
            - Dhofari Arabic
            - Yemeni Arabic (dialect continuum)
              - Hadhrami Arabic
              - San'ani Arabic
              - Ta'izzi-Adeni Arabic
                - Ta'izzi Arabic

- Adeni Arabic
- Djibouti Arabic
- Judeo-Yemeni Arabic
- Tihamiyya Arabic
  - Zabidi dialect
- Yafi'i Arabic
- Northwest Arabian Arabic (Levantine Bedawi Arabic, Eastern Egyptian Bedawi Arabic)
- Najdi Arabic
- Bareqi Arabic
- Egypto-Sudanic Arabic (dialect continuum)
  - Egyptian Arabic (dialect continuum)
    - Judeo-Egyptian Arabic
    - Sa'idi Arabic
    - Cairene Arabic
  - Sudanese-Chadian Arabic (dialect continuum)
    - Sudanese Arabic
    - Chadian Arabic
- Levantine Arabic (dialect continuum)
  - North Levantine Arabic
    - Cilician Arabic
    - Aleppine Arabic
    - Damascene Arabic
    - Judeo-Syrian Arabic
    - Lebanese Arabic
  - South Levantine Arabic
    - Palestinian Arabic
      - Modern Palestinian Judeo-Arabic
    - Jordanian Arabic
- Mesopotamian Arabic/Iraqi Arabic (dialect continuum)
  - Gilit Dialects (dialect continuum)
    - Baghdadi Arabic
    - Shawi Arabic
    - Khuzestani Arabic
    - South Mesopotamian Arabic
  - Qeltu Dialects (dialect continuum)
    - North Mesopotamian Arabic
    - Anatolian Arabic
    - Judeo-Iraqi Arabic
      - Jewish Baghdadi Arabic
    - Cypriot Arabic
- Central Asian Arabic (dialect continuum)
  - Bakhtiari Arabic
  - Bukharian Arabic
  - Kashkadarian Arabic
  - Khorasani Arabic
- Shirvani Arabic (extinct)
- Maghrebi Arabic (Western Arabic) (dialect continuum)
  - Pre-Hilalian dialects
    - Pre-Hilalian Urban Arabic dialects
      - Fessi dialect
    - Jebli Arabic
    - Jijel Arabic
    - Maghrebi Judeo-Arabic
      - Judeo-Moroccan Arabic
      - Judeo-Tripolitanian Arabic
      - Judeo-Tunisian Arabic
      - Judeo-Algerian Arabic
    - Siculo-Arabic
      - Maltese
        - Cottonera Dialect
        - Gozitan dialects
        - Qormi dialect
        - Żejtun dialect
        - Maltralian
        - Corfiot Maltese (extinct)
    - Andalusi Arabic (extinct)
    - Eastern pre-Hilali Dialects
      - Tunisian Arabic
    - Western pre-Hilali dialects
  - Hilalian dialects
    - Sulaym dialects
      - Libyan Arabic
        - Western Egyptian Bedawi Arabic
    - Eastern Hilali dialects
    - Central Hilali dialects
      - Algerian Saharan Arabic
    - Western Hilali dialects
    - Maqil dialects
      - Hassaniya Arabic
  - Koines
    - Algerian Arabic
    - Moroccan Arabic
- ʾAzd dialect (extinct)

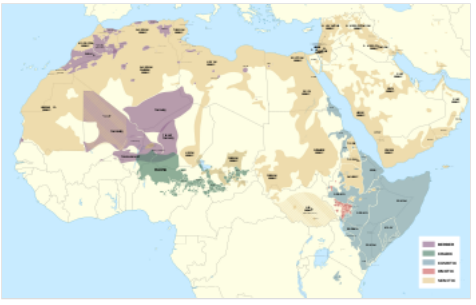
- Huḏayl dialect (extinct)
- Ṯayyiʾ dialect (extinct)
- Safaitic (extinct)
- Hismaic (extinct)
- Hasaitic (extinct)
- Nabataean Arabic (extinct)
- Dadanitic ? (extinct)
- Thamudic ? (extinct)

- South Semitic
  - Western South Semitic
    - Ethiopic
      - North Ethiopic
        - Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)
          - Dahalik
          - Tigre
        - Tigrinya
      - South Ethiopic
        - Transversal South Ethiopic
          - Amharic–Argobba
            - Amharic
            - Argobba
          - Harari–East Gurage
            - Harari
            - East Gurage
              - Silt'e
              - Zway
        - Outer South Ethiopic
          - n-group
            - Gafat (extinct)
            - Soddo
          - tt-group
            - Mesmes (extinct)
            - Muher
            - West Gurage
              - Mesqan
              - Sebat Bet
                - Sebat Bet Gurage
                - Inor
    - Old South Arabian (Ṣayhadic)
      - Sabaic (extinct)
      - Minaean (extinct)
      - Qatabanian (extinct)
        - Awsānian (extinct)
      - Hadramautic (extinct)
      - Razihi ?
      - Faifi ?
      - Himyaritic ? (extinct)
    - Modern South Arabian (Eastern South Semitic)
      - Baṭḥari
      - Ḥarsusi
      - Hobyót
      - Mehri
      - Shehri
      - Soqotri
- Unclassified
  - Sutean (extinct)

Semitic-speaking peoples

The following is a list of some modern and ancient Semitic-speaking peoples and nations:

Central Semitic



Distribution of the Semitic-speaking peoples

- Amorites
- Arabs
  - Alawites
  - Ancient North Arabian-speaking bedouins
  - Itureans
  - Nabataeans
  - Tayy
  - Thamud – 2nd to 5th centuries AD
- Arameans - an ancient Northwest Semitic people. They had various kingdoms and city-states and were historically organized in tribal structures.
  - Ahlamu
  - Arameans (Syriacs) of the Qalamoun mountains[a][61][62][63][64][65][66]
  - Mhallami
- Canaanite-speaking nations of the early Iron Age:

    - Ammonites
    - Edomites - appeared in Transjordan between 11th to 2nd centuries BCE. Eventually assimilated into Jewish population during Hasmonean conquest.[67]
    - Hebrews/Israelites – founded the nation of Israel which later split into the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.
        - Jews
        - Samaritans
    - Moabites
    - Phoenicians – founded Mediterranean colonies including Tyre, Sidon and ancient Carthage/Punics. The remnants of these people became the modern inhabitants of Lebanon.
- Chaldea – appeared in southern Mesopotamia c. 1000 BC and eventually disappeared into the general Babylonian population.
- Druze
- Maltese
- Mandaeans
- Maronites
- Ugarites, 14th to 12th centuries BC

East Semitic

- Akkadians – ancient East Semitic speakers who moved from the Arabian desert[68] into Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium BC and settled among the indigenous peoples of Sumer.[69][70]
    - Assyrians
        - Modern Assyrian people
    - Babylonians
- Eblaites – 23rd century BC

South Semitic

- Abyssinian-speaking peoples
    - Axum – 4th century BC to 7th century AD
    - Amhara people
    - Argobba people
    - Dahalik people
    - Gurage people
    - Harari people
    - Beta Israel, Beta Abraham and Falash Muras.
    - Jeberti people
    - Silt'e people
    - Tigrigna People
    - Tigray people
    - Tigre people
    - Wolane people
    - Zay people
- Old and Modern South Arabian-speaking peoples
    - Bathari people
    - Faifi people
    - Ancient Hadramitic-speakers. Eventually evolved into the modern day Hadhrami people.
    - Himyarites from 110 BCE until 578 CE
        - Yemenite Jews
    - Harsusi people
    - Hobyot people
    - Mehri people
    - Minaeans 8th century BCE to 2nd centuries BC
    - Qatabanians
    - Shehri people
    - Razihi people
    - Sabaeans of Yemen – 8th to 1st centuries BC
    - Soqotri people

Unknown

- Suteans – 14th century BC

See also

- Proto-Semitic language

- Middle Bronze Age alphabets

Notes

1. According to the generally accepted view, it is unlikely that begadkefat spirantization occurred before the merger of /χ, ʁ/ and /ħ, ʕ/, or else [x, χ] and [ɣ, ʁ] would have to be contrastive, which is cross-linguistically rare. However, Blau argues that it is possible that lenited /k/ and /χ/ could coexist even if pronounced identically, since one would be recognized as an alternating allophone (as apparently is the case in Nestorian Syriac).[42]
2. see Canaanite shift
3. "In the historically attested Semitic languages, the endings of the singular noun-flexions survive, as is well known, only partially: in Akkadian and Arabic and Ugaritic and, limited to the accusative, in Ethiopic."[49]
4. While some believe that *ʔanāku was an innovation in some branches of Semitic utilizing an "intensifying" *-ku, comparison to other Afro-Asiatic 1ps pronouns (e.g. *3nk*, Coptic *anak*, *anok*, proto-Berber *ənakkʷ) suggests that this goes further back.[53]
5. The Akkadian form is from Sargonic Akkadian. Among the Semitic languages, there are languages with /i/ as the final vowel (this is the form in Mehri). For a recent discussion concerning the reconstruction of the forms of the dual pronouns, see Bar-Asher, Elitzur. 2009. "Dual Pronouns in Semitics and an Evaluation of the Evidence for their Existence in Biblical Hebrew," Ancient Near Eastern Studies 46: 32–49
6. This root underwent regressive assimilation.[55] This parallels the non-adjacent assimilation of *ś... > *š...š in proto-Canaanite or proto-North-West-Semitic in the roots *śam?š > *šamš 'sun' and *śur?š > *šurš 'root'.[56] The form *ṯalāṯ- appears in most languages (e.g. Aramaic, Arabic, Ugaritic), but the original form *ślṯ* appears in the Old South Arabian languages, and a form with *s* < *ś* (rather than *š* < *ṯ*) appears in Akkadian.
7. This root was also assimilated in various ways. For example, Hebrew reflects *šišš-, with total assimilation; Arabic reflects *šitt- in cardinal numerals, but less assimilated *šādiš- in ordinal numerals. Epigraphic South Arabian reflects original *šdṯ; Ugaritic has a form ṯṯ, in which the *ṯ* has been assimilated throughout the root.[55]

a. "Modern Arameans", including Western Neo-Aramaic speakers, have been redirected to "Terms for Syriac Christians" due to ongoing disputes among Eastern Aramaic-speaking groups regarding their ethnic identity and origin, leading to edit wars on Wikipedia. Western Neo-Aramaic speakers face rejection from those asserting an "Assyrian" identity due to nationalistic ideologies (refer to "Assyrian people", "Assyrian continuity" etc., where no mention is made of Western Neo-Aramaic speakers, their heritage, origin, language etc.). The article "Arameans" is designated for the pre-Christian period until more suitable solutions are identified.

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4. Kuntz 1981, p. 25.
5. Ruhlen 1991.
6. Vermeulen, H.F. (2015). *Before Boas: The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment* (https://books.google.com/books?id=B1nxCQAAQBAJ&pg=PT252). Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology Series. University of Nebraska Press. ISBN 978-0-8032-7738-0. Retrieved 7 October 2022. "Schlözer 1781: p.161 "From the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, from Mesopotamia to Arabia ruled one language, as is well known. Thus Syrians, Babylonians, Hebrews, and Arabs were one people (ein Volk). Phoenicians (Hamites) also spoke this language, which I would like to call the Semitic (die Semitische). To the north and east of this Semitic language and national district (Semitische Sprach- und VölkerBezirke) begins a second one: With Moses and Leibniz I would like to call it the Japhetic." "
7. Kiraz 2001, p. 25; Baasten 2003, p. 67
8. Kiraz 2001, p. 25.
9. Baasten 2003, p. 68-69.
10. Kitto 1845, p. 192.
11. Eichhorn 1794, pp. 773–6; Baasten 2003, p. 69
12. ***Johann Gottfried Eichhorn*, Semitische Sprachen**, 1795
13. Kiraz 2001, p. 25; Kitto 1845, p. 192
14. [1] (http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/3139/1/PAGE_31%2D71.pdf) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20200731204154/https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/3139/1/PAGE_31-71.pdf) 2020-07-31 at the Wayback Machine Andrew George, "Babylonian and Assyrian: A History of Akkadian", In: Postgate, J. N., (ed.), *Languages of Iraq, Ancient and Modern*. London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, pp. 37.
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19. The Origin of the Jews: The Quest for Roots in a Rootless Age By Steven Weitzman page 69 (https://books.google.com/books?id=c3SYDwAAQBAJ)
20. Brandão 2020, p. 23.
21. Izre'el 1987c, p. 4.
22. Waltke & O'Connor 1990, p. 8.
23. "…Syriac, the Classical dialect of Aramaic first attested in Edessa, about 200 CE, but which spread through the Christian communities of Mesopotamia and the Levant in the following centuries.", Revival and Awakening American Evangelical Missionaries in Iran and the Origins of Assyrian Nationalism, p.49
24. Brock 1998, p. 708.
25. Harrak 1992, pp. 209–14.
26. Afsaruddin & Zahniser 1997, p. 464; Smart 2013, p. 253; Sánchez 2013, p. 129
27. Nebes 2005, p. 335.
28. *CLASSICAL SYRIAC*. Gorgias Handbooks. p. 14. "In contrast to "Nestorians" and "Jacobites", a small group of Syriacs accepted the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. Non-Chalcedonian Syriacs called them "Melkites" (from Aramaic malka "king"), thereby connecting them to the Byzantine Emperor's denomination. Melkite Syriacs were mostly concentrated around Antioch and adjacent regions of northern Syria and used Syriac as their literary and liturgical language. The Melkite community also included the Aramaic-speaking Jewish converts to Christianity in Palestine and the Orthodox Christians of Transjordan. During the 5th-6th centuries, they were engaged in literary work (mainly translation) in Palestinian Christian Aramaic, a Western Aramaic dialect, using a script closely resembling the Estrangela cursive of Osrhoene."
29. "JACOB BARcLAY, Melkite Orthodox Syro-Byzantine Manuscripts in Syriac and Palestinian Aramaic" quote from the German book Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete, p. 291

30. "However, in contrast to what went on in northern Syria and Mesopotamia, where Syriac competed well with Greek to remain a great cultural language, Syropalestinian was in a weak position with regard to Greek and, later, to Arabic." quote from the book The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilād Al-Shām During the Umayyad Period: English section, p.31
31. "Some Chalcedonians of Palestine and the Transjordan chose to write in Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA) rather than Syriac." quote from the book A Companion to Byzantine Epistolography, p.68
32. Arman Akopian (11 December 2017). "Other branches of Syriac Christianity: Melkites and Maronites". *Introduction to Aramean and Syriac Studies*. Gorgias Press. p. 573. ISBN 9781463238933. "The main center of Aramaic-speaking Melkites was Palestine. During the 5th-6th centuries, they were engaged in literary, mainly translation work in the local Western Aramaic dialect, known as "Palestinian Christian Aramaic", using a script closely resembling the cursive Estrangela of Osrhoene. Palestinian Melkites were mostly Jewish converts to Christianity, who had a long tradition of using Palestinian Aramaic dialects as literary languages. Closely associated with the Palestinian Melkites were the Melkites of Transjordan, who also used Palestinian Christian Aramaic. Another community of Aramaic-speaking Melkites existed in the vicinity of Antioch and parts of Syria. These Melkites used Classical Syriac as a written language, the common literary language of the overwhelming majority of Christian Arameans."
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External links

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- *Pattern-and-root inflectional morphology: the Arabic broken plural* (https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00831338)
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