PREFACE

Etymological Study of Semitic Languages (Arabic and Hebrew)

Introduction

There is no way to conclusively prove a theory about an early stage of a prehistoric language but it was possible to demonstrate its likelihood. Like that, Arabic and Hebrew are the main Semitic languages which are still used until today; Arabic is the language of the Koran (Quran), and Hebrew is the language of the old testament (Hebrew Bible), and both are similar in many aspects. For example, 90% of the roots of the words are similar in both the languages.

Need of this study

The present study is trying to discover the inter-relationship of Semitic words. It needful to understand the relationship between the Semitic languages based on their etymological nature, finding how these languages have changed from time to time, and realized the changeable meanings of the words, and to find the reasons for these changes, trying to find out the methods of change in each grammatical aspect, such as grapheme change, phonological change, semantic change, etc. Firstly with letters, to know about the original meaning of letters, how the grapheme has changed, and how the name of the letters came and in which way they came. The second with words, to know how to reconstruct the Proto-Semitic word, and what is the original meaning and form of many of them, and how to reconstruct the lost letters in some words, since many Semitic languages have lost 6 letters in their development. To find the average of compatibility with Proto-Semitic language between Arabic and Hebrew.
Objectives

- Finding the origin of form and meaning for the Proto-Semitic words
- Finding the nature of change and all its aspects
- Studying the linguistic change across the times between these languages
- Finding a new theory for reconstructing the Proto-Semitic words and letters
- To find out the average of compatibility between Arabic and Hebrew with Proto-Semitic
- To put the rules to reconstruct the lost letters in some Semitic languages
- To find a new path to build a new dictionary for Semitic etymology
- To find out the original meaning, and the origin shape of the letter

Methodology

The data has been collected based on the methods of the historical and comparative linguistics. In addition, the study is based on verb, noun, adverb and adjective, for each word if found. The main work in this study is to search in Arabic and Hebrew’s dictionaries, to find the similarities and the differences in meaning between these languages, and the effect of this phenomenon on other languages.

In finding the original meaning for the shape of the letters in Semitic languages, I have searched for the oldest forms of the letters in most of the Semitic languages, by putting them in their historical date, and I utilized those graphemes for each letter. Then I searched for the meaning of those letters in dictionaries and other references, and at the end of the study for each letter the main meanings that found are given.

To find the Proto-Semitic words, and for the study purpose 196 words are chosen to find out their Semitic origin among more than 20 Semitic languages, and the total Semitic words which are used in comparison were 1720 words. I searched for those words in the available dictionaries.
Therefore, for 28 letters (the number of Proto-Semitic letters) I have selected 7 random words for the purpose of study. Printed dictionary is not available for etymological words for all Semitic Languages, but in the Internet, there are two websites which provide etymological dictionaries. The first one is **The Semitic Etymological Dictionary** by JUM Research Projects in Oriental Institute of the Russian State University for the Humanities, Advanced Research Institute for the Evolution of Language in Moscow 103009, Russia. In this dictionary Prof. Alexander Militarev and Leonid Kogan have already been working on their dictionary for nearly five years\(^2\). The second dictionary **Semitic Roots Index** is powered by The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, 2000\(^3\). In Arabic language -which is my mother tongue- there is only one dictionary with the title **Mujam Mufradat al-Muštarak al-Samie fi-al-Luga al-Arabiyya**\(^4\) by the author Ḥazim ‘aliy kamal al-diyn. He has made his dictionary based on the Semitic words, which are related to Arabic, or they may have the same meaning or same original sounds in Arabic. In Hebrew, it found after a long search only one dictionary: **A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary Of The Hebrew Language**.

Each Proto-Semitic word reconstructed in the study with its grammatical category, along with that the Proto root and the original meaning are mentioned, and that was done after collecting and analysing the data. The data compared and collected for each chosen word as the following:

**Proto-Semitic**: The proto word with its possibilities with its grammatical category.

**Root**: Proto Semitic root.

**Arabic**: Word written in Arabic letters with transcription, and with its grammatical category.

**Hebrew**: Word written in Hebrew letters with transcription along its grammatical category.

**Other languages**: If available in other Semitic languages.

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\(^2\) See all the information related to this project in this link: Militarev, Alexander. 2006. Semitic Etymology http://www.jum.ru/finproj/semetimdic.htm

\(^3\) See this dictionary in this link http://www.bartleby.com/61/Sroots.html

\(^4\) **Mujam Mufradat al-Muštarak al-Samie fi-al-Luga al-Arabiyya**. Published by: Maktaba al-‘adab, Cairo, Egypt. 1994.
Meaning and etymology: Discussions, especially in Arabic and Hebrew, by mentioning the grammatical categories for each derivation if available with the meaning. And at the end of study, conclusion is given for the original meaning and form of the Proto-Semitic word and Proto root.

The design of the thesis

1. On Etymology
In this chapter a study has been made about the history of etymology in ancient India, ancient Greco-Roman, and in Arabian, and also an attempt has been made to study the term “etymology” with its origin, definitions in general and by specific linguists. After that the methods of Etymology have been mentioned. Also in this chapter a study has been made about the etymology and dictionaries in three parts, 1-in General dictionaries, 2-Historical dictionaries, and 3-Etymological dictionaries. And at the end of this chapter, there is a brief study about the term etymology in Semitic languages.

2. Semitic languages
In this chapter, I have given a general information about Semitic languages, and a study of classifications of Semitic languages by different western and eastern scholars, and my classification could be observed. The time line and some information about major Semitic languages as Akkadian, Eblatie, GeṢez, Canaanite & Phoenician, Aramaic, Syriac, Biblical Hebrew, Ugaritic, Arabic, Sabaean, and Mandaic. Origin of Proto-Semitic language, and the study about the homeland of Semitic people, and the time line of linguistic data that we have, and which types of writing they used, and the oldest writing among them especially in Arabic.

3. Etymological Shape of The Letters In Arabic and Hebrew
In this chapter a study of the historical development of the Semitic letters. Starting for each letter with the oldest shape available for most of them, with the meaning of the letter in these languages as seen from the grapheme, and as mentioned by the scholars, and at the end of studying each letter I have mentioned the main proposal meaning for the name of letter, and how the shape of a letter has changed from ancient time up to now. The chapter supported with pictures for most of the letters.

4. Etymological Analysis of Semitic Words
This chapter is the main work of the thesis. As I have mentioned in the Methodology, 196 Proto-Semitic words were reconstructed (28 letters, and 7
words for each letter), with the Proto-root, and grammatical categories in Arabic and Hebrew, with comparison to more than 20 Semitic languages. Each word has been given the original meaning for the Proto-Semitic word. Also I have formed the rules for reconstructing the lost letters (6 letters).

5. Conclusion, Results and theory of reconstruction the Proto-Semitic.

In the Conclusion, the main features of the analysis are discussed; by mentioning the main results with statistics, and the average of compatibility of Arabic & Hebrew with Proto-Semitic letters, and how to reconstruct the Proto-Semitic word; to begin with researcher’s experience in this field, and nature of the data of Semitic languages which based on it a researcher can understand the characters of each language, also can reconstruct the grammatical categories. Also I have been indicated which language is more close to Proto-Semitic language. At the end, the rules have been mentioned for reconstructing the lost letters in many Semitic languages.

The thesis supported with appendices, and Bibliography.