CHAPTER TWO

Semitic languages
2.1 Introduction

Each of human language has its own historical developments which differ from age to age, and most of the languages have their own way of writing system, and that system also can be modified, and it is not stable.

Semitic languages are part of the Afro-asiatic family, which contains many languages which were spoken in ancient world from Mediterranean in the west to Iraq in the east, and from Ethiopia to Anatolia. And in the age of Islamic empire it was spoken by many people as the religious language (Arabic) from east of north India and west China to north Magnolia to south Russia, and from Spain to middle Africa and all Arab countries. Nowadays, the major languages that still used are Arabic and Hebrew; both of them are still spoken until now. Arabic is by far the most common; some dialects of Arabic are spoken by more than 338 million speakers (2007 census), from Morocco to Tajikistan, and it is also used in Classical and Modern Standard forms, for religious and other formal purposes. Modern Ethiopic languages like Amharic, Tigrinya, and Tigre are spoken by 25 million people in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Modern Hebrew is the language of 5 million inhabitants of Israel. The Aramaic dialects continue as the languages of a few hundred thousand speakers who have left the Middle East in recent years and spread far and wide.

2.2 Classifications of Semitic

The classification of western studies in the field of Semitic languages is different from the classification of eastern studies in many aspects. Each group of them (Western studies = Eastern studies) tried to give their evidences for their theories. In fact, both of them were affected with their religions background! The western scholars classified the Semitic languages based on the Bible, especially Old Testament, for them Hebrew is the origin and the oldest languages because it is the language of the Jewish, and based on that they classified other languages. On the other hand, the eastern
scholars affected with the Islamic point of views, for them Arabic which is the language of Holy Quran is origin for all other Semitic languages, so in their studies they considered Arabic as the oldest language in the Semitic languages family, and more nearer to the Proto-Semitic language. However, to get the best results, a researcher has to read both groups in their languages, so, in my opinion, and from my experience in this field, and by taking the scientific method without being affected by any religious background; the truth tends to be nearer to Eastern studies, the scientific evidences will be used to prove the theory, based on comparisons with new study and methodology, as it will seen in chapter four for first time in Semitic studies, and with maximum Semitic languages in comparison (more than 20 languages).

First of all, we will speak about this family and its relation with other families. For many scholars Semitic languages are one part of Afro-Asiatic languages,

![Proto-Afro-Asiatic tree diagram]

Table 1- proto-Afro-Asiatic

They\textsuperscript{22} put Semitic and Egyptian as separated families, but is that correct!? Western scholars tried to separate them according to what is written in Bible (Old Testament) which considers Hamito-languages (Egyptian) out of Semitic family!. In detail, according to Bible, Sam is the son of Noah, and from his name the word (Semitic) has came, and Ham is the son of Noah, and from his name the word (Hamitic) has came, also, the Canaanites’ people attribute to Ham. The question is: if the story of Noah was correct (in fact, many scientists nowadays confirm that the story of flooding as written in Bible was not correct and the kind of huge flooding could not happen in nature!), why do they insert Canaanite’s language in Semitic family? why do they leave the Egyptian (Hamitic) outside this consanguineous?\textsuperscript{23}. However, the latest studies in languages show that the relationship between Egyptian (Hamitic) and Semitic is so close and we can consider them as one family. For example

\textsuperscript{22} Most of the books in historical linguistics consider that, See for example the "Semitic languages." Encyclopædia Britannica. Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2008. See also ELL2 - Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics p 9662,

\textsuperscript{23} See this discussion in “Kidba al-Samiya w-Faqiqa al-fiyniqiya” (Semitic falsehood, and the truth of Phoenician) by Faraj. D . p.13
the scholar Dr. Jamal Al-diyn Al-ḥadḍuwr who considered the Pharaohs (old Egyptian) Old Arabs, and gave many evidences to improve his theory. Also the Egyptian language is similar to old Arabic, and the Egyptian dialect was language of tribe (Al-ʿinna’) which lived in Egypt in the early history of Egypt. Also he supported his theory by the words of scholar Aḥma Kamal who made a dictionary for thousands of Hieroglyphic words with comparison to Arabic, he made his dictionary in 22 volumes, and as a conclusion he said:

"Most of the language used by the ancient Egyptians was Arabic in origin and meaning, as well as being similar to Arabic we speak today, so the language of the ancient Egyptians is the language of the Arabian Peninsula, but they differ from each other only in shapes and some synonyms, they are two dialects in one language." The chapter three will explain how the shape of letter was so similar between them.

The problem in western scholars’ studies is that the most of them did not read the eastern studies in their native languages, because of that a big gap occurred among them. For example, in Arabic many manuscripts which have been reprinted have a valuable information about the field of Semitic languages from the olden days up to now, so western studies ignored the eastern studies, and the eastern studies were more effected by the western studies, and many scholars from the east cannot use the western languages especially English, on the other hand most of the western scholars cannot read or write the eastern languages, for instance, Arabic which is considered as a difficult language.

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24 See his theory and his evidences in his book. “Ṣawdah al-tariḥ” (recurrence of History), p.89
25 “Ṣawdah al-tariḥ” (recurrence of History), p.105
Table 2 – Semitic languages

As in the diagram (Table 2), the classification is very famous for the most of the western scholar\(^{26}\), and was accepted by some eastern scholars also\(^ {27}\). So Arabic and Hebrew belong to the central Semitic.

Now, a new theory for classification of Semitic languages from the eastern scholars point of view, just like Dr. Jamal Al-diyin Al-ḥaḍḍuwr, in his book “Ṣawdah Al-tariyḥ” (Recurrence of History)\(^ {28}\), he classified the languages by considering all the Semitic languages as Dialects of old Arabic, so he put them in groups like this:

- Peninsula group: which consists of south Arabian languages and Sabaic.
- Syrian group: Carthaginian (Punic), Phoenician, Canaanite, and Eblaite.
- Third group: old Egyptian (Hieroglyphic) and Coptic.
- Forth group: pre-Sumerian, Sumerian, Akkadian (Babylonian and Assyrian).
- Aramaic group: Syriac and Western Aramaic.
- Libyan group: old Libyan and Barbarian.
- North Africa group: Tamazight, Canaanite, Barbarian.
- Ethiopic group: Amharic, Jmazih
- Kochi group: like: Somalia

\(^{26}\) See for example: Encyclopedia of linguistics p. 9664. And “Study of Semitic Grammaticalization” p. 15
\(^{27}\) See for Example: Al-Saleb, Šubhi. “Dirasat fi-ilḥ-al-.luğah” (Studies In Philology) p. 47.
\(^{28}\) See this classification in “Ṣawdah Al-tariyḥ” (Recurrence Of History) P. 109.
2.3 Language Timelines

2.3.1 Akkadian

East Semitic:

East Semitic is made up of Akkadian and Eblaite. Akkadian was written from left-to-right in cuneiform and was spoken in Mesopotamia (ancient Iraq) from 2600 B.C.E. to the middle of the first century C.A. The dialect of the north was called Assyrian and it has been subdivided into three periods, ranging from 1950 B.C.E. to 600 B.C.E.: Old- around (2000-1500 B.C.E), Middle- around (1500-1000 B.C.E), and Neo-Assyrian (1000-600 B.C.E)\(^29\). The dialect of the south was called Babylonian and it was subdivided into two major periods, ranging from 1950 B.C.E. to 50 C.E.: Old- (2000-1500 B.C.E), Neo- stretches from the early 1\(^{st}\) millennium until the fall of the empire in the late 7\(^{th}\) century B.C.E. Standard Babylonian refers to the archaizing written language used in the first half of the 1st millennium, in which both Babylonians and Assyrians recorded religious and literary texts, royal inscriptions, and other formal texts\(^30\).

2.3.2 Eblaite

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Eblaite is a part of the Northern Central Semitic group of languages, so it is not from east languages: “archaic Semitic language is probably the most ancient to survive in substantial form, dating from the third quarter of the 3rd millennium B.C.E. as a Northern Central Semitic language”\(^31\). In Encyclopedia of Languages and Linguistics it is an east language, for them it is more related to Akkadian, “A cache of texts was uncovered beginning in the 1970s at Tell Mardikh, the ancient city of Ebla, near Aleppo in Syria. These texts, which date to the 24\(^{th}\) or 23\(^{rd}\) century B.C.E., are largely in Sumerian, but bilingual lexical lists and some other texts display another language that is not Sumerian and not Akkadian, but seems to be closely related to Akkadian. This language is called Eblaite”\(^32\). In any way, Ebla, still in the early stages of investigation.

\(^{29}\) See Salloum D, Muhammed. Dictionary of Akkadian Words, in Ancient Oriental, Greek and Latin Language, P. h
\(^{30}\) See also Encyclopedia of Languages and Linguistics, P.9664
\(^{32}\) See Encyclopedia of Languages and Linguistics, (Semitic languages), p 9664.
## West Semitic:

The main differences between the Eastern Semitic dialects and their western relatives are in the verb system, so, they are separated from the East Semitic by an innovation that can be seen in all West Semitic languages: the development of an original verbal adjective *qatil (kill)*+ case ending into an active, perfective suffix conjugation, *qatala (killed)*. This new perfective conjugation replaces the Common Semitic Languages perfective/relating to form *yaqtul (he is killing)*, which continued in use in West Semitic. West Semitic itself can be divided into the Ethiopian languages, the Modern South Arabian languages, and the Central Semitic languages.

### 2.3.3 Ge’ez

Classical Ethiopic (Ge’ez) was attested beginning in the 4th century C.E. Epigraphic texts in Ge’ez have been at Aksum, which is in present-day Ethiopia. The language was spoken until the end of the 9th century C.E or 10th century. It remains a language of literature and of the Christian liturgy.

### Northern Central, or Northwestern

As in the last diagram which made by the western scholars, they considered the two languages: (Hebrew and Phoenician) were originated or derived from Canaanite. Actually, the primitive studies believed like this, but nowadays, many scholars have found that Hebrew and Phoenician were not derived from Canaanite, all the five languages (Canaanite, Aramaic, Phoenician, Hebrew, Ugaritic) are sister languages and equal under the branch: Northern Central or Northwestern. So the diagram can be reformed as fellows:

![Diagram of Northern Central, or Northwestern of Semitic languages]

Table 3- Northern Central, or Northwestern of Semitic languages

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33 See Encyclopedia of Languages and Linguistics, (Semitic languages), p 9665
34 Hecker, Bernice Varjick, The Biradical Origin of Semitic Roots, p.8
35 See: “Semitic languages” in Encyclopedia of Languages and Linguistics, p 9665
36 See Wlfenson, A. “Tariyih al-lugat al-samiyya” (The History of Semitic languages), P.56 & P.75
Among those scholars Faraj Allah Diyb wrote a book with title “Kiḏba Al-Samiyya W-ḥaqiqa Al-Fiyniqiya” (Semitic Falsehood, and the truth of Phoenician), in this book, the scholar gave the evidences that the land of Torah was in Yemen not in Palestine, and according to him the origin of Phoenicians and Canaanites was in Yemen, and those people migrated to Syria and Palestine in later period 37.

2.3.4 Canaanite & Phoenician

Under the branch of Northern Central or Northwestern, Canaanite and Phoenician carry out the same categories, so many scholars consider them as one language. But the question is: Do they have different names?. The answer, it found that the problem was because of the Greek who called the Canaanitean (the people of Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria) who lived near seastrand as Phoenician 38. The Greek used this name depending on the Greek word (Phoenix) 39, which means purple colour.

Phoenician is very close to Hebrew and Moabite. The earliest Phoenician inscription deciphered dates probably from the 11th century B.C.E; the latest inscription from Phoenicia proper is from the 1st century B.C.E, when the language was already being superseded by Aramaic 40. Phoenician words are found in Greek and Latin classical literature as well as in Egyptian, Akkadian, and Hebrew writings. The language is written with a 22-character alphabet that does not indicate vowels. An early form of Canaanite is attested in the Tell el-Amarna letters (c. 1400 B.C.E). Moabite, which is very close to Hebrew, is known chiefly from one inscription dating from the 8th century B.C.E 41.

37 Diyb, Faraj Allah. “Kiḏba Al-Samiyya W-ḥaqiqa Al-Fiyniqiya” (Semitic Falsehood, and the truth of Phoenician). p.34
38 See Wlfenson, A. “Tariyḥ al-.luġat al-samiyya” (The History of Semitic languages), P.57
39 “In ancient Egypt and in classical antiquity, a fabulous bird associated with the worship of the sun. The Egyptian phoenix was said to be as large as an eagle, with brilliant scarlet and gold plumage and a melodious cry. Only one phoenix existed at any time, and it was very long-lived—no ancient authority gave it a life span of less than 500 years. As its end approached, the phoenix fashioned a nest of aromatic boughs and spices, set it on fire, and was consumed in the flames. From the pyre miraculously sprang a new phoenix, which, after embalming its father’s ashes in an egg of myrrh, flew with the ashes to Heliopolis (“City of the Sun”) in Egypt, where it deposited them on the altar in the temple of the Egyptian god of the sun, Re. A variant of the story made the dying phoenix fly to Heliopolis and immolate itself in the altar fire, from which the young phoenix then rose.” See "phoenix." Encyclopædia Britannica. Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2008.
There is another opinion by some scholars, for example: According to A. Wlfenson\textsuperscript{42}, it is a mistake to say that Hebrew is a branch or dialect of Canaanite, the thing that both the languages were one language, and in the later period they had separated. And that is the reason for their similarities. Also, Dr. Yiḥya Ṭababni who wrote a book about Canaanite language, according to him Canaanite and Phoenician are one and same\textsuperscript{43}.

The latest theory Canaanite people’s place was in Yemen not in Palestine! The evidences for this theory made by Faraj Allah Diyb, according to him\textsuperscript{44}: The word (Semitic) itself is a historical lie, and it should be (Yemeni or Arabic), for him the places of Canaanite people as mentioned in Torah were in Yemen, and the origin of Phoenician was in Yemen. He explained his theory depending on the analysis of the names of places as mentioned in Torah texts with comparison to the names of the historical places in Yemen. He also analyzed many events and stories in the Old Testament considering those events and stories that happened in Yemen. For him most of the history of Old Testament was fake.

2.3.5 Aramaic

Aramaic is the language of Jesus. The oldest texts found were from the 10\textsuperscript{th} to 7\textsuperscript{th} centuries B.C.E. and are labeled as Ancient Aramaic\textsuperscript{45}. By the 8\textsuperscript{th} century B.C.E it had become accepted by the Assyrians as a second language\textsuperscript{46}. Standard Aramaic was spoken from the 6\textsuperscript{th} to 3\textsuperscript{rd} centuries as the administrative language of the Persian Empire as well as the spoken language of much of the region. This is the dialect found in the Bible (Daniel, Ezra, and parts of Esther, Koheleth, Song of Songs, Job, Nehemiah, and Chronicles 1 and 2). Among the Jews, Aramaic was used by the common people, while Hebrew remained the language of religion and government and of the upper class. Middle Aramaic was spoken from the first century B.C.E. to the first century C.E. and this was the dialect in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament. Late Aramaic was the language of various religious writings from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} to the 9\textsuperscript{th} centuries C.E. Aramaic continued in wide use until about C.E. 650, when it was supplanted by Arabic. In the early centuries C.E., Aramaic divided into

\textsuperscript{42} Wlfenson, A. “\textit{Tariyḥ al-luġat al-samiyya}” (The History of Semitic languages), P.75.
\textsuperscript{43} Ṭababni, Yiḥya. “\textit{Al-luğa al-kinṣaniyya}” Canaanite Language, P.28.
\textsuperscript{44} Diyb, Faraj Allah. “\textit{Kiḏba Al-Samiyya W-haqiqa Al-Fiyniqiya}” (Semitic Falsehood, and the truth of Phoenician), P.165.
\textsuperscript{45} Hecker, Bernice Varjick, \textit{The Biradical Origin of Semitic Roots}, p.7.
East and West varieties. West Aramaic dialects include Nabataean (formerly spoken in parts of Arabia), Palmyrene (spoken in Palmyra, which was northeast of Damascus), Palestinian-Christian, and Judeo-Aramaic. Modern Aramaic is spoken in some small communities up to the present time, West Aramaic is still spoken in a small number of villages in Lebanon. 47

2.3.6 Syriac

It was an important Christian literary and liturgical language from the 3rd through the 7th century C.E. Syriac was based on the East Aramaic dialect, which became one of the chief centres of Christianity in the Middle East at the end of the 2nd century. The earliest Syriac inscriptions dated from the first half of the 1st century; the earliest documents were not inscribed on stone dated from 243 C.E. 48. Because of theological disputes, Syriac-speaking Christians divided during the 5th century into “Nestorians”, or East Syrians, under the Persian sphere of influence, and “Jacobites”, or West Syrians, under the Byzantine sphere. After this division the two groups developed distinct dialects differing chiefly in the pronunciation and written symbolization of vowels. Arabic dialects have effected with Syriac Languages especially in Slang. 49 Syriac is still spoken in few villages in Syria.

2.3.7 Biblical Hebrew

This earliest form of Hebrew is known as Biblical Hebrew which was Spoken in ancient times in Palestine, Hebrew was supplanted by the western dialect of Aramaic beginning about the 3rd century B.C.E; the language continued to be used as a liturgical and literary language. However, it was revived as a spoken language in the 19th and 20th centuries and (now) it is the official language of Israel. 50 The oldest parts of the Bible, e.g., the Song of Deborah, may have been written in the period 1300-1200 B.C.E. and are considered Archaic Hebrew. The Hebrew used in most of the Bible is considered Classical Biblical Hebrew and covers the period from the first temple to the Babylonian exile. Late Biblical Hebrew covers the period of Persian domination, from 535 B.C.E. (post-exile) to 332 B.C.E., when the conquest of Palestine by Alexander of Macedon began the period of Hellene

49 See Samiyyr Śabdu. “Al-sirianiyah al-ʕarabiya” (Syriac –Arabic) p.68.
domination. During the Babylonian exile (586-538 B.C.E.) Hebrew was highly influenced by another Semitic language, Aramaic, which was the lingua-franca of the Near East. Thereafter, Aramaic grew in influence, especially in urban areas like Jerusalem and among the aristocratic (urban) and commercial classes. Hebrew on the other hand, continued to be the language of the rural population which constituted the majority of the people. Though Aramaic was the spoken language among the urban population, most of the official and administrative documents were written in Hebrew. The language used in official documents laid the groundwork for the legal language that was later used in the rabbinical academies in Palestine.

Recent excavations have disclosed clues of Hebrew dating from the fifteenth century B.C.E. These writings show how closely related Biblical Hebrew to other ancient Semitic languages. The history of the Hebrew language is usually divided into four major periods: Biblical, or Classical, Hebrew, until about the 3rd century B.C.E., in which most of the Old Testament was written; Mishnaic, or Rabbinic, Hebrew, the language of the Mishna which is a collection of Jewish traditions, written about 200 C.E., Medieval Hebrew, from about the 6th to the 13th century C.E., when many words were borrowed from Greek, Spanish, Arabic, and other languages.

Hebrew language developed rapidly between the first and third century of the Common Era. After the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. During the second century, the center of Jewish life shifted from Jerusalem to the Galilee, a region in which the mixed population spoke Aramaic and Greek. Even the rabbinic academies which studied the Mishna adopted Aramaic as the spoken language. Though Hebrew was no longer spoken, it continued to be used in liturgy and the study of the Bible. Hebrew remained as a spiritual language of the Jewish people.

In the middle Ages Hebrew was highly influenced by Arabic in its vocabulary, word structure, and syntax. Throughout the middle Ages, Hebrew, was not ordinarily spoken, continued to be used for a variety of purposes: religious, literary, commercial, and even entertainment. Under the impact of Islamic culture during the ninth to the thirteenth century, rabbinic, philosophical, and poetic works in Hebrew flourished. Jews living in Spain, Portugal, and Northern Africa composed significant literary works in Hebrew.

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In the beginning of the Enlightenment period, and towards the close of the eighteenth century, the vernacular of the masses in Europe was Yiddish; but most of the scholars and writers continued to write in Hebrew. The first classic of Modern Hebrew literature was written in the eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth century.

With influx of Jews from Europe and the Middle East speaking scores of vernaculars, Hebrew assumed a new role serving as a unifying factor within this Babel of languages, and becoming the mother-tongue of the younger generation of Jews in Palestine. At the same time, influenced by the vocabulary and linguistic structure of the languages spoken by the new immigrants, Hebrew grew and developed.

By the study, it found that Arabic and Hebrew are so related to each other, they are closer more than it expected. When you compare both the languages in detail, by using the biggest historical dictionaries you will surprise that the basic or original meaning is one and the same for most of the old words in Arabic and Hebrew.

### 2.3.8 Ugaritic

This was the language of the city-state Ugarit during the period from 1360 to 1180 B.C.E. It was written in an alphabetic cuneiform, the cuneiform writing system used on the Syrian coast from the 15th to 13th century B.C.E. The cuneiform signs, unlike those in Akkadian, represent single consonants but with a few syllabic exceptions. Ugaritic was written from left to right; its 30 symbols included 3 syllabic signs for vowels, as opposed to the 22 consonantal letters in the North Semitic alphabet. Extant documents in Ugaritic were written on clay tablets with a wedge-shaped stylus and date from the 15th–14th century B.C.E. They were found primarily at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) on the Syrian coast in 1929. Two other inscriptions in Ugaritic, were found at Beth-Shemesh in Palestine and in Lower Galilee in north Palestine.

### 2.3.9 Arabic

Arabic belongs to the Semitic language family. The members of this family have a recorded history going back to thousands of years, one of the most extensive continuous archives of documents belonging to any human

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language group. The earliest evidence of Arabic was found on inscriptions written in Nabatean and Palmyrene (although the script letters were Aramaic) and were from between the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E. There were several dialects of Old Arabic that predated classical Arabic, which drew on the Qur'an and pre-Islamic poetry in the 7th century C.E. and is spoken even today, along with many dialects within a hundred years after the death (in 632 C.E) of prophet Muhammad, the prophet was entrusted by God to deliver the Islamic message, Arabic had become the official language of a world empire whose boundaries stretched from the Oxus River in the Central Asia to the Atlantic Ocean, and had even moved northward into the Iberian Peninsula of Europe.

2.3.10 Sabaean
Sabaean epigraphs have been found from the 8th century B.C.E. through the 6th century C.E. The Kingdom of Saba was located in South Yemen. It is one among the Sayhadic (Epigraphic South Arabian) languages.

2.3.11 Mandaic
Mandaic had its origin in a sect of the Mandaean, at first in Mesopotamia and then in southern Iraq and Iran. The earliest texts were from the 4th century C.E. and later ones were dated to the 7th century.

2.4 The time lines for Linguistic data in Semitic Languages
The time lines for Linguistic data in Semitic Languages did not continue in all the languages, some of them started from olden days and then they stopped for some period of time, and then started again until now, just like Arabic and Hebrew, and some languages data did not continue but stopped for ever, just like Akkadian and Eblaite.

2.5 The homeland of the ancient Semitic people and writing
There are many kinds of written records for many Semitic languages from north Syria, south Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and by comparison, I believe there is a relationship between the homeland and the nature of writing. For example, the people who lived in desert used to travel a lot, and they used leathers and bones of animals in writing, and these materials in general will be scratched and damaged in few years, and it was rare for them to use stone or metal in writing which can save the writing shape and information for long-time. But in Syria as an example, people lived in area which was wealthy with

54 Hecker, Bernice Varjick. The Biradical Origin of Semitic Roots, P.8
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stones and rocks that could be used in writing. The writer could also use roasted slime, clay, metals, wood and animal's leathers. So the nature in north great Syria helps us in saving the written records for long-time, but that does not mean that languages in north Semitic areas are older than the languages in south Semitic areas.

2.6 Types of writing system in Semitic languages

In order to study the etymological shape of the letters in Semitic languages we should study the historical writing as found in written record which is available to us. By comparing each language with other we can get some ideas about the nature of development of letters shape. It found after the comparison among these languages that the writing system of letters was of two types, the oldest is the pictorial type, and the second is cuneiform type.

Why is the pictorial writing older than cuneiform?

The history of human being as seen in the oldest caves which was used by human beings had some pictures there, and these pictures are considered as primary language. In these pictures people tried to explain their daily life, but in the case of cuneiform, it is more complex or more developed than pictorial writing, because it uses complex symbols, and shape of these symbols does not have clear meaning as it seen in the shape of pictorial writing. Language is a reflection of man’s life, so by developing his life it becomes more complex, the language also becomes more complex, and so it used abstract symbols more and more.

Cuneiform is a System of writing used in the past days to write many languages in the Middle East. The original and primary writing material for cuneiform texts was a damp clay tablet, into which the scribe would press a wedge-shaped stroke with a reed stylus. "A configuration of such impressions constituted a character, or sign. Proto-cuneiform signs dating from (3200–3000 B.C.E) were drawn rather than impressed and were largely pictographic, these features were lost as the script evolved. The first language to be written in cuneiform was Sumerian in 2350 B.C.E. Cuneiform was slowly displaced in the first millennium B.C.E by the rise of Aramaic which was written in an alphabet script of Phoenician origin" 55.

Table 4 - The Cuneiform writing

Table 5 - The pictorial writing, The oldest shape with the meaning
2.7 The oldest writing of old Arabic

Arabic like Hebrew and Syriac is written and read from right to left. It is not known the exact time when Arabic writing started, but the earliest evidence of Arabic was found on inscriptions written in Nabatean and Palmyrene, (although the script letters were Aramaic) and were found between the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E. By studying the Arabic grammar especially morphology and syntax that have an advanced and complex system which leads us to the fact that it has long history and that advanced system in expressing the determinative meaning. According to Arabian traditions, they consider Arabic as the mother of all languages, and it was spoken by Prophet Adam along with other languages just like Hebrew and Syriac, who creates them by Himself or by God (Allah) directly, or God learnt Him. But for linguists, there is no scientific way to prove that. Also the Jew people consider Hebrew as the oldest language and the mother of Semitic languages, this is not our subject in this thesis; however Arabic and Hebrew are so related with each other in most of grammar aspects.

The shape of modern Arabic writing was affected a lot with Syriac writing, which by the time was developed until it has the last shape. But the oldest form of writing according to linguists is going back to the age of PETRA (400 B.C.E- 100 C.E) and from their style of Aramaic writing the Arabic writing appeared.

The oldest writing of Arabic

According to the scholar Ḥasan Šabbas, Arab writing and Arab characters coexistence together in the Arabian Peninsula during the three stages of life: the “forest” which began with the start of the last ice age since the (100000) B.C.E. and continued until the end of the (14000-12000) B.C.E. has been inherited by the certainty assets characters (‘ (a) R Ī -(w) Ł - - (y) ' y). Then followed by stage of “agricultural” and continued until thousand (9) B.C.E. has been inherited by the possibility of great assets characters ((f) ʕ f - (m) َ Ł - (l) ‘ and (y) ʕ ʕ). Then it followed by “pastoral” stage after persistent drought in the Arab Peninsula and lasted until dawn Ages of pre-

56 W. Wright, LL.D. Grammar of the Arabic Language, vol.1 P.1
57 Hecker, Bernice Varjick. The Biradical Origin of Semitic Roots, P.8
58 See for Example Ibn Jinny in his books *Al-haṣa’is* (characteristics), P.41 Vol 1
59 Šabbas, Hasan. “Haṣa’s al-huwrf al-Sarabiyya wa-maṭaniyha” (Properties of Arabic characters and their meanings)
Islamic and Islamic ages. The possibility of severe inherited by the rest of the characters.

Arabic and Ugaritic contain 28 letters, but in many other Semitic languages just like Hebrew there are 22 letters. The question is, why this happened?

By the study it found that the reason why some Semitic languages have more letters, and that pre-Semitic languages have 28 letters. In olden days, people immigrated from Arabian Peninsula to what nowadays known as Iraq (old name was: Mesopotamia) because of persistent drought in the Arabian Peninsula, and then in Mesopotamia when they came in contact with Sumerian, Semitic people by the time gradually affected with Sumerian and they had used Sumerian writing which have only 22 letters with cuneiform type of writing, and by the time they stopped using some letters which non used in Sumerian they are: ﷧﷥- ﷤- ﷪- ﷯- ﷤- ﷣- ﷩- ﷤- ﷩- ﷤. Then the first Semitic language in Mesopotamia appeared with 22 letters with cuneiform type of writing, and it was Akkadian language. Later, the other languages which appeared in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine became like Akkadian with 22 letters.

Because of such changes, the immigrated people may stopped using those letters ﷧- ﷤- ﷤- ﷩- ﷤- ﷤ at least in writing because by using Sumerian writing system in cuneiform which have 22 letters, and for western scholars; Sumerian languages did not belong to Semitic languages. And they might have used all the letters or some of them in normal talking but not in writing. But nowadays the scholars such as Dr. Jamal al-diyn al-ḥaḍḍuwr, who considers Sumerian language as one of the Semitic family, and the Sumerian people belong to Arabian people. To support his theory he compared the name of areas, cities, and villages in Gulf, Oman and Phoenicians coast, just like the name of “Ṣur” in Oman, and “Ṣur” in Mediterranean’s coast. Or “Jbayl” in Oman and “Jbayl” in Mediterranean’s coast... So, for him the Phoenician immigrated from Gulf coast and Oman to Mediterranean... then he said: *from deep reading we see that the Sumerian came from Dalmwn (Bahrain) and they learnt writing there*. On the other hand, Sumerian is an apparent language isolated, spoken in a gradually contracting area until about the beginning of

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60 This theory also supported by Wifenson, A. “Tariyḥ al-luğat al-samīyya” (The History of Semitic languages), P.42.
62 Al-ḥaḍḍuwr, Jamal al-diyn. “Ṣawdah al-tariḥ” (recurrence of History), P. 86.
the second millennium B.C.E., maybe that is why the western scholars considered Sumerian not as a Semitic language.

Table 6- Old Arabic writing