The purpose of the present note is to propose new etymological evidence for a few lexemes of Epigraphic South Arabian languages (usually Sabaic). Most of the relevant terms are more or less problematic from the point of view of textual interpretation so that at least some of the newly proposed cognates from Geez and Modern Ethiopian are potentially helpful for eliciting their meaning. All etymological comparisons are taken from the author’s unpublished Ph. D. thesis dealing primarily with the non-emphatic sibilants of ESA (Okhotin 1999).

In each entry, the pertinent ESA root is followed by a concise examination of the relevant context(s) and the etymological discussion (introduced by # and || respectively).

1. Sab. /s y=m/ ‘measure of weight’ (SD 20).

# The Sab. term is Hapax Legomenon in Ja 669/7 but the above meaning (already suggested by the editor and accepted, e.g., in Sima 2000:334) can be derived from the context: ḥknyw mrḥmw ... šlmn wms dm ṣrḥm wmlḥmny /s ym/ ‘they dedicated to their lord ... this statue and a silver inscription, the weight of both of them being one ṣy’. An alternative interpretation is proposed in Biella 375 (‘verified, correct’, with reference to Arb. ṣāsi ‘proper, fitting’) though ‘name of a weight’ is also mentioned.

|| The etymological evidence for the translation ‘measure of weight’ comes from Tgr. ṣas (pl. ṣāṣṣ) ‘a dry measure, measure (in general)’ (LH 463), Tna. ṣāṣṣi ‘a wooden measure for cereals, about four kg.’ (KTna. 1858).

2. Sab. /ws(=m)/ ‘plague, pestilence’ (SD 23, Biella 359), Min. /s/, ‘épidémie, peste’ (LM 17).

# Since the Sab. term is attested several times, its general meaning ‘kind of disease’ is rather transparent (v., e.g. Ja 645/10–13: hwfy ... grb ṣbdhw ... bn ḫwm wṣws, wmmwt ‘he saved ... the body of his servant ... from sickness, disease and plague’).

|| In Müller 1962:83 ṣws was compared to Yem. Arb. ṣaws ‘sprain, dislocation’ (Piamenta 346), ‘Verrenkung’ (Behnstedt 878). For an alternative etymological interpretation v. Tgr. ṣaso ‘fever, malaria’ (LH 463), Tna. ṣaso id. (KTna. 1858). Other, less reliable parallels, are proposed in SED I No. 27.

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1 For the list of abbreviations used in this article see p. 400.
3. Sab. $h_s s_3 =m$ ‘(building material), mud brick (?)), mortar, puddled clay (?)’ (SD 72), ‘material used in masonry’ (Biella 192).

# The Sab. term is Hapax Legomenon but the meaning ‘kind of building material’ is relatively clear from the context: $mbr?m h_s s_3 m \text{wlbm}$ ‘building work in $h_s$ and stones’.

|| To be compared to Arb. $\dot{h}s\dot{a}n$ ‘sol dur recouvert de sable, où l’eau des pluies s’infiltrte’ (BK 1 429), Hrs. $\dot{h}\dot{o}hi$ ‘earth, land, soil, dust’ (JH 57), Jib. $h\dot{a}\dot{s}\dot{i}$ ‘soil’ (JJ 118), Soq. $\dot{h}\dot{o}hi$ (hoihe) ‘terre’ (LS 166) and Ethiopian terms for ‘sand’: Tna. $\dot{h}\dot{a}\dot{s}\dot{a}\dot{w}\dot{a}$ ‘sand, strand, sandbank’ (KTna. 212), Amh. $\dot{a}\dot{s}\dot{a}\dot{w}$, $\dot{a}\dot{s}\dot{a}\dot{w}$ ‘sand’ (K 1182), Cha. Eža Enm. Gyt. Muh. Sod. Sel. Wol. $\dot{a}\dot{s}\dot{a}\dot{w}$, End. $\dot{a}\dot{s}\dot{a}\dot{w}$, Msq. Gog. $\dot{a}\dot{s}\dot{a}\dot{w}$ ‘sand’ (LGur. 102).

4. Sab. $k_s d=m$ ‘feebleness (of body)’ (SD 79).

# According to SD, attested in Ja 670/9–11: $\dot{w}h\dot{w}?l \text{bnhw } k_s d m$ ‘he made feebleness retreat from him’. An alternative interpretation proposed by the editor is to treat $\text{bnhw } k_s d m$ as ‘his son $k_s d m$’.

|| If the rendering of SD is accepted, note Amh. $k\dot{a}\dot{s}\dot{s}\dot{\ddot{a}}\ddot{\ddot{a}}$ ‘to become very thin, gaunt, emaciated’ (K 1411).

5. Sab. $s_1 l=m$ ‘mésure de capacité’ (RMA 66).

# According to the editors, attested in RMA 15/6 ($s_1 l m \text{glglnm}$ ‘un $s_1 l$ de sésame’), with a reference to another text written on wood where $s_1 l m tmrn$ ‘une unité de mesure de dattes’ is mentioned. This interpretation, accepted, e. g., in Sima 2001:286, has been placed to doubt in Stein 2003:180 (with an extensive discussion).

|| An etymological support for the translation ‘kind of measure’ is provided by Tgr. $\dot{\text{s}}\dot{\text{a}}\dot{\text{l}}\dot{\text{a}}\dot{\text{s}}\dot{\text{f}}\text{o}$ ‘a measure, = 1.5 l.’ (LH 206) and Tna. $s\dot{a}\dot{l}\dot{a}\dot{s}\dot{f}\ddot{o}$ ‘small measure for grain that equals 1/3 of an $\text{snq}$; small unmeasured amount of grain, a pinch of grain’ (K Tna. 633). Amh. $\ddot{s}\dot{a}l\ddot{\ddot{e}}$ ‘a large earthenware crock holding about two $\ddot{\text{snq}}\text{-jugs}$’ (K 441) can also be compared.

Sab. $s_1 l l$ ‘kind of coin’ (SD 125, Biella 336), attested in C 548/8 ($\ddot{\text{hm}} s_1 \ddot{\text{l}} \ddot{\text{lm}}$ ‘five $s_1 l$-coins’) is usually regarded as borrowed from Aramaic: Nab. $s_1 l$, Plm. $s_1 l$ ‘certain coin’ (HJ 788), Jud. $s\ddot{l}\ddot{\text{s}}\dot{\text{a}}$ ‘a weight and a coin’ (Ja. 996), Syr. $\ddot{s}\ddot{l}\ddot{s}\ddot{\ddot{a}}$ ‘moneta, drachma’ (Brock. 477). One wonders whether the Arm. terms, otherwise without etymology, can also be compared to the above Ethiopian forms with a meaning shift ‘kind of weight’ > ‘kind of coin’.

6. Sab. $s_1 s_1 s_1 (=m)$ ‘summer season’ (SD 122).

# Attested several times together with other terms for agricultural seasons (e. g. Ja 615/18–19: $\ddot{\text{mrt}} d l ? \ddot{\text{wbrf}} \text{w} s_1 s_1 s_1 m \text{wmlym}$ ‘crops of spring, autumn, summer and winter’).

2 According to Sima 2001:286, also in RMA 15/7.
If Jamme’s interpretation according to which «each term of the series indicates not the season itself, but the crops and fruits gathered during these periods of the year» (Jamme 1963:118) is correct, the Sab. term should probably be compared to Tgr. səšəšə ‘épeautre’ (LH 194) and Tna. sašsa ‘barley grown in the season following the small rains because it can subsist on the moisture in dew or fog or by irrigation and which is harvested before the big rainy season’ (KTna. 764) rather than to Arb. səš ‘to pass away (months)’ as suggested by Jamme (reproduced in Biella 340). The Ethiopian terms probably belong to a well-attested non-reduplicated prototype denoting a kind of cereal crop, represented by Akk. šešu ‘barley, grain’ (CAD Š2 345), Hbr. pB. šəšəš ‘a species of bean’ (Ja. 1610), Arb. suṣ- ‘ivraie; froment gâté par la nielle’ (BK 1 1090), Tgr. səš ‘oats’ (LH 194) and Tna. sašsa ‘oats, kind of fodder; edible grass which grows mixed with barley’ (KTna. 766).

7. s₁š=t=n ‘period, space of time’ (SD 139, Biella 503).

# The Sab. term is Hapax Legomenon in R 3910/5 where it denotes the timespan of use of a hired animal: wəšyhb₂n bšdn šs₂, t ymtm f₂w šs₂, ry ṭblm f₂w təvrm f₂w hirm flyhbₙ šs₂bhw s₁št=b₂n bšlyhw «one who will return after ten days or twenty [days of use] a camel, a bull or a[ny other] beast, let him give its hiring price for the period he employed it».

|| While Ethiopian forms in -at (like Gez. səṭat) are likely Arabisms, a few other terms, structurally different from Arb. səṭat-, may be suspected to be genuine: Gez. səṭ ‘hour, time’ (LGz. 481), Tna. saṭ (šaṭ) ‘moment, instant, time(s); time, hour’ (KTna. 760), šaṭuy ‘then, at that time, at this (that) moment, immediately’ (ibid.), Har. sa ‘time, at the time of’ (LHar. 135). A similar dichotomy is observable in MSA: contrast Mhr. sāʔəḥ ‘hour, watch’ (JM 353), Jib. sāḏah id. (JJ 232), Soq. sāḥah id. (LS 289) on the one hand and Mhr. ətən ‘for a while’ (JM 353), Hrs. əθet, seyət ‘a while’ (JH 112), Jib. mon sāθət ‘long ago’ (JJ 232), Soq. le-sā‘ət ‘à l’heure’ (LS 289) on the other.

8. Sab. s₁wn ‘towards’ (SD 129), s₂m ‘towards, in front of, next to, by’ (ibid. 127), s₂m ‘to, up to, next to, by’ (ibid. 139).

# These three types of forms have been usually treated as phonetic variants of one lexeme (Beeston 1984:58) but according to a recent study (Stein 2003:213–214) s₂m (with a late and phonologically innovative variant s₁m) is to be kept apart from Middle Sabaic s₁wn.

|| The Sab. preposition is rightly compared to the widely used Eblaite preposition si-in ‘to, for’ in Fronzaroli 1979:13 and Archi 2002:8 (extensively discussed in the latter study where the meanings «allocutive ‘to’», «allative, directive ‘to’», «dative ‘for, to’» and some others have been detected). Both are further to be connected with Cha. Enm. End. Gyt. Gog. sən, Eža səmn ‘until, till, up to, as far as’ (LGur. 549) as well as Jib. šin ‘for, in a while, for
a time’ (JJ 268). Mhr. *han* ‘with, in the presence of, at’ (JM 158) is also of interest but the correspondence Jib. *š* ~ Mhr. *h* is atypical and the semantic difference is considerable.

### Abbreviations of Languages


### Abbreviations of Lexicographic Tools


LGur — W. LESLAU. *Etymological Dictionary of Gurage (Ethiopic)*. Vol. I–III. Wiesbaden, 1979 [whenever quoted without number of volume, the 3rd volume is referred to].


References


Jamme 1963 — A. JAMME. *Sabaean Inscriptions from Maḥram Bilqīs (Mārib)*. Baltimore.


**SUMMARY**

Despite the enormous progress made in Sabaeology in recent decades, there still remain a significant number of Epigraphic South Arabian lexical items for which textual analysis has not yet provided any coherent interpretation. As far as such terms are concerned, Semitic etymology may sometimes provide precious clues for a better understanding of their meaning. The present article attempts to present a few newly proposed etymological connections between Ethiopian Semitic and Epigraphic South Arabian (mainly Sabaic).