SOME NEW EPIGRAPHIC SOUTH ARABIAN — ETHIOPIAN ETYMOLOGIES

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 All etymological comparisons are taken from the author's unpublished Ph.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).¹ 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. $\mathfrak{f}\mathfrak{s}_1\mathfrak{y}=\mathfrak{m}$ '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: *hḱnyw mrʔhmw ... ṣlmn wms₃dm ṣrfm wmdlthmy* $\mathfrak{f}\mathfrak{s}_1\mathfrak{y}\mathfrak{m}$ 'they dedicated to their lord ... this statue and a silver inscription, the weight of both of them being one $\mathfrak{f}\mathfrak{s}_1\mathfrak{y}$ '. An alternative interpretation is proposed in Biella 375 ('verified, correct', with reference to Arb. *ṣāṣi*^m 'proper, fitting') though 'name of a weight' is also mentioned.

|| The etymological evidence for the translation 'measure of weight' comes from Tgr. *ṣās* (pl. *ṣāsās*) 'a dry measure, measure (in general)' (LH 463), Tna. *ṣassi* 'a wooden measure for cereals, about four kg.' (KTna. 1858).

2. Sab. $\mathfrak{f}\mathfrak{w}\mathfrak{s}_1(=\mathfrak{m})$ 'plague, pestilence' (SD 23, BIELLA 359), Min. $\mathfrak{f}\mathfrak{s}_1$ '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 ḥwm wṣws₁ wmwtt* 'he saved ... the body of his servant ... from sickness, disease and plague').

|| In Müller 1962:83 $\mathfrak{f}\mathfrak{w}\mathfrak{s}_1$ 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.

¹ For the list of abbreviations used in this article see p. 400.

3. Sab. $hs_3s_3=m$ ‘(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 hs₃s₃m w?bnm* ‘building work in *h* and stones’.

|| To be compared to Arb. *ḥisaⁿ* ‘sol dur recouvert de sable, où l’eau des pluies s’infiltré’ (BK 1 429), Hrs. *ḥōhi* ‘earth, land, soil, dust’ (JH 57), Jib. *ḥāši* ‘soil’ (JJ 118), Soq. *ḥōhi (hoihe)* ‘terre’ (LS 166) and Ethiopian terms for ‘sand’: Tna. *ḥašäwa* ‘sand, strand, sandbank’ (KTna. 212), Amh. *ašäwa, ašawa* ‘sand’ (K 1182), Cha. Eža Enm. Gyt. Muh. Sod. Sel. Wol. *ašawa*, End. *ašawa*, Msq. Gog. *ašäwa* ‘sand’ (LGur. 102).

4. Sab. $ks_1d=m$ ‘feebleness (of body)’ (SD 79).

According to SD, attested in Ja 670/9–11: *whw?l bnhw ks₁dm* ‘he made feebleness retreat from him’. An alternative interpretation proposed by the editor is to treat *bnhw ks₁dm* as ‘his son *ks₁dm*’.

|| If the rendering of SD is accepted, note Amh. *kässädä* ‘to become very thin, gaunt, emaciated’ (K 1411).

5. Sab. $s_1l_1=m$ ‘mésure de capacité’ (RMA 66).

According to the editors, attested in RMA 15/6 (*s₁l₁m glglnm* ‘un *sil* de sésame’), with a reference to another text written on wood where *sl₁ 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. *šəlləfo* ‘a measure, = 1.5 l.’ (LH 206) and Tna. *səlləfo* ‘small measure for grain that equals 1/3 of an *ənqa*; small unmeasured amount of grain, a pinch of grain’ (K Tna. 633). Amh. *salle* ‘a large earthenware crock holding about two *ənsära*-jugs’ (K 441) can also be compared.

Sab. *s₁l₁* ‘kind of coin’ (SD 125, Biella 336), attested in C 548/8 (*ḥms₁ ?s₁l₁m* ‘five *sl₁*-coins’) is usually regarded as borrowed from Aramaic: Nab. *sl₁*, Plm. *sl₁* ‘certain coin’ (HJ 788), Jud. *silā* ‘a weight and a coin’ (Ja. 996), Syr. *selā* ‘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. $s_1fs_1f(=m)$ ‘summer season’ (SD 122).

Attested several times together with other terms for agricultural seasons (e. g. Ja 615/18–19: *?mrt dt? wḥrf ws₁fs₁m wmlm* ‘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. *səlsəsa* 'épeautre' (LH 194) and Tna. *saśsaśa* '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. *səsf* '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. *šeṭu* 'barley, grain' (CAD Š2 345), Hbr. *pB. šəfūšūt* 'a species of bean' (Ja. 1610), Arb. *suṣf* 'ivraie; froment gâté par la nielle' (BK 1 1090), Tgr. *sāśaś* 'oats' (LH 194) and Tna. *saśaś* 'oats, kind of fodder; edible grass which grows mixed with barley' (KTna. 766).

7. *s₁ft=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: *wdyhgbʔn bʔdn ʔs₂rt ymtm fʔw ʔs₂ry ʔblm fʔw twrm fʔw bʔrm flyhbn ʔs₃bhw s₃ʔtn ys₁bʔn bʔlyhw* «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. *sāśat*) are likely Arabisms, a few other terms, structurally different from Arb. *sāśat*-, may be suspected to be genuine: Gez. *sāś* 'hour, time' (LGz. 481), Tna. *saś* (*śaś*) 'moment, instant, time(s); time, hour' (KTna. 760), *śaśtuy* '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. *sāʔəh* 'hour, watch' (JM 353), Jib. *sāśāh* id. (JJ 232), Soq. *sāśah* id. (LS 289) on the one hand and Mhr. *sētən* 'for a while' (JM 353), Hrs. *sēʔet*, *seyāt* 'a while' (JH 112), Jib. *mən sāśtē* 'long ago' (JJ 232), Soq. *le-sāśet* 'à l'heure' (LS 289) on the other.

8. Sab. *s₁wn* 'towards' (SD 129), *s₁nn* 'towards, in front of, next to, by' (ibid. 127), *s₃nn* '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) *s₃nn* (with a late and phonologically innovative variant *s₁nn*) 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 *sənn* 'until, till, up to, as far as' (LGur. 549) as well as Jib. *šīn* 'for, in a while, for

a time' (JJ 268). Mhr. *hən* 'with, in the presence of, at' (JM 158) is also of interest but the correspondence Jib. *ṣ* ~ Mhr. *h* is atypical and the semantic difference is considerable.

Abbreviations of Languages

Akk. — Akkadian, Amh. — Amharic, Arb. — Arabic, Cha. — Chaha, End. — Endegeñ, Enm. — Ennemor, Gez. — Ge'ez, Gog. — Gogot, Gyt. — Gyeto, Har. — Harari, Hbr. — Hebrew, Hbr. pB. — Post-Biblical Hebrew, Hrs. — Harsusi, Jib. — Jibbali, Jud. — Judaic Aramaic, Min. — Minaean, Mhr. — Mehri, Msq. — Masqan, Muh. — Muher, Nab. — Nabatean, Plm. — Palmyrean, Sab. — Sabaic, Sel. — Selti, Sod. — Soddo, Soq. — Soqotri, Syr. — Syriac, Tgr. — Tigre, Tna. — Tigriñña, Wol. — Wolane, Yem. Arb. — Arabic dialect of Yemen.

Abbreviations of Lexicographic Tools

Behnstedt — P. BEHNSTEDT. *Die nordjemenitischen Dialekte. Teil 2: Glossar.* Wiesbaden, 1992.

Biella — J. C. BIELLA. *Dictionary of Old South Arabic. Sabaean Dialect.* Chico, CA, 1982.

BK — A. de BIBERSTEIN-KAZIMIRSKI. *Dictionnaire arabe-français.* Vol. 1–2. Paris, 1860.

Brock — C. BROCKELMANN. *Lexicon Syriacum.* Halle, 1928.

CAD — *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.* Chicago, 1956.

HJ — J. HOFTIJZER, K. JONGELING. *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions.* Leiden — New York — Köln, 1995.

Ja. — M. JASTROW. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature.* New York, 1996.

JH — T. M. JOHNSTONE. *Harsusi Lexicon.* Oxford, 1977.

JJ — T. M. JOHNSTONE. *Jibbali Lexicon.* Oxford, 1981.

JM — T. M. JOHNSTONE. *Mehri Lexicon.* London, 1987.

K — T. L. KANE. *Amharic-English Dictionary.* Wiesbaden, 1990.

KTna — T. K. KANE. *Tigrinya-English Dictionary.* Springfield, 2000.

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].

LGz — W. LESLAU. *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic).* Wiesbaden, 1987.

LH — E. LITTMANN, M. HÖFNER. *Wörterbuch der Tigre-Sprache. Tigre-Deutsch-English.* Wiesbaden, 1956.

LHar — W. LESLAU. *Etymological Dictionary of Harari.* Berkeley — Los Angeles, 1963.

LM — M. ARBACH. *Le madabien: Lexique, Onomastique et Grammaire d'une langue de l'Arabie méridionale préislamique*. T. I: *Lexique madabien*. Thèse de doctorat — Nouveau régime. Université de Provence Aix Marseille I. Centre d'Aix. Aix-en-Provence, 1993.

LS — W. LESLAU. *Lexique Soqotri (Sudarabique moderne) avec comparaisons et explications étymologiques*. Paris, 1938.

Piamenta — M. PIAMENTA. *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*. Leiden — New York — København — Köln, 1990.

SD — A. F. L. BEESTON, M. A. GHUL, W. W. MÜLLER, J. RYCKMANS. *Sabaic Dictionary (English-French-Arabic)*. Louvain-la-Neuve, 1982.

SED — A. MILITAREV, L. KOGAN. *Semitic Etymological Dictionary*. Vol. 1: *Anatomy of Man and Animals*. Münster, 2000.

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Beeston 1984 — A. F. L. BEESTON. *Sabaic Grammar*. Manchester.

Fronzaroli 1979 — P. FRONZAROLI. «Problemi di fonetica eblaita, 1». *Studi Eblaiti* 1: 65–89.

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

Müller 1962 — W. W. MÜLLER. *Die Wurzeln mediae und tertiae y/w im Altsüdarabischen: eine etymologische und lexikographische Studie*. Diss. Tübingen.

Okhotin 1999 — N. OKHOTIN. *Voiceless Non-Emphatic Sibilants of the Epigraphic South Arabian Languages: an Etymological Investigation*. Unpublished PhD. thesis, Russian State University for the Humanities.

Sima 2000 — A. SIMA. *Tiere, Pflanzen, Steine und Metalle in den altsüdarabischen Inschriften. Eine Lexikalische und realkundliche Untersuchung*. Wiesbaden.

Sima 2001 — A. SIMA. «Altsüdarabische Konditionalsätze». *Orientalia* 70: 283–312.

Stein 2003 — P. STEIN, *Untersuchungen zur Phonologie und Morphologie des Sabäischen*. Rahden/Westf.

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).