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 All etymological comparisons are taken from the author’s unpublished Ph.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. $ṣ_y=m$ ‘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: $hknyw mr’hw ... simn wms srfm wmdlthmy ṣṣ_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. $sā$i ‘proper, fitting’) though ‘name of a weight’ is also mentioned.

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

2. Sab. $ṣṣ_1(=m)$ ‘plague, pestilence’ (SD 23, Biella 359), Min. $ṣṣ_1$ ‘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 $bdhw ... bn $w$m $w$ṣṣ, $wmwtt ‘he saved ... the body of his servant ... from sickness, disease and plague’).

|| In Müller 1962:83 $ṣṣ_1$ 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.

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1 For the list of abbreviations used in this article see p. 400.
3. Sab. ūsāš =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: mbrūm ūsāš wūbnm ‘building work in ū and stones’.


4. Sab. ksā dm =m ‘feebleness (of body)’ (SD 79).

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

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

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

# According to the editors, attested in RMA 15/6 (sīlī mglūnm ‘un sīlī de sésame’), with a reference to another text written on wood where slī 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. šalāfīo ‘a measure, = 1.5 l.’ (LH 206) and Tna. sallāfīo ‘small measure for grain that equals 1/3 of an ŏnqa; small unmeasured amount of grain, a pinch of grain’ (K Tna. 633). Amh. sall ‘a large earthenware crock holding about two sānāra-jugs’ (K 441) can also be compared.

Sab. sīlī ‘kind of coin’ (SD 125, Biella 336), attested in C 548/8 (ϧmsīlī ʔsīlī ‘five slī-coins’) is usually regarded as borrowed from Aramaic: Nab. slī, Plm. slī ‘certain coin’ (HJ 788), Jud. silīā ‘a weight and a coin’ (Ja. 996), Syr. sallīā ‘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. sīsī =m ‘summer season’ (SD 122).

# Attested several times together with other terms for agricultural seasons (e. g. Ja 615/18–19: ḫmrt dtē wbrf wsīsī ḫm wmlym ‘crops of spring, autumn, summer and winter’).

2 According to Sima 2001:286, also in RMA 15/7.