

THE ROOTS OF COMMON SEMITIC ORIGIN DENOTING BODY PARTS

Abstract

The paper presents some results of research related to the analysis of roots of Common Semitic origin, which are united in the lexical-semantic thematic group denoting different body parts. Of particular interest to us was a thematic subgroup of lexemes (lexical units) denoting boundary parts of the human and animal bodies outline. This sub-division belongs to a hierarchically broader lexical-semantic group of body parts. In general, comparative analysis of semantic fields and lexical groups in different languages is an important problem of contemporary linguistic studies both from the viewpoint of comparative and typological linguistics. Summing up all the facts discussed in the paper, it may be concluded that several roots are revealed and identified as ones, which are characterized by wide distribution and correct regular phonetic correspondences, as a result, it would be possible to reconstruct six of them at the Proto-Semitic level with the following meanings: *'finger'*, *'tail'*, *'horn'*, *'back'*, *'breast'* and *'abdomen, belly'*. These meanings are denoted by the following roots of Common Semitic origin: Common Semitic šb' – *'finger'*, Common Semitic qrn – *'horn'*, Common Semitic dnb – *'tail'*, Common Semitic tdy – *'breast'*, Common Semitic thr – *'back'* and Common Semitic krš – *'abdomen, belly'*.

Keywords: *Common Semitic, body parts, finger, tail, horn, back, breast, belly*

1. The paper presents some results of research related to the analysis of roots of Common Semitic origin, which are united in the lexical-semantic thematic group denoting different body parts. Of particular interest to us was a thematic subgroup of lexemes (lexical units) denoting boundary parts of the human and animal bodies outline. This sub-division belongs to a hierarchically broader lexical-semantic group of body parts. The aim of the study was to reveal and identify the roots, which were characterized by wide distribution and correct regular phonetic correspondences, as a result, it would be possible to reconstruct them at the Proto-Semitic level with the meanings associated with the lexical-semantic group under consideration.

In general, comparative analysis of semantic fields and lexical groups in different languages is an important problem of contemporary linguistic studies both from the viewpoint of comparative and typological linguistics. It's important to note, that one more thematic subgroup of lexical units denoting body parts - particularly, a group of lexemes expressing meanings of hard and flexible connective tissues - was studied earlier in the same way.¹

¹ M. Meparishvili, *The Denotation of the hard and flexible Connective Tissues in Semitic Languages, The Near East and Georgia*, XIII, Ilia State University. Tbilisi, 2021. 73-77.

2. Results of research. It has been revealed several roots that can be restored at the Proto-Semitic level to the meanings that were the subject of our interest. These roots are: *šb'*, *ḏnb*, *qrn*, *ṭdy*, *thr* and *krš*. They denote such meanings as: '*finger*,' '*tail*,' '*horn*,' '*back*,' '*breast*,' and '*abdomen, belly*.' Let's briefly consider each of them separately.

3. * *ḏnb* – '*tail*' > '*sin*'

'Tail' is a part of the body, which can be interpreted as: 'Tail – the projecting continuation of the backbone at the binder end of an animal'. For expressing the above-mentioned meaning in different Semitic languages is used a root *ḏnb* is, which is widespread and can be found in every Semitic language, e.g., in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, Ugaritic, South-Arabian, and Ethio-Semitic ones. It should be admitted, that considered root reflexes some more developed compound meanings, such as '*sin*,' '*leave behind*' etc. The root consists of three consonants. The second radical is dental nasal sonorant *n*, and the third one is voiced labial plosive *b*; both phonemes are stable and unchanged and are presented everywhere by the same reflexes. As for the first radical, it's voiced interdental sibilant spirant, which occurs without any change in Arabic, Epyghraic, and Modern South Arabian languages. In Hebrew, Akkadian, and Ethiopic, it's substituted by voiced alveolar sibilant *z*; in Aramaic and Soqotri, its corresponding is voiced dental plosive *d*.²

Illustrating example: ³

Common Semitic root *ḏnb* – '*tail*' > '*sin*'

Arabic *ḏanab* '*tail*', *ḏanb* '*sin*', Hebrew *zanab* '*tail*', Uugaritic *š2nb-t* '*tail*', Akkadian *zumba-tu/ zinba-tu* '*tail*', Aramaic(Bibl.) *danba* '*tail*', Aramaic(Syr.) *dunba* '*tail*', Ethioph. (Geez) *zanab* '*tail*', Ethio-Semitic (Tigre) *zaanaba* '*lag behind*', Modern South-Arabian (Harsusi) *ḏenob* '*tail*' and *ḏeneb* '*sin*', cf. Epyghraic SA *ḏnb* '*leave behind, drive away (enemy)*', MSA A(Mehri) *ḏeneb* '*tail*', MSA A(Shahri) *dunub* '*tail*', MSA A(Soqotri) *dinob*.

4.* *qrn* '*horn*'

'Horn' is a solid connective tissue, which can be interpreted as: 'Horn – the hard projection on the heads of certain animals, the substance of it'. For expressing the above-mentioned meaning in different Semitic languages, a root *qrn*, which is widespread and could be found in every Semitic language, e.g., in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, Ugaritic, South-Arabian, and Ethio-Semitic ones. The root consists of three consonants; the First radical is voiceless uvular *q*, the second one is prepalatal vibrant sonorant *r*, and the third radical is

² Meparishvili M., The Proto-Semitic Sibilants, (Budapest, 1089), Proceedings of the SPEECH RESEARCH '89, International Conference, June 1-3, 1089, Budapest, edited by Tamas Szende, 100; And M. Meparishvili, Comparison of Proto-Semitic Phonological System with modified Systems in different Semitic Languages, The Near East and Georgia, VIII, Ilia State University. Tbilisi, 2014. 72.

³ The comparative data of Semitic languages, used below, have been taken from different dictionaries, e.g., for Harari - W. Leslau, Etymological Dictionary of Harari, Berklay& Los Angeles, 1963; for Tigre - E. Littman and M. Höffner, Wörterbuch der Tigre-Sprache, Wiesbaden, 1962; for Harsusi - T.M. Johnstone, Harsusi Lexicon and English-Harsusi Word-List, London, New York, Toronto, 1977, Oxford University Press; for Hebrew - L. Koehler, A Dictionary of the Hebrew Old Testament in English and German, for Aramaic (Bibl.) – W. Baumgartner, A Dictionary of the Aramaic Parts of the Old Testament in English and German, Leiden, 1958; for Ugaritic - J. Aistleitner, Wörterbuch der Ugaritischen Sprache, Berlin, 1967; for Arabic - A. Biberstein-Kazimirski, Dictionnaire arab-français, Paris, 1960, etc.

dental nasal sonorant n. All three phonemes are stable, unchanged, and are presented everywhere by the same reflexes.

Illustrating example: Common Semitic root qrn 'horn'

Arabic qarn 'horn', Hebrew qeren 'horn', Ugaritic qrn 'horn', Akkadian qarnu 'horn', Aramaic qarnā, Ethioph. (Geez) qarn 'horn', Ethio-Semitic (Tigray) qarni, Ethio-Semitic (Harari) qar, Ethio-Semitic (Amharic) MM qand (qarn>qand),⁴ Modern South-Arabian (Harsusi) qeron and qon 'horn', MSA A(Mehri) qon and qeron, MSA A(Shahri) qun, MSA A(Soqotri) qan 'horn'.

5. *'šb' 'finger'

The term "finger" refers to a part of the body, specifically defined as "one of the jointed extensions of the hand." In various Semitic languages, this meaning is expressed using the four-consonant root 'šb', which is commonly found across all Semitic languages, e.g., in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Ugaritic, South-Arabian, and Ethio-Semitic ones. {The first radical of the root is glottal ', the second one is voiceless glottalized (emphatic) sibilant phoneme ʕ, the third radical is voiced labial b, and the last one is voiced pharyngeal 'ayn. In addition, the phoneme /ɛ/ is stable and unchanged in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Ugaritic, Akkadian, South-Arabian and North-Ethiopic languages, in South-Ethiopic-Amharic and Harari – its substitute is voiceless glottalized dental ʈ.⁵

Illustrating example: Common Semitic root 'šb' 'finger'

Arabic 'ašbi' 'finger', Hebrew 'ešba' 'finger', Ugaritic 'šb' 'finger', Aramaic (Bibl.) 'ešba'-'išba', Aramaic (Syr.) šeb'a 'finger', Ethioph. (Geez) 'ašba'-t 'finger', Ethio-Semitic (Tigray) 'ašabe', Ethio-Semitic (Tigre) šeb'-at, Ethio-Semitic (Harari) aṭabinna, Ethio-Semitic (Gafat) 'ša-ta , Ethio-Semitic (Amharic) MM ṭa -tṭaba-t 'finger', Epyghrafic SA 'šb'-m, Modern South-Arabian (Harsusi) ha-šba' 'finger', MSA A (Mehri) šeba', MSA A (Shahri) 'ešba', 'finger', MSA A(Soqotri) 'ešba' 'finger'.

6. *krš - 'abdomen, belly, stomach'

'Belly' can be interpreted in the following way: 'Belly' – the part of the body which contains the bowels and stomach.' For expressing the above-mentioned meaning in different Semitic languages, the root krš, which is widespread and can be found in every Semitic language, e.g., in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, South-Arabian, and Ethio-Semitic. The root consists of three consonants. The First radical is voiceless velar k, the second one is prepalatal vibrant sonorant r, these phonemes are stable, unchanged, and are presented everywhere by the same reflexes,⁶ last radical is voiceless lateral aibilant spirant š, which occurs with its original phonetic significance in South-Arabian languages and transcribed by scholars as ś. In Akkadian and Ugaritic, as well as in Arabic and Ethio-Semitic languages, its corresponding is sibilant š, in Hebrew ś, in Aramaic – alveolar sibilant s.⁷

Illustrating example: Common Semitic root krš - 'abdomen, belly'

Arabic karš 'abdomen, belly, stomach', Hebrew kareś 'abdomen, belly', U Akkadian karšu \\\ karašu belly, stomach', Aramaic (Syr.) karasa 'stomach', Ethioph. (Geez) karš

⁴ Leslau, op. cit. 36 and 105-106.

⁵ Meparishvili, (1989) op. cit. 101; and Meparishvili, (2014) op. cit. 73.

⁶ S. Moskati, A. Spitaler, E. Ullendorf, W. von Soden, An Introduction to the comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages, Phonology and Morphology, Wiesbaden. 39.

⁷ Meparishvili, (1989) op. cit. 101-102; and Meparishvili, (2014) op. cit. 73.

‘stomach, abdomen, belly’, Ethio-Semitic (Tigray) karš ‘grow stout, fat’, Ethio-Semitic (Tigre) karš ‘fat’, MM Modern MSouth-Arabian (Harsusi) kereś ‘stomach’, MSA A(Mehri) kereś, MSA A(Shahri) šurś ‘belly’, MSA A(Soqotri) šereś ‘stomach’.

It should be admitted that in Shahri and Soqotri, k is palatalized, that is, k>š.

7. * tdy - ‘breast’.

The next lexical unit with the meanings associated with the lexical-semantic group under consideration is ‘breast’, denoted by the root of Common Semitic origin *tdy. ‘Breast’ is defined as the human chest and woman’s mammary gland’. The root is widespread and can be found in different Semitic languages, e.g., in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, South-Arabian, and Ethio-Semitic ones. The root consists of three consonants; the first radical is voiceless interdental sibilant t, the second one is dental plosive d, and the third one is approximant y, d, and y are stable, unchanged phonemes, presented everywhere by the same reflexes. In addition, voiceless interdental t occurs without any change in Arabic, Ugaritic, Epyghrafic, and Modern South Arabian languages. In Hebrew, Akkadian is substituted by pre-palatal sibilant š; in Aramaic and Soqotri, its corresponding is voiceless dental plosive t.⁸

Illustrating example: Common Semitic root tdy - ‘breast’

Arabic tady ‘breast’, Hebrew šad ‘breast’, Ugaritic td ‘breast’, Aramaic (Syr) teda ‘breast’, Modern South-Arabian (Harsusi) tōdi ‘breast’, MSA A(Mehri) tōdi, MSA A(Shahri) tōde’, MSA A(Soqotri) tōdi ‘breast’.

8. * ṭhr – ‘back’ (> ‘noon’)

The next lexical unit with the meanings associated with the lexical-semantic group under consideration is ‘back’, denoted by the root of Common Semitic origin *ṭhr. The root is widespread and can be found in different Semitic languages, e.g., in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Ugaritic, Epyghrafic, and Modern South Arabian ones. The first radical of the root needs some explanations; it is glottalized (emphatic) interdental sibilant /ṭ/,⁹ which is modified in different Semitic languages and gives the following correspondences: j in South-Arabian, i in Arabic, Ugaritic, š in Hebrew, Akkadian, and North-Ethiopic, ṭ in Aramaic, Soqotri and South-Ethiopic. It should be noted that the root has some compound meanings, such as ‘noon,’ and ‘upper part of smth.’. It should be admitted that the meaning ‘back’ is denoted by the allothetic Semitic root ¾hr too. In addition, the first radical /¾/ is the most modified one in the Semitic phonological system.¹⁰ It occurs by different reflexes; its correspondences are: d in Arabic and Geez, š in Hebrew, Akkadian, Ugaritic, and North-Ethiopic, lateral alveolar sibilant ž in South-Arabian languages, ṭ in South-Ethiopian and ‘ayn in Aramaic.

Illustrating example: (a.) Common Semitic root *ṭhr – ‘back’ (> ‘noon’)

Arabic iahr ‘back’, iuhr ‘noon’, Hebrew šohar ‘upper part of smth.’, šahara-im ‘noon’, Ugaritic ir ‘back’, Akkadian šeru ‘back’, Aramaic (Syr.) ṭahra ‘noon’, Epyghrafic SA MM ihr ‘back’, MModern MSouth-Arabian (Harsusi) Jahr ‘camels back; back’, MSA A(Mehri) jahr ‘noon’, MSA A(Shahri) johr ‘noon’, MSA A (Soqotri) ṭhar ‘noon’.

⁸ Meparishvili, (1989) op. cit. 100; and Meparishvili, (2014) op. cit. 72

⁹ Meparishvili, (1989) op. cit. 101; and Meparishvili, (2014) op. cit. 73

¹⁰ Meparishvili, (1989) op. cit. 102; and Meparishvili, (2014) op. cit. 73.

cf. Illustrating example: (b.) Allothetic root * $\frac{3}{4}$ hr 'back'

Modern South-Arabian (Harsusi) žahr 'back,' MSA A(Mehri) žaher 'back,' MSA A(Shahri) žehr 'camels back,' Hebrew šahar 'back, the upper part of smth.'

9. Conclusions: Summing up all the facts discussed in the paper, it may be concluded that several roots are revealed and identified as ones, which are characterized by wide distribution and correct regular phonetic correspondences, as a result, it would be possible to reconstruct six of them at the Proto-Semitic level with the following meanings: 'finger', 'tail', 'horn', 'back', 'breast' and 'abdomen, belly, stomach'. These meanings are denoted by the following roots of Common Semitic origin: Common Semitic *šb' – 'finger', Common Semitic *qrn – 'horn', Common Semitic *ḏnb – 'tail', Common Semitic *tdy – 'breast', Common Semitic *thr – 'back' and Common Semitic *krš – 'abdomen, belly, stomach'.