Semitic Languages

Features, Structures, Relations, Processes

Gideon Goldenberg

•

١



Concise contents

Full contents vii Preface xv Glossing category labels xvii

- 1 Introduction 1
- 2 The Languages 10
- 3 Distribution of the Semitic Languages 21
- 4 Writing Systems and Scripts 30
- 5 Genetic Classification 44
- 6 Special Achievements of Semitic Linguistic Traditions 58
- 7 Phonology 64
- 8 Closed-class Morphemes 81
- 9 Derivational Morphology 116
- 10 Entity Terms 130
- 11 Syntactic Relations; the Case System 140
- 12 Predicative Relation 149
- 13 Verbal Systems 199
- 14 Attributive Relation 226
- 15 Completive Relation 278
- 16 Existence, Belonging, and Possession 300

t

١

References 313 Index 351

Full contents

Preface xv Glossing category labels xvii

1 Introduction 1

- 1.1 Semitic languages in general linguistic research, and the present book 1
- 1.2 Linguistic approach and a few features found in Semitic languages 4
- 1.3 Data, transcriptions, and glossing 5
 - 1.3.1 Illustrative examples 5
 - 1.3.2 Transcriptions, phonetic representation, and glossing 6

ş

2 The Languages 10

- 2.1 Akkadian; Eblaite 10
- 2.2 Hebrew 11
- 2.3 Phoenician 12
- 2.4 Ugaritic 12
- 2.5 Aramaic 12
- 2.6 Arabic 14
- 2.7 Epigraphic South Arabian 15
- 2.8 Modern South Arabian 16
- 2.9 Gə^cəz 16
- 2.10 Tigré 17
- 2.11 Tigrinya 17
- 2.12 Amharic 18
- 2.13 Argobba 18
- 2.14 Gurage 19
- 2.15 Gafat 19
- 2.16 Harari 19
- 2.17 Selected dictionaries 20

3 Distribution of the Semitic languages 21

- 3.1 Historical perspective 21
- 3.2 Distribution in the older periods 22
- 3.3 Arabic after the Islamic conquest 24
- 3.4 Neo-Aramaic 26
- 3.5 Modern South Arabian languages 27
- 3.6 Ethio-Semitic 27
- 3.7 Numbers and contacts 28

4 Writing Systems and Scripts 30

- 4.1 Ideographic and syllabic cuneiform 30
- 4.2 The alphabet 32
 - 4.2.1 Consonantal alphabetic writing 32
 - 4.2.2 Vowel notation in alphabetic writing 35
 - 4.2.3 Semitic languages in Roman-based alphabets 43

3

5 Genetic Classification 44

- 5.1 Genetic classification and the Semitic languages 44
- 5.2 Points considered with regard to classification of Semitic 45
- 5.3 North Semitic South Semitic 46
- 5.4 The traditional classification with East West as central nodes 46
- 5.5 The position of Arabic and 'Central Semitic' 47
- 5.6 Some counter-evidence and critical comments 48
- 5.7 Canaanite, Aramaic, and Arabic; some further problems 50
- 5.8 Problems of South Semitic 52
- 5.9 Modern South Arabian and the Ethiopian languages 53
- 5.10 Ethio-Semitic 53
- 5.11 Main subgroupings of the Semitic family 56

6 Special Achievements of Semitic Linguistic Traditions 58

- 6.1 Arab tradition 58
- 6.2 Substantive form and substantive clause 59
- 6.3 Adjective form and adjective clause; the 'syntactic exercise' 59
- 6.4 Adjective form as a transposed relative in Ethiopic 60
- 6.5 Verb form as a dimorphemic complex 61
- 6.6 Segmental vowel length 61
- 6.7 The 'weak quiescent' and Hebrew grammar 62
- 6.8 Comparative Semitics 63

:3

7 Phonology 64

- 7.1 Common Semitic background 64
 - 7.1.1 'Emphatic' consonants 64
 - 7.1.2 Triadic oppositions 65
 - 7.1.3 Plosive and fricative consonants 66
- 7.2 Sound correspondences 67
- 7.3 w and the sibilants 69
- 7.4 'Weak phonetic changes' and other irregularities 70
- 7.5 Reconstructed extinct phonemes 70
- 7.6 Consonant gemination 72
- 7.7 Vowels and vowel length 73
- 7.8 Syllabic structure 74
- 7.9 Diphthongs 75
- 7.10 Some special features of Modern South Arabian phonology 76
- 7.11 Some special phonological features of Ethiopian languages 77

8 Closed-class Morphemes 81

- 8.1 Personal pronouns 81
 - 8.1.1 Nominative forms 82
 - A Independent personal pronouns 82
 - B Bound personal pronouns 84 Inflexional Affixes in Predicative Construction 84
 - (a) Suffix Conjugation 84
 - (b) Circumfix Conjugation 86
 - 8.1.2 Oblique forms and related adjectival complexes 87
 - A Pronominal suffixes 87
 - B Independent oblique pronouns and adjectivals 91
- 8.2 Excursus on dual marking 94
- 8.3 Notes on reflexive and reciprocal expressions 97
- 8.4 Some general and comparative observations 98
- 8.5 Interrogative pro-words 100
- 8.6 Demonstratives 101
- 8.7 Pronominal heads in adjectival constructions and 'complementizers' 104

- 8.7.1 In attributive constructions 104
- 8.7.2 In substantivizations 106
- 8.8 Basic adpositions 107
- 8.9 Numerals 109
- 8.10 Excursus on indefinites 113

9 Derivational Morphology 116

- 9.1 Root-and-pattern: triradical or tripartite roots and three-place patterns 116
 - 9.1.1 Interdigitation of tripartite roots and three-place patterns 116

đ

- 9.1.2 Nominal patterns and augmented roots 118
- 9.2 Nominal derivation by stem-and-affix 119
- 9.3 Verbal stem derivation 121
- 9.4 Verbal derivation with tense-marking augmentation 127

10 Entity Terms 130

- 10.1 Gender 130
- 10.2 Number 132
- 10.3 Plural and dual marking of conjoined entity terms 137

11 Syntactic Relations; the Case System 140

- 11.1 Three types of syntactical bonds 140
- 11.2 Case system 142

12 Predicative Relation 149

- 12.1 Nexus syntactically and morphologically 149
- 12.2 Structure of predication in nominal and verbal constructions 150
- 12.3 S–P and P–S in nominal sentences 151
- 12.4 Possessive constructions with predicative sense 153
- 12.5 On the process of verbalization in Syriac 153
- 12.6 Predicative participles and statives; nominal, verbal, and copular sentences 154
- 12.7 Impersonals, generic person, inner objects, passive, dummies, and verb-initial sentences 158
 - 12.7.1. Impersonal constructions 158
 - 12.7.2 'Generic person 161
 - 12.7.3 Inner object: cognate, effected, abstract 167

ŵ

- 12.7.4 Impersonal passives 169
- 12.7.5 Two types of verb-initial sentences 175
- 12.8 Extraposition and related structures 181
 - 12.8.1 Extraposition 181
 - 12.8.2 Theme-marking, anteceding,

and front-extraposition 184

- 12.9 Cleft sentences 189
- 12.10 On some Satzgestaltungen; alignment variations 192
 - 12.10.1 Stimulus and experiencer, and the direction of transitivity 194
 - 12.10.2 Constructions with the passive participle 198

13 Verbal Systems 199

- 13.1 Binyanim 199
- 13.2 Tenses 202
- 13.3 Perfect : Imperfect; narrative and Hebrew 202
- 13.4 Syriac and its auxiliaries 204
- 13.5 The Arabic expanded tense system 205
- 13.6 Neo-Aramaic tenses 211
- 13.7 Tense systems in Ethio-Semitic 215
 - 13.7.1 Gəʿəz tense system 215
 - 13.7.2 Tigre 218
 - 13.7.3 Amharic expanded tenses 219
 - 13.7.4 Converbs in Neo-Ethio-Semitic and Gurage tenses 222
 - 13.7.5 'Say' and ideophones in Ethio-Semitic 223

14 Attributive Relation 226

- 14.1 Annexions with nominal and pronominal constituents 226
- 14.2 Adjectives 230
- 14.3 Head + prepositional phrase annexions 231
- 14.4 Relative clauses 231
- 14.5 The consistent structure of annexions in Akkadian and Syriac 232

14.5.1 Akkadian annexions 232

14.5.2 Annexions in Syriac 236

14.6 Involvement of the dative preposition *I*- in Hebrew annexions 238

- 14.7 Annexions in Gəʿəz: a highly consistent system, but with *lä*- appositives 241
- 14.8 Mehri annexions 244
- 14.9 Attributive relations in Neo-Ethio-Semitic languages 246
 - 14.9.1 Tigrinya 246
 - 14.9.2 Amharic 248
 - 14.9.3 Old Harari 250
- 14.10 The independence of syntagms with a pronominal head 252
- 14.11 Pronominal heads strengthened: correlatives or prop words 254
- 14.12 Pronominal head hidden or virtual; exocentric or indirect attributes 256
 - 14.12.1 Seemingly headless attributes in Hebrew and Arabic 256
 - 14.12.2 Indirect attributes 257
- 14.13 Annexions and attributes in Arabic: Ancient, Classical, and other 258
- 14.14 Annexion heads of various origins; 'genitive exponents' 262
 - 14.14.1 Quasi-grammaticalized nominal heads of attributive syntagms in Semitic 262
 - 14.14.2 Formal annexion heads of pronominal and nominal origin in Neo-Arabic 263
 - 14.14.3 Head N + Attribute vs N, [Head PRON, + Attribute]; 'synthetic': 'analytic' 265
- 14.15 Phrase adjectivizations 267
 - 14.15.1 Indirect adjective. Nast sababi 267
 - 14.15.2 Adjectival annexions 276

15 Completive Relation 278

- 15.1 Completive relation and the accusative 278
- 15.2 Further adverbial endings and inflected adverbials 284
- 15.3 Periphrases of adverbial complements' 286
- 15.4 Embedded completive clauses and related structures; prolepsis 291
- 15.5 Circumstantial clauses 292

¢

3

- 15.6 Qualitative adverbs and adjectives 294
- 15.7 Inflected gerunds, converbs, clause-chaining, co-ordinating subordination and subordinating co-ordination 296
- 15.8 The end of a syntactic chain 299

16 Existence, Belonging, and Possession 300

' \

- 16.1 Genuine statements of existence: purely existential and situated 300
- 16.2 Existence situated in time; existential verbs 304
- 16.3 Predicative constructions of belonging and possession 307

۲

16.4 Structural shifts in expressions of existence and belonging 309

References 313

Index 351