CHAPTER 1

Arabic in Its Semitic Context*

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In Memory of Wolfhart Heinrichs

During the Enlightenment, some thinkers pondered the original language of humanity, and decided that it must have been Hebrew.[1] With the advent of historical linguistics in the 19th century, Hebrew was, in a way, dethroned by Arabic. On the one hand, the simple vowel system of classical Arabic, on the other hand, its rich consonantal inventory, huge vocabulary, complex system of tenses and moods, and seemingly complete system of derived verbs made Arabic seem, to 19th-century European scholars, to be the most archaic and conservative of all Semitic languages; indeed, the earliest comparative studies almost treat Arabic as though it were, in fact, Proto-Semitic.[2]

But of course Arabic is not Proto-Semitic. The phonology of classical Arabic is indeed very conservative, but there are other, more conservative Semitic

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1 See, e.g., Olender 1992; Eco 1995: 74–75. Note also Renan 1863, who considered Hebrew to be the most archaic Semitic language.

2 E.g., Wright 1890: 8, citing de Goeje: "En dat van alle Semietische talen het Arabisch het naast staat aan de moedertaal." Further, Lindberg 1897: v; Müller 1887: 316–317; O'Leary 1923: 5, 16. For Zimmern (1898: 5), Arabic and Ethiopic were the last languages to break away from the common Semitic stock. See also the extended discussion in König 1901: 57–70.

phonologies, such as the consonantal inventory of the Ancient South Arabian languages. And Arabic has undergone any number of developments that distinguish it not only from other Semitic languages but, in a great many ways, from the common ancestor of the Semitic languages as well.

This paper has several goals: to offer a view of what Arabic is as a Semitic language; to review where Arabic stands within the Semitic family, what its closest relatives are; and to review some of the features that uniquely characterize Arabic. These goals will also, of necessity, involve the ongoing discussion of the relationship between the modern forms of Arabic, the classical language, and the various preclassical forms of the language.

That comparative Semitic philology could illuminate and explain aspects of both classical and colloquial Arabic has of course long been known. Even in the nineteenth century, no one really thought classical Arabic was identical with Proto-Semitic. For example, it was recognized that Proto-Semitic had three voiceless sibilants, as in Biblical Hebrew, and that Arabic had merged two of those (**s* or **s*[1] and **ṯ* or **s*[3]; see further below).[3] It was also realized that the classical Arabic relative *allaðī* had to be a secondary development.[4] More recent comparative Semitic study has provided other examples, such as the following:

1. The preformative *s* of Arabic Form X, (*i*)*staʕala*, makes sense when we posit that *s* was the original—and only—causative marker in Semitic. But an early sound rule that changed pre-vocalic *s* to *h* spread throughout much of Semitic;[5] thus the simple causative **yusapʕil* became first **yuhapʕil* and then, with the further loss of the *h* in Arabic, *yufʕil*. In the *st* form **yustapʕil*, however, the *s* was not pre-vocalic, and so it did not undergo the sound change. Arabic *yastafʕil* thus reflects a very old Semitic form.
2. The original function of the preformative *n* in Form VII *yanfaʕil* is seen in Akkadian **(y)ippaʕil*, where the base of the form, **paʕil*, is the verbal adjective of the basic stem of the root, as is still the case for a few verbs in Arabic, such as *fariḥ* 'glad'. For transitive verbs in Akkadian, the verbal adjective is passive resultative, so **paʕil* would mean 'done, made'. The *n* preformative originally marked a form as ingressive or incohative: **ya-n-paʕil* meant 'become, get done, made'.[6]

3 E.g., Brockelmann 1908: 128.

4 Wright 1890: 117.

5 Voigt 1987; Huehnergard 2006: 8–9.

6 Conti 1980: 103–107; Lieberman 1986; Huehnergard 1987: nn. 31, 62.

We call Arabic a Semitic language because it shares a wide range of features in common with the other languages that we consider Semitic:[7] a root structure of three radicals for most content words; a common inventory of consonants that includes pharyngeals and triads of stops and fricatives, each with a voiced, a voiceless, and an "emphatic" member; a common lexicon; morphological features such as contrasting suffix- and prefix-conjugations of the finite verbs; derived verbal stems marked by prefixes related to the pronominal system, such as *n* and *t*; nouns with two genders, three numbers, and three cases;[8] unmarked word order verb–subject–object; noun–noun modification by a special genitive chain construction (*ʔiḍāfa*).

Those are some of the many ways Arabic is like other Semitic languages. But we are more interested here in the ways in which Arabic is *unlike* other Semitic languages. What features characterize Arabic within Semitic? Or, more simply, What is Arabic?[9] We could simply list features in which Arabic differs from other Semitic languages:[10] Arabic has broken plurals, Akkadian and Amharic do not; Arabic has a derived verb stem with prefixed *n*, Aramaic and Ethiopic do not;[11] Arabic has pharyngealized consonants, Ethiopic and Akkadian do not;

7 Bateson 2003: 52–54. Edzard 2012 rightly notes that many of these common Semitic features are attested in other language families. What is unique about Semitic, of course, is the aggregation of these features.

8 Reconstructing Proto-Arabic with *iʕrāb* is required by the comparative method, *pace* Owens 1998. Since Proto-Semitic and Proto-Central Semitic exhibit the same cases as classical Arabic, Proto-Arabic must likewise have exhibited those cases. This is not altered by the fact that most modern forms of Arabic are caseless and probably descend from caseless ancestors, or by the fact that there were undoubtedly very early, even pre-Islamic, varieties of Arabic in which the case-system had been lost, such as Al-Jallad's Ancient Levantine Arabic (2012a: 340–343, 384). (Nor, of course, can we reconstruct two types of Proto-Semitic, as Owens proposes, one with a case-system and one without.) The absence of a case-system in the colloquials is clearly the result of loss after the Proto-Arabic period; it may have happened in a single common ancestor, but more likely, it happened in several early forms of Arabic (Blau 2006, esp. p. 80). Loss of the Proto-Semitic case system also occurs over the history of Akkadian, and likewise accounts for various morphological features in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic. See further Hasselbach 2013: 69–70; Versteegh 2010.

9 The same question is asked by Retsö (2013; see especially p. 436). I wish to thank Prof. Retsö for sending me a copy of this paper prior to its publication. Some of the features proposed by Retsö as specifically Arabic will be noted below.

10 See, e.g., Mascitelli 2006: 19. As noted by Retsö (2013), most of Mascitelli's features are not specific to Arabic.

11 Classical Ethiopic does have an N stem, as in *ʔangargara* 'to roll'; but, although it is probably related ultimately to the N of other Semitic languages (see above, n. 6), it no longer had the same semantic force.

Arabic has compound tenses, like *kāna yafʕalu*, Hebrew and Akkadian do not. But this approach is not terribly helpful.

As already noted, Arabic is not Proto-Semitic. But nor did it descend directly from Proto-Semitic as its own discrete branch, any more than the other Semitic languages did. Arabic is part of a set of ever-smaller, ever more restricted, subgroups of languages that share common ancestors among themselves, ancestors that are not shared with other members of the larger Semitic family. In other words, there are intermediate stages or nodes, intermediate ancestors that Arabic shares with only *some* of the other Semitic languages. To establish what is specifically characteristic of Arabic, we have to look at its closest relatives, and see how it differs from *them*; put another way, we have to look at the features in which Arabic differs not from Proto-Semitic, but from its most recent common ancestor. It is those features that uniquely characterize Arabic.

But how do we establish which of the languages are more closely related to each other? As we just saw, it is not simply a matter of collecting features in common, or features that are different, and toting them up. For establishing genetic relationships among members of a language family, only one type of feature is diagnostic of a genetic relationship, and that is the "shared innovation." A shared innovation is a feature that a subgroup of languages exhibits in common because it was inherited from a recent, or immediate, common ancestor in which that feature first arose. Shared innovations are the *only* features that are significant for genetic subgrouping. As Alice Faber (1997:4) succinctly put it: "The establishment of a linguistic subgroup requires the identification of innovations that are shared among all and only the members of that subgroup." A clear example of a shared innovation is the use of the suffix-conjugation, the Arabic perfect *faʕala*, as an active, past tense verb, replacing the earlier Semitic past-tense form *yafʕal*. In Akkadian and Eblaite, and in the earliest-attested form of ancient Egyptian,[12] the form **samiʕtă* meant not 'you have heard' but rather 'you are/were heard'; it was a kind of verbless clause, comprised of an adjective, **samiʕ-* 'heard',[13] plus an enclitic pronoun subject **-tă* 'you'. The development of that form into an active, perfective verb meaning 'you (have) heard' was a profound change, a shared innovation that characterizes all of the Semitic languages *except* Akkadian and Eblaite as a subgroup within the Semitic family, a subgroup that is usually called "West Semitic."

12 On the form and semantics of the Old Egyptian counterpart to Akkadian and Eblaite **samiʕtă*, see most recently Allen 2013: 120–121.

13 As just noted, *ḳatil* (*faʕil*) is the basic verbal adjective in Akkadian.

In most of the West Semitic languages, the original past tense use of *yaqṭal* survived, but only in restricted or secondary usage; in classical Arabic, for example, we see it in *lam*(*mā*) *yaqṭal* as a negative past tense.[14] The originally tenseless nature of the suffix-conjugation is also preserved in most of the West Semitic languages as a secondary characteristic. In classical Arabic we find it in forms such as optative *raḥima* 'may he have mercy' and epistemic *ʕalima* 'he knows';[15] similar uses continue into some of the modern colloquials.

Thus, shared innovations are the key. But shared features have several sources and it can be difficult to establish which of those are shared innovations. Some shared features are shared retentions, that is, features that two languages share because they were inherited from a still earlier ancestor, and these tell us nothing about internal relationships within the family; examples include most of the phonetic inventory of the family and the triradical system of roots. Some shared features are the result of what is called "drift" or "parallel development," usually the result of systemic pressure or an "inner dynamic,"[16] as in the non-standard English *brang*, which arises in many unrelated speech communities as the result of the analogy of *sing* : *sang*. Another common phenomenon that results in shared features is diffusion, the areal or wave-like spreading of features as a result of contact between speakers of different dialects and languages.[17] Not only individual lexical items, but also phonological features, morphological forms, even whole grammatical categories and constructions may be borrowed through language contact. Recent studies suggest that there are very few linguistic features (if any) that may not be borrowed.[18] Because many of the Semitic languages were in frequent contact with one another, diffusion of features is an extremely common phenomenon that we must always keep in mind. Indeed, for a proper evaluation of the what is unique or specific about the origin of Arabic, we must consider both shared innovations, which are the result of a genetic relationship, and diffusion, which results from language contact due to geographical proximity.

What, then, are Arabic's closest relatives? The genetic position of Arabic within Semitic has been the crux of the internal subgrouping of the Semitic

14 Also in its interchangeability with the perfect in both the protasis and the apodosis of a conditional sentence; I wish to thank W. Heinrichs for reminding me of this.

15 W. Heinrichs and N. Pat-El remind me that non-past *faʕala* also appears in conditional clauses.

16 Aikhenwald and Dixon 2001: 3.

17 See the recent study of Babel et al. 2013, who argue "diffusion plays a greater role in language diversification than is usually recognized."

18 See, e.g., Epps et al. 2013: 210.

family for several generations of Semitists.[19] The prevailing view of the internal subgrouping of the Semitic for much of the twentieth century was the following (after Faber 1997):

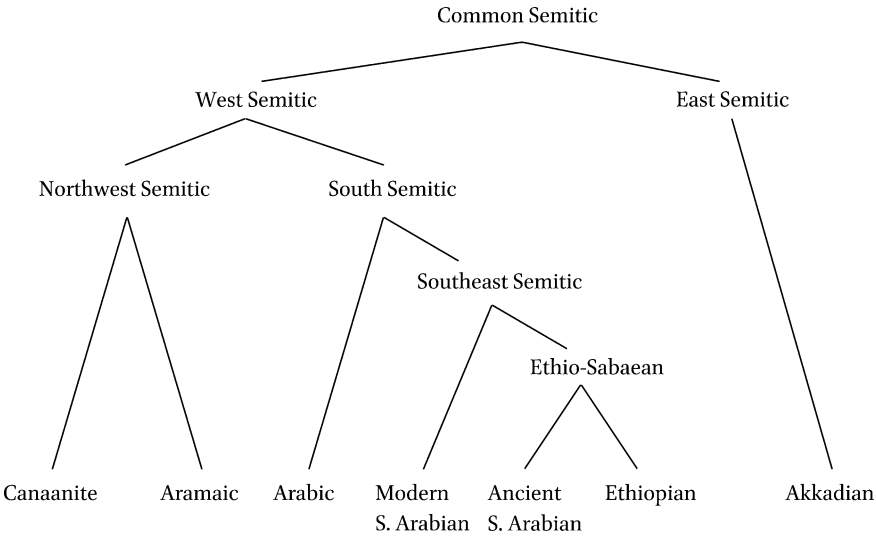

FIGURE 1.1 *Geography-based classification of the Semitic languages*

In this view, which was based partly on shared features and partly on geography, there is a three-part division: Akkadian is the sole member of East or Northeast Semitic; the Canaanite languages—Hebrew, Phoenician, and a number of other, sparsely attested, dialects—and Aramaic comprise Northwest Semitic;[20] and Arabic, Ethiopian Semitic, the Ancient South Arabian languages, and the Modern South Arabian languages comprise South or Southwest Semitic. The most important features that were said to characterize this South or Southwest branch were:

1. broken plurals;
2. the form III verb *fāʕala*; and
3. the change of Proto-Semitic stop **p* to fricative *f*.

19 I do not agree with Retsö (2013: 444) that "The discussion whether Arabic should be classified as Central Semitic or South Semitic is not very meaningful." For reasons that will, I trust, become clear in what follows, identifying the closest relatives of Arabic is fundamentally important for any linguistically useful discussion of the specific features that constitute Arabic.

20 For Northwest Semitic, see Hasselbach and Huehnergard 2007.

But the first and second of these are not shared innovations; they are shared retentions. It has been shown that all of the Semitic languages exhibit at least vestiges of broken plurals, and so they must be reconstructed as a feature of Proto-Semitic. Their occurrence in Arabic, Ancient South Arabian, Modern South Arabian, and Ethiopian Semitic is thus a retention from the proto-language, not the result of an innovation in a common intermediate ancestor. The same is true of the verb form with long first vowel, *fāʕala*;[21] it appears, again as a vestige, in Northwest Semitic, and, as Zaborski (1991: 371) has shown, it appears outside of Semitic elsewhere in the larger Afro-Asiatic family, among the Cushitic languages. So it, too, is a shared retention. The change of common Semitic **p* to *f* is almost certainly the result of diffusion, due to the proximity of some of the other so-called South Semitic languages at various times in the past; but as it is a very common change cross-linguistically, is not really significant.[22]

Thus, this earlier view has for many Semitists been superseded by a different model, one that was championed especially by the Semitist Robert Hetzron in a number of articles and monographs in the 1970's.[23] This model shows the following branching:

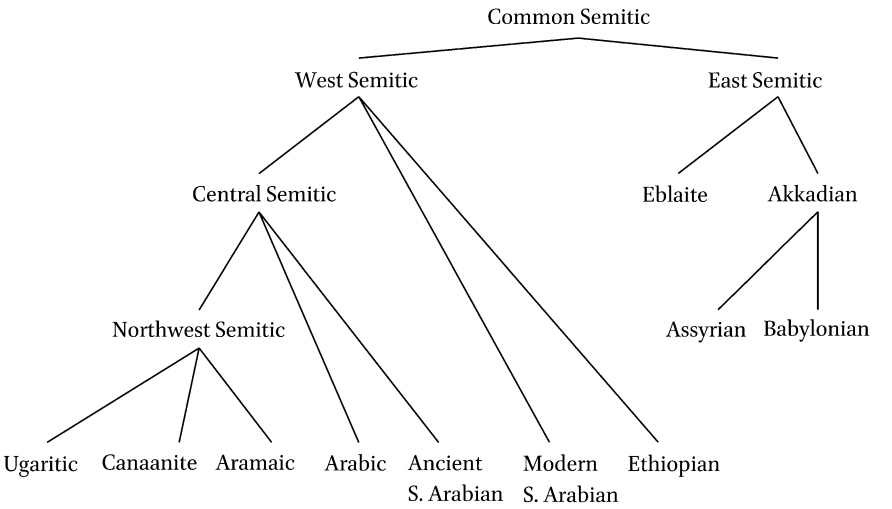

FIGURE 1.2 *Linguistic classification of the Semitic languages*

21 On *fāʕala*, see Danks 2011 and the important review by Waltisberg 2012.

22 A similar change even appears in Northwest Semitic, as is well known, although there it is a conditioned change.

23 E.g., Hetzron 1974, 1976.

Again, Proto-West Semitic first hives off from the common Semitic ancestor, characterized by the new suffix-conjugation *faʕala*. But here, from Proto-West Semitic, a branch called Central Semitic breaks off. Central Semitic is characterized especially by a new form of the verb to express the imperfective aspect, **yafʕalu*, an innovation vis-à-vis the Proto-Semitic imperfective form **yaḳattal* that we find in Akkadian, Ethiopic, and the Modern South Arabian languages.[24] The languages in which the Proto-Semitic form has been abandoned and replaced by **yafʕalu* must have shared a common ancestor, which is labelled Central Semitic. (The remaining languages of West Semitic, which did not replace *yaḳattal* with *yafʕalu*, and which exhibit shared retentions but no significant new common innovations,[25] constitute what in biological classification schemes would be termed a "paraphyletic" group, that is, a group that contains its most recent common ancestor, but not all of the descendants of that ancestor.)

This model is the consensus among the majority of Semitists today.[26] In a paper some years ago I reviewed some fifteen features that are shared by the Central Semitic languages, and only by those languages.[27] Of those fifteen, I suggested that at least five could be considered shared innovations, the rest being, probably, the result of diffusion or, less often, shared retentions.

This approach to subgrouping thus establishes that Arabic is part of Central Semitic and that its closest genetic relatives are the Northwest Semitic languages and the Ancient South Arabian languages.[28] In addition, the diffusion of a number of other features, some of which will be considered below, indicates that Arabic, or at least parts of the early Arabic dialect continuum (along with Ancient South Arabian), also participated in two distinct linguistic areas (or Sprachbunde), probably at different times: the first included some of the Central Semitic languages spoken to the north of Arabic, especially southern forms of Canaanite and of Aramaic (to account, e.g., for the syntax of the definite arti-

24 In highlighting this feature, Hetzron was preceded by V. Christian 1919–1920, 1944.

25 See, however, Kogan 2011b: 244–246, who argues that innovations in the lexicon of Ethiopian Semitic mark it as a distinctive genetic subgroup within Semitic.

26 See Rubin 2008 and Huehnergard and Rubin 2011 for surveys of classification schemes. There are still some scholars who prefer the earlier model, for example, Corriente 2012: 1, who blithely dismisses four decades of scholarship that have swayed the majority of Semitists as "a fad."

27 Huehnergard 2005.

28 Hetzron did not originally include Ancient South Arabian in Central Semitic, but it has since been established that Sabaic also has the *yafʕalu* form as its imperfective verb; see Nebes 1994.

cle); the second included some of the nearby non-Central Semitic languages to the south and east of Arabic, the ancestors of the Modern South Arabian languages and of the Ethiopian languages (to account, e.g., for the diffusion of certain broken plural patterns).[29]

It is from Central Semitic, then, that we will proceed in our attempt to determine what is specifically characteristic of Arabic. In this approach, the question "What is Arabic?" is the same as "What are the innovative features of Proto-Arabic?" or, more explicitly, "What are the innovations vis-à-vis common Central Semitic that are shared by all of, and only, what we call Arabic?"

But before we do proceed, we must decide what to *count* as Arabic. In particular, we must consider the status of the inscriptional varieties that are usually lumped together under the label "Ancient North Arabian" (ANA).[30] These have long been very poorly understood. A real problem is that, although there are tens of thousands of inscriptions, most of them are simple graffiti, names with a patronymic or an epithet or a brief prayer. Thus, much of the grammar remains unknown. But there has been some superb work on these dialects of late, especially by M. Macdonald, H. Hayajneh, and A. Al-Jallad. In a fundamental paper, Macdonald (2000: 29–30) emphasizes that the Ancient North Arabian dialects are not the same as Arabic: "it is now clear that Ancient North Arabian represents a linguistic strain which, while closely related to Arabic, was distinct from it." Hayajneh (2011: 760) refers to the northern Arabian peninsula during the first millennium BCE as a "linguistic area [with] several linguistic levels or strata." More recently, Al-Jallad goes still further, and questions "the validity of ANA as a genetic category," stating that "there are no *shared innovations* connecting the languages attested in the ANA scripts together against Arabic."[31] For now, therefore, the Ancient North Arabian material will be left out of consideration as we explore what it is that makes Arabic distinct. We will return to this question at the end of the paper.

Even leaving aside Ancient North Arabian, what *do* we include in the term "Arabic"? It is by now well established that "Classical Arabic"—whatever we include in that term—is just one of many forms of Arabic, and not the ancestor of all of the others.[32] Indeed, as is well known, even the grammar of the con-

29 For a more detailed study of the participation of Arabic in (micro) linguistic areas, see Al-Jallad 2013.

30 We may also note here the various possible attestations of early forms of Arabic in texts in other languages such as Akkadian and Northwest Semitic; see, e.g., Israel 2006.

31 Al-Jallad, this volume; similarly Al-Jallad 2014, esp. n. 12.

32 On the meaning of "Classical Arabic" see, multos inter alios, Retsö 2011, who suggests (783) that the term be restricted to "the explicit system of rules established by the grammarians.

sonantal text of the Qurʔān (the *rasm*) differs from that of its vocalization; both of those in turn exhibit features different from those of the various pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions, what Macdonald terms "Old Arabic."[33] And none of those can be considered Proto-Arabic, that is, the ultimate ancestor of all the other forms of Arabic.[34] A reconstructed Proto-Arabic must, by definition, be ancestral to all of these;[35] it must also be ancestral to the many modern forms of Arabic, which also exhibit several features in common that are not found in the classical language.[36]

J. Owens rightly insists that we should try to reconstruct the ancestors of the modern colloquial dialects without assuming that they are all descended from the classical language.[37] The idea is not unprecedented: there have been similar efforts to reconstruct proto-forms of some of the modern Aramaic languages, none of which descends from any of the many written forms of Aramaic at our disposal. Outside of Semitic, a very instructive parallel is offered by the Romance languages. Historical linguists have been working on the reconstruction of Proto-Romance for over a century. And Proto-Romance is not the same as Latin: it has a reduced case system,[38] no neuter, a different verbal system. Yet no one disputes that the Romance languages descend from Latin; it is just

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Strictly speaking, Classical Arabic is then a variant within the Arabiyya"; "Classical Arabic, or more properly the Arabiyya …, is thus a large complex with considerable variation represented by the language of the old poetry, the Qurʾān, the Classical norm, and Modern Standard Arabic." W. Heinrichs (email of 22.05.2010) notes that "the classical language" has several uses or meanings: "any non-colloquial *fuṣḥā* from the beginning of attested literature up till today; (b) the counterpart of 'pre-classical Arabic' (Wolfdietrich Fischer), the latter ruling from the beginnings roughly up to the end of the Umayyad period; (c) any pre-modern *fuṣḥā*."

33 Macdonald 2000: 61, 2007; Al-Jallad 2014.

34 And the various forms of "Middle Arabic," whether we mean written Arabic that is intended to be *fuṣḥā* but that exhibits intrusions of colloquial features, or simply written medieval Arabic more generally. See Blau 2002: 49; Khan 2011: 817; Al-Jallad 2012a: 407.

35 Similarly Al-Jallad 2014, n. 9: "Proto-Arabic must exclusively refer to the reconstructed ancestor of all the varieties of Arabic."

36 See Larcher 2010; Watson 2011a.

37 Owens 2006: 8–13 and *passim*.

38 Old French, for example, preserves a two-case system (Pope 1934: 308–314; Cohen 1973: 111–112) which, of course, eventually disappears. On Late Latin and its development into various Romance languages, see Vincent 1988; Posener 1996, especially 104–138. Many modern Germanic languages do not inflect for case (except the genitive), while others do, and yet we do not reconstruct two separate forms of Proto-Germanic, with and without cases.

not the Latin of Cicero, but rather a continuum of spoken forms of Latin that peek through the later stages of the written language. The modern colloquial forms of Arabic likewise do not descend directly from the classical written language. I cannot, however, agree with Owens that the colloquials derive from an ancestor or ancestors that existed from the Proto-Semitic period alongside the classical language.[39] There are undoubtedly *several* Proto-Neo-Arabics alongside the classical form of the language,[40] in a dialect continuum in which—just like today—those that were in contact influenced each other, and each was influenced by, and had its influence on, the classical literary language. But standard comparative-linguistic methodology requires that *all* of these—the several Proto-Neo-Arabic strains, the classical literary language, the pre-classical poetic language, the forms of Middle Arabic—that all of these various forms of Arabic *do* descend from a single entity that we can label Proto-Arabic, an entity that itself is a *unique* descendant of Central Semitic.

(Also unlike Owens, I believe that in any reconstruction of Proto-Neo-Arabic, we must also take substrate influence into account, even when we are not sure what that substrate influence might have looked like. A parallel is offered by Akkadian. There are what Assyriologists call peripheral dialects of Akkadian, dialects that were written by individuals well outside the core area in which Akkadian was originally spoken. Some of those may be purely written dialects, but some of them were certainly spoken. But those dialects betray clear evidence of their writers' native languages, and any features they exhibit that are not in the Mesopotamia dialects might be due to influence from those linguistic substrates, at a much later date than the "proto" period. Thus, we should not include those dialects in any first attempt to reconstruct Proto-Akkadian. We should start, instead, with the dialects where Akkadian originated, in Mesopotamia. I believe that a similar approach will be most effective in reconstructing Proto-Arabic, namely, to start with the dialects that are likely to be those where Arabic first emerged as a distinct language; this will include the Arabic of the peninsula, but equally, as Al-Jallad has convincingly shown, what he terms Ancient Levantine Arabic.[41] Even there one undoubtedly has to contend with influence from contact with speakers of Aramaic, with speak-

39 Owens 2006: 115. See also above, n. 8.

40 Note, for example, Al-Jallad's Ancient Levantine Arabic, which, although also later influenced by both the literary language and other spoken dialects, may be considered ancestral to today's Syro-Levantine dialects; see Al-Jallad 2012a: 379.

41 Al-Jallad (2012a: 379) persuasively argues that "Arabic has a long linguistic history in the Levant prior to the Islamic period," and that "Arabic moved into the Peninsula during the first few centuries of the Common Era."

ers of the various Ancient South Arabian languages, and with speakers of the ancestors of Mehri and the like.[42] But those influences are also possible in the classical language, and are near the time period in which we would place our Proto-Arabic.)

Before we can examine what this Proto-Arabic looks like, we must first review some of the features that Arabic has inherited from common Central Semitic.[43] For the most part, we need not consider features that derive from earlier nodes, common West Semitic, and Proto-Semitic itself, features such as the broken plurals and the *fāʕala* measure.

1. Tense-Mood-Aspect system. Not only the imperfective verb *yafʕalu*, but the entire classical Arabic Tense-Mood-Aspect system, with jussive *yafʕal*, subjunctive *yafʕala*, and energic forms *yafʕalan*(*na*), can be reconstructed to common Central Semitic. All of the forms, and most of their functions, can be found in Ugaritic, in the Canaanite-Akkadian texts from el-Amarna, and in early Biblical Hebrew (Sabaic, too, exhibits most of these forms). A feature that may be characteristic specifically of Arabic is the function of *yafʕala* as a marked subjunctive form. Apart from the latter, however, the Tense-Mood-Aspect system of the classical language is similar enough to what we reconstruct for Common Central Semitic that it is undoubtedly also a feature of Proto-Arabic. The quite different Tense-Mood-Aspect systems in the modern colloquials must therefore reflect later developments. Since they are so similar to one another, some of those developments may have occurred in one or more common ancestors, even though the actual morphological elements may differ in the individual colloquials (for example, for the new imperfectives), and are therefore not necessarily themselves part of those ancestors. (Alternatively, the similar arrangement may be the result of diffusion.)

2. The first-common-plural independent pronoun **naḥnŭ* 'we' is a Central Semitic innovation. For Proto-Semitic we must reconstruct **niḥnŭ* with *i* in the first syllable. The final *u* of **naḥnŭ* is inherited from Proto-Semitic, where the

42 See, e.g., Holes 2006. We might even add, perhaps, contact with speakers of Akkadian, if the late Babylonian king Nabonidus (ruled ca. 556–539 BCE), who lived in Taymāʔ for a time and who is mentioned in a few "North Arabian" inscriptions from Taymāʔ (Hayajneh 2001a, 2001b; Müller and al-Said 2002), still spoke Akkadian rather than Aramaic. Holes 2006: 31 also notes a number of possible Akkadian lexical vestiges in the Arabic of the Gulf area.

43 The following paragraphs are a summary of Huehnergard 2005.

enclitic 1cp element, on the suffix-conjugation, also ended in *-ŭ̆*; in other words, the suffix-conjugation 1cp form in Proto-Semitic, and in Proto-Central Semitic, was **samiʕnŭ̆*. The accusative form of the 1cp element, on the other hand, had final *-ă̆*, as in **naʡara-nă̆* 'he watched us'. Most of the Semitic languages levelled one or the other of these vowels through all cases: *ā* in Aramaic and Ethiopic, *ū* in Canaanite. In classical Arabic, of course, *ā* was levelled everywhere *except* the independent form *naḥnu*, while in the colloquial dialects, the levelling has been taken to its conclusion, as in the other languages, so that the independent form likewise usually has final *a*, as in *nəḥna*.[44]

3. In Proto-Semitic the endings of the suffix-conjugation in the first- and second-persons were **-kŭ̆, *-tă̆, *-tĭ̆*; it is likely that these were also endings in common Central Semitic, although all of the descendant languages have levelled either *t* or *k* throughout. The *kaškaša* dialects of Arabic are usually thought to be due to contact with Ancient or Modern South Arabian languages. Perhaps, however, Proto-Arabic, like Proto-Central Semitic, retained the heterogenous set of endings, and the levelling occurred as an areal phenomenon across southern Arabic dialects and the other languages.

4. An interesting feature of Central Semitic is the phonotactics of the geminate roots. Forms such as classical Arabic *yaruddu* 'he returns' reflect the operation of a Proto-Central Semitic sound rule that metathesized the second root consonant and the theme-vowel: **yardudu* > *yaruddu*. The forms with the geminated radical were levelled through most of the modern colloquials. Forms of the perfect with a diphthong or long vowel before the suffix, like *ḥaṭṭayna* 'we placed' (Damascus), which are normative in many colloquials, are already attested in pre-classical texts, and similar forms are found in ancient Hebrew;[45] the analogical source of these forms is fairly obvious (*bánā : banáyna :: ḥáṭṭa : X* = *ḥaṭṭáyna*), however, so we should probably not rush to assign them to common Central Semitic; they may well be parallel developments.[46]

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44 As the form *nəḥna* shows, some Arabic colloquials have forms with *i*, or a reflex of **i*, in the first syllable; these are probably the result of later sound changes, however; see Al-Jallad 2012a: 285–286.

45 E.g., *təsubbeynā* 'they (f) were surrounding' < **taʿsubb-ay-nă̆*.

46 The opposite seems to have happened in Safaitic, where III-*w/y* roots are reanalyzed as geminates in the D-stem, thus, *ġzy* but *ġzz*, *qṣy* but *qṣṣ*, *ḥlw* but *ḥll*, etc. (Al-Jallad 2015: § 5.6.1.b).

5. Another Proto-Central Semitic sound rule is the change of *w* to *y* after *i*. This rule caused a number of roots that were originally III-*w* to exhibit forms that were III-*y*; thus, e.g., we find *raḍiya* rather than the original **raḍiwa*. Some Central Semitic languages, such as Ugaritic and Sabaic, show much variability in these roots; in Ugaritic, for example, in the verb that is cognate with Arabic *ʔatā* 'to come', we find suffix-conjugation /ʾatawat/ 'she arrived', but prefix-conjugation /taʔtiyū/ 'they (m.) arrived'. In Arabic the conditioned alternation of final root consonants was generally levelled through, leaving only remnants of the original *w*; thus, *raḍiya* is consistently III-*y*, but has a *maṣdar riḍwān*. (In some roots, the *maṣdar* also exhibits the *y*, as in *ʔityān*, though even here there is a derived noun with *w*, *ʔitāwa*.) The colloquial dialects, again, have levelled still further, to fewer types of III-weak root, as has also happened in Aramaic and, to an even greater extent, in Hebrew.[47]

6. Proto-Central Semitic exhibited a characteristic distribution of vowels in the prefixes of the prefix-conjugation of the G (Form I), known to Hebraists as the Barth–Ginsberg Law: if the theme vowel was *u* or *i*, the prefix had *a*, whereas if the theme vowel was *a*, the prefix had *i*: thus, *yaktub, yaʔsir*, but *yirkab*.[48] Hebrew preserves this distribution only in a number of weak verb types (verbs I-guttural, geminate verbs, and hollow verbs); otherwise, the prefix with *i* has been levelled throughout the sound verb, as also happened in Aramaic. Only in Arabic do we see the levelling of the *a* prefix, as in the classical language, although even there we find a few vestiges of the earlier distribution, such as *ʔiḥālu* 'I think' and variant dialectal forms of some I-*w* verbs, such is *tījalu* 'you are afraid'; some modern colloquials, such as Najdi, also preserve this distribution (*yaktib* 'he writes' vs. *yismaʕ* 'he hears').[49] And some early dialects and many modern colloquials exhibit *taltala*, that is, levelling to *i*, as in *yiktub*, like Hebrew and Aramaic.[50]

7. Internal reconstruction suggests that Proto-Central Semitic had the same relative clause marker as Proto-Semitic. This was a form with the same shape

47 Macdonald (2000: 49, 2004: 509) notes that Safaitic preserves both the final radical of III-weak verbs and, sometimes at least, the original distinction between III-*w* and III-*y* verbs.

48 See Hasselbach 2004. More recently, however, Bar-Asher (2008) has argued that this distribution goes back to Proto-Semitic, not to a Proto-Central Semitic innovation.

49 Bloch 1967; Ingham 1984: 20; Behnstedt and Woidich 2005: 13.

50 Rabin 1951: 61; Fischer and Jastrow 1980: 62; Grand'Henry 1990 (my thanks to A. Magidow for the last reference).

and declension (in the singular) of the classical Arabic word *ðū*. Only in Arabic does this word develop into a noun meaning 'possessing, owner of'. But even that development cannot be assigned to Proto-Arabic, because the grammarians tell us that some of the early dialects preserved the form *ðū* or its genitive *ðī* in its original function as a relative marker. The relative *d* of some modern colloquials is probably also a reflex of this old form.[51]

The classical Arabic relative (*a*)*llaðī* was presumably a demonstrative pronoun originally, to judge by the parallel Hebrew form *hallāz*(*e*) 'this/that'. The unusual formation of these words in Arabic and Hebrew—the article plus the asservative particle **la* plus the old demonstrative base **ðȳ*—strongly suggests that it is a Proto-Central Semitic innovation. Its use as a new relative particle, however, is a specifically Arabic development, though perhaps not one that can be assigned to Proto-Arabic, in view of the continued use of the earlier *ðū* in some old (and perhaps modern) varieties of Arabic.[52]

8. One of the most intriguing developments of the Central Semitic languages is the definite article. Since an article is lacking in Akkadian and in classical Ethiopic, it is clear that Proto-Semitic did not have a definite article. And since some of the Central Semitic languages, such as Ugaritic and the language of the Deir ʕAllā inscription,[53] also lack an article, we must conclude that Proto-Central Semitic likewise had no definite article. In the Central Semitic languages that do exhibit an article, it has a variety of shapes:

Hebrew: *hab-bayit* 'the house'; *b-ab-bayit* 'in the house'
Arabic: *al-bayt* 'the house'; *ar-rajul* 'the man'; *li-r-rajul* 'to the man'
Aramaic: *bayt-ā* (earlier */bayt-aʾ/) 'the house'
Ancient South Arabian: ⟨BYTN⟩ /bayt-ān/ 'the house'

51 On *ð-* relatives in ancient and modern colloquials, see Behnstedt 1987: 84–85 (north Yemen); Watson 2011a: 861, 865; Al-Jallad 2013: 235. Eksell 2009, however, suggests that *d*-particles (as genitive exponents) in Syro-Mesopotamian Arabic dialects may be borrowed from Aramaic. In expressions such as *man ðā* and *mā ðā*, too, the second element is probably a frozen form of the Semitic relative; see Huehnergard 2005: 186–189; Huehnergard and Pat-El 2007.

52 Al-Jallad (p.c.) suggests that perhaps "the *ʾallaḍī* forms were typical of the Ḥiǧāzī forms of Arabic, since the only ancient attestation comes from Dadān."

53 Other Central Semitic languages without a definite article are the Northwest Semitic language of the Zincirli inscriptions and, possibly, the Ancient North Arabian language Hismaic. See Macdonald 2004: 518, Al-Jallad 2014.

But the article does have a remarkably consistent syntax, and recent studies have made a good case that, despite that variety of forms, the article in those languages descends from a common Proto-Central Semitic ancestor, a presentative particle, probably with the byforms **ha-* and **han-*, that was originally used to mark nominal attributives.[54] Thus, although a definite article *per se* is not a feature of Proto-Central Semitic, the presentative particle is, as is the beginning of the process that led to an article in the various descendant languages.

We are now finally in a position to consider a number of features as possible shared innovations of Proto-Arabic, features found throughout Arabic that are not features of common Central Semitic, that is, that are innovative features of Proto-Arabic vis-à-vis its most immediate ancestor. It should be emphasized that this is not intended as a complete list.[55] The features mentioned below are found in the classical language, and usually in the modern colloquials as well, though not in every case. We will then review a few features that are common to the modern forms of Arabic but missing from the classical. The lexicon is absent from both lists; I have not discussed the lexicon throughout this paper, because vocabulary is so easily borrowed, and it is so difficult to establish the lexicon of an ancestral language such as Proto-Central Semitic.[56]

1. Pronunciation of the emphatic consonants. There is an emerging consensus that the emphatic consonants of early Semitic were not uvularized or velarized,[57] as in Arabic, but rather glottalic, as in Ethiopic, in the Modern South Arabian languages, and probably also in Akkadian and early Northwest Semitic.[58] Thus, the pronunciation of these consonants in Arabic is atypical, and undoubtedly the result of an innovation.[59] Since it is common to nearly all forms of Arabic,[60] it can be labelled a Proto-Arabic feature. By the same

54 See especially Pat-El 2009; also Rubin 2005: 72–81; Huehnergard 2005; Hasselbach 2007.

55 Al-Jallad (2014 §2), e.g., adds to this list "the development of the new subordinating conjunction **tay* and the form **ḥattay* 'until'."

56 But see Kogan 2011b: 242–249 for a strong defense of incorporating the lexicon into the calculus of classification.

57 For this depiction of the Arabic pronunciation of the emphatics, rather than pharyngealized, see Heinrichs 2012.

58 The most recent survey of the evidence is Kogan 2011a: 59–61.

59 See, e.g., Zemánek 1996.

60 W. Heinrichs (p.c.) kindly reminds me that the Arabic of the Ḫarga Oasis in Egypt exhibits ejective [t'] and [q']; see Behnstedt 1980: 243. In the peninsular dialect of Zabīd, *q* is sometimes realized as [k']; see Watson 2011b: 899.

token, the standard Arabic pronunciation of the reflex of the earlier Semitic velar emphatic, **ḳ*, as a voiceless uvular /q/ is also innovative.[61] Further, as W. Heinrichs (2012) has recently argued, the voiced pronunciation of *q* in various modern colloquials, either as a uvular /G/ or, more often, as a velar /g/ (i.e., *gāf* rather than *qāf*), is also probably ancient, and to be explained as simply an alternative development of earlier **ḳ* when the emphatics became uvularized (the presence or absence of voicing being subphonemic in the pronunciation of these consonants).

2. The merger of Proto-Semitic **s* and **ṯ* (or **s*¹ and **s*³) is also a feature of all forms of Arabic.[62] The same merger occurs in late Sabaic inscriptions (Sima 2001, 2004; Stein 2003: 26–27), however, and it is unclear whether these are related phenomena.[63] The merger is not found otherwise in the neighboring Ancient South Arabian or Modern South Arabian languages.[64]

3. Central Semitic preserved two forms of the first singular pronoun from Common Semitic, **ʔanăˇ* and **ʔanākŭˇ*. A minor common Arabic feature is the loss of the longer of those forms. This loss is shared with Aramaic, presumably an independent development in each, unless the loss of the longer form in Arabic is the result of contact with Aramaic.

4. The feminine singular demonstrative element *t-*, as in *tilka, hātā*, (*ʔ*)*allatī*, is found almost nowhere else in Semitic.[65] It may be a bizarre remnant from Afro-Asiatic, since feminine demonstrative *t* occurs in ancient Egyptian. More likely, however, it reflects a levelling and reanalysis of the feminine nominal ending *-*(*a*)*t*,[66] and is thus an interesting Arabic innovation.

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61 On Arabic /q/ see Edzard 2008.

62 So also Mascitelli 2006: 19.

63 The merger of **s*¹ and **s*³ also appears before the late period in the Amiritic (Haramic) dialect of Sabaic, but there it is probably due to Arabic influence (Sima 2001; Stein 2013: 25–26, 42).

64 The same merger occurred in Safaitic as well as in most of the other Ancient North Arabian dialects; see further below. Proto-Semitic **s* and **ṯ* also merged in Proto-Ethiopic, a presumably independent development.

65 M. Macdonald points out (p.c.) that a relative particle *t* appears in late Sabaic inscriptions; see also Stein 2004: 237; Al-Jallad 2013: 232.

66 Hasselbach 2007: 3; differently Al-Jallad 2012a: 316–317, who suggests that a form **tay* was derived by reanalysis from *matay* 'when?'. As noted by Al-Jallad (2013: 235), the element *tī* appears already in *ʔallatī* in an early Arabic inscription found at Dadān.

5. In both Akkadian and Sabaic, singular unbound nouns ended in **-m*, that is, have *mimation*, **baytum*, while duals and external masculine plurals end in **-n*. The same distribution of endings undoubtedly obtained in both Proto-Semitic and Proto-Central Semitic. The presence of nunation—*tanwīn*—on singular nouns is unique to Arabic,[67] and is presumably a levelling of the *n* of the dual and the plural ending that was inherited from Central Semitic.[68]

6. In both Proto-Semitic and Proto-Central Semitic the feminine singular marker on nouns had two partly unpredictable allomorphs, **-at* and **-t*;[69] only in Arabic to we find these allomorphs levelled to the former (with very few exceptions, such as *bin-t* and *ʔuḫ-t*).[70]

7. In the perfect of the verb in Arabic, the 3rd feminine plural in *-na*, *faʕalna*, is almost unique in Semitic, being found otherwise only in Qatabanic (Ancient South Arabian). Most of the other Semitic languages preserve the original 3fp ending **-ā*. The source of Arabic *-na* is obvious, namely, analogy with the prefix-conjugation forms: *yafʕalū : yafʕalna :: faʕalū : X*, so perhaps it should not be assigned too much weight as a diagnostic feature. (The feminine plural is lost in many modern colloquials, but it is preserved in rural and Bedouin dialects across the Arabic-speaking world.[71])

8. The specialization of the form *mafʕūl* as a passive participle is a specifically Arabic development (and Safaitic; see further below). There are examples of *mafʕūl* as a passive form elsewhere in Semitic, for example Hebrew *maspūnîm*, 'treasures' < 'hidden things', but its use as the paradigmatic passive participle is unique to Arabic.

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67 The final *n* of the definite article in Ancient South Arabian is unrelated to *tanwīn*.

68 Mascitelli (2006: 256) mentions the forms *ʔibnum*(*un*) and *fam*(*un*), which may also preserve the old mimation. The very early Qaryat al-Fāw inscription (1st century BCE?) exhibits a few forms with final *-m*, at least one of which is almost certainly a vestige of ancient mimation rather than an enclitic *-m* (as was argued by Beeston 1979). If the inscription is indeed ancient Arabic, then the change to *n* would not quite be Proto-Arabic. But Al-Jallad (2014) presents cogent arguments that the inscription exhibits no shared innovations that characterize Arabic and, thus, that it should not be considered Arabic.

69 See, however, Steiner 2012, for a proposed historical development to account for the distribution of these allomorphs.

70 Huehnergard 2005: 167–168; see also Al-Jallad this volume § 5.2.

71 Diem 1973: 13; Fischer and Jastrow 1980: 119–120; Behnstedt and Woidich 2005: 43.

9. Arabic is also unique in not having a specific paradigmatic infinitive in the basic stem (Form I),[72] instead having a large set of *maṣdar*s. Many of the forms of the *maṣdar*s are attested in the other Semitic languages, but the absence of a paradigmatic form is an interesting development.

10. The G internal passive prefix-conjugation form *yufʕal* is also common Central Semitic. But the vowel melody of the suffix-conjugation forms, *u~i* as in *fuʕila, ʔufʕila*, etc., is specifically Arabic (vs. **ḳuttal* in Northwest Semitic; note also the verbal adjective patterns *ḳatil/ḳattul* in East Semitic).

11. The particle *qad*, as in *qad faʕala*, is probably a grammaticalized form of the root *qadama* 'to precede'.[73] If we compare the classical Ethiopic tandem verb construction *ḳadama baṣḥa* 'he arrived first', it is not difficult to see how the first verb might be grammaticalized as a marked perfective or marked preterite form.[74] The semantic grammaticalization was accompanied, as is often the case, by phonetic reduction of **qadama* > *qad*.[75] The *qad faʕala* construction is common in early Arabic, of course; it is also found in a few of the modern colloquials of the peninsula, such as Najdi *gid/ǧid*, and in some Yemeni dialects.[76] It also appears once in a Safaitic text (Al-Jallad 2015: §5.1.2.b).

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72 W. Heinrichs suggests (p.c.) that "one might perhaps say that *faʕlun* is the default infinitive. This is indicated by (a) the fact that *faʕlun* is normally used with 1st-form denominative verbs (*kabadahū kabdan* 'he hit/wounded him in the liver'), and (2) the *ism al-marra* of the 1st verb stem is *faʕlatun* (since with derived verb stems the *ism al-marra* is simply formed by adding the feminine ending *-atun* to the infinitive [*ibtisāmun* 'smiling' vs. *ibtisāmatun* 'one smile'], *faʕlatun* points to an infinitve *faʕlun*)." If we accept this, the default usage of *faʕl* would also be a development; the usual infinitive forms in other Central Semitic languages are *faʕāl* (Hebrew, Ugaritic; also in Akkadian), *fiʕl* (Hebrew, Ugaritic), *fuʕ(u)l* (Hebrew), though we may note also forms such as Hebrew *ʔahăbā* 'to love', a *faʕlat* form; for Ugaritic, see Tropper 2012: 480–490.

73 Alternatively, as W. Heinrichs reminds me (p.c.), *qad* may derive from (accusative) *qidman*, which appears in ancient texts in the same function as *qad*.

74 Similarly in Syriac, e.g., *qaddem w-ḥawwi* 'he showed previously', *qaddemt ʔemret* 'I said beforehand' (Nöldeke 1898: 262 §335, 264 §337A); note also North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic *qəm-qāṭəl* as a perfective past, with *qəm* probably from *qḏam* (Khan 2012: 224–225).

75 This process was already suggested by de Lagarde 1889, but the grammaticalization aspect is now much clearer.

76 Ingham 1984: 104–107; Holes 2006: 26–27.

12. As Mascitelli has pointed out (2006: 19), the preposition *fī*, presumably derived from the noun 'mouth', is unique to Arabic (and Safaitic; see further below).

13. Throughout Semitic the third-person pronouns are also used as anaphoric or remote demonstratives, as in Akkadian *šarrum šū* or Hebrew *hammélek ha-hû?* for 'that king'. Indeed, it is likely that the anaphoric meaning is the original. Only Arabic and the Modern South Arabian languages do not use these pronouns for remote deixis.[77] The non-use of 3rd-person pronouns in this way thus seems to be a Proto-Arabic feature.[78] The same feature in Modern South Arabian may indicate an areal phenomenon, or a parallel development, or influence from Arabic.

14. As shown by N. Pat-El (2014), Classical Arabic exhibits innovative morpho-syntax in its relative clause constructions (as presented by the grammarians), viz., *rajulun raʔaytu*(*hū*) and *ar-rajulu llaðī raʔaytu* vs. the common Semitic patterns that would yield Arabic *rajulu raʔaytu* and *rajulun allaðī raʔaytu* (i.e., {construct plus clause} or {non-construct plus relative pronoun plus clause}).[79]

Two other typical Arabic features are the relative pronoun *allaðī* and the form *al-* for the definite article.[80] But neither of these can be assigned to Proto-Arabic, since they are not found in all forms of Arabic. As noted earlier, reflexes of the ancient Semitic relative **ðū* persist in various ancient (and perhaps modern) forms of Arabic. And it is well known that the article in some Yemeni dialects, both ancient and modern, is *am-* or *an-*.[81] Further, the assimilation

77 Hasselbach 2007 also includes Aramaic and Ugaritic among the languages that do not use the anaphoric pronouns for remote deixis; there are, however, examples in Ugaritic (Tropper 2012: 212–213 § 41.132), and, as she herself notes, examples in various Aramaic dialects.

78 Hasselbach 2007: 16 plausibly suggests that the use of the anaphoric pronoun to express remote deixis is a later development than the use of forms that are based on the forms used for near deixis (such as Arabic *ðālika*), because the latter are found vestigially in many languages alongside the former. Nevertheless, the demonstrative use of the anaphoric pronouns across all branches of Semitic indicates that it is also a feature of Proto-Semitic, one that was lost in the languages that do not exhibit it.

79 There are exceptions, however, that conform to the common Semitic type; see Retsö 2006: 28. See also the paper of L. Edzard in this volume.

80 Also in Safaitic and, perhaps, Dadanitic; see Al-Jallad 2014. On Safaitic, see further below.

81 Rabin 1951: 34–36, 50–51; Fischer and Jastrow 1980: 121; Beeston 1981: 185–186; Behnstedt 1987: 85–87; Rubin 2005: 78; Al-Jallad 2014. My thanks to N. Pat-El for some of these references.

of the *l* to the following consonant is not consistent: it assimilates to all consonants in some dialects, not at all in some ancient dialects, and there are many permutations between these extremes.[82] Thus the form of the article in Proto-Arabic may have been variable.[83]

As is well known, the modern Arabic colloquials share a number of features that are not found in the classical language, or found only marginally, and Arabists have discussed these features and their significance at some length.[84] Some of the features that are shared by many of the colloquials may be inherited from earlier Semitic,[85] and thus they would also constitute part of Proto-Arabic even though they do not appear in the classical language. A number of these have already been mentioned, namely:

1. the *taltala* forms *yiʃʕul*;
2. the *kaškaša* dialects; and
3. forms such as *ḥaṭṭayna*.

Other possible examples are the following:

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82 See, e.g., Behnstedt 1987: 85; Macdonald 2000: 51; Al-Jallad 2014 § 2, this volume § 5.5.

83 Another possible feature is the common Arabic negative *mā*, which is not regularly found elsewhere in Semitic. It probably developed out of the interrogative *mā* that is found throughout Central Semitic (and occasionally in Akkadian), although the precise path of the development remains uncertain; see Rubin 2005: 50; Al-Jallad 2012b; Pat-El 2012 (*pace* Faber 1991, who considers *mā* to be a vestige of an Afro-Asiatic negative marker). As these writers note, however, instances of negative *mā*(*h*) are also attested sporadically in Northwest Semitic languages; thus, the development is a Central Semitic one, which Arabic has simply expanded. A. Al-Jallad (email of 30.11.2013) also reports the occurrence of negative *m* in a mixed Hismaic–Safaitic inscription (KRS 2543).

Still other specifically Arabic features are suggested by Retsö (2013: 439–440). Among them he notes form IX *iffʕalla* as "found only within the Arabic complex"; there are, however, similar forms in Akkadian (the rare R stem) and in Biblical Hebrew (e.g., *šaʔănan* 'to be at ease' and adjectives such as **ʔadumm-* 'red'), and so the form must be reconstructed for Proto-Semitic. Similarly the more widespread use of the dual in classical Arabic (on pronouns, adjectives, and verbs) is found not only in Ancient South Arabian languages, as noted by Retsö, but also in Old Akkadian and in Ugaritic. (The discussion of this feature in Watson 2011a: 861 must also be corrected; Classical Arabic forms mirror those of Old Akkadian.) The negative *mā* is also attested in Safaitic (Al-Jallad 2015: 156).

84 See the summary in Watson 2011: 859–862.

85 See also the paper of N. Pat-El in this volume for additional features. The preservation of earlier features in colloquials is a well-known phenomenon; cf. colloquial English *'em* (as in *We found 'em*), a vestige of Old/Middle English *him/hem*, as an alternative to the standard *them*, which was borrowed from Norse; see Greenbaum 1996: 167.

4. Independent third person pronouns such as Bišmizzen *huwwi*, *hiyyi* and Bīr Zēt *hūte*, *hīte*, which Al-Jallad (2012a: 283–285) has argued are reflexes of ancient Semitic oblique forms of the pronouns (**suʔāti*, **siʔāti*).
5. The use of third person independent pronouns as copulas. This construction is possible in the classical language if the predicate is definite, as in *ʔulāʔika humu l-kāfirūna* 'those are the unbelievers'; but it does not seem to be common in the classical language, whereas it is common in some of the colloquials, as noted by Brustad (2000: 157–158), in sentences such as (Egyptian Arabic) *ʔana huwwa ʔinta* 'I am you'. Such constructions are also common in Northwest Semitic languages and in Ethiopic, and their frequency in the modern colloquials may reflect this earlier Semitic situation rather than an expansion of the classical usage.
6. In a number of colloquials, *fī* 'in it', originally *fī-hi*, is a particle that expresses existence, 'there is/are'.[86] There are hints of these pseudo-verbs, as Brustad (2000: 151–157) calls them, in classical and pre-classical texts, but they have an exact analogue in classical Ethiopic, where *bo* or *botu* 'in it' can even be construed with an accusative complement, like *kāna*. There is also an Akkadian verb, *bašûm*, that means 'to exist, be present', a verb without Semitic cognates unless we derive it from **ba-sŭ* 'in it'.[87] Thus, the use of 'in it' to express existence seems to be quite ancient in Semitic.
7. In some colloquials, the copula verb *kān* need not agree with its subject;[88] similarly, some dialects allow a frozen 3ms pronoun to serve as a copula. This may be an inner-Arabic development. But it is worth pointing out that copula verbs elsewhere in Semitic, for example Hebrew (*hāyā*), Syriac (*ʔit-*(*h*)*wā*), Sabaic (*kwn*), and Akkadian (*ibašši* 'there is'), also tend to occur as frozen 3ms forms regardless of the gender and number of their subject.
8. Noun–noun modification by means of a genitive exponent. It is well known that the Semitic languages are characterized by *ʔiḍāfa*, a construct genitive chain for noun–noun modification. But a second construction for noun–noun modification must also be reconstructed for Proto-Semitic, namely, the use of the bound form particle **ðū*, as in **baytum ðū baʕlim* 'the house of the lord';[89] in other words, in Proto-Semitic a noun could fill the slot after **ðū* as well as a clause. This construction is found in every ancient Semitic language, and is preserved in classical Arabic in

86 Similarly in some Yemeni dialects, *beh*, *boh* (negative *mā bīš/būš*; Diem 1973: 17–18).

87 See, e.g., Rubin 2005: 45–46.

88 Brustad 2000: 260–261.

89 See Bar-Asher Siegal 2013, Pat-El 2014.

the use of *ðū* plus genitive in apposition to a preceding noun, *imruʔun ðū mālin* 'a man of wealth', *ar-rajulu ðū l-ḥilmi* 'the man of reason'.[90] That construction is not perceived as equivalent to the construct chain, however. As is well known, many modern colloquials have a genitive exponent,[91] and it may be that this common development reflects a successor to the use of **ðū* as such in earlier Semitic.

To conclude this paper, we return briefly to the inscriptional Ancient North Arabian material, and ask whether there is any way to decide whether it, or a subset of it, is part of Arabic, that is, whether any part of Ancient North Arabian shares a common ancestor with Arabic, or instead constitutes a separate branch or set of branches of the Central Semitic group. As noted earlier, what has been called Ancient North Arabian is in all likelihood a number of distinct languages that share the same script, but not necessarily any genetic affiliation. According to Macdonald and Al-Jallad, several of these languages—Taymanitic, Thamudic, and Dadanitic—exhibit various peculiarities vis-à-vis Arabic; further study is needed to elucidate those features, and we must, unfortunately, continue for now to leave them out of our consideration of the parameters of what constitutes Arabic. But Safaitic, by far the most commonly attested of these inscriptional languages, is becoming better understood, and Al-Jallad notes that it does share a number of innovative features with Arabic,[92] namely:

1. the preposition *ʃ* 'in';[93]
2. *mfʕl* as a frequent passive participle, though not as widespread as *fʕl*;[94]

90 Fischer 2006: 203 § 391a, 206 § 398.1.

91 See Eksell Harning 1980.

92 Al-Jallad (this volume) also notes that "Ḥismaic and Arabic share several interesting isoglosses"; but he also points to a number of important differences, and so I have felt it best to leave Ḥismaic out of consideration here.

93 Al-Jallad this volume.

94 Macdonald 2004: 517; Al-Jallad this volume. Note that the vocalization of the passive *fʕl* adjective is sometimes /faʕīl/ and sometimes /faʕūl/ in early Greek transcriptions (see Al-Jallad ibid. § 5.7); since the paradigmatic passive participle is **ḳatūl* in Hebrew and **ḳatīl* in Aramaic, both forms must be reconstructed to Proto-Northwest Semitic; the Graeco-Arabica forms indicate that both forms are to be reconstructed to Proto-Central Semitic as well.

3. a feminine demonstrative element *t*;[95]
4. the use of *lm yfʕl* for past negation.[96]

These features are admittedly few in number, but they may suffice to indicate that Safaitic shares a common ancestor with Arabic; that, in other words, it is descendent from Proto-Arabic and may be considered a part of the Arabic continuum.[97] There are differences between Safaitic and the rest of Arabic, however:[98]

1. Although the definite article in Safaitic is occasionally *ʔl-* or (with assimilation of *l*) *ʔ-*, it is usually *h-*, as in other Ancient North Arabian languages.[99]
2. Safaitic exhibits 3ms perfects of middle-weak verbs that, curiously, exhibit a medial *w* or *y*, such as *ḥwr* 'he returned' and *myt* 'he died'.[100]

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95 E.g., in *ʔrḍ t* 'this land' and *tk h-gml* 'those are the camels'; for these and other examples, see Al-Jallad 2015: § 4.9.

96 Note *bġy l-ʔḫ-h f-lm yʕd* 'he sought his brother, but he did not return' (Maʿani and Sadaqah 2002: 253, text 2; my thanks to A. Al-Jallad for this reference; on *lm*, see also Macdonald 2000: 49–50, 2004: 521); for another example, see Al-Jallad 2015: § 8.1. While preterite *yafʕal* is inherited from Central Semitic, the construction with *lam* is otherwise specific to Arabic.

Note also the merger of Proto-Semitic **ś* (*ś*[1]) and **tś* (*ś*[3]), which occurred in both Arabic and Safaitic (Macdonald 2004: 499), but not, as noted above (n. 64), elsewhere in Central Semitic. The same merger also occurred in most of the other Ancient North Arabian languages (with the possible exception of Taymanitic, for which see Macdonald 1991, Müller and al-Said 2002).

97 The Safaitic analogues of the other innovative features of Arabic outlined above, such as the particle *qad*, are unfortunately not yet attested.

98 Note that Safaitic also lacks the relative *allaðī*; see Al-Jallad 2013: 235.

99 See especially Al-Jallad 2014, § 3.1 (h). Macdonald (2000: 51; 2008: 471) suggests that the texts in which *ʔ(l)-* appear are "Safaeo-Arabic mixed texts," but Al-Jallad (ibid.; also this volume, n. 28) argues that since "these texts all exhibit common Safaitic features" it is preferable to see in them "a dialect of Safaitic which happens to use an *ʔl-* article."

Livingstone (1997) has suggested that, in an Akkadian inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III (ruled 744–727 BCE), the writing SAL.ANŠE *a-na-qa-a-te* 'she-camels' exhibits a very early example of the definite article; but even if correct, the form of the article is ambiguous, either *ha(n)-nāqāti* or *ʔan-nāqāti* < *ʔal-nāqāti*. Further, Livingstone's suggestion has been disputed; see Hämeen-Anttila 2009.

100 Macdonald 2004: 509. According to Al-Jallad (this volume), these forms occur alongside forms without the medial *w* or *y*, e.g., both *myt* and *mt* for 'he died'. What is curious is

As Al-Jallad suggests, the most economical way to account for these facts is to see the innovative features of either Safaitic or Classical Arabic as having developed after the Proto-Arabic period.[101] In other words, Safaitic would be descendent from Proto-Arabic, but represent an early branching from the rest of Arabic. The form of the definite article is not terribly significant, since, as we have seen above, it was probably variable in Proto-Arabic.

In conclusion, we may suggest the following provisional branching for Central Semitic, with Safaitic as an early offshoot from Proto-Arabic:

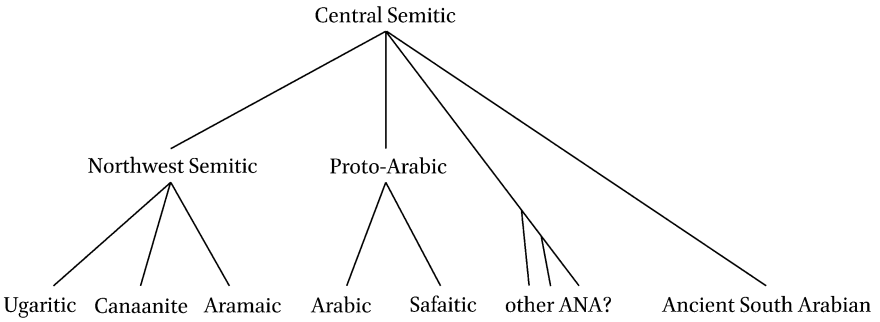

FIGURE 1.3 *Classification of Arabic*

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that all of Central Semitic otherwise exhibits the simplification of the original medial triphthong into a single vowel, as in Arabic *kāna*; see Huehnergard 2005: 176–178.

101 As Al-Jallad suggests, the most economical way to account for these facts is to see the innovative features of either Safaitic or Classical Arabic as having developed after the Proto-Arabic period. Another feature in which Safaitic differs from Arabic proper is the pervasive assimilation of syllable-final *n* to a following consonant, as in *ʔfs*[1] 'funerary monuments' < **ʔanfus*. This is undoubtedly an areal phenomenon: it is also a regular feature of Northwest Semitic, and at least a sporadic feature of Sabaic. Indeed only Arabic among the Central Semitic languages does not usually exhibit assimilation of *n*. (And there are also a few instances in which Arabic does exhibit assimilation of *n* to a following consonant, as in the poetic form *mil-* for *mina-l-*, and *muðð*(*u*) for *munð*(*u*) [see Rabin 1951: 73, 189], as well as the assimilation of *tanwīn* to a following word.)

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