

## Some Qatabanic Lexical Items Philological and Linguistic Observations

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[In this paper the Qatabanic lexical items *ḥr*, *qrđ*, *fʕ*, *hlk*, *mnly*, *td* and *wzl* are examined from a linguistic and philological perspective and the historical, cultural and comparative implications are also emphasised. Ancient South Arabian is considered as one independent branch within Semitic comprising several different cognate languages].

**Keywords:** Ancient South Arabian, lexicography.]

Over the last years the author has published a number of papers on the Qatabanic lexicography<sup>1</sup> in which difficult lexical items have been examined in detail. This article presents some further material which is particularly interesting for cultural and linguistic reasons.

The ultimate aim of this examination is to reassess the Qatabanic lexicon in order to compile a new Qatabanic dictionary<sup>2</sup>. Throughout this work the importance of a philological approach and a comparative perspective has been emphasised. A philological approach allows the reconstruction of significant aspects of the Qatabanian culture, while a comparative perspective is an essential aspect in resolving the controversial issue of the classification of Ancient South Arabian (ASA) within Semitic.

### *ḤR “market’s superintendent”*

The root *ḥr* is attested only as a nominal form on the market stela of Timna<sup>c</sup> (inscriptions CSAI I, 2005A, B, C=R 4337, A, B, C). This is a law issued by the Qatabanian king and tribe which regulates trading activities and the organisation of the market of Timna<sup>c</sup>. The contexts suggest that term *ḥr* designates a type of official in charge of supervising the trading activities in the main market of Timna<sup>c</sup>, *S<sup>2</sup>mr*. Scholars agree on its interpretation such as “*superintendent, supervisor of the market*”<sup>4</sup>. This official

1. Mazzini 2002; 2006 (A); 2008; 2009 (A).

2. See in particular the observations in Mazzini 2006 (A), 239-240.

3. The text of this inscription is quite controversial. The recent interpretation by Avanzini 2004, 284-290 diverges significantly from that by both Beeston 1959, 1971 and Müller 1983.

4. Ricks 1989, 117. Beeston 1959, 12, “*overseer*”; Müller 1983, 278, “*Aufseher*”; Avanzini 2004, 285, “*magistrate*”.

is titled *ʿhr S<sup>2</sup>mr* (CSAI I, 205A=R 4337A, 16; 22; 27; CSAI I, 205B=R 4337B 1-2; 6-7), which indicates that this office was specifically linked to the market of Timna<sup>c</sup>. In inscription CSAI I, 205A=R 4337 A, 16 it is stated that no one was allowed to trade in the market of Timna<sup>c</sup> without the permission of this superintendent and so all traders had to be authorised by him<sup>5</sup>. A similar statement is also reported in line 22. In inscription CSAI I, 205B=R 4337B, 6 it seems that the superintendent is imposing taxes on trading activity carried on in the market *S<sup>2</sup>mr*<sup>6</sup>. Particularly significant is the following passage at the end of CSAI I, 205B=R 4337B, 25-28, “*w-l ykn<sup>26</sup> s<sup>2</sup>y<sup>2</sup>m b-y<sup>2</sup>s<sup>2</sup>y<sup>2</sup>ṭw<sup>27</sup>n Q<sup>2</sup>tb<sup>2</sup>n bn S<sup>2</sup>mr b<sup>28</sup>n ḥdwr b-ʿhr Q[<sup>2</sup>tb<sup>2</sup>n]*” which may be translated as “*and may be placed<sup>26</sup> the merchandise, which Qataban will<sup>27</sup> buy in S<sup>2</sup>mr from the<sup>28</sup> shops, under the authority of the market-supervisor of Qa[<sup>2</sup>taban]*”<sup>7</sup>. Here, the official is called *ʿhr Q<sup>2</sup>tb<sup>2</sup>n*, the superintendent representing the whole tribal community (*Q<sup>2</sup>tb<sup>2</sup>n*), and it is specifically stated that any trading activity must be conducted under his authority. The importance of this official is also evident from the expression *mlk Q<sup>2</sup>tb<sup>2</sup>n w-ʿhr S<sup>2</sup>mr*, which occurs twice in inscriptions CSAI I, 205A =R 4337A, 27 and CSAI I, 205B =R 4337B, 1-2, where the king and superintendent appear to cooperate in the administration of the market.

This root occurs in both Sabaic and Minaic but in these languages it has different meaning from Qatabanic. In Sabaic, it refers to a social class of the important tribe *Fys<sup>2</sup>n*<sup>8</sup>, and has been interpreted as “*nobles*”<sup>9</sup>. The etymological origin of this root is uncertain. The only possible parallel is provided by Arabic where the term *ʿāhil* means “*noble*”. Given that there is no phonetic parallel between ASA *r* and Arabic *l*, the relationship between the two roots remains uncertain. The hypothesis that the root was borrowed by Arabic from ASA cannot be completely ruled out<sup>10</sup>.

#### *F’Y* “*to destroy*”

The root *f<sup>2</sup>y* occurs several times in Qatabanic as a participial form in the *s<sup>2</sup>* stem, *msf<sup>2</sup>y*<sup>11</sup>. Its meaning is “*to destroy*” or “*to damage*”, as the context and the comparative evidence demonstrates. Indeed, the form *msf<sup>2</sup>y* occurs in the formulaic curse traditionally used at the end of dedicatory texts against any possible mistreatment of the object carrying the inscription<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, the root *f<sup>2</sup>y* is also attested in Arabic with the meaning “*to strike, to break*”<sup>13</sup>.

5. See Avanzini 2004, 285.

6. The interpretation of the passage is problematic because of the term *hmd* that is controversial. Here, the author has accepted the rendering by Beeston 1959, 8: “*tax assessment*” (Avanzini 2004, 288).

7. This rendering is a recent revision of the text by Mazzini 2009 (A), 160; see also Avanzini 2004, 288.

8. See in C 601, 3 and R 3951, 1. In Minaic the term *ʿhr* is attested in M 291=R 3285, 2; M 361= R 3700, 3; M 365=R 3705, 4; M 366=R 3706, 3; B-Int 32, 3 (unpublished).

9. See SD, 14. Although in Minaic this term occurs in fragmentary texts, the contexts may suggest a sense similar to that of the same word in Sabaic.

10. On the question of loans in the ASA and Arabic lexicon some observations can be found in Rabin 1984 and recently Weninger 2009, but this issue should be examined more systematically. In this regard it should be noted that the term *ʿhr* is attested outside the Minaean kingdom, namely in al-ʿUlā and Madāʿin Šāliḥ in the north of the Arabic peninsula, which could explain the loan in Arabic.

11. See in particular CSAI I, 94=Atlal, 11; CSAI I, 123=Aylward 2, 7; CSAI I, 158=CIAS 95.11 / r 8 n. 1, 6; CSAI I, 130=Hoqat, 6; Lion1, 6; CSAI I, 143=Mub 206, 7; CSAI I, 144=Mub 409, 5; CSAI I, 183=R 3872, 4; CSAI I, 153= R 4704; 3; R 4937, 3.

12. See one example of this formula in CSAI I, 130=Hoqat, 6-7: *bn mshkr<sup>2</sup>m w-msf<sup>2</sup>y<sup>2</sup>m b<sup>7</sup> n br<sup>2</sup>t-s<sup>2</sup>ʿ* “*against everyone who may damage or destroy it<sup>7</sup> from its place*”.

13. Note that this root is also used once in the Old Testament, Dt 32, 26 as a rare poetic verb expression meaning “*to destroy*” in the context of a curse. This parallel with the ASA usage is significant and can be considered a further diagnostic datum for the classification of ASA within Central Semitic (see Voigt 1987 and recently Avanzini 2009).

It is interesting to note that this same root in the *s<sup>L</sup>* stem is also frequently found in the Minaic documentation<sup>14</sup> within a similar formulaic curse and therefore it is possible that the root *sfʿy* is a Qatabanic-Minaic isogloss.

*HLK* “to accomplish a work / to conform to a law”

In a previous paper the author examined the uses of the root *h<sup>L</sup>k*<sup>15</sup> in Qatabanic, where it was noted that this root is only attested in Qatabanic and in Ḥaḍramitic. Recently a new Minaic text, YM 26106, has been published<sup>16</sup> in which the root *h<sup>L</sup>k* also occurs. This is an expiatory inscription whose general sense is uncertain and therefore the exact meaning of this root cannot be established with certainty. The translation proposed by the editor of the inscription<sup>17</sup>, “to break”, appears to be reasonable in view of the context. This meaning matches the equivalent root in Arabic, but it would diverge considerably from the Qatabanic meaning which is both “to accomplish a work” (concrete) and “to conform to a law” (abstract)<sup>18</sup>.

The author also noted that the Qatabanic meaning “to accomplish a work” can be paralleled with the only occurrence of this root in Ḥaḍramitic<sup>19</sup>. However, this text is also quite problematic and its interpretation controversial. More recently the author has proposed a revision of this text<sup>20</sup> according to which the root *h<sup>L</sup>k* is interpreted as “to conform, to comply”, a sense which is more closely linked to the abstract meaning occurring in Qatabanic.

*MNHY* “in direction of”

The term *mnhy* is attested once in the Qatabanic corpus (CSAI I, 4= R 3878, 1) and it has been interpreted “in the direction of”<sup>21</sup>. This interpretation apparently relies on Rhodokanakis<sup>22</sup> who suggested the rendering “in Richtung nach” for the same term that also occurs in Sabaic<sup>23</sup>. This interpretation appears to be convincing given the contexts where the term occurs in both languages<sup>24</sup>.

It is interesting to note that the term *mnhy* appears to be a noun<sup>25</sup>, despite its use as a preposition. Given this, it may have been used originally as a noun and then later developed into a preposition. This is reasonable in view of parallel cases such as *fnwt*, *nwyt*, and *nsʿ(n)* occurring in Ancient Sabaic<sup>26</sup>. It is important to emphasise that this specific use of *mnhy* is only attested in Ancient Sabaic<sup>27</sup> and in one

14. In Minaic this form is attested as an imperfective (*ysfʿy*) and as an infinitive (*sfʿy*).

15. Mazzini 2002.

16. Arbach-Audouin 2007, 52.

17. Arabach in Arbach-Audouin 2007, 52.

18. The hypothesis that this meaning might also be used to interpret the root *h<sup>L</sup>k* in the aforementioned Minaic inscription cannot be completely ruled out. If it is the case, the text reports that the state authority of Maʿīn conformed (*h<sup>L</sup>k*) to their pact (*ʿm-sm*) which enabled them (*shhy*) to exploit the water of the main wādī. Yet, this was a grave infraction because it appears that the wādī was under the protection of the god *Wdm*. Therefore, the community was required to perform an expiatory ritual in order to reestablish the authority of the god over the wādī.

19. Mazzini 2002, 330-331.

20. Mazzini 2009 (B), 540-541. See also Multhoff 2010, 25-26.

21. Ricks 1989, 104.

22. Ricks does not mention directly Rhodokanakis.

23. Rhodokanakis 1917, 99; 1927, 19.

24. From a semantic point of view the term *mnhy* is related to the ASA root *nhy* indicating “to flow”.

25. A noun *mnhy* is largely attested in Sabaic with the meaning “supply-channel of irrigated area” (SD, 95).

26. This aspect has been recently examined by Prioletta 2002. Note also the parallel with Arabic *naḥwa*, although the phonetic inconsistency ASA *h* / Arabic (and Semitic) *ḥ* remains unclear. The prepositional use of *nsʿ(n)* was already observed by Beeston 1962, 57; 1984, 58. Both Stein 2003 (in the chapter *Die Partikeln*, pp. 207-244) and Nebes - Stein 2004, do not mention any of them.

27. Prioletta 2002, 343-344.

Qatabanic text dating to the early phase<sup>28</sup>. These data seem to point to an isogloss between Qatabanic and Sabaic reflecting an archaic phase of both languages<sup>29</sup>.

*QRD* “dam?”

The term *qrđ* refers to irrigation structures that were constructed by kings in certain areas<sup>30</sup>. The term is usually interpreted as a “dam”<sup>31</sup> in line with Jamme<sup>32</sup>. The scholar proposed this rendering on the basis that there was an etymological connection with the Semitic root *QRD* meaning “to pinch” or “to cut”. Jamme suggested that “the word may be translated “pincers” and is a figurative word for dam describing the action of the latter as “pinching, cutting” the flow of water in order to get hold of it”<sup>33</sup>. Although the interpretation dam is reasonable, the contexts in which the term occurs are ambiguous and do not provide any precise information about the nature of the structure. Furthermore, it should be noted that the term *gurđah* is still used in the modern Arabic dialect of Ṣan‘ā’ to indicate “mixture of lime, ashes, and calcium carbonate forming of a sort of cement, esp. used for foundation”<sup>34</sup>. In view of this, the Qatabanic root *qrđ* may describe the material used for construction<sup>35</sup> rather than the action of pinching, or cutting the flow of water. If the material used for the construction designated the whole structure, any type of installation, including a dam, might be proposed. Therefore, alternative interpretations such as “canal” or “cistern” cannot be ruled out and the usual interpretation “dam” should be considered highly hypothetical.

It is worth noting that the root *qrđ* is also attested once in the Ancient Sabaic inscription, R 4813, 1. Here, the term *qrđ* occurs as a title of functionary in the following context: *Ybħr’l Ylf qrđ Yd’l bn B’tr d-Sħ[... ..]*. The passage refers to an individual named *Ybħr’l Ylf* who bears the title *qrđ* of the king, *Yd’l bn B’tr*. Although the text is fragmentary and very laconic<sup>36</sup>, the beginning expression composed of “name of a private + title + name of king” is attested quite often in the ASA documents. This type of expression usually refers to officials who were very close to the king. These individuals played a significant role in ancient South Arabian society. Unfortunately it is very difficult to reconstruct the actual characteristics of these officials because of lack of detailed information. The title *qrđ* occurring in the Sabaic text has been interpreted as “loanmonger” on the basis of the meaning occurring in Arabic (“to borrow, to loan”)<sup>37</sup>. However, the Qatabanic lexical data discussed above might point to a title such as “supervisor in charge of the construction activities or of the construction of particular buildings”. Given the limited evidence, this proposal remains very hypothetical. Apart from this possible parallel in Ancient Sabaic, thus far the Qatabanic root *qrđ* is unattested elsewhere in ASA.

28. Avanzini 2004, 26; 50-52.

29. Priolella 2002, 344, suggests a loan from Sabaic (accepted by Avanzini 2004, 26; 42) in view of the influence of Sabaic on Qatabanic in the archaic historical period. This hypothesis is challenging and cannot be completely ruled out. However, the Qatabanic documentation of the archaic period is quite limited and stereotyped, and therefore, apart from the use of the Sabaic pronominal suffix/causative preformative *h* (also used in the same historical period within the Ḥaḍramitic texts), it is very difficult to establish whether or not the lexicon was affected.

30. In particular this term occurs in CSAI I, 11=Ja 2366, 2; 4; 5 and in CSAI I, 195=Ja 2360, 8; 9.

31. Ricks 1989, 149 (“dam”) and Avanzini 2004, 59 (“barrage”) and 266 (“dam”).

32. Jamme 1972, 32.

33. Jamme 1972, 32.

34. Piamenta II, 1991, 393.

35. The basic action of breaking, grinding and mixing up different materials in order to obtain a sort of cement for construction should be imagined.

36. According to Müller in Von Wissmann 1982, 284, the beginning of line 2 can be read ...by]t-hw *Mdb* “sein [Ha]us *Mdb*” which might suggest this is a construction text. The individual bearing the title *qrđ* would record either the construction or the restoration of his house.

37. Jamme 1972, 32. SD, 106 by contrast proposes simply “title of functionary” without suggesting any further hypotheses. See also the interpretation by Müller “eine Art von Beamter” in Von Wissmann 1982, 284.

*TD “one”*

Qatabanic also comprises the term, masc. *td* / fem. *tt*, which refers to the cardinal “one”<sup>38</sup>. This numeral is not attested anywhere else in ASA where the well-known Semitic root ʕD, with the extension /ʔ/ characteristic of West Semitic (<sup>ʔ</sup>*hd*)<sup>39</sup>, is used instead. The Qatabanic form is also unattested in the rest of Semitic, with the exception of Modern South Arabic (MSA)<sup>40</sup>. In view of this, it appears that the Qatabanic *td* is an innovative lexical trait, which replaced the older West Semitic root ʕD, and that it is a significant isogloss peculiar to both Qatabanic and MSA<sup>41</sup>.

*WZL “to break”*

In a previous paper the author suggested that no definite etymology can be found for the lexical item *wzl* “to break” and therefore it is a Qatabanic innovative trait not only in ASA but also in Semitic<sup>42</sup>. This observation should now be revised in broader Afroasiatic context. In Old Egyptian *zw*<sup>ʔ</sup> (from *\*zwl*) and *zʔw* (from *\*zwl*) indicate the act of “cutting, breaking”<sup>43</sup>. In view of this parallel the Qatabanic root *wzl* should be understood as an archaic lexical relic.

Until now the root *wzl* has only been attested as a verb in the Qatabanic corpus. Recently a new text has revealed the occurrence of a nominal form. In 2006 the French-Yemeni mission, including Iwona Gajda, Khaled al-Hajj and Jérémie Schiettecatte, surveyed the region of al-Bayḍāʔ in southern Yemen, and two new Qatabanic inscriptions were discovered (‘Aqaba Bura‘ 1, 2)<sup>44</sup>. The first inscription is a royal text recording the construction of a mountain pass and the second mentions a king’s vassal in charge of supervising the construction of the same pass<sup>45</sup>. The first document includes the formulaic expression *bny w-wzl w-brr*, which is characteristic of these types of texts<sup>46</sup> with *wzl* used as an infinitive verb form. By contrast, in the second document the term *mwzl* is employed (a *m-fʔ* nominal formation) which is unattested in Qatabanic. The term occurs in the following passage, “*b-ʕʔq w-mbny w-mwzl mnqln*” (in the excavation and construction and cutting of the pass), which is a further confirmation of the meaning of the verb form, “the cutting” or “the opening up”, as suggested by the author<sup>47</sup>.

38. See in CSAI I, 197=R 3688, 3; CSAI I, 203=R 3858, 10; CSAI I, 202=R 3854, 6.

39. Lipiński 2001, 289. The form <sup>ʔ</sup>*hd* is largely attested in Sabaic and Minaic, while it does not occur in Ḥadramitic. Note that Qatabanic also exhibits the other numeral <sup>ʕ</sup>*tnm* with a probable cardinal value, which is another old Semitic root occurring in Akkadian, Ugaritic and Hebrew. This form seems to be used within particular contexts (such as the notion of time, see CSAI I, 202=R 3854, 6). This root also occurs in Minaic M 367=R 3707, 6 (although the context is unclear) and in two minuscule texts, Mon.script.sab. 220 A, B, written in Sabaic from Nashshān, recently published by Stein 2005.

40. See for instance Jibbāli *td* / *tt* (Simeone-Senelle 1997, 395); see also Johnstone 1983.

41. This is particularly significant in view of the possible etymological link between the numeral *td* and the term *td* in Argobba and *td* in Amharic, meaning “finger”, as well as the root *dad* meaning “someone” in East Cushitic, as suggested by Lipiński 2001, 292.

42. Mazzini 2008, 157.

43. The author would like to thank Gábor Takács for drawing his attention to these parallels in Old Egyptian. The proposal by Kogan 2005, 518-519 that the common Aramaic (and some rare cases of Hebrew) root *zl* would derive from the Semitic root ZL with the addition of the extension ʔ might lend support to the hypothesis that Qatabanic *wzl* is also linked to the same root, see Mazzini 2006 (A). Both elements, ʔ and *w*, can be used as an extension to a root in Semitic, see Militarev 2005. In fact ZL would be an Afro-Asiatic root and in Qatabanic a similar extension *w* would have been added. The semantic issue of how the basic sense of the root ZL develops into the concept of breaking still remains unclear (Mazzini 2008).

44. Gajda - al-Hajj - Schiettecatte 2009.

45. On the relationship between the king and the supervisor’s text, see Mazzini 2002, 329-330.

46. Mazzini 2006 (A), 242. Note that in inscription CSAI I, 28=R 4328, 5 the verb expression referring to the construction of the pass, *nqz w-wzl w-brr*, uses the verb *nqz* instead of *bny* occurring in the new Qatabanic text.

47. Mazzini 2008, 157-158.

The lexical items examined above warrant some additional historical and linguistic observations. The analysis of the term *ʾhr* may shed some new light on the officials in ancient South Arabian society. The figure of a market superintendent, who was closely linked to the royal authority, can be compared to another official titled *kbr Tmn<sup>c</sup>*; the “*mayor of Timna<sup>c</sup>*”. The latter is mentioned in the royal edict, CSAI I, 202=R 3854, which deals with administrative issues of an area of Timna<sup>c</sup>. The *kbr Timn<sup>c</sup>* acts on behalf of the king and is responsible for assuring that the community complies with the rules reported in the edict. Interestingly, the text states that the king will intervene in the event that the *kbr Tmn<sup>c</sup>* is not able to enforce the rules. Again, there appears to be a close cooperation between the royal authority and its representatives. These observations point to the existence of a bureaucratic system controlling the major sectors of the state, a centralised structure comprised of officials who represented the royal authority and who were in charge of enforcing the law.

Given these observations, the “supervisor of construction activities” hypothesis advanced for the Sabaic title *qrđ* appears to fit into this historical picture. In this regard it is worth mentioning the construction of mountain passes. This was typically carried out by the king although the royal inscription recording the event was always paired with a second inscription by the vassal who supervised the works<sup>48</sup>. These data point to the existence of an official figure in charge of supervising works on behalf of the king<sup>49</sup>. The reconstruction of bureaucratic structure of the state is not surprising in view of the several parallels that exist with similar figures within other ancient Near Eastern cultures<sup>50</sup>.

The presence of the root *wzl* in Qatabanic prompts reflection on the written tradition of the ASA monumental documents. It has been emphasised that this root is very rare, an old lexical relic. It is also striking that it is employed in very common ASA language. For example, note the expression *mḥd w-brr w-wzl w-šll mnqlt Mblqt*, translated as “*hewed out and opened up and broke and paved*” (CSAI I, 21=R 3550, 3), where the verbs *mḥd / brr / šll* are forms characteristic of the ASA construction texts (and which are well-known Semitic roots). This can be explained in view of a stylistic feature characteristic of the ASA monumental documents, which is to emphasise an action through the use of synonyms (and quasi-synonyms). Four verbs are used to describe the opening up of a pass, all of which express the same idea of breaking (with the additional nuance of smoothing which is a quasi-synonym) This stylistic device is used in many different contexts. A clear example of this stylistic device from the juridical documentation is the beginning section of the royal edicts. Note the following expression: *wqh w-rysʾn w-hknn w-hḥ(r)n mlk Sʾm(r) Yhrʾsʾ mlk Šbʾ..* “*commanded and ordained and enacted and decreed king Sʾmr Yhrʾsʾ king of Saba...*” (Sabaic trade law R 3910). Here, we can find the sequence, *wqh / rysʾn / hknn / hḥ(r)n*, where all the verbs are synonyms for the king’s act of issuing an edict. This literary device reminds us of the so called parallelismus membrorum, a well-known feature characterising all Semitic poetry in the ancient Near East. In this regard it should be noted that employing two or more synonymic (or quasi-synonymic) words often involves using rare words, along with very simple and common ones<sup>51</sup>, so this poetic language exhibits archaic layers of the lexicon, which rarely occur in other types of document. This observation implies that the ASA monumental documents reflect a certain “literary tradition”, which has never been carefully examined.

Another aspect reflecting this “tradition” is the use of formulaic language, which is a stylistic feature characteristic of all ASA monumental documents. There was a special part of the lexicon used only in formulae, clearly demonstrated, for example, by the root *fʾy*. This is another trait which occurs in the

48. See under item *hll* and in particular Mazzini 2002, 329-330.

49. See recently Maraqtan 2010, 243-244.

50. See in general Van De Mieroop 1997.

51. See Tropper 1998 (only morphological features are examined); see Wagner 2007 for the different structures of the parallelismus membrorum.

poetic texts of most of the ancient Near Eastern literatures, i.e. a formulaic language containing a special lexicon. The case of *fʿy* is particularly interesting because it is used in the curse formula characteristic of dedicatory texts, which are practically identical in both Qatabanic and Minaic<sup>52</sup>. This suggests that the ASA cultural area originally shared one “literary tradition”.

From a linguistic perspective, the Old Egyptian parallels with Qatabanic *wzl* suggest that this is a conservative trait<sup>53</sup>, while the numeral one *td* is innovative. This demonstrates that archaic layers of Semitic are interwoven with Qatabanic independent developments, evidence which complements the morphological data, such as the pronominal<sup>54</sup> or the verbal<sup>55</sup> systems. This interpretation can also be applied to the roots *hlk* and *qrđ*, both old Semitic roots that have developed new semantic nuances (*hlk* = “to accomplish a work” / *qrđ* “type of structure-construction material”), which are unattested in the other Semitic languages. This evidence clearly demonstrates that Qatabanic should not be considered conservative or innovative from a typological point of view.

Furthermore, it is also important to emphasise that the lexical data demonstrates that Qatabanic does not have a particularly close affiliation with any of the other ASA languages. We can only affirm that Qatabanic shares a series of different linguistic features with each of the ASA languages. This observation is demonstrated by the lexical items examined above. The term *mʿny* is an isogloss with Sabaic, while the root *fʿy* is an isogloss with Minaic. The root *hlk* is an isogloss with Ḥaḍramitic while the use of this root in Minaic is probably innovative if we accept the meaning “to break”, attested in Arabic<sup>56</sup> (the root *hlk* is unattested in Sabaic). The root *ʿnr* can be interpreted as a semantic development peculiar to Qatabanic, from a root which is also attested in Sabaic and Minaic. Again, this phenomenon is recognisable in both the lexical and morphological data<sup>57</sup>.

The reconstruction of this pattern is particularly significant because it applies not only to Qatabanic but also to all the other ASA languages. No ASA language can be considered typologically more conservative or more innovative and the links between the ASA languages appear to be evenly spaced. Furthermore, each of these languages exhibit innovations which allow us to classify them as independent variants within the same linguistic group.

These data suggest that the position of ASA within Semitic is similar to that of Northwest Semitic in the first millennium, a linguistic group whose members were genetically linked. Each member of both Semitic subgroups acquired the status of a national language with the emergence of the various political entities at the beginning of the first millennium.

A final observation regarding to the special importance of the numeral *td* is that it is an isogloss, which links only Qatabanic and MSA. As an innovation, this isogloss is diagnostic for classification and suggests that there is a particular relationship between ASA and MSA. Given this link, the exact nature of the relationship between these two languages should be explored<sup>58</sup>.

52. The Qatabanic formula *bn mshkrm w-msfʿym bn brt-sʿ* can be compared to the following Minaic formulaic pattern *bn-d yshkr-sm w-ymsʿ-sm w-yshfʿy-sm bn mqmh-sm* (in inscription M 185=R 2965, 3). In relation to the curse formulae in Sabaic see Maraqtan 1998.

53. This is not an innovation as previously proposed by the author (Mazzini 2008, 157).

54. Mazzini 2006 (B).

55. Avanzini 2005.

56. See footnote 33 and the general observations in Mazzini 2002, 332-336.

57. Mazzini 2007.

58. See Avanzini 2005, 2009 and the contrasting view by Porkhomovsky 1997.

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