

Common Afrasian (Afro-Asiatic) terms related to the magic, supernatural, spiritual and mythic

Etymologies and reconstructions

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The paper contains 38 reconstructed common Afrasian (Afro-Asiatic) terms related to the magic, supernatural, spiritual and mythic rather conditionally combined into 10 groups (Soul, essence of life; Spirits, gods, ghosts and other supernatural creatures; God, spirit as an ancestor; Wonder, miracle, fortune-telling; Evil magic; Healing magic; Sorcery as knowledge; Spell, omen, magic speech or sign; Offering, sacrifice; Mythical and fantastic animals and their origin).

Each Proto-Afrasian term is reconstructed from a set of cognate words with compatible meanings in various branches and groups of the AA superfamily based on established regular consonant correspondences. The PAA language was supposedly spoken by the human community in the Near East at the turn of the Mesolithic and Neolithic—according to my glottochronological calculations, in the last third of the 11 millennium BCE—and their original homeland, according to the author, was the southern Levant. The reconstruction can provide valuable evidence for anthropologists, archaeologists, mythologists, prehistorians.

Key words: reconstruction, proto-forms, Afrasian languages, magic, supernatural, mythic.

In memory of my beloved son Mikhail Militarev (2005-2022)

1. Introduction¹

On topics related to the spiritual, magic, supernatural, mythic, fantastic creatures and the like in the prehistoric and archaic cultures an ocean of literature has been published, and the author – etymologist

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and comparative linguist—can hardly say anything new except to contribute by presenting corresponding terms, trace them up to the proto-forms reconstructed as deep as the Proto-Afrasian (henceforth: PAA) level and equip with etymologies constructed on the basis of regular sound (in the case of Afrasian languages, consonant) correspondences and compatible meanings. The PAA language was supposedly spoken by the human community in the Near East at the turn of the Mesolithic and Neolithic—according to my glottochronological calculations,² ca. 10,350 BCE—whose original homeland was the southern Levant.³ The reconstructed terms can be roughly grouped according to their proposed semantics:

1. soul, essence of life;
2. spirits, gods, ghosts and other supernatural creatures;
3. god, spirit as an ancestor;
4. wonder, miracle, fortune-telling, divination, magic;
5. evil magic;
6. healing magic;
7. sorcery as knowledge;
8. spell, omen, magic speech or sign;
9. offering, sacrifice;
10. mythical and fantastic animals.

The lexical material is organized by the families that make up the Afrasian macrofamily: Semitic, Egyptian, Berber and Chadic (the NAA branch⁴), Cushitic and Omotic (the SAA branch), according to the author's classification based on lexicostatistics.⁵

² Based on Sergei Starostin's radical modification (Starostin 2000)—not yet recognized by the mainstream, but, in my experience, more than workable—of Swadesh's method, also not recognized (which is in part justified).

³ See Militarev and Nikolaev (2020: 1 and Discussion). See also article "Afroasiatic Homeland" in Wikipedia referring to various authors (however, very outdated in what concerns my hypothesis and, especially, dating) and Militarev forthcoming.

⁴ The PNA is dated by the same criterion (see Starostin 2000) to ca. 9,800 BCE. For a most detailed account of my recent understanding and ongoing application of this method, its capabilities and its verification by dating established by related sciences (historical, archaeological, genetics, oral tradition/folklore studies), see Militarev (2023: 52-60 *et passim*). See comments to the most recent Afrasian genealogical tree in Militarev (2022) and the tree itself at Militarev forthcoming or <https://disk.yandex.ru/i/C0kbpXIuH17k8Q>.

⁵ Recently transforming from "a controversial method" into the one half-accepted by the linguistic mainstream.

Almost all of our lexical data is quoted after the Afrasian Etymological Database (AADB)⁶ compiled between the end of the last century and the latter part of the first decade of our century by Olga Stolbova and myself (in the first years, within the framework of the Santa Fe Institute's project "Evolution of Human Languages") and later worked on by the present author alone. At present it contains over 4,000 entries in the main Afrasian etymological base (liable to strong reduction in the final version, of course) and some 15,000 entries in the subordinate bases with lexical data from all branches and main AA subbranches/groups, connected with the main one. The version dated April 2007 is available from <https://starlingdb.org>. According to the description by the editors of this site containing lexical and etymological bases in various world macrofamilies:

[C]ompiled by Alexander Militarev and Olga Stolbova on the basis of multiple published sources as well as constantly on-going newer work. Both the main Afroasiatic database and all of the numerous subordinate databases are in a state of near-permanent construction, containing much raw data that still has to be polished, but nevertheless, the database, even as it is, is a considerable improvement on previously available etymological dictionaries. Subordinate databases include files with Semitic, Berber, Egyptian, Cushitic, and Chadic data (the latter courtesy of O. Stolbova, most of the others supported by A. Militarev).

To this somewhat outdated description I would add the Omotic database and sporadic parallels from non-Afrasian languages. The words "in a state of near-permanent construction" explain why "the final version" is still not posted on the Internet.

Before proceeding to the lexical material, let us introduce the author's criterion for evaluating etymologies (on the example of AA languages) which allows to use the following simple five-point rating of the plausibility of cognation in each lower taxon of the AA macrofamily and on the PAA level:

●●●● terms with identical or matching meaning in all (or in a representative selection) of the languages compared, with strictly regular phonetic correspondences⁷ between them, containing at

⁶ References to other sources are given when they are not mentioned in the database or sometimes when the given lexeme is of particular importance for the proposed etymology or the source is not evident.

⁷ This condition applies to consonants; the correspondence between vowels in the Afrasian languages is not established; the reconstructed vocalism in proto-forms of all levels is conventional in most cases. However, it is quite legitimate to consider as related lexemes with vocalism and base structure even not reducible to a single pattern, provided the same consonantal root composition and comparable meaning, unless each of these lexemes has a better alternative etymology; naturally, this implies a certain degree of hypothetical and tentative nature of the proposed etymologies, which is unavoidable until the Afrasian Database has been made into a comprehensive and well-elaborated etymological dictionary is completed with a step-by-step reconstruction at all taxonomic levels.

least three (or two including one low-frequency/rare) root consonants, fully representative of each of the branches compared or terms doubtless related regardless of the number of root consonants (like in Semitic *ʔil-, ʔilāh- ‘God’):

●●● terms clearly comparable semantically⁸ with regular phonetic correspondences, containing three to two “hard”⁹ root consonants, representing at least one subbranch/group of a given branch and having no alternative etymology;

●● terms comparable semantically and phonetically, containing only one “hard” root consonant, representing groups/subgroups of the branch and having no alternative etymology;

● terms presumably comparable semantically and phonetically, but under-represented in the languages compared or terms with ambiguous phonetic interpretation/origin (especially common in Egyptian where, e.g., the hieroglyph for *n* can stand for and continue either AA **n* or **l*) or terms not obviously matching semantically though fit in all other respects and having no alternative or better etymology;

● terms suspected of borrowing or attested in a late period of the language susceptible to borrowing (late Egyptian, Coptic, postbiblical Hebrew) or having a disputable meaning, or isolated in their taxon, hypothetically commensurable, brought into comparison for the sake of “comprehensive picture.” The rating of any Proto-Afrasian or Proto-North Afrasian root is derived from the rating of at least two constituent parts (branches, groups) of the respective taxon.¹⁰

⁸ In comparative and historical linguistics – while there is a high demand for strict sound correspondences (in the case of Afrasian languages—in consonantism, see the previous footnote), the criteria for semantic comparison are still mainly based on obviousness and common sense or at best on the repetition of the same semantic transition at different roots (Maizel’s “isosemantic series”—see Maizel 1983).

⁹ All consonants can be considered “hard” in the Afrasian languages except *w*, *y*, and *ʔ* (glottal stop) as any of the three may serve as an “extender” of primary, usually bi- or monosyllabic root bases and thus is secondary and unstable; there are rare cases, however, when one of these “soft” consonants persists in the same root in various daughter languages being, therefore, reconstructible as part of the proto-form (see, e. g., *y*- in Semitic **yVdVʕ*- ‘to know’) and hence acting as “hard.”

¹⁰ The meanings of the words are given in the European language of the corresponding bilingual dictionary.

2. The data

2.1. Soul, essence of life

AA **nVf*- ‘breath, soul, self, life’¹¹ (AADB 162): ●●●●●

Semitic: MSA **nVf*- ‘self’: Mehri *nōf*, *ḥə-nōf* (Johnstone 1987: 283), Jibbali *nūf*, Soqotri *nəf* (and *nhəf*) (Johnstone 1981: 181) ●●●●

Egyptian (OK) *nf.t* ‘Wedel, Fächer’, (NK) *nf* ‘breath, wind’, *nfy* ‘ausatmen, hauchen’ (EG II: 250) ●●●

Berber: **naf*:- Ayr, E. Tawllemmet *a-nāfo* ‘fresh humid wind’, Ahaggar *a-nāfo* ‘breath’, *ta-nəff-ut* ‘breath, soul’, Ghadames *ənnəfu* ‘respiration’, Izayan *ta-neff-ut* ‘breath, soul’ ●●●●●

Chadic **nif*:- W.: Kupto *néefō* ‘to live, breathe’; C. **nVf*- ‘heart, soul, life’: Tera *nifi* ‘life’, Fali-Kirya *nəffə*, Bana *nəf(ə)*, Mbedam *nəf* ‘heart’, Logone *nəfu* ‘Herz, Seele’ ●●●●●

Cushitic **na/if*:- N.: Beja *nifi* ‘wehen (Wind)’; E.: Saho *naḥ* ‘breath, soul, self’, LEC: Somali *neef* ‘breath, life, soul, spirit; animal’, *naḥ* ‘life, soul, self’, Oromo *nāfa* ‘breath; soul’ ●●●●●

[] Cf. EDE 1999: 126 (compared, beside Berber, C. Chadic, Beja, E. Cushitic, N. Omotic (likely loans from Ethiopian), to Semitic **ʔanp*- ‘nose’); CED #591 (comp. to Egyptian, Tuareg, Beja, Saho, Somali).

NAA **naḥVs*- ‘breath, soul, life’ (AADB 80): ●●●●●

Semitic **naḥš*- ‘breath; soul; vitality, life; person; self’¹²: Akkadian *naḥāšu* ‘to breathe freely,’ *napištu* (*naḥāštu*, *naḥātu*) ‘life, vigor, vitality; breath; good health; person’ (also ‘throat, neck’); Ugaritic *naḥš* ‘soul’ (also ‘throat, gullet’); Phoenician *naḥš* ‘self, desire, person’ (also ‘gravestone’), Hebrew *naḥš* (*nif*) ‘to breathe freely, recover,’ *nāḥāš* ‘breath; soul; life; living being’ (also ‘throat, neck’); Aramaic: Old, Official, Nabatean, Palmyrian, Hatra *naḥš* ‘life, person’ (also ‘funerary

¹¹ It is to note that such concepts as ‘soul,’ ‘life force,’ ‘essence of a living being’ and ‘life’ itself, though commonly and “naturally” derived from such a tangible and objective notion as ‘breathe/breathing’ require a very high level of abstraction (that this derivation occurred parallelly and independently in every language, i.e. much later, is less likely or rare), while in our case, we are talking not about religious, philosophical or even mythological concepts of the ancient world but about the Neolithic or even Epipaleolithic time. It is all the more intriguing in view of a whole “network” of triconsonantal variant roots differing by the quality of one of the radicals like AA **nps* (SED I Verbal Roots No. 46) ~ Semitic **nph* ‘breathe’ (SED I Verbal Roots No. 45) or the presence of a third root consonant vs. the same “biconsonantal base” (like in AA **nVf*- ~ **naḥVs*-), the fact that even raises suspicion of some conscious word creation—or play of words.

¹² There is also Semitic verb **naḥš* ‘to deliver, give birth’ very likely derived from the present root with a semantic development from ‘to give life’ (see SED I Verbal Roots No. 47).

monument’); Sabaic, Qatabanian *nfs*₁ ‘soul, life, person, self’; Arabic *nafs*- ‘âme, principe vital; sang; personne’, *nfs* V ‘respirer’; Geʿez *nafsa* ‘to blow (wind, spirit),’ *nafs* ‘soul, spirit, breath, life,’ Amharic l *näffäsä* ‘to blow (wind),’ *näfs* ‘soul, spirit, life;’ Mehri *nəfs-ēt* ‘individual, soul,’ Jibbali *ənḥés* ‘to sigh,’ *nəfs-ét* ‘soul,’ Soqotri *nəfoš* ‘respirer, vivre, se ranimer,’ *nófoš* ‘selves’ (pl. of *nafh* ‘âme’) ●●●●●

Berber **ni/ufas*: Ahaggar *unfas* ‘breath’, Ayr *ənfəs*, E. Tawlllemmet *infəs* ‘respiration; vie,’ Izayan *unfus* ‘breath,’ *nəffəs* ‘breathe’ ●●●●

Chadic **nafus*- ~ **sVnf*- (met.): W.: Hausa *númfāši* ‘breathing’ (Abraham 1962: 707; not in Stolbova 2021), Daffo-Butura *nafos*, Sha *lufwos* ‘breathe,’ Monguna *mafòs* ‘to breathe,’ *mafós* ‘life;’ C.: Mofu *-səfn-*, Matakam *-sáfn-*, Munjuk *sinfi*, Musgu *súmfa* ‘breathe’ (Stolbova 2021 #351; compared to Semitic) ●●●●

(?) Cushitic E. **nafs*-: Saho *nafs-e* ‘breathing,’ LEC: Somali, Boni *neefso*, Rendille *nəfsó* ‘breathe’ (borrowing from Arabic or Ethiopian in Saho and Somali is possible, but less so in Boni and Rendille) ●

[]SED I Verbal Roots No. 46.

AA **kirw*- ‘soul/mind in an altered state, (shamanistic?) trance’¹³ (AADB 2700): ●●●●●

Semitic **ku/irw*-: Akkadian (OB, SB) *kāru* ‘to be in depression, in a stupor’ (CAD k 240), *kūru* ‘daze, depression, stupor’ (ibid. 570); Arab. *kry* ‘sommeiller’ [BK 2: 892]; Tigre *kərri belä* ‘talk nonsense,’ *sāb kəyarāt* ‘soothsayers’ (*sāb* is ‘man’), Selti *kārärä* ‘talk much and nonsense’ (Leslau 1979: 350) ●●

Egyptian (OK) *k* (presumably <**kur*) ‘soul, vital essence’ ●●

Berber: Ahaggar *tă-karaww-at*, Ayr *i-kerker-än* ‘épilepsie’¹⁴, E.Tawlllemmet *a-t-kər* ‘possessed (by an evil spirit),’ Qabyle *kerrer* ‘faire des sorcelleries, des sortilèges’ ●●●●

Chadic W.: Hausa *kürw-ā* ‘soul; ghost’ (Abraham 1962), ‘the soul or personality which is supposed to leave a sleeper, returning when he awakes’ (Bargery 1951), (?) Tangale *korom* ‘divination’, Jimi *karoo* ‘spirit (of person)’; C.: Bura *kir* ‘the self; the will’ ●●●

Cushitic **ʔa(n)-kir*-: C. **ʔən-kir*- ‘soul’: Bilin *ʔənkəra*, Qwara *enkera*, Aungi *enk-* (**ʔənk-[ər]* in

¹³ Hardly a random selection of lookalikes based on a frequent *k + r* succession of radicals, this AA root implies a sophisticated notion hard to formulate. The most interesting comparison—between Egyptian *k* and Hausa *kür-wā* ‘the soul or personality which is supposed to leave a sleeper, returning when he awakes’—was, if I am not mistaken, first suggested in Hodge (1966).

¹⁴ With an interesting parallel in Hadza *nkoro-ko* ‘epilepsy’ (Miller 2021). On the Hadza-Afrasian hypothesis see Militarev (2022).

Appleyard (2006: 126). All the comparanda starting with Oromo shows otherwise); E.: Oromo *ekeera* (-*ʔVkir-) ‘ghost of dead person’ (Gragg 1982) ●●●●

2.2. Spirits, gods, ghosts and other supernatural creatures

AA *ʔil- ~ *lil- ~ *laʔ- ‘sky/cloud/rain’ or ‘sun’ > ‘God’?¹⁵ ●

Semitic *ʔil-, ʔilāh- ‘God’: Akkadian *ilu* (*elu*); Ugaritic /ʔilu/; Phoenician ʔl, Hebrew ʔēl, ʔāḏō^ah, pl. ʔāḏōhīm; Aramaic Official ʔl, ʔlh, Syrian ʔēl, ʔalāhā, Mandaic *alaha* (‘false god’); Sabaic ʔl, ʔlh; Arabic ʔilah-, ʔilāh-; Jibbali ʔēz̄, Soqotri *aʔ* ‘God.’¹⁶ ●●●●●

a) *laʔ(laʔ)- ‘sun(shine)’ (AADB 1159): ●●●

Semitic: Arabic *lʔlʔ* ‘briller (étoile, feu)’ (BK 2: 953) ●

Chadic *liʔ- ‘daybreak; sunshine’: W.: Kirfi *liʔ-*, *li-ŋi* ‘daybreak’, Daffo-Butura *leʔ* ‘anbrechen (Tag)’, E.: Bidiya *laal* (redupl.) ‘shine (sun)’ (cf. Stolbova 2005 #14a and 55; compared with Arabic) ●●●

Cushitic *laʔ- ~ *lalaʔ- (redupl.): E.: LEC *laʔ-t-: Konso *letta*, Mashile *latta* ‘sun’ (alternatively *IVʃ(IVʃ-) ‘light, sun’ AADB 2878); S. *lalaʔoo ‘sun; day; God’: Iraqw *lalaʔa* ‘God’ (Mous, Qorro and Kiessling 2002), *looʔaa* ‘sun, God’, Gorowa *looʔaa*, *lalaʔaa*, *leleʔaa* id., Alagwa *lalaʔaa* ‘sun, day’, Burunge *leetu*, *letu* id. (Kiessling, Mous 2003) ●●●●●

¹⁵ Though comparing a word with one “hard” root consonant and a glottal stop is kind of a venture, the significance of the Semitic term justifies any etymological effort possible in theory. The “isosemantic series” (Maizel 1983), i.e. the same semantic transitions repeated in different roots in the same or related languages, is long, especially in the Egyptian-Chadic cultural/lexical area. Cf. for ‘sky/cloud/rain’ > ‘god’: (1) Egyptian (PT) *bʃn* ‘sky waters’ ~ Chadic **buwan-* ‘God, sky, rain’ (St. 2021 #236): C.: Gidar *bùwàn* ‘rain’; E.: Mawa *bwān* ‘God, sky’, Ubi *bwane*, Mawa *buan*, Mabire *boŋ* ‘ciel’, E. Dangla *búŋ* ‘le devin, le mystérieux, dieu’, Migama *búŋ* ‘dieu de pluie, ciel’, Bidiya *bùŋ* ‘Dieu’, Mubi *bùn* ‘sky, God’, Jegu *bóŋ* ‘Himmel, Gott’, Toram *bùŋ* ‘Dieu’; (2) AA **raw/ʔ-* ‘sky; god’ (below), etc. For ‘sun’ > ‘god’: (1) Egyptian (NK) *bʃ* ‘Bez. des Sonnengottes’ ~ Chadic W.: Bokkos, Daffo-Butura *bwè* ‘sun’, Ngamo *ḥàḥà* ‘sky’, Gerka *ḥá* ‘sky, god’; (2) Egyptian (PT) ʔ^a*ʔtyw* ‘Bezeichnung für Götter’ ~ Chadic *(ʔ^a)*ʔvti* ‘sun’, incl. W.: Guus *fiit*, Sha *fat* ‘sun; God’. Cf. also a completely different association: Chadic **law/yʔ-* ‘soul, spirit’: W.: Daffo-Butura *lwàʔ* ‘Seele, Heiliges’; E.: Jegu *láyó* ‘spirit; Geist (auf Bäumen, in Höhlen)’ (Stolbova 2005 #47).

¹⁶ Jibbali ʔēz̄ can continue either *ʔil- or *baʔl- ‘lord’ (cf. Mehri *abeli* ‘God’ Johnstone 1987: 41); in Soqotri, “*aʔ* ‘God’ seems to be attested in a few archaic poetic compositions recorded by our fieldwork team.” (Kogan 2015: fn. 503).

b) *lVw- ~ *lil- ~ *wVl- (met.) ‘cloud, rain, sky’ (AADB 1341): ●●●●

Egyptian (PT) *nw.t* (if <*lVw-) ‘sky’ ●●

Chadic W. *liw- ‘cloud’: Gwandara *llúú*, Sura *llúu*, Chip *liwu*, Ankwe *low-in*, Boghom *lilyu*, *lwai* (cf. Stolbova 2005 #50) ●●●●●

Cushitic *wVl-: ‘cloud’: C. *wVl- ‘cloud’: Aungi *wul*, Kunfal *wel*; E.: HEC: Burji *wáall-a* ‘cloud, fog’ ●●●●●

Omotiic *wVl- ~ *lil- ‘cloud, rain’: N.: Gimira (Bench, She) *wol* ‘rain’; S.: Ari *lil- (redupl.) ‘cloud’ ●●●

AA *bari?- ‘god-creator’ (AADB 1689): ●●●

Semitic *bVrV?- ‘to create (God)’: Hebrew *bārā?*; Syrian *br?*, Mandaic *bra*; Arabic *br?* ●●●●

Canarian: Palma *a-bora* ‘dios...que estaba en el cielo’, ‘god’, ‘Dieu, ou le régulateur des astres’ (Wölfel 1965: 432) ●

Omotiic S. *bary- ‘god-creator’: Ari *bérri* ‘Gottesname: Erdgottheit’, Hamar *baryo* ‘creator’ ●●●●

AA *raw/?- ‘sky; god’ (AADB 1336): ●●●

(?) Semitic: Geʿez *rāʔot* ‘the name of (God) the Father (seems to be a magical name)’ (LGz.: 458) ●

Egyptian (Gr.) *ry.t* ‘der Himmel’ (EG II: 400; if <*rVy-), (PT) *rw*, als vierfachen Teil des Himmels? (EG II: 403) ●

Chadic (a) *rVw- ‘sky’: W.: Karekare *ráwì*, Fyer *rúrùwê*, Bokkos *ri?*; C.: Hide *lwa* (< *rwa*). In CED #647, compared with Egyptian and S. Cushitic ●●●

(b) *raa (< *raH-) ‘God’: W.: Gwandara (Nim) *rara* (redupl.) ‘God’; E.: Mokilko *ráa* ‘ciel, dieu’, Bidiya *raayà* ‘God (used in funeral songs)’ (In CED #646, compared with Egyptian *rʔ* ‘sun, sun-god’) ●●●

Cushitic S.: Burunge *raw* ‘sky’ (probably also Alagwa, Burunge *raw* ‘above’) ●●

Omotiic N. *yar- (met.)¹⁷ ‘god’: Chara *yar*, Kafa, Anfillo *yarō*, *yero*, Bworo *ya/er*, Dizi (Nao) *yeri* (Bender 2003) ●●●●

[] Cf. AA *ʔay/wr- ‘sunlight’ (AADB 2026) and AA *ʔar- ‘moon’ (AADB 2783)

¹⁷ Some authors suggest the origin from *ʔ/ʒar-, but *y < *ʔ or *ʒ is not confirmed (and not given in Bender’s correspondence tables) for any of the quoted languages.

NAA *zVḵ- ‘(night) ghost, phantom’ (AADB 2845): ●●●

Semitic *zakīḵ- ‘phantom’ (Cohen *et al.* 1970: 785; likely < Akk.); Akkadian (SB, NB) *za/iḵīḵ-* ‘phantom, ghost, nothingness, foolishness; haunted place; the god of dreams; soul’ (CAD z 58); Aramaic (Hatra) *zkyḵ?* ‘fantôme’ (?); Arabic *zīḵ* ‘avoir peur pendant la nuit’ (BK 1: 991) ●●●
 Chadic C. *zVḵ- ‘spirit, shadow’ (possibly < *zVḵ-): Daba *zùkò* ‘fetiche, esprit’, Mofu *zakale, zagale* (-l is not etymological) ‘esprit mauvais, sacrifice’, Sukun *žik* ‘shadow, spirit’ (cf. Stolbova 2009 #446). ●●●

AA *zVr- ‘(evil) genius; sky-god; magic’ (AADB 3564): ●●●●

Semitic *zVr- ‘evil genius, magician’: Akkadian (SB, NB) *zīr-* ‘hatred, hate’ (as the designation of a type of magic, hate magic) (CAD z 136); Arabic *zūr-* ‘culte faux; idole, faux dieu’ (BK 1: 129); Tigre *zar*, Gurage **zar* ‘spirit that possesses a person’ (Leslau 1979), Amharic *zar* ‘a spirit which inhabits lakes, wilderness areas or trees and which possesses people’ (Kane 1990: 1624); Jibbali *zír-én*, semi-magical ritual involving fire-eating, etc., Soqotri *zehér-eh* ‘sorcière’, *zrr* ‘user de sorcellerie’ (Leslau 1938: 157) ●●●●

Egyptian (PT) *z*: (if *z* denotes *r*) ‘amulet, fetish’, (NK) *z:w* ‘preserve, guard’ ●●

Chadic: W.: Hausa *zarči* (< **zar-t-*) ‘a decoction to make a man an expert hunter’; C.: Munjuk *zor-o* ‘devinette’ ●●

Cushitic C. **zār-*: Bilin *žār* ‘sky, sky god’, Khamta, Aungi *zār* ‘evil genius’¹⁸ ●●●●

2.3. God, spirit as an ancestor**AA *ni(?)nay- ‘elder/adult male relative’ (> chief, lord’) > ‘god’ (AADB 52):**

a) ‘elder/adult male relative’ (> chief, lord’) ●●●

Semitic: Soqotri *ninhin* ‘elder brother, master, lord,’ *ninho* ‘master, lord’ ●●

Chadic **ni(?)an-* ‘elder male relative’: W.: Mupun *nāan* ‘a superior person,’ *nēn* ‘adults, people,’ Fyer *nán* ‘Bruder, Nachbarn,’ Pero *nínyà* ‘man,’ Ngizim *nán* ‘person;’ C.: Gude *nwánwá* ‘chief,’ Daba *nánà* ‘neveu, l’oncle maternel;’ E.: Kera *nəṇə* ‘mother’s brother, uncle’ (cf. Stolbova 2005 #360) ●●●●●

¹⁸ The common tenet that the Ethiopian terms are borrowed from the Agaw languages (cf., e. g., Appleyard 2006: 76) does not seem so convincing in the light of the Akkadian, Arabic and Soqotri parallels which rather point to common Afrasian origin (or to an Ethiopism in Agaw).

Cushitic S. **naʔan*¹⁹ ‘elder male relative:’ Iraqw *naana* ‘lover; elder brother,’ Gorowa *naanaa* ‘father,’ Burunge *naanaa* ‘dad’ ●●●●●

Omotic N. **naynay*- ‘male relative:’ Chara *nainaa* ‘relative,’ Gimira (She) *niania* ‘nephew,’ Dizi (Nao) *non*, (Maji) *nānē* ‘brother’ ●●●●

b) Egyptian-Chadic **na(Ha)n*- ‘god’ (AADB 1585):

Egyptian (Gr.) *nn* ‘Urgott’ ●

Chadic W. **na(?)an*- ‘God’: Sura *naan*, Angas *nen*, Mupun *nāan* (also ‘sky’), Montol *nāan*, Ankwe *naan*, Gerka *nàán*, Mushere *naan* (cf. CED #600; compared with Egyptian). ●●●●●

[] Cf. Sumerian *nun* ‘prince; god.’

2.4. Wonder, miracle, fortune-telling, divination, magic

AA **mayh*- ‘wonder, miracle, divination’ (AADB 3642): ●●●

Semitic **ta-mayh*-, with a frozen **ta*- prefix): Hebrew *tāmāh* ‘to be astonished, amazed; to freeze with fear, be horrified;’ Aram.: Biblical *tamah* ‘miracle,’ Syrian *tamayh*- ‘wonder’ ●●●●

Egyptian **myh.t* > Demotic *myh/h* ‘wonder’ (EDE 2010: 154)²⁰ ●●

Berber **may*- ‘wonder tal:’ Ayr, E. Tawllemmet *emăy* ‘conte merveilleux, légende; fable (destiné à tromper qqn.),’ pl. *imăyy-ăn* ‘fantasies, hallucinations, fantasmes,’ Semlal *umiy* ‘conte, fable’ ●●●●

Cushitic E.: HEC: Sidamo *maha* ‘to do the job of a sorcerer, wizard; divine, prophesy’ ●

AA **mar*- ‘diviner, fortune-teller’²¹ (AADB 1475): ●●

Semitic Ethiopian: Geʿez *māri*, *mārəy-ā* ‘heathen seer, diviner, priest of idolaters, magician’ (LGz.: 362), Amharic *mari* ‘sorcerer who foretells the future;’ cf. probably related Hebrew *mirmā* ‘trick, fraud;’ Aramaic: Old *mrm-t* (pl.) ‘treachery’ (JH 694), Syrian *marmīn*- ‘whisperer, calumniator, slanderer’ (according to Payne-Smith 1903: 302, root **rmā*) ●●

Chadic **mar*-: W.: Siri *maraa-cəki* ‘sorcerer’ (*cəki* ‘man, male’) (Stolbova 2009 #604); E.: Kera

¹⁹ Only **-ʔ-* can account for the hiatus in the Inlaut as AA **-h-* would have yielded *-h-* in West Rift languages. The same is true of Chadic.

²⁰ Takács’ comment on this word “no evident cognates” looks odd as he provides it with quite convincing Aramaic, Post-Biblical Hebrew (not including the biblical Hebrew term), Tuareg and Sidamo forms, the more so since **-h* preserved in both the Egyptian (likely), Semitic and Sidamo forms is a rather rare occurrence and can hardly be haphazard.

²¹ Attestation in Ethiopian vs. E. Cushitic is suspicious of borrowings.

kə-maara ‘a small staff used for fortune-telling; soothsayer’ (EDE 2010: 31; included *ibid.* 30 into a bunch of terms presumably matching Egyptian *m*; ‘sehen’ and Semitic **ʔmr* ‘sehen (lassen)’)

●●

Cushitic E.: LEC: Oromo *moru* ‘divine,’ *mor-tu* ‘sorcery’ (LGz.: 362), Rendille *mor-o* ‘soothsayer, star-gazer, who sees visions’ (Pillinger, Galboran 1999: 227), ‘medicine man, witch doctor’ (Heine 1976), HEC: Darasa *mar-aat-* ‘crazy,’ Burji *murum-* ‘wizard, sorcerer, tells fortune by inspecting coffee beans’²² ●●

NAA or Semitic only²³ **cigul-* ‘seal, (sealed, registered) property, treasure’ > Ethiopian ‘divination, magic’²⁴ (AADB 441): ●●●

Semitic **sigu/il-* ‘seal, (sealed, registered) property, treasure:’ Akkadian (OB on) *sikiltu* ‘possession, acquisition, private possessions,’ *sug/kullu* ‘herd (of cattle, horse, other animals),’ in personal names *sikiltu*+divine name(s) also in a religious sense; Ugaritic *sglt* ‘treasure, private property;’ Hebrew *səgullā* ‘Israel as the property of God; (personal) property (of the kings and the provinces);’ Hatra *sgyl* ‘possession’ (prob. designating temple; name of the temple of Shamash at Hatra) (HALOT: 742); Arabic *sʒl* ‘to register,’ IV ‘to be rich,’ *siʒill-* ‘a scroll, roll for writing on it’ (cf. also *siʒʒī-l-* ‘a mysterious stone’); Geʿez (*?a*)*sgala* ‘to practice magic, augury, divine, take omens, have divining power,’ *sagalāt* (pl.) ‘magical instruments’ (LGz.: 491), Tigre *sāb sḡāl* ‘magicians,’ Amharic *sḡāl* ‘witchcraft, divination,’ (?) Gurage **sḡwārār* ‘magician, sorcerer’ (“probably to be identified with” the other Ethiopian forms; Leslau 1979: 491); MSA **sgl* ‘to register’ (almost certainly from Arabic) ●●●●●

Egyptian (OK) *sd;w.t* (almost certainly <**sVgi/ul-*)²⁵ ‘seal,’ *sd;wt* ‘precious things, treasures’ (cf. *sd;w* ‘ring (?)’) (EG IV: 379). ●●

²² Compared in Sasse (1982: 149) to Oromo *morom-* ‘murmur, disagree, curse,’ Somali *murm-* ‘contradict, disagree,’ Gollango *maram-* ‘deny,’ etc.; with all the phonetic and structural similarity, probably too different semantically.

²³ The meaning ‘seal’ looks too early for proto-Afrasian. It is more likely a Semitism in Egyptian considering a whole network of Semitic derivatives and the proto-form reconstructed on a proto-North Semitic level which I date glottochronologically between 4,500 (separation of proto-MSA or proto-South Semitic) and 3,700 (separation of proto-Akkadian) BCE.

Interestingly, the two other Egyptian (OK) terms for ‘seal’ (*htm* and, probably, *dbf.t*) are also connected with Semitic ‘seal’ (**ḥatm-* and **ṭabaf-*). For more on Egyptian-Semitic terms meaning “seal,” see Militarev (2023: 50 and footnotes 76, 110, 111).

²⁴ Though the semantic change from ‘seal’ to Ethiopian ‘divination, magic’ (having no alternative etymology) is not so obvious, the identic triconsonantal roots are hardly unrelated.

²⁵ Suggestive comparison with Semitic ‘seal’ is strangely omitted in EDE 1999: 253 where the Egyptian term is instead compared with Semitic **sgr* ‘to close, shut’ and two C. Chadic words hardly fitting phonetically.

2.5. Evil magic

AA *biʿay- ‘hex, evil spells causing antisocial behavior’ ●●●

Semitic: Arab bʿw ‘commettre un crime, un péché; envoûter; se rendre coupable d’une trahison; atteindre qqn et lui nuire de son mauvais œil; susciter à qqn un malheur’, baʿw- ‘crime’ (BK 1: 144); cf. Tigre *bäbša*, Amharic *baba* (redupl.) ‘ê. consterné, angoissé’ (Cohen et al. 1970: 73) ●

Berber: Ahaggar *buy-et* ‘n’être aimé de personne (déplaire à tout le monde)’ ●

Chadic**bVHVy-* ‘to be bad, evil (spirit)’: W.: Hausa *má-biyaa* ‘the spirits which are supposed to cause the various forms of hysteria,’ Pero *bóu* ‘devil,’ Kupto *mbúʔyà* ‘witchcraft,’ C.: Gabin *ḡiḡà*, Gaa’anda *ḡiḡa* (redupl.) ‘evil,’ Gude *bwàyi* ‘bad, evil,’ Logone *mbáawee*, *mááwe* ‘to be bad,’ etc.; E.: Bidiya *beyò* ‘méchanceté,’ Mokilko *bèyyé* ‘bad spirit’ (Stolbova 2021 #73; compared to Arabic)

●●●

Cushitic S. **biʿ-ā* ‘antisocial behaviour:’ Iraqw *biʿ-iri* ‘greed,’ Alagwa *biʿa* ‘adultery,’ Burunge *biʿa* ‘madness, lunacy’ (Kiessling, Mous 2003: 73), Qwadza *beʔ-et-* ‘to scorn’ (EDE 2001: 169) ●●●●

AA *biʿVt- ‘evil spirit or magic’:²⁶ (AADB 2615) ●●●

Semitic **biʿVt-* ‘terror (of God, evil spirit):’ Hebrew *biʿut* ‘terrors (of God),’ *bʿt* (pi.) ‘to terrify so. (evil spirit);’ Aramaic Judaic *baʿāt-ā* ‘terror,’ Syrian *bʿt* (af.) ‘to frighten’ (HALOT: 147) ●●●●

Cushitic E. **bit-*: Afar *but-a* ‘evil eye,’ HEC: Sidamo *bit-a* ‘work of a sorcerer’ ●●●●

Omotiic N. **bit-* ‘to bewitch:’ Wolaita *bit-a* ‘to bewitch; witchcraft,’ Gamo *bit-* ‘to bewitch,’ *bit-a* ‘sorcery’²⁷ ●

AA *bawd- ‘sorcerer, witch-doctor, one with evil eye:’²⁸ (AADB 65) ●●●●

Semitic **ba/ud-* ‘evil priest, sorcerer:’ Hebrew *bad* ‘oracle priest’ (HALOT: 109); Arabic *ʔabdād-*, pl. *bidad-at-* ‘temple des idolâtres’ (BK 1: 93),²⁹ Yemeni Arabic *budā/bidah* ‘elle peut transformer un homme en animal (âne, cheval),’ *bid-eh* ‘witch, sorceress, monster;’ Geʿez *budā*, Tigrinya,

²⁶ Probably derived from **biʿay-* with the fossilized **-t* suffix.

²⁷ Borrowing from Sidamo in N. Omotic is possible. This direction of borrowing, not vice versa, is supposed based on many similar cases of borrowing pointing to HEC as the source.

²⁸ Cf. AA *(?)*bd* ‘go mad, be insane’ (AADB 3769) ●●●● probably related: Semitic: Arabic *ʔbd* ‘become wild (cattle);’ Geʿez *ʔabda* ‘be insane, mad, out of one’s mind, become a fool,’ Amharic *abbādā* ‘be insane, go mad’ ●●●●. Berber **bVd-* ‘be mad:’ Nefusa *beddiw* ‘fou,’ Mzab *biddu* ‘perdre la raison, rendre fou,’ Wargla *abeddiw* ‘faible d’esprit, idiot, niais, et aussi fou’ (Näit-Zerrad 1998). ●●●

²⁹ Cf. also *bdd* ‘causer du dommage à qn.’ (BK 1: 92).

Amharic, Harari *buda* ‘ironsmith, magician, man who causes harm by means of the evil eye,’
 Gurage **buda* ‘tanner, man who has the power of casting the evil eye’ (Leslau 1979: 132) ●●●●●
 Chadic **(?V-)bVd-*: W.: Karekare *bâḍàḍà-kà* ‘blacksmith,’ Ngizim *bádà-rà*³⁰ ‘sorcerer;’ C.: Lame,
 Zime-Dari *bidà* ‘blacksmith;’³¹ E.: Mobu *bábáḍé*, Kwang *bùbbùḍde* ‘to curse’ ●●●●●
 Cushitic C. **bawd-*: Bilin *bawd-a* ‘witch-doctor; werewolf,’ *bōd-a* ‘potter,’ Khamir *bud-a* ‘witch-doctor;
 werewolf,’ Kemant *bud-a* ‘witch-doctor;’ E. **bawd-*: Saho, Afar *bud-ā* ‘witch-doctor; potter,’ LEC:
 Somali *bid-a* ‘witch-doctor,’ Oromo *bawd-a*, *bud-a* ‘man with evil eye,’ *bud-ā* ‘potter,’ Bayso *bud-*
a ‘evil eye,’ HEC (< Oromo?): Sidamo *bud-akko*, Darasa, Burji *bud-a* ‘who has evil eye,’ Kambatta
būd-o ‘potter’ ● (low score if borrowed or a Wanderwort)
 Omotic **bud-*: Dache *bud-a* ‘evil eye,’ Kafa *bud-o* ‘witch-doctor, potter,’ Bworo *bud-o* ‘witch-doctor’
 (cf. also Ongota *buda* ‘to spit’ Kusia, Siebert 1994) ●

[] A widely spread East African term usually treated as a Wanderwort. While some of the terms are possibly loans in Cushitic and Omotic from Ethiopian (Amharic?) or in Ethiopian from Agaw or East Cushitic (so in EDE 2001: 151-152), the Proto-Afrasian origin is secured by the Hebrew-Arabic (with compatible but different meanings) and Chadic cognates (and, perhaps, Somali *bid-a* with its root vowel *-i-* preventing explanation as borrowing. Cf. NS: Bari, Shilluk *bōdo*, Bongo *bodo* ‘smith.’

NAA **bary-* ‘possession by an evil spirit, spell’ (AADB #2673):³² ●●●●●

Semitic **bary-*: Akkadian (OB) *bārû* ‘diviner,’ *barīrī-tu*, ‘a female demon; Mandaic *baraia*
 ‘exorciser,’ Neo-Aramaic *būrā* ‘fou, insensé;’ Geʿez *bāryā* ‘one who is in the service of a demon;
 epilepsy, a spirit that brings an epilepsy’ ●●●●●
 Berber: Ahaggar *būri* ‘attaque de nerfs,’ E. Tawllemmet *bor-t-ən* (pl.) ‘génies, esprits’ ●●●
 Chadic **bury-* ‘possession by a bad spirit:’ W.: Hausa *bóorii* ‘a form of supposed devil possession’
 Tangale *bura* ‘name of a bad spirit (cf. also Bokkos *mburú*, Daffo-Butura *mbúru* ‘medician’);

³⁰ *-ra* is a suffix? cf. Ngizim *gazbər* ‘tall, long’ < AA **gVz/žb-* ‘long.’

³¹ In view of a well-known association ‘smith – sorcerer,’ here probably also belongs Chadic **(?a)bVd?* > **vad-* ‘to forge:’ W.: Warji *vaad* ‘fabricate;’ C.: Ouldem *-vəd* ‘fabriquer, forger,’ Chuvok *mévḍēy* ‘forger, couvrir le toit de la case,’ Mada *ávàd* ‘forger,’ Muyong *ávàd* ‘to roof, to forge,’ Mafa *víḍ* ‘forger, fabriquer; faire un toit en paille’ (in Stolbova 2021 #36 glossed ‘to fabricate’).

³² It is tempting to unite **bari?* ‘god-creator’ (above) and **bary-* ‘possession by an evil spirit, spell’ into one root implying an arguable evolution from an epileptic fit/possession by spirits (a shaman’s trance?) → the one who deals with spirits → (evil) spirit → god. Cf. a somewhat similar semantic development in AA **kVrw-*.

C.: Mbara *mbré* ‘sorcerer;’ E.: Mokilko *bírre* ‘se promener (mauvais esprit) pour manger les âmes des gens’ (Stolbova 2021 #272; comp. to Akkadian and Geʿez) ●●●●●

NAA *ĉVn(?) - ‘(evil) sorcery’ (AADB 54): ●●●

Semitic *šVnV?- ‘to hate, be enemy;’ Ugaritic *šn?* ‘to hate;’ Phoenician *šn?-t* ‘hate, enmity,’ Hebrew *šn?* ‘to hate,’ *šōnē?* ‘enemy;’ Palmyrean *rwḥ šnyn* ‘evil spirits (?);’ Sabaic *s2n?* ‘enemy, ill-wisher;’ Arabic *šn?* ‘to hate’ ●●●●●

Egyptian (Medical texts) *šny* (unless < šly) ‘zaubern,’ (NE) *šn.w* ‘der Zauberer’ ●●

Chadic *šVn- ‘magic, spirit worshipping;’ W.: Bolewa *sìn-kau* ‘spirit,’ Tangale *seene* ‘to worship (idol);’ C.: Logone *šána* ‘Fetisch;’ E.: Kwang *sóné* ‘fetish;’ Sokoro *súne* ‘magic, medicine,’ Bidiya *čóŋŋà* ‘sorcier thaumaturge’ (in CED #858 compared to Egyptian, Sabaic and Mehri *šny* ‘to see, to consider’ > ‘to show, to be a medicine-man,’ semantically arguable) ●●●●●

2.6. Healing magic

NAA *bVl(bVl) - ‘(healing) magic, sorcery’ (AADB 1154, 1616): ●●

Semitic *bVl-, *bVlbVl- (redupl.) ‘be delivered from an evil spirit:’ (?) Arabic *bll* ‘guérir, être guéri; recouvrer la santé;’ *bill-* ‘remède;’ *balal-* ‘salut, sécurité’ (BK 1: 155-156]; Geʿez *balbala* ‘predict through omens’ (LGz.: 95), Tigre (*?a*)*bālbāla* ‘to talk like one possessed; be delivered from an evil spirit’ (Littmann, Höffner1956: 271) ●●

Chadic *bVl- ‘magic (spirit, sorcerer)’ (CED #213; comp. to Geʿez): W.: Pa’a *bali* ‘bewitch;’ *bàlà-mà* ‘witchcraft;’ Warji *bə̀lə-mai* ‘sorcerer;’ C.: Sukun *ma-mbəlum* ‘spirit, ghost;’ Kuseri *balai* ‘ghost (visible apparition);’ *mbilla* ‘magic;’ E.: Ndam *bàlí* ‘guérisseur, sorcerer;’ Barein (dial.) *bòlí* ‘traditional healer’ ●●●●●

2.7. Sorcery as knowledge

AA *(yV)daʃ- ‘to know’ > S. Cushitic ‘sorcery’ (AADB 3472): ●●●●●

a. ‘to know:’ ●●●●●

Semitic *yVdVʃ- ‘to know:’ Akkadian *idû, wadû*; Ugaritic; Phoenician, Hebrew; Aramaic *ydf ‘to know;’ Sabaic *dʃw* (met.) ‘to know;’ *ydf* ‘to find out;’ Arabic *ʔaydaʃa* IV ‘to inform;’ Geʿez *ʔaydaʃa* (caus.) ‘to make know, inform, declare, report, etc.;’ Harari *ēda*; Mehri *wēda*, Harsusi *yōda*, Jibbali *ʔedaʃ*, Soqotri *edaḥ* ‘to know’ ●●●●●

Egyptian (NE) *idʃ* ‘clever’ (probably < Hebrew) ●

Chadic **di?*- ‘know, learn, teach.’ C.: Mandara *diya*, Masa *di?i* ‘to know,’ Bachama *dyê gúnò*, Kola *dyù gwánj* ‘learn’ ((Jungraithmayr, Ibrizimow 1994: 319); E.: Mokilko *dóoyè* ‘to teach’ ●●●●●
 Cushitic E. *(*ya*)*da?*- ‘know, think.’ Saho, Afar *da?*- ‘be able, know,’ LEC: Somali *da?*- ‘understand,’
 Oromo *yaada* ‘think; worry,’ Konso *yaat-* (-*t* < **d*) ‘think’ ●●●●●

b. ‘sorcery:’

Cushitic S. **da?*-³³: Iraqw, Gorowa *da?a-ti*, *da?a-ri* ‘withcraft, sorcery, magic,’ Alagwa *danda?-as*
 ‘to treat injury, wound,’ Asa *da?-aruk* ‘doctor-diviner’ ●●●●●

AA **kayn-* ‘know’ > NAA ‘magic’ (AADB 912): ●●●●●

a. ‘know, learn, master’: ●●●●●

Semitic: Ethiopian **kayn-* ‘skill, art.’ Geʿez *kin* ‘craft, skill, plan, trick, etc.,’ Tigrinya *käynät* ‘art,’
 (?) Tigre *kin* ‘intention, will’ ●

Egyptian (MK) *tny* (unless <**kly*) ‘to learn’ ●●

Chadic: W.: Kirfi *kinn-* ‘to know,’ Maaka *kónò* ‘it is known;’ C.: Bachama *kaná* ‘truth,’ Buduma *káni*
 ‘true;’ E.: Mokilko *kónyà* ‘knowledge’ (cf. CED #436; comp. to Ethiopian and Cushitic) ●●●●●

Cushitic **kayn-* ‘know’: N.: Beja *-kan* ‘know;’ C.: Bilin *kən-t-*, Khamir, Qwara *kin-t-* ‘learn;’ E.: LEC:
 Hadiya *ken-* ‘know’ ●●●●●

b. ‘(evil) wizard, magician, priest’ (NAA): ●●●●●

Semitic **kahin-*³⁴ ‘priest; cheat.’ Ugaritic *khn*; Phoenician *khn*, Hebrew *kōhēn*; Aramaic: Egyptian
khn, Syrian *kāhnā*, Mandaic *kahna* ‘priest;’ Arabic *khn* ‘ê. devin, prêtre; predire l’avenir à qqn.,’
kāhin- ‘fortune-teller, diviner; (pre-Islamic) priest’ (the latter meaning may be < Aram.); Geʿez
kāhan ‘priest, clergyman’ (considered an Aramaic loan), Tigrinya, Amharic *kahən* ‘priest’ (<
 Geʿez ?); Mehri *kōhən* ‘cunning; cheat,’ *káthən* ‘to pretend to st. in order to attain one’s object,’
 Harsusi *kēhen*, Jibbali *kúhun* ‘adult, clever’ ●●●●●

Chadic **kVn-* ‘k. of magic; evil spirit’ (CED #438; compared to Ugaritic, Hebrew and Arabic): W.:

³³ In view of this AA etymology, more semantically plausible, the idea of this root derived from **da?*- ‘burn’ (Kiessling and Mous 2003: 78) looks much less likely.

³⁴ On a secondary *-h-* in Afrasian see Militarev (2005: 18-20).

Montol *kung* ‘evil spirit,’ Kupto *kònm* ‘spirits,’ *kònm* ‘object of religious worshipping; ritual,’ Bokkos *kuná* ‘sorcerer;’ C.: Gude *kíiina* ‘type of evil spirit,’ Sukun *kyikun* ‘divination,’ Makeri *kunus* ‘magic, God, fetish,’ Munjuk *kìniwi* ‘empoisonner par magic’ ●●●●●

2.8. Spell, omen, magical speech or sign

NAA *ʔayat- ~ *tay(t)- ‘sign, miraculous sign, omen’ (AADB 199): ●●●

Semitic *ʔayat- ‘sign, miraculous sign, omen’: Akkadian (Oakk.) *ittu* ‘mark, sign, omen, ominous sign,’ etc. (CAD i 304); Hebrew *ʔōt* ‘sign, miraculous sign, omen, foretelling the future,’ etc. (HALOT: 26); Aram.: Bib., Syrian *ʔātā* ‘signum, miraculum,’ etc. (Brockelmann 1928: 53-54); Arabic *ʔāyat-* ‘signe, miracle, pierre sépulcrale, signe céleste,’ etc. (BK 1: 72; cf. *tiwāʔ-* ‘marque en forme de croix imprimée sur les cuisses ou sur le cou d’une bête’ (BK 1: 211) ●●●●●
 Egyptian (OK) *ty.t* ‘image, form, shape, figure, sign’ (EG V: 239-40) ●●●
 (?) Berber: Ayr, E. Tawllemmet *tuta* ‘drapeau’ (Alojali: 187) ●

AA *fa(ʔV)l-³⁵ ‘to curse’ (AADB 842): ●●●●

Semitic *pVʔVl- ‘to wish ill, curse’: Sabaic *fʔl* ‘to wish ill to so.; Jibbali *effél* ‘to bring bad luck by cursing’ ●●●●
 Egyptian (PT) *fʔw*³⁶ ‘Bedrohung o. a.’ (EG I: 575) ●●
 Berber: Ayr, E. Tawllemmet *fäll-ăn* ‘é. possédé par le diable; s’irriter, s’énervé’ (Naït-Zerrad III: 568) ●●●
 Chadic *ful- ‘to curse:’ W.: Montol *ful-ni*, Karekare *fūulu*, Bolewa *full-* ‘abuse, curse’³⁷ ●●●●
 Cushitic *fal- ‘bewitch, curse, slander:’ E.: LEC: Somali *fal* ‘to put a spell on’ (Heine 1978: 58), ‘bewitch’ (Sasse 1979: 18), Rendille, Arbore *fal-* ‘to curse,’ Oromo *falfal-* (redupl.) ‘to bewitch’ (Sasse 1982: 69), HEC: Hadiya *far-* (*-r < *l*) ‘to bewitch;’ S.: Iraqw *fool-usamoo* ‘slanderer’ (Mous, Qorro, Kiessling 2002: 35) ●●●●●

³⁵ *f- in the reconstructed form is based not so much on the arguable Egyptian form or the Chadic ones not clearly distinguishing the reflexes of AA *f- and *p- (see AA *palaʔ- ‘magic speech or object’ below) as on the unequivocal evidence of f- in Iraqw clearly distinguishing between f and p. The choice of Sabaic and Jibbali in favor of AA *faʔVl- vs. *palaʔ- relies on the meaning alone.

³⁶ ; more likely renders -l- in view of the very plausible AA parallels.

³⁷ And several verbs of the *fulp- type meaning ‘to abuse’ – see Stolbova 2021 #362 *ful-p (pl.)

AA **pala?* - ‘magic speech or object’³⁸ (AADB 842): ●●●●

Semitic: Hebrew *pālā?* ‘something unusual, miracle’ (HALOT: 928); Syrian *pēlē?tā* ‘simile, proverbium; symbolum; aenigma’ (Brock.: 569); Arabic *fa?l-* (met.?) ‘augure, présage, pronostique, surtout bon’ (BK 2: 530); cf. Mehri *fāyōl* ‘to be saved, safe’ (JM:111), Jibbali *fyl* ‘to be saved, save, survive’ (Johnstone 1981: 67) ●●●

Berber **fal-* ‘magic speech or practice:’ Ayr, E. Tawllemmet *ta-nā-falal-t* (Alojali 1980: 141), Ahaggar *ta-nā-fāl-it* ‘paroles magiques ayant pour but de retrouver un objet égaré’ (cf. also Ayr *affal* ‘immunité (contre une maladie)’ (Alojali 1980: 38), Qabyle *a-s-fāl* ‘pratique magique qui consiste à faire tourner une offrande au-dessus du malade, puis à l’égorger’ (Dallet: 204; unless < *fāl* ‘passer par dessus’ (Dallet 1982: 203) ●●●●●

Chadic C.: Mada *fla* ‘génie, esprit lié à un objet magique, souvent maléfique,’ Azum *flei-na* ‘idol, oracle’³⁹ ●●

Cushitic S.: Dahalo *póla?i* ‘amulet’ ●●●

AA **ḥabar-* ‘cursing or charming someone openly, out loud’ (AADB 4081): ●●●●

Semitic **ḥabar-* ‘cursing or charming someone out loud:’⁴⁰ Akkadian *ḥabāru* ‘to be noisy, make noise (of people)’ (context meanings);⁴¹; Phoenician *ḥbr* ‘conjurer, charmer, exorcist,’ Hebrew *ḥābār* ‘spell,’ Post-Biblical Hebrew *ḥabbār* ‘charmer of snakes, magus, Parsee priest’ (likely < Aramaic); Aramaic Judaic *ḥabbār*, Syrian *ḥabbār-* ‘charmer of snakes, magus;’ Geʿez *ḥabr* ‘encantation, enchantment, witchcraft,’ Tigre *ḥābrä* ‘to profess,’ *ḥābre* ‘wonder’ ●●●●

Cushitic E. **ḥabār-*: Saho *abaar*, Afar *abaare* ‘curse’, *abaaro* ‘evil, curse, a devilish act’, LEC: Somali,

³⁸ Differing from the somewhat semblable **fa(?V)l-* ‘to curse’ not only semantically, but also phonetically: **p-* is guaranteed by Dahalo *póla?i* as AA **f* and **p* yield different reflexes in Dahalo (Takács 2011: 115).

³⁹ As the reflexes of **p-* and **f-* do not clearly differ in the corresponding languages (CED: 29), semantically these two terms seem to suit here better than in Stolbova 2021 #361, where they are united under the heading ‘wind’ > ‘ghost’ with W.: Bolewa *pēli* ‘wind’, *pe-mpeli* ‘wind, spirit, ghost’, Karekare *filfilä* ‘wind’, Kupto *filfil* ‘wind, air; spirit, devil’; C.: Hide *fala-k* ‘wind’, Dzepaw *fūr*, Gizey *fūl* ‘esprit’, Marba, Musey *ful-na*, Ham *fūl* ‘esprit-génie’, Masa, Lew *fūl* ‘génie de la brousse’ derived, in its turn, from **fVl-* ‘to blow (away)’.

⁴⁰ There are a few words in Arabic and MSA (probably, Arabisms) either homonymous or (more likely) related with a semantic change from ‘cursing or charming’ to ‘be wizard, magician’ to ‘know, test’: Arabic *ḥbr* ‘know, learn, test,’ *ḥabār-* ‘news, rumor;’ Mehri. *ḥabūr* ‘try, test (so’s character),’ Jibbali *ḥōr* ‘to examine so.,’ Soqotri *ḥabor* ‘to plumb, measure; give news of a death.’

⁴¹ Most likely related is a much-discussed Akkadian *ḥābiru* (rather than *ḥāpiru* which has no feasible cognates; often confused with Egyptian *špr.w* ‘foreign/Asiatic workers’ having a different etymology but perhaps contaminated due to a partial phonetic coincidence) ‘outlaws, rebels, etc.’ originally probably denoting a band of wandering fortune-tellers and magicians.

Boni *habaar*, Oromo, Rendille *abaar*- ‘curse’⁴² ●●●●

2.9. Offering, sacrifice

AA **sa/uk*- ‘slaughter an animal, make a sacrifice’ (AADB 1956):⁴³ ●●●

Semitic: Arabic *skk* ‘to cut ears’ ●

Chadic W.: Hausa *súka* ‘slaughtering a camel’ ●

Cushitic C. **suk*:- Bilin *suuk*- ‘slaughter cattle (after funeral)’ (see Reinisch 1887; 300); S.: Iraqw *saanka* (with a secondary *-n*-) ‘chyme, stomach contents of a slaughtered animal (sheep or cow)... used as an offering to the dead’ (Mous, Qorro and Kiessling 2002)⁴⁴ ●●●●●

NAA **zi(H)b*- ‘(food-)offering, sacrifice’ (AADB 1708): ●●●●●

Semitic: Akkadian (from OB on) *zīb-u* ‘food-offering’ (CAD z 105) ●●●●●

Chadic **zib*- ‘make a sacrifice’: C.: Podoko *gičika žibe* ‘hut for sacrifices’ (*gičika* ‘hut’), Muyang *éžibi* ‘give dowry for a woman, give by stages’, Sakun *zəv* (< **zVb*-) ‘sacrifice, make offering to’; E.: Bidiya *ziib* ‘make a sacrifice before eating the new corn’ (CED #800; compared with Akkadian).
●●●●●

NAA **žVbVh*- ‘make a sacrifice, offering’ (AADB 1707): ●●●●

Semitic **dVbVh*- ‘slaughter, make a sacrifice’: Akkadian (NB) *zebû* ‘slaughter, make a sacrifice’;

Ugaritic *dbḥ*; Phoenician *zbḥ*, Hebrew *zbḥ* ‘to slaughter,’ *zābaḥ* ‘communal sacrifice, sacrifice of slaughtering sheep, goat or cattle’ (HALOT: 262); Aramaic: Biblical *dbḥ*, Syrian *debḥā* ‘sacrifice,’ Sabaic *ḏbḥ* ‘to slay, sacrifice, slaughter; sacrificial victim;’ Arabic *ḏbḥ*; Geʿez *zabḥa* ‘to slaughter, sacrifice,’ Tigre *zābḥa* ‘to skin an animal’ ●●●●●

Egyptian (MK) *dbḥ* ‘(food) offering’⁴⁵ ●●●●

⁴² Semitic **ḥ* (< AA **ḥ*) yields **ḥ* in Saho-Afar and LEC which often appears as *h* or disappears completely in all the languages, see (Sasse 1979: 35-41). Though borrowing in E. Cushitic from Ethiopian is possible phonetically, there is no term in the latter fitting semantically (Harari *habār* ‘curse’ is obviously a loan from E. Cushitic as *ḥ* in Harari is attested only in borrowed words; instead, it confirms the fallen *ḥ*- in the earlier state of E. Cushitic).

⁴³ In spite of scarce evidence, a semantically interesting item worth recording and further search.

⁴⁴ The Iraqw dictionary (Mous, Qorro and Kiessling 2002) gives a more detailed meaning of the noun clearly pointing to an offering, while the W. Rift reconstruction (Kießling and Mous 2003) retains only **saanka* ‘chyme.’

⁴⁵ Though AA **ž* regularly yields Egyptian *z*, not *d*, there are several notable exceptions, e. g. AA **ʕi/užn*- ‘ear’ (> Semitic **ʕudin*-) > Egyptian *idn*.

(?) Cushitic E.: LEC: Somali *dabaah*- ‘slaughter’⁴⁶ ●

2.10. Mythical and fantastic animals and their origin

AA *ʔačhayl- ‘(big) reptile’ > Semitic ‘dragon’ (AADB 2606): ●●●●●

Semitic *ʔačhayl- (met.) ‘a mythical reptile, dragon’: Aramaic: Syrian *ʔātalyā* ‘draco; stella, quae solem tegens eclipsim efficit,’ Mandaic *talia* ‘fictive dragon causing eclipse;’ Tigre *ʔashal-ät* ‘dragon,’ Tigrinya *ʔasäl-ät, ʔashal-ät* ‘animale favoloso, di smisurata grandezza e della specie del coccodrilla’ ●●●●●

Berber **Haššayl*- ‘sp. of snake.’ Ghat *ašil*, Ahaggar *âššel* ‘serpent,’ Ayr *aššel*, E. Tawllemmet *aššol* ‘couleuvre, gros serpent,’ Mزاب *t-iššel-t* ‘vipère’ ●●●●●

Cushitic S.: Dahalo *ṭáʔala* (met.) ‘puff-adder’⁴⁷ ●

Omotic *ʔ/haylaš- (met.) ‘crocodile.’ N. *ʔaylaš-: Wolaita *aylaaš-uwa*, Zala *aylaš-uwa*, Dawro *allašo*; S. **haylaš*-: Ari *hayleša* ●●●●●

[] Militarev, Nikolaev 2021 #9.1. Cf. SED II No. 20.

NAA *ʔalw- ‘elephant’ > Akkadian ‘mythical giant bull’ (AADB 2511): ●●●●●

Semitic *(ya-)ʔalw- ~ *ʔVwal: Akkadian (Bogh, SB, Akkadogr. in Hitt.) *alû (elû)* ‘mythical giant bull’ (CAD *a*₁ 377), ‘The Bull (of Heaven);’ Syrian *yašlā* ‘unicornus, rhinoceros’ (Brockelmann 1928: 305); Tigre *ʔawal* ‘young of the elephant’ (Littmann, Höffner 1956: 477) ●●●●●

Berber **yalw* ‘elephant.’ Ghat *alu*, Ahaggar *êlu*, pl. *êlw-ān*, Ayr *ilaw*, E. Tawllemmet *elaw*, Zenaga *ažih* (<*ʔVliw) ●●●●●

[] Cf. Blažek 1994: 198 (Akkadian and Berber).

AA *bač- ‘snake, reptile’ > Akkadian, Ugaritic ‘dragon’ (AADB 2625): ●●●●●

Semitic **bač-am/n-*: Akkadian *bašm-u* ‘a horned serpent; the constellation Hydra, mythical aquatic

⁴⁶ AA *ʔ > Somali *d* regularly; the isolated triconsonantal Somali term suspiciously coinciding with the Arabic one is likely a borrowing.

⁴⁷ ṭ in Dahalo is usually considered to continue only AA **t* – as well as *ḏ* is considered to continue AA **d*. There are several cases, however, of Dahalo *ḏ* very likely corresponding to Semitic *ḏ* < AA *ʔ (cf. fn 37). Interestingly, G. Takács, the most authoritative student of the AA consonantal reflexes in S. Cushitic, leaves empty cells for Dahalo reflexes of AA *č and *ʔ in his table of correspondences between PAA and S. Cushitic (Takács 2011: 116).

reptile;’ Ebla *ba-ša-nu-um* ‘sp. of snake;’ Ugaritic *bṭn*, *bṭn-t* ‘serpent, dragon;’ Arabic *batan-* ‘coulèvre, serpent,’ *buṭn-* ‘genre de reptile’ ●●●●●

Cushitic E.: LEC **(ʔa-)bVč-*: Somali *abes-o*, Arbore *ebés-a* ‘kind of serpent,’ Oromo *bof-a* ‘snake’

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Omotic N. **biʔas-* (met. < **ʔi-bas-*?): Dizi (Sheko) *biasu* ‘crocodile’ ●

□ Cf. SED II #63.

AA **garyam-* ~ **gumaray-* ‘hippopotamus’ ●●●●● > (?) Ugaritic ‘a mythical beast’ ● (AADB 2526):

Semitic **g^(w)imar(r)ay-* ‘hippopotamus:’ Ugaritic *gmr* ‘a kind of animal capable of fighting ferociously’ (‘hippopotamus?’),⁴⁸ Geʿez *gomāri*, *g^wamāri*, Tigrinya *gumare*, Amharic *gumarre*, Muher *g^wāmarre*, etc. ‘hippopotamus’ ●

Chadic C. **garyam-* ‘hippopotamus:’ Vulum, Mbara *gáriyàm*, Musgu *geryam*, Masa *gáryam*, Banana *garyamba*; E.: Tumak *gírím*, Mubi *gírímtíí* ●●●●●

Cushitic C. **gumar-* ‘hippopotamus;’ E.: Saho-Afar **gumarī* ‘hippopotamus;’ HEC **gumarr-* id.

●●●●●

Omotic N.: Kullo *gomára* ‘hippopotamus’⁴⁹ ●

□ Cf. Blažek (1994: 204).

AA **har-* ‘crocodile’ > ‘water monster,’ ‘mythological giant snake’ (AADB 4072): ●●●●●

Egyptian (PT) *h_jw* (if < *hrw*; if < **hyw*, related to Sem. **hVwVr-* ‘sp. of worm, snake’) ‘Schlange (best. Art)’ (EG II: 483), also ‘Monster, (zischende) Schlange?’ ●

Chadic **har-um-* ‘crocodile:’ W. **haram-*: Diri *hurin*, Sha *hàr-àm* ‘some water monster (crocodile, hippo),’ Bokkos *haràm*, Daffo-Butura *hàràm*, Kulere *hárâŋ*, etc.; C. **hurum-*: Gisiga *hurom*, Mbara *húrúm*, Masa *hūrūm-nā*, etc.; E. **(H)urm-*: Lele *ūr-m-ō*, Kabalai *ərmm-ə* ●●●●●

Cushitic **har(ar)-* ‘large reptile:’ E.: Dullay: Gollango *háar-o* ‘crocodile;’ S. **harar-* ‘mythological giant snake:’ Iraqw *hárár-îo*, Gorowa *haraari-yoda*⁵⁰ ●●●●●

□ CED #332 (comp. to Gollango and W. Rift)⁵¹

⁴⁸ The main argument for this meaning is Ethiopian parallels which are, naturally, suspicious of borrowing from Cushitic. If the Ugaritic term really means ‘hippopotamus’ (and not so interpreted from Eth.), it tips the scale in favor of Ethiopism in Cushitic. If not, an African Wanderwort, of course, is also a possibility.

⁴⁹ Blažek (1994: 202) also quotes Yamma *gumau*, Bworo *goma*, *gomia*, Kafa *gomānā*. If not for these terms, the Kullo form may be considered an isolated Omotic example and suspected a loan from HEC or Ethiopian.

⁵⁰ According to Kiessling and Mous (2003: 132), “probably of Datoga origin,” which is less likely in view of the Gollango and Chadic cognates.

⁵¹ Ongota *haar-o* ‘crocodile’ compared *ibid.*, if recorded correctly, does not fit here because *ḥ-* does not continue AA **h*.

NAA *harnag- ~ *hirguan- ~ *gurhan- ‘sp. of carnivore’ (dog, jackal, hyena) > Canarian demon in the form of a dog (AADB 352): ●●●

Semitic *harnag-: Syrian *harnāgā* ‘golden jackal;’ cf. also Arabic *žāriḥat-* < **gariḥ-* ‘bête ou oiseau de chasse (chien, guépard, faucon)’ ●

Canarian **hir(g)wan-*: Palma *hirguan* ‘...demonio in figura d’uomo lanuto,’ *irvene* ‘el demonio en figura de perro lanudo,’ *irvene* ‘apparitions,’ *yrvene* ‘el Diablo’ (Wölfel 1965: 484, entry “Der Hund”) ●●

Chadic: C. **gurh-an-* ~ **hirg-*: Hildi *gərhaŋ* ‘jackal,’ Musgu *hérge*, Munjuk *hirge* ‘dog,’ Musgoy *gúrnai*, *ŋúrmai*, Masa *ŋurnaita*, Banana *gənira*; E. **gurnay-*: Kera *gòrnòy*, Kwang *gōrény*, Kabalai *gwòrrnày* ‘hyena’ (Jungrraithmayr, Ibriszimow 1994: 107, 205; cf. CED #224a.) ●●●●●

[] Militarev 2020 #1.1.1.6; Militarev and Nikolaev 2021.

AA *kal(u) ‘sp. of large fish’ ●●●● > Akkadian fabulous creature (AADB 2674):

Semitic **kalul-*: Akkadian (SB) *kulil-*, *kulull-* ‘a fabulous creature, part man and part fish’ (CAD *k* 526);⁵² Mehri *kell*, Jibbali *kāl* ‘whale’⁵³ ●●●●●

Chadic **kVl-*: W. **kul-m-*: Hausa *kulma* ‘the name of a large fish;’ C. **kalik-* (partial redupl.): Bura *kalik-o*, *kilakil-a* ‘a sp. of fish’ ●●●

Cushitic E. **kallu-m-* ‘fish;’ Afar *kullu(u)m*, LEC: Somali *kallúun*, pl. *kalluum-o*, Bayso *kunnum-i* (assim.) ●●●●

NAA *kusay- ‘sp. of (large) reptile’ > Semitic mythical (aquatic) reptile, dragon’ (AADB 3727): ●●●●●

Semitic **kuš(a)y-* ~ **kayš-* ‘(mythical) serpent;’ Akkadian (NB) *kušū*⁵⁴ ‘an aquatic (mythical) animal, a crab? a shark?’ (*šinni kušī* ‘a dragon’s tooth’ in CAD); Geʿez *kaysi*, Tigre *kāyəs* ‘serpent, dragon,’ Tigrinya, Amharic *käysi* ‘snake, serpent’ ●●●●●

Chadic **kaws-* ‘dangerous snake or large reptile;’ W.: Hausa *kwáasáa*, *kúusè* ‘puff-adder;’ C.: Mada *mé-ksèw-éd* (met.) ‘sp. of viper;’ E.: Bidiya *kóosò* ‘vipère’, Kera *késé* ‘varan,’ Lele *kōsō* ‘varan de Nil,’ Somrai *gàší* (< **kas-* CED: 37) ‘crocodile’ ●●●●●

⁵² Hardly a Sumerian loan in view of the Semitic and AA cognates.

⁵³ Dolgopolskiy (2008 #1030) apud Thomas (1937).

⁵⁴ In view of Eth. and Chadic cognates, borrowed in Sumerian *kušū*, not vice versa.

[] Cf. SED II No. 120; Stolbova 2011 #125, 127 (comp. to Akkadian).

AA *laḥ-am- ‘large aquatic animal’ ●●●● > Akkadian ‘a mythical being’ ●●●●● (AADB 2516):

Semitic *laḥm- ‘shark:’ Akkadian (OAkk.) laḥmu (*laḥamu*) ‘a monster, a mythical being;’ Arabic luḥm- ‘kind of sea-fish,’ Dat_ina laḥam, Yemenite luḥam, laḥam ‘shark;’ Harsusi léhem, Jibbali lḥum, Soqotri léhem ‘shark’⁵⁵ ●●●●●

Egyptian (NK) ḥrm(w) (<*ḥVlVm-, met.?) ‘crocodile’?⁵⁶ ●

Chadic *lVḥV ‘hippo’ (Stolbova 2005 #151): W.: Dera lǎhyo; C.: Chibak laḥa, Bura laha, Gude lǎh

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Cushitic N.: Beja lehúmbo ‘die graugrüne Meerkatze’ (Blažek 2003: 263) ●

[] Cf. SED II No. 145.

NAA *tVn- ‘snake’ (?) ● or Semitic only ●●●●● (AADB 3805):

Semitic *tannin- ‘(mythical) snake, dragon:’ Ugaritic *tnn* ‘dragon;’ Hebrew *tannīn* ‘sea-monster, sea-dragon; serpent; crocodile;’ Aramaic: Official *tnyn* ‘dragon;’ Judaic *tannīnā* ‘sea-monster, crocodile; large snake;’ Samaritan *tnyn* ‘serpent;’ Syrian *tannīnā* ‘belua marina; draco, aspis;’ Mandaic *tanina* ‘dragon;’ Arabic *tinnīn*- ‘serpent of enormous size; dragon’ (< Aramaic?) ●●●●●

(?) Egyptian (Gr.) *wrj tn.t* ‘Schlange (best. Art)’ (EG I 146) ●

Chadic E.: Kera túuni ‘Flusspferd’ ●

[] Cf. SED II No. 227.

AA *(ʔa-)ḡag(w)- ‘sp. of largest herbivore’ ●●●● > Egyptian ‘a mythical animal’ ●●●●● (AADB 2521)

Egyp. (MK) *zḡ.t* ‘ein Fabeltier’ ●●●●●

Chadic W. *(n-)ḡungw- (met. < *ḡagw-n-): Diri, Pa’a ḡungw-a, Siri ḡiḡw-a ‘hippopotamus;’ Dwot ndzugh-u ‘elephant’ ●●●●●

Cushitic E. *ḡag-am-: Yaaku *sogóm-èi* ‘elephant’ (s in Yaaku may reflect *z < *ḡ/ḡ) ●●

Omotiic N. *ʔa-ḡag-ay ‘hippopotamus:’ Kačama *azāgē*, Koyra *azzāgē*, *azzagi*, Ganjule *azagé* ●●●●

[] Cf. Blažek (1994: 204); Militarev and Nikolaev (2020).

⁵⁵ Inter-borrowing between the living Arabic idioms and MSA suggests itself, but its direction is not clear.

⁵⁶ “...reconstructed after the sign ‘crocodile’ determining the homonymous place name” (Bla 2003: 264).

3. Conclusions

The fact that our ancestors believed in spirits and the supernatural and practiced different kinds of magic from a much earlier time than the Neolithic is well known, but the reconstruction of the proto-language terms at such a deep chronological level reflecting perceptions, beliefs and practices of the Near Eastern man and society has been carried out for the first time in scholarship and can provide valuable evidence for anthropologists, mythologists, prehistorians, archaeologists. Evidence obtained not indirectly—through the interpretation of archaeological artifacts, rock carvings, much later written monuments or still later modern archaic cultures, but directly—through objective and impartial testimony of language.

4. Discussion

The reconstructed proto-language terms related to the proposed theme do not name objects, actions or qualities in the way many other reconstructed terms with quite concrete and clear meanings (such as ‘goat,’ ‘sun,’ ‘big’ or ‘eat’) do, but rather reflect the etymologist's view of the common notion that unites the given group of cognate words. This approach, with the inevitable element of “semantic subjectivity,” however, creates a framework and paves the way for further research that could cover a significantly larger number of lexical sources, including new ones, for individual languages—to overcome another weakness in part of the etymologies, namely, incompleteness, if not scarcity, of data compared, rather than claims high degree of semantic precision in reconstructed proto-forms or completeness of lexical material. As they say, not perfect but workable...

Alphabetic list of 38 reconstructed proto-forms:

- *ʔačhayl- ‘(big) reptile’ > Semitic ‘dragon’
- *ʔil- ~ *lil- ~ *laʔ- ‘sky/cloud/rain’ or ‘sun’ > ‘God’?
- *ʔayat- ~ *tay(t)- ‘sign, miraculous sign, omen’
- *ʔalw- ‘elephant’ > Akkadian ‘mythical giant bull’
- *biʔay- ‘hex, evil spells causing antisocial behavior’
- *biʔVt- ‘evil spirit or magic’
- *bač- ‘snake, reptile’ > Akk., Ugaritic ‘dragon’
- *bawd- ‘sorcerer, witch-doctor’
- *bvl(bvl)- ‘(healing) magic, sorcery’
- *bariʔ- ‘spirit or god-creator’

- *bary- ‘possession by an evil spirit, spell’
- *cigul- ‘seal, (sealed, registered) property, treasure’ > Eth. ‘divination, magic’
- *ĉVn(?) - ‘(evil) sorcery’
- *(y)daŋ- ‘to know’ > ‘sorcery’
- *faʔVl- ‘to curse’
- *garyam- ~ *gumaray- ‘hippopotamus’ > (?) Ugaritic a mythical beast
- *har- ‘crocodile’ > ‘water monster’, ‘mythological giant snake’
- *harnag- ~ *hirguan- ~ *gurhan- ‘sp. of carnivore’ (dog, jackal, hyena) > Canarian demon in the form of
a dog
- *ħabar- ‘cursing or charming someone openly, out loud’
- *kal(ul) ‘sp. of large fish’ > Akkadian ‘fabulous creature’
- *kayn- ‘know’ > ‘magic’
- *kirw- ‘soul, ghost’
- *kusay- ‘sp. of (large) reptile’ > Semitic mythical (aquatic) reptile, dragon’
- *lah-am- ‘large aquatic animal’ > Akkadian ‘a mythical being’
- *mVh- ‘wonder, miracle, prophesy’
- *mar- ‘diviner, fortune-teller’
- *ni(H)nay- ‘elder/adult male relative’ (> chief, lord’) > ‘god’
- *nVf- ‘breath, soul, self, life’
- *nafVs- ‘breath, soul, life’
- *palaʔ - ‘magical speech or object’
- *raw/?- ‘sky; god’
- *sa/uk- ‘slaughter an animal, make a sacrifice’
- *tVnnVn- ‘(mythical) snake, dragon’ (Semitic)
- *zi(H)b- ‘(food-)offering, sacrifice’
- *žVbVh- ‘make a sacrifice, offering’
- *(?a-)žag(w)- ‘sp. of largest herbivore’ > Egyptian a mythical animal
- *žVķ- ‘(night) ghost, phantome’
- *žVr- ‘magic; (evil) genius; sky-god’

Some transcription signs and conventions

ḃ — emphatic voiced bilabial stop

ṭ — interdental voiceless spirant

ḏ – interdental voiced spirant
 ʈ – dental voiceless emphatic stop
 ḏ – dental voiced emphatic stop
 c – alveolar voiceless affricate [ts]
 ʒ – alveolar voiced affricate [dz]
 ʧ – palato-alveolar voiceless affricate [tʃ]
 ʤ – palato-alveolar voiced affricate [dʒ]
 ʃ – hissing emphatic voiceless spirant
 ʧ – alveolar emphatic voiceless affricate
 ʤ – palato-alveolar emphatic affricate
 ʂ – lateral voiceless spirant
 ʧ̣ – lateral voiceless affricate
 ʤ̣ – lateral emphatic affricate
 ḳ (or q̣) – emphatic velar stop
 ɸ – uvular voiceless spirant
 ɸ – pharyngeal voiceless fricative
 ʕ – pharyngeal voiced fricative
 h – laryngeal voiceless fricative
 ʔ – glottal stop
 ā, ī, ū, ē, ō – long vowels
 ă, etc. – short vowels
 ə – neutral vowel (shwa)

in the reconstructed proto-forms:

V indicates a non-specified (in other words, any) vowel, e.g. *bVr- should be read ‘either *bar-, *bir-, or *bur-’

H indicates a non-specified laryngeal or pharyngeal consonant

S indicates a non-specified sibilant

/ between two symbols means ‘or’, e.g., *gaw/y- is to be read ‘*gaw- or *gay-’

() a symbol in round brackets means ‘with or without this symbol’, e.g. *ba(w)r- should be read ‘*bawr- or *bar-’

~ means ‘and’ pointing to two or more co-existing proto-forms, e.g. *ʕad-at- ~ *ʕidd- indicates two reconstructed variant proto-forms

[] precedes references and comments to the whole entry

Abbreviations

AA – Afrasian

E. – East

LEC – Lowland East Cushitic

MK – Middle Kingdom

MSA – Modern South Arabian

N. – North

NAA – North Afrasian (Semitic, Egyptian, Berber, Chadic)

NB – Neo-Babylonian

NE – New Egyptian

NK – New Kingdom

OAKk – Old Akkadian

OB – Old Babylonian

OK – Old Kingdom

PAA – Proto-Afrasian

PNA – Proto-North Afrasian

PT – Pyramid Texts

S. – South

SAA – South Afrasian (Cushitic and Omotic)

SB – Standard Babylonian

W. – West.

Abbreviations of sources

AADB – Militarev, Alexander and Olga Stolbova. 2007. *Afrasian (Afro-Asiatic) Etymological Database* [online] [Cit. 18 October 2019]. Available from <https://starlingdb.org> and <http://starling.rinet.ru> [Cit. 28 December 2021].

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The academic background is zero. Graduated from the Faculty of Translation of the Moscow Institute of Foreign Languages, six lost years. The family duty: to publish a draft doctoral dissertation on Semitics by my grandfather—polyglot and orientalist Solomon Maizel, who passed away at 52—led to graduate school at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences, where I miraculously got without knowing either linguistics or Semitics. Had to master everything myself. With great difficulty wrote my first dissertation. Received an offer from Igor Diakonov to participate in the compilation of the Comparative Historical Afrasian Dictionary. In 2001-2013, Head of Afrasian section in the Santa Fe Institute’s project “Evolution of Human Languages.” In 2006, nominated by a group of US, European and Russian professors for the Holberg International Memorial Prize for outstanding scholarly work in the academic fields of the arts and humanities. Founding member, International Association for Comparative Semitics (Barcelona). Like my informal teachers Solomon Maisel, Igor Diakonov and Sergei Starostin, I have always sailed separately from the mainstream. The rest is on Wikipedia.

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