

EtymARAB

**harifa**, a (*haraf*), vb. I, and **harrafa**, vb. II, to dote, be senile and feeble-minded; to drivel, talk foolishly

**haraf**, n., feeble-mindedness, dotage, senility; childishness (of an old man)

**harif** and **harfān**, adj., feeble-minded, doting; childish; n., dotard

**harīf**, n., autumn, fall

**harīfī**, adj., autumnal

**harūf**, pl. *hirāf*, *?ahrifat*, *hirfān*, n., young sheep, lamb, yearling; wether

**hurāfat**, pl. *-āt*, n., superstition; fable, fairy tale

**hurāfī**, adj., fabulous, fictitious, legendary

**mahrāfat**, n., prattle, drivel, twaddle, bosh

**tahrīf**, n., folly, delusion; foolish talk, drivel, twaddle, bosh, buncombe

**muḥarrif**, adj., childish, foolish; (pl. *-ūn*) prattler, chatterbox, windbag; charlatan

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## Biradicalist Mimophonic Triradicalism: Sounds, root nuclei and root complements in M. Ḥ. Ḥ. Gabal's 'etymological' dictionary of Arabic (2012)

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### Abstract

This article presents and discusses the monumental 'etymological dictionary', or 'lexicon', *al-Muṣṣḡam al-iṣṭiqāqī al-muḥaṣṣal*,<sup>1</sup> by the late Egyptian professor of Arabic language at al-Azhar University, Muḥammad Ḥasan Ḥasan Gabal (d. 2015),<sup>2</sup> and tries to situate it on the map of positions taken in Arabic and Semitic Studies in the West regarding the question whether or not the triradical roots of the Arabic and Semitic lexicon may have developed, via extension, from earlier biradical ones.

*Key words:* biradicalism, triradicalism, root, *iṣṭiqāq*, traditional 'Arab' etymology

The study that this article aims to present and discuss is remarkable in at least three respects:

- 1) It gives eloquent proof of the deplorable fact that, in spite of globalisation and an increasingly interconnected world, Western and indigenous Arab linguistics obviously continue to live as if in two separate galaxies—neither does Gabal refer, in any way whatsoever, to the bulk of Western research on the questions that are central to his own linguistic efforts,<sup>3</sup> nor seem scholars in the West to have taken notice of Gabal's *magnum opus* so far.
- 2) Although the *Muṣṣḡam* does not communicate with Western research, the theory developed by Gabal nevertheless implicitly contributes to the discussion of one of the key issues of Arabic (and Semitic) linguistics: the so-called "biradicalism problem" (Voigt),<sup>4</sup> i.e., the question "whether the Semitic lexicon is primarily built on biradical or triradical bases, that is, whether triradical roots are original or developed out of a more archa-

1 Muḥammad Ḥasan Ḥasan ḠABAL, *al-Muṣṣḡam al-iṣṭiqāqī al-muḥaṣṣal li-ḡalfāz al-qurḡān al-karīm: muḥaṣṣal bi-bayān al-ṣalāqāt bayn ḡalfāz al-qurḡān al-karīm bi-ḡaṣwāti-hā wa-bayn maṣānī-hā*, 4 vols., Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḡādāb, 2012. – The *Muṣṣḡam* seems to build (among other works) on the author's earlier study, *al-Maṣnā al-luḡawī* (see note 7, below).

2 Gabal also formerly served as Dean of the Faculty of Arabic Language in al-Manṣūra; when the *Muṣṣḡam* was published he was *ustād ḡayr mutafarriḡ* at the Faculty of Qur'anic Studies, Ṭanṭā.

3 The Bibliography ("al-Maṣādir", *Muṣṣḡam*, iv: 2400-2408) does not contain any non-Arabic references.

4 Rainer M. VOIGT, *Die infirmen Verbaltypen des Arabischen und das Biradikalismus-Problem*. Stuttgart: Franz-Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1988 (= Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz, Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission; vol. 39).

ic biconsonantal base”.<sup>5</sup> Uninformed as Gabal shows himself of the decades-old<sup>6</sup> debate in the West as well as of many of its basic assumptions and major findings, his approach certainly suffers from what many in the West will consider a basic prerequisite for being taken serious in academia. Nevertheless, I do not think that this lack of communication with the non-Arab linguistic tradition and research community should be sufficient reason for Western scholars to ignore such a major contribution to the field, all the less so since Gabal was and is still revered in the Arab world as one of the *ʔaʔimma*, the ‘leading authorities’, in the field of Arabic language studies.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, his theory can be regarded, in quite a number of aspects, as a kind of ‘missing link’ between biradicalist and triradicalist positions.

- 3) Given that Gabal considers Arabic as one of the ‘purest’ (*ʔanqà*) languages of the world (*Muʔḡam*, i: 10, fn. 1) and therefore does not feel the need to deal with possible influences from non-Arabic contact languages, his approach to the lexicon is ideosyncratic and shows the notorious tendency to explain the semantic variety in a root from one single basic meaning. This is why many of his assumptions or conclusions will look wrong and unacceptable, or even ridiculous, to Semitists who think they can prove the foreign origin of numerous words and roots, particularly in cases where semantic diversity and obvious unrelatedness among lexical items within ‘one’ root (cf., e.g., *ʕiFR* ‘zero’ vs. *ʕaFīR* ‘whistling, high tone’ vs. *ʔaʕFaR* ‘yellow’)<sup>8</sup> as well as evidence from other Semitic languages make the non-Arabic origin of at least one of some of the items highly probable. Nevertheless, again, I do not think this deficiency justifies an *in toto*

5 Rebecca HASSELBACH, review of BOHAS & DAT 2007, *JAOS*, 128/2 (2008): 372-77, 372.

6 HASSELBACH, *ibid.*, even calls it “centuries-old”.

7 GABAL’s devotion to Arabic linguistics and his erudition are reflected in numerous publications, which earned him a great deal of his prestige among colleagues in the Arab world. The most important of these publications, apart from the *Muʔḡam*, seem to be (in chronological order; sources: Library of Congress, LBS Halle-Merseburg, Internet):

- *al-Maʕnà al-luḡawī: dirāsaʔ naʕariyyaʔ wa-taʔbīqīyyaʔ*. [s.l. : s.n.], 1981 ([Cairo]: Maʔbaʕat al-Saʕādaʔ);
- *al-Iḥtiḡāḡ bi’l-ʕiʕr fī ’l-luḡaʔ: al-wāqif wa-dalālatu-hū*. Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʕArabī, [1986];
- *al-Istidrāk ʕalà ’l-maʕāḡim al-ʕarabiyyaʔ: fī dawʔ miʔatayn min al-mustadrakāt al-ḡadīdaʔ ʕalà Lisān al-ʕArab wa-Tāḡ al-ʕarūs*. Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʕArabī, [1986];
- *Xaʕāʔiʕ al-luḡaʔ al-ʕarabiyyaʔ: taʕḡīl wa-taḡqīq*. Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʕArabī, [1987];
- *Dīfāʕ ʕan al-Qurʔān al-karīm: ʔaʕālaʔ al-ʔiʕrāb wa-dalālatu-hū ʕalà ’l-maʕānī fī ’l-Qurʔān al-karīm wa’l-luḡaʔ al-ʕarabiyyaʔ*. Alexandria: Dār al-Maʕrifāʔ al-ḡāmiʕiyyaʔ, 1998;
- *al-Murakkab [?] al-ʔasmà al-ʔisnādī wa-ʔanmāʔu-hū*. Alexandria: Dār al-Maʕrifāʔ al-ḡāmiʕiyyaʔ, 1998?;
- *Taʕāqub al-ʔalfāz li-taʕāqub al-maʕānī*. Alexandria: Dār al-Maʕrifāʔ al-ḡāmiʕiyyaʔ, 2000?;
- (*ʕilm*) *fiqh al-luḡaʔ al-ʕarabiyyaʔ: ʔaʕālatu-hū wa-maʕāʔilu-hū*. Cairo: Maktabat al-ʔĀdāb, 2005;
- *Wiḡāqāʔ naql al-naʕḡ al-qurʔānī al-karīm min rasūl allāh ʔilā ʔummati-hī*. Cairo: Maktabat al-ʔĀdāb, 2010;
- *al-Talaqqī wa’l-ʔadāʔ fī ’l-qirāʔāt al-qurʔāniyyaʔ: taḡqīqāt*. Cairo: Maktabat al-ʔĀdāb, 2011;
- *Min al-qaḡāyā al-kubrā fī ’l-qirāʔāt al-qurʔāniyyaʔ*. Cairo: Maktabat al-ʔĀdāb, 2012.

8 Example taken from Abdellah CHEKAYRI, “Iḡtiqāq”, in *EALL*, II (2007).

rejection of the *summa* of an erudite Arab scholar's eminent knowledge and vast intellectual efforts—for mainly three reasons. First, although parts of the work are certainly not tenable from a modern linguistic perspective, others actually *do* overlap with certain trends in Western research on the composition of the Arabic lexicon, to such a degree that it seems hardly believable that they should have developed without knowing about each other. Second, the partial inacceptability of Gabal's approach notwithstanding, it still provides a huge amount of illuminating insights and is a veritable treasure trove of interesting ideas that can be useful also to Western research, particularly so because he is in constant dialogue with the indigenous *Arab* linguistic tradition. Thirdly, the tendency of most Arab scholars to derive all lexical items with identical root consonants from one single root, even if they belong to highly diverging semantic fields, may, it is true, produce 'wrong' results from the point of view of strictly scientific diachronic linguistics. They are, however, nevertheless worth our attention because they often produce/create relations that, although linguistically untenable, from some point onwards start to live lives of their own. The semantic 'relations' postulated by this type of par-etymological 'derivation' do not reflect historical truth, but allow the researcher to look into the interesting processes of dynamic value production: like popular etymology, they grant insight into connections that a culture makes between items or activities that, originally, do not have anything in common but that the language has assigned similarly sounding words to.

### Gabal's approach

Gabal explains his approach (and the lemma structure of his dictionary) in the introduction to this 4-volume study ('Bayn yaday hādā 'l-muṣṣḡam'). He shares the assumption of the classical lexicographers that the meaning of any genuinely Arabic word (*lafz*) can be 'derived' (*muštaqq*) from an underlying sequence of (generally three)<sup>9</sup> root consonants that carry a basic semantic value. He calls this sequence a 'structure' (*tarkīb*, elsewhere identified with *māddaī* 'theme' or *ḡidr* 'root')<sup>10</sup> and explains the fact that all items derived from such a *tarkīb* participate, in one way or another, in its basic meaning, as the result of the principle of *waḥdat al-ʔaṣl*, the 'unity of the root,' which he considers a unique specificity of the Arabic language (*Muṣṣḡam*, i: 10). While some classical lexicographers would allow for the side-by-side existence of homonymous, but unrelated roots, e.g.,  $\sqrt{1}SFR$  (> *ṣifr* 'zero', etc.) alongside with  $\sqrt{2}SFR$  (> *ṣafīr* 'whistling, high tone', etc.) and  $\sqrt{3}SFR$  (> *ʔaṣfar* 'yellow'), Gabal follows those who believe that even such a diversity can, and must, be derived from a still deeper *tarkīb*, that is, in our example, a  $\sqrt{0}SFR$ . For some grammarians, this is only a formal construct; Gabal, however, who believes *radically* in the 'unity of the root,' goes with those who do not regard assumed roots like  $\sqrt{0}SFR$  as a merely formal idea but always also attach a real value to it, a value that is not only hypothetical but is attested

<sup>9</sup> According to HASSELBACH, "[t]he concept of a triradical root was originally developed by Arab grammarians in the tenth century C.E." – *op. cit.*, 373.

<sup>10</sup> *Muṣṣḡam*, iv: 2411, heading *Fihris al-tarākīb* ( : *al-mawādd* : *al-ḡudūr*) *al-luḡawīyyāī*.

in the sources (in our case: ‘emptiness’, *xuluww*, *farāğ*, as in *şafira*, *a*, vn. *şafar*, *şufūr* ‘to be empty, void, vacant’—*Muṣṣam*, iv: 1271). Here, as in less complex, non-homonymous roots, the very basic meaning has to be ‘extracted’ (*istaxlaṣa*) from all existing items, i.e., concrete realisations/derivations in the lexicon. To have done this extraction for all the items relevant for the Qur’anic vocabulary (which is Gabal’s main corpus), is, in the scholar’s own words, his greatest achievement because it demanded his hardest efforts and a long-standing experience. In his search for the basic meaning of a *tarkīb* he says he let himself be guided by the work of earlier lexicographers, but often also went beyond their findings. A major criterion for Gabal to decide which out of a variety of meanings represents the basic value is its closeness to the senses, or sensual perceptibility (*ḥissiyyat*), palpability, concreteness, or ‘materiality’ (*māddiyyat*).<sup>11</sup> To take again our *ŞFR* example, he finds the basic \*‘emptiness’ in the adj. *şifr* (also *şufr*, *şufur*, *şafir*) ‘empty, void, vacant’ and explains *şifr* ‘zero’ [ $\sqrt{^1\text{ŞFR}}$ ] as \*‘circle made around an emptiness’, *şafir* ‘whistling, high tone’ [ $\sqrt{^2\text{ŞFR}}$ ] as \*‘sound produced by blowing into a hollow (= empty) reed’, and *ʔaşfar* ‘yellow’ [ $\sqrt{^3\text{ŞFR}}$ ] as \*‘colour of the face of s.o. who is hungry (= has an empty stomach), or has a certain disease (called *şafar*) in the belly that renders the face yellow’.

For Gabal, the **sequence** of the root consonants within a given *tarkīb* is **fixed**; when altered, even if the consonants may remain the same, the basic semantic information changes (compare, e.g.,  $\sqrt{BRK}$ ,  $\sqrt{BKR}$ ,  $\sqrt{RBK}$ ,  $\sqrt{RKB}$ ,  $\sqrt{KBR}$ ,  $\sqrt{KRB}$ , all of which contain the same radicals *B*, *R*, and *K*, but are bearers of very different basic meanings because of the unique position of the radicals in each root). However—and this is probably the reason why Gabal prefers to call a root a *tarkīb* “composition”—, according to the author, each 3-consonantal *tarkīb* is “composed of” an **initial 2-consonantal unit, or nucleus ( $C_1C_2$ ), and a third radical ( $C_3$ )** that modifies the meaning of the 2-consonantal kernel in a specific way—and always regularly so, because each modifier consonant has a certain meaning attached to it; for example,  $-T$  as a modifier  $C_3$  always expresses some kind of “solidity\compactness or coarseness combined with spreading\diffusion” (*kaṭāfāt ʔaw ġilaz maṣa tafaṣṣin*—*Muṣṣam*, i: 40-41).

Gabal calls the 2-consonantal kernels “lexicon chapters (or: divisions)” (sg. *faṣṣ muṣṣamī*) because they provide him with a primary principle to group his material. Each biradical nucleus carries a specific meaning produced by the interplay of the two consonants following each other, a value that usually is represented in its purest way in the corresponding geminated verbs ( $C_2$ : or  $C_3=C_2$ ), i.e., those that do not have an additional third root consonant as a modifier. The  $C_1C_2$  unit may be preceded, separated or followed by  $ʔ$ , *W* or *Y* without these having a significant impact on the  $C_1C_2$ -sequence and its semantic essence. This is why all roots containing *hamz* and/or weak consonants are grouped differently than in traditional dictionaries; e.g.,  $\sqrt{W\text{ŞD}}$ ,  $\sqrt{\text{ŞWD}}$  and  $\sqrt{\text{ŞDW}}$  are all treated in the  $\text{ŞD}$  chapter. Consequently, there are no *fuṣūl muṣṣamiyyat* starting with  $ʔ$ , *W* or *Y* at all.<sup>12</sup> Thus, chapter *BD* deals with  $\sqrt{BD}$ :  $\sqrt{BDW}$ ,  $\sqrt{BYD}$ ,  $\sqrt{BDʔ}$ ,  $\sqrt{ʔBD}$ ,  $\sqrt{BDR}$ ,  $\sqrt{BDS}$ ,  $\sqrt{BDL}$ , and  $\sqrt{BDN}$  — all sharing the basic notion of ‘emptiness and width/extension in space, and the like’ (*farāğ wa-ʔtisāf wa-mā ʔilā*

11 *Muṣṣam*, i: 14-15.

12 GABAL thinks that the “strong, sound” consonants (*ṣiḥāḥ*) play the decisive role in determining the meaning in roots that also contain a weak consonant (*ṣillat*) or a *hamz*. He claims this to be one of the innovative ideas that he added to previous research. He also thinks that  $ʔ$ , *W* and *Y* hardly can be imagined to form part of a biradical nucleus because of their “volatility” — *Muṣṣam*, i: 22.

*dālīka*) attached to the nuclear *BD* sequence (*Muṣṣam*, i: 19-20). In this way, Gabal groups the roughly 2300 roots he deals with, in c. 370 chapters dedicated to the biconsonantal nuclei from which their meanings are ‘derived’ (*Muṣṣam*, i: 22).

The semantic modification caused by the addition of a third consonant to the biconsonantal nuclei is explained by Gabal in **mimophonic** terms. That is, for the author, the relation between sound and meaning is not arbitrary but determined by the phonetic features of the involved consonants. The “solidity\compactness or coarseness combined with spreading\diffusion,” mentioned above, that is added to the  $C_1C_2$  kernels when complemented by  $-T$ , corresponds to the articulation of [θ] as a voiceless dental fricative, an obstruent (→ “solidity\compactness, coarseness”) with only limited closure of the vocal tract, not stopping airflow but making it turbulent<sup>13</sup> (→ “spreading\diffusion”). The semantic values of all consonants are described in detail in Gabal’s “Introduction” and explained again in the opening paragraphs of each *faṣl muṣṣamī* when a definition of the basic values (sg. *maṣnà miḥwarī*) of the biconsonantal kernels as well as the triconsonantal *tarākīb* is given. Gabal’s terminology seems to draw on earlier—Classical—source(s), but the author does not mention any name, and I have not been able so far to determine in whose footsteps he is following:<sup>14</sup>

BSV = basic semantic value, *al-maṣnà al-luḡawī al-ḥamm*<sup>15</sup>

/ʔ/ = *daḡt* ‘stress’ → BSV: *tuḡakkid maṣnà mā taṣḥabu-hū fī ’l-tarkīb* ‘confirms/underlines the meaning of the basic structure that it accompanies’

/b/ = *taḡammuṣ tarākumī raxw, maṣa talāṣuq<sup>in</sup> mā* ‘soft accumulative concentration, with some cohesion’ → BSV: *taḡammuṣ raxw, maṣa talāṣuq<sup>in</sup> mā* ‘soft agglomeration, with some cohesion’

/t/ = *daḡt daqīq (yuḡaddī ḡilà ḥabs daṣīf ḡaw ḡayr ṣadīd)* ‘fine\soft\gentle pressure (leading to a light, or not strong, obstruction\retention)’ → BSV: *daḡt bi-diqqā’ wa-ḥiddā’ yataḡattā min-hu maṣnà ’l-imtisāk al-daṣīf wa-maṣnà ’l-qaṣ* ‘fine, but sharp\accentuated pressure, giving the meaning of a weak retention or interruption’

/θ/ = *naḡāḡ diqāq bi-kaṡāfa’ wa-’ntiṣār<sup>in</sup> mā, ka’l-tafaṣṣī* ‘fine air flow (lit. penetration\breakthrough of s.th. fine)<sup>16</sup> with a certain density\solidity and spreading, such as diffusion’ → BSV: *kaṡāfa’ ḡaw ḡilaz maṣa tafaṣṣī<sup>in</sup>* ‘solidity\compactness or coarseness combined with spreading\diffusion’

13 <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obstruent>>, as of 24Mar2017.

14 However, when I presented GABAL’s approach at the all-German meeting of Oriental Studies (Deutscher Orientalistentag, Jena) in September this year, the terminology did not ring any bells in the audience (some 30-40 people) either. Nor did Jonathan OWEN (Bayreuth) recognize in it the terminology of any classical author. (Thank you to the DOT audience and J. OWEN—as well as to G. LEUBE who was so kind as to ask Owen his expertise for me—for their informed feedback.) This evidence would speak against my assumption that we are dealing with some older phonetic terminology here; rather, it would suggest that GABAL invented it himself. – For the translation of GABAL’s terminology in the following paragraphs I am deeply indebted to Zeus WELLNHOFER, Berlin, who supported my first attempts with some further suggestions which inspired the version that I ended up with.

15 *Muṣṣam*, i: 26-39; basic semantic value (BSV) as given *ibid.*, i: 40-41.

16 *naḡāḡ* ‘penetration’ seems to indicate the air flow observed in a fricative.

- /dʒ/ = *tağammuṣ hašš la-hū ḥiddat<sup>m</sup> mā* ‘delicate\fragile\gentle concentration that has a certain sharpness\markedness\vehemence\pitch\precision about it’ → BSV: *dto*.
- /h/ = *ğafāf fī ‘l-bātin maṣa ‘ḥtikāk bi-ṣiraḍ yubriz wuğūd al-mamarr al-ğāff fī ‘l-ğawf* ‘dryness inside, accompanied by a friction *bi-ṣiraḍ*,<sup>17</sup> making apparent the existence of a dry corridor\channel\passage-way deep down’ → BSV: *ḥtikāk bi-ṣiraḍ wa-ğafāf* ‘friction *bi-ṣiraḍ* and dryness’
- /x/ = *taxalxul* [etc.] *fī ḷaṭnā? ḡilaz* ‘shaking\loosening\relaxation\vibration [etc.]<sup>18</sup> within a coarseness’ → BSV: *taxalxul maṣa ḡafāf* ‘shaking\vibration [etc.], accompanied by dryness’
- /d/ = *imtidād ṭūlī daqīq maṣa ‘nḥiṣār, ḷay ḥtibās ṣan al-ṣiraḍ* ‘soft vertical extension accompanied by a constriction, i.e., obstruction, over the breadth’ → BSV: *ḥtibās bi-ḍaḡt wa-‘mtidād* ‘blocking\obstruction\occlusion, accompanied by pressure and extension\broadening’<sup>19</sup>
- /ð/ = *ṭVxīn rVṭVb ḷaw ḡVḍḍ (muḥṭaw<sup>an</sup>) yVnṭVḍ*<sup>20</sup> → BSV: *naḑād taxīn ḍū raxāwaṭ<sup>in</sup> mā wa-ḡilaz* ‘permeable thickness/thick\broad air flow, showing a certain softness\laxity\relaxation and coarseness’<sup>21</sup>
- /r/ = *suyūlaṭ al-ḡirm maṣa ‘stirsāl, ḷay ṣay? min al-tamāsuk yaḡṣal al-ittiṣāl wa‘l-imtidād wāḍiḥayn* ‘flowing of (= through?) the throat (or fauces), accompanied by a letting go,<sup>22</sup> i.e., some retention, making both continuation\connection and endurance evident’ → BSV: *istirsāl maṣa tamāsuk<sup>m</sup> mā* ‘a letting go\releasing, (but) with some retention\cohesiveness’
- /z/ = *šiddaṭ iktināz bi-‘zdiḥām ḷašyā? ḷaw ḷaḡzā? baṣḍu-hā ḷilā baṣḍ* ‘intense compactness (produced) by pressing things or parts against each other’ → BSV: *iktināz wa-‘zdiḥām* ‘compactness and compression’<sup>23</sup>
- /s/ = *imtidād daqīq (ḥādd ḷaw qawīyy) nāfiḍ fī ḡirm ḷaw min-hu* ‘extension\prolongation of something fine (sharp or strong) coming through a tube, or from it’ → BSV: *imtidād*

- 17 Would this *ṣiraḍ* ‘breadth’ or ‘obstruction’ mean the sound’s articulation with the tongue root against the back of the pharynx?
- 18 Does *taxalxul* ‘shaking, vibration, etc.’ here mean the sound’s articulation with the back of the dorsum at the soft palate?
- 19 I have no idea what GABAL means by *ṭūlī* ‘vertical’ in the context of /d/—perhaps the thickening of the tip or blade of the tongue when being pressed (cf. *ḍaḡt*) against the teeth where it also ‘broadens’ (cf. *ṣiraḍ*),<sup>22</sup> and extends (cf. *imtidād*)? – For *ṣiraḍ* cf. also above, /h/ and note 17.
- 20 I am too uncertain about the vocalization of Gabal’s expression as to attempt a translation of his description.
- 21 For *naḑād* interpreted as ‘air flow’ cf. /θ/, above. The sound’s ‘thickness’ and ‘coarseness’ can perhaps be explained as describing the constriction of the air flow through a narrow channel at the place of articulation, while *raxāwa* may point to the release of air.
- 22 Does this refer to the air streaming between the (tip of the) tongue and the alveolar ridge that causes the tongue to vibrate in a trill?
- 23 Probably a reference to the fact that the teeth are held close together when the tongue directs the airstream towards the sharp edge of the teeth when this voiced alveolar sibilant is articulated.



*bi-diqqai wa-hiddai* ‘continuation\persistence\prolongation, accompanied by fineness\precision and intensity\sharpness’

/ʃ/ = *tasayyub wa-tafarruq, ʔay intišār wa-tafašš<sup>in</sup>, wa-šadam tağammuʃ ʔaw tašaqqud* ‘efusion and diffusion, i.e., unfolding\expansion and spreading with no contraction\contraction or hardening\clotting’ → BSV: *tafašš<sup>in</sup> ʔaw intišār maša diqqai* ‘diffusion or spreading, (but) with some precision\exactitude’<sup>24</sup>

/s/ = *kawn al-šayʔ ǧalīz<sup>an</sup> qawiyy<sup>an</sup> fī dātih xāliṣ<sup>an</sup> mimmā yuxāliṭuh* ‘internal coarseness and strength\powerfulness, free of contamination\contaminating mixing’ → BSV: *naḫāḍ bi-ǧilaz wa-quwwatī wa-xulūṣ* ‘airflow (lit. penetration\permeation) combined with coarseness, strength\powerfulness, and purity’<sup>25</sup>

/ḏ/ = *ǧilaz ʔaw tiql la-hū hiddat<sup>in</sup> mā, yuxāliṭ fa-yaḍǧaṭ bi-ǧilazih wa-tiqlih* ‘coarseness or heaviness that comes with a certain sharpness, blending itself in so that this coarseness and heaviness exercise pressure/produce emphasis’ → BSV: *ḍaḡṭ bi-kaṭāfaī wa-ǧilaz* ‘emphasis with density\compactness and coarseness’

/ʔ/ = *nawṣ min al-ḍaḡṭ bi-ǧilaz wa-tiql maša hiddatī muxāliṭatī* ‘a kind of stress\pressure\emphasis, combined with coarseness and weight\heaviness, with some sharpness\vehemence blended in’ → BSV: *al-ḍaḡṭ bi-ʔtisāṣ wa-ʔstiglāz* ‘stress\pressure\emphasis accompanied by widening and thickening\hardening\tendency to coarseness’

/z/ = *hiddatī tuxāliṭ al-šayʔ al-kaṭīf, ʔay: tasrī fī ʔaṭnāʔih* ‘sharpness blended into s.th. dense\solid\compact, i.e., permeating it/running through it’ → BSV: *naḫāḍ bi-ǧilaz ʔaw hiddatī maša kaṭāfaī* ‘permeation\penetration\airstream combined with coarseness or sharpness, but also density\solidity\compactness’

/ʃ/ = *raxāwaī ǧirm multahVm (ittisāṣ<sup>an</sup> ʔaw imtidād<sup>an</sup>)*<sup>26</sup> → BSV: *iltihām šalā riqqai maša hiddat<sup>in</sup> mā* ‘fusion\union\cohesion with (?) a thinness accompanied by some sharpness’<sup>27</sup>

24 It seems hard to relate this description to the features Western phonetics usually ascribe to /ʃ/: cf., e.g.: “Its manner of articulation is sibilant fricative, which means it is generally produced by channeling air flow along a groove in the back of the tongue up to the place of articulation, at which point it is focused against the sharp edge of the nearly clenched teeth, causing high-frequency turbulence [cf. *tasayyub, tafarruq, intišār, tafaššī* ?]. Its place of articulation is palato-alveolar, that is, domed (partially palatalized) postalveolar, which means it is articulated with the blade of the tongue behind the alveolar ridge, and the front of the tongue bunched up (‘domed’) [cf. *diqqai* ?] at the palate.” <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voiceless\\_palato-alveolar\\_sibilant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voiceless_palato-alveolar_sibilant)> (as of 28Dec2017).

25 The element of coarseness, power, sharpness, vehemence, etc., recurring in GABAL’s characterisation of /ʃ/, /ḏ/, /ʔ/, /z/ seems to correspond to our Western experience of these consonants as ‘emphatics’, i.e., ‘strong’ and ‘expressive’ (from Greek *emphaínein* ‘to present, exhibit, display, let s.th. be seen, etc.’).

26 I find this description untranslatable, mainly due to the unclear meaning of *ǧirm*, but also to the unmarked vocalisation of *multahVm* (active or passive?) and the difficulty to relate spatial categories (*ittisāṣ, imtidād*) to the phonological features that Western phonetics usually attribute to /ʃ/ as a voiced pharyngeal fricative. For these, cf., e.g., <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voiced\\_pharyngeal\\_fricative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voiced_pharyngeal_fricative)> (as of 29Dec2017).

27 While in most other descriptions the prepositions *bi-* and *maša* are used, here we find *šalā* followed by *maša*. Does it indicate more or less the same as *bi-* (a feature accompanied by, or combined with, an-

- /ɣ/ = *mā yušbih al-ḡuṣāʔ allaḍī lahū šayʔ min kaṭāfatī ʔaw quwwatī wa-ḥiddatī, maʕa taxal-xul<sup>in</sup> mā* ‘resembles the belch which (also) has some density or powerfulness and sharpness, in spite of a certain vibration\wavering’ → BSV: *taxalxul maʕa šayʔ min al-raxāwatī* ‘vibration\wavering with some gentleness\softness’
- /f/ = *naḑād bi-quwwatī (kaʔl-ṭard waʔl-ʔibṣād) ʔilā zāhir al-šayʔ maʕa ʔttisās al-nāfid ʔaw intišāriḥ* ‘powerful breaking through\airflow (as under expulsion or removal [of s.th.]) to its outside, accompanied by its expansion\widening or spreading’ → BSV: *ṭard wa-ʔibṣād* ‘expulsion\ejecction and removal’<sup>28</sup>
- /q/ = *taḡammuṣ (mutaṣaqqid) dū ḥiddatī fī bāṭin al-šayʔ ʔaw ʕumqih (qaḍ yunfaḍ [or: yan-fuḍ ?] minhu)* ‘(dense\complex and) sharp concentration (deep) inside of s.th. (through it a breakthrough\eruption\emittance may happen)’ → BSV: *taṣaqqud wa-ʔṣtidād fī ʔl-ʕumq* ‘hardening\clotting\concentration and intensity deep down’
- /k/ = *ḍaḡt ḡaʔūrī<sup>29</sup> maʕa ḥiddatī ʔaw diqqatī* ‘pressure in the depths accompanied by sharpness\vehemence or precision\fineness’ → BSV: *ḍaḡt ḡaʔūrī daqīq yuʔaddī ʔilā ʔmtisāk ʔaw qaṭṣ* ‘fine\precise pressure\emphasis deep down (?) causing retention or interruption’<sup>30</sup>
- /l/ = *nawṣ min al-ʔntidād min šayʔ kaʔl-taṣalluq maʕa tamayyuz ʔaw istiqlāl* ‘a kind of extending from something, as if clinging (to it) while (at the same time) distinguishing itself, or making itself independent (from it)’ → BSV: *taṣalluq ʔaw ʔntidād maʕa ʔstiqlāl ʔaw tamayyuz* ‘adhesion\cohesion\attachment\clinging (to s.th.), or extending (from it), accompanied by separation and distinction’
- /m/ = *taḑāmm ʔaw istiwāʔ zāhirī li-šayʔ ʔaw ʕalā šayʔ* ‘union\conjunction, or an outward equalisation of/adjustment to s.th.’ → BSV: *ʔmtisāk ʔaw istiwāʔ zāhirī* ‘retention or outward levelling’<sup>31</sup>
- /n/ = *ʔntidād laṭīf fī ḡawf ʔaw bāṭin ḡirm ʔaw minhu* ‘subtle extension\expansion\continuation in the innermost or inside of a body/object\tube, or from it’ → BSV: *ʔntidād laṭīf fī ʔl-bāṭin ʔaw min-hu* ‘subtle extension\expansion inside, or from inside’

other), or is it meant to express some other kind of combining (‘against’, ‘as opposed to, contrary to’)?

- 28 GABAL’s description seems to focus on the constriction (*bi-quwwatī*) of the airflow in the fricative, while his *ʔttisās* abd/or *ʔntišār* do not have a direct correspondence in Western characterisations of the sound, which only take into account the place of articulation (labiodental) and the moment the air passes through the channel, not however what happens ‘outside’, during articulation (air escapes and spreads).
- 29 I was unable to track down the word *ḡaʔūr* from which this adjective obviously is a nisba formation. It seems clear, however, that it has something to do with *ḡawr*, i.e., a profound, unfathomable depth.
- 30 ‘Pressure’ and ‘vehemence’ can probably be related to the characteristic features of a plosive, while ‘precision\fineness’ may be seen as resulting from the articulation at the soft palate.
- 31 For *taḑāmm*, *ʔntiwāʔ*, and *ʔmtisāk*, cf. probably the closed mouth, lips pressed together; as for *zāhirī*, GABAL seems to regard /m/ primarily as a ‘surface phenomenon’; the ‘levelling’ or ‘adjustment’ of s.th., or against s.th., is most likely taken from the fact that the lips meet each other and ‘unite’ to produce this bilabial.

/h/ = *farāğ al-ğawf ḡaw ḡifrāğ mā fih bi-quwwatī* ‘emptiness of a cavity, or emptying it by force’ → BSV: *farāğ ḡaw ḡifrāğ* ‘emptiness or emptying’<sup>32</sup>

/w/ = *ištīmāl wa-ḥtiwāḡ* ‘encompassing\including\comprising and containing’ → BSV: *ištīmāl* ‘comprehensive inclusion’

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/y/ = *ittišāl al-mumtadd šayḡ<sup>an</sup> wāḥid<sup>an</sup>*, *wa-ğadam tafarruqih ḡaw tasayyubih* ‘the reaching out of an extension to something (?)’<sup>33</sup> without separating from it or leaving it’ → BSV: *ittišāl* ‘connection’

Gabal then goes on and collates these features with the basic semantic values that one gets by examining words in which the respective consonants appear in their ‘purest’, concentrated form, i.e., where they feature ‘alone’ and their value is not ‘contaminated’ by any additional element. For example, in order to determine the basic value of /b/, he searches the Arabic lexicon for words that contain as many *b*-s as possible and finds that the essential value of /b/, in its most condensed form, must be represented in *babbatī* ‘well-nourished youth, thick, fat, brawny’, because this word contains not less than three *b*-s (and only the fem. suffix *-atī*, which is irrelevant for the basic meaning).<sup>34</sup> Given that neither vowels nor *hamz* and semi-vowels count as particularly ‘contaminating’ ingredients, words containing these elements can be used in the extraction process, too. Thus, for the identification of the basic semantic value of /d/, not only *dad* ‘play, sport’ and *dadid* ‘joking’ are relevant, but also, e.g., *ḡidd* ‘misfortune, adversity’ or *ḡadīd* ‘difficult, serious (affair)’.<sup>35</sup> Gabal is convinced that this method allows for a ‘natural, unconstrained, unmannered’ (*dūn takalluf*) reconstruction of basic representatives of the consonants’ *maḡnā luğawī ḡāmm*. The second criterion that helps him to identify the basic semantic value of a consonant and also to double-check a hypothesis arrived at with the first method, is the consonant’s ‘taste’: depending on where and how it is articulated it comes with a certain *maḡāq*, i.e., a way how ‘it feels’ to utter or hear it.<sup>36</sup> Thus, phonetics (as described above) and semantics are closely intertwined.

The author is consistent in his mimophonic approach in that he does not limit the sound-meaning correspondence to the modifying  $C_3$  consonants; he also applies it to the nuclei and, in the last consequence, to the lexicon as a whole. That is, while the basic value (*maḡnā miḡwarī*) of a triradical root is explained as the product of the modification made on a  $C_1C_2$  kernel by a  $C_3$  complement of a certain sound quality and, hence, semantic function, the basic values of the  $C_1C_2$  kernels themselves are explained as the result of the inter-

32 GABAL’s ‘cavity’ can perhaps be seen as corresponding to the glottal place of articulation (‘deep down’), while the ‘emptiness’ could be seen together with the fact that /h/ is often regarded as the counterpart of the vowel that follows it.

33 WELLNHOFER (see note 14, above) proposes: ‘connecting the extended as one thing (?)’. – Neither my own nor Wellnhofer’s renderings seem fully convincing, so both will remain with a big question mark attached to them.

34 *Muḡgam*, i: 25. – The word GABAL builds his argument on is not found in LANE’s *Lexicon*; cf., however, HAVA, *Arabic-English Dictionary*: *babb* and *babbān* ‘fat baby’; and DOZY, *Supplément*: *babbatī* ‘nom qu’on donne à un très-petit enfant’.

35 Meanings given as in HAVA’s *Arabic-English Dictionary*.

36 Gabal mentions that already al-XALİL b. ḡAḡmad dealt with notions of *ḡawq* or *taḡawwuq* – *Muḡgam*, i: 25.

play between the two consonants from which they are formed; each having peculiar phonological features, which in turn each carry a certain meaning, their combination in the nuclei produces unique semantic notions.

## Gabal's and Western approaches compared

In the following, I will treat the main differences, but also overlappings between Gabal's approach and Western views on the composition and development of the Arabic lexicon.

### Synchrony vs. diachrony

An essential difference between Gabal (as also the traditional Arab lexicographers) and most Western Arabists lies in the very perception of language as such. While most scholars in the West deal with linguistic phenomena as something subject to change in time, i.e., reflecting a certain stage in a historical development, Gabal, like his classical predecessors, is either not interested in diachrony or regards the language he studies as an unchanging, somehow "eternal" entity.<sup>37</sup> Any statement he makes about 'derivation' (*ištiqāq*) is therefore never intended in the sense of a development ("X developed from/into Y"), but rather as a description of a (static) condition. Thus, his approach does not differ from traditional Arabic *ištiqāq* which, according to Fleisch,

introduces no historical perspective into the study of the language. The relations or origins that are detected form merely part of the revealed language and are given with it.<sup>38</sup>

Consequently, and unlike in many Western biradicalist theories, the segmentation of triradical 'structures' into biconsonantal nuclei + modifiers is in Gabal's approach never meant as mirroring a *process* in which one would have to assume historical priority, in an *earlier* stage of the language's history, of the nucleus, to which *then, later* were added the modifiers; for Gabal, the discovery and description of the nuclei is rather a way of bringing some kind of logical order into the otherwise seemingly arbitrary composition of the Arabic lexicon.<sup>39</sup> With this systematisation, Gabal says, he continues, fully develops, and completes, the work of classical lexicographers and grammarians like Ibn Fāris (d. 395 AH), al-Zamaxšarī (d. 538 AH) and al-ʿĀlūsī (d. 1137 AH).<sup>40</sup> He does not seem to be aware, how-

37 The author does not neglect the existence of borrowings from other languages (*daxīl, muṣarrab*) (*Muṣṣam*, i: 10) but remains silent about their historical background or the periods of borrowing.

38 Henri FLEISCH, "Ištiqāk", in *EP*, iv (1973).

39 Cf., in contrast, a statement like Christopher Ehret's: "If we are right in assuming that the thirty-seven extensions had become non-productive, and the forms containing them lexicalized, by the Proto-Semitic period, then the meanings identified for them by internal reconstruction must be projected back to the last point in time at which they were still productive, i.e., pre-Proto-Semitic. Once lexicalization had taken place, they would no longer have been subject to a shift in function or meaning, except insofar as the words of which they had become a part underwent meaning change" – EHRET, "The origin" (see fn. 55), 112.

40 These three authorities are mentioned by GABAL himself (*Muṣṣam*, i: 21, ), in particular IBN FĀRIS,

ever, of the old debate, going on in Western research since more than a century now, about “whether or not biradical roots *historically* preceded triradical ones”.<sup>41</sup>

This said, we may add, however, as a note on the margin, that Gabal’s argumentation probably is not totally free from a sense of, and for, historical development. Although the author does not go as far as to speak of ‘origins’ (which would imply historicity, a starting point to which a development could be traced back in time) but rather prefers the term *maḏxad* ‘source’ (avoiding a temporal implication and referring to a deeper structure instead), he nevertheless does assume, though perhaps only implicitly, *some* kind of development when he confirms the view of the classical lexicographers that the ‘purest’, i.e., unadulterated, variety of Arabic was that of the Bedouins in the desert. The criterion that, in Gabal’s eyes, confirms that a hypothetical ‘essential, basic’ value of a root or nucleus really *is* the *maḥnà miḥwarī*, the ‘central value’ the identification of which is the aim of all his efforts and from which all other values can be explained (‘derived from’), is its carrying ‘a Bedouin flavour’ (*ḥarīḡ ḥarabī*), its ‘smelling of the [Bedouin] environment’ (*rāḥat al-bīḥāt – Muḡgam*, i: 11). That is, Gabal obviously takes for granted that a certain “contamination” or confusing diversification has happened to the Arabic language *after* an early, Bedouin stage and that it is now the lexicologist’s task to trace the many meanings within one root *back* to the original, “authentic” one. For the Muslim believer, this is essential because a correct understanding of the Qur’an will not be possible unless the original meanings of the words are known (ibid.).

### Biradicality vs. Triradicality

Classical Arabic *iṣṭiqāq* denies the existence of biradical roots; it always operates with triradical roots as the language’s “minimal templates”.<sup>42</sup> Even though Gabal further segments triradical roots into biradical nuclei plus modifiers and applies this segmentation *systematically* to the whole lexicon, he still does not touch on the principle of a basic triradicalism as such—this is why I labeled his approach a ‘biradicalist triradicalism’ in the title of this article. Nor does Gabal oppose the view that “[a]ltering the position of any of the radicals would cause a complete change in the meaning”.<sup>43</sup> In this respect, his approach does not go beyond the confines of what classical Arabic linguists usually term *al-iṣṭiqāq al-ṣaḡīr* (or *al-ḥaṣḡar*) ‘the small(er) derivation (lit., splitting)’. Cases where identical radicals feature in different positions but the two corresponding roots nevertheless carry the same sense (e.g., ḠDB ~ ḠBD), i.e., where one has to apply the so-called *iṣṭiqāq kabīr* in order to ‘derive’ a metathetical form from another, non-metathetical one, are of no interest to Gabal. There is, however, a certain overlapping when it comes to the so-called *iṣṭiqāq*

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*Maqāyīs al-luḡatī*, section on  $\sqrt{ZLL}$ ; al-ZAMAXŠARĪ, *al-Kaššāf*, commentary on Q 2:1 and sections on  $\sqrt{NFQ}$  and  $\sqrt{FLH}$ ; and al-ḤĀLŪSĪ, as Zamaxšarī, *Kaššāf*, plus his discussion of *dulūk* (Q 17:78). However, the author continues, none of the three had further elaborated on the way how the third radicals modified the meaning of the nuclei (*Muḡgam*, i: 22).

41 EDZARD, review of VOIGT 1988, 158 (my emphasis, S.G.).

42 CHEKAYRI, “Iṣṭiqāq”. – For an example of the discussions that unfolded among Arab linguists when the third radical was invisible and not easy to determine, cf. Simona OLIVIERI’s contribution on *ism* in the present *dossier spécial*, pp. 72 ff.

43 CHEKAYRI, “Iṣṭiqāq”.

*ʔakbar*, the ‘largest derivation,’ invented by Ibn Ǧinnī.<sup>44</sup> Here, “neither the actual sense of the root nor the order of succession [of the radicals] are preserved,”<sup>45</sup> nevertheless a sense that is common to some possible combinations can be extracted. For example, among the six roots that all contain the radicals *Q*, *L* and *W*— $\sqrt{QLW}$ ,  $\sqrt{QWL}$ ,  $\sqrt{WQL}$ ,  $\sqrt{WLQ}$ ,  $\sqrt{LQW}$ ,  $\sqrt{LWQ}$ , all of which are realised in the language—Ibn Ǧinnī found a semantic denominator for most of them, namely *al-xufūf wa’l-ḥarakatī* ‘haste and movement.’<sup>46</sup>

Gabal makes a similar effort, but the example just quoted would be considered by him only because it happens to contain a *W*, i.e., a weak radical, which he does not count as a full consonant but only as a kind of augment<sup>47</sup> (see above), and only because, if *W* remains unconsidered, we get roots that share the relative succession of the main (i.e., strong) radicals. Thus, for Gabal, the six roots above can be divided into two groups: one showing the *QL* sequence ( $\sqrt{QLw}$ ,  $\sqrt{QwL}$ ,  $\sqrt{wQL}$ ) and another showing *LQ* ( $\sqrt{LQw}$ ,  $\sqrt{LwQ}$ ,  $\sqrt{wLQ}$ ). A similar grouping would however not be possible, say, for  $\sqrt{SLM}$ ,  $\sqrt{SML}$ ,  $\sqrt{LMS}$ ,  $\sqrt{LSM}$ ,  $\sqrt{MSL}$ , and  $\sqrt{MLS}$ , which, Ibn Ǧinnī found, all shared the idea of a certain ‘gentleness’, or for the six possible combinations of *K*, *L*, and *M* (all expressing the idea of ‘force’).<sup>48</sup> While each of the two groups of six roots is composed of identical radicals, none shows reduplication, or a weak consonant, or *ʔ*, and this is why Gabal treats them all as belonging to different semantic “chapters”, according to their initial nuclei: *SL-*, *SM-*, *LM-*, *LS-*, *MS-*, *ML-*, and *KL-*, *KM-*, *LK-*, *LM-*, *MK-*, *ML-*, respectively.

The fact, observed already by some medieval Arab linguists (see above), that triradical roots with identical *C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>* sequences (sometimes also *C<sub>1</sub>...C<sub>3</sub>*, and sometimes even not exactly identical, but only similar phonological features of two radicals) often have a common semantic denominator, is uncontested in Arabic (and other Semitic) studies in the West<sup>49</sup> and has some corresponding views in the indigenous Arab tradition as well. As already mentioned above, in this respect Gabal sees himself as the successor and ultimate perfection of Ibn Fāris, al-Zamaxšārī and al-ʔĀlūsī. But how does his approach overlap with, or contradict, Western positions in this critical question?

Western scholars have focused on a variety of phenomena and also drawn various conclusions from their observations.

One whose approach is also essentially *mimophonic* (see below) and, like Gabal’s, pri-

44 According to Henri FLEISCH, “*Ishtikāk*”, the idea is set out in the *Xaṣāʔiṣ* (Cairo 1371/1952, i: 5-17 and Cairo 1374/1955, ii: 133-9).

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 On augments, cf., e.g., the example and the explanation given by CHEKAYRI, “*Iṣṭiqāq*”: “The three forms *ʔalandad*, *yalandad*, and *ʔaladd* are derived from the root *l-d-d*, which carries the semantic load ‘to dispute violently’. According to *iṣṭiqāq*, the glottal stop at the beginning of the word followed by three consonants is analyzed as an augment. The nonvocalized *n* in the third position and the reduplicated radical are perceived as augments as well.”

48 George BOHAS, “Lexicon: Matrix and Etymon”, in *EALL*, iii (2008), referring to IBN ǦINNĪ, *Xaṣāʔiṣ*, i: 133-139.

49 Cf. EHRET, “The origin” (see fn. 55), 110: “In Arabic and other Semitic languages it has long been evident that there are numerous sets of trilateral roots that share similar or related meanings and are formally identical except in their third consonants.”

marily a *synchronic* description is George Bohas' theory of *matrices et étymons*.<sup>50</sup> Like Gabal, Bohas argues "that the [traditional] lexicographical classification of words by alphabetical order of their roots masks important semantico-phonetic regularities," namely that many lexical items containing an identical *binary* combination of traits often belong to the same larger semantic fields.<sup>51</sup> While this opinion is shared by many others, including Gabal, Bohas is unique (in the West, but in a way following the path sketched by Ibn Ğinnī and the *ištiqāq ʔakbar*) in allowing for a "nonlinear ordering of the constituent parts" within his binary nuclei (e.g., *BT ~ TB* 'to cut, cut off') or even allowing these elements to be preceded, separated, or followed by a third element (marked bold in the following; cf., e.g., *BaTaKa* 'to cut, cut off, severe, pluck out, cut off one's tail', *inBaTaʔa* 'to be cut off', *BaTaLa* 'to cut off, severe, separate', *BuRT ~ BaRT* 'axe', *BaLaTa* 'to cut off', *SaBaTa* 'to cut s.th., cut it off; to shave one's hair, shaved his head').<sup>52</sup>

Most other Western theories that, like Gabal's, segment triradical roots into biradical nuclei plus augment/increment/modifier/extension<sup>53</sup> combine their analysis of the lexicon with a *diachronic* approach in which the nucleus represents an earlier, more original stage

50 The main publications in which the theory is developed and elaborated upon in detail are probably the following three: Georges BOHAS, *Matrices, étymons, racines: Éléments d'une théorie lexicologique du vocabulaire arabe*, Paris and Louvain: Peeters, 1997; ID., *Matrices et étymons: Développements de la théorie*, Lausanne: Editions du Zèbre, 2000; and ID. and Mihai DAT, *Une théorie de l'organisation du lexique des langues sémitiques: Matrices et étymons*, Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2007.

51 Mirena MEHANDIJSKA, review of BOHAS 1997, *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 32/2: 177-78, 177. – In fact, for BOHAS, "the triconsonantal root is no linguistic reality but merely a grammatical tool" – HASSELBACH, review of BOHAS & DAT 2007, 28.

52 Examples as in BOHAS, "Lexicon: Matrix and Etymon". My emphasis, S.G.

53 In Western theory, the segmentation of existing roots into 'core roots' plus augment is not necessarily of the kind we are dealing with in the present article, i.e., *C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>* plus *-C<sub>3</sub>*. OREL & STOLBOVA, for instance, think they have discovered, or would at least not exclude the possibility of, a number of *prefixes* rather than extensions added at the *end*. Cf., e.g., the following items in *HSED* (a choice of items where the assumed prefix was added in Semitic while it seems sensible to assume its absence from Afroasiatic):

- (prefix \**h*V-): <sup>#1497</sup> AfrAs \**kum*- 'to take, get' > Sem \**hVkum*- 'to take' > Ar √*HKM* (*u*)
- (prefix \**f*V-): <sup>#966</sup> AfrAs \**goʕ*- 'woman' > Sem \**ʕagūz*- 'old woman' > Ar *ʕagūz*
- <sup>#1609</sup> AfrAs \**kurab*- 'insect' > Sem \**ʕakrab*- 'scorpion' > Ar *ʕaqrab*
- (prefix \**m*V-): <sup>#524</sup> AfrAs \**ʕag*- 'to mix' > Sem \**mVʕug*- 'to mix' > Ar √*MŠĠ* (*u*)
- <sup>#1458</sup> AfrAs \**kin*- 'egg' > Sem \**mVkan*- 'to lay eggs' > Ar √*MKN* (*a*)
- (prefix \**n*V-): <sup>#506</sup> AfrAs \**ʕar*- 'look, see' > Sem \**nVʕar*- 'to guard, look' > Ar √*NZR* (*a*)
- <sup>#516</sup> AfrAs \**ʕaʔ*-/\**ʕaw/y*- 'to move upwards' > Sem \**nVʕaʔ*- 'to rise, grow, raise' > Ar √*NŠʔ* (*a, u*)
- <sup>#549</sup> AfrAs \**ček*- 'to smell' (trans.) > Sem \**nVʕak*- 'dto.' > Ar √*NŠQ* (*a*)
- <sup>#557</sup> AfrAs \**ʕip*- 'to moisten, be wet' > Sem \**nVʕap*- 'to absorb (liquids)' > Ar √*NŠF* (*a, u*)
- <sup>#594</sup> AfrAs \**daʔ*-/\**daw*- 'to be wet' > Sem \**nVdaw/y*- 'dto.' > Ar √*NDW, NDY* (*a*)
- <sup>#1157</sup> AfrAs \**ham*- 'to eat' > Sem \**nVham*- 'to be insatiable' > Ar √*NHM* (*a*)
- <sup>#1976</sup> AfrAs \**pič*- 'to spit' > Sem \**nVpič*- 'dto.' > Ar √*NFT* (*i, u*)
- (prefix \**w*V-): <sup>#974</sup> AfrAs \**gud*- 'to find, seek' > Sem \**wVgVd*- 'to find, meet' > Ar √*WĠD*
- <sup>#1183</sup> AfrAs \**hob*- 'to give, send' > Sem \**wVhVb*- 'to give' > Ar √*WHB*

of linguistic development (a claim that Gabal does not make, as we have seen above).<sup>54</sup> At the same time, these theories resemble Gabal's in that the order of the two constituents within the biradical nuclei is *unchangeable* (as opposed to Bohas' unspecified sequence). The Western approach to which Gabal's probably comes closest in terms of a *systematic segmentation* (nuclei + modifiers) and the *non-flexibility* of position of  $C_1$  and  $C_2$  within the  $C_1C_2$ -nuclei (*linearity*) is probably Christopher Ehret's.<sup>55</sup> It is true that Ehret, unlike Gabal, does not treat  $\varnothing$ ,  $W$  and  $Y$  as different from other consonants and that he therefore does not allow them to precede or 'invade' his nuclei; and it is also true that Ehret does not claim the segmentability of *all* triradicals (he only deals with it a *widespread* phenomenon, evidently applicable to "numerous sets of trilateral roots"<sup>56</sup>); apart from these differences, however, Ehret's and Gabal's analysis of the Arabic lexicon are very similar. They are particularly similar in the degree of comprehensiveness and systematization with which they assign certain meanings to certain  $C_3$  modifiers. In Gabal's mimophonic view the meanings are generated somehow "naturally", while in Ehret's theory they seem to be arbitrary, the results of mere convention; both approaches, however, take the geminating verbs as starting point for their identification of the meanings of the unmodified nuclei, and then proceed to list the triradical  $C_1C_2+C_3$  roots and explain their meanings as results of a *regular* and *systematic* structure in which each modifier  $C_3$  has a clearly specified function.<sup>57</sup> Here are some examples of how Ehret and Gabal describe the value and effect of the  $C_3$ -s when following a nucleus:

54 For Ehret, "[t]he proportion of seemingly irreducible triconsonantal roots in Semitic is a pattern unparalleled among the world's languages," and this is why "the trilaterals are suspect as morphologically extended forms of once-simpler roots" – EHRET, "The origin" (see fn. 55), 109.

55 First developed in length in Christopher EHRET, "The origin of third consonants in Semitic roots: An internal reconstruction (applied to Arabic)", *Journal of Afroasiatic Languages*, 2/2 (1989): 107-202, and id., *Reconstructing Proto-Afroasiatic (Proto-Afrasian): Vowels, tone, consonants, and vocabulary*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995. – Other suggestions for some suffixes had already been made earlier, though by far not as comprehensive as in Ehret's model, by I.M. DIAKONOFF in his "Problems of root structure in proto-Semitic," *Archiv Orientalní*, 38 (1970): 453-480. In this article, the author suggested to assume that many animal names in Semitic could be analysed as originating in a core root/body to which a "postpositive determinant" (almost resembling a word class suffix) was added, e.g., *\*-b* for "animals of prey and harmful animals" (Ar *ʔarn-ab* 'hare', *dub-b* 'bear', *ḏiʔ-b* 'wolf', *ḏub-āb* 'fly', *kal-b* 'dog', *ʕaqr-ab* 'scorpion', *ʔaʕl-ab* 'fox'; cf. also *ʕank-ab-ū* 'spider', *ḡur-āb* 'crow, raven'), *\*-r* for "useful animals" (Ar *ʔimm-ar* 'ram', *baq-ar* 'cow', *ḥim-ār* 'ass', *kar-r* 'lamb', *ʕay-r* 'ass-foal', *ʔaw-r* 'ox'), and *\*-l* for "wild useful animals" (Ar *ʔayy-al* 'deer', *ḡam-al* 'camel', *nayy-al* 'a sort of antelope', *ʕiḡ-l* 'calf', orig. 'young antelope'), etc. – DIAKONOFF, op.cit., 461-2, n. 23; cf. also LIPÍŃSKI, *Semitic Languages*, #30.10.

56 EHRET, "The origin," 110 (my emphasis, S.G.).

57 I think Gabal wouldn't have had any difficulty to accept a statement by Ehret like the following: "When the verb members of such sets [of trilateral roots that share similar or related meanings and are formally identical except in their third consonants] are grouped according to their third consonants, there emerge *recurrent correlations* between the presence of particular consonants in  $C_3$  (third) position and the presence of particular varieties of meaning modification in the roots containing those  $C_3$ . [...] the correlations of meaning and form are *remarkably consistent*, and *the case to be made is therefore exceedingly strong*" (EHRET, "The origin", 110; my italics, S.G.). – The fact that the augments in Gabal's and Ehret's models *do* have a semantic purpose marks a major point of difference between these two theories, on the one hand, and Bohas & Dat's model, on the other; "according to Bohas and Dat, there is no functional difference between adding a guttural, glide, or other consonant. That is, the



<b>-C<sub>3</sub></b>	<b>Ehret 1989</b>	<b>Gabal 2012</b>
-/t/	durative	'fine, but sharpaccentuated pressure, giving the meaning of a weak retention or interruption' ( <i>dağt bi-diqqat wa-ḥiddat yataʔattā minhu maʕnā 'l-imtisāk al-ḍaʕf wa-maʕnā 'l-qaʕf</i> )
-/θ/	diffusive	'solidity\compactness or coarseness combined with spreading\diffusion' ( <i>katāfaʔ ʔaw ḡilaz maʕa tafašš<sup>m</sup></i> )
-/ðz/	finitive fortative	'delicate\fragile\gentle concentration that has a certain sharpness\markedness\vehemence\pitch\precision about it' ( <i>tağammuʕ hašš maʕa ḥiddat<sup>m</sup> mā</i> )
-/h/	iterative	'friction <i>bi-ʕiraḍ</i> and dryness' ( <i>iḥtikāk bi-ʕiraḍ wa-ğafaf</i> )
-/d/	durative	'blocking\obstruction\occlusion, accompanied by pressure and extension\broadening' ( <i>iḥtibās bi-dağt wa-'mtidād</i> )
-/ð/	extendative fortative	'permeable thickness/thick\broad airflow, showing a certain softness\laxity\relaxation and coarseness' ( <i>nafād taxīn ḍū raxāwat<sup>m</sup> mā wa-ḡilaz</i> )
-/r/	diffusive	'a letting go\releasing, (but) with some retention\cohesiveness' ( <i>istirsāl maʕa tamāsuk<sup>m</sup> mā</i> )
-/z/	intensive (of manner)	'compactness and compression' ( <i>iktināz wa-'zdiḥām</i> )
-/s/	non-finitive	'continuation\persistence\prolongation, accompanied by fineness\precision and intensity\sharpness' ( <i>imtidād bi-diqqat wa-ḥiddat</i> )
-/t/	durative intensive	'stress\pressure\emphasis accompanied by widening and thickening\hardening\tendency to coarseness' ( <i>al-dağt bi-'ttisāf wa-'stiḡlāz</i> )
-/ʕ/	partive	'fusion\union\cohesion with (?) a thinness accompanied by some sharpness' ( <i>iltiḥām ʕalā riqqat maʕa ḥiddat<sup>m</sup> mā</i> )
-/l/	finitive	'adhesion\cohesion\attachment\clinging (to s.th.), or extending (from it), accompanied by separation and distinction' ( <i>taʕalluq ʔaw imtidād maʕa 'stiqlāl ʔaw tamayyuz</i> )
-/m/	extendative	'retention or outward levelling' ( <i>imtisāk ʔaw istiwāʔ zāhirī</i> )
-/n/	non-finitive	'subtle extension\expansion\continuation inside, or from inside' ( <i>imtidād laʕf fi 'l-bāṭin ʔaw minhu</i> )
-/h/	amplificative	'emptiness or emptying' ( <i>farāğ ʔaw ʔifrāğ</i> )

The similarity of Gabal's and Ehret's description of the Arabic root inventory notwithstanding, a major difference between both approaches is, as we saw, the fact that Ehret thinks of the modifier  $C_3$ -s as 'extensions' that were added *at a later stage* to historically preceding 'pre-Protosemitic' biradical roots, while Gabal's approach is ahistoric. In principle, he does not touch the classical tenet of an essential triradicalism; for him, the segmentation of  $C_1C_2C_3$  patterns into  $C_1C_2$  nuclei + modifier  $C_3$ -s only serves the explanation of what he perceives as semantic regularities within a language that he treats as a static sys-

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augments themselves have no semantic or grammatical purpose that could explain why each is added in a specific instance" – HASSELBACH 2008 (see note 5), 375.

tem. With this view, Gabal, in a way, comes close, on the other hand, to **Voigt** who, in his seminal study on the biradicalism problem (see fn. 4, above), argued “that triradical roots need not be explained as expansions of biradical roots”; the semantic similarity that can be observed in many triradical roots with identical  $C_1C_2$  should rather be looked at as the result of “later analogical abstraction, a phenomenon of iconicity rather than algorithmic expansion”.<sup>58</sup> For Voigt, the only group of roots for which it seems to make sense to assume a biradical origin are the geminated ones ( $C_1C_2$ );<sup>59</sup> in his view, all attempts to derive triradical roots from biradical “core roots”<sup>60</sup> are methodologically insufficient and have to be regarded as failed.<sup>61</sup> Thus, for Voigt, like for Gabal, the inventory of Arabic roots consists mainly of triradical as well as a number of geminated roots. The difference between the two scholars’ conceptions of trilateral roots that share similar or related meanings and are formally identical except in their third consonants<sup>62</sup> lies in their explanation of the  $C_3$  elements: While for Gabal they have the quality of modifiers of the  $C_1C_2$  nuclei, each endowed with a specific semantic function, for Voigt the roots in question are not composed of such “nuclei” plus modifying  $C_3$ -s; root variation can, and should, rather be explained as the result of what he calls “**Reimwortbildung**”, i.e., “rhyming” assimilation or analogous imitation of existing (triradical) precedents, or, as Hasselbach puts it: “words that have similar meanings tend to assimilate on a phonetic level. Similarly, words that are similar in meaning and sound also tend to become closer in meaning”.<sup>63</sup>

#### Mimophony vs. arbitrariness of meaning

As already explained above, Gabal’s approach is strictly mimophonic, i.e., he regards (and does not grow tired to explain) the original meaning of a root as the somehow natural result of an interplay between the sounds that come together in it. Language, for him, is thus ultimately (built on) onomatopoeia. Unlike some classical Arab scholars who, as Gabal is well aware,<sup>64</sup> often identify two or more values for one root (see above), Gabal is always eager to find the *one* “central meaning” (*maʿnà miḥwarī*) from which he can “derive” all the others. While he remains strictly consistent in this respect the diversification of meaning—which he cannot neglect, but which in itself is a *development*—is obviously seen as the result of the activity of the human brain (widening, narrowing, figurative use, etc.) and, thus, of acts of convention that took place *after* the original meaning was given (by nature/God).

58 EDZARD, review of VOIGT 1988, 158-9.

59 Cf. VOIGT, *Die infirmen Verbaltypen*, 209 / FISCHER, review of VOIGT 1988, 129. – One of the reasons for this acknowledgement is the pervasive existence, alongside with geminated roots, of reduplicated forms ( $\sqrt{QSQS}$  alongside with  $\sqrt{QS}$ ;  $\sqrt{FTFT}$  alongside with  $\sqrt{FT}$ ;  $\sqrt{GLGL}$  alongside with  $\sqrt{GL}$ , etc.) which can hardly be explained other than as originating in biradicals.

60 EDZARD’s term, in his review of VOIGT 1988, 159.

61 FISCHER, *op.cit.* 129, paraphrasing VOIGT’s main argument.

62 Cf. note 49 above.

63 HASSELBACH, *op.cit.* (see note 5), 374, referring to VOIGT, *Die infirmen Verbaltypen*, 81.

64 He mentions IBN FĀRIS and al-RĀGĪB al-IṢFAHĀNĪ – *Muṣṣḡam*, i: 12, fn. 1.

The question of whether or not meaning in a language is conditioned by sounds and combinations of sounds is, of course, a very old one. In contemporary Western linguistics, the Saussure'ian axiom of an essential arbitrariness in the assignment of meaning to sounds in any language can certainly be taken as the *communis opinio*. Thus, it is presented, for instance, in a standard reference work like Bußmann's *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*, as a basic fact:

**Arbitrarität** [...] Grundlegende Eigenschaft von sprachlichen Zeichen, die besagt, dass zwischen dem Bezeichnenden (= Lautbild, Zeichengestalt) und dem Bezeichneten eine beliebige, nicht naturnotwendige [...] Beziehung besteht. [...] DE SAUSSURE [1916] [...] belegt die Beliebigkeit dieser Verbindung durch die Tatsache, dass dasselbe Objekt der Realität von Sprache zu Sprache verschieden benannt wird.<sup>65</sup>

As a consequence, prevailing opinion tends to regard as exceptions from the general rule those cases in which languages seek to imitate givens of the real world and where lexemes are motivated somehow "naturally". But even in these instances of onomatopoeia, the result of imitation usually is not completely identical among the languages and may differ considerably from one to another (cf., e.g., Engl *cock-a-doodle-doo*, Fr *cocorico*, Russ *kukarekú*, Ge *kikerikí*, Swiss Ge *güggerüü*, Ar *kūkūkūk*, Tu *gukiriku*, *kukuriko*, Pers *ququli ququ*, Chin *wō-wō*, etc.).<sup>66</sup>

In contrast, traditional Arabic linguistics tended to assume in principle a "natural" relation between sound and meaning, without however developing it into a fully-fledged system. Yet, as a treatise like Karamat Husein's *The Imitative Origin of Arabic Primary Roots* of 1903 shows, the basic idea seems to have been preserved from classical times into the twentieth century,<sup>67</sup> and it was taken up again, as we saw, not only by Gabal<sup>68</sup> but also by a Western scholar like Georges Bohas,<sup>69</sup> who has been able, since the mid-/late 1990s, to

65 BUBMANN (ed.), *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*, 54-55. In my own translation: "Arbitrariness [...] is a] fundamental characteristic of linguistic signs; it means that the relation between the signifier (= sound, written/drawn character) and the signified is arbitrary, not motivated by natural givens [...]. To prove the arbitrariness of this relation, DE SAUSSURE [1916] [...] points to the fact that the same real world object is named differently from language to language."

66 Cf. *ibid.*, 494, entry on "Onomatopoeie".

67 Here, we can read—to quote only one among many other amazing-amusing passages—the author's ideas in the beginning of a chapter he calls "Embryology": "The primitive Arabs had [...] keen external senses, fertile poetical imagination and good intellect. Their climate was warm and they, in search of water and pasture, moved from place to place. They led a camp life and were in direct contact with Nature. They therefore continually heard the various sounds emitted by animate and inanimate things. Rustlings, murmurings, clatterings, rattlings [*sic!*], clinkings, jinglings, whizzings, buzzings, hummings, gurglings, croakings, hissings, chirppings [*sic!*], howlings, whisperings, sobbings, sighings, produced in them subjective impressions of sound which, besides being the result of a mode of molar motion, were felt by them to be like the objective sounds. This may not be scientifically [*sic!*] true, but there can be no doubt that a *likeness* between the two was felt" – HUSEIN, *Imitative Origin*, 17.

68 Cf. GABAL's remarks, referred to above (p. 8), on the purity of the language of the Bedouins and the "taste of the desert" that one gets from the unadulterated stages of the language.

69 With his suggestion that, in Hasselbach's paraphrase, "on a purely diachronic level, the combinations of phonetic features and notions seem to be tightly linked to the capacities of the first speakers to imi-

gather a circle, if not a veritable “school”, of like-minded disciples and colleagues around himself, a fact that has resulted in the splitting of the scholarly community into a (comparatively small) pro-Bohas’ian and a (large, majoritarian) anti-Bohas’ian camp. It is not the purpose of the present article to discuss again the arguments of both camps.<sup>70</sup> However, what I think can be useful for anybody who consults Gabal’s *Muṣṣam*—which, I believe, may be beneficial (see below) in spite of the ultimate untenability of its basic approach—is to contrast his method with the Bohas’ian one in order to determine its place among the “mimophoneticians”.

- (1) One major difference is certainly the fact Gabal still shares with mainstream linguistics the “common assumption that the *phoneme* is the most basic meaning differentiating unit,” while Bohas “considers *phonetic* features the ultimate distinctive units of a language that cannot be divided further”.<sup>71</sup> Gabal thus remains on the level of what Bohas calls the “etymon” (abb. ε) while Bohas himself goes a step farther in that he postulates a “combination of elements [...] such as [labial], [coronal], [+/-voice], [fricative], etc.,” i.e., the so-called “matrix” (abb. μ), to “carry the basic semantic notion of a given stock of words”. Therefore, even though the articulation of the consonants are of key importance also for Gabal, his “nuclei” (*fuṣūl muṣṣamiyyah*) are less comparable to Bohas’ *matrices* than to his *étymons*, i.e., the combinations of two phonemes, like, for example, {q, s}, {k, t}, {ḡ, d}, and {k, s}. While in Bohas’ theory, all of the latter are generated by *one* and the same matrix, namely μ {[coronal], [dorsal]} ‘to cut, decide, tear, destroy, death’, Gabal does not see combinations of *Q* and *S*, *K* and *T*, *Ḡ* and *D*, or *K* and *S* as belonging together under one overarching semantic “roof”.

Other differences have already been mentioned above:

- (2) In his mimophonic explanations Gabal is more consistent than Bohas. While Gabal’s approach covers both, the biconsonantal nuclei *and* the modifiers, Bohas’s (and Dat’s) mimophony applies to their *matrices et étymons* only, while “the augments themselves have no semantic or grammatical purpose that could explain why each is added in a specific instance”.<sup>72</sup>
- (3) Linearity vs. interchangeability of elements within the biconsonantal nuclei: To take up the above example, while for Gabal *QS-* and *SQ-* are two distinct bases, Bohas would treat them as two (of several other) possible realisations of ε {q, s}. The same goes for *KT-* and *TK-* vs. ε {k, t}; *ḠD-* and *DḠ-* vs. ε {ḡ, d}; as well as *KS-* and *SK-* vs. ε {k, s}.
- (4) Position of additional modifiers: With the exception of *hamz* and the “weak” consonants/semivowels *W* and *Y*, the only position in which Gabal considers modifiers is that of *C*<sub>3</sub> following a *C*<sub>1</sub>*C*<sub>2</sub>- nucleus. In contrast, Bohas’ian “radicals” (abb. *R*), i.e., the triradical roots that actually exist in the language and constitute autonomous lex-

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tate real-world objects phonetically” (HASSELBACH, *op.cit.*, 376, referring to BOHAS & DAT 2007, 193), Bohas comes conspicuously close to Husein’s argument, sketched in note 67 above.

70 For a concise and sober overview, cf., e.g., HASSELBACH’S review of BOHAS & DAT 2007.

71 HASSELBACH, *op.cit.*, 373 (my emphasis, S.G.).

72 HASSELBACH, *op.cit.*, 375; cf. above, note 57.

emes, are generated from a biconsonantal etymon, e.g.  $\epsilon \in \{b, t\}$ , either **(a)** by reduplication of the second etymon phoneme (gives  $\sqrt{BTT}$ ), or **(b)** the addition of a sonorant (*R, L, M, N*) or guttural (*ʕ, H, Ĥ, ʔ*) in any position (gives, e.g., *inBaTaʕa* and *BaTala*); **(c)** by addition of a glide (*Y, W*); **(d)** by prefixation, as in *saBaTa*; **(e)** by adding a final consonant, mostly *F* or *B*; or **(f)** by the merger of two independent etymons, as in *batata* (presumably a fusion of  $\epsilon \in \{b, t\}$  and  $\epsilon \in \{t, k\}$ ). Interestingly enough, in Bohas' theory, these augmentations "have no significant effect on the semantic range of a given etymon," as Hasselbach rightly observes;<sup>73</sup> in Gabal's theory, only the glides and *hamza* remain similarly ineffective.

### Putting Gabal and Western research in dialogue—the root $\sqrt{\text{ʕRB}}$ , for example

As already stated in the introduction, I do not think that the many shortcomings of Gabal's approach should serve the scholarly community as a justification for an outright rejection of the entire *Muʕḡam*. Let me therefore close this paper with a short demonstration of what Gabal's findings may add to our knowledge, or evidence-based hypotheses, about a sample root whose etymology seems to be particularly difficult to establish. As a case in point may serve Ar (and Sem)  $\sqrt{\text{ʕRB}}$ . The semantic diversity within this root is enormous and any attempt to disentangle the complexity seems to be doomed to plunge the etymologist into deep despair. In Modern Standard Arabic alone we have at least six main values<sup>74</sup> (the list gives some major exponents of each only, not the whole bulk of obvious derivatives):

- <sup>1</sup> $\text{ʕRB}$  *ʕarab* 'Arab', *ʕarabī* 'Arabic', *ʕarraba* 'to make Arabic, Arabicize, translate into Arabic', *ʔaʕraba* 'to use desinential inflection, i.e., the *ʔiʕrāb*'
- <sup>2</sup> $\text{ʕRB}$  *ʔaʕraba* 'to express, voice, state clearly'
- <sup>3</sup> $\text{ʕRB}$  *ʕarraba* 'to give earnest money, make a down payment (*ʕurbūn*)', *ʕarrāb* 'godfather, sponsor'
- <sup>4</sup> $\text{ʕRB}$  <sup>1</sup>*ʕarabā* 'swift river'
- <sup>5</sup> $\text{ʕRB}$  <sup>2</sup>*ʕarabā* 'carriage, wagon, cart, coach'
- <sup>6</sup> $\text{ʕRB}$  (*wādī*) <sup>3</sup>*ʕarabā* 'the Arabah' (depression to the south of the Dead Sea, Jordan Rift Valley)<sup>75</sup>

Other values, now obsolete, include:<sup>76</sup>

- <sup>7</sup> $\text{ʕRB}$  <sup>†</sup>*ʕarib* '(well, river) containing/yielding much water, abundance of water'
- <sup>8</sup> $\text{ʕRB}$  <sup>†4</sup>*ʕarabā* 'soul, mind'

<sup>73</sup> HASSELBACH, *op.cit.*, 374.

<sup>74</sup> Taking the entry  $\text{ʕRB}$  in WEHR/COWAN's *Dictionary* as the database for the survey of the MSA part.

<sup>75</sup> Not in WEHR/COWAN 1979 but evidently still in use.

<sup>76</sup> **BH** = BADAWI/HINDS 1986, **F** = FREYTAG 1835 [vol. iii], **H** = HAVA 1899, **L** = LANE 1874 [vol. v], **LZ** = LANDBERG/ZETTERSTEIN 1942, **W** = WAHRMUND 1887.

- <sup>9</sup>ζRB †ζurbānāt ‘(a sort of) lizard’
- <sup>10</sup>ζRB †ζarūb (also [F] ζarūbat, ζaribat) ‘loving, pleasing, of matching age’; cf. also [F] (denom.) vb. IV, †ζaζraba ‘matrimonium iniit cum femina ζarūb appellata’; should we also compare [LZ] DaṭAr ζarab li- ‘être bon pour’?
- <sup>11</sup>ζRB †ζarūbat ‘(an old, pre-Islamic name for) Friday’
- <sup>12</sup>ζRB †ζarraba ‘to incite with lust, arouse (a partner’s) sexual appetite’, †ζaζraba ‘to copulate, have sex’, [LZ] YemAr ζarab ‘to have sex’; cf. also †istaζraba, vb. X, ‘[F] appetivit marem (vacca), [L] to desire the bull (said of a cow)’
- <sup>13</sup>ζRB †ζarābat ~ †irābat ([W] ~ †urābat) ‘foul speech, obscene talk’, and denom. verbs II, IV, X
- <sup>14</sup>ζRB †ζaraba i (ζarb) ‘to eat (much), devour’ [F,L,W]; cf. also [LZ] DaṭAr ζarab ‘être glouton, grand mangeur’, ζarūb ‘dévorateur, qui dévore, qui a la fringale’
- <sup>15</sup>ζRB †ζarib ‘bad, corrupt, disordered (stomach)’; cf. also †ζariba a (ζarab) ‘to be(come) disordered (stomach) (by indigestion)’
- <sup>16</sup>ζRB †ζariba a (ζarab) ‘to become swollen and purulent, break up again after it had healed ([F,H,W] a wound, [L] a camel’s hump), [F,L,H] to leave a scar (wound), have a scar remaining after it has healed’. – Cf. also next item?
- <sup>17</sup>ζRB DaṭAr ζurbiyyat ‘inguinal region, groin; turgor of lymph node’ [LZ]
- <sup>18</sup>ζRB †ζarab ~ ζarib ‘clear, limpid, clean (water, a palmtree, a horse’s hoof, language, etc.); pure, genuine, hence: noble (horse etc., race)’; also (redupl.) †ζurbub ‘abundant water, such as is clear, or limpid’; †ζarraba, [H,W:] also †ζaζraba, ‘to prune (a palm-tree); to make an incision in the bottom of the horse / to scarify (a horse) (to make clear that it is a good horse); [F] puram et a vitii immunem protulit (loquela) [= overlapping with <sup>1</sup>ζRB in †irāb]; to reproach, upbraid s.o. [i.e., point out clearly the faults in s.o.’s behaviour]’; †ζaζraba [F] ‘distinctam, manifestam effecit (rem)’. – [F] †ζurb ‘noble horse’, †ζarab ‘nobilitas generis (in equis)’, †ζarāb ‘boum species glabra’; [overlapping with <sup>1</sup>ζRB ‘Arabic’:] (hayl) †ζirāb ‘Arabici nobilesque equi’, †ζaruba ‘Arabica et vitii immunis fuit (loquela), †(ζarab) ζaribat / -āt / †aribat’ [F] (Arabum) gens pura / [L] the pure, or genuine Arabs’. – Cf. also next item?
- <sup>19</sup>ζRB †ζarabī ‘white/excellent (barley)’
- <sup>20</sup>ζRB †ζirb, a species of barley-grass, ‘dried buhmā plant’ [F,L]
- <sup>21</sup>ζRB DaṭAr ζurb ~ ζurub ‘ordre, arrangement, convenance, résultat’ [LZ]
- <sup>22</sup>ζRB EgAr ζarbat, pl. ζurab, ‘quarter tone; device for adjusting the tone of the strings of the qānūn (mus.)’ [BH]
- <sup>23</sup>ζRB †ζarāb, [W] ζarābat ‘fruit of the ḥazam tree’
- <sup>24</sup>ζRB †ζarābat, pl. -āt, ‘bag with which the udder of a sheep, or goat, is covered’ [F,L]
- <sup>25</sup>ζRB †ζurūbā?u ‘(a name of) The Seventh Heaven’ [F,L]

<sup>26</sup>ʕRB DatAr taʕārīb ‘tetragonal stones’ [LZ]

<sup>27</sup>ʕRB ʕarīb, ʕarīb ‘somebody’ [F,BK]

What can we make out of this evidence? It seems difficult, if not impossible, to find a common denominator in all these values, even if we leave unconsidered those items that seem to be of foreign origin or due to metathesis, such as <sup>5</sup>ʕRB ʕarabāī ‘carriage, wagon, cart, coach’ (from Pers?, Grk?, Skr via Av?, or a corruption of Ar ʕarrādaiī ‘stone-throwing machine, military siege weapon’, hence also ‘carriage carrying a gun’?),<sup>77</sup> <sup>25</sup>ʕRB ʕurūbā? ‘Seventh Heaven’ (probably from, or at least akin to, Targ ʕarābōl), and the dialectal <sup>22</sup>ʕRB EgAr ʕarabāī ‘quarter tone, etc.’ and <sup>26</sup>ʕRB DatAr taʕārīb ‘tetragonal stones’ (both perh. from √RBʕ, with metathesis).<sup>78</sup> Following a triradicalist approach and drawing on previous research and evidence in Semitic, we can tentatively group the items in six *larger* semantic complexes<sup>79</sup> (which, however, still do *not* account for a considerable number of the less frequent words<sup>80</sup>):

- (A) ‘to **enter**’: According to many (Huehnergard, Kogan, Klein, et al.), this is the very basic value of the root in Sem [Akk *erēbu* ‘to enter, enter in the presence (of a god, king, etc.), come in (said of taxes), come (said of months), invade, penetrate; to return, arrive, come, go home’, (Š-stem) *šūrubu* ‘to penetrate’, Ug Phoen *ʕrb* ‘to enter, go in’]. This value seems to be manifest however in Akk, Ug and Phoen *only*, while it has undergone a shift, or several shifts, of meaning in the remaining Sem area where it is mostly realized as one of five new semantic bases, presented below. Retsö, meanwhile, seems to regard Ar ʕarāba ‘to penetrate, copulate, have sex’ (<sup>12</sup>ʕRB \*‘“enter” a woman’) and perhaps also the n.gent. *ʕarab* itself (<sup>1</sup>ʕRB) as possible reflexes of the original ‘to enter’, suggesting for the latter an original meaning of \*‘those who have entered [, sc.] into the service of a divinity and remain his slaves or his property’;<sup>81</sup> cf. also next but one paragraph.
- (B) ‘to set, **go down** (sun), **evening, west**’: This value is usually explained as an extension of (A), based on the idea of the sun “entering”, i.e., setting, behind/below the horizon. The value can be observed already in Akk *erēb šamši*, Ug *ʕrb špš* ‘sunset’ and is very frequent throughout Sem, including Ar (here, however, with \*ʕRB > ĠRB, e.g., *ġaruba*, *ġariba* ‘to set’, *ġarb* ‘place of sunset, west’).<sup>82</sup> Rotter suggested that also Ar ʕarūbaiī (<sup>11</sup>ʕRB), a pre-Islamic name for ‘Friday’, should be put here, originally indicating the \*‘day of Venus’ (Lat *dies Veneris*), i.e., the day of the ancient deity of the evening star.<sup>83</sup>

77 For details and references cf. the entry in *EtymArab*, with further references.

78 As note 77.

79 First sketched in the entries I prepared for the *EtymArab* online dictionary; for more details cf. there.

80 The “homeless” ones include the wadi ʕArabāī (<sup>6</sup>ʕRB), the ‘white/excellent’ barley (<sup>19</sup>ʕRB ʕarabī) and a species of barley-grass called *buhmā* (<sup>20</sup>ʕRB ʕirb), the fruit from a certain tree (<sup>23</sup>ʕRB ʕarāb, ~ai), the ‘bag with which the udder of a sheep, or goat, is covered’ (<sup>24</sup>ʕRB ʕarābaī), ‘somebody’ (<sup>27</sup>ʕRB ʕarīb, ʕarīb), as well as the dialectal <sup>21</sup>ʕRB DatAr ʕur(u)b ‘order, arrangement, result’.

81 RETSÖ 2003: 598.

82 A shift regarded by NÖLDEKE 1900: 155, n.1, as a “Steigerung”, likely to be induced by neighbouring -R-.

83 ROTTER 1993: 123, n. 56.

- (C) **‘pledge, to step in, stand surety or bail for, give guarantee\earnest money’**: In ascribing the meaning \*‘to enter, stand surety or bail for, guarantee’ to Sem  $\sqrt{\text{ʕRB}}$ , Huehnergard obviously regards the idea of ‘stepping in for s.o.’ as integral aspect of the Sem root, going together with (A) \*‘to enter’.<sup>84</sup> According to Klein, this is doubted by others (cf., e.g., the fact that BDB groups this value apart from ‘to enter’).<sup>85</sup> BDB mentions that the value usually is connected with (D) ‘to mix’, although this is “quite uncertain”.<sup>86</sup> There is consensus nevertheless that the value ‘to step in for s.o., etc.’ is a major basis around which a larger semantic field has built up in CSem (Ug, Can, Aram, Ar, SAr), cf., e.g., Ug  $\text{ʕrb}$ , Hbr  $\text{ʕārab}$  ‘to take on pledge, give in pledge, go surety for; to barter, exchange’, Syr  $\text{ʕarab}$  ‘to vouch for, go surety for’, Syr  $\text{ʕreb}$  ‘to promise solemnly, be surety, pledge o.s.; (with *b-*, *l-*, *ʕal-*) esp. to stand sponsor (at baptism)’,  $\text{ʕurāb(t)ā}$  ‘surety sponsor, god-parent’ (> Ar  $\text{ʕRB}$   $\text{ʕarrāb}$  ‘godfather’), Ar  $\text{ʕarraba}$  ‘to give earnest money’ ( $\text{ʕRB}$ ); Hbr  $\text{ʕērābôn}$  ‘pledge’, JudAram, ChrPal  $\text{ʕarbūnā}$  (> Ar  $\text{ʕarbūn}$  ‘pledge, token’, usually treated as from 4-rad.  $\sqrt{\text{ʕRBN}}$ ). Retsö even tends to see the n.gent.  $\text{ʕarab}$  ( $\text{ʕRB}$ ) itself as belonging here (as an extension from ‘to enter’) when he suggests an interpretation of the name  $\text{ʕarab}$  as \*‘those who have entered into the service of a divinity and remain his slaves or his property’.<sup>87</sup>
- (D) **‘mixture > confusion’**: With the exception, perhaps, of  $\text{ʕRB}$   $\text{ʕarib}$  ‘bad, corrupt, disordered (stomach)’, there seem to be no other direct reflexes of this basic value in Ar. It figures on the list here nevertheless, for two reasons: first, because there is an old theory that would see the n.gent.  $\text{ʕarab}$  ( $\text{ʕRB}$ ) as originally meaning \*‘the mixed people’ (or even \*‘riffraff’), a term applied by the Israelites to all types of foreigners and non-natives; and second, because it could serve as a semantic link between (A) \*‘to enter’ and (E) \*‘vehemence’ (see below), or (if \*‘to enter’ has to be separated from ‘mixture’) as the origin from which \*‘vehemence’ could have developed as an Ar innovation. The idea of \*‘mixture > confusion’ seems to be realized mainly in Hbr  $\text{ʕārab}$ ,  $\text{ʕarab}$ , Syr  $\text{ʕrab}$ ,  $\text{ʕreb}$  ‘to mix, mingle’, Hbr  $\text{ʕērūb}$  ‘mixture, mixed company; swarm (non-Israelites; foreign parts of the Egyptian population, the ethnic melting pot of Babel, foreigners in the land of Juda)’,  $\text{ʕārōb}$  ‘swarm of wild bees or flies—the forth plague of Egypt’ (prob. < \*‘swarm of stinging flies’), (? >) Syr  $\text{ʕrūbā}$ ,  $\text{ʕarrūbā}$  ‘swarm of vermin and insect; mixed multitude, riff-raff, rabble; confusion (of words)’.<sup>88</sup> – Do we also have to compare Ar  $\text{ʕurbānā}$ ,  $\text{ʕarabānā}$  ‘(a sort of) lizard’ ( $\text{ʕRB}$ )?<sup>89</sup>
- (E) **‘vehemence (passion, vitality, agility, outburst, expression, excess, abundance, abundance of passion, exuberance, affection)’**: This value is one of the broadest bases for new derivations in Ar, but apparently only there, i.e., it seems to be an Ar innovation. It can be thought to be a development from (D) when the ‘mixture, confusion’ was

84 HUEHNERGARD 2011, s.r. *ʕRB*.

85 KLEIN1987: s.r. *ʕRB*.

86 BDB: s.r. *ʕRB*.

87 RETSÖ, *The Arabs*, 598.

88 MILITAREV & KOGAN, *SED II*, #36 reconstruct Sem \**ʕa/urub-* ‘kind of vermin, worm’.

89 KLEIN1987 considers also Hbr Aram  $\sqrt{\text{ʕRBL}}$ , Ar  $\sqrt{\text{ʕRBL}}$  as belonging here (as extension in \*-L): Hbr  $\text{ʕirbēl}$  ‘to mix; to cause to whirl; to confuse’, Syr  $\text{ʕarbel}$ , Ar  $\text{ʕarbala}$  ‘to sift’.



thought to exceed a certain limit or an emotional quality was attached to it; in many derivations from this basis there is also an element of the ungovernable, unmanageable, or of an uncontrollable eruption. The most frequent items belonging to this complex are probably: ‘abundance (of water)’ (<sup>7</sup>ʕRB), esp. that in a *ʕarabā* ‘swift river’ (<sup>4</sup>ʕRB) (of which <sup>8</sup>ʕRB *ʕarabā* ‘soul, mind’ is likely to be figurative use); it is also tempting to draw a line from this swiftness and agility to that of a *ʕurbānā* ‘(kind of) lizard’ (<sup>9</sup>ʕRB) and the turbulences in a *ʕarib* ‘corrupt, disordered’ stomach (<sup>15</sup>ʕRB, but cf. D, above) and the *ʕarab* ‘swelling’ caused by it (<sup>16</sup>ʕRB); <sup>DatAr</sup> *ʕurbiyyā* ‘inguinal region; lymphoma’ (<sup>17</sup>ʕRB) certainly also belongs here; the idea of excess is evident in the verb *ʕaraba* ‘to eat (much), devour’ (<sup>14</sup>ʕRB), and that of passion and affection in the adj. *ʕarūb* ‘loving, pleasing’ (<sup>10</sup>ʕRB) that the Qurʾān uses as an epithet to describe the virgins of Paradise; if the pre-Islamic name for ‘Friday’, *ʕarūbat* (<sup>11</sup>ʕRB), originally really means ‘Venus’ (cf. B, above), then one could also interpret this name as \*‘the Affectionate, Loving’ one (rather than \*‘Deity of the Evening Star’, from \*‘to set, go down < to enter’); to *ʕarūb* ‘loving, pleasing’ one could also put *ʕarraba* ‘to arouse (a partner’s) sexual appetite’ and *ʕaʕraba* ‘to penetrate, copulate, have sex’ (<sup>12</sup>ʕRB), keeping in mind, however, that Retsö interpreted the latter as a reflex of (A) \*‘to enter’; the same verbs *ʕarraba* and *ʕaʕraba* can, however, also remain free of all sexual implication and instead refer to an eruption, an outburst, a letting out of feelings, emotions, thoughts, etc., i.e. an ‘expression’ (<sup>2</sup>ʕRB), an outward showing of emotions or feelings or uttering of thoughts; if this ‘expression’ is not properly controlled, we get *ʕvrābat* ‘foul speech, obscene talk’ (<sup>13</sup>ʕRB).

- (F) The sixth large semantic cluster within Ar  $\sqrt{\text{ʕRB}}$  is that of ‘clarity, purity’ and hence also ‘nobility’ (<sup>18</sup>ʕRB). Since this value, too, seems to be an Ar idiosyncrasy, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to try to derive it from the preceding complex, in itself probably an Ar innovation, along the hypothetical line \*‘vehemence > abundance > abundance of water > abundance of clear water > clear water > clear > pure > noble’. Indeed, the idea of ‘abundance’ mostly occurs in connection with water, and items like those indicating an ‘abundance (of water)’ (<sup>7</sup>ʕRB) or a ‘swift river’ (<sup>4</sup>ʕRB), mentioned in the preceding paragraph, are often characterized in the dictionaries simultaneously with the attribute ‘clear, pure’ and can thus easily serve as bridge between ‘abundance’ and ‘clarity, purity’, e.g., *ʕarab*, *ʕarib*, *ʕurbub* ‘[F] *Multa aqua pura* / [BK] *grande quantité d’eau pure* / [L] *abundant water, such as is clear, or limpid*’ (my italics, S.G.). (The figurative use of *ʕarabā* ‘swift river’ as <sup>8</sup>ʕRB *ʕarabā* ‘soul, mind’ also fits into this picture: a swift mind is often also a clear mind.) The basic idea of \*‘clarity, purity’ is then transferred into quite a number of very different contexts, so that verbs like *ʕarraba* or *ʕaʕraba*, lit. meaning ‘to make clear, limpid, clean’, can come to mean such diverse actions as ‘to prune (a palm-tree)’, ‘to make an incision in the bottom of the horse, to scarify (a horse) [to make *clear* that it is a good one]’, ‘to express clearly’ (overlapping with ‘to express’ understood as a simple “outing” of emotions etc., see E ‘vehemence’), ‘to speak correctly, without mistakes’, ‘to reproach, upbraid s.o. [i.e., point out *clearly* the faults in s.o.’s behaviour]’, etc. From ‘purity’ the step is not far to ‘nobility’, particularly that of horses (*ʕurb* ‘noble horse’, *ʕarab* ‘purity of race’), but often overlapping with ethnic purity, esp. that of the Arabs (<sup>1</sup>ʕRB) themselves. – With all

probability also †*ʕarabī* ‘white/excellent’ barley (<sup>19</sup>*ʕRB*) is just a specific application of ‘purity’ on this type of corn.

This is, roughly, where an etymologist with a traditional triradicalist approach will get.<sup>90</sup> In how far do the findings of biradicalists like Ehret, Bohas and Gabal alter or corroborate this picture?

In his seminal study on “The Origin of Third Consonants in Semitic” (1989), Ehret reconstructs a “pre-Protosemitic” root \**ʕR* ‘to take out, remove’ from which he assumes the following Ar verbs (cited with their verbal noun) to be derived by reduplication or extension in third consonant modifiers:

<i>ʕarʕar</i>	‘to uncork, pull out an eye’
<i>ʕarab</i>	‘to separate, put by, put aside’
<i>ʕarʔ</i>	‘to remove, lift up, lay aside’
<i>ʕard</i>	‘to throw or fling far’
<i>ʕarad</i>	‘to flee, take to flight’
<i>ʕardas</i>	‘to throw to the ground’
<i>ʕarz</i>	‘to tear out violently’
<i>ʕarḏ</i>	‘to offer, present, show itself, happen, occur, come to meet, show, bring to mind, give or take in exchange’
<i>ʕarq</i>	‘to depart, set out’
<i>ʕarw</i>	‘to come up to, approach, visit, occur, happen’ <sup>91</sup>

The value ‘to separate, put by, put aside’ of √*ʕRB* does not figure as such in our own list above. But it seems to be identical with the ‘pruning’ of a palm-tree (†*ʕarraba*, †*ʔaʕraba*), an operation in which the leaves are separated and put aside in order to clean the plant. In our own sketch of the semantic field we had assumed this pruning to be a special use of ‘cleaning’ and therefore suggested to make it dependent on (F) ‘clarity, limpidness, purity’ (<sup>18</sup>*ʕRB*). Ehret’s reconstruction would now suggest to see it the other way round and derive the latter from the former. In addition, his findings would invite us to see subfield (F) of √*ʕRB* together with the other “derivations” from pre-PSem \**ʕR*—which, however, does not help in any way when it comes to disentangle the remaining areas of the complex field.

In his—not less seminal—book *Reconstructing Proto-Afroasiatic* (1995), Ehret comes with yet another reconstruction: From pre-PSem \**ʕR* ‘to be raised’ (< AfrAs \*-*ʕir*- ‘to be raised; sky’), he derives the Ar verbs

<i>ʕarb</i>	‘to swell and suppurate’
<i>ʕarġ</i>	‘to ascend, mount, rise’
<i>ʕard</i>	‘to shoot up, grow’
<i>ʕarš</i>	‘to build, erect a trellis’. <sup>92</sup>

90 For more details cf. the *ʕRB* entries in *EtymArab*.

91 EHRET, “The Origin”, 175-6 (item #33).

92 EHRET, *Reconstructing*, 353 and 510 (item #695). – I am not considering here two other pre-PSem \**ʕR* roots, (#696) ‘to burn (intr.), shine’ and (#697) ‘hard, firm, strong’ because they do not show any semantic overlapping with Ar √*ʕRB*.

The first item is <sup>16</sup>ʕRB in our above list. While we tended to regard the camel's 'swollen and purulent' hump as dependent on either (D) 'mixture > confusion' or (E) 'vehemence' (incl. excess, abundance, outburst, etc.), Ehret assumes the idea of 'being raised' as the underlying general notion. Worth further consideration, I think (all the more so since we will find something similar also in Gabal's study, see below). Unfortunately though, this step, too, does not bring much more light into the remaining areas of the etymological labyrinth of Ar ʕRB. One possible consequence would probably be to separate items that can be thought to derive from \*'swelling' from the rest and consider the possibility of *two* (or more) distinct etymologies of the different ʕRB complexes.

Unlike Ehret's and Gabal's root nuclei, Bohas' etymons are, as we saw, non-linear. This means that in order to find a biconsonantal basis from which Ar ʕRB may be derived, we have to investigate three cases:

- ε {ʕ,r} + /b/
- ε {ʕ,b} + /r/
- ε {b,r} = {r,b} + /ʕ/

And also a fourth possibility has to be taken into account, namely an "etymon merger":

- ε {ʕ,r} + ε {r,b}

The data that are to be found in Bohas' *Matrices, étymons, racines* (1997) and seem to be of possible relevance in our case are:

- ε {b,r} /br/ – 'good work, good deed, beneficence, liberality, charity; piety; just, truthful, faithful (one of the names of God)' (*barr, bārra, tabarrara, birr, bārr*)
- /rb/ – 'benevolent, beneficent; master, lord (*also*: the Lord, God)' (*rabb, murtabb*)
- ε {b,ʕ} /bʕ/ – 'noise/sound produced by water when poured from a bottle' (*baʕbaʕ*)
- 'to make long strides (said of animals)' (*bāʕa /bawaʕaʕ*)
- /ʕb/ – 'to gurgle (bucket when being filled with water)' (*ʕabba*)
- 'wide and made with all one's forces (jump, race)' (*waʕʕb*)
- ε {r,ʕ} /rʕ/ – 'to be rippled, slightly agitated (said of clear water on the surface of the ground when the wind strokes over it)' (*raʕraʕa*), 'to become loose, and wobbled, or moved about (tooth)' (*taraʕraʕa*)
- 'tall, handsome (young man)' (*raʕrāʕ*)
- 'to guard, take care of' (*rāʕā /rāʕaʕaʕ*)
- 'crowd, gathering' (*rīʕāʕ*)
- 'to compel s.o. to abstain from s.th., prevent s.o. from doing what is unlawful' (*warraʕa*)
- /ʕr/ – 'to remove (the stopper of a bottle to uncork it)' (*ʕarʕara*)
- 'movement, agitation' (*ʕarʕaraʕ*), 'to be agitated, and, so to speak, bubbling (said, e.g., from the heart when agitated by violent emotion)' (*waʕira*)
- 'young man' (*ʕurr*)
- 'to charge s.o. with a load, give s.o. the care of s.o.' (*ʕarrara*)
- 'large group of men' (*ʕurwaʕ*)

- ‘to interrupt, withhold, prevent s.o. from getting access to s.th.’ (*waṣara*, *waṣṣara*)<sup>93</sup>

Of all these values, only very few seem to have any relation to any of the many  $\zeta RB$  items of our own list:

- € {b,r} Both realisations of this etymon, /br/ and /rb/, seem to have to do with beneficence and doing good works. If this could be connected to the idea of ‘nobility’ (which we derived from F \*‘purity’), then the second part of the corresponding  $\sqrt{\zeta RB}$  items could be seen together with *rabb*, etc.
- € {b,ṣ} The only possible overlapping I can see here is between *ṣabba* /ṣb/ ‘to gurgle (bucket when being filled with water)’ and items such as <sup>4</sup> $\zeta RB$  ‘swift river’ or <sup>15</sup> $\zeta RB$  ‘corrupted stomach’ (all in subfields D \*‘mixture > confusion’ or E \*‘vehemence’).
- € {r,ṣ} /rṣ/ *raṣraṣa* ‘to be rippled, slightly agitated (water)’: related to (E) ‘vehemence, agitation’?  
/ṣr/ *ṣarṣarā* ‘movement, agitation’, *waṣira* ‘to be agitated, violent emotion’: dto.?
- € {ṣ,r} + € {r,b} : A fusion of the two etymons could yield something like ‘agitation + gurgling’ or ‘agitation + beneficence’. The first could be imagined as a mutual reinforcement of the two activities; the latter could bring us, with some phantasy and twisting, to <sup>1</sup> $\zeta RB$  the Arabs as \*‘the agitated beneficent ones’.

I leave it to the reader’s discretion to judge how meaningful such speculations are and whether or not they advance our understanding of the etymology of Ar (and Sem)  $\sqrt{\zeta RB}$ .<sup>94</sup>

Gabal, like Ehret, sees  $\sqrt{\zeta RB}$  as composed of a nucleus  $\zeta R$ - and a modifying *-B*. Unlike Ehret, however, the Egyptian author does not reckon with the possibility of a multitude of  $\zeta R$ - bases; Gabal always looks for *the* one and only common denominator in all. What he identifies as the very basic value of a root or a nucleus is therefore always extracted from all the relevant elements that are found in the language. Thus, the basic value of  $\sqrt{\zeta RB}$  is filtered out from all existing  $\zeta RB$  items, and the basic value of the nucleus \* $\zeta R$ - is the common denominator of all existing combinations of the  $\zeta R$ +... type, including also reduplication and *ʔ*, *W* and *Y* in free position.

Gabal’s  $\zeta RB$  chapter<sup>95</sup> therefore starts with a presentation of the (in his view) most typical items (all to be found in our own survey, cf. numbering in parentheses):

<i>qurḏān ṣarabī</i>	‘the Arabic [i.e., clear] Quran’ (as in Q 41:3) (cf. subgroup F *‘clarity, purity)
<i>nahr ṣarib</i>	‘flood’ (cf. our <sup>47</sup> $\zeta RB$ )
<i>biḏr ṣaribatī</i>	‘well abundant in water’ (cf. <sup>7</sup> $\zeta RB$ )
<i>ṣarabatī</i>	‘swift river’ (cf. <sup>4</sup> $\zeta RB$ )

93 BOHAS, *Matrices*, 99 (#33), 101 (#41), and 121-2 (#197) – my translations from French, S.G. – Where I found a common denominator in Bohas’ data, I tried to summarize.

94 For an exemplification of the dimensions that can be reached with a BOHASian approach, cf. Jean-Claude ROLLAND’s contribution in the present dossier, pp. 68, below.

95 GABAL, *Muṣṣam*, iii: 1471-74.

<i>ʕarab</i>	‘vitality, agility, liveliness’ (cf. our subgroup E)
<i>ʕariba</i> a ( <i>ʕarābatī</i> )	‘be swift, lively, agitated’ (cf. subgroup E)
<i>ʕaribat miʕdatuh</i>	‘his stomach was disturbed due to what was loaded on it’ (cf. <sup>15</sup> ʕRB)
<i>ʕariba</i> <i>ʕl-ḡurḥ wa-ḥabiṭa</i>	‘there remained some traces of the wound after healing, a degeneration’ (cf. <sup>16</sup> ʕRB)
<i>ʕariba</i> <i>ʕl-sanām</i>	‘the hump (of a camel) became swollen and purulent’ (cf. <sup>16</sup> ʕRB).

He then presents his conclusion as to what constitutes the basic value of  $\sqrt{\text{ʕRB}}$  as extracted from the existing vocabulary, namely: *našāṭ wa-ʕnīlāq bi-ḥiddatī dātīyyatī lil-ḥulūš mim mā yuḥbas*, i.e. (roughly) ‘vehement activity\agitation inside aiming at releasing\letting out what is locked up’. It is clear that this is our semantic subgroup (E) \*‘vehemence’ and that Gabal obviously derives all values that he considers authentic ʕRB values from this one notion. Given that our own approach, for the most part of the Ar ʕRB items, remained within the subfields (D) \*‘mixture > confusion’, (E) \*‘vehemence’, and (F) \*‘clarity, purity’ and that these often seem to overlap, Gabal’s suggestion looks absolutely worth reconsidering our own findings in the light of his *našāṭ wa-ʕnīlāq...* Our subfields (A)–(C) (\*‘to enter’, \*‘to go down, set’, \*‘pledge, to step in’) are mainly motivated by the non-Ar evidence and did not yield incontrovertible results.<sup>96</sup>

Gabal’s first paragraphs are followed by an amplifying discussion in which the author explains in how far also other ʕRB values than those mentioned in the beginning can be regarded as derived from the one *maʕnā miḥwarī*. In many points this discussion confirms our own findings, e.g., the hypothesis that <sup>2</sup>ʕRB ‘expression, outburst’ should be connected to \*‘vehemence’, or that also the notion of (F) \*‘purity’ (<sup>7/18</sup>ʕRB) may be dependent on this \*‘vehemence’ (Gabal: being free from contamination, *al-ḥulūš min al-šawāʕib*, is also a *ḥiddatī* because it means strength\power, *quwwatī*, this is why pedigree horses or camels are called *ʕirāb*).

In some other points Gabal suggests explanations for items that our own survey had left unconsidered, such as <sup>†</sup>*ʕirb* ‘dry *buhmā* plant’ (<sup>20</sup>ʕRB), <sup>†</sup>*ʕarāb(atī)* ‘fruit of the *ḥazam* tree’ (<sup>23</sup>ʕRB), and also the *wādī (al-)* *ʕArabatī* (<sup>6</sup>ʕRB), the latter being interpreted as just taken from *ʕarabatī* ‘swift (i.e., “vehement”) river (with abundant water)’ (<sup>7</sup>ʕRB). Interesting is also Gabal’s explanation of the n.gent. *ʕarab* (<sup>1</sup>ʕRB):

the Arabs are called like this due to their *ḥiddatī dātīyyatī* ( $\approx$  innate passionateness, hot temperament), which shows in their vitality (*našāṭ*) and their unrestrained mobility (*ḥarakatī mutasayyibatī*) when they wander in\roam the open\unprotected desert in search of pasture; it also shows in the emotionality (*ʕātīfīyyatī*), affectivity\impulsiveness (*infiʕāliyyatī*) and the hot-bloodedness (*ḥarārat al-damm*) that are widespread among them; finally, [it also shows] in their ability to express their in-

96 <sup>1</sup>ʕRB ‘Arab’ and <sup>12</sup>ʕRB ‘to copulate’ are only *perhaps* from A ‘to enter’, and <sup>11</sup>ʕRB ‘(pre-Isl.) Friday’ only *perhaps* from B ‘to go down, set’. <sup>3</sup>ʕRB ‘to give earnest money; godfather’ is certainly from C ‘pledge, to step in’, it is right; but given that Gabal does not treat the respective items as authentic *Arabic*—with good reason, since they are borrowed from Aram or based on loanwords from this language—, the overwhelming majority of Ar ʕRB items are indeed concentrated in the D, E and F groups.

nermost feelings with minute precision, i.e., [a precision that is to be found in] the correct or, as was said: pure, expression (*ʔiʕrāb, ʔiʕsāh*).

Given that none of the many explanations that have been suggested so far for the ethnonym is beyond doubt,<sup>97</sup> Gabal's idea should at least be retained among those that seem to be further investigation.

The *tarkīb* *ʕRB* is treated within the chapter on *ʕR* + modifiers. Here, the root  $\sqrt{ʕRB}$  features alongside with the geminated  $\sqrt{ʕR:ʕRR}$ , the reduplicated  $\sqrt{ʕRʕR}$ , the weak  $\sqrt{ʕRW}$ ,  $\sqrt{ʕRY}$ ,  $\sqrt{ʕWR}$ , and  $\sqrt{ʕYR}$ , as well as the roots with sound third consonants, i.e.,  $\sqrt{ʕRĜ}$ ,  $\sqrt{ʕRĜN}$ ,  $\sqrt{ʕRŠ}$ ,  $\sqrt{ʕRD}$ ,  $\sqrt{ʕRF}$ , and  $\sqrt{ʕRM}$ . The basic value extracted from the values of all these individual roots is said to be *naqṣ ʔaw ġard min zāhir al-šayʔ ʔaw ʕan zahiri-hī fa-yabruz* 'a lack or removal on or from the outside of s.th., so that it comes out/shows/appears'.<sup>98</sup> The dependence of the trilaterals on the biliteral nucleus is explained as follows:

a lack or removal from the outside of s.th., an act that makes apparent/lets surface what was hidden, is expressed in 'scab, mange' (*al-ʕarr al-ġarab*,  $\sqrt{ʕRR}$ ), and also in the 'openings of the handles on a jug or the button-holes at the borders of a shirt' ( $\sqrt{ʕRW}$ ), as well as in the 'being stripped/divested' (*taġarrud*) expressed in  $\sqrt{ʕRY}$ , and so also in the 'opening in [the place of the missing eye in] a one-eyed person' or a 'cleft in the mountains' ( $\sqrt{ʕWR}$ ), and likewise in the 'prominence of the middle rib in a leaf or the instep on top of a foot' ( $\sqrt{ʕYR}$ ); [the same notion is contained] also in the sharp eruption of s.th. that was locked up and is now released, or in the 'well that has stored up abundant water and now wells out', accompanied by a vehement outburst ( $\sqrt{ʕRB}$ ), as also 'lameness\limping', i.e. a defect whose impact becomes apparent in walking ( $\sqrt{ʕRĜ}$ ); the *ʕurš* of a foot are the strong veins\ribs protruding on it, or on a leaf ( $\sqrt{ʕRŠ}$ ); *ʕarḍ* 'breadth' is the wide side on which everything is openly visible ( $\sqrt{ʕRD}$ ); the *ʕurf* (crest) of a cock or (mane) of a horse is what juts out from their bodies ( $\sqrt{ʕRF}$ ); and so also  $\sqrt{ʕRM}$  [means] something accumulating and piling up outside\on the surface, where it then peels off, as for example dirt [on a cooking pot] or the bark [on a tree].<sup>99</sup>

97 In *The Arabs in Antiquity*, RETSÖ tends to derive *ʕarab* from Sem  $\sqrt{ʕRB}$  \*'to enter' (A) which Huehnergard, as we saw, regards as forming a unit together with \*'to step in for s.o., pledge' (C). Earlier theories would connect *ʕarab* with the *ʕArabai* ( $\sqrt{ʕRB}$ ) (the Arabs as \*'those who live in the Araba region'), or with the notion of \*'mixing' (D) (the Arabs as \*'mixed company' or, more negatively, a 'swarm'), or with its opposite, the \*'purity and nobility' (F) of descent, or with \*'vehemence, excess' (E) (the Arabs as 'people who eat\devour a lot' [ $\sqrt{ʕRB}$ ] or 'have much sex' [ $\sqrt{ʕRB}$ ]), or (by metathesis) with the 'Hebrews' ( $\sqrt{ʕBR}$ ), by which the Arabs like the Hebrews are essentially seen as \*'the nomads, those who traverse, cross, wander around' or \*'those who come from, or inhabit, the other side of the river, the region beyond'. – For further details cf. entry *ʕarab* in *EtymArab*.

98 Cf. EHRET's pre-PSem \**ʕR* 'to take out, remove' and BOHAS' etymon  $\epsilon \{r,ʕ\} > /ʕr/ > ʕarʕara$  'to remove (the stopper of a bottle to uncork it)'.  
 99 نقص أو جرد من ظاهر الشيء يلزمه ظهور ما كان خافياً ، كما يتمثل في العرّ الجرب - في (عرر) ، وكما في عوربيّ الكوز

والقميص المفرغتي الوسط واقعتين في ظاهر الكوز وحافة القميص - في (عرو)، وكما في التجرد - في (عري)، وكما في فراغ العين العوراء والشق في الجبل - في (عور)، وكما في اختراق العير الورقة والقدم ظاهراً في أعلاهما - في (عير)، وكالانطلاق بجدة

At the same time, all these values are also explained in mimophonic terms. To conclude this presentation with an example also of this feature of Gabal's approach, here is the explanation he gives for  $\sqrt{\text{CRB}}$  \*'sharp eruption of s.th. that was locked up and is now released':

In  $\sqrt{\text{CRB}}$  the *-B* expresses a soft cohesion or accumulation and the *tarkīb* [as such] an internal vehemence\impetuosity, i.e., one that is stable\contained inside of something, [but] whose effect becomes apparent\juts out, despite a gentle build-up\accumulation, i.e., non-discernibility of its traces, as in *ṣarab* 'agility\vitability', where [the internal impetuosity] is not apparent\uncovered, and in the *biʔr ṣaribat*, the well that contains plenty of water.<sup>100</sup>

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مع الخلوص مما يجبس ، وفي البئر العربية كثرة مائها من كثرة ما تختزنه . مع قوة اندفاعه في (عرب)، وكما في الظلع وهو نقص يظهر أثره في المشي في (عرج)، و(غرش) القدم عروق قوية بارزة من القدم والورقة ، و(العرض) جانب واسع ظاهر كالمكشوف . في (عرض). و(عرف) الديك والفرس نافذ من البدن إلى ظاهره . في (عرف)، والمجتمع متراكماً على الظاهر . في (عرم)، وهو يعبر الظاهر منقشراً من غيره وشأنه أن ينقشر كالوسخ والقلفة

وفي (عرب) تعبر الباء عن التلاصق أو التجمع الرخو ، ويعبر التركيب عن حدة ذاتية أي ثابتة في أثناء الشيء يبرز أثرها — 100 مع تجمع لطيف أي عدم مفارقة سفيرة كالعرب النشاط فهو ليس سفراً وكالبئر العربية الكثيرة الماء

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