

The reconstruction of the Berbero-Semitic Adjectives

Marijn van Putten, Leiden University

It has often been remarked upon that of the Afro-Asiatic languages, Berber and Semitic have among the most striking morphological similarities. This much is clear from their similarities of the prefix-conjugation of the verbs; their predisposition towards triradical roots; their broken plural formation and several other morphological aspects.

In recent years, there is a renewed interest in the historical comparison of specifically the Berber and Semitic language families within the Afro-Asiatic phylum. Kossmann & Suchard (2017) present a scenario of the development of the verbal aspect system and Van Putten (2018) shows that Berber and Semitic, besides the feminine ending *-t seem to share additional feminine suffixes *-ay and *-āy that show certain striking morphological and derivational similarities.

This paper expands on the investigation into Berbero-Semitic by examining its adjective formation. It will show that Berber and Semitic have a similar stem formation for adjectival stems and that both the Berber qualitative verbs, which carry the suffix conjugation and the Semitic verbal adjectives can be understood as having developed from an original predicative formation through pronominal suffixes that were originally suffixed to qualitative adjectives. The development can thus summed up as follows:

Proto-Berbero-Semitic:

- Qualitative adjectives are formed with *CaCVC, *CaCVC (and perhaps also CaCVC).
- Predicative adjectives are marked by a suffix conjugation that agrees with the subject in person and gender.
- Deverbal stative and passive adjectives had not yet developed.

Semitic:

1. verb/verbal adjective pairs develop by associating qualitative verbs with the qualitative adjectives.
2. *CaCiC becomes strongly associated as the regular derivational formation of a deverbal adjective.
3. The use of deverbal adjectives is spread to intransitive verbs, and eventually to transitive verbs, giving rise to the Semitic G-stem stative and passive adjectives.

Berber:

1. Berber uses the (mostly) intransitive *-iCCiC verb class to form deadjectival qualitative verbs.
2. After Zenaga Berber splits off, the semantic overlap between the stative sense of the perfective, e.g. *y-āwriy 'it is yellow' and the predicative adjective *wāray 'it is yellow', causes the predicative adjective to be incorporated as a suppletive perfective stem of the verb.

Bibliography:

- Kossmann, Maarten & Benjamin Suchard D. 2018. A reconstruction of the system of verb aspects in proto-Berbero-Semitic. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 81(1). 41–56.
- Van Putten, M. (2018). The feminine endings *-ay and *-āy in Semitic and Berber. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 81(2), 205-225.