CHAPTER 1

Language in Ancient Syria-Palestine and Arabia: an introduction

ROGER D. WOODARD

Pedra
It seems no work of man's creative hand,
By labor wrought as wavering fancy plann'd,
But from the rock as by magic grown,
Eternal, silent, beautiful, alone!
Not virgin-white like the old Doric shrine
Where erst Athena held her rites divine;
Not saintly-grey, like many a minster fane,
That crowns the hill, and consecrates the plain;
But rosy-red as if the blush of dawn
That first beheld them were not yet withdrawn;
The hues of youth upon a brow of woe,
Which man deemed old two thousand years ago.
Match me such marvel save in Eastern clime,
A rose-red city half as old as Time.
John William Burgon

Often rehearsed, sometimes parodied, there remains something hauntingly arresting about John William Burgon's sonnet in praise of Petra, Jordon's "rose-red city," lying at the threshold of the Arabian Peninsula, on the southeastern fringe of ancient Syria-Palestine (the term is used herein to denote the region encompassing the modern political states of Jordon, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria; on the notion of "Syria-Palestine," a geographic construct popularized by W. F. Albright, see Dever 1997). Now home to a Bedouin community, Petra was once the thriving capital city of the ancient Nabataeans, whose kingdom flourished in the late centuries BC and the early centuries AD. Arid Petra's prosperity flowed not only from the desert caravans that passed through the city, located at the nexus of intersecting trade routes, but from its abundant water supply, captured by an elaborate system of Nabataean-engineered ducts, dams, and cisterns. Strabo, the first-century (BC and AD) Greek geographer, knew of just such a Petra: "The chief city of the Nabataeans is called Petra, for it lies in a place that is otherwise smooth and flat, but guarded by encircling rock [Greek πέτρα (*pétra*)]. It is steep and sheer on the outside, but on the inside it possesses no short supply of streaming water, both for the fetching and for irrigating gardens" (*Geography* 16.4.21).

A bit further along, Strabo, in commenting on the Arabian harbor town that he calls *Leuke Kome* (Λευκὴ Κώμη 'White Village'), asserts that "to and from this place camel-caravaners journey safely and easily, going into Petra and out of Petra, with so many people and camels that they are not at all different from an army" (*Geography* 16.4.24).

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These prosperous Nabataeans left behind abundant language evidence, and much of it, but by no means all of it, comes from Petra itself. Linguistic life among the Nabataeans, as throughout most of the ancient Near East, was complex. Some of the nomadic peoples living in the vicinity of Petra were speakers of the Ancient North Arabian language of Hismaic (see Ch. 8, §1.1.2). Ancient South Arabian (see Ch. 7) must have been commonly heard in Petra on the lips of traders traveling with the frankincense-, myrrh-, and nard-laden camel caravans coming north from South Arabia – as were undoubtedly other tongues from even more distant locales. The principal inscriptional language of the Nabataeans themselves was Aramaic, the lingua franca of the time and place. The Nabateans were, however, an Arab people and speakers of Old Arabic (see Ch. 8, §1.1.1): Old Arabic names and forms surface in Nabataean Aramaic inscriptions, and the earliest text written in Old Arabic *language* is written with the Nabataean Aramaic *script*. This Nabatean script is in fact the historical source of the present-day Arabic writing system.

The frenetic complexity of living Petra's linguistic milieu lies placid beneath the stone city's Nabataean Aramaic inscriptional remains. This language, Aramaic, shares at least two traits in common with the other languages that comprise this volume. First, Aramaic and the other languages concerned are members of a single language family – the Semitic family. Second, each of these languages is written using a consonantal script – a writing system in which each symbol represents a single consonant and in which (to generalize slightly) vowels are not explicitly represented.

With regard to the first trait (Semitic family membership), the language profile of Syria-Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula differs somewhat from that of the neighboring regions of Mesopotamia and Northeast Africa (treated in the companion volume, *The Ancient Languages of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Aksum*) where both Semitic and non-Semitic languages were indigenous in antiquity, and many (though not all) of the non-Semitic languages are well attested and well understood (though, we should note, the Egyptian language is Afro-Asiatic and, hence, ultimately related to Semitic; see Appendix 1 at the end of this volume). Syria-Palestine and Arabia, in contrast, are places where only Semitic languages are attested in antiquity, with the possible exception of what has been called Byblic.

Byblic is a language attested by only a small number of inscriptions. In the course of his excavations at the site of the ancient city of Byblos (Biblical Gebal) on the coast of the modern state of Lebanon, the French archeologist Maurice Dunand unearthed inscriptions, on bronze and stone, executed in a previously unknown script. Many of the symbols are of a hieroglyphic nature, some apparently descended from or inspired by characters of the Egyptian hieroglyphic script; the Byblian script thus bears the tag *Pseudo-Hieroglyphic*, or, less commonly, *Proto-Byblic*. The script, judging by the number of identified symbols (114 by Dunand's analysis), is likely syllabic. As early as 1946 (a year after Dunand's publication of the inscriptions), the decipherment of Byblian Pseudo-Hieroglyphic was announced by a distinguished French philologist, Edouard Dhorme, who read the language of the script as Phoenician. Dhorme's proposed decipherment and others which have followed (see Daniels 1996:29–30 for discussion of subsequent attempts) have not been received with confidence and the script and its language still reside in the undeciphered file.

While Syria-Palestine and Arabia might thus be viewed as places of relative linguistic homogeneity (vis-à-vis Mesopotamia and Northeast Africa), within the domain of the Semitic family itself they prove to be linguistically quite heterogeneous regions. The Semitic family is divided fundamentally into an East Semitic and a West Semitic branch; on at least the West Semitic side, further subdivisions can be identified. Each of the several constituent groups of the Semitic family is represented within the geographic space that is Syria-Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula, with the possible exception of the subgroup to which Ge'ez (Ethiopic) belongs, depending upon how one subcategorizes that aspect of the family

(see below). Eblaite, a language of second-millennium BC northern Syria is East Semitic (and is treated together with the Mesopotamian East Semitic Akkadian languages in *WAL* Chapter 8, owing to its close relationship to those languages). Aramaic (Ch. 6) and the Canaanite languages of Phoenician (Ch. 4), Ugaritic (Ch. 2), and Hebrew (Ch. 3), along with lesser-known Canaanite languages (dubbed "Canaanite dialects"), such as Moabite, Ammonite, and Edomite (Ch. 5), are West – specifically Northwest – Semitic languages; all were spoken in Syria-Palestine. The early languages of Arabia are Ancient South Arabian (Ch. 7) and Ancient North Arabian (Ch. 8); their geographic distribution within Arabia is self-evident. Ancient North Arabian is now commonly bracketed with the Northwest Semitic languages to form a Central Semitic group within West Semitic. Some Semitists would include Ancient South Arabian in this same Central cluster; others would identify a separate South Semitic group, within West Semitic, in which South Arabian and Ge'ez – languages separated by the Red Sea – share membership (on Ge'ez, see *WAL* Ch. 14).

In his *De inventoribus rerum* (*On the Invention of Things*), the Italian Renaissance scholar Polydore Vergil examines the question of *Quis primus literas invenerit?* ("Who first invented letters?"), exploring what the Greek and Roman authors had to say on the subject. Invoking the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, Vergil tells his readers (translation here and below is that of Copenhaver 2002):

Diodorus . . . seems to attribute the invention of letters (about their inventor I note great disagreement among the relevant authors) to the Egyptians, writing thus: The Egyptians claim that they discovered letters, the motions of the stars, geometry, and most of the arts. Some maintain that a man named Menon invented them in Egypt. But one must not fail to mention that instead of letters they used pictures of animals which in fact represented mental notions.   (1.6.2)

A bit further along, Vergil rehearses the views of Eusebius, the third-/fourth-century bishop of Caesarea, who himself cites the Jewish historian Eupolemus:

Eusebius believes that Eupolemus actually relates the true origin of letters when he affirms that Moses (who lived long before Cadmus, according to the same Eusebius in his *Chronicle* and in book 10 of the *Preparation for the Gospel*) first taught letters to the Jews, that the Phoenicians got them from the Jews and finally that the Greeks got them from the Phoenicians.   (1.6.6)

While the Egyptians may or may not have invented writing (see the Introduction to *The Ancient Languages of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Aksum*), the consonantal writing systems used to record the ancient Semitic languages of Syria-Palestine and Arabia – the second shared trait noted above – almost certainly have their common origin in the land of the Pharaohs, where their inception was crucially dependent on the Egyptian script (pictorial, as Diodorus claims, though representing sounds, not mere "mental notions"; see *WAL* Ch. 7, §2.1). The ancestor of these various Syro-Palestinian and Arabian writing systems is the so-called Proto-Sinaitic script, likely devised within Egypt by a Semitic people living there during the early second millennium BC (see Darnell *et al.* 2005:90–91; Hamilton 2006). The earliest-known examples of the script come from Wadi el-Hol in Upper Egypt and date to *c.* 1850 BC (see Darnell *et al.* 2005:86–90). Slightly less ancient examples (*c.* 1700 BC) come from Serabit al-Khadem in the Sinai Peninsula – preserved in inscriptions produced by Semitic workers in the turquoise mines of the region. Fundamentally, this script was devised by assigning to pictorial symbols of the Egyptian writing system the value of the consonant that begins the Semitic name for the object symbolized (the so-called "acrophonic principle"; see Ch. 4, §2). On the basis of existing evidence, the creation of the Proto-Sinaitic consonantal script may perhaps be dated to *c.* 2000 BC.

We should mention that very recent work has revealed an earlier use – perhaps *c.* 2400 BC, or earlier still – of Egyptian *symbols* used with Egyptian (rather than Semitic) *phonetic*

values to spell Semitic words. These Semitic-language inscriptions, recording spells used for protection against snakes, were found in the pyramid of the Pharaoh Unas in the Egyptian city of Ṣaqqārah; they would appear to preserve a third-millennium BC form of Northwest Semitic (see Steiner 2007).

A form of the Proto-Sinaitic script is attested in Syria-Palestine as well; its occurrences in the latter region, dating to *c.* the seventeenth century BC and later, are given the name Proto-Canaanite. An offshoot of the Proto-Canaanite script – perhaps quite an early one – gave rise to the Arabian writing systems, both South (see Ch. 7, §2) and North Arabian (see Ch. 8, §2); the South Arabian consonantal script evolved further into the Ethiopic syllabary of Ge'ez (see *WAL* Ch. 14, §2). By the fourteenth century BC, the Proto-Canaanite script had also spawned the writing system that is best attested from the remains of the city of Ugarit on the Syrian coast – unique among Canaanite scripts both in the cuneiform-shape of its symbols and in the addition of three syllabic characters to the script's repertory of consonantal letters (see Ch. 2, §2).

Elsewhere in Syria-Palestine the Proto-Canaanite script continued to evolve, with its curvilinear, pictorial propensities dissolving into more conventionalized linear forms beginning in about the eleventh century BC, and being used to record the Canaanite language of Phoenician (see Ch. 4, §§1–2). It is this Linear Phoenician script that would be acquired for writing Aramaic (*c.* eleventh century BC; see Ch. 6, §2.1) and then Hebrew (*c.* tenth century BC; see Ch. 3, §§1–2) – and not the other way around as Eupolemus, per Eusebius, imagined.

And what of Eusebius' Cadmus, long preceded by Moses? Cadmus is the Phoenician prince of Greek tradition who sailed west through the Mediterranean in search of his abducted sister Europa. The Linear Phoenician consonantal script is the source not only of the Aramaic and Hebrew writing systems, but of the Greek alphabet as well, and Cadmus is one of several figures to whom the Greeks gave the credit for introducing writing to Greece. But that story must await another volume.

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CHAPTER 2

Ugaritic

DENNIS PARDEE

1. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Ugaritic is the only well-attested example known today of the West Semitic languages spoken in the Levantine area in the second millennium BC. The position of Ugaritic among the Semitic languages has been a matter of dispute, in part because of a confusion of categories, namely between literary and linguistic criteria. Literarily, the poetic texts show strong formal (poetic parallelism), lexical, and thematic affinities with Biblical Hebrew poetry. Linguistically, however, Ugaritic is considerably more archaic than any of the well-attested Northwest Semitic languages, and probably descends directly from a Levantine "Amorite" dialect. All indications are that it is not more directly related to East Semitic (Akkadian) than to West Semitic. Within the latter branch, it shares certain important isoglosses with Northwest Semitic as opposed to Arabic (e.g., roots Iw → Iy) and with Canaanite as opposed to Aramaic (e.g., /ḍ/ → /ṣ/). The isoglosses shared with Arabic (e.g., consonantal inventory) represent for the most part features commonly inherited from Proto-Semitic.

Ugaritic is a one-period language, attested only for the last part of the Late Bronze Age, approximately 1300–1190 BC. This is because the writing system in which known Ugaritic texts are inscribed was not invented (at least according to present data) until the early thirteenth century, whereas the city of Ugarit – virtually the only site where Ugaritic texts have been discovered – was destroyed early in the twelfth century. In recent years it has become clearer that the greatest number of texts date from the last few decades of the site and there is, therefore, no basis on which to define a "late" Ugaritic over against the main body of texts (contra Tropper 1993b), for the main body of texts *is* late Ugaritic. The only clear strata of the language are the poetic dialect in which most mythological texts are written and the prose dialect used for everyday communication and administration.

Virtually all Ugaritic texts have been discovered at the site of the ancient city of Ugarit, modern Ras Shamra, excavated by the French more or less continuously since 1929 (Yon 1997). The site had been inhabited since the Neolithic period (Contenson 1992), but texts are presently attested only for the Late Bronze Age; the Middle Bronze levels, where finds of Akkadian texts are to be expected, have hardly been penetrated. In recent years, Ugaritic texts have been discovered at neighboring Ras Ibn Hani, a suburb of Ugarit (Bordreuil *et al.* 1987). From rare mentions of Ugarit in texts from other sites (Mari, el-Amarna), it is clear that the inhabitants of the city were of so-called Amorite stock, for they bear Amorite names and maintained cultural relations with the other Amorite kingdoms of the eighteenth century BC.

The area under the control of Ugarit was limited on the north and east by important natural boundaries (the Jebel al-Aqraᶜ on the north and the Jebel Ansariyeh on the east), with occasional control of areas bordering these boundaries (e.g., southern portions of the

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state of Mukish to the north). The southern boundary was at the southern extremity of the Gebleh Plain, and also varied (e.g., at times including the kingdom of Siyannu). The average territory may have been approximately 2,000 sq. km. (Saadé 1979:33).

There are approximately 50 mythological texts in poetry and some 1,500 texts in prose (including decipherable fragments). The primary types of prose texts are (i) religious (ritual, pantheon, votive); (ii) ominological (astral, malformed births, extispicy); (iii) medical (hippiatric); (iv) epistolary; (v) administrative (contracts, lists of many sorts); and (vi) didactic (abecedaries, exercises).

The prose texts originated largely from the palace administration of the city of Ugarit. The administration was headed by a king, often in vassal position to a king of a larger political entity, particularly the Hittite king in the period documented. Many of the letters emanate directly from the royal family; many of the ritual texts specifically mention the king; most of the administrative texts deal with one aspect or another of royal control of the resources of the kingdom (real estate, taxes, management of royal goods, working of royal raw materials, etc.). The hundred-plus epistolary documents, in particular, reveal the Ugaritic that was in everyday use in the city.

Because they provide a mythical and literary background to the Hebrew Bible, the poetic texts have made Ugarit famous. They are, however, comparatively few in number and the poetic dialect presents many difficulties of interpretation. Several of the tablets bearing the major mythological texts are signed by a scribe named Ilimilku who some now suspect may have lived near the end of the kingdom of Ugarit, rather than nearly a century earlier, the generally accepted view (Pardee 1997:241 note 3). The poems that he and other scribes wrote down had in all likelihood been passed down by oral tradition for centuries.

The nature of the corpus and of the writing system places limits on our ability to describe the language. The number of texts is relatively small and virtually all are damaged to some degree, leaving few long stretches of text for analysis. This is especially true of the prose texts, which were usually written on tablets smaller than those bearing the major mythological texts. There are no prose narrative texts as yet from which to derive a narrative prose syntax. The poetic texts are largely narrative rather than lyrical, but are of little use, because of their archaic form, for projecting a prose syntax. The upshot is that phonology is described largely in terms of graphemes; morphology is to a significant degree reconstructed; reasonably comprehensive descriptions of morphosyntax and of poetic syntax are possible; the prose discourse syntax particular to letters is reasonably well known, while narrative prose syntax is known primarily from narrative sections of letters.

The Ugaritic language was only one of at least eight languages (and/or writing systems) in use at Ugarit. The one other Semitic language attested is Akkadian, the international lingua franca of the time, in which approximately 2,000 texts are written in syllabic cuneiform, primarily epistolary, legal, and administrative. A number of texts have also been found in Sumerian, Hittite (written in standard syllabic cuneiform and in hieroglyphic), Egyptian, Hurrian (written in Ugaritic consonantal cuneiform and in standard syllabic cuneiform), and Cypro-Minoan (not fully deciphered).

2. WRITING SYSTEMS

2.1 The consonant alphabets

The Ugaritic writing system is unique in that it adapts the cuneiform principle (wedges inscribed in clay) to represent graphemes of a consonantal type for the purpose of writing a

West Semitic language. The Semitic consonantal writing system had been devised some two to four centuries before the earliest attested Ugaritic texts, and there is no particular reason to believe that it was not in use at Ugarit before the invention of the Ugaritic cuneiform characters. Indeed, it is not unlikely that the cuneiform system is a representation in clay of a linear alphabet (i.e., one written with ink), though presently available data do not allow a precise description of the origin of the cuneiform alphabet of Ugarit.

At present, three consonantal systems are attested at Ugarit: (i) the *long alphabet*, well attested by abecedaries; (ii) the *short alphabet*, very rarely attested and of uncertain composition (no abecedary has yet been discovered representing this script); (iii) a South Semitic type alphabet, presently attested at Ugarit by a single abecedary (RS 88.2215), showing South Arabian character order (i.e., *h, l, ḥ, m . . .*), very similar to an abecedary discovered in 1933 at Beth-Shemesh in Palestine but only recently deciphered (bibliography in Bordreuil-Pardee 1995b; 2001, text 32).

The long alphabet was clearly intended for writing Ugaritic, for virtually all texts, whether in prose, in poetry, or of a didactic nature, are written in it. The short alphabet shows merging of phonemes (and thus graphemes) on the Phoenician model (e.g., /š/ and /t̠/ written *t̠*), and the few texts in consonantal cuneiform discovered beyond the borders of Ugarit appear to be written in variants of the alphabet script (Dietrich and Loretz 1988; cf. Bordreuil 1981). It seems, therefore, to be an adaptation of the long alphabet to a Phoenician-type consonantal repertory. The language of at least one text written in this system has been identified as Phoenician (Greenstein 1976; Bordreuil 1979). Though the abecedary in South Arabian order consists of the same number of signs as the basic consonantal repertory of the long alphabet, it shows several variant sign forms and was not, therefore, a simple reorganization of the Ugaritic script along South Arabian lines. Because only abecedaries are attested in this version of the script, one can only speculate as to the language that it was used to convey.

Several examples of the (long) consonantal alphabet written out partially or in full (i.e., abecedaries) provide our oldest witnesses to the concept of a repertory of consonants existing in a fixed order. The Ugaritic abecedary consists of twenty-seven symbols denoting the consonants of the language, plus an additional three characters appended to the end. The Ugaritic symbols follow the order customary for the later Northwest Semitic alphabets, which, however, contain only twenty-two signs:

Semitic abecedaries

Northwest Semitic

ʾ	b	g	d	h	w	z	ḥ	ṭ	y	k	l	m	n	s	ʿ	p	ṣ	q	r	š	t

Ugaritic

ả	b	g	ḫ	d	h	w	z	ḥ	ṭ	y	k	š	l	m	ḏ	n	ẓ	s	ʿ	p	ṣ	q	r	t̠	ġ	t

ỉ	ủ	s̀

The five extra signs of Ugaritic (*ḫ, š, ḏ, ẓ, ġ*) are dispersed at apparent random within the order, seemingly suggesting the invention of the Northwest Semitic alphabet for a language, such as Ugaritic, which had a larger consonantal inventory than those of the well-known first-millennium languages.

The origin of the three additional signs (*ỉ, ủ, s̀*) appended to the end of the abecedary is in dispute. The patent similarity of *form* between the Ugaritic symbol transliterated *s̀*, and the *s*-character of the later Northwest Semitic script makes a common origin likely, but the reason for the addition of this sign to the Ugaritic alphabet is unclear (compare Segert

Table 2.1	The Ugaritic cuneiform consonantal script		
Character	Transcription	Character	Transcription
ᚻᚻ	å	ᚷ	d̲
𒌋	b	ᚻᚻᚻ	n
ᛏ	g	ᚻ	ẓ
ᚷ	ḫ	ᚷ	s
𒁹	d	ᚸ	ʿ
ᛖ	h	ᛖ	p
ᛒᚻ	w	ᚿ	ṣ
ᛏ	z	ᚻ	q
ᚷ	ḥ	ᛒᛒ	r
ᚷ	ṭ	ᚷ	t̲
ᚻ	y	ᚷ	ǵ
ᛒ	k	ᛒ	t
ᚷ	š	ᛖ	ỉ
ᛏᛏᛏ	l	𒌋	ủ
ᛏᛏ	m	ᚷ	s̀

1983:201–218; Dietrich and Loretz 1988). In *function*, s̀ is like Ugaritic *s*, but only in certain words – other *s*-words are never written with s̀.

2.2 The syllabic characters

The typification of the Ugaritic script as "consonantal" requires some qualification. The initial character *a̧* and the two "supplemental" characters *ỉ* and *ủ* function as *syllabic* symbols, having the CV value of glottal stop plus the vowel *a*, *i*, or *u*. The reason for the presence of these syllabic *alif* (the name of the Northwest Semitic character for the glottal stop) signs is uncertain (perhaps they were added for the purpose of writing a language such as Akkadian, which permits syllables to begin with vowels; Akkadian texts written with the Ugaritic script have been found, but they are rare). To represent a syllable-final glottal stop, *ỉ* is used. The situation presents difficulties, however, for a syllable-final glottal stop seems sometimes to quiesce, sometimes to be followed by a very brief vowel (compare "secondary opening" in Biblical Hebrew). See Verreet 1983:223–258; another hypothesis is proposed by Tropper 1990b.

3. PHONOLOGY

3.1 Consonants

The Ugaritic consonantal system is typically described in terms of *graphemes* rather than in phonetic terms. By comparison with the later West Semitic languages, and in comparison with other contemporary languages (Akkadian, Egyptian, Hurrian), however, the phonetic system can be approximated (see Tropper 1994a; Gordon 1997):

Ugaritic obstruents

	Bilabial	*Inter-dental*	*Dental*	*Palato-alveolar*	*Velar*	*Pharyngeal*	*Glottal*
Stops							
Voiceless	p		t		k		' (/ʔ/)
Voiced	b		d		g		
Emphatic			ṭ (/t'/)		q (/k'/)		
Fricatives							
Voiceless		ṯ (/θ/)	s	š	ḫ (/x/)	ḥ (/ħ/)	h
Voiced		ḏ (/ð/)	z		ġ (/γ/)	ʿ (/ʕ/)	
Emphatic		ẓ (/ð'/)	ṣ (/s'/)				

The fricative transcribed *š* may be lateral fricative /ɬ/ instead.

In addition, the following sonorants occur:

	Bilabial	*Dental*	*Palatal*
Nasals	m	n	
Liquids		r, l	
Glides	w		y

In comparison with Arabic, Ugaritic had one fewer consonantal phoneme, there being no sign for *ḍ, which had shifted to *ṣ*. The Ugaritic writing system made no distinction between *š* and *ś*. Indeed, there being no evidence from graphic confusions within Ugaritic for the survival of *ś (unlike Hebrew), it appears likely that it had merged with /š/ (Blau 1977:106; Tropper 1994a:29–30).

The graphic system does not correspond precisely to the phonetic one. The symbol *ẓ* is used for etymological *z̄* (/ð'/), but certain words containing etymological *z̄* are regularly written with symbol *ġ* (e.g., *nġr* "guard" from the root *NẒR*), probably expressing a phonetic shift, itself reflective of a dual articulation of *ẓ* (dental and laryngeal; cf. Aramaic /ð'/ ≈ < q > → /ʕ/; Segert 1988). The use of the symbol *ẓ* for /t'/ is not nearly as widespread as has been claimed (see Freilich and Pardee 1984), appearing only in *CTA* 24 and probably in *RIH* 78/14 (Bordreuil and Caquot 1980:352–353; Tropper 1994b; Pardee 2000:859–71).

Etymological /ð/ poses particular problems: it is sometimes written with the character *ḏ*, but usually with *d*. Apparent confusion of /ð/ and /z/ characterizes certain roots: for example, *nḏr*/*nzr* "vow" (both in Ugaritic); *ḏmr*/*zmr* "sing"; *ḏrʿ*/*zrʿ* "seed/arm." Though there is, therefore, certainly evidence for disparities between the graphic and phonetic systems, the situation was probably not as confused as some have thought. Examination of the confusions claimed by Tropper 1994a reveals that the interpretations of the texts, and hence of the phoneto-semantic identifications, are sometimes either dubious or faulty: for example, *šʾr* and *ṯʾr* are not the same word (Tropper 1994a:38) –the first is "flesh, meat," while the second denotes a kinship status; the two terms only become homophonous in Hebrew with the coalescence of /š/ and /θ/.

3.2 Vowels

Because the Ugaritic writing system does not include vowel characters, Ugaritic vocalic phonology represents an uneasy truce between description and reconstruction. It has this feature in common with all of the pre-Christian era Northwest Semitic languages; however, those attested in the first millennium BC either make use of *matres lectionis* ("mothers of reading," consonant characters used to signal the presence of a vowel) and have later

vocalization systems on the basis of which some retrojection can be done (Aramaic, Hebrew), or else have later congeners in which *matres lectionis* are used (late Phoenician, Punic, Neo-Punic). The reconstruction of the Ugaritic vocalic system must rely, therefore, on two types of internal sources: (i) the "extra" *alif* signs in the Ugaritic script (see §2.2); and (ii) Ugaritic words in syllabically written texts. The latter appear in three distinct forms: (i) the so-called polyglot vocabularies (Ugaritic words written in ancient "dictionary" entries); (ii) Ugaritic words in Akkadian texts; and (iii) proper names. For the first two types, see Nougayrol 1968: texts 130–142 and indices pp. 351–352, and Huehnergard 1987; the third type is more difficult to use for reliable results because of the presence of archaic elements in Ugaritic names and of non-Ugaritic names. If one wishes to reconstruct a form or a word where these internal sources are silent, one must rely on comparative Semitic considerations.

The Ugaritic vocalic system is assumed to have consisted of the same six phonemes reconstructed for Proto-Semitic, /a/, /i/, /u/, /ā/, /ī/, /ū/, to which two secondary long vowels were added by monophthongization, /ê/ < */ay/ and /ô/ < */aw/. There is no evidence for secondary lengthening of the short vowels (e.g., /a/ → *qameṣ* in Biblical Hebrew), nor for any shifts of the long vowels (e.g., the "Canaanite shift" /ā/ → /ō/). Apparent anomalous uses of the *alif* signs may indicate the presence of glide vowels following certain of the laryngeal and pharyngeal consonants (Verreet 1983), though these data are susceptible to other interpretations (Tropper 1990b).

4. MORPHOLOGY

4.1 Word formation and word classes

Like the other Semitic languages, Ugaritic morphology is of the inflecting (or fusional) type. The traditional view according to which a Semitic word consists of a consonantal *root + internal vowel(s) + additional morphemes* still has merit today. Though there are clearly nominal roots, which include a vocalic element (e.g., *kalb-* "dog"), and verbal roots in which vocalic variation is the rule and which serve as the basis for nominal derivation (see below), both types of roots generate derivatives. Morphology thus consists of an abstract entity known as a *root*, which exists in concrete form as a set of consonants, usually two or three, which in a nominal root may include a vowel, and which is modified by internal vowel change (*ablaut*), by suffixation, and/or by prefixation. Thus, a Ugaritic dictionary, organized by root (according to the tradition of Semitic-language dictionaries), will begin with the simplest form attested, either a verb or a noun, and will proceed from this simple form through the attested verbal forms (if any such exist), then through entries characterized by suffixation, then through those characterized by prefixation and/or by further suffixation: for example, *MLK* "to rule," *mlk* "king," *mlkt* "queen," **mmlkt* "kingdom."

Though it is not a useless thing to analyze an old West Semitic text according to the grammatical categories commonly used for the modern languages of scholarship, a descriptive analysis of these languages gives three primary categories of words: *nouns* (see §4.2), *verbs* (see §4.4), and *particles* (see §4.6). There is, nonetheless, a significant degree of overlap within these categories (e.g., verbal nouns and particles derived from nouns) and there are clearly definable subcategories (e.g., adjectives and adverbs). The three-division description is nevertheless important, for the elements belonging to overlapping categories and to subcategories are clearly definable according to one or other of the primary categories (e.g., verbal nouns will have nominal morphology along with certain syntactic and lexical