speech, so in the domain of the Semitic tongues we can assign to Arabic only a relative antiquity. It is true that in Arabic very many features are preserved more faithfully than in the cognate languages,—for instance, nearly all the original abundance of consonants, the short vowels in open syllables, particularly in the interior of words, and many grammatical distinctions which in the other lan­guages are more or less obscured. But, on the other hand, Arabic has coined, simply from analogy, a great number of forms which, owing to their extreme simplicity, seem at the first glance to be primitive, but which nevertheless are only modifications of the primitive forms ; whilst per­haps the other Semitic languages exhibit modifications of a different kind. In spite of its great wealth, Arabic is characterized by a certain monotony, which can scarcely have existed from the beginning. Both Hebrew and Aramaic are in many respects more ancient than Arabic. This would no doubt be far more apparent if we knew Hebrew more completely and according to the original pronunciation of its vowels, and if we could discover how Aramaic was pronounced about the 13th century before our era. It must always be borne in mind that we are far more fully and accurately acquainted with Arabic than with the other Semitic languages of antiquity. The opin­ion sometimes maintained by certain over-zealous Assyrio- logists, that Assyrian is the “Sanskrit of the Semitic world,” has not met with the approval even of the Assyrio- logists themselves, and is unworthy of a serious refutation.

A comparative grammar of the Semitic languages must of course be based upon Arabic, but must in every matter of detail take into consideration all the cognate languages, as far as they are known to us. In the reconstruction of the primitive Semitic tongue Hebrew might perhaps afford more assistance than Ethiopic ; but Aramaic, Assyrian, and even the less known and the more modern dialects might furnish valuable materials.

It is not a formidable undertaking to describe in general terms the character of the Semitic mind, as has been done, for example, by Lassen *(Indische Alterthumskunde,* i. 414 sq.) and by Renan in the introduction to his *Histoire des Langues Sémitiques.* But still there is a danger of assuming that the most important characteristics of particu­lar Semitic peoples, especially of the Israelites and of the Arabs, are common to all Semites, and of ascribing to the influence of race certain striking features which are the result of the external conditions of life, and which, under similar circumstances, are also developed among non- Semitic races. And, though it is said, not without reason, that the Semites possess but little talent for political and military organization on a large scale, yet we have in the Phoenicians, especially the Carthaginians, in Hamilcar and in Hannibal, a proof that under altered conditions the Semites are not incapable of distinguishing themselves in these domains. It is a poor evasion to deny that the Phoe­nicians are genuine Semites, since even our scanty sources of information suffice to show that in the matter of reli­gion, which among Semites is of such supreme importance, they bore a close resemblance to the ancient Hebrews and Aramæans. In general descriptions of this kind it is easy to go too far. But to give in general terms a correct idea of the Semitic languages is a task of very much greater difficulty. Renan’s brilliant and most interesting sketch is in many respects open to serious criticism. He cites, for example, as characteristic of the Semitic tongues, that they still retain the practice of expressing psychological pro­cesses by means of distinct imagery. In saying this he is taking scarcely any language but Hebrew into account. But the feature to which he here alludes is owing to the particular stage of intellectual development that had been reached by the Israelites, is in part peculiar to the poetical

style, and is to be found in like manner among wholly different races. That the Semitic languages are far from possessing the fixity which Renan attributes to them we shall see below. But, however this may be, certain gram­matical peculiarities of the Semitic languages—above all, the predominance of triliteral roots—are so marked that it is scarcely possible to doubt whether any language with which we are tolerably well acquainted is or is not Semitic. Only when a Semitic language has been strongly influenced not only in vocabulary but also in grammar by some non- Semitic speech, as is the case with Amharic, can such a doubt be for a moment entertained.

Many attempts have been made, sometimes in a very superficial fashion and sometimes by the use of scientific methods, to establish a relationship between the Semitic languages and the Indo-European. It was very natural to suppose that the tongues of the two races which, with the single exceptions of the Egyptians and the Chinese, have formed and moulded human civilization, who have been near neighbours from the earliest times, and who, moreover, seem to bear a great physical resemblance to one another can be nothing else than two descendants of the same parent speech. But all these endeavours have wholly failed. It is indeed probable that the languages, not only of the Semites and of the Indo-Europeans, but also those of other races, are derived from the same stock, but the separation must have taken place at so remote a period that the changes which these languages underwent in prehistoric times have completely effaced what features they possessed in common; if such features have some­times been preserved, they are no longer recognizable. It must be remembered that it is only in exceptionally favour­able circumstances that cognate languages are so preserved during long periods as to render it possible for scientific analysis to prove their relationship with one another. @@1

On the other hand, the Semitic languages bear so striking a resemblance in some respects to certain lan­guages of northern Africa that we are forced to assume the existence of a tolerably close relationship between the two groups. We allude to the family of languages known in modern times as the “ Hamitic,” and composed of the Egyptian, Berber, Beja (Bishári, &c.), and a number of tongues spoken in Abyssinia and the neighbouring countries (Agaw, Galla, Danḳali, &c.). It is remarkable that some of the most indispensable words in the Semitic vocabulary (as, for instance, “water,” “mouth,” and certain numerals) are found in Hamitic also, and that these words happen to be such as cannot well be derived from triliteral Semitic roots, and are more or less independent of the ordinary grammatical rules. We notice, too, important resem­blances in grammar,—for example, the formation of the feminine by means of a *t* prefixed or affixed, that of the causative by means of *s,* similarity in the suffixes and pre­fixes of the verbal tenses, and, generally, similarity in the personal pronouns, &c. It must be admitted that there is also much disagreement,—for instance, the widest diver­gence in the mass of the vocabulary ; and this applies to the Semitic languages as compared not only with those Hamitic languages that are gradually becoming known to us at the present day but with the Egyptian, of which we possess documents dating from the fourth millennium before the Christian era. The question is here involved in great difficulties. Some isolated resemblances may, improbable as it appears, have been produced by the bor-

@@@1 The following is an instance of the manner in which we may be deceived by isolated cases. “ Six ” is in Hebrew *shesh,* almost exactly like the Sanskrit and modern Persian *shash,* the Latin *sex,* &c. But the Indo-European root is *sweks,* or perhaps even *ksweks,* whereas the Semitic root is *shidth,* so that the resemblance is a purely accidental one, produced by phonetic change.