all the Semitic languages, the termination h *(hú)* as the suffix of the third person singular, is the Sabæan properly speaking. The other, which expresses the causative by *sa* (corresponding to the Shaphel of the Aramæans and others), and for the suffix uses *s* (like the Assyrian *sh*), is the Minaic. To this latter branch belong the numerous South Arabic inscriptions recently found in the north of the Hijaz, near Hejr, where the Minæans must have had a commercial settlement. The difference between the two classes of inscriptions is no doubt ultimately based upon a real divergence of dialect. But the singular manner in which districts containing Sabæan inscriptions and those containing Minaic alternate with one another seems to point in part to a mere hieratic practice of clinging to ancient modes of expression. Indeed it is very probably due to conscious literary conservatism that the language of the inscriptions remains almost entirely unchanged through many centuries. A few inscriptions from districts rather more to the east exhibit certain linguistic peculiar­ities, which, however, may perhaps be explained by the supposition that the writers did not, as a rule, speak this dialect, and therefore were but imperfectly acquainted with it.

As the Sabæan writing seldom indicates the vowels, our knowledge of the language is necessarily very incomplete ; and the unvarying style of the inscriptions excludes a great number of the commonest grammatical forms. Not a single occurrence of the first or second person has yet been detected, with the possible exception of one proper name, in which “ our god ” apparently occurs. But the know­ledge which we already possess amply suffices to prove that Sabæan is closely related to Arabic as we are acquainted with it. The former language possesses the same phonetic elements as the latter, except that it has at least one addi­tional sibilant, which appears to have been lost in Arabic. It possesses the broken plural, a dual form resembling that used in Arabic, &c. It is especially important to notice that Sabæan expresses the idea of indefiniteness by means of an appended *m,* just as Arabic expresses it by means of an *n,* which in all probability is a modification of the former sound. Both in this point and in some others Sabæan appears more primitive than Arabic, as might be expected from the earlier date of its monuments. The article is formed by appending an *n.* In its vocabulary also Sabæan bears a great resemblance to Arabic, although, on the other hand, it often approaches more nearly to the northern Semitic languages in this respect; and it possesses much that is peculiar to itself. @@1

Soon after the Christian era Sabæan civilization began to decline, and completely perished in the wars with the Abyssinians, who several times occupied the country, and in the 6th century remained in possession of it for a con­siderable period. In that age the language of central Arabia was already penetrating into the Sabæan domain. It is further possible that many tribes which dwelt not far to the north of the civilized districts had always spoken dialects resembling central Arabic rather than Sabæan. About the year 600 “ Arabic ” was the language of all Yemen, with the exception perhaps of a few isolated dis­tricts, and this process of assimilation continued in later times. Several centuries after Mohammed learned Yemen­ites were acquainted with the characters of the inscriptions which abounded in their country ; they were also able to decipher the proper names and a small number of Sabæan words the meaning of which was still known to them, but they could no longer understand the inscriptions as a

whole. Being zealous local patriots, they discovered in those inscriptions which they imagined themselves to be capable of deciphering many fabulous stories respecting the glory of the ancient Yemenites.

Farther to the east, in the sea-coast districts of Shihr and Mahra, up to the borders of the barren desert of the interior, and also, we are told, in the island of Socotra, dialects very unlike Arabic are still spoken. Allusions to this fact are found in Arabic writers of the 10th century. These dialects depart widely from the ancient Semitic type, but bear some resemblance to the Sabæan, although they cannot be regarded as actually descended from the latter. One feature which they have in common with Sabæan is the habit of appending an *n* to the imperfect. Like the Ethiopic, and prob­ably also the Sabæan, they use *k* (instead of t) in the terminations of the first person singular and the second person singular and plural of the perfect tense. In the suffixes of the third person there appears, at least in the feminine, an *s,* as in the Minaic. Unfortunately the information which we have hitherto possessed respecting these dialects is meagre and inexact, in part very in­exact.2 It is much to be wished that soon they may all be inves­tigated as carefully as possible, the more so as there is danger in delay, for Arabic is gradually supplanting them.

*Ethiopic..—*In Abyssinia, too, and in the neighbouring countries we find languages which bear a certain resem­blance to Arabic. The Geez or Ethiopic @@ 3 proper, the lan­guage of the ancient kingdom of Aksúm, was reduced to writing at an early date. To judge by the few passages communicated by Salt, the back of the inscription of Aeizanas, king of Aksúm about 350, exhibits writing in the Sabæan language, which appears to prove that the development of the Geez character out of the Sabæan, and the elevation of Geez to the rank of a literary language, must have taken place after the year 350. The oldest monuments of this language which are known with cer­tainty are the two great inscriptions of Tázéná, a heathen king of Aksúm, dating from about 500. Hitherto our acquaintance with these inscriptions has been derived from very imperfect drawings @@4 ; but they amply suffice to show that we have here the same language as that in which the Ethiopic Bible is written, with the very same exact indication of the vowels,—a point in which Ethiopic has an advantage over all other Semitic characters. Who in­troduced this vocalization is unknown. When the above- mentioned inscriptions were made the Bible had probably been already translated into Geez from the Greek, perhaps in part by Jews; for Jews and Christians were at that time actively competing with one another, both in Arabia and in Abyssinia; nor were the former unsuccessful in making proselytes. The missionaries who gave the Bible to the Abyssinians must, at least in some cases, have spoken Aramaic as their mother-tongue, for this alone can explain the fact that in the Ethiopic Bible certain religious conceptions are expressed by Aramaic words. During the following centuries various works were produced by the Abyssinians in this language ; they were all, so far as we are able to judge, of a more or less theological character, almost invariably translations from the Greek. We cannot say with certainty when Geez ceased to be the language of the people, but it was probably about a thousand years ago. From the time when the Abyssinian kingdom was reconstituted, towards the end of the 13th century, by the so-called Solomonian dynasty (which was of southern origin), the language of the court and of the Government was Amharic ; but Geez remained the ecclesiastical and literary language, and Geez literature even showed a certain

@@@1 The literature relating to these inscriptions is widely scattered. Before the Parisian *Corpus* supplies us with the collected materials, we may hope to see the Sabæan grammar of D. H. Müller, who, with Halévy, has lately rendered the greatest services in this department.

@@@2 See especially Maltzan, in *Z.D.M.G.,* vols. xxv. and xxvii.

@@@3 This name is due to the fact that the Abyssinians, under the in­fluence of false erudition, applied the name *klθιoπia* to their own kingdom.

@@@4 The authorities of the library of Frankfort have kindly enabled the present writer to consult Rüppell’s copies, which are more accurate than the lithographs in his book. The English in 1868 did not seize the opportunity to examine thoroughly the antiquities of Aksum, and since then no traveller has taken the trouble to procure accurate copies of these extremely important monuments.