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.

Mahrï and Socotrï.

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 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. Mahrï, from which Shkhaurī forms a distinct dialect, and Socotrī are probably scions of dialects which were related to Sabaean and Minaean; but they have developed on altogether independent lines, and we can scarcely hope that they will render us any great assistance in the interpretation of the inscriptions. They certainly show the southern Semitic type in a most pronounced manner. The strange form of the words is produced, *inter alia,* by all manner of vowel lengthenings and violent mutations of consonants *(e.g.* in Socotrī *s* frequently becomes *h,* a phonetic change otherwise unknown in Semitic philology). Exact investigation will undoubtedly still dis­cover an old acquaintance in many a strange-seeming word. Here and there, however, in Mahrī we discover words which at the first glance we recognize as common in Hebrew or Aramaic, while Arabic knows them either not at all or only in derivative significations. Stifl, a very large part—perhaps the preponderating part—of the Mahrī vocabulary is formed by words which have been borrowed from the Arabic at different periods. Many of them have subsequently undergone drastic phonetic alterations, so that at first they might be taken for genuine Mahrī. In Socotrī, which has been more protected by its insular position, the borrowed Arabic words are rarer, but even here they are not lacking. These languages, how- ever, especially Socotrī, stiff contain a number of words, with regard to which we may well doubt whether they are Semitic at all. The conjecture that Hamites also were once settled in those districts and have left traces of themselves in the language, appears to be favoured by the bodily characteristics of the inhabitants.@@1

Ethiopic.

In Abyssinia, too, and in the neighbouring countries we find languages which bear a certain resemblance to Arabic. The Geez, or Ethiopic@@2 proper, the language of the ancient kingdom of Axūm, was reduced to writing at an early date. At first Sabaean letters were employed. But even the monument of King Aeizanas (c. **A.D.** 350), as is now well established, bears, in addition to the Greek inscription, one in Ethiopian. This, however, is both in Sabaean and in Geez characters, *i.e.* in a systematic transformation of the Sabaean. Here the Geez is still unvocalized; and some few inscriptions besides, without vowel signs, have been discovered. But two great inscriptions of the same king of Axūm—so it appears to be after the newest researches —already have the full vocalization which obtains in the Ethiopian Bible and the remaining literature: the language, too, is identically the same. The indication of the vowels gives Ethiopie an advantage over all other Semitic scripts. By whom it was introduced is un- known. Not long after the time of the inscriptions the Bible was translated into Geez from the Greek, 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 Ethiopie 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 activity in numerous translations from those Arabic and Coptic works which were in use amongst the Christians of Egypt; besides these, original writings were composed by monks and priests, namely, lives of saints, hymns, &c. This literary condition lasted till modern times. The language, which had long become extinct, was by no means invariably written in a pure form: we may often observe, *inter alia,* a servile imitation of Arabic modes of expression. Even in manuscripts of more ancient works we find many linguistic corruptions, which have crept in partly through mere carelessness and ignorance, partly through the influence of the later dialects. On points of detail we

are still sometimes left in doubt, as we possess no manuscripts be­longing to the older period.

Geez is more nearly related to Sabaean than to Arabic, though scarcely to such a degree as we might expect. The historical intercourse between the Sabaeans and the people of Axüm does not, however, prove that those who spoke Geez were simply a colony from Sabaea; the language may be descended from an extinct cognate dialect of south Arabia, or may have arisen from a mingling of several such dialects. And this colonization in Africa probably began much sooner than is usually supposed. In certain respects Geez represents a more modern stage of development than Arabic ; we may cite as instances the loss of some inflexional terminations and of the ancient passive, the change of the aspirated dentals into sibilants, &c. In the manuscripts, especially those of later date, many letters are con­founded, namely, *h,* *h*, and *kh, s* and *sh, ṣ* and *ḍ,* this, however, is no doubt due only to the influence of the modern dialects. To this same influence, and indirectly perhaps to that of the Hamitic languages, we may ascribe the very hard sound now given to certain letters, ***q, t, ṣ,*** and *ḍ,* in the reading of Geez. The last two are at present pronounced something like *ṭs* and *ts* (the German 2). A peculiar advantage possessed by Geez and by all Ethiopie languages is the sharp distinction between the imperfect and the subjunctive: in the former a vowel is inserted after the first radical, a formation which exists also in Mahrî and Socotrï, and—though in another signification—in Assyrian as well. Geez has no definite article, but is very rich in particles. In the ease with which it joins sentences together and in its freedom as to the order of words it resembles Aramaic. The vocabulary is but imperfectly known, as the theological literature, which is for the most part very arid, supplies us with comparatively few expressions that do not occur in the Bible, whereas the more modern works borrow their phraseology in part from the spoken dialects, particularly Amharic. With regard to the voca­bulary, Geez has much in common with the other Semitic tongues, but at the same time possesses many words peculiar to itself; of these a considerable proportion may be of Hamitic origin. However, the grammar shows, at most, some slight and dubious traces of Hamitic influence. Geez seems to have been originally the language of a tribe almost exempt from non-Semitic blood. But we must not suppose that all the inhabitants of the ancient kingdom of Axum were pure Semites. The immigration of the Semites from Arabia was, in all probability, a slow process, beginning at a very ancient period, and under such circumstances there is every reason to assume that they largely intermingled with the aborigines. This opinion seems to be confirmed by anthropological facts.

Tigrē and Tigriña.

Not only in what is property the territory of Axüm (namely, Tigrë, north-eastern Abyssinia), but also in the countries bordering upon it to the north, including the islands of Dahlak, dialects are still spoken which are but more modern forms of the linguistic type clearly exhibited in Geez, viz. that spoken in Tigrë proper and that of the neighbouring countries. In reality, the name of Tigrë belongs to both, and it would be desirable to distinguish them from one another as Northern and Southern Tigrë. But it is the custom to call the northern dialect Tigrē simply, whilst that spoken in Tigrë itself bears the name of Tigrai or, with an Amharic termination, Tigriña. Tigrë bears a somewhat closer resemblance to Geez than does Tigriña, although this latter is spoken in the very home of Geez, for Tigriña has during several centuries been very strongly influenced by Amharic, which has not been the case with Tigrë, which is spoken mostly by nomads. But Tigrë, on the other hand, seems to have been greatly influenced by Hamitic dialects. In late years careful observations on both languages have been made by scholars *in loco,* and we already have a number of printed texts, comprising partly original works, partly translations of Biblical books and so forth. But in this domain our knowledge still stands in great need of being perfected.

Amharic.

Although Tigrë and Tigriña are not free from foreign influences, yet at the core they are purely Semitic. This is not fundamentally the case with Amharic, a language of which the domain extends from the left bank of the Takkazē into regions far to the south. Although by no means the only language spoken in these countries, it always tends to displace those foreign tongues which surround it and with which it is interspersed. We here refer especially to the Agaw dialects. Although Amharic has been driven back by the invasions of the Galla tribes, it has already compensated itself to some extent for this Ioss, as the Yedju and Wollo Gallas, who penetrated into eastern Abyssinia, have adopted it as their language. With the exception, of course, of Arabic, no Semitic tongue is spoken by so large a number of human beings as Amharic. The very fact that the Agaw languages are being gradually, and, as it were, before our own eyes, absorbed by Amharic makes it appear probable that this language must be spoken chiefly by people who are not of Semitic race.@@3 This supposition is confirmed by a study of the language

@@@1 What certain knowledge we possess of Mahrî and Socotrï is almost wholly based on the researches of Vienna scholars. We hope to receive from them still more light on these strange tongues.

@@@2 This name is due to the fact that the Abyssinians, under the influence of false erudition, applied the name **Ai0ιoπiα** to their own kingdom.

@@@3 Only an advanced guard of the Agaw languages, the Bīlīn or dialect of the Bogos, is being similarly absorbed by the Tigrë.