Announcements

- There’s a website for the class now. 
  http://blogs.middlebury.edu/arabiclinguistics/
  (Also, go/arabling)
- Please refer to the website for the most updated syllabus prior to every class.
- I will also post any electronic files for readings, homework assignments, and exams there.

Today’s puzzle

- Let’s do some verb conjugation!

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{عاشتُ} & \quad \text{عشتُ} \\
\text{عشتُ} & \quad \text{عشتُ}
\end{align*}
\]

Today’s agenda

- What do we mean by ‘Arabic’?
- Overview of historical linguistics.
- The history of Arabic as a Semitic language.

So, what’s Arabic, then?

- Where is it spoken?
- What other languages are spoken in the same areas where Arabic is spoken?
- What do we know about the linguistic situation in Arabic-speaking countries?
- What’s a language and what’s a dialect?

Arab League countries
Language and history

So, do you guys speak English?
- Yes!
- And so did Shakespeare:
  A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.
- Translation?
  Not really!

So, do you guys speak English?
- Yes! And so did Chaucer:
  Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
  The droght of March hath perced to the roote.
- Translation?
  When April with its sweet showers
  The drought of March has pierced to the root.

Historical linguistics
- So, you get the obvious point: Languages do change over time, and sometimes in such a way that speakers of a later form of a language are no longer able to understand texts of that same language from an earlier stage.
- Linguists who are interested in the historical development and change of languages over time are known as historical linguists. They are also interested in determining if what are today different languages were at one point one language.

Reconstruction and the comparative method
- The 19th century was the century for the study of historical (aka diachronic) linguistics.
- Historical linguists, aka comparativists, were mainly concerned with “reconstructing” the properties of the parent language of a group of languages that are believed to be genetically related.
- Reconstruction was done by means of the comparative method, whereby earlier forms were determined via the comparison of later forms.
- The earlier forms are called proto-forms, and the earlier language is called a proto-language.
Cognates

• The forms compared were typically words that were believed to have developed from the same ancestral root. They are called **cognates**.

• Consider the following table of Germanic cognates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Danish</th>
<th>Swedish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>Mann</td>
<td>mand</td>
<td>man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>voet</td>
<td>Fuß</td>
<td>fot</td>
<td>fot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bring</td>
<td>brengen</td>
<td>bringen</td>
<td>bringe</td>
<td>bringa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Compare Arabic “non-cognates”:

رجل (man), قَدَم (foot), and حضَرأَ (bring)

The discovery of Proto-Indo-European

• In 1786, Sir William Jones, a British judge and scholar working in India, noted that Sanskrit bore to Greek and Latin “a stronger affinity ... than could possibly have been produced by accident,” and he suggested that the three languages had “sprung from a common source”.

• This common source is what came to be known later as “Proto-Indo-European” (PIE), the parent language of most of the languages spoken today in Europe, Persia, and northern India.

Proto-Semitic

• Applying the comparative method to cognates from Arabic and other languages spoken in the same region led to the postulation of a proto-language from which all the languages descended.

• The language is called **Proto-Semitic**, or simply **Semitic**.

Semitic cognates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Akkadian</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Ge'ez</th>
<th>Mehri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>peace</td>
<td>šala:m</td>
<td>sala:m</td>
<td>šalom</td>
<td>sala:m</td>
<td>salom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name</td>
<td>šum</td>
<td>ism</td>
<td>še:m</td>
<td>sim</td>
<td>ham</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Similarities among Semitic languages:

- tri-consonantal roots; pharyngeal and emphatic sounds, paratactic constructions; verbal systems with prefixes and suffixes.
**Semitic similarities and differences**

- Arabic shares certain linguistic features with South Arabian and Ethiopic, e.g., the broken plural.
  
  رجل – رجال
  
  كتاب – كتب

- In most Semitic languages, there is a b/p distinction, but not in South Semitic languages, including Arabic.
  
- Hebrew paqad (to look after) and Akkadian ppaqadu (to take care of) correspond to Arabic faqada (to lose, look for) and Ge'ez faqada ‘to want, require’.

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**Proto-Semitic family tree**

(from Versteegh 1997:12)

- Arabic, however, shares certain linguistic features with Hebrew, to the exclusion of South Semitic languages.

  - The suffixes of past tense in both Arabic and Hebrew have -t, but in Ethiopic have -k.
  
  Arabic: katab-tu/katab-ta
  
  Hebrew: katavti/katavta
  
  Ethiopic: -ku/-ka

- Arabic and Northwest Semitic languages are also the only Semitic languages to have developed a definite article.

- In both Arabic and Hebrew, the feminine marker -at developed a from without the -t.

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**Proto-Semitic family tree**

(from Versteegh 1997:14)

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**Map of the Geographical Distribution of the South Semitic Languages**

- Map showing the geographical distribution of the South Semitic languages.
Beyond Semitic

- Some scholars have also proposed that the Semitic language family is actually part of a larger language family that included several of the languages of Africa, in addition to Semitic languages.
- The group is called *Afro-asiatic* (and sometimes Hamito-Semitic).
- It includes several language sub-families: Semitic, Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Omotic, and Ancient Egyptian (Coptic).

**Afro-asiatic languages map**

Afro-asiatic languages map

Arabic over time

- Early Arabic: Little is known.
- Classical Arabic: 6th AD to probably 10th AD.
- Middle Arabic: 11th to the 18th centuries.
- Modern Arabic: End of the 18th century to today, during which Modern Standard Arabic developed.

**Next class agenda**

- Main debate: Was Classical Arabic a language spoken by ordinary Arabs, or was it only an 'elevated diction' language used only in specific contexts?
- Also, the spread of Arabic and the development of the regional dialects.
- Continue reading Holes’ *Chapter 1*.

**References**

- Ethnologue: [The Semitic language family tree on Ethnologue](http://www.ethnologue.com).  
  