

## THE PRESENT-FUTURE IN AMORITE<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The present note discusses the problem of a paradigmatic present-future form in the Amorite language. By employing the continuum model of language evolution and dialectal classification and using the comparative, typological and empirical evidence, the authors conclude that Amorite must have had a systematic category with the meaning of a dynamic present-future. They argue that, out of the two possible candidates – i.e., *yaqattal* and *yaqtulu* – it is the former that is the most plausible. This conclusion, in turns, strengthens the hypothesis whereby the reduplicative *yaqattal* was a Proto-Semitic paradigmatic present-future category.

### INTRODUCTION

According to the most studies, Amorite is classified as a Northwest Semitic (NWS) language<sup>2</sup> (for instance, Knudsen 1991:867, Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:410,

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<sup>2</sup> In our genetic classification of the Semitic languages, we follow the model posited by Hetzron (1976), modified lately by various scholars (e.g., Porkhomovsky 1998) and discussed in Huehnergard (2005a:165) and Huehnergard & Rubin (2011:263-264). This model states that Semitic languages can be divided into two main sub-groups: East Semitic (ES; Akkadian and Eblaite) and West Semitic (the remaining idioms). West Semitic (WS) includes three main branches: Modern South Arabic (MSA), Ethiopian and Central Semitic. Central Semitic (SC), in turn, splits in three main branches: Arabic, Old South Arabian (OSA) and Northwest Semitic (Ugaritic, Canaanite and Aramaic; cf. Huehnergard 2005a:162). Alternatively, Huehnergard (2005a:192) groups NWS and Arabic as North Central Semitic (NCS) and regards Old South Arabian (Sabeen, Minean and Qatabanian) as

Huehnergard 2008:577 and Streck 2011:452-453). Within this view, the idiom constitutes the oldest language, known up to date, of the NWS branch – to be exact, the evidence locates it in the period spanning from the latter half of the third millennium until approximately 1200 B.C.E.<sup>3</sup> The idiom is attested to in Mesopotamian cuneiform texts and mainly concerns the geographic area of the Middle Euphrates valley and Syrian steps (Streck 2011:453).

The Amorite language, as it is known to us, is almost exclusively attested to in proper and, in particular, personal names that appear in Akkadian (Akk.) and Sumerian texts (Knudsen 2004:317; Streck 2011:452-453). More precisely, the Amorite corpus consists of some 7 000 antroponyms and a few toponyms. In total, they amass circa 11 600 words. Additionally, scholars distinguish approximately 90 entities, which are loan words into Akkadian and Sumerian (Streck 2000:82-128, 135, 2010:39 and 2011:453). It is important to note that no Amorite text has been discovered thus far.<sup>4</sup>

Given the scarcity and peculiarity of the Amorite corpora, various aspects of its grammar still remain unrevealed to scholars. One such aspect involves the verbal system and, more concretely, the existence or not of the present-future *yaqattal*.<sup>5</sup> The present note aims at casting some new light on the issue of the Amorite *yaqattal* from the comparative, typological, and empirical perspective and within the continuum model of language evolution and dialectal classification defended by cognitive linguistics and grammaticalisation theory. In order to accomplish this objective, the study will be organized in the following manner. First, the Amorite verbal system will be presented and the problem of a present-future category introduced. Next, the continuum model of language evolution and dialectal classification – necessary for an

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South Central Semitic (SCS).

<sup>3</sup> Some scholars, however, regard the classification of Amorite as a NWS tongue as still problematic and uncertain or as an “open question” (Kerr 2002:48).

<sup>4</sup> The notion of the “Amorite language” can already be encountered in Akkadian cuneiform texts. The Akkadians, themselves, viewed this idiom as independent and clearly distinct from their own mother tongue (Streck 2000:76-80; 2011:453; Charpin and Ziegler 2007).

<sup>5</sup> The label “present-future” employed in this paper is a simplification. As indicated by the Akk. *iparras*, the semantic potential of the gram is far more complex and also includes the sense of an imperfective (durative and progressive) past. Therefore the term “imperfective” is sometimes employed (cf. Kouwenberg 2011:88; see also Diakonoff 1991-1992:85-88). Additionally, the formation conveys certain modal functions (for a review of the values of the *yaqattal* morphology in Semitic, see Kienast 2001, Kouwenberg 2011 and Andrason 2013:272-292).

adequate comprehension of this article – will be explained. After that, the most likely proposal of the candidate for the paradigmatic present-future category will be formulated. Finally, the main conclusions will be presented and their implications for the Proto-Semitic (PS) verbal organization described.

It should be emphasized that the contribution of this note primarily lies in the linguistic methodology employed and its logical argumentation. This methodology largely draws from semantics and cognitive theories. Given that, as already explained, Amorite is attested to exclusively in the onomasticon, the semantic and theoretical arguments presented here should not be understood as decisive but rather as complementary. Being aware of these limitations, we believe, however, that the present study shows that cognitive linguistics and modern theories of language evolution and dialectology can cast some new light on the issue of the Amorite present-future tense and open new possibilities for future research.

## THE PROBLEM OF THE AMORITE VERBAL SYSTEM

The evidence available thus far suggests the following structure of the Amorite tense-taxis-aspect-mood (TTAM)<sup>6</sup> verbal system. The language certainly possessed the “preterite” *yaqtul*, the “stative” *qatal(a)*<sup>7</sup> and the modal form *laqtul*. The *yaqtul* corresponds to the Akk. *iprus* and Biblical Hebrew (BH) *-yiqtol* in the *wayyiqtol* and offers the meaning of a past and (present) perfect (Huffmon 1965:63-77; Knudsen 1991:878-879; Streck 2011:455-456).<sup>8</sup> The *qatal(a)* – a construction that is related to the Akk. *parsāku*, on the one hand, and to the NWS (and CS in general) suffix conjugation *qatala*, on the other – is mainly an intransitive and de-transitive stative (Huffmon 1965:87-94; Streck 2011:456-457). In limited instances, this formation provides transitive and more dynamic uses. These values, although still rather infrequent, bring the Amorite *qatal(a)* construction a little closer to the NWS (and CS) perfect (Huffmon 1965:89-90; cf. also Streck 2011:567 and his comment on the

<sup>6</sup> We use the term TTAM instead of TAM (tense-aspect-mood) due to the fact that the category of perfect (taxis) is viewed as an independent taxonomical type, distinct from the aspect and tense.

<sup>7</sup> The “stative” in the 3rd person singular masculine seems to provide examples both with *a* and without it (cf. Huffmon 1965:91). Hence the notation *qatal(a)*.

<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the system included the imperative (*qitvl*), active and passive participles (*qātil-* and *qatūl-*, respectively) and verbal adjective *qatVI-* / *qatl-* (Streck 2011:455).

penetration of the *qatal(a)* into the WS onomastica). The *laqtul* is employed as a precativ or jussiv and is an evident counterpart of the Akk. *liprus* and NWS modal (“short”) *yiqtol* (Huffmon 1965:78-81, Knudsen 1991:879; Streck 2011:456).

Besides the abovementioned formations, which are well attested and commonly accepted, some scholars assume the existence of the *yaqattal* type gram – a present (or, more correctly, present-future) reduplicative form, cognate to the Akk. *iparras*. This possibility was deduced from a reduced group of anthroponyms, such as *Ya-ba-an-ni-DINGIR*, *Ya-ma-at-ti-DINGIR* or *Ya-na-ab-bi-DINGIR* (von Soden 1985; Lipiński 2001:347; Kerr 2002:136). Nevertheless, most linguists are reluctant in recognizing the *yaqattal* as a genuine member of the Amorite verbal system (Huffmon 1965; Knudsen 1991; Streck 2011). They maintain that the evidence is non-conclusive (Knudsen 1991:879; Streck 2011:456; cf. also Kienast 2001:310) because all the possible cases of the *yaqattal* are ambiguous and can be interpreted as examples of the D *yaqtul* (Huffmon 1965:82-86). Since the existence of the *yaqattal* cannot be clearly posited, the form is usually not included in the models of the Amorite verbal system (see, for instance, Streck 2011:465). Additionally, it is important to note that the available data does not enable scholars to view the form *yaqtulu*, a present-future gram that is typically found in NWS languages (cf. the “long” *yiqtol* in Biblical Hebrew from an earlier *\*yaqtulu*) as a component of the Amorite verbal organization.

As a result, scholars – with the exception of Kerr (2002:47), as far as we know – usually design a rather peculiar picture of the Amorite verbal system. If the modal formation *laqtul* is kept apart, the language possessed only two tense-taxis-aspect (TTA) forms: the dynamic past and perfect *yaqtul* and the stative *qatal(a)*. Inversely – and especially in models that exclude the *yaqattal* – Amorite lacks the category of a present (or an imperfective type gram, including progressive and continuous) and a future. This clearly clashes with the situation attested to in other members of the NWS branch and in the entire Semitic family in which the existence of a present-future (or alike) gram is not only commonly attested but also fundamental for the respective systems (cf. Kienast 2001). Ancient Semitic languages document two main types of a present-future gram: the *yaqattal* and *yaqtulu*. The selection between them contributes to a dialectal classification of a branch or a tongue. The *yaqattal* is found in the ES branch (cf. the Akk. *iparras*), although it is also available in the Ethiopic and MSA groups (Kienast 2001, Lipiński 2001:347, Kogan 2012:316-319; see also section 4, below). Moreover, as a residual category, it is sometimes claimed to have existed in

Qumran and Old Biblical Hebrew (Meyer 1958:126-126; Rössler 1961:450; Mettinger 1973:69-73; see also Vernet 2013:156-157, 160).<sup>9</sup> However, contrary to the theories proposed at the beginning of the Ugaritic studies (cf. Goetze 1938), it is nowadays accepted that the *yaqattal* type gram was missing in Ugaritic and Amarna glosses (Fenton 1970; Tropper 2012:461-462; cf. already Gordon 1965:67-68).<sup>10</sup> The *yaqtulu* regularly appears in CS and NWS languages (cf. the long *yiqtol* in Biblical Hebrew and *yaqtulu* in Arabic [Ar.]; see Huehnergard 2005a:164-165, 191).

It should likewise be noted that the Amorite TTA system, as it is presented in most grammatical studies, seems to be implausible from a typological perspective. First, if Amorite exclusively possessed the two above-mentioned grams (i.e., “the preterite” *yaqtul* and “stative” *qatal(a)*) with the values traditionally ascribed to them, it would only cover the semantic domains of the perfect, past and (present or past) stative. Inversely, the system would lack any means to express the ideas corresponding to a dynamic present and future. This is cognitively extremely unlikely, if not impossible.<sup>11</sup> Second, it is imaginable to hypothesize that one of the two attested formations could also function as a dynamic present-future. Since the *qatal(a)* is most frequently restricted to the stative (and thus non-dynamic) uses, the only gram that is genuinely active is the *yaqtul*. However, the postulation whereby a gram that is typically employed as a perfect and past can also be a paradigmatic and regular expression of the present and future is typologically weak. To be precise, such a system would consist of only one dynamic form that would be able to convey all the temporal, taxis and aspectual nuances; merely speaking, it would do all the types of semantic TTA “jobs” that are available in languages worldwide. This organization would be extremely dysfunctional.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> It should however be noted that nowadays the theory of the existence of the *yaqattal* in Biblical Hebrew is usually rejected, being regarded as old and inadequate (cf. Waltke & O’Connor 1990:467-468; Lipiński 2001:350; in contra, see Vernet 2013:157, 160).

<sup>10</sup> See, however, Lipiński (2001:347-348), who still maintains the “old” view (compare also Vernet 2013:157-158).

<sup>11</sup> Observe, for instance, that all the well-known (e.g., exhaustively analysed and abundant in corpora) Semitic, Indo-European and Bantu languages have means to convey the sense of a dynamic present and future tense (Hewson & Bubenik 1997; Hetzron 1997; Nurse 2008; Weninger 2011). From a typological perspective, we are unaware of a language that would be unable to express present and future actions and activities. In such a language, speakers would not be able to talk about present and future at all – cognitively, this is an impossible situation for humans for whom the present temporal sphere is the most relevant and the nearest (Heine & Kuteva 2007; Kuryłowicz 1972).

<sup>12</sup> Note again that no Semitic, Indo-European or Bantu language, that has been exhaustively

Additionally, the hypothesis whereby the *yaqtul* could express the meaning of an active present and future in Amorite is unlikely given its behaviour in other Semitic languages.<sup>13</sup> The Semitic morphology *yaqtul* (cf. Akk. *iprus*, BH *way-yiqtol* or Ar. *lam(ma)-yaqtul*) is a form whose semantic nucleus includes the senses of a perfect (present perfect and pluperfect) and past (Andrason 2011 and 2013:173-207; for a review of the semantic potential of the *yaqtul* see also Kienast 2001). Certainly, this form can also provide the values of a present or future – all of them, however, are rare (non-prototypical and non-paradigmatic) being strongly marked by the context (Andrason 2013:175-177, 182). For instance, they may be found in certain subordinated clauses or when derived from a few stative verbs (compare the use of the *iprus* in subordinated clauses with the value of a future perfect as well as the stative present value of the verbs *edûm* and *išûm*; Huehnergard 2005b:282, 438; Andrason 2013:194-196). Thus, although the *yaqtul* morphology can sometimes be used as a type of present or future, it is never employed as a regular and prototypical expression of the present-future. As already mentioned, the paradigmatic and systematic present-futures in Semitic are the *yaqattal* or *yaqtulu*.

As a result, given the typological and comparative background, the Amorite language is expected to possess some type of a present-future gram and the best possible candidates are forms that would correspond to the two main constructions that function as presents and futures in the Semitic languages: the *yaqattal* and *yaqtulu*.

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studied, possesses one gram only that would be a paradigmatic and prototypical past, present and future at once (Hewson & Bubenik 1997; Hetzron 1997; Nurse 2008; Weninger 2011). There is no verbal system, known to us (with the exception of early pidgins; cf. Mühlhäusler 1986:135-137, 142, 145-147; Holm 1988:4-5), that would consist exclusively of one dynamic verbal form – a past-present-future with no traces of other constructions with which it could interact at the system's level. Verbal systems typically have some central grams (two, three or more) and a set of peripheral constructions. Such organizations are complex and regularly specialise their components in the manner that each one of them is a paradigmatic and prototypical expression of a tense, aspect, taxis or mood. Of course, there are languages where one and the same gram can be used as a past, present and future (e.g., an imperfective aspect). However, it typically interacts with another construction (usually, a perfective aspect), delivering a system where only a part of the past, present and future activities can be conveyed by it, i.e., those that are imperfective (cf. Hewson & Bubenik 1997 and Dahl 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Of course, no one has proposed that the Amorite “preterite” *yaqtul* could be used as a dynamic present-future. In this paragraph, we merely discuss a possibility that the Amorite TTA organization consisted exclusively of two forms (the *yaqtul* and *qatal(a)*) and that one of them would have to be employed as a paradigmatic dynamic present-future.

## A MORE REALISTIC METHOD FOR LANGUAGE EVOLUTION AND DIALECTAL CLASSIFICATION

As mentioned above, the existence of the *yaqattal* or *yaqtul* is one of the most important dialectal features that differentiate various Semitic branches and intervene in the internal classification of the Semitic languages. Typically, the selection between the two alternatives is conceived as mutually exclusive. If an idiom has a present-future gram of the *yaqtulu* type, it does not (or should not) possess a present-future form of the *yaqattal* type and vice versa. In this manner, the Semitic family splits into independent branches and the model of a dialectal tree can clearly be designed. As a result, the fact that a tongue includes the *yaqattal* or *yaqtulu* conjugation determines its classification. However, typological studies, modern dialectology, cognitive linguistics and grammaticalisation theory – together – portray the linguistic change and language evolution in a quite distinct manner. The development of a grammatical entity, the evolution of a given sphere of a language, and the growth of a family of tongues are all complex and diffuse phenomena which, instead of corresponding to a discrete and categorical modification of a state *x* into a different state *y*, constitute a continuum of various transitional or fuzzy stages. These intermediate phases are evolutionary steps that connect one prototype (state *x*) to another prototype (stage *y*) via several states where properties of *x* and *y* mix and intervene in different proportions. This continuum representation is especially common in tracing developments of verbal constructions such as aspects, tenses or moods which are *per se* highly complex grammatical objects (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994; Hopper & Traugott 2003; Croft 2003; Croft & Cruse 2004; Bybee 2010; Andrason 2013).

For example, the fact that the suffix conjugation functions either as a non-verbal stative or, on the contrary, as a verbal dynamic perfect/past is commonly used in differentiating the ES and CS branches. In the ES group, the *parsāku* is assumed to be a stative category located outside the verbal system, while in the CS, under the shape of *qatal(a)*, it is a central verbal gram with the sense of a perfect and/or past. Accordingly, the properties of the suffix conjugation play an important role in the classification of Semitic languages and splitting the entire family in independent and – as they appear on diagrams – isolated branches. However, rather than a discrete split, the behaviour of the suffix conjugation should be modelled as a continuum of stages that relate two poles of a cline: the non-verbal resultative proper stative and fully verbalized remote narrative past tense. Both extremes constitute the initial and final

points of the so-called resultative path – a typological model of the grammatical evolution of forms that crosslinguistically function as resultatives, statives, perfects and pasts.<sup>14</sup> The properties of the prefix conjugation in the Semitic languages document various stages of this path, from the initial one to the most advanced one, instead of two extreme situations only. This representation shares various methodological principles with the so-called wave model used in language evolution and dialectology which portrays a given diachronic and/or dialectal variation as an input modification and its posterior generalization and spread to different strata and layers of the language or language use (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994; Andrason 2013; cf. Huehnergard & Rubin 2011:265-267).

Transferring this general linguistic discussion to the topic of the present paper, one may state the following: branches of the Semitic family and individual languages may display states that can be placed on the continuum which links two extremes: the state *x* and *y*. In the state *x*, the *yaqattal* is used as a paradigmatic present-future, while the *yaqtulu* does not exist or, at least, is used for different peripheral functions. In the state *y*, the *yaqtulu* is employed as a paradigmatic present-future while the *yaqattal* is missing. The state *x* would characterize the ES prototype and the ES verbal system in general. The state *y* would be more representative of the CS and NWS prototype and verbal systems available in this part of the Semitic family. This representation allows us to admit that a given branch and some of its members can mingle properties of the state *x* and *y*, thus providing characteristics that belong to the two prototypes and are representative to the two verbal systems, although certainly, in different proportions. Accordingly, there may be languages that possess both the *yaqattal* and *yaqtulu* (cf. Andrason 2013; Vernet 2013:150; for a similar view in the explanation of linguistic diversity in Old Biblical Hebrew, see Notarius 2013).

This signifies that from the methodological point of view defended by modern linguistic theories, the claim whereby a member of the NWS branch (such as Amorite) cannot have the *yaqattal* type gram or cannot offer certain ES traits – just because it is a NWS tongue – is not only circular but also untenable. It is more probable that the NWS group displays a phylum of verbal systems with a distinct degree of NWS prototypicality. One of the scales of this prototypicality could precisely concern the

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<sup>14</sup> The resultative paths states that non-verbal (or not fully verbal) resultative proper inputs develop into dynamic verbal grams acquiring new senses in the following order: present perfect, perfective, and definite past (for a more detailed discussion of this evolutionary scenario, see Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994; Andrason 2010, 2011 and 2013).



choice between the *yaqattal* (non-prototypical NWS trait) or the *yaqtulu* (prototypical NWS trait). As explained above, three main states of this continuum are possible: the language possesses the *yaqattal* type gram, the form *yaqtulu*, or the two grams are employed in different functions and characterized by a distinct degree of frequency.

## THE MOST PLAUSIBLE HYPOTHESIS

In order to determine which one of the two possible formations is a more plausible present-future gram in Amorite, we shall again analyse certain properties of the verbal system of this language. Although Amorite is classified as a NWS language, it is remarkable that its TTAM verbal system profoundly resembles the organization of the Akkadian and East Semitic verb:

- The use of the simple *yaqtul* morphology with the sense of the perfect and past is fully comparable with the semantic potential of the Akk. *iprus* and ES *yaqtul* in general. In other NWS languages, the semantic domain of a dynamic perfect (present perfect and pluperfect) and/or past is more commonly conveyed by the *qatala*. Employing a dynamic terminology, one can state that, in the Amorite and East Semitic languages, the *yaqtul* conveys the meaning that occupies advanced stages on the resultative cline. In the remaining NWS tongues, however, this place has been invaded by the *qatala*, which in Amorite and ES languages still remained in its initial evolutionary phase. If the non-modal *yaqtul* is preserved in the NWS branch, it is typically used as a peripheral category, being commonly limited to very specific contexts and/or accompanied by morphological extensions (see next paragraph; cf. Andrason 2010, 2011 and 2013).
- The morphological properties of the Amorite *yaqtul* relate it closely to its ES homologue. While in the ES group, the “preterite” *yaqtul* was used “on its own” with no need of an additional marking, in various WS idioms it was reshaped by incorporating an extra element. For example, the successor of the CS *yaqtul* in Biblical Hebrew is extended by the entity *wa-* with the reduplication of preformative consonant, delivering the form *wayyiqtol*. In Arabic, the “preterite” *yaqtul* formation is limited to negative contexts and occurs when preceded by the particles *lam* and *lammā*. In various other tongues it was entirely lost, being substituted by the *qatala* and/or its successors (cf. Rabbinic Hebrew; Pérez Fernández 1992). In general, in NWS languages, the use of the simple (i.e.,

morphologically non-extended) *yaqtul* with the force similar to that of the *iprus* is perceived as an archaism (see, for instance, an exceptional use of the simple *yiqtol* in Biblical Hebrew with a past value [Waltke & O'Connor 1990]; cf. also the use of the *yaqtul* in Ugaritic, which appears in poetry while in prose the *qatala* is preferred [Sivan 2001:99 and Tropper 2012:697]).

- The Amorite *qatal(a)* is principally a stative category which contrasts with the dynamic character of its morphological counterparts in other NWS and CS languages. From a grammaticalisation perspective, it is a closer relative to the Akk. *parsāku* than to the NWS and CS *qatala*. Just as in the ES branch, the suffix form can be modelled as spanning initial portions of the resultative path and grammaticalisation cline in general. In other NWS languages, the suffix conjugation greatly advanced on the path becoming a paradigmatic dynamic perfect or past fully integrated into the verbal system. However, slight traces of a further grammaticalisation process of the Amorite *qatal(a)* may also be observed (cf. footnote 15, below). Consequently, as far as the precise location on the resultative cline is concerned, the Amorite *qatal(a)* occupies a slightly more advanced stage in comparison with the Akk. gram but still far from well-developed phases attested to by CS and NWS tongues.
- The Amorite modal *yaqtul* is typically marked by the prefix *l-* just like in the Akk. *liprus*. In various CS and NWS languages, for example in Biblical Hebrew and in Arabic, the independent morphology of the short *yiqtol* is regularly modal and does not need to (although may) be marked by modal particles. It is the “preterite” *yaqtul* that requires an additional marking (cf. the BH *wac-* and Ar. *lam(mā)*).

In sum, the Amorite verbal system is relatively similar to the ES organization, as is documented by Akkadian, and shows a relative degree of conservatism.<sup>15</sup> Using the continuum representation, it can be figuratively imagined as an intermediate state (one of various possible ones) between the ES prototype and the NWS prototype. Consequently, in accordance with the reasoning implied by the path or wave model of diachronic evolution and dialectal classification, the following can be postulated: since the Akkadian organization includes the *iparras* as its exemplary paradigmatic present-future gram, it is *more likely* that Amorite – whose verbal system displays various ES

<sup>15</sup> Of course, the two systems also display certain dissimilarities which connect Amorite to the other members of the NWS branch. For instance, there is no perfect of the *iptaras* type and the *qatal(a)* – besides being typically stative just like the Akkadian *parsāku* – also provides less common transitive dynamic uses.

characteristics – also had a morphological cognate to the *iparras*, viz. the *yaqattal* instead of the *yaqtulu* that was common in the NWS and CS branch. If the two coexisted in the language, which is also a possible scenario since this would correspond to an intermediate stage between the two poles of the prototypicality, the following situation would seem to be the most plausible, given the similarity with the Akkadian verbal system: the *yaqattal* should be more prototypical (it should be more frequent, being especially characteristic of the written language), while the *yaqtulu* should be less prototypical (it should be less common, probably being restricted to the spoken language).

Moreover, the attested evidence seems to favour the *yaqattal* hypothesis rather than its alternative, the *yaqtulu* proposal (Lipiński 2001; Vernet 2013). Namely, while certain verbal forms may possibly be explained as instances of the *yaqattal* – being also conceivably the cases of the D *yaqtul* (see again *Ya-ba-an-ni-DINGIR*, *Ya-ma-at-ti-DINGIR* or *Ya-na-ab-bi-DINGIR*) – no forms of the *yaqtulu* (even only possible ones) have been reported thus far. In other words, the ambiguity of certain examples does not rule out the possibility of their interpretation as *yaqattal* (cf. Huffmon 1965; von Soden 1985), while no traces of the *yaqtulu* can be observed. This fact seems to reinforce the *yaqattal* hypothesis (for a similar observation, see Kerr 2002:47-48).<sup>16</sup> This also suggests that if Amorite had both the *yaqattal* and *yaqtulu*, the former would be more formal (it can conceivably be identified), while the latter (if it existed) was more likely a spoken phenomenon (hence, unattested in the onomasticon; cf. the previous paragraph).

Consequently, both the structure of the Amorite verbal system itself and its proximity to Akkadian, on the one hand, and the empirical evidence available currently (i.e., the possible cases of the *yaqattal*), on the other, arguably favour the theory whereby Amorite had a present-future gram of the *yaqattal* type rather than of the *yaqtulu* type.

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<sup>16</sup> Certainly, the lack of the conclusive evidence gives the impression that the *yaqattal* type gram in Amorite was a “phantom”. This is true, to an extent, because our study is concerned with the plausibility – and hence probability – of a determined grammatical situation without having access to unambiguous linguistic proofs. What we are trying to show here is that the *yaqattal* seems, however, to be a significantly lesser “phantom” than the *yaqtulu*.

## CONCLUSION

Our study proposes that, in light of certain comparative and typological facts, Amorite necessitates a (dynamic) present-future gram. The nature of the Amorite verbal system and the available evidence jointly suggest that the best candidate for a prototypical present-future category is a form of the *yaqattal* type, an Amorite homologue of the Akk. *iparras*. In a hypothetical case where the two grams coexisted in the language, the *yaqattal* would be more prototypical. In total, the Amorite seems to be placed closer to the *yaqattal* pole of the *yaqattal-yaqtulu* prototypicality cline.

The above mentioned conclusion may additionally have some bearings on the question of the antiquity and Proto-Semitic (PS) status of the present-future *yaqattal*. In general terms, there are two principal solutions to the original present-future gram in Proto-Semitic (Kouwenberg 2011; Kogan 2012). One theory argues that the PS language had the *\*yaqattal* as its paradigmatic present-future (or imperfective). This form typically survived in the ES group (as the Akk. *iparras*) as well as in the Ethiopian (Ge'ez *yaqattəl*) and Modern South Arabian (Mehri) branches.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it may also have persisted – although as a residual category – in the oldest NWS languages such as Qumran and Old Biblical Hebrew, as well as, possibly in Samaritan Hebrew (Meyer 1958:126-126; Rössler 1961:450; Vernet 2013). This implies that the NWS and Arabic *\*yaqtulu* was a CS innovation, most likely built on the pattern *yaqtul* and the subordinated marker *u* (Rössler 1950; Hetzron 1976; Diakonoff 1991-1992:88; Kienast 2001; Lipiński 2001; Rubin 2005; Huehnergard 2005a:164-165, 191; Huehnergard & Rubin 2011:270; Vernet 2013; cf. already Haupt 1878). The other view argues the opposite. It is the *yaqtulu* that is the old PS present-future that was preserved in the CS branch (i.e., in the NWS languages and in Arabic) but was substituted in ES (Akkadian) – and possibly in Ethiopic and MSA languages – by the reduplicative morphology of the type *yaqattal* (Rundgren 1959; Kuryłowicz 1972; Kouwenberg 2011:95-109; see also Zaborski 2005). In addition, one may identify a third position – a type of a compromise – according to which there were two imperfective forms in Proto-Semitic: *\*yaqatulu* and *\*yaqattal* (cf. Rössler 1950; Kuryłowicz 1962).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion and criticism of the relation between the Akk. *iparras* and the Ethiopic *yaqattəl*, see Kouwenberg (2011:117-125). See also Kogan (2012:316-319).

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion of the problem and the arguments against and in favour of the two main positions, see Kouwenberg (2011:97-100) and Kogan (2012:314-319).

With these distinctions made, the results of our study suggest the following: if the *yaqattal* is a central component of the Amorite verbal system, the oldest known NWS language – which also represents the earliest state of the NWS verbal organization –, it is likely that the common ancestor of the NWS idioms would also have a dynamic present-future of the Akkadian type instead of the *yaqtulu*, commonly found in posterior NWS tongues (cf. Kerr 2002:48). Accordingly, the hypothesis whereby the *yaqattal* gram is an original PS construction that was preserved in the ES branch and (with certain possible modifications) in the Ethiopian and MSA families, but was instead lost in the CS and NWS groups gains some important support. In other words, the fact that Amorite might most likely have included in its verbal repertoire the *yaqattal* as a paradigmatic present-future implies a remote antiquity of this reduplicative present-future: given that the form is likely shared by the ES languages and by the earliest NWS idiom (being possible available in Ethiopic and MSA), it is highly plausible that its origin as a systematic expression of the present and future is Proto-Semitic. Inversely, the use of the *yaqtulu* as a paradigmatic present-future would correspond to a posterior innovation. This signifies contrariwise that one of the essential arguments against the PS present-future *\*yaqattal* – the fact that the Akk. *iparras* fails to possess cognates in CS languages (NWS and Arabic; cf. Kouwenberg 2011:99) – is reversed. Since there is a NWS cognate of the ES *iparras*, it is reasonable to postulate its Proto-Semitic origin.

Additionally, the still disputed examples of the *yaqattal* in Qumran and Biblical Hebrew (nowadays usually regarded as unconvincing and/or highly dubious) could gain in strength and probability. They would witness a residual use of the *yaqattal* form in posterior NWS languages, which corresponds to a terminal state of the grammatical life of this construction. To conclude, the verbal systems of NWS languages – from the oldest to the modern ones – could be arranged into a continuum of the *yaqattal* – *yaqtulu* prototypicality: (state *a*) the *yaqattal* is a paradigmatic present-future while the *yaqtulu* is missing or peripheral, being, for example, limited to a colloquial language (Amorite; cf. Vernet 2013) > (state *b*) the *yaqtulu* is a paradigmatic present-future while the *yaqattal* is peripheral (tentatively, Qumran and Old Biblical Hebrew) > (state *c*) the *yaqtulu* is a paradigmatic present-future, the *yaqattal* is lost and new grams of the imperfective type are possibly derived (Classical Arabic).<sup>19</sup> This would demonstrate a diffuse progression from one diachronic and

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<sup>19</sup> A further stage (state *d*) can correspond to the use of these novel constructions as

dialectal prototype to another.

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paradigmatic present or present-future grams and the restriction of the *yaqtulu* to some peripheral functions (cf. modern Arabic dialects and Modern Hebrew). Finally (state *e*), the *yaqtulu* could be entirely lost being replaced by new imperfective formations. It must be noted that these states are conceptual abstractions and simplifications, and various, more fragmentary, intermediate states could be posited.

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