Amorite: A Northwest Semitic language?

Alexander Andrason & Juan-Pablo Vita

University of Stellenbosch & CSIC-ILC in Madrid

The present paper discusses the problem of the classification of Amorite within the Semitic family. After testing the Amorite corpus of personal names and toponyms for the presence of sixty features that have been proposed as characteristic of the Central, Northwest and East Semitic branches – and viewed as necessary conditions for establishing the relation of a language's belonging to one of these subgroups – the authors conclude that the existing data fail to be conclusive. Since, on the one hand, the available data can link Amorite to the Central, Northwest and East Semitic branches and, on the other hand, as various pieces of evidence are either missing or their interpretation is uncertain, the definite answer to the question of the genetic filiation of Amorite seems to remain beyond the reach of Semitic linguistics. This, in turn, implies that several theories concerning the place of Amorite among Semitic languages should be taken with more caution.

1 Introduction

1.1 Amorite and its genetic filiation

Amorite is a peculiar language in the Semitic family. As it is known to us, Amorite is almost entirely deduced from some 11.600 proper names that appear in Akkadian and Sumerian cuneiform texts.[1] In contrast, texts that could straightforwardly attest grammatical features of the Amorite language have not been discovered thus far.[2] The Akkadian material from which Amorite is reconstructed was written in the period of time that spans from the latter half of the third millennium to approximately 1200 BCE (Knudsen 2004:317, Streck 2011a:452-453). Apart from Amorite proper names, scholars distinguish approximately 90 items that are regarded as Amorite loanwords into Akkadian and Sumerian (Streck 2000:82-125). Moreover, certain non-Akkadian traits, which are mainly found in Akkadian of Mari, are interpreted as resulting from the influence of (a) local, arguably Amorite, dialect(s) (Streck 2000:82-128, 135, 2010:39, 2011a:453). All these types of the Amorite evidence mainly concern the geographic area of the Middle Euphrates valley and Syrian steps (Streck 2011a:453).

[1] Most of such proper nouns are names of persons. Names referring to places are significantly less common.

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As far as the genetic filiation of Amorite is concerned, Amorite is usually treated as a separate language and classified as the oldest and the most archaic member of the Northwest Semitic branch, known currently (Huffmon 1965, Knudsen 1991:867, Zadok 1993, Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:410, Huehnergard 2008b:577, Streck 2011a:452-453 and Andrason & Vita 2014).

In his influential publication from 1965, Herbert B. Huffmon regards Amorite as a member of the Northwest Semitic branch. The language seemingly shows certain grammatical, lexical and cultural features that link it to Northwest Semitic or, at least, differentiate it from Akkadian. Among such distinctive properties, the most relevant are the presence of the prefix *ya-* in the prefix conjugation, a possible change of the 1st person pronominal suffix in the *qatal(a)* from *-ku* to *-tu*, and the lexeme *ḫabd-* from **ʿabd* 'slave' (Huffmon 1965:1-18, 91, 189).

Probably, the most detailed analysis of the position of Amorite within the Semitic family has been developed by Ebbe E. Knudsen (1991 and 2004). After studying similarities between Amorite and Northwest Semitic languages, Knudsen concludes that Amorite is an archaic Northwest Semitic dialect. In his article from 1991 dedicated to proper names of persons, Knudsen identifies two features that, in his view, are particularity relevant for the proposed classification: the shift of *w* to *y* at the beginning of a word and the presence of the (oblique) construct plural (Knudsen 1991:871, 877, 882).[3] Furthermore, Knudsen distinguishes eighteen additional traits that, according to him, are important for the determination of the genetic filiation of Amorite. He is, however, aware that only one of them (i.e. the merger of *s* and *š* into *ś*, which is distinct from *š* that arose from an earlier *t̠*; ibid. 875) corresponds to an innovation shared with other Northwest Semitic languages.[4] In the 2004 study, Knudsen focuses his analyses on the Amorite vocabulary that emerges both from anthroponyms and possible Amorite loanwords in Old Babylonian. In this paper, the principal relevance is given to lexicon, which, in Knudsen's opinion, is more decisive than genuine grammatical traits in establishing the genetic filiation of languages (see also Knudsen 1991:882 and Kogan 2015:5-10, 14-16). Having analysed the Amorite vocabulary, Knudsen concludes that "lexical innovations shared with Northwest Semitic languages by far outnumber those shared with other varieties of Semitic" (Knudsen 2004:326). Fir Knudsen, this lexical correspondence with Northwest Semitic constitutes for Knudsen a decisive proof of the classification of Amorite as a Northwest Semitic language (ibid.:328).[5]

In 1991 and 1993, Ran Zadok defended the idea that Amorite – understood by him as a cluster of dialects – is a Northwest Semitic language. However, in contrast to Knudsen, Zadok argues that apart from being related to Ugaritic, which could be "the westernmost

[3] In the later study from 2004, Knudsen views only the first trait as really important (Knudsen 2004:324).

[4] Indeed, the other features identified by this scholar also existed in Akkadian (e.g. the case inflection and the preterite or *yaqtul* form of the verb) and/or Proto-Semitic (e.g. pronouns *anā* and *anāku*). Some of them can likewise constitute areal phenomena or independent, typologically common, developments. It should be noted that we preserve the notation adopted by Knudsen, where the symbol *ś* does not imply any specific phonetic value but only indicates that this sibilant is distinct from *s* (Knudsen 1991:875).

[5] Knudsen, in fact, proposes a more precise position of Amorite within the Northwest Semitic branch, classifying it as more closely related to Canaanite (Hebrew) than to Ugaritic and Aramaic (ibid.:329).

dialect of 'Amorite' type" (Zadok 1993:513),[6] Amorite may likewise constitute the origin of the Aramaic language (Zadok 1993:315-317; see also Zadok 1991).

More recently, in two important studies, Michael P. Streck (2011a:452 and 2013:320) maintains the opinion that Amorite is the oldest Northwest Semitic language. With respect to the Amorite onomasticon, Streck distinguishes various traits that, in his view, link this system to Northwest Semitic, for instance, the afore-mentioned change of word initial *w* to *y* and the participle *qāl-* of verb II-*y/w* (e.g. *šāb-el* 'The god is one who turns the face'; Streck 2011a:457). As for the Amorite loan words, Streck (2011b:367) observes that these lexemes preserve Proto-Semitic guttural consonants and, like the onomasticon, bear witness to the shift of initial *w* to *y*. All of this arguably differentiates the underlying language (presumably Amorite) from Akkadian and East Semitic.

Alexander Andrason and Juan-Pablo Vita (2014:21) *grosso modo* maintain the traditional view of the genetic filiation of Amorite as a Northwest Semitic language. However, studying the possibility of the existence of *yaqattal* in Amorite and analysing the properties of other verbal formations, Andrason & Vita conclude that the whole Amorite verbal system seems to differ from other Northwest Semitic verbal systems. In contrast to those languages, it offers a relative degree of conservatism and a palpable East Semitic character. Andrason and Vita (2014) also recognise that the behaviour of the Amorite verb diverges in certain aspects from the properties of verbs in Akkadian. Consequently, using a continuum representation, they imagine the situation found in Amorite as an intermediate state (one of various possible ones) between the East Semitic prototype and the Northwest prototype (Andrason & Vita 2014:30-31; see also below in this section).

Even though the prevalent opinion is that Amorite is a Northwest Semitic language (Canaanite or not), some scholars regard this classification as still problematic. In a detailed study dedicated to the Amorite phonology, Giorgio Buccellati (1997:11-12, 30) views this language as closely related to Akkadian. Specifically, Amorite and Akkadian are defined as sociolects of the same language spoken in Syro-Mesopotamia in the third millennium BCE. Amorite is a rural, more archaic dialect, while Akkadian constitutes an urban, more innovative dialect. As a result, Amorite belongs to the same branch of Semitic languages as Akkadian, that is, the East Semitic family. A similar position against the Northwest theory has recently been maintained by Jean-Marie Durand (2012:165-172, 186-189) and Joaquín Sanmartín (2014). Duran claims that Akkadian and the phenomenon which is referred to by most scholars as Amorite, are in fact dialects of one family and not two different languages or linguistic families. To be exact, Amorite would be a popular variety (local vernacular or *patois*) of Akkadian and, therefore, as one could logically infer, an East Semitic language. According to Sanmartín (2014), Amorite was a dialect cluster composed of several varieties (ibid.:496). It constituted a collection of local dialects, idiolects and sociolects of the standardised Akkadian (ibid.:497). In his view, this situation would have its modern parallel in the relationship between Standard Arabic and Arabic dialects (ibid.).[7]

[6] Concerning a possible genetic relation between Amorite and Ugaritic, see also Pardee (2012:21-25).

[7] Apart from the afore-mentioned studies, the genetic status of Amorite has not received a detailed analysis as far as we know. In the remaining cases where the classification of Amorite is proposed, scholars usually limit themselves to one paragraph in which they mention a few features justifying, in their opinion, the filiation of Amorite to the Northwest Semitic branch. For example, von Soden (1985:307) classifies Amorite as an early

Durand (2012) and Sanmartín (2014) not only cast doubts on the traditional classification of the language emerging from some proper names from Mari. They also question its very status as an independent linguistic system, a language. To be exact, according to Durand, Amorite was not a language on its own – [*une*] *langue perdue à redécouvrir* (Durand 2012:189) – but a group of local Akkadian varieties, much less prestigious than the normative Akkadian from the city of Ešnunna, a lingua franca of the time. This view is, in fact, not restricted to scholars arguing for the East Semitic classification of Amorite. For instance, Huehnergard (1992:159) exposes a view which is similar to the position expressed by Durand (2012). Huehnergard argues that Amorite emerging from anthroponyms and toponyms is not a linguistic unity, or a coherent single language, but rather a collection of non-Akkadian Semitic varieties (not only dialects but also languages), which can belong to West, Central and Northwest Semitic branches. A complex and heterogeneous linguistic status of Amorite (both chronologically and geographically) has also been recognised by Knudsen (1991:883) and Zadok (1993:513).[8]

1.2 "Amorite problems" and methodology of research

From the treatment of Amorite in the scholarly literature discussed above, two problems emerge: one concerns the classification of Amorite in the Semitic family and the other is related to its status as an independent linguistic system. As far as the former issue is concerned, most scholars view Amorite as a Northwest Semitic language. However, voices have been raised openly (some of them quite recently) questioning this view (Buccellati 1997, Durand 2012, Sanmartín 2014) and/or expressing some reservation towards its acceptance (Kerr 2002 and Andrason & Vita 2014).[9] The other problem concerns the very

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Canaanite language, even though he argues for the existence of the *yaqattal* in Amorite just like in Akkadian. Gordon (1997) enumerates several traits that connect Amorite to the Northwest Semitic family, among which the most important seem to be the Northwest Semitic shift of initial *w* to *y* and the Canaanite shift of *ā* to *ō*. He also notices the presence of the feminine ending *-ā* besides *-t*, as well as the word order where the verb precedes the subject, which match the usage in Northwest Semitic and contravene the situation in Akkadian (Gordon 1997:102-104). However, Gordon (1997:103) also notes that Barth's Law fails to operate in Amorite. The definition of Amorite as Northwest Semitic may likewise be found in Lipiński (2001:52), who classifies this language, together with Ugaritic, as a North Semitic language. In a similar vein, Hasselbach and Huehnergard (2007:410) define Amorite as a member of the Northwest Semitic family. According to these linguists, this classification is granted by the presence of two Northwest Semitic features: the use of *y* instead of *w* in the initial position and the use of the prefix *ya-* in the preterite instead of *i*-as in Akkadian. Lastly, the view that Amorite is the earliest Northwest Semitic language is defended by Gzella (2011:427), for whom this classification is justified by the assimilation of *n* to the following consonant in addition to the traits identified by Hasselbach and Huehnergard (2007), i.e. the change of word-initial **w* to *y* and the presence of the preformative *ya-* in the prefix conjugation instead of Akkadian *i-*. In another important study dedicated to Amorite, Tropper (2000:733) views Amorite as *certainly* a member of the West Semitic family, more specifically as an old Northwest Semitic language. This view is also maintained by Waltisberg (2011:19-20), who classifies Amorite as the oldest Northwest Semitic language. For the history of the research on Amorite, see also Streck (2000:131-134).

[8] Streck, who views Amorite as a separate language, fully recognises that Amorite is not "entirely homogenous" (2013:313), but rather a chronological and dialectal complex. Responding to Durand's arguments, Streck refers to the fact that the Babylonian "had a clear concept of Akkadian and Amorite as two distinct languages" (Streck 2013:318) and that Amorite "was the object of learning" (ibid.:319). Furthermore, Streck (2013: 320) correctly observes that the presence of the past tense *yaqtul* in Amorite does not justify the classification of Amorite as a type of Akkadian, as claimed by Durand (2012:186).

[9] Kerr (2002:138) regards the filiation of Amorite as an "open question".

status of Amorite as a language or dialect. While recognising its chronological and geographic diversity, the majority of linguists have treated Amorite as a single linguistic unit – a language, a dialect, or a dialect cluster. By contrast, others suggest that Amorite is not a coherent linguistic entity, but rather an invention of linguists, a phantom, emerging from a collection of names that reflect various West, Central, Northwest and even East Semitic languages. In such a case, "it is difficult to say anything meaningful about phonology, morphology, or classification" (Huehnergard 1992:159) of Amorite, as there was never an Amorite linguistic system as such. This issue seems to be of extreme relevance, as it is related to the very sense of the entire Amorite scholarship.

The present paper will principally focus on the first problem, that is to say, on the classification of Amorite. It aims at re-analysing the genetic status of Amorite by systematically testing it for the presence or absence of features that have currently been proposed as characterising Central, Northwest and East Semitic branches. This is motived by two further reasons, apart from the above-mentioned lack of agreement. First, although the publications discussed above in Section 1.1. constitute important and valuable contributions to the determination of the filiation of Amorite, the very problem of the dialectal position of this language has rarely constituted the main object of study (see Buccellati 1997, Knudsen 1991, 2004). Scholars have rather mentioned the issue of classification when discussing other, no less important, linguistic properties of Amorite. Second, in recent years, influential studies dedicated to the question of the genetic filiation of Semitic languages have been published and, as a result, bestowed linguists with sophisticated instruments for determining the membership of a language within the Semitic family. Various features underlying the classification and subgrouping of Semitic languages have been posited. Traits that are shared innovations have been differentiated from those that stem from areal spreading or individual, typologically common, developments (Huehnergard 2005a, 2006, forthcoming, Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007, Huehnergard & Rubin 2011, Weninger 2011, Kogan 2015).

As a foundation of our research we will use a series of articles written by John Huehnergard himself (2005a, 2006, 2007, 2008a) or in collaboration with other scholars (Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007) in which various Central, West and East Semitic features are determined. Other features important for the classification are extracted from studies published by Faber (1997), Gzella (2011), Kouwenberg (2011), and Kogan (2011, 2015). We are fully aware of the fact that various features (if not most of them) are still controversial and, thus, their validity for the sub-grouping of Semitic languages may be questioned (for a critical assessment of Huenhergard's features of Central Semitic consult, for instance, Kogan 2015:130-152). Comparative Semitics is a developing science and several diachronic theories and classification models have been proposed. However, with all possible caution and reservations acknowledged, the aforementioned works offer, in our opinion, the most accurate and comprehensive treatment of genetic relationships in Semitic languages. Therefore, they constitute the best "tools" available so far that can be used to test the dialectal division in branches and sub-groups of Semitic languages. They ensure the most principled approach for determining the position of Amorite within the Semitic family.

In this study, and in accordance with the great part of grammatical tradition (Huffmon 1965, Knudsen 1991, 2004, Gordon 1997, Lipiński 2001, Streck 2000, 2011a, Hasselbach &

Huehnergard 2007, and Andrason & Vita 2014), we will treat Amorite as if it were a consistent, single, linguistic and grammatical entity – a language. We are, however, conscious of the temporal and topographical extent of the corpus underlying this study and its variety. Therefore, this unification and/or "singlisation" of Amorite only constitutes a temporary and hypothetic approximation.

Additionally, in our examination of Amorite understood in this manner, we will re-use the data already available in works produced previously, in particular those written by Huffmon (1965), Knudsen (1991, 2004) and Streck (2000, 2011a).[10]

Moreover, the Amorite language analysed in this study will be narrowed to the linguistic system emerging from personal names – anthroponyms (names of persons) and toponyms (names of places). Inversely, it will not include possible Amorite borrowings and alleged Amorite traits recoverable mainly from Akkadian texts from Mari. As has already been explained at the beginning of this article, the Amorite evidence is quite heterogeneous. It emerges from proper names, on the one hand, and from the non-Akkadian component of the letters of Mari, on the other. This heterogeneity and two "sources" of Amorite as it is known to us can reflect two distinct, although possibly connected, language systems, under the assumption that Amorite is a language analysable as a single entity (Gzella 2011:427 and Streck 2013).[11] Given that the two types of Amorite seem to be quite distinct from the methodological, chronological and textual (genre) perspective, and that they do not necessarily reflect the same linguistic phenomenon (although they can be connected, being able to overlap, to a certain degree), they may necessitate distinct treatments and analyses. Since the vast majority of the Amorite material is constituted by proper names, the present paper will focus on this variety.

The four approximations adopted in this paper explained above (i.e. the determination of the features that should constitute the foundation of the dialectal test(s), the analysis of the Amorite corpus as a unitary system, the limitation of the evidence to the corpora analysed previously and to personal names only) constitute the limitations, in our view unavoidable, of this research. An additional, fifth problem underlying this study is the assessment of the Amorite evidence. As will be evident from the discussion in Section 3, the reconstruction of

[10] Streck's study is mainly based on the database of Amorite names developed by Gelb (1980).

[11] First, as noted by Gzella (2011) and Streck (2013), the language reflected by the personal names may be much older than the "spoken" Amorite that transpires in the lexical borrowings and non-Akkadian features in Akkadian cuneiform texts. Proper names – be they anthroponyms or toponyms – typically reflect the stage of the language that is older than a contemporaneous variety, written and, especially, the spoken one. Accordingly, while Amorite loanwords and other possible Amorite traits found in Akkadian probably attest to the contemporaneous state of Amorite, the Amorite proper names may echo its older stage. However, it must clearly be stated that although personal names tend to reflect a more archaic state of grammar and lexicon than the "normal" spoken language, they can also contain traits typical of the living language of the time (especially with respect to phonology), even being able to witness innovations. (Therefore, Streck (2000 and 2002:118-120) argues that Amorite proper names can be used to hypothesise properties of the "normal" language spoken by people at that time.) Second, while Amorite of the anthroponyms and toponyms is empirically evident – the proper names more or less unequivocally testify the features of the Amorite language – the other source of Amorite relies on deduction. That is, the non-Akkadian features present in Akkadian varieties (for instance, in Mari-Akkadian) are filtered out and interpreted as an influence of the underlying substrate, in this case, Amorite. And third, the two sources differ in their genre. One source contains proper names in which grammatical forms and features are typically fossilised or idiomatically fixed, while the other corresponds to genres where more spontaneous linguistic production takes place (e.g. letters).

Amorite synchronic grammar from proper names is extremely difficult if not impossible – grammatical elements are used without context, readings are commonly ambiguous, and properties found in nouns of persons or places do not have to coincide with those of the underlying language.

2 Testing Amorite as a West/Central/Northwest Semitic language

In this section, the features that have been identified as distinguishing Central, Northwest and East Semitic languages will be "tested" against the available Amorite evidence. First, we will study if Amorite offers traits identified by John Huehnergard (2005a) as typical of Central Semitic languages (section 2.1). Thereafter, we will examine whether Amorite exhibits further Central Semitic features that, although not included by Huehnergard (2005a) in his article, have been mentioned by Huehnergard elsewhere and/or by other scholars (cf. section 2.2). Subsequently, the Amorite data will be analysed in respect to their compatibility with Northwest Semitic features (cf. section 2.3). Lastly, we will verify whether Amorite complies with traits that are exemplary of East Semitic languages (cf. section 2.4).[12]

2.1 Genetic features of Central Semitic according to Huehnergard (2005a)

The most important features that differentiate Central Semitic languages from East Semitic languages are so-called shared innovations. In fact, according to the principle of the comparative-diachronic approach, only such features are relevant for genetic classification because they are most probably inherited from a common ancestor, where they first arose (Faber 1997:4). In this case, it would be Proto-Central Semitic – a language from which all the Central Semitic languages descend. On the contrary, traits that may exist (or have existed) in a group of languages, but that have either been retained or emerged due to areal spreading, parallel, and typologically common innovations, are arguably insignificant (or at least less significant) for genetic subgrouping. Following Huehnergard (2005a), this section will enumerate all possible shared innovations of Central Semitic languages and verify whether Amorite behaves as do other members of the Central Semitic branch.[13]

The most relevant class of shared innovations consists of features that can be viewed as Common Semitic "with some confidence" (Huehnergard 2005a:191). With a high degree of likelihood, such traits came to existence in Proto-Central Semitic and, therefore, have been inherited by all the Central Semitic daughter languages. It is possible to distinguish eight traits of this type:

(1) The first feature concerns phonetics. The Barth-Ginsberg law is a phonetic rule that distinguishes Proto-Central Semitic from other Semitic languages. This principle governs the quality of the vowel in the prefix of the prefix conjugation in the G stem and states

[12] This last type of testing is negative. To be exact, if Amorite is a Central, Northwest or, in general, a West Semitic language, it is expected not to offer traits that characterise members of the East Semitic branch.

[13] In our view, up to the present time, this study constitutes the most detailed treatment of Central Semitic dialectology. For a critique of some of the features identified by Huehnergard (2005a) as innovations, see Kogan (2015:130-152).

the following: the vowel of the prefix is *a* if the theme-vowel is *u* or *i*, but it is *i* if the theme-vowel is *a* (Huehnergard 2005a:180-191; see also Faber 1997:8, Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:417, Huehnergard & Rubin 2011:271, Hasselbach 2013:258-259). In some Central Semitic languages, for instance in Arabic, this original vocalic alternation has subsequently been eliminated as the vowel *a* was levelled in the entire paradigm (Huehnergard forthcoming:11).[14]

The Barth-Ginsberg law does not operate in Amorite and the prefix consistently exhibits the form in *ya-* as illustrated by proper nouns such as *Ya-ás-ma-aḫ-*^{d}IM '(the god) Haddu has listened' (Huffmon 1965:63-64, Gordon 1997:103 and Streck 2000:190). However, this fact can be interpreted in two ways: the law never operated or it did originally operate but, like in Classical Arabic, the prefix vowel *a* was levelled due to analogical processes. This latter proposal seems to be less likely given the remote age of the Amorite corpus.

(2) The most relevant features that distinguish Central Semitic languages from East Semitic languages concern the verbal system. Proto-Central Semitic restructured the Proto-Semitic tense-aspect-mood system (originally composed of present-future *yaqattal* and perfective/past *yaqtul*) by creating a new system composed of *yaqtulu* (imperfective), *qatala* (active perfect and/or past), *yaqtula* (subjunctive/volitive) and the energetic form (Huehnergard 2005a:165, 191). Probably, the most important of the changes affecting the verbal system was the replacement of Proto-Semitic *yaqattal* (cf. *iparras* in Akkadian) by a "long" (i.e. ending in *u*) prefix conjugation *yaqtulu* as a paradigmatic imperfective (and/or present-future) form (Huehnergard 2005a:164-165; see also Hetzron 1976, Faber 1997:8, Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:416, Huehnergard & Rubin 2011:270-271, Weninger 2011:162, Huehnergard forthcoming:6, 9; *contra*, see Zaborski 1991, 2005, Kouwenberg 2010:95-109, see also Kogan 2015).

As far as Central Semitic *yaqtulu* is concerned, the available data do not enable scholars to view this form as a component of the Amorite verbal system.[15] On the other hand, however, some linguists assume the possibility of the existence of the successor of Proto-Semitic *yaqattal* in Amorite with a present-future function, cognate to Akkadian *iparras*. This possibility has been deduced from a limited number 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 and Kerr 2002:136). Nevertheless, all such possible cases of *yaqattal* can also be interpreted as examples of *yaqtul* of the D stem (Streck 2000, 2011a; see also Huffmon 1965:82-86). Therefore, most scholars are reluctant in recognising *yaqattal* as an element of the Amorite verbal system, arguing that the evidence is inconclusive (Huffmon 1965, Knudsen 1991:879 and Streck 2000, 2011a; cf. also Kienast 2001:310). The form is usually not included in the models of the Amorite verbal

[14] According to Kogan (2015:151), the status of the Barth-Ginsberg law as a CS innovation is ambiguous. Certain Akkadian forms suggest that the phenomenon may be more ancient.

[15] As suggested by an anonymous reviewer, the absence of **yaqtulu* could also be explained by the loss of a final short vowel. In such a case, some seeming *yaqtul* forms would actually be reflexes of **yaqtulu* (see an analogous development in North-West Semitic, e.g. in Biblical Hebrew). Even though possible, this view contrasts with the typical interpretation of *yaqtul* forms in the Amorite corpus as successors of PS **yaqtul*.

system (see, for instance, Streck 2011a:465). However, even though the evidence is far from being conclusive, the *yaqattal* hypothesis seems to be more plausible (or likely) than the *yaqtulu* hypothesis. That is to say, while certain verbal forms may possibly be explained as instances of *yaqattal* – being also conceivably the cases of D *yaqtul* – no forms of *yaqtulu* (even only possible ones) have been detected so far. In other words, whereas the available data do not enable scholars to view the form *yaqtulu* (a present-future gram that is typically found in Northwest languages) as a component of the Amorite verbal organisation, the ambiguity of certain examples does not rule out the possibility of their interpretation as *yaqattal* (von Soden 1985, Kerr 2002:47-48; see also Huffmon 1965:82-86, Lipiński 2001 and Vernet 2013; for a detailed analysis of the *yaqattal* in Amorite, see Andrason & Vita 2014).[16]

(3) The use of the suffix conjugation *qatala* as an active perfect and/or past instead of its original use as a stative or passive resultative is another trait distinguishing Central Semitic languages. Most likely, this development took place in Proto-West (or even Proto-Central) Semitic (Huehnergard 2005a:163, 165, 191; see also Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:416, Huehnergard & Rubin 2011: 270-271, Huehnergard forthcoming:3-4, 9).[17]

From a formal perspective, Amorite possesses a gram of the *qatal(a)* type – a construction that is related to *parsāku* in Akkadian, on the one hand, and to the Central Semitic suffix conjugation *qatala*, on the other. *Qatal(a)* in Amorite is mainly an intransitive and de-transitive stative like its Akkadian cognate (Huffmon 1965:87-94 and Streck 2011a:456-457). However, some scholars propose that, in limited instances, Amorite *qatal(a)* can also provide transitive and dynamic uses. For instance, forms such as *yaṣar* (from the root *yṣr* 'form, design'), *malak* (from the root *mlk* 'reign'), *šapaṭ(a)* (from the root *špṭ* 'judge'), and *dan(i)* (from the root *dyn* 'judge)' can be interpreted as cases of the G active perfect (Huffmon 1965:89-91). Linguists who admit the possibility of the use of *qatal(a)* as an active perfect in line with Central Semitic languages are nevertheless aware of the paucity of such cases, since only six or seven names seem to employ active verbs in the *qatal(a)* form. An opposing opinion is expressed by Streck (2011a) who rejects the idea of the use of *qatal*(*a*) as an active perfect in Amorite, arguing for a different interpretation of such examples, in particular as statives or as

[16] Even though present-future *iparras* forms are rare in Akkadian names, they do appear (Stamm 1968:95-96). In Biblical Hebrew, names that contain forms of present-future "long" *yiqtol* are also found (Rechenmacher 2012:87). Therefore, even though possibly less common than other verbal forms, examples of either *yaqattal* or *yaqtulu* are expected to be attested in Amorite.

[17] Although Huehnergard (2005a) classifies this change as a relatively certain shared innovation, it should be noted that the development of an original resultative-stative passive (a de-transitive construction built on a verbal adjective or resultative participle) into an active dynamic present perfect and, later, into a past tense is an extremely common phenomenon from a crosslinguistic perspective. In fact, one of the most common sources of present prefects and past tenses are de-transitive (or intransitive) resultative proper constructions (cf. Nedjalkov 1988 and 2001, Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994, Lindtsted 2000, Graves 2000). Thus, even though it is very likely that *qatala* became an active perfect or past in Proto-Central Semitic (contrasting with Akkadian, where it remained a de-transitive resultative), the very evolution of this sort is typologically regular (compare with Huehnergard 2006 who notes that the same development accounts for the *iptaras* form, a type of a perfect, in Akkadian).

nouns (e.g. *Yaśartī-'el* 'The god is my justice' or *Malak-'ilī* 'My god is king'; Streck 2011a:456-457).

While the status of the *qatal(a)* as an active (dynamic) perfect or past is rather uncertain, these two semantic domains are typically conveyed in Amorite by *yaqtul*. Proper nouns that include the *yaqtul* tense are well attested, e.g. *Yaśma'-Hadda* 'Hadda has heard' or *Yabruq-'el* 'The god has shone' (Streck 2011a:456; see also Huffmon 1965:63-77 and Knudsen 1991:878-879). It should be noted that the use of the simple *yaqtul* morphology (i.e. without additional morphemes) as a paradigmatic perfect and past is fully comparable with the behaviour offered by *iprus* in Akkadian. As mentioned above, in other Northwest Semitic languages, it is *qatala* that typically expresses the semantic domain of a dynamic perfect (present perfect and pluperfect) and/or past. Consequently, Amorite and East Semitic languages offer an analogical situation: simple *yaqtul* is a paradigmatic perfect and past, whereas in Central Semitic languages – as this place has been taken by *qatala* – the semantic potential of *yaqtul* has been reduced. To be exact, in Central Semitic languages, the *yaqtul* form came to express a past tense rather than a present perfect (e.g. Biblical Hebrew), was reduced to some particular syntactic environments (see Classical Arabic, where it is used almost exclusively in negative) or disappeared completely (Syriac).[18] The morphological properties of the Amorite *yaqtul* also relate it closely to East Semitic *iprus*. While in the East Semitic group, the 'preterite' (i.e. present and past) *yaqtul* was used "on its own" with no need of an additional marking, in various Central Semitic languages it was reshaped by incorporating an extra element differentiating it from a formally analogical gram – the modal *yaqtul*. For example, the successor of Central Semitic *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* is limited to negative contexts and occurs when preceded by the particles *lam* and *lammā*. In general, in Northwest Semitic languages, the use of the simple *yaqtul* morphology (i.e. non-extended by other elements) with the force similar to that of *iprus* is perceived as an archaism.[19]

(4) The modal, subjunctive and/or volitive form *yaqtula* is another Central (or West) Semitic innovation (Huehnergard 2005a:165, 191; see also Hetzron 1976, Faber 1997:8). This gram, which is formed by expanding the prefix conjugation by the ending *a*, is found in various Central Semitic languages, where it functions as a subjunctive (Arabic), as an injunctive (Ugaritic), or as a cohortative (Canaano-Akkadian and Hebrew; Huehnergard & Rubin 2011:271).[20]

In the available Amorite corpus, there are no examples of the subjunctive and/or volitive mood *yaqtula*, contrary to the other Central and Northwest Semitic languages.

[18] Note, however, that perfective *yaqtul* occurs in Ugaritic names.

[19] See, for instance, an exceptional use of the simple *yiqtol* in Biblical Hebrew with a past value (Waltke & O'Connor 1990). Compare 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).

[20] Note that Lipiński (2001:353) and Kienast (2001:289) propose that the form *yaqtula* is connected with the ventive of Akkadian in *-a*(*m*). Although this is possible, it is also far from certain (Weninger 2011:163). The objection of interpreting the verbal form with *-a* as a CS innovation has also been expressed by Kogan (2015:13, 130-136), for whom, the extant evidence is ambiguous and the diachronic origin unclear.

The unique modal form (apart from the imperative) is *yaqtul* employed as a precative or jussive, similar to Akkadian *liprus* and Central Semitic modal ('short') *yiqtol*: *Lamlik*-DINGIR 'Let the god counsel' (Knudsen 1991:879 and Streck 2011a:456; see also Huffmon 1965:78-81). As far as the formal characteristics of the Amorite *laqtul* are concerned, this construction seems to approximate its Akkadian cognate rather than the equivalents in Central Semitic languages. Namely, the Amorite formation is consistently marked by the prefix *l*- as is the case of *liprus* in Akkadian. This clashes with the situation found in various Central and Northwest Semitic languages (e.g. in Biblical Hebrew (BH) and Arabic (Ar.)), where the "simple" morphology of short *yiqtol* is regularly modal and does not need to be (although it may be) marked by additional modal particles. As mentioned above, it is the 'preterite' *yaqtul* that requires a supplementary marking (cf. the BH *waC*- and Ar. *lam(mā)*).

(5) The last innovative component of the Central Semitic verbal system is the so-called energetic mood. This formation is attested in various Central Semitic languages, for instance in early Northwest Semitic languages and in Arabic. On the contrary, East Semitic (for example, Akkadian) shows no traces of the energetic mood (Huehnergard 2005a:165; see also Weninger 2011:163, Huehnergard & Rubin 2011:271).[21]

The energetic mood is unattested in Amorite, additionally suggesting the similarity between the Amorite and East Semitic verbal systems. However, the evidence may also be regarded as inconclusive due to the limited extent of the corpus.

(6) The remaining three features concern the nominal system and/or syntax. The derivation of the forms of 'tens' by means of external masculine plurals (cf. Hebrew *šlošim*, Aramaic *t(ə)lāṯin* 'thirty') instead of the ending *ā* (cf. Akkadian *šalāšā*) is argued to be a Proto-Central Semitic innovation (Huehnergard 2005a:182-183, 191).[22]

As the forms of 'tens' are unattested in Amorite, the evidence is inconclusive (Streck 2000, 2011a).

(7) Another innovative features are demonstrative forms such as *hallɔz(ɛ)* in Hebrew and *allaðī* in Arabic (were it developed into a relative pronoun; Huehnergard 2005a:186, 191).

No evidence of cognates to Hebrew *hallɔz(ɛ)* and Arabic *allaðī* have been found in Amorite thus far. This may, of course, be due to the scarcity of the available data.

(8) Lastly, it is posited that Proto-Central Semitic developed a construction in which the demonstrative pronoun is inserted directly after an interrogative pronoun (cf. Hebrew *mi zɛ*, Arabic *mā ðā*), and which contrasts with East Semitic formations, where it is a

[21] Kogan (2015:141) accepts the possibility that the energetic mood existed as a category in Proto-Central Semitic, although he doubts about its innovative character. On the origin of the energetic mood, possible evolutionary scenarios, reconstructions and Proto-Semitic foundation(s) consult Hasselbach (2006).
[22] Kogan (2015:146) accepts this feature as a possible CS innovation.

relative pronoun that follows the interrogative pronoun (cf. Akkadian *munnum ša*; Huehnergard 2005a:186-188, 191).

The Amorite data, available to us, fail to offer cases of a construction analogical to Hebrew *mi zɛ* or Arabic *mā ðā*. Once more this may stem from to the paucity of examples.

Apart from the features discussed above, Huehnergard (2005a) distinguishes several other traits that may be used in the genetic subgrouping of Central Semitic languages, and their differentiation from the East Semitic branch. However, in this case, the proposed shared innovations are less certain, as they could also have arisen due to other phenomena: retention, areal spreading or borrowing, and parallel or typologically common development.

The following features, commonly found in Central Semitic languages, may constitute both shared innovation and retentions from Proto-Semitic:

(9) Feminine plural *-*na* in the prefix conjugation (cf. Arabic *yaqtubna* in contrast to Akkadian *iprusā*; Huehnergard 2005a:169-170, 192).

No examples of the feminine ending -*na* in the prefix conjugation are attested in Amorite. This may stem from the absence of this morpheme in Amorite or may result from the scarcity of the evidence. In the latter case, the data would, thus, be inconclusive.

(10) Metathesis of the second radical and the theme-vowel in geminated verbs in the prefix conjugation: **yasbubu* > **yasubbu* (cf. Arabic *yadullu* but Akkadian *idninū*; Huehnergard 2005a:171-176, 192).[23]

Amorite exhibits the two possible variants of the geminate verbs. One is *yaqlal-* without the metathesis (e.g. *Ya-aḫ-ru-ra* and *Ya-aḫ-m*[*u*]*-mi-im*, as well as the name of place *Ya-aḫ-mu-ma-am*^{ki}), while the other is *yaqall-* which exhibits the discussed Central Semitic change (see the following names of places: *Ya-ḫu-ur-ru-um*$^{(ki)}$ and *Ya-ḫu-ur-r*[*a*]$^{k(i)}$; Huffmon 1965:87-88).

(11) Alternation *ā* - *ŭ* in the suffix conjugation of verbs II-w/y (cf. Arabic *qāma – qumtu* in contrast with Akkadian *kīn – kīnāta*; Huehnergard 2005a:176-178, 192).

If the form *Qà-am-ta*-DINGIR is correctly interpreted by Huffmon (1965:91) as *qāmta-'il(ah)* (from the root *q-w-m* 'rise'), it would attest the 2nd person *qatal(a)* with a long vowel contrary to the alternation found in Central and West Semitic.

(12) The last type of this class of features concerns lexicon. The following words are typically found in Central Semitic and, being absent in other Semitic languages, are posited as possible Central Semitic innovations and/or isoglosses: nouns **'abd* 'servant' and **kapp* 'palm of hand'; an extended nominal form **'l-āh* 'god'; prepositions **'ilay-* 'to(ward)' and * *'im/ma'*- 'with'; conjunction **pa-* (Huehnergard 2005a:190-192; see also Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:420); verbal roots *'-d-r* 'help', *ḥ-g-g* 'make a

[23] It should be noted that Huehnergard (forthcoming:10) mentions this change as a possible parallel development.

pilgrimage', *ḥ-z-y* 'see', *n-ḥ-m* 'console', *ṭ-r-p* 'pluck' (Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:420).[24] In a more recent study, Kogan (2015:158) proposes further lexical isoglosses, for instance **ʿumq-* 'depth', **ʿamal-* 'toil', **našam-at-* 'breath', **rubb-* 'multitude', **patīl-* 'thread', **milāʾ-* 'fullness' and **ʿibād-at-* 'work'.

Out of the above-mentioned lexemes, the following ones can be detected in Amorite: the root **ʿabd* 'servant' (Huffmon 1965:105-107, Gordon 1997:102, Streck 2000:291-293), the form **ʾil-āh* 'god' (accepted by Huffmon 1965:165; criticised in Streck 2000:288), and the verbal roots *n-ḥ-m* 'console, be compassionate' (Huffmon 1965:237-238, Streck 2000:107) and *ʿ-ḏ-r* 'help' (Streck 2000:248-249). According to Knudsen (2004:237-238; cf. section 1.1), if Amorite loanwords in Akkadian are taken into consideration, the Amorite lexicon is much more similar to Northwest Semitic, and, therefore, Central Semitic than to Akkadian or East Semitic. However, many of the words which, according to Knudsen, Amorite shares with other Central Semitic languages are not Proto-Central (or Proto-Northwest) Semitic innovations, but rather constitute examples of retentions and/or areal spreading. The lexemes reconstructed by Kogan (2015) as Proto-Central Semitic are unattested. However, in various cases, the respective roots do exist, e.g. *ḫ-b-d* (Huffmon 1965:189, Zadok 1993:320, Streck 2000:247, 251, 291-93), *m-l-ʾ* (Zadok 1993:326, Streck 2000:237).

Other traits, which are regularly found in Central Semitic languages and are, therefore, sometimes regarded as Central Semitic innovations, may have arisen due to an areal (or wave) spreading. Accordingly, they can constitute cases of inter-dialectal borrowing:

(13) It is claimed that in Central Semitic, the ejective Proto-Semitic consonants received a pharyngealised pronunciation (Huehnergard 2005a:165; see also Faber 1997:8, Huehnergard & Rubin 2011:268-269, Huehnergard forthcoming:12-13).

In Amorite, the emphatic consonants /ṭ/ and /q/ are posited to be ejective [t'] and [k'] (Streck 2000:151-256 and 2011a:454; see, however, that other scholars do not overtly determine the nature of the emphatic sounds; cf. Huffmon 1965, Knudsen 1991).[25]

(14) The creation of a definite article is sometimes regarded as a Central Semitic feature due to the following fact: while Central Semitic languages possess definite articles (cf. Arabic *ʾal-* and Hebrew *ha-*), there is no definite article in Akkadian and in Proto-Semitic.[26]

[24] All these lexemes may also reflect an areal spread (Huehnergard 2005a:189-190).

[25] Buccellati (1997:16) reconstruct such consonants as merely 'emphatic'. However, he emphasises that this reconstruction is phonemic rather than phonetic or articulatory (ibid.:15).

[26] It should however be noted that the forms of the definite article in Central Semitic languages are quite different. Nevertheless, despite the variety of forms, their syntax is nearly identical, which suggests a possible development from a common ancestor and a shared original underlying form, sometimes reconstructed as a presentative particle (Huehnergard 2005a:184-186; see also Gzella 2006, Weninger 2011:169). Thus, although "a definite article *per se* is not a feature of Proto-Central-Semitic, the presentative particle is, as is the beginning of the process that led to an article in the various descendant languages" (Huehnergard forthcoming:12; see also Huehnergard & Rubin 2011:269-270; *contra* see Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:415, who propose that it is unlikely that Proto-Northwest Semitic had a definite article).

Since the available examples do not provide any trace of a definite article, this category seems not to have existed in Amorite. However, the absence of the definite article in the corpus may also be interpreted as inconclusive evidence.[27]

With respect to two further features proposed by Huehnergard (2005a) as Central Semitic innovations (cf. feature 15 and 16 below), the evidence is inconclusive. To be exact, any form of the independent pronoun of the 1st person plural is unattested (cf. trait 15 below) and the distinction between verbs III-*w* and III-*y* cannot be analysed as such forms are similarly absent in the corpus (cf. trait 16; Huffmon 1965:70):

(15) The change of *i* into *a* in the 1st person plural pronoun, whereby Proto-Semitic **niḥnu* developed into Proto-Central Semitic **naḥnu* (Huehnergard 2005a:166; see also Huehnergard forthcoming:10).

(16) The transformation of verbs III-*w* into III-*y*, as illustrated by Arabic *raḍiya* from earlier **raḍiwa* (Huehnergard 2005a:179-180, 192). This development may have been a result of a more general phonetic change: *w* > *y* / *i*_V (Huehnergard forthcoming:10-11).

In addition, certain features that are reconstructed as Proto-Common Semitic innovations may constitute cases of a parallel development. Being typologically common, they might have arisen independently in various Central Semitic languages:

(17) The development of the feminine singular ending **-at* into *-a* (Huehnergard 2005a:167, 191; see also Huehnergard & Rubin 267-268).[28]

Both types of feminine endings, i.e. -(*a*)*t* and -*ā* (in pause), are found in Amorite: *'Aštar-šarra* 'Aštar [is the] queen' (Streck 2000:212) and *Maḏmaratum* 'protection' (Streck 2000:314; see also Gordon 1997:102, Streck 311-316, 2011a:455).

(18) The replacement of the 1st person of the suffix conjugation *qatala* **-ku* (cf. Akkadian *parsāku*) by **-tu* (cf. Arabic *katabtu*; Huehnergard 2005a:168-169, 191; see also Faber 1997:9, Huehnergard forthcoming:10).[29]

The form *Ya-sa-ar-ti*-DINGIR may attest the change of the 1st person *qatal(a)* suffix **-ku* into **-tu* (cf. Huffmon 1965:91).

Lastly, there is one feature that characterise Central Semitic and/or West Semitic languages:

(19) The G internal passive **yuqtal*, which is present in Central Semitic (and also Modern South Arabic languages) but which is absent in East Semitic (Akkadian) and in Proto-

[27] One should, for instance, note that even languages that have a definite article, generally avoid this category in proper names of persons and in toponyms. For example, with a very few exceptions, the article fails to appear in proper names in Biblical Hebrew even though the definite article is a well-grammaticalised category in this language (Rechenmacher 2012:45).
[28] The elimination of the final consonant is a common phonetic process and could have occurred independently.
[29] This change can be an analogical paradigm levelling (Huehnergard & Rubin 2011:273-274).

Semitic (the only form being internally passive is the participle *qatil*), is a possible Central or West Semitic innovation (Huehnergard 2005a:182, 192; see also Weninger 2011:159, Huehnergard forthcoming:14-15).

The forms *Yú-um-ra-aṣ*-DINGIR and *Ya-am-ra-aṣ*-DINGIR seem to be examples of the internal (G or C) passive *yuqtal* (Huffmon 1965:74-76). This category is, however, ignored by Streck (2011a).

2.2. Other features that are distinctive of Central (and/or West) Semitic

Apart from the features distinguished by Huehnergard (2005a), there are other traits that – although not being necessarily shared innovations – are usually regarded as differentiating Central Semitic languages from East Semitic.

(20) According to the most prevalent view, the 3rd person pronouns with *h* (cf. Proto-Northwest Semitic **hu'a*, *hi'a*, *hum*, *hin* and Arabic *huwa*, *hiya*, *hum*, *hunna*; Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:412-413, Rubin 2010a:29) developed from analogical Proto-Semitic forms with the initial consonant *s* (**suʔa*, **siʔa*, **sum*, **sin*; also as enclitic genitive-accusative **su*, **si*, **sum*, **sin*; Huehnergard 2008a:237; see also Weninger 2011:169; compare the same pronominal series with the consonant *š* in Akkadian). However, the change of the sibilant *s* to *h* in Central Semitic languages may have arisen due to an areal wave phenomenon (Huehnergard 2005a:166). It is also important to note that the evolution from a sibilant to an *h* sound is typologically common, and may be found in Germanic, Slavonic and Romance languages. Furthermore, according to the traditional reconstruction proposed by Brockelmann (1908, 297-306) and sometimes maintained by some modern scholars (del Olmo 1999), the Proto-Semitic independent personal pronouns of the 3rd person contain the consonant *h* in the masculine (**hū'a* and **hum*), while the forms of the feminine exhibit a sibilant (**šī'a* and **šinn*; cf. Weninger 2011:167). This proposal could allegedly be corroborated by Modern South Arabic forms like *hē* 'he' and *hēm* 'they (ms.)', on the one hand, and *sē* 'she' and *sēn* 'they (fm.)' found in the Mehri language of Oman, on the other hand (Rubin 2010b:31).[30]

Knudsen (1991:876) interprets the independent pronouns in Amorite as containing the sibilant. He argues, however, that the corresponding pronominal suffixes should be read as having the consonant *h*: *Ia-aḫ-zi-bu-ú* /ya'zibuhū/ 'He saved him'. In Knudsen's opinion (1991:876-8777), the genuine Amorite pronouns would display the consonant *h*, while the forms with a sibilant would be imported from Akkadian. This view was criticised by Golinets (2010) and Streck (2011a:454), according to whom the Amorite 3rd person pronouns exhibit a sibilant, i.e. *śū* 'he' (e.g. *Śū-mālika* 'He is counsellor') and *śī* 'she' (e.g. *Śī-rāma* 'She is lofty'). According to Golinets (2010:612-614), the spelling -

[30] The corresponding suffixed forms are *-(ə)h*, *-(ə)həm*, *-(ə)s* and *-(ə)sən* (Rubin 2010b:34). Note, however, that according to Voigt (1987) the consonant *s* in the feminine pronouns in Mehri is not a regular reflex of Proto-Semitic *s* (so-called s_1). In such a case, the forms in Mehri are not helpful in this discussion. Overall, the /h/ versus /s/ forms in third person pronouns and causatives may constitute a weak feature for sub-grouping. For instance, Old South Arabian, which belongs to the Central Semitic group, exhibits both forms with /h/ (Sabaic) and forms with /s/ (Minaic, Qatabanic and Ḥaḍramitic; Stein 2011, 1055, 1059; 2013, 70, 84).

Cu-ú in *Ia-aḫ-zi-bu-ú* (which is interpreted by Knudsen as evidence of a pronominal suffix with *h*) indicates mimation and not the consonant *h*.[31]

(21) A highly similar change has occurred in the causative stem where the consonant *s* (which existed in Proto-Semitic and is attested in Akkadian as *š*) has developed into *h* in Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic and, further, into a glottal stop in Classical Arabic and younger languages (cf. Voigt 1994, Weninger 2011:156, Huehnergard 2008a:240, Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:418, Rubin 2010a:45). It should, however, be observed that Ugaritic, a Northwest Semitic language, has an *s*-type causative (Tropper 2012:585). An even more peculiar situation is presented in Mehri where two possibilities are available: the *h*-stem in a causative function and the *š*-stem in a causative-reflexive function (Rubin 2010b:97-107).[32] Both features (20 and 21) are sometimes claimed to be results of a phonetic development found in West and/or Central Semitic, where the Proto-Semitic alveolar fricative **s* evolved into **h* in a prevocalic position (Huehnergard 2006:7-8, Huehnergard 2008a:230, Rubin 2010a:45). Sometimes this phonetic change is viewed as being restricted to non-lexical morphemes: personal pronouns of the 3rd person, causative stem structure, conditional particle and locative-terminative marker (Kogan 2011:107).[33]

Knudsen (1991:881) proposes that Amorite had the *h*-type causative (pronounced with *h* or with the glottal stop *ʾ*), which, according to him, can be illustrated by the 'preterite' yaqtul form *Ia-ki-in-*^{d}IM. An opposite opinion is defended by Streck (2000:336-337, 2011a:455-456, 2013:323), who argues that the *h*-causative is unattested in Amorite. On the contrary, verbal adjectives suggest the *s*-type of the causative stem: *Śaḥbaru* 'Ally' and *Saklalu* 'Perfectly made' (Streck 2011a:456).

(22) Another trait associated with Central Semitic is the use of the prefix *ya-* in the *yaqtul* form of verbs rather than *i-* as in Akkadian (Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:410). Once more, this is a case of retention from Proto-Semitic where the prefix was **ya* (Huehnergard 2008a:238). Thus, the relevance of this trait for genetic classification is dubious.

In Amorite, it is the prefix *ya-* that regularly appears in the preterite instead of *i-* that is found in Akkadian (Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:410, Gzella 2011:427; cf. section 1.1).

(23) Central Semitic languages have developed a new series of passive participles (such as, Hebrew *qatūl*, Aramaic *qatīl*, Arabic *maqtūl*), replacing the verbal (resultative or perfective) adjective *qatil*, which was employed in this function in Proto-Semitic. This verbal adjective was used as a passive participle in Akkadian (cf. *parsāku*). In Central

[31] Regarding a *h*-type of laryngeals and pharyngeals, and siblilants in Amorite consult Buccellati (1997:17-22).
[32] The *š*-stem in Mehri may probably derive from **st* and not **s* (cf. Kogan 2011:107).
[33] It should also be noted that the value of the consonant which is found in the 3rd person pronouns and in the causative – although frequently identical (cf. Voigt 1987) – does not have to be the same. For instance, in Ugaritic and Arabic, the two categories use different consonants – Ugaritic employs *h* in the pronouns and *s* in the causative, while Arabic uses *h* in the pronouns and *ʾ* in the causative.

Semitic, it developed into the active *qatala* form (Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:417, Huehnergard forthcoming:14). According to Huehnergard (2006:10), the form *qatūl* is common in Central and West Semitic, whereas it is very rare in Akkadian, being one of the morphological isoglosses differentiating the two branches.

Amorite has a passive participle of the pattern *qatūl*, as attested by the form *Na-tu-nu-um* (*natūnum*) 'given' (Streck 2000:330-331, 2011a:455-456).

(24) Central Semitic includes a particular adjectival pattern *'aCCal- (cf. the elative and adjectives of colour and deficiencies in Arabic; Kogan 2015:155).

According to Streck (2000:334-335), the nominal pattern 'CCal (*'aqtal*) with a possible elative meaning is attested in Amorite by forms such as *Aḫ-na-nu-um* 'very gifted' (contrasted with *Ḫa-ni-nu-um*; ibid.:335).

(25) It is proposed that VSO word order, which continues the word order of Proto-Semitic, distinguishes Central Semitic languages from East Semitic, where the sequence SOV is preferred (Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:419, Huehnergard 2008a:241).[34] This Central Semitic feature is, however, a clear case of retention.

In Amorite, the verb normally precedes the subject (*Ya-ag-mu-ur*-DINGIR 'God has finished'; Huffmon 1965:65; see also ibid. 63-68, Streck 2000:196) and the VSO word order seems to prevail (Gordon 1997:102-104), even though some exceptions from this tendency may be encountered (Huffmon 1965:69).

With respect to two features that are sometimes posited as distinguishing Central Semitic languages (cf. features 26 and 27, below), the evidence is negative, i.e. these features are absent in Amorite. To be exact, both the particle *'al(a)* (Huffmon 1965, Knudsen 1991:881-882) and a particle akin to *bal* or *bᵊli* are unattested in Amorite (Huffmon 1965:175, Knudsen 1991:881-882).[35] However, the absence of the two traits may also be interpreted as inconclusive:

(26) Central Semitic languages (or Northwest Semitic languages, as this feature is absent in Arabic) developed a prohibitive marker *'al(a)* 'don't' (Faber 1997:8);

(27) Central Semitic (or West-Semitic) languages developed a negative (verbal) marker **bal*, as illustrated by Hebrew *bᵊli* 'not, without' and Arabic *bal* 'on the contrary' (Faber 1997:8, Pat-El 2012, 2013, Andrason & Lyle 2015).[36]

[34] One should note, however, that Akkadian names usually exhibit VS word order, e.g. *Iddin-Šamaš* (Huehnergard 2008a:241). SOV word order arose in Akkadian due to the influence of Sumerian (ibid.).

[35] However, it should be noted that the form *balti*/*ī* 'without' does exist in Amorite (Huffmon 1965:175, Knudsen 1991:881-882).

[36] Pat-El (2013:55) questions the Central Semitic status of **bal* as this element is attested both in East and West Semitic languages. However, as a verbal negator, **bal* or its variants are only found in Northwest Semitic so that it could constitute a Northwest Semitic innovation or an areal feature (ibid.).

Lastly, the Amorite corpus does not enable us to test the language for the following four features:

(28) It is argued that in contrast to East Semitic languages, Proto-West Semitic could form the plural by means of internal vowel fluctuation (cf. also broken plurals in Arabic; Huehnergard 2006:8). However, it is also hypothesised that this category constitutes a Proto-Semitic feature, which is lost in Akkadian (Huehnergard 2006:9).[37]

(29) The infinitive pattern of derived stems exhibits the vowel *ā* in Central Semitic (Kogan 2015:152).[38]

(30) Central Semitic languages exhibit a shared strategy in the inflection of verb formed with four radicals. This pattern is analogous to the conjugation of the intensive stem of regular, tri-radical verbs (Kogan 2015:153).

(31) Various Central Semitic languages exhibit a "specific structure of the numeral of the second decade" (Kogan 2015:156). This structure is distinguished by the following traits: the digit precedes the teen; a special form of the numeral 'ten' is employed; the digit and the teen show opposite genders ('gender polarity'); and both elements end in *-a* (Kogan ibid.).

To our knowledge, there are no examples of the plural forms in Amorite (for a doubtful case, see Streck 2000:335 and Lipiński 1981:279), the infinitive of a derived stem, the inflections of quadri-radical verbs and the form of the second decade (Huffmon 1965, Knudsen 1991, Streck 2000).

2.3. Features distinguishing Northwest Semitic

Apart from being testable for features characteristic of the Central Semitic branch, Amorite – an alleged Northwest Semitic language – is expected to comply with the traits that are exemplary of the Northwest Semitic sub-group. So far, scholars have proposed at least ten features that could characterise Northwest Semitic languages, distinguishing them from the other Central Semitic languages:

(32) One of the most important traits is the development of the word-initial consonant *w* into *y* (Blau 1978:35, Huehnergard 1991, Faber 1997:9, Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:410-41, Kogan 2011:109, 2015, Gzella 2011:432).

Amorite seems to attest the development of initial *w* into *y* as illustrated by the form *Ia-qa-rum* /yaqarum/ '(is) estimated/(is) precious'' (in contrast to Akkadian *waqārum* or Arabic *waqara*) and *Ḫa-ab-du-Ya-an-du* 'Servant of Y.' (of the root *y-d-d* from **w-d-d*

[37] There are also vestiges of internal plurals in Akkadian which, together with Afro-Asiatic data, suggest the Proto-Semitic character of this feature (Huehnergard 2006:9).
[38] For a critical discussion of features 25, 26, 27 and 28, consult Kogan (2015).

'love'; Gordon 1997:102; see also Buccellati 1997:24-25, Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:410-411 and Gzella 2011:427).

(33) The assimilation of *n* to an immediately following consonant is regarded as distinguishing Northwest Semitic from Classical Arabic (Gzella 2011:432, Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:411). This change is, however, typologically very common and can sometimes be found in Akkadian: *iddin* 'he gave' from earlier *indin*, or *šattum* 'year' from **šantum* (Huehnergard 2005b:32-33).[39]

The Amorite data offers examples of assimilation of /n/ before another consonant (/yattin/ 'he gave') as well as cases where the assimilation is absent (/yantin/; Huffmon 1965:67, Gzella 2011). According to Knudsen (1991:881), the two possibilities are free variants (see also Gzella 2011).

(34) The loss of the mimation and/or nunation is another typical property of Northwest Semitic languages distinguishing this branch from both Akkadian and Classical Arabic. Arguably, it already occurred in Proto-Northwest Semitic (Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:414). However, it is also possible that the process of the elimination of mimation/nunation has taken place individually in daughter languages (ibid.), as it is a typologically common phenomenon that arises due to phonetic reduction (see, for instance, the loss of mimation in post-Old Babylonian Akkadian and in Modern Arabic).

In Amorite proper names, the mimation is present although it may also be lost. It seems that the use of mimation is optional: *A-ḫu-um* 'brother' (Huffmon 1965:132,160) and *Sa-mu-um* 'name' (Huffmon 1965:132, 247) *versus Ya-ḫa-du* (Huffmon 1965:132, 210). The mimation seems to be frequent at the end of the names, while in medial components, it is rather uncommon (Knudsen 1991:877; see also Huffmon 1965:95, 99-101, 132-133).

With respect to three features proposed sometimes as distinguishing Northwest Semitic languages (cf. features 35, 46 and 37, below), the Amorite evidence available to us is inconclusive. Precisely, the root *lqḥ* (feature 35), examples of the *(h)it*-stem (feature 36), and plural forms (feature 37) fall ail to be attested in the corpus (Streck 2011a:455).[40]

(35) The assimilation of *l* to *q* is a characteristic trait of Northwest Semitic as illustrated by Ugaritic *yqḥ* < **yilqaḥ*- (Tropper 2012:148) and Hebrew *yiqqaḥ* < **yilqaḥ* 'he will take' (Faber 1997:10).

(36) A typical feature of Northwest Semitic is a metathesis of *t* in the reflexive prefix *(h)it* with roots that have a sibilant as their initial consonant, e.g. Hebrew *hištammer* < **hit-šammer* (Faber 1997:10).

[39] This type of assimilation has also occurred in later Sabaic (Stein 2012:43) and may thus constitute an areal phenomenon or a parallel development.
[40] However, the broken plural *qatl* may be found in loanwords (Streck 2011a:455, Knudsen 2004:325).

(37) The pluralisation of monosyllabic nouns by the insertion of the vowel *a* and, possibly, by a simultaneous use of external plural endings is another important feature of Northwest Semitic (cf. Hebrew plural *dɛɣɔlim* versus singular *dɛɣɛl* < **digl*; Huehnergard 1991:284-285, Faber 1997:9-10; see also Knudsen 2004:325-326).

The following four features are characteristic of Canaanite, a sub-group of Northwest Semitic:

(38) The change of *ā* into *ō* that took place in Canaanite after the 15th century BCE (cf. Hebrew *ḥămōr* but Arabic *ḥimār*; Faber 1997:10, Gordon 1997:103, Gzella 2011:434). This development could also have been an areal phenomenon. The change in question is also typologically common.

The presence of the Canaanite shift in Amorite is argued by Gordon (1997:103), who illustrates it by the proper noun *A-du-na-im* (*'adōn-na'īm*) 'The Lord is good'. Streck (2000:134, 153) rejects the reading proposed by Gordon and the whole vocalic change of *ā* in *ō* in Amorite.

(39) The development of the pronominal ending of the 1st person in the *qatala* from *-tu* to *-ti* (Harris 1939:10, Faber 1997:10).

No certain examples of the 1st person singular *qatal(a)* in *-ti* have been detected thus far in Amorite. It seems that the alleged case *Ya-sa-ar-ti-* is not a 1st person *qatal(a)* (Huffmon 1965:91) but rather a nominal formation (Streck 2000:326).

(40) The form of the 1st person plural of the pronominal genitive-accusative suffix, i.e. *-nu*, which has spread from the independent pronouns *'anu* and *'anaḥnu* 'we' (Faber 1997:10).

In Amorite, the pronominal suffix is *-na* (e.g. *Lana-Hadda* 'Hadda is for us'), which indicates that this change did not take place (Huffmon 1965, Streck 2011a:454).

(41) Another feature that distinguishes Canaanite and/or Northwest Semitic from the remaining Central Semitic languages and, in particular, from Arabic, is the vocalic structure of the D and C stems. The Proto-Central Semitic **qattil-* and **haqtil-* evolved in Canaanite into **qittil-* and **hiqtil-* (cf. Hebrew *qittēl* versus Arabic/Ge'ez *qattal-*; Hasselbach & Huehnergard 2007:418; see also Huehnergard 1991:285, Faber 1997:10).

It seems that in Amorite, the quality of the first vowel of the D stem is *a*, whereas the second vowel is *i* (i.e. *qattil-*), see for instance *'Ibaśśir* 'he has brought the good' (Streck 2011a:456). Accordingly, the above-mentioned change did not take place.

2.4 East Semitic features

As Central and Northwest Semitic languages are distinguished by determined features, scholars also propose certain traits that characterise the East Semitic family, in particular Akkadian (Babylonian and Assyrian) but also Eblaite. The absence of these features can, in

turn, be used as a possible indication that a given language does not belong to the East Semitic branch. If it does not constitute a member of that branch, it must be genetically closer to the other sub-groups, in the case of Amorite, West or Central Semitic languages.

(42) As far as the phonetics is concerned, the loss of most 'guttural' consonants is a typical trait of East Semitic, such as Akkadian (Kogan 2011:55, 109-110, Kouwenberg 2011: 333). This rule however does not hold true for Eblaite, which seems to preserve all the Proto-Semitic gutturals (Streck 2011c:342, Catagnoti 2012: 60).[41]

In Amorite the guttural consonants *ḫ*, *'*, *h*, *ḥ*, and *ʿ* are mostly preserved and represented in writing, especially at the beginning of a word, for example *Ya-ri-im-ḫa-al* of the root *ḫ-w-l* 'maternal uncle' (Streck 2000:264; cf. Zadok 1993:324 and Cohen 2012:270). For other examples see Huffmon (1965:154, 160, 175, 189, 192-198, 205-206), Buccellati (1997:18), Knudsen (1991:874), Streck (2000:196, 231-253) and (2011a:454).

(43) A typical trait of Akkadian, and a possible East Semitic feature, is so-called Geers' law, whereby in a root that includes two emphatics, one of them dissimilates and develops into a non-emphatic sound: **ṣabāṭum* > *ṣabātum* 'to seize' (Huehnergard 2006:8).

Geers' law does not seem to operate in Amorite as demonstrated by the presence of forms of the root *ṣdq* 'be just': *Ṣí-id-qa-*^{d}IM (Huffmonn 1965:256-257 and Streck 2000:206-207).[42]

(44) It is sometimes postulated that East Semitic underwent an early change whereby the word final vowels **-a* and **-u* were lost. This change is visible in the form of *qatala* that was preserved as such in Proto-West Semitic but in the Eastern languages, such as Akkadian, was reduced to *paris* (Huehnergard 2006:6-7).[43]

The final *-a* is most commonly absent in the stative/perfect *qatal(a)* in the 3rd person singular masculine: *yatar* 'is surpassing' in *Ya-tar*-DINGIR (Huffmon 1965:87, 89, 101). It is only found in a few cases (cf. *Ṣa-du-qa* in Huffmon 1965:93). Streck (2000:286-287) is very reserved in admitting the variant with *-a* and does not include it in his more recent publication (Streck 2011a).[44]

(45) Another Proto-Akkadian innovation seems to be the rule of the syncope of an unstressed short vowel in open syllables: **damiqum* > *damqum* (Huehnergard 2006:8). One should, however, note that the syncope of unstressed vowels is a very frequent phenomenon crosslinguistically.

[41] This indicates that the loss of gutturals in Akkadian is not really a Proto-Akkadian feature but rather a later development and thus not necessarily indicative for sub-grouping.
[42] It should be noted that *ṣí-* in *Ṣí-id-qa* is written ZI, so it may be problematic to determine the presence of Geers' Law in an uncontroversial manner.
[43] The vowel syncope rule might not have been regular at earlier stages of Akkadian. Therefore, this feature would be a weak argument for an East Semitic classification in general.
[44] However, it should be noted that the absence of the final element *-a* may also reflect a posterior loss of this ending (cf. Biblical Hebrew). This type of apocope is crosslinguistically very common.

It seems that the syncope rule fails to operate in Amorite, at least in the *qatal(a)* form, where two short vowels in open syllables follow one another, e.g. *Ša-pa-ṭá*-DINGIR (Huffmon 1965:89). See also the feminine form of the adjectives *qatil*: *Ka-bi-da* 'heavy' and *A-mi-nu-um* 'true' (Streck 2000:326).

(46) The vowel fluctuation of the pronominal prefixes in the G and N stems that depends on the person and/or number with which these two verbal constructions are used is a typical East Semitic feature. In Akkadian and Eblaite, the forms with *-a-* are found in the 1st person singular and 2nd person singular and plural, while the forms with *-i-* [from earlier **ya-* or **yi-*] appear in the 3rd person singular and plural and in the 1st person plural (cf. *ni-*). This vocalic alternation is most probably a case of Proto-Semitic retention. This situation contrasts with the changes imposed due to Barth's law that operated in Central Semitic (cf. point 1 and 22; Huehnergard 2006:13).

The prefix vowel seems to appear invariably as *a*: i.e. *yaqtul*, *taqtul* and *'aqtul* (Streck 2011a:455). In contrast, the quality of the prefix vowel of the 1st person plural is unattested.

(47) The use of certain original derivational categories as basic verbal paradigms, such as the (geminated) imperfective *yaqattal* (cf. Akkadian *iparras*), is exemplary of East Semitic. According to the most widely accepted theory, the presence of the *yaqattal* in Akkadian corresponds to the retention of the Proto-Semitic state of affairs (Huehnergard 2005a, Huehnergard & Rubin 2011). According to the contrary opinion, the development of the *yaqattal* as a present-future was an East Semitic innovation (Kouwenberg 2010, 2011: 333; see also Zaborski 2005).

See point (2) above, where a possible presence of *yaqattal* in Amorite was discussed.

(48) East Semitic languages are characterised by the use of the suffix conjugation cognate to the Central Semitic *qatal(a)* but employed only in a resultative (possibly de-transitive) function (cf. Akkadian *paris*). This contrasts with the Central Semitic usage where this construction functions as an active perfect and/or past (Kouwenberg 2011: 333).

See point (3), above, where we discussed a typical use of the Amorite *qatal(a)* in a stative intransitive sense and the paucity (or even lack) of examples of an active dynamic perfect/past function.

(49) The development of the *iptaras* as a perfect in Old Babylonian and as a principal past-tense verb in Middle Babylonian may be regarded as an Akkadian and East Semitic innovation (Huehnergard 2006:13-14; see also Kouwenberg 2010:155-160).

No instances of the perfect *iptaras* have been detected in Amorite. On the other hand, the Gt (reflexive, passive) stem is well attested, e.g. *Ta-aḫ-ta-mar* (Huffmon 1965:81) and *Yantaqim* 'He has been avenged' (on this issue in Amorite, consult Huffmon 1965:81-82, 94, Knudsen 1991:880 and Streck 2011a:455; concerning the Gt stem in Akkadian, see Streck 2003).

(50) The use of the element *-ma* as a marker of the logical connection (coordination) may be a shared East Semitic innovation that differentiates this morpheme from its usage in West Semitic, where it is used as a topicalising particle (Huehnergard 2006:16-17).

The particle *-ma* appears in Amorite (Huffmon 1965:101, 103, 118-120, Gordon 1997:104), where it seems to have an emphatic and/or topicalising (like in West Semitic) rather than coordinative (East Semitic) force: *Qa-mu-ma*-DINGIR from the root *q-w-m* 'rise' (Huffmon 1965:101, 259, Streck 2000:276, 329).

(51) East Semitic languages developed a new word order, where the finite verb occupies the clause-final position, i.e. the SOV word order (Kouwenberg 2011:333; this trait is reverse of feature 25).

As mentioned in point 25, in Amorite the verb normally precedes the subject. Accordingly, even though the East Semitic SOV word order may sometimes be found, the majority of instances follow the opposite pattern.

As far as features 52-57 are concerned, the evidence is negative. That is, the corpus fails to offer any example of the following characteristics: TAN-stems (feature 52), dative/accusative forms akin to *-kum* and *-šum* (feature 53), independent dative pronouns (feature 54), oblique forms of pronouns of the 1st and 2nd person (feature 55), possessive adjectives of the type *šu'ā'um* (feature 56), and the prepositions *in* and *ana* (feature 57). However, the absence of such forms can also be interpreted as inconclusive:

(52) East Semitic seems to have developed a set of derived verbal stems that express verbal plurality, the so-called 'TAN-stems' (Huehnergard 2006:15, Kouwenberg 2011:333).

(53) East Semitic developed novel pronominal suffixes of the 2nd and 3rd person singular dative (and accusative), *-kum* and *-šum*, respectively (Huehnergard 1992, 2006:12, Faber 1997:7).

(54) The existence of independent dative pronouns in Akkadian and Eblaite is sometimes explained as a shared innovation, even though it seems likely that these forms were inherited from Proto-Semitic (according to the latter hypothesis, the independent dative pronouns would have been lost in West Semitic; Huehnergard 2006:12).

(55) Sometimes, the presence of the oblique forms of pronouns of the 1st and 2nd person in Akkadian and Eblaite ((*i*)*yāti* and *kunūti*) is explained as a shared East Semitic innovation (Huehnergard 2006:11). Once more, this feature may also be a case of retention if the Afro-Asiatic evidence is taken into consideration (ibid.).

(56) Another Akkadian and Eblaite innovation may be the development of possessive adjectives, such as *šu'ā'um* 'his/hers' (Huehnergard 2006:13).

(57) The Akkadian and Eblaite prepositions *in* and *ana* may also be East Semitic innovations (Huehnergard 2006:16).

Lastly, with respect to feature 58-60, the evidence is inconclusive. As no plural forms, both of nouns and adjectives, are attested, the response of Amorite to features 58 and 59 cannot be tested. The same holds true for trait 60, since neither of the two options envisaged by this feature is attested:

(58) East Semitic languages are distinguished by the absence of internal nominal inflection (similar to broken plurals in Arabic) and, by contrast, an almost exclusive use of suffixes in derived nominal forms (Kouwenberg 2011:333).

(59) East Semitic distinguishes itself from West Semitic by the creation of plural masculine adjectives in *-ūt-* (Huehnergard 1992, Faber 1997:7).

(60) In East Semitic the gender of the attributive adjective is determined by the morphological form of the governing noun and not by its gender, as is the case in West Semitic (Huehnergard 2006:17).

3. Assessment of the evidence

Having analysed the response of Amorite to the most important Central, Northwest and East Semitic features, we will try to determine the genetic status of this language. Given the extent of the evidence introduced previously, which involves sixty features, we will first recapitulate all the data (section 3.1). Subsequently, these data will be interpreted and the issue of the classification of Amorite within the Semitic languages will be examined (section 3.2). This evidence will also enable us to discuss the overall linguistic nature of the language that emerges from the corpus of proper names associated with Amorite.

3.1 Recapitulation of the evidence

First of all, our study demonstrates that Amorite does not provide any of the eight most important features of Central Semitic (see section 2.1). In other words, if the presence of the most likely shared innovations is analysed (which, in total, could be viewed as a "strong test" for the relationship of belonging to the Central Semitic class of languages), Amorite corpus leads to quite a negative conclusion. Only following the opinion of some scholars and yet in very infrequent cases, Amorite may offer one typical Central Semitic feature (see trait 3). In most cases, the data either contradict the expected properties (if Amorite is to be a typical Central Semitic language; see features 1 and 3, as well as 2, 4, and 5) or are inconclusive (see features 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8). Accordingly, the current evidence fails to substantiate the claim that Amorite is a Central Semitic language.

No.	Feature	YES	NO	Inconclusive

1	Barth-Ginsberg law		x	
2	*yaqtulu*		x	x
3	Perfect/past *qatala*	x	x	
4	*yaqtula*		x	x
5	Modus energicus		x	x
6	Tens in *ā*			x
7	*hallɔz(ɛ) – allaðī*			x
8	*mi zɛ – mā ðā*			x

Second, if the compatibility with other, possible but less probable, shared innovations is studied (which could be denominated as Huehnergard's "weak test"), the following can be observed: some of such features are exhibited by Amorite (see features 10, 11, 12, 13, 17; traits 18 and 19 are confirmed only according to Huffmon), while others are not (see features 9, 10, 12, 14, 17; trait 19 is contravened according to Streck). Additionally, various pieces of evidence can be regarded as inconclusive (9, 12, 15, 16, 18 and 19). Consequently, and once more, the evidence does not enable us to decisively place Amorite in the Central Semitic group.

No.	Feature	YES	NO	Inconclusive
9	Feminine plural **-na*		x	x
10	Metathesis of geminates	x	x	
11	*ā* - v̆ in verbs II-w/y	x		
12	Lexicon	x	x	x
13	pharyngeazed emphatics	x		
14	definite article		x	
15	**naḥnu*			x
16	verbs III-*w* > III-*y*			x
17	*-at* > *-a*	x	x	
18	**-ku* > **-tu*	x		x
19	internal passive **yuqtal*	x	x	x

Third, if the other Central Semitic features are taken into consideration (i.e. the features that were not included by Huehnergard in his 2005a publication; cf. section 2.2), the result is slightly less ambiguous. Four Central Semitic traits are undoubtedly present (22, 23, 24, 25), while only two are absent (26, 27). Moreover, this absence may also stem for the limitations of the corpus. However, out of the characteristics that are documented, two (22, 25) are of almost no relevance for the genetic filiation of the language, as they most likely constitute retentions from Proto-Semitic. The response of Amorite to features 20 and 21 (i.e. the *s* or *h* type pronouns and causatives) depends on whether one favours the view defended by Knudsen (Amorite behaves as a Central Semitic language) or that held by Streck (it fails to

do so). Once more, certain fragments of evidence can be viewed as inconclusive (see especially features 28, 29, 30 and 31; see also traits 26 and 27 mentioned previously).

No.	Feature	YES	NO	Inconclusive
20	3rd person pronouns with *h*	x	x	
21	Causative with *h*	x	x	
22	*ya* in the *yaqtul* (?)	x		
23	new passive participles	x		
24	Adjective ’aCCal-	x		
25	VSO (?)	x		
26	*’al(a)* ‘don’t’		x	x
27	Negative marker **bal*		x	x
28	Internal plural			x
29	Infinitive with *ā*			x
30	4-radical verbs			x
31	Numeral of the 2nd decade			x

Fourth, with respect to the Northwest Semitic features (cf. section 2.3), Amorite offers only one trait that can be regarded as unambiguously positioning this language in the Northwest Semitic group (32). Two characteristics seem to argue against such a classification (40, 41). Various pieces of evidence are (or can be viewed as) inconclusive (35, 36, 37), or their assessment differs among scholars (38, 39). Two traits (33, 34) are attested as both occurring and as failing to do so, rendering their relevance for the classification of Amorite virtually null. As a result, the evidence fails to unequivocally confirm the definition of Amorite as Northwest Semitic.

No.	Feature	YES	NO	Inconclusive
32	Initial *w* > *y*	x		
33	Assimilation of *n* (?)	x	x	
34	Loss of mima- nunation (?)	x	x	
35	Assimilation of *l* (?)			x
36	Metathesis of *t*			x
37	Doubly marked plurals			x
38	*ā* > *ō* (?)	x	x	
39	1st *qatala tu* → *ti*	x	x	x
40	*’anu* and *’anaḫnu*		x	
41	Vowel change in D and C		x	

Fifth, the negative test in which the compatibility with East Semitic features is examined seems to be the least ambiguous. In various cases, Amorite fails to offer typical East Semitic characteristics (see traits 42, 43, 45, 50, 51; see also 49, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, which can also be viewed as inconclusive). Only on two or three occasions, the language exhibits East

Semitic features (44, 48, and if von Soden position's is accepted also 47). As always, in most instances, the evidence is inconclusive.

No.	Feature	NO	YES	Inconclusive
42	Loss of 'guttural'	x		
43	Geer's law	x		
44	*qatVla* > *qatVl*	x	x	
45	Syncope	x		
46	Vowel fluctuation in G / N	x		x
47	*yaqattal*		x	x
48	Resultative-stative *qatala*		x	
49	*iptaras*	x		x
50	*-ma* – logical connection	x		
51	SOV	x		
52	TAN-stems	x		x
53	*kum* and *šum*	x		x
54	dative pronouns	x		x
55	(*i*)*yāti* and *kunūti*	x		x
56	*šu'ā'um*	x		x
57	*in* and *ana*	x		x
58	No internal noun inflection			x
59	Plural adjectives in *ūt*			x
60	Gender of attributive adj.			x

3.2 Discussion

The Amorite evidence available currently leads to the following conclusions concerning the genetic filiation of Amorite:

a) The existing data can (either positively or negatively) link Amorite to the West/Central/Northwest Semitic branch(es), on the one hand, and to the East Semitic group, on the other;
b) The interpretation of some pieces of evidence available to us is still debatable and, therefore, its contribution to the genetic classification is uncertain;
c) Various pieces of evidence remain unattested, thus preventing us from providing a conclusive response to whether Amorite complies with a feature or fails to do so;
d) The overall assessment of the available (and to a degree, certain) information is conditioned by the preference given to particular features that are to be taken into consideration. If "strong" Huehnergard's test is strictly applied, we have no foundation to classify Amorite as a Central or Northwest Semitic language at this stage. If the "weak" variant of Huehnergard's test or the other verifying procedures are used, the rejection of the Central or Northwest Semitic hypothesis is less

categorical – Amorite approximates the Central or Northwest family to a greater extent. Lastly, if the negative East Semitic test is employed, the result seems to advocate more clearly for the non-East Semitic nature of Amorite. If the three tests are summed up, they apparently leave the question open as both options (i.e. belonging and non-belonging to Central/Northwest Semitic branches) are almost equally possible. In brief, the methodology on which the assessment is based seems to importantly bias the results and, thus, the classification of Amorite.

In this regard, one should emphasise that if the analysis only concerns Central Semitic innovations (cf. section 2.1), the status of Amorite as a Central Semitic language cannot be corroborated without doubts. In fact, if the most significant sub-type of these features is envisaged – which concerns the verbal system – Amorite behaves as an East Semitic language rather than a West/Central/Northwest Semitic language. It is remarkable how much the Amorite verbal system (as it is hypothesised on the grounds of the available data) is similar to the Akkadian system. This similarity is visible in the following:

a) The presence of the present-future form *yaqattal* seems to be more plausible that its Central counterpart – *yaqtulu*. As already mentioned, whereas the cases of the former can still be argued (they can be the examples of both the D stem and *yaqattal*), the latter is entirely unattested;
b) In the majority of cases (if not in all of them), *qatal(a)* is used like in Akkadian, i.e. as an (atemporal) intransitive and/or de-transitive/passive formation (when derived from active transitive roots). It seemingly fails to appear with a transitive force, typical of Central/West/Northwest Semitic;
c) The instances of the use of *qatal(a)* in the function of a present perfect or past (regular in the West/Central/Northwest Semitic languages) are highly scarce. Some scholars openly reject them. In any case, *qatal(a)* is not the principle means of convening the sense of a perfect and/or past, contrary to the situation found in the Central and Northwest Semitic branches;
d) The use of *yaqtul* as the main expression of a perfect and/or past in Amorite is another trait typical of the Akkadian verbal system, where *iprus* is the principal verbal construction conveying the sense of a past and (negative) present perfect (as well as pluperfect). This stands in clear contrast with the situation attested by Central/Northwest Semitic;
e) The morphological properties of the Amorite *yaqtul* relate this language to East Semitic. Specifically, as is the case with *iprus* in Akkadian, the Amorite *yaqtul* form is regularly used as a past tense "on its own", i.e. with no need of an additional marking. By contrast, in various Central and Northwest Semitic languages, the use of *yaqtul* in the function of a past is limited to cases where this gram incorporates an extra element (cf. Biblical Hebrew *wayyiqtol*) or to negative and subordinate contexts in which the presence of certain introductory elements is compulsory (cf. *lam* and *lammā yaqtul* in Arabic). The use of the simple *yaqtul* as a past is perceived as an archaism in Northwest Semitic languages;

f) The regular presence of the modal *yaqtul* in the company of the introductory morpheme *l-* parallels the situation found in Akkadian. This contrasts the situation attested to in Arabic and/or Hebrew, where the modal *yaqtul* is usually employed freely, i.e. with no accompanying entities.

Of course, the Amorite and Akkadian verbal systems are not identical. The main (but not unique) difference between them is the absence of the perfect of the *iptaras* type in the Amorite corpus. Nevertheless, if one had to classify the verbal system of Amorite as it appears to us presently, merely assessing it as more similar to Akkadian (East Semitic) and/or Arabic/Hebrew/Ugaritic (Central Semitic), irrespective whether such correspondence stems from shared innovations or inheritance, the Amorite verb stands much closer to East Semitic than Central Semitic. Consequently, since the relevance of the verbal system for the genetic classification of Semitic language seems to be the most decisive, Amorite would be *more* East Semitic than West Semitic. However, as already mentioned, Amorite performs very poorly on the East Semitic "test" complying with only three (or even two) East Semitic features.

Consequently, in light of the presented evidence, a definitive answer to the problem of the genetic filiation of Amorite seems to remain outside the reach of modern Semitic linguistics. In our view, one should, therefore, be more cautious in classifying Amorite as a member of a given family, being always aware that such classification still awaits a final solution.

If the results of our study are correct, Amorite seems to be a peculiar language under the assumption that it is, in fact, a language. Namely, Amorite exhibits properties that could relate it to the two main groups: West/Central/Northwest Semitic and East Semitic. How can a language provide genetic characteristics that link it to two supposedly mutually exclusive branches? Three solutions can be proposed:

a) According to the first possibility, rather than being a single language – or a cluster of closely related dialects – the corpus of personal names that are referred to as Amorite is a collection of linguistic systems (dialects and/or languages) that belong to distinct branches of the Semitic family. This seems entirely possible as the so-called Amorite evidence is of great extension, both geographically and chronologically. Some data could correspond to West/Central/Northwest grammatical systems (especially those located closer to western territories, associated with these types of languages), whereas others could represent the eastern sphere of the Semitic family.
b) As the second option, one may hypothesise that even before fragmentation in East and West (and later Central and finally Northwest) branches, Proto-Semitic might have constituted a continuum of dialects where certain features were shared as if they were isoglosses. That is, each feature could appear in a given local variation, independently from the range of other traits. To put it differently, the passage from the two most separated (spatially and/or grammatically) dialects was gradual and various intermediate variants existed. When West Semitic (which later gave

rise to Central Semitic) and East Semitic were fragmentised into two "independent" branches, a linguistic system – especially the variation that was spoken at the very remote time, e.g. in the third millennium BCE – could be a successor of such an intermediate dialect originally belonging to the Proto-Semitic cloud of dialects. In this manner, it was able to exhibit both West/Central and East features.

c) The third possibility is that East Semitic traits are, in fact, due to language contact, constituting cases of borrowings from Akkadian (cf. Knudsen 1991). Alternatively, one could hypothesise an inverse transfer and, thus, the "westernisation" of an East Semitic variety.

These three possible explanations for the grammatical heterogeneity found in the Amorite language are directly related to the problem of its linguistic status. If Amorite is a cluster of western, central or north-western dialects that were possibly easternised or Akkadanised and acquired certain East Semitic features, it could be analysed as a single – although variable – grammatical entity. Inversely, if Amorite is a group of eastern dialects, posteriorly westernised, it could be conceived as a relatively unitary linguistic system. If it is a remnant of one dialect that existed in the Proto-Semitic dialectal continuum, it is also analysable as a more or less coherent language. However, if it is a chaotic collection of languages belonging both to the East and West branches, it cannot logically be analysed as a single consistent linguistic entity. A definitive answer to which of these possibilities is correct cannot be provided currently.

Whatever the case may be, until we have correctly understood the linguistic phenomenon that lies behind the "Amorite" proper names and certain non-Akkadian features found in local Akkadian varieties, we can continue to use the term Amorite. However, we should be aware of the complexity of the Amorite question and the provisionality of adopted views or working hypotheses. This complexity and provisionality of the Amorite issue in linguistics is unmistakably echoed by an analogical treatment of Amorite in archaeology, where scholars disagree if Amorite implies monolithic cultural and social identity, or rather corresponds to a plurality of regional cultures or a *koiné* culture, i.e. a medium of interaction of various cultural identities (Burke 2014).

4. Conclusion

The present paper offered a principled analysis of the genetic and dialectal position of Amorite. By testing the Amorite corpus of proper names against sixty features that have been proposed as characteristic of the Central, Northwest and East Semitic branches, it is possible to conclude the following: the evidence available currently does not enable us to undoubtedly determine the position of Amorite within the Semitic family. The data can link Amorite to the Central, Northwest and East Semitic branches. Additionally, various pieces of evidence are missing or their interpretation is uncertain. As a result, the definite answer to the question of the genetic filiation of Amorite presently seems to remain beyond the reach of Semitic

linguistics. This, in turn, implies that the theories concerning the place of Amorite in Semitic languages formulated thus far should be taken with more caution.

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