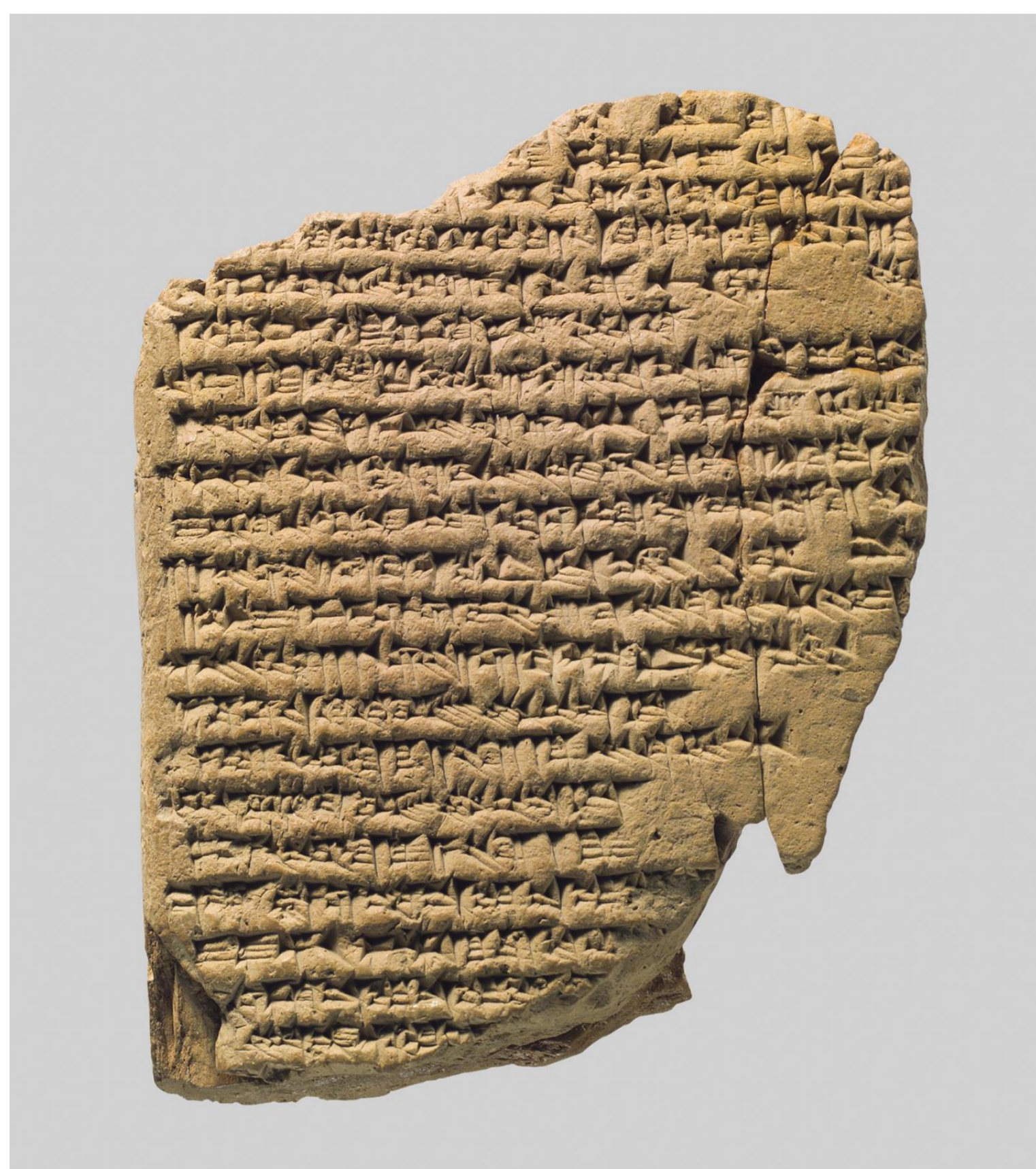




Spatiotemporal diffusion of morphological features in the Ancient Near East

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Babylonian lamentation song, 2nd century B.C.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the role of contact in language change?
- How do linguistic innovations spread through languages and linguistic communities?
- Are different types of contact (administrative, trade, immigration) correlated with certain linguistic changes?

METHOD

Correlating linguistic and extralinguistic variables to identify the spatiotemporal effects of contact

1. Comparing morphological and morphosyntactic variables in the languages of the Ancient Near East:

- FOCUS ON SPACE: different local dialects of the same language
- FOCUS ON TIME: differences between time periods of the same language

2. Using extra-linguistic factors as a proxy for language contact:

- GEOGRAPHICAL: elevation, water ways
- ENVIRONMENTAL: temperature, rainfall
- POLITICAL: ruling systems, borders, population size
- ECONOMIC: economic systems, production, trades
- SOCIAL: sedentary vs. nomadic, agriculturalist vs. pastoralist
- MASS EVENTS: immigrations, famines, floods, wars
- POPULATION GENETICS: ancient DNA

THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

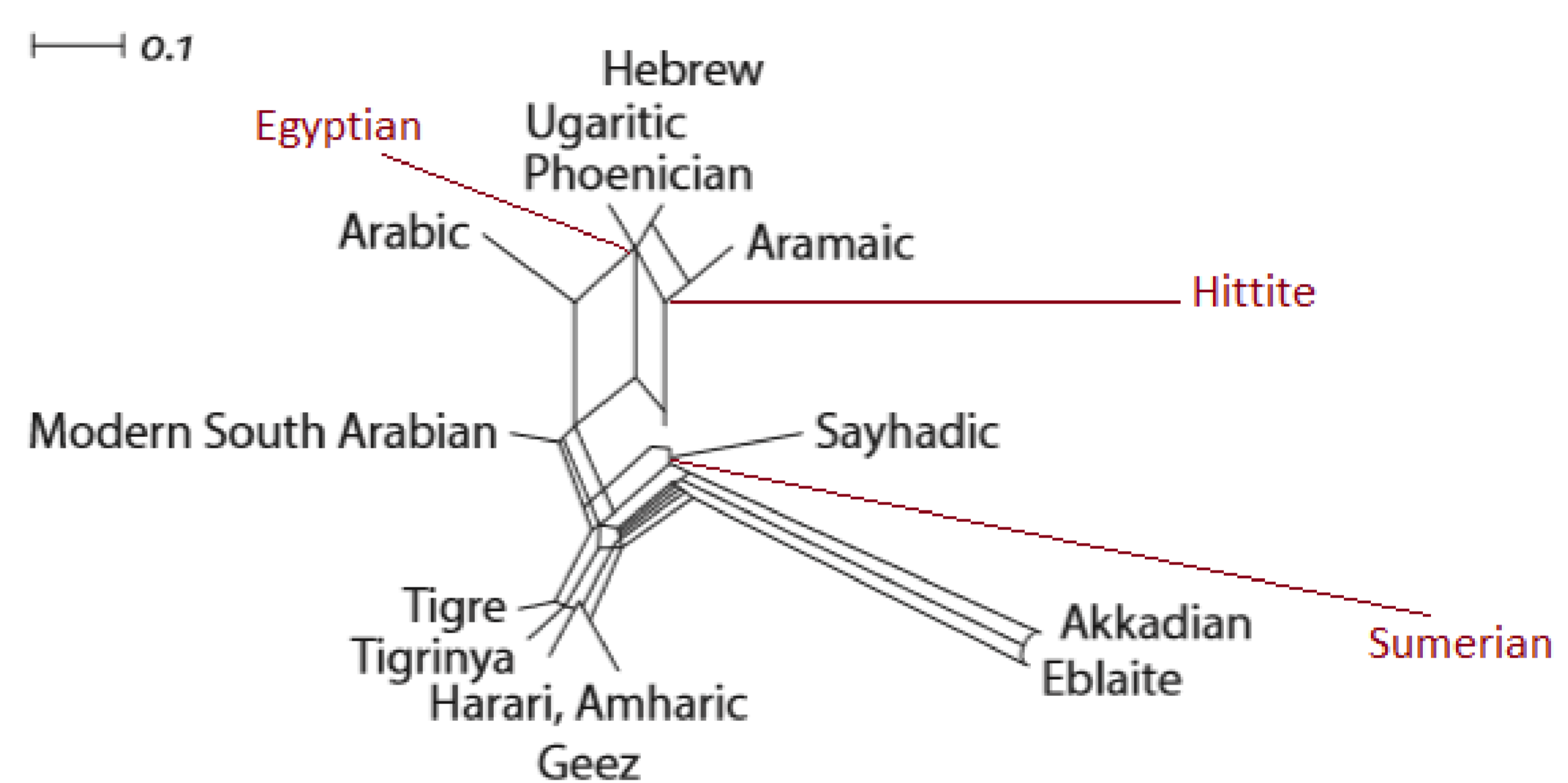
LOCATION: The fertile crescent: Mesopotamia (today's Iraq), the Levant (today's Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan), Egypt;

TIME: 4th millennium BC - mid first millennium CE

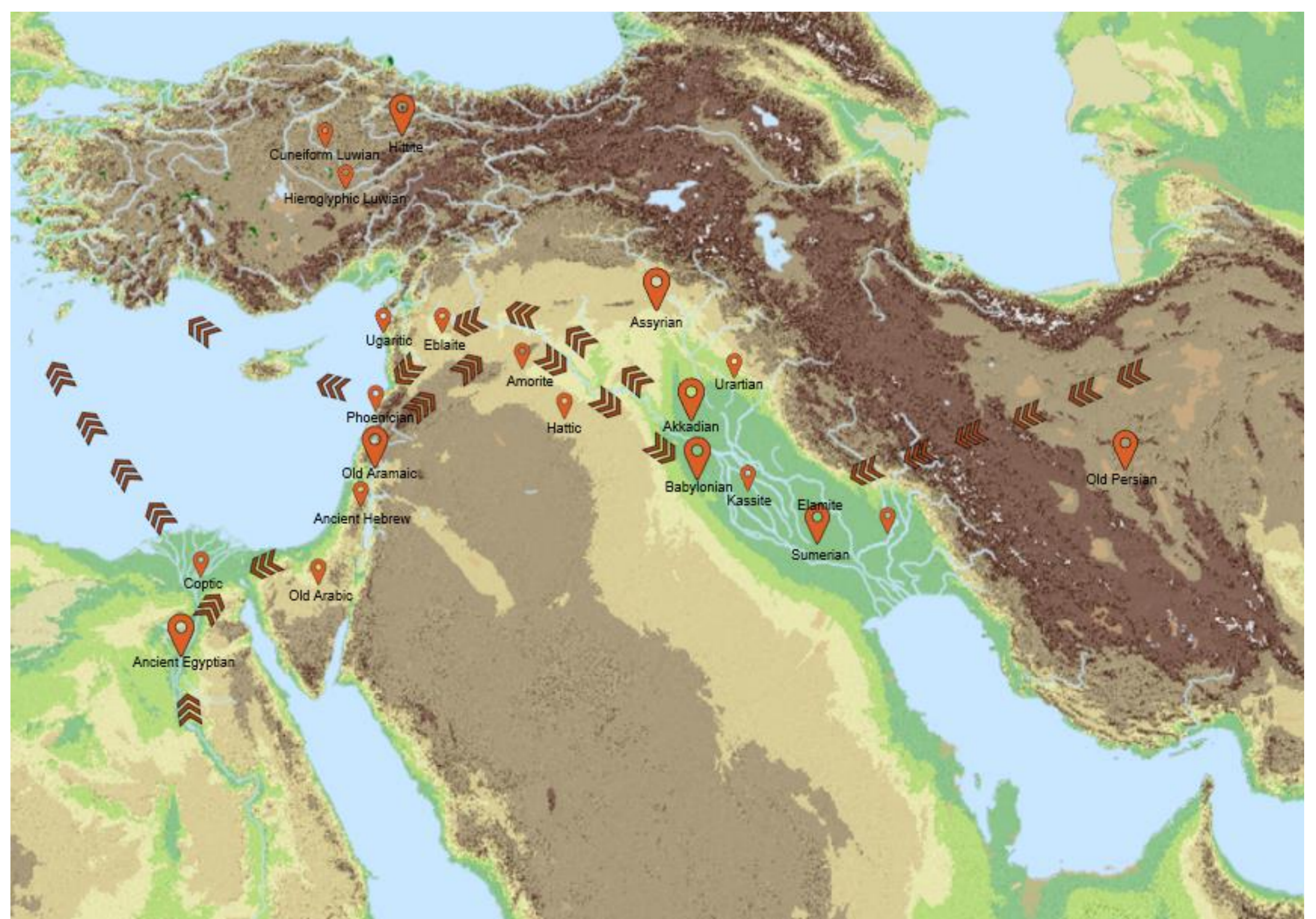
INTEREST

6000 years of uninterrupted documented linguistic history;

Diverse linguistic landscape: Afro-Asiatic, Hurro-Urartian, and Indo-European languages, as well as language isolates are known to have coexisted and were in contact



NeighborNet network based on the combination of the datasets of Faber 1997 + Gai 1994 + Zemánek 2017 With speculative connections to other languages



“...the question of genetic relationships among the Semitic languages cannot be treated in isolation from their subsequent pattern of contact”. (Faber 1997:3)