Conclusions

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9 Conclusions

Though a first introduction, this initial investigation into Uto-Aztecan ties to Near-Eastern languages yields numerous consistencies, morphological parallels, and several hundred lexical similarities for each dimension. Some inconsistencies remain to be clarified or tossed, and questions to be answered—remember this is an exploratory study—yet the proposed tie answers many previous questions. Many language relationships/families have been established with one-tenth of what is presented here. Some Semiticists might question an assumed lack of the common Semitic words. I say assumed, because many common Semitic words do appear in UA, though less common ones became more prevalent. Some are indeed missing—Hebrew yad 'hand' and šmʕ 'hear'—but for others, it is reversals of prominence rather than lack: e.g., the common Hebrew ʕayn 'eye' does have rare appearance in UA, while the rare Semitic bṣr 'see/eye' serves as the common UA word for 'eye'; the common Hebrew 'iiš 'man' and 'išaa 'woman' are found in UA, but not as prominently as Semitic *đakar 'male, man' > UA *taka 'man' and Hebrew ђaberet > UA *hupi 'woman', which are more common in UA.

Some may question the citing of cognate forms from various Semitic languages instead of only one. We addressed this matter at 1.25, page 33, and mentioned that we know next to nothing of some ancient dialects and even what we have of Classical Hebrew vocabulary in existing texts is but a fraction of what existed in the spoken dialect(s); so when a match with the expected Hebrew reflex of an existing Arabic form is found, for example, there is little reason to doubt its existence in the ancient spoken cognate language Hebrew. In fact, that is what the philologists who compiled the Hebrew lexicons have always done: validate the Hebrew terms based on cognate terms. We mentioned the lack of a word for squirrel in the Hebrew Old Testament (page 33), yet we find two Arabic words for squirrel in UA, whose sound correspondences match unattested Hebrew cognates. Another example is Semitic *km' 'truffle' (575) found in both Arabic to the south and Ugaritic (of Northwest Semitic) to the north, so the term's existence in Hebrew, located between the two, would be likely, even though Old Testament authors had no occasion to talk about truffles either.

Of interest are the Aramaic features (at section 8), Aramaic vocabulary, and many nouns with the Aramaic masculine definite article suffix -aa' fossilized into the forms, besides the productive UA *-ta suffix which resembles and behaves similarly to Aramaic's feminine article suffix *-taa' 'the'. Regarding Semitic-kw and Semitic-p, we might try to assign the Phoenician/Hebrew similarities to one and the Aramaic to the other; however, both seem to have some items with Aramaic morphology, but Semitic-p more so. Data on most dialects of Northwest Semitic is limited, if available at all; nonetheless, some scholars (Young 1993, 54-62, 85-86) see an Aramaic influence or substrate among the dialects of ancient Israel, especially northern Israel. What is not known is the degree or extent, though it may have been more significant or pervasive than presently known. The data of this work are relevant to that void in present knowledge.

Marsha White (1997), in a review of Young 1993, summarizes Young's substance more clearly and concisely than either I or Young might: "Young … suggests that Biblical Hebrew goes back to the adaptation of the pre-Israelite Canaanite prestige language…. Thus, from the beginning of Israelite history there were two linguistic strata: literary/formal and dialectical/colloquial. This situation of diglossia persisted throughout pre-exilic Israelite history…. The best explanation for … so many Aramaisms in the early literary language is that they were in the lower (i.e., spoken) form of the language, and that Archaic Biblical Hebrew was open to elements from the underlying dialects. The strong presence of Aramaisms in the oldest Biblical Hebrew undermines the theory that Aramaisms equals late" (White 1997). Spolsky (2014, 30) also mentions a possible Israelite diglossia in which the daily vernacular may have been closer to Aramaic and cites other sociolinguistic examples of peoples' writing in one language while speaking another, their own but differing colloquial (Spolsky 2014, 36).

This all aligns well with the likelihood of Aramaic substrata serving as underlying dialects to the literary language of Canaanite / Hebrew, perhaps throughout the Northern Kingdom's centuries. What language did the mothers (Leah and Rachel) of the 12 tribes speak? Aramaic! In addition, Aramaic was somewhat a lingua franca throughout most of the area through most centuries. So did the Israelites really set aside Aramaic upon entering Canaan? Or did they adopt degrees of bilingualism while adding the Phoenician / Canaanite literary language? The latter is likely nearer the case in some areas, if not most.

Rendsburg (1997) refers to "Israelian [northern kingdom] Hebrew as a dialect bundle, because almost certainly there were minor differences … the Galilean variety no doubt shared many features with

Phoenician and with Aramaic too. However, the available data generally do not allow us to isolate such minor differences" (Rendsburg 1997, 67). I might add that the differences may not all have been minor.

Relative to the Semitic-kw and the Semitic-p infusions, we have a good start in sorting the two (pp. 239-41), but that process is not complete. Their separate sound correspondences (Appendix A) in many instances have helped to distinguish many lexical items' affiliation, whether of Sem-kw or Sem-p. Yet as both have similar correspondences for some sounds (s, t, m, etc), some items resist sorting; thus, the matter remains opaque at times. Given this body of data, anyone wishing to, can continue work on and contribute to the sorting. The availability of this sizable corpus of raw data provides potential for many studies.

As to the original look of these diffused elements transplanted into the Americas, much remains to be figured out about the processes involving the language mixing, fossilizations, trimming, and molding into this unique result called Uto-Aztecan. Of course, every language mix is a unique product, though the processes toward such results often share commonalities. We have mentioned Yiddish, for example.

Yiddish yields noteworthy parallels to Uto-Aztecan. One parallel is that in both Yiddish and Uto-Aztecan, the Semitic items fit into a larger non-Semitic grammar. Kerler (1999, 9) explains that "the Germanic derivational machinery sets the major patterns for the morphological and to some degree syntactical integration of the other components" (of Yiddish). Likewise, in UA the fossilized Semitic pieces have largely been put into a larger non-Semitic grammar to a great degree. Bakker and Muysken (1995) explain that it is typical in language mixes that the vocabulary of one language largely fills the grammatical framework of another. In Uto-Aztecan, a sizable Near-Eastern vocabulary fills whatever grammar, fitting the description of language mixes better than Yiddish does, for in Yiddish, German provides both most of the framework and most of the vocabulary and pronouns, while in UA, the Semitic infusions contribute much basic vocabulary and most of the pronouns.

Another parallel is that both involve a smaller Semitic-speaking population transplanted into a foreign land amidst other larger populations. Larger languages normally exert a heavy influence on a smaller language, at the least, if not lead to language loss via the complete adoption of the larger language(s). Examples are many. Native American languages have been heavily subject to the recently arrived European languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese or French. Many have succumbed to language loss, and even the surviving languages show the effects of two to four centuries of European language influence. Yiddish, the language of central European Jews (originally Mediterranean Jews), results from the original Hebrew-Aramaic idiom being subject to many centuries of mostly German influence, as well as Slavic and other languages, collecting words from various stopping places along the way. Kriwaczek (2006, 40-48), Weinreich (1980), and Harshaw (1990, 5-7) outline its evolution from Roman Empire times, spreading from Greece, Italy and France into Slavic- and German-speaking areas and elsewhere by the first millenium's end. Harshaw (1990, 32) and Weinreich (1980, 34) note Leo Wiener's percentages as 70% German, 20% Semitic, and 10% Slavic. Other estimates similarly put the Semitic component to be between 15-25%, so the great majority of the vocabulary is from outside influences, mostly German. Kriwaczek (2006, 114) cites Wexler's (1993) view that much of the Hebrew might be of later adoption from written sources via Judaic religious instruction, education, and culture. If so, the implication is that without written sources, much less or very little Semitic would have survived to the present.

Uto-Aztecan's percentage of Near-Eastern components remains to be determined and tallied. Nevertheless, at first glance, Uto-Aztecan's percentage of Near-Eastern components seems to exceed Yiddish's Near-Eastern percentage considerably. *Uto-Actecan: A Comparative Vocabulary* (2011) includes some 2700 Uto-Aztecan cognate sets. Those with substantial similarity to Semitic or Egyptian, and according to the proposed sound correspondences, are about 30%. But for common words or the more widespread/frequent UA words, about 60% align with Near Eastern etymologies.

In 7.4 we see a large amount of the common vocabulary (animals, body parts, nouns of nature) in UA from the Near Eastern sources. As for other vocabulary, among the 2700 Uto-Aztecan cognate sets, the vast majority of those sets have cognates or reflexes, that is, descendant words in less than half of the 30 UA languages. Only 45 cognate sets have reflexes in 25 or more of the 30 UA languages or appear in 7 or 8 of the 8 UA branches. Yet 26 of those 45 sets appear in this work (see 7.8). That amounts to about 60% of the widespread UA words. In other words, Semitic and Egyptian seem prominent in the origins of UA.

In fact, all three of the idioms mentioned (Semitic-kw and Semitic-p and Egyptian) appear to have contributed to common UA words found in all or nearly all branches. From Semitic-kw are (4) UA *kwasï

‘cook, boil, ripen’ and (5) UA *kwasi ‘tail, penis’; from Semitic-p are (532) UA *pusi ‘eye’ and (531) UA *pow ‘road’; and from Egyptian are (280) UA *omwa ‘salt’, (284) *kumCa ‘husband’, and (508) UA *t/raman ‘tooth’. It appears that all three were present in what is called Proto-Uto-Aztecan, the original mixture from which the UA languages descend. Some may object, citing glottochronology’s presumed time-depth of 5,000 years for UA, but holding fast to glottochronological estimates is more a hobby of anthropologists, archaeologists, and non-specialists than of linguists. Most linguists know better and view glottochronological estimates like colds—they usually pass with little permanent damage.

Language mixture may also explain many final vowels in UA, a final vowel added to the traditional Semitic form. The phonology of some languages do not allow ending words with consonants, but must end with a vowel and thus a vowel is added to consonant-final foreign words. Arends, Kowenberg, and Smith (1995, 103-4) note such a tendency (to add final vowels) for most Surinam creoles: sneki ‘snake’; poti ‘put’.

One might also wonder how verb-initial languages like Hebrew and Egyptian (VSO) could spawn verb-final languages like UA. First of all, Biblical Aramaic is largely a verb-final language. What’s more, such changes are not unusual, but, in fact, frequent in language change. Perhaps the three most common causes of such change seem to be the case for UA as well. First, topicalization as a fronting tool can help bring nouns (subjects and objects) to the front, turning original verb-initial patterns into noun-initial syntactic patterns. This actually happened in the history of Egyptian—changes away from VSO (verb initial) in later Egyptian due to topicalization patterns. Second, UA’s use of the Hebrew ha- ‘interrogative prefix’ may be an example. The Hebrew ha- ‘interrogative prefix’ is first element in Hebrew yes-no questions, while the UA *ha- ‘interrogative particle’ is usually second element in UA sentences, and interestingly the first element is always a noun. Both facts are quite consistent with each other, because a topicalization of a noun followed by a question about it essentially reveals the Hebrew structure, yet also explains its consistent second position in UA: My sandal—is it in the house? Third, being among (neighbors to, surrounded by) verb-final languages (SOV) would change most languages to become SOV before long, and SOV is probably the most frequent word order among North American Indian languages. White Mesa Ute changed to English word order in a century or so. Fourth, there are non-SOV and even VSO patterns in some UA languages.

As mentioned, a salient implication suggested by the data is that Egyptian and two dialects of Northwest Semitic and other unknowns, likely of American origin, had merged by Proto-Uto-Aztecan times. Such is admittedly a strange combination, but many languages are strange combinations—like English. Modern English kept only 15% of the Old English vocabulary (Baugh and Cable 1978, 55), having replaced the other 85% with infusions from French and Latin, etc. In fact, after the Norman French conquest of A.D. 1066, a thorough mixing of Norman French with Old English resulted in Modern English being as much a mix of Old English and Norman French as border Spanish or “Spanglish” is a mix of English and Spanish. Though most of our common words are from Old English, the percentages of a printed page would contain comparable amounts of French, and an unabridged dictionary would show much more Latin and French in modern English than what survived from Old English into modern English. Though the details differ from language to language, many languages are mixtures to varying degrees.

Of course, much more investigating, data-collecting, sorting, cross-checking, and analyses must yet take place, and objective discussion is welcome. Let the open-minded add to the refining scrutiny and help truth emerge. Academicians claim to be seekers of truth, and minus a few duped by reality-challenged philosophers deeming truth to be ever relative or non-existent, the rest of us should work toward it.

Academicians supposedly encourage open-minded, independent thought or critical thinking, yet they often construe critical thinking to mean rethinking the values system of one’s upbringing, apparently confident that students will ‘see the light’ and be ‘liberated’ from the presumed ‘mythologies’ of religion or traditional values, but academics’ responses are less than enthusiastic should such an investigation confirm what they were sure could not be so. When evidence is presented to suggest conclusions outside their paradigms, such as pre-Columbian transoceanic crossings or Semitic speakers in ancient America, many of their reactions show their paradigms to be as dogmatic as they think religious ones are.

A very interesting difference between Sem-p and Sem-kw is that Sem-p kept ʕ and ġ distinct, and kept ḫ and x distinct, whereas Sem-kw did the known Canaanite mergers of ḫ and x to ḫ, and also the merger of ʕ and ġ to ʕ. Among some Israelites, if not all, this merger occurred later, that is, sometime between 300 BC and the first centuries AD (Kutscher 1982, 13-18; Sáenz-Badillos 1993, 81; Blau 1998, 12, 30). The fact that Sem-p shows the distinction in contrast to Sem-kw having merged them, losing the distinction, could be

interpreted as a difference in time depth—that Sem-p separated earlier from the Near-East and Sem-kw later. However, that would not need to be the case. The fact that the Phoenician alphabet has two letters for the four sounds suggests that the merger had already taken place in Phoenician by the development of the Phoenician alphabet (1500-1200 BC), whereas Israelite Hebrew bore with using some symbols to represent two sounds each (ʕayn for ʕ and ġ, ḥeyṭ for ḥ and x, šin for š and ś) for a millennium or so, like English uses *th* for both ð (this, Heather) and θ (think, Timothy). Thus, the Phoenician merger of the four Proto-Semitic consonants to two happened a millennium before the Israelite merger of the four to two. If the Semitic-kw speakers came on a Phoenician vessel, that would explain their merger and much else.

Much remains to be worked out, but less than remained to be figured out in UA previously, as these data explain much that was not explainable before (6.1-6.7). As well, the specific Egyptian and Semitic data may eventually help identify the Old World times and places from whence the dialects came.

This corpus may provide enough promising data for varieties of other analytical studies. For example, the Semitic-p *ti'na 'mouth' (< Aramaic diqn-aa, 617) vs. Semitic-kw ca'lo 'chin' (< Hebrew zaaqn-o 'chin-his', 628), from the same Semitic cognate pair, offer a potential to illuminate much. Several other pairs of the same word, one from each, provide examples of the potential.

If these proposed ties are as viable as the statistical probabilities suggest, they provide a leap forward in explaining scores of previous unknowns, only some of which might have been attainable after many more decades of comparative UA work. Keep in mind, as if 1500 matches were not enough, that there is another way to know whether this is a valid case or not: if it be truth, then this is only the beginning of findings.

APPENDIX A: Sound Correspondences of the Semitic and Egyptian Infusions in Uto-Aztecan from Semitic-K^{w}, Semitic-p, and Egyptian: C- (initial), -C- (medial), C (all environments)

Semitic, Egyptian	UA terms from Semitic-kw in UA	UA terms from Semitic-p in UA	UA terms from Egyptian
b	kw	b/p	b/p
p	p	p	p
’	ø/’	w/’	w/’
ḫ	hu/w	hu	hu
x (> ḫ Phn)	hu/w	k/h	k
ʕ	w/o/’	w/o/u	w/o/u
ġ (> ʕ Phn)	w/o/’	k	-- (not in Egyptian)
ṣ/ḏ	c	s	s
ṭ	c/s	t/c	-- (not in Egyptian)
t	t-, medially -r-/-l-	t-, -r-/-l-	t-, -r-/-l-
d	t-, medially -r-/-l-	t-, -r-/-c-	t-, -r-/-l-
k	ø-, -k-	k	k
g	ø-, -k-, but Tak ŋ	k	k
q	ø-, -k-, but Tak ŋ	k, but Tak q	k, but Tak q
h	h/ø	’/ø	’/ø
m	m	m	m
n	n	n	n
l	l	l	-- (not in Middle Egyptian)
r	t-, medially -y-	t-, -r-	t-, -r-/-y-
ð (> z Phn)	s/c	t	-- (not in Egyptian)
z	s/c	c	-- (not in Egyptian)
θ (> š Phn)	s	s	s
s_1 (> š)	s	s	s
s_2 (> ś)	s	s	s
s_3 (> s)	s/c	s	s
y/i	y/i	y/i	y/i
w	w	w	w