Facets of Hebrew and Semitic linguistics   Handout 4 (Sept. 12)
LING 214/614, JDST 215/675, Fall 2013
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Theme: the Northwest Semitic languages, family tree model vs. wave model

Question of the day: *Ancestors, relatives or neighbors?*

1. A few words on the Northwest Semitic languages
- Aramaic: 1st millennium BCE – today
    - Old/Ancient Aramaic
    - Imperial Aramaic
    - Middle Aramaic
    - Late Aramaic: Western dialect and Eastern dialect
      E => Syriac: 1st millennium CE – (today: by Syriac churches), also E and W dialects
    - Neo-Aramaic languages

- Ugaritic: 2nd millennium BCE

- **Canaanite** languages:
    - Hebrew: 1st millennium BCE – today
    - Ammonite, Edomite, Moabite: early 1st millennium BCE
    - Phoenician: 1st half of 1st millennium BCE (*Tyre, Sidon, Byblos…*)
      => Punic: in *Carthage* (originally a colony of Tyre),
      1st mill BCE in Western Mediterranean, N-Africa, until late Roman times (Augustine)!
    - Old Canaanite: Tel el-Amarna glosses within diplomatic letters in Akkadian.
      Canaanite sound shift: [ā] > [ō]

Old discussion: should Ugaritic be considered a Canaanite language?
      Hints: geography vs. linguistics? Science (old style) = obsessive-compulsive categorization?

2. How should we draw the isoglosses?

Ugaritic: [ā]	Old Canaanite: [ō]
Cases system: Nom Acc Gen	Cases system: Nom Acc Gen
Aramaic: [ā]	Hebrew: [ō]
No cases	No cases

3. The criticism of the family tree model
      (family tree model originally: August Schleicher's *Stammbaumtheorie*, 1860s)

   - Methodology: create categories based on cognates, regular sound changes and sound laws, etc.
   - Explains gradual differentiation within a language family.
   - Prediction: isoglosses do not cross each other. But they do!
   - Ignores temporal distinctions.
   - Ignores potential interaction between languages after splitting apart.   **Areal effects.**
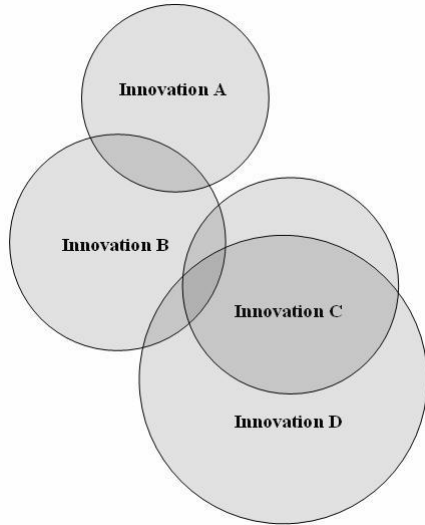
- as well as…

4. Wave model

(Johannes Schmidt's *Wellentheorie*, 1872)
- The family tree model ignores dialectal differences in the proto-language.

Imagine **waves of innovation** in the proto-language:
- Center vs. periphery.
- Waves may follow each other.
- Waves may intercept. Waves may move in perpendicular directions.

Innovation A

Innovation B

Innovation C

Innovation D

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wave_Model_Schmidt.jpeg

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- Theory of waves of migrations ("leaving the desert")
    1. Akkadian (cca. 3000 BCE to the East)
    2. NW: Amorite (Amurru, cca. 2200 BCE to the E), then Ugarit and Canaanites (to the NW)
    3. Aramaic tribes (cca. 1100 BCE, to Syria)
    4. Arabs (since Roman times until today, cf. Bedouins)
    5. Southern Arabian and Ethiopian (toward the South)

Reading for next week: Bennett, Parts 4-5 (and eventually re-read Part 3).
Rabin, *A Short History of the Hebrew Language*, Chapters I-IV.

Further background on Semitic languages:

John Huehnergard: 'Introduction'. In: John Kaltner and Steven L. McKenzie (eds.): *Beyond Babel: A Handbook for Biblical Hebrew and Related Languages.* SBL 2002. Pp. 1-18.

Sabatino Moscati (ed.). *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages: Phonology and Morphology.* Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1964 (and later printings). Pp. 1-21.

Homework (to be submitted, preferably on paper, by Tuesday, September 17): Bennett, p. 30 and 33, *exercises 2 and 3*. Focus on a single language pair (either Ar-Eg, or Eg-Su, etc., as explained in exercise 2). It will be appreciated, however, if you also kept an eye on the rest of the languages, which may give you hints. You will submit an approximately 1-page-long report, 2/3 of which will answer exercise 2, and some additional remarks will reflect upon exercise 3.