

***RECENZJE, OMÓWIENIA, SPRAWOZDANIA, KOMUNIKATY***

Allan R. Bomhard: *The Nostratic Hypothesis in 2011: Trends and Issues*, 341pp. (= Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph Series Number 59). \$128. ISBN 978 0 9845383 1 7

Linguistic studies of languages of distant relationship keep on appearing. It all started in the late 18th century when Sir William Jones, a learned British jurist in India, suggested that languages as geographically diverse as Sanskrit, Irish, Germanic, Greek, etc. had clear similarities. From this philological base the modern abstract study of language has evolved. In the present case, the author, Allan Bomhard, has become the principal western spokesman for an idea originally proposed by the Dane Holger Pedersen who, in 1903, began the “Nostratic” hypothesis. In this Pedersen claimed that there was a distant common origin for such language families including Indo-European, Hamito-Semitic (widened to Afro-Asiatic which includes Berber, Chadic and Cushitic as well), Kartvelian (including e.g., Georgian), Uralic (including e.g., Finnish and Hungarian), and Altaic (including e.g., Turkish and Mongolian). This large grouping was called a macro-family. The supposition, logical in a way, was largely ignored for three quarters of a century until Bomhard (1984), following Joseph Greenberg of Stanford University, made a forceful effort to reignite interest in this theory, even suggesting broader groupings which came to be called “Proto-World”. At the same time Russian scholars began to plow the same soil, bringing in such Eastern Siberian languages as Nivkh and Chukchi. In the 1930s smaller-scale studies had begun, relating Indo-European to Uralic, or Indo-European to Kartvelian; but most of these correspondences could be dismissed as mere loan words between contiguous language families, just as there are Spanish words found in Basque. Few accepted the idea that one could trace back language so far in time. Jerzy Kuryłowicz, a Polish linguist who flourished in the mid-20th century, suggested that language correspondences largely could not be traced farther back than 7000 years; by this time phonological relationships would be too blurred. The oldest Indo-European writing goes back only to 2000 BC, to the Hittite cuneiform inscriptions. Ancient Vedic hymns were written down by the mid-first millennium BC, but reflect memorized metrical religious verse which might go back more than another millennium BC. Mycenaean

Greek, written in Linear B script, dates to only 1200 BC. The oral texts we call Homeric might have achieved their final shape as early as 800 BC but were recorded in manuscript form only from 500 BC. Thus Indo-European languages have a depth of only 4000 years. Semitic cuneiform texts in Akkadian might have a time depth approaching 4500 years; neighboring Sumerian and Egyptian are older. Thus Kuryłowicz's 7000 year range is unprovable since we have no languages that are so distantly recorded. But most linguists are comfortable with his idea.

The Proto-Indo-Europeans, presumably arriving from Central Asia, started their earliest westward migration close to 9000 years ago, though according to the late Lithuanian archaeologist Maria Gimbutas, their final dispersion from the Ukraine did not occur until after 4000 BC. The Georgian linguist Tamaz Gamkrelidze suggests that the Indo-European people remained a coherent unit until approximately 5000 BC, when they dispersed from the northern Middle-East to their current areas extending from Ireland to Bangladesh. Alan Bomhard also tried hard to show that major language groups from Europe to Korea are related and that this can be proven by comparison of vocabulary. This goes beyond Nostratic and becomes "Proto-World", implying an incredible time depth (the Neolithic revolution in the Fertile Crescent began less than 11,000 years ago at most). Though the pre-human *Homo erectus* might have begun to leave Africa about 1,500,000 years ago, he certainly did not have speech as we know it; the lobe of his brain responsible for speech was not large enough, and the skeletal shape of his mouth would not do either. But 70,000–50,000 years ago *Homo sapiens* began spreading out from Africa to Europe. Part became *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* (HSN) and later part became *Homo sapiens sapiens* (HSS), two subspecies that were capable of inter-breeding. We find DNA traces of HSN still in our present European population, and even in highland New Guinea. DNA evidence also suggests the HSN had light skin and red hair, not the way the HSN have been presented in traditional illustrations. They might even have had freckles. But we cannot say these people had a single language. Things are just too complicated for that. It seems probable, however, that the Indo-European language was not a language isolate, but existed at a primordial date in the company of other related speakers who branched out eventually to form other language families and sub-families.

Bomhard's bibliography is composed of scores of historical and multi-language dictionaries which he has rigorously thumbed through to find lexical correspondences. But too little of the vocabulary from which Bomhard makes wide-range comparisons is part of any culture's core vocabulary. Basic terms like dog, river, flower or hunt have no broad distribution in similar

shapes; terms of family relation are confined to their singular language family. Words like *mama* and *papa* are widespread, but such terms as these are universally coined in the nursery: *Kindersprach*. Bomhard cannot find significant, wide-spread words of similar shape and meaning; often they are mono-syllabic terms linked around a single consonant, a comparison which does not form meaningful etymologies. Take Afro-Asiatic *\*akw-* as in Arabic *akka* “burn”, Dravidian *\*axrna* “warm oneself”, Eskimo *akaka* “hot”. Such an etymology is unconvincing, as is, on semantic grounds, Indo-European *\*ékwo-* “horse”, Altaic *\*echa* “more quickly”, which Bomhard suggests are related on the grounds that the word for “horse” is related to the word for “speed”. He also asserts that Proto-Nostratic *\*er-* “earth” is revealed in cognates such as Afro-Asiatic *\*[e]r* “earth”, Proto-Indo-European *\*er-*, Dravidian (Kannada) *ere* “black soil”. But the core is simply *-r-*, which is too small. Altogether he lists hundreds of etymologies of this nature.

Some decades ago the primary American linguistics journal *Language*, openly decided that they would no longer print articles about a Nostratic language family. Yet the idea of a far-extending macro-family continues to fascinate the intellectual population. Books and articles expressing these thoughts will probably continue to be presented.

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Iwona Benenowska: *Wartościowanie w listach Marii Pawlikowskiej-Jasnorzewskiej*. Bydgoszcz 2015, ss. 269.

Książka Iwony Benenowskiej *Wartościowanie w listach Marii Pawlikowskiej-Jasnorzewskiej* zasługuje na uwagę i uznanie z kilku powodów. Po pierwsze, jest pierwszym tak obszernym językoznawczym opracowaniem języka poetki: analiza przeprowadzona została na podstawie zbioru listów pt. *Maria z Kossaków Jasnorzewska. Listy do przyjaciół i korespondencja z mężem (1928–1945)* opracowanego przez Kazimierza Olszańskiego. Po drugie, monografia może być dopełnieniem nie tylko analiz literaturoznawczych, ale też poprzez uchwycenie sposobów wartościowania zarówno na płaszczyźnie leksykalnej, jak i składniowej, praktycznie jest opracowaniem idiolektu Marii Pawlikowskiej-Jasnorzewskiej. Po trzecie, książka Iwony