

NOSTRATIC DICTIONARY

by Aharon Dolgopolsky

*To the blessed memory
of the great scholars and my dear friends*

Vladislav Illich-Svitych (1934–1966)

and Sergey Starostin (1953–2005)

Foreword

Aharon Dolgopolsky

This dictionary is a preliminary one. Critical remarks of scholars and further research will bring about modifications and more exact etymologies. Therefore I appeal to my colleagues and experts in different fields of comparative linguistics to submit their critical remarks (both in their papers and in personal messages) that will be helpful in checking and improving the etymologies.

Today the pace of development in our field of science is rapid; therefore at the very moment of its publication this dictionary (like any other study of this kind) is already out of date. Thus is due to several reasons:

1. Some extremely important studies in etymology are still in preparation or in print. The recently published Altaic etymological dictionary by S. Starostin, A. Dybo and O. Mudrak was not available to me (I could only use its preliminary versions). This drawback has brought about another one: I could not pay due attention to the very complicated and controversial proto-Altaic vocalism of roots, so that my reconstruction of Nostratic vowels still needs checking and revision. Nor have I been able to use the *Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian* (vols. IIIff.) by G. Takács.
2. Some important papers were published shortly before the submission of this dictionary (e.g. the second Georgian edition of the Kartvelian etymological dictionary by H. Fähnrich and Z. Sarjveladze; the Laz-Turkish dictionary by İ.A. Bucaklışı and H. Uzunhasanoğlu; the latest fascicles of the *Dictionnaire des racines sémitiques* by D. Cohen; the new Tuareg-French dictionary by K.-G. Prasse, Ghoubéïd Alojaly and Ghabdouane Mohamed; the French-Berber dictionary by M. Dray; the *Rendille Dictionary* by S. Pillinger and L. Galboran; *The Dhaasanac Language* by M. Tosco; the *Iraqw-English Dictionary* by M. Mous a. o. (MQK); the *Grammar of Miya* by R. Schuh; *The Maale Language* by Azeb Ahma" *Essai sur la phonologie du proto-berbère* by M. Kossmann; *Comparative Dravidian Linguistics* by Bh. Krishnamurti; the second volume of the above-mentioned Takács"s *Dictionary*), so that I have not been able to use them to the full extent. The same applies to the *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*, edited by J.P. Mallory & D.Q. Adams (L./Chic. 1997), which is extremely valuable for its lexical and grammatical entries (which are not connected with Mallory"s incorrect conception about the homeland and early migrations of the Indo-Europeans [Gimbutas"s theory of Ponto-Caspian steppes as the homeland that is at variance with obvious linguistic facts: cf. AD IEH, AD CCIE and AD MAIEH; on the archaeological aspects of the problem see Rnf. AL]). The second volume of *Indo-European and its Closest Relatives* by J. Greenberg reached me in July 2002, when the text of my dictionary was ready. Nevertheless, in the reference notes of my entries (after the signs \diamond and \blacklozenge) I have mentioned those comparisons of Gr. that are (at least partially) acceptable. I have paid no attention to those (too numerous!) among Gr."s comparisons that are untenable or unjustified.
3. Some important dictionaries remained inaccessible to me. Among them the manuscripts of the two unedited Goemay dictionaries by E. Sirlinger (Jos, Nigeria, 1937 and 1946); the Russian-Türkmen dictionary by Alijev and Borijev (Ashkhabad, 1929); the Chinese dictionaries of the Mongolian languages Baoan, Dongxiang and Dagur (Beijing, 1981-2); the etymological dictionaries of Erzya, Moksha and Cheremis that were published in Saransk and Yoshkar-Ola (see Sr. and Srl EG, AB, BuL, LiuZh, Zhong, CygM, KMC and Gord. in the bibliography). I regret not being able to use the Gothic etymological dictionary by W. Lehmann and the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 1983).
4. Some earlier papers on Nostratic (among them those by A. Bomhard) have not been analysed although they are likely to contain useful comparisons (in spite of methodological drawbacks [cf. AD rTPN] and partially untenable hypotheses of sound correspondences). Analysing them is a lengthy and inefficient procedure that I could not undertake owing to time constraints.

5. I have not included in my comparison Eskimo-Aleut, Chukchee-Kamchadal, Etruscan and (almost entirely) Gilyak and Elamite, although these languages do belong (in my opinion) to the Nostratic macrofamily. The reason is that the comparative study of these languages is in its initial stage. At the time of writing there was no comparative dictionary of Eskimo-Aleut (but now see Fortescue, M., S. Jacobsen & L. Kaplan, 1994, *Comparative Eskimo Dictionary*, Fairbanks (AL): Alaska Native Language Center; and Fortescue, M., 2005, *Comparative Chukoto-Kamchatkan Dictionary*, Berlin & New York (NY): Mouton de Gruyter). The only comparative dictionary of Chukchee-Kamchadal (by O. Mudrak) was only published shortly before the present dictionary was submitted, and hence could not be used. Therefore for the time being I cannot evaluate Greenberg's interesting comparisons concerning EA, CK, Gil and Ai.

For all these and other reasons this dictionary does not claim to be an exhaustive list of all Nostratic words. I am already aware of some possibly reconstructible words that need further investigation. Other Nostratic words may be found in recently published and forthcoming papers on descendant languages. I hope to mention them in future papers.

The greatest practical drawback of the present dictionary is lack of indexes. Their preliminary version does exist, but could not be included in this dictionary because it would have increased its volume immensely. I am planning to publish them separately as soon as possible.

One of the weakest points in the dictionary is the supposed Chadic cognates. Unfortunately, they had to be adduced without previous detailed analysis of the phonological prehistory and history of the Chadic languages (beyond the precious results achieved by O. Stolbova in her recent papers). Actually Chadic historical phonology, morphology and etymology are in their infancy. I have adduced Chadic cognates hesitantly and tentatively. They may serve as raw material for establishing sound laws in the prehistory and history of the Chadic languages.

Probably an additional inconvenience for some readers will be my approach to semantic definitions of the lexical items. In many cases I prefer to preserve the German, French, Italian, Spanish and Latin definitions from the sources in order to avoid inaccuracy in semantic interpretation of the data (due to polysemy of words in the sources and the inevitable arbitrariness in my English translation of these). In some cases I had to achieve accuracy by quoting the sources in Russian, Swedish or other 'exotic' languages (accompanied by an English translation). If the name of an endemic plant or animal, of an object or phenomenon of some ethnic

culture has no exact English equivalent, I have had to present an approximate interpretation (sometimes with the symbols \in 'a kind of' or \approx 'approximately'). If the English word is polysemic, I have sometimes preferred to use a more convenient Latin, French or German equivalent (Latin 'dorsum' or French 'dos' instead of English 'back').

I hope very much to make use of critical remarks of scholars in order to improve the etymologies of this dictionary. New comparative material and modifications of Nostratic etymologies will later be published as *Addenda and Corrigenenda to the Nostratic Dictionary*. Therefore critical remarks by experts in different fields of comparative linguistics and related fields are most welcome.

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