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

Vladislav Illich-Svitych (1934–1966)
and Sergey Starostin (1953–2005)
Foreword

Aharon Dolgopolosky

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rapid; therefore at the very moment of its publication this dictionary (like any other study of this kind) is already out of date.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 I.A. Bucaklış 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 and ) 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 Borjev (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-
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 ‘a kind of’ or ‘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 Corrigenda 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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founder of modern Nostratic linguistics Vladislav
Illich-Svitych (1932–64), from whom I learned the
basic methodology of long-range comparative
linguistic research. He discovered the main sound
correspondences between Nostratic languages
and the phonetic laws that underlie these
correspondences. In his Essay of Comparison of
the Nostratic Languages (IS I, II, III) and his earlier
paper “Material for comparison of the Nostratic
languages” (IS MS), he proposed more than 600
Nostratic etymologies. Almost all of them (in a
revised form) have been incorporated in the present
dictionary (with reference notes ‘IS’ and ‘IS MS’).

Among other linguists who contributed much
to the crystallization of mature Nostratic studies,
I must gratefully mention Vladimir Dybo, Igor
Diakonoff and my predecessors and friends Björn
Collinder and Karl-Heinrich Menges.

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My deep gratitude and homage to those many
scholars who dedicated their life, talent and energy
to record and register the lexical stock of ancient,
living and dying-out languages, to preserve their
precious Wortschatz, to establish etymologies and
to discover laws of their historical phonology
and morphology. This dictionary is built on their
shoulders.

No research in comparative linguistics is possible
without access to professional literature. Therefore
the present study would have not been feasible

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