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THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES CORRELATE WITH THE NOSTRATIC PHYLUM

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0. In the light of our present knowledge, no genetic link between the Australian languages and languages outside Australia can be assumed to exist with any degree of certainty, voiced the currently widespread opinion of the well known expert in the field S. Wurm (1972:9), and in the same vein also Dixon (1980:238). The linguistic isolation of the Aboriginal tongues has been generally upheld in spite of some XIXth century scholars' statements to the contrary (Bleek 1851 and others). In our days this line has been continued by Blažek (1989) and some other long-range researchers.

Hereby the author submits to the readers' attention some points in which the Aboriginal idioms may have things in common (be it typologically or otherwise) with Nostratic (Ns) phylum languages.

1. The general make-up of the two can be said to have at least one major feature in common:

- Proto-Australian (pA) had a fairly agglutinative structure (Dixon, op. cit.:226)
- The eastern branch of Ns languages including the Ural-Altai and Dravidian families feature the same morphological type while the Western branch families, for example the IE, are also surmised to have been agglutinative in the past (see here Lehmann 1962, Bomhard & Kerns 1994:124).

2. Syntactic similarities

2.1. Statistically there seems to be some preference for the [word] order S-O-V in transitive sentences. The order S-O-V seems to be the basic Australian sentence pattern (Wurm, op.cit.:68).

2.2. In the Aboriginal languages the Subject of a sentence is employed with no affix in most cases (Homburger 1951:30). Indeed, in many Pama-Nyungan (PN) languages an intransitive Subject is unmarked and is used in the Absolutive case, with zero realization (Dixon, op.cit.:22).

2.3. At the same time the indigenous tongues possess a widespread Direct Object marker *-na* (Wurm op.cit:63). Take an instance from a PN language, Dungidjan:

tyaan-tu *pukiny-nya* *pumi*
 man-erg. dog-obj. hit
 'the man hit the dog' (Wurm 1994:747)

The Australian idioms have a widespread feature viz. an Ergative/agentive suffix that indicates the actor of an action expressed by a transitive verb, see above (loc.cit.).

2.4. Scholars generally write of a bipartite division within the Aboriginal tongues encompassing a) Accusative languages and b) Ergative ones. K. Hale for one believes that a number of the Australian languages could be regarded as constituting a mixture of Ergative and Accusative types (after Wurm 1972:62).

2.5. The SOV pattern is characteristic of most Ns families as well (Bomhard & Kerns op.cit. 157 sqq).

The direct object in Ns, if equated with the PN Absolutive is also said to have a zero indication (op.cit.:81). The Ns counterpart of *-na*, is plainly seen in *-n* 'oblique forms suffix' (Illich-Svitych 1976-78). In point 2.4. the two macro-families under study also coincide (Bomhard & Kerns op.cit. 162-165)

3. Morphological Correlates

3.1. In the system of Personal pronouns three persons are distinguished, the third often being a demonstrative.

1st person sg. *nga*, 2nd person sg. *ngin-* ~ *ngjin*, both with petrified Ergative suffixes *ngadju*, *ngindu*, etc. According to A. Capell (1956) the root-form of the pronoun in question is **nga-*, with the said suffix variants (*-dju* ~ *-du* ~ *-ju* ~ *-da* ~ *-ju*) in most Central Australian (PN) groups and in many West Australian languages. Against this background Woiwuru (Kulinic group) has *wa-n* and Wanman (SW group) features *bara* for 'I'.

The second and third person plural forms *njura* and *dana* are found in many areas. compare this with the southern Australia's Narrinyeri *il* 'he' (Wurm 1972:63, 81-82; Dixon, op.cit.:78).

3.2. Very instructive for the comparative and/or historical linguist is R.Dixon's apt statement that:

...common ergative suffix *-nggu* ~ *-lu* ~ *-du* and the accusative *-nya* provide an obvious grammatical clue to a unity of pA languages, ergative allomorphs also being *-tu*, *-ngku*, *-lu*, the latter after a vowel; the pA accusative taken to have been *-nya* ~ *nha* (Dixon, op.cit.:224,308,471).

3.3. The Nostratic Pronouns reveal many resembling feature (Bomhard & Kerns 1994:156 sqq., 171) to the items referred to above.

The PNs **na-/*nə-*, **ni-/*ne-* 'a demonstrative stem' (op. cit.:688) is very likely to correlate with the forms discussed as well. The Nostratic oblique *n-* stem also compares well enough with the accusative *-nya* ~ *nha* (vida supra) (op. cit.:173-178).

4. Phonetic Parallels

4.1. From the viewpoint of syllable structure in most of the Aboriginal languages simple patterns of the type CV, CVC are reported (Wurm 1972:55). Thus evident is a historical continuity with the pA monosyllabic words (Dixon, op.cit.:470). (Emphasis added - Sh.N.).

4.2. Further, in most languages under study stress happens to fall onto the first syllable (Wurm op. cit.:57).

4.3. As quoted from the sources cited (p.104) according to such authority as A. Capell, a three vowel system featuring /i, u, a/ is conjectured for the Australian Languages as being the original one.

4.4. The pA system of consonants phonemes is reconstructed by Dixon (op.cit.:177) to be:

<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>g</i>
<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ny</i>	<i>ng</i>
<i>w</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>y</i>	

Among the laryngeals the glottal stop is a recent development going back to /g/ or /d/ or /r/ in different languages (op.cit.:470). Yet in the North Pamam sub group a frequent occurrence of the glottal stop phoneme is observed (Wurm, op.cit.:142).

4.5. Phonologically the word-initial clusters of consonants are absent from most Australian languages. In them /r/ and retroflex consonants are not found word initially (op.cit.:56).

4.6. The Proto-Ns inventory of phonemes shows as a number of resemblances with the Australian languages. Compare such vowels as /i, ə, u, e, a, o/ and /m-, n-, l-, r-/ among liquids; /q^h-, q'-, ŋ-, ʔ-, h-/ i.e. laryngeals, two laterals, a number of palatalized and aspirated consonants (Bomhard & Kerns op. cit.125-131). Ergo there are grounds to state the more primordial character with the pA phonetic inventory. Root structure patterning in Proto-Ns resembled 4.1 (v.s.) (op.cit.:123,192).

5. Some Lexical Matches

5.1. According to some modern long-range studies the Aboriginal glosses are not in the least 'in a state of linguistic isolation' (v.s.), so to speak. In various Australian languages one comes across common/lexical/core words for 'woman, female' of the type *ginaia* ~ *-gun*. In extinct Tasmanian of the Indo-Pacific stock they have a cognate *quani* 'idem'. From the ancient Amerindian Tonkawa (Texas) we get *kwaan* 'woman'. Among the Altain branch of Nostratic, namely Turkic 'one of the wives in polygamy' is

kūni*, all boiling down to a common [Mother Tongue] *kuni* 'woman' (Bengtson 1989:176).

5.2. Way back in 1956 A. Capell had suggested such Common Australian vocabulary items as (quoted from Dixon, op. cit.:119):

<i>bina/pina</i> 'ear'	<i>gugu</i> 'water'
<i>bula</i> 'two'	<i>mara/mala</i> 'hard'
<i>jalang</i> 'tongue'	<i>warlu</i> 'fire'

5.3. An off-hand glance at the Ns core vocabulary entries reveals many correlates of the glosses mentioned above, at the inspectional level at least. The reconstructed Nostratic vocabulary may match the Aboriginal glosses in, say:

* <i>aK'u</i> ~ <i>gugu</i> 'water'
* <i>g'uλV</i> 'glowing coals' ~ <i>jurra</i> 'fire'
* <i>jVnV</i> 'speak' ~ <i>bina/pina</i> (?) 'ear';
* <i>mužkA</i> 'fist' ~ <i>mara/mala</i> (?) 'hand'

Some presumable cognates would be more preferable: cf. Ns **mar-na* 'hand'; Drav. **pāl* 'pant, share' ~ IE **pol-* 'half (ad *bula*); Ural. **nālmā* 'tongue' (ad *jalang*); Ns **haw-* 'rain' (ad *gugu*).... (compiled from various sources).

6. In Lieu of a Conclusion

6.1. A number of languages around the world have hardly been successfully shown to be related to any others - in at least some cases because any related idioms have long been extinct. The Aboriginal tongues of the Green continent are exemplary in this respect. The Aboriginal languages of Australia are conservatively classified in 26 families, the largest being Pama-Nyungan, consisting of about 200 languages originally spoken over 80-90 per cent of Australia.

6.2. Not a few experts in the field (R.M. Dixon and others) criticize the proposed Nostratic and other similar super-families, proceeding in holding long-range comparison attempts in little respect.

6.3. The present author's vision of a deep, Nostratic or pre-Nostratic-type connection between Australian and those languages is herewith exemplified by certain cursive parallels offering a rather large testimony to the Nostratic phylum's certain external long-range relationships.

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