Book reviews / Рецензии

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In Hot Pursuit of Language in Prehistory.
Essays in the four fields of anthropology. In honor of Harold Crane Fleming.
By John D. Bengtson (ed.)
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The volume under discussion was published in honour of Harold Crane Fleming, a distinguished veteran anthropologist with deep specialisation in linguistics and language prehistory. His particular passion in this domain have been African languages, on which he published a great number of significant papers following his long term trips to Ethiopia, working mostly, though not exclusively, with Chadic, Omotic and Cushitic languages. Through his studies, Harold Fleming has always emphasised that only a complex interdisciplinary approach can lead us to uncover the prehistory of humankind — a task he has always been working upon in person.

The book is a solid attempt to vindicate this very approach. It contains a collection of articles written by specialists in various fields of anthropological studies — including genetics, archaeology, linguistics, cultural studies and human biology. The lifetime idea of Harold Fleming, therefore, is well reflected here: to bring together people who can answer questions on deep human past multiplying knowledge of several interconnected disciplines and creating a synergy to boost the progress. A great endeavour, indeed.

The collected papers are divided into five major blocks in an attempt to follow the disciplinary principle: African Peoples; African Languages (synchronic studies); African Languages (classification and prehistory); Languages of Eurasia, Oceania, and the Americas; and Human and Language Origins. However, some inconsistencies may be noticed: papers on genetics are placed into the first and final sections, while issues of mythology are discussed in parts I and IV. This is probably done on purpose, to strengthen the impression that all humanities are interrelated and cannot be easily classified.

We will go through the materials one by one in the order they are presented, focusing more on linguistic studies as the present Journal implies.

Genetics and genogeography have recently become an important part of prehistoric studies, and pioneering experiments of L. Cavalli-Sforza (1991) and his followers to link genetic data with cultures, ethnicities and languages are gaining substantial popularity. One of them is carried out in Shomarka Omar Keita's article "Geography, selected Afro-Asiatic families, and Y-chromosome lineage variation: an exploration in linguistics and phylogeography". The author deals with Y-chromosome genetic data of various ethnic groups of Afro-Asiatic (or Afrasian) language speakers. As it turns out, many of the ones that are located in Africa belong to the same haplogroups — which, therefore, may confirm their common origins. The author claims to find the same traces in Semitic data to back the theory of the African origins of Afrasians; however, this does not seem evident. There are further doubts regarding links with Berber genetic data, which, according to earlier discoveries, lies closer to Eurasian stocks than to African ones.

The article by Christy Turner named "A dental anthropological hypothesis relating to the ethnogenesis, origin, and antiquity of the Afro-Asiatic language family: peopling of the Eurasian-S.Asian triangle IV" considers traits of dental morphology of Homo sapiens fossils to resolve the same problem: the original homeland of Afrasian language speakers. Contrary to the previous author, the author supports the idea of Near Eastern origins of Afrasians, namely the Natuf archaeological culture of the region. In the light of the latest reports (Militarev 2009), this relation seems promising. Sadly, the author's phrase 'the hypothesis of non-African origins of Afro-Asiatic finds support in the fact that the Semitic branch ... is the most important in terms of number of speakers' (p. 18) does not withstand serious criticism.

Daniel McCall describes the phenomenon of the calendar 7-day week in the culture of ancient civilisa-

tions in his "African weeks". He turns to a well-known parallel between the 7-day week in the ancient Mediterranean, originating from Babylon, and the same tradition among the Akan people of Ghana. An amazing migration of the cultural custom is suggested by the author to have emerged due to the gold cara-van trade across Sahara which lasted for thousands of years between the Mediterranean and the 'Gold Coast', the homeland of the Akan. The author analy-ses possible correspondences in the names of the weekdays between European cultures and this remote African one.

"Gender distinction and affirmative copula clauses in Zargulla" by Azeb Amha is the first article of Part II of the book. It provides an insight into the problem of gender marking in one of the Omotic languages: sur-prisingly, the old opposition of masculine and femi-nine is reinterpreted as neutral / emotional shading of the copula. Typologically, this kind of development is a rare case, worth being studied on a wider range of data, and a nice example of how the Afrasian gender system has eroded in Omotic.

Another synchronic study is contained in "Riddling in Gidole" by Paul Black, who finds and classifies rules of building popular riddles in two East Cushitic languages of Ethiopia: Gidole and Konso.

The longest paper of the volume, "A lexicostatisti-cal comparison of Omotic languages", is written by Václav Blažek; it opens the third part of the book. This is a serious and detailed analysis of the subject, con-taining both a retrospective review of the existing re-constructions of Proto-Omotic and the author's own estimates. Blažek adduces two of the most recently established and reliable systems of phonetic corre-spondences between the Omotic languages (one by L. Bender and the other by M. Lamberti & R. Sottile), as well as the language tree diagrams of Omotic built by H. Fleming and L. Bender. Based on the Swadesh 100-word lists for fourty Omotic dialects, the author sug-gests his own version of the language diffusion chart, which amends Bender's tree in some details without changing the whole picture. A good corpus of recon-structed Proto-Omotic roots for the Swadesh list is en-closed. The author concludes that the breakup of the Proto-Omotic language community took place ca. 7,000 years ago.

Christopher Ehret's contribution to the volume is entitled "The primary branches of Cushitic: seriating the diagnosis sound change rules". The basis of the study is the comparison of the reconstructed phone-mic systems of Proto-Cushitic and its core branches: common innovations are considered to reflect the structure of the proto-language's dialectal diffusion.

Unfortunately, no examples are presented to support the reconstructions, which are mostly taken from ear-lier works of the author. The author concludes that there was a common phonetic innovation in East and South Cushitic, and another one common for Beja and South Cushitic. The latter, according to the author, may suggest a Beja-South Cushitic node in the internal classification of the family.

The issues of phonetic and morphological devel-opment in Chadic languages are discussed in Herr-mann Jungraithmayr's "Erosion in Chadic". He de-scribes a very intriguing, but still poorly studied, issue of the difference in development speed between vari-ous languages of the same stock. Indeed, some lan-guages of the group / family always seem more pro-gressive, while others are rather conservative. The process of language change and proto-language sys-tem destruction is called erosion by the author, who then analyses it for Chadic. Based on this criterion, he proposes to divide the languages of the family into three basic groups: 'Old Chadic', preserving much of Proto-Chadic in its phonetics and morphology; 'Mid-dle Chadic', showing significant shifts; and 'New Chadic', the most progressive and innovative lan-guages which have reduced or dropped much of their prehistoric shape. It is interesting to see that some languages may be archaic in preserving vowels and progressive in consonantism, or vice versa. The issue clearly deserves deeper research, with a discussion of the reasons for different rates of language change which, in our opinion, should include external lan-guage contacts as one of the main drivers of the lan-guage change.

Philippe Bürgisser ("On Kunama *ukunkula* "elbow" and its proposed cognates") not only addresses the etymology of this body part lexeme in one of the Nilo-Saharan languages, but also gives some lexical corre-spondences to strengthen the possible relations be-tween Nilo-Saharan and two isolate languages of the region, Shabo and Kadu. Further on, pros and contras of the two existing Proto-Nilo-Saharan reconstructions (by L. Bender and C. Ehret, respectively) are analysed. The author's view is that Bender's sound correspon-dences are poorly worked out, and that both versions are not strict enough due to far-fetched semantics, which is entirely true. However, one of the author's further statements — 'I don't share Ehret's faith in the existence of exceptionless sound laws' — is something that we can hardly accept. Exceptionless sound laws are not a matter of faith, but rather a basic principle of comparative linguistics; observed deviations from a postulated rule are usually due to other rules, some-times still waiting to be discovered.

"The problem of pan-African roots" by Roger Blench is a collection of lexical comparisons between the four language macrofamilies of the continent made by the author in the recent years. Blench has defended the Niger-Saharan hypothesis of genetic relations between the two sub-Saharan African language families, and the extension of this analysis towards pan-African lexical correspondences seems logical. However, we should be cautious about the material presented: the number of languages of Africa is so huge (over 1,500 in Niger-Congo alone) that finding a 'suitable' shape of word with a close semantic meaning, as Blench does, may not seem reliable. To avoid mere coincidences, one needs to compare proto-language forms (carefully reconstructed in advance) rather than data from one or two languages of a family. Otherwise, the studies of deep (and global) etymologies may be easily discredited from a methodological standpoint.

Part IV of the book opnes with an excellent paper by Allan Bomhard, "Some thoughts on the Proto-Indo-European cardinal numbers", that will be interesting for everyone familiar with the Indo-European reconstructions. It appears that, although the issue has already been studied for two centuries, there is still room to grow. Bomhard recalls and supports some earlier hypotheses on the origins of the numerals, e. g., he backs the original meaning 'four' for the root *$Hok'to$-, whose dual form *$Hok't\bar{o}$ is commonly known to have meant 'eight'. He also considers the original Indo-European word for 'two' to have been *do-, with Anatolian evidence, and explains the traditional *$duwo$- / *$dw\bar{o}$ as a Caucasian loanword. Thus he is able to interpret Indo-European *$de\text{-}km̥t$ 'ten' as < 'two-hands'. At the same time, there is no explanation in the paper for what particular reasons the Proto-Indo-Europeans (including Proto-Anatolians, if we recall Luwian *tuwa*- 'two') needed another word for 'two', if they already had one. Also, why is the 'Caucasian' *dwo- so similar in phonetic shape with the original **do-? It would be much more logical to support another theory here (Gamkrelidze & Ivanov 1984), namely, that the initial sound of Indo-European *d^wo- was actually a kind of a labiodental phoneme reflected as *d- (Irish *dó*), *dw- (Latin *bis* 'twice') and *w- (Tocharian A *wu*) depending on the particular Indo-European dialect. In this case, borrowing of this form into Caucasian sources, such as Proto-Circassian *$t'q'^wa$ mentioned by Bomhard, would be no surprise.

Juha Janhunen's "Some Old World experience of linguistic dating" deals with long-range comparison hypotheses of the language families of Northern Eurasia. The classification of Eurasian proto-languages is given according to their time depth. The author is reluctant to admit Altaic as a family of languages, but mentions that some arguments in favour of the Nostratic (Eurasiatic) and Ural-Altaic theories are 'difficult to take distance from'. The question, as Janhunen rightly puts it, is the method. The Etymological dictionary of the Altaic languages (EDAL 2003) contains almost 3,000 items, while for Proto-Uralic no more than 200 roots can be recognised. The reason is the assumption that a word can only be considered Proto-Uralic if it is found in both Fenno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages, though the latter are quite scarce in number. However, the binary approach to Indo-European (or Indo-Hittite) as falling into two major nodes of Anatolian and Narrow Indo-European will substantially decrease the number of Proto-Indo-Hittite roots. Will that make all the remaining roots of Pokorny not Proto-Indo-European?

John Bengtson, the Editor of the volume, presents a well-structured analysis of the recent advances in the long-range studies of the two hypothetical macrofamilies of Eurasia: Nostratic (Eurasiatic) and Dene-Caucasian ("The languages of Northern Eurasia: inference to the best explanation"). It is the typological and phonetic differences between these families that are the subject of the paper, and a summary chart is given following the analysis. The author concludes that a binary scheme of the deep prehistoric language diversification in Eurasia is the best explanation to date.

The work by Michael Witzel, called "Slaying the dragon across Eurasia", concentrates on the mythological story widespread in both the Old and the New Worlds: the evil dragon being killed by the hero. The value of mythology for reconstructing human prehistory has always been high for Indo-Europeanists (Puhvel 1993; Mallory 1991), and the dragon story, in particular, was also under close scrutiny (Watkins 2001). Witzel goes further to compare similar images and myths about dragon slaying from China, India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Japan etc., and makes comparisons with Maya (Kekchi) mythology as well, prolonging and deepening the comparison on both the cultural and the linguistic level.

One of the early scholars dealing in long-range language comparison, Alfredo Trombetti, is paid homage in the article by Jonathan Morris ("Trombetti: the forefather of Indo-Pacific"). The author reestimates Trombetti's works dedicated to the issues of genetic relationship between Andamanese, New Guinean and Australian languages, called the Indo-Pacific hypothesis. Both Trombetti and his fellow countryman Riccardo Gatti compiled a large number of proposed cognates, many of which are quoted in the paper.

More lexical items are presented from Trombetti's interesting 1923 work on possible correspondences between Dravidian and Australian.

Jane Hill, in her "Otomanguean loan words in Proto-Uto-Aztecan maize vocabulary" touches upon the issue of maize domestication in North America and Mesoamerica and proposes that the terms for its cultivation in Proto-Uto-Aztecan were actually borrowed from neighbouring Otomanguean. One of the more convincing arguments is built around the initial consonant alternations in Uto-Aztecan lexical items, an isolated phenomenon in this family, yet quite productive in and typical of Otomanguean. Some observations are made on the possible homeland for Uto-Aztecan.

The article by Larry Lepionka ("Historical interpretations of geographical distributions of Amerind subfamilies") gives a detailed description of prehistoric migrations of language families which arose after the breakup of the Proto-Amerind language community. The basic classification of Amerind, upon which the author is relying, is presented in (Ruhlen 1987) following the late Joseph Greenberg. Various geographical, social and historical typologies are drawn upon to reconstruct the prehistory of the people's dissolution over the vast territory of the American continent, which makes the paper a good example of interdisciplinary synergy advocated in this volume.

Stephen Zegura, in his "Current topics in human evolutionary genetics", emphasises the most actual trends in modern genetics, including the origins and geographic migrations of early Homo Sapiens, the chimpanzee connection, and the origins of human language.

The last topic is also the subject of the contribution by Philip Lieberman ("A wild 50,000-year ride"), who deals with the development of speech anatomy of Homo sapiens. He names a collection of features which allowed the human being to pronounce basic vowel sounds, and notices that the earliest recorded signs of the ability to pronounce vowels like [a], [i] and [u] go back to nearly 50,000 years back, but not earlier. So, this seems a natural chronological boundary for long-range comparative linguistics as it finds itself at the very end (or, rather, the beginning) of the road to the prehistory of language.

Another view on this issue is contained in Ofer Bar-Yosef's article "Can Paleolithic stone artifacts serve as evidence for prehistoric language?" This is a view from the archaeological standpoint, and it analyses the level of mutual comprehension within human society in the Paleolithic era. The author suggests that the methods of stonework and similar techniques used to draw similar patterns on stone may confirm that, by that time, the society was well organised with the use of language. This 'archaeology of language', as the author puts it, is, without a doubt, an important area for further investigation.

The origins of human language are further regarded in the works of George van Driem ("The origin of language") and Paul Whitehouse ("Some speculations on the evolution of language, and on the language of evolution"). The former presents his forthcoming monograph 'The Language Organism' describing the theory of language origins and evolution through history. A similar problem is raised by P. Whitehouse: what did early languages look like? The author makes a few decent comparisons with child language, probably the best model for studying the early developments of human language as a whole. There is also an attempt to build a chronology of language development, definitely a great endeavour itself.

Two authors, Alain Matthey de l'Etang and Pierre Bancel, share authorship of the two last articles of the volume. They concentrate on proposed global etymologies of the two kinship terms, *mama* and *papa*, and their derivatives. There are two well known views on their origins, and most mainstream linguists consider them banal nursery terms, the easiest a baby can pronounce when acquiring speech. However, the hypothesis of their ancient origin in the human protolanguage is also widely discussed (Bengtson & Ruhlen 1994). The second article, "The millennial persistence of Indo-European and Eurasiatic pronouns and the origin of nominals", attempts to derive the personal pronominal roots widespread in Northern Eurasia, namely *mV-* 'I' and *tV-* 'thou', from these very prehistoric kinship terms. This raises doubts, and not only because of the lack of comparative linguistic evidence presented, but also from a typological point of view. Such an origin of the pronominal paradigm (from lexemes meaning 'father' and 'mother') is never found in the world's languages, though we may find derivatives of sibling terms used as polite pronouns in some Asian tongues, cf. Vietnamese *anh* 'thou' < 'elder brother', etc. (Babaev 2009). Still, the claim of the ancient Nostratic (Eurasiatic) origins of the two mentioned personal pronouns is beyond any doubt (Babaev 2008).

Overall, the collection of articles we have reviewed seems to have achieved its goal: to demonstrate a synergetic effect of interdisciplinary approach for the research of the human past. This display of interdisciplinary knowledge is all the more impressive if its presentation is unified by being dedicated to a single person who has devoted his life to the study of human prehistory — Harold Fleming.

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