

Towards «Dene-Basque»

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Especially after World War II, Karl Bouda has made numerous attempts to relate Basque to other languages/language groups resting, as with others, on the classical ideal of knowledge - to reduce an «infinite» number of propositions to a small number of postulates¹.

So it is a pity that Professor Bouda (1901-1979) no longer is able to watch and to contribute to present-day omnicomparative research. In his comparative work, Caucasian did play a prominent role, even leading him to a linguistic entity called «Euskaro-Caucasian». One of the North Caucasian words supposed to be cognate with Basque was the term for «wolf»: (1) Basque *otso* - Batsic *borç*, Awarian *baç*, etc. Bouda not only concentrated on Basque-Caucasian but also postulated relationships to Uralic, Sino-Tibetan, Chukchi-Kamchatkan and Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian). A nice Austronesian (AN) equivalent (not mentioned by Bouda) can also be found in the case of «wolf»: AN *wasu*, Kavalan *wasu*, Pazeh *wats'u*, Ami *watsu* (all three Formosan languages).

This Basque-North Caucasian-Austronesian equation then would contribute to the establishment of the Dene-Caucasian proto-form: *wats'u*. The other members of this macro-family are Yeniseian, Sino-Tibetan, and Eyak-Athapascan. The position of Austronesian has not been clarified so far; maybe it is a «mischsprache» as it seems to have Nostratic elements too.

The Proto-Nostratic form for «wolf, dog» is *k'q'üjnA* > Indo-European *kwōn-/kun-* «dog» (cf. English *hound*), Uralic *küjnä* «wolf», Altaic *k'ina-* «id.» - and therefore not connected to the above Dene-Caucasian example (Note that Kartvelian = South Caucasian is a Nostratic language).

Another Dene-Caucasian example (given by Bouda) is:

(2) Basque *e-ema-n* «give» - Artshi (East Caucasian) *ma'* - AN *li-ma* «hand, five» - Thai *m̄y* «hand» (Chukchi *my-ng-* «hand» would have to be interpreted as a loan then).

Bouda has listed other cases which are re-visited in the following.

(3) Basque *bihi-* East Caucasian *x^oi(n)* «seed, corn, core» - AN *bənih*, *binih* (with infix *-ə/in-*) «seed».

* The Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen.

1. Cf., inter alia, K. BOUDA, Baskisch und Kaukasisch, Zeitschrift für Phonetik II (1948), 182-202, 336-352; Eine jüngst ermittelte archaische Sprachgruppe in Asien und Europa, Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift XXXII (1981), 192-142.

- (4) Basque (*h*)*e-ze* - Abchasic *za* - AN *bat'ah*, Tagalog *basa* «wet».
 (5) Basque *lagun* «companion, comrade, husband, etc.» - Cherkessian *leγ°ə* 'mate, comrade» - AN *laki* «husband».
 (6) Basque *berri* «new» - Awarian *babar* «young» - AN *bayu* «new».
 (7) Basque *ur* «water», *e-ur-i* «rain» - Awarian *ɔor* «river», Lakkadian *b ²ε-ar* «lake» - AN *udan*, Malagasy *urana* «rain».
 (8) Basque *e-bak-i* «cut» - AN *bijak* (with infix *-ij-?*) «separate, divide».
 (9) Basque *gose* «unger, hungry» - Darginic *guš*, Lakkadian *kasi* «id.» - AN *gutəm* 'starve».
 (10) Basque *gau* «night» - AN *γabi* «+ evening» - Thai *g'am* «night».

Also in the beginning of the Fifties, Robert Shafer, following in the wake of Edward Sapir, showed that the North American Na-dene stock was linked with Sino-Tibetan ³. *Mutatis mutandis*, both Bouda and Shafer may therefore be said to have been forerunners of what today is called Dene-Caucasian.

The word for «smoke» for instance would give a good example: Basque *kbe*, Cherkessian *k'e*, Kukish-Lushei *khu* «smoke, vapour», Thai-Lao *gwǎn* «smoke», Athapascan *-gùh* «foggy», Tlingit *gwas* «fog».

Basque therefore would not stand alone as sometimes postulated. The above and other cases would all give evidence for a prehistoric culture of the Aurignacien period extending from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Baikal. The latter would have been then also the original homeland of the Indians speaking Eyak-Athapascan (who later crossed the Bering Land Bridge). Consequently, the correct name of the macro-family would be «Dene-Basque» (going from east to west as is common practice) ⁴.

LABURPENA

Karl Bouda eta Robert Shafer jaunek aurretik egindako saioetatik abiatuz, Dene-Euskara (Dene-Kaukasiera Euskararekin) izeneko macrofamilia berri baten adibideak ematen dira. Austronesiar familia ere erlazionatuta egon liteke.

2. The Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen.

Cf., inter alia, K. BOUDA, *Baskisch und Kaukasisch*, *Zeitschrift für Phonetik* II (1948), 182-202, 336-352; Eine jüngst ermittelte archaische Sprachgruppe in Asien und Europa, *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* XXXII (1981), 192-142.

3. Cf., e.g., R. SHAFER, *Athapascan and Sino-Tibetan*, *International Journal of American Linguistics* 18 (1952), 12.

4. My remarks here are a follow-up of W.W. SCHUHMACHER, *Basque and Modern Omnicomparative Linguistics*, *FLV* 53 (1989), 50-51, where «Dene-Basque» here however is used in narrow sense, i.e., the Nostratic component is neglected. I have not been able to consult the work of S. CHIRIKBA «on the North Caucasian [i.e. Dene-Caucasian] character of Basque»; cf. V.T. SHEVOROSHKIN and T.L. MARKEY (eds.), *Typology, Relationship, and Time*, Ann Arbor, 1986, p. XVI. Cf. also the article of M. MORVAN, *A propos du basque *(H)IL*, *FLV* 53 (1989), 45-48, also referring further to possible Amerind relations (which then must date from the common period in Asia, if not

RESUMEN

A partir de intentos anteriores hechos por Karl Bouda y Robert Shafer, una nueva macrofamilia denominada Dene-Vasco (Dene-Caucásico con Vasco) es ejemplificada, al que también la familia austronesia podría entrar en relación.

RESUME

A partir de tentatives antérieures de Karl Bouda et Robert Shafer, une nouvelle macro-famille appelée Dene-Basque (Dene-Caucasien avec du Basque) est illustrée par des exemples; la famille austronésienne pourrait également s'y rattacher.

SUMMARY

Based on a previous attempt made by Karl Bouda and Robert Schafer, a new macrofamily called Dene-Basque (Dene-Caucasian with Basque), apparently related to the Astronesian family, is here illustrated.

