

# 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 postulates<sup>1</sup>.

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-Athapaskan. 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 *kṵwōn-/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’i(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 *ley'ə* «mate, comrade» - AN *laki* «husband».
- (6) Basque *berri* «new» - Awarian *bahar* «young» - AN *bayu* «new».
- (7) Basque *ur* «water», *e-ur-i* «rain» - Awarian *ɔor* «river», Lakkadian *b ²ε-ar* «lake» - AN *uɖan*, 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 *ɣabi* «+ 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 <sup>3</sup>. 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 *khe*, Cherkessian *k'e*, Kukish-Lushei *khu* «smoke, vapour», Thai-Lao *gwǎn* «smoke», Athapaskan *-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-Athapaskan (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) <sup>4</sup>.

## 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, Athapaskan 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.

