

# Linguistic Notes

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## I. Linguistic Evidence for Basque Influence on Easter Island (Rapa Nui)?

In 1975, Robert Langdon had suggested influence of 16th century European (Spanish) castaways in East Polynesia where no previous European contact was known: Tahitian dances, Hawaiian feather helmets, the Maori with their seeming European features, and the Easter Island script were among the phenomena tentatively explained in the above way. As far as Easter Island (Rapa Nui) was concerned, the discovery that the Easter Islanders and the Basques are remarkably similar genetically was interpreted by him in the way that some of the Basque seamen onboard the Spanish ships their descendants must have come to the Island (cf. also Schuhmacher 1976). Langdon has 're-explored' the subject again recently (Langdon 1988). If there have been Basques on Easter Island, these probably also would have had some influence upon the Polynesian language of the inhabitants. Langdon and Tryon (1983) have made the most important contribution to the Easter Island language in recent time.

Looking for a possible Basque influence, it is striking that Rapanuian alone among the languages of the Eastern Polynesian subgroup has retained the ergative (Weber 1988) - which is so characteristic for Basque too.

As for the lexicon, Rapanuian is characterized by a relatively large amount of 'non-Polynesian' words (cf. Langdon & Tryon 1983: 45-46). Going through the material, one case of similarity may be posited: Easter Island *uka* 'young woman' - Basque (guip. lab. nnav.) *urricha* 'tierweibchen' (Uhlenbeck 193: 24).

However, more cases would be needed...

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## II. Basque and Modern Omnicomparative Linguistics

Early in this century, the Danish linguist Holger Pedersen (1867-1953) began to elaborate on other relationships with the well-established Indo-European family, assisted by his contryman Herman Möller (1850-1923). Whereas the former for the most worked on an Indo-European-Uralic relationship, the latter delt whit Indo-European and Semitic. Pedersen suggested the term *Nostratic* (from Latin *nostrās* «our countryman») for the macrofamily with the Indo-European ingredient. Today, Proto-Nostratic is supposed to consist of:

- Indo-European
- Afro-Asiatic / Hamito-Semitic
- Uralic
- Kartvelian (South-Caucasian)
- Dravidian
- Altaic
- Chukchee-Kamchatkan
- (Eskaleut?).

In addition, two other macrofamilies have been established so far: Amerind and Dene-Caucasian. According to Joseph H. Greenberg, Amerind is made up of the languages on the American Continent which have *nV* and *mV* for the 1st and 2nd person personal pronouns. The non-Amerind Indian languages are members of Dene-Caucasian consisting of:

- Eyak-Athapascan
- Yenisseian
- Sino-Tibetan
- North-Caucasian.

Basque therefore is missing. Indeed, the present renaissance of omnicomparative studies dealing with macrofamilies or proto-proto languages seems to have passed the field of Basque linguistics so far - a field that earlier has seen so many attempts to relate the language to other languages/language families (cf. for instance the works of C.C. Uhlenbeck or the late Karl Bouda). Where would Basque then fit in today? Or, in other words, would its character be Nostratic or Dene-Caucasian?

Following Karl Bouda, there would be evidence to establish a linguistic entity termed Euskaro-Caucasian. The evidence is not only based on a number of lexeme matchings but also on a series of regular phonological correspondences between Basque and West-, East-, and South-Caucasian languages. However, looking on Nostratic and Dene-Caucasian and their respective members, we have to recognize a Caucasian split-up: South-Caucasian (Kartvelian) is Nostratic whereas North-Caucasian is Dene-Caucasian. Of other language families supposed to be related with Basque, mention has to be made of Uralic, Chukchee, Sine-Tibetan, and Austronesian. Uralic and Chukchee are Nostratic, Sino-Tibetan is Dene-Caucasian

whereas the character of Austronesian has not been defined so far. Thus, it turns out that Basque may belong to Nostratic AND Dene-Caucasian. Maybe we have to establish a new macrofamily made up of Nostratic and Dene-Caucasian, *Dene-Nostratic*. One member of this proto-proto-proto language would be Basque. As already pointed out by Karl Bouda, linguistic evidence would point to a prehistoric population parallel to a line Pyrenees-Alps-Carpathians-Balkans-Caucasus-Pamir-Himalaya<sup>1</sup>. Thus, why not call the language 'Dene-Basque'.

### III. Chamorro - last but not least...

In two previous notes (Schuhmacher 1975, 1976), I had tried to contribute to the discussion on the origin of *Chamorro*, the name of the Austronesian language spoken by the native people of Guam and the other islands of the Marianas.

As it has not been possible so far to explain the term from the language itself, including even possible folk etymologies, one has to look for other languages. And as pointed out by Topping (1973: 6): «Like a canoe blown by many winds, the Chamorro people and language have been subjected to several different foreign influences. All these have left some mark on the language». The languages in question have been (in that order): Spanish, German, Japanese, and English.

Recently, during a private conversation, Dr. Horst Cain (Marburg and Cologne) interpreted to me *Chamorro* as a reflex of Japanese *Samurai* - designating in the feudal era of the country one of the class of military retainers of the *daimios*, and in wider sense a member of the military caste. However, to account for such a loan an early contact between Japan and the Marianas had to be posited (as the existence of *Chamorro* is older than the modern Japanese influence).

But the fact cannot be denied that the word *chamorro* is existent in a language: Basque *chamorro* 'gorgojo; weevil' would be THE possibility (as mentioned earlier). Thinking of German *süsser Käfer* (lit., sweet beetle) to designate 'attractive girl', it may not be far-fetched to postulate that a Spaniard (or a Basque staying in the Marianas) has created the nickname - in the beginning to designate the speaker, later to be transferred to his language.

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 TOPPING, Donald M. (with the assistance of Bernadita C. Dungca), Chamorro Reference Grammar, Honolulu 1973.

1. Of Karl BOUDA'S voluminous opus, I just want to mention here: Baskisch und Kaukasisch, Zeitschrift für Phonetik II (1948), 182-202, 336-352; Eine jüngst ermittelte archaische Sprachgruppe in Asien und Europa, Germanische-Romanische Monatsschrift 32 (1951), 129-142. A good introduction to modern omnicomparative linguistics is VITALIJ V. SHEVOROSHKIN and T.L. MARKEY (eds.), *Typology, Relationship and Time* (Ann Arbor 1986).

#### IV. Basque and Tumleo *ama* 'Mother', *aita* 'Father'

Tumleo is an Austronesian language of Papua (formerly Australian) New Guinea spoken on one of the small islands in the northwest (Capell 1971; Schultze 1911). In this SVO language, the words for 'mother' and 'father' are respectively *ama* and *aita* (where one would expect a reflex of Proto-Austronesian \**ina* 'mother' and \**ama* 'father').

How can we account for the Basque-Tumleo *ama-aita* identity? Greenberg (1957: 36-37), when defining resemblance between two languages as similarity in sound and meaning, distinguishes four sources: genetic relationship, borrowing, symbolism, and chance. Excluding for evident reasons all sources but borrowing in this pair-identity, the prudent course therefore must be to try to find a historical connection that would account for this borrowing (from Basque into New Guinea Austronesian).

To follow up Magellan's discovery of the westward route to Asia, King Charles I of Spain despatched in 1525 a second expedition to the Spice Islands of the Eastern Archipelago. Commanded by Garcia Jofre de Loaisa, the fleet comprised seven ships, of which four reached the Pacific on May 26, 1526, and only one, the *Capitana* reached the Moluccas. For in a storm which blew up on June 1 in 47°30'S, the fleet was scattered and of the remaining ships, the *San Lesmes* – a caravel – disappeared, never to be seen again. As one of some dozen European ships known to have vanished in the vast reaches of the Pacific Ocean between the time of Magellan and of Captain Cook, the *San Lesmes* thus gained no more than a brief report in the annals of Pacific History. In this obscurity she would have remained but for the discovery of four cannon apparently of early Spanish make found lying on the reef of Amanu, an atoll of the Tuamotu archipelago. The Australian historian Robert Langdon (1975, 1988) therefore speculates that the cannon may have belonged to the *San Lesmes* – that the crew survived and intermarried with the local women, and that over the next 250 years they and their descendants spread to many Polynesian islands. Tahitian dances, Hawaiian feather helmets, the Maoris of New Zealand with their seeming European features, and the Easter Island script are among the phenomena which Langdon explains by 'the European castaway influence', and more conjecturally, as 'the terminal point of the *San Lesmes* castaways'.

Instead of the motley band of Spaniards, Portuguese, Basques, Genoese, Sicilians, Germans, Greeks, Neapolitans, Flemings, Corfiotes, Frenchmen, Ligurians, Negroes, Malays and the single Englishman that Magellan took with him, Loaisa's crew was much more of a piece as it had almost entirely been drawn from Spain itself; so a notable proportion were Basques – the descendants of them, according to Langdon, did come as far as to Easter Island: Human Leukocyte Antigen (HLA) testing had the result that 39 per cent of the Basques and 37 per cent of the Easter Islanders were carriers of the HLA gene B12 – the highest and the second highest proportions in the fifty-odd communities tested throughout the world. The figures for A29 were similar – all pointing to contact between descendants of 16th century Basque castaways and the Easter Islanders. (No linguistic evidence for such a contact has been found; cf. Schuhmacher 1989).

As for New Guinea, we know for instance of a ship commanded by Hernando de Grijalva that in April 1537 had landed troops in the Peruvian

port of Paita. On her way home, the crew murdered the captain and steered on a course near the Equator. Wracked by hunger, exhaustion, and disease, they finally reached some islands to the north of New Guinea - where they were either killed by the natives or captured and enslaved.

Thus, the possibility of Basques to come to New Guinea on Spanish ships to or from Manila or Acapulco at this early time cannot be excluded. And it seems only natural that in a bilingual family the terms for 'mother' and 'father' from the language of the father are used - so that today the respective Basque words can be found on the New Guinea island of Tumleo.

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## RESUMEN

I. La supuesta influencia que según Robert («Don Roberto») Langdom tuvieron en la Polinesia Este náufragos españoles del siglo XVI puede verse apoyada por el hecho de que los habitantes de las Islas del Este y los Vascos son genéticamente similares. A nivel lingüístico, la construcción del caso ergativo en el idioma Rapuni, podría apuntar hacia una influencia vasca, mientras que en el léxico no hay indicios que nos muestren dicha influencia.

II. El idioma vasco no se incluye en el actual renacimiento de los estudios omnicomparativos. A partir de intentos anteriores hechos por Karl Bouda (1901-1979), el idioma vasco podría ser miembro del Nostrático y Dene-Caucásico, o de una nueva macrofamilia denominada Dene-Nostrático (o más apropiadamente «Dene-Vasco»).

III. El Chamorro, nombre del idioma austronesio hablado por los nativos de Guam y de otras islas de las Marianas, podría derivar de la palabra vasca txamorro (Chamorro) «gorgojo», ya que algún español (o vasco que permaneciera en las Marianas) podría haber creado el apodo para denominar al que lo hablaba (este término sería más tarde transferido a la lengua).

IV. La existencia de dos palabras, *ama* «madre» y *aita* «padre» en Tumleo, una lengua austronesia de Papua Nueva Guinea, podría deberse a la llegada de náufragos vascos en el siglo XVI.

## LABUPERNA

I. Robert Langdom («Don Robertok») dionez, Polinesia ekialdean espainiako itsasgizon ontzigabetuek XVI. mendean ustez izandako eragina, ekialde irletako biztanleak eta euskaldunak elkarrekin duten antza genetikoarekin indartzen da. Hizkuntza aldetik, Rapuni mintzairak duen ergatibo kasuak euskararen kutsua adieraz lezake, hiztegian inolako kutsuaren aztarnarik ez egon arren.

II. Euskara ez da erabiltzen oraiko konparaketa orotarikoen ikerketa berrituetan. Karl Boudak (1901-1979) lehen egindako saioen arabera, Nostratiko eta Dene-Kaukasiarraren kide izan daiteke, edota Dene-Nostratiko (hobeki esateko «Dene-Euskararen») familia berri haundi baten atala.

III. Guam eta Marianasetako beste biztanle batzuk mintzo duten Chamorro hizkuntza, *txamorro* euskal hitzetik datorkeena da, bertan gelditutako espainiol edo euskaldunen batek sortutako ezizenez edo; izengoitia hizkuntzari itsasiko zitzaion gero.

IV. Papua Nueva Guinean austronesierazko Tumleoz «ama» eta «aita» esatea, itsasgizon euskaldunak XVI. mendean ontzigabetuta han geldituagatik izan daiteke.

## RESUME

I. L'influence supposée qu'auraient eue, d'après Robert («Don Robertok») Langdom, les naufragés espagnols du XVI<sup>ème</sup> siècle dans l'Est de la Polynésie, peut se voir appuyée par le fait que les habitants des îles de l'est et les basques sont génétiquement similaires. Au niveau linguistique, la construction du cas ergatif en langue Rapuni pourrait indiquer une influence basque, alors qu'il n'y a aucun indice dans le lexique qui nous démontre cette influence.

II. Le basque est absent de l'actuelle renaissance des études omnicomparatives. Suivant les tentatives antérieures de Karl Bouda (1901-1979), le basque pourrait appartenir au Nostratique et au Dene-Caucasien, ou à une nouvelle macrofamille dénommée Dene-Nostratique (ou plus exactement «Dene-Basque»).

III. Le Chamorro, nom de la langue austronésienne parlée par les natifs de Guam et d'autres îles des Mariannes, pourrait dériver du mot basque *txamorro* (chamorro) «gorgojo», un espagnol (ou un basque résidant aux Mariannes) ayant du donner ce surnom à celui qui la parlait (ce terme serait plus tard passé à la langue elle-même).

IV. L'existence des deux mots, *ama*, «mère» et *aita*, «père», en Tumleo, langue Austronésienne de Nouvelle-Guinée Papoue, pourrait être du à l'arrivée de naufragés basques au XIV<sup>ème</sup> siècle.