

Re: Related languages (Re: A China–Sumer connection)

Source: <http://sci.tech–archive.net/Archive/sci.anthropology/2005–03/1469.html>

phippmartin_at_hotmail.com

Date: 03/24/05

Date: 23 Mar 2005 20:57:45 -0800

Comm wrote:

> *"Neeraj Mathur" <neemathur@hotmail.com> wrote in message*

> *news:d1qb9t\$9l7\$1@news.ox.ac.uk...*

>> *Now, a more general point, for Martin. He points out that linguists use*

>> *similarities in vocabularies to determine relations, and offers the tables*

>> *as evidence. This is true, but it is not the correct approach. What*

>> *historical linguists and comparative philologists actually do is trace the*

>> *history of any given word through the language. If you do this, you will*

>> *find that there are basically two possible scenarios: first, the word can*

>> *have been borrowed at a given moment from some other language. If this*

>> *happens, your tracing of the word's history ends at the time of the*

>> *borrowing (to trace it further would mean tracing it in a different*

>> *language; if you are a specialist in English, you might get 'jungle' as*

>> *far back as the moment it enters Hindi but you may simply not have the*

>> *resources or knowledge to trace it further within Hindi itself).*

>> *On the other hand, if*

>> *the word is not borrowed, then essentially you are tracing it back to the*

>> *end of your records. Your search ends at the point when your records for*

>> *the > past run out. Comparative philology now provides the opportunity to*

>> *go one step further back. It is at this point, and this point only, that*

sci.anthropology: Re: Related languages (Re: A China–Sumer connection)

- > > *comparison tables between different languages become relevant. If you make*
- > > *a large enough table, then if two languages offer regular sound*
- > > *correspondences, you can go further back and posit that they are all the*
- > > *descendants of a given form and you can say that the word you were tracing*
- > *g*