

Re: Languages of Africa

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2004-09/3930.html>

From: Anti-imperialist (*ai_at_anti-imperialist.net*)

Date: 09/21/04

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"Peter T. Daniels" wrote:

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> *Jacques Guy wrote:*

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>> *Anti-imperialist wrote:*

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>>> *"The greatest linguistic diversity appears to be in Africa.*

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>> *Papua-New Guinea, moron.*

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> *Did you manage to miss "Indo-Pacific"?*

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> *That was G's proposal that disappeared with nary a trace, to unite all*

> *of NAN PNG plus Tasmanian and Andamanese.*

Not really, Wurm (1971) agreed with about 70% of it. Without a trace, eh?

<http://ehl.santafe.edu/indopac.htm>

Taxonomy and Genetic Relationships Between Indo-Pacific Languages

Timothy Usher, Santa Fe Institute

The main object of this project is a better historical understanding of the relations between the vast language family of Indo-Pacific languages. Tim Usher has put together (in the form of several large electronic spreadsheets) an impressive collection of material from most of these languages, sufficient for a serious historic analysis of these relations.

So far, he has managed to resolve the consonantal correspondences of the Halmaheran, South Bird's Head, West Bomberai, Nimboran and Upper Tami groups and made substantial progress on the Timor-Alor-Pantar, Bird's Head, East Bird's Head, Mairasi-Tanah Merah, Kwerba, Tor, Pauwasi and Senagi groups. This has resulted in the generation of citable protoforms along with the resolution of a number of low-level classification issues

and the correction of erroneous dialect assignments found in the literature.

Altogether, these groups comprise the major western peninsulas of Irian Jaya (Bird's Head, Bomberai) and the northern half of mainland Irian Jaya, and include some of the families whose classifications are most disputed (to the extent there has been a debate at all). Tim has developed a workflow system which exploit his pre-existing lexical databases with maximal efficiency, greatly reducing the time needed to discern and support proposed correspondences. The immediate goal of the project is to feasibly envision a preliminary reconstruction of all New Guinean families for which there is sufficient data. As correspondences are resolved and protoforms discovered, they are checked against Tim's vast lists of Greenberg-style comparisons in order to confirm or falsify previously proposed connections and to bring outcomparisons to bear on family-level issues. Slowly but surely, these lists are taking on the manner and reliability of an etymological dictionary, the ultimate goal of this project. This improved dataset will provide the basis for the definitive resolution of Indo-Pacific taxonomy at the highest levels, as well as providing ample source material for the reconstruction of the most ancient proto-languages.

Thought you said "it disappeared without a trace"? :P

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