

Re: Languages of Africa

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2004-09/3944.html>

From: Peter T. Daniels (grammatim_at_worldnet.att.net)

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Anti-imperialist wrote:

>

> *"Peter T. Daniels" wrote:*

>>

>> *Jacques Guy wrote:*

>>>

>>> *Anti-imperialist wrote:*

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

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>>> *Papua-New Guinea, moron.*

>>

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

>>

>> *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?*

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

>

> *Taxonomy and Genetic Relationships Between Indo-Pacific Languages*

>

> *Timothy Usher, Santa Fe Institute*

Ruhlen hoodwinked Gell-Mann's Santa Fe Institute into sponsoring a conference on this sort of thing a few years ago. The participants were physicists and Ruhlenian crackpots.

> *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.*

A spreadsheet with data from something like a thousand languages, for most of which virtually no usable data are available? That must be really something!

> *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 out comparisons 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*

Of course you didn't put a date on this. Nor a title on Wurm 1971, which was published before G's IP.

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Peter T. Daniels

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