Bygone voices reconstructed
Bashkir parallels to a few Global roots

Shamil Nafiqoff

1 One of the oft-debated issues in the long-range research is that of reconstructing putative global lexical roots. The negative attitude on the part of some scholars is plainly contrasted to positive evaluations. The trend is largely due to pioneer efforts such as those of A. Trombetti in the early XXth century. The data got from the Turkic languages in this respect is scarce, the Altaic languages materials are also seldom treated from the ‘global angle’. So the following synopsis may be viewed as certain preliminary data interpreted by a novice long-range researcher and is aimed at demonstrating some lexical matches to certain global scale etyma culled from such sources as.

2 Proto World (PW) *pari ‘fingernail’

The (global) root of the PR type had been pointed out by our eminent long-range researcher A. Dolgopolsky way back in the early ‘60s of the past century «probably in the sense of a finger». The Altaic form of *per- ‘thumb’ has been further used in Nostratic (N) reconstructions and is plainly correlate to PN *p|h|al-/*p|h|%l- ‘thumb’. Recently the latter has been shown to match more ancient Sino-Caucasian (SC) forms: N pArA : SC *pArV or *bArV ‘claw, finger’. The Proto Human PVRV ‘finger, fingernail’ in a synopsis of Global comparisons by Moscow long-rangers A. Dybo, S. Starostin et alii (MS, 2005) is reflected in N *pVrV, Afro-Asiat. *far(-t)-, Sino-Cauc. *pVrV(–b-, -l-) and is compared Ijo bara ‘arm, hand’ as a representative of African languages. The reflexes of PW *pari are well attested in the Altaic resp. Nostratic languages and the author’s native Bashkir features barmaq ‘finger’ which is easy to be shown as consisting of a root reminescent of the PW analogue and an affixal increment.

3 PW *tik ‘finger’

This global root which is semantically close to the preceding one (v.s.) has been paid attention to starting with the ’80s of the last century. The gloss was drawn into comparative studies still earlier. Examples: Esqimo tikeq ‘index, forefinger’ vs IE *deik-; Greek: δεικ- ‘points at, shows’; Aino teke ‘hand’ vs Nivh tamak ‘idem’ vs Korean tjuk ‘ten’. The kindred idea of ‘singleness’ is there in the Altaic and Amerindian matches exemplified by Turkish tekel ‘single, alone’ vs Maya tukel ‘idem’. On the semasiological part I cannot refrain from citing one of the long-rangers par excellence M. Swadesh who says:
We cite an archimorph for which about 50 possible variants have been found, namely [Chukoto-Eskaleut'] *tiki, whose primitive sense may have been claw, but which gave rise to meanings like finger, hand, touch, grasp, take, scratch, cut, reach for, ask for, point, foot, nose, etc. The Bashkir language has the verb teklä- meaning 'to stare at' that may pass for a match to the PW gloss discussed, as well as quite a few parallels in the spirit of Swadesh's suggestions. For further ramifications in the semantics of *tik in 15 phyla consult M. Ruhlen. Worthy of note here is the global comparative set proposed by A. Dybo et alii mentioned above. Here we have. PW TVKV 'to look, show' ~ N *tVjkV~ Af. As. *dag-...~ Sino-Tib. *tuak (~d-) 'consider, inspect' ~ Amerind *tuki 'eye, see'; *takw 'know' (after M. Ruhlen) ~ Bantu *-dag- 'show'. Upon much reflection I am inclined to regard Bashkir teklä- as originating from TVKV rather than *tik though this could be an instance of contamination.

4 PW *kuni 'elbow/knee' (rather: 'joint') and a corresponding verb meaning 'to bend' (present in Khoisan ['elbow'], Nilo-Saharan ['knee'], Nostratic [*kujñA 'bend at the joints; joint'], Austro-Asiatic ['elbow'] , Australian ['elbow'] and other languages). The apparent indivisibility of the underlying notions 'elbow', 'knee', 'bend (as elbow/knee)' makes it clear that both elbow and knee were named after their most prominent function/quality. This was just one simple word.

This data are to be augmented by another well-known U.S. long-ranger J. Bengtson's matches:

Khoisan South /nu //en //kan 'branch'
IE *kon-t... ' (element in numerals = '10')
Jukagir kun-el 'ten'
Sino-Tibetan Ancient Chinese *ken 'shoulder'
Yenissean *ken- 'idem'
Dravidian *kan- 'arm'
Chibchan-Paezan Murire kani
Equatorial Piro kano 'idem'

On the archaic African side I propose Niger-Kongo Grebo kona 'knee' and Nilo-Saharan Dinka kon 'arm, elbow' to draw upon the hypothetical Kongo-Saharan superphylum. Bashkir has jeř 'sleeve' and jensek 'shin' to rather appropriately fit the semantics of the PW gloss in question. Phenetically here we witness the well-known Altaic phenomenon of 'initial stops dropping' familiar from other world phyla, too.

5 PW *Ham/maH- 'hand' (also with the suffix *-r/n- in quite different languages), also 'take'.

The gloss can go together with the universal global root kap- 'capere'. Note the presence of the archaic laryngeal and metathesis phenomena. Nostratic studies in lexics...
have revealed such cognates as N käpä ‘paw’ and kamu ‘seize, squeeze’. The Altaic reflex here looks to be *k‘ap‘V ‘seize, hold, the Turkic one being *kap-. Transcending Nostratics we must agree with S. Wikander, say, who thinks that:

Maya kab ‘hand, arm’ could perhaps be compared with Turkish kapmak ‘to grab, snatch’.

There are enough reflexes in Bashkir the grassroots of which can be traced to the PW and Nostratic at large. I prefer mentioning here qapqan ‘snare’, qanqanla- ‘to snare’ and-qapsa- ‘feel) in one’s pocket’), etc. Note here special study by M. Ruhlen Proto-Amerind *KAPA ‘finger, hand’ and its origin in the Old World, in Indo-European, Nostratic and Beyond. 2002.

6 PW *tali~ dali ‘tongue’

The Altaic *tilV (~i-) ‘tongue’; voice’ with Turkic *dil/*dil ‘idem’ fit here with no doubt. To the many correspondences mentioned in V. Blazek’s synopsis the following ought to be added: Kamchadal (extinct dialect) dycil ~ nicil which it is tempting to compare with Tonkawa (ne) tale ‘tongue (lick)’. The very archaic Common Australian is demonstrated to possess *dalaŋ ‘tongue’. On the Bashkir part such manifest cognates as tel ‘tongue’, telä- ‘to desire’ may be demonstrated with a less certain jala- ‘lick’.

7 PW *tari~ turi ‘leq’

In all probability the Turkic languages family by way of the corresponding cognate has the form *Tujz-ke meaning ‘knee’. The traditional Altaic correspondence is PA *tujre ‘knee’ vs Korean *tari ‘leg’. For more info consult such sources as18,27. The parallels offered in V. Blazek’s main Proto-language source could be proliferated by Quileute -t’u(s) ‘hip’, Proto Calif. Penutian *tol ‘leg’ and the Pama Nyungan Yínwum *t’aru ‘foot’. Bashkir teô ‘knee’ falls with the standard Turkic pattern (v.s.) with the Auslaut consonant being a regular historical development from the Proto Altaic source, the Korean reflex of which being the uttermost approximation to the PW etymon, is this not too tall of me to state so? So much for the human body parts treated in a concise manner on purpose.

8 PW *taki~ tuki ‘burn, be hot’

This primordial gloss has been fairly well preserved in the Altaic family of languages as seen from *dakV ‘to burn (trans. and intr.) : Turkic *jak-... Japanese *dák-. A very archaic nature of the term is revealed also in such parallels as PN *t/o/gV ‘fire’ vs Sino Caucasian *tVKwV ‘burn, glow, kindle’, as well as Proto Miwok *toho ‘ignite’ vs N *t/o/gV. The same holds good for the match Turkish yak- ‘to burn’ vs Maya yaktel ‘embers’. Worth noting is also PSalish t’ayq” ‘spark’ reflected in Squamish t’i?q”-m ‘throw off large sparks’ and Shuswap yéq”– ‘fire
Out of many Bashkir parallels I should rather point to toqan- ‘take fire’ and jai- ‘burn (trans.)’.

PW PVLV ‘shine, bum…

This archaic word is represented in the Nostratic macrofamily as *belV, *baly-, *bar- ‘to shine, be bright’, cf. Sumerian bar ‘to shine, light’ (Bomhard, Kerns, op. cit.: 211, 213), as a lexical parallel between N and SC we have PN *balka ‘shine, gleam’; ST *P k ‘white’; in the Austro-Caucasian superfamily one finds PAN *balar ‘pale’., *balaR ‘pale, white’: the Amerind macrofamily offers *pali ‘sun, shine’, *pole ‘white’; among languages of Africa Bantu *-bad- ‘shine’ (record number 10 in: A. Dybo et alii, MS). The Amerind data can be supplemented by Coahuitlán (Texan) al ‘sun’ and Proto Penutian */wi/ule ‘lightning’. In Bashkir balq- ‘to shine, etc.’ is very close to PN *balka (see above), the –q element being an increment to the original two-syllable forms PVLV, *belV (v.s.).

9 PW *k/kuwa/i ‘rain’

In V. Blazek’s synopsis the semantics in the macrophyla correspondencies also include ‘wet’ and ‘water’ which is but too natural. The Nostratic EKu ‘water’ reflected in Pr Alt. *ak- ‘flow’ is cognate with SC *-qV ‘fluid, drink’. Other parallels include Kamchadal ?i ‘water’, Aleut igata- ‘flows’. From *qiga. Turning to Africa we find WChadic *hamV ‘water’. Concentrating our attention on PAustralian gu ‘idem’ we may surmise a segmented nature of the PW kuwa or rather a resemblance to *ki (v.s.) if I get V. Blazek’s idea right. My native language offers us such parallels as ayyn/m ‘a flow’, ay- ‘to flow’ and a host of their derivatives, dialect variations and ramifications in several related semantic fields.

Further research can easily multiply Bashkir correspondences to several score of Proto World etyma, a sketchy glimpse of which is offered to the reader.

Acknowledgment: The author wishes to expressly thank Dr. V. Shevoroshkin and Dr. A. Dybo for the invaluable assistance in suppling the modern source data.

10 References

33. Illič-Svityč, Vl.: 1971, Opyt sravnenija... Tom I.