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Basque / North Caucasian lexical matches on the 50-item wordlist

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1. Current state of research on the Basque / Caucasian connection:

- J. Bengtson's recent works on Basque historical phonetics, grammar, lexicon (esp. Bengtson 2008);
- [Basque comparative database](#), linked to general Sino-Caucasian database;
- 50-item wordlist (stable half of Swadesh list, see Starostin 2010) for Common Basque and individual subbranches of North Caucasian (Proto-Nakh, Proto-Avaro-Andian, etc.).

2. Principles of comparison between NC and Basque:

- (a) «relaxed» model of phonetic correspondences /in general accordance with Bengtson 2008/;
- (b) assumption of fossilized prefixes in Basque nominal stems (*b/e/=, i=*, etc.);
- (c) comparison **only** between reliably archaic forms (Common Basque + Proto-North or Proto-Northeast Caucasian).

3. Results:

- 8 direct semantic matches between Common Basque and Proto-NC
- 4 etymological (non-lexicostatistical) matches with allegedly trivial semantic shifts
- general correlation with J. Bengtson's model of phonetic correspondences
- NC: optimal match among all language families of Eurasia as Basque's closest relative
- should definitely be used as a point of reference for future research on Basque (and NC) prehistory

Attested phonosemantic matches between Basque and Proto-North Caucasian

A. Exact (lexicostatistical) matches

Word	Basque	North Caucasian	Proto-hypothesis
'fire'	su ~ sü /Z/	*c'ayi (N *c'e, AA *c'aʔi, Ts *c'ə, L *c'u, D *c'a, L *c'ay, Kh čä, WC *ma=c'wa) !! Oblique: cf. L *c'oyi	*c'ay- ~ *c'oy-
'star'	i=zar	*ʒ:whari: (N *tʰari, AA *c:ʷarhi, Ts *cʷã, Lak *c'u-, D *zuri, WC *c'wa)	*ʒʷhar-
'ear'	be=larri /B, G, HN, L/ ~ be=harri /L, LN, Z/ ~ be=arri /HN, LN, R/	*leH/l/e (N *la, D *lehi, WC *La- ~ *lʷa-) !! Oblique: cf. N *la-ri- (> N dimin. *la-ri-k' 'ear')	*leH- ~ *leH-ri
'tongue'	mihi /L, LN/ ~ mĩhĩ /Z/ ~ mĩ /R/ ~ min /B, G/	*melc'i (N *mott', AA *mic'i, Ts *mic, Lak maz, D *mec, L *melc:, Kh mic', WC *bəza)	*melc'i (→ *menc'i → *menhi)
'dog'	or ~ hor /LN, Z/	*ɣ:(H)weye (N *pʰu, AA *ɣʷoʔi, Ts *ɸ:ʷəy, D *ɣ:ʷay, L *ɣ:ʷäya, Kh *pɣra, WC *Lʷa) !! Oblique: *ɣ:(H)wey-rV- (N *phare-, PA *ɣʷor-, D *ɣ:ur-, L *ɣ:ʷäyrV-)	*ɣ:wey- ~ *ɣ:wey-r-
'die' + 'kill'	il ~ hil /L, LN, Z/	*=i(w)ɣ'e (N *=aL-, AA *=iɣ'-, Ts *=iɣ'-, D *=ibk'-, L *ʔiɣ'e, WC *ɣ'a-)	*=iɣ'-
'what'	ze-r	*s:ay (N sʰe-, AA *s:u-, Ts *s:V-, Lak s:a-, D *s:e, WC *sa)	*s:ay
'not'	ez ~ ze /old Basque/	*c'ə ~ *ʒ'ə (N *ca, AA *-č'i, Ts *-č', L *č:V)	*VčV

B. Etymological matches with trivial semantic shifts

Word	Basque	North Caucasian	Proto-hypothesis
'dry'	eihar ~ ihar ~ igar /B, G, HN/ 'dried up, wilted, withered'	*=ig:war (N *aq ⁻ , AA *=iq: ^{w-} , Ts *qoq ⁻ , Lak *q'aaq ⁻ , L *ʔiq: ^w ar ⁻ , Kh q'i) (Alternately: to Basque agor 'dried up, sterile, barren')	*=ig:/ ^w ar
'eye' / 'see'	b=egi 'eye'	*=agw- 'to see' (N *=ag ⁻ , Ts *=eg ^{w-} , D *g ^{w-} , L *ʔak: ^w ä-)	*=eg ^w /i/ (→ *b=eg ^w i)
'hear'/'know'	entzu-n 'hear'	*amc'e 'to know' (N *=abc ^{z-} , L *ʔac'a ⁻ , WC *c'a ⁻)	*amc'-
'sun' / 'day'	egu-zki 'sun' (← egu-n 'day')	*Hwi:q:V 'day' (AA *q: ^w iʔV, Lak *q'ini, L *yiq:, Kh q'ä) (cf. also *wirə:q:a 'sun' ← *hwe:ri-Hwi:q:V ?)	*/H/wiq'-

C. Dubious partial matches for personal pronouns

Word	Basque	North Caucasian
'I'	ni	Cf.: Lak <i>na</i> , Dargwa <i>nu</i>
'thou'	hi	Cf.: N *hə:, D *hu, L *bu, Kh oχ

Abbreviations:

(a) B = Bizkaian; G = Gipuzkoan; L = Lapurdian; HN = High Navarrese; LN = Low Navarrese; R = Roncalese; Z = Zuberoan

(b) AA = Avaro-Andian; D = Dargwa; Kh = Khinalug; L = Lezgian; N = Nakh; Ts = Tsezic; WC = West Caucasian

Literature

- Bengtson, John D. 2008. "Basque Phonology in a Dene-Caucasian Context." In: Bengtson, John D. 2008d. *Linguistic Fossils: Studies in Historical Linguistics and Paleolinguistics*. Calgary: Theophania Publishing. 93-209.
- Starostin, George. 2010. "Preliminary lexicostatistics as a basis for language classification: a new approach." *Journal of Language Relationship*, 3, 79-117.