# EVIDENCE FOR PREHISTORIC LINKS BETWEEN THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA : THE CASE OF THE BURUSHOS.[1]

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The Tarim Basin, site of the desiccated human remains which are the principal focus of this volume, is surrounded by mountains on three sides: the Tian Shan range to the north, the Kunlun Shan to the southwest, and the Altun Shan to the southeast. Just beyond the western rim of the basin are the Pamir, Hindu-Kush and Karakorum mountains, a region noted for both its rugged terrain and the diversity of ethnic groups which have settled its valleys. One such group in particular has fascinated linguists and historians for nearly a century: the Burushos of northern Pakistan. While I know of no strong evidence that the ancestors of the Burushos ever inhabited the vast depression 200 km northeast of their current homeland, I believe the study of Burusho prehistory to be of relevance for understanding the cultural and linguistic context of the western Tarim region in the 2nd millenium BCE, the period to which the oldest mummies have provisionally been dated [Mair 1995].

The Burushos speak a language, Burushaski, that has not been convincingly grouped into any known linguistic family. Its three  dialects — Hunza, Nager, and the Yasin Valley (or Werchikwar) dialect — are at present surrounded by Indo-Iranian and Tibetan languages, though it seems a safe assumption that the ancestors of the Burushos were already present in northwestern South Asia when the first speakers of Indo-European languages appeared in the area.[2] Two related questions have been frequently asked regarding the Burushos: (1) What territory or territories were occupied by prehistoric Burushaski speakers? (2) Is Burushaski genetically related to any other language(s)? In this paper I will present my thoughts on these two questions. With regard to the first, I will argue in favor of the assertion that the Proto-Burushos were historically linked to the Caucasus region, and very likely migrated to their present homeland from there.[3] As for the second, I will content myself with a preliminary examination of the linguistic evidence for Burushaski-Caucasian links, without forcing it to yield a response to a simple yes-no question regarding phyletic relationship. The belief that the peoples of the Caucasus and Hindu-Kush/Karakorum region are somehow connected is of course far from new: the hypothesis has been discussed from time to time in the German- and Russian-language anthropological literature,[4] and even some Greek geographers of antiquity saw links between Colchis and India.[5] In addition to bringing new data and new arguments to bear on this hypothesis, I will discuss the methodology of historical study, in particular, the coordination of data from linguistics and comparative mythology to establish prehistoric contacts.

**1. The Burushos in northwestern South Asia**. Scholars have noted numerous features of Indo-Iranian languages which point to intensive contact with speakers of non-Indo-European languages

[e.g. Èdel'man 1980], presumably after Indo-Iranian-speaking peoples migrated eastward and came into contact with populations speaking Dravidian, Munda and other languages. Burushaski loan-words and grammatical features in Shina, an Indic language of the Dardic subgroup indicate that Burushaski or one or more now-extinct languages related to it were once more widely spoken in the Gilgit region [Jettmar 1975: 190]. Other languages of the immediate vicinity — Khowar (Dardic), Wakhi (Iranian) and Balti (West Tibetan) — also show signs of a Burushaski substratum [Fussman 1972; Tikkanen 1988], as do toponyms. The search for linguistic or archeological traces of Burusho occupation farther afield in the Subcontinent, though, has yet to yield convincing positive results, leading Parpola [1994: 142] to the conclusion that "the earliest speakers of Burushaski entered their present homeland from the north after the inception of the North Neolithic [late 3rd millenium BCE — KT], and have never gone much further". There is, furthermore, evidence in the Gilgit area of a linguistic substratum of unknown affiliation, evidently distinct from Burushaski, Indo-European, Dravidian and Tibetan. Berger noted many toponyms and anthroponyms of unknown origin [1960: 662],[6] and the attested fragments of the language referred to as *Bru-zha* in late-1st millenium CE Tibetan sources, despite its promising resemblance to the ethnonym *Burusho,* might be unrelated to any known language of the area [Jettmar 1975: 299; Tikkanen 1988: 317; but see Berger 1995 for a Burushaski reading of some Bru-zha words]. These facts are compatible with a scenario in which the Proto-Burushos arrive in the Hindu-Kush/ Karakorum region several centuries or a millenium before the Indo-Iranian-speaking peoples. As to their previous whereabouts, the evidence is less direct, and primarily derived from comparative linguistics and ethnology.

**2. The Macro-Caucasian hypothesis and Eurasian mountain pastoralists.** Many efforts have been made to find a place for Burushaski in one of the Eurasian language families, most often one of the North Caucasian groups or the tiny Yeniseian family of Central Siberia. The paleolinguist John Bengtson has recently proposed a linguistic grouping which he has named the "Macro-Caucasian" phylum [Bengtson 1991a, 1991b, 1992b]. This phylum, which is claimed to be itself one component of a much larger genetic grouping termed "Sino-Caucasian" or "Dene-Caucasian",[7] comprises the Northwest Caucasian (Abkhaz-Adyghean) and Northeast Caucasian (Nakh-Daghestanian) languages,[8] and the isolates Basque and Burushaski. The Macro-Caucasian hypothesis is of particular interest to us because it encompasses languages spoken in several widely-separated Eurasian mountain ranges (viz. the Pyrenees, Caucasus and Hindu-Kush/Karakorum) which are home to cultures sharing numerous features. The indigenous populations of these regions practice (or practiced until recently) a mixed economy based on agriculture, transhumant pastoralism and hunting. The participation of the two genders in these economic activities is strictly regulated by tradition, and symbolic associations and valuations

linked to women and men are projected onto the different forms of food production and their associated animals. Comparing his observations among the Kalash people of the Hindu-Kush with those collected in the Pamirs, Pyrenees and elsewhere, the ethnologist Peter Parkes observed that "… an extensive permutational set of variously juxtaposed livestock values can … be traced among Eurasian mountain pastoralists from the Pyrenees to the western Himalayas" [Parkes 1987: 655-6]. In structural terms, the individual valuations of animals and food-producing activities, and their associations with male or female spheres of activity, may vary from one region to another, even among neighboring ethnic groups, but their organization into a binary system of opposed terms — the "dual symbolic livestock codes of mountain pastoralists [according to which — KT] … animals are primarily associated with male and female values of 'purity' and 'impurity'" — seems to be a constant in these societies [loc. cit]. Considering these facts diachronically, one naturally asks to what degree the topography and climate favor a particular type of pastoralism (goats and sheep being led to alpine pastures in the summer while bovines stay near the village year-round), and a particular emphasis on altitudinal zonality (high = pure but dangerous; low = corrupt, polluted) in the symbolic system? A careful examination of the ethnographic materials, hand-in-hand with comparison of the relevant languages, can be of assistance in determining whether populations inhabiting similar ecological zones, despite the likelihood of independent convergence in many aspects of their cultures, are in fact historically linked. In this paper I will concentrate on the two easternmost 'Macro-Caucasian' language families and their associated cultures, since the case for historical links between them is particularly strong. Evidence of possible connections with the Alps and Pyrenees will be mentioned here and there in the footnotes, though its relevance for the Macro-Caucasian hypothesis remains to be assessed.

**3. The comparative method in ethnology and linguistics.** In his work on Indo-European social ideology, Dumézil noted that a comparison of material derived from the myths, epics or folklore of widely-separated peoples is convincing to the extent that similarities are found at both the substantive and structural levels. As in historical linguistics, where genetic groupings proposed on the basis of apparent cognates are rendered considerably more probable by striking, functionally unmotivated similarities in grammatical features, so hypotheses concerning ancient cultural contact are strengthened by such correspondences in both the form and structural contextualization of symbols:

«Au fond, il en est de la méthode comparative en matière religieuse comme en matière linguistique: elle seule permet de remonter avec assurance, avec objectivité, dans la préhistoire par l'utilisation simultanée des archaïsmes, des bizarreries (des "irrégularités", disent les grammariens), de toutes les traces qui, ici et là, au sein de chaque équilibre particulier substitué à l'équilibre préhistorique commun, témoignent bien de ce lointain passé …» [Dumézil 1992: 236].[9]

Despite the large proportion of its vocabulary for which no Indo-European etymology has been established, the retention in Hittite of such typologically-unmotivated features as the *r/n*-heteroclitic declension (e.g. nominative <u>wata-**r**</u>, genitive <u>wete-**n**-as</u> "water") makes its Indo-European affiliation readily recognizable [Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1984: 188; cp Greenberg, Turner and Zegura 1986: 493]. A comparable example from Dumézil's work is the discovery of paired one-eyed and one-handed gods or heroes, associated with magic and justice, respectively, in several Indo-European traditions. This mythemic "bizarrerie" is linked to two complementary aspects of sovereignty well-established elsewhere in early Indo-European social ideology [Dumézil 1992: 261-6; Puhvel 1987; Littleton 1982: 99, 247-8], which makes its interpretation as an archaism dating back to Proto-Indo-European society all the more likely.

Dumézil developed his method in the context of the study of symbolic systems of peoples speaking languages already shown to be related by the comparative method. What I propose here is the application of a similar procedure of substantive and structural comparison of symbols to two speech communities for which historical linguistics has not yet conclusively proven a relationship. The two bodies of comparative data — ethnological and linguistic — taken together provide a stronger case for historical linkage than either would on its own.

**4. The Caucasian "prosthesis motif" and its Hindu-Kush parallels.** Many peoples of the Caucasus region (the Abkhazians, Georgians, Ossetes, Chechens, etc.) have variants of the following myth: Supernatural beings (gods or demons) capture, kill and eat an ibex. They then gather up the bones and wrap them in the skin, but discover that one bone has been lost; in some versions it was stolen by a hunter who happened across the feast. They replace the missing bone with a piece of wood, and set it with the others. The gods/demons strike the skin with a stick, or pronounce an invocation, and the animal returns to life. The next day a hunter kills the revived ibex, and discovers a wooden bone in its corpse. Nearly identical tales of resuscitation and prosthesis have been recorded among the Burushos and nearby Dardic-speaking peoples (the Shinas and Kalashas) in the Hindu-Kush: A hunter is invited by fairy-like supernaturals, or the demon-like Pfûts, to share a meal of ibex or goat meat. The hunter hides a rib-bone. After the meal the fairies gather up the bones, and fashion a replacement from juniper wood for the one that is missing. They revive the animal. The human who observed the feast later kills the revived animal and discovers the wooden bone. By way of illustration, two prosthesis texts, one from the province of Xevsureti in northeast Georgia [Shanidze 1931: 637-638], the other from the Burushos of northwest Pakistan [Lorimer 1981: XX], are presented in Table 1.[10]

## TABLE 1: THE PROSTHESIS MOTIF.

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### Elements of the prosthesis story (Caucasus, Hindu-Kush / Karakorum):

*(a) Human (hunter or herdsman) observes supernatural beings dining on meat of ibex or goat.*
*(b) He steals and hides one of the bones.*
*(c) The bones are gathered and placed on (or wrapped in) the skin.*
*(d) A replacement for the missing bone is fashioned out of wood by the supernaturals.*
*(e) They resuscitate the animal, which runs off.*
*(f) The animal is later caught and killed by the human, who discovers the wooden bone.*

### Comparison of Georgian (Xevsurian) and Burushaski versions:

**GEORGIAN**: Shanidze *Xevsurian folk poetry* (1931), translated by KT.

[*A hunter went hunting and came to a cave at the foot of a cliff. He recounts this story*]: "I lit a fire. At midnight someone called out 'Come to our wedding party!' 'I can't', another demon called out, 'I have a guest, I cannot come.' The first demon says 'Come and bring your guest with you!' It was very dark … I could not see anyone. 'Come with me,' a voice called to me, 'follow the sound of my voice' … We arrived, the place was full of demons. … They brought three ibexes, slaughtered them and boiled the meat. They ate and drank vodka … I too drank and ate. They gathered up the bones stripped of meat, wrapped them in the skin, struck it with a whip. The very ibex that we had eaten rose up and ran off! Now they gathered the bones of the second one, wrapped them in the skin, and pronounced a blessing. It too got up and ran away. My host demon said to me: 'Hide one bone.' I did so. They began searching. I held on to the shoulderblade. They made one of wood, set it with the others, wrapped them in the skin, and prayed: 'Get up, get up, *xech'ech'ao,* you have a shoulderblade of wood.' It rose up and ran away. Then I went to sleep. Next morning at sunrise I got up and caught sight of some ibexes. I killed three … including the one in which they had set the wooden shoulder blade the night before!"

**BURUSHASKI**: Lorimer *Folk tales from Hunza,* XX: "The man who supped with the Pfûts"

One day a goat belonging to a man got lost. (As he went on) looking for it night came down on him. He was returning to his home without having seen it and as he came along there was a light in the Bûri Bûn and there were Pfûts dancing. He also went in, they say, and mixed with them, and then sat down among them. After dancing the Pfûts brought food for a wedding party and at the end when they had eaten they brought a skin. Then they demanded from all the bones of their shares of the meat, and collected them. There was one rib short. That rib the man, to whom they had given it as his share, had hidden from them. Then they made a rib of wood and threw the bones into the skin, and on shaking it up the goat came to life. When the man looked he saw that it was his own goat. The Pfûts drove it out and then they went off as a wedding party to the house of the Sughûralo Pfût. When the man, having departed thence, came to his house, that goat of his was there at the door. On the morrow, when he slaughtered it, one rib was missing and in its place was a wooden rib.

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It is important to note that the prosthesis motif, far from being an isolated mythemic curiosity, is in both regions embedded in remarkably similar complexes of beliefs and symbols associated with hunting, hunting deities and game animals. The Caucasian and Hindu-Kush variants resemble each other not only at the surface level (e.g. game animals watched over by female supernaturals with reversed feet, toes pointing backward), but also appear to derive from similar sets of symbolic oppositions (e.g. beautiful female supernaturals with inverted features opposed to monstrous male gods/ogres with missing or defective features [one-eyed, blind or deaf]).

The principal features of these complexes are the following:

(a) *Divine patrons of game animals — female and male*.

Caucasus: The female deities/demons who watch over the ibex and other horned game animals of the high mountains (e.g. the goddess *Dæl* of the Svans of northwest Georgia) are said to be extraordinarily beautiful, with golden hair and radiant white skin (literally radiant: they glow in the dark). They often seduce human hunters, who thereupon enjoy great success as long as they observe a series of taboos imposed by the goddess. Should they violate a taboo, or incite the jealousy of their divine lover, they risk falling to their death from a cliff [Virsaladze 1976]. One such animal-resuscitating female supernatural, the *č'ink'a* of northwest Georgia, can be identified by a curious feature of her anatomy: her feet are reversed, "the heels pointing forward and the toes backward" [Nadaraia 1980: 192].[11] As for the male patrons, many traditions specify that they are handicapped in some fashion (one-eyed [e.g. the Chechen *Elta*, whose eye was knocked out by his own father] or blind, sometimes deaf or mute; the Abkhazian *Ažⁿeipšaa*, is aged, deaf <u>and</u> blind [Dirr 1925; Dumézil 1965: 55-59; Chikovani 1971; Mal´sagov 1991; Salakaia 1991; Xalilov 1991]).[12]

Hindu-Kush/Karakorum: The so-called 'fairies' (*parí*, also known as *rāḉhi* "protectors") are represented as beautiful young women and seducers of hunters. Hunters who offend them may pay with their lives, pushed by the deities off the mountain.[13] A man can tell them apart from human women by their feet: their toes point backward [Jettmar 1975: 247-8; Snoy 1975: 176; Tiffou & Pesot 1989: 114-115].[14] Some Burushos attribute the feature of reversed feet to the fairies [*parí-gus*]), others to the harmful female *bilás* [Patry 1994]. Their male counterparts (the Shina *yaḉh* and the Burusho *hír-bilas* ["man-*bilás*"]) are one-eyed giants [Jettmar 1975: 222; Berger 1983:31].

In both cases the sexual dichotomy between divine patronesses and patrons of game animals appears to be paralleled in other features of their representation: beauty vs. monstrosity; <u>inversion</u> of body parts (reversed feet; also vertically-set eyes in some descriptions of the *rāḉhi* ) vs. <u>lack</u> of body parts or other defect.[15]

(b) *Transformations of the deity.*

Caucasus: Many divine patrons of ibex and deer can take the form of the beasts they watch over. The transformed deity bears a special mark: golden horns, unusual coloration or beauty, etc. [Virsaladze 1976: 33].

Hindu-Kush/Karakorum: The 'fairies' can disguise themselves as ibex, mountain goats, or crows [Jettmar 1975: 223].

(c) *Purity and taboos.*

Caucasus: The peoples of the Caucasus considered the high mountain peaks to be the habitations of the gods. The deities, in particular the goddesses of game animals, are extremely sensitive to any kind of "impurity." A man must, therefore, be absolutely certain that he — and everyone in his household — is "pure" before he goes into the mountains to hunt. The most serious occasions of impurity are death, adultery, and women's blood flow (i.e. menstruation and childbirth). The slightest violation, even if unintentional, of a taboo is thought to have fatal consequences for a hunter [Gabliani 1925: 36, 140]. Animals, their meat and other foodstuffs are also ranked according to purity, with game animals of the high mountains considered more pure than domestic animals restricted to lower altitudes. At the top end of the scale is the meat of ibexes and deers, which, according to Svan hunters, cannot be touched by menstruating women, pigs, sheep or chickens [Nizharadze 1964: II, 36]. A male shaman [*kadag*] in the northeast Georgian province of Xevsureti guards the state of ritual purity necessary for the exercise of his powers by avoiding contact with women, and abstaining from onions, garlic, eggs and poultry [Charachidzé 1968: 146-147].[16]

Hindu-Kush/Karakorum: In order not to offend the fairies, a Shina hunter must avoid all occasions of impurity, that is, any contact with women (especially during menstruation and childbirth), or with cows and their milk [Jettmar 1975: 228-229, 248].[17] According to Parkes, "the symbolic values of Kalasha animals may … be seen to be ordered along a basic gradient of altitude: markhor [a type of ibex — KT] > goats > sheep > cattle > hens." The products considered especially polluting are domestic fowls, onions, garlic and the scarlet dyestuff *rhoN,* which is "associated with evil spirits (*balâ* ) that derive from the lower ends of the valleys" [Parkes 1987: 648-650].

(d) *The patrons of game animals and the weather*.

Caucasus: In addition to their role as caretakers of game, the divine patrons influence the weather. The hunting goddesses in particular are associated with snowfall and rain [Charachidzé 1979: 100 on Dæl; Oniani 1917: 13-5 on the *č'ink'a*; Tsanava 1990: 55]. There is a mountain lake in Svanetia (NW Georgia) consecrated to the hunting god *Jgëræg* ("St. George"). If a drop of blood falls into the lake, or an "unclean" (menstruating) woman approaches it, it will rain [Chartolani 1977: 136].

Hindu-Kush/Karakorum: The fairies can control the weather and cause storms. In the mountains are lakes where they are said to bathe. Throwing rocks into one of these lakes will cause rain or hail [Hussam-ul-Mulk 1974: 97].[18]

(e) *Animals «pre-eaten» by the gods.*

Caucasus: The divine patrons of the ibex and deer are believed to exploit them for food in a manner parallel to the animal husbandry practiced by Caucasian villagers: The deities lead their herds of wild caprids to high mountain pastures, watch over them like shepherds, milk them, and kill them for meat. This latter activity is not only for the benefit of the gods. The Abkhazian and Mingrelian sources indicate specifically that hunters can kill only those animals which have been previously eaten, then resuscitated, by their divine patrons [Salakaia 1991: 49-50; Tsanava 1990: 55-6; Danelia & Tsanava 1991: 345-347].

Hindu-Kush/Karakorum: The peoples of Dardistan believe that the exploitation of domestic animals (specifically goats) is merely the terrestrial parallel to the herding of ibexes and mountain goats by the fairies in their high mountain domain [Jettmar 1975: 221]. Furthermore, according to hunters "one can only kill animals which have already been eaten by the fairies". The latter are thought to "rob the essence" from game animals by eating them, thus leaving them vulnerable to the hunters' arrows or bullets [Jettmar 1975: 224, 246; Snoy 1976: 115].[19]

One can speculate that in the context of this cluster of beliefs, the implantation of a wooden bone by a supernatural being that has eaten and revived a game animal reflects some notion of possession or in-dwelling: the insertion of a portion of the divine essence or power into the animal. For the historical study being undertaken here, the prosthesis motif is at the heart of the argument, since, among the hunting-related symbolic elements presented here, it has the most restricted distribution.[20] The motif of female supernaturals with reversed feet is attested further to the east, in the Himalayas,[21] and perhaps as far west as the Basque country (see note 15), thus overlapping the range of the prosthesis motif. Whether the latter represents an innovation, introduced within a group of hunting cultures in contact, or an archaism remains to be determined.

**5. Burushaski and Northeast Caucasian: evidence for early contact.** In this section I will explore linguistic evidence of historical links between the Burushaski and Northeast Caucasian (Nakh-Daghestanian) speech communities.[22] Certain morphosyntactic systems reconstructed for earlier stages of Burushaski and Northeast Caucasian (NEC) resemble each other both in overall structure and in specific details: the category of gender, and its association with the genitive case; a single absolutive/ergative form for the 1st and 2nd person pronouns; and stem suppletion for the 2sg pronoun.[23] These structural similarities, in conjunction with possible lexical cognates, indicate some kind of prehistoric contact, either direct or mediated, between the ancestors of Burushaski and the Northeast Caucasian languages.[24] My purpose at this point in the research program is to

explore linguistic data which corroborate the ethnological findings reported in the first part of the paper, and leave any evaluation of a possible Burushaski-Caucasian phyletic grouping for later consideration.

(a) *Gender marking.* A grammatical category of gender — by which is meant a categorization of nouns into two or more groups, each with distinct morphosyntactic properties — is far from rare [Corbett 1991]. The Burushaski and NEC gender systems (often designated as "class" systems) have several features in common. In the gender system reconstructed for Proto-NEC by Schulze-Fürhoff [1992a,b], there are four genders ranked according to "control" and "social relevance", following a cascading hierarchy of the binary features [± animate; ± human; ± masculine].[25] The category of gender in Burushaski is structured along somewhat similar lines.[26] In both cases, there are two gender classes for nouns referring to male and female humans, a third gender including names of animals and other nouns, and a residual class. Agreement markers in Burushaski and most NEC languages crossreference the gender and number of the absolutive-case NP in the clause. In both Burushaski [Tiffou/Patry 1995] and Proto-NEC there is no distinct plural agreement for the lowest-ranked of the four genders, as shown in the following table:

### TABLE 2. GENDER IN BURUSHASKI AND PROTO-NORTHEAST-CAUCASIAN.

#### *Burushaski* [Klimov/Èdel´man 1970; Berger 1974; Tiffou/Pesot 1989]

| GENDER | CORE MEMBERSHIP | VERB AGREEMENT WITH ABS. NP | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *singular* | *plural* |
| **hm** | human males | i/e- | u/o- |
| **hf** | human females | mu/mo- | u/o- |
| **x** | animals; count nouns | i/e- | u/o- |
| **y** | mass nouns; substances, grains, abstract nouns | **i/e-** | **i/e-** |

#### *Proto-NEC* [Schulze-Fürhoff 1992]

| GENDER | CORE MEMBERSHIP | VERB AGREEMENT WITH ABS. NP | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *singular* | *plural* |
| **I** | [+ masc; + hum; + control] (human males) | *w- | *b- |
| **II** | [- masc; + hum; ± control] (human females); [- hum; ± anim; + relevant [+ fem; + hum]] (objects associated with women's work sphere) | *r/y- | *b- |
| **III** | [+ hum; - control] (human children); [- hum; ± anim; + socially relevant [+ hum]] (non-human animates and some inanimates) | *b- | *d- |
| **IV** | [- hum; - control; ± anim; - socially relevant [+ hum]] (all other nouns) | **\*d-** | **\*d-** |

In Burushaski and many NEC languages, the genitive case of certain nominals is identical to, or includes, a gender-agreement marker. In most languages of the Avar-Andic subgroup of NEC the genitive case of Class I (human masculine) nouns, personal pronouns, and other types of pronouns referring specifically to people consists of a gender marker, agreeing with the modified NP, attached to the oblique stem: e.g. Andi *imu-v vocci* [father-**gender.I** brother] "father's brother", *imu-b k'otu* [father-**gender.III** horse] "father's horse" [Tsertsvadze 1967: 281]. In the Lezgian language Archi, the genitive and dative forms of the 1st person pronouns take gender prefixes, e.g. *w-is ušdu* [**gender.I-**my brother] "my brother" [Xajdakov 1967: 618; Kibrik 1979:68]; frozen gender prefixes are retained in the genitive-case forms of the personal pronouns of other Lezgian languages, and perhaps in the ergative-case forms (derived from ancient genitives?) of the Nakh personal pronouns. The evidence suggests that gender agreement within the NP, between the head noun and its genitive-case modifier, is an ancient feature of NEC. As for Burushaski, the genitive-case suffixes for most classes of nominals are identical to the agreement markers in the verb for nouns of the corresponding gender, as listed in Table 2 above: [hm/x/y] **-e**, e.g. *hir-e ha* "the man's house", [hf] **-mo**, e.g. *gus-mo ha* "the woman's house" [Tiffou/Pesot 1989: 20-23]. To be sure, this is not an agreement phenomenon of the sort observed in Andi or Archi, since the genitive suffix reflects the gender of the noun to which it is attached, rather than that of the noun heading the NP. The formal similarity between the two declensional patterns is nonetheless sufficiently strong, and the patterns themselves sufficiently rare, to warrant notice.

It seems likely that the Burushaski genitives — and indeed the declensional system as a whole — are of relatively recent origin [Tiffou/Pesot 1989: 56]. In most respects Burushaski morphosyntax corresponds to the head-marking type described by Nichols 1986: the transitive verb agrees with both the subject and the direct (sometimes indirect) object, and 'inalienably-possessed' nouns (mostly kinterms and body-part nouns) take prefixes indexing their possessors [cp Nichols 1988]. The latter construction, on the assumption it continues the manner of marking possession for all nominals in Proto-Burushaski, may be the direct source of the gender markers used as genitive suffixes. The prefixes marking the gender, person and number of the possessor NP (e.g. **á**-s "my-heart"; **go**-s "thy-heart"; **mo**-s "her-heart") could have been resegmented as suffixes attached to the preceding word, i.e. the possessor in a consistently SOV language such as Burushaski:

hmxy:  *[*hir* [*e-ha*]]NP 'man his-house'        ⇒      [*hir-e* [*ha*]]NP 'man's-house'
hf:       *[*gus* [*mo-ha*]]NP 'woman her-house'  ⇒      [*gus-mo* [*ha*]]NP 'woman's-house'

Although the Burushaski genitive arose from materials already existing in the language, close contact with the early NEC languages, characterized by a formally-similar exploitation of gender-agreement markers as genitive-case desinences, could well have played a catalyzing role.

(b) *Case neutralization for 1st and 2nd person pronouns; stem suppletion in the 2sg.* Internal evidence from Burushaski and NEC morphology indicates that at an earlier stage, the 1st and 2nd person pronouns did not have distinct absolute and ergative forms. The best evidence for the older pattern comes from the Yasin dialect of Burushaski [Berger 1974: 20; Tiffou/Morin 1982; Tiffou, personal communication], and the Avar-Andic, Tsezic and Lezgian branches of NEC. Elsewhere, the ergative has been extended to the personal pronouns, but stem-formation evidence indicates that this was a relatively recent innovation. The Burushaski and NEC declensional pattern is one variant of the split-ergative phenomenon first described by Silverstein [1976], and may have originated in an earlier Sprachbund including the Kartvelian languages spoken to the southwest of NEC.[27] The neutralization of the absolutive, ergative and dative for 1st and 2nd person pronouns is clearly ancient in Kartvelian, and furthermore it is correlated with a split between head-marking and dependant-marking grammar. The grammatical roles of 1st and 2nd person core arguments are indicated exclusively by crossreferencing markers in the Kartvelian verb, i.e. the syntax is head-marking [Nichols 1986]. On the other hand, 3rd person NPs (except proper nouns and the pronoun meaning "who") are fully case-marked, while verb agreement is less prominent or even absent — hence a basically dependent-marking morphosyntax for NPs lower on Silverstein's hierarchy [Tuite 1995]. At present it is uncertain whether a head-/dependant-marking split of this kind can be reconstructed for earlier stages of NEC or Burushaski.

One particularly striking structural parallel between Burushaski and several branches of NEC is the use of a completely different stem for the absolutive/ergative form of the 2nd singular pronoun:

**TABLE 3. 2ND-SINGULAR PRONOUNS IN YASIN BURUSHASKI & SOME NEC LANGUAGES.**

| | Burushaski | Avar-Andic branch | | Tsezic branch | | Lezgian branch | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Yasin* | *Botlix* | *Godoberi* | *Tsez* | *Hinux* | *Archi* | *Aghul* | *Udi* |
| ABS/ERG | **un** | **min** | **min** | **mi** | **me** | **un** | **vun** | **un** |
| GENITIVE | go | du-B | du-B | debi | debe | vit | vi | vi |
| DATIVE | go-γa | du-j | du-ɬi | deber | debez | vas | va-s | va(x) |

['-B' = gender marker (Avar-Andic genitive)]

In this instance as well, NEC is likely to have played the role of catalyst for a change in Burushaski. The 2sg genitive *go* is identical to the 2sg agreement marker in the verb. When gender-agreement markers were reanalyzed as genitive suffixes for 3rd-person nominals in Burushaski, the already-existing pattern of stem suppletion in early NEC may have encouraged the extension of the change to the 2nd singular declension in particular, while the 1st singular retained its stem (with lengthening of the vowel: abs. *je/ja*, genitive *jáa* ) [cp Tiffou/Morin 1982].[28]

(c) *Lexical look-alikes*. Bengtson has published several dozen Macro-Caucasian etymologies, consisting of what he considers to be cognate words deriving from at least two of the three member families, viz. 'North Caucasian', Basque and Burushaski [1991b, 1992b; Blažek/Bengtson 1995]. While I remain sceptical of his claim of a phyletic relationship between Northwest Caucasian and NEC, and the inclusion of these latter within a language phylum stretching from the Pyrenees to New Mexico, Bengtson's lexical spadework has uncovered some compelling evidence of early links between Burushaski and the <u>North</u>east Caucasian family (more precisely, its Daghestanian branch). Of sixty-three Burushaski lexemes cited as having 'North Caucasian' cognates, forty-seven, including the more convincing ones, have their best or only match in NEC, versus five in Northwest Caucasian and eleven undecidable. Of particular interest are instances of what might very well be ancient loanwords from individual branches of NEC into (Proto)-Burushaski.

All seven Burushaski lexemes shown in Table 4 (below) are semantically plausible as loanwords, and show close formal and semantic resemblances to at least one candidate source in NEC. The Lak and Burushaski lexemes in ex. 1) have very similar meanings, and the fact that the former appears to be an isolated semantic innovation within NEC implies that the Proto-Burushos borrowed the word from (Proto)-Lak after the break-up of Proto-NEC. In 2) the proto-NEC root has undergone metathesis of its initial and final consonants (not a rare occurrence in prehistoric NEC, to judge by the entries in Nikolayev and Starostin's dictionary), with variant [ii] preserved in the Lezgian language Tabasaran, whereas the other branches of NEC only employ variant [i]. The use of the NEC lexeme in 3) to denote a unit of measurement rather than a body part is evidently an innovation within the Tsezic branch. The compound root in 5) *\*žu-χIera* "pear" (?< *\*žum* "quince" + *\*χIera* "pear" [N/S 893]) is limited to the Lezgian branch of NEC. In these cases the Burushaski lexeme was borrowed after particular formal or semantic changes took place within individual branches of NEC, indicating once again that the time of borrowing postdated the period of Proto-NEC unity.[29]

### TABLE 4. POSSIBLE NORTHEAST CAUCASIAN LOANWORDS IN BURUSHASKI.[30]

| *Burushaski* | *Possible Daghestanian sources* |
|---|---|
| 1). phīnč / pfīnč / [Yasin] phínju "stick for games such as polo" | *Lak* paInc' "a small stick for playing, sharpened at one end (Russ. чижик)" |
| 2). ṣoq "sole, track" | *Proto-Lezgian* [i] *q'Iʷaš / [ii] *šaq'Iʷ "heel" (variant [ii] preserved in Tabasaran) < *Proto-NEC* *q'HwŏšwV "heel, ankle" |
| 3). qʌṣ "cubit"; [Yasin] qaṣ "Elle mit Hand, als Maß" | *Proto-Tsezic* *k'ɔ(n)č'u 1. "leg, shin"; 2. "distance between thumb and forefinger" [*Gunzib* k'ɔč'u] < *Proto-NEC* *kwănVč'ĕ "paw, knee"[31] |

4). quš "elbow of a garment" [Yasin]≥     *Proto-Lezgian* [i] *q'Iʷa(m)č'V- 1. "to bend"; 2. "elbow" [*Udi (Nij dialect)* q:ačI "elbow"]; 3. "tip, point" < *Proto-NEC* *q'Hwemč'V "hook, curved"

5). šuɣuri/šoɣori "kind of pear"; [Yasin] šuɣurí "Art harte Birne"[32]     *Proto-Lezgian* *ǯu-χIera "pear" [e.g. *Lzg.* č:üχʷer, *Agul* ǯeχer / č:iχIar, *Tbs.* žiχir "pear"]

6). tilí-eŋ "saddle"; -ltul- "to saddle (a horse)"     *Avar* λ':ilí (кьIили « седло »); *Lak* k'ili "saddle" < *Proto-NEC* * λ'wiɬē "saddle"

7). pholɣó "feather" [Yasin]     *Lak* p'iħulli *Dargwa (Akushi dialect)* paIħaIla "feather" < *Proto-NEC* *p'VħVɬV "feather, mane"

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The question of a genetic linguistic grouping paralleling the correspondences proposed here, on the basis of evidence from comparative mythology, must for the time being remain unresolved. Much more work needs to be done, on the basis of the most recent and most reliable language data, before one can associate the prosthesis motif with an ancient population which spoke Macro-Caucasian. What I believe I have demonstrated, though, is that Burushaski and the NEC languages share what Nichols has termed quasi-genetic resemblances: "resemblances of structure and vocabulary that do not prove genetic relatedness in the standard sense but certainly suggest a possible connection at a level slightly deeper than the comparative method can reach" [1993: 73].

The archeological evidence indicates that the Northeast Caucasian peoples have been in roughly their present location for several millenia at least [Džaparidze 1989: 376ff; Nichols 1994]. Does this therefore imply that sometime in the 3rd millenium BCE the ancestors of the Burushos migrated eastward from an Urheimat in the vicinity of the North Caucasus region, across the steppes north of the Caspian Sea and through what is now Kazakhstan? There is another possibility that should be considered. The common features discussed in this paper could have as well diffused more slowly across a chain of highland communities to the south of the Caspian, across Iran and Afghanistan. Long-distance displacement of communities is not required by this model, and it has the added bonus of being consistent with the retention of symbolic clusters associated with highland topography and economic activities. Perhaps some of the influx into the Bronze Age Tarim Basin came from this second, less-studied southern route.

**NOTES.**

[1]In preparing this article I have profited greatly from discussions with Drs. Karl Jettmar and Hermann Berger (Heidelberg), Johanna Nichols (Berkeley), John Bengtson (Minneapolis), P'aat'a Buxrashvili and Ap'olon Tsanava (Tbilisi), John Colarusso (McMaster), Victor Friedman (Chicago), Victor Mair (Pennsylvania) and Étienne Tiffou, Yves-Charles Morin, Richard Patry, John Leavitt and Sushil Mittal (Université de Montréal), to all of whom I express my gratitude, while absolving them of blame for the use I make of their contributions. Some of the ideas contained in this paper were presented at the American Anthropological Association (December 3, 1994), the Symposium on Language and Prehistory in South Asia, Univ. of Hawai'i at Manoa (March 20, 1995), the 7th Conference on the Cultures of Caucasia, Univ. of Chicago (May 6, 1995), and at the Georgian Academy of Sciences in Tbilisi (July 7 and 12, 1995). The research presented here has been supported by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and les Fonds pour la Formation de Chercheurs et l'Aide à la Recherche du Québec.

[2]See Tikkanen [1988] for arguments in favor of a "pre-Aryan convergence area" in northern South Asia, including (Proto)-Burushaski, Dravidian, and Tibeto-Burman, but not Indo-Iranian. Note also the presence of early Tibetan loanwords in Burushaski, e.g. the words for 'rice' [Klimov/Èdel´man 1970: 13] and 'salt' [Fussman 1972: 333; though H. Berger prefers a Shina origin for the latter (personal communication)].

[3]I employ the term "historically linked" as an umbrella designation for the sharing of cultural/linguistic features between communities due to common origin (genetic/phyletic relation), occupation of adjoining territories, or other factors contributing to diffusion (e.g. migration or trade). More detailed study of historically-linked cultures may lead to a clearer picture of the type of relation between them, but for any given case there is no guarantee that enough of the signal can be detected against an often very noisy background.

[4]Dirr [1925: 146]; Jettmar 1957; Klimov/Èdel´man [1970: 12]; Gamkrelidze/Ivanov [1984: 956]; etc.

[5]Arrian *Anabasis* 5.3.1-4, Strabo 15.1.8; see also the brief discussion in Braund [1994: 18].

[6]According to Èdel´man [1968: 58], the greater part of the toponyms in the mountainous regions of the Hindu-Kush and Pamir regions are of unknown provenance.

[7]Bengtson [1991a] includes Sino-Tibetan, Yeniseian, Sumerian and Na-Dene in this macrophylum; it corresponds closely to Starostin's «Paleo-Eurasian» grouping [1982: 197].

[8]Northwest and Northeast Caucasian are grouped into a single 'North Caucasian' family, although such a grouping has yet to be demonstrated to the satisfaction of many linguists who work on these languages.

[9]On Dumézil's methodology, see also Littleton 1982, Dubuisson 1993.

[10]For the Caucasian variants see: Dirr 1925; Shanidze 1931: 637-638; Dzidziguri 1970, 1971; Virsaladze 1976; Salakaia 1975, 1987; Mak'alatia 1985; Tsanava 1990, 1992: 42-46. The variants from the Hindu-Kush/Karakorum region known to me are cited in: Lièvre/Loude 1990: 65-6; D. Lorimer 1981: XX; Jettmar 1975: 247; Tiffou & Pesot 1989: 105-106; Tiffou 1995: 161-166.

[11]At least two other mythical beings from western Georgia are said to have reversed feet: the Mingrelian *očok'oči,* a Pan-like forest-dwelling creature [Danelia & Tsanava 1991: 385]; and the shape-changing *kaǰi,* which can take the form of a beautiful woman, save for feet with the heels forward [Tsanava 1992: 66].

[12]In the religious thought of the Svans and Abkhazians, the patrons of game animals (Dæl and Ažᵒeipšaa) stand in opposition to the patrons of hunters, warriors, woodcutters, thieves and in general all men who go into the wild in search of its riches. The latter function is attributed to *Jgëræg* ("St. George") among the Svans, and *Aerg* in Abkhazia (Charachidzé 1986; Inal-ipa 1965: 517-519; Tuite 1996, ms.). Also inhabiting the wild spaces are seductive long-haired sprites with reversed feet (e.g. the Abkhazian *Dzydzlan-dzaħk'uaže* [Inal-ipa 1965: 524]) and fearsome ogres, often represented as cyclopses. Insofar as their corporal structure is concerned, the sprites and ogres appear at first glance to be symbolic doubles of the *Dæl-Jgëræg* couple, but the matter needs to be investigated further.

[13]I owe this information to Mr. Dada Khan, a Burusho from Yasin, Pakistan, who was invited to Montréal by my colleague Prof. Etienne Tiffou in May 1994.

[14]Manchmal nehmen sie [die Rāḉhi— KT] gar die Gestalt des Eheweibs an, um sich an den Erwählten [Jäger — KT] heranzumachen. … An den nach rückwärts gerichteten Zehen erkennt er die unheimliche Besucherin [Jettmar 1975: 247-8].

[15]These cases of corporal inversion and handicap are to be distinguished from the Indo-European paired one-eyed and one-handed gods (see above), which have a very different distribution and symbolic function. Another curious resemblance, awaiting further study, is the figure of the bird-footed goddess or demon (an inversion of humanness rather than of direction?), noted in Western Europe [Hoffmann-Krayer/Bächtold-Stäubli 1929-1941: «Perhta»; Grange 1983], Azerbaijan [Basilov 1987] and perhaps in Central Asia [Bleichsteiner 1953: 64-68]. The Basque mythological figure Mari shares many features of the Caucasian and Hindu-Kush patronesses of game animals, although the prosthesis motif has not yet been noted in the Basque country, to my knowledge. Mari is the «jefe o reina de todos los genios», and is described as having the foot of a goat («Esta dama era muy hermosa y muy bien hecha en todo su cuerpo, salvo que tenía un pie como de cabra»). She is associated with animals, and can appear in the form of a male goat. She is frequently said to control weather phenomena, especially rain and hail. There is also mention of a cave-dwelling

male cyclops (Torto, Anxo or Alarabi), associated with a Polyphemus-like story of anthropophagy, blinding and escape [Barandiarán 1960]. In much of Central Asia, notably among the Turkic-speaking populations, one hears accounts of a female demon, variously named *Albasty, Almasty, Halanasy, (H)al*, etc., who is said to have breasts so long they hang over her shoulders and down her back [Johansen 1959; Benveniste 1960]. Some Kazakh myths attribute reversed feet to this demon, while a Tuvin myth portrays her with a single eye in her forehead [Basilov 1987]. Could these represent reworkings of symbolic material — the female with inverted features and the male with a missing feature — more faithfully conserved in the Caucasus and Hindu-Kush?

[16]Charachidzé motivates the ban on onions and garlic by the supposed necessity for those who speak to the gods to avoid an offensive breath odor [Detienne/Harmonic 1995: 67]; while I do not doubt that some of Charachidzé's informants may have offered this sort of explanation, I suspect that the original motivation was the association of these foods with the lower altitudes and women's sphere of activity. Victor Mair and Sushil Mittal have kindly pointed out to me that onions and garlic are stated to be impure in early Indian Buddhist texts, and to this day are not eaten by some Hindus.

[17]Fragmentary evidence indicates that some sort of cow-milk taboo may have existed in the Caucasus also. The power of the Mingrelian *t'q'ašmapa* ("queen of the forest"), a beautiful and potentially dangerous goddess of wild animals, can be neutralized by bathing her hair in milk [Danelia & Tsanava 1991: 361-366].

[18]There are likewise similar beliefs concerning the meteorological impact of unburied human remains. Among the Chitralis of the Hindu-Kush, «If a dead body is left unburied in open ground, it will rain for a long time» [Hussam-ul-Mulk 1974: 113]. More specifically: «Wird die Leiche eines Ertrunkenen, vor allem die Leiche eines Mädchens, nicht aus dem Fluß geborgen, so kann das Regen auslösen. Es genügt aber auch schon, daß ein Toter unbeerdigt in den Bergen liegen bleibt. Offensichtlich wird damit die von den Peri gehütete Reinheit befleckt» [Jettmar 1975: 429]. Earlier this century, among the Georgians it was believed that «… si un ossement demeurait à la surface de la terre, sans être beurré et recouvert de terre, l'on disait alors qu'une grande pluie allait venir, qu'elle inonderait la terre et que le beau temps disparaîtrait. Les gens disaient: "Les nuages du ciel pleurent, c'est donc qu'il y a un os hors de terre." S'il pleuvait trop, on partait à la recherche d'un os déterré … on le beurrait et l'enterrait … » [Charachidzé 1968: 583]. The curious practice of buttering unearthed human bones may also have a faint echo in the Hindu-Kush: The 'Kafirs' of Wama in the Ashkun valley would, on certain occasions, open the coffins of their ancestors and rub the bones with fat. [Jettmar 1986: 128].

[19]One of the principal functions of Siberian shamans is to assure the success of hunters by "capturing" the souls of game animals: "En outre, les Samoyèdes attribuent aux animaux des âmes

ou «ombres» (donc des «âmes libres»), censées protéger l'animal et que le chaman devait «prendre» avant que la chasse puisse commencer. Les Iouraks croyaient fermement qu'un chasseur ne pouvait prendre un animal avant que le sorcier (chaman) se soit emparé de l'«ombre» de l'animal en question." [Paulson 1965: 91]. It remains to be determined what light these Siberian facts can shed on the Caucasian and Hindu-Kush beliefs that animals must be pre-eaten by the deities before a hunter can capture them. Is the eating of a creature a means of seizing its soul? Does the implantation of a prosthesis signal supernatural control or possession of an animal or person? [cp Charachidzé 1968: 320-23; Jettmar 1957: 129; Tuite, in press]. On parallels between Caucasian motifs of consumption and resuscitation, and beliefs associated with shamanism, see, among others, Eliade [1968: 68-69] and Pócs [1989: 41-42].

[20] Besides the Caucasus and Hindu-Kush/Karakorum regions, the prosthesis motif has been recorded in Turkey [Boratav 1976, 1992], Greece and the Alpine region. Here as well most of the variants are found in the proximity of mountains, leading one to wonder if there is a connection to be sought with Eurasian mountain pastoralist societies which speak (or once spoke?) "Macro-Caucasian" languages. In almost all of the variants attested to the west of the Bosporus, it should be noted, a human is eaten and resuscitated, rather than an animal (could the transposition "en clé de sorcière" of a game-animal resuscitation myth have been correlated with the crossing of a major linguistic and/or cultural frontier? [Lévi-Strauss 1973: 223; 1991: 129-130]). The three principal European prosthesis variants are:

(a) *Pelops and the ivory shoulderblade.* Pelops, the legendary ancestor of the House of Atreus, was killed by his father, cooked and served to the gods at a banquet. None of them tasted the meal, except for Demeter, who took a piece from the shoulder. The gods gathered up the fragments of Pelops' body, threw them into a cauldron, and added a shoulderblade of ivory to replace the one chewed on by Demeter. Pelops emerged hale and hearty from the cauldron, with the addition of the ivory shoulderblade which was subsequently to be a mark of his lineage. Some scholiasts recorded a more extreme version in which all of the gods partake of the meal, leaving only the head, hands and feet of Pelops untouched [Heyne 1807; Drachmann 1969: *Olymp*. I, 79-80; Lorimer 1936: 32; Tuite, in press].

(b) *The "Hazel-witch" in Central Europe.* Ethnographers have described a "Pelops motif" in the folklore of Austria, the Italian Tyrol, Slovenia, Hungary, etc. [Mannhardt 1858: 66; von Sydow 1910; Schmidt 1963; Matičetov 1959] of which the following is a typical outline: A village girl attends a witches' banquet. The witches kill her, cut up her body, cook it and eat it. A young man watching the scene grabs a rib bone and hides it. The witches gather up the bones, replacing the missing rib with a hazel branch, and reanimate the girl, who returns to the village. Shortly afterwards the boy announces that "there is a hazel-witch *(Haselhexe)* among us." The girl falls

dead on hearing these words [Schmidt 1963: 147]. Schmidt has indeed proposed, based on a comparison of these legends with the fragmentary accounts of the Caucasian prosthesis myths in Dirr 1925, that the two traditions are somehow related, and even sketches possible routes of transmission. As for linguistic evidence of historical links between the Alpine region and the Caucasus, Orel and Starostin [1990] recently published 59 etymologies associating Etruscan words, the meaning of which is rarely very clear, with Northeast Caucasian roots, in an attempt to demonstrate that Etruscan descended from a branch of the Northeast Caucasian family. This would be an astonishing parallel to the mythological evidence presented here if it were true; unfortunately the etymologies offered by Orel and Starostin do not inspire much confidence in their proposed genetic grouping.

(c) *Animal-reviving witches and saints.* The only Western European example I have encountered thus far of the resuscitation of an animal with an inserted wooden bone is likewise associated with witchcraft. A woman tried by the Milanese Inquisition in 1390 was accused, among other things, of reviving animals. Should a bone be missing, an elder-wood prosthesis was substituted ("et si quod ex ossibus defficet ponunt loco eius de ligno sambuci" [Bertolotti 1979: 486]). There are as well numerous accounts of medieval saints, mostly of Celtic or Gallic origin, bringing animals back to life. One version of the life of the 7th-century Saint Opportune of Normandy relates how she resuscitated dead geese from their bones. Because one bone was missing, however, the revived geese limped [Grange 1983: 146]. The theme of a revived animal which limps because of a missing bone (i.e. the prosthesis motif <u>without</u> the prosthesis) is also attested in Scandinavian mythology (Thor's goats) and elsewhere in medieval Europe [von Sydow 1910; Schmidt 1963].

[21]The Kumaonis, an Indic-speaking people of the Himalayas, speak of fairies with reversed feet, accompanying a monstrous sylvan deity called Airi, which, rather than lacking an eye, has a third one atop his head which kills anyone who meets its gaze [Oakley 1905/1990 §9; Atkinson 1981: 825-6].

[22]The Northeast Caucasian family consists of two primary branches: Nakh (Chechen-Ingush and Bats) and Daghestanian. The latter is further subdivided into the Avar-Andic, Tsezic, Lak-Dargwa and Lezgian groups [Schulze-Fürhoff 1992b].

[23]The Burushaski data presented here come principally from the Werchikwar dialect of the Yasin Valley, which appears to be more conservative in important respects than the better-known Hunza dialect [Berger 1974: 5]. The primary sources are Berger 1974 and Tiffou/Pesot 1989.

[24]The similarities proposed here resemble those shared by Proto-Kartvelian and Proto-Indo-European (ablaut, shared lexemes), which are believed to reflect early contacts between these two language families [Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1984], or possibly common origin [Bomhard 1996]. Burushaski of course shows signs of convergence with the languages of northwest South Asia,

especially those spoken in its immediate neighborhood. Most of the characteristics Burushaski shares with Indo-Iranian and Tibetan languages are phonological (retroflex consonants) and syntactic (quotative and subordinate constructions) [Tikkanen 1988]. The features shared with NEC are of a different order, pertaining to the structure of the morphology.

[25]Nichols [1989] argues that gender marking arose in later Proto-NEC, through the reanalysis of pre-Proto-NEC systems of nominal and verbal prefixation as agreement. If the Burushaski gender system indeed reflects convergence with NEC, the time of contact would correspond to late Proto-NEC or even after the break-up of the protolanguage (see the discussion of loanwords in subsection (c) below).

[26]"[La classe] *hm* représente exclusivement les humains masculins et *hf* exclusivement les humains féminins … À la classe *x* appartiennent les noms désignant les animaux, des entités dénombrables; à la classe *y* appartiennent les entités non dénombrables, les éléments fluides, les grains, les éléments immatériels etc." [Tiffou/Pesot 1989: 15-16]. See also Berger 1992.

[27]The declensional pattern described here is to be distinguished from a superficially similar neutralization of case oppositions in the declension of personal pronouns in the Pamir, Dardic and Nuristani languages (Èdel´man 1983, Paxalina 1989). Neutralization of the direct/oblique case opposition is limited to the 1st and 2nd person **plural** pronouns, and therefore is likely to reflect the general tendency toward reduction of paradigmatic distinctions for the marked member of a grammatical category (Croft 1990: 77-79).

[28]The phonological similarity between the absolutive/ergative 2sg pronouns in Burushaski and in the Lezghian branch of NEC is probably fortuitous; only two phonemes, both of high frequency, are involved.

[29]If we take as a ball-park estimate that NEC is "comparable to I[ndo-]E[uropean in age", the break-up of Proto-NEC would date to roughly the 4th millenium BCE [Nichols 1994].

[30]<u>Sources</u>: 1) MCE (Bengtson 1991b) 47, N(ikolayev)/S(tarostin) 870-1, Victor Friedman (pers. comm.); 2) MCP (Bengtson 1992b) 63, N/S 926, Xaj(dakov) 38; 3) Berger 1974, MCP 52, N/S 704, Murk(elinskij) 119; 4) MCE 53, N/S 925; 5) Berger 1974, MCE 30, N/S 893, Xaj 56, Murk 162; 6) Blažek/Bengtson 160, Xaj 88, N/S 783; 7) Bengtson 1996, N/S 879, Tiffou (pers. comm.). The reconstructed NEC forms come from Nikolayev and Starostin [1994]. In their system of transcription /I/ indicates pharygealization; /H/ stands for a laryngeal consonant, and /V/ a vowel of uncertain quality.

[31]The irregular correspondances between Burushaski /q/ and various Daghestanian velars and uvulars might pose difficulty for a proposed <u>phyletic</u> relation between Burushaski and NEC, but such inconsistencies do crop up in cases of borrowing. In Georgian words borrowed from Arabic,

for example, Arabic /q/ can be replaced by /q'/, /k'/ or /χ/; conversely, in Georgian place-names recorded by Arabic chroniclers, Arabic /q/ can represent Georgian /q'/ or /k'/ [Zereteli 1990].

[32]Tiffou suspects that *šuɣurí* might be a loan from Khowar or Shina; Bengtson responds that "this may be one of the Burushic words retained by Burushos who assimilated to Indic languages (Khowar, Shina)" [pers. comm.].

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