

To the EMET Prize Jury 2012 in the Field of Linguistics

When I was approached to recommend Prof. Aharon Dolgopolsky, a colleague of mine for many decades in the field of Historical Comparative Linguistics – for the EMET Prize, and after reading the regulations to this prize, I was enthusiastic about the proposal and the idea that Aharon Dolgopolsky be awarded this prestigious prize in the field of linguistics for this year. He is the symbol of a cultural hero on a universal and historic scale who, throughout his life, has devoted his talent and unfailing energy to the realization of the linguistic-humane-cultural ideal to a profound degree. He aspires to describe, in a brilliant scientific manner, the relationship between languages from the earliest times as evidence of the human race's common history and way of life. This is a particularly daring mission, since he enters into the very essence of the phonological, lexical and grammatical structure, and etymology and stocks of different language-families (Indo-European, Semito-Hamitic, Kartvelian, Uralic, Altaic, Dravidian). Most linguists specialize in a more or less narrow linguistic field, whereas Dolgopolsky's scope of research reaches out for the common linguistic foundation of trans-genetic relationship.

Dolgopolsky's excellence is that, by means of extremely detailed data evidence, he succeeds in proving the relationship between seemingly distant linguistic families. A perusal of the rich bibliographic list of his publications already provides the first opportunity of following the ongoing breakthroughs, the result of his research since the 60s up to his monumental "Nostratic Dictionary" (2008).

Aharon Dolgopolsky began to publish on Nostratic issues in 1963. At about this time he also worked on the reconstruction of Proto-Cushitic. The fundamental "Comparative-Historical Dictionary of Cushitic Languages" (1973) testifies to its author's immense knowledge in this field and his expert treatment of lexical data. Although some of the reconstructions have become outdated, Dolgopolsky's monograph remains an unparalleled rich source of data and an important milestone in Afro-Asiatic historical linguistics. It was the first to lay down the bases for the reconstruction of affricates and uvulars.

Since then he has continued his fruitful research at Haifa University. Over the past decades he kept preparing his magnum opus, the "Nostratic Dictionary", the first comparative dictionary of the Nostratic languages. The immense quantity of etymologies

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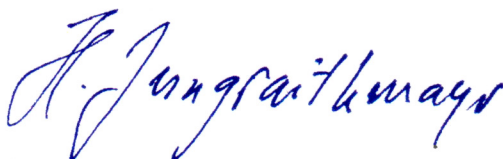
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he has proposed, and his exceptional exactitude and masterful way of presenting the lexical data are the outstanding qualities of his great achievement.

Aharon Dolgopolsky's capacities are far beyond the normal. He has a sound professional knowledge and an excellent acquaintance with the literature of a very wide range of languages. He is fond of fierce debate, devoid of personal and academic preconceptions, and led by his eagerness to learn objective reality with inexhaustible energy, as R.M. Bulatova wrote in 1989: "Aron proved to be a person capable of great self-sacrifice, a selfless worker, ready to perform any amount of labor in the interests of science".

Let us grant him the honor and recognition of this unique prize and thus encourage him to continue his fruitful pioneering research work!

Sincerely,



Prof. Herrmann Jungraithmayr

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