

2. Famous linguists praise Aharon Dolgopolsky

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Colin Renfrew – Cambridge

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RECOMMENDATION LETTER to the EMET Prize Jury 2012 in the field of linguistics

I fully support the nomination of Prof. A.Dolgopolsky for the prestigious EMET Prize.

Prof. A.Dolgopolsky is a genius in the field of comparative linguistics who has accomplished a titanic work: using a precise comparative-historical methodology he has reconstructed the Nostratic proto-language, the ancestor of several old proto-languages, ancestors of Indo-European, Kartvelian, Semito-Hamitic, and other families. For that, he had a unique knowledge in hundreds of languages, belonging to each of the above families.

Thanks to Prof. A.Dolgopolsky the comparative linguistics made a giant step forward; a long work of fully-stuffed scholarly institutions would not be able to do such a research.

There are many sub-branches of Prof. A.Dolgopolsky research; one is a re-creation of ways of life of our remote ancestors, - how did they hunt, fish, what tools did they used (Prof. A.Dolgopolsky wrote a book about it; on its material, an International Symposium convened at the University of Cambridge in Great Britain; this resulted in 2 volumes of scholarly studies).

In 2008 Prof. A.Dolgopolsky published the four volumes of his *Nostratic Dictionary*. Since then, scholars have an access to this work via internet. By the end of 2011, some 40000 scholars all over the world had accessed this magnificent work.

I would like to wish Prof. A.Dolgopolsky, with whom I had the honour of working together, many more years of life and of seminal research for the benefit of the whole mankind.

Sincerely,

Dr. V. Shevoroshkin,

Professor of Linguistics and Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures,
University of Michigan in Ann Arbor,

1st of April, 2012.



EMET Prize
A.M.N.Foundation
Jerusalem

McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research

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11th April 2012

Professor Aharon Dolgopolsky

It is a pleasure to write in support of the nomination of Professor Aharon Dolgopolsky for the EMET Prize for Science, Art and Culture in the field of Linguistics.

Professor Dolgopolsky is of course a comparative and historical linguist with a worldwide reputation. Together with the late Vladislav Ilich-Svitych he is the founder of the field of Nostratic linguistics. His *Nostratic Dictionary*, first published by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge in 2008, with the 3rd edition to be published later this year, is a monumental, four-volume compendium which sets out in detail for the first time the evidence from a wide range of languages in the Nostratic macrofamily which can be adduced to support the Nostratic hypothesis. The Nostratic hypothesis asserts the relatedness of this family of languages and their descent from the reconstructed Proto-Nostratic ancestral language.

This work has attracted widespread attention from linguists and archaeologists, and harmonises in many respects with the work of the distinguished American linguist the late Joseph Greenberg (*Indo-European and its Closest Relatives: the Eurasiatic Language Family*, Stanford University Press, 2000). The possibility of such linguistic macrofamilies has excited widespread interest (and some controversy) and is the focus of much research at the present time in the field of quantitative phylogenetics.

As a prehistoric archaeologist I have been greatly interested by the hypothesis and by the work of Dolgopolsky. In 1998, following his visit to Cambridge, the McDonald Institute published his short book *The Nostratic Macrofamily and Linguistic Palaeontology*, and the following year the symposium volume *Nostratic: Examining a Linguistic Macrofamily*, for which he wrote the crucial Introduction.

His erudition is legendary, and deeply respected by linguists, including many who are not themselves working in the field of Nostratic studies. His impact has been worldwide, and has influenced developments in prehistoric archaeology as well as his own field of comparative and historical linguistics.

It is therefore my great pleasure to support his nomination for the EMET Prize

Yours sincerely

Professor Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn FBA

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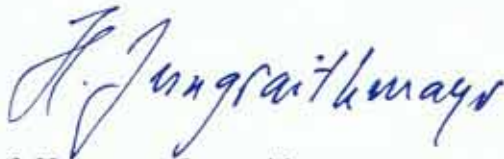
he has proposed, and his exceptional exactitude and masterful way of presenting the lexical data are the outstanding qualities of his great achievement.

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

Professor Emeritus of African Languages
Goethe University of Frankfurt
Institut für Afrikanische Sprachwissenschaften
5th April 2012

Aharon B. Dolgopolsky: The Scholar and The Man*

Gábor Takács

Professor Aharon B. Dolgopolsky became 70 on November 18th, 2000. For that occasion^[1], I suggested that the next “yellow volume” to be published on long-range comparison and Afro-Asiatic (Afrasian, Semito-Hamitic) edited by Prof. V. V. Shevoroshkin and Prof. H. U Sverdrup should be in honour of this exceptional man. It was therefore a pleasure when later I was asked to write some sort of foreword to his volume about how I see and know the jubilee. I should emphasize right at the start that there are several other people, especially his older friends from Moscow who know him much better than I do. Therefore, my brief foreword can be no more than a short appraisal of his enormous scientific production and a fragmentary collection of my personal impressions.

I have known A. Dolgopolsky’s name ever since I began dealing with Afro-Asiatic comparative linguistics. I came to know him personally only much later, at the Italian conference on Afro-Asiatic in Naples in January 1996. Since then, there have been a number of pleasant occasions of discussing comparative linguistics questions with him. I will never forget September 1998, when I spent nearly a whole month in Haifa with him. It was wonderful from both a scientific and a personal viewpoint. There was nothing he would not have done for me.

Aharon Dolgopolsky graduated from the Moscow Institute of Foreign Languages (nowadays Moscow Linguistic University), where he studied primarily the Romance languages and comparative linguistics. Soon, the scope of his linguistic interests widened to comparative Indo-European, Afro-Asiatic, and a number of other language families of Eurasia. First, he worked at the Moscow Institute and later (i.e., from the middle of the 1960s up to 1976), at the Institute of Linguistics (USSR Academy of Sciences) in Moscow.

Aharon Dolgopolsky began to publish on Nostratic in 1963. His first paper (Dolgopolsky 1963) on the subject was a curious article in Spanish, which is little known even among Nostraticists (e.g., it is not even listed in the Nostratic bibliography by I. Hegedus). Although A. Dolgopolsky “had taken up Nostratic studies long before Illič-Svityč” (Bulatova 1989, 20), both scholars began to publish on it practically simultaneously, which signified a revival of the theory claiming the deep genetic relationship between numerous Eurasian language families (e.g. Indo-European, Kartvelian, Semito-Hamitic, Uralic, Altaic, Dravidian). The two outstanding linguists realized the need for a much better knowledge of Proto-Afro-Asiatic and the importance of its lesser known African daughter branches.

In the mid-sixties, Aharon Dolgopolsky started to reconstruct Proto-Cushitic, while Illič-Svityč did the same with Proto-Chadic. The fundamental “Comparative-Historical Dictionary of Cushitic Languages” (1973) testifies to its author’s immense knowledge in this new field and his expert treatment of lexical data. Although many of the reconstructions themselves have become outdated, A. Dolgopolsky’s monograph remains an unparalleled rich source of data and an important milestone [ww: otherwise, mix of metaphors!] in Afro-Asiatic historical linguistics, since it was the first to lay down the bases for the reconstruction of affricates and uvulars.

Soon the plan emerged of compiling a comparative Afro-Asiatic dictionary in collaboration with with Prof. I. M. Diakonoff (1915-1999). In his presentation at the Semito-Hamitic Congress in Florence (1974) he wrote: “We have planned (in Leningrad and Moscow ...) to prepare a Comparative Historical Lexicon of Afrasian Languages; the project is at present being tutored by Prof. A. B. Dolgopolsky ... and myself ...” (Diakonoff 1978, 43). Unfortunately however, this planned joint work of these two giants of Afro-Asiatic linguistics was never published (although it was continued later on by a new generation of comparativists in Moscow, who were guided by the principles elaborated by Prof. Dolgopolsky). On 24th September 1976, Aharon Dolgopolsky accomplished his aliyah to Israel.

Since then he has continued his fruitful research at Haifa University. Over the past two decades or so, he has been preparing his *magnum opus*, the eagerly awaited new comparative dictionary of the Nostratic languages. One could enumerate the long list of the jubilee’s masterful articles on comparative Afro-Asiatic phonology and lexicography. What makes his suggestions convincing, however, is not just the immense quantity of etymologies he has proposed, but also his exceptional exactitude and his masterful way of presenting lexical data.

In my opinion, it is no exaggeration to say that Aharon Dolgopolsky is a genius. His capacities are far beyond the normal. He has a sound professional knowledge and an excellent acquaintance with the literature of a whole range of language families: Indo-European, Afro-Asiatic, Kartvelian, Uralic and Altaic, to name but a few.

He has a truly unselfish and eager interest in science. He is ready to telephone from home even to the far corners of the world simply to get a missing piece of linguistic data, no matter how long the conversation

* It is my pleasure to express my gratitude to Mr and Mrs Watson (Morpeth, UK) for correcting the English of this text.

takes and how much it costs. Likewise, he is ready to travel anywhere in order to make reams of photocopies of works that are missing from his library. As R. M. Bulatova (1989, 22) wrote: "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".

He is a passionate man, fond of fierce debate, devoid of personal and academic preconceptions, and led by his eagerness to learn objective reality. He is also a passionate lover of life, who never gets bored, with a great sense of humour and a huge store of anecdotes. Gifted with musical talent, for hours on end he used to sing songs of all kinds during our journeys together. I was amazed at his hidden physical strength and his inexhaustible energy.



Aharon Dolgopolsky at his home