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THE CATCHER IN THE RYE?

Krzysztof Tomasz Witczak: *Indoeuropejskie nazwy zbóż*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2003 [2004], 70 × 100 [X], 159 pp., paperback, ISBN 83-7171-712-1, 16 PLN (English summary, pp. 139-142).

This book is based on the author's doctoral thesis defended in 1995 at the University of Łódź; "the purpose of this comprehensive study is a complex mapping of the Indo-European cereal terminology" (p. 139), using an interdisciplinary approach: the reader learns the botanical, ecological, archeological and linguistic facts concerning the various types of grains. The work consists of two parts. The first part comprises the introduction (pp. 9-12), which describes the goals of the work, methodology used and the sources, and two chapters. The first is entitled "The beginnings of cereal cultivation – the first farmers and their identification" (pp. 13-24). It provides a survey of the "neolithic revolution" and its consequences in the Middle East (and later on in Europe). The second chapter called "Indo-European agronomic culture and its relationship to the neolithic revolution in the Middle East" (pp. 25-38) is a brief introduction to Indo-European agricultural terminology, as well as to the author's opinion concerning the Proto-Indo-European homeland problem.¹ The second part is

¹ Witczak contests the Kurgan hypothesis of Gimbutas and follows the views of Gamkrelidze-Ivanov, Dolgopolsky and Sevoroshkin and especially Renfrew, who are looking for the homeland of the Proto-Indo-Europeans among the agricultural tribes of Anatolia (the neolithic centre in Çatal-Hüyük). According to Witczak (after Danko) the structure of the Indo-European parent language was formed in the Balkans. From there it spread to Central and Northern Europe and to Asia. Witczak follows these opinions tendentiously, taking a priori someone's side in the discussion of the problem, which in fact does not bear much on the questions of Indo-European grammar. For example, Witczak does not bring the arguments of Gimbutas to the discussion, apart from reference to the Kurgan Culture as the "hypothetical mother culture of Indo-European as reconstructed with the help of common words" (Gimbutas 1970, but without page number). Works such as M. Gimbutas, "Die Ethnogenese der europäischen Indogermanen", Innsbruck 1992, or M. Gimbutas, "Das Ende Alteuropas", Innsbruck 1994, are not mentioned at all. Witczak does not

etymological, divided into several chapters devoted to the individual types of grain: first the general name ‘grain’ (*frumentum*, pp. 39-50), then ‘barley’ (pp. 51-63), ‘oats’ (pp. 64-73), ‘millet’ (pp. 74-90), ‘wheat’ (pp. 91-107), ‘rye’ (pp. 108-115), and ‘corn’ (*semen, granum*, pp. 116-120). The two final chapters provide a general conclusion. They give the “stratification of the Indo-European grain terminology” (with an emphasis on the “Nostratic heritage”, pp. 121-124) and an “analysis of the semantic changes within the cereal terminology” (pp. 125-137). Then follows an English summary, abbreviations (143-146) and the bibliography (147-159). Each term is described in the same way – i.e. in the form of a lexicon entry. Under A) the general characteristics of the species is described, B) gives information on their earliest growing areas. C) presents the lexical material with commentary, etymology and Nostratic parallels; D) lists the particular names of the species in individual languages, E) gives general conclusions.

Without any doubt the author worked hard to find the rich comparative material from so many (not only Indo-European) languages. But the general impression after reading the book is that in fact it was vain work. Despite the words of Witczak, who promises us a comprehensive study based on the strict methodology of a discipline called by him “cultural paleolinguistics”, it seems that the book is a mere enumeration of forms found in etymological dictionaries, with some non-linguistic, botanical, or archeological commentaries. Unfortunately, they, and not the linguistic comments, are the advantages of this study.

Reading Witczak’s book, one quickly gets the impression that the author actually misunderstands the methods of comparative Indo-European linguistics. As the main criterion of the Indo-Europeanness of a form he treats its occurrence in Hittite and other IE languages or the existence of related Nostratic

quote any argument against Renfrew’s opinion (i.e. an Anatolian homeland of the Indo-Europeans), e.g. the similarities between Proto-Indo-European and Uralic, and he does not understand the absurdity of the presumed existence of a language ancestral to Greek in Greece at around 6500 B.C. (cf. the presentation of existing hypotheses on this subject in Mallory 1994, 143-185; quoted in Witczak’s bibliography). Because of the assumed agricultural character of the Indo-European society one misses also the discussion on the “war-chariot” problem. Witczak says, however, that the Indo-Europeans knew such actions as ‘driving a vehicle’ because of the existence of roots like **ueǵʰ-* and **rejdʰ-* (**rejdʰ-*, however, seems to be present only in Germanic, Celtic and Baltic, cf. LIV², 502, and should be treated as an innovation, specific to the North-West branch of IE, cf. Oettinger 2003, 189), but he denies the existence of a verbal root expressing the action of ‘riding a horse’ (which in fact seems quite problematic to me, in light of the already quoted **rejdʰ-*, which in the above-mentioned branch of IE expresses these semantics). Witczak passes over in silence the heroic epic poetry among the Indo-Europeans (*indogermanische Dichterprache*), which could point to the warrior (nomadic) character, even if not of the whole Indo-European population, then at least among the aristocratic class.

forms (!). The author totally ignores morphological analyses; most important to him seem to be semantic similarities and phonetic correspondences between the languages.² One misses also detailed commentaries on individual forms, and on the kind of evidence which allows him to bring together all kind of forms at disposal in (mostly old) dictionaries. Cf. e.g. Gk. Thess. *δάρατος*, Delph. *δαράτα*, Maced. *δράμις* (p. 84), which are quoted without pointing out the source of the forms. *δάρατος* and *δράμις* are quoted as dialectal forms by Athenaios (Deipn. 3, 114b), but *δάρατος* and Delph. *δαράτα* are also attested in inscriptions.³ Words are cited without differentiation into more archaic forms and younger innovations, into inherited forms and loan-words, and so on; e.g. the case of Persian *zurt* or *zurđ* (even with a question mark, p. 55), which occurs in the old dictionary of Horn (1893). Steingass notes only *zurāt* ‘maize, Indian corn’ (Steingass 1957, 614), ‘species of millet’ (Steingass 1957, 558), which seems very likely to be an Arabic loan-word *zurāt* زرت (probably with adapted orthography with ⟨ze⟩ for Ar. *durāt* written with ⟨dal⟩ ذرة, cf. however the existence of the regular variant *zurāt* ذرة), the possibility of which has not been even mentioned by the author.⁴ The same applies to Arm. *alewr*, which according to Clackson could be a loan from Greek (Clackson 1994, 94f.) (even if one disagrees with such views, one has to discuss their possibility). For IE etymologies it seems absolutely useless to quote forms from all modern Indic languages if a form is attested as early as Sanskrit; the same applies to old and modern Iranian languages and to Latin and the Romance languages. What is more, the modern forms very often lack an intermediate reconstructed basis, so that the impression arises as if the Kafiric forms would be direct heirs of Indo-European (or Indo-Aryan).

This lack of commentaries, except for semantic ones, unfortunately has the consequence that in many cases Witczak’s etymological proposals have to be

² On the importance of morphology in the study of language relationships, cf. Klingenschmitt 1994, 235ff., and especially Clackson 1994, 11-27, who state that the relationships between languages should be evaluated first of all on the basis of the number of common innovations in the field of morphology. This principle is one of the fundamentals of modern historical linguistics – IE languages show far-reaching similarities in the internal structures of morphemes.

³ For Thess. form see IG IX 2, 1202: V (Lex sacra from Corope) *αι κε αφελεται το δα[ρατον --- / --παερ]εξε(ι) προχος. Αι κε το / ν αραχον αφελεται, α[--- / --προ]χον διαδουμεν. Αι κε με θελε, απισαι πεντεροντα;* for Delph. *δαρατα* cf. CID I 9, A 24: IV. For the linguistic evaluation of the gloss see recently García Ramón 2004, 240f.

⁴ From a Syrian source in V. M. Belkij, “Karmannyj arabsko-russkij slovar’”, Moskva 1986, 249: ذرة [durra] – ‘mais, kukuruza’, cf. also *durra baydā* ‘millet’ (‘white millet’). Arabian *durra* means also ‘something small, atom’, so the semantics ‘grain’ could also be expected. On the other hand Witczak quotes Arab. *durra* in his chapter on millet (p. 84), an obvious relationship to Pers. *zurāt* (*zurt* on p. 87) has not been noted.

rejected, due to morphological, phonological shortcomings or due to problems of the history of the languages involved (language contacts, loan-words). Some examples:

Welsh *wenith*, Bret. *gwiniz* ‘wheat’ is probably not derived from the word for ‘spring’, as suggested by Witczak on page 42 (with a question mark; according to Witczak from **wesH₂aros*, cf. however commonly accepted **h₂ues-r/n-*). First of all, the correct citation form for the Welsh word is *gwenith*; *wenith* is a morphologically conditioned allomorph. It probably goes back to Proto-Celtic **uo-nikto-* ‘das Ausgesiebte, sieved out’ (GPC II, 1637), cf. also OIrish *-necht* in *cruithnecht* in the meaning ‘wheat, frumentum’ (DIL C 562. 26ff.). LEIA sees here also the possibility of having *gwen* ‘white’ < **uindā-* as the first compound member; this would yield the same semantic development possibly underlying the case of *wheat* : *white* (LEIA C 254f.).

OIr. *eorna* ‘barley’ (page 43f., 54) is compared with OIndic *yāvah* ‘grain, corn, barley’, with a question mark as a possible Celtic continuation of a formation **yewH₁os* (m.) in a general meaning ‘grain’ (in fact, *yāvah* seems to be **jéuo-*, without laryngeal, cf. also Gr. ζεαί < **jey-je_h2* Watkins 1978, 595, in Witczak without any comment on word-formation); cf. however the proposal of De Bernardo Stempel, who interprets it as an heteroclitic **esor-n-yā:* to Irish *errach* ‘the season of spring’ (< **es-en*, **os-en* ‘Erntezeit’ as in IEW 343; De Bernardo Stempel 1999, 136³⁵, 138; cf. **(h₁)os-r/*(h₁)s-n-* as in Sl. *jesen/osenj*, Smoczyński 2001, 107).

OIr. *sacul*, Mir. *seagul* (p. 112) are obviously borrowings from Latin *sēcāle* through British Celtic. In Witczak’s book such a possibility has not been signalled at all.

OIr. *arbor*, gen.sg. *arbe* (*arbann* given here as gen. sg. is a mistake for gen.pl.; p. 82) is indeed an old heteroclitic noun, but the proposed pre-form **H₂árg^{wh}r* – is wrong. Witczak surmises that [b] in *arbor* were the continuation of PIE **g^w*. In fact, ⟨b⟩ is here the spelling for an Irish bilabial spirant /v/ from **u/* after *r*; the traditional reconstruction is **h₂erh₃ur* from a root **h₂erh₃-* ‘to plough’.

A comparison of Welsh *wtr* ‘light corn, light grain’ and Lith. *putrà* ‘Graupen, Grütze’, both presumed to continue the same protoform **putro-* (p. 119), is quite impossible since Welsh *wtr* seems to be a ghost-word.

The equation of Hittite *parḫuena-* ‘sort of wheat’ and Gallo-Lat. *arinca* (f.) ‘wheat’ must be false, too (p. 103). Witczak gives ‘sort of wheat, probably *Triticum dicoccum* Schrank’ as the original meaning, noting that it should be interpreted as an Anatolian-Celtic isogloss. Both forms are supposed to ultimately go back to **prHwen-*, the immediate Proto-Celtic pre-form being **parwen-kā*. The equation is problematic, on the one hand due to the dubious status of the Gaulish form (actually it is not clear if it is really Celtic; Delamarre

2003, 54 derives it from the root **h₂erh₃-* ‘to plough’; the **y* of the pre-form should not disappear – thus rather ***aruinca* would be expected). On the other hand the Hittite form is not clear either, first of all semantically. It seems to mean something like ‘all kinds of seeds’ and appears with quantities; bread-making; with wool, gods, has been used to attract deities and souls (CHD P/2 149f.; Tischler HEG II/11-12 2001, 457).

The same applies to the proposed comparison of Hittite *kant* (p. 111) ‘sort of grain’, Toch. B *kanti* ‘kind of bread’, Lat. *centēnum* ‘rye’, Sp. *centeno*, Port. *centeio* (< Lusitanian **kentēnom*, thus Witczak). According to the author this could represent the inherited root **k_ṛnt-* in the meaning ‘rye’. First of all, the Anatolian form (which seems to have survived in Lycian **xada-* ‘Getreide’, cf. *xqqase* ‘Futtermittel’, or in the place-names Lyc. *Kadyanda* < **xadawati* ‘reich an Getreide’ ~ Hitt. **kant-uant*; Neumann apud Tischler HEG I 1983, 485f.) is normally treated as a loan word from Indo-Iranian (Av. *gantumō*, OIndic *gōdhūma*; Tischler, ibidem; cf. also Hoffner 1974, 69-73; in Witczak’s book the Indo-Iranian forms are quoted under the entry WHEAT, 96f. where Hitt. *kant-* is also mentioned; but the reader does not find any word of comment on it there). In Hilmarsson’s dictionary Toch. B *kanti* ‘bread’ has been treated as etymologically unclear: “Could be a loanword” (Hilmarsson 1996, 78), so one really wonders why Toch. *kanti* should continue earlier **kānt-*. Apparently Witczak proposes here the same development as in *kante* ‘hundred’, cf. **k_ṛntóm* > PToch. **kəntē* > TB *kante*, Toch. A *kānt* (Ringe 1996, 39). Van Windekens’ suggestion (1976, 181; even if not the best proposal, cf. “semantics hardly compelling”, Adams 1999, 139) that *kanti* could reflect PIE **gned^h-* ‘press together’ (cf. however **gnēt-*, only Germanic and Balto-Slavic; LIV², 191) and thus could be related to OE *cneda* ‘knead’ or OCS *gnesti* ‘press’ has not been mentioned at all, although the book of Van Windekens is listed in Witczak’s bibliography. Most bizarre is the reference to an unattested Lusitanian proto-form (**kentēnom*) for the Spanish and Portuguese forms. The way the form is quoted suggests that the proposal goes back to Meyer-Lübke. This is wrong. In Meyer-Lübke there is no mention at all of a Lusitanian origin of *centeno/centeio*. If the author assumes such an origin, he should state clearly that it is his own view. But what seems more important, why could the presented forms not come from Latin (as in DLC I, 765)? The Lusitanian corpus contains now 5 inscriptions, yielding ca. 47 words (cf. Untermann MLH 1997, 736f.; to Untermann only 3 inscriptions were known at the time). Apart from the still unsolved problem of the position of Lusitanian (an Indo-European language of Iberian Peninsula, very close to Celtic, but not Celtic itself), the material at our disposal does not allow us to make assumptions like Witczak’s. There exists only one example of a form which might contain the reflex of sonantic *ṛ*, i.e. *INDI* ‘and, or’ presumably from **ṛdhi* (Wodtko 1997, 740; *DOENTI*, 3pl. pres., seems to

be a result of analogy, Wodtko 739). As far as word formation is concerned there is no attested suffix *-eno-* (cf. however the obscure **-in(n)a-* as in *LOEMINA*, MLH 734f., according to Wodtko probably a PN containing **-meno-*).

The author does not try to verify the forms he cites. This is for example the case with Lat. *spelta*, mentioned as “Pannonian” by Hieronymus, attested for the first time in 301 A.D. (Ed. Diocl.). This has been treated as such also by Witczak (p. 100). According to the author the proto-form is **spłt-* (with other comparisons, e.g. Gr. *πóλτος* “Brei aus Mehl”, Lat. *puls*, *pultis* also from an *s*-less form **płt-*. It seems strange that Pannonian (treated here as a Paleo-Balkan language) would yield here *e*-vocalism. Should it be a full grade of the root? In the language called “Pannonian” the liquid sonants seem rather to give a *u*-reflex. This can be inferred from toponymy, cf. the best known example *Ulcisia Castra* or *Ulcinium* (Alb. *Ulqini*, Serb. *Ucinj*) probably from *ulc* ‘wolf’ (< **ulkas* < **vulkas* < **vulkas* < **ul^hkos*, cf. Anreiter 2001, 14, 16).⁵

The same applies to *asia* (p. 114). This is taken by Witczak to be Gaulish with reference to Welsh *haidd* and Breton *haeiz*. This is very speculative in view of the possibility that the form is very likely not of Celtic but of Ligurian origin, *asia* being only a variant for **sasia* in some manuscripts of Pliny (thus already Holder 1904, cf. also Schrijver 1995, 318f.: in Gaulish the initial /s/ of supposed **sesyo-* should be retained, cf. the mentioned Welsh *haidd* with *h* < **s*).

This lack of detailed analyses as well as the lack of commentaries is the main objection against this book.⁶

In the majority of the examples the author follows etymologies proposed long time ago, e.g. in Pokorny’s IEW. New literature or the modern way of reconstruction have hardly been taken into account. Indo-European reconstructions often look old-fashioned, and unfortunately they do not lack some severe mistakes either. The most obvious example is the use of the laryngeals and apophony. Sometimes we find some monster forms, as e.g. **d^hHwaH₂* (p. 83) with a laryngeal and a long sonant in one root. Then for example on pages 94ff. we find the IE proto-form **pūrós*, **pūróm* ‘wheat’, as in Gr. *πῦρός*, OInd. *purah*, Lith. *pūrai* (pl.). He falsely interprets Lithuanian accentuation, stating that “it points to the apophonic length of a root *-u-* and not to the lengthening caused by laryngeal” (thus **pū-* : **pu-*). Consequently, he does not try to comment on the Greek and Indic length at all. The Greek form, however, is to be reconstructed as **puh₂-ros* in the meaning ‘the pure one, der Reine’ to the

⁵ According to Anreiter, so-called “Pannonian” should be interpreted as being related to other IE substrates in the East Alpine regions, to the so-called “Ostalpenblock” (East Alpine Indo-European), which together with the so-called “Old European” hydronymy “die älteste greifbare indogermanische Sprachschicht in diesem Raume repräsentiert” (Anreiter 2001, 13).

⁶ The only commentary follows Old Prussian *gaydis* ‘Weizen’ on page 99.

verbal root **peṷh₂-* (cf. OIndic *punāti*; **peṷH-* ‘reinigen’ in LIV², 480), with the treatment *CUh₂C > CŪC* (and not *CuĀC*; for the complex analysis as well as the cultural context see recently Janda 2000, 39-47). Lith. *pūrai* must surely be related (*pūrai* ← **puH-ro*, Smoczyński 2001, 135).

The same is the case with the equation of OIr. *tuirenn* and Arm. *c’orean* as if from **k̂poryanos* ‘wheat’ (pp. 99-100). The author does not seem to understand the proper idea of “thorn”, ascribing it a relevant role in the question on the archaic character of the lexeme, which is completely wrong.⁷ Armenian *c’orean* is still of unknown origin (the sources of *c’* could be: **ks*, **ksk* or **kh*, e.g. *vec’* ‘six’ < **suyek̂s*, *eharc’* ‘asked’ < **épr̂ksket*, cf. *áp̂rcchat*, etc.; Schmitt 1981, 61; Ritter, 1996, 29). The suffix *-ean-* is, however, very productive – mostly in derivatives or suppletive genitive formations (cf. Olsen 1999, 386, 388, 390, 954); as one of the possibilities the reference to the Irish form *tuirenn* in HAB IV, 461, also Pokorny IEW I 744, who reconstructs **torio-nā*, cf. on the other side *tuirenn* < **storianā* as if from **ster-* ‘herbe picante’ (OIndic *t̄nam*, Gr. *τέπναξ*) in LEIA T 174, or it could be compared to Lat. *triticum* < **terī*, hence **torīnā*. Sometimes the author does not quote a form as he found it in his source. For example, on p. 102 Witczak quotes Eichner’s reconstruction of Hitt. *halkiš* as coming from the root **H₂al-*. In fact, in this article Eichner only plays with the possibility, considering **h₂elh₁-* and not **H₂al-*, cf. “*halki-* ‘Getreide’, wohl < **H₂l̄H₁-(kó-)* (oder **H₂elH₁-/H₂olH₁-)*, urspr. ‘Mahlgut’” (Eichner 1972, 54). On the other hand Witczak very often only refers to other scholars’ proposals but without quoting them. That way one cannot get any idea how the proposed form should look like. This, in fact, renders the book useless, since every time the reader would like to see other opinions than Witczak’s, he has to turn to the original work. It is a great nuisance that author does not quote any bibliographical references on the occasions of the (rarely) mentioned grammatical (phonological or morphological) problems. He does not explain them, leaving the reader with many unsolved questions. Such methodological mistakes could lead to the impression that the author actually has no control over the material. His way of analysis can hardly satisfy the needs of modern Indo-European linguistics.⁸

⁷ Thorn is rather an innovative phonetic variant, limited to certain contexts, cf. J. Schindler, A thorny problem, “Die Sprache” 23, 25-35 (1977); for the problem of thorn, and a limitation of examples, cf. the recent discussion in M. Mayrhofer, “Die Hauptprobleme der indogermanischen Lautlehre seit Bechtel”, Wien 2004: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, pp. 40f. Against the existence of thorn, cf. recently R. Lipp, “Die indogermanischen Palatale im Indoarischen und das Thorn-Problem”, unpublished dissertation Freiburg in Br. (cf. his observations in LIV² 151, 213f., 384, 638f., 644f.).

⁸ These are general objections against the methodology of Witczak presented also in other works, cf. Bichlmeier 2003, 214.

The book lacks an index, which in the case of such a study, with quotations from almost every language, is quite strange. The author excuses himself for this shortcoming (“Author’s annotation” in the beginning), but this does not help at all the reader who wants to find individual words. What is more, some of the forms have been treated several times in different parts of the book. This gives the impression of chaos. For example **ǵrHnóm* has been interpreted on page 44 (without etymology), as well as on pages 116f. (here with etymology, but with all the forms from the individual languages quoted once again). There are also inconsequences, as in the case of Greek *σῖτος* (p. 45). This occurs once in the company of OIndic *sīyam* ‘grain’ as a continuation of PIE **sīto-*, **sītyo-* ‘cereal, grain’, but strangely being interpreted as a “Pelasgian” element in Gk. On page 105 the form is treated as Minoan. Why then mentioned with an IE protoform? One could get the idea that Pelasgian, Minoan and IE are actually terms for the same concept. Sometimes forms appear in conclusions of chapters where they had not been treated at all yet, e.g. *halkiš* on page 63, which in fact is discussed on page 102 for the first time.

This chaos is the price for the chosen semantic principle. It probably would have been better if the author had decided to stay in the field of semantic changes and motivations for cereal nomenclature. The semantic developments of cereal terminology form the really interesting part of this book. Here one has to emphasize the observations made on the Slavic material, which seem to be quite right. But the author apparently did not reckon with the possibility of folk-etymological influence, which in the case of this subject would not seem improbable. The summary chapter devoted to the structural presentation of the semantical principles in the development of cereal terminology (pp. 125-136) is instructive. Sometimes, however, the above mentioned chaos can be found even here. Again, this is the price for the principles used in the author’s treatment of the material: the lack of borders between archaic and new applies also to semantics. Semantic changes, even if most interesting, are a problem of individual languages. The group of most archaic terms could actually point to the fact that cereal terminology in the Indo-European languages seems to follow very primitive principles, with the semantic motives being e.g. “what can be ground”, “what can be eaten”, “what can be sown”, etc. More specialized meanings come to life in areas of Indo-European where certain sub-groups have already formed (e.g. the Balkans-area; the North-West area, etc.).⁹ The cultural context, e.g. the function of flour in the Greek mysteries or in the Hittite religion, could have been treated in a more detailed way, which would have made the whole book more interesting to the reader.

⁹ Cf. **ǵr̥h₂-no-* ‘Korn, Getreide’, Goth. *kaurn*, OIr. *grán*, Lat. *grānum*, OCS *zrbno*, Lith. *žirnis* – the semantic innovation among the Nord-West IE languages vs. original IE semantic ‘ground, Gemahlenes’ (Oettinger 2003, 184).

Probably as typos should be classified statements such as e.g. “the existence of the Hurrian-Urartean substrate in Tocharian” (p. 38). The terminology used is sometimes strange, too, e.g. Pol. “archetyp” for reconstructed stems, which is not normally used in such a meaning. Inexplicable are the author’s very strong statements concerning the presumed acceptance of some of the used theories. This applies especially to the problem of Nostratic. Witczak speaks about increasing numbers of western scholars who are convinced of the correctness of this thesis. In reality this is not the case at all. Witczak’s Nostraticism is rather of an aprioristic, glottogonic nature (he does not obviously see the problem of the status of such a theory – “weder zu verifizieren, noch zu falsifizieren”, Meier-Brügger 2002, 41 with bibliography; cf. also Gippert 2003, 35-43). Here again the author allows himself to be misled by the mass of his material, e.g. on pp. 96-97 he quotes Semitic examples such as Arab. *hintat* ‘wheat’ (< *hanata* ‘ripen’) and Chad (Hausa) *gundu* ‘sort of millet’, without specifying what Hausa *g* and Semitic *h* could have in common. Then again he does not explain how it is possible to connect Sem. *h* with “the IE fluctuation between *g* and *sk*”. This “fluctuation” is obviously based on the false assumption that Lat. *scandula* and Sanskrit *gōdhūma*, which is quite certainly the result of “Volksetymologie”, cf. EWAIA I 498f., are continuants of the same proto-form;¹⁰ for the problem of Uralic and Indo-Iranian language contacts, including agriculture terminology see the posthumously published work of H. Katz (“Studien zu den ältesten indoiranischen Lehnwörtern in den uralischen Sprachen”, aus dem Nachlaß herausgegeben von P. Widmer, A. Widmer und Gerson Klumpp, Heidelberg 2003: C. Winter Universitätsverlag), especially pp. 211-224 (“Ackerbau”).

Comparative Indo-European linguistics is one of those academic disciplines which are still not present in the Polish academic practice. From such a perspective one should welcome very warmly every book devoted to this area. Regrettably, the book of Witczak does not fulfill the requirements of up-to-date

¹⁰ Strong against such a methodology Doerfer 1973. One may quote his words from the end of the book as a motto: “Die Indogermanistik gleicht zuerst einer hellen Straße, das sind die belegten Einzelsprachen. Geht man weiter, gelangt man in eine düster-schattige Alee, in der man stolpernd in vielen Richtungen kreuz und quer laufen muß, um weiterzugelangen, das ist der Zwischenraum zwischen den ältesten Belegen (beispielsweise das Altlatein) und der rekonstruierten Ursprache. Findet man die rechte Tür, so kommt man in einen Park, in eine weite dämmerige Lichtung, in die immerhin von oben her dünne Streifen Lichtes fallen, das ist das rekonstruierte Indogermanische. Hier mag man nun spielen und sich ergötzen. Dahinter aber beginnt der dunkle Urwald der Glottogonie, voll lastenden Schweigens, ewiger Dunkelheit und wucherndem Gestrüpp [sic!], in dem man sich unentrinnbar verfängt. **In diesen dunklen Wald sollten wir nicht hineingehen; denn eben dort, wo der dunkle Wald anfängt, hört alles Wissen auf.**” (Doerfer 1973, 122).

Indo-European linguistics. The absolute lack of strict morphological analyses, the belief in phonetical or phonological correspondences supported by similar semantics but without the solid interpretation within the frames of the historical phonology of a given language and absolutely irrelevant Nostraticism could lead the reader to the false idea that actually one may compare anything with anything, and that such is the right methodology. I hope, however, that my suggestions would lead to gain a fresh view on this doubtlessly interesting material, and could help others analyse these terms, which play a very important role in every society.

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