

Michael Fortescue, *Language Relations across Bering Strait. Reappraising the Archaeological and Linguistic Evidence*, London—New York 1998. 251 pp. + 53 maps.

In the introduction of the book the author states that "... thanks to its unique geographical position, straddling the Old and the New Worlds, the Beringian region provides us with a useful test case for observing the differing rates whereby languages and genes move through space and time. [---] I shall proceed by first placing the languages with which this book is principally concerned — those that belong to the 'stock' or 'mesh' that I call 'Uralo-Siberian' — into a geographical and prehistoric context." (p. 2).

The term *Uralo-Siberian languages* is explained by Fortescue as follows, "At the risk of being seen to preempt in advance the 'stock' as opposed to the 'mesh' conception of the relationship between the languages involved, I shall simply call the hypothetical proto-language (or complex of related languages) out of which all the relevant circumpolar languages may have emerged 'Proto-Uralo-Siberian'. [---] This hypothetical entity, whether 'stock' or 'mesh', can be taken as representing the core source of all the truly Siberian language families. [---] During the course of the last millennium or so this much ramified entity has gradually been ousted from its original dominance in the area under pressure from new languages — Altaic and Indo-European ones — coming in from the south." (p. 5). According to Michael Fortescue the descendants of this hypothetical proto-language are Uralic, Yukaghir, Eskimo-Aleut and less certainly Chukotko-Kamtchatkan (Chukotko + Itelmen). The following vision by Fortescue is of special interest: "Language tends to spread more rapidly than genes but more slowly than cultural artifacts..." (pp. 20—21). It does not seem impossible.

M. Fortescue points out, "This book [---] is concerned essentially with the last wave of linguistic intrusion from the Old World into the New, that we have relatively secure ground underfoot (de-

spite the disappearance of the Land Bridge some 10 000 to 12 000 years ago, well before the appearance the Uralo-Siberian languages in the region!). Preceding it were at least two earlier waves and perhaps several more. Only the waves immediately preceding the Uralo-Siberian one will occupy us to any extent, as the source of various substratum-like features that they left behind." (p. 21).

Regrettably, not here or anywhere else in the book does it not appear which chronology the author makes use of, i.e. whether it is based on the radiocarbon C_{14} method and — if it is based on it — whether it is calibrated dendrochronologically or not. Observing the maps 2 and 3 in his map-appendix, depicting the spread of the icecap 11 000 and 8000 years ago, respectively, we get an impression that the dendrochronological calibration that would add about 2000 years to these figure, is missing. But the spread depicted on the map 2 is too extensive as far as Europe is concerned, at least, even with the approximate calibration in the given period, i.e. 13 000 years ago. The map rather presents the situation after the last maximum of the last ice age about 16 000 years ago. It is certainly a too simplified approach to Fortescue's chronology but it seems that a number of pre-historical figures, indicating the years presented by him, should be added about 5000 years to become consistent with the recent research results (C_{14} and calibration).

In a brief characterization of Uralo-Siberian languages (pp. 9—18) M. Fortescue claims that the dual has been lost in many Finno-Ugric languages in Europe (p. 10). However, it should be born in mind that such a loss bears no evidence in Finno-Ugric languages. The dual is characteristic only of Ob-Ugric and Samoyed languages thus of the eastern part of the Uralic language group (see Künnap 1998 : 77). There is no reason, either, to suppose after M. Fortescue that the genitive suffix was not pre-

served in Samoyed languages (p. 10) — **n-* is in general use in these languages (Künnap 1974; 1982).

The chapter on "Hypotheses concerning the internal and external relations between 'Paleo-Siberian' languages" (pp. 35–59) briefly outlines the research into the history of the affinity of Eskimo and Aleut languages and, against this background, deals with the Chukchi-Itelmen linguistic relationships. The author is of the opinion that the Itelmen and Chukchi languages certainly form a common language family since 20% of the Proto-Chukchi stems have an equivalent in Itelmen, while 21% of Proto-Eskimo stems have corresponding equivalents in Aleut (p. 39). It is generally recognised that Aleut and Eskimo languages belong to a common language family. At the same time M. Fortescue admits that in Itelmen there is a strong substratum of the type of Na-Dene or Mosa Indian languages, thus explaining ejectives to which in Chukchi often correspond consonant clusters which could have been hard to pronounce by the speakers of Na-Dene or Mosa type of languages (p. 41).

The chapter "A typological overview of the region" (pp. 60–78) contains commentaries to the 45 maps at the end of the book which present 45 typological features (maps 9–53). The maps are the more interesting as they do not comprise only the s.-c. Uralo-Paleo-Siberian languages but also neighbouring language families like Altaic, Chino-Tibetan, Na-Dene and Penuti, even a much recent arrival, Russian. This is a singularly good and illustrative overview. Distancing ourselves from the idea of a common proto-language, unacceptable for us, in the following, if necessary, we are going to consider only these maps in which the language phenomena under observation are also concerned with the Uralic language family. The map 48 indicates that, according to M. Fortescue, Uralic languages are not tone-languages (Eugen Helimski has supposed tone in these languages, see Хелимский 1977). Commenting on the vowel harmony map 51 M. Fortescue writes, "Proto-Uralic certainly had palatal harmony [---] with back /*u, ɨ, o, a*/ alternating with

front /*ü, i, e, ä*/." (p. 77). However, there is hardly a reason to insist on it, although such a possibility principally exists.

Michael Fortescue states, "The typological features [---] which appear to have been brought into the Beringian region by the Uralo-Siberian wave can be summarized as follows: a) a single (voiceless) stop series, plus b) a single voiced fricative series, c) a palatal consonant series, d) genitive and accusative case marking (plus at least three basic local cases), e) lack of adjectives (and adverbs) as distinct part of speech, f) stems predominantly of the shape (C)V(C)CV(C) (except for some pronominals and demonstratives), g) sounds /*ð*/ and /*r*/, h) an auxiliary negative (tending to morphologization), i) an auxiliary copula, j) morphological evidentials, k) indicatives based on participles, l) non-finite subordinate clauses, m) plural and dual noun affixes (also, in more limited eastern region, singularives), n) purely suffixing morphology, o) word-initial stress, p) tense conflation on simple 'aorists', q) possessor suffixes of noun. [---] Features apparently introduced by the preceding ('pre-Na-Dene?') wave include: a) glottally constricted vowels (and an ensuing propensity to develop tones), b) a tendency to increasing reliance on prefixation, c) stem ablaut (and discontinuous verb stems), d) lack of /*p*/ and sparsity of other labials apart from /*w*/, e) attributive adjectives as a distinct category, f) subordinating participles, g) indefinite object and subject prefixes, h) enclitic particle negation, i) reflexive vs. plain possessive affixes." (pp. 78–79). He continues saying, "Three major clines which seem to have been in place across the Gateway for a long time are: a) decreasing complexity of vowel systems and increasing complexity of consonant systems going from west to east, b) increasing domination of aspect over tense (as the marking of the latter becomes less obligatory) going from west to east, c) increasing head-marking as opposed to dependent marking going from west to east. [---] Another broad cline on the Siberian side is from languages with complex morphophonemic junction phenomena in the north to agglutinative ones with simple morphophonemics in the

south — Altaic intrusions from the south (especially most recent arrival Yakut) expected.” (p. 80). One would have expected a summarizing map explaining which language families have more typological common features. Instead M. Fortescue presents 17 Uralo-Paleo-Siberian common features which distinguish the former from the rest of the languages of the area. He admits that part of the common features are obviously not entirely independent of one another but excuses himself by the backwardness of linguistics as a science. “It is just that linguistics has not reached the stage where we can do much more than point at a few of the underlying principles of harmony and implication” (p. 78).

In the chapter “The reconstruction of common Eskimo-Aleut and Chukotko-Kamtchatkan core morphology” (pp. 96—108) M. Fortescue presents a number of similar morphemes and derivation suffixes. A special attention should be paid to the fact that several Proto-Eskimo-Aleut derivative suffixes which do not occur as independent stems in Eskimo-Aleut languages seem to have equivalents in Chukotko-Kamtchatkan independent stems. However, the number of similar morphemes is relatively small and the hypothesis about their affinity has not a leg to stand on.

In the chapter “Drawing Uralo-Yukaghir morphology into picture” (pp. 109—123) Michael Fortescue presents various Uralic and Yukaghir suffixes that have similar equivalents in Eskimo-Aleut and Chukotko-Kamtchatkan languages. He supposes that Proto-Uralic had the locative-lative suffix **-k* and the allative-dative suffix **-ŋ*. By way of comparison, Károly Rédei is of the opinion that all similar stems are loans from the Ugric or (North)Samoyed proto-language into Yukaghir and finds that morphologically Uralic languages and Yukaghir are absolutely different and the similarities in their case endings are barely of a casual nature (Rédei 1999 : 15 and following). The subject of the chapter “Lexical correspondences between Uralo-Siberian languages” (pp. 124—177) involves the comparison of sound systems, the reconstruction of Proto-Uralo-Siberian phonemes,

sound correspondences. When observing common stems of different proto-languages M. Fortescue has reconstructed 94 Proto-Uralo-Siberian stems, 45 of which have an equivalent in Proto-Uralic, 32 in Proto-Finno-Ugric, five in Proto-Samoyed and five in some Finno-Ugric branch or a single language. Seven Proto-Uralo-Siberian stems lack an equivalent in Uralic languages. It is somewhat surprising that when observing Proto-Uralo-Siberian words there are six times more equivalents found in Proto-Finno-Ugric than in Proto-Samoyed. At the same time it confirms a special conservatism in the Finno-Ugric and particularly in Finnic word-stock. At the end of the chapter he treats of loan words inside and between language families (Aleut-Eskimo, Chukchi-Central-Siberian remnant, Itelmen-Chukchi, loan words in Yukaghir).

In the chapter “Who could have spoken Proto-Uralo-Siberian — and where?” (pp. 178—203) M. Fortescue focuses on archaeological cultures on the Uralo-Siberian area and attempts to identify them linguistically. His view is that the Proto-Uralo-Siberian language was first spoken around the Sayan Mountains, thus associating its speakers with the Djuktai Culture. The Proto-Chukchi-Kamtchatkan speakers were the first to branch off from them and moved north-east, later Proto-Uralo-Yukaghir speakers and Proto-Eskimo-Aleut speakers who moved west and north-east, respectively. Thus M. Fortescue is searching for the geographical area where Uralo-Siberian languages could have been in mutual contact as the common features of their languages ostensibly indicate. He deliberates as follows: “... if the archeologists are right about the movements of peoples out of central northern Eurasia, the present distribution of languages must somehow — however indirectly — reflect what is known of these movements [---] If somehow it could be proven, for example, that ancestral Proto-Uralic lived in Europa rather than east of the Urals prior to the Siberian Mesolithic, the whole scenario would have to be radically revised. Alas, it is unlikely (short of time travel) that such direct (dis)confirmation will ever be forthcoming. Internal consistency, howev-

er, can be demanded right away.” (p. 178).

It is quite obvious that Michael Fortescue is out of touch with the recent radical changes about the origin of Uralic languages. The interdisciplinary workteam who has organized in 1997–1999 annual symposiums “Roots of the Peoples and Languages of Northern Eurasia” has for some time already created a substantial theory about the primary origin of Uralic languages from Northern Europe. Ob-Ugric and Samoyed languages spread later from Europe towards Asia, to Siberia. Since the speakers of European Finno-Ugric languages have undoubtedly been Europoids, the Samoyed speakers are clearly Mongoloids at present, the members of the workteam suppose that probably the speakers of Paleo-Siberian languages were involved in the language shift to Uralic languages, and as a result of it an obvious and abundant Paleo-Siberian substratum remained in Samoyed languages. (See more closely Wiik 1997; Roots 1998; Künnap 1998.) The major support for the new theory adopted by the workteam consists in the research results obtained by anthropologists and geneticists as the members of the team. Actually, it does not considerably mar the linguistic value of the work done by Michael Fortescue: while trying to find explanations to the common features between Uralic and Paleo-Siberian languages by locating their primary common settlement area in Central Siberia and supposing common proto-languages, at the same time he presents the existing common features in the present-day languages. Against the background of the new theory it is just the viewpoint about explaining the origin of the common features that changes — more than before the language shift should be taken into consideration: earlier Paleo-Siberian → Samoyed and more recent Samoyed → Paleo-Siberian/Altaic. Along with the language shift mentioned the questions about both the substratum and other language contacts become more complex.

The next chapter “Linguistic layering around the bottleneck: from Beringia

to the Diomed Islands” (pp. 204–242) presents the characteristic features of linguistic “bottlenecks”. The substratum phenomena in the languages of the region: Itelmen common features with Mosa languages on the western coast of North America, also with the Nivkh language. It refers to a onetime chain of coastal languages from the banks of the River Amur to Sakhalin and via Kamtchatka to North America to the coastal area of British Columbia. Probably many units of the chain have perished by now but the substratum in present-day languages allows to reconstruct some of them. Michael Fortescue indicates that “Proto-U[ralic]-S[iberian] might have been spoken somewhere between 8000 and 10 000 years ago across a wide area of forested regions of southern Siberia centred on the region between Lake Baykal and the Sayan — the probable homeland of the Uralic Samoyeds — and extending eastward up the Lena/Aldan valleys and westward almost as far as the Ob.” (p. 219). As appears in the light of the new theory mentioned above it is hard to believe both in a common (or even a relatively common) proto-language and the starting of Uralic languages from the area envisaged by M. Fortescue altogether. A different matter is that the area must have been populated and various languages were spoken as well as some trips undertaken but Uralic languages were spoken mainly in Northern Europe at that time.

Speaking generally about common features of Uralic languages on the one hand and Siberian languages on the other, a probability should be kept in mind that they may originate from a contact situation but the situation is conceivable both in Europe and Asia simultaneously. The thing is that groups of speakers of the same or mutually related languages could have arrived from the African direction and broken up, proceeding separately into one or another part of the world and in either they could have got into contact with speakers of different languages which would also explain a certain similarity between Uralic and Altaic languages without any contacts between the two parts of the

world. (See also Künnap 1998 : 37.) There is no reason to firmly believe either that peripheral areas of a language group are necessarily more conservative than the central area as M. Fortescue appears to hold (p. 220) because there are too many deviations from the rule. It is quite clear that the occurrence of some widely spread phenomena in world languages need not necessarily be explained by language contacts even across geographically close areas, on the other hand, language contacts can be supposed on such areas in the case of globally more unique phenomena.

From the point of view of the new theory, it is hard to accept the "gradual spread into agricultural Europe" (p. 241) whereby "sizeable elements in the populations of Finland, Estland [---] must have shifted from earlier European languages to Balto-Finnic" (p. 229), as yet proposed by M. Fortescue — there is no ground for such an opinion.

The picture drawn by M. Fortescue about the North-Eurasian linguistic history is impressive although the material prov-

ing it remains scanty. The book shows that the development of languages is not so simple as supposed by some traditional supporters of the language-tree theory. Peoples have shifted their languages, mixing both old and new ones, as is amply testified by strong substratum evidence. Based on this book, a question arises if there is any sense at all in dividing various North-Eurasian languages and language groups between language families since their development appears to be more complicated than that of Indo-European languages, for instance. The book uses the data on linguistics, archaeology and genetics for explaining the history of North-Eurasian and North-American languages. On the other hand, the new data, thanks to the fast development of genetics, may constantly offer more detailed changes also to linguistics. The picture drawn by M. Fortescue should be specified and this requires further extensive research work and cooperation with researchers from various areas.

REFERENCES

- K ü n n a p, A. 1974, Zum Problem des nordsamojedischen Genitivs. — СФУ X, 193—200.
- 1982, Über die ursprüngliche Kasusform des substantivischen Bestimmungswortes der postpositionalen Fügungen im Samoyedischen. — СФУ XVIII, 112—118.
- 1998, Breakthrough in Present-Day Uralistics, Tartu.
- R é d e i, K. 1999, Zu den uralisch-ju-kagirischen Sprachkontakten. — FUF 55, 1—58.
- The Roots of Peoples and Languages of Northern Eurasia I. Turku 30. 5.—1. 6. 1997, Turku 1998 (= Roots).
- W i i k, K. 1997, How Far to the South in Eastern Europe Did the Finno-Ugrians Live? — Fennoscandia Archaeologica XIV, Helsinki, 23—30.
- Х е л и м с к и й Е. А. 1977, Тональные оппозиции в уральских языках. — NyK 79, 3—5.
- AGO KÜNNAP, SVEN-ERIK SOOSAAR (Tartu)