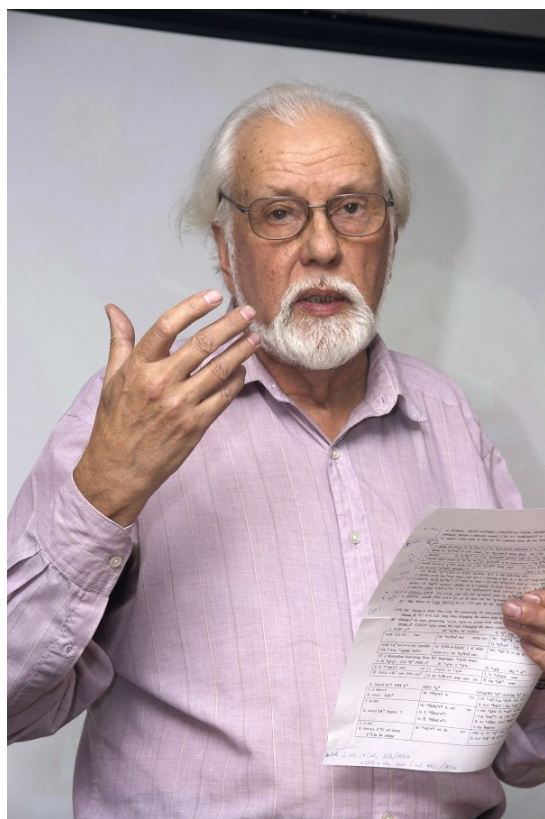


Vitaly V. Shevoroshkin (1932–2023)

IRÉN HEGEDŰS AND VÁCLAV BLAŽEK



Vitaly V. Shevoroshkin was born on 12 January 1932 in the small historical settlement of New Athos on the Black Sea coast (Abkhazia, Georgian Soviet Republic of the USSR). After 1951, he lived and studied in Moscow. Having graduated from Moscow State University in 1956, he started working at the Institute of Russian Language, Academy of Science of USSR in 1962. He obtained his academic degree (“Candidate of linguistics”/Doctor of Philology) at the Russian Academy of Science in 1965.

In 1974 he emigrated to the USA and began teaching first at the University of Maryland (1974–1975), then held a position of associate professor at Yale University (1975–1978). In 1978 he became visiting associate professor of linguistics at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where a year later he was appointed professor of linguistics at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. It is from this same department that he retired after 30 years of teaching on May 31, 2009.

His teaching activity covered a vast area of linguistic studies. He taught courses on Anatolian, and other Indo-European languages, which included synchronic and diachronic approaches to Slavic languages, as well as indigenous languages of the Americas. He was member of linguistic organizations such as *Societas Linguistica Europaea* and the Michigan Linguistic Society (of which he was president in 1986–1987). His publication activity continued for several years after retirement, though abated after 2014, when – after almost 50 years of marriage – he lost his wife, Galina Barinova, also a linguist (married in 1965).

He died on 22 December 2023 in Zürich, Switzerland, where his son, Aleksei lives and works.

Vitaly Shevoroshkin’s oeuvre covered three major areas of linguistic research: A) theoretical aspects of phonetics and phonology, B) ancient Anatolian languages, and C) the hypothesis of distant genetic relationship between language families (with emphasis on the Nostratic hypothesis).

A) Theoretical aspects of phonetics and phonology

Shevoroshkin's early period of linguistic research focused on theoretical issues of sound-chain patterns. This was the topic of his doctoral dissertation,¹ in which his goal was to identify common features of sound sequences shared by languages of the world and to find typological patterns that would facilitate the solution of theoretical issues as well as the decipherment of ancient texts. His monograph of 1965 demonstrated the applicability of the method in the decipherment of the Carian script. He carried on the synchronic line of sound-chain research in a wider scope of languages, and this led to the publication of his monograph of 1969,² in which he argued that since sound chains in all languages are governed by similar principles (regularity in the sequence of vowels and consonants, etc.), the method is capable of identifying classes and subclasses of various sounds (characters) in a text written in any language.

He also co-authored some articles on Russian phonetics and phonology with his wife, Galina Barinova (1972b; 1988d).

B) His activity in the field of Anatolian studies

Vitaly V. Shevoroshkin belongs to the most productive and at the same time to the most respected scholars in the field of the ancient Anatolian languages. Let us recount his Anatolian linguistic interests in some detail. He published 9 contributions about the Anatolian (= Hittite-Luwian) languages in general (1965d; 1967; 1968c; 1970; 1978a; 1979; 1981; 1982; 1988; 1998; 2015b), and together with Paul Sidwell they edited a collective monograph (2002b). Shevoroshkin devoted individual studies to Hittite (1964a), Luwian (1965f) and Lydian (1968f; plus, the monograph of 1967). He concentrated especially on two Anatolian languages of the first millennium BCE:

- Lycian, including Milyan (1963a; 1966c; 1968b, e, f; 1971b; 1977b; 1978b; 1993; 2000a, b; 2002a, b, c; 2004; 2008a; 2010; 2011a, b, c, d; 2012a, b; 2013c; 2014; 2015b), and
- Carian (1962; 1963b, d, e; 1964b, c, d, e, f, g; 1965a, b; 1968e, f; 1977a; 1982–83; 1991a, b; 1992a; 1994a), plus the first monograph about Carian (1965).

Although Shevoroshkin analysed the onomastic data practically in all publications about Anatolian languages, he devoted three special studies focusing exclusively on Anatolian onomastics (1969b; 1978a; 1988a).

Vitaly Shevoroshkin was also a first-class specialist on the scripts of the East Mediterranean and Asia Minor. Besides the standard contributions (1962b; 1965c; 1966a; 1968d; 1972a; 1975) he was also the author of a series of knowledgeable comments on the Russian translations of important studies devoted to the Phaistos Disc, Linear A, Lydian, Carian and Sidetic scripts (1976a, b, c, d, e). It was during the preparation of this volume (edited by Igor M. Djakonov) that Vitaly Shevoroshkin emigrated to the USA. His emigration automatically meant that he became *persona*

¹ «К исследованию некоторых закономерностей строения звуковых цепей. (В связи с проблемами идентификации лингвистических единиц)» [On the investigation of some regularities in the structure of sound-chains. (On the connection with the problems of identifying linguistic units)]

² 2nd edition published in 2004.

non grata, which entailed the prohibition of his publications. For this reason, his name in the volume *Тайны древних писмен: проблемы дешифровки* [Secrets of old scripts: problems of decipherment] was replaced by fictitious А.Ф. Деянов, and this way the volume could be published, although everyone among the linguists of the East Block knew about the real identity of the author.

C) Promoting the Nostratic hypothesis and the study of language in prehistory

In 1962 Shevoroshkin met Aharon Dolgopolsky, they both worked at the Department of Structural Linguistics, Russian Language Institute of the Academy. Dolgopolsky had already been working on his Sibiuro-European (later called Borealic and then Nostratic) comparisons, and since Shevoroshkin himself noted relevant non-Indo-European correspondences to his Indo-European root list, their discussions frequently concerned the Nostratic hypothesis. The development of the hypothesis gained significant momentum, when Vladimir A. Dybo – aware of the fact that beside Dolgopolsky, another young linguist, Illič-Svityč was investigating the same topic – introduced the two scholars to each other. With the early demise of Illič-Svityč in 1966, Shevoroshkin's emigration to the US in 1974 and Dolgopolsky's to Israel in 1976, the Moscow school of Nostratic linguistic research obtained representatives beyond the Russian Academy.

In 1988, Vitaly Shevoroshkin and Ben Stolz organized the *First Interdisciplinary Symposium on Language and Prehistory* at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. This event brought together linguists focusing on the Nostratic hypothesis with those investigating other hypotheses of linguistic relationship at a deeper time-depth. This was the first opportunity for American experts to meet a group of Russian and East European linguists (including Aharon Dolgopolsky, then already living in Israel) who were specialising in the reconstruction of the Nostratic protolanguage. This symposium has a special relevance for the historiography of linguistics because its aim was to establish communication between linguists and human geneticists in order to approach the complex issue of linguistic prehistory from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. This was quite a revolutionary momentum at that time, and given the present-day heightened attention to the correlation of population genetics and the historical migration routes of speakers of different languages, it is easy to see that Vitaly intended to steer the development of historical-comparative linguistic research in the right direction. This, however, does not mean that the prestige of Nostratic or long-range linguistic comparison has won general recognition, but the symposium and the subsequent period showed an increased interest in these contested issues of language in prehistory. The proceedings and related materials were published in a sequence of several volumes in Germany (1989a, 1989b; 1990; 1991; 1992).

Vitaly's professional support and friendship is gratefully acknowledged by both authors of this obituary. Vitaly and his wife Galina Barinova were the kindest of hosts and welcomed us to their home in Ann Arbor, Michigan. We also treasure the pleasant memories of meeting them during their professional or private visits in Europe.

Irén Hegedűs (University of Pécs, Hungary) and
Václav Blažek (Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic)

Vitaly V. Shevoroshkin's list of publications

Books

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- 1969 *Звуковые цепи в языках мира*. [Sound-chains in the world's languages] Москва: Наука. 187pp.
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- 2004 *Звуковые цепи в языках мира*. [Sound-chains in the world's languages] (2nd, rev. edition) Москва: USSR. 184pp.

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- 1989a *Reconstructing Languages and Cultures*. (Abstracts and Materials from the First Interdisciplinary Symposium on Language and Prehistory, Ann Arbor, 8–12 November 1988). Bochum: Brockmeyer.
- 1989b *Explorations in Language Macrofamilies*. (Materials from the First Interdisciplinary Symposium on Language and Prehistory). Bochum: Brockmeyer.
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Reviews

Shevoroshkin regularly published reviews in Russian journals, such as *Вопросы языкознания* [Questions of Linguistics] and *Вестник древней истории* [Herald of Ancient History], as well as abroad. These reviews covered books on general linguistics, Anatolian languages, onomastics, and writing systems. Here is a just a sample of his numerous reviews:

- 1962 Martinet, A.: *Elements de linguistique generale*. *Вопросы языкознания* 11–12, № 6, 131–135.
- 1964 Palmer, L.R.: *Mycenaeans and Minoans. Aegean Prehistory in the Light of the Linear B Tablets*. L., 1961; & Heubeck, A.: *Praegraeca. Sprachliche Untersuchungen zum vorgriechisch-indogermanischen Substrat*. Erlangen, 1961. *Вестник древней истории* 1964, № 2, 192–194.
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