

# Preface

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Pages ix–x of

**Toward Proto-Nostratic: A New Approach to the  
Comparison of Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Afroasiatic**

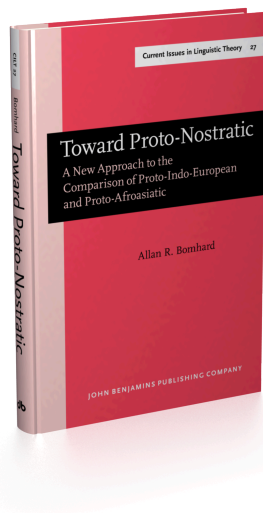
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## PREFACE

In a series of articles written over the past decade, I have explored the possibility that Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Afroasiatic might be genetically related. In the course of my research, my understanding has grown little by little, and I have gradually unravelled the basic sound correspondences between these two reconstructed proto-languages and have also uncovered much of the common vocabulary. This book represents the culmination of my work to date -- it incorporates and updates my previous articles and adds much new material. This book is not -- nor was it ever intended to be -- a comparative grammar of either the Indo-European or the Afroasiatic language families. It is, rather, a comparison of Proto-Indo-European with Proto-Afroasiatic. That the subject is explored from an Indo-Europeanist point of view will be evident to all.

While mine is not the first attempt to demonstrate that Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Afroasiatic are in fact genetically related, it is the first to use the radical revision of the Proto-Indo-European consonantal system proposed by Thomas V. Gamkrelidze, Paul J. Hopper, and Vjačeslav V. Ivanov. Moreover, unlike previous endeavors, this is the first to make extensive use of data from the non-Semitic branches of Afroasiatic. Thus, I believe that I have broken new ground.

Since the assumptions underlying my approach to the investigation of the possibility of the common genetic origin of Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Afroasiatic differ considerably from the assumptions made in earlier works on "Nostratic", I have found these works to be of limited value at best, and they are, consequently, seldom cited in the body of this book.

The methodological approach followed in this monograph has been one of rigorous adherence to the time-honored principles of comparative reconstruction (cf., for example, Greenberg 1957:35-45 and Hoenigswald 1960). This methodology has proven its efficacy over and over again in the history of linguistic science. Even though I have tried to set high standards, however, I do not claim that this book is free of errors or that it represents the last word on the subject. On the contrary, I regard this as a pioneering work. It is my sincerest hope that others more qualified than I will use this book as a starting point for deeper investigation into the relatedness of Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Afroasiatic.

I would like to express my thanks to all those who, over the many years that it has taken me to develop my ideas, have graciously offered both support and much-needed criticism, especially Raimo Anttila, Martin Bernal, Henrik Birnbaum, John Colarusso, Thomas V. Gamkrelidze, Paul J. Hopper, and Saul Levin. I would also like to acknowledge the help that Elrabih Makki gave in reviewing the Arabic material found in this book. A special note of deep appreciation must be extended to my friend, colleague, and collaborator on the Kerns Gedenkschrift, Yoël L. Arbeitman. His encouragement has been a constant source of inspiration, and the careful scrutiny that he has given my work has saved me from making many foolish errors. Finally, I would like to thank Konrad Koerner for courageously agreeing to publish what will, no doubt, prove to be a controversial work. It goes without saying that I alone am responsible for any errors that may occur in this book.

I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of a fellow student of Nostratic, Gilbert Davidowitz, who passed away suddenly of a heart attack on 21 July 1980.

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