

Comments

ROBERT S. P. BEEKES

Department of Comparative Linguistics, University of Leiden, P.O. Box 9515, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands (r.s.p.beekes@wolnail.nl). I VII 01

Kullanda claims that the so-called Indo-European kinship terms indicated not genealogical kinship relations but age/sex distinctions. It was not that a speaker could not distinguish, for example, his mother from other women but that such a distinction was unimportant in that society and language. As he admits, however, there are "only a few reflexes" of the system he supposes, and the counterevidence is very strong.

The use, for example, of *pater* to indicate a senator in Rome is very late compared with the date of Proto-Indo-European and cannot be used as evidence for the proto-language. The use of "mother" for the goddess of the earth is doubtless to be taken literally, in the genealogical/biological sense, and the same holds for the designation "daughter" for Persephone. These views are nearly universal in ancient societies. The use of "brother" for a monk is taken over from the Semitic languages and cannot be used as evidence for Proto-Indo-European. For Lithuanian *mótė* 'woman, wife', the residual meaning "mother" in dialects *proves* that this was the earlier meaning.

What is most important in the case of a new theory is whether it can explain things that were unclear in the earlier theory. Kullanda claims that this is the case with Old High German *ano*, meaning both "grandfather" and "grandmother." This is true, but it is found *only* in German, not even in the other Germanic languages, and therefore it cannot be used for Proto-Indo-European. Again, Middle High German *enel* means both "grandfather" and "grandson," but that these meanings go to-

gether is first found in Middle High German and certainly cannot be projected back to Proto-Indo-European. In general, then, Kullanda's idea is historically not well founded.

At the same time, there is plenty of evidence for terms indicating kinship, and Kullanda's brushing them aside is unacceptable. He suggests that **snuso-* 'daughter-in-law', **suesōr* 'sister', Greek *gambrós*, etc., 'son-in-law' are loanwords from Caucasian. Even if this is true, it is irrelevant: the words can be reconstructed with certainty for Proto-Indo-European, and if they were loanwords, we are talking about a period of, say, 1,000 years earlier. (Also, the fact that words with these meanings were borrowed shows that Proto-Indo-European society wanted to express these notions.) (Greek *gambrós*, etc., still present a difficulty for the reconstruction, but an ablauting system, e.g., **ǵom-ēr*, **ǵm-er-*, **ǵm-r-* could explain all forms. And even if we could not find a single reconstruction because of reshapings in the separate languages, there is no doubt that the word is an old Proto-Indo-European word.) The word for "husband's sister" (Greek *gálōs*, etc.) is also an old Proto-Indo-European term that can be reconstructed with certainty: **ǵelH-ōu-s* (with the usual ablaut). That "husband's brother" is "a relative innovation in Indo-European" is improbable; the form **deh₂iuēr*, cannot be understood as formed from Proto-Indo-European elements: it looks very old.

Thus the nonkinship meanings can be easily explained as secondary, the evidence given for old age/sex-meanings is based on material too late to be used for Proto-Indo-European, and there are several old Proto-Indo-European terms for exact kinship relations. Kullanda's theory must be rejected.