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Introduction

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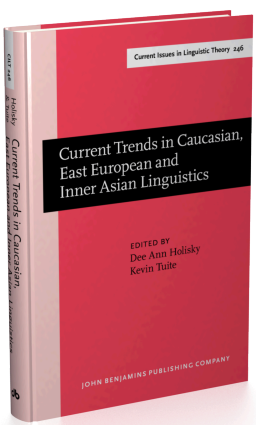

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INTRODUCTION

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Among the research objectives mandated to the Russian Academy of Sciences after its foundation under Peter the Great was the collection of linguistic and ethnographic data among the numerous indigenous peoples being brought within the borders of the Empire. It was largely thanks to the concerted gathering of word lists and paradigms throughout the 18th century that Finno-Ugric comparative linguistics achieved notable success while Indo-European was still in its infancy, and that precious information was recorded concerning the now-extinct sister languages of Ket.

After the October revolution, linguistic work continued unabated, but in increasing isolation from West European and North American scholarship. On the other hand, Soviet research profited enormously from the policy — remarkably progressive against the backdrop of the colonialist mentality still underlying much Western social science at the time — of active recruitment and training of indigenous scholars. At a time when the number of native-speaker-authored grammars of native American languages could be counted on the fingers of one hand, the linguistics, ethnology and archeology of the Caucasus was already dominated by researchers of Georgian, Abkhazian, Daghestanian and other North Caucasian origin. It was only after the death of Stalin that scholars from capitalist countries were once again allowed to undertake research on the territory of the USSR, although their access to the field was severely circumscribed for many years. Many of the American linguists represented in this volume participated in the Soviet-American academic exchange program between IREX (the International Research & Exchanges Board) and the USSR Ministry of Higher Education, which enabled doctoral students and faculty to spend up to 9 months in the Soviet Union. It should be pointed out in this context that of the two Georgian contributors to this volume, one (Gamkrelidze) participated in the exchange from the Soviet side, and the other (Apridonidze) was the teacher and mentor of a succession of IREX exchangees at Tbilisi State University, including the two editors of this volume.

If IREX was the principal avenue by which American linguists gained access to speakers of Soviet minority languages, the biannual conferences organized by Howard Aronson and his colleague Bill Darden at the University of Chicago provided a key venue for presenting their results and meeting their colleagues. The inaugural International Conference on Non-Slavic Languages of the USSR (abbreviated NSL) took place in 1979. As its title clearly indicates, this was conceived as a means of offering specialists in Caucasian, Baltic, Iranian, Finno-Ugric, Altaic, Siberian and other language groups spoken on Soviet territory a regular occasion for sharing research and networking, comparable to those already available to North American Slavists. The list of languages discussed at the ten NSL conferences that took place between 1979 and 1997, and the two Chicago Conferences on Caucasia held in 1999 and 2002, is impressive, as is the roster of scholars who attended them. Besides the contributors to this volume, many of whom were regular participants in the NSL, other scholars made a point of attending the meetings to present work-in-progress on lesser known languages. One thinks of the late Robert Austerlitz's series of papers on the internal reconstruction of the Siberian isolate Gilyak (a.k.a Nivkh), and the regular appearances of Eric Hamp to address issues in Armenian historical linguistics. Most of the contributions to the present volume began as papers read at the tenth and final NSL conference (known since the break-up of the USSR as the Conference on Non-Slavic Languages of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic republics), held at the University of Chicago in May of 1997. On that occasion it was decided by participants that the proceedings of the conference would be presented to Prof. Aronson in recognition of his valuable contributions to Caucasian linguistics — and more broadly, to the study of the languages of eastern Europe and the former USSR — as scholar, teacher and organizer.

Our collection begins with a tribute to Howard Aronson by his former student, and now colleague, Victor Friedman, to which is appended a list of his publications. The remaining chapters follow in alphabetical order according to the names of their principal authors, but I will present them here by language group, beginning with those discussed in the largest number of papers.

1. *Languages of the Caucasus*

Howard Aronson was one of the first linguists in North America to take a serious interest in the languages of the Caucasus, and one of the very few who taught a Caucasian language (Georgian) on a regular basis. It is therefore appropriate that the bulk of the contributions, twelve of the 17 papers, are concerned with languages from the three indigenous Caucasian families.

1.1 *Nakh-Daghestanian (Northeast Caucasian)*

Of the three Caucasian language families, only Nakh-Daghestanian has a family tree of comparable complexity to that of Indo-European. As shown in the genealogies compiled by Nichols and Schulze, the over two dozen Nakh-Daghestanian languages can be grouped into at least five, and perhaps as many as seven, principal branches. This is indicative of a relatively rapid expansion of the ancestral speech community some five or six millennia ago, as Nichols points out in her chapter. The cultural or economic factors motivating the spread of the Nakh-Daghestanian languages is a fascinating problem still awaiting future research. The three Nakh languages (Chechen, Ingush and the outlier Batsbi) probably go back to a deep division in the family, and many experts believe that Proto-Nakh split off somewhat earlier than the ancestors of the Daghestanian branches. If that isn't complicated enough, the long presence of the Nakh-Daghestanian communities in contiguity to each other in the eastern Caucasus has contributed to localized convergence at different time depths among adjoining languages, and to the distribution of features Schulze attempts to capture in the diagrams in sections 3.1 and 4 of his paper. No fewer than six chapters are consecrated to the fascinating Nakh-Daghestanian languages, still little-known to Western linguists. Four contributions focus on individual languages, while two deal with the family as a whole.

Victor A. Friedman, best known as a Slavist and specialist in Balkan linguistics, has been studying the Daghestanian language Lak for a number of years. The detailed morphemic breakdown and glosses he provides for the tale of Shamsu and his dog, intended for an annotated Lak reader and textbook, provide linguists with a glimpse of the deployment of the complicated nominal and verbal morphology of this language in the structuring of a text. Among the mechanisms one can observe at work are noun-class agreement with absolutive-case arguments, the alternation between finite and non-finite verb forms, and the various past-tense paradigms.

While a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley, Zev Handel collaborated in the Ingush Language Project under the direction of Johanna Nichols. Through extensive work with native speakers and the study of the existing dictionaries and grammars of the Nakh languages, the Berkeley team has been assembling an ever-growing database on Ingush and Chechen, much of which is accessible to interested researchers via the World Wide Web. Handel's chapter is characteristic of the work being produced by Nichols and her associates, in terms of both the painstaking detail with which Ingush verbal ablaut is analyzed, and in the generous furnishing of the data underpinning the writer's conclusions. It is as though Handel refuses to impose his conclusions

with the authorial authority he could easily invoke, and instead invites his readers to stroll through the lengthy database in his Appendix III, to see for themselves whether his analysis is reasonable, and perhaps discover other questions to explore. In addition to its obvious relevance for Chechen-Ingush comparative grammar, Handel's paper is likely to contribute to the study of ablaut at much deeper time-depths, since vowel alternations characterize the nominal and verbal morphology of many Daghestanian languages as well (a topic touched upon by Johanna Nichols in her contributions to this volume).

Alice C. Harris, one of the world's leading specialists in Kartvelian linguistics, took the opportunity, while in Georgia for her doctoral research, to visit the village of Okt'omber, one of the few areas where the Udi language is still spoken. Over the years, she has maintained her interest in this highly interesting but endangered language, which appears to be the most direct descendent of the so-called Caucasian Albanian literary language preserved in a handful of fragmentary texts from over a millennium ago. Udi occupies a somewhat peripheral position within the Lezgian branch of Daghestanian languages, having undergone a number of innovations in morphology and syntax, but also conserving some important features. Harris points out that Udi data have not been given appropriate weight in the reconstruction of proto-Lezgian locative cases and preverbs, and attempts to remedy the situation by uncovering Udi reflexes frozen into adverbs or reanalyzed as grammatical cases.

Reflexivization has received considerable attention in the formal linguistic literature since the early days of generative syntax, since constraints linked to coreference have proven particularly useful in the investigation of underlying syntactic structures. Reflexive pronouns and adjectives are featured in two contributions to this volume, and it is hoped that the comparative data they supply will prove useful to syntacticians, all the more so since data from languages of ergative alignment are still not given the prominence they merit in the main schools of linguistic theory . The paper co-authored by Maria Polinsky and Bernard Comrie is one of the numerous publications that have resulted from their long-standing collaboration with Daghestanian linguists and native speakers, an approach which has enabled them to examine in detail the syntactic phenomena relevant to contemporary theoretical discussions, but which are rarely treated in grammatical descriptions from the Soviet era. In their paper, Polinsky and Comrie analyze the structural properties and distribution of two types of reflexive construction in Tsez. Of particular interest is their data on affective and potential construction, in which the Tsez translation equivalent of the English subject is marked in the dative or another oblique case. Such so-called 'quirky' case-marking is not at all quirky in many Cauca-

sian languages, but case assignment in reflexive clauses does show intriguing diversity. The antecedent in Tsez affective reflexive constructions is in the absolutive case, whereas its Georgian equivalent, for example, would be assigned the dative.

Johanna Nichols' chapter on Nakh-Daghestanian consonant correspondences is the fruit of many years' reflection on the thorny issues that have impeded progress in this area, despite the large number of languages furnishing material for comparison. The Russian linguists Nikolaev and Starostin, with the publication of their "North Caucasian etymological dictionary", appeared to have established the principal sound correspondences among the Nakh-Daghestanian languages, and, what is more astounding, even between these latter and the Abkhaz-Adyghean (Northwest Caucasian) family, which is thought by many to be unrelated. However, Nichols, Schulze and other critics have pointed to the numerous methodological flaws in the dictionary, and the need to proceed cautiously within each family, without any a priori assumptions concerning relatedness. In her paper, Nichols demonstrates how she believes this should be done from the Nakh-Daghestanian side. Alongside the evidence for regular sound change, she evaluates the complicating role played by gender affixes, ablaut, and what appears to have been ancient phonetic symbolism. Her chapter is accompanied by fifty Nakh-Daghestanian etymologies and cognate sets, many of them very different from those published by Nikolaev and Starostin or other linguists. Without question, Nichols' paper represents a major step in the reconstruction of Proto-Nakh-Daghestanian, and will be the subject of discussion for years to come.

The same can be said for Wolfgang Schulze's intricately argued and richly documented reconstruction of the prehistory of demonstrative pronouns in the Nakh-Daghestanian languages, concluding with hypotheses concerning the ancestral paradigms. Like Nichols, Schulze insists on methodological rigor and restraint in reconstruction, yet he too freely admits that other sources of change besides regular sound laws must be considered. The Nakh-Daghestanian demonstrative paradigms present an abundance of knotty problems, sufficient to test the skills of even the most practiced comparativists. Some deictic systems refer to the loci (physical or metaphoric) of both speaker and hearer, whereas others are organized around that of the speaker only. Many, but not all, have demonstratives indicating the relative altitude of the referent (e.g. Akhwakh *hade-* "there very high above"), doubtless a useful distinction to be able to make if one lives in highland Daghestan. As Schulze points out, demonstrative paradigms are notoriously short-lived and variable, and particularly susceptible to the influences of sound symbolism and analogy. Further

complicating the picture is vocalic ablaut, a widespread and ancient phenomenon in Nakh-Daghestanian. Schulze calls upon his encyclopedic knowledge of the linguistic data, based on years of fieldwork as well as familiarity with the Russian- and Georgian-language scholarly literature, in combination with theoretical principles (the "Grammar of scenes and scenarios", cf. Schulze 1998), to arrive at reconstructions of the ancestral demonstrative paradigms of the individual branches, as well as Proto-Nakh-Daghestanian.

1.2 *Kartvelian (South Caucasian)*

As was mentioned above, Howard Aronson taught and conducted research on the Georgian language for most of his career at the University of Chicago. Of the five papers in this collection that deal with Georgian and its sister languages, three are by former students of Aronson's, and the other two by Georgian colleagues with whom he has had close ties for many years. The Kartvelian language family, comprising Georgian, Laz, Mingrelian and Svan, is by far the best-described of the indigenous Caucasian families, and the only one with unbroken attestation since the early Christian period. No less than four etymological dictionaries have been published (two each by the late G. A. Klimov, and the team of Heinz Fähnrich and Zurab Sarjveladze), and numerous monographs have been consecrated to questions of Kartvelian phonology, morphology and syntax. Nonetheless, much work remains to be done; even a language as thoroughly examined as Georgian continues to hold surprises, and present baffling problems, to those who study it.

Shukia Apridonidze presents a comparative study of the morphosyntax of reflexive pronouns and possessives in Modern Georgian and some modern West European languages (English, Russian and German). She passes in review the different usages to which the Georgian root *tav-* "head" and its genitive *tav-is-* are put in the formation of Georgian reflexives, and compares person-sensitive reflexives to those that are the same for all three persons, as in Russian. Both of the latter strategies are employed by Georgian speakers. Apridonidze notes that some northeastern Georgian dialects favor the use of *tavis-* "one's own" in all three persons, and that the innovative use of *sak'utar-* "own", with the same meaning and distribution, is spreading in the literary language. One might wonder if the usage of *sak'utar-* is modeled on Russian *sebja/svoj*; such an explanation seems far less probable, however, in the case of the nonliterary dialects of the northeast Georgian highlands.

In his Chicago PhD thesis, now published in book form by Harrassowitz of Wiesbaden, Marcello Cherchi undertook an exhaustive analysis of the morphology, syntax and semantics of the fourth class (or 'conjugation') of Georgian

verbs, according to the classification used by many Kartvelianists. This class comprises a diverse group of statives and dative-subject verbs, most of which have defective tense-aspect paradigms. In the chapter presented here, Cherchi attempts to classify Mingrelian verbs according to the same criteria he applied to Georgian verbs. Although it has been common practice to use Georgian-based terminology in describing the rather closely-related Mingrelian, Cherchi argues that it is premature to assume that there are adequate formal grounds to group Mingrelian verbs into four classes. Although Mingrelian has many cognates to Georgian Class 4 verbs, with similar properties, he does not discern any compelling reasons to group them apart from other non-inverting verbs (i.e. those that do not undergo case shift in the evidential series III and IV).

Like Armenian, Georgian is written with an alphabet created specifically for it, with a nearly perfect mapping of characters onto phonemes and no obvious resemblance to other scripts. Also as in the case of Armenian, Georgian writing first appears after the adoption of Christianity as state religion (the oldest known Georgian texts date from the mid-5th century). The origin of the earliest form of the Georgian alphabet, known as *asomtvaruli* ("capital letters"), has been the object of much speculation, little of it of any scientific merit, by amateurs eager to discern astronomical symbolism or links to Sumerian pictograms in the forms of individual letters. Tamaz Gamkrelidze has attempted to bring more reputable methods to bear on the question in some recent work, most notably his 1990 monograph later translated into English under the title "Alphabetic writing and the Old Georgian script". Some of his conclusions are summarized in the paper presented here. In his view, the inventors of the Armenian and Georgian alphabets used Greek as their principal model, but the forms of most of the letters and some aspects of their ordering were original (and sufficiently different from each other that Gamkrelidze deems it highly unlikely that one individual or circle of individuals could have created both the Georgian and Armenian scripts).

Kora Singer attempts to unravel yet another of those seeming paradoxes which the Georgian language presents to linguists. Despite its rich nominal and verbal morphology, Georgian permits a high degree of homophonous or ambiguous marking, at least from the outsider's point of view. Double dative constructions are a case in point: verbs with two indirect objects, both assigned the dative case, and only one of which is crossreferenced by agreement markers on the verb. The 'demotion' of underlying indirect objects occurs in other constructions, for example the perfect tenses of transitive verbs, but not here. Singer takes note of certain semantic correlates of Georgian double dative constructions, such as inalienable possession, animacy and the lexically-

specified case frames of verbs, but does not find the correlations strong enough to permit an easy characterization of the factors motivating the presence of two indirect objects.

The so-called 'series markers', verbal suffixes present in the present, imperfect and other Series I verb forms in the Kartvelian languages, present the reverse side of the coin: rather than a mapping of one form onto several distinct functions, as with double datives, here a half-dozen distinct morphemes appear to have the identical function. Kevin Tuite assembles the dossier on series markers from all four Kartvelian languages and several Georgian dialects, in search of regularities of distribution, function and association with particular verb stems. The synchronically unmotivated plethora of series markers appear to derive from two distinct sets of ancestral morphemes, those which marked stative/resultative aspect, and a second group with antipassivizing force. Tuite's analysis of the evolution of series markers also has implications for the reconstruction of verb-stem morphology in Proto-Kartvelian.

1.3 *Abkhaz-Adyghean (Northwest Caucasian) and Indo-European*

The possibility that an "areal and perhaps phylogenetic relation" might link the Northwest Caucasian language family to Indo-European had been suggested almost forty years ago by Paul Friedrich (in a 1964 book review in *American Anthropologist*), and received additional endorsement a quarter century later by Eric Hamp (in his contribution to *The New Sound of Indo-European* edited by Theo Vennemann). The ancestor of these two fami-lies, dubbed "Pontic" by Colarusso due to its likely proximity to the Black Sea, would have split up over 10 millennia ago. These initial proposals, insightful as they are, were made without the benefit of a first-hand knowledge of Abkhaz-Adyghean linguistics, and in the absence of an established set of etymologies. Reconstructing Proto-Abkhaz-Adyghean is, as John Colarusso admitted in a NSL paper presented in 1989, a "very hard nut" to crack, despite the strong typological resemblances and shared inflectional morphology among Abkhaz-Abaza, Ubykh and the Circassian dialects. As Nichols noted in her 1992 book, languages of the typological profile of Abkhaz-Adyghean "lose evidence of their relatedness more rapidly" (1992: 266) than do other types of languages. A high proportion of monomorphemic roots and polysynthetic head-marking morphology conspire to increase the likelihood of morpheme-boundary reanalysis, and hence complicate the recognition of cognate forms. Furthermore, in these extremely consonant-rich (and vowel-poor) languages, secondary phonetic features such as labialization and pharyngealization appear to have originated as distinct segments. In the "hard nut" paper mentioned

above, for example, Colarusso argues that many instances of Ubykh pharyngealization arose from the fusion of a consonant and a following lateral, e.g. Ubykh /-vˤa-/ "spy upon someone" < */-fˤa-/ < */-fx̌a-/ < PNWC */pʰə-x̌ə-a/ (cf. Circassian /-px̌ə-/ "look"). Initially skeptical of claims that NWC and IE might be related, Colarusso came to take the hypothesis more seriously as his painstaking reconstruction of Proto-Abkhaz-Adyghean proceeded. In his chapter for this volume, Colarusso examines some problematic IE animal names, especially the root for "horse', in the light of the Pontic hypothesis. Colarusso's etymologies might not be to the taste of all readers, but I would like to make one observation: Long-range comparativists are commonly criticized for their reliance on phonological look-alikes rather than sound laws. There is something suspicious about sets of alleged cognates, the common ancestors of which would have been spoken before the last Ice Age, which resemble each more transparently than do Armenian *erku* and English *two*, or Latin *habere* and English *give*. If the Indo-European family does indeed have surviving kin somewhere, I suspect the family resemblances will be of the sort Colarusso presents in his paper, and be revealed as a result of similarly labor-intensive spadework.

2. *Siberian indigenous languages*

Although co-organized by specialists in Kartvelian (Aronson) and Balto-Slavic (Darden) linguistics, the Chicago NSL conferences were an important venue for the presentation of work on the far-flung languages of the Russian east. Besides the series of papers by Austerlitz on Gilyak, of which mention was made earlier, at one time or another work was presented on every Siberian language branch and isolate, including Samoyedic, Tungusic, Finno-Ugric, Turkic, Chukchi and Ket. The present collection contains a representative sampling of recent research in Siberian linguistics, illustrative of the range of problems — contact phenomena, phonological typology, genetic classification — confronting investigators of these seriously under-studied, and in some cases, endangered, languages.

Despite its vast size, Siberia has some of the characteristics of a linguistic area. Gregory Anderson has examined the phonological systems of three dozen indigenous Siberian languages, belonging to seven or more families, in order to investigate evidence of the spreading of phonological features in native Siberia, and work out probable trajectories of diffusion. In his chapter for this volume, Anderson focuses on nasal phonemes. Several Siberian families — Tungusic, Uralic and the isolates Nivkh and Yukaghir — have well-established and evidently ancient four-way contrasts among nasal phonemes: /m/, /n/, /ñ/

and /ŋ/. Some other groups have only three, lacking the palatal nasal /ñ (ɲ)/, whereas in others /ñ/ is present, but with only marginal phonological status. Besides its interest for specialists in typology and historical phonology, Anderson's paper may be of relevance to the study of the cultural prehistory of Siberia, as the direction of diffusion of linguistic features is indicative of sustained contacts among speech communities in the remote past.

The Tungusic language family spreads over the Russian border into adjacent regions of northern China. Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley draw upon both Russian- and Chinese-language publications, supplemented by their fieldwork on Oroqen, a Tungusic language spoken in China, in their investigation of morphological variation in this family. The nomadic way of life of most Tungusic communities, and their long history of migrations, make for an especially complicated geolinguistic map. Isoglosses often crosscut each other, and the boundaries between languages or dialects are seldom clear. Mindful of the limitations of rigidly Stammbaum-based methods of language grouping, Grenoble and Whaley opt for a 'bottom-up' approach to the classification of Tungusic speech varieties. As it is becoming increasingly clear that the histories of even such well-studied families as Indo-European cannot be accurately represented by family trees (cf. the problematic position of Germanic (Ringe et al. 1998)), greater attention will need to be paid to alternative approaches to classification, and a rethinking of such fundamental notions as 'language', 'dialect' and genetic relatedness.

K. David Harrison and Abigail Kaun describe the vowel inventory of the previously undocumented variety of Tatar spoken in and near Namangan in central Uzbekistan. Turkic vowel systems have provided much material for theoretical phonologists to reflect upon. In this paper, the authors look at some interesting aspects of Namangan Tatar vowel harmony, which is sensitive to the parameters of backness and rounding. Backness harmony applies in regular fashion, but in polysyllabic words, the phonetic realizations of underlying front and back vowels overlap. Rounding harmony is of more restricted occurrence than in other Tatar varieties, being limited to roots formed with the causative suffix, and then only if certain conditions obtain. This confronts the analyst with an interesting problem at the interface of phonology and morphology.

The fascinating Yeniseian family, of which the endangered language Ket is the sole survivor, sticks out like a sore thumb on the Central Siberian linguistic map. Ket has head-marking morphology, polypersonal verbs that choose their agreement marking positions as a component of stem formation, and, it now appears, tone as well. Over the past few years, Edward Vajda has become one of the world's experts on Yeniseian linguistics. He has compiled an exhaustive

bibliography of Yeniseian studies (Vajda 2001) and done fieldwork in Siberia with some of the remaining Ket speakers. In his contribution to the present volume, Vajda examines the phonetic data on Ket vowels, which has been analyzed in widely divergent ways by his predecessors (some have described as few as five vowel phonemes, others as many as fifty-six!). Out of a bewildering mass of phonetic detail Vajda distills seven vowel phonemes, and four phonologically distinct tones, with somewhat different realizations in monosyllabic and polysyllabic words. He also argues, on the basis of pitch contours, for a distinction between phonological words and phrases in Ket, with important consequences for the analysis of verb morphology and the syntax of noun phrases.

3. *Slavic*

It should not be forgotten the Howard Aronson was a Slavist before he began studying Georgian, and in particular a leading specialist in Bulgarian linguistics. One of his former PhD students, Donald Dyer, has followed in this direction, with an additional interest in the linguistic situation in the Republic of Moldova, where, alongside Rumanian and Russian, forms of Bulgarian are also spoken. Based on his fieldwork with the Bulgarians of Moldova, Dyer situates their speech varieties on the dialectological map, and describes their distinctive phonological and morphological features. The editors of the present volume would also like to take this occasion to announce that Donald Dyer, along with Victor Friedman, has edited a second collection in honor of Howard Aronson, this one comprising papers in Slavic and Balkan linguistics (Friedman and Dyer 2002).

4. *Acknowledgements*

Co-editor Dee Ann Holisky and I wish to acknowledge all of those whose help made it possible to commemorate Howie's contribution to Eurasian linguistics with this collection. We begin by thanking those of our colleagues who served as anonymous evaluators of the chapters published here. Your attentive reading of the manuscripts, expert comments — and, quite often, your proofreading skills — were essential to the process of transforming a collection of twenty-minute conference papers into a publishable book. Further copy-editing and page layout was done by my doctoral student Marsha Chuk, who, despite having no preparation whatsoever in Caucasian or Siberian linguistics, showed an astonishing flair for picking out inconsistencies and possible flaws in some of the most arcane corners of the volume. Finally, our special thanks go to Konrad Koerner, for his encouragement and extensive help in preparing

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