

## Editor's foreword

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 <https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.262.01vaj>

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**Languages and Prehistory of Central Siberia**

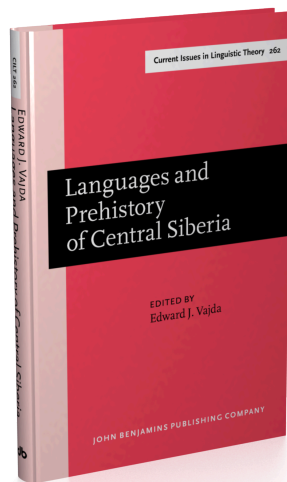
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[*Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, 262] 2004. x, 275 pp.

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## FOREWORD

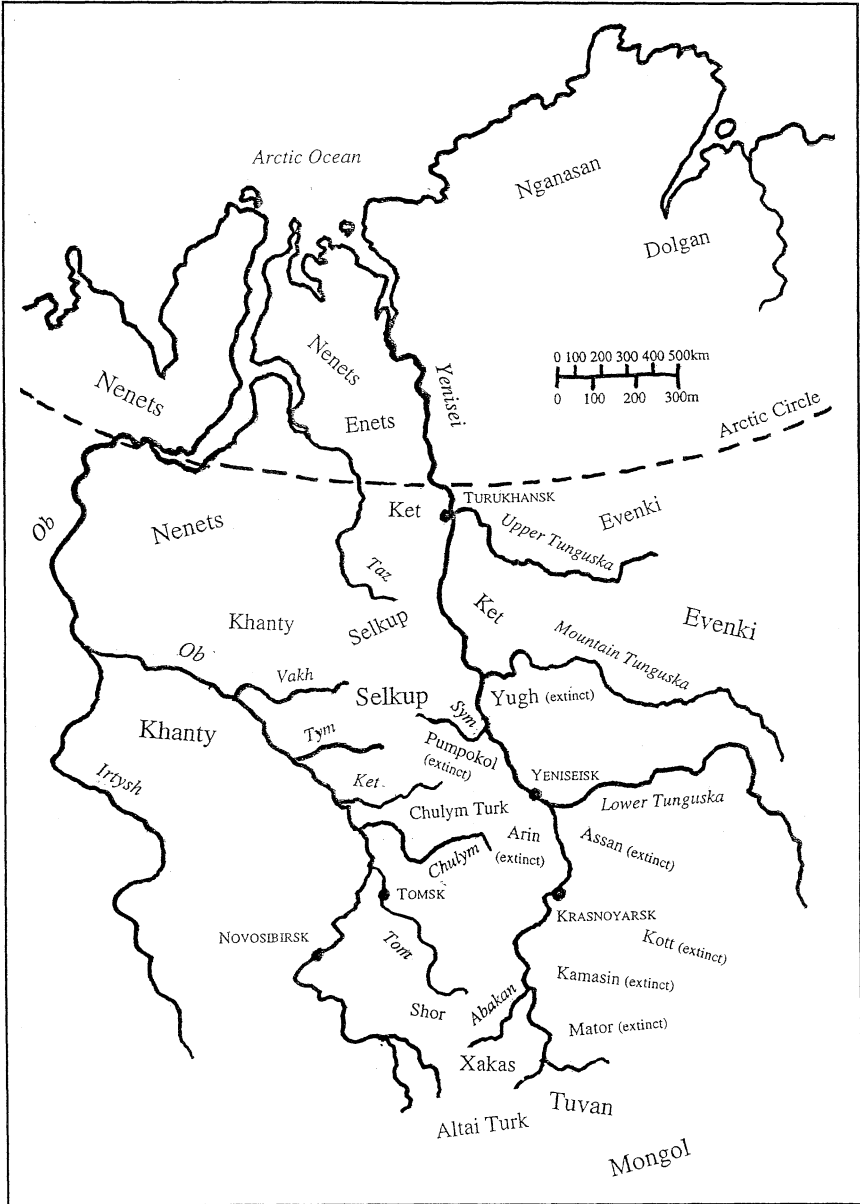
This collection of articles is dedicated to the outstanding Siberianist Andreas Dulson (1900-1973) on the occasion of the centenary of his birth. The contributing articles cover a range of topics connected with the aboriginal languages of Central Siberia. This includes the Altai-Sayan region of southern Siberia and the vast Yenisei River watershed stretching northward from the Altai to beyond the Arctic Circle. Before the arrival of Russian traders and travelers in the early 1600s, most of this area contained only sparse populations of hunters and reindeer herders who spoke languages belonging to three distinct genetic groupings. Most widespread were the Samoyedic languages, beginning with Selkup in the southwest, and continuing northward to the Enets, Nenets, and Nganasan peoples above the Arctic Circle. The southernmost area, which includes the Altai-Sayan Mountains, was home to several small Turkic-speaking groups, notably the ancestors of the modern Xakas (Khakas), Altai, and Shor peoples. Most of the central portion of the Yenisei watershed was occupied by Yeniseic-speaking peoples, of which Ket is now the sole remaining representative. Alongside the geographically dominant Samoyedic, Yeniseic, and Tungusic speakers, the Yenisei area also contained intrusions of Ugric-speaking Khanty (Ostyak) from the west, and Tungusic-speaking Evenki from the east. The approximate 17th-century location of each of these tribes is shown in the map following the editor's foreword. The present volume contains articles dealing mainly with Yeniseic, Selkup, and South Siberian Turkic.

The career of Andreas Dulson encompassed all of these peoples and their languages to some extent. But it was the study of the Ket and their extinct relatives – the Yugh, Kott, Arin, Assan, and Pumpokol – that remains the most lasting aspect of his scholarly legacy. Born to German-speaking parents in the Volga River area on February 9, 1900, as the youngest of several children, Dulson always showed a propensity for learning. His early career led him to specialize in studying the unique German dialects spoken on the territory of the Soviet Union. Soon after the Nazi invasion of June 22, 1941, the Dulson family, along with the entire population of Volga Germans, was forcibly relocated to remote areas of Siberia or Central Asia. Dulson, who had already acquired an international reputation for his linguistic publications, was fortunate in being allowed to live in exile in the beautiful city of Tomsk, famous for its high level of intellectual culture. There he and his wife and children managed to make the best of a difficult

situation. More than a decade would pass before Dulson was able to renew his scholarship in any public way, however, since he was under political restrictions. During that difficult time, he abandoned the study of German dialects, to which he no longer enjoyed access, since internal exiles had no legal right to travel. Instead, he became interested in the origin of the numerous pre-Russian hydronyms (river names) sprinkled across Central Siberia. It was he who first discovered that many of these names derive from languages related to Ket, a fact demonstrating that the Ket and their relatives once lived over a vast area of Inner Asia. After Stalin's death in 1953, Dulson was allowed to travel beyond Tomsk Province and began arranging archeological and linguistic fieldwork through his affiliation with Tomsk State Teachers Training College. His first fieldtrip to the Yenisei occurred in 1955, when he recorded the speech of the Kureika Ket, the northernmost group of Yeniseic speakers. During the remaining two decades of his life, Dulson organized dozens of similar research trips. He and his collaborators and students collected over eighty volumes of field materials, mainly on Ket, but also on the Selkup and South Siberian Turkic languages and peoples. A complete, annotated list of Dulson's numerous publications dealing with Yeniseic peoples can be found in *Yeniseic Peoples and Languages* (Edward Vajda, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), which also includes detailed information about the school of linguistics he founded in Tomsk. A more substantial biography can be found in the Erika Becker's monograph *Prof.-Dr. Andreas Dulson (1900-1973): Sein Leben und Werk in den Erinnerungen seiner Schüler* (Hamburg: Ural-Altaic Society, 1999). The present collection represents the first tribute to Dulson published in English.

Because Andreas Dulson advocated a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Aboriginal Siberia, the individual articles assembled here in his honor deal with several language families. Some are synchronic, others diachronic. The volume contains four thematic sections. Studies on Yeniseic linguistics come first, then studies of Selkup. The third section deals with the South Siberian Turkic languages Xakas and Chulym. The final section contains three studies that focus on archeology and culture from the vantage of their relevance to linguistics. These articles discuss the ethnic and linguistic origins of the Selkup, Xakas, and Ket peoples and likewise help foster a greater understanding of the linguistic groupings of Aboriginal Central Siberia, a world now quickly vanishing into the past. Except for the chapters by Gregory D. S. Anderson and K. David Harrison, all were originally written in Russian and translated by me for inclusion in the present volume. None has been published elsewhere. Most Russian contributors were students or colleagues of Andreas Dulson. I thank all of the participants for their cooperation and patience in helping make this unique volume possible.

Edward J. Vajda  
September, 2004



Native Languages of Central Siberia

