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Preface

The South Siberian Turkic languages are a group of minor idioms which are in many ways archaic, because they developed in isolation in an area where the great Islamic literary languages had quite limited influence. A detailed investigation into the archaic aspects of these languages can contribute important insights into the historical development of the language family as a whole. It appears, on the other hand, that substrates introduced by the assimilation of various originally non-Turkic (Samoyed, Ob-Ugrian and Ket) ethnic groups influenced their structures in a number of ways, bringing some specific areal features into South Siberian Turkic. Intensive contacts with varieties of Mongolian over a number of centuries and more recently with Russian have also engendered serious changes not only in their lexicon, but also (less visibly at first sight) in their grammars. Another important factor which should be taken into consideration when studying the emergence of this group of languages – heterogeneous in the mid term – are the contact-induced convergences which took place among them at different stages.

We have included into this volume also papers on Yellow Uygur, although this language is not spoken in South Siberia but in the Qinghai province of China, not far from Tibet, because it shows some clear classificatory features pointing towards South Siberia. With the exception of Tuvan, all languages dealt with in this volume are acutely endangered. The fact that their speakers were not numerous in the first place, advancing urbanisation coupled with the loss of traditional socio-economical structures, as well as the need to master Russian, the socially dominant super-regional language of communication, as a condition for economical success, are all making speakers of these ‘small’ languages give them up, turning to Russian.

None of the South Siberian Turkic languages are adequately documented and studied. Most material collected among their speakers in Siberia through field work and much of the results of research carried out about them have become accessible to Turcologists outside Russia only recently: Fruitful cooperation between Western European scholars and scientists from the Novosibirsk Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Novokuzneck National Pedagogical Academy (previously the National Pedagogical Institute in Novokuzneck) became possible only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This led to several projects financed by *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) and *Humboldt-Foundation*, carried out at Mainz and Frankfurt Universities.¹

1 Some of the work engendered by this cooperation is brought together in the following volumes: Marcel Erdal & Irina Nevskaya (eds.). *Exploring the eastern frontiers of Turkic*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2006 (Turcologica 60); Marcel Erdal, Irina Nevskaya, Hans Nugteren & Monika Rind-Pawłowski (eds.). *Chalkan manual. Part I*. Wiesbaden: Harras-

Most of the contributions of the present volume were presented at a conference in July 2003 at the Goethe University in Frankfurt organized by the department of Turcology and the Orient-Institut Istanbul with the support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.² A few additional papers looking at South Siberian Turkic – by Gregory Anderson, Baylak Ooržak, Monika Rind-Pawłowski, and Saule Tažibaeva – round up the contents of the volume.

Three types of questions can be discerned in the contributions:

1. What do retained early Turkic forms, lost in other modern languages, mean for the history of the Turkic languages as a whole? What was the contribution of substrates to the development of grammatical subsystems?
2. As a second research domain, the contributors looked at features shared by the South Siberian Turkic languages. The areal point of view brought the following questions into focus: What is the influence of contact with non-Turkic Siberian languages on the emergence of shared areal features not found among the Turkic languages outside Siberia? Do the features shared by the Siberian languages discussed in this volume amount to an emerging ‘Sprachbund’ as described e.g. for the Balkan languages? The development of some varieties of the languages dealt here but spoken outside this particular geographical area was one of the matters taken to be indicative for the clarification of this question.
3. The third domain consists of contributions to typological features both of the language group as a whole as well as of single languages: Some of the papers deal with the ‘polypredicative’ synthetic sentences of which all South Siberian languages make abundant use. Another typological characteristic of these languages is the absence of simple modal adverbs, balanced by recourse to a rich array of analytical predicative constructions with the copula *pol-*. Typical is also an abundance of analytical modal constructions. Verbs of position and movement in space such as *yat-* ‘to lie down, to lie’, *odur-* ‘to sit down, to sit’, *tur-* ‘to stand up, to stand’, *yor-* ‘to set out, to walk around’ have developed functions of expressing modes of action and have even acquired some modal contents.

The contributors of the present volume have not only striven to throw light on the grammatical domains of a particular subset of the Turkic languages, but have also intended their work to contribute to understanding these languages as a whole, and even to further our understanding of human language in general.

The editors

sowitz, in print. The second part of the *Chalkan manual* and a volume to bring unpublished Shor epics with linguistic analysis and translation are in preparation.

- 2 We are also grateful to Ralf Gehrke for his technical support both of the above mentioned projects and of this volume.