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Preface

The first thing I feel I need to do in this preface is to explain the title of the book, ‘Language Contact in Modern Uyghur’: The use of the preposition ‘in’ may seem a bit odd, but I think it is the only possible one in view of what the work is trying to do. My research is based on present-day Uyghur language data and those beginning in the middle of the previous century, couched in the language use of modern Uyghur society: Therefore ‘in’ Uyghur. But these data have been used synchronically and diachronically, for exploring four quite different contact systems, a virtual language contact laboratory, as it were. There was not much physical speaker involvement for the contact with Persian and Arabic, two very different languages themselves engaged in an involved contact situation, which created the culture by which much of the Turkic population of Xinjiang has identified itself for already a thousand years. Although the Uyghurs at a quite early stage submitted to Mongol rule for a number of centuries, cultural influence went the opposite way: Mongol tribes submitted to Turkic language, culture and identity, flooding the Uyghur language with influence from the bottom up; the Mongolic influence, in many ways more significant than the others, has mostly gone unnoticed by scholars. The language used at that time was not yet ‘Modern Uyghur’; Modern Uyghur became what it is during the Mongol domination. Russian influence opened up the western modern world to the Uyghurs, a huge and pretty sudden world-view revolution reflected in language. Uyghur cultural and linguistic contact with Chinese existed already in Tang times but became more socially relevant with the establishment of Qing rule in 1759; it is practically the only relevant contact nowadays, lending itself to wide-scale synchronous research. Although much of our subject matter is in the past, our present-day material lends itself to the contrast of five different types of language interaction, with five languages which are typologically quite different from each other and belong to four different genetic families.

This book is a revised and expanded version of my doctoral dissertation, defended in April 2014 in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Recalling those ‘fantastic’ days, I would like to mention the kind persons who gave me their valuable time, ideas and encouragement and supported me with their inspiring suggestions. First, I would like to express my deep gratitude towards my ‘Doktorvater’, Professor Marcel Erdal, who supervised my whole study in Frankfurt; without his serious and scientific support, this endeavor could not have been carried out. Special thanks go to Professor Irina Nevskaya, who kindly led me in the area of contact linguistics with her profound knowledge and patient instruction. I also owe her much for her serious suggestions concerning the theoretical part and the Russian chapter. My equally great thanks are for Professor Muhämmätrehim Sayit, who supported my research from the beginning on. His important remarks on the Chinese part, as well as those of

Professor Huang Chenglong and researcher Wang Haibo, prevented some shortcomings.

Furthermore, I sincerely thank Professor Abdurishid Yakup, who inspired and helped me during his stay in Frankfurt and gave me very important suggestions during the revising process. Professor Arslan Abdulla from Xinjiang University made work more convenient for me by generously offering his research materials. I use the opportunity to also express my warm gratitude to Professor Bernt Brendemoen, who carefully read and commented on my whole work, and to Dr. Bayarma Khabtagaeva, who read the Mongolic part thoroughly; both kindly offered me their valuable suggestions, from which I profited much.

I am grateful to Frankfurt University, which offered me access to various valuable scientific materials and a rich library. I wish to thank all teachers and colleagues in Frankfurt University, from whom I absorbed new scientific ideas and methods, profiting from their knowledge and friendship. I am especially thankful to Professor Károly, Dr. Nugteren, Professor Ragagnin and Dr. Jügel for their advice in some scientific matters. Professor Lars Johanson kindly read my work and happily accepted it for publication; I again wish to express my thanks to him. Mr. Şahin Beygu greatly helped me with his serious editing work. I owe great thanks to the China Scholarship Council, which financed my study in Germany, and the Uyghur Language and Literature department at Minzu University of China which also supported my study. Last but not least, I wish to express my gratitude to my mother Hashirem Pazil and my father Memtimin Abdurehim, my sister Aynur and other relatives who have supported me for many years; without their material and spiritual support I would not have been able to carry out my research.

This work is obviously based on the valuable contributions of many previous investigators, some of which may not have been duly appreciated here for lack of space and time. I would here like to express my warm gratitude to all those researchers with my sincere apologies. All the insufficiencies and shortcomings are, of course, mine.

Language contact is everywhere, as shown already by the names of my family members. It is such a complex phenomenon that a study such as this one can surely not cover everything in breadth and depth even concerning one language. Still, I hope that this perspective on Uyghur contact scenarios will serve as a useful base for further research in language contact and typology and, to some degree, as a small contribution for understanding some aspects of Uyghur society! I wish my reader would enjoy the work as much as possible: Bitte schön!

Räxmät!

Beijing, March 2016

Aminem Memtimin