

«salariato» (formato su *varj*, gen. singolare *varjow*). L'assimilarsi di *-awor* a un semplice suffisso comporta poi la necessità di ricorrere ad un altro suffisso, per ottenere il corrispettivo femminile di quei sostantivi in *-awor* che indicano professione o condizione; il suffisso utilizzato per questo fine è *-uhi*, così che accanto a *t'agawor* «re» abbiamo *t'agowhi* «regina». Per un bizzarro gioco del caso anche questo secondo suffisso rimontava ultimamente alla stessa radice **bher-* «portare» da cui era originato *-awor*.²⁸

Nell'evoluzione successiva della lingua, venuta meno la coscienza della connessione fra *-awor* e *berem*, terminati alcuni sviluppi fonetici che avevano condotto all'alterarsi dell'occlusiva, proveniente da **bh* indeuropeo, in al-

cune particolari circostanze, l'armeno forma una nuova serie di composti con *-ber*, la cui connessione con la radice di *berem* è naturalmente più perspicua. Abbiamo così *banber* «messaggero», *malsaber* «che porta i peccati» *ptaber* «fruttuoso», ecc. E' possibile che su questa nuova serie di composti, che indizi fonetici fanno ritenere più recente, abbia almeno in parte agito il modello greco, anche se ha ragione Meillet a notare che *ptaber* è più usato e diffuso di *καρποφόρος*. Ma se l'influsso greco è ravvisabile almeno inizialmente, avremmo qui un'ulteriore prova della capacità di penetrazione della lingua greca e della cultura greca su culture diverse: è significativo che anche in latino il modello dei composti greci con la radice di *φέρω* sia stato recepito, inizialmente nella lingua della poesia poi in strati linguistici più diffusi, dando luogo a una ricca di serie di composti quali *pinifer*, *frugifer*, eccetera.

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²⁸ Cfr. Bolognesi, pag. 38-39; E. Benveniste, *Persica* «BSL» XXXI, 78: *taguhi* «regina» viene da un ir. **tāga-bṛdryā* con la seconda parte del composto svoltasi regolarmente in **-wrhi*, donde **-wrhi*, **-urhi*, *-owhi*.

THE LANGUAGES OF THE SOVIET UNION

In the Soviet Union there is such an abundance of tongues that no other land, united under a central political head, can closely compare. In western Russia the multitudinous Indo-European languages are spoken, Baltic and Slavic principally, accompanied by numerous others. In the Northwest Finnic speakers are found, and their tongues, from Lapp to Estonian, form part of the Uralic group. In the mountainous far South we have nearly fifty languages spoken in the Caucasus; Georgian with its millions of speakers down to miniscule Gunzib and Ginukh, with respectively only six hundred and two hundred living speakers. In Central Asia are the burgeoning Turkic languages, part of the Altaic system which also includes Mongolian, well known to all, and lesser tongues – Uighur, Buriat and Tungus. In the far east we find the so-called Paleo-Siberian languages, not a linguistic family in the genetic sense, like Indo-European or Turkic, but a geographical classification which, like the large Caucasian grouping, includes languages of various roots that inhabit a common territory. The Paleo-Siberian family includes the several languages of the Kamchatka peninsula as well as Eskimo, Aleut and the Island of Sakhalin; all languages which are unrelated but constitute the single class "other."

The Slavic languages comprise the largest group of speakers of any language groups of the USSR, and within them, Russian is the most numerous, with 130 million stolid speakers; Ukrainian is second with more than forty million, and Belorussian is fourth with nine million, somewhat fewer than Uzbek, the most commonly spoken Turkic language. These three Slavic languages are part of the East Slavic group and are dialectally separate from South Slavic languages like Bulgarian or Serbo-Croatian or the West Slavic languages – Polish, Czech and others. It was once thought that Old Church Slavic, the language of the oldest Slavic religious manuscripts from

the tenth century, was the parent of all three Slavic dialect groups, but evidence clearly shows that the OCS manuscripts are part of the South Slavic group, and were written after their separation from the other Slavic groups. Neither the Belorussian nor the Ukrainian languages were encouraged during the Tsarist period and few books were published in either tongue; after the revolution a standard literary dialect was established and over eighteen thousand titles have been published in Belorussian alone during the 66 years since then, a number that compares startlingly with the grand total of 244 that appeared between 1835 and 1916.

Ukrainian and Belorussian differ only slightly from Russian and bi-lingualism in either the Belorussian or Ukrainian languages is not a hefty achievement. And indeed, so close are all three languages that some Ukrainians and Belorussians speak dialects heavily larded with Russian forms, both syntactic and morphological, essentially speaking "mixed" dialects. These speakers must be taught the standard literary language in school almost as a separate language.

There are only two extant Baltic languages: Lithuanian and Lettish (Latvian); there is written evidence for others, such as Old Prussian and Curonian, but they have not been spoken for over three hundred years. Lithuanian, as a literary language, only found itself at the end of the last century though some writing exists from as early as 1547. Lettish goes back almost as far, to the 1585 but the written language now used was established only early in this century. The difficulty of establishing literary languages for both Lithuanian and Lettish was due to the extreme dialectal diversity that then obtained. Essentially, any literary dialect, if it is to be successful, must include elements of the various prestige dialects as well as compromising forms from the lesser dialects with numerous speakers.

The late appearance of Baltic literature does not mean that there was no literacy there at an earlier time. There was, but it was in German, spoken by the gentry and the language of the Hanseatic league that controlled commerce in the Baltic from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, as well as in Latin, the language of the church and scholarship, and in Polish.

The Slavic and Baltic languages are indeed the best represented of the Indo-European language in the USSR, but there is a considerable volume of other Indo-European systems. The Romance languages are represented in the speech of the Moldavians, a language quite close to Romanian; the Volga Germans and Yiddish speakers represent the Germanic group; Gypsies speak an Indic language; the Armenians are well represented with their unique language; and a large bevy of Iranian dialects is spoken in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Greek speakers are also found in the Caucasus and Ukraine and even the Albanians account for a few thousand settled speakers.

The Armenians have lived in the South Caucasus for millennia. These people, whose language is clearly Indo-European but closely related to no other, speak two major dialects, the western, which is the dialect of the Turkish Armenians, and the eastern, spoken in the Caucasus and Iran. With only a little practice each dialect can be fully understood by speakers of the other, and they both share the same classical language, written since 405 AD.

The Greeks, known in the Caucasus since the legendary Jason of the Golden Fleece, have come and gone, been absorbed and repelled for at least three millennia. The current Greek inhabitants came in the last hundred years, refugees from the revolution-torn Ottoman Empire. In the Caucasus they often live in tiny villages, villages of a distinctive layout reflecting a Greco-Turkish heritage rather than a genuine Caucasian tradition.

The Gypsies have been in territorial USSR for over a thousand years, arriving

from north-west India whence they originated. There have been great concentrations in the Caucasus, and in Armenia they have a very special dialect, more Armenian than Gypsy, that is incomprehensible to any other Gypsy speakers. They remain, even in the restrictive conformity of the USSR, an individualistic people, and pass their time selling and buying small items in cautious contempt of the socialist system. No books are published in the USSR in the Gypsy languages; a formal literary dialect has yet to be established, and an accurate statement as to their number is hard to come by.

Albanian concentrations are found near Melitopol in the south-east Ukraine and there are perhaps no more than 2500 who speak Albanian at home; they came from Bessarabia in 1861 and have been slow to assimilate.

Besides Yiddish, the Germanic speakers include those who speak standard German, the Volga Germans. In the 1970 census a total of 1,846,317 were reported, a sizeable number, more than there are of Estonian speakers, or Latvians and some of the major Turkic languages. The Germans came to Russia in the 1760's, imported by Catherine the Great for their skills. They now live in distant Kazakhstan where they were removed during the Second World War.

The Iranian languages spoken in the USSR are most diverse, and include everything from common Persian to exotic Ossetic and Tat, and little known languages of the Pamirs. And, of all the modern Indo-European languages, the Iranian languages are the least recorded, least studied, and least known. To a certain extent they are tucked away in inaccessible places: Central Asia, where we find Tadjik and Talysh; the Caucasus where Ossetic and Tat are spoken; and the truly distant and removed Pamir mountains where there is welter of closely related languages; the Shughni group sharing the common border of Afghanistan and the Tadjik and Kirghiz republics of the USSR. Their very remoteness and the native suspicion of outsiders have kept

the Pamir languages from being well recorded, and though Europeans and Russians of adventurous nature have studied them at least since the nineteenth century, a multitude of questions about them still remains.

The most common Iranian language of the USSR is Tadjik, closely related to Persian but lacking much of the Arab Islamic influence that so changed the nature of Persian after the ninth century. Tadjik speakers are an Iranian people with a deep and glorious literary tradition and their language still remains the language of higher culture for the surrounding Iranians and some Turkic speakers who are born to lesser known languages and dialects. On the western fringe of the Iranian world are the Kurds, a people whose written literature in Arabic script goes back a number of centuries yet for whom, because of their nomadic ways, general literacy is uncommon. The Soviet Kurds were first given an alphabet in Armenian script (1921) that met with little success; following many of the Islamic languages of the USSR, Kurdish then adopted a Latin script in 1929, but this gave way in 1945 to a modified Russian alphabet which serves adequately and is the alphabet of the Kurdish schools in the USSR, and of the single Kurdish newspaper, *Ria Taza (The New Path)*. Equally interesting is the Ossetic language, spoken in the Caucasus by nearly half a million people who live largely among Georgians, whose language has significantly influenced the lexical makeup of Ossetic. Ossetic is by no means indigenous to the Caucasus Mountains, nor for that matter is it even a western Iranian language. Rather, the Ossetic people are immigrants from Central Asia a thousand years ago, before the Mongol hordes, from the north-eastern fringe of the Iranian world; their speech, among living languages, is most closely related to Yaghnobi, a small language now spoken in the area around Dushanbe, the capital of Tadjikistan; their ancient connections are with the Alani and Sarmatian tribes.

It is very hard for western linguists to get access to these languages. For the most part they are located in regions that have few facilities for travelers, and because of this the

Soviets do not open up these areas, not even to scholars who would be most willing to endure a few hardships if only to record a few pure vowels on tape.

Another major Soviet language group is the Uralic family which can be divided into three groups, numerically uneven. The Finnic group includes not only such well known languages as Estonian and Finnish but the languages of the Volga sub-group (Mordva and Mari) and the Perm sub-group (Komi, Udmurt), both of which are west of the Urals. East of the Urals and around the Ob River which flows north into the Kara Sea, are the Ob Ugric languages, Mansi and Khanty, members of a group that is closely related to Hungarian. And in the Central Siberian north is the Samoyed group, the speech of a nomadic people.

The genetic unity of the Finnic and Ugric languages was known before the unity of the Indo-European was identified and described. It was first stated in 1770 when the Hungarian scholar Janos Sajnovics showed that languages as diverse as Lapp and Hungarian were connected. We have written records for Estonian since 1535—a catechism; and for the Karelians there is a four line inscription dating back to the mid twelve hundreds. Finnish, only incidentally a language of the USSR, has written records from the sixteenth century. In addition to these well known Finnic languages, there is a welter of others: Ingrian, Veps, Vot, and Livonian, most of whose speakers would use either Estonian, Russian or Finnish as a literary language. The speakers of Livonian, all three hundred of them, use Latvian as their language of culture.

It is not quite clear where the Lapps fit in. They differ considerably from the other Balto-Finnic people, yet their language seems closer to the western Finnic group than any other. There are only about two thousand Lapps in the USSR, the bulk of them being concentrated in northern Sweden, Norway and Finland, and their total number is somewhere around 30,000. In the thirties the Soviets made an effort to bring about literacy in Lapp and set up primary schools in their language rather than in Russian. But like so many of

these early Soviet efforts to bring literacy to small peoples, it was administratively unsupported, and was abandoned. And though the Soviets still provide instruction, at least in primary schools, in fifty-two different languages, a conscientious effort to include all the additional fringe languages would double or even triple that number.

The more distant Uralic languages that remain on the west side of the Ural mountains can be put into two groups, the Volga Finnic languages Mordvin and Mari, and the Perm Finnic languages, Komi and Udmurt. These are all large languages: Mari, according to Soviet frequencies, has half a million speakers, Mordvin has twice that number; and the Perm group also has nearly a million speakers itself. All are established national languages in the USSR and they have had some form of literacy from long before the Soviet period. The Komi language is known from religious manuscripts going back to the fourteenth century, written by the Komi's first Bishop (1383-1395), Stepan Khrap.

The second major division of the Uralic languages, after the western Finnic, and the Volga and Perm Finnic group, is the Ob Ugric. These people now live, or used to live, around the Ob, a great Central Russian river flowing north into Arctic waters. It is this group which the Hungarians migrated from reaching their modern homeland in the Carpathian Basin in the years 895-896. The other members of the Ugric group who remained at home are the Mansi and Khanty people, among the smallest of the Uralic nationalities. They now live east of the Urals in a large sparsely populated region of central Siberia; of the Khanty there are twenty-two thousand; the Mansi number only eight thousand. The latter's language has been known in the West since Russian travelers made word lists of their vocabulary in the 1700s.

The Samoyeds number fifty thousand, and are largely a nomadic people, following their reindeer along the arctic coast of central Siberia. The differences between a western Uralic language, say Finnish, and a Samoyed language, is immense, and correlations can scar-

cely be noted except by trained linguists. There are four surviving Samoyed languages, the largest being Nenets with about twenty-nine thousand speakers. Another branch, Kamas, was thought to be extinct until an aged woman was recently found in Estonia who kept Kamas alive in her daily prayers. Her appearance at the Third International Congress of Finno-Ugrists in Tallinn in 1970 was a sensation.

It is unclear what exactly the racial type of the Uralic people is, for those in the West are entirely European in appearance while those on the other side of the Urals are decidedly Mongoloid. It seems that these Uralic people, who stem originally from the central Urals are a composite of two ethnic types, European and Mongoloid; they have fairly dark hair and eyes, are of short stature, and have a concave bridge of the nose. This archaic Uralic type is best demonstrated in the Lapp, Volga and Perm Finnic groups. The more easterly Uralic people are decidedly Mongoloid in appearance.

The Caucasian languages, about forty in number, are crammed into the mountainous region separating the Black Sea and the Caspian. It is generally agreed that they are divided into three, possibly independent, groups: the South Caucasian group (Kartvelian) which has as its most important member Georgian, the native language of Stalin; North West Caucasian, the speakers of Abkhaz and Circassian; and North East Caucasian, with over two dozen languages that are broadly broken down into the Daghestani group, and the Nakh group. Few of these languages are known well in the West, even to linguists.

The Georgian language, the corner-stone of the Kartvelian group, has a long and glorious history. Old Georgian manuscripts represent the language of the late fifth century AD while the other Kartvelian languages, Svan, Mingrelian and Laz, are known only from modern times. The initial period of Georgian literature saw only liturgical and historical writings but by the twelfth century secular poetry was appearing and the great Georgian ep-

ic was written, Shotha Rustaveli's *The Knight in the Panther Skin*.

A distinctive feature of the Kartvelian languages is their tendency to have lengthy consonant clusters: Georgian *prckvna* "to peel" is a good example of a sequence of six consonants. In neighboring Armenian it can be seen in such a proper name as Mkrтч'yan (literally "son of the baptizer"), a word not at all atypical. The other Kartvelian speakers in the Caucasus, Mingrelian and Svan (Laz is primarily spoken in Turkey on the Black Sea littoral) do not have established written forms, using Georgian in their schools and as a literary language. A Mingrelian speaker then will frequently be tri-lingual, speaking his mother tongue, Mingrelian, and his language of culture, Georgian, and his national language, Russian.

This situation is not in the least uncommon among speakers of small languages in any part of the USSR, and the Soviet school systems are wholly able to handle this problem, Marxist theory holds that the key to any person's culture is through his language, and for this reason language teaching and theoretical linguistics are taken very seriously in the USSR. Even western languages get special emphasis, and children, who might just as well have gone to a special school for science, or art or music, can go as well to special schools where they receive intensive training in English or French or German. There, starting in first grade, Georgian children will be introduced not only to their own Georgian alphabet of thirty-three letters, but begin learning Russian as well, and also start in with the Latin alphabet in the French, English and German schools. The seven-year-olds beginning school in Georgia can then be confronted in their first year by three languages and three separate alphabets. First grade in Tbilisi can be awesome.

The Northwest Caucasian languages number as few as three and as many as five, depending how one approaches the matter. The smallest number would include Abkhaz, Circassian and Ubykh; the larger count comes by separating off Abaza, which has sixty-four

separate consonants, from Abkhaz as a separate language rather than just a dialect, and by dividing Circassian into two: Adyge (West Circassian) and Kabardian (East Circassian). If there was ever more than one principal dialect of Ubykh we shall never know for only one speaker remains, Fuat Ergun, an older man now living in Turkey. He learned the language from his grand-parents, being orphaned at an early age. But his sons speak Circassian, and when Mr. Ergun passes, Ubykh does also.

The Abkhaz people live in one of the most pleasant climates of the USSR, along the eastern Black Sea littoral, and are native to the area that is now reserved for the most fashionable of the Soviet resorts. Before the Soviet period an Abkhaz was most rarely literate in his own language, and those who did become literate frequently used Georgian as their literary language instead. Now of course schools and newspapers and books exist in Abkhaz, but this is all relatively new.

The two Circassian languages are spoken by a people whose daughters were once in great demand in the harems of Baghdad and Istanbul, and a premium price was paid for these females till the end of the Ottoman era. Their language is also intriguing, and some important work has been done on it by Western scholars. One particular effort showed quite clearly that though Kabardian has 48 consonants, it has only one phonemic vowel, and the other varieties of that vowel which are heard are all regularly determined by the sounds that surround them.

The North East Caucasian language group is the most complex and least known. Many of the languages have their grammar recorded only incompletely and await fuller treatment from linguists. Most have never been written and only seven of the twenty nine have an official form which allows a child to study in that language in a primary school. Botlikh speakers, 3,000 in number, use Avar (400,000 speakers) in school while Udi (4,000) use Georgian or Azerbaijani, an important Turkic language entirely unrelated to Udi.

It is difficult to classify these North East Caucasian languages. Most scholars agree that there is an Avar-Andi-Dido group located on the west shore of the Caspian. Avar, with its four hundred thousand speakers, is well known and constitutes a single sub-group; the Andi sub-group which is just west of the Avar speakers has eight member languages none with more than 5,000 speakers. Not one of these Andi languages has a written form and the speakers of these obscure tongues must use Avar or Azerbaijani, or Chechen, a language of the North Central group having 600,000 speakers, and the most wide spread of all the North East Caucasian languages. Another group is the Dido group with five member languages; there is also Lak-Dargwa, with those two members, and the Lezgian group. Lezgian itself, and another member of the same group, Tabasaran, are literary languages. Some members of this group, spoken only in a few villages, are approaching extinction because the potential speakers have begun to reject their native language, preferring instead a more prestigious tongue. In 1926 there were 20,000 people who identified themselves as Tsakhur speakers, but they came to identify strongly with the larger and more prestigious Azerbaijani Muslim culture, and to reject their own language in favor of Azerbaijani. By 1959 the world was down to 7,321 Tsakhur speakers. But when non-Muslim Russian was substituted for Azerbaijani in the Tsakhur schools, and for official announcements, the Tsakhur, not considering the Russian culture an acceptable substitute, reverted to their own native language. By 1970 the number of people designating themselves as Tsakhur speakers had risen almost fifty percent to 10,119.

The Udi people, like Tsakhur speakers, members of the Lezgian group, are the inheritors of an ancient tradition that has only become clear in the last few years. There were once three literate cultures in the ancient Caucasus: the Armenians, the Georgians and the Caucasian Albanians (not at all related to the Albanian of Europe). Until recently we read of Caucasian Albanian literacy only in the old Armenian chronicles, and no evidence

for this language was securely at hand. Traditionally the Udi, a Christian people, were reviewed as the continuers of the Caucasian Albanians, but there was no proof. In the last decade, however, fragments of inscriptions, suggested to be Caucasian Albanian, have been successfully translated and they prove to have a tantalizing closeness to modern Udi. The Caucasian Albanian church had earlier been swallowed up by the stronger Armenian Church, and with the establishment of an Armenian liturgy in the Caucasian Albanian church, the written form of Caucasian Albanian (traditionally received from the Armenians!) was no longer needed. The reconstruction of the ancient Caucasian Albanian language is a monument to the energy of Azerbaijani, Armenian, Georgian and American scholars.

The Caucasian mountains do indeed hold a lot of languages. That the groups are small merely reflects the isolation of their villages, for separate languages, incomprehensible one to another, developed originally out of dialects that finally, in their isolation, became too distant for mutual understanding.

But even if we theoretically recreate the proto-forms of these groups, we would still end up with at least a hypothetical ten Caucasian languages at, say, 500 BC: Kartvelian, Abkhaz, Circassian, Nakh, Avar, Andi, Dido, Lak, Dargwa and Lezgian. This is a great number for such a small area. It is conjectured that the so-called Caucasian languages once extended well beyond the Caucasus; on the west, well down into present day Turkey, and on the east, down into Iran, Iraq and Syria. Proto-Kartvelian might be related to Ancient Hattic, a language known from Hittite texts, and the North-East Caucasian languages might somehow be descendants of unknown languages related to Hurrian and Urartian, ancient cuneiform languages of eastern Anatolia.

These hypotheses, that the Caucasian languages continue extinct languages of eastern Anatolia and beyond, are appealing to an immediate logic, but remain wholly hypotheti-

cal, and will remain so until linguists clearly establish the proto-form of these modern Caucasian languages, as was begun two hundred years ago for Indo-European and Uralic. It is only with the arrival of Soviet power that these unruly (others would say fiercely independent) tribesmen have been subdued and become approachable, permitting linguists to study their languages. And now, with increased education in the Caucasus, these tribes are producing from their own ranks scholars capable of describing and preserving these exotic and unusual languages.

In eastern Central Asia there is the Altaic family. It is divided into three traditional sections: the Turkic, the Mongolian and the Tungus-Manchu. As it stands there is a question of how these three groups are actually united. The rapport between Turkic and Mongolian is clear, for they have abundant shared vocabulary, much that could not have been taken by loan, many shared morphological markers, and sharing of other features as well. Similarly the Tungus-Manchu languages are clearly related to the Mongolian tongues. What cannot be comfortably related, apparently is Tungus-Manchu and Turkic. Yet the connection between Turkic and Mongolian, and Tungus-Manchu and Mongolian is hard to deny, even though some of the relationships can be dismissed as the result of areal contact and loans.

These three language groups constitute what is called the micro-Altaic group for, in spite of questions about its unity, theories have been advanced which expand the grouping still farther. This larger grouping, called the macro-Altaic group, also includes Korean, which, it is argued, can be joined to a reconstructed proto-Altaic. And then, still further, others join Japanese, giving us five groups in all in the macro-Altaic family. The arguments for these two further additions, Korean and Japanese, are most subtle, but there are numerous Western scholars strongly committed to them.

The Turkic languages are remarkably unified, from Osmanli Turkish spoken in modern Turkey, Cyprus and still in parts of the Bal-

kans, to the eastern languages of Central Asia and in the frozen northeast of Siberia where the Yakuts live. These Turkic languages are divided into five groups, the best known being the South-West Turkic group which includes the language of modern Turkey as well as Azerbaijani – spoken in Northwestern Iran and on up into the east Caucasus – and other lesser known languages like Gagauz, Khaladj, and Turkmen, most of which descend directly from Osmanli Turkish; all are mutually intelligible to a good extent and an Azerbaijani from Baku could make his way in Istanbul, though he would not have the linguistic power to engage in a philosophical discussion. There is a North-West group of nearly a dozen languages including Tatar and Kazakh; a South-East group including in its members Uzbek and Uighur; and a North-East group having Kirghiz, Yakut, and Tuvan (one might remember from stamp collecting days the marvelous but utterly worthless stamps of Tannu Tuva). The fifth group is composed of solitary Chuvash. Soviet scholars argue that the Chuvash are really a Uralic people who adopted a Turkic language but kept a wide spread Uralic substratum, Uralicisms so old they have been obscured by many phonological changes. The Chuvash language early attracted the attention of Russian, and with the establishment of a University of Kazan (where Lenin once studied) during the eighteenth century, much attention was given to Chuvash.

The Yakut language, separated as it was from the mainstream of Turkic culture, maintains many archaic features but, oddly, is losing such complicated Turkic patterns as there are for the genitive. The Uighurs are known from Chinese chronicles of the eighth century, and have a literature from the tenth century, written in a script derived from Old Turkish runic. The Tatars (the spelling Tartar is peculiar to the West, perhaps contaminated by Tartarus; it first appears in English in Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*) also have a literary tradition going back to the sixteenth century. Most of these Turkic languages that have a medieval literature owe it to the strong influence of

literacy in Arabic, which was necessary for their Muslim tradition acquired after the eleventh century.

The Mongolian languages exist in a relatively concise area which includes the quasi-independent Peoples Republic of Mongolia, and, on Soviet territory, the Buriat Autonomous Region just south of fabled Lake Baikal; Oirat speakers are elsewhere along the Chinese Soviet border. Mongolian has been a written language since 1240 when the *Secret History of the Mongols* was prepared, and the Oirats attained literacy in the seventeenth century. Mongolian has a vertical alphabet derived from that of the Turkic Uighurs, an alphabet still used today in Mongolia even though an adaptation of the Russian Cyrillic alphabet has become official in its stead. The Buriats of the USSR got writing only in the Soviet period.

Mongolian is the link language group between Turkic and Tungus-Manchu, for it has features of both these major groups. The Turkic and Mongolian languages have a small case system, but even the genitive is unknown in the Tungus-Manchu languages, except for Manchu alone, and here possibly by contamination; and both the Turkic and Mongolian languages have subject suffixes added to non-verbal predicate forms, a grammatical category that is not shared by the Tungus-Manchu group, though in Mongolian it is recent innovation.

The Tungus-Manchu group consists of two main sub-groups. The Northern is in Soviet territory and includes the Tungusic languages of Evenki, Even, Negidal and Solon. These languages got an alphabet only with the arrival of the Soviets. Curiously, Tungusic speakers seem to be discontinuing the use of their native language, preferring instead to use the more prestigious Russian language. Only slightly more than fifty percent of the Tungusic people still speak their native language.

The Southern division of the Tungus-Manchu family is principally identified by Manchu itself, the speech of a people who ruled China from 1644 to 1911. It was only with the arrival of Manchu power in China that Man-

chu became a written language. Manchu has little in common with Turkic, but much with Mongol; among the features the two languages share is a two-fold form of "we," one being a "we without you" and the other being a "we with you," a precision of speech quite lacking in western languages.

There has been, for at least a century, a theory that the Altaic and Uralic languages are somehow united, and Chuvash was seen as one of the bridge languages. The theory persists up to this day, but it cannot be proven on the basis of shared vocabulary, or any correspondence between morphological parts. There are some typological similarities, especially in suffixation, but even these correspondences are too vague to be in themselves convincing. Essentially, the Uralic-Altaic hypothesis is a hypothesis that is consistently losing ground among linguists, and few seem willing to reinforce the collapsing bulwark.

The fifth great language family of the USSR is the "all other." It is composed of the so-called paleo-Siberian languages which occupy the region south of the Arctic Ocean, north of the Kurils, and east of the Yenisey River to the Bering Sea. They include well-known languages like Eskimo and Aleut, and lesser languages, separate from Eskimo-Aleut, like Chukchi, Itelmen, Kerek and Alyutor. Eskimo is famous for being a language with the most complicated words, for in Eskimo, with the use of suffixes and affixes a whole sentence can be created out of a single word. Thus *anjalanjuktug* (an approximate spelling) contains the root *anja* "boat" and means, "He wants to acquire a big boat." Eskimo is now a written language using, in Soviet territory, a modified Cyrillic script.

Nivkh is an isolated language spoken on the Island of Sakhalin, and it is these natives that Chekhov dealt with on his travels to the Tsarist penal colony there. The Nivkh speakers, like Ket speakers and the languages of other of the far-eastern tribes were largely untouched by western Christians, Central Asian Muslims, and eastern Buddhists, or any other higher culture. They remained isolated from outside influences and like the indigenous peo-

ple of the Americas, suffered an abrupt change, never to be overcome, with the arrival of the European West.

There are other scattered languages about the USSR, languages of larger families that are better represented elsewhere. A Chinese language, Dungan, is spoken by almost 40,000 people in Central Asia. It contains voluminous loan words from Persian and Turkic, and has had a written form since Soviet times. Two Semitic languages are also represented. Arabic is scattered here and there throughout Central Asia, and one other Semitic language, called Asori or Modern Assyrian, is spoken in the south Caucasus. Asori is a continuant of Biblical Aramaic, the language of Jesus, and is also spoken in some remote areas of Syria. These Asori migrated north to the Caucasus and to north-west Iran where they now live in enclaves west of Tabriz. They, now Christian, are found throughout Armenia and Georgia, and share much of their culture with these two south Caucasian nationalities. Though grammars of their language are still being published in the USSR, Asori is nowhere within the USSR a literary language. At one time, during a more hopeful period of socialism in the USSR, a former section of Armenia, Nakhijevan, now administratively part of Azerbaijan, actually had a few schools where, during the twenties, teaching was done in Asori. But this, as for Lapp, was abandoned as being impractical and overly zealous.

The Soviet languages all have one thing in

common, and that is Russianization. Slowly Russian elements leak in. Principally there is lexical influence, and Russian words become part and parcel of the non-Russian language. And though it is reasonable to assume that new technical vocabulary would be of Russian origin, other words are replaced too. Georgian now sports the word *problema* "problem", direct from the Russians who got it, of course, from the French. And in the technical realm, though Armenian had a perfectly good word for telephone, (*her-a-khos*, literally "far-speaker") Russian *telefon* is used everywhere. Also in Armenian the Russian word for beer, *pivo*, circulates instead of the extant Armenian word, *garejur* (literally "barley-water"), known since the twelfth century, initially in Middle Armenian medical texts.

Different languages have different susceptibilities. Most simply said, those Soviet people who enjoyed, before the Soviet period, a strong level of culture, a written liturgy and a secure intelligentsia, have languages which yield only insignificantly to Russian culture. By and large Georgian speakers remain Georgian speakers and the Georgian language remains little changed and little distracted from its normal course. And though aggressive cultures have visited themselves before on the peoples of the Baltic, or of the Caucasus, or of Central Asia, they have always come and gone, while the Baltic, Caucasian and Turkic languages have endured and evolved.

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