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Walter Wintschalek, *Die Areallinguistik am Beispiel syntaktischer Übereinstimmungen im Wolga-Kama-Areal*, Wiesbaden 1993 (Studia Uralica. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Finno-Ugristik der Universität Wien, Band 7). XI + 158 pp.

In spite of the long and intensive contacts between speakers of Altaic and Finno-Ugric languages in the Volga-Kama region in the eastern parts of Russia proper, there are remarkably few scientific works on the subject. Among the more well-known are the works of M. Räsänen: "Die tschuwassischen Lehnwörter im Tscheremissischen" (1920) and "Die tatarischen Lehnwörter im Tscheremissischen" (1923). Of more recent works, the ones by N. Isanbajev (Исанбаев 1989), G. Bereczki (1983) and S. Csúcs (1979) should be mentioned.

Therefore, a systematic and comprehensive description of the relations between the languages in the Volga-Kama area would fill a gap in the literature. Walter Wintschalek's book "Die Areallinguistik am Beispiel syntaktischer Übereinstimmungen im Wolga-Kama-Areal" describes the relations between four languages in the area mentioned above, namely the Altaic languages Tatar and Chuvash and the Finno-Ugric languages Mari and Udmurt. For the two latter languages Wintschalek uses the older terms *Cheremis* and *Votyak*. Unfortunately, in many ways W. Wintschalek's book will prove disappointing to potential readers.

The methodological basis of the book is areal linguistics, the linguistic subdiscipline that deals with the diffusion of structural features across linguistic boundaries, the languages involved not necessarily being related. A characteristic of these features is, according to areal linguistics (Campbell, Kaufman, Smith-Stark 1986 : 534), that the diffusion of them is a result of borrowing, stemming from mutual influence and not something that could equally well be explained

as a result of chance, onomatopoeia, common typology, language universals or as a feature inherited from some proto-language. Another thing characteristic of such features is that they should occur in all (or most) languages in a given area, and furthermore that they should be unique to this area.

The study of areal phenomena started in the first decades of the 19th century when different scholars noted resemblances between the languages on the Balkan peninsula. The languages involved are Greek, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Serbocroatian and Albanian, and among the allegedly diffused features could be mentioned the postponed definite article, the lack of (synthetic) infinitive and the formal and functional merge of genitive and dative.

The beginning of W. Wintschalek's book is a survey of the history of areal linguistics, from the earliest studies of the linguistic situation on the Balkan peninsula to the formal birth of areal linguistics when N. Trubetzkoy used and defined for the first time the term *Sprachbund* at the First International Congress of Linguists at the Hague in 1928 (cf. Trubetzkoy 1931). The survey continues with a description of how this term later was used to discuss and explain structural resemblances between languages in a given area. Areas mentioned in areal linguistic papers are, besides the Balkan peninsula, India and Meso-America (Campbell, Kaufman, Smith-Stark 1986).

In the following section, W. Wintschalek describes the history of the Volga-Kama region before he turns to a discussion of the criteria for what he calls the "Wolga-Kama Sprachbund". First, the great amount

of lexical borrowing between the languages is discussed, then Wintschalek gives an account of the phonological resemblances that he says exist, e.g., the existence of vowel harmony in all four languages, similar accentuation and convergence in the development of consonants in the area.

The section which follows is devoted to morphological resemblances. According to the author, such resemblances are for instance diffusion of case markers, both in form and function and similarities in the comparison of adjectives.

The largest part of the book, however, consists of the discussion of syntactical resemblances. Among the most important is the ambivalent character of the existential verb, being used either as noun or as a verb in all languages of the area.

W. Wintschalek's book is very ambitious and abounds in examples that are intended to show that the languages in the Volga-Kama region form a Sprachbund and, furthermore, that the languages have influenced one another to such a degree that, if the process goes on, a new language will arise. Another opinion of the author is that the languages in the area show structural resemblances that can be found only in this area and that this makes the area unique, that it is a "linguistic area".

The main problem with the book is that the theory of Sprachbunds and linguistic areas, and consequently even areal linguistics itself, is far from undisputed. To take the linguistic situation on the Balkan peninsula as an example, it becomes evident after a thorough investigation, taking the dialects into consideration, that the alleged lack of (synthetic) infinitive in all Balkan languages is a structural feature that definitely does not occur in all the languages. In Bulgarian, there is a short form of the old infinitive which is used in limited contexts, in the Tosk dialect of Albanian there is a new infinitive which is very productive and the Romanian as well as the Serbian dialects differ rather dramatically in the extent to which they have lost the infinitive. Formal and functional merge of case markers (genitive/dative or others) is a process that can be observed in many languages, cf. Hungarian (which could be explained with contacts with the Balkan peninsula) and even Finnish. The postponed definite article is a feature that is not unique

to the Balkan area, e.g., Swedish *huset* 'the house'. The postponed definite article has occurred in different times and for different reasons in the Balkan area. In Romanian it is the result of a process that started in the Latin spoken in the Roman province of Dacia, and in Albanian the postponed article might very well be original.

The examples in W. Wintschalek's book do not successfully support the author's theory of a Sprachbund; it often turns out that a given structural feature does not always occur in every language in the area or that it can equally well be explained as a result of chance, language universals, inheritance from a common ancestor or linguistic typology. Eventually W. Wintschalek ends up with a very small set of structural resemblances unique — in his opinion — to the area, which presents another problem: How many diffused structural features are sufficient when assuming the existence of a Sprachbund?

One feature unique to the area, according to W. Wintschalek, is the use of (pp. 124—129) that are very common in Turkic languages and are used to express adverbial relations, or, in combination with certain finite verbs, aspect. Verb forms similar to Turkic exist in Mari and Udmurt too; in Mari they are called gerunds, in Udmurt they are known as verbal adverbs. In Mari these infinitive verb forms are frequently used to express adverbial relations but can also be used with certain finite verbs to express aspect. At first glance, this might seem a clear case of a diffused structural feature, but in fact converbs are not unique to the area. Turkic languages in general abound in gerunds and participles, especially languages like Kirghiz and Uzbek, which have never been in contact with the languages of the Volga-Kama region. These aspectual verb forms are not even unique to the Turkic languages: they appear in more or less the same structure in a large part of the Eurasian continent and seem to be something of a semi-universal. Furthermore, in Mari the verb can be in the genitive case, which is a striking parallel to the North Saami, where the so called verbal genitive is used to express adverbial relations, e.g., *Dat lea boahhtimin riide* 'he had come riding'. As for Mari, it is possible that two different features have merged, one inherited from an ancestor common to Mari

and north Saami, and one borrowed from the Turkic languages. This borrowing has been made easier by the structural resemblance of the features and the typological resemblance of the languages.

The direction of such borrowings is another thing that has to be taken into account. It turns out that the Turkic languages Tatar and Chuvash have borrowed very little from their Finno-Ugric neighbours, at least compared to the massive influence of Tatar and Chuvash on Udmurt and Mari. Wintschalek's own examples are sufficient evidence for this. Taking the direction of such borrowings into account, it does not seem well founded to talk about mutual influence.

The influence seem to be all but mutual and this is linked to another question that areal linguists often tend to overlook: The status of a language and the political, religious and cultural dominance of one people upon one or several other peoples in a given area. In the Volga-Kama region there is little doubt that the dominating peoples were first the Chuvash and later on the Tatars and this has left clear traces in Mari and Udmurt.

Another major shortcoming of the book is that Wintschalek fails to delimit the area he wants to discuss. If the linguistic evidence in the Volga-Kama region is not sufficient, the author hastily broadens the area by bring-

ing other languages spoken in adjacent areas into the discussion, e.g., Bashkir and Mordvinian, but even languages spoken in more remote areas, such as Mongolian. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that W. Wintschalek almost completely disregards Russian when hypothesizing a Sprachbund in this area; Russian has a long history in the region, well over 400 years. Another shortcoming of the book is a large amount of erroneous data and a slightly confusing representation of sample sentences in Mari, since different systems for transcription have been used. For instance, the spirant *b* sometimes occurs as *w* depending on where the sample sentence is taken from. In the list of references there are remarkably few works published after 1983 and many important papers and books on areal linguistics are totally absent. In short, the book does not seem to be quite up to date.

In conclusion, it seems appropriate to say that this book does fill a gap in the literature but that it does not provide us with any new knowledge and does not even succeed in proving its own major theory. If the author's intention had been to point out and discuss the immense impact of Tatar and Chuvash on Mari and Udmurt, the result would probably have been different.

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ANDRÉ HESSELBÄCK (Uppsala)