

Fulbright-Hayes Faculty Research Abroad Fellowship Award

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The Fulbright Research Fellowship that I received for 1998 allowed me to carry out extensive research in Siberia and European Russia during the first three months of 1998. Below I will detail the geography and material content of the research, and comment on unexpected successes as well as on a few things I had originally hoped to do but could not.

Fulbright Research Trip

On January 7th, 1998 I arrived in Novosibirsk at the invitation of linguists and anthropologists from Novosibirsk State University (in Akademgorodok) and the Novosibirsk Foreign Language Institute. During the next three weeks I worked intensively in the State Public Novosibirsk Technical Library, the largest library in Siberia; there I acquired nearly 2,000 Xeroxed pages containing a few hundred publications on the Kets and other Yeniseian peoples. I also visited the Novosibirsk Regional Museum,

interviewed the curators and was allowed to view and even photograph the Ket exhibits. In Akademgorodok I met and interviewed dozens of Siberia specialists and acquired nearly 200 books and smaller publications relating to the Kets and neighboring Siberian peoples. During my visit to the Department of Ethnography I negotiated an agreement to become the editor of the English language summaries at the end of each of the proposed 60 volumes of a series called Folklore of Siberian Peoples. In return, I will receive copies of each volume along with sound recordings of some of the songs, texts, shamanistic performances included in each volume. This was a stroke of luck for me, as these books would have been very expensive to acquire otherwise; I also have the opportunity now to work in continual contact with ethnographers studying Native Siberia (previously, most of my contact was with linguists). Finally, I delivered a paper (in Russian) at a conference devoted to foreign language teaching held at the Siberian Academy of Public Administration, Jan. 23-25; the text of the paper was published in the conference proceedings the following month.



At the beginning of February I traveled to Tomsk, where I had been invited by the Tomsk Pedagogical University. During the next month I worked closely with scholars at the Laboratory of Siberian Languages. On February 7th, I gave a paper on Ket tones at a special seminar organized for Ket scholars; my ideas were well received, despite the fact that they contradicted earlier findings by some of the Tomsk specialists. This seminar also included fascinating talks on the origin of the Kets and on other aspects of their grammar; it allowed me to meet all of Tomsk ketologists and begin serious collaboration with them. At the same gathering I also gave a two hour presentation of my ideas regarding the influence of ecological factors such as disease on the world distribution of languages; I hadn't planned to work on this topic during my sabbatical at all, but

the interest of my Tomsk colleagues caused me to give this presentation. The topic generated so much attention that during the next few weeks I gave similar presentations to anthropologists at the Tomsk State University and to students at Tomsk Pedagogical University. The local newspaper interviewed me about these ideas and about my Ket work and wrote up a large article about my visit

in the city's main newspaper, the *Red Banner*. I was also interviewed on national Russian TV about my work (and have a video copy of the program). I also gave an interview to a popular magazine, but have not yet received the text of the resultant article. Tomsk was closed to foreigners during the Soviet period, and I was the first American professor ever to visit the city. As a result of this circumstance, I was asked to give several presentations on American English dialects and write an article on this subject which will be published later this year in a Tomsk Peduniversity volume devoted to Germanic studies. I also wrote up my presentations on Ket tones (about 10 pages) and ecological linguistics (about 25 pages) which have already been published in the proceedings of the Tomsk Dulson Conference.

I didn't let all of these additional matters distract me from my main purpose of gathering data for my book on the Kets. During the month of February I managed to gather nearly 4000 pages of Xerox, hundreds of books and other publications, visit all museums where Ket materials are stored, read unpublished manuscripts and view archival photographs taken during expeditions to the Kets. I even succeeded in acquiring copies of most of the unpublished dissertations on the Ket language (about 18 works totaling nearly 3000 pages). My copies are now the only ones outside of Russia and will be invaluable to my future research.

In Tomsk, I lived in a dormitory across the road from the Siberian Languages Laboratory. The temperature often dipped down to forty below zero (this is the point where the Fahrenheit and Celsius scales coincide). For one period lasting several days, the heat in the dorm (which never was very adequate) was completely turned off to protest the University's lack of ability to pay its electric bills. I had to live and even sleep wearing full winter coat, scarf, gloves and hat. For some reason, these austere conditions, coupled with being able to communicate daily with many of the best minds in Siberia studies, caused me to work at a pace that I wouldn't otherwise have thought possible. In addition to writing the 40 or so pages of publications and giving the dozen public lectures described above and working extensively with native speakers of Ket and other Siberian languages, I also wrote over thirty detailed letters to Siberia scholars in cities I was unable to visit (these people subsequently sent me dozens more books and publications along with other valuable information), read about 1,500 pages of the articles I had been collecting in libraries, and wrote by hand over 53 pages of annotations to my Ket bibliography. Why, on the other hand, I didn't simply perish during this period I do not know. As it turned out, forcing myself to say goodbye to Tomsk at the end of February was the most difficult part of the trip. It is hardly possible to relate all of my personal and professional impressions of this unique month.

The last stage of my trip I spent in Moscow and St. Petersburg. In Moscow, where I was invited by the Institute of Linguistics, I visited the Ethnography Department at the Academy of Sciences and read several unpublished manuscripts on the Kets. I also worked in the Russian National Library, gathering an additional 1000 or so pages of Xerox. I managed also to buy a few hundred more books. In Moscow I met with Ruslan Hairullin, a specialist in Native Siberia who had visited Western on a Fulbright during 1996-97; we exchanged valuable information, though our idea of publishing an anthology of Native Siberian literature, as it turns out, fell through, since we would have to pay royalties to each native author if we published such a work (and the book would not generate enough money to allow this). Most important, I met with Galina Nikolaeva, a native Ket woman (and co-inventor of the Ket alphabet) with whom I had been corresponding for some years. She gave me vital information and together we set out a plan for future collaboration.

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Snowy bench in Novosibirsk, Siberia

I had been invited to St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) by the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography. There I met and worked extensively with Evgenia Alekseenko, the world's foremost authority on Ket culture and ethnohistory. Dr.



The Russian Ethnography Museum

Alekseenko helped me acquire copies of numerous rare publications (many of them of her own authorship) and showed me hundreds of photographs, as well as the Ket artifacts in the Museum's collection (by far the world's largest Ket collection). By a stroke of luck, at the Museum I met the visiting Finnish professor Juha Pentikainen, specialist in Native Siberian belief systems. He invited me to deliver a paper on Ket shamanism at a conference in Finland in November 1998 (which, as it turned out, I did not attend). In St. Petersburg I also met with Aleksandr Volodin, who teaches Ket language at the Herzell Institute of Linguistics. Dr. Volodin also gave me dozens of books and publications, including a copy of yet another Ket dissertation (one

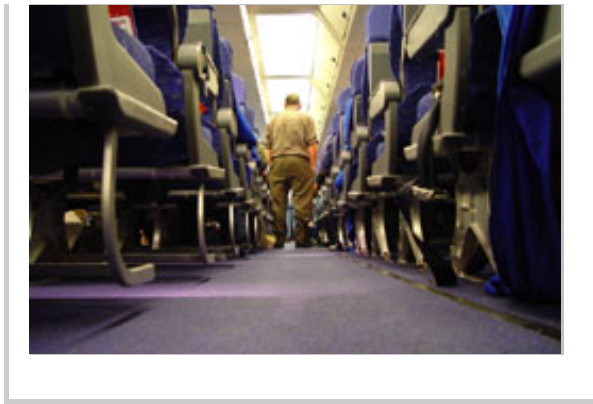
that was unavailable in Tomsk). He also allowed me to attend a dissertation defense involving the application of a new theory (morpheme ordering) to the problem of the Cambodian verb and its function particles. This theory has been used successfully to describe the complex Ket verb form; now it has been used to describe a language with very simple words. For me this fact was important, since I believe that the Ket verb form (which can have up to 20 different morphemes, or constituent parts) is historically a phrase rather than a single word.

Finally, in St. Petersburg I managed to visit the Editor's office of the Education Publishing House, which puts out all of the books used in teaching Siberian languages in the native schools. I managed to interview people who have been working on this problem for nearly forty years, since the days of Stalin. I also managed to convince the editor to sell me (privately, "under the table") a copy of several dozen of the books (they are normally not for sale at all, since only a few hundred of each are published for use in the small native schools); so I managed to acquire dictionaries of 19 Native Siberian languages, including Ket, as well as copies of all of the published Ket language textbooks and teacher's guides. This is essential material that no one else outside of Russia has. I traveled by train back to Moscow to fly home (international flights are out of Moscow rather than St. Petersburg). During the last half day in Moscow I managed to visit another publishing house that is putting out new encyclopedias of the flora and fauna of Russia (something like America's Peterson Field Guide Series). I had been looking for such books for years without success, and now I acquired about ten of the volumes (guides to Russian birds, trees, mushrooms, etc.) Such books are essential for me when studying native Siberian languages and cultures since these peoples rely greatly on the local environment and have vocabulary for all sorts of items in nature unknown even to most Russians. Now I finally have definitive sources on this aspect of Siberia. My last act in Moscow before leaving for the airport was to meet Svetlana Pankova, director of the Russian Education Ministry's Department of Ethnic Schools. I had met Ms. Pankova two years previously during a trip to Moscow. She shared her views on the latest situation regarding minority education and also gave me about a dozen hard-to-get publications on native peoples of Russia.

By the time I left the country at Moscow's Sheremetyevo II Airport, I had several hundred pounds of books and papers. Someone from the Institute of Linguists actually had to accompany me and help me physically wheel the luggage to the Russian customs checkpoint. There I was met with an extremely unpleasant surprise. The customs agent was shocked by the sheer volume of books I was carrying and at first insisted on confiscating all of my dictionaries (including the Native Siberian ones). I was detained, but after showing the chief customs agent all of my invitations, as well as the personalized authors' signatures in many of the books, I was allowed to take everything with me. But for a while, the fate of an important result of my trip hung in the balance. After being thus detained, I wheeled my voluminous luggage to the Aeroflot counter. There I was greeted with an even more unpleasant surprise: my ticket reservation had accidentally been canceled and the flight was booked full. I protested that I had reconfirmed my ticket in January as well as early March. It was to no

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avail; I had to wait till the very end of the long line. As it turned out, there was a single seat left and I got it. I barely had time to check in my luggage (passage for which I had to pay a few hundred dollars), go through passport control and run to the plane a minute or two before it took off. But my troubles weren't completely over. First, I wondered whether my luggage had made it onto the flight (which was non-stop Moscow to Seattle). Also, the seat I had been given was in the smoking section at the very back of the plane. Soon after takeoff the Russians around me produced bottles of vodka and other spirits and began drinking them with abandon (I am writing you all this because, if you have read this far in my long account, then you certainly deserve some entertainment, so please excuse my levity – plus, all of this is true).



By the fifth hour of the 12-hour flight, empty bottles of vodka, gin and even Georgian cognac were rolling down the aisles. Ugly arguments had broken out and the stewardesses had all disappeared out of fear that a brawl was imminent. Fortunately, by the ninth hour of the flight, all of the Russian drinkers were utterly unconscious, and the plane and I arrived in one piece. As it turned out, all of my luggage did make it onto the plane and also arrived unharmed. This success in bringing home so much valuable resources – obtained by me at considerable effort and expense – proved crucial to my ability to finish my books and article.

Original Fellowship Application vs. Actual Results

In general I succeeded in accomplishing all that I had set out to do in the original fellowship. I met with all of the scholars that I had wanted to meet with, as well as became introduced to quite a few more. I was able to use all of the libraries and other research facilities that I had intended to visit. I was also very fortunate in working with native Ket speakers in the places I visited. This made up for the fact that I could not actually go to any of the Ket villages in the dead of winter. Nevertheless, none of the material I needed for my immediate projects was located in these villages. And the fact that I did make extensive use of native speaker informants means that I succeeded in accomplishing as much language study and documentation as I needed to for the completion of my books and articles. I would thus rate my trip as a complete success – and one that has also laid the personal groundwork for future research in Siberia.

Summary list of resulting publication

In summary, I feel that the research funded by the fellowship was completely successful. Not only did I complete my project, I also laid the groundwork for a strong research program in the future. Below is a full listing of my publications stemming from my Fulbright Research Fellowship-funded trip to Russia in 1998.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Monographs

Yeniseian Peoples and Languages: a history of their study with an annotated bibliography and a source guide. Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 2001. (389 pages)

Ket Prosodic Phonology. (*Languages of the World 15.*) Munich: Lincom Europa, 2000

Refereed journal articles

"The role of position class in Ket verb morphophonology." *Word* 52/3, pp. 369-436.

"Actant conjugations in the Ket verb." *Voprosy jazykoznanija [Linguistic Inquiry]* Volume 67/3 (2000): 21-41. Moscow: Nauka.

Other journal articles

"What would be required to prove a genetic link between Basque and other Eurasian language families" In *Mother Tongue V* (December, 1999), pp. 87-91.

"The Kets and their Language." *Mother Tongue IV* (1998), pp. 4-16.

Book chapters or encyclopedia articles

"Yeniseian and Athabaskan-Eyak-Tlingit: some grammatical evidence for a genetic relationship." *Sravnitel'no-istoricheskoe i tipologicheskoe izuzhenie iazykov i kul'tur*, ch. 2, pp. 22-34. Tomsk: Tomsk Pedagogical University.

"K tipologicheskoi kharakteristike tonal'noi sistemy v ketskom iazyke [Toward a typological characterization of the Ket tonal system]." *Problemy dokumentatsii ischezayushchikh yazykov i kul'tur. 23-e Dul'zonovskiye chteniya. Materialy konferentsii, chast' I*, pp. 49-56. Ufa; Tomsk, 1999.

"Mezhdu dvumia mirami: obuchenie amerikantsam russkomu iazyku [Between Two Worlds: Teaching Russian in America]." in *Inostrannyi iazyk kak sredstvo professional'nogo i mezhlchnostnogo obshcheniia: tseli, zadachi i metody obucheniia* [Foreign language as a means of professional and interpersonal communication: goals, problems and teaching methods], pp. 22-4, in Russian. SibAGS: Novosibirsk, 1998.

"Ekologicheskaiia istoriia i rasprostranenie iazykov [Ecological history and language distribution]." *Vestnik TGPU. Humanities Series*, 6: 46-50. Tomsk, 1998.