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The book under review is a new volume in the *Routledge Language Family Series*,¹ edited by the Finnish scholar Juha Janhunen (JJ), one of the most authoritative experts in Mongolic and Altaic studies. This volume deals with the Mongolic languages, which form one of the largest non-Indo-European language families of Eurasia.

The book opens with a short but informative editorial preface which delimits the scope of the volume and discusses a number of methodological issues. In particular, JJ points out several important features of the family under study: on the one hand, the close relationship and structural similarity of the Mongolic languages makes their genetic links obvious and transparent; on the other hand, this state of affairs creates some difficulties in determining the exact number of languages and subgroups. This in turn poses a number of problems in applying the traditional family tree model. Consequently, JJ is inclined to remain with the less traditional (but hardly the more recent) wave model (i.e., the spreading of changes from an epicentre), which is supplemented by ‘onion model’, according to which, “the Mongolic languages form several concentric layers” (p. xvii), with Mongol proper as the core member.

The volume contains twenty chapters, five of which are written by JJ. These include chapter 1 on Proto-Mongolic (JJ) and 16 short (no more than 30 pages) sketches of individual Mongolic languages and dialects: Written Mongol (JJ), Middle Mongol (Volker Rybatzki), Khamnigan Mongol (JJ), Buryat (Elena Skribnik), Dagur (Toshiro Tsumagari), Khalkha (Jan-Olof Svantesson), Mongol dialects (JJ), Ordos (Stefan Georg), Oirat (Ágnes Birtalan), Kalmuck (Uwe Bläsing), Moghol (Michael Weiers), Shira Yughur (Hans Nugteren), Mongghul (Stefan Georg), Mangghuer (Keith W. Slater), Bonan (Wu Hugjiltu) and Santa (Stephen S. Kim). The last three chapters deal with Intra-Mongolic taxonomy (Volker Rybatzki), Para-Mongolic (JJ), i.e., languages spoken by some of the ethnic neighbours of the early Mongols that

¹ To date, ten other volumes have been published in this series. In chronological order, they are: Slavonic (1993), Germanic (1994), Semitic (1997), Dravidian, Indo-European, Turkic, Uralic (all 1998), Indo-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan, and Bantu (all 2003). The ordinal numbers appear only from 2003 on. Thus, the last three of the above-mentioned volumes bear numbers 2, 3 and 4, respectively.

were “collaterally related to Proto-Mongolic” (p. 391)—foremost the Khitan language, and Turko-Mongolic relations (Claus Schönig).

Chapter 1 deals with the proto-language. Of course, our knowledge of a proto-language can only be based on reconstruction—hence the technical explanations and apologies found in the first paragraph of the chapter: “[L]ike all proto-languages, Proto-Mongolic is an abstraction that can only be approached by the comparative and diachronic analysis of the synchronically known Mongolic languages” (p. 1). Nevertheless, beginning a volume that deals with a language family with a sketch of the proto-language—however imperfect its reconstruction might be—seems to be a particularly attractive idea, and highly recommendable for the whole series (which unfortunately does not consistently follow this principle in the volumes published thus far).² It is also the simplest way to present the phonetic correspondences between the languages in question and, not unimportantly, to provide an idea about which members of the family are more conservative, or, in contrast, more innovative.

We will not touch on all details of each linguistic description of the individual Mongolic languages. Let it suffice to note that, as is usual for the volumes of the *Routledge Language Family Series*, all descriptive sketches are clearly written and provide a large amount of relevant information for the reader. However, a few remarks on the general layout and the structure of the sketches (which may also pertain to the series in general) are in order. Most of the sketches follow the same schema: they open with a survey of relevant data and sources, and also contain sections on the system of phonemes, word structure and word formation, number and case, pronouns, possessive suffixes. We also find several sections dealing with the verbal system, sections on syntax and lexicon, and finally, a short bibliography. However, there are also a number of differences in the structure of the sketches, which can cause certain (minor) inconveniences. Specifically, by not commenting on a particular phenomenon in a language description, the author may create the (wrong) impression that this phenomenon lacks in the language in question.

This may be observed, for instance, in the case of the syntax of causative constructions, to wit, the causative-passive polysemy, which is a highly peculiar feature of the Mongolic languages. There is only one chapter, on Khalkha (by Jan-Olof Svantesson), which contains a separate section on the passive and the causative (p. 171-172). The author notices that when “there is no direct object [in a causative construction], the causer subject takes the patient role”, i.e., a causative is employed in the passive use, as in (1):

- (1) *Xony cono/n-d id-üül-sen.*
 sheep wolf-DAT eat-CAUS-PART.PERF
 ‘The sheep was eaten by the wolf.’ (lit. ‘The sheep let the wolf eat.’)

² The volumes which do contain a separate chapter on the proto-language include Slavonic, Indo-European and Turkic.

Such a causative-passive polysemy is typical of several languages of Central Asia and South Siberia, such as Tuvan and some other adjacent Turkic languages, Korean and Buryat (see for instance: I. Nedjalkov 1991: 4-31). Thus it would be natural to find this information in the other individual sketches. This is unfortunately not the case. The attentive reader may come across an example of a passive construction with the actor in the dative (2), which E. Skribnik gives in her sketch of Buryat (p. 109), but this example is left without comment:

- (2) *Taryaan münder-te soxy-uul-aa.*
 corn hail-DAT beat-CAUS-PART.IMPERF
 'The corn was beaten by hail.'

Note that *soxyuul-aa* is a causative (derived by means of the suffix *-uul*), not a passive properly speaking.

Another issue worthy of discussion in the context of the Altaic languages is the syntax of causative constructions. Thus, J.-O. Svantesson points out in his sketch of Khalkha that this language allows for two possible case-markings of the causee (= object of causation), namely the dative and instrumental, as in (3a-b) (p. 171-172):

- (3) a. *Bi Batu-d alim id-üül-sen.*
 I Batu-DAT apple eat-CAUS-PART.PERF
 'I made Batu eat an apple.'
- b. *Bi Bat-aar alim id-üül-sen.*
 I Batu-INS apple eat-CAUS-PART.PERF
 'I let Batu eat an apple.'

However, we do not find corresponding data in most of the other chapters, except for those on Buryat (in the section on simple sentences, p. 121) and Dagur (in the section on number and case, p. 138-139). Unfortunately, Svantesson's explanation of the difference between the above (a) and (b) patterns (i.e., the dative "indicates that the action of the base verb is controlled by the causee, rather than the causer, [...] in contrast to the instrumental causee, which has little or no control of the action", (p. 172)) appears quite confusing and unconvincing. Judging from (3a-b), it is exactly the other way around: the instrumental (as in 3b) indicates that the causee (in our example, Batu) performs the base activity (eating an apple) without causer's assistance (indirect causation, for instance, by asking to eat), while the dative (as in 3a) shows that the work is shared by the causer and causee (direct, or contact, causation), so that a more adequate translation of (3a) would be 'I fed Batu with an apple'. Such a semantically conditioned variation in case marking of the causee is typologically common, being attested in several genetically unrelated languages, such as French and Quechua (see, for instance, Kulikov 2001: 889-891).

In general (and this pertains to practically all the volumes in the series), the arrangement of the linguistic material throughout the sketches is not always optimal.

Thus, the above-mentioned information about case marking in causative constructions clearly belongs to the syntax sections. However, as we saw, in the book under review it can be found—if at all—in different sections, which include “Causative and Passive”, “Number and Case” and “Simple Sentence”. As far as the sections “Syntax” are concerned, they mostly contain the “residual” information about word order and the use of particles.

To conclude this review, one more technical remark is in order. As one might expect for a book on Mongolic languages, the volume contains numerous references to works published in Russian. Unfortunately, the editor has decided not to follow the standard transliteration of Cyrillic (as adopted, for instance, in the Slavonic volume of the same series, see Cubberley 1993: 55-58). For some understandable reasons the editor prefers not to use diacritics (thus, *ch, sh, zh, shch* instead of *č, š, ž, šč*). Most disturbing, however, is the use of *y* both for the mid front vowel (= Turkish *i/i*) and for [j] (rendered as *j* in the standard Cyrillic transliteration), as in Russ. *yazyk* (standard *jazyk*) ‘language’. Still more confusing is writing *ii* for [ij] (as in the surname *Xelinskii*) and *iï* for [ii] (as in *lekcii* ‘lectures’; both examples on p. 28). What the reader is then presented with is a double Roman letter for the sequence of two different Cyrillic letters and two different Roman letters for the sequence of two identical Cyrillic letters. (That is to say, the exact opposite!)

The above-mentioned minor shortcomings and lacunae do not, of course, diminish the importance and the indisputable value of the book under review. The survey conveniently summarizes the relevant literature and is an excellent guide to the modern Mongolic studies. The volume will serve well in assisting the researcher in charting a rational course across the ocean of literature on Mongolic and Altaic languages. The book is highly recommended for Mongolic scholars, general linguists and typologists.

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