

Studies in linguistic and cultural diversity at Lomonosov Moscow State University

Achievements, challenges,
and prospects

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Achievements

- State of the art before 2020 at Lomonosov Moscow State University (MGU, for short)
- Linguistic diversity:
Faculty of Philology, Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics
- Cultural diversity:
Faculty of History, Department of Ethnology

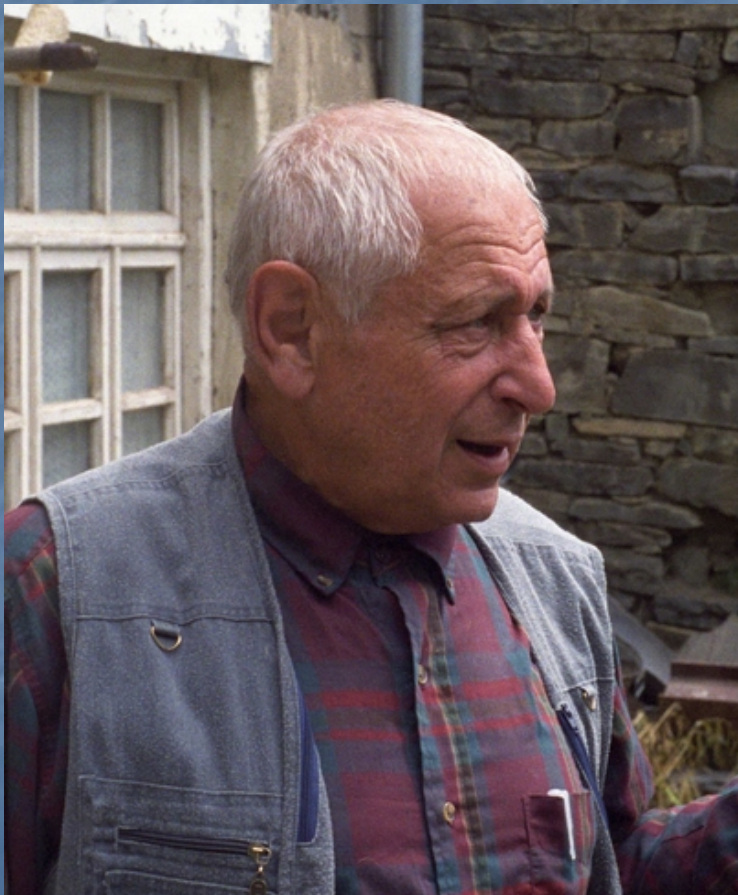
Achievements

- Faculty of History, Dept. of Ethnology
 - A tradition of studies in ethnography, social, cultural, and applied anthropology going back to the late 19th century
 - A wide array of topics in intercultural interactions, social, cultural and religious identity, ethnic psychology, normative social practices, nationalism studies, migration studies, studies in post-Soviet transformations
 - The scope of studies includes cultures of the peoples of Siberia, Caucasus, Volga region, Central Asia, Far East

Achievements

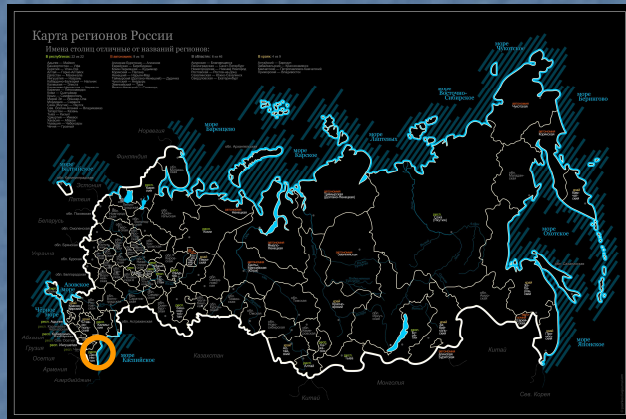
- Faculty of Philology, Dept. of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics
 - Program in documentation of the languages spoken in Russia and former USSR
 - Collective fieldwork expeditions; up to 3 expeditions every year
 - A team of linguists consisting of up to 20-25 members
 - Every member focuses on a specific topic in the grammar of a language

Achievements



- Alexander Kibrik (1939 - 2012), the person who established the program in 1967

Achievements

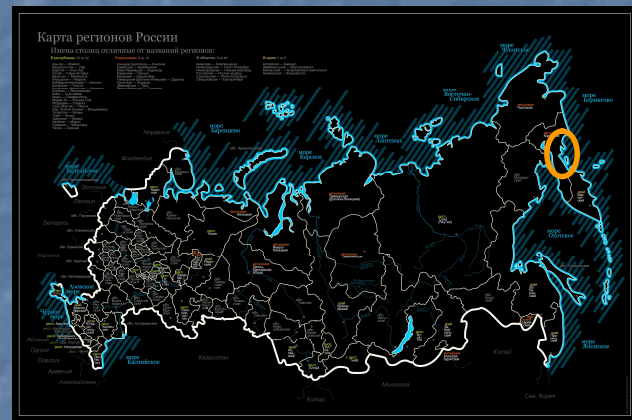


- The very beginning: 1967, Lak (< Nakh-Daghestanian)

Achievements

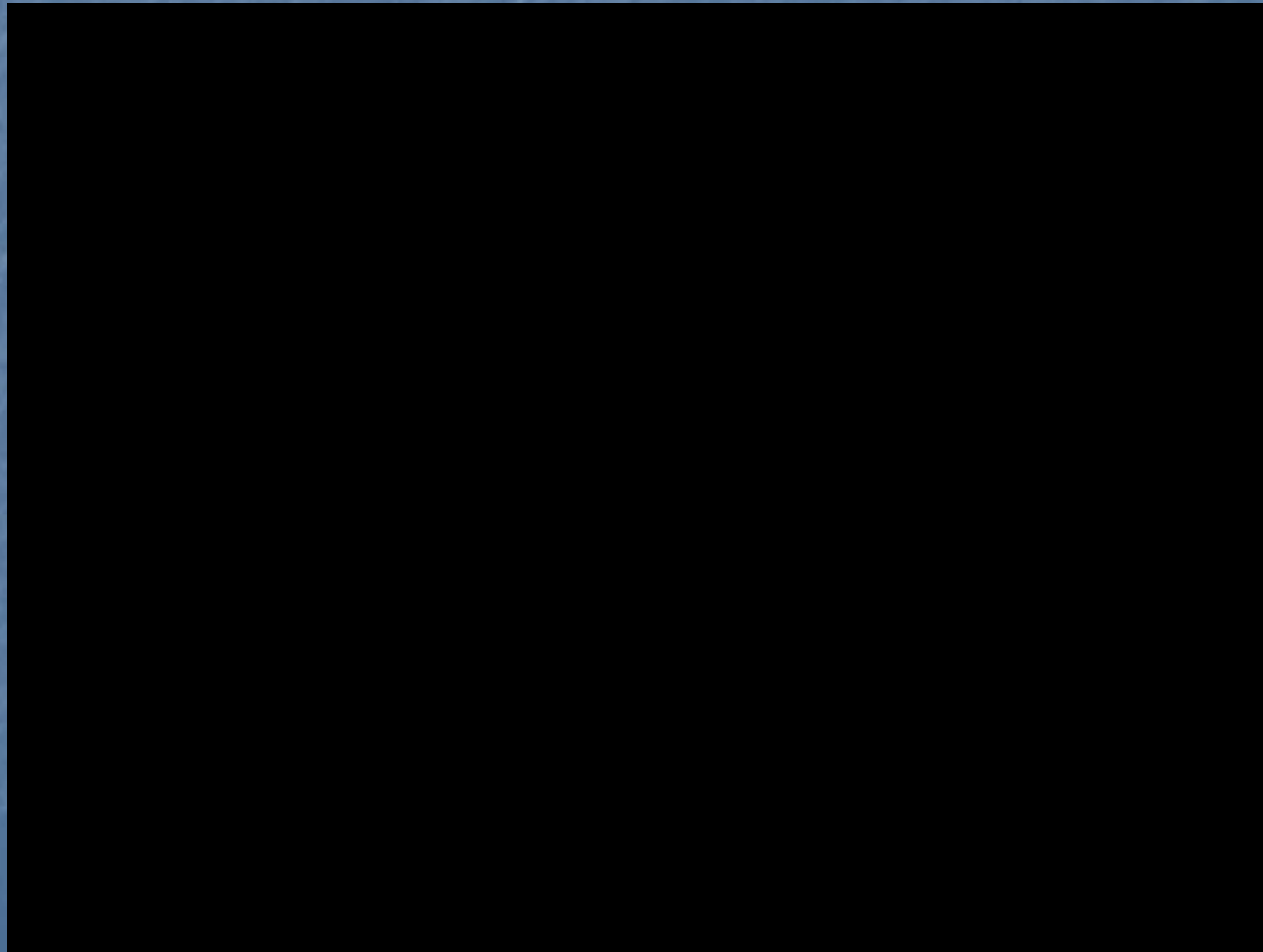


Source: <https://water-rf.ru>

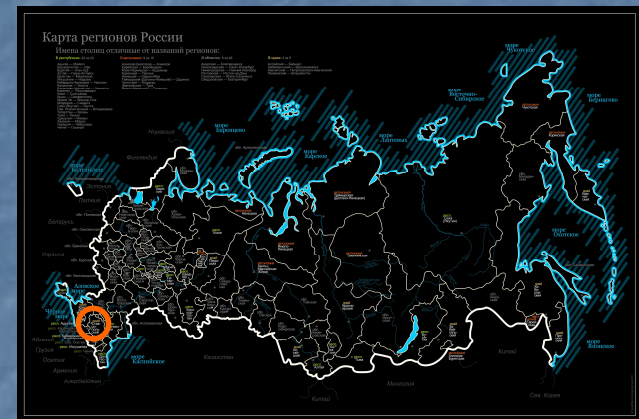


- (Almost) the very beginning:
1971, Alyutor (< Chukotko-Kamchatkan),
Vyvenka village, Kamchatka

Achievements



Achievements



- These days (August 2021):
Fieldwork on Karachay-Balkar (<Turkic < Altaic)
- Nastya Voznesenskaya, an MGU graduate student
- Askhat Atabiev, a teacher of physics at the local high school

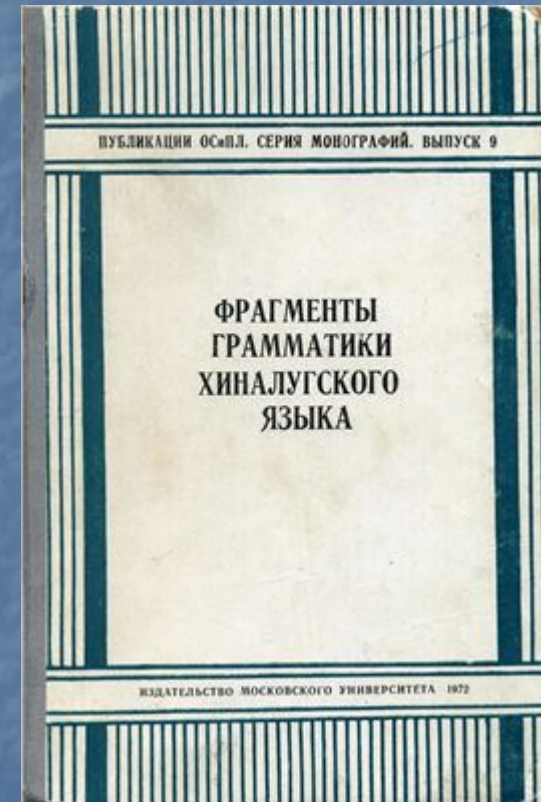
Achievements

- In between 1967 and 2021
 - Almost 100 fieldwork expeditions
 - More than 800 participants
 - About 70 languages of all linguistic families represented in Russia and former USSR
 - About 20 monographs
 - More than 700 papers in linguistic journals and edited volumes

Achievements

- The first major publication: a grammatical description of Khinalug (< Lezgi < Nakh-Daghestanian, 1972)

Кибрик А. Е., Кодзасов С. В., Оловянникова И. Л. Фрагменты грамматики хиналугского языка [Components of the Grammar of Khinalug]. М.:Изд-во Московского ун-та, 1972.



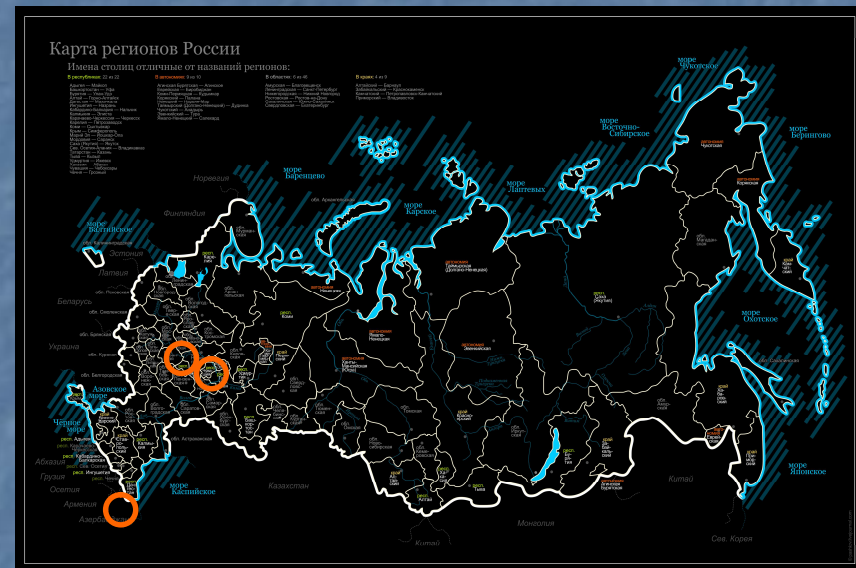
Achievements

- Recent monographs:
Grammatical descriptions
of Mishar Tatar (< Turkic,
2017) and Moksha
(<Finnic < Uralic, 2018)
- Элементы татарского языка в
типологическом освещении [Elements of
Tatar in a typological perspective] / Ред.
С.Г. Татевосов и др. М., 2017
- Элементы мокшанского языка в
типологическом освещении [Elements of
Moksha in a typological perspective] / Ред.
С.Ю. Толдова и др. М., 2018



Achievements

- Khinalug,
Northern Azerbaijan
- Moksha,
Volga Region
- Tatar, Mishar dialect,
Volga Region



Challenges

- Russia has gone through a chain of major social transformations, specifically, in the past 20-30 years.
- What is the cultural distance between traditional societies as described by cultural and social anthropologists in the 20th century and their modern counterparts?

Challenges

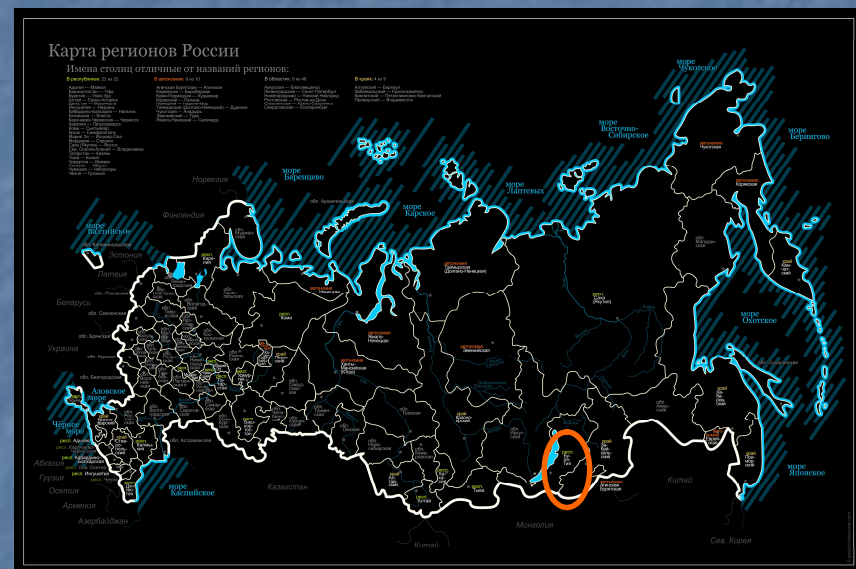


Source: pinterest.de

- Buryat male shaman, early 20th century

Challenges

- Buryat, a Mongolic language spoken in the territories around the Baikal lake and in Northern Mongolia



Challenges

- Sanzhidma Mangutova in a shaman dress, Republic of Buryatia, 2014



Challenges

- One can convince oneself that the people in the two pictures fall under the same culture. But do they?



Challenges

- Cultural identity faces linguistic pressure.
- Most languages spoken in Russia are (more or less) seriously endangered.

Challenges

Language vitality: EGIDS scale (Lewis and Gary 2010)

Table 1. Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

Level	Label	Description
0	International	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.
2	Provincial	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	Wider Communication	The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
5	Developing	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6b	Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

Challenges

- Institute of Linguistic, Russian Academy of Sciences, the “Languages of Russia” project

<http://jazykirf.iling-ran.ru/>

- Type 0: safe
- Type 1a: endangered languages
- Type 1b: definitely endangered languages
- Type 2: severely endangered languages
- Type 3: critically endangered, nearly extinct languages

Challenges

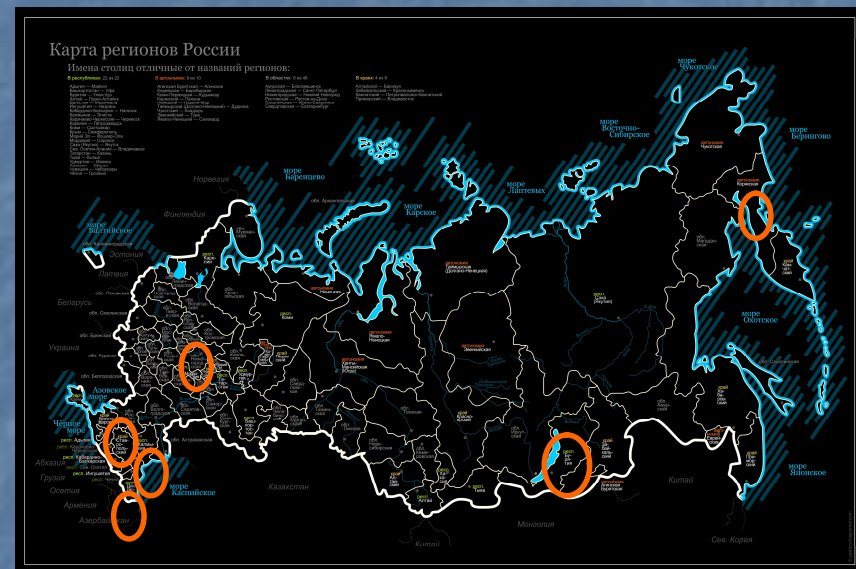
■ Languages of Russia

Type 0	14	9,2%
Type 1a	30	19,7%
Type 1b	64	42,1%
Type 2	19	12,5%
Type 3	25	16,5%
Total	152	100%

Source: http://jazykirf.iling-ran.ru/list_concept2020.shtml

Challenges

- Languages mentioned above
 - Lak: type 1a
 - Alyutor: type 2
 - Karachay-Balkar: type 1a
 - Khinalug: n/a
 - Moksha: type 1a
 - Buryat: type 1a



Challenges

- This assessment may be too optimistic, however
- Most of the languages discussed here are going through language shift that leads to the interruption of intergenerational transmission of a language

Challenges



- Sanzhidma: a fluent L1 Buryat speaker 📢
- Darima, her granddaughter: 📢
an L1 Russian speaker,
a heritage Buryat speaker

Prospects

- Given the challenges our disciplines are facing, linguists and anthropologists should work together to make sure that cultural and anthropological studies are linguistically well-informed, while linguistic studies take into account crucial information about social and cultural environment.

Prospects

- Lomonosov Moscow State University is currently building up a unique environment for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- In 2020, six Interdisciplinary Research and Education schools were established
- One of these schools is School for Preservation of the World Cultural and Historical Heritage

Prospects

- School for Preservation of the World Cultural and Historical Heritage



Prospects

- Part of the School is the project entitled “Languages and Cultures of the Indigenous Peoples of Russia: Models of structural analysis”
- The team of 35 scholars, both faculty members and graduate students
- Faculty of Philology
 - Dept. of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics
 - Colleagues from a few other departments
- Faculty of History
 - Dept. of Ethnology
 - History of Migration and Diasporas Laboratory

Prospects

■ Agenda

- Collecting and analyzing extensive data on the languages and cultures of Siberia, Volga region, Caucasus and Far North
- Developing a framework for interdisciplinary research at MGU
- Building up educational programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels
- Establishing collaboration with research institutes of the Russian Academy of Science and regional research centers that focus on revitalization of the languages of Russia

Prospects

- MA program: “Languages and Cultures of the Indigenous Peoples of Russia: Models of structural analysis”
- Excerpts from the curriculum
 - Theory of Language
 - Linguistic diversity
 - Languages of Russia
 - Mathematical methods in linguistic studies
 - Population of Russia: demography, ethnic and confessional identity
 - Customary law of the indigenous peoples of Russia
 - Peoples of Siberia: dynamics of cultural evolution
 - Ethnography of the peoples of the Caucasus

Prospects

- Suming up: achievements, challenges, and prospects
- For linguistic and cultural studies, prospects of success in accomplishing the above goals require combining our achievements and facing challenges together
- A lot of inspiring work is ahead!

Thank you!

■ Contact Info

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