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A Report on George Grekoff’s Collection of Chimariko (and Other) Materials

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A REPORT ON GEORGE GREKOFF'S COLLECTION OF CHIMARIKO (AND OTHER) MATERIALS

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George Grekoff was a graduate student at UC Berkeley in the ‘50’s and early 60’s, who did research primarily on the Chimariko language. He died in 1999, and willed his enormous collection of materials to the Survey of California and Other Indian languages. Chimariko had ceased to be spoken before Grekoff began his research, and his work was based mainly on the field notes of Edward Sapir and J. P. Harrington. Included in his collection are xerox copies of Sapir’s, Dixon’s, and Harrington’s field notes, but the bulk of the materials are his reorganized notes, lexical lists, and analyses—enough to fill two large double-door storage cabinets altogether. We are grateful to Mr. Grekoff’s daughter Christine Grekoff of Seattle for facilitating the gift of the collection to the Survey, and especially to his close friend Jerry Hand who stored the collection for several months after Grekoff’s death, and painstakingly boxed it and mailed it to Berkeley. The boxes filled a sizeable portion of the Survey archive room for several months until we managed to get it in enough order to put in cabinets.

To quote a 1995 article by Margaret Langdon and William Jacobsen,

Many believe that Chimariko is very important for the understanding of Hokan; in particular, Oswalt presented results of the method he has been developing for measuring similarities between pairs of Hokan languages. Pairings of Chimariko with Yuman languages and with Proto-Western Pomoan are among the most promising. (Langdon and Jacobsen 1995:129)

They also point out

Howard Berman has organized the Chimariko field notes of Sapir for inclusion in a forthcoming volume of the Collected Works of Edward Sapir; the Harrington material of Chimariko remains to be organized and analyzed.” (ibid., p. 129)

Grekoff’s materials go a long way toward alleviating this problem. This valuable collection was in the process of creation for decades, virtually without the awareness of the linguistic community. To understand how this happened, we will give a brief summary of Grekoff’s life.

1. A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF GEORGE GREKOFF. George Grekoff was born in Flushing, New York, on Sept 16, 1923, to Russian immigrant parents. Growing up bilingual, he lived in New York, all way through high school and did part of his undergraduate work at Queens’ College. He and brother signed up together for the army at the tail end of World War II, and he was shipped over to Germany during occupation, where he met his wife-to-be, Charlotte. He was called back to the Army Reserves during the Korean War, and was stationed in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where their daughter Christine was born in 1951. A few weeks after her birth, Grekoff was discharged and the family moved to California, and he eventually came to Berkeley to study linguistics. He worked for Mary Haas on a Thai project, and she subsequently set him to work on the Chimariko language. In 1962, before he finished his dissertation, he was hired at the University of Washington in Seattle to teach linguistics and Russian. But as so many people have found when taking a position before finishing the dissertation, he was unable to complete his degree, and after some years was terminated as a result. After that, he worked for American Can Company as a quality control inspector for close to 10 years, until they closed their Seattle plant in the early ‘70’s. Then Charlotte died of pneumonia, and Grekoff went into a depression for several years. Eventually he found a position using one of the other skills he had developed during his varied life —drafting. He worked for a couple of different engineering firms from then until his retirement. One of his closest friends was Jerry Hand, an engineer at Grekoff’s last job.
Hand says that Grekoff was one of the most knowledgeable people he ever knew, on an extremely broad range of topics.

Grekoff died on July 25, 1999, due to complications resulting from chemotherapy treatment for cancer.

Both Christine and Hand report that Grekoff always considered that his true life’s work was the study of Chimariko. He never lost sight of that, even though he was removed for most of his life from the academic community. He worked continuously on Chimariko in his spare time. I know of only two published articles, one in Bright’s Studies in Californian Linguistics (Grekoff 1964) and the other in the 1996 proceedings of the Hokan-Penutian Workshop (Grekoff 1996). He also presented a paper at the 1981 Hokan-Penutian workshop at Sonoma State University, but did not publish in the resultant proceedings. We find in his materials notes on laryngealization and glottalization in Chimariko and other languages (mainly Karok, Kiowa, and Wintu), with preparation for a paper on this subject intended for IJAL—but it too was never published. He seems to have suffered from the disease of perfectionism that has often afflicted scholars. Furthermore, he was a shy person, characterized by his daughter as gentle and self-effacing, who, once he left academia, never put himself forward into the notice of the linguistic community. Yet he steadily worked on with his organization and analysis of the Chimariko language materials until his death last July.

2. A LISTING OF THE GREKOFF COLLECTION. Tess Wood was the Survey research assistant in spring 2000, and devoted her quarter-time job almost entirely to the organization and archiving of Grekoff’s materials. The archiving is still in process, but the materials can viewed at this point by interested parties who wish to visit the Survey. The following is Ms. Wood’s report on the contents of this impressive collection.

2.1. LEXICON. The collection contains a large amount of lexical material, and planning of a dictionary had been begun by Grekoff. Around 35 boxes of file slips largely contain vocabulary (lexical and grammatical elements) and examples, some indexed by English word, others by Chimariko word or affix, a few others by semantic group or grammatical phenomenon. Since the lists are constructed from various sources (the largest number of references appear to be to Harrington’s Chimariko notes and texts) most words are referenced to their source. In addition, there exists:

(a) a paper file of preliminary lists for the lexicon, organized by parts of speech and alphabetized by Chimariko word:

- Verb list
- Modifiers; conjunctions; and miscellaneous
- Manner and degree adverbs
- Time adverbs
- Qualitative adjectives
- Locational and directional terms
- Pronouns
- Numeratives
- Modals
- Particles
- Imitatives
- Nouns
- Negative verb forms

(b) a 51-page ‘Reconstituted Glossary of Chimariko’—compiled from non-Harrington sources. This seems to be a partial dictionary (only some sections of the alphabet) and/or to contain forms with underspecified consonants.
(c) Grekoff’s copy of Sapir’s field notes, which is primarily a vocabulary list, and samples from glossaries by other fieldworkers.

In addition, there are notes on orthography, alphabetization, indexing, dictionary conventions such as citation forms, how to structure dictionary entries, even sample copies of pages to show layouts, plus two files of notes for the introduction to the lexicon.

2.2. GRAMMAR. Grekoff’s dissertation was to be a grammar of Chimariko. The collection contains many materials for the grammar, including drafts of three chapters:

1. Phonology
2. Morphophonemics
3. Tactics (levels; forms: word, clitic, construction; predication; stems, themes, affixes; suprasegmentals)

There are six ring binders full of notes for the grammar, roughly organized by part of speech or by grammatical area. The notes show lots of concern with morphophonemic level analysis, especially affixation, vowel alternations, and verb classes:

Adjectives vs. statives; locatives and postpositions; participles; nominal predication; ‘verb-0’
Phonetics (contains another draft of chapter 2)
Phonetics/phonology (distribution, accent data from LM, componential analysis)
Morphophonemics
Attributive; sequences of predicates; agreement; subordination, coordination.
Clause combining, association, apposition, reiteration, phrases, predications

2.3. PHONETICS, PHONOLOGY, MORPHOPHONEMICS. In addition to some basic descriptions (phoneme charts, etc.), the collection includes the following:

- Comparison of phonetics of different speakers’ speech (based on Harrington’s transcriptions); for example, a comparison of affricates transcribed for different consultants.
- Work on laryngealization and glottalization in Chimariko and other languages (mainly Karok, Kiowa, and Wintu). There is a large quantity of material apparently for a paper on this subject intended for IJAL.
- Some historical work (essentially phoneme distribution based on reconstituted lexical items)
- Notes on stress/accent (including, for example, its relation to syncope)
- Processes of insertion, deletion, elision: their environments, characterization; morphophonemic analysis

2.4. MORPHOLOGY. The collection contains descriptions and notes on verbal morphology, including tense-mood-aspect, theme affixes, and valence changing morphology, most of which is detailed below in the section on verb classes and valence. Grekoff did a large amount of work on the morphology and morphophonemics of affixal negation, as part of a larger interest in negation (see §2.8).

There are also notes on a number of other topics including: nominalization, causatives and essives, adversatives, benefactives, appellatives (much of this is on English and includes some analysis and diagrams), possession markers, and various other nominal affixes.

There is some work on reduplication, including examples, meanings of reduplicated forms, and the interaction of reduplication with other processes such as deletion and insertion.

2.5. PRONOMINALS: INDEPENDENT AND BOUND. Grekoff covered this topic in considerable detail. There are descriptive notes on, for example, independent and bound pronouns occurring with different verb forms (transitive, intransitive, imperative, adjectival, compared with the verbal stem); possessives, as well as a few comparative notes on independent pronouns.
There are a number of notes for and on a paper on the 'etymological' analysis of Chimariko pronouns (presented at the Workshop on the Hokan and Penutian Languages at Sonoma State in 1981).
In addition there are several folders of notes with a more theoretical treatment of pronouns (in the stratificational framework, complete with charts, tables, and "realization graphs").

2.6. Verb Classes and Valence. A significant quantity of material exists on verb classes, transitivity, valence-changing operations, theme types:

- Notes on transitivity; active, passive and stative verbs; double object constructions; impersonals; causatives; complement types; notes on the inflection of verb classes, the basis for their distinction, and their argument types. Both descriptive notes and analysis in the stratificational framework are included. Some topics are covered more descriptively, in others most of the work is theoretical.
- Themes and instruments. These may occur as verbal prefixes in Chimariko (they seem to function a bit like classifiers). There are a number of files containing examples and notes on this phenomenon, e.g. on specific items which occur as prefixes; their meanings in combination with various verbs; their requirements for particular thematic suffixes to be added to the verb with which they occur.
- Complement types: notes on identifying various thematic roles (locatives, goals, benefactives, etc.), complement types occurring with particular groups of verbs or specific verbs, body-parts as complements.

2.7. Other Topics in Syntax. A number of syntactic topics are detailed in other sections, such as verb valence, complement types, and passivization. In addition, Grekoff's more descriptive work on syntax (collected examples and description of the phenomena) includes:

- noun phrase structure and constituency
- predicate nominals
- 'specificational constructions': verbs such as 'want', 'like', and their complements
- relative clauses
- direct and indirect quotation

The more theoretical syntax notes mainly concentrate on phrase and clause structure, complete with many diagrams (using stratificational linguistics).

2.8. Negation: Affixal Negation, Privatives, Antithesis. Negation and antithesis are covered in considerable depth. In particular, Grekoff worked in detail on affixal negation (morphology, morphophonemics and semantics) and on surface-marked privatives in Chimariko (primarily semantics). In addition to folders of data, notes, and analysis, drafts of papers on both of these topics exist (one possibly presented at the Berkeley Hokan-Penutian conference).

Grekoff's work on negation primarily focuses on Chimariko but (as in other areas) includes some notes and comparisons with other languages:

- copied and annotated material from published sources on a wide range of languages
- original notes by Grekoff, largely on English and Russian (and comparisons of these with Chimariko)

2.9. Lexical Items, Semantic Fields. A series of folders deals with the use and semantics of particular words or groups of words, mainly verbs. Some words are covered in much more detail or have much better general description and details than others. The list of words includes the following:

- put (verbs of displacement); dressing and covering verbs; carry; action with a cover; action with a long, pointed object; do, become; say/do; name; defecate; be thirsty; be; suck; dig; hurt; choke; hurt, be sick etc.; hide; throw; win; become/make; freeze, frozen; verbs of displacement; "act" verbs and agency; know, remember, forget (examples only); fill/full, long, short/low, far; body-part actions.
Folders on "Lexical studies" contain collections of examples and notes for particular words or topics: the only one of significant size is the collection of notes on dentalia and shells. Collections of examples exist for various words and topics but are very limited in size and detail.

2.10. NOTES ON DISCOURSE, NARRATIVE, MYTH ANALYSIS. The collection contains little material on discourse and narrative. There are just two folders containing a few of Grekoff's notes and observations on narrative style and on the structure of myths and their narration.

2.11. TEXTS. A number of texts are either xeroxed or re-written from other peoples’ field notes. The collection includes a binder of texts from Harrington, typed/written out by Grekoff, as well as loose folders a few smaller texts (source unknown).

In addition, the collection includes a microfilm copy of Dixon's texts and a set of xeroxes (made from the microfilm) of Harrington's Chimariko notes/texts.

2.12. ETHNOGRAPHY. The ethnographic material in the collection is largely in the form of xeroxes of published articles on Chimariko and other California groups.

2.13. OTHER CHIMARIKO RESOURCES. Grekoff also indexed or made notes on various sections of Harrington's work on Chimariko. A number of copies, either xeroxes or re-typed/written, exist of notes and texts from various people who worked on Chimariko, although mainly Harrington and Dixon. One microfilm of Dixon's work and three of Harrington's are included.

There is also one reel of tape containing a Chimariko song performed by Grace McKibben (a Wintu singer) and one audio cassette of Chimariko, made by Alice Schlichter (also of Grace McKibben).

2.14. OTHER LANGUAGES. In addition to work on Chimariko, Grekoff did fieldwork on other Native American languages, and the collection contains the following:

- Skagit (Southern Coast Salish): one box of file slips containing notes on morphology, stems and affixes. Five books of field notes etc. from 1964-67, the first containing lexical material, the others a mix of vocabulary and morphology/syntax (e.g. verbs are tested in different sentence frames with different valence patterns)
- Clayoquot (Central Nootka): three books of field notes from 1966-67 containing vocabulary, and sentence frames. Half of a box of file slips (the other half is Kwakiutl) containing vocabulary and some grammatical notes
- SE Pomo: two boxes of file slips containing details of the phonemic system and vocabulary, one indexed by English word, one by Pomo. One book of notes from 1957 (Sulphur Bank), mainly vocabulary but also some sentence frames
- Kwakiutl: one book of field notes from 1968, containing vocabulary. Half of a box of file slips containing vocabulary and some grammatical notes (the rest of box is Clayoquot)
- Sechelt (Salishan): one box of file slips containing vocabulary and examples of roots, affixes, grammatical categories
- Nootka: a brief diary of a trip to Alberni from 1968, containing some vocabulary and notes about consultants

3. CONCLUSION. The notes on the other languages listed just above are especially interesting because they are Grekoff's own original field notes. However, this valuable collection of original field notes is physically dwarfed by the massive lexical collection and analytical notes on Chimariko. Grekoff's contribution to the analysis of Chimariko is extremely important, and if utilized by other scholars, can form the basis both for the long-awaited description of the Chimariko language and for future Hokan comparative studies.
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June 17-18, 2000
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PREFACE

The year 2000 was the 30th anniversary of the first Hokin languages conference. That first conference was imagined, planned and run by Prof. Margaret Langdon at the University of California at Berkeley, with the assistance of Prof. Shirley Silver of California State University at Sonoma. Almost every year since then, Hokin workshops and then Hokin-Penutian workshop in the previous few years had been either very small or even cancelled due to the lack of a sufficient number of people submitting paper titles. There was some thought of abandoning the Hokin-Penutian workshops altogether. Margaret felt that it would be a shame for this long tradition to end without a last hurrah, and so I offered to hold a Hokin-Penutian Workshop at Berkeley in conjunction with the “Breath of Life” Language Workshop for California Indians. The Breath of Life Workshop is a biennial gathering of California Indians here at Berkeley, and is designed primarily for people whose languages have no speakers left. We give them tours of the campus archives and show them how to use publications, fieldnotes and recordings of their languages for their own purposes – primarily language learning and teaching. I felt it would be a good thing to show the linguists who spent their careers working on these endangered languages to see the use their work is being put to by the descendents of the very people they worked with years ago. Therefore, the first session of the Hokin-Penutian Workshop consisted of presentations by the participants in the Breath of Life Workshop. The anticipation of this treat may have played a role in bringing a relatively large crowd here in 2000, perhaps along with billing the workshop as “The (Last?) Hokin-Penutian Workshop.” Sixteen papers (not counting the Breath of Life presentations) were given at the workshop, eight of which are published in this volume.

With both the Hokin and Penutian hypotheses in doubt, there is always a question as to which languages should be included at the workshop. Although my sympathies are with the “splitter” camp in linguistics, I’m definitely a social lumpeter. Therefore, for purposes of the workshop I chose to define “Hokin” and “Penutian” as rubrics rather than language stocks, and advertised the workshop as being “for any language that has ever been hypothesized to be Hokin or Penutian.” We thus have papers ranging from Tsimshianic to Zuni, and—oh, well—we even accepted Juliette Blevin’s excellent paper on Yurok, an Algonkian language, which has never been hypothesized as either Hokin or Penutian.

At the business meeting held at the end of the Hokin-Penutian workshop, no-one wanted to say that this was the last one. Instead, we voted to continue with the workshops on a biennial basis, to be held here at Berkeley from now on, overlapping with the Breath of Life Workshop as it did in 2000. As I write this preface, the two years have already passed, and we are preparing for the 2002 Breath of Life Workshop, which this year will overlap with – not the Hokin-Penutian Workshop – but the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages. The upcoming conference for the Celebration subsumes participants in Hokin-Penutian Workshops. I imagine that our biennial gathering will continue on: whether it will be a Hokin-Penutian workshop in 2004 or something broader than that remains to be seen.

Leanne Hinton
Director of the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages
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