

EDITORS' DEDICATORY NOTE

This issue of the journal “Language in Africa” is dedicated to Konstantin Pozdniakov — a well-known specialist in African linguistics, who celebrates his 70th anniversary on July 24, 2022. The list of the fields in which he has significantly contributed in both African and general linguistics is impressively long: Niger-Congo comparative linguistics (especially Atlantic and Mande), the use of quantitative methods for comparative and typological studies, phonotactic universals, typology of personal markers and numeral systems, general morphology and morpho-phonology, the behavior of units that consist of morphemes' segments (known as “submorphemes”), integration of morphemes into paradigms, the theory of “non-morphemic signs”, synchronic functions of diachronic changes by analogy, and finally quite a different problem of deciphering of the Easter Island writing system (Rongorongo).

In fact, the biography and research activity of Konstantin Pozdniakov symbolically realizes the goals of this journal, the main purposes of which are the cooperation between two leading centers of African Linguistics in Russia (Moscow and St. Petersburg) and creating a platform for the international cooperation in the field of African languages.

In 1974, Konstantin Pozdniakov graduated from the Department of African Studies of Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) State University (with his M.A. thesis “Historical grammar of Manding”). From 1974 to 1978, he was a postgraduate student at the Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow. In 1978, he defended his Ph.D. dissertation on the comparative study of Mande languages (“Comparative historical analysis of Mande languages”). From 1978 to 1982, he worked at the Soviet cultural mission in Dakar, Senegal. Then, in 1982–1997,

he was a researcher at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences (Kunstkamera), Leningrad / St. Petersburg. In 1995, he defended his doctoral dissertation on the reconstruction of the grammar of Atlantic languages (“Comparative historical grammar of Atlantic languages”). Since 1997, he has been a professor at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris and a researcher at the LLACAN (Langues, Langages et Cultures d’Afrique) research unit of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). From 2011 to 2016, he was a senior member of the Institut Universitaire de France.

He was trained in Leningrad as an Africanist which meant a wide range of subjects dealing with Africa with some special influence of “classical Oriental Studies”. This field was an important source for Leningrad’s African studies taking into account the figure of Dmitri Olderogge often considered the founder of Russian African studies, who was an Egyptologist by his basic education. Konstantin Pozdniakov’s university teachers were Svetlana Tomchina, specialist in Mande languages, and ethnohistorian Vyacheslav Misyugin, both very passionate and motivating, although not quite mainstream scholars. Being a postgraduate student of a Bantuist Irina Toporova in Moscow, Konstantin was involved in quite a different tradition of purely linguistic approach, and after returning to Leningrad he appeared to be the first Africanist with a purely linguistic broad background.

It was Konstantin who not only broke the long-standing tradition of rivalry between Leningrad and Moscow (and our journal is one of the results of his efforts) but also can be treated as the first person who established African linguistics in Leningrad / St. Petersburg as a separate research field. Two of the coeditors of this issue (Vydrin and Zheltov) consider themselves his pupils.

The tradition of the comparative study of Niger-Congo languages in Russia, as repeatedly noted in various publications, owes its emergence and many important and still current topics to the works and personality of Konstantin Pozdniakov. Thus, it is no accident that

this issue is dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the founder and most prominent representative of the St. Petersburg school of African linguistics. Still keeping his dedication to St. Petersburg Niger-Congo linguistics, Konstantin and his research long ago became an important part of African linguistics at the international level. No wonder this issue has attracted prominent scholars of different schools and traditions from all over the world (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Paris, Lyon, Hamburg, Berkeley, etc.).

One of the most important characteristics of Pozdniakov's linguistic ideas is the ability to see the multidimensionality of language as an object of study which he has so deeply and artistically demonstrated. Not surprisingly, such "multidimensionality" is reflected by the topics and range of languages in this issue. It starts with the publications on Atlantic languages — his main field of research (Guillaume Segerer, Jack Merrill, Stéphane Robert and Sylvie Voisin, Maximilien Guérin, Denis Creissels and Alain-Christian Bassène, Maria Kosogorova), then Mande — the field he started his studies with (Valentin Vydrin, Elena Perekhval'skaya, Tatiana Nikitina), other Niger-Congo languages — Bantu, Adamawa, Kwa (Larry Hyman, Gérard Philippon, Alexander Zheltov, Nadezhda Makeeva), non-Niger-Congo languages — Central Sudanic, Saharan, Berta, Afro-Asiatic (Pascal Boyeldieu, Dmitry Bondarev, George Starostin, Martine Vanhove and Mohamed-Tahir Hamid Ahmed).

Another distinctive feature of Pozdniakov's scientific activity is a feature rarely met in the research field: the combination of deep analysis with his ability to express a keen sense of the beauty of human language. This characteristic comes from the amazing personal deepness, artistry and charm of Konstantin. This combination is a trait of his which few can match.

As Konstantin once noted, in order for the statement "Language is complex and diverse" not to be perceived as a banal truism, this thesis must be supported by serious work over many years to prove it. His research for sure proves his justification of such a generalization. The authors of this issue present their works as a small, but hopefully

valuable confirmation of our honoree's vision in proving the complexity, diversity, and multidimensionality of such a remarkable phenomenon as Human Language based on African data. We offer these studies with deep respect, admiration and friendship for our longtime colleague and teacher, Konstanin Podzniakov.

Будь здоров, Костя! 'Keep healthy, Kostya!'

Alexander Zheltov, Valentin Vydrin, Andrey Shluinsky