

“Central Eurasian Studies at IU (the pre-Department Years)”

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Abstract

The Department of Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University dates its origins to the Army Specialized Training Program conducted at IU starting in 1943. But the history of the Department from that beginning to its official emergence as a Department in 1966 is less well known. This paper follows the development of Central Eurasian Studies during this first twenty year period, tracing its interactions with both internal and external events. Relations between departments, the influence of individual personalities, governmental funding and world events all factor into the rise of a unique department at Indiana University – one that traces its roots primarily neither to a geographic region nor to an academic discipline, but largely to an [imagined] family of languages. Particularly interesting are the connections between Linguistics as a field of study and broader efforts to promote language training and the understanding of various cultures and regions. The history also provides grounds to reflect on current concerns over the influence of DOD funding in the academy and the recurrent tensions within academia between the (practical) preparation of professionals and the advancement of (theoretical) knowledge.

In 1966, the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies was formed at Indiana University – Bloomington. But the Department, renamed the Department of Central Eurasian Studies in 1981, traces its earliest history back to the “Army Specialized Training Program for Central Eurasian languages in 1943.”¹ How did the study of Central Eurasia evolve over these first 20+ years? How did historical events impact the growth of this kernel into a full academic department? To what extent did this kernel owe its growth to government support? And how was the study of Central Eurasia imagined and conducted during this period – and what do the answers to these questions tell us about our studies of Central Eurasia today?

The First Step

The history of Central Eurasian studies at Indiana University traces its start to 1943. Faced with the disruptions of a war-time economy and national mobilization, empty classrooms and the desire to be of assistance to the national war effort, the administration of Indiana University, led by its storied president, Herman G. Wells, made a conscious effort to attract military programs to Bloomington. As the male student population dropped to a handful, the Bloomington campus became home to new Navy yeomen, WAVES² and SPARS³ (Carter, 124-26). However, the largest military program at IU during World War II was the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), which brought in several thousand Army trainees for college-level training. The trainees were

¹ www.indiana.edu/~ceus/ date accessed 13 July 2010

² Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Services

³ Name for the United States Coast Guard Women’s Reserve created in 1942.

to be treated on the West Point model, addressed as “Cadet” and calling their professors “Sir” while standing at attention to recite answers. Despite the oft-repeated remark that the ASTP represents the start of Central Eurasian training at IU, in fact the ASTP was far wider in scope, and most trainees received instruction in common core subjects such as “physics, mathematics, chemistry, English, history, geography, and engineering drawing” (Carter b, 431).

However a select few college graduates were enrolled in a subprogram of the ASTP focused on languages first conceived of by the American Council of Learned Societies. At IU, Professor Charles F. Voegelin, associate professor of Anthropology, led an experimental course of instruction in Turkish for seven students (Carter, 40). The course was so successful that with the arrival of the first formal ASTP cadets in June 1943, 121 of 378 were enrolled in Area and Language courses covering German, Turkish, Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian (Wells/ASTP a, 3). By the end of 1943 the program had expanded to include three departments – a German Area and Language Department (run by the Department of German), a Balkan Area and Language Department (later renamed the East European Area and Language Department) led by Professor Edward Buehrig, and a Northern Area and Language Department led by Professor Carroll Christenson. Languages taught included Polish, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Russian, Finnish, Serbo-Croatian, Greek and Turkish (Wells/ASTP c). Instruction consisted not only of language but area studies as well, divided into “seven courses each ... handled by an expert in the field” (Wells/ASTP a, 9).

After the ASTP

Though the ASTP ended in 1944, it was only the first of many responses by Indiana University to international events that would impact the study of [Central] Eurasia. The Korean War, the “loss” of China, and the successful launching of Sputnik all turned the attention of the United States towards events in Eurasia. The need for a new international perspective that became apparent during World War II was reiterated with each of these events, and the U.S. government and various foundations responded with increased funding for international programs. Indiana University rode this wave of international growth, adding departments or programs in Slavic studies (later Slavic Languages and Literature), Asian Studies (later East Asian Languages and Cultures), Latin American studies, West European Studies, Near Eastern Languages and Literature, and the Russian and East European Institute in the 1950s and early 1960s.⁴

Tracing the history of what was to become the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies through this period of ferment is difficult. Professors arrived and departed, programs started, merged, were renamed, funding expanded and contracted, and scholarship adapted. This study focuses on four streams of information to track the growth of Uralic and Altaic studies – biographical data on various professors, pronouncements about programs in the official IU Bulletins, funding data from the IU Financial Reports and other sources, and scholarly production by both faculty and graduate students. Together these trace the growth of a seed planted by Thomas Sebeok in the ASTP through a long period of gestation in the Linguistics Department to its first

⁴ IU played a critical role in publishing, including the transformation of the Association for American Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL) Journal into The Slavic and East European Journal in 1956 (Twarog, 47).

shoots in a program and its ultimate flowering in the establishment of the Uralic and Altaic Department.

Professors

Thomas Sebeok – The single greatest—and sometimes overlooked⁵—contributor to the establishment of Central Eurasian studies at Indiana University was Thomas Sebeok. Professor Sebeok arrived at Indiana University in 1943 as part of the Army Specialized Training Program. Originally brought to IU as a linguist with responsibilities for training in Hungarian and Finnish, he was soon largely responsible for the running of the East European portion of the program.⁶ However, the program ended in 1944 and Sebeok was to assume the first of many various titles. For a short period in 1944 he was employed by IU supported by a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS),⁷ and then a new Army Language Training Program was begun that lasted through the end of the war and for which Professor Sebeok was responsible.⁸

Born in Budapest, Hungary in 1920, Sebeok left Hungary in 1936 to study at Cambridge University but in 1937 immigrated to the United States where he continued his studies at the University of Chicago, earning a bachelor's degree in 1941 before

⁵ To the extent that the history of Central Asian studies at Indiana is known at all, the program's strength is usually credited to Denis Sinor. For instance in the latest issue of Bloom magazine (the local version of Life), IU President McRobbie says of Sinor: "Another person who I think is quite fascinating is Denis Sinor, who really is responsible for our expertise in Central Eurasian Studies....Talking to Denis about the history of Central Europe and how he established the center here, you realize he is one of the great intellectual figures in the history of the university." (Andrews 2008) See also ("Denis Sinor and Central Eurasian Studies" 2008) and (Sinor 2003).

⁶ While Sebeok in later works indicates that he took over from Professor Voegelin, the list of Faculty and Staff for the Program (Wells/ASTP b-f) only list Sebeok as a linguist (vice faculty), and a letter to Wells reporting on the program does not mention him at all (Wells/ASTP a). The IU Historian in a summary of the program says Voegelin and Sebeok directed it (Carter, 41).

⁷ Memo from Wells to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, October 9, 1944, in Wells papers, IU Archive.

⁸ Letter from Professor Bernard Gavitz to Dean Briscoe, May 4, 1945, in Wells papers, IU Archive.

transferring to Princeton University, where he earned an M.A. in 1943 and a PhD in 1945. He also had an informal mentoring relationship with the linguist Roman Jakobson at Columbia University, who put him in contact with John Lotz, at that time Director of the Hungarian Institute (1936-1957) at the University of Stockholm. John Lotz went on to become the head of the first Department of Uralic and Altaic Languages at Columbia University, which was established in 1953.⁹

Lacking a proper place for him at Indiana University after the war, Sebeok is made a professor in the English Department, where he remains until 1954. Sebeok continued his research on Finno-Ugric linguistics with a trip to Sweden and Finland in 1947, developing ties with scholars there that he then leveraged into a series of visits to Indiana University through a five year grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for the study of Hungarian and Finnish.¹⁰ During this five year period Sebeok manages to attract two additional Finno-Ugric scholars, Alo Raun and Felix Oinas, who both arrive at Indiana University in 1950.

In 1952, Sebeok begins the Cheremis Project, a long-term study of the language and culture of the Cheremis (Mari) people of central Russia. Much of this study is built on information from the language informant Ivan Jersky, a deserter from the Red Army who arrives in Bloomington after stops in a German prisoner of war camp and post-WWII displaced persons camps. Over the course of the project, funding is received from Indiana University; the Department of State; the Department of the Air Force; the U.S.

⁹ Report on Uralic and Altaic Studies, 7.

¹⁰ In at least two different places (Sebeok interview with Lubamersky, p102 (1993) and in a 1997 article "My 'Short Happy Life' in Finno-Ugric Studies"(1997)), Sebeok asserts that a "curricula Program in Uralic and Altaic Studies" had begun at IU by the end of the 1940s. However, in a memo to Dean G.R. Waggoner, dated April 17, 1954, Sebeok mentions "encouraging discussions of the *proposed* Program in Uralic and Altaic Studies" (emphasis added). The official Program seems to have started with the Establishment of a Committee on Uralic and Asian studies in 1956.

Office of Education; the Arctic, Desert, Tropic Information Center of the Research Studies Institute, located at Maxwell Air Force Base; the National Science Foundation; the American Philosophical Society; the American Council of Learned Societies; the Social Science Research Council; the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation; the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research; and the Newberry Library (Sebeok 1997).

Even by 1952, the prominence of Indiana University in Altaic studies was already being established. In the first issue of the *Ural-Altische Jahrbücher*, itself the resumption of the former *Ungarische Jahrbücher* under a new title, and the leading German journal on Uralic and Altaic issues, both Oinas and Raun are featured. (Pope 1952)

In 1954 Sebeok went to Dean Cleland of the Graduate School and said that the Ford Foundation was putting together a nation-wide committee to advise on the field of Uralic and Altaic studies, and as a result Dean Cleland “suggest[s] that we approve a program before the meeting of his committee, and suggest to him that he prepare several possible alternative programs of course work and research which he would be interested in undertaking, so that he will have something definitive in the way of suggestions to present to the committee when it meets.”¹¹

Dean Cleland then goes on to say that “Tom [Sebeok] is one of our most valuable men. Much of the reputation of the University in the area of linguistics and almost all of its reputation in Finno-Ugric studies is based on his presence. Furthermore, our future standing in this field, and any opportunities which we will have to participate in Uralic-Altaic programs and in financial support of such programs, will depend on his presence.

¹¹ Memo from Dean Ralph E. Cleland, Graduate School, to Dean H.T. Briscoe, May 19, 1954.

We must not risk losing him....we should look forward to the time when Tom can develop a strong enough program in the Finno-Ugric field to warrant the creation of a department to which he can be assigned”¹²

This assessment of Sebeok was not lost on the University’s administration; within a year a Committee on Uralic and Asian Studies was formed with Professors Sebeok, Raun and Oinas among the nine members.¹³ And the following year a separate committee on Uralic Studies was established consisting of just Sebeok, Raun and Oinas. Nor was the assessment mistaken, in 1955 Sebeok was appointed the director of the Air Force Language Training Program¹⁴ and in 1958 the Air Force signed a new contract with Indiana University to allow several hundred airmen to be trained in Russian each year. This contract was a huge boost to IU, and at its height in the 1962-63 Fiscal Year brought in over \$465,000 to the Linguistics Department under which it was placed, giving Linguistics the third largest departmental budget in the School of Arts and Sciences, after only Chemistry and English.¹⁵

Also, in 1958 the National Defense Education Act was passed, and with it came an enormous stream of new funding for language and cultural studies. Besides funding an extensive number of student fellowships in language and area studies, the NDEA funded fourteen Language and Area Centers, including one at Columbia University in

¹² Memo from Dean Cleland to Dean Briscoe, dated June 3, 1954 where he argues that Sebeok should be appointed Assistant Professor of Linguistics, rather than his then current appointment as Assistant Professor of English.

¹³ The full membership was Professors Horst Frenz (Comparative Literature), Walter H.C. Laves (Government); Associate Professors Theodore R. Bowie (Fine Arts), Frederick W. Riggs (Government), Thomas A. Sebeok (Linguistics), Ssu-yu Teng (History); Assistant Professors Felix J. Oinas (Slavic Studies), Alo Raun (Linguistics); Instructor Panayiotis J. Vatikiotis (Government) as Chairman. From the 1957-1958 Indiana University Graduate Bulletin, p257 (published in late 1956). See also the February 15, 1960 memo from Sebeok to Wells.

¹⁴ Indiana Daily Student, 9/14/55.

¹⁵ Indiana University 1962-1963 Financial Statement [ending June 30, 1963], p23, 42.

Uralic-Altaic, but none at Indiana.¹⁶ However, Uralic-Altaic studies also received a research grant of roughly \$650,000 “to develop specialized training materials in some 25 Uralic and Altaic languages, and to conduct basic surveys and pertinent research dealing with the languages, countries or other areas. This grant [was] administered by a special ACLS Committee on which [Sebeok] represent[ed] Indiana University; four [Indiana University] faculty members [held] subcontracts from the ACLS.”¹⁷ This grant was under the supervision of John Lotz at Columbia¹⁸ and Indiana University’s success in winning a number of these subcontracts was no doubt due to Sebeok’s continuing partnership with Lotz, evidenced among other areas in their cooperation on the Conference on Uralic and Altaic Studies held at Columbia May 18-19, 1956.

One final step of Sebeok’s in securing Indiana’s place in Uralic and Altaic Studies before the arrival of Denis Sinor was the submission by early 1960 to the U.S. Office of Education a proposal for a Uralic and Altaic Language and Area Center at Indiana to begin in the fall of 1961.¹⁹ Funding of a Center under the NDEA required a commitment of matching funds by the host university, a commitment Sebeok impressed upon Wells and others, leveraging an offer for a position at the University of Kansas as the Roy Roberts Distinguished Professor of Linguistics and Anthropology for further support for Uralic and Altaic Studies, the Linguistics program, and a broad range of publications in Folklore, Linguistics, and Area Studies under the Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore and Linguistics.²⁰ The wisdom of retaining Sebeok were soon evident, as he

¹⁶ *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter, 1959), 417-18.

¹⁷ February 15, 1960 memo from Sebeok to Wells.

¹⁸ *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter, 1959), 419.

¹⁹ February 15, 1960 memo from Sebeok to Wells.

²⁰ February 15, 1960 memo from Sebeok to Wells and attached offer letter from Franklin D. Murphy, Chancellor of the University of Kansas to Sebeok dated February 11, 1960. Also see letter from Dean Collins to Sebeok dated February 22, 1960 promising among other things that “we expect to strengthen the

laid out recent successes in an April 5, 1962 memo to President Wells where he announced the granting of 15 Uralic and Altaic Title VI fellowships for IU students, the funding of the June 1962 meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (\$19,585), an \$18,000 grant for publishing the Uralic and Altaic Series, and the expected formal announcement the following week of the activation of the NDEA Language and Area Center.²¹ Successfully established in 1962,²² this language center, under the leadership of Professor William Fierman until recently, has continued to this day as the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center. Sebeok himself remained connected to the program he had built, including remaining as editor of the Uralic and Altaic Series until 1969, but by 1963 he had turned leadership over to Denis Sinor and begun pursuing what developed into his greatest contribution to scholarship, biosemiotics (Sebeok 1997).

Sebeok's success in building a program in Uralic and Altaic studies included an active recruitment campaign for like-minded colleagues. The first two professors to join Sebeok in what was to become the Program in Uralic-Altaic Studies were Professors Alo Raun and Felix Oinas. Both were from Estonia and had done research in Finno-Ugric languages prior to fleeing Estonia during World War II. Both first spent time in war-torn and early post-war Germany, before finding their way to the U.S. in 1949. Of the two, Professor Raun was the senior, having earned his PhD at Tartu University in Estonia in

program in Uralic-Altaic studies. We hope to have support for the program from NDEA funds, but if this is not forthcoming it would still be our intention to enlarge the staff in this area."

²¹ Memo from Sebeok to Wells dated April 5, 1962.

²² In two descriptions of his early years at IU, Sinor suggests that it was his doing that the Office of Education supported the establishment of a Uralic and Altaic Research Center at IU (Sinor 2003, "Denis Sinor and Central Eurasian Studies" 2008). However, Sinor did not arrive in Bloomington until Christmas, 1961 and according to the 1960 memo from Sebeok to Wells the process was already well on its way. This contention is further strengthened by the April 5 memo from Sebeok to Wells. It seems likely that the trip to the Office of Education in DC that Sinor mentions served only to seal the deal and introduce the new head of the program.

1942. He was invited by Professor Sebeok to IU in 1950 and was initially funded by a J.S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation grant. Indeed, according to a request to grant Professor Raun an assistant professor position in Linguistics in 1955, his presence at IU was fully funded by external sources from 1950 to 1955.

Professor Oinas also arrived at IU in 1950, but unlike Raun, did not have his PhD yet because his studies had been interrupted by the war. Also invited by Sebeok, Oinas was an assistant instructor in 1950-1951 and earned his PhD in Linguistics in 1952, whereupon he joined the faculty. His dissertation was “The Development of the Postpositional Cases in Balto-Finnic Languages,” and looked at Ingrian, Votic, Karelian-Olonetsian, Ludic and Vespian, in addition to the more common languages of Livonian, Estonian and Finnish. In 1956 he was Assistant Professor of Slavic Studies and in the 1957-58 Academic Year he taught “Folk Culture of the Baltic Peoples” and, in conjunction with Professor Klagstad, “The Peoples of the Soviet Union and Their Culture.” With the establishment of the Program in Uralic Studies in 1958, both Raun and Oinas joined Sebeok in committing to the growth of the program—a commitment that would find them both as members of the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies in its first formal year of existence, 1966.²³

Sebeok recruited another member of the Linguistics faculty for the new program, Professor Fred Householder. Householder received his PhD in 1941 from Columbia, worked on a Modern Greek dictionary for the war effort in New York City,²⁴ was at Allegheny College from 1946 to 1948 then moved to Bloomington where he was hired as

²³ Uralic and Altaic studies appears for the first time as a Department in the College of Arts and Sciences in the Indiana University Financial Statement of 1965-66, which ran through June 30, 1966. Prior Financial Statements have it as a Program under the Graduate School.

²⁴ Where he met Sebeok, who also had a language coordinator position (Hungarian & Finnish desk) in New York City during the war (Bender 1997, Sebeok 1997).

an assistant professor of Classics. In 1952 Sebeok asked Householder to oversee the teaching of Turkish and Azerbaijani as part of the Air Force Language Training project at Indiana University and so Householder committed to learn both languages, which eventually resulted in the publication of Spoken Azerbaijani (1960), and A Basic Course in Azerbaijani (Householder 1965), among others. Though newly arrived in the field of Altaic languages, and still primarily a member of the Linguistics Committee/Department (he was chair from 1974 to 1980), Householder was sufficiently advanced in Altaic studies not only to supervise Altaic language training, but to appear in the inaugural study of Altaic Studies in America (Householder 1962) and to supervise Gerd Fraenkel (PhD Indiana, Linguistics, 1962), whose dissertation was on Azerbaijani grammar (Bender 1997).²⁵

Although Householder developed expertise in the region, the first true Altaicists to arrive at Indiana University were Denis Sinor and John Krueger. Professor Sinor was recruited by Sebeok from his position at Cambridge University. Initially skeptical of coming to “a little-known university located in a land that was just recovering from McCarthyism,” Sinor was persuaded to accept a one-semester visiting professorship. Despite finding Bloomington “a rather ridiculous place”, the library “abominable,” students who “did not compare well with those of Cambridge” and the “Uralic and Altaic Program ... a fake construct,” the warmth of his new colleagues and the “free rein to build what [he] was capable of building” were enough to convince him to stay (Sinor 2003). Sinor arrived in December 1961, preceded a few months by John Krueger, recently graduated from the University of Washington, then a strong center of Altaic

²⁵ This in contradistinction to Sinor’s statements that “At the time we had a Uralic and Altaic language program in which there was no Altaic. I was invited to join, bringing in the Altaic side” (Lubamersky, 105). For info on Fraenkel, see his dissertation “Generative Grammar of Azerbaijani” (1962).

studies under Professor Nicholas Poppe. Sinor began his career by teaching classes on Mongolian history in Medieval Europe, pre-Mongolian Turkic history, and the history of Hungary, while Krueger initially focused on the teaching of Turkish and Mongolian.

While Sinor would eventually lead the new Uralic and Altaic Studies Department, he, like the Department, went through some unexpected turns along the way. First, Sebeok, after all he had done for the Program, stepped down from its leadership to explore new interests in Semiotics, and by 1963 Sinor found himself head of the Program. In addition, in the 1964-65 College of Arts and Sciences Bulletin, published May 30, 1964, Sinor was listed as Chairman of the Asian Studies Program. Outside of Indiana University, he also took on leadership roles in a number of organizations related to the study of Central Eurasia. In February, 1965, after having already served on the three-person editorial board, he was elected vice president of the Societas Uralo-Altaica, publisher of the *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher*.²⁶ In November, 1965, he was reelected Secretary-General of the PIAC (Permanent International Altaistic Conference) and appointed chairman of the Central Asian and Altaic Studies Section of the forthcoming 27th International Congress of Orientalists to be held in 1967.²⁷ By 1967, Sinor had also established the Asian Studies Research Center, home of the PAIC, the Mongolia Society, and the Tibet Society, Inc., with himself as director (Najam and Findlen 1967). By the time the Program became a Department in 1966, several more faculty members had been added. In the 1964-65 listing of Program faculty, Professor Edmond Schutz is listed. A member of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences,²⁸ he was likely the second of a series of visiting scholars from Hungary who also included

²⁶ Indiana University International Affairs Newsletter Vol. 1(4), February 2, 1965, p6.

²⁷ Indiana University International Affairs Newsletter Vol. 2(2), November 2, 1965, p6.

²⁸ According to Armeno-Kipchak. Uralic and Altaic Series 23 (1963).

Professor Gyula Decsy, and Instructors Tamas Doszkocs in the fall of 1964, followed by Zsolt Viragos²⁹ (Sinor 2005). As the NDEA Uralic and Altaic Language and Area Center Technical Report for 1965-1966 put it: “Uralic and Altaic faculty have the closest contacts with Hungary. Last year Professors Sebeok, Raun and Sinor, and this year Professors Raun and Sinor will have visited the country. Both will be guests of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences...” In the future this relationship would cause friction within the Area Studies community at IU as concerns about developing too close a tie to the still communist Hungarian government would clash with the remarkable achievement of convincing that same government to endow a Chair in Hungarian Studies at IU. (Sinor 2005; Lubamersky 1993)

The program had strong relationships not only with Hungary but with Finland as well. In 1964 Professor Jaako Ahokas joined the faculty as a visiting professor. Amazingly, he was paid for by the Finnish government in what was expected to be a rotating Chair of Finnish Studies, but which later disappeared under subsequent department management.³⁰

The geographical extent of the Program continued to grow, adding not only professors from the western edge of the region, but from the east as well. Professor Friedrich Bischoff joined Professor Krueger in Mongolian Studies. From France, with a PhD from the University of Paris, 1959, he had studied the T'un-Huang documents in Paris brought back by Aurel Stein, and then Mongolian with Professor Heissig in

²⁹ NDEA Title VI Institutional Application 1964-65.

³⁰ Sebeok claims credit for the development of this partnership (Sebeok 1997), and given his connections and research there this is probably largely true. However, by the time Ahokas arrived at IU, Sinor was clearly leading the department and handling the appointment, as attested in his letters to Ahokas (May 27, 1964 from Departmental Secretary to Ahokas) and the Finnish Ambassador (May 20, 1964 from Sinor).

Germany. He was recruited by Sinor and received a joint appointment in East Asian Languages and Literature and the Program in Uralic and Altaic Studies.³¹

As the Altaic language family at that time was thought to include Korean, another hire in the 1964-65 academic year was Professor William Henthorne, whose focus was on Korean history and language. However, Henthorne's stay at IU was brief, by 1970 he had moved on to Princeton, perhaps because of the transfer of Korean from Uralic and Altaic Studies to the Department of Asian Languages and Literature.

The final faculty addition mentioned for 1964-65 was Talat Tekin, a Lecturer in Turkish. He was followed in 1965 by two other instructors in Turkish, Ilse Dorothea Cirtautas, Assistant Professor of Uralic and Altaic Studies (PhD. University of Hamburg, 1958), and Mehmet Ilhan Basgoz, Assistant Professor of Uralic and Altaic Studies (PhD. University of Ankara, 1949), who remained on the faculty and headed Turkish studies at IU until his retirement in 1997.

Funding

While the sources and scope of funding are not always entirely clear, particularly during the first decade after the ASTP, the sources do indicate a steady stream of funds that served to sustain and build the work on first Uralic, and then more broadly Uralic and Altaic studies. While the story of the program's early funding is largely connected to Sebeok's own progression, from the ASTP program in 1944 all the way through to the establishment of the NDEA Center in 1962, additional details of the growth in funding and scholarship is warranted. For instance, the Human Relations Area File reports that were funded in the post-Sputnik 1958 NDEA included not only monologues on Finnish

³¹ Memo from Sinor dated February 27, 1964

and Estonian, but also Votic, Cheremis, Vepsian, Livonian, Lapp, Ostyak, Mordvin, Karelian, and Zyryan – all members of the Uralic language family.

In 1956 the Ford Foundation supported the creation of a Committee on Uralic and Altaic Studies (Lotz 1958). Interestingly, the influence of the Program at Indiana is already evident by this time, being one of two programs mentioned specifically in the Lotz Report (the other one being the Department of Uralic and Altaic languages at Columbia University that had already ceased operation by 1963)³² and which counted four of 35 specialists listed in the Report either at or from Indiana University (Sebeok, Raun and Oinas at IU, and Ingemann (PhD Indiana, 1956) at University of Kansas).

The program gathered funds from other sources as well. For instance the text of Hakulinen's book on Finnish language was translated for the Uralic and Altaic Series with funds from the Finnish Government (Hakulinen ix), but also pursuant to a contract between the United States Office of Education and the American Council of Learned Societies (ii).

Perhaps the most interesting places to trace the growth in funding and the path of the Program are in the Indiana University yearly financial statements.³³ Although the 1955-56 Statement has only limited information, it does mention that the Air Force Language Training Program had a budget of over \$100,000. The next year's statement, which begins a trend of greater financial detail, puts this amount into perspective by showing the total budgets and the amount of the total for salaries:

1956-57	Institute of East European Studies:	\$3,687.41	Salary: \$3,102.24
	Linguistics Department Total:	\$11,419.69	Salary: \$10,684.49

³² Letter from Sinor to Karl Menges, 1964.

³³ The following data was taken from the Indiana University Financial Statements, 1955-56, 56-57, 57-58, 58-59, 60-61, 61-62, 62-63, 63-64, 64-65, and 65-66, which in each case ended the fiscal year on June 30.

Slavic Studies:	\$38,472.82	Salary: \$37,278.95
Graduate School (Folklore Program):	\$9,921.85	Salary: \$9,496.27

Additional funding listed for that year included Sebeok's program 'English for Hungarians' which was an effort to help refugees of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution (Sebeok 1992); Publications for the Center for Anthropology, Folklore and Linguistics (\$11,030.84) of which Sebeok was head; and a restricted grant labeled "American Philosophical Research-Sebeok" in the amount of \$750 for salary.

In the next financial report (57-58) we see the Linguistics Department double its budget, with smaller growth at both the Institute and in Slavic Studies. The general line items for the Folklore Program is re-designated the "Research Center for Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics with a total budget of \$30,043.77 and a salary budget of \$17,109.00.

In the 1958-1959 fiscal year, the Institute for East European Studies becomes the Institute of Russian and East European Studies, and the Department of Slavic Studies becomes the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature—which had by then grown to a total budget of \$74,346.24. This report also marked the arrival of NDEA funding for a Russian Language Institute, though extensive funding was delayed until the following fiscal year.³⁴

The 1959-1960 fiscal year marks the explosive growth of post-Sputnik and NDEA funded programs. The Air Force Language Training restarts and is funded by a \$217,492.86 grant. A Uralic and Asian Fellowship from Ford in the amount of \$3000 is recorded. A new Coordinator for Foreign Languages and Social Studies is budgeted, but this position lasts only until 1965. Three NDEA grants, two for the Russian Language

³⁴ Only \$677 is recorded for the 58-59FY, whereas the next year NDEA funding totals over \$100,000.

Institute and one for East European Studies bring in income of over \$120,000; while Sebeok has an American Council for Learned Societies (ACLS) and two NSF grants totaling over \$24,500.

The 1960-1961 report records the introduction of two new programs. A Department³⁵ of Asian Studies with a total budget of \$22,778.03 and a Program in Uralic-Altaic Studies under the Graduate School with a total budget of \$9,551.24 of which almost all was for salaries. The Air Force training continues at \$192,000, recorded as restricted funds under the Linguistics Department; Slavic Languages and Literature has a total budget of \$230,739.87 including \$164,942.41 in restricted funds from NDEA grants, and Asian Studies has a new NDEA grant of \$13,800. Sebeok again has a number of budget lines for grants from the NSF and ACLS totaling over \$10,000, and another \$3000 for a Uralic and Asian Fellowship from Ford is recorded.

In 1961-1962 the numbers were as follows:

Asian Studies (including \$41,756.55 restricted)	\$72,846.61	Salary: \$27,762.75
Inst for REE Studies (incl. \$16,780.08 rest.)	\$24,047.43	Salary: \$4,320.00
Linguistics (incl. \$338,874.50 rest.) ³⁶	\$372,997.51	Salary:
\$31,881.57		
Slavic Languages & Lit. (\$156,101.70 rest.)	\$250,896.37	Salary: \$90,353.16

³⁵ It is not clear from the Report whether it was truly called a Department at this point, but unlike the Program in Uralic-Altaic Studies this line item is recorded under the College of Arts and Sciences in a manner identical to traditional departments of COAS.

³⁶ The Air Force Language Training line was now renamed the Intensive Language Center, but continued to be included in the Linguistics Department's budget, making the Linguistics Department the fourth largest budget-wise out of 37 departments from 1961 to 1965.

GradSchool-Program in Uralic-Altaic Studies	\$25,702.27	Salary: \$22,513.00
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And in 1962-1963:

Asian Studies (including \$68,481.76 restricted)	\$107,039.81	Salary: \$35,378.02
Inst for REE Studies (incl. \$41,278.03 rest.)	\$51,865.95	Salary: \$8,091.87
Linguistics (incl. \$473,455.30 rest.)	\$527,962.34	Salary: \$50,450.51
Slavic Languages & Lit. (\$248,766.07 rest.)	\$371,063.73	Salary: \$115,899.88
GradSchool-Program in Uralic-Altaic Studies	\$42,104.48	Salary: \$40,868.96

The budgets had experienced astronomical growth, largely through the restricted funds whose sources were various grants, but also from increased university commitments to these areas, expressed through the increasing salary budgets covered by the University.

The 1963-1964 fiscal year budget saw small declines in the Institute for Russian and East European Studies, Linguistics, and Slavic Language and Literature, mostly due to a decrease in restricted funds. But two new programs were introduced, a Program in Latin American Studies (albeit with a budget of only \$3000) and the new Department of East Asian Languages and Literature. The Graduate Program in Uralic-Altaic Studies continued to grow, with \$4000 in budgeted salaries and the first budget line for the NDEA Center (recorded under “NDEA Linguistics”).

The 1964-1965 financial report again recorded small increases in East Asian Languages and Literature, the Institute of Russian and East European Studies,

Linguistics, Slavic Language and Literature and the Graduate Program in Uralic-Altaic Studies.³⁷ Professor Sinor also records his first two significant grants, both from the U.S. Office of Education, for \$18,000 and \$10,800 respectively.

The 1965-1966 Report records the shakeout in administrative arrangements that largely persist to this day. The Asian Studies program is all but absorbed into the East Asian Languages and Literature Department, with all but \$2,000 in budgeted salaries transferred. The Graduate Program in Uralic and Altaic Studies is transferred to the College of Arts and Sciences, and a new Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literature is introduced. Uralic and Altaic has a salary budget of \$93,394.50 and Sinor has two grants totaling over \$49,000 from the U.S. Office of Education. And in the 1966-1967 financial report Uralic and Altaic actually records a decline in budgeted salary to \$75,457, perhaps because of a transfer of Sebeok out of the Department's budget.³⁸

³⁷ Here are the numbers:

Asian Studies (\$103,794.35 restricted)	\$135,885.26	Salary: \$28,637.76
East Asian Lang & Lit	\$44,704.33	Salary: \$41,250.00
Inst. REE Studies (\$21,807.57 restricted)	\$35,925.73	Salary: \$11,243.27
Linguistics (\$497,163.03 restricted)	\$580,509.53	Salary: \$76,546.47
Slavic Lang. & Lit. (\$341,218.46 rest.)	\$479,903.68	Salary: \$132,501.30
GradSchool- Program in Uralic-Altaic Studies	\$53,037.69	Salary: \$50,093.00

³⁸ This is mere supposition, but based on the Sebeok's salary of \$14,400 in 1960-61; his declining interest in Uralic studies, and his continued investment in linguistics and semiotics, this seems a reasonable guess given no indication of such a major funding cut to faculty in the departmental communications of the period.

Scholarship

Looking at the scholarship on Central Eurasia produced by the students and faculty at Indiana University in the twenty year period from 1945 to 1965, one sees the bridge between the earliest scholar/adventurers of largely European origin and the robust study of Central Eurasia that now exists in the United States. The traditions of Stein, Pelliot, and Lattimore find their way to the halls of the mid-west.

The Hungarian interest in Central Asia, demonstrated by Armin Vambery of the 19th century and Aurel Stein of the early 20th was passed on in the interests of émigré Hungarians such as Denis Sinor, Thomas Sebeok, or students Laszlo Saimonisz (MA, 1965, Uralic and Altaic Studies) or Charles Gati (PhD, 1965, Government). Pelliot's discoveries at Dunhuang are studied by Bischoff and Sinor, and Lattimore's interests in Inner Asia are studied by Gerald Woodard (MA, 1949, History; Thesis: "Russia's relations with Outer Mongolia, 1911-1946") and Larry Moses (MA, 1966, Uralic and Altaic Studies) who would go on to earn a Ph.D. and then teach in the Department.

Others bridge the gap between the adventures of the early 20th century and modern scholarship through their own life stories. John Hangin was a refugee from Inner Mongolia who studied in Japan in the middle of World War II before arriving in the United States, while Seok Song lived through the Japanese occupation of Korea. Not only were Oinas and Raun refugees of Estonia, but a younger generation like Liina Keerdoja (MA, 1966, Uralic and Altaic Studies) and Emanuel Nodel (PhD, 1956, History) also found their way to Indiana University.

Interestingly, 22 non-linguistics majors have theses that involve a study of the Uralic and Altaic region between 1948 and 1966, yet of the 15 who mention either their

theses chair or their full committee, only one has one of the three original professors from the Program in Uralic and Altaic Studies. In addition, there are 20 students in the Linguistics Department whose theses involve the Uralic and Altaic regions, of whom five are theses on Cheremis, demonstrating again the impact of Sebeok's external funding on scholarship. Though there seems to be little connection between the linguistic study of the region and other specialties' studies prior to the establishment of a master's degree in Uralic and Altaic studies, once the degree is established, and the Department shortly thereafter, the Department does seem to achieve a better balance, with 6 of 20 masters theses and 3 of 8 Ph.D.s having a linguistics focus.

Together these young faculty and scholars served to establish Uralic and Altaic studies in America. A field in which virtually nothing was known came into existence.³⁹ And though at first built on the thinnest of threads,⁴⁰ the continued emphasis on building the program in the end resulted in a lasting foundation for studies of the region at Indiana University.

³⁹ In an example of how little was truly known, the Soviets, who themselves controlled much of the region, only published their first grammars of Karakalpak in 1951-1952. Н.А. Баскаков, Каракалпакский язык I, Материалы по диалектологии; II Фонетика и морфология, Часть I, Москва 1951-1952.

⁴⁰ Most exemplary perhaps is the Cheremis project – which produced five student theses and numerous external publications – and which was based largely on one human subject, who himself had not even lived in the Mari region proper. (Sebeok 195-)

Part II: “Oriental” Studies At IU

While the preceding discussion provides a narrative of the twists and turns that created the Uralic and Altaic program, it still remains to characterize what was created. Beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s, a debate arose within academia on how to study the many regions of the world that were gaining the attention of both government and academia. One solution, seeking at the same time to combine the strengths of multiple disciplines while overcoming resistance in various departments to the study of these new regions, was the creation of Area Studies programs. Though funded by numerous programs designed to support Area Studies, and ultimately named for a geographic region, the creation of the Uralic and Altaic Department did not create an “integrated area program” but rather bureaucratically formalized a program that in many ways continues to trace its intellectual roots to the older Orientalism from which its founders arose.⁴¹ The failure to create an integrated area program can be traced to five interlocking currents: the challenge of defining the area, the funding streams, the backgrounds of the founders, the decision to create a department, and the inaccessibility of the area’s central core.

As Area Studies began to be defined in the late 1940s and early 1950s several important definitions of a robust area program were promulgated. In 1947, Robert Hall,

⁴¹ Compare the definition of Orientalism as “an organic whole which is composed of the knowledge derived from the original sources concerning the language, religion, culture, history, geography, ethnography, literature and arts of the Orient” with Area Studies as “an enterprise call[ing] for extensive studies by many kinds of specialists, geographers, historians, economists, sociologists, demographers, psychologists, political scientists, literary and art critics, and so on.” Note the presence of modern social sciences in the second but not the first. The first is taken from the introduction to the 1939 Turkish edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* quoted in Reading Orientalism: Said and Unsaid, and the second from volume 1 of the Monograph Series on Area Studies (Canu 1952, 41).

in a study for the Social Science Research Council provided four criteria for area programs:

- 1) Did they have legal or at least quasi-legal standing within their institutions?
- 2) Did they include three or more pertinent disciplines, other than language, on something like a basis of equality?
- 3) Was adequate instruction provided – and a reasonable competence required in the language or languages needed for study of the area involved?
- 4) Was some workable medium of integration employed, such as joint seminars, cooperative courses, or group defined objectives and group analysis of results? (Hall 1947, 8)

Wendell Bennett, in a follow-up study for the SSRC in 1951, developed seven criteria for an “integrated area program”: “1) official university recognition and support of the program, 2) adequate library resources both for teaching and research on the area, 3) competent instruction in the principal languages of the area, 4) offerings in at least five pertinent subjects in addition to language instruction, 5) some specific mechanisms for integrating the area studies, 6) an area research program, and 7) emphasis on the contemporary aspects of the area” (Mintz 1956, 9; Bennett 1951, 7-9).⁴²

By the mid-1950s, a large number of area studies programs had come into existence, as evidenced in a survey of the programs done by Sidney Mintz for the Human Relations Area Files. As Mintz defined the task of area studies, he saw three large-scale objectives – the training of specialists, the provision of practical knowledge, and the broadening and deepening of knowledge (Mintz, 11). In contrast, for Bennett the purpose was “largely, if not primarily, to provide data of a policy character” (Mintz, 10).

⁴² It is interesting to note that Bennett, writing in 1951, included in his list one Indiana University program as an “integrated area studies” program. The program was listed under Europe, “titled” “East European Studies”, with “coverage” as “East European with emphasis on Finno-Ugric studies” and an “emphasis” on “language and culture” (70-71). The subsequent separation into REEI, the Slavic Department, and Uralic and Altaic Studies Department may also have played a role in the lack of integration in the Uralic and Altaic studies program.

The passage of time since the post-WWII explosion of area studies programs allowed Mintz to assess some of their strengths and weaknesses. One key problem was one of employment – area studies PhD’s could only find work in similar area studies programs – not in disciplinary programs (while the reverse was not necessarily true) (Mintz, 14-15). In addition, he noted concerns that area programs do not give a student a solid core of (disciplinary) knowledge – but said this objection is often repudiated by seeing area programs as supplementing rather than supplanting disciplinary programs (Mintz, 14). Finally, he noted concerns about the administrative challenges of running an area program (Mintz, 15) – a challenge exemplified at Indiana University by the various changes in area programs (East European to REEI; Uralic and Asian Studies to both Uralic and Altaic Studies and East Asian Studies) and by the concerns that led to the creation of the Uralic and Altaic Department,

The advantages spelled out included the view that area studies were essential to a well-informed national and international policy, that they provide cross-cultural sophistication of an essential kind, and that they provide bridges between disciplines “which otherwise may remain parochial and isolated” (16). Mintz summarized by saying: “Certainly the recent national emergency and the development of postwar foreign policy has proved abundantly the strategic advantages of area knowledge in peace as well as in war” (16).

From Linguistics towards Integrated

Though Sebeok was quite successful in harnessing the push for area knowledge to build a nationally-renowned center of Uralic and Altaic studies, by the early 1960’s this

center was still clearly dominated by a focus on linguistic knowledge and issues. As Sinor came in he made a deliberate attempt to broaden the focus of studies, and as the early history of theses in the new Department demonstrated, was successful in moving the majority of theses away from purely linguistic studies while maintaining linguistic elements as a key component of the program.

Sinor was quite concerned about the need for more than linguistics, noting in an April 3, 1964 memo that the NDEA funding, though traditionally interpreted as supporting only linguistic studies, should properly be interpreted as supporting a broader area studies program.⁴³ Sinor said this would facilitate a “different – not exclusively linguistically oriented – type of student”. As Sinor told one potential student: “You have probably consulted the old catalog prepared at a time when the Uralic and Altaic Programs concentrated mainly on the linguistic aspects of these studies. Today, you have no linguistic requirements to fulfill for admission to the Uralic and Altaic Program.”⁴⁴ Sinor went on to say in his memo to Dean Ashton that Uralic and Altaic should be “presented as a ‘normal’ area-study” and that “even closer collaboration [should be sought] with the Departments of History, East Asian Languages and Literatures, and the

⁴³ The relevant portion of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 is:
“TITLE VI-LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Part A-Centers and Research and Studies

Language and Area Centers

Sec. 601. (a) The Commissioner is authorized to arrange through contracts with institutions of higher education for the establishment and operation by them, during the period beginning July 1, 1958, and ending with the close of June 30, 1962, of centers for the teaching of any modern foreign language with respect to which the Commissioner determines (1) that individuals trained in such language are needed by the Federal Government or by business, industry, or education in the United States, and (2) that adequate instruction in such language is not readily available in the United States. Any such contract may provide for instruction not only in such modern foreign language but also in other fields needed to provide a full understanding of the areas, regions, or countries in which such language is commonly used, to the extent adequate instruction in such fields is not readily available, including fields such as history, political science, linguistics, economics, sociology, geography, and anthropology....”

⁴⁴ Letter to Mr. William KS Tobin, Lanham, MD, from Sinor, May 14, 1964

Asian Studies Program in general...also representatives of two important new fields of studies (Tibetan and Korean history)”.⁴⁵

However, even this broader approach fell short of a truly ‘integrated’ area studies, for though he included history, language, and literature, Sinor did not include anthropology, economics, political science, sociology or law. Essentially, he included the disciplines of traditional Orientalists,⁴⁶ but not of the new social scientists, to which area study programs more generally had shown a keen regard.⁴⁷ The inclusion of another area studies program (Asian studies) as one of the “disciplines” in which Uralicists and Altaists had studied⁴⁸ suggests that one challenge to having an “integrated area program” was the definition of what area was being studied. It also indicated a failure to reach the “five pertinent subjects” outside of language instruction that Bennett had demanded.

Also missing were the specific mechanisms for integrating the area studies. In contrast to the Uralic and Altaic program, the Latin American studies program at Indiana University demonstrated this integration right from the beginning. As the 1957-58 Indiana University Graduate Bulletin puts it: “[Latin American Studies] embraces courses which deal with the races, geographic conditions, historical evolution, social problems, folklore, and literatures of the respective Latin-American nations. Provision is made for the active exchange of ideas between students and specialists in the four

⁴⁵ Memo from Denis Sinor to Dean John W. Ashton, Subject: Annual Report, dated Spring 1964.

⁴⁶ Sinor is part of the last great generation of Orientalists – he himself was Secretary General of the 23rd International Congress of Orientalists held at Cambridge University in 1954. (Sinor 1963) (Statutes at Large, Public Law 85-864, p. 1580-1605)

⁴⁷ In a fascinating example of this difference, in the “NDEA Uralic and Altaic Language and Area Center Technical Report for 1965-1966” the standard table for demonstrating the disciplines in which the area studies program had had students granted degrees included the following list: Language & Literature, Linguistics, Area (specify), Anthropology, Arts, Economics, Education, Geography, Government & Political Science, History, Philosophy & Religion, and Sociology. However, in a subsequent report the Center crosses out Arts and Economics and instead inserts Folklore and Asian Studies, while listing no degrees in most of the listed fields beyond language, linguistics, anthropology and history.

⁴⁸ See fn 47.

interdepartmental courses (L400, 402, 404, 406) [also required for M.A. students] in which professors from several disciplines are present to lead and integrate the topics under discussion.” These integrated courses were quite common in area studies of the time, but Uralic and Altaic had no such sequence.

Defining the Area

Perhaps the most obvious challenge in creating an “integrated area program” is the question of what area is actually being studied. This has been a continual source of angst for Uralic and Altaic studies. Nicholas Poppe, the founder of Altaic studies at the University of Washington, said: “The subject of Altaic studies comprises the descriptive, historical, and comparative investigation of the so-called Altaic languages, including dialectology. It does not include the literature or history of the peoples speaking Altaic languages, because the peoples concerned do not represent a cultural or historical unity. Consequently, Altaic studies are a branch of linguistics.” (Poppe 1962, 1) As Sinor himself points out, the area has not one, but seven distinct cultures and as he says in the opening lines of an article arguing for the importance of Altaic Studies: “I always feel distrustful toward any discipline that has to make strenuous efforts to define itself.” (Sinor 1963) This linguistic region includes numerous areas covered or potentially covered by other departments, including Turkey, Korea, China (under the Mongols), and (Finno-Ugric) Eastern Europe. The change in the name of the region studied (from Uralic and Altaic to Inner Asia to Central Eurasia) also demonstrates the challenge of defining the region. If those shepherding the field must always come back to the basics

of what the area actually consists of, they cannot focus on the disciplinary coverage of the area – the focus too often remains on the correct geographic coverage.

Funding Streams

The availability or lack thereof of various funding streams also served to pull the program in various directions. Initially (i.e. throughout the late '40s and '50s) funding was primarily focused on language acquisition. Without a Department already in existence for the area, Linguistics ended up hosting the language training, partly also as a result of the assumption that linguistics and language acquisition go together (though later arguments surface describing the real gap between understanding the linguistic nature of language(s) and actually acquiring a working knowledge of a language). But the placement of language learning in Linguistics meant that an already strong emphasis on language learning from external sources was only magnified, as the disciplinary aspects of Linguistics naturally led students to focus ever greater efforts on linguistic issues rather than other aspects of the area.

Later funding also served to magnify the instability of the area. While the successful establishment of the NDEA Title VI center in 1962 could have resulted in a consolidation of the area, the loss of a Uralic category for Title VI funding by 1967 meant that support for graduate student fellowships in Uralic and Altaic studies had to be garnered from applications to other areas. Inner and East Asia, the Near and Middle East, and East Europe each were funding categories under Title VI, and since the Uralic and Altaic field touched on all these areas, discussion of the area found its way into

applications for funding from IU in all three of these categories.⁴⁹ While the success of IU in receiving this funding meant that Uralic and Altaic students had a rich stream of financial support, it also meant that the leadership of the program and of IU were never forced to focus on the development of the area program. Because there was no external submission, there was no contract between IU and the funding agency specifically focused on how the Uralic and Altaic area program would be grown. Instead, the growth of the program is mentioned in an appendix or postscript in each of the other applications and as long as the three main programs moved forward it would have been unlikely for funders to strongly question the status of the outlying Uralic and Altaic aspects of the other programs.

Finally, the availability of funding from international sources was also a centrifugal force on the program. While as a geographic region the center is Mongolia, Xinjiang, or Soviet Central Asia, the primary source of international support during the first twenty years came from two countries on the very periphery of the region – Hungary and Finland. While solid arguments were made for the linguistic and historical connection between these two regions and Inner Asia, the present geographic reality was far different. Yet each of these countries contributed truly substantial resources to the program, with Finland supplying a visiting professor position for two crucial years in the mid-1960s while Hungary provided key support via a series of lecturers from the mid-1960s on.

⁴⁹ See the file “NDFL Title VI Applications, 68-69” in IU Archives.

Background of Founders

In addition to the strong influence of Linguistics, the program may also have been influenced by the national backgrounds of both faculty and students. Of the ten faculty present for the 1964-1965 Academic Year, only four were born in the United States. One was from Turkey, and the remaining five, including three of the four full professors, were from either Hungary or Finland. While both countries could claim linguistic connections to the region studied—since Finno-Ugric is a subset of Uralic languages—these nations were on the very edge of the linguistic/cultural core of the Uralic & Altaic region, and like the funding, continued interest in Finno-Ugric studies may have served to distract from concentrating on the core Central Eurasian region.

Beyond the impact on the development of the Department as an area studies program, the backgrounds of the faculty and students would have played a significant role in the life of the department in its earliest days. In addition to the faculty, of the 70 students whose theses with either written in the Department of Uralic & Altaic Studies (1965-1972) or which touched on the region prior to the formation of the department, 28 were from overseas, and 24 either had foreign travel or overseas missionary⁵⁰ or military experience prior to starting their work at IU. Of those from overseas, 12 appear to have been refugees from their native countries, and several more had experienced war time conditions while growing up. The initial years of the program included an astounding depth of experiences among the students, who in many cases had personally witnessed the great upheavals of World War II and its aftermath, whether in Eastern Europe, Palestine, Korea, or Inner Mongolia; or had been trained in the first wave of Cold War

⁵⁰ Four students, all apparently from the Church of Latter Day Saints, had spent time in Finland (2 as acknowledged missionaries) prior to their arrival at IU.

military service, often in programs which could trace their roots to the ASTP of IU and other locations.⁵¹

The Decision to create a Department

Sinor indicates that one of his primary goals as he assumed leadership of the Uralic and Altaic program was the creation of a Department, which he accomplished in 1966. (Sinor 1993) This was a goal that Sebeok had championed as well, and with the submersion of Eastern European studies into the Slavic program and the disappearance of the Uralic and Altaic Department at Columbia, the decision to create a full department must have made eminent sense.

The creation of the Department did ensure the longevity of Central Eurasian studies at Indiana University. Faculty who had previously been funded by external grants or by other departments now had a home where their administrative duties, financial concerns and scholarly interests would all be organizationally linked. While tenure in other departments might ensure the individual scholar would remain, by organizing as a Department, faculty lines would be more likely to rollover to new faculty of similar commitment as old faculty retired. And a department chair has greater influence within the larger university than a program or institute head. As Sebeok says of Russian area studies “As various deans came and went, a college dean as a knee-jerk reflex would tolerate the area students, but lean towards the departments” (Lubamersky 1993, 103).

⁵¹ Five students directly acknowledge military intelligence or language training – the circumstance of several others (including the development of an interest in this region) suggest it.

That said, by creating a department, particularly one covering such a vast geographic area, there was a real danger that the multi-disciplinarity of area studies would be lost. The initial hirings in the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies demonstrate this point. As the Department laid out its hiring hopes in the middle and late sixties, the focus was on covering gaps in languages, areas, or historical periods. So, Ottoman Turkish was covered, but not (yet) modern Turkish; Uralic languages, but not Altaic; Pre-Mongol history, but not post-Timurid or Russian colonial history. But the more modern disciplines which area studies had usually tried to attract were not mentioned – no mention is made of a need for an economic approach, a legal approach, or a political science approach to the region. While these fields might indeed have had scholars interested in the region, these scholars had to find a home in their disciplinary departments, and given the focus on independence by Sinor, this was bound to be a less than ideal situation for those scholars.⁵²

The Inaccessibility of the Area's Core

While to some extent the other factors leading to the failure to establish a truly “integrated” area studies program could have been mitigated through additional funding, or altered attitudes and structures, one fundamental reality during the period covered created an almost insurmountable barrier to the creation of an integrated area studies program: the political realities on the ground in the region. During most of the period in question, Soviet Central Asia, Siberia, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang were all essentially

⁵² Sinor: “Once I became Chair of the Department and Director of the Center I became quite ferocious ... (He now bares his teeth and growls) and remain today ferocious on the subject of autonomy.” (Lubermersky 1993, 105)

off-limits to foreign researchers. While there were exceptions, these were few and far between, with researchers contending not only with issues of access, but at least in the Chinese territories, real issues of instability and danger as well. And for the modern disciplines whose absence is one indicator of Uralic and Altaic studies' failure to achieve an "integrated" program, the situation was almost impossible. For the lawyer, there was no independent legal system to compare—only imperial systems whose study would place you squarely in other area programs. While a general study of Marxist economics was surely possible, detailed study of the local and regional economic structures was far too sensitive politically to allow the economist free reign. Similarly, communist leaders were unlikely to welcome the detailed research questions of a political scientist or sociologist into the current state of affairs. In the end, only linguistics, history, literature or historical anthropology were sufficiently apolitical to allow interaction between western and Soviet scholars, and even these disciplines were often confronted with spillover from the ideological contest between East and West.

Today the regions of Central Eurasian are far more accessible than ever before to the Western scholar. While politics can interfere (witness for example the near complete closure of Uzbekistan to researchers in 2006), there are ample opportunities to research almost any question across a wide swath of the region historically associated with Uralic and Altaic studies. And not only are research agendas more accessible, but there are potentials for academic partnership that have never existed before—not only with western-backed institutions such as the American University of Central Asia or ACTR/ACCELS study centers, but with the educational institutions of sovereign nations

such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan who now find themselves with both the financial resources and reframed ideological stances that might allow them to develop mutually beneficial partnerships. A chair in Kazakh studies or a 2-year visiting professorship in Turkmen Cultural Affairs is a stretch to envision, but no more so than a Hungarian chair in 1957 or a Finnish professorship in Indiana in 1943. The challenge will be to continue to steer a clear course toward an integrated study of the area, wary of any extreme—whether the government’s funding of languages without context, disciplinary emphasis on theory and broad applicability over thick description, or scholarly nostalgia for an age when the lust of knowledge was sufficient justification and the demands and costs of the field of higher education were not nearly so complex.

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