



Press Release

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New Collection of Articles on the Ukrainian Language

In 2008 the Kharkiv Historical and Philological Society published an extensive collection of articles on the Ukrainian language by Michael Moser, associate professor of linguistics at the Institute of Slavic Studies, University of Vienna. The publication of *Prychynky do istorii ukraïns'koï movy* (Contributions to the History of the Ukrainian Language) was jointly supported by the Kowalsky Program for the Study of Eastern Ukraine at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) and the Natalia Danylchenko Fund of the Shevchenko Scientific Society in the United States. The Kowalsky Program, supported by the Michael and Daria Kowalsky Endowment Fund at CIUS, promotes the study of eastern Ukraine and the revival of its scholarly, cultural, and educational potential. This publication project benefited greatly from Professor Moser's long-standing collaboration with scholars from Ukraine, especially Professor Serhii Vakulenko of Kharkiv University, the editor and principal translator of the collection, who has also worked with the Kowalsky Program on other projects.

The 27 articles making up this collection were originally written in several languages—German, English, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian. They stress the international importance of the Ukrainian language and make a significant contribution to the field of linguistics. The articles deal with a broad range of historical aspects of the Ukrainian language, including issues of East European linguistic unity, a variety of documents, historical variants of Ukrainian such as *prosta mova* ("plain" Ruthenian) and *iazychiie* (a bookish western Ukrainian language of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), old Ukrainian translations, the *Synopsis* of 1674, and regional aspects of the language, mainly those associated with Galicia and Transcarpathia during the period of Habsburg rule.

Given the shift in the political context of scholarship that took place after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it should be noted that Professor Moser's work helps undermine the notion of a "common Old Rus' language," which remains dominant in Russian linguistics. Moser follows the prominent Ukrainian linguist and literary scholar George Y. Shevelov (Yurii Sheveliov, 1908–2002) in substantiating the concept of a "linguistic and dialectal zone" out of which the Ukrainian, Russian, and Belarusian languages developed. The Austrian scholar is the first to analyze in detail five Galician documents from the turn of the fifteenth century that contain unique linguistic forms and illustrate the intensity of Polish-Ukrainian contacts during that period. Further on, he scrutinizes the efforts of nineteenth-century Galician Russophiles to represent Russian as the region's sole literary language and treat the local "Rusyn" language as one of its dialects.

A well-developed linguistic terminology is a significant indicator of the growth of national consciousness. In this respect, the author recognizes Habsburg Vienna as a leading centre in working out such a terminological system for the Ukrainian language. Drawing attention to the language policy of the former USSR, which sought to bring that country's languages closer to the structure of Russian, Moser notes that they are still at risk and emphasizes the need for active linguistic development in the newly independent successor states.

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Publications on the Ukrainian language and linguistics supported by CIUS have included works by such authors as Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, Bohdan Strumiński, Mykola Pavliuk, and George Y. Shevelov. Michael Moser, who is fluent in Ukrainian, has worked with the Institute on a number of projects. He began as a specialist in German philology, and his work on the comparative and historical aspects of that subject led him to take an interest in the Slavic languages, most notably Ukrainian. Shevelov's works proved a major stimulus in the development of that interest.

These collected articles, which feature meticulous analysis, numerous examples, and historical and comparative parallels, are of particular value to linguists exploring the history of the Ukrainian language. They will also be useful to specialists in other (especially Slavic) languages, as well as to historians, literary and cultural scholars, and all those interested in the history of the Ukrainian language and culture. *Prychynky do istorii ukraïns'koï movy* (ISBN 978-966-1630-01-6) can be purchased by contacting the Kharkiv Historical and Philological Society (ist_fil_tov@yahoo.com).