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NüShu — It's not for you, guys!

by Simon Wong

"Beside a well, one won't thirst; beside a sister, one won't despair."
— line from a NüShu verse

In today's Chinese society, women enjoy freedoms their ancestors would never have dreamed of. Nonetheless, although women in the old days were deprived of learning opportunities, their passion to communicate their feelings—so often sorrow, despair, anger and bitterness—could not be taken away. Asian culture may be introversive—self-expression is private and not meant to be revealed in public—but somehow, an in-group means of self-expression used for centuries has been made known to the world.

The name "NüShu" (or "Nushu") is a phonetic transcription of a Chinese term meaning "women's (or better, female) writing." In spite of the intriguing labels "hidden language" or "secret language" used in popular reports (e.g., Cody), it is neither. Strictly-speaking NüShu is not even a "women's script," privileged only to female initiates; it is simply ignored and considered as a "womanish" and "unworthy" play-game, or as Chiang has successfully proved, a socially low derivative of Hanzi. It is not a distinct language or dialect, but mainly a written form, a *script* representing more or less the *language* of a regional local dialect; generally, men speaking the dialect would understand NüShu if they heard it sung aloud. NüShu was first (re-)discovered in PuMei Village, a town of less than 20,000 people, in JiangYong county (Hunan Province). The script is also used in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

(Re-)discovery of NüShu

The use of NüShu would have been absorbed by the dominate Han Chinese without notice if not for an unforgotten experience of a 12-year old boy, Zhou ShuoYi. Zhou's aunt married into a neighboring village where the women used NüShu writing. She brought with her a family etiquette book which for centuries had taught the new brides in the family proper manners toward their husbands and in-laws. The NüShu women were pleased with the content and translated it into NüShu. By this process, the women played an important role in cultural exchange—texts from Han culture were translated into NüShu and women who married in from the outside learned the script.

In a visit, Zhou's aunt brought the NüShu translation back to the family. Zhou was fascinated by the writing, but his research on the script did not start till 1954 (almost 20 years later) when he was working at the JiangYong Cultural Bureau. Unfortunately, his work was cut short by the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), when party leaders were trying to erase the country's history in order to build an entirely "new China" with no connection to its feudal past or traditions. Subsequently, NüShu was denounced as "evil characters" (suspected as spy code or lesbian writing) and no one dared use it. Zhou surmised that many NüShu documents were burned. All his own research materials were burned and he was imprisoned for 21 years because of his research on NüShu.

Growing Interest in NüShu

Persecution did not dampen Zhou's avid interest in NüShu. In 1981, he wrote an article about NüShu, reintroducing the phenomenon to China and attracting national and international attention (Gong & Zhou 1986). Last year he published a dictionary which represents his years of field study.

Although Zhou (now in his 80s) is often regarded as the first to reveal the script to the world, more well-grounded research has since been carried out, for example, by Zhao LiMing (Tsinghua University in Beijing), the most prominent scholar on NüShu research nowadays, and Xie ZhiMin, who heads up the NüShu Cultural Research Center at South-Central University for Nationalities.

Sociolinguists, cultural-anthropologists, and women studies specialists from overseas are also interested in the rediscovery of the script. The Japanese sociolinguist Orie Endo, who has traveled to the sites every year since 1993, and maintains a comprehensive website on NüShu, wrote a monograph on the subject. At least three doctoral dissertations (see References) and numerous scholarly articles explore the uses, significance and sociocultural functions of NüShu. An excellent documentary film was made by Yang YueQing in Canada.

Because of growing international interest in NüShu, the local governments of Hunan and JiangYong county have stepped up preservation of NüShu. In 2002, at PuMei Village the JiangYong county government opened the "NüShu Culture Village," turning the ShangJiangXu township into an open "NüShu culture museum."

Preservation (or desecration) of the Script

In the preservation of language data, a *speech* form is easier to authenticate than a *script* form; forged texts can go undetected, and this is the situation that NüShu is facing now.

Authentic NüShu texts are rare because according to the local custom, they were supposed to be burned or buried with the dead. Experts in China have collected just over 300 pieces—handkerchiefs, aprons, scarves and handbags embroidered with NüShu writing, and manuscripts written on paper or fans. The earliest NüShu object found so far, according to Zhao LiMing, is a bronze coin from the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (1851-1864), with a NüShu inscription on the back that reads "All women on earth are one family."

When Zhao began researching NüShu materials in the 1980s, villagers often gave her pieces for nothing. But tourist demand has pushed up prices (a book can bring up to US $400 dollars), and encouraged forgeries. The desire to make a profit has hindered preservation and research. Men are composing NüShu documents, even introducing new characters. Zhao told one reporter that, of four NüShu works she bought in JiangYong in 2003, three were forgeries: "what currently threatens NüShu most is not the danger of being lost, it is the danger of losing its authenticity." (Miao 2003)

To address the problem, the JiangYong County Government designated five women as official "NüShu transmitters" in 2003. An authorized transmitter must be able to sing traditional songs, write and read the script, and compose poems; but there is no specific criterion on the writing style, and these women all write in different styles. Of the five, only two are truly native NüShu writers—the other three acquired the language skill from others later in life. Yang HuanYi was recognized as the only living person with firsthand experience of the entire process of NüShu culture. That is, she had a "non-kin sister" as a girl, with whom she learned NüShu; she sang NüShu songs with her sisters, and could sing her life story using NüShu. Yang passed away just a year ago at the age of about 98.

Apart from honoring the genuine NüShu writers, the chief purpose of the certification was to put a stop to forgery of NüShu material, unfortunately by producing "genuine duplicates." In the NüShu Culture Village, classes on writing NüShu are held for local people and outsiders—people who are entirely unrelated to the NüShu culture and do not share the passion of the writing. Such artificial preservation and transmission removes the writing from its sociolinguistic functionality. What makes the writing valuable is surely not the form of the script, but the passion and emotional attachment of the native writer to the writing. He YaXin, though an official transmitter, is reluctant to teach or even to write NüShu nowadays because it recalls the bitter experiences of her youth. As she told Orie in an interview: "While I am writing, I sometimes weep. Sufferings and sorrow are the themes of most NüShu works."

In her most recent visit (2004) to the village, Orie reports: "rather than respecting the original form of NüShu and working toward its preservation as a style faithfully following the NüShu tradition, they are privileging its utility in the development of the tourist industry" (Orie 2005, "Chinese Women's Script: Research Report, September 2004"). Like many such efforts, when government officials talk about preservation, they actually mean "cultural tourism"; but tourism does not always help to preserve culture.

Origin and (Socio-) linguistic Peculiarities of NüShu

The origin of NüShu remains a subject of debate. Some scholars date the script to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 BC), some before the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC), others like Zhou ShuoYi hypothesize that it even predates the oracle-bone inscriptions of the Shang Dynasty (16th -11th century BC). However ancient the script, it has obviously been heavily influenced by the Han

Chinese script (Chiang, Orie and Zhao). Recent researchers consider NüShu a result of a hybrid Yao-Han culture (Miller 2004). Orie believes it was invented by women literate in Chinese character script, possibly several hundred years ago. Any modern Chinese reader would easily recognize the resemblance between NüShu script and Chinese characters. Many NüShu characters look like diagonally stretched versions of regular modern Han

NüShu song with parallel Mandarin Chinese in simplified script

Chinese characters (see picture). "The whole aspect of the script, inked thinly with crosshatched lines and threadlike tendrils, resembles complex embroidery designs, a similarity which folk theory links to its origin" (Miller 2001).

Early research on NüShu identified more than 1200 characters in surviving NüShu texts, but actually many forms are variations of the same character, and it is now believed that the writing system contains around 500-700 "core graphs." Most of the extant texts were read from right to left and top to bottom, although later on when NüShu was taught to new learners, it was written horizontally and left to right, as in modern Chinese or English. Unlike the Han Chinese script, NüShu is predominantly syllabic. Each graph represents a syllable, which sometimes is an exact equivalent of a Chinese character, but more often repre-

sents a sound unit which may substitute for many Chinese characters. According to Silber (1994: 396 n.18), the local dialect that NüShu is based on is mutually unintelligible with Mandarin Chinese, and contains a large number of expressions for which there are no *Hanzi* equivalents. Some NüShu expressions are incomprehensible to dialect speakers now in their forties. Speech differences for NüShu are found not only between generations but also between villages.

NüShu texts

Of the entire corpus of authentic NüShu writings (as distinguished from "new" compositions), two kinds of texts may be identified. One is short, usually written in embroidery on fans, handkerchiefs and scarves; the other is running text, written on paper, including memoirs, admonitions (how to be a good wife and daughter-in-law), autobiography, personal letters to the non-kin sisters, or renditions of Chinese classics such as the famous romance of ZhuYingTai.

The texts are composed mostly in "formulaic" verse expressing grief and sorrow at women's lot in life; "the reader usually chants aloud in a set melody which is repeated every two sentences…. Since the sentences almost always have either seven or five words, the length of the sentence does not vary and fits well with the melodies" (Chiang, 1991:13).

Among the more formal writings of NüShu such as personal letters or adapted translation, *San Chao Shu* (see picture, next page) constitutes an important cultural practice in the NüShu community. Usually translated "Third Day Booklet," it is a wedding keepsake for the new bride, a cloth-bound booklet, decorated with colored ink and paper cutouts, containing songs and lyrics in NüShu. There are usually empty pages for the

bride's personal embroidery patterns and threads. *San Chao Shu* is often a joint composition to the bride by all the women in her natal family, such as her kin or non-kin sisters and her mother. It is to be sung aloud among women of the bride's marital home and village, and is delivered to the young married woman on the third day of her marriage; if not, the woman would have no respect from her husband and his family because she is seen as deserted by her natal family. In the extant *San Chao Shu*, the contents are highly conventionalized, primarily because it is meant to be performed orally (McLaren, 1996). They all express the writers' pain and anger over losing the bride to marriage; rarely are there words of congratulation. *San Chao Shu* is more lament and condolence than celebratory wedding gift.

Transmission of texts

While "secret language" is an exaggeration to describe NüShu, there is some sense of "secrecy" in the language form used. NüShu is not a common communication medium for all women in the JiangYong areas. It is used chiefly by a group of non-kin sisters; girls could swear oaths of sisterhood from the age of ten. They did women's work with other non-kin sisters (weaving, sewing and embroidery), celebrated special seasons and festivals together and farewelled sisters on their marriage.

NüShu is usually transmitted in intimate settings, such as the upper room (sometimes called "Nühong shi") while sewing or weaving. He Yanxin reminisced how her grandmother used to teach her: she would sing a phrase while writing it on her palm or with a twig in the earth. "I often saw my grandmother cry [as she wrote] /
I would weep together with her /
I asked her why she cried so much /
She said I knew not of her pain."

(Orie 1997; English translation from McLaren 2000).

Photos: Endo Orie; used with permission

Significance of NüShu in Cultural Studies

The term "Chinese," whether referring to the culture or language, carries a strong political overtone. With more than 50 ethnic groups and over 120 distinct languages under the single political entity of China, the term "Chinese culture" is often understood by many scholars as a "single complex cultural system" with a core "system of values, a common socio-ethical framework based on Confucianism in which all, including illiterate men and women, participated in one way or another" (McLaren 1998). In this complex, the use of one script (*Hanzi*, "Han character") functions as a unifying cultural force, as it is not restricted to any one language.

Given this depiction of "Chinese culture," the appearance of NüShu was bound to catch the attention of so many scholars in different fields. Here is a socially marginalized group who invented their own form of communication—"women's writing"—distinct from the predominate Chinese character script sometimes known as *NanShu*, "men's writing" (McLaren 1998).

How do we interpret this socio-textual phenomenon? Chinese society has generally been viewed as repressive for women. There is thus a tendency (especially among Euro-Americans) to romanticize NüShu "as a discourse of resistance

and enshrine its writers as heroines in a national (or global) struggle against gender oppression." (Silber 1994:47) This perspective is most popular in mass news reporting on NüShu, and is also shared by some key Chinese scholars. For example, Zhao describes NüShu as a cultural revolt. "Women used NüShu to complain, yet the complaint was not disheartened. On the contrary, it emits a bright radiance of freedom." (Miao 2003)

It is undeniable that women were repressed in China, and probably still are in most parts of modern China; the lamenting tone of almost all NüShu texts together with other cultural practices of the community such as foot-binding and arranged marriage seem to support the idea that these discourses reflect the anti-Confucian and anti-oppressive sentiment of the authors. Cathy Silber, an American anthropologist and feminist, has examined the relationship between the complex non-kin sisterhood relationship and the marriage discourses of the NüShu texts. Interestingly, she had begun her study on NüShu with the same sentiment, but came to an entirely different conclusion by the end.

Ritual siblinghood was quite common in ancient Chinese culture and is still practiced today. The non-kin sister relationship found in the NüShu community is highly developed; at least two kinds of sisterhood may be identified: "sworn sisters" (*jiebai zhimei*) or "old same" (*laotong*), depending on the degree of intimacy, age, and number of membership (Silber 1994).

The "old same" represents a more rigid and committed non-kin sister relationship than the "sworn sister." It is restricted to two females, sometimes of the same age; the commitment is lifelong and intimate, "based in fidelity, great emotional attachment, and mutual high regard," and sometimes involve a pact. Most of the letters

and *San Chao Shu* were written by these *laotong* sisters. Silber has pointed out that many of these letters depict the sisterhood "as an exclusive couple through repeated use of pair metaphors and both implicit and explicit analogies to marriage" (p.52). This special non-kin sibling bond may explain why the NüShu women (and especially the *laotong* sisters), contrary to the norm of the dominant culture, have little motivation to marry, and experience the kind of sadness expressed in the *San Chao Shu*.

It may also explain the practice of "delayed marriage," in which the new bride returned to her home on the third day (perhaps after receiving the *San Chao Shu*) until the birth of her first child. During this period, she would visit her husband 4-5 times a year on special occasions with gifts from her natal home. Under these circumstances, it would usually take 2-3 years to conceive, and if conception was not successful in that time, the family would look down on the bride or arrange a second wife for the husband (Silber, 1994: 398 n.57). Silber concludes: "the social institutions oppressive to women, though dominant and pervasive and seemingly permanent, were not so monolithic as to render women utterly passive victims with no room to maneuver. The more important issue … in these peer group discourses about marriage is the durability of girlhood relationships after marriage."

NüShu texts are an instance of both "women's writing" traditions and oral art performance. As a kind of women's writing, NüShu is not unique; similar female scripts have arisen in other cultures such as Japan and Korea. McLaren has pointed out that certain well-educated, socially elite women in China, such as those in Jiangnan, also created their own expressive culture. However, their writing often falls "within the confines of a

language and literary genres constructed by men" (McLaren 1998). By contrast, NüShu writings were composed by the non-elite (many of whom did not know Han Chinese), and do not conform to the dominant literary conventions.

In the history of women's writings, NüShu gives us insight concerning a socially-marginalized group of a society. "Unlearned women clearly had a 'technology of the word' or line of oral transmission (in the influential notion of Walter Ong) which allowed them to create, transmit and preserve in written form a gender-specific tradition which diverged significantly from elite culture generally, including the culture of elite women." (McLaren, 1998)

The dialect encoded by NüShu is not among the 120 plus official minority languages in China, so the Asia-Pacific Area has one less potential project to be concerned with! In the past decade or two, preservation of endangered languages has stirred much interest from linguists and national leaders, but we must ask ourselves whether our zeal for language preservation arises from our academic interest, or whether it truly grows out of our respect for the language speakers themselves. Many native users of NüShu may prefer that their language, used to express their sorrows, not be remembered.

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Recent Publications

*Inclusion of an item in **TIC Talk** does not necessarily mean we recommend it, or that we have seen it, though in most cases we have. It means that the article or book (sometimes by title alone) looks as if it might be of interest to our readers. Names in **bold** indicate people who are in some way related to UBS. Other bolding is for quick location of the general topic.*

Bible Translation

Translation and Religion: Holy Untranslatable. 2005. L. Long, ed. University of Toronto Press. Scholars of the Qur'an, the Bible, Buddhism, and Hinduism and Jainism provide insight into the complexities of **translating holy texts**. The first group of essays sets out broad issues and a contextual framework for recurring themes; the second group presents case studies. Titles related to Bible are: "Prophecy and Tongues: St. Paul, Interpreting and Building the House," K. Onur Toker; "Texts and Contexts: Perspectives on Jewish Translations of the Hebrew Bible," Leonard Greenspoon; "Archaising versus Modernising in English Translations of the Orthodox Liturgy: St. John Crysostomos in the 20th Century," Adriana Serban; "Holy Communicative? Current Approaches to Bible Translation Worldwide," **Peter Kirk**; "Settling Hoti's Business: The Impossible Necessity of Biblical Translation," David Jasper; "The Translation of the Hebrew Word 'ish in Genesis: A Brief Historical Comparison," **David Burke**; "From Scriptorium to Internet: The Implication of Audience on the Translation of the Psalms of the St Albans Psalter," Sue Niebrzydowski; "Cultural Aspects in Qur'an Translation," Hussein Abdul-Raof. A draft of Peter Kirk's paper, which, among other things, is a critique of the Relevance Theory approach to Bible translation, is available at www.qaya.org/academic/bibletranslation/Holy%20Communicative.zip (zipped Word doc).

Joanne Baumgartner. 2001. "Key Cultural Concepts in **Australian Aboriginal Languages** as Used in Biblical Translation." Paper presented at the Association of Pacific Rim Universities 2nd Doctoral Students Conference, University of Auckland, New Zealand. http://www.usc.edu/ext-relations/news_service/apruwww/StudentPapers/FinishedPapers/BaumgartnerPaper.html. B. explores how Natural Semantic Meta-language (NSM), which uses universal terms to identify concepts that are common to all languages, can be applied in the translation process to preserve cultural identity in Aboriginal languages such as in the Pintupi Language of the Central Desert.

P. Lucca. 2004. "La conversione dell'Armenia al Cristianesimo e la traduzione della Bibbia in Armeno." *Bibbia e Oriente* 46/2:103-26. A historical survey of the introduction of Christianity and translation of the **Bible in Armenia**, as well as the transmission of the text and text criticism.

Wayne Leman's **Better Bibles Blog** aims to stimulate the English Bible reading world to think more critically about the Bibles they use: http://englishbibles.blogspot.com

David G. Horrell. 2005. "Familiar Friend or Alien Stranger? On Translating the Bible." *Expository Times* 116/12:402-08. Looking especially at the **NRSV and NIV**, and interacting with the recent comments of Earle Ellis in *ET*, H. argues that translations of the Bible should do more justice to aspects of the text that make it less comfortable to pious modern ears:

its rootedness in ancient culture, its sometimes awkward style, its patriarchal assumptions, and its occasional vulgarity. (pub abstr)

Ann Nyland. 2005. *The Source New Testament with Extensive Notes on Greek Word Meaning*. Smith & Stirling. N., a Classical Greek scholar with a specialty in Greek lexicography, provides detailed **lexicographical notes in her English NT translation** that include references to contemporaneous Greek documents. In an interview with Wayne Leman, N. talks about the translation: http://englishbibles.blogspot.com/2005/07/meet-translator-ann-nyland-tsnt.html. N. has also written *More Than Meets the Eye: The Campaign to Control Gender Translation in Bibles* (Smith & Stirling, 2005). According to N., groups lobbying against **gender-accurate Bible versions** rely upon misinformation about basic grammatical principles as well as upon mistranslation of common Greek words.

Bible

David M. Carr. 2005. *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature*. Oxford University Press. C. explores a new **model for the production, revision, and reception of ancient texts**. The Gilgamesh epic, Homer's Iliad, and the Bible were primarily intended as educational texts. The primary focus was not on writing them down, but inscribing hallowed writings, word for word, on the hearts of elite members of society. Carr examines key concepts of orality, cultural memory, and literacy, and synthesizes scholar-

ship on writing and education in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Israel. These cultures formed elites by having young people master a body of ancient texts, often in an archaic dialect or foreign language. In this way, select members of society were trained for leadership by learning to read, write, recite, or sing the texts. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have been shaped by early Jewish educational practices, which focused on mastery of the Hebrew Bible in opposition to the Greek curriculum and Greek culture. This form of education gives us insights about ancient Israelite culture, and also about how religious and secular groups are formed by having ancient, cherished traditions "written on the heart" of the next generation.

John C. Poirier. 2005. "The Canonical Approach and the Idea of 'Scripture.'" *Expository Times* 116/11:366-70. Proponents of the canonical approach have used a narrowed **understanding of the term "Scripture"** as a means of privileging their own hermeneutical program. But such a understanding is late, and it does not square with how the New Testament's authority was understood by the writers and the original canonizers of the Christian Bible. (pub abstr)

Frank Senn. 2004. "The **Bible and the Liturgy**." *Liturgy* 19/3:5-12. "We cannot fully reclaim the historic liturgy without reclaiming the Bible; and the Bible will not be recovered in the context in which it emerged in both synagogue and church unless the historic liturgy is retrieved." (12)

Edwin M. Yamauchi. 2004. *Africa and the Bible*. Baker. Y. explores the historical and archaeological background of **biblical texts that deal with Africa**, examines the exegesis of these texts, and traces the ramifications of later interpreta-

tions and misinterpretations of these texts. Topics treated include the curse of Ham's son Canaan, Moses' Cushite wife, the Ethiopian eunuch, Simon the Cyrene, and afrocentric biblical interpretation.

T.C. Skeat. 2004. *The Collected Biblical Writings of T.C. Skeat*. Brill. Introduced and edited by J.K. Elliott. This collection gathers together **papers on Biblical and related matters by Skeat**, papyrologist and a former Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, in three sections: ancient book production (use of dictation, papyri & mss, roll vs codex), studies on particular NT mss (Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Chester Beatty), and NT textual variants. In his introduction, Elliott assesses the importance of Skeat's work and incorporates some of Skeat's later thinking on these topics based on personal correspondence.

Translation, Linguistics, Culture

Zoltán Kövecses. 2005. *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation*. Cambridge University Press. K. proposes a **theory of metaphor variation** to explain why metaphors vary both interculturally and intraculturally as extensively as they do. He identifies the major dimensions of metaphor variation—social and cultural boundaries that signal discontinuities in human experience; describes which components, or aspects, of conceptual metaphor are involved in metaphor variation and how they are involved; isolates the main causes of metaphor variation; and addresses the issue of the degree of cultural coherence in the interplay among conceptual metaphors, embodiment, and causes of metaphor variation.

Communicating Ideologies: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Language, Discourse, and Social Practice. 2004. M. Pütz, J. Neff-van Aertselaer, and T.A. van Dijk, eds. Peter Lang. Essays are concerned with **ideology and the mutual constitution of social practices and social structures through discourse**, taking into account a number of linguistic theories and methods, and focusing on text and discourse as well as ecolinguistics and language policy.

Discourse Across Languages and Cultures. 2004. C.L. Moder and A. Martinovic-Zic, eds. Benjamins. This volume brings together research by linguists working in **cross-linguistic discourse analysis and by second language researchers working in the contrastive rhetoric tradition**. The articles encompass a variety of approaches, treating spoken and written genres, and provide insights concerning the roles of cognition, multilingualism, communities of practice, and linguistic typology in shaping discourse within and across cultures. Included is "Holistic textlinguistics," by Robert E. Longacre.

*Approaches to **Cognition Through Text and Discourse***. 2004. T. Virtanen, ed. Mouton de Gruyter. This collection explores the overlapping area of study that discourse linguists and cognitive linguists are interested in but approach from different perspectives and frames of reference. A number of contributions highlight central issues in the study of text and discourse, attempting to give them cognitive explanations. Individual chapters focus on textual and situational contexts as well as the context of culture and society at large. Some titles: "Text, discourse and cognition: An introduction," T. Virtanen; "Language, discourse, and cognition:

Retrospects and prospects," R. De Beaugrande; "On the discourse basis of person agreement," A. Siewierska; "Point of departure: Cognitive aspects of sentence-initial adverbials," T. Virtanen; "What is foregrounded in narratives? Hypotheses for the cognitive basis of foregrounding," B. Wårvik; "Conditionals: Your space or mine?" A. Bülow-Møller; "Communicative fragments and the interpretation of discourse," M. Björklund; J. Nagy summarizes the chapters in a review at http://www.ling.ed.ac.uk/linguist/issues/16/16-2190.html.

Albert N. Katz and Todd R. Ferretti. 2003. "Reading Proverbs in Context: The Role of Explicit Markers." *Discourse Processes* 36/1:19-46. The authors examine how explicit markers or "**introductory formulae**," which are used for signaling that statements should be interpreted literally or nonliterally, influence the **online processing of proverbs**. Familiar or unfamiliar proverbial statements were presented in contexts that were biased toward either their literal or nonliteral meanings, and were always preceded immediately by either *proverbially speaking*, *in a manner of speaking*, *literally speaking*, or no marker. The main hypothesis was that the markers, in combination with the contexts, should act as strong constraints on whether people interpret the statements literally or nonliterally. The results demonstrated that each form of marker had a unique effect on the reading of different regions of the proverbial statements, and that they have a stronger influence in reducing ambiguity associated with the meanings of unfamiliar proverbs than with familiar proverbs. The results are discussed in relation to existing models of nonliteral language comprehension.

Akesha Baron. 2004. "'I'm a Woman but I Know God Leads My Way': Agency and Tzotzil Evangelical Discourse." *Language in Society* 33:249-83. For indigenous Tzotzil Protestants in Chiapas, the emergence of a new discourse about God is restructuring social interactions. Discourse data point to an **intersection of Protestant beliefs, discourse strategies, and gender**. The performance of a Protestant identity in which gender is transcended opens up new possibilities for agency, particularly for women who otherwise lack sanctioned authority. This case study shows how strategic manipulation of Protestant discourse in verbal performances allows one woman to enact a position of moral authority that empowers her to pursue an innovative plan. As an important means through which Tzotzil Protestants dictate and create their lives, praying in the evangelical world provides a useful site for the study of unusual kinds of performative utterances. (pub abstr)

Crucial Readings in Functional Grammar. 2005. **Matthew Anstey** and J.L. Mackenzie, eds. Mouton de Gruyter. The book brings together various ideas that carry forward Dik's canonical presentation of the theory in his two-volume ***Functional Grammar*** (1997), and provides a comprehensive review of Functional Grammar publications. The editors' introduction surveys current FG theory.

Language Typology: A Functional Perspective. 2004. A. Caffarel, J. Martin, and C.M. Matthiessen, eds. Benjamins. This book is a **Systemic Functional contribution to language typology**—essays describe particular languages against the background of generalizations about a wide range of languages and develop typological accounts based on descriptions of the systems of particular languages (rather than isolated constructions).

Missionary Linguistics / Lingüística Misionera: Selected Papers from the First International Conference on Missionary Linguistics, Oslo, 13-16 March 2003. 2004. O. Zwartjes and E. Hovdhaugen, eds. Benjamins. Contains studies of early-modern **linguistic works written by missionaries** in Spanish, Portuguese, English and French, describing, among others, indigenous languages from North America and Australia, Maya, Quechua, Xhosa, Japanese, Kapampangan, and Visaya. Topics include: innovations of individual missionaries in lexicography, grammatical analysis, phonology, morphology, and syntax; creativity in descriptive techniques; differences and/or similarities of works from different continents, and different confessional backgrounds.

Creoles, Contact, and Language Change: Linguistic and Social Implications. 2004. G. Escure and A. Schwegler, eds. Benjamins. The fifteen articles offer a sampling of **creolists' current research interests**, the majority addressing issues of morphology or syntax. Other topics: phonological analysis; language development from the point of view of acquisition; discourse strategies and style; issues of social and ethnic identity. Approximately twenty contact varieties are studied.

The Cambridge Companion to Chomsky. 2005. J. McGilvray, ed. Cambridge University Press. Linguists, philosophers, cognitive scientists, and political theorists offer to a general audience their **perspectives on Chomsky's contributions** in linguistics, philosophy of mind and human nature, and politics, and provide insight into the connections between Chomsky's work in each of these areas. The first chapter in each section presents an overview of his work in that area, and

succeeding essays develop major themes Chomsky pursued.

Peter Culicover and Ray Jackendoff. 2005. *Simpler Syntax*. Oxford University Press. The authors argue for a **proper balance between syntax and semantics**, between structure and derivation, and between rule systems and lexicon. They put forward a new basis for syntactic theory, drawing on a wide range of frameworks, and proposing the **Simpler Syntax Hypothesis**: the most explanatory syntactic theory is one that imputes the minimum structure necessary to mediate between phonology and meaning. A consequence of the hypothesis is a richer mapping between syntax and semantics than is generally assumed in generative grammar.

John Field. 2004. *Psycholinguistics: The Key Concepts*. Routledge. This **introduction to psycholinguistic theory** covers the core areas of psycholinguistics: language as a human attribute, language and the brain, vocabulary storage and use, language and memory, the four skills (writing, reading, listening, speaking), comprehension, language impairment and deprivation. F. draws on a range of real texts, data and examples, provides classic readings by key names in the discipline, including Aitchison, Deacon, Logie, Levelt and Bishop.

Literacy and Deaf People: Cultural and Contextual Perspectives. 2004. B.J. Brueggemann, ed. Gallaudet University Press. This collection advocates for an **alternative view of deaf people's literacy**, one that emphasizes recent shifts in Deaf cultural identity rather than a student's past educational context as determined by the dominant hearing society. In the first part, writers use diverse disciplines to reveal how schools where deaf children are taught are the product of ideologies about teaching, about how deaf children learn, and about the relationship of ASL and English. Papers in Part Two offer various views on multicultural and bilingual literacy instruction for deaf students. Subjects range from a study of literacy in Norway, where Norwegian Sign Language recently became the first language of instruction for deaf pupils, to the difficulties faced by deaf immigrant and refugee children who confront institutional and cultural clashes. Other topics include the experiences of deaf adults who became bilingual in ASL and English, and the interaction of the pathological versus the cultural view of deafness. The final study examines literacy among deaf college undergraduates as a way of determining how the current social institution of literacy translates for deaf adults and how literacy can be extended to deaf people beyond the age of 20.

M.A. Adbel-Fattah. 2005. "Arabic Sign Language: A Perspective." *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 10/2:212-21. **Sign language in the Arab World** has been recently recognized and documented. Efforts have been made to establish the sign language used in individual countries, including Jordan, Egypt, Libya, and the Gulf States, by trying to standardize the language and spread it among members of the Deaf community and those concerned. Such efforts produced many sign languages, almost as many as Arabic-speaking countries, yet with the same sign alphabets. This article gives a account of some of these sign languages through reference to their possible evolution, which is believed to be affected by the diglossic situation in Arabic, and by comparing some aspects of certain sign languages (Jordanian, Palestinian, Egyptian, Kuwaiti, and Libyan) for which issues such as primes, configuration, and movement in addition to other linguistic features are discussed. A contrastive account that depicts the principal differences among Arabic sign languages in general and the spoken language is given. (from pub abstr)

Matthew S. McGlone. 2005. "Quoted Out of Context: Contextomy and Its Consequences." *Journal of Communication* 55/2:330-46. "Contextomy" refers to the **excerpting of words from their original linguistic context** in a way that distorts the source's intentions. A reported experiment supports the view that contextomy prompts audiences to form a false impression of the source and contaminates subsequent interpretation when the quote is restored to its original context.

Mark Currie. 2004. *Difference: The New Critical Idiom*. Routledge. C. traces the diverse uses of the **concept of "difference" in philosophy, linguistics, feminism, cultural geography and cultural theory**. He follows the concept from its most widely studied expressions in structuralism and poststructuralism to broader critical issues such as individuality, diversity and universality.

Takami Kuwayama. 2004. *Native Anthropology: The Japanese Challenge to Western Academic Hegemony*. Trans Pacific Press. K. focuses on the politics involved in the production, dissemination, and consumption of anthropological knowledge, with special attention to the contributions of Japan and the position of "native" anthropologists in the practice of contemporary post-colonial anthropology.

Bible Translation Conference 2006: Context and Translation, 24-26 Jan 2006, Horsleys Green, High Wycombe, England. Ernst-August Gutt will present his most recent research under the topic of "Realism in translation," addressing the possibilities and limits of translation set by the cognitive processes at work in communication. The conference will consist of plenary sessions, papers and discussion groups. Papers are welcome; abstracts should be submitted for consideration to etp_uk@sil.org by 31st October (or 1 December, acc. to the publicity doc) See http://www.eurotp.org/UK/Session.asp?SessionID=120.

International Conference on Translation, Identity and Heterogeneity, 4-6 Dec, 2006, University of San Marcos, Lima, Peru, with the cooperation of the University of Murcia, the University of Urbino, the Nida Institute, UBS, SIL, the Center for Translation, Culture and Communication (CETRA), SBL, and others, and organized by Stefano Arduini, Jose María Jimenez Cano, and **Robert Hodgson**. The conference will explore aspects of the theme, including minority languages, the emergence of new languages (creoles, pidgins, street-languages), boundaries, inner cultural space, cultural mediation, and the politics of language. http://www.nidainstitute.org/Conferences/

Symposium: Self & Identity in Translation, 4-5 Feb 2006, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK. A two-day symposium aims to explore the presences of subjectivity, identity and selfhood in the translator's work and the translation event/text. http://www.uea.ac.uk/eas/events/self+identity/callforpapers.htm

Translation and/as Culture Conference, 11-12 Nov 2005, Monash University. This conference will provide a forum for mapping forms and concepts of translation, adaptation and transformation in diverse cultures, and will seek to address the hermeneutic and methodological issues raised by such comparisons. Issues to be addressed: the relationship between translation, globalization and national identity; ways in which translation processes construct national identities; the commensurability of translation concepts across cultures; the extent to which they are rooted in specific sociocultural practices; the relation between translation and other forms of creative transformation. http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/lcl/conferences/translation/

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