

# Ernst Frideryk Konrad Koerner

## In memoriam

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### 1. Introduction

We have lost many important historical and comparative linguists this year (see Claire's Corner in this issue). We mourn them all. We are saddened by knowing that they are no longer with us and will no longer be contributing inspired analyses and insightful interpretations that advance our understanding of the history of individual languages and of language change and comparative linguistics in general. In principle, we would like to offer scholarly assessments on the contributions of each one of them, but there is one among them – E.F. Konrad Koerner, who passed away on 6 January 2022, a month shy of his 83rd birthday (born 5 February 1939), after a long and productive scholarly career – that we must single out for special recognition because of what he meant to this journal.

Memorializing Konrad in this journal is especially significant as *Diachronica* was one of his babies, first published in 1984 with a steady growth in page count and number of annual issues since. Our journal is a scholarly venue, along with the CILT (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory) book series, that gave a voice to historical linguistics as a field, as opposed to the histories of particular families or languages. Konrad's creation of *Diachronica* came at a time when outlets for general matters in historical linguistics were rare: family-specific journals in Inod-European, Romance, Germanic, and Slavic dominated (in the west at least). Journals and organizations devoted to the broader landscape were few and far between; even the International Conference on Historical Linguistics was still young and in development.

That said, *Diachronica* and CILT were just two aspects of Konrad's broader vision for contributing to the publishing scene in linguistics, and he was the driving force behind the development of outlets and organizations especially for the history of linguistics, specifically NAAHoLS (North American Association for the History of the Language Sciences) and the journal *Historiographia Linguistica*.

As the founding editor of *Diachronica* and editor until 2001, Konrad clearly put his personal stamp on it, a stamp that persists in diverse ways. The decision to publish material in German and French, and to publish abstracts for all articles in those languages, reflected Konrad's interest in the journal being, as its subtitle declares, truly an "International Journal for Historical Linguistics". Indeed, the first issue included four articles, two in French, one in German and one in English. We now consider manuscripts in Spanish as well, and release abstracts in Mandarin.

Similarly, the phenomenon that George Dunkel (1993: 105) described as "new forms but old meanings ... [i.e.] the preservation of the structure of old phraseology despite the formal renewal of its surface expression",<sup>1</sup> is exemplified in what emerged out of Konrad's aptly – and alliteratively – named editor's column, *Konrad's Korner*; as the "Urtitel", it spawned similar structures in later editorships: *Joseph's Jottings*, *Joe's Jottings*, and now *Claire's Corner*.

We have served as editors of this journal and grew up, so to speak, under Konrad's watchful eye, and we both started our respective editorial journeys as the journal's book review editor, thus truly serving, in medieval but in a certain sense timeless fashion, as apprentices under the guidance of the maestro.

Konrad had his quirks, to be sure, such as a love for carbon copies (the original "cc") and onionskin paper. But as an editor, he was unparalleled, with a radar-like sensitivity for matters of spacing on a line – until 1999, the journal was produced as camera-ready copy so everything aesthetic rested in the editor's hands.

But Konrad was far more than just a conductor of the unfolding of new directions in the field of linguistics at large in the period after the 1970s; he was also a serious scholar of the history of linguistics, starting with a dissertation on *Ferdinand De Saussure: Origin and development of his linguistic theory in Western studies of language. A critical evaluation of the evolution of Saussurean principles and their relevance to contemporary linguistic theories* (Simon Fraser University, 1971). He continued with numerous scholarly contributions on matters pertaining to the development of linguistics as an intellectual discipline in what we might call the modern era, including "The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: A preliminary history and a bibliographical essay", in the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* (1992) and several contributions to the history of phonetics, such as "Historiography of phonetics: The state of the art" in the *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* (1993), and a long string of important edited volumes.

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1. Dunkel was discussing various ways in which the Hittite lexicon reveals its Indo-European heritage; fittingly, his paper was published in a CILT volume.

And he was well recognized for this academic work, being awarded a prestigious fellowship from the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study and the Konrad Adenauer Research Prize of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, among other honors. He was particularly proud of the honorary doctorates he received, including ones from the University of Sofia (Bulgaria), the Nicolaus Copernicus University (Poland) and the University of Edinburgh (Scotland), as well as *Festschriften* produced by colleagues.

Konrad is missed, for sure, but his decades of dedication to historical linguistics and the history of linguistics constitute a legacy of valuable insights and lasting infrastructure.

## References

- Dunkel, George. 1993. *Periphrastica homerohittitovedica*. In Bela Brogyanyi and Reiner Lipp (eds), *Comparative-Historical Linguistics. Indo-European and Finno-Ugric: Papers in honor of Oswald Szemerényi*, vol. III, 103–118. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.  
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