

The Tungusic language family through the ages: Interdisciplinary perspectives

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Tungusic (or Manchu-Tungusic) is an endangered language family that encompasses about twenty languages located in Siberia and northern China. They are distributed over an enormous area that ranges from the Yenissei River in the west to the Kamchatka Peninsula in the east (Janhunen 2012). Recent years have seen a considerable interest in this language family (e.g., Malchukov & Whaley 2012). The proposed workshop has the overarching goal of bringing together researchers from different countries and disciplines to create opportunities for mutual exchange. The workshop emphasizes the diachronic dimension, tracing the development of Tungusic from prehistory and the earliest attestations to the present day. In recent decades it has become clear, however, that historical linguistics alone cannot answer all questions concerning the development of a language family, especially as concerns the time and *urheimat* of the speech community of the proto-language. While the focus will lie on the interpretation of the history of the Tungusic language family, we welcome classical comparative studies, as well as original synchronic studies of individual languages, and encourage participants to engage in an inter-disciplinary dialogue with disciplines such as archaeology, ethnology, genetics, or history.

For example, a recent study that combined archaeology, genetics, and linguistics came to the conclusion that the direct ancestors of the Tungusic speaking Ulchi have been living in Manchuria for at least 7700 years, which suggests a remarkable genetic continuity (Siska et al. 2017). It goes without saying that genetic continuity does not necessarily imply linguistic continuity, which at any time could have been disrupted by language shift. In order to solve such problematic issues, we welcome innovative thinking from as many different perspectives as possible. The time-frame for possible

contributions can range from prehistory to the 21st century. Possible topics for presentations include, but are not restricted to the following:

- Fieldwork reports and the investigation of endangered Tungusic languages (Li Linjing 2016), focussing on changes in the structure of moribund languages, and language shift to Chinese or Russian (Janhunen 2005). Because many Tungusic languages are not historically attested, modern synchronic data are of high value for a better understanding of the diachronic development of Tungusic.
- The reevaluation of previously published materials on Tungusic languages such as word lists from the 19th century and their importance for our understanding of the historical development of individual languages (Alonso de la Fuente 2017).
- Progress in the decipherment of the two Jurchen scripts (ca. 12th to 15th century) that represent the oldest attestation of Tungusic languages (Golovachev et al. 2011).
- Comparative investigations and reconstructions of Proto-Tungusic, conclusions regarding the internal structure of the Tungusic language family (Pevnov 2016), and an evaluation of previous work in the area (Doerfer 1978).
- Questions regarding the time, place, and speech community of proto-Tungusic and the modelling of the subsequent spread of the individual languages. Here and in the following point we especially welcome data and results from archaeology (Kim 2013), ethnology (Sasaki 2011), genetics (Duggan et al. 2013), and history (Zgusta 2015).
- The critical evaluation of wider connections of Tungusic such as to the Khitano-Mongolic language family. With the recent progress in the decipherment of the extinct neighbouring language Khitan (Apatóczyk & Kempf 2017), new possibilities for research in this area are opening up. These include the investigation of loanwords in Tungusic languages or the potential genetic relationship between Tungusic and Khitano-Mongolic in what has been called the *Khinganic* hypothesis (Janhunen 2012).

The workshop will be **introduced** by the organizers Andreas Hölzl and Tom Payne. Apart from the above mentioned points, the introduction will focus on recent advances in the study of Tungusic languages and problematic issues that are relevant for a better understanding of the historical development of Tungusic. These include the following points:

- Recent descriptive work on moribund Tungusic languages such as the less well-known northern dialect of Uilta (e.g., Morikai Satoe 2016, Yamada Yoshiko 2016), studies of individual features such as vowel harmony (e.g., Aralova 2015), and the publication of new important grammar books of Tungusic languages (e.g., Zikmundová 2013, Dong Xingye 2016).
- Areal connections of Tungusic (e.g., Baek 2016) and the problem of mixed Tungusic languages that include Alchuka, Bala, Kilen, Kili, and Ussuri Nanai (Hölzl 2017). These languages with somewhat unclear affiliation represent an obstacle for traditional phylogenetic approaches of Tungusic languages and deserve further attention. Furthermore, the first two of these languages were only described in Chinese publications of the 1980s (e.g., Mu Yejun 1987) and were previously unknown outside of China and Japan.
- Most approaches agree on the following lower-level groupings, i.e. most scholars agree that the languages within one of these groups are more closely related to one another than any of them is to languages from the other groups (e.g., Janhunen 2012, Hölzl 2017).

1. Ewenic (Arman, Even, Evenki, Khamnigan Evenki, Negidal, Oroqen, Solon)
2. Udegheic (Oroch, Udihe)
3. Nanaic (Hezhen, Kilen, Kili, Nanai, Uilta, Ulcha, Ussuri Nanai)
4. Jurchenic (Alchuka, Bala, Jurchen A, Jurchen B, Manchu, Sibe)

Most classifications furthermore agree that Ewenic and Nanaic have to be kept apart. They only differ with respect to the position of Udegheic that is either grouped with

Ewenic or with Nanaic, and whether Jurchenic is the first branch to diverge from all other branches or should be seen as more closely related to Nanaic.

The workshop will be held at the 51st Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea in Tallinn, 29th August - 1st September 2018. Full abstracts will be required by the **15th of January 2018** (<http://sle2018.eu/call-for-papers>). Each presentation will be 20 minutes long, followed by a discussion of 5 minutes. The publication of workshop proceedings is planned and will be submitted to Language Science Press in Berlin (<http://langsci-press.org/>).

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