Editorial Preface: Introducing the International Journal of Eurasian Linguistics

It has long remained an unfortunate situation that while many other well-defined geographical areas of the world have their own specialized linguistic journals, the languages of Central and Northern Eurasia have not had an international forum of a similar scope and standard. The *International Journal of Eurasian Linguistics* (Brill) is now intended to fill this gap. It will join the company of other well-known regionally specialized linguistic journals such as, for instance, *Oceanic Linguistics* (University of Hawaii Press), *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* (Benjamins), and the *International Journal of American Linguistics* (University of Chicago Press). The new journal will use the abbreviation JEAL.

Eurasia is the largest continent in the world and covers, in the broad definition, both Europe and all of Asia, including the Near East and the Indian subcontinent. In this context, JEAL will focus on what is traditionally known as Central Eurasia, or also Inner Asia, a region extending, roughly, from Anatolia and eastern Europe in the west to northern China, Mongolia, Manchuria, Korea, and Japan in the east, and from the Iranian Plateau and Tibet in the south to Siberia and the Arctic Ocean in the north. Languages spoken in other parts of Eurasia are also potentially relevant to JEAL, but only in case they are discussed in connection with the principal regional focus of the journal.

The languages of Central Eurasia, thus defined, are traditionally lumped into two major categories, “Ural-Altaic” and “Palaeo-Asiatic”. The former category comprises six genetic language families: Uralic, Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic, Koreanic, and Japonic, while the latter comprises several small families and close-to-isolates, including Yeniseic (Ket-Kott), Kolymic (Odul-Wadul, or Yukaghir), Kamchukotic (Chukchi-Kamchadal), Amuric (Nivkh-Nighvng), as well as Ainu (Ainuic) and Burushaski. Since all attempts at linking these language families genetically with each other, or with other families, remain controversial, JEAL will treat them as separate entities, but not neglecting their historical and prehistorical contacts. From the point of view of the areal context, language families such as Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan, and Eskaleutic

(Eskimo-Aleut), as well as linguistic regions such as the Caucasus, also belong to the scope of JEAL.

Central Eurasia, or Inner Asia, is a well-established object of study in many disciplines, including geography, anthropology, ethnology, history, and archaeology. The non-linguistic aspects of this region are today covered by journals such as *Central Asiatic Journal* (Harrassowitz), *Inner Asia* (Brill), as well as *Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology of North Asia* (Russian Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk). Some of the individual language families and sub-areas of the region have their own specialized journals, including *Finnisch-Ugrische Forschungen* (Finno-Ugrian Society), *Turkic Languages* (Harrassowitz), *Mongolian Studies* (Mongolia Society), as well as, until recently, *Mon-Khmer Studies* (Mahidol University at Salaya, now discontinued).

There are also a few less regularly appearing multidisciplinary journals and yearbooks in the field, with a background in academic communities and learned societies. Some of these are old and internationally well-established, including, notably, *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* (Helsinki), *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher* (Wiesbaden), and *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (Budapest), while others are more regionally based and/or academically less ambitious, including, for instance, *Eurasian Studies Yearbook* (Berlin), *Ural-Altaic Studies* (Moscow), *Altai Hakpo* (Seoul), *Mongolica* (Ulan Bator), as well as the *International Journal of Central Asian Studies* (Seoul).

What makes JEAL to stand out in this context is its ambition to represent the cutting edge of research on the languages of Central Eurasia in a broad regional, comparative and panchronic scope, and with a philological, areal, or typological approach. While JEAL takes a critical stand with regard to the loose methods often used in comparative linguistics, including “Nostratic”, “Sino-Caucasian”, and “Transeurasian” comparisons, it welcomes professional contributions on linguistic taxonomy, linguistic reconstruction, contact linguistics, and language documentation. On the philological side, it will focus on the analysis of epigraphic and textual materials, especially when they open up perspectives for wider ethnolinguistic conclusions. As far as theories are concerned, JEAL favours contributions based on a sound data-to-theory and form-to-function approach, anchored in linguistic substance and a knowledge of the extra-linguistic context.

JEAL will be published in two issues per year (spring and autumn), and with a total annual volume of about 300 printed pages. Each issue will contain articles (= full-length scholarly papers, with an ideal size of c. 10,000 words), reports (= summaries of current topics and research projects, with an ideal size of less than 5000 words), and book reviews (with a typical size of 1000 to

3000 words). We hope that this first issue will give an idea of the range of the types of topics and approaches that JEAL will cover in the years to come.

Juha Janhunen

University of Helsinki
asiemajeure@yahoo.com

Alexander Vovin

EHES/CRLAO, Paris
sashavovin@gmail.com