

how records of suicides, murders, and other untimely deaths could be phrased to obfuscate the actual circumstances in which a succession of violent demises occurred, and chapter 6, “Concealing submission”, details the vocabulary used to glorify the position of the lords of Lu in diplomatic meetings and hide the fact that they were attending as an inferior partner. Cumulatively, this analysis records a society in which rank and birth were everything – the *Chunqiu* records the world of royalty, aristocrats, and their attendant noblemen in terms that appear simple and straightforward but are in fact very highly nuanced and designed to present the ruling house of Lu in the most gracious and laudatory terms.

The *Chunqiu* has long been comparatively neglected in Western academia, in contrast to the intense interest shown in other texts that deal with the same period, and indeed other Confucian classics. Although not recognized, part of this neglect must be ascribed to the aristocratic viewpoint expressed throughout this text. In this regard, Van Auken is to be commended for the accuracy of her translations, and the care and attention paid particularly to the nuances of titles and rank. All too often in contemporary Western scholarship an underlying contempt is shown for the history of pre-imperial China by inaccurate and sloppy translations of titles, as if they do not really matter and a term like *gong* 公 (a posthumous honorific for a male aristocrat, here translated as “lord”) can equally well be rendered as “duke”, “king”, “prince” and so on, just as if there were no difference in meaning. *Spring and Autumn Historiography* places the techniques used in creating this record at the centre of the analysis, and as such, the explanation of the terminology used and the translation of key terms is excellent.

Ultimately, the *Chunqiu* is a challenging text not just because it is very old, very terse, and deals with events very far away, but because it describes history as it was made – for better or worse – by those who held power by right of being born into a long-established hereditary aristocracy, and it was written to present their doings in the very best possible light. Also present in this text are those who fought against this entrenched hierarchy armed with a ruthlessness and brutality that can be just as unsettling as the prolonged contemplation of unearned privilege. Newell Ann Van Auken is to be commended for her work in bringing this important text to an English-language speaking audience, making the laconic wording and alien concerns comprehensible to people in a very different time and place.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X24000478

## **Alexander Vovin†, José Andrés Alonso de la Fuente and Juha Janhunen (eds.): *The Tungusic Languages***

**(Routledge Language Family Series.) xxviii, 543 pp. London: Routledge, 2024. ISBN 9781138845039.**

Andreas Hölzl

University of Potsdam

Email: [hoelzlandreas@web.de](mailto:hoelzlandreas@web.de)

The book under review is “the first comprehensive handbook of Tungusic in English” (p. xviii). Tungusic constitutes “a medium-sized language-family with some 15 different



languages distributed over a vast territory in Northeast Asia” (p. 1). The forerunner of the present volume planned by Alexander Vovin over 20 years ago never appeared (p. xix). Due to the delay to the project, two sketches of Uilta and Solon intended for that volume were published independently by Toshirō Tsumagari 津曲 敏郎 in 2009 (*Journal of the Graduate School of Letters* 2 and 4). José Andrés Alonso de la Fuente was later invited to the project, which finally succeeded after Juha Janhunen, who had already edited the volume *The Mongolic Languages* in the same Routledge Language Family Series in 2003, joined the editorial team. The project was sadly overshadowed by the loss of one of the editors and two contributors: “Sasha Vovin (1961–2022) himself died only several months before the completion of the project, while Tsumagari Toshiro (1951–2020) and Daniel Kane (1948–2021) also passed away without having seen the final versions of their texts” (p. xix).

The volume contains an index (pp. 538–43) and 20 chapters that can be divided into two main parts: (1) The bulk of the volume consists of descriptions of 14 Tungusic varieties (pp. 76–500) that “follow a roughly uniform template” (p. xviii) and cover various details ranging from the research history, over phonology and grammar (e.g. converbs, person marking), to aspects of the lexicon (e.g. loanwords). These descriptions include Jurchen (Kane and Miyake, pp. 76–102), yet another sketch of Written Manchu (Vovin, pp. 103–38), Siberian Ewenki (Janhunen, pp. 139–83), Orochen (Whaley, pp. 184–205), Solon (Baek, pp. 206–33), Neghidal (Oskolskaya, pp. 234–59), Ewen (Malchukov, pp. 260–93), Oroch (Kazama, pp. 294–325), Udihe (Perekhval'skaya and Janhunen, pp. 326–63), Nanai (Kazama, pp. 364–406), Ulcha (Kazama, pp. 407–35), Uilta (Tsumagari and Yamada, pp. 436–62), Spoken Manchu (Zikmundová and Gao Wa, pp. 463–82), and Sibe (Zikmundová, pp. 483–500).

(2) The sketches are preceded (pp. 1–75) and followed (pp. 501–537) by several chapters addressing more specific topics, such as an introduction to the language family (Janhunen, pp. 1–18), an overview of “early” Chinese, Korean, and Japanese sources (Vovin, pp. 19–25), a cursory list of European sources published between 1692 and 1856 (Alonso de la Fuente, pp. 26–34), and a discussion of sociolinguistic aspects, such as the official status or endangerment (Mamontova, pp. 501–16). The chapter “Tungusic in time and space” (Janhunen, pp. 517–37) offers a contextualization of the language family (e.g. areal aspects) and potential wider connections of Tungusic (e.g. to Mongolic).

The most important contributions for the advancement of the field are perhaps the updated Proto-Tungusic reconstruction (Janhunen, pp. 35–75) as well as some of the descriptions of individual varieties previously almost exclusively accessible to readers of Russian (Ewen, Neghidal, Oroch, Uilta, Ulcha) and Chinese (Orochen, Sibe, Solon, Spoken Manchu). A strength of the volume also observed in earlier works edited by Janhunen is the strict internal consistency, including spelling and analytic conventions (e.g. *Ewenki* rather than *Evenki*, the use of the ampersand for reduplication, or boldface for forms from Written Manchu). The volume fulfils the highest standards in the field. The following is a superficial list of a few shortcomings in order of appearance that do not, however, make the book or the individual contributions less valuable as a reference work.

A chart of the Manchu script (pp. xxiv–xxvi) is missing letters as used in non-initial position. The following map (p. xxvii) shows the approximate distribution of Tungusic languages from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, with only those covered in the book at hand indicated in detail. This explains the absence of languages like Arman, Bala, Chinese Kyakala, Hezhen, Kili (Kur-Urmi Nanai), Kilen, or Ussuri Nanai, but not of varieties of spoken Manchu formerly found in north-east China (e.g. Aihui) and other locations (e.g. Beijing). The sweeping condemnation of Tungusic studies in China by Janhunen as “unsophisticated” (p. 6) clearly underestimates several valuable contributions, most recently by scholars such as Cong Shan 丛珊.

The Proto-Tungusic reconstruction contains several new and intriguing proposals. Some, such as the genitive \*-I (p. 58), are very plausible, while the assumption of one variable interrogative \*xī(y)a(-) ~ \*xa(y)ī(-) “what”, previously treated as two different stems, as well as of a “separate” Northern Tungusic \*ii- “which one” (p. 60), might require more evidence to be convincing.

Regrettably, Hezhen (a southern dialect of Nanai) and Kilen (a mixed language with a southern Nanai component) – together classified as varieties of the so-called “Hezhe” language in China – are not addressed in detail in the book at hand, and the former seems to be largely neglected (pp. 3, 6, 365). These two varieties were not “first described by An Jun (1986)” (p. 366) but are also known from several earlier sources, including work done by Ling Chunsheng 凌纯声 in the 1930s. It is also incorrect that Kilen (like Kili) has a basic lexicon that “is virtually identical with that of Ewenki” (p. 365). Apart from Nanaic and Orochic elements, Kilen also contains many lexical items, including the numeral system, borrowed from Manchuric.

Without doubt, the present volume is one of the most important books ever published on Tungusic languages. It represents a true milestone in the field that will serve as an invaluable reference work for generations of scholars to come. It finally makes some of the less well-described languages accessible to general linguists and typologists. The continuing documentation and description of this “seriously endangered” (p. xviii) language family having taken a major step with the volume at hand, some of the most important tasks for Tungusic studies now are an accessible and comprehensive etymological dictionary as well as a reconstruction of the “four clearcut and internally coherent groups” (p. 8), i.e. Proto-Jurchenic (or Manchuric), Proto-Nanaic, Proto-Orochic (or Udegheic), and Proto-Ewenic.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X24000570

**Royall Tyler (trans.): *Joy, Despair, Illusion, Dreams: Twenty Plays from the Nō Tradition***

**New York: Columbia University Press, 2024. ISBN 9780231214766.**

**Royall Tyler, (trans.): *The Dawn of the Warrior Age: War Tales from Medieval Japan***

**New York: Columbia University Press, 2024. ISBN 9780231214667.**

C. Andrew Gerstle

Professor Emeritus, SOAS University of London, London, UK

Email: [Ag4@soas.ac.uk](mailto:Ag4@soas.ac.uk)

Royall Tyler is undoubtedly one of the most important scholars and translators of pre-modern Japanese literature active today. His two newest books confirm his reputation and offer us fresh translations of a range of premodern texts.