URAL-ALTAIC LANGUAGES

URAL-ALTAIC LANGUAGES. The Ural-Altaic, Finno-Tatar, or “Turanian” languages constitute one of the primary linguistic families (see Philology, vol. xviii. p. 779) of the eastern hemisphere, occupying a vast domain, which extends with few interruptions from the Balkan Peninsula, Hungary, and Lapland eastwards to the Pacific Ocean, and from the Arctic Ocean southwards to China proper, Tibet, and the Mediterranean. It thus comprises nearly the whole of Asiatic and a considerable section of European Russia, the northern half of the Chinese empire, a large part of north Persia, by far the greater part of Asia Minor, and extensive tracts in European Turkey, Austria, and Scandinavia, with an area of not less than 10,000,000 square miles and a total population of over 40,000,000. Philologists recognize six well - marked branches, which, with their main subdivisions and four outlying doubtful or extinct members of the family, may be tabulated as under :—

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I.  Samoyedic. | *Yurαk* and *Yenisei,* White Sea to the Yenisei.  *Taνghi,* between lower Yenisei and Khatanga rivers.  *Kamasin,* upper Yenisei. |
| II.  Finnic. | *' Finnish,* Finland, parts of Norway, Lakes Onega and Ladoga.  *Lapp,* Russian and Scandinavian Lapland.  *Esthonian* and *Livonian,* south side of Gulf of Finland. *Mordvinian* and *Tcheremissian,* middle Volga.  *Permian, Votyak,* and *Siryenian,* between the Vyatka and Petchora rivers. |
| III. Ugric. | *Ostiak,* middle and upper Obi and its eastern affluents. *- Vogul,* east slopes of the Ural Mountains.  *Magyar,* central and south-eastern Hungary. |
| IV. Turkic. | *' Uigur* or *East Turki,* including *Uigur proper* of Kashgar, Kulja, and Yarkand ; *Jagatai* of Bokhara, Ferghana, Khiva ; *Kara-Kalpak,* south-eastern side of Aral Sea ; *Turkoman (Turkmenian),* west Turk­estan, north Persia, and Asia Minor.  *Seljuk* or *West Turki* or *Osmanli,* Asia Minor and the Balkan Peninsula; *Tchuvash,* south-west of Kazan and about Simbirsk.  *Kipchak (Kapchak) : Coman,* extinct, formerly current throughout the Kipchak empire from the Altai Mountains to the Black Sea ; *Kazan Tatar,* middle Volga ; *Kirghiz,* West Siberian steppes, lower Volga, the Pamir, and west slopes of the Altai, Thian-Shan, and Kuen-Lun Mountains; *Nogai* with *Kumuk,* Bessarabia, Crimea, Volga delta, Daghestan, Terek valley.  *Yakut,* middle and lower Lena and northern slopes of the Sayan Mountains. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| IV. Turkic— *continued.* | *Siberian Tatar : Teleut, Koibal, Soyot, Kotta, Bash J kir, Mescheryak,* and other corrupt Turki dialect spoken by Tatarized Finn populations from th Altai to the Urals. |
| V.  Mongolic. | *Sharra* or *East Mongolian,* Mongolia ; *Kalmuck*  Dzungaria and lower Volga, thence to lower Don  *Buriat* or *Siberian Mongolian,* east and west of Lake Baikal. |
| VI. TUNGUSIC. | *Tungus proper,* from the middle Yenisei to the  Pacific ; *Lamut,* western coast of the sea of Okhotsk;  *Manchu,* Manchuria. |
| VII. | Japanese, Japan and Riu-Kiu (Lew-Chew) Islands; doubtful. |
| VIII. | Corean, Corea ; doubtful. |
| IX. and X. | Accad and Etruscan ; both doubtful and extinct. |

In its morphology Ural-Altaic belongs to the agglutinat­ing order of speech, differing from other languages of this order chiefly in the exclusive use of suffixes attached to the unmodified root, and partly blended with it by the principle of progressive vowel harmony, in virtue of which the vowels of all the suffixes are assimilated to that of the root. Thus the typical formula is R + r + r + r, &c., where R is the root, always placed first, and r, r, r . . . the successive postfixed relational elements, whose vowels conform by certain subtle laws of euphony to that of the root, which never changes. These suffixes differ also from the case and verbal endings of true inflecting languages (Aryan, Semitic) in their slighter fusion with the root, with which they are rather mechanically united (agglutin­ated) than chemically fused into a term in which root and relational element are no longer separable. Hence it is that the roots, which in Aryan are generally obscured, blurred, often even changed past the possibility of identi­fication, in Ural-Altaic are always in evidence, unaffected by the addition of any number of formative particles, and controlling the whole formation of the word. For instance, the infinitive element *mak* of the Osmanli *yaz-mak =* towrite becomes *mek* in *sev-mek =* to love (vowel harmony), and shifts its place in *sev-il-mek =* to be loved (imperfect fusion with the root), while the root itself remains un­changed as to form and position in *sev-ish-il-mek* = to be impelled to love, or in any other possible combination with suffixed elements. The facility with which particles are in this way tacked on produces an exuberance, especially of verbal forms, which in Osmanli, Finnish, Magyar, Tungus, and Mordvinian may be said to run riot. This