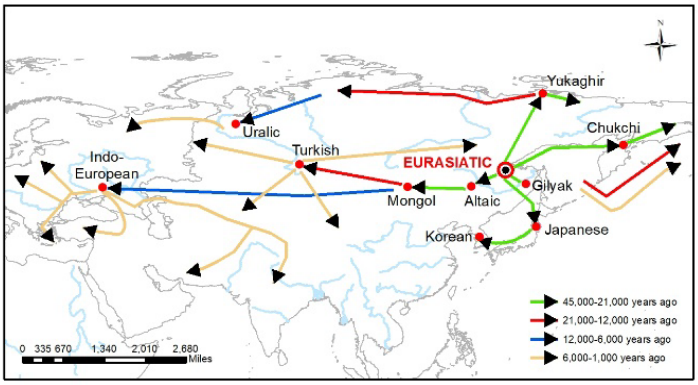
12.Eurasiatic

Homeland. For Eurasiatic, the homeland region is presumed to be the Amur Valley, based on the distribution of Eurasiatic subgroups around that center. From this region, language families spread north, south, west, and east.



Concise Spreadsheet: top three levels

Eurasiatic		
	Gilyak	
	Altaic	
		Tungistic
		Mongolian
		Turkic
	Chukotian	
	Korean-Japanese-Ainu	
		Korean
		Japanese
		Ainu
	Yukaghir-Uralic	
		Yukaghir
		Uralic
	Indo-European	
		Anatolian
		Armenian
		Greek
		Albanian
		Italic
		Slavic
		Baltic
		Germanic
		Celtic
		Tocharian
		Indo-Iranian
	Etruscan	
	Eskimo-Aleut	
		Aleut
		Eskimo

Full Spreadsheet: see "12.Eurasiatic," listing Eurasiatic languages by groups and subgroups.

Pleistocene Changes.

65,000–45,000 years ago.

45,000–21,000 years ago. Establishment of the Eurasiatic phylum took place no earlier than 45,000 years ago, in the Amur Valley, by settlers who presumably came from the west. Eurasian languages presumably were descended from one of preceding the language phyla, but no candidate has been advanced in detail. Arguing in geographic terms, I propose that Trans-Himalayan languages were the most likely ancestor of Eurasiatic. Initial expansion of Eurasiatic was in northeast Asia in times before the Glacial Maximum. Maritime and riverain technology – relying on boats made of skin sewed around wooden frames – became important, enabling migrants to move south to Japan and Korea, north to Chukotia, and along rivers to form the Yukhagir and Altaic groups. Arrival of maritime settlers from the south, of Indo-Pacific-speaking origin, may have strengthened the maritime tradition of Eurasiatic speakers.

21,000–12,000 years ago. Indo-European and Etruscan families formed (out of Altaic or Yukhagir–Uralic ancestors), at the western fringe of the Eurasiatic language zone.

Holocene Changes.

12,000–6000 years ago. Yukhagir-speaking migrants moved west as temperatures rose, forming the Uralic subgroup; they specialized in hunting and then domesticating reindeer. The Altaic group remained based in the east but sent migrants across the steppes. The Indo-European subgroup, centered north of the Black Sea, spread east, west, and south, adopting agriculture that had been developed by preceding groups.

6000 years ago–1000 CE. Uralic speakers spread further west to the Baltic and Atlantic. Inuit-Aleut formed in northeast Asia and spread east across the Aleutian Islands and the polar fringe of the Americas, in a parallel to Yukhagir–Uralic communities, but focusing on fish and dogs. Altaic spread widely with horse culture, then horses spread beyond the limits of Altaic society.

Commentary and Debates. Understanding the overall language distribution of temperate Eurasia has been difficult. Indo-European languages were described early and effectively but the relationship of Indo-European languages to other language groups has been hypothesized in several contradictory ways. In Greenberg's Eurasiatic, Indo-European is a late-developing subgroup, which grew rapidly and widely in Holocene times. In Dolgoposky's Nostratic, Afroasiatic, Dravidian, and Kartvelian are added to Eurasiatic, and it is assumed that the homeland of the Nostratic phylum was in the Levant or Caucasus during the Terminal Pleistocene.

Greenberg's classification of Eurasiatic follows rather closely the structure of his classifications of Niger–Kordofanian, Afroasiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Amerind, and Na-Dene. In each case, the distribution of language families reveals clearly a homeland region and a sequence of expansions.

References.

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