

## ユーラシア古語文献の文献学的研究

### NEWSLETTER

No. 8 2004/12/10

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#### 活 動 報 告

第 15 回、第 16 回研究会が開催されました。

#### ◆第 15 回研究会◆

日時 : 2004 年 10 月 23 日(土) 午後 2 時～午後 4 時

場所 : 京都大学大学院文学研究科附属

ユーラシア文化研究センター (羽田記念館)

"Japanese language classification. A matter of argument or a matter of belief?"

Dr. Martine Robbeets (東京大学大学院外国人研究員)

コメント 板橋義三 (九州大学大学院助教授)

#### ◆第 16 回研究会◆(第 53 回羽田記念館講演と共催)

日時 : 2004 年 11 月 13 日(土) 午後 2 時～

場所 : 京都大学大学院文学研究科附属

ユーラシア文化研究センター (羽田記念館)

「15 世紀中央アジアの聖者伝『マカーマーテ・ホージャ・アフラール』について」

川本正知 (奈良産業大学教授)

「ラシードウ ウッディーンと王叔和『脉訣』のペルシャ語訳本」

羽田亨一 (東京外国語大学教授)

研究会報告の要旨

第15回研究会報告

BELIEF OR ARGUMENT?

The Classification of the Japanese Language.

Martine Robbeets

**1. The champion of hypotheses**

The origin of Japanese is among the most disputed questions of language history. When it concerns attempts to classify the language, Japanese can boast a wider range of languages and language families for which an attempt to establish a genetic relationship with has been made than can any other language in the world. Hypotheses have been presented, connecting Japanese to Sumerian, Indo-European, the Papua languages, Austro-Asiatic, Sino-Tibetan, Tamil, Ainu, Austronesian, Altaic...

The comparative method of historical linguistics is a tool for testing the validity of a single hypothesis of language classification, it is not a method for selecting the most likely hypothesis out of many different possibilities. Relying on interdisciplinary research such as recent advances in archaeology, genetics, physical anthropology and general insights in the mechanisms of language change, I select the Altaic hypothesis as the most fruitful one to test in an initial stage. That brings us to the question “Is Japanese an Altaic language, or not?”. For many linguists today the Altaic affinity of Japanese remains what it originally was: a question. The lack of a global state of the art leads to the dissemination of extreme answers to the Altaic question for Japanese, ranging from an absolute ‘no!’ to an exclamatory ‘yes!’. Given this lack of consensus in linguistic literature about the Altaic affinity of Japanese, my doctoral dissertation (Robbeets 2003) aimed at presenting a state of the art for the etymological evidence relating Japanese to Korean, Tungusic, Mongolic and Turkic. My approach is empirical in the sense that the material, the body of lexical and morphological evidence proposed in an attempt to relate Japanese to Korean, Tungusic, Mongolic and Turkic is at the core of my study. Given the massive accumulation of etymologies, 1806 Japanese lexical entries and 59 morphological entries along with the various proposals suggested so far, we are confronted with a methodological problem. How can we evaluate all the evidence?

**2. A genetic argument**

As suggested in the title, searching for common linguistic origins, is a matter of argument, not a matter of belief. A genetic argument is a negative argument, what in classical logic is called a disjunctive syllogism. It means that our deduction, the process of reaching a conclusion about common ancestorship, works by elimination. One rules out all but one of the logically

possible accounts of the similarities holding between the languages compared, so that only inheritance from a putative common ancestor remains. Thus, a genetic argument consists not only in the presentation of a set of similarities holding over the languages compared, it also consists in the demonstration that these similarities are not likely to be the result of nature, borrowing or chance. Applying this knowledge to the similarities holding between Japanese, Korean, Tungusic, Mongolic and Turkic, it is essential to set up a methodological framework for sifting the proposed evidence. The sifting criteria that I adopt in order to separate the stronger etymological proposals from the weaker ones are the following. First I omit etymologies in which the internal analysis of the individual proto-forms is in conflict with the external comparison. Second, I omit similarities that could be the result of universal tendencies in the structuring of language. Third, I try to rule out borrowing as an explanation of the similarity sets. Fourth, I set up semantic constraints for the comparison of the meanings.

### 3. The core-evidence

What is the result of this sifting process? Starting from 1806 Japanese lexical items along with their etymologies, it is possible to omit 474 etymologies on the basis of a contradictory internal etymology. Next, 89 proposals are omitted because they are likely to be attributed to universal tendencies in linguistic structuring. Then, 181 etymologies are disregarded on suspicion of borrowing, and, finally, 485 etymologies are left out due to weak semantics. A core of 577 etymologies stands the test. However, we are still left with two possible accounts for the similarities involved: coincidence or inheritance from a common ancestor. What remains to be done in order to motivate the phonological similarity by genetic relationship is the application of the comparative method. This method tries to establish regular sound-correspondences. In an attempt to establish regular sound correspondences, the 577 remaining look-alikes are arranged in matrices. Etymologies that reflect a regular correspondence for the initial are transplanted into the matrix that investigates the medial consonant. Only if the medial consonant corresponds regularly, the etymology is further transplanted into the third matrix that examines the medial vowel correspondence. Working systematically along these lines I arrive at a core of 349 etymologies that reflect regular correspondences for the initial consonant, the medial vowel and the medial consonant of the Japanese proto-form. The fact that (1) there are triple phoneme correspondences alone can with a high degree of probability rule out chance as an explanation of the similarities. Other considerations that speak against coincidence are (2) the total number (=349) of the remaining etymologies; (3) the number of branches (=5) involved in the comparison; (4) the overall phonological symmetry of the Altaic sound system reflecting a dual voiced-voiceless opposition, a two-fold liquid system and cluster correspondences; (5) the stability of the etymologies in terms of individual

reconstruction, borrowing, nature and semantics. Besides, it is reassuring to find shared basic vocabulary. For 42 semantic items out of Swadesh's 100 list, I find an etymology that relates a Japanese proto-form to Korean, Tungusic, Mongolic and/or Turkic. Arguing for or against a linguistic unity is before all a matter of data. However, due to the limited space at my disposal in this summary, I will restrict myself to the following seven etymologies for Japanese basic vocabulary items. They stand the sifting process and can be taken as an illustration of the quality of the 349 remaining core etymologies.

### 1. HEART

Japanese: *kokoro*, OJ *ko<sub>2</sub>ko<sub>2</sub>ro<sub>2</sub>* 'heart', MJ *kokoti* 'heart, feelings, mood', pJ \**koko* 'heart'

Tungusic: Neg. *oxon / okon* and Ev. *ukun* 'breasts' > pTg \**xukun*

Ma. *xuxuŋ*, Lit. Ma. *xuxun*, Na. *kū(n)*, Olč. *kū(n)*, *kuku(n)*, Orok. *kū(n)*, Jur. *xuxun* 'breasts'  
> pTg \**kukun* (pTg \**k-* > \**x-* ?)

Mongolic: WMo. *kökü*, SH MMo. *kokan*, Khal. *xöx*, Kalm. *kökŋ*, Dong. *gogo*, Bao. *kugo*, Yogh. *hgön*, Mgr. *kugo*, Mogh. *kökä*, pMo \**kökön* 'breast'

Turkic: OTk. *köküz*, Tk. *göyüs*, Az. *köks*, Tkm. *gövüs*, Chuv. *kögör*, Kirg. *kökürök*, Sal. *göfryx* all with the meaning of 'breast' and Yak. *köyüs* 'middle of the back', pTk \**kökür<sub>2</sub>* 'breast'

### 2. EAT

Japanese: *kuu*, OJ *kup-*, pJ \**kup-* 'eat'

Mongolic: WMo *kebi-* means 'raminate, chew the cud' and not simply 'chew', WMo. *kebi-*, Kalm. *kew-*, Dag. *keme-*, Mgr. *kēji-*, pMo \**kebi-* 'chew the cud'

Turkic: MTK. *keviš*, Az. *göjüš*, Tkm. *gāvüš* 'cud', Khal. *kāviš*, Bash. *köjös*, Kaz. *küjis* all mean 'cud' and OTk. (Karakhanide) *kev-*, Tk. *gev-*, Gag. *gevše-*, Sal. *küşä-*, Chuv. *kavle-*, Yak. *kebi-*, Kirg. *küjšo-* mean 'chew, chew the cud', pTk \**kēb-* 'chew the cud'

### 3. BITE

Japanese: J *kamu* 'bite, gnaw, masticate', OJ *kam-* 'brew', *kamosu* 'brew', pJ \**kamo-* 'bite, gnaw, masticate'

Mongolic: WMo. *kemeli-*, *kemile-*, Khal. *ximle-*, Kalm. *keml-*, Bao. *kamel-*, Dag. *keme-*, Yogh. *kemle-*, pMo \**kemeli-* 'gnaw, bite'

Turkic: OTk. *kemür-*, Tk. *gemir-*, Tat. *kimer-*, Az. *gemir-*, Tkm. *gemir-*, Kirg. *kemir-*, pTk \**kemür-* 'gnaw'

### 4. EARTH

Japanese: morpheme attested in *suna* 'sand', *nae* 'seedling', OJ *nawi* 'earthquake', OJ *nara*

‘Nara, the Land’, *ne* ‘root’ etc.; OJ *na* ‘ground, plain’ (M 14, 3447), pJ \**na* ‘earth, ground, plain’

Korean: K *nara*, MK *nàráh*, Kog. OK \**nɔ*, pK \**nara* ‘country’

Tungusic: Neg. *nā*, Ma. *naa*, Lit. Ma. *na*, Na. *nā*, Olč. *nā*, Orok. *nā*, Jur. *na*, pTg \**nā*, ‘earth’

Turkic: Bash. *jalan*, pTk \**jalaŋ* ‘field’

## 5. YELLOW

Japanese: J *ki* ‘yellow’, OJ *kugane* < *ku* + *kane* ‘metal’, pJ \**ku*

Korean: MK *kwulí* ‘copper’, Kog. OK \**kul* ‘yellow’, pK \**kwuli* ‘yellow, copper’

Tungusic: Neg. *ōjin*, Na. *χō-gžō*, Olč. *χoj-pü(n)*, Ev. *uri-m*, pTg \**xuri*- ‘grey’

Mongolic: WMo. *küreŋ*, *kürin*, Khal. *xüren*, Kalm. *kürŋ*, Dag. *kurel*, Mgr. *kurē*, pMo \**küre-* ‘brown’

## 6. WHITE

Japanese: J *siro* ‘white’, OJ *siro*, *siraha* ‘white feather’, *sirahama* ‘white beach’, *siraga* ‘white hair’, pJ \**siruo*, \**sira* ‘white’

Korean: MK *hoy-* ‘white’, MK *huy-* ‘white’, MK *syey-* ‘whiten (of hair, of face)’, pK \**siV-*

\**siCo* (i-breaking) > \**syo-* > \**hyo-* (metathesis) > MK *hoy-* ‘white’

\**siCu* (i-breaking) > \**syu-* > \**huy-* (metathesis) > MK *huy-* ‘white’

\**siCu-i-* (i-breaking) > \**syu-i-* (lenition block) > MK *syey-* ‘whiten’

Mongolic: WMo. *sira*, Khal. *šar*, Kalm. *šarə*, Dong. *səra* Bao. *šira*, Dag. *šara*, Yogh. *səra*, Monguor *šira*, Mogh. *šira*, pMo \**sira* ‘yellow’

Turkic: OTk. *sariy*, Tk. *sari*, Tat. *sari*, Uigh. *seriq*, S.-Yugh. *sariy*, Az. *sari*, Tkm. *sari*, Chuv. *šorǎ*, Yak. *araGas*, Kirg. *sari*, Kaz. *sari*, Bash. *hari*, Sal. *sa(:)ri*, , pTk \**sāri-g*, ‘yellow’ (? < pTk \**siri-g* ‘yellow’ < pTk \**sira-g*)

## 7. ROUND

Japanese: *marui* ‘round’, OJ *maro*<sub>2</sub> ‘round, circle’ (M 2305), pJ \**maru-*, \**maro-*

Tungusic: Neg. *mejel*, Lit. Ma. *murġen*, Na. *murġi*, Olč. *murū-muru*, Orok *morolime*, Ev. *murume*, pTg \**murV-* ‘round’

Mongolic: WMo. *murui*, Khal. *muruj*, Kalm. *muŕū*, Dag. *morčigui*, Mgr. *muŕi*, pMo \**murui* ‘curve’

Turkic: Tkm. *bur-*, Chuv. *pɓʷɪɓʷm-*, pTk \**bura-* ‘to twist, wind round’

## 4. And what about morphology?

It does not take an experienced linguist to reveal that the morphological evidence proposed in the Japanese-Altaic question is underrepresented *vis-à-vis* the lexical evidence. Sifting the

etymologies advanced for 59 Japanese morphemes, I leave out 35 cases for which the internal analysis is in conflict with the external comparison. Two etymologies are omitted because they can be the result of universal patterning. I further reject 6 cases for reason of functional overpermissiveness. And finally, for 4 morphological comparisons, the sound correspondences are problematic. The sifting criteria lead to only 12 morphological etymologies that stand the test. That morphology yields poor results in the Japanese-Altaic question can be called a matter of competing forces. Just like in the case of basic vocabulary, the strength of the morphological evidence lies in its low borrowability. However, the tendency of Japanese and Altaic towards agglutinative word formation can perhaps account for the paucity of the data in the following way.

- (1.) In agglutinative languages the morphemes are mainly suffixes or unbound postpositions. They are in a peripheral position, a position where phonological erosion is expected.
- (2.) This is also true for a large number of Indo-European suffixes, like e.g. the proto-Germanic *\*-iz* plural that completely eroded in final position. However, the Germanic plural left a trace in the root due to the inflectional feature of Indo-European. Agglutinative word formation, on the contrary, tends to exact segmentation of root and morpheme. In Japanese and Altaic we do not expect inflectional fusion like in English *mouse-mice* in which the trace of a lost plural morpheme *\*-iz* can be traced in the phonology of the root.
- (3.) In agglutinative languages one morpheme corresponds to one meaning. The lack of polysemy of morphemes increases the risk of coincidental look-alikes in morphological comparison.
- (4.) Agglutinative word formation is not likely to show systematic formational irregularities like *ego-me* or *good-better-best*.
- (5.) In agglutinative languages grammatical and derivational morphemes often originate from independent words that have been grammaticalized. This projects the quality of the proposed morphological evidence back to the lexical level. Many etymologies proposed for Japanese morphemes can be eliminated on suspicion of grammaticalization.
- (6.) Not only in Japanese, but also in Korean, Tungusic, Mongolic and Turkic, the morphemes are often -if not monophonemic-monosyllabic, which raises the chance of accidental similarity.
- (7.) Finally, loss of entire grammatical categories can lead to the inability to reconstruct large parts of the morphological system. The observation that for Romance languages less than half of Classical Latin inflectional endings are reconstructible may serve as a hint as to how much morphology might be hoped for in reconstructions that exceed the approximate time depth of 2500 year. Although Japanese shares a serious number of structural features with Korean, Tungusic, Mongolic and Turkic, typological evidence is not really useful as an argument for common ancestorship. Typological similarity can be the result of genetic inheritance, but it

does not necessarily do so. it can also be induced by contact, universals, or chance. Because it is difficult to sort out genetic, areal and universal determinants of linguistic structure, I do not take into account any typological similarities.

## 5. Conclusion.

Back to the initial question: “Is Japanese relatable to Korean, Tungusic, Mongolic and Turkic?”. Given the etymological evidence for Japanese proposed so far, given the methodology of comparative linguistics and, given the limits of my evaluation abilities, I reach the conclusion: “yes, it is.” First, it is possible to establish a regular set of sound correspondences. And, second, we can rule out chance, universals or borrowing to a serious extent. At this moment I am unable to find another motivation for the phonological correspondences than to attribute them to a common ancestor of the languages involved in the comparison.

Does it mean that everything is done yet? No, not at all. Starting from the remaining core-evidence we can further examine the data in order to refine the selection and reduction of the evidence. Since every etymology deserves to be taken on its own merits, our evaluation should not be a priori and as a whole, but item by item. if we arrive at the point where we are unable to eliminate the remaining core-etymologies any further and we can maintain that Japanese is relatable to Altaic, a lot of work remains to be done in terms of conditioning factors, refinement of the vowel-correspondences, suprasegmental correspondences, morphological comparison etc. Either way, being linguists it is our responsibility to search in a constructive way for an answer to the classification question of Japanese. Altaic scholarship has accumulated numerous etymological proposals. Historical linguistic scholarship has refined the comparative methodology. What remains open to evaluation is the accurate application of the methodology on the data. That is why the classification of the Japanese language is, just like the classification of any other language in the world, a matter of argument and, not a matter of belief.

**次回研究会の開催について**

下記のとおり COE 第 18 回、第 19 回研究会を開催します。  
皆様のご参加をお待ちしております。

**☞ COE 第 18 回研究会 ☜**

(科学研究費補助金「中央アジアにおけるムスリム・コミュニティーの成立と変容に関する歴史学的研究」研究会と共催)

日時 : 2004 年 12 月 26 日(日) 午後 2 時～午後 5 時

場所 : 京都外国語大学国際言語平和研究所 (12 号館 429 会議室)  
京都市右京区西院笠目町6 Tel. 075-322-6055

〈講演〉

『世界征服者の歴史』におけるアラウッディーン・ジュワイニーの  
叙述目的と叙述方法

N. トショフ (ウズベキスタン共和国科学アカデミー東洋学研究所研究員)

「インシャー作品に収録された書簡の信憑性について  
—ティムール関連の書簡を事例として—

S. グラーモフ (ウズベキスタン共和国科学アカデミー東洋学研究所研究員)

**☞ COE 第 19 回研究会 ☜**

日時 : 2005 年 1 月 8 日(土) 午後 3 時～午後 5 時

場所 : 京都大学文学部 新館第 1 講義室

〈講演〉「19 世紀末ロシア農民の手紙文とその背後にある諸事実  
—語用論的文献学の確立に備えて—

オルガ 横山 京都大学大学院文学研究科客員教授

**編集後記**

COE31 研究会ニューズレター第 8 号をお届けいたします。

今後も活発に研究会等を企画して参りますので、皆様のご支援、ご協力をお願いいたします。

**連絡先**

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