

## 18 **Ainu's Relation to Other Languages**

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**Summary** 18.1 Is Ainu an Isolate Language? – 18.2 Philological Attestations and Investigation. – 18.3 Internal Reconstruction. – 18.4 Comparative Reconstruction. – 18.5 Loanwords and Areal Linguistics. – 18.6 Wörter und Sachen.

### **18.1 Is Ainu an Isolate Language?**

Discuss:

- How do we define a language family?
- What makes a language isolate?
- How is an isolate language different from an unclassified language and what makes a language so?

Consider the following six means scholars usually employ to advance their knowledge on isolate languages (Campbell 2017, 11). Do you think they can be applied to Ainu? Which one(s) could be more effective than others and why?

- Philological attestations and investigation
- Internal reconstruction
- Comparative reconstruction
- Loanwords
- Areal linguistics
- Wörter und Sachen

## 18.2 Philological Attestations and Investigation

### List of historical sources on HA:

- Anonymous (1624-44?), *Matsumae no kotoba* 松前ノ言 (The Language of Matsumae);
- De Angelis Girolamo (1624), *Relatione del regno di Iezo*;
- Kūnen (1704), *Ezo kotoba* 狄言葉 (The Language of Ezo);
- Chōsaborō Abe, Uehara Kumajirō (1792), *Moshiogusa* 藻汐草 (Sundried Seaweed);
- Batchelor John (1889), *An Ainu-English-Japanese Dictionary*;
- Mashiho Chiri (1953-54), 分類アイヌ語辞典 *Bunrui ainugojiten* (Categorical Dictionary of the Ainu language).

### List of historical sources on SA:

- La Pérouse Jean-François de Galaup (1798), *Voyage de La Pérouse autour du monde, pendant les années 1785, 1786, 1787 et 1788* (A Voyage of La Pérouse Around the World Performed in the Years 1785, 1786, 1787 and 1788);
- Davydov Gavriilo (1812), Словарь наречий народов обитающих на южной оконечности полуострова Сахалина, собранный на месте покойным Гаврилою Давыдовым *Slovar' narechij narodov obitayushchikh na yuzhnoy okonechnosti poluostrova Sakhalina, sobranniy na meste pokojnym leytenantom Gavriloyu Davydovym* (A Dictionary of Ethnolects of Peoples Inhabiting the Southern Recesses of the Sakhalin Peninsula Collected on Location by the Late Lieutenant Gavriilo Davydov);
- Dobrotvorskij Michail M. (1875), Айнско-русски словарь *Ajnsko-rusски slovar'* (An Ainu-Russian Dictionary);
- Pilsudski Bronislaw (1912), *Materials for the Study of the Ainu Language and Folklore*.

For additional sources, also on Kuril Ainu, see Satō, Bugaeva (2019, 69-71).

Attestations of words in historical sources help us trace the path of development of single terms and sometimes of the language in general. Valuable information on adoption of loanwords, creation of toponyms, phonological changes, presently obsolete morphosyntactic structures etc. can surface in historical sources – in the case of Ainu the transcription(s) used represents an insightful tool to investigate language development.

Attestations of *pirka* /pir̥ika/ 'be good'; *sirkunne* /çir̥ikun:e/ 'be dark' (examples from Satō, Bugaeva 2019, 84-6):

びる可	biruka	( <i>Matsumae no kotoba</i> )
びる可	piruka	( <i>Ezodan hikki</i> 1710)
飛類可	hiruka, et al. renderings	( <i>Ezo kotoba</i> 1704)
ビルカ	biruka	( <i>Hokkai zuihitsu</i> 1739)
пирука	piruka	(Davydov 1812)
志りく川ね	shirikunne	( <i>Matsumae no kotoba</i> )
志りくん祢	shirikunne	( <i>Ezodan hikki</i> 1710)
ширикунни	shirikunni	(Davydov 1812)

The Japanese (*hentaigana*) and Cyrillic transliterations point to actual different phonological realisations for the segment *r* in *pirka* and *sirkunne*. This phonological difference, lost in modern/contemporary Ainu, can be ascribed to different underlying syllable structures for the two words present in Proto-Ainu (see e.g. Satō 2015 for more).

### 18.3 Internal Reconstruction

Consider again the fourth person prefix *a-* of HA you analysed in Lesson 5 in the function of marker of agent in the impersonal-passive construction. The origin and development of this agreement prefix can be determined through internal reconstructions. Bugaeva (2011, 524-8) traces four stages that led to *a-* being used this way.

The affix *a-* has its origin in the intransitive verb *an* 'exist' in the existential construction, of the type in (1), where this verb takes a noun as its sole argument (S). This is the first, initial, stage.

- (1) *Inne kotan an.*  
 be.populous village **3SS/exist.PC**  
 'There was a populous village.' (Tamura 1985, 48)

The second stage of the development sees an intransitive verb being nominalised (via zero-nominalisation, a process widespread in Ainu) and functioning as the S argument of *an*.

- (2) [**Rok**]<sub>s</sub> *an yakka pirka ya?*  
**sit.PL.NMLZ** 3SS/exist.PC though 3SS/be.good INT  
 Lit.: 'Is it good if there is sitting down? = May I sit down?'  
 (KJ in Bugaeva 2011, 525)

The verb *an* begins to function as a clitic and semantically the construction soon develops an impersonal reading.

This impersonal construction that was originally limited to intransitive verbs gets extended to transitive verbs by analogy (3). Here the post-clitic =*an* is placed before the verb, thus becoming a prefix, in line with other personal agreement morphemes of Ainu. Erosion of the segment *n*, most common in Ainu when grammaticalisation happens, follows and the prefix takes the form *a-* (the form *an-* still remains in some fossilised verb forms and in North-Eastern Hokkaidō dialects). This third stage of the development is supported by the prosodic features that the personal affix *a-/an* still retains.

- (3) *A-en-ko-pisi*                      *p*                      *anakne*    *opitta*                      *ku-ye*.  
 IP-1SOI-APPL-3PO/ask    thing    TOP                      all                      1SS-3PO/say  
 'I (will) say everything I am asked.' (Tamura 1984, 12)

In the fourth and final stage (4) the impersonal construction with a transitive verb takes a passive reading and expression of the actant with an oblique is allowed.

- (4) Toan                                      **kur-oro-wa**                      a-en-kik.  
 that                                      **man-place-from**    IP-1SO-hit  
 'I was hit by that man.'

#### 18.4 Comparative Reconstruction

Philological studies of historical sources may include comparative reconstruction and vice versa. Two works that attempt to reconstruct Proto-Ainu using this approach are Vovin (1993) and Alonso de la Fuente (2012).

In particular, Vovin (1993) takes into account the phonetic alternations present in many Hokkaidō and Sakhalin Ainu dialects and, on this basis, sketches a provisional phonemic inventory of Proto-Ainu (PA). Secondly, though far more marginally, Vovin discusses a number of morphophonological variations that occurred in Ainu. Starting from the phonemes of PA some lexical items of the language are reconstructed and then compared with other proto-languages belonging to the Austroasiatic language family (AA).

(PA) *ki=raqu* 'horn'

PA \***ki(=)raqu** L(-)LH "horn". Cf. PW \***rxŋ** "horn (anim.)" (Diffloth 1980, 131); PM \***draŋ**, Proto-Mon \***krɛ:ŋŋ** "horn" (Diffloth 1984, 99).

(PA) \*VqV > (Proto-Wa) +Vŋ  
 (PA) [r] > (PAA, PW, Proto-Monic) [r]

(PA) *suma* 'stone'

PA \***suma** LH "stone". Cf. PW \***smo?** "stone" (Diffloth 1980, 106); PM \***tmo?** "stone" (Diffloth 1984, 130); Alak *tamō*; Bahnar *tómō*; Boloven *tamō*; Chrau *thmō*; Halang *mō*; Kaseng *tamō*; Khmer *thmō*; Kontu *tamō*; Kuoi *tamau*; Lavé *tamō*; Phnong *tama*; Por *thmo-*; Prou *tama*; Sedang *hum*; Stieng *tómāu*; Sué *tamao*; Talaing *tmo?*; Tareng *tamō*; Khasi *máw*; Umpai *samo*; Bo Luang *samo*; Mapá *samo* "stone" (Shafer 1965, 20-21). PAA \***θoma** or \***θamu** ?

(PA) [s] > (PW) [s], (PM) [t], (PAA) [θ]

(PA) *ti=* 'we (personal agreement)'

PA \***ti=** L "we". Cf. PVM \***toy** "I" (Thompson 1976, 1176); Car Nicobar *cin* "I" (Das 1977, 25).

The comparative reconstruction approach adopted by Vovin is rooted in Hoenigswald's (1960) classical comparative method, with which linguists have long tried to determine cognation among languages. The comparative method includes three steps of language comparison: *step 1* - observe the sound correspondences within words that have a comparable meaning in different languages; *step 2* - infer regular sound changes rules which must explain all sound changes attested in the compared words; *step 3* - infer cognation judgements and propose a phylogensis for the analysed languages.

The comparative method establishes two types of linguistic characters that help define language cognation: lexical characters (similar words with the same meaning in different languages) and phonological characters (similar or identical sound changes that recur in different languages). A special type of lexical characters are morphological characters (grammatical features such as declension, conjugation, agreement in different languages that can be traced back to the same proto-morpheme). Since morphological material resists borrowing, and therefore it is unlikely that a morpheme in a language changes in an unexpected way, looking at morphology when using the comparative method is most insightful.

In the 1990s, Warnow revises the classical comparative method by stating that, in comparing languages, almost all (but not necessarily all) the linguistic characters should be compatible within the evolutionary tree for the analysed languages. This is a way to bypass

the inevitable cases of phonological (e.g. natural sound changes) and lexical (e.g. provable cases of borrowing) idiosyncrasies sometimes attested among languages that otherwise exhibit a strong similarity. As a way to optimise his analysis that, otherwise, would produce several possible trees with varied degrees of compatibility, Warnow formulated the following criterion: *find the tree on which it is possible to explain all incompatible character evolution with as simple an explanation as possible, and which matches linguistic scholarship as closely as possible*. The tree that meets this criterion is the best tree to describe the relations and phylogenesis of the analysed languages.

What are the major pitfalls of this approach?

- How many examples are available and so how reliable are our results...
- Possible mismatch of semantic categories among proto-languages and their encoding in the lexicon...
- How advanced is the study on the other proto-languages we use as a term of comparison... Synchronic analysis...
- Historical derivation and development of morphemes and specifically of inflectional morphology... Diachronic analysis...
- Geographical boundaries, historical vicissitudes, language contact, ...
- Arbitrariness in choosing the languages to be compared...
- How much do our assumptions influence the outcome of our analysis...

## 18.5 Loanwords and Areal Linguistics

Language contact between Ainu and Japanese, on the one hand, and Ainu and Nivkh, on the other hand, is well-substantiated (Dougherty 2019, 101-2). Japanese loanwords in Ainu include *tampaku* (Jap. たばこ *tabako* 'tobacco, cigarette'), Nivkh loanwords in Ainu include *tunakay* (Niv. *tlaji* 'reindeer'). The Ainu loanwords that got into Japanese, e.g. ラッコ *rakko* 'sea otter', are rarer.

Grammatical structures or phonological/phonetic features may be shared by languages spoken in a same area (*Sprachbund*). These language features spread among languages through diffusion or contact. One example of diffusion of grammatical structures between HA Ainu and Japanese is e.g. the tentative construction *wa inkar* 'try to', most probably created on calque of the Japanese *-te miru*.

Do loanwords and linguistic features inherited through diffusion and contact tell us something specific about a language genetic affiliation?

## 18.6 Wörter und Sachen

“Words that can be analysed into component parts are believed to be more recent than words which have no internal analysis” (Campbell 2017, 13). Cases where we can apply this approach in Ainu include common words and many toponyms:

*oypep* (HA), *'oypeh* (SA) < *'o-ipe-p* (LOC-AP.eat-NMLZ)

‘the thing someone eats in = vessel, plate’

*aop* (HA) < *a-o-p* (IP-get.in-NMLZ)

‘the thing someone gets into = car’

Sapporo < *satporo pet* (HA) < *sat poro pet* (be.dry be.big river)

‘the big dry river’

“Words [that contain non-productive morphology] are assumed to be possibly older than words composed only of productive (regular) morphemes” (Campbell 2017, 14). However, for a language like Ainu...

- How do we determine whether a piece of morphology is no longer productive?
- How about those morphemes that become non-productive in the late stages of the language's history?
- Is this approach informative with regards to the historical development of the language?

