The Origins of the Ainu Language.

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Several attempts have been made over the last century to clarify the origins of the Ainu language (Batchelor 1889), (Sternberg 1933), (Patrie 1982). None of them has yet been succesful, since all of them involved the method of straight comparisons. It is obvious that we will not achieve any positive results until we are comparing modern languages and not the reconstructions of the proto-languages. Some steps toward the reconstruction of the Proto-Ainu (PA) were proposed by Hattori Shirô (Hattori 1967).

My reconstruction of PA is based on interdialectal phonetic correspondences as well as on some peculiar morphonological alternations in two major dialect groups – Hokkaidô and Sakhalin. Present-day knowledge about these alternations in the third dialect group, Kuril Ainu, is too scarce in order to use it for this purpose.

The present reconstruction is based on the materials of the eight dialects of Hokkaidô: Yakumo (Y), Horobetsu (H), Saru (SA), Obihiro (O), Bihoro (B), Asahigawa (A), Nayoro (N), and Soya (SO); one dialect of Sakhalin: Raichiska (RA); and four sources on the Kuril dialects: Torii Ryûzô's materials (KT) (Hattori 1964), M.Dybowski's glossary (KD), S. Krasheninnikov's glossary (KK) (Murayama 1971) and I. Voznesenskii's glossary (KV), which I discovered in the Archive of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad (USSR). Occasionally I also used some other sources, such as the 200 word-list and Russian materials on the Nairo dialect of Sakhalin (NA) (Hattori 1960), (Novikova and Savelieva 1953), M. Dobrotvoskii's "Ainu-Russian Dictionary" (D) (Dobrotvorskii 1875), J. Klaproth's "Asia Polyglotta" (KLAP) (Klaproth 1823), Ph. J. von Stralehnberg's glossary (Stralenberg 1730) and some others, such as the Japanese-Ainu xylographic dictionary "Moshiogusa" (Kindaichi 1972) etc. It is necessary to take into consideration all available sources and dialects, since for example PA *r-, *d-, and *tr- are reflected in the majority of dialects as [r-] and thus the comparison of, let us say, SA dialect of Hokkaidô with RA dialect of Sakhalin (Hattori 1967) will not provide the whole PA reconstruction.

Since the limited space of this paper does not allow me to give a detailed discussion, I provide below the final results of my Proto-Ainu reconstruction (Vovin 1991 draft) in comparison with the modern Ainu phonological system (for the first variant of the reconstruction see Vovin 1989).

Modern Ainu Consonants

p		t			k		(q)
			c				
m		n					
w		s	y				h
		r					

Proto-Ainu Consonants

p		*t*			*k*		*(g)*
		d			*g*		
m		n					
		s	*y*			*h*	(H)
		r					

1) Modern Ainu [t] and [c] are in complementary distribution, thus I reconstruct only PA *t.

2) The morphonologic alternation of the Modern Ainu [w] is quite peculiar — it alternates with [s]. At the same time, some 18th century materials show in the place of modern [w] a cluster like [hw]. Combining these two factors and taking into consideration that the distribution of [w] in the words going back to PA is extremely limited I excluded [w] from PA phonemic inventory and reconstructed cluster *hd- (phonetically, probably [hð-]).

3) In addition to two voiceless stops [t] and [k] the correspondences between the Ainu dialects show the existence of their voiced counterparts *d and *g (phonetically, probably [ð] and [ɣ]).

4) PA also had two types of laryngeal fricatives *h and *H (perhaps voiceless and voiced).

5) PA *g, *h and *H shifted to [s] before [i] (there are only occasional examples of [h] before [i] in Modern Ainu).

Proto-Ainu initial consonant clusters

hd-   hr-   pr-   tr-   ty-

There are no initial consonant clusters in the Modern Ainu dialects.

674

Modern Ainu vowels (Hokkaidô)

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i                         u
     e             o
          a
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Modern Ainu vowels (Sakhalin)

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i        u              ii            uu
  e   o                  ee      oo
    a                      aa
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Proto-Ainu vowels

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i (ü)        (ï)     u        ii            uu
  e  (ö)          o
    E      (ĕ)  O                EE    OO
      a    A                       aa  AA
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1) PA long vowels are preserved in Sakhalin (Hattori 1967), but only in open syllables and in the first syllable in the overwhelming majority of cases. KK and KD (the latter less consistently) sometimes preserve long vowels, though not only in the open syllables.

2) The distinction between mid-low *E, *O and mid-high *e, *o is reconstructed on the basis of different correspondences between dialects (see below). The vowels *A, *AA, *ĕ, *ï, *ü, and *ö are reconstructed only in nominal stems with possessive form and verbal stems with "stem+V" "transitive" form. The last four vowels are represented only in verbal stems.

Proto-Ainu accent classes

(L - low pitch, H - high pitch)

1.1. Tonic H-L
1.2. Atonic L-H

2.1. High prototonic HH
2.2. Low prototonic HL
2.3. Oxytonic LH
2.4. Atonic LL-H

3.1. High prototonic HHH
3.2. Low prototonic HLL
3.3. Middle prototonic HHL
3.4. Mesotonic LHL
3.5. Oxytonic LLH
3.6. Atonic LLL-H

1) I do not agree with Hattori Sirô, who proposed that pitch accent in Hokkaidô dialects is a reflex of distinction between long and short vowels preserved in RA (Hattori 1967). High pitch in Hokkaidô dialects does

not always correspond to a long vowel in RA. Besides
that, there are two different accent systems within
Hokkaidô dialects, one is represented by Y, and the
second by all other dialects except B which lost pitch
distinctions. There is also oblique evidence that pitch
distinctions also existed in KK, one of the Kuril
dialects. Thus, I reconstruct for PA not only short and
long vowels, but also several accent classes.

2) Ainu accent is the opposite to Japanese. It is
the rise of voice, not the drop, which is significant. I
consider that sequences like HH or HL have initial
silent low-pitched mora, thus I represent them as "high
prototonic" and "low prototonic", respectively.

3) The reconstruction of atonic classes 2.4. and
3.6. is possible only by taking into consideration Y
data, since all the other dialects do not permit the
accent to be further than on the second mora of a word,
thus all more than one-mora words in the majority of
modern Hokkaidô dialects are tonic.

Phonetical correspondences between Ainu dialects

Consonants

PA	Y	HO	SA	O	B	A	N	SO	RA	NA	KT	KK	KD	KV	KLAP	D
*p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p,-h		p	p	p	p	p	
*m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m		m		m	m	m,-m-,m -mm-		
*t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t,-h		t	t	t	t	t	
*d-	r-	r-	r-	r-r-r-r-r-					r-		t-	r-	r-	r-	r-	
*n	n	n	n	n n n n n					n		n	n	n	n,-n-,-nn-	
*s	s	s	s	s s s s s					s		s	s	s	s	
*r	r	r	r	r r r r r					r,-rV	r	r	r	r	r	
*y	y	y	y	y y y y y, -y-,-ø-					y		y	? y, -y-,-ø-		y- ø-,y-	
*k	k	k	k	k k k k k					k,-h		k	k	k	k	
*g	h-	h-	h-	h-h-h-h-h-					h-/k-		h-/k- /ø-	ø-/ø- -h-?	k-/g-/ kh-/ø-?		
*h-	h-	h-	h-	ø-ø-ø-ø-h- /h- /h-					h-		h-	?	ø-	kh-/g- /ø-	
*H-	ø-	ø-	ø-	ø-h-ø-ø-ø-					ø-		ø-	ø-	?	?	
*hd	w	w	w	w w w w w					w		w	u- v /w-,-G-	v	-gu-	
*hr-	h-	h-	h-	h-h-h-h-h-					y-		y- /h-	y- y- /ø-	y-		
*pr-	p-	p-	p-	c-c-p-c-c- /c-/p-					c-		ch-	ch-c-	ch-		
*tr-	r-	r-	r-	r-r-r-r-r-					r-		r-	tr- /r-	r-	tr-/r-	tr-