

**THE GENERAL LINGUISTIC OF ALTAIC FAMILY LANGUAGES****TEACHER: MURODOVA SEVARA**Sevaramuradova888gmail@.com.**PÓLATOVA O'G'ILOY TOLIBJON QIZI**Abdurahmonovtolibjon95@gmail.com.**XALIMOVA SEVINCH ABDUMALIK QIZI**

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Abstract: The hypothesis of an Altaic language family, comprising the Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic, Korean and, in most recent versions, Japanese languages continues to be a viable linguistic proposal, despite various published claims that it is no longer accepted. A strong body of research continues to appear, developing and refining the hypothesis, along with publications that argue against a demonstrated relationship among these languages. This paper shows that many of the arguments against a genetic relationship fail to address the criteria demanded in modern historical linguistics, while many of the responses from proponents of the Altaic theory have failed to address the criticisms raised. We hope that arguments focusing on the real issues of phonological correspondences and morphological systems will shed greater light on the relationship among these languages.

Key words: hypothesis, linguistic, claims, longer accepted, the hypothesis, morphological systems, greater light.



Introduction

The Altaic theory holds that the Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic and Korean (and in most recent versions, also Japanese) languages are genetically related (and, for those who are inclined to accept even wider relationships, that they are more closely related to each other than to any other language family now known). A convenient terminology is to refer to the Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic languages as ‘micro-Altaic’; and to these languages with the addition of Korean and Japanese as ‘macro-Altaic.’ Altaic is a controversial theory today in the same way that the Algic or Afroasiatic hypotheses, or the hypothesis of the Indo-European character of the Anatolian languages was controversial well into this century. That is, it is accepted and worked on by a large number of recognized scholars, but it is either questioned or openly rejected by a number of others. The decades since World War II and especially the last few years have seen an unprecedented growth in Altaic comparative work as well as an unprecedented vigor in the debate over its validity. Nearly all of this work, pro and con, is usually published in outlets which appeal to the specialists in Central and East Asian languages and civilizations, rather than in ones devoted to general linguistics. It is thus doubly disturbing that a series of recent publications that aimed at general linguists purvey, in tones of authority but without much basis in fact, a series of myths about the current state of the Altaic hypothesis. Among the more confusing treatments of the Altaic relationship in several major recent encyclopedias of linguistics in English, German and Russian are Tekin , and the relevant articles in Jarceva and Glušck . Tekin presents Altaic (by which he means Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic and Korean) as an uncontroversial given and does not allude to Japanese at all. In the case of Glušck and Jarceva , what one would learn depends on which of several articles one reads. For example, in Glušck, the (unsigned) article ‘Altaische Sprachen’ informs us that Altaic is a ‘Sprachbund’, without any mention of the hypothesis of a genetic relationship (although the references are Benzing and Poppe , the latter of which deals in detail with the hypothesis of a genetic relationship among the Altaic languages). On the other hand, in the same encyclopedia, the articles (signed by Meyer-Ingwersen) on ‘Mongolisch’, ‘Tungusisch’ and ‘Tu\$ksprachen’ present these languages without further



ado as members of an ‘altaische Sprach-familie’ (without mentioning any controversy or alluding to Korean or Japanese), while the articles by Coulmas on ‘Japanisch’ and ‘Koreanisch’ tell us that Japanese shows typological similarities with Korean and allege that it is precisely these features which might point to a genetic relationship between these languages, and put the whole issue in the concept of ‘mixed languages’.

METHODOLOGY

Claims on the status of the Altaic studies.

More consistent, but even more misleading is a series of recent publications by influential linguists in Russia as well as the West telling general linguists that the Altaic hypothesis, far from flourishing, or even being the subject of an intense controversy, is quite simply dead (e.g., Vinogradov, Bateman et al, Nichols). Vinogradov says that Altaic (by which he appears to mean only Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic) is identified as a language group mostly on typological grounds, ‘with only a scant quantity of Common Altaic lexical and phonetic correspondences’ [translation ours]. If true, this would mean that, by ordinary standards, there is no case for Altaic (although, curiously, Vinogradov himself nonetheless seems to acknowledge the relatedness of the Altaic languages). Similarly, although in considerably more detail, Nichols claims that, after eliminating purely typological similarities between Turkic, Mongolian and Tungusic, the evidence [sc. for Altaic] was reduced to the pronominal root resemblances and a set of putative cognates. When the cognates proved not to be valid, Altaic was abandoned and the received view now is that Turkic, Mongolian and Tungusic are unrelated (see Unger [our Unger]). A few lines down she reiterates that ‘the lexical stock [sc. of Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic] proves to offer very few good potential cognates’. She then proposes contact as the explanation for the similarities among the pronouns of these three language groups (together with those of a number of other language groups of Northern Eurasia, roughly those which are sometimes classified as Nostratic or Eurasiatic). Yet, even a reader with only a slight knowledge of the Altaic problem and its history might feel that a theory to which so many of the best specialists in Central and East



Asian linguistics devoted a great part of their scholarly activities during the last century and a half should deserve better than a laconic remark like ‘the cognates proved not to be valid’.

Even those well-known scholars who deny the validity of Altaic, notably Clauson and passim), Doerfer and passim and Janhunen or express some skepticism about it, notably Ro!na-Tas (e.g., and passim) and Sinor , do not maintain that there is a shortage of putative cognates. Rather what they claim is that most (or all) of these are not cognates but borrowings. It is usually held, both by the supporters and the opponents of the Altaic theory, that the Altaic languages (or at least Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic) are best studied together, precisely because specialists in the individual languages know that the abundance of shared vocabulary among the languages called Altaic are an important tool for the proper understanding of the (pre-)history of these languages, and of the peoples who spoke them. Regardless of whether one explains all (most, some, few) of these shared items as due to inheritance or to borrowing, the Altaic debate has never been about the existence of truly shared items, but about the proper interpretation of their very abundance. Only in the case of Japanese have some critics of Altaic (notably Doerfer) claimed that the lexical evidence for linking this group to Altaic (as given in Miller) could reflect mere chance. But even here those critics who have actually worked on the problem (and who actually know Japanese), e.g., Janhunen agree that many of the Japanese forms in question are true shared forms and not chance resemblances; and again the only question is whether they represent common inheritance or widespread borrowings. Nichols’ claim that ‘the evidence [sc. for Altaic] was reduced to the pronominal root resemblances and a set of putative cognates’ is closer to the mark than Vinogradov’s, but it still does not convey an accurate impression. In fact, it is quite ironic, because connections involving less basic vocabulary are universally granted by critics and skeptics alike, whereas it is the validity of the pronominal root resemblances which is usually questioned by the critics or skeptics (e.g., Clauson , Ro!na-Tas . Indeed, Doerfer rejects the significance of the Altaic pronominal roots in a work in which he admits hundreds of lexical commonalities, and later (Doerfer) seeks to explain away the personal pronouns as belonging ‘zu den



Babywo\$rtern, offenbar enstanden aus expressiven Urlauten ', while much of the anti-Altaic literature avoids dealing with the problem of the pronouns.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Many of the others are spoken in former USSR republics **Azeri, Turkmen, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Uzbek Uigur, Mongolian, Japanese, Korean.**

In Turkish the plural is formed by the addition of **Ler** Or **Lar**. The suffixes themselves can be glued on one after the other for example: **EV** is Home , **EV LER** is house.

Having reviewed some of the most glaring misrepresentations of the current state of the Altaic debate in works intended for general linguists, we will now offer a sketch of the history of Altaic linguistics, based to a large extent on original research into this complex and controversial subject. In order to understand the roots of the Altaic debate, it is crucial to realize that the concept of Altaic emerged in the 19th century out of the significantly earlier Ural-Altaic theory. The term 'Ural-Altaic' can easily be misleading, since we naturally assume that it was intended to refer to a putative language family composed of two subfamilies: Uralic (Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic) and Altaic (Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic, without Korean or Japanese, which were not considered at the time). But that is not how it was intended at all, since the early writers on Ural-Altaic did not treat the three Altaic families as being more closely related to each other than to Finno-Ugric or Samoyedic, nor did they conceive of the latter two as forming a grouping of their own. In fact, the Ural-Altaic theory was proposed, under the label of 'Scythian', in a posthumous and unfinished work of Rask who also saw a connection to several more distant language groups (Basque, Caucasian, Chukchi-Kamchatkan, Eskimo-Aleut). Moreover, some vague idea similar to that of Ural-Altaic must have existed much earlier, because we find Strahlenberg offering arguments to refute the view which he says was widely held in his time that all the peoples of High Asia, generally and inaccurately called Ta(r)tars, were one ethnic and linguistic group.



Morphology

Most of the discussion concerning the relationship of these languages has so far centered on the lexicon and phonology as a guide to determining inheritance vs. borrowing. Unfortunately, morphology, which would be crucial in establishing a relationship, has received much less attention over the years. While there is extensive literature on the morphology of each of the language families involved, comparative work involving the full range of languages under consideration needs considerably more study. Indeed there is a plethora of shared grammatical formants among these languages and an important task remaining in Altaic studies is to consider not simply individual shared forms, but determine if we can construct entire shared systems between the families. An example we have already alluded to is the pronominal system in (micro-)Altaic, with its characteristic suppletive patterning. Although work on Altaic morphology may be said to have begun with Ramstedt, the real first milestone on the way to a comprehensive comparative study of Altaic morphology is undoubtedly Ramstedt. This work, now dated and marred by frequent use of unreliable data, remains a classic, which must be read as a starting point for all students of Altaic morphology. It deals with Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic and Korean morphology, but not with Japanese. Its Korean data is severely hampered by the inaccessibility to the author of Middle Korean sources, so it is based primarily on modern Korean forms. In addition, much of the data is in error, due partly to the author's failing memory at the time, as well as to the inevitable problems of editing a posthumous manuscript.

Conclusion

To sum up, it seems clear that most of the principled and methodological arguments of the opponents of the Altaic theory have little merit and do not in almost any particular case rise to the standards of discourse in modern comparative linguistics. The status of Altaic, although not quite the same as that of families like Algonquian, Romance, or Indo-European, is perhaps comparable to that of Austro-Asiatic or Afro-Asiatic: large families whose relatedness is suggested by a great deal of evidence, but where a great deal of work



still remains to be done on even some very basic questions. But if this is the case, then how can we explain the different perceptions of the validity of Altaic on the part of a significant number of linguists? To a large extent it is due to little more than the unusual tenacity, energy and outspokenness of the opponents of the theory, together with the equally unusual inability of its supporters to deal decisively with them.

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