

Two Words of Korean-Japanese.

(1926)

Very interesting lectures have been given recently in the Asiatic Society of Japan on »The origin of the Japanese«. Dr. Whymant read a paper on this subject in 1924, and later Dr. Labberton, at two of the Society's sessions, gave a lengthy exposition of his views on the same problem. Both of them hold or have held the view that the Japanese, or Nipponese as Dr. Labberton puts it, are anthropologically and linguistically to be counted among the Malayo-Polynesian group of nations and are no near relations to the continental tribes of Asia. The Honorary President of the Society, Sir Charles Eliot, adopted an opposing attitude in the course of the discussions that followed and, as I also had the opportunity to do, expressed the opinion that linguistically Japanese must be connected with the so-called »agglutinative» languages of Asia, and most nearly, albeit remotely enough, with the Korean language.

To avoid any misconceptions on the part of the reader I have purposely divided up the question so that the anthropological point of view and anything relating to cultural intercommunication between nations will not enter into the present discussion. I am afraid here of mixing, more than anything else, such things as types of houses, type of cranium, special customs, folklore and legends, etc. with the investigation of the subject: the origin of the Japanese language. It is solely on this last point that I will express an opinion. I should therefore like to present certain proofs which I have selected as definite ones. Whatever other points we may all agree upon, we can say that the Japanese, in certain racial features, resemble Malays or Polynesians, that there has been in earlier times an influx from the South, etc. But — and here I disagree with Dr. Whymant and Dr. Labberton — in its internal construction

and most essential parts the language, far from being a language of the Malay or Polynesian type, has no connections and no connections in this respect can be found. After having studied Dr. Labberton's articles carefully, I consider that these papers and what material they contain are not very convincing.

The chief point at issue here is that the Japanese language resembles too closely the Korean and the languages of Altaic stock to be, in all points, but a casual or accidental concurrence. The main features of these languages can be summarized in the following:

1) The words where a flexion is found consist of a stem and ending or suffix, i. e. no prefixes or infixes are used or known.

2) There are suffixes which can not be traced back to independent words or, in other words, certain elements remain in the flexional forms which in Japanese as well as in Korean and the Altaic languages seem to have been suffixes from oldest time. The use of suffixation is an old remedy in languages and independent words, therefore, when unaccentuated and indicating the relations between the accentuated words, often have a tendency to be agglutinated with the preceding word and give new suffixes.

3) The construction of syllables seems to have been more varying in oldest Japanese than it is now. It is after many historical changes that the Japanese language has come to a phase where short open syllables prevail and only *-n* is found as a closer of a syllable. Earlier both *-ŋ* and *-m* existed, and probably also other consonants, at the end of a syllable, and there was a distinction between long and short syllables.

4) The words begin with a vowel or with consonant + vowel. Two consonants as initial sounds have never been «mundgerecht», as the Germans say. This is the rule still in Japanese and in the Altaic languages, and the Korean language does not contradict it.

Now, to come to the two words I offer as evidence of old-time Korean-Japanese relations, I should like to make my underlying idea clear, that, *if* the Japanese had imported, their language en route from somewhere in the South, let's say from the Pacific islands, from Siam or somewhere else, we should have every reason

to expect that travelling through the waves in boats and from island to island, words signifying *boat*, *sailing*, *rowing*, words for *island*, *riffs*, *rocks*, *sand*, *beach*, words for *water*, *waves*, *wind* etc. could not have been forgotten en route and that it is just among such words we must search for the reminders of the oldest connections, or the «origin», if we use that expression. Dr. Labberton has given no words or etymologies of this kind which could firmly rebind the old linguistical ties. There is no other way out of this difficult problem than to accept the possibility or probability that the immigrants from the South — whether numerous or few — learned a new, an entirely different language, in Japan i. e. the alternative must be accepted that there was an old population in Japan whose language gained the upper hand.

Are there, then, words of this kind common to Japanese and Japans nearest neighbours on the Asian continent? I would say there are many, but I produce only two here:

Jap. *shima* 'island' = Kor. *sjēm* 'island' (SKE p. 228).

Jap. *he-* 'boat', 'ship' = Kor. *pä* < *pai* 'boat, ship' (SKE p. 181).

1) *shima* = *sjēm*

The word of two syllables which is now pronounced *shima* is, according to well known rules of the development of the Japanese language, an earlier *sima*, i. e. the initial sound was originally *s*, not *sh*. In the corresponding Korean word *sjēm* we now have a «broken» vowel, i. e. the vowel of an original second syllable is anticipated and fused with the vowel of the first syllable. We can see the same development in the following words:

Jap. *kuma* 'bear' = Kor. *kōm* (< *kuam*) 'bear' (SKE p. 122),

Jap. *kasa* 'hat' = Kor. *kat* (written *kas*) 'hat' (SKE p. 99),

Jap. *hatake* 'field' = Kor. *pat* (stem *path*) «field» (SKE p. 192),

*Jap. *shiru-ko* 'juice' = *Kor. *sjül* 'brandy, sake' (mong. *šilü* 'juice'),

*Jap. *fude* 'writing brush' = *Kor. *put* (stem *pud*) 'writing brush',

Jap. *iye* (< **ipe*) 'house' = Kor. **ip* (SKE p. 70).

*Kor. *sjül* (Gale p. 759) and *put* (Gale p. 468) do not seem to have been taken in Studies in Korean Etymology.

When we find the same phonetical peculiarities in *shiru* = *sjül*, *kuma* = *kom*, *shima* = *sjēm*, the identity of Japanese *shima* with the Korean *sjēm* cannot remain the subject of any hesitation. It is not taken from Chinese or any other known source. One cannot imagine that the Japanese »borrowed» it from the Korean or the Koreans from the Japanese. One can only say that this word is common to the two languages.

2) Jap. *he* (in *hesaki* 'the prow, the bow') = Kor. *pä* (< *pai*) 'boat, ship'.

As is well known, in the Japanese the sound *h* is a comparatively late development of an earlier *f*, and this of a still earlier *p*. There is thus no difficulty in the correspondence of Jap. *h*- = Kor. *p*-. Indeed, the vowels may require some explanatory remarks to reveal their identity.

We have in the modern Japanese still many cases where we find the alteration between *a* and *e*:

me 'eye', but *ma-yu* 'eyebrow', *ma-do* 'window' (orig. 'eye-door'),
mae (*ma-he*) 'foreside' (orig. 'eye-side', 'eyedirection', cfr.
shirihe 'the backside, the tail-side'), *matataku* 'to blink', etc.
te 'hand', but *tamoto* 'the sleeve', *tasukeru* 'to help' (orig. 'hand-help',
sukeru 'to help'), *tayasui* 'easy to do' (orig. 'hand-easy') etc.

fune 'boat', but *funanori* 'a sailor'

ame 'rain' and *ama* 'heaven', *amayo* 'a rainy night'

ame 'sweatmeat' and *amai* 'sweat'

take 'height' and *takai* 'high'.

This alternation between *e* and *a* in the words or in the same stems is after all an old flexional peculiarity. The language had probably, as Dr. Labberton supposes, had from the beginning a diphthong like *ai*, which when constituting the last sound of a word gave *e*, but before endings and in some compositions lost the *i*-element and therefore now shows the original *a*-vowel.

To take an example: *mado* 'window' was *mai-n-to* »eyedoor» just as *mizu*, older *midu* 'water' was earlier *mintu* (cfr. Ainu *mintuchi* = Jap. *mizuji* 'nymphe').

The correlation between *e* and *a*, indicating an original diphthong, is in no way an exception. There is also a similar correlation between, for instance, *i* and *o*, indicating the earlier existence of a diphthong *ii*:
hi 'fire' (Ainu *pi*), but *honoo* 'flame', *hotaru* 'firefly', *hoshi* 'star',
ki 'tree' (Luchuan *k*), but *kodama* 'dryad', *konoha* 'treeleaf',
ori-ru 'to come down', but *oros-u* 'to take down', etc.

It would be possible to give a long list of correspondence of such type between different vowels, but as this is not necessary here the above may suffice to show that we really are right in identifying the Japanese vowel *e* in *he* with the Korean vowel *ä* (weitten *ai*, since it is only the modern pronunciation of the old diphthong *ai*) in *pä*. For Japanese *he* (in *hesaki*) = Korean *pä* 'boat' we can find several phonetic parallels: Jap. *he* in *heso* 'navel' > Kor. *pä* 'stomach'* (cp. Jap. *hara* 'stomach'), Jap. *he* in *hebi* 'snake' = Kor. *pä* in *päami* 'snake'** (in Migori, Dictionary of Southern Island Dialect p. 151 *päbu* 'snake'). In older Japanese compounds seem to have existed with the orig. **pai* 'boat' as the first part appearing as *ha*, e.g. *hatoba* 'pier, quay, wharf' and *hama* 'harbour' (SKE p. 182) and the orig. *pai* 'stomach' also as *ha* in *hara* 'stomach' (SKE p. 182).

In presenting these two words **sima* 'island' and **pai* 'boat' as common to Korean and Japanese I hope I have been able to produce evidence that the old connections between the Koreans and the Japanese touched upon things of the greatest importance to everyday life. Such connections clearly indicate where we must search for the origin of the Japanese language.

It is now up to the supporters of the South Sea theory to offer something which similarly or even more convincingly can demonstrate that their opinion is the right one, i. e. to give us words which must have been used even under the most primitive conditions of the earliest migrations and indicate, on the contrary, a connection with Malay or the Polynesian languages.

I have to add that the »Asiatic» theory is by no means a new

* SKE p. 182, where Japanese *heso* is not, however, cited.

** Gale p. 483. Not cited in SKE.

discovery. As far as I know, all Japanese scholars — I will mention only the names Shiratori, Torii, Kanazawa — adhere to the same theory. But the above two words ought, as far as I can see, to be quite enough to prove the correctness of the supposition of old Korean-Japanese connections as to the language.