

## **THE HISTORY OF KOREAN LITERATURE, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

The project is devoted to one of the most important problems in Korean studies - the problem of the formation and history of the development of the Korean language community, the existence of which among others formed the basis of the hypothesis of the genetic relationship of the so-called Altaic languages: Korean, Japanese, Turkic, Mongolian and Tungus-Manchu. A huge number of lexical and morphological elements common for the Korean and Altaic languages, identified by the efforts of several generations of Altaists, led to the assumption that these elements are the heritage of some proto-language that existed for a long time in the vast expanse of Altai, and that the now preserved Korean linguistic community is the fragment of this single proto-language.

Doubts about the existence of the Altaic family as a genetic unity of languages began to arise from the middle of the last century and still persist to this day. Having carefully studied the problem and the accumulated factual materials on the identified similarities, a number of scientists concluded that the established similar parallels are largely the result of various contacts and interactions of languages that are considered to be a part of the family, and not a consequence of their genetic relationship. A new direction in Altaic studies emerged and developed to resolve the question about the Altaic nature of each mentioned linguistic unit. By the end of the twentieth century, two movements were formed: Altaists and Anti-Altaists.

The anti-Altaist approach to the existence of the Altai linguistic community leaves researchers with three possibilities for clarifying the genesis of the Korean language: 1) recognize its isolation; 2) discuss its connections with any one of the indicated groups (Japanese, Turkic, Mongolian, Tungus-Manchu); 3) try to prove its belonging to another family of languages, for example, such as the Paleo-Asiatic. Attempts to bring the Korean language closer to the Paleo-Asiatic, as well as Dravidian or Austronesian languages lead to a large number of exaggerations when looking for external parallels for Korean lexemes. Therefore, this direction

has not received special recognition in linguistics. The assumption that the Korean language should be unconditionally categorized as an isolated language evokes rejection in our days because the points of contact between Korean and Japanese are too obvious. It was the closeness of the Korean and Japanese languages in the field of basic vocabulary and morphology that served as the basis for combining them into one separate group. As a result, the thesis about the Korean-Japanese commonality of languages, which received the name *Koreo-Japonica* or *Japano-Koreanic* was formulated.

Dealing with various problems of Korean historical linguistics for more than forty years, comparing modern and medieval Korean, establishing their connection with the language of the population of ancient Korea, studying Turkic, Mongolian, Tungus-Manchu lexicons, comparing the phonetic and grammatical structure of the Korean and other Altaic languages, we became more and more convinced that structurally and genetically the Korean language is part of the Tungus-Manchu proto-language, heavily saturated with elements of Turkic and Mongolian origin. We wanted to understand the history of Turkic, Mongolian, Tungus-Manchu relations in those lands where the ancestors of Koreans once lived, so we set ourselves the following tasks: 1) to illuminate the observable vocabulary of the tribal languages of ancient Korea; 2) to interpret it from the point of view of linguistic belonging, distribution and historical continuity; 3) to reveal the elements of commonality between the speech of the ancient Koreans and the language-successor, as well as the language that we call Korean today.

Ultimately, the intention behind all this is to form an objective picture about historical connections of the Korean language, and contribute to the development of a unified concept for linguistic foundations of its relationships with other languages. This is an objective point. The subjective point is to present the material not only scientifically, with a high degree of reliability and objectivity, but also as simply and excitingly as possible, to be of interest to a wide range of readers.

The Koreans got their name from the name of the state *Koryeo*, which existed on the Korean Peninsula for almost three hundred and fifty years after the fall of the United Silla state in 935. The beginning of the United Silla itself was laid by the Jinhan tribes, who had been located in the southeastern part of the peninsula for a long time and created their own state, Silla, in 57 BC. At an early stage of history, Mohe (Kor. Malgal) settled north of Silla, and Kaya ruled in the south. Kaya was the ancestral home of the Byeonhan tribes. The western neighbor of Silla was the state of Baekche, representing the formation of the Buyeo and Mahan tribes. Historical tradition dates the time of its appearance to 18 BC. After the abolition of the Chinese district of Lolan (Kor. Nangnang) in 313, the territories north of Baekche and Silla were ruled by the state of Koguryeo. It was founded in 37 BC in the Changbai Mountain region in northeastern China. Among the most important tribes of Koguryeo, the Buyeo and Maek tribes can be mentioned. They are regarded as descendants of the indigenous population of Ancient Choseon.

In the 5th century A.D. the Silla people conquered Kaya, which turned out to be decisive for their language in the way that its references disappeared forever from the historical chronicles. In 660, Silla moved west, where Baekche was. In 662, all Baekche lands were converted into Silla cities and counties. With the defeat of Koguryeo in 666-668, Silla united the peninsula under its rule. Since that time, the process of forming the Korean nation with a single common language began. The Silla language was the baseline for this new formation. In this sense, the Silla language can be called proto-Korean.

The ancient Koreans wrote using signs borrowed from China. The old writing system based on Chinese characters and used to write words in the Korean language, was called *idu* “bureaucratic writing”. The first acquaintance with Chinese characters already led the ancient Koreans to the idea that each word of the Chinese language, represented by a separate hieroglyph, can be meaningfully associated with a certain word in their native language without borrowing a foreign (Chinese) sound form. This

approach was reflected in such early recordings as 檀君 “black birch + lord”, 平壤 “bliss + land”, 百濟 “one hundred + cross over” and others. But it had one significant drawback - it did not reveal the reading of units involved in transcriptions at all. Therefore, the next task in the development of a writing system was to find a way how to reflect the real sound of words hidden behind ideographic signs, without changing the writing system. The answer to this question was found to be the method of indicating the reading of words using other words, completely different in meaning, but accidentally equal in sound, which was widely used in ancient China (the method of *homonymy*). If we turn to examples from the Korean language, then this could be explained by using the sign for *nun* “eyes” for writing the word *nun* “snow”, the sign for *pam* “night” for writing the word *pam* “chestnut”, the sign for *pä* “pear” for writing the word *pä* “belly” etc. In early Korean recordings, this method was widespread.

However, weaknesses of such a writing system were also well understood: many opportunities for interpretation were allowed, although the writing remained the same. So later, over time and as the scope of application of writing expanded, new types of records began to be created with reliance on sound characteristics, and not on the meaning of Chinese characters. But by implementing them, the records turned into simple syllabic signs representing the rudiment of a kind of alphabet writing on a hieroglyphic basis, which was developed in countries neighboring China in subsequent eras. For example, the term “comb” was written by Xiongnu people as a combination of the signs 枇 (in Chinese \**bji*) plus 梳 (in Chinese \**šo*). Researchers usually consider the 枇梳 complex as a binomial, each component of which expresses a specific concept of “comb”. There are some reasons for this: this is how 枇梳 is perceived in Old Chinese. However, in Xiongnu language, the element 梳 \**šo* in the position of the last part could discolor and denote not a separate syllable \**šo* with real semantics “comb”, but the usual phoneme \**š*, contained at the end of the Xiongnu word \**biš* with the meaning “comb” (cf.: Mod. Kor. *pis* “id.”). For the Xianbei word 饒樂 (AC \**ńaw-lāk*), the Chinese sources set the va-

lue “yellow”. At the same time, it is easy to see that the combinations of signs 饒 “abundant” and 樂 “happy” together do not give the meaning that the Chinese attribute to them; this provides the local (Xianbei) reading \**nolag*, focused on the pronunciation of its Chinese equivalent (cf.: Mod. Kor. *nolah*- “yellowish”). Similar phonetic signs without semantic meaning represent Silla word 阿莫 \**amag* “mother” (> MKor. *amh*), Koguryeo word 今勿 \**kümür* “black” (> MKor. *kemir*), Baekche word 所比 \**šubhür* “thickets, forest” (> MKor. *suphir*) and others.

In addition to the actual transcriptional signs, indicating the pronunciation of syllables in general, the *idu* transcriptions also contain spelling signs indicating the reading of the endings of individual words. This made it possible for Koreans to record their speech avoiding ambiguous spellings. So, the river name *Amnok* [in Chinese *Yalu*] was written by the Koguryeo people as 鴨綠. Here the first part of the word 鴨綠 - 鴨 means “duck”, and the second part 綠 (in Chinese \**lwōk* “green”) prescribes to read its ending as \**lok*. It turned out something like 鴨<sup>lok</sup>. The sound of 鴨<sup>lok</sup> was related to another Koguryeo word - 遼 “long, far”, see: WMong. *kolo*, *qolo*, Bur. *xolo*, Ord. *xolo*, Mog. *qolō*, Dag. *xolo*, Dong. *Golo*, Bao. *xolo*, *Golo*, Mongor. *xolo*, *Golo*, *xulo*. If 鴨綠 and 遼 are read as \**qolok* ~ \**qulok*, then it becomes clear why 鴨綠江 “Duck river” (cf.: WMong. *quladu* “hawk, harrier”, Nan. *xolī* “raven, crow”, Yak. *kus* “duck”) was considered alongside 遼水 “Faraway River” (*Liao river* in Northeast China), and this solves the problem of double data regarding the name of the same geographical object.

For all the seeming ingenuity and simplicity underlying the writing system of *idu*, the situation does not seem to be exemplary. The main difficulty for the interpreter in the disclosure of the meaning of words written in this way is the dual character of the hieroglyphs from the semantic and phonetic points of view. It is sometimes not easy to determine, which side - semantic or phonetic - to use for the reading of each separate sign, and this is the main reason why many specialists avoid this field of research.

The most valuable material for studying the history of the Korean language in the early stage is contained in the 三國事記 (“Historical Records of Three States”, 1145), compiled by a group of historiographers of the Koryeo dynasty under the leadership of the famous statesman Kim Boo Sik. Despite the simplicity of presentation and the abundance of linguistic material contained in this book, there has not been a single expert to this day who could unveil the mystery of the old signs. Secondly, there are works of a later time: 三國遺事 (“Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms”, 1281), 帝王韻紀 (“Songs of Emperors and Kings”, 1287), 文獻備考 (“Reference on Historical Data”, XIII century), 高麗史 (“History of Koryeo”, 1451), 世宗實錄地理志 (“Annals of King Sejong's Reign”, “Geographical Descriptions”, 1454), 新增東國輿地勝覽 (“Review of the landmarks of the Eastern State”, 1530) and other works of medieval Korea. The repertoire of words related to the realities of the past that reached us through them is also diverse: the names of mountains, rivers, fortresses, cities, the names of people, rulers, the names of all kinds of titles and social positions, plants and animals, natural phenomena, various realities associated with people’s beliefs. The dictionaries of the Korean language (鷄林類事, XII century; 朝鮮館譯語, XIII century) and textbooks on medicine (鄉藥救急方, XIII century) are of great interest to historians of the language. Comprehensive search, registration and reconstruction of the vocabulary included in these and other unmentioned works, in the most appropriate form from a scientific point of view, should become the main goal of the efforts being made within the framework of our declared project.