

A Framework for the Study of Japanese Language Origins

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This paper aims at presenting a possible framework for the understanding of Japanese linguistic prehistory. The framework is presented in the form of issues (numbered 1-35), consisting of theoretical presumptions, empirical facts, preliminary conclusions, working hypotheses, and unsolved problems. It remains the task of future research to solve the problems and verify to what extent the proposed working hypotheses are correct¹.

Theoretical Presumptions

1. *Japanese is a normal language.* Although Japanese is often, in both popular conceptions and nationalist political considerations, pictured as somehow “special”, it should be realized that there is nothing special about the origins of the Japanese language, or the Japanese themselves. Japanese is a perfectly normal language, which, like all languages, must have a normal background. Some part of this background can be verified on the basis of historical documentation from the last 1300 years, but much of the prehistory of Japanese remains to be recovered with the help of a multidisciplinary assessment of the available linguistic, archaeological, and anthropological data.

2. *Japanese has a single genetic lineage.* As a normal language, Japanese must be the result of gradual evolution from an ancestral form which no longer exists. The principles of diachronic linguistics predict that the genetic lineage of a language is an invariant inherited property. This lineage can be stopped if a language ceases to be spoken, and it can also be obscured by the impact of the linguistic changes accumulated in the course of time. However, it is both theoretically and practically impossible that the genetic lineage of a language is changed. Thus, Japanese also remains a member of its original genetic context. It is another matter whether this context can be detected.

1 Because of the recapitulating and programmatic nature of this paper, no actual language material is quoted, and references are kept down to a minimum. A few relevant references, where further sources can be found, will nevertheless be provided.

3. *Japanese has been influenced by other languages.* In spite of its single genetic lineage, Japanese must have been influenced by other languages already much prior to its historically documented layers of Chinese lexical influence (not to mention the very recent influx of English elements). Judging on the basis of Japanese alone it is difficult to estimate how strong and pervasive the alien influences may have been, but there is no reason not to assume that there have been many of them, at different times, in different geographical contexts, and affecting different aspects of the Japanese language. It is theoretically plausible that some of the ancient language contacts of Japanese can be identified by the methods of external comparisons and areal typology. Alongside with internal reconstruction, this is an important potential source on the prehistory of Japanese.

4. *Japanese is not a mixed language.* Recent work on languages known as “creoles” has created an unfortunate confusion concerning the potential of linguistic interference. It has been claimed that, under certain specific conditions, there can be a disruption in the genetic transmission of a language, after which an entirely new genetic lineage appears through the process of relexification. Such new lineages are, it is claimed, true mixed languages, in which grammar and lexicon have different origins (Thomason & Kaufman 1988). It is difficult to accept this framework, for, essentially, “creoles” are normal languages which just happen to have undergone a period of rapid structural evolution. The fact that “creoles” are often spoken by populations that have changed their language, is of no consequence to the taxonomic position of the “creoles” themselves. In spite of opposite claims (see, for example, Itabashi, 1999) there is also no reason to assume that Japanese would be a mixed language, or a “creole”.

5. *Japanese has moved on the map.* The study of linguistic prehistory has two equally important goals: first, to reconstruct the substance of ancient languages (proto-languages); and second, to identify the ancient locations (homelands) of the extant genetic lineages. Japanese is a typical example of a language whose modern geographical distribution is due to relatively recent movements on the map. These movements and the earlier location of the Japanese lineage can be approached by assessing the available multidisciplinary evidence, including, in particular, the evidence from language contacts.

Empirical Facts

6. *Japanese is not an isolate.* Fortunately, Japanese is not without genetic relations, for together with the languages of the Ryukyu islands, Japanese forms a small language family which is best termed Japonic. Historical and linguistic considerations allow the genetic distance between Japanese and Ryukyuan to be estimated roughly at 1500 to 2000 years (Hattori 1954), which is comparable with the depth of several other language families in Northeast Asia, including Turkic and Tungusic. Some other families in the region, including Mongolic and Korean (Korean) are even shallower than Japonic (Janhunen

1992).

7. *Japonic has replaced other languages.* Although today Japanese and Ryukyuan cover the entire territory of the Japanese Islands, the historical presence of the Ainu language in Hokkaido and northern Honshu remains a reminder of the original situation, in which there must have been several “aboriginal” languages spoken in various parts of Japan. All of these languages were ultimately extinguished by the Japonic expansion, and it is therefore impossible to know how diversified the linguistic map of Japan originally was. However, the replaced languages must have left a substratal impact on both Japanese and Ryukyuan.

8. *Japonic is not related to Ainu.* It cannot be ruled out that some of the replaced languages of Japan were related to Japonic. This is, however, not the case with Ainu, which certainly represents a genetic lineage totally distinct from Japonic. Although a genetic relationship between Japanese and Ainu has recurrently been proposed by amateur comparativists in both Japan and abroad, the facts speak strongly against it. The actual similarities and material parallels that exist between the two lineages, are to be attributed to their common areal context, which has involved substratal, superstratal, and adstratal influences.

9. *Japonic has no known living relatives.* Ainu is not the only language with which Japonic has been genetically compared. Other comparisons have concerned languages as diverse as Chinese, Tibetan, Dravidian, Papuan, Austronesian, and Austro-Asiatic, with the most popular point of reference being offered by the so-called Altaic (or Ural-Altaic) framework, which comprises Korean, Tungusic, Mongolic, and Turkic (as well as Uralic). Unfortunately, all of these comparisons compete against each other, and all of them involve violations of the comparative method. Although it cannot be ruled out that the comparative work will still yield a positive result, the inevitable conclusion for the time being is a negative one (Janhunen 1992).

10. *Japonic belongs to the Altaic type.* In contrast to the failure of the genetic comparisons, it is impossible to deny the fact that Japonic is typologically linked with the continental languages traditionally identified as Altaic (or Ural-Altaic). The Altaic features of Japonic cover most aspects of the language, including segmental structure, morphology, morphosyntax, and syntax. In view of these features, Japanese may well be called an Altaic language, but only in the typological sense. The same is true of the other “Altaic” languages, which, in spite of their shared typology, seem to represent separate genetic lineages.

11. *Japanese is an aberrant Altaic language.* Compared with the other languages of the Altaic type, Japonic shows a number of marked aberrances, including a very simple

phonemic system, lack of vowel harmony, and abundance of monosyllabic roots. Some of these features may well be due to the secondary alien substrates in Japonic, but they may also be interpreted as pointing to a basically non-Altaic typological orientation.

12. *Japonic is really linked with Korean.* Within the Altaic complex, Japonic exhibits many similarities with Korean, including a single liquid consonant system, the presence of tones (also termed “pitch accent”), adjectival verbs, a system of sentence-final particles, and a system of honorifics. For most details of morphosyntax, even modern Japanese and Korean are isomorphic. There are also material parallels in various parts of the lexicon, though generally not in basic vocabulary. The natural explanation of all these parallels is that Japonic and Korean are really linked in a close union which may well be termed a *Sprachbund*. This *Sprachbund* exists within the Altaic typological complex, and at least some of its features, such as the phenomenon of tones, are basically non-Altaic.

13. *Japonic was once spoken in Korea.* Though still difficult to recognize in both Japan and Korea, according to Miller (1979) it is a philological fact that a language closely reminiscent of Old Japanese was, albeit fragmentarily, recorded in parts of the Korean Peninsula during the Three Kingdoms Period of Korea (4th to 6th century C.E.), or immediately after it (7th to 10th century C.E.). Conventionally termed the “Old Kwokwulye (Koguryo) Language”, this language is best classified as Para-Japonic, since it obviously represented a branch collateral to the surviving languages of the Japonic family.

14. *Korean spread from Silla.* As the Three Kingdoms Period ended with the unification of the southern part of Korea (668 C. E.) under the kingdom of Silla, it is obvious that the modern Korean language derives from the context of Silla (Shiragi). The language of Silla, philologically known as Old Korean, is technically best identified as Pre-Proto-Korean, since the breakup of Proto-Korean into the modern dialectal diversity of Korean took place only later, during the Middle Korean period.

Preliminary Conclusions

15. *Japonic has a continental origin.* Neither the presence of Para-Japonic on the Korean Peninsula nor the areal parallels between Japonic and Korean give a direct answer to the question concerning the geographical origin of Japonic. However, the simplest explanation of the facts is that Japonic did, indeed, originate from the Korean Peninsula, from where it spread to the Japanese Islands, leaving Para-Japonic as a temporary trace of its previous location. During its presence in Korea, Japonic was a member of the Altaic typological complex, and also of the more specific Koreo-Japonic *Sprachbund*.

16. *Korean has a Para-Japonic substrate.* It is difficult to estimate the relative impacts of the various stages of interaction between Japonic and Korean (Janhunen 1999). Since

both families once coexisted on the Korean Peninsula, their interaction must have begun already at the level of the corresponding pre-protolanguages. However, the coexistence of Korean and Para-Japonic continued even after the expansion of Japonic to the Japanese Islands, and it is likely that the greatest contribution to the empirically observed similarities between Japonic and Korean was made by the Para-Japonic substrate of Korean.

17. *Proto-Japonic expanded through Kyushu.* In view of the modern distribution of the Japanese and Ryukyuan languages, the homeland of Japonic must be placed on Kyushu Island. Kyushu was obviously the part of Japan most easily reached from Korea, and it became the center of the subsequent expansion of Japonic both to the south (Ryukyuan) and to the east (Setonaikai and Central Honshu). Technically speaking, the language spoken in the Kyushu homeland may be identified as Proto-Japonic, while its immediate continental ancestor may be termed Late Pre-Proto-Japonic. Late Pre-Proto-Japonic was also the ancestor of the Para-Japonic branch, which remained in Korea.

18. *Japonic was the language of the Yayoi Culture.* Archaeological research has long ago established an extremely fitting framework for the above conclusions. In this framework, the insular expansion of Japonic is connected with the Bronze Age Yayoi Culture (300 B.C.E to 300 A.D.), which ended the long continuity of the previous Jomon Culture all over Japan. The Yayoi culture clearly involved the movement of both people and cultural patterns from the southern part of Korea to Kyushu, and further towards Central Honshu. There was a marked cultural and anthropological difference between the Yayoi and Jomon populations, and there is no question that a linguistic difference was also involved. Indeed, the Yayoi Culture represents the only realistic framework during which the ancestral form of Japanese and Ryukyuan can have been introduced to the Japanese Islands.

19. *Ainu spread to Hokkaido with the Satsumon Culture.* While most of the Jomon languages were absorbed by early Japanese, the ancestral form of the modern Ainu language initially resisted the pressure of assimilation by moving gradually towards the north. It seems that (Pre-Proto-)Ainu was originally spoken somewhere north of the Japanese settlements of the Nara Basin. The expansion of Japanese then pushed Ainu northwards up to Hokkaido. The arrival of the Ainu language to Hokkaido seems to have involved an actual migration, which can be connected with the Satsumon Culture (ca. 600-1300 C. E.). The subsequent expansion of Ainu in Hokkaido must have been accompanied by the extinction of the previous languages of the island (Janhunen 2001).

Working Hypotheses

20. *Korea had three different dynastic languages.* While the kingdom of Silla can be unambiguously identified as the source of the Korean language, there is no reason to

assume that the other two kingdoms in protohistoric Korea were Korean speaking. Rather, the very fact of political division speaks against the assumption of a linguistic unity. The three dynastic languages are best referred to as the Silla language (Pre-Proto-Korean), Paykcey language, and Kwokwulye language.

21. *The language of Paykcey was Para-Japonic.* It is well known from both documented history and archaeological material that the origins of the Japanese state, also called Yamato, were particularly closely connected with the kingdom of Paykcey, also called Kudara (Wontack 1994). Clearly, Paykcey was the basic source of the early Japanese culture, including even the imperial house. This circumstance suggests strongly that it was exactly Paykcey that was the principal dominion of Para-Japonic on the Korean Peninsula (Kono 1987). During most of the Three Kingdoms Period, Paykcey was more prosperous and culturally advanced than Silla, and it is only natural that Paykcey was also the continental mentor of the emerging state on the Japanese Islands. The linguistic difference between the Para-Japonic of Paykcey and the Proto-Japonic or early Old Japanese of Japan may not have been large, and very probably, the two populations were able to communicate with each other. Japan seems also to have become the last refuge for some of the Paykcey nobility, who had to leave their country after the Silla conquest (660 C.E.).

22. *Japonic had originally a non-Altaic typology.* The application of the method of internal reconstruction to Japonic linguistic material suggests that Pre-Proto-Japonic may originally have been characterized by a non-Altaic typology. The most important non-Altaic features of Pre-Proto-Japonic seem to have been its predominantly monosyllabic morpheme structure and the presence of tonal distinctions (Janhunen 1997).

23. *Pre-Proto-Japonic underwent Altaicization.* The fact that Japonic in its historically documented forms is, nevertheless, unarguably a member of the Altaic typological complex can be explained by assuming that Pre-Proto-Japonic underwent a process of Altaicization. This process must have been triggered by the other languages of the Korean Peninsula, perhaps even not so much by the Silla language (Pre-Proto-Korean) as by the Kwokwulye language. It is true, we do not know what the genetic identity of the Kwokwulye language was, but considering its position in the vicinity of later Mongolic, Tungusic, and Korean, it can hardly have been anything but a language of the Altaic type. There are rather strong arguments in favor of the assumption that the Kwokwulye language was genetically connected with Tungusic (Proto-Tungusic or Para-Tungusic). The historically documented emergence of the Tungusic-speaking Jurchen from the very region of the Kwokwulye kingdom is separated from the Kwokwulye period only by the kingdom of Bohai (698-926 C.E.), which in many respects was a successor state of Kwokwulye and a predecessor of the Jurchen Jin empire (1115-1234 C.E.).

24. *The Korean tones are a Japonic feature.* While the Altaic features of Japonic may be explained by assuming an Altaic typological impact on Pre-Proto-Japonic, some of the apparently non-Altaic features of Korean may, correspondingly, be due to the impact of Pre-Proto-Japonic or Para-Japonic. This possibility lies particularly close in the case of the Korean tones, which, alien in the Altaic context, seem to represent a secondary innovation (Ramsey 1991). The Japonic tones, by contrast, are relatively primary, though ultimately they may be connected with the evolution of the original syllable-final consonants.

25. *Japonic had once a Sinitic typology.* Moving further along these lines, it can be assumed that the non-Altaic features in the typology of Japonic, including both the tonal system and the many monosyllabic roots, are reminiscences from a period when Pre-Proto-Japonic had an essentially different typological orientation. This orientation may be tentatively connected with the Sinitic type, as represented by several languages and language families of modern Continental East and Southeast Asia, including Tai-Kadai, Miao-Yao, Chinese, and Vietnamese. Indeed, the evolution of Japonic towards a typology with polysyllabic roots accompanied by the gradual loss of tonal distinctions seems to be a close parallel to what has happened, much later, in Chinese, especially Mandarin Chinese (Hashimoto 1980). The Sinitic typology seems to be a strictly areal phenomenon, which means that if Pre-Proto-Japonic once belonged to this typology it must have been really contiguous with some other language of the Sinitic type.

26. *Pre-Proto-Japonic was intrusive in Korea.* The assumption that Pre-Proto-Japonic may not have been a language of the Altaic type inevitably leads to the further hypothesis that it must have been intrusive in Korea, which, by all indications had long been dominated by languages of the Altaic type. Since the Altaicization of the Japonic lineage must have been completed before the Yayoi expansion to Japan, a region apparently originally dominated by languages of another typology, the intrusion of Pre-Proto-Japonic to its location in Paykcey must have taken place in pre-Yayoi times (early 1st millennium B.C.E or earlier).

27. *Pre-Proto-Japonic came from Coastal China.* The location of Paykcey in the southwestern part of the Korean Peninsula suggests that the Japonic intrusion to Korea may have taken place by the sea route, or along the very coastline from, or through, the nearby peninsulas of Liaodong and Shandong. Since Liaodong is more likely to be associated with languages of the Altaic type, including both Tungusic and Mongolic, it appears reasonable to search for the earlier geographical location of Pre-Proto-Japonic in Shandong and the surrounding parts of Coastal China.

28. *Pre-Proto-Japonic was a Dongyi language.* The early inhabitants of Shandong, as known from Shang and Zhou dynasty Chinese sources (starting with 13th-12th cc.

B.C.E), are generically identified as the Dongyi (Eastern Barbarians). Although we cannot yet specify the chronological framework of the presumable intrusion of Pre-Proto-Japonic to Korea, it is not impossible that Pre-Proto-Japonic was involved in the Dongyi complex, which itself was at least partially based on the long and advanced local Neolithic tradition of the Longshan Culture. Of course, this hypothesis, like all the previous ones, should be verified, if possible, in the light of further linguistic evidence. It would be particularly crucial to find substantial evidence of linguistic contacts, such as loanwords, between Pre-Proto-Japonic and the languages of Continental China, including, for instance, Tai-Kadai and Miao-Yao, as well as Chinese itself.

Unsolved Problems

29. *Did Yan have a Japonic connection?* There are several details in the political setting of protohistoric Northeast Asia whose ethnic and linguistic significance we do not know. One such detail concerns the state of Yan of northern China and southern Manchuria (ca. 1000-222 B.C.E). It may be taken for certain that both the local population and the dynastic elite of Yan were originally non-Chinese. In view of its geographical location, the most likely linguistic correlation for Yan would seem to be offered by Mongolic, later represented in the region by the Para-Mongolic lineage leading to the Khitan of the Liao empire (907-1125 C.E.). However, other alternatives cannot be ruled out, and among them there is a slight possibility that Yan could have somehow been connected with the contemporary and later presence of Pre-Proto-Japonic and Para-Japonic in Korea. For the time being there is no substantiation for this assumption.

30. *Were Paykcey and Kwokwulye ethnically related?* Another unclear detail concerns the ethnic connections of Kwokwulye. Although Tungusic remains the most natural identification for the linguistic identity of at least a large section of the Kwokwulye population, it is well known that there was a special political association between Kwokwulye and Paykcey. This association may have been based on simple geopolitical factors, but it may also have involved an ethnic and linguistic affinity. Although there is no reason to revive the “Horsedriver Theory” and the obscure “Pwuye (Puyo) Connection” in this context (Sahara 1993), the fact cannot be denied that Kwokwulye was territorially a huge entity, which must have comprised speakers of several languages.

31. *Was Pre-Proto-Japonic a member of a language family?* While Pre-Proto-Japonic, as once spoken in the territory of Paykcey in southern Korea may well have been a single well-defined language before its breakup into the Proto-Japonic and Para-Japonic branches, the possibility exists that Pre-Proto-Japonic itself was, perhaps still during the Three Kingdoms Period, a member of a larger language family. Compared with Korean, which is likely to have experienced its first-ever expansion during the Silla period, Pre-Proto-Japonic must already have had a history as an expansive language when it reached

Korea, and its expansive route may well have been marked by a chain of related languages extending from Korea to Shandong or Liaodong, or both. For the time being, there is no way to verify, or to deny, this possibility.

32. *Was Kaya a Japonic Korea Strait State?* The biggest enigma in the protohistoric relationships of Japan and Korea is the political entity known as the Kaya league (or confederation). Of Kaya it is only known that it was an entity that never developed into a centralized kingdom like Paykcey and Silla. However, Kaya seems to have been associated with both Paykcey and Yamato (Oda Fujio et al. 1993). It appears more than likely that Kaya was dominated by a population speaking Pre-Proto-Japonic, and it may even have been the immediate source of the Proto-Japonic speakers on Kyushu. Why, then, was Kaya politically separate from Paykcey? One reason may have been that Kaya was an essentially maritime-oriented Korea Strait state, which may, in fact, have comprised territories on the Japanese Islands. However, in the lack of historical documentation, more information can only be expected from archaeological work on both sides of the Korea Strait, as well as on the strategically crucial Tsushima Island.

33. *Was there an Austronesian intrusion to Japan?* It should be recognized that the expansion of Japonic with the Yayoi Culture may not have been the only intrusion that reached the Japanese Islands in the final phase of the Jomon period. It is particularly plausible that Japan also received population from the south, through the Ryukyu Islands. The geographical and chronological setting would support the assumption that this population was linguistically Austronesian, and its descendants might well have survived, for a considerable time, in the southern periphery of protohistoric Japan, perhaps specifically on the island of Shikoku. This issue remains, however, also to be corroborated by archaeological and anthropological data.

34. *Does Japonic have three typological layers?* The presence of an Austronesian substrate, or “mixture”, in Japonic has often been proposed on the basis of lexical comparisons. The evidence is, however, highly questionable (Vovin 1994). It appears more fruitful to look for traces of Austronesian structural interference. Assuming that there was an Austronesian intrusion to Japan, and using the term “Oceanic” to characterize the Austronesian language type (Neville & Whyment 1926), Japanese and Ryukyuan may perhaps be described as languages incorporating three typological layers: a primary Sinitic layer, a secondary (superstratal or adstratal) Altaic layer, and a tertiary (substratal) Oceanic layer. This is, indeed, a very plausible generalization of Japonic typology, though it should be understood that none of the three typological layers has any genetic implication for Japonic.

35. *Is Ainu representative of Jomon typology?* The assumption of three typological layers in Japonic raises the question concerning the typology of the languages of Jomon Japan.

Obviously, there must also be a Jomon typological layer in Japonic, or at least in Japanese. In view of the cultural homogeneity and prolonged lack of external contacts of the Jomon population, it is likely that the languages of Jomon Japan were also homogeneous, though only typologically and not genetically. Apart from Japonic itself, the only surviving source on the Jomon language type is Ainu. Incidentally, Ainu can hardly be placed in any of the three typologies incorporated by Japonic, though certain of its features, including its extremely simple phonemic system, might be regarded as “Oceanic”. Of course, we do not know whether Ainu is really representative of Jomon typology, especially since it may have received new traits in its secondary location on Hokkaido. Even so, diachronic and comparative research on Ainu is a clue to understanding the linguistic situation in Jomon Japan, and, through it, the typological prehistory of Japanese.

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Appendix: Questionnaire on Japanese Language Origins

In order to illustrate the diversity of opinions that still prevails concerning the origins of the Japanese language, the participants of the international workshop meeting at which this paper was first presented (Kyoto, September 23, 2001), were asked to define their personal position concerning the 35 issues raised by the speaker. The options for each issue were: ‘yes’ (+), ‘no’ (–), and ‘don’t know’ (?). The questionnaire was returned by ten anonymous participants. The answers are listed and analyzed below:

Do you agree with the following statements:	+	–	?
1. Japanese is a normal language	9	0	1
2. Japanese has a single genetic lineage	6	2	2
3. Japanese has been influenced by other languages	10	0	0
4. Japanese is not a mixed language	5	3	2
5. Japanese has moved on the map	10	0	0
6. Japanese is not an isolate	7	3	0
7. Japanese has replaced other languages	7	1	2
8. Japonic is not related to Ainu	5	2	3
9. Japonic has no known living relatives	5	4	1
10. Japonic belongs to the Altaic type	6	1	3
11. Japanese is an aberrant Altaic language	4	2	4
12. Japonic is really linked with Korean	6	1	3
13. Japonic was once spoken in Korea	5	3	2
14. Korean spread from Silla	5	0	5
15. Japonic has a continental origin	9	0	1
16. Korean has a Para-Japonic substrate	2	3	5
17. Proto-Japonic expanded through Kyushu	5	1	4
18. Japonic was the language of the Yayoi culture	6	1	3
19. Ainu spread to Hokkaido with the Satsumon Culture	3	0	7
20. Korea had three different dynastic languages	4	3	3
21. The language of Paykcey was Para-Japonic	0	3	7
22. Japonic had originally a non-Altaic typology	3	2	5
23. Pre-Proto-Japonic underwent Altaicization	2	2	6
24. The Korean tones are a Japonic feature	0	3	7
25. Japonic had once a Sinitic typology	0	7	3
26. Pre-Proto-Japonic was intrusive in Korea	1	1	8
27. Pre-Proto-Japonic came from Coastal China	2	1	7
28. Pre-Proto-Japonic was a Dongyi language	0	1	9
29. The Yan state had a Japonic connection	1	2	7
30. Paykcey and Kwokwulye were ethnically related	3	1	6
31. Pre-Proto-Japonic was a member of a language family	9	0	1
32. Kaya was a Japonic Korea Strait state	4	1	5

33. There was an Austronesian intrusion to Japan	6	0	4
34. Japonic has three typological layers	2	1	7
35. Ainu is representative of Jomon typology	2	1	7
Total	154	56	140

In 4 instances (out of the total of 350 answered points), a blank answer has been interpreted as meaning ‘don’t know’. Also in 4 cases, an answer placed between the alternatives ‘yes’ and ‘no’ has been taken as equivalent to ‘don’t know’. In other respects, the answers present no technical ambiguities. The opinions of the speaker have not been included in the statistics (they would be ‘yes’ for the points 1 to 28, and ‘don’t know’ for the points 29 to 35).

The answers speak for themselves, but, generally, it may be noted that there is more positive agreement (154 times ‘yes’) than cautious ignorance (140 times ‘don’t know’) or negative disagreement (56 times ‘no’). As could be expected, there is more positive agreement on the points raised in the paper as theoretical presumptions (1 to 5) and empirical facts (6 to 14). There are, however, only two issues for which there seems to be complete positive agreement (10 times ‘yes’): that Japanese has moved on the map (issue 5), and that Japanese has been influenced by other languages (issue 3). On the other hand, there is only one point on which the participants actively and overwhelmingly disagree with the speaker’s framework (7 times ‘no’): that Japanese had once a Sinitic typology (issue 25). Two issues that the speaker has classified as unsolved problems, get a surprisingly strong positive support from the participants: that Pre-Proto-Japonic was a member of a language family (issue 31, with 9 times ‘yes’ against 1 ‘don’t know’), and that there was an Austronesian intrusion to Japan (issue 33, with 6 times ‘yes’ against 4 times ‘don’t know’).

There is one general conclusion that can be made from this small survey: that we still know very little about the linguistic prehistory of Japanese. Many even very trivial issues remain to be solved. The framework proposed by the speaker was on purpose non-data-oriented. The participants who answered the questionnaire are, however, working with the data, and from essentially the same database they arrive at a wide diversity of opinions. It goes without saying that disagreement is only fruitful as long as the search for the truth goes on. However, the ultimate goal of the study of Japanese language origins should be a growing agreement on some fundamental issues without which the work cannot proceed further.

日本語起源研究の一フレームワーク

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この論文は日本語の歴史を理解するためのフレームワークを提示することを目的とする。そのフレームワークは1-35の番号をふって提示されている。それは、理論的な前提、実証的なデータ、予備的結論、作業仮説、未解決の問題等々からなる。提唱された作業仮説がどこまで正しいのかを立証するために、また問題を解決するために、将来の研究がまだまだ残されている。

This paper aims at presenting a possible framework for the understanding of Japanese linguistic prehistory. The framework is presented in the form of numbered issues (1-35), consisting of theoretical presumptions, empirical facts, preliminary conclusions, working hypotheses, and unsolved problems. It remains the task of future research to solve the problems and verify to what extent the proposed working hypotheses are correct.