

Chapter 11

The Origin and History of the Extinct Contact- Induced Language, Matagi

Yoshizo Itabashi

Emeritus, Kyushu University, Japan

ABSTRACT

This chapter attempts to find how the Matagi hunters of Tohoku region in Japan contacted the Ainu hunters and how the Matagi language absorbed the Ainu vocabulary. The Ainu hunters contacted the Japanese hunters there on a routine basis because the Ainu people settled down in Tohoku region before the Old Japanese period and have lived there since. The Japanese hunters borrowed some Ainu words necessary for living, hunting, and rituals in the mountains after the Middle Japanese period. The term Matagi, however, might have been employed long before the Middle Japanese period. During the Middle Japanese period the Yamato state came to dominate the entire Tohoku area. Although some Ainu adjusted to the Japanese living environment there, the rest probably escaped up toward Hokkaido. Hence, the Ainu people became less and less in Tohoku region. Eventually the Ainu words remained mainly in the Matagi language, although they are never spoken again.

INTRODUCTION

Preliminary

The Matagi people and the Matagi language will be explained in detail in Chapter1, but the succinct definition of these terms is briefly mentioned in this section. The Matagi people are a hunter group with their very advanced and skillful techniques to hunt wild animals, especially bears in the winter time. The number of those hunters has not been known because their number varies from period to period in history and the size of any Matagi group also varies from place to place in northern Japan.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2959-1.ch011

It is extremely difficult to tell how many Matagi hunters in the past or at present, but as of 2007 the number of Matagi hunters with far advanced hunting skills in northern Japan, Yamagata, Akita, Aomori, and Iwate would probably be extremely low, much less than 50 altogether. Their occupations for a living after World War II, vary from Matagi to Matagi, but their occupations in the Edo or even Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa periods were basically self-supporting agriculture, especially miscellaneous minor grain-farming and hunting during the winter time.

The Matagi language is their own language, which is a both social, regional, and contact-induced Japanese dialect of northern Japan, with a mixture of some Ainu vocabulary.

The author briefly mentions the basics of the Ainu language for general readers to be better able to understand the content of this chapter. The Ainu language was a very active language during the Edo period(1603-1867) and the Ainu people gradually diminished in the Meiji(1868-1912), Taisho(1912-1926) and early Showa period(1926-1989) when the Ainu people were compelled by the Japanese Government's assimilation policy to become Japanese citizens, so that the language became also less and less used in daily life because of the Ainu people themselves were compelled to think less of the language and did not use the language with younger generations. It is now almost extinct and is not employed for the Ainu people to lead a daily life.

The Ainu language is quite different from the Japanese language in that the Ainu language has the vowels [I,e,a,o,u] and the consonants [p,t,k,h,s,r,tʃ,m,n,w,y,'] with no voice distinctions, and is basically a single syllable language like Chinese. It has no inflections in any parts of speech like Chinese, and there is a distinction in person and number. It is also a SOV, AN language like Japanese. It also has no distinction between adjectives and verbs.

The Author was very much concerned with the Matagi language, especially lexicons of some Matagi dialects in northern Japan because there was quite different characteristics in some lexicons. Then, he applied to the JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science) for the funding and was accepted for four years beginning from 2004, which was entitled with *A Study of the Matagi Lexicons in Tohoku region and the Compilation of A Matagi Dictionary*. This was the starting point of his research on the Matagi lexicons, more specifically, the research on the common lexicon(s) between Matagi and Ainu, found in the Matagi language.

The outcome of the research was described in the Matagi dictionary that he compiled as a part of the research results. This article shows some different results from those in the dictionary because some further research has been conducted on the common lexicons in the Matagi language, which will show the new results after the twelve years since then.

The abbreviations will be listed in the following to easily recognize the words.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SOV: subject-object-verb

AN: adjective-noun

NPostp: noun-postposition

N: noun,

V: verb,

Adj: adjective, A

18 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-origin-and-history-of-the-extinct-contact-induced-language-matagi/260349

Related Content

Backing Into Race: Immigration, Identity, and Social Movement Theory in English Language Teacher Education

Tonda Liggett (2024). *Interrogating Race and Racism in Postsecondary Language Classrooms* (pp. 98-115).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/backing-into-race/336621

Inclusive Education in Bilingual Early Childhood and Primary Centres

Antonio Daniel Juan Rubio (2024). *Inclusive Education in Bilingual and Plurilingual Programs* (pp. 61-79).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/inclusive-education-in-bilingual-early-childhood-and-primary-centres/338452

AI-Powered Lesson Planning: Insights From Future EFL Teachers

Banu Çiçek Baaran Uysal and Iknur Yüksel (2024). *AI in Language Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* (pp. 101-132).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/ai-powered-lesson-planning/339092

How Literal is the 1972 Translation Into English of J.L. Borges' *Historia Universal de la Infamia*?

Marcelo Sánchez (2023). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-13).

www.irma-international.org/article/how-literal-is-the-1972-translation-into-english-of-jl-borges-historia-universal-de-la-infamia/323801

Book Review: Understanding Metaphor Through Corpora: A Case Study of Metaphors in Nineteenth Century Writing

Yanwei Wang (2021). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 51-56).

www.irma-international.org/article/book-review/281673