The Ethnolinguistic History of the Early Korean Peninsula Region: Japanese-Koguryŏic and other Languages in the Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla kingdoms

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Most attempts to explain the early ethno-linguistic history of the Korean Peninsula region suffer from one or more basic flaws, the most important of which is selective omission of data from the sources. One theory alone clearly explains the historical, linguistic, and archaeological data. The Puyŏ-Koguryŏic people, who came from the Liao-hsi region (as did the Wa, or Proto-Japanese) and overran the Korean Peninsula region in the first few centuries of our era, spoke Puyŏ-Koguryŏ, a language related to Japanese. In Liaotung and southern Manchuria, the native peoples spoke Chinese and unknown languages, but in most of the Korean Peninsula itself they spoke Proto-Korean Han languages. The Puyŏ-Koguryŏic rulers who set themselves above the conquered peoples were annihilated by the T'ang-Silla alliance at the end of the Three Kingdoms period. The substratum peoples reemerged under Han-speaking Silla rule and Old Korean became the sole language of Korea.

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Upon the scholarly discovery of the Koguryŏ language in 1907, and ever since, there has never been any doubt that it is genetically related to Japanese. Unfortunately, the details of that relationship, and the question of possible relationships with other languages, especially Korean, remained murky for nearly a century primarily because no one undertook the necessary groundwork—a careful philological study of the medieval texts in which most of the remains of the Koguryŏ language are found.[2] That study has now been done, together with close linguistic analysis of the resulting data and examination of other data and theories connected to Koguryŏ (Beckwith 2004).[3]

However, several scholars—notably Juha Janhunen (2005), Martine Robbeets (2005), James Unger (2005), and Alexander Vovin (2005b)—have recently proposed various other explanations of the linguistic history of Korea before the Middle Korean period. Since these scholars also claim to describe the history and distribution of all languages once spoken in the Korean Peninsula area in general, not only the former Koguryŏ-ruled parts

1 This is a revised version of a paper, "The Location and Linguistic Identification of the Koguryŏ Language," given a the Conference on the Language(s) of Koguryŏ and the Reconstruction of Old Korean and Neighboring Languages, held in Hamburg at Universität Hamburg, September 23-24, 2005. I would like to thank the organizers, Professors Werner Sasse and An Jung-Hee, and the sponsor, the Koguryo Research Foundation, for their kindness and generity.

2 This judgment applies equally to Beckwith (2000).

3 See the review by Sasse (2004). The same sources contain important material on other early Korean languages as well, and are fundamental to all scholarly investigation of the topic.

of what is now Korea, it is necessary for them to discuss the history of the Koguryŏ language[4] in the context of the history of the Korean language, to the extent possible on the basis of the sources. Unfortunately, that is precisely the problem: they do not do this. In fact, in order to be able to make their arguments, they must discount the ancient and medieval sources written by Chinese and Koreans in Chinese, because the material those sources contain explicitly contradicts their views. Therefore, they contend that the ancient and early medieval sources written in Chinese, which contain the very historical and linguistic material that has revealed the existence of the languages under discussion and constitutes virtually the only data on them, including both the Chinese dynastic histories and the Samguk Sagi geographical chapters, are unreliable (Unger 2005; Vovin 2005b), and they therefore claim to reject them. Yet it is not actually true that they reject the sources per se. In fact, they only omit selections of data from these sources that falsify their theories. They give no reasons, whether philological or any other kind, for rejecting the selected pieces of information they claim to reject, and they appear to be unaware that the sources of most of the basic information upon which they rely are the very same sections of the very same texts that they claim to reject.[5] Janhunen (2005), who is unaware of (or has in any case not consulted) the majority of the primary sources or studies of them, simply ignores virtually all relevant data entirely. Robbeets (2005) claims most of the preserved Koguryŏ linguistic data—including words, function morphemes, and syntax rules—are too "scarce" and "fragmentary"

4 The Koguryŏ language is variously renamed by them. The names they most commonly use are "Japonic" or "Japanic" and "Para-Japonic," terms evidently invented by Juha Janhunen (who has also innovated similar terms, such as "Para-Mongolic," for other areas). These terms are historically and linguistically incorrect, misleading, and in this case prejucial with respect to the data.

5 It is actually impossible for a scholar working on the topic to reject *all* of the material because the Chinese sources contain practically the only data in existence on the subject of the early ethnolinguistic history of the Korean Peninsula area. The language in which all of the early sources from China, Korea, and Japan are written is Classical Chinese. It takes specialized Sinological knowledge in order to properly interpret and evaluate these and other early Chinese sources and early Chinese linguistic problems. Perhaps because the Japanese sources written in Chinese have been translated into Japanese and commented on in Japanese-language publications these scholars seem to believe they are somehow more reliable than the other Chinese-language sources; in any case they do not comment on the reliability of the Japanese sources.

to be used; accordingly, she too ignores or rejects them, and with them most of the data.[6] But in linguistics, as in any scientific field, it is not acceptable to ignore or throw out data simply because a cherished theory would only be tenable if the data did not exist.

1. The Sources on the Languages of the Early Korean Peninsula Region

The mere existence of the Koguryŏ language—more precisely, the Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language, which had at least five dialects, namely Puyŏ, Koguryŏ, Ŏkchŏ, Ye-Maek, and Puyŏ-Paekche, described in the *San Kuo chih* 三國志, *Chou shu*, and other sources—presents insuperable difficulties for several theories of linguistic relationship involving Korean, Japanese, and other languages in Northeast Asia.[7] For this reason, scholars who have supported those theories— nearly all of whom are Japanologists—previously ignored the Koguryŏ language, or suggested that the data could be safely ignored.

1.1. The Pre-Three Kingdoms Period

Our knowledge of pre-Three Kingdoms Korea and the surrounding region comes exclusively from a small number of Classical Chinese historical texts—primarily the *Han Shu*, the *San kuo chih*, and the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書—and from archaeology. Since archaeology by itself does not tell us anything about the languages spoken by the bearers of the cultures in Korea at that time, it is necessary to combine the study of archaeological material with the study of the Chinese sources in order to try and form a picture of this period, just as it is necessary to combine these two kinds of data in the study of other areas of the world in ancient and early medieval times. It is known from historical sources that there were influxes of people into Korea from the area of northeastern China during the Warring States period. The

6 On her attempt to apply statistics and probability theory to historical-comparative linguistics, see the comments in Beckwith (forthcoming).

7 For discussion of these theories see Beckwith (2004: 164-235).

identity of the languages spoken by these groups is unknown and there are no sources that indicate what they might have been, though it is probable that some of the people spoke Old Chinese dialects. The first linguistically identifiable group consists of the Chinese speakers who established the Han Dynasty commandery of Lo-lang in northwestern Korea. This outpost survived as a Chinese speaking colony for about half a millenium, and its existence is well supported by archaeological remains, including inscriptions (Gardiner 1969). There was also one archaeologically known pre-Three Kingdoms migration into Korea, though there is no historical evidence to support or clarify it. This is the migration of the bearers of what is essentially one culture who moved from an unknown location to two known destinations: the late Mumun culture of the southern Korean Peninsula and the Yayoi culture of western Japan.[8]

1.2. The Three Kingdoms and Early United Silla Periods

Like the previous period, our knowledge of Korea during the Three Kingdoms and early United Silla periods is dependent on historical sources written in Chinese, whether Chinese dynastic histories (primarily the *Chou shu, Liang shu, Nan shih, Chiu T'ang shu, and Hsin T'ang shu*) or Korean-authored histories (primarily the *Samguk sagi*[9]). In fact our only knowledge of nearly everything concerning Korean history, languages, culture, etc., during these periods derives from material written in Chinese.[10]

8 The traditional dating to the fourth century BC has recently been challenged, but the scholars who follow the new dating also argue that the Jomon culture of Japan was many thousands of years older than has previously been thought. That would put Japan far ahead of its time in many aspects of cultural development compared to the rest of the world, including even Mesopotamia. This is doubtful. Moreover, due to the well-known instability of the carbon-14 sequence during much of the first millenium BC, their chronology is highly suspect. The dating of the Yayoi migration will remain unclear until a careful, complete dendrochronology sequence is done for both Korea and Japan during this period.

9 Of other Korean sources, the *Samguk yusa* is much less reliable as a historical source. The material in the *Koryŏ sa* on this period is largely repeated verbatim from the *Samguk sagi*, but from an early copy of it, making it a valuable textual check on the latter source.

10 There are a few brief references to early Korea in non-Chinese sources, notably Old Tibetan and Arabic. The earliest Tibetan reference is in a late eighth century geographical text, where the country

Even the Korean inscriptions are all in Chinese.[11] There are a few passages dealing with Korea in early Japanese historical works—which are also written in Chinese—but they are so vague or legendary that their interpretation depends upon Chinese sources or Korean sources written in Chinese. It is, in short, impossible to dispense with this material and hardly permissible to cavalierly eviscerate it.

2. The Koguryŏ Language Corpus

Turning to the actual data and the scholarly problems involved, one of the most important issues is the identification, dating, and geographical location of the extant Puyŏ-Koguryŏic linguistic material (Beckwith 2003, 2004).

The philologically verified corpus of the Koguryŏ language,[12] including Archaic Koguryŏ and Old Koguryŏ, consists of 141 words and function morphemes.[13] No full-text sentences are preserved, but much grammatical infor-

(actually 'united Silla' by that time) is called *KeɲuLi* [keuli] (Bacot 1957), from MChi *keuli*, i.e., NMan *gãoli* [kauli], NKor *Koryŏ ~Koguryŏ*. The earlest Arabic reference is in a ninth century Arabic geographical text, where the name of the country is given as *al-Śīlā*[ʃi:la:] i.e., Silla (Ibn Khurdāhbih 1889: 70).

11 Vovin (2005b) argues that the Koguryŏ inscriptions, which are all written in Chinese reflect an Old Korean substratum language. However, two out of his three examples (the only examples) are normal Classical Chinese, while the remaining example concerns what appears to be the very last character in its inscription—hardly solid evidence for any theory. A textual error or lacuna of some kind is certainly involved, not a substratum influence. See Beckwith (forthcoming).

12 This material is to be distinguished sharply from the unverified raw data, from which all scholars previously drew their data and on which everyone based their conclusions, so everyone involved is culpable and no one is really to be blamed. Now that the philology has been done, however, so that errors of many kinds, ghostwords, and other false or unctain examples have been eliminated from the corpus, regardless of whatever theory one might create about the corpus there is no longer any excuse for using the raw data, or for citing examples from older works—such as Lee (1964), Lewin (1973), Whitman (2002) (cited in Unger 2005) and so forth—which are based on the raw data. The only conceivable reason for scholars continuing to do this would seem to be avoidance of issues and data that disprove their theories.

13 Including AKog *wi-[位] 'to look like' (Beckwith 2004: 32 n. 10), which as Sasse (2004: 105) rightly notes I overlook from my summary list at the end of the book. Checking the Old Chinese rhyme, it appears that 位 rhymes in the *Odes* only once, and with a word that evidently has a final affricate or at any rate something other than *-p (which I suggest on page 32); it is accordingly reconstructed by Starostin (1989: 572) as *wrəʗ. Since the Old Chinese final of 位 is however in some

mation, including basic syntactic structure, is in fact preserved in the Old Koguryŏ toponym collocations (Beckwith 2004: 50-92, 116-120).

2.1. Archaic Koguryŏ

The earliest record of the Koguryŏ language consists of 15 glossed words and function morphemes recorded in the account of Koguryŏ in the *San kuo chih*, completed in the late third century CE, "which reflects data collected by the Wei 魏 expedition that passed through both Koguryŏ and Puyŏ territory in the mid-240s" (Byington 2004: 70) and in the *Hou Han shu*, completed in the mid-fifth century, and other sources.

The Archaic Koguryŏ language was spoken by the Koguryŏ people in Late Antiquity, when the Koguryŏ Kingdom was located mainly in the area of modern-day Liaotung and southern Manchuria. However, the Koguryŏ people, from the earliest historical account of them in 12 CE on, are also known as 貊 Maek[14] (Beckwith 2004: 34). The people of the 濊貊 Ye-Maek Kingdom told the Chinese that they were the same people as the Koguryŏ, and the *San kuo chih* remarks that their language is almost identical to that of the Koguryŏ, though their clothing is slightly different. Moreover, the sacred ancestral cave of the Koguryŏ was located in Ye-Maek territory, and the Koguryŏ ruling elite went there every year for ceremonies dedicated to their main god or gods (Beckwith 2004: 43-44). This indicates that the spiritual center of the Koguryŏ nation was in Ye-Maek, and supports the other evidence in the text that the Ye-Maek area had been settled in Antiquity by the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic people (SKC 30: 848) during one of their periodic incursions into the northern Korean Peninsula. It is in any event unavoidable that although the Ye-maek area was politically distinct at the time of the ancient Chinese reports, the Ye-Maek were a Puyŏ-Koguryŏic people who

doubt on other grounds (cf. the discussion of similar finals in Sagart 1999: 52-56), causing doubt about the value of the transcriptional character, I give the Archaic Koguryŏ form here as *wi- for the time being.

14 The name is also written 貉 etc. As Mark Byington (p.c., 2004) has argued, this ethnic group is presumably to be distinguished from a people of the same name who were located well inside the early Chinese culture zone centuries earlier during the Warring States period.

spoke a dialect of Archaic Koguryŏ (or 'Puyŏ-Koguryŏ') from Antiquity onward. The Ŏkchŏ, who lived to the north of the Ye-Maek and east of the Koguryŏ, also spoke a dialect of Koguryŏ (SKC 30: 846). Therefore, the ancient form of the Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language, Archaic Koguryŏ (or Archaic Puyŏ-Koguryŏ), was not spoken solely in Liaotung and southern Manchuria (as is widely claimed, without any reference to the sources) but also on the entire east coast of the Korean Peninsula down to the far southeastern corner, where Chin Han, the predecessor of Silla, was located.

2.2. Old Koguryŏ

The majority of the preserved Koguryŏ language consists of Old Koguryŏ words and function morphemes in toponym collocations recorded in the mid-eighth century, five centuries later than the Archaic Koguryŏ material (which was recorded in the middle of the third century). These forms are found in several medieval sources, principally the relevant Chinese dynastic histories; the *Samguk sagi* 三國史記, which was composed in the twelfth century CE but includes material from early medieval sources; the *Koryŏ sa* 高麗史, which was composed still later but includes extensive quotations of material from the Samguk Sagi and other early sources; and various Japanese sources.

The Koguryŏ language material included in the *Samguk sagi* dates to the period between the Sui and T'ang dynasty Chinese invasions of the Koguryŏ Kingdom in the late sixth to mid-seventh centuries and the Silla onomastic reform of the mid-eighth century, when King Kyŏngdŏk (景德王) ordered the place names of his kingdom to be converted into Chinese. This administrative change was recorded with glosses of many toponyms in the languages then spoken in Korea. Of those preserved in the *Samguk sagi*, the largest number are names of places in the former Koguryŏ Kingdom. Unfortunately, not all of the names are glossed, and of those that are glossed, many are simply new Chinese names replacing old Chinese names, or they must be discarded for various philological reasons (Beckwith 2004: 50-92). After eliminating all uncertain forms, and adding a new one, ヘン pen "man, person (人)", which has recently been identified from Japanese mate-

rial (Kiyose 2004: 237), there are 126 firmly identified Old Koguryŏ words and function morphemes. Additional or alternate forms cited in previous publications are not usable because of philological problems.[15]

2.3. Identification of the Language of the Koguryŏ Toponyms

Many have pointed out that the Samguk Sagi does not explicitly say, for example, "These words are in the Koguryŏ language, which was spoken by the Koguryŏ people in the territory of the Koguryŏ Kingdom during the reign of the Koguryŏ ruler King Kwanggaet'o (廣開土王)." With the exception of a few words specifically discussed in various parts of the text or in other sources, this is a correct observation, although the Samguk Sagi does explicitly say that the toponyms were the names of places in the former Koguryŏ Kingdom. However, there is probably not a single medieval source on the Early Middle Ages which makes such a full, clear, unambiguous statement about any language in eastern Eurasia, and perhaps anywhere.[16] It is hardly surprising, then, that Kim Pusik does not suddenly step aside, abandon his medieval world-view, and comment for the sake of modern scholars, "By the way, these words are in the Koguryŏ language, which was spoken by the Koguryŏ people throughout the former Koguryŏ Kingdom." The *Samguk sagi*—like all the other medieval sources on Koguryŏ, Paekche, Silla, and so on—is no exception to the rule. Although this fact has encouraged many scholars to argue that the language of the Koguryŏ toponyms was not the language spoken by the Koguryŏ people, these scholars cite little or no any actual data to support their claim. In fact, far from citing the ancient and medieval sources or attempting to explain them, Robbeets (2005), Unger (2005), and (to a lesser extent, since he does actually cite some of the sources) also Vovin (2005b), claim that they are not reliable. That leaves few or no sources for them to deal with, so they can propose whatever may come to mind. They have thus created an argument which may be paraphrased as follows:

15 This is explained in detail in Beckwith (2004), q.v.
16 Some of the remarks in the *San kuo chih* and the *Liang shu* come close.

> The language of the toponyms of the former Koguryŏ Kingdom is not the Koguryŏ language but some other language that was spoken there before the Koguryŏ conquered the area.[17] The language of the Koguryŏ Kingdom was a form of Korean (Unger 2005; Vovin 2005b), a language related to Korean (Robbeets 2005), or some other language (Janhunen 2005).

This argument goes back several decades in the literature and is solidly disproved by the data in the Chinese sources, as has already been demonstrated (Beckwith 2004: 18-20, 236-249). However, since the above scholars cite neither the sources nor the latter study of them—other than a few error-filled citations of it (q.v. Beckwith, forthcoming)—and continue to select only the bits of data that fit their views and to ignore the rest, it is necessary to reexamine the problem.

3. Distribution of the Koguryŏ Linguistic Data

Seven of the fifteen attested Archaic Koguryŏ words and morphemes are attested in Old Koguryŏ. Except for one word attested only in the area north of the Yalu in both Archaic and Old Koguryŏ, all seven forms are attested in both areas—that is, Archaic Koguryŏ in the north, Old Koguryŏ in the central and central east-coast Korean Peninsula region and, in two cases, in both

17 See, e.g., Kim (1985, 1983, 1981). Cf. Mabuchi (1999: 145 [610]), whose view is based on a proposal by Kôno Rokurô that has been followed by many scholars. Lee Ki-moon and Park Pyŏng-ch'ae (quoted in Toh 1989: 446) suggest that even though the spoken language of the Koguryŏ Kingdom was Puyŏ-Koguryŏ, the toponyms may well have remained in the original substratum language. As for the putative conservatism of toponyms to which the latter scholars, as well as Toh (repeated in Toh 2005) and Vovin (2005b) refer, this is a linguistic folk-belief. In any territory that has been occupied successively by people speaking different languages in preliterate times or areas, there are indeed always a few toponyms that preserve earlier linguistic forms, but the vast majority are in the current dominant spoken language. In literate societies, any extreme can occur, from near total retention, as in Hawaii (one of the standard putative examples of 'conservativeness'), to near total replacement, as in Korea itself a mere century after the Silla conquest. It is nothing short of astounding that those who cite the putative conservativeness of toponyms as 'proof' that the Koguryŏ toponyms of Korea are in some other mysterious language overlook the fact that these toponyms—the same ones which provide most of our data on the Koguryŏ language—were all changed by fiat, and the historical record of that change is our source. The early Korean Peninsula is perhaps he worst example in the entire known world of a place with conservative toponyms.

the north and the central and eastern areas.

3.1. Distribution of the Old Koguryŏ Toponyms

There are three distinct geographical areas from which Old Koguryŏ lexical material is preserved in the *Samguk sagi*.

3.1.1. *The part of the former Koguryŏ Kingdom north of the Yalu River in Liaotung and southern Manchuria.* This is the area of the ancient Koguryŏ Kingdom that is described in the *San kuo chih* and *Hou Han shu* accounts in which the Archaic Koguryŏ words are preserved.

3.1.2. *The part of the former Koguryŏ Kingdom in the eastern Korean Peninsula which was previously the Ye-Maek Kingdom.* This is the same area described as Puyŏ-Koguryŏ-speaking in the *San kuo chih* and *Hou Han shu* accounts.

3.1.3. *The part of the former Koguryŏ Kingdom in the central and west-central Korean Peninsula.* Some of this territory had earlier been ruled by the Puyŏ-Paekche, the close ethnolinguistic relatives of the Koguryŏ, and it is quite possible that some of the toponyms are actually relics of the Puyŏ-Paekche dialect of the common Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language. In addition, part of the area had earlier belonged to the Ye-Maek Kingdom, so some of the toponyms in that area were undoubtedly Puyŏ-Koguryŏic in origin even before the Koguryŏ conquest. Toh Su-hee (1987, 1989, 1994) and other scholars have in fact argued that the language of the early Paekche Kingdom in the west-central part of the Korean Peninsula was a Puyŏ-Koguryŏic language and the toponyms in the *Samguk sagi* from this particular area are therefore in Puyŏ-Paekche rather than in Koguryŏ.[18] Since the Paekche Kingdom is known to have actually been formed only in the fourth century (Gardiner 1969: 43), and the Koguryŏ forced the center of the Paekche king-

18 Toh (2005) has recently changed his views on these issues, though it is not clear why.

dom to shift southward in the fifth century, there could be at most only very minor differences between Puyŏ-Paekche toponyms and Puyŏ-Koguryŏ toponyms. Considering the form in which they are transcribed, it is not surprising that few linguistic differences are detectable. The Chinese accounts actually note that there were only minor differences between the Puyŏ-Paekche and Old Koguryŏ dialects of the common Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language (Beckwith 2004: 38-39).

3.2. An Inexplicable Error

Due evidently to failure either to glance at the relevant chapters of the *Samguk Sagi* itself or to read the recent philological-linguistic study of the toponyms[19] in that source (Beckwith 2004), some scholars (Janhunen 2005; Unger 2005;[20] Vovin 2005b) openly claim or imply that the text includes only toponyms from the central Korean Peninsula area of the former Koguryŏ Kingdom. This claim is false.[21] The *Samguk sagi* gives several lists of glossed toponyms of places in Koguryŏ north of the Yalu, each list being preceded by a title which explicitly states that the names are of localities north of the Yalu. Although the *Samguk sagi* is written in Classical Chinese, these toponyms too have been discussed in English (Beckwith 2004: 89-92). The *Samguk sagi* also includes toponyms from the former Ye-Maek Kingdom region (Beckwith 2004: 83-88), which was already Puyŏ-Koguryŏ-speaking in Antiquity, as noted above. Overlooking this material is a gross error that alone falsifies the view that the language of the Koguryŏ toponyms was not the Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language.[22]

19 Note that *toponyms* are to be clearly distinguished from *morphemes* (which include free lexemes, function morphemes, etc.). Most toponyms consist of more than one morpheme and also contain syntactic information.

20 Unger quotes Whitman (2002) as his authority on this.

21 The only way to explain this claim, which has been repeated from paper to paper over several decades, is that those who have made the claim did not read, or even glance at, the *Samguk Sagi* itself, perhaps because it is written in Classical Chinese.

22 Toh (1987, 1989, 1994), basing himself on work by specialists in Korean historical geography, has located many of the toponyms recorded in the *Samguk Sagi*. Unfortunately, he has ignored not only the northern toponyms in that source but also the historical accounts of Ye-Maek in the *San kuo chih*,

In the *Samguk sagi* there are 19 glossed and linguistically identified toponyms from the region north of the Yalu, 14 from the east-central coast (former Ye-Maek Kingdom) region, and 88 from the central and west-central Korean Peninsula regions. Each full toponym usually includes two or more words and grammatical morphemes. In very many cases they are repetitions of other occurrences. Six Old Koguryŏ words and one grammatical function morpheme are found in both the northern and the three central regions: OKog *kuər 'walled city, fort (城)' ; OKog *pɨy 'country, nation; commandery; Puyŏ'; OKog *tar 'mountain; high' ; OKog *ɓaɨp 'crag, high mountain' ; OKog *kaɨp 'cave, hole (in a mountain)' ; OKog *par 'second-growth paddy rice' ; and OKog *na 'genitive-attributive marker' (Beckwith 2004: 239, 250-252). All except *par are among the most frequently occurring, best-established Old Koguryŏ forms. It is necessary to emphasize that these morphemes occur together with other Old Koguryŏ morphemes in the toponyms. The mutual relationship of the other morphemes is therefore indicated even without further attestations. By contrast, the absence of the best-attested of these Old Koguryŏ toponym words—*kuər, *pɨy, *tar, and *ɓaɨp—from the area of Silla and Kara, and their rarity or absence in Paekche, is striking. The semantic equivalents of these words in Silla or in Middle Korean are so wildly different phonetically from the Old Koguryŏ forms, the two sets cannot be reconciled. By contrast, all of them have good, or at least probable, Japanese etymologies. The unrelatableness of the Han languages and the Japanese-Koguryŏic languages is crystal clear even in the late antique and early medieval periods.

The single most frequently occurring Old Koguryŏ word is *kuər 'walled city, fort (城)' ,[23] from AKog *kuru [溝婁] 'id.' (Beckwith 2004:

and he has in many cases used a later Silla Chinese name of a place instead of its Koguryŏ name. He has also drawn unacceptable historical and linguistic conclusions about the materials (v. Beckwith 2004). Nevertheless, the maps in his work may be used, with great caution, to get an idea of the geographical locations of the toponyms outside of the northern Koguryŏ area.

23 In his paper's sole actual citation of any of my research on Koguryŏ, Vovin (2005: 8, n. 22 and on his handout, page 3, note 1) says, "Beckwith reconstructs *xuər (203: 57)." The date and page in this citation suggests it comes from a prepublication manuscript, since no such work ("Beckwith 2003") is listed in his bibliography, which includes only my book (Beckwith 2004), wherein the form in question is reconstructed as *kuər. I do give the Middle Chinese pronunciation of one of the transcrip-

41), which occurs in dozens of toponyms all over Koguryŏ Kingdom territory, but nowhere in former Silla or Kara territory. There are two examples from the former Paekche Kingdom, but this is to be expected, since the kingdom was founded and ruled by Puyŏ-Koguryŏ-speaking people (Beckwith 2004: 34, 37-40) and it is known that two languages were spoken there, one a Puyŏ-Koguryŏ dialect, the other a Han dialect (Kôno 1987). By contrast, there are no examples at all of this word from the area of the former Silla kingdom, and indeed, the Chinese sources agree that the Silla people spoke a completely different language from that spoken by the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic peoples, and that the Silla language could only be understood by the Paekche (*LS* 54: 806; *NS* 79: 1973). These remarks make no sense whatsoever in the view propounded by Unger (2005) and Vovin (2005b), according to which Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla all shared the same language, Old Korean.[24] By contrast, it is not surprising that the people of Paekche, who are specifically known to have used two languages, could understand a language closely related to one of their own languages.

Unlike the Koguryŏ Kingdom area, which has dozens of examples of OKog *kuər 'walled city, fort' in its toponyms, the Silla-Kara area has no examples whatsoever of this word, but is covered instead with toponyms which have the word *pur, from earlier *puri, as clearly shown on Toh Soo-hee's maps. Moreover, the Chinese sources remark that the Silla word for 'walled city, fort (城)' was 健牟羅 *güan-muw-la, i.e., Silla *konmura (*LS* 79: 1973; *NS* 79: 1972; cf. Beckwith 2004: 41 n. 32), which consists of two parts, Silla *kon 健 'great' and Silla *mura. Although *kon is well attested and has good Han-Paekche and Korean cognates, as shown by Kôno (1987) and Vovin (2005b), the word *mura has not yet been definitely identified with a Korean word. However, if the Old Japanese word *mura 'village' is a loanword from Silla, as seems very likely, the Silla word *kon-

tional characters (忽) as *χuər, with the special symbol (*) used to mark such forms, but the other transcription (骨) is *kuər. For discussion see Beckwith (2004).

24 Reference to this sorce material (discussed in Beckwith 2004: 38-39) is accordingly omitted by them. Although Vovin (2005b) quotes brief passages from the *Chou shu* in an attempt to disprove Kôno's (1987) demonstration that two languages were used in the Paekche Kingdom, his interpretation contains errors and cannot be accepted (Beckwith, forthcoming).

mura 'walled city' literally means 'big village' (Kiyose and Beckwith, forthcoming). In any case it is obvious that Silla *mura has absolutely nothing to do with Old Koguryŏ *kuər. This confirms, once again, the statements in the Chinese sources that the language of Silla was completely different from that of Koguryŏ. If the nations of Three Kingdom period Korea all spoke Korean, as claimed by Unger (2005) and Vovin (2005b), however, the statements would make absolutely no sense.

As mentioned above, half of the preserved Archaic Koguryŏ words and morphemes are also found in Old Koguryŏ, including the most frequently occurring word, OKog *kuər 'walled city, fort' , which descends, completely regularly, from Archaic Koguryŏ *kuru 'id.' (Beckwith 2004: 41). The word is found in dozens of toponyms all over the former Koguryŏ Kingdom territory, and only in that territory.[25] The Old Koguryŏ words from the undeniably Puyŏ-Koguryŏic speaking areas of the north and east are also not distinguishable from the Old Koguryŏ words meaning the same thing from the central and west-central Korean Peninsula area. This indicates that the toponym words from the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic-ruled areas of the Korean Peninsula are in the Koguryŏ language or in another Puyŏ-Koguryŏ dialect. The only possible conclusion is that the Koguryŏ language, or the common Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language, was at one time used in all three areas. In other words, the lexical material from the west-central Korean Peninsula area is philologically indistinguishable from the lexical material of the other dialects of the same language spoken in the former Ye-Maek region and the region north of the Yalu.

Nevertheless, the fact that the toponyms are in the Koguryŏ language certainly does not tell us that *everyone* in the Koguryŏ Kingdom spoke Koguryŏ. Some of the toponyms appear to be Koguryŏ calques or folk-etymologized Koguryŏ phonetic imitations of earlier names which were originally in another language or languages and it is virtually certain that the Koguryŏ language was a superstratum spoken alongside the local language or languages. (See further below.)

25 With the exception of two Puyŏ-Koguryŏic toponyms in Paekche, q.v. below.

As noted above, a few examples of Puyŏ-Koguryŏic words are found in the area of the former Paekche Kingdom. But this should not be puzzling. The ancient and medieval Chinese ethnolinguistic sources tell us—and due to a brilliant paper by the late Kôno Rokurô (1987) it is well known—that two languages were spoken in the Paekche Kingdom.[26] The language of the native people was a Han language, 'Han-Paekche' , which Kôno's study shows must be related to Korean; it was certainly the descendant of the language of Ma Han. The other language was "Puyŏ-Paekche," a Puyŏ-Koguryŏic dialect spoken by the ruling class.

There cannot be any doubt about the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic ethnolinguistic origins of the Puyŏ-Paekche. They themselves told the Chinese historians explicitly that they were of Puyŏ-Koguryŏic stock. The origin myth the Paekche related to the Chinese is virtually identical to that of the Puyŏ and the Koguryŏ, as is obvious in the original Chinese historical sources. The claims to the contrary that have been made (Unger 2005: 4) require maintaining that the ruling class of a powerful kingdom would falsely claim to be the relatives of their worst enemies.

4. The 'Korean' Theories

It has already been established that the Koguryŏ ruling class spoke the Koguryŏ language—or perhaps more precisely, the 'Common Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language' —throughout the Koguryŏ Kingdom, and that other languages including Chinese and several Han (Korean) dialects or languages are known to have been spoken in Koguryŏ and Paekche territory. The Koguryŏ-Korean theory (Robbeets 2005; Unger 2005) has already been disproven (Beckwith 2002, 2004). There is no scientific excuse for discussing it further.

Some, including Robbeets (2005) and Unger (2005), would also like to pursue the theory that *Japanese* and *Korean* are genetically related, regardless of the demonstrated lack of a relationship between the Koguryŏ lan-

26 See note 24.

guage—a close relative of Japanese, as is generally accepted—and Korean. Nevertheless, a century of energetic attempts to demonstrate a genetic relationship between Japanese and Korean have failed, and the proposal-which was unlikely to begin with—should be abandoned. Robbeets (2005) also supports the 'Macro-Altaic' proposal, a 'distant relationship theory' that is one of a veritable family of doubtful 'Altaic' proposals (q.v. Beckwith 2004: 220-223, 231-234, 241), but as with the previous two proposals, careful linguistics has already disproved the 'Altaic' idea (Georg 2005; Vovin 2005a).

A variant of this approach now claims that Korean is the direct descendant of Koguryŏ, and Silla had little, if anything, to do with it.[27] This argument contends that the Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language was in fact Old Korean (Unger 2005; Vovin 2005b). This is different from the views of earlier scholars. Lee Ki-moon, Kim Bang-han, Murayama Shichirô, and Nicholas Poppe, who argue that Korean is an 'Altaic' language, do not say it is a Puyŏ-Koguryŏic language. They do argue that Koguryŏ and Korean are 'Altaic' languages, but they always put Korean in a different branch from Japanese and Koguryŏ, although they disagree about how high up in the stemma the node should be (Beckwith 2004: 12-26). The basis for the new theory of Unger and Vovin is, again, either the omission of entire sources or the use of raw data—especially the use of earlier studies based on the latter unreliable material, which they quote approvingly in their papers.

With regard to the identifications of Koguryŏ words with Korean words (and some 'Altaic' words) by Lee Ki-moon (1983), Bruno Lewin (1973), and Gisaburo N. Kiyose (1986, 1991), the few likely examples among them are examined carefully in Beckwith (2004: 164-183) and either falsified or shown not to be evidence of a genetic relationship. The examples are based on bad data (i.e., uncritically selected bits of raw *Samguk sagi* material), weak theory (particularly the untenable 'Altaic' theory and its many

27 Silla should thus be ignored by the proponents of this theory, but in fact much is made of putative Silla attestations of Koguryŏ words. The failure to examine the sources philologically and weed out the corrupt, unclear, or ambiguous examples—i.e., the unusable data—dooms this and all other such arguments.

virus-like mutations), or both.[28] The theory that Korean is a Puyŏ-Koguryŏic language or, vice versa, that Koguryŏ and the other Puyŏ-Koguryŏic languages are Korean, ignores virtually all the ethnolinguistic and historical data on all the languages concerned—including Koguryŏ, Japanese, Silla, and Korean. It is unsupportable and makes absolutely no sense either linguistically or historically. It must be rejected.[29]

5. The 'Japonic' Speculation

Finally, there is yet another view. Although the language preserved in the toponyms from the former Koguryŏ Kingdom must be identified with the Koguryŏ (or Puyŏ-Koguryŏ) language, as shown above, and although that language is certainly related to Japanese, as has been known for a century (Beckwith 2004: 9), it has been argued that the language called 'Koguryŏ' is actually not the speech of the people who founded and ruled the Koguryŏ Kingdom but a substratum language related to Japanese. The proponents (Janhunen 2005; Unger 2005; Vovin 2005b) thus posit a hypothetical language which is virtually identical to the language identified as Koguryŏ, and which has identical established relationships, but is simply much older.

The 'Japonic' speculation, shown in Figure 1, argues that the Koguryŏ (or Puyŏ-Koguryŏ) language was restricted to the area north of the Yalu River, and that the material in the *Samguk sagi* which has been called 'Koguryŏ' is actually not the same language. According to the 'Japonic' proponents, the Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language is something else—Korean (Unger 2005; Vovin 2005b), Gilyak (Janhunen 2005), Tungusic (Janhunen 2005),[30] or whatever. They argue that the language preserved in the *Samguk sagi*

28 The same evaluation applies to the recent work in the same vein by Itabashi (2003). See the detailed criticism of the arguments of Unger (2005) and Vovin (2005b) in Beckwith (forthcoming).
29 This does *not* mean, however, that Koguryŏ is not a language of Korea, or that Koguryŏ history and culture is unrelated to Korean history and culture. The official Chinese dynastic histories alone refute such a claim and point out the many ways in which Koguryŏ language, culture and history were sharply distinct from those of China.
30 Janhunen contends that the Puyŏ language was probably related to Gilyak, while the Koguryŏ language was probably Tungusic. He does not support either conjecture with any actual evidence.

toponyms, their 'Japonic' , is a close relative of Japanese that was once spoken in the central and southern Korean Peninsula and is descended from the language of the first millenium BCE migrants who brought a new archaeological complex to southern Korea (where it is known as the Mumun culture) and northern Kyushu (where the people are identified as the Wa and their culture is known as the Yayoi). They propose that these people did not die out in Korea; their 'Japonic' language survived, continued to develop, spread across the peninsula, and is preserved in the toponyms from the central Korean Peninsula region which were recorded in the eighth century (over a millenium after the Mumun-Yayoi migration) and eventually copied into the *Samguk sagi* (Unger 2005).[31]

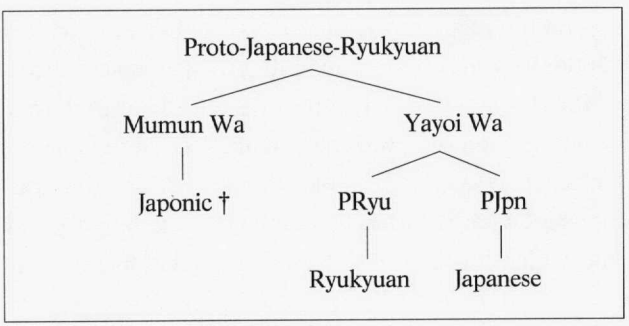

Figure 1. The 'Japonic' speculation

As noted above, the 'Japonic' speculation depends crucially on the proponents' omission of data from the same sources they use to construct their speculation, or on their mistaken belief that the sources do not contain such data. As shown herein, the idea is falsified by the actual existence of the very data they mistakenly believe does not exist, by application of Occam's Razor to their convoluted arguments, and by the demonstration that the language of the recorded toponyms of the former Koguryŏ Kingdom must be identified specifically with the language spoken by the ruling Koguryŏ stratum.

In addition, there is the remarkable fact that the toponyms in question

31 Vovin (2005b) does not give any details on his version of the speculation.

are found exclusively in the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic ruled areas of the Korean Peninsula, not in Silla or Kara. According to the 'Japonic' proponents, the language spoken by the Mumun-Wa culture bearers in the southern Korean Peninsula was identical to Proto-Japanese, and the Japanese-related words in the toponyms from the former Koguryŏ Kingdom are remnants of that language. If this were correct, the toponyms from the southern Korean Peninsula areas in the *Samguk sagi* should contain an even higher percentage of such words than those in the central Korean Peninsula areas or the former Koguryŏ Kingdom areas north of the Yalu. In fact, the identified 'Japonic' words do not occur at all in the territory of Silla and Kara, with one or two doubtful exceptions. Some Japanese-related words do occur in the territory of the Paekche Kingdom. However, according to the 'Japonic' proponents, the Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language—including Paekche and Koguryŏ—was actually just Old Korean (Unger 2005; Vovin 2005b), so any Japanese-related lexical material found in the toponyms from Paekche could only be relics of the ancient language spoken by the Mumun-Wa culture bearers.

A well-known example of such a lexeme is the Paekche and Old Japanese word *kɨ 'walled city, fort (城)', which is discussed by Unger (2005) and Vovin (2005). There are two examples of the Old Koguryŏ word *kuər 'walled city, fort' in linguistically Puyŏ-Koguryŏic toponyms from the former Paekche kingdom area, but there are several examples of 基 *kɨ 'walled city, fort' (Vovin 2005b: 8 n. 21), which is generally believed to be a related form (Yun 1994) descended from an earlier *kuy, which goes back to Common-Puyŏ-Koguryŏic *kuru. In view of the simultaneous existence of two examples of *kuər in the same territory, Paekche *kɨ should only be a specifically 'Japonic' form. The word 基 ~ 紀 *kɨ (*JDB* 236) 'walled city, fort' also appears in Old Japanese sources on Paekche, and in Japanese toponyms (cf. Unger 2005: 2). Though the word found in Japanese names is widely thought to be a borrowing from Paekche, an inherited Common Japanese-Koguryŏic *kuru could have become *kɨ purely internally in Japanese (Beckwith 2004: 41 n. 32; cf. Yun 1994). The word does seem to be more worn down by time and phonological change than the Koguryŏ word—it *looks* older. Since the 'Japonic' theory argues that the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic people spoke Korean, they could not have been

the donors of a Japanese-related lexeme to Paekche. The conclusion would seem clear: the the Paekche word *kɨ must be one of the linguistic residues of the ancient Mumun-Wa language once spoken in southern Korea,[32] and the 'Japonic' scenario is thus supported historically and linguistically.

However, there are at least three serious problems with this example. Firstly, the same sources that go to great pains to tell us about the two languages of Paekche (Han-Paekche and Puyŏ-Paekche) never mention a hypothetical third language (i.e., 'Japonic'). Secondly, it is difficult or impossible to identify any actual Paekche linguistic material—whether Puyŏ-Paekche or Han-Paekche—with the Proto-Japanese language specifically. Thirdly, and fatally for the idea that Paekche *kɨ supports the 'Japonic' theory, the Chinese sources specifically state that Ma-Han, the territorial predecessor of Paekche, did not have any 'walled cities, forts (城)' , unlike Pyŏn-Han and Chin-Han. That means the early Puyŏ-Paekche ancestor of the word *kɨ 'walled city, fort' —which is clearly inherited from attested Archaic Puyŏ-Koguryŏ kuru 'id.' —could only have been introduced by the Puyŏ-Paekche conquerors (who founded the Paekche Kingdom) along with the thing itself, and the word subsequently underwent and completed its phonological changes by the time of its transmission to Japan along with historical and geographical information, not long before the Korean Peninsula toponyms preserved in the Samguk Sagi were recorded in the mid-eighth century. Therefore, as is already generally accepted, Japanese *kɨ must be a loanword from Puyŏ-Paekche *kɨ, which is inherited—via an intermediary Proto-Puyŏ-Paekche form *kuy or the like, from *kur(u)—from Archaic Puyŏ-Koguryŏ *kuru, as shown in Figure 2.

32 Both Unger (2005) and Vovin (2005b) do suggest it is a loanword. However, Vovin compares OKog *kuər to Mongol *qoto(n)* and other Central Eurasian words for "city," despite the fact that these spurious etymologies have already been disproved (Beckwith 2004: 4-5); they are further conclusively disproved by the existence of the Archaic Koguryŏ form of the same word, *kuru (Beckwith 2004: 4-5). Vovin's incorrect reconstruction of the Middle Chinese reading of the transcription characters involved (q.v. Beckwith 2004: 4-5) is to blame for this mistake.

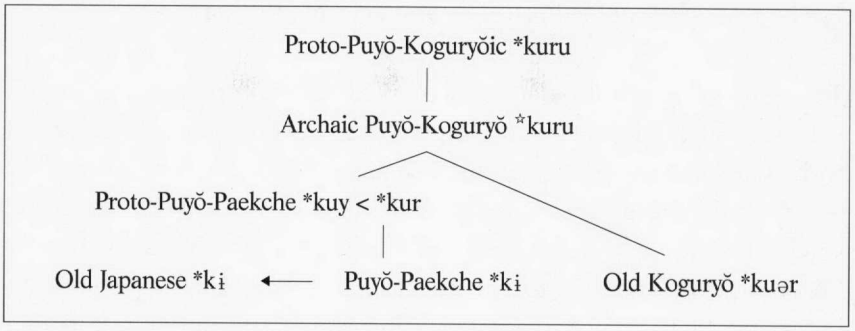

Figure 2. Puyŏ-Koguryŏic 'walled city, fort'

Finally, one of the insuperable problems for the 'Japonic' speculation is the fact that the toponyms containing lexical material clearly related to Japanese are not found at all in the southeastern Korean Peninsula area (the Silla Kingdom territory) or along most of the south coast (former Kara territory), and only a few of them are found in the southwestern Korean Peninsula (Paekche territory). So where, then, are the 'Japonic' toponyms located? In the territory of the former Koguryŏ Kingdom, from its far southern border to its far northern border. The distribution is remarkably clear and provides unambiguous evidence in favor of equating the language spoken by the Koguryŏ people with the language of the toponyms in their kingdom—a not unreasonable connection. But this distribution constitutes a fatal difficulty for the 'Japonic' proponents, as well as for those who argue that the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic languages of Koguryŏ and Paekche were, like the languages of Silla and Kara, all simply Old Korean (Unger 2005; Vovin 2005b). One archaeologist trying to make sense of the 'Japonic' speculation (without being aware of the proponents' faulty linguistics and nonexistent philology) refers to this bewildering difficulty as the 'geographical inversion' problem (Hudson 1999: 97). It is, indeed, an insuperable problem for the 'Japonic' speculation. But for the Japanese-Koguryŏic theory (Beckwith 2004), which is based on the actual linguistic and historical data, there is no problem. See Figure 3.

6. The Languages of the Early Korean Peninsula Region

The pertinent facts which must be accounted for by any proposal are in actuality accounted for only by the simplest one, which also accords very well with other historically better-known examples.

Consider the history of the Germanic-speaking Franks. They conquered Gaul, where the spoken language was a colloquial form of Late Latin. The Franks retained their Germanic language, Old Frankish, for several centuries, and built a powerful kingdom. But it split into three warring kingdoms upon the death of Louis the Pious in 840 CE. The subsequent Oaths of Strasbourg, dated 842, were sworn in Old French (a Romance language descended from spoken Latin), the language of territory that later formed part of France, and Old High German, the language of territory that later formed part of Germany. The Franks in France bestowed their name, some Frankish loanwords, and some other linguistic influences on the local Romance tongue before shifting their speech to the latter language. When the Old Norse-speaking Vikings settled in Normandy later in the same century, they found Romance-speaking French. The Vikings, who were mainly single male warriors, took local wives, quickly acculturated to the local French culture, and shifted from Old Norse to French, which they spoke

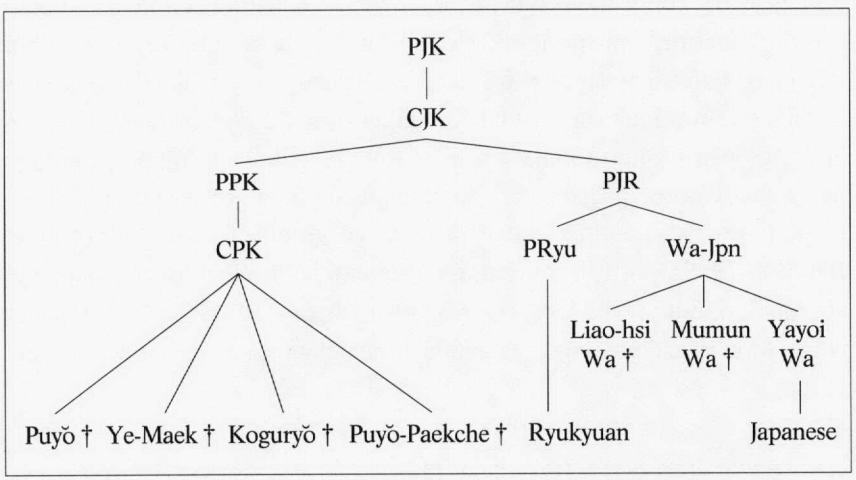

Figure 3. The Japanese-Koguryŏic languages

when they conquered England in 1066. There the descendants of the French-speaking Normans eventually acculturated in turn to the Anglo-Saxon (Germanic) speaking English. Another well-known example of this process is the history of the repeated conquests of Iranian-speaking Central Asia and the repeated Iranization of the conquerors, including Tokharians, Turks, Arabs, and Mongols, until finally the later large-scale migration of Turks into northern Central Asia caused much of the region to shift to Turkic. There are many other such examples. Unger's (2005) misunderstanding and misrepresentation of this overwhelmingly well-attested, normal historical process is difficult to fathom.

Unlike the 'Korean' and 'Japonic' theories discussed above, the Japanese-Koguryŏic theory has been developed on the basis of careful philological, historical, and linguistic study of the sources that have been preserved. While the study or presentation may contain mistakes, the theory has the unusual merit, in this field, of agreeing with the data found in the sources. Applying the same methodology—i.e., use of the methods of philology, history, and comparative-historical linguistics—to the early Korean Peninsula area as a whole, especially in the light of the important presentation and discussion of early Old Korean data in Vovin's (2005) paper, a fairly clear picture emerges, one which accords with and accounts for the known facts about the ethnolinguistic history of the early Korean Peninsula area, including archaeology, history, and linguistics.

- The language of the Korean Peninsula before the intrusion of the Mumun-Yayoi culture into southern Korea in the first millenium BCE. is unknown, but in view of subsequent history it was undoubtedly Proto-Korean (i.e., Proto-Han).
- The Mumun-Yayoi culture bearers spoke Proto-Japanese.
- The Han peoples' languages were very heavily influenced by Proto-Japanese — accounting for the long-noted similarity of the otherwise unrelatable Japanese and Korean languages — but the Proto-Japanese language died out on the Korean Peninsula before the intrusion of the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic peoples early in the first millenium CE.
- The Puyŏ-Koguryŏic peoples overran the entire peninsula and ended up dom-

inating all of it except the southeastern realms of Pyŏn Han (later Kara) and Chin Han (later Silla). According to the theories of Unger (2005) and Vovin (2005b), these are the very areas where the Japanese-related Mumun-Yayoi 'Japonic' language should be best preserved in the toponyms. But in fact, no 'Japonic' forms at all have been unambiguously found in these regions,[33] which have strikingly different toponyms from the central and northern Korean areas known to have been dominated by the Koguryŏ people. Much the same point applies to the Paekche Kingdom area. The presence of a few Puyŏ-Koguryŏic toponyms in the Paekche region is due to the fact that the kingdom was founded by a Puyŏ-Koguryŏic people who spoke a Puyŏ-Koguryŏic language. It had a Puyŏ-Koguryŏic-speaking superstratum and a Han-speaking substratum, as shown by Kôno (1987).

- The Puyŏ-Koguryŏic peoples spoke dialects of the Puyŏ-Koguryŏ language, which was different from the languages of Pyŏn Han (later Kara) and Chin Han (later Silla), and from the native language of Ma Han (later Paekche).
- In all early Korean Peninsula area states where the social structure is well known, the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic-speaking people are described in the sources as a superstratum ruling over a substratum they treated as slaves. In Paekche, the substratum language is known to have been a Han dialect, i.e., a dialect of Old Korean. In each of the other former Puyŏ-Koguryŏic states of Korea the substratum would also seem to have been one or more Han languages (and in far northwestern Korea and Liaotung, Chinese also). The ruling class moved the substratum peoples around at will (as attested by King Kwanggaet'o's memorial inscription) and thus spread the Han dialects further to the north.
- The Puyŏ-Koguryŏic peoples had a powerful influence on the Han dialects spoken in their territory. This is true especially of the Koguryŏ, who named or renamed many places in their kingdom in the Koguryŏ language. But in the seventh century CE the power of the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic-ruled Koguryŏ Kingdom and the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic-ruled Paekche Kingdom was broken by the T'ang-Silla alliance. Many Puyŏ-Koguryŏic people were killed, and most of the remainder were forcibly removed to central China. Shortly afterward

33 There are some debatable forms, particularly one Silla area toponym syllable that could represent the Japanese-Koguryŏic word *mir "three," but as Unger (2005) notes, they are all problematic.

the Puyŏ-Koguryŏic languages became extinct.

- Under the rule of the Han-speaking Silla conquerors, the previously subservient non-Puyŏ-Koguryŏic-speaking peoples of the Koguryŏ and Paekche territories recovered their former position and absorbed any remaining Puyŏ-Koguryŏic people. In Paekche, it is likely that the Puyŏ were already speaking a Han dialect even before the fall of the kingdom.
- The resurgent Han dialects were somewhat different from the ancestor of Middle Korean, as shown by Vovin (2005b) in his study of Korean loanwords in Jurchen and the Paekche words transcribed in Japanese sources. Middle Korean — the lineal ancestor of Modern Korean — evidently descends from another Han dialect, such as that spoken in Kaesŏng, near the area of modern Seoul, not from the Silla dialect, as argued by Lee Ki-moon and others (cf. Kiyose and Beckwith, forthcoming).
- However, the Silla dialect must have become the official language. That would mean there were noticeable differences between the local dialects and the "standard Old Korean" language of the time, which itself changed to reflect the local dialect when the capital moved from one region to another. This explains the apparent shift back and forth between progressive and conservative features in the data, in that many grammatical morphemes disappear and reappear in each Korean dynasty from the Silla period down to Middle Korean (Hiroomi Kanno, p.c., 2006).
- It is not certain how early the early Korean loans to Jurchen are, but even if they date back as far as the Parhae Kingdom, as argued by Vovin (2005b), the reason the loans are Korean is not that the Koguryŏ people spoke Korean—an impossibility in any case, based on the actual Koguryŏ language data—but that after the annihilation of the Koguryŏ people the resurgent substratum language of most of the former Koguryŏ Kingdom was a Han language, i.e., one or more dialects of Old Korean.

Progress in the study of Korea, as in studies of other areas of the world, is possible only through intensive research on and careful use of the sources that do exist. If scholars will now abandon speculation and turn to that difficult task, we may finally begin to achieve a deeper understanding of the early ethnolinguistic history of the Korean Peninsula area.

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Other Abbreviations and Sigla

AJpn	Archaic Japanese
AKog	Archaic Koguryŏ
CJK	Common Japanese-Koguryŏic
CPK	Common Puyŏ-Koguryŏic
id.	'the same'
Jpn	Japanese
MKor	Middle Korean
NKor	New Korean (= Modern Korean)
OKog	Old Koguryŏ
OKor	Old Korean
p.c.	personal communication
PJK	Proto-Japanese-Koguryŏic
PJpn	Proto-Japanese
PJR	Proto-Japanese-Ryukyuan
PPK	Proto-Puyŏ-Koguryŏic
PRyu	Proto-Ryukyuan
q.v.	'which see'
v.	'see'
*	mark for an ordinary reconstructed form
⋆	mark for a reconstruction of a Chinese character transcription