Ancient Koguryǒ, Old Koguryǒ, and the Relationship of Japanese to Korean

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Linguists working on the historical relationship between Japanese and Korean have mostly ignored the medieval or 'Old' Koguryǒ (OKog) onomastic material, some arguing that it does not, in fact, represent the language of the Koguryǒ people in the medieval Koguryǒ kingdom, but a language of Paekche (Toh 1987, 1989, 1994) or an ancient substratum language of the Korean Peninsula (Kim 1981, 1985), and the reflexes of this lexical material in Japanese are loanwords introduced by immigrants during the Kofun period (Unger 2001). Consider the examples in (1).

(1) a. OKog *mir* (*SS*) 'three' : OJpn *mi* 'id.'
    b. OKog *ütsi* (*KS*) 'five' : OJpn *itu* 'id.'
    c. OKog *ku* (*SS*) 'child' : OJpn *kʊ* (Martin 1987: 452: *kwo) > NJ *ko* 'id.'
    d. OKog *kɨr ~ key* 'tree, wood' : OJpn *kɨ ~ ki* 'id.'

Recent arguments in favor of a genetic 'Japanese-Koguryoic family' (Beckwith 1999), however persuasive, may be criticized because they do not deal with the often remarked problem that no connection has been shown between the language of the ancient Koguryǒ kingdom, or 'Archaic' Koguryǒ (AKog), and the language of the later OKog toponyms from north of the Yalu on the one hand, and the OKog toponyms from the central Korean Peninsula on the other. However, if these objections are answered the argument that Koguryǒ is related genetically to Japanese (as thought by most scholars who have worked on the primary data, regardless of their ideas about further relationships) would be strengthened. In view of the recent disproof of the most important putative Koguryǒ-Korean etymologies (Beckwith 2002), the close relationship between the Japanese and Koguryǒ languages could potentially disprove the Japanese-Korean genetic theory, or at least force a major reformulation.

This paper examines all known linguistic data on AKog from ancient Chinese literary accounts (primarily the *San kuo chih*), as well as the King Kwanggaet'o memorial inscription of 414. Since determining linguistically whether AKog and OKog are related is heavily dependent on the reconstruction of the phonology of the Chinese syllables used to transcribe these languages, characteristics of the archaic Northeastern Chinese in use in the Korean area when the Koguryǒ names were recorded are taken into consideration in this paper. Analysis of both sets of Koguryǒ material reveals a clear, regular relationship between AKog and the OKog language attested half a millenium later, as in the examples in (2).

(2) a. AKog *ɣapma* (*SKC*) 'great mountain' ~ OKog *ɦap* 'high mountain' : OJpn *yama* 'mountain'
    b. AKog *kuru* (*SKC*) 'walled city, fort' ~ OKog *kuər* 'id.' : OJpn *kɨ* 'id.'
    c. AKog *kweyru* (*HHS*) 'yellow' ~ OKog *kuər* 'id.' : OJpn *ki, ku- ~ kʊ-* 'id.'

Next, the problem of the OKog dialects, the existence of which was first suggested by Lee (1964, 1983), and their relationship with AKog, is discussed. Some of the differences evident in the OKog material—such as the examples in (3), which show that the dialect in question and Old Japanese are closer to each other in some respects than to the dominant OKog dialect—suggest that one dialect (perhaps introduced into Korea in Antiquity during one of the migrations of peoples related to the Koguryǒ, including the Ye or Ye-Maek) may be even more closely related to Japanese.

(3) a. OKog *kɨr* 'tree, wood' ~ OKog (dial.) *key* 'id.' (*SS*) : OJpn *kɨ ~ ki* 'id.'
    b. OKog *kuərtsi* 'mouth' ~ OKog (dial.) *kʊtsi (SS)* < *kutui 'id.' : OJpn *kuti* < *kutui 'id.'

The sharp contrast between the shared Japanese-Koguryŏ material and Early Middle Korean shown in the examples in (4), though superficially facile, when buttressed with further examples and analysis of shared phonological innovations supports arguments against the Japanese-Korean genetic theory.

(4) a. OKog *puk* 'deep'(*SS*) : OJpn *puka-* 'id.' : EMK *kip^{h}ŭn* (Sasse 1976:138)
   b. OKog *piar* 'level, flat' (*SS*) : OJpn *pira-* 'id.' : EMK *'yŏt^{h}ŏ/nyŏt^{h}ŏ/'yat^{h}ŭn* (Sasse 1976:138)
   c. OKog *tan* 'valley' *(SS)* : OJpn *tani* 'id.' : EMK *kolkŏi* (Sasse 1976:105)

Since new publications in linguistics (Beckwith 2002) and anthropology-archaeology (Nakahashi 1998, Hudson 1999) give powerful arguments against the Japanese-Korean theory, it is suggested that despite important recent contributions to comparative Japanese-Korean historical linguistics (Whitman 1990, Vovin 1995, Unger 2001b) the current divergence or genetic theory must be either rejected and replaced with a convergence theory, or comprehensively revised to explain the Koguryŏ data in a principled way.

Note on Transcription
All unstarred forms cited are reconstructions based on Chinese character transcriptions.

Source Abbreviations
HHS: Hou Han shu; *KS: Koryŏ Sa*; *SKC: San kuo chi*; *SS: Samguk Sagi.*

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