



The Lost Languages of Koguryō

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As the most ancient of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, Koguryō is also the one whose linguistic identity and ethnic connections are the least obvious. Although Koguryō happens to be the kingdom that has come to give the modern international name to Korea, the homeland of ethnic Koreans, surprisingly little can be said of the actual ethnic groups that once lived, and the languages that were spoken, within the territory of Koguryō. General considerations of regional history and areal linguistics nevertheless permit some conjectures which, though they can never be proven, allow Koguryō to be linked with the ethnic history of the surrounding regions, that is, Manchuria, China, and Japan.

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Introductory premises

To approach the question concerning the ethnic and linguistic identity and evolution of Koguryŏ, it is necessary to accept certain general introductory premises without which no further work on the issue would be possible. These include the following:

(1) *Koguryŏ was a multiethnic and multilingual state.* By regional standards, Koguryŏ (1st century BCE to 668 CE)¹ was an exceptionally long-lived, large and mighty state, whose territory extended from the central part of the Korean Peninsula to the core of continental Manchuria.² Importantly, the Koguryŏ territory also comprised the peninsula of Liaodong. In later times, the territory once occupied by Koguryŏ has continuously been inhabited by several ethnic groups, speaking several different

¹ The culturally neutral abbreviations BCE and CE are used here instead of the conventional Western notions BC and AD, which are contextually hardly suitable for discussions of East Asian history.

² For the general interpretation and dating of the political history of early Korea I follow Gardiner (1969) and Ledyard (1975), who convincingly argue against the traditional claim that Silla would have been the oldest of the Three Kingdoms of Korea. By all tokens, both Silla and Paekche were creations of the early 4th century, while Koguryŏ existed several centuries earlier, though it was re-established in the 4th century. The idea proposed by Ledyard (1975: 242) that the mythical founding dates of Silla and Paekche antedate their actual historical formation by six 60-year cycles (360 years) is both brilliant and persuasive, though probably impossible to prove.

languages belonging to several different language families. This is also the situation today, when the one-time Koguryŏ territory is divided between the two Korean states, P.R. China, and the Russian Federation. It may therefore be taken for certain that Koguryŏ, at the time of its existence as a separate kingdom, was both ethnically and linguistically highly diversified. Koguryŏ was never a nation state of some single ethnic group, but an empire-like political entity whose identity was based on regional considerations at the intersection of China, Manchuria, and Korea-Japan. The question as to what language was spoken in Koguryŏ therefore inevitably has no single and simple answer.

(2) *Chinese was used as an imported prestige language.* The only language that is beyond any question documented from the actual chronological and territorial context of Koguryŏ is Chinese. It is well known that immediately before the founding of Koguryŏ, the territory of Koguryŏ was administered as a system of Chinese military commanderies. With the commanderies came considerable numbers of immigrant population, including soldiers, administrators, and merchants. A large part of the immigrant population must have spoken Chinese, which also came to be the principal language of prestige culture and documented literary use in Koguryŏ. Chinese was used as a language of administration and historical records in Koguryŏ, as is most famously illustrated by the stele of Kwanggaet'o (417 CE). Even so, Chinese was an imported language in Koguryŏ, apparently never spoken by the masses native to the region. There is also no reason to assume that Chinese could have been the actual dynastic language of the ruling elite of Koguryŏ. In fact, Chinese was a historical newcomer also in the adjacent territory of the former 'Chinese' state of Yan (11th century BCE to 222 BCE), whose political sphere partly overlapped with that of Koguryŏ, especially as far as the Liaodong peninsula was concerned. However, the territory of Yan was ultimately linguistically Sinicized, and it is possible that parts of the Liaodong Peninsula have been continuously Chinese speaking since the period of the Chinese commanderies. It is even likely that the Chinese language in Liaodong and Korea evolved into distinct local forms, different from those spoken in the political centers of China proper, though the differences were

later extinguished by new waves of immigration.³ In actual Korea, Chinese as a spoken language may have disappeared by the beginning of the Unified Silla (668 CE).

(3) *Korean was originally the language of Silla.* The fact that Korean or, more exactly, the immediate ancestor of the Old Korean predecessor of Middle Korean, spread from the territory of the Silla Kingdom, is now more or less generally accepted, although there is disagreement concerning the dating of this linguistic expansion. However, the very circumstance that Korea in the Three Kingdoms period was politically divided into three separate states speaks for the assumption that there were also at least three languages on the peninsula. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is therefore natural to assume that the linguistic unification of Korea was a direct result of the political unification under the Unified Silla. This is also suggested by the remarkable dialectal homogeneity and, hence, shallow depth of Modern Korean.⁴ In Silla, Korean appears to have been relatively indigenous, and the language is likely to have represented an old local continuum from at least the time of the Chinhan tribal union (1st to 3rd centuries CE), on which Silla was based. Just how long before that time the lineage of Korean was present in the Silla territory, is impossible to tell, but there are reasons to assume that of all known languages spoken in Korea, Korean may, indeed, have the most ancient local roots. Geographically, Silla (in the southeast) represented a *cul-de-sac* on the Korean Peninsula, and any linguistic expansions to the peninsula would have introduced new languages

³ In his important book on Koguryō, Beckwith (2004: 93-105) attempts a reconstruction of what he calls 'Archaic Northeastern Middle Chinese', which would have been the dominant variety of Chinese spoken in the region at the time of the compilation of the original sources of the *Samguk Sagi*, that is, in the early period of the Unified Silla (7th to 9th centuries CE). While the postulation of such a form of local Chinese is perfectly justified, the question as to how this variety should be reconstructed, and to what extent it can be reconstructed, remains, of course, to be discussed.

⁴ The assumption by Vovin (in this volume) that the linguistic unification of Korea would have been completed already before the Three Kingdoms period seems difficult to reconcile with the historical and linguistic realities. It goes without saying, however, that the early Korean language must have involved at least some degree of internal variation, and this variation was extinguished by the Silla expansion. This interpretation leaves open the possibility that even Old Korean and Middle Korean may have represented two parallel (though closely-related) lineages of early Korean (Koreanic).

from the north and west, pushing relatively older languages towards the southeast, the territory of Silla.

(4) *The language of Paekche was Para-Japonic.* In view of the likelihood that not only Koguryō but also Silla and Paekche were multiethnic and multilingual entities, the linguistic expansion of Korean must have resulted in the replacement of an unknown number of local languages all over the Korean Peninsula. This process of linguistic assimilation may well have been anticipated by the presence of Korean-speaking individuals and communities in some parts of Paekche and Koguryō even before the unification under Silla, for the state borders between the Three Kingdoms are likely to have been rather loose and did not necessarily coincide with any exactitude with ethnic and linguistic boundaries. In particular, there is evidence of ‘bilingualism’ in Paekche, suggesting that part of the Paekche population may actually have spoken contemporary forms of Korean, while another part spoke the Paekche dynastic language, as used by the ruling elite of the kingdom.⁵ Most importantly, it seems possible to identify this other language with the language underlying the so-called Old Koguryō toponyms, recorded mainly from central Korea in the late Three Kingdoms period. It has now been unrefutably confirmed that the language of these toponyms represents a form of speech closely but collaterally related to the Japonic languages (Japanese-Ryukyu), as spoken on the Japanese Islands. In view of this collateral relationship, the peninsular language in question cannot be identified as Japonic in the strict sense, but, rather, as *Para-Japonic*.⁶ Para-Japonic is, in

⁵ The idea of Paekche ‘bilingualism’ was launched by Kōno (1987), though he speaks somewhat misleadingly of the ‘bilingualism’ of the Paekche *language*. On the language of Paekche, cf. also Toh Soo-hee (1986).

⁶ The excellent philological treatment of the ‘Old Koguryō’ toponymic corpus by Beckwith (2004) leaves no longer any doubt about the genetic identity of the underlying language. Beckwith’s proposal to call the language family by the name ‘Japanese-Koguryōic’ is, however, less lucky and can hardly be recommended for general use. Since Japonic (Japanese-Ryukyu) will always remain the better documented part of the family, any extinct language collaterally related to Japonic is certainly better identified as *Para-Japonic*, a term introduced (in the shape *Para-Japanic*) in Janhunen (1996: 204). Strictly speaking we will never know how diversified Para-Japonic was, for it may have comprised several distinct languages. The situation is reminiscent of other language families with lost but historically documented collateral branches, such as the case of Mongolic and Para-Mongolic (i.e.

fact, the only other linguistic entity apart from Korean and Chinese that is documented from protohistorical Korea. The presence of Para-Japonic in Paekche is perfectly congruent with the archaeological and historical evidence suggesting that the immediate origins of early Japanese culture and statehood (Yamato) were located in Paekche (Kudara).⁷ All of this also confirms the conventional assumption that the Japonic language family entered the Japanese Islands from the southern part of the Korean Peninsula in connection with the expansion of the late bronze age Yayoi Culture (from the 4th century BCE or earlier).

So far for the premises. The identification of the dynastic languages of Silla and Paekche as (Ancient) Korean and Para-Japonic, respectively, does not, however, provide an immediate answer to the question as to what language had a dynastic status in Koguryō, and what other languages were spoken in this kingdom. This question should, in the first place, be dealt with against the background of the general ethnic and linguistic history of southern and central Manchuria. It happens that there are as many as three concretely identifiable and still extant language families whose homelands seem to have been located in this very region, either within or adjacent to the territory of Koguryō, in what might also be called the Koguryō sphere. The three language families are Mongolic, Tungusic, and Amuric.

The languages of the Koguryō sphere

The original boundary between Mongolic and Tungusic seems to have run along the Liao basin, with Mongolic being spoken to the west and Tungusic to the east of the river. The historical states based in Liaoxi, starting with the

Khitan and other Khitanic languages).

⁷ The role of Paekche in the formation of Japan as a political entity has been stressed by several Korean scholars, notably Hong Wontack (1994). The evidence typically quoted in this context comprises historical, philological, archaeological, and ethnological facts, but, curiously, there is no direct mention of the linguistic dimension of the question. The location of the immediate geographical origins of Japonic in Korea is an issue which many Korean and Japanese scholars are apparently still reluctant to discuss in open terms due to the possibility of political misinterpretation.

Northern Wei of the Tabghach (386-534) and ending with the Liao of the Khitan (907-1125) were documentably dominated by populations speaking Mongolic (or, more specifically, Para-Mongolic) languages. The language of the historical Mongols in western Manchuria and eastern Mongolia is best seen as a northern offshoot of the Mongolic language family from its Liaoxi homeland. All the Mongolic-related ethnic groups were known to the early Chinese by the generic name Xianbei, which may, course, also have comprised non-Mongolic-speaking populations.⁸

It is more difficult to present an unambiguous lineage for Tungusic speakers, but possible clues are provided by the ethnonymic link that may exist between the documentably Tungusic Jurchen of the Jin dynasty (1115-1234) in southern and central Manchuria and the earlier Sushen (3rd to 6th centuries CE) in the same region. This ethnonymic link might also comprise the so-called Wiman Chosŏn tribal state in southern Manchuria and northern Korea (2nd century BCE), which is often regarded as a predecessor to Koguryŏ prior to the founding of the Chinese commanderies. Another ethnonymic link connects the protohistorical Mohe, one of the population sections of Koguryŏ, with the kingdom of Parhae(Bohai) (698-926) in northern Korea and eastern Manchuria, which may be seen as a direct successor state to Koguryŏ and a predecessor to the Jin of the Jurchen.⁹ In broad outlines, the areal history of the Tungusic language family parallels that of Mongolic. In the Tungusic case there was a northward expansion along the

⁸ While the Para-Mongolic identity of the Khitan language has been fully confirmed by the recent progress made in the decipherment of the Khitan scripts, the scarce database preserved of the language of the Tabghach has been interpreted in a variety of ways in the past. Conclusive arguments in favour of a Mongolic connection of the Tabghach language were, however, presented already by Ligeti (1970), who also emphasizes the Xianbei connection of the Tabghach.

⁹ It has to be noted that the mentioned ethnonymic links are not perfect. For a recent discussion of the etymological problems of the Chosŏn-Sushen-Jurchen complex, cf. Janhunen (2004); for a source-based survey of the Mohe-Parhae issue, cf. Reckel (1995: 18-199). The question concerning the exact nature of the continuity from Koguryŏ to Parhae would certainly deserve more research. In any case, the traditional Korean view, according to which Koguryŏ was a purely 'Korean' kingdom, while Parhae was basically a 'Manchurian' entity, is poorly motivated. From the Korean point of view, it would be more correct to say that the Three Kingdoms period was followed by a Two Kingdoms period, during which the two actors on the Korean scene were Parhae and the Unified Silla, as already proposed in Janhunen (1996: 151).

Sungari-Amur basin, which resulted in the formation of the so-called Amur Tungusic and Northern Tungusic subgroups, of which the Northern Tungusic subgroup subsequently spread from the Middle Amur region even further northwards, ultimately covering almost all of Siberia. In spite of its great geographical extension, the Northern Tungusic expansion was by all tokens a secondary and very late phenomenon (probably starting only in the early 2nd millennium CE).¹⁰

This means that the Liao basin very probably already in Koguryō times corresponded to the borderline between Mongolic and Tungusic, two language families that have interacted in the region for millennia, and which both produced expansive offshoots towards the north. Liaoxi was never a part of Koguryō, whereas Liaodong formed an integral part of the Yan state, which also comprised Liaoxi and northeastern China proper. The Yan state anticipated territorially Northern Wei and Liao in the western half of southern Manchuria, and it must have comprised Mongolic speakers, possibly even as the dominant ethnolinguistic element. On the other hand, in the eastern half of southern Manchuria, Koguryō was followed by Parhae and Jin, both of which were quite certainly dominated by Tungusic speakers.

In this historical context, the role of the Liaodong Peninsula emerges as crucial. Since it was successively a part of both Yan and Koguryō, and later of both Liao and Jin, while it never belonged to either Northern Wei or Parhae, it is difficult to determine what the linguistic identity of its pre-Chinese population may have been. In principle, both Mongolic and Tungusic can have been spoken in Liaodong, either contemporaneously or successively, but it is also possible that the peninsula originally had another language that was neither Mongolic nor Tungusic, nor, of course, Chinese. However this may have been, it is likely that the language once spoken in Liaodong had an impact on the formation of the linguistic situation of Koguryō and, in particular, on the choice of the dynastic language of the kingdom. From this point of view, it may be concluded that the dynastic language of Koguryō can have been either Mongolic or Tungusic, or something else.

¹⁰ The argumentation here follows the lines presented in more detail in Janhunen (1996: 167-172 and *passim*).

When it comes to the non-Mongolic and non-Tungusic alternative, a possibility is offered by Amuric, a small language family today represented by the single isolate language Ghilyak (*Nivkh*), spoken in the Amur Delta region (Amur Ghilyak) and on northern Sakhalin (Sakhalin Ghilyak). Historically, Ghilyak is a typical example of areal marginalization. There is no doubt that the language family was originally centered far to the south of its present location, probably in central or southern Manchuria. Apart from its geographical relocation, Ghilyak has also undergone a process of typological reorientation, which has made it structurally relatively different from the Altaic typology otherwise prevalent in Manchuria. Assuming that the Amuric family in Koguryŏ times was still located in central or southern Manchuria, its original structural orientation is likely to have been closer to the Altaic type. However, even in its present form, Ghilyak shows many diagnostic areal features, including vowel rotation and nominal classifiers, shared by both Korean and other languages of Greater Manchuria.¹¹

One specific political context with which the Amuric language family could be tentatively linked is offered by the vaguely documented tribal state of Puyŏ (*Fuyu*), once centered in the region between the Liao and Sungari basins. On the ethnic map of protohistorical Manchuria, Puyŏ remains an odd entity which cannot immediately be connected with the presumable lineages of Mongolic and Tungusic speakers. The role of Puyŏ 'horseriders' in the history of Koguryŏ, Paekche, and even Japan (Yamato), has long been a matter of debate with no conclusion in sight, but the one thing certain is that the Puyŏ tribes were at times powerful enough to play a political role independent from Koguryŏ. The information that Puyŏ would have invaded its southern neighbours, or influenced their dynastic history should not, however, be taken at face value.¹² There is even less reason to believe that

¹¹ The issue of vowel rotation (verticalization of palato-velar vowel harmony) has been much debated in Korean linguistics, but it seems impossible to deny the presence of the phenomenon in Korean. For the general areal background I can only refer to Hattori (1979) and Janhunen (1981).

¹² The foundation myths discussed in this connection by, for instance, Beckwith (2004: 29-32 and *passim*) should be taken for what they are—folklore. They may well reflect ancient political and cultural power relationships, but they have most probably nothing to do with actual ethnic identity issues, and even less with the linguistic origins and connections of any of the peoples and populations

the diffuse suggestions of Chinese historical sources concerning a linguistic ‘identity’ between Puyō and Koguryō should be taken seriously. However, Puyō must have had a single dynastic language, and this language was most likely different from the dynastic languages of the neighbouring states.

The assumption that the Puyō dynastic language was Amuric will, of course, always remain at the level of a hypothesis. The most notable circumstance in this context is that Ghilyak, in its historically attested forms, has items of cultural vocabulary that are not shared with, and apparently not borrowed from, any of the other known languages of the region. A language spoken in historical times by a tiny population (today less than 5,000) of culturally ‘primitive’ fishermen and sea mammal hunters, Ghilyak surprisingly has native items for, for instance, metal names such as ‘iron’ (*wat~wec*) and ‘silver’ (*dota*). This means that some of the vocabulary items conventionally assumed to be Tungusic loanwords in Ghilyak may actually be Amuric loanwords in Tungusic. Some of these items are specifically shared with only the Jurchenic (Jurchen-Manchu) and Amur Tungusic subgroups of Tungusic, such as, for instance, the words for ‘gold’ (Ghilyak *ays/ng* < **aysVn* = Manchu *aisin*), ‘pig’ (Ghilyak *olghong* < **ulgVn* = Manchu *ulgiyan*), and ‘hundred’ (Ghilyak *ny-rhangq* < **-tangkv* = Manchu *tanggû*).¹³ It thus appears plausible that Ghilyak is the last remnant of a language of ‘higher’ culture that was once spoken in central or southern Manchuria.

The routes of the Japonic expansion

A temporary conclusion of the preceding discussion is that we can list as many as six languages or language families in Korea and southern

concerned. The terms ‘Puyō-Koguryō’ and ‘Puyō-Koguryōic’, as used by Beckwith (2004: 33-38), are therefore not only premature but also void of any verifiable substance.

¹³ The important and promising field of lexical parallels between Amuric and Tungusic is seriously underexplored, the main works still being those by Kreinovich (1955) and Panfilov (1973). It goes without saying that there are also actual Tungusic loanwords in Ghilyak, but an analysis of the layers and directions of borrowing remains to be carried out. An ingenious starting point for this work is offered by the series of papers by Robert Austerlitz on Ghilyak internal reconstruction, initiated with Austerlitz (1981). On the Ghilyak metal names, cf. Austerlitz (1984).

Manchuria in Koguryŏ times: Chinese (Sinitic), Korean (Koreanic), Japonic (Para-Japonic), Mongolic (with Para-Mongolic), Tungusic, and Amuric. With good reason we can place Korean in southeastern Korea, Japonic in southwestern Korea, Mongolic in the western half of southern Manchuria, Tungusic in the eastern half of southern Manchuria, Amuric somewhere to the north of Mongolic and Tungusic, and Chinese all over the region as the language of a cultural superstratum. If any one of these languages was the dynastic language of Koguryŏ, the most likely candidate would seem to be Tungusic, for the other languages concerned were all connected with other political entities and historical lineages: Korean with Silla, Japonic with Paekche, Mongolic with Yan and its successor states in Liaoxi, Amuric possibly with Puyŏ, and Chinese with the military commanderies in the region.

There is, however, a persistent conception that the dynastic language of Koguryŏ was, after all Japonic (Para-Japonic). This conception is primarily connected with the identification of the 'Old Koguryŏ' toponyms of Korea with the state of Koguryŏ.¹⁴ However, it has been noted long ago that, in reality, the principal territory of the toponymic corpus is located in central Korea, in an area that was only secondarily transferred from Paekche to Koguryŏ. It is therefore more likely that the toponyms basically represent the language of Paekche, rather than the language of Koguryŏ. This is also more congruent with the presumable linguistic history of the Korean Peninsula. Assuming that the one-time Para-Japonic-speaking population of Paekche was gradually covered by the Korean language expanding from Silla, it is natural that the last remnant islets of Para-Japonic speakers would have remained exactly in the territory of the toponymic corpus, that is, in the former borderland between Paekche and Koguryŏ, a region that was located sufficiently far from the political power centers of both Paekche and Koguryŏ. At this time, the rest of the former Paekche territory may already have been predominantly Korean speaking, while a major part of the former

¹⁴ The most important advocate of the Para-Japonic identification of the dynastic language of Koguryŏ is now Beckwith (2004). The following discussion will therefore focus on countering some of his arguments.

Koguryō territory, never conquered by Silla, would have retained the original linguistic profile of Koguryō.

Another circumstance to be considered in this context is that Korean and Japanese, even in their modern forms, constitute a bilateral *Sprachbund*, in which the two languages are more or less isomorphic (earlier possibly also isophonic). Since this structural parallelism cannot be explained by contacts across the Korea Strait, its most likely explanation is that the underlying linguistic interaction took place at a time when Japonic (Para-Japonic) was still spoken in parts of Korea. In other words, Korean has a Japonic (Para-Japonic) substratum. At the same time, Japonic has a Korean adstratum as a reminiscence from its coexistence with Korean (Koreanic) on the Korean Peninsula.¹⁵ The bilateral relationship of Korean and Japanese is very special even in the larger context of the so-called Altaic (or Ural-Altaic) typological sphere, and it is best explained by assuming profound linguistic interaction in the Silla-Paekche area of southern Korea.¹⁶ There is no specific information suggesting that similar interaction took place in the territory of Koguryō. The Jurchen-Manchu language, historically spoken in the northern part of former Koguryō, is, of course, typologically close to both Korean and Japanese, but this closeness is of a less specific kind.

On the other hand, it seems difficult to deny that a small number of Para-Japonic toponyms is attested from the original Koguryō territory, including the area north of the Amnok(Yalu) River. It is, however, not a question of the entire northern part of Koguryō but, rather, of the coastal belt comprising northwestern Korea and parts of the Liaodong Peninsula. Unfortunately, this small corpus¹⁷ does not contain some of the most diag-

¹⁵ On the contextual background of the Koro-Japonic *Sprachbund*, cf. Janhunen (1999). It may be noted that the convergence of Korean (Koreanic) and Japanese (Japonic) also belongs to the issues that are difficult to deal with in the national frameworks of Korean and Japanese scholarship. As an alternative, many scholars therefore still turn to the Altaic Hypothesis, which ‘allows’ the structural parallelism to be explained as a result of divergence. Unfortunately, the divergent explanation is incorrect in this case, as is also pointed out by Beckwith (2004: 164-183).

¹⁶ I am not going here into the special problematics connected with the Kaya League (Mimana) in the coastal borderzone of Silla and Paekche, which, in the absence of any other obvious alternative, is also likely to have been Japonic speaking. Possibly, Kaya should be seen more as a political than as an ethnic phenomenon, but its position in protohistorical Korea is still in many respects enigmatic.

¹⁷ The corpus is presented by Beckwith (2004: 89-92), who lists 8 “unsundered cities,” 3

nostic Para-Japonic elements with unquestionable Japonic cognates (such as numerals). Some of the words occurring in the toponyms, like the item for 'city' (roughly **kur*), may also represent regional cultural vocabulary, which, even if it ultimately were of a Japonic (Para-Japonic) origin, can have been current in many languages. Even so, the possibility cannot be ruled out that the typonymic corpus implies the presence of at least some Para-Japonic-speaking communities in the western coastal parts of Koguryŏ. It is another matter what the correct ethnohistorical explanation of this situation should be.

The problem is connected with the routes by which the Japonic language family moved on the continent towards the Japanese Islands. It is now increasingly commonly recognized that Japonic, unlike Korean, was not native to Korea, but had relatively recently arrived to the peninsula from continental China, where its most immediate source region would seem to have been the Shandong Peninsula. However, Shandong was probably not the 'original' homeland of Japonic, either, for the typological features reconstructable for Pre-Proto-Japonic suggest a non-Altaic-type language with areal connections further to the south. It is therefore plausible to assume that Japonic was once located somewhere on the southeastern coast of China, perhaps in the Yangtse basin, from where the linguistic lineage moved northwards along the coast.¹⁸ The crucial question is how Japonic reached the Korean Peninsula. There seem to be four possible models of explanation:

(a) *The sea route from Shandong to Korea.* In this model, Japonic would have arrived directly by the sea route from Shandong. The sea route in question has obviously long been used for both commerce and warfare, as well as

"surrendered cities," 5 "renegade cities," and 2 "captured cities" north of the Amnok River having names with possible Para-Japonic elements.

¹⁸ This scenario, proposed in Janhunen (1997), is accepted by Beckwith (2004), who has also postulated lexical parallels between Japonic and southern continental languages, notably "Tibeto-Burman." An alternative framework of a similar type is being developed by Alexander Vovin (personal communication). So far, the etymological evidence is hardly binding, but the typological implications have an independent diagnostic value even if no material parallels were ever found.

for human migrations. Considering that the expansion from southern Korea to Japan (in the Yayoi period) also took place by sea, there should have been no technical problems for a sufficiently large number of people to move from Shandong to Korea (slightly before the Yayoi period) and to start a viable speech community there. As always, the expansion of the language would also have taken place by way of language shift, which means that the volume of the primary migration need not have been particularly large. Obviously, the language gained its position due to the cultural (including social, economic, and military) superiority of its speakers. Assuming that Japonic had thus arrived in what later came to be Paekche, the language could well have started an expansion not only eastwards to the Japanese Islands, but also northwards along the western coast of Korea. This expansion could then explain the Para-Japonic toponyms in Koguryō.¹⁹

(b) *The sea route from Shandong to Liaodong to Korea.* While the previous model brings Japonic directly from Shandong to the subsequent Paekche territory in southwestern Korea and only then to Koguryō, it is also possible that the primary migration was directed from Shandong to Liaodong, that is, to a part of the subsequent Koguryō territory. The distance from northern Shandong to the tip of Liaodong is slightly shorter than from Shandong to Korea, and this sea route has also been in active use since ancient times. From Liaodong, Japonic could have spread either directly by sea or along the coastal belt of western Korea to the subsequent territory of Paekche, and only then further to the Japanese Islands. This does not mean, however, that the whole extension of this route at any one time would necessarily have been simultaneously Japonic speaking, for the language could have disappeared at the one end while it was still advancing at the other end.

(c) *The land route from Shandong to Liaodong.* A variant of the previous model, this explanation implies that the Japonic expansion from China to

¹⁹ A preliminary simplified version of this model, without consideration of the possibility of a secondary northward expansion of Japonic (Para-Japonic) along the western coast of Korea, was first proposed in Janhunen (1996: 230-231).

Korea took place all the way along the coast, without the seaways being involved to any significant degree. This model would bring Japonic from Shandong first to Liaoxi, a part of the Yan state, and only then further to Liaodong, also a part of Yan, as well as Korea, including both Koguryō and Paekche. Assuming that the preceding expansion of Japonic from the south to Shandong had followed the coastal land route, it would not appear impossible that the same basic method of expansion continued also north of Shandong. On the other hand, the Japonic expansion involved a random process, rather than a consciously planned operation, which is why the methods and principles of expansion need not have remained the same all the time.

(d) *Separate routes to Liaodong and Japan.* While in the previous three models it is presupposed that there was only a single primary expansion, which spread Japonic from Shandong to Korea, either directly (a), via Liaodong (b), or also via Liaoxi (c), it is, in principle, possible to postulate a more complex mechanism with two separate movements. In this case, one movement would have brought Japonic from Shandong to Liaoxi (Yan) and/or Liaodong (Koguryō), and another from Shandong via southern Korea (Paekche) to Japan (Yamato). This would imply that the 'Old Koguryō' toponyms represent a Para-Japonic idiom that separated from the lineage of Japonic (proper) already on the Chinese continent. It is, however, not immediately clear whether the 'Old Koguryō' corpus should in this case be understood as representing the northern lineage (Koguryō) or the southern one (Paekche).²⁰

There is perhaps no need for the time being to take a definitive stand either against or in favour of any of the four alternative models, for they are, after all, relatively close to each other. It is basically a question of how large the

²⁰ This is the preferred model of Beckwith (2004: 241-249 and *passim*), who seems to assume that the Yayoi migration was not directly connected with any of the Korean states or their predecessors. Rather, the Yayoi migration would only minimally have touched Korea on its way from China to Japan (northern Kyushu). Since the Yayoi population would also not have left any remnant Japonic or Para-Japonic speakers in Korea, the total attested Para-Japonic corpus would represent the language of Koguryō and its offshoots elsewhere in Korea.

area covered by Japonic and Para-Japonic was in Korea and adjacent regions. In the maximal case (c-d), Japonic and/or Para-Japonic would have been present, though not necessarily simultaneously, all over the Yellow Sea coast from Shandong to Liaoxi to Liadong to Korea to Japan. In the minimal case (a), only Shandong and the southwestern part of Korea would ever have been covered by Japonic on its way towards the Japanese Islands. From the point of view of simplicity, the minimal model (a) is to be preferred to the maximal model (c-d), but the truth may also lie between these extremities (b). One source of information that may shed light on the question in the future is archaeology, but we should not be too optimistic about the possibilities of archaeology to solve questions that basically belong to the realm of linguistics.

It has to be noted that the presence of Para-Japonic toponyms in what seems to be have been original Koguryō territory does not necessarily mean that Para-Japonic was also the dynastic language of Koguryō. Koguryō may, however, have been a region where Japonic and/or Para-Japonic contacted with the other languages of southern Manchuria, and traces of these contacts may still be preserved in the Japanese language. Probable cultural loanwords from Manchurian languages into Japanese include, for instance, the items for ‘shoe’ (*kutu* = Mongolic **gutu.l*), ‘soup’ (*siru* = Mongolic **silō*), ‘barley’ (*mugi* = Manchu *muji*), and ‘seven’ (*nana* = Tungusic **nada/n*).²¹ Irrespective of which model is adopted to explain the Japonic expansion, the only route by which these words can have reached Japanese is along the western coast of Korea. Most probably, the loan contacts took place at a time when the lineage of Japonic was still present in Korea. Of course, there was also a period, several centuries long, when mutually intelligible forms of Japonic were spoken on both sides of the Korea Strait. In this period, which must have lasted till the Kofun period of Japan (4th to 6th centuries CE), loanwords can have passed also from Manchuria to Korea to Japan.²²

²¹ The item for ‘seven’ is also discussed by Beckwith (2004: 180-181), who is sceptical of the etymological connection, though he correctly mentions that items for ‘seven’ have been borrowed all over Eurasia.

Concluding remarks

Of the six known linguistic lineages present in the Koguryŏ sphere, only Chinese and Korean cannot with any likelihood be connected with the dynastic language of the kingdom. Of the others, Mongolic and Amuric also seem to have been more marginal to Koguryŏ than Tungusic and Para-Japonic. The Tungusic identification is supported by the fact that most of the Koguryŏ territory later emerges as Tungusic (Jurchenic) speaking, and there is no evidence suggesting of any major Tungusic expansion in the region after the Koguryŏ period. In any case, a large section of the population once governed by Koguryŏ must have been linguistically Tungusic. However, one important issue that can never be approached with any exactitude is the factor of linguistic extinction. Most likely, the language density of Korea and adjacent regions has been consistently declining during the last several millennia. The original diversity must have been far greater than that suggested by just the six lineages identifiable in the region today. It can therefore never be ruled out that the dynastic language of Koguryŏ was, after all, one of these subsequently extinct languages, whose name is perhaps still preserved in the variety of ancient ethnonyms recorded in Chinese sources.²³

It is also a question of what the role of a dynastic language was in early Korea and Manchuria. If a dynastic language was something spoken only by a tiny ruling elite (the ruling house), possibly an elite specially invited or accepted from a neighbouring country, as is often the case, the whole ques-

²² It is important to note that credible Manchurian etymologies datable to the Three Kingdoms period or earlier have so far been found specifically in Japanese, rather than Korean. This is congruent with the situation that Korean was long confined to the relatively isolated southeastern corner of the peninsula, while the main route of cultural influences passed along the western coast. More intensive contacts between Korean and Manchurian languages (Jurchen and, later, Middle Mongol) were initiated only in the Koryŏ period (from the 10th century CE), cf. also Lee (1958).

²³ On the problems of connecting ancient ethnonyms with modern linguistic lineages, cf. Janhunen (1996: 235-236). Beckwith (2004: 44-45 and *passim*) nevertheless feels able to regard the ancient ethnonyms Ye and Maek of the Korean-Manchurian borderline as "more or less the same" as Koguryŏ. Even if the relevant Chinese sources may suggest so, it is more likely that different ethnonyms imply ethnic differences. We simply do not know what the ethnic and linguistic identity of the Ye Maek was, but it was very probably in some way distinct in the Koguryŏ context.

tion concerning the dynastic language of Koguryō would not have much ethnohistorical significance. Such dynastic languages would, however, not have survived long. More likely, a dynastic language was an idiom relatively widely used in administrative, economic, and military contexts. In the Koguryō case, it is reasonable to assume that the dynastic language was supported by a considerable proportion of the local population. However, considering that the political weight of Koguryō was biased towards the south and west, its dynastic language may well have been an idiom spoken specifically in the coastal zone extending from Liaodong to northwestern Korea.

This makes the assumption of a Para-Japonic dynastic language for Koguryō appear somewhat more plausible than it otherwise would. Japonic was, after all, the dominant language of Paekche, which was located in the southern part of the same western coastal zone of Korea of which Koguryō dominated the northern part. The cultural and political links of Koguryō and Paekche are undeniable historical facts, and they could well have been supported by a linguistic link, as well. The main weakness of this scenario is that it is, then, difficult to understand why Koguryō and Paekche would at all have been separate states, if they were dominated by the same linguistic group with a similar cultural profile. While it may be taken for certain that there were Para-Japonic speakers in those (southern) parts of Koguryō that had once belonged to Paekche, the assumption that Para-Japonic also had played a dominant role in the rest of Koguryō since the time of its founding is considerably less well argued.²⁴

Also, the mere assumption of a linguistic unity or affinity between Paekche and Koguryō does not give an answer to the question as to which of the two kingdoms would territorially first have been embraced by the

²⁴ It is a considerable merit of Beckwith (2004) that he has demonstrated the potential relevance of Para-Japonic for Koguryō. Even so, the greatest merit of his book lies in the philological analysis, which should leave no competent linguist uncertain about the fact that there *was* such a thing as Para-Japonic or 'Koguryōic', spoken in parts of Korea. This is an important message that should no longer be ignored in any serious study of Japanese and Korean linguistic prehistory. At the same time, Beckwith's critique of the Altaic Hypothesis is justified, and it can only be hoped that the practice of comparative linguistics in both Korea and Japan can ultimately liberate itself of the antiquated paradigms of distant genetic comparisons.

Japonic or Para-Japonic language (or languages). An expansion from the south (Paekche) towards the north (Koguryŏ) would certainly be relatively easy to place in the context of what is otherwise known of the ethnic and linguistic history of Greater Manchuria. An expansion from the north (Koguryŏ) towards the south (Paekche) would, on the other hand, imply that Japonic or Para-Japonic was once the dominant language all over the Liaoxi and Liaodong region (the Yan state area).²⁵ This is a framework for which more linguistic and extralinguistic evidence would have to be presented before it can be accepted as a convincing alternative. Meanwhile, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to conclude that the likeliest candidate for the dominant and, hence, dynastic language of Koguryŏ still remains Tungusic.

²⁵ However this may have been, Beckwith (2004: 37-40) goes clearly too far when he assumes that the Para-Japonic linguistic sphere also comprised Puyŏ in the context of 'Puyŏ-Koguryŏic'. The etymology of 'Puyŏ' proposed by Beckwith (2004: 53 note 11) is hardly decisive in this context. Geographically, Puyŏ was an entity whose territory extended far to the heart of Manchuria in the Sungari basin, a region certainly dominated by ethnic groups other than Para-Japonic speakers. The more moderate assumption that only the ruling elite of Puyŏ would have been Para-Japonic speaking would, on the other hand, be ethnohistorically inconclusive.

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