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The language of the Koguryo state: A critical reexamination

The inspiration for this article was a rather well-known book titled *Koguryo: The Language of Japan's Continental Relatives* by Christopher I. Beckwith. This work on the nature of the language of Koguryo and its relation to Japanese contained interesting ideas, but some parts of it, especially the used methodology and the conclusions drawn about the ethnic origins of the Japanese people, appeared to be flawed in some aspects. This spurred a search for more information of this topic and eventually lead to this paper where the existing research on the Koguryo language and the extant material itself will be examined.

The language of Koguryo, a state situated in the north of the Korean peninsula (37BC-668AD), has received attention of various scholars of different nationalities in the last 100 years. What makes it intriguing is that it is an ancient language sharing similarities to Old Japanese according to some scholars, to others to Altaic languages in general and also, of course, to Korean. The basic problem when analyzing such relationships is that this language is badly attested, most of the lexis stems from the famous Korean chronicle Samguk Sagi written in the 12th century. Samguk Sagi is supposed to have taken its material from older chronicles, and the part most interesting to us are the chapters on geography which mostly focus on the old toponyms used before the reforms of the 7th century when the old place-names were replaced by new Chinese names. The names are written first phonetically in Chinese characters and then a Chinese equivalent is attached to them. That poses another problem: The correct phonetic value of the Chinese characters at the time they were added to the indigenous name. This is, of course, again complicated by that the phonetic transcription can differ in date and source. Some have attempted a complex analysis, but were widely criticized for it (like aforementioned Beckwith, 2004). The aim of this article is to reinterpret this data and to analyze it in relation especially to the Japonic languages. The author of this paper does not claim to have anything more than a basic knowledge of the Korean language so this side of the matter will be left to the ones better equipped for it. This question is, of course, inherently laden with political booby traps because it has been manipulated with by various nationalists on both sides of the Tsushima strait. Nevertheless, this paper is an attempt to look

into the matter without any preconceptions. It should be taken as it is: As a linguistically based analysis focused on the extant data.

Another problem is the tendency to conflate the ancestors of Koguryo and Japanese people with various archeological cultures. This is a logical fallacy typical of many who try to push a nationalist agenda or just want to come up with a new theory. The facts are that we do not have any data that would allow us to connect older archeological cultures to the later (still hypothetical) Koguryo-Japanese people. (The shared material culture does not necessarily mean shared identity or language. By the same logic we would be all members of the: "Jeans-McDonald's culture" and we would all be speaking "American.")

Of course, through the whole paper we will be touching the question of the Altaic theory, as it tries to connect most of the languages spoken in the northeastern Asia at this time. This paper will leave the question whether this theory is correct or not unanswered as answering it demands a great amount of research and critical examination it does not always receive. Some scholars are too fast to reject it, and some are too fast to defend it. However, it is very hard to deny that the languages customarily grouped into the Altaic family (Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic, Korean, and Japanese) are very similar structurally. Such similarities can be essentially caused by two things: 1) Genetic relationship

2) Close and prolonged contact.

Genetic relationship is self-explanatory, but let us look at the theory of contact. For such a wide ranging conversion to happen, this had to be a very intensive or a very, very long contact. And for it to happen, space is required. In other words, speakers of those languages have to live very close to each other. In such a case we have to ask: Where did this contact happen? Either way it would require proto-Japanese, proto-Korean, proto-Tungusic and so on being situated somewhere close to each other, and as it surely did not happen in the Japanese archipelago, it had to happen somewhere on the continent. Korean peninsula is the closest to Japan so it would be the logical place for the Japonic speakers to pass through.

What is interesting is the approach of Beckwith, as he agrees that the Koguryo language is related to Japanese, but he is strictly opposed to the Altaic theory! Still, the need of a language family in the northern East Asia is quite evident. We have many languages that share structural similarities, but the linguists still have not agreed on a solution. The main problem is the lack of lexical cognates, proponents of the Altaic theory argue that the Altaic family is older than the Indo-European and the Finnougric, and therefore it is harder to find extant cognates, and instead they focus on the

grammatical similarities and on the verb morphology. (Starostin, 2003, p. 235). Their opponents argue that it is a result of parallel development caused by proximity, in other words that these languages form a Sprachbund. Some actually discount even that (Beckwith, 2004), but then we would be left with many languages sharing key features for no apparent reason.

The theory that Koguryo is related to the Japonic languages is not the only one that has been proposed. There is also a theory that Silla, Koguryo and Paekche shared the same language which was nothing else than Old Korean. Vovin in his article `Koguryo and Paekche: Different Languages or Dialects of Korean?` tries to defend this theory based on an analysis of the borrowings from Korean in Jurchen and Manchu, old Korean poems and textual evidence from words he considers to be borrowed from Paekche to Old Western Japanese. Some of his arguments could be considered valid, some could be disproved. It appears that there are indeed words and grammatical characteristics borrowed from Korean to Jurchen/Manchu, but Vovin does not account for the fact that this contact did not necessarily have to take place directly in the kingdom of Koguryo. Jurchen is essentially first attested in the second half of the 12th century. Even if we discount the theory that Koguryo was Korean, there are still almost 5 centuries during which speakers of Jurchen and Korean probably shared a common border. His evidence for Paekche language being Korean based on one *hyangga[1]* poem seems a bit anecdotal. The poem was supposed to be written by a man from Paekche who came to Silla to see a beautiful princess. From that Vovin takes that this man and the locals could communicate, and therefore people in Paekche did speak a dialect of old Korean. However, there is no reason why that man from Paekche could not have learned Korean as his second language, or even more probably, he did not actually compose this poem. The most valid is Vovin's critique of the Paekche lexis in Japanese based on the lack of said words in Ryukyuan. However this already concerns Paekche after it was forced to move south from its original land. Therefore his theory that the Para-Japonic language attested in Samguk Sagi was at that time already a vanishing substrate language is possible, but again not proven.

There are also arguments that the language attested in Samguk Sagi is not in fact a single language but a whole mix of languages. As Koguryo was most probably not a single ethnic unity, there were many peoples living in its borders. Some of them must have been speakers of various Tungusic

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1   An old Korean poem.

languages (tribes as Mohe), or Chinese, or maybe of some languages that vanished in the process of history. That is the problem with such ancient multi-ethnic empires.

Some Korean scholars (for example Toh Soo Hee) object to the use of toponyms from Samguk Sagi as a proof of the Koguryo language as they come from the area that was the original (or at least early) Paekche territory. Therefore, according to them, it does not represent the Koguryo language, it is supposed to represent the early stage of the Paekche language. Such concerns of course make our analysis even more difficult. It is hard to ignore these voices as the Paekche kingdom changed its place during the first millennium and it was not the only one to do so. The borders shifted many times in the time between the beginning of the common era and the year 668 when Silla more or less united the peninsula. Beckwith counters with that that he analyzes even place names north of the river Yalü, and the independent analysis for this paper shows that there indeed seem to be a few vaguely Japonic names in the north (鉛城−乃勿忽 *Nəjmutxwət namari?[2], 節城−蕪子 *Muə tsɨ/tsi fushi? etc.) which means that Toh Soo Hee's theory, however compelling, does not seem to be conclusive.

The analysis of extant place-names and its problems
Let us move our attention to the analysis itself. In this paper an independent analysis based on the reconstructed pronunciation of Early Middle Chinese (EMC) by Pulleyblank as it is in his *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation* (Pulleyblank, 1991) will be used. This reconstruction was chosen because it is one of the most detailed reconstructions available, and it is probably the closest to the time when the Koguryo names were written down as it is based on the early Tang rhyming table *Qieyun*. It is true that Beckwith provides quite a detailed account of each extant place name and of his own reconstruction of his "Archaic Northeastern Middle Chinese*." However it is very dubious because he reconstructs this dialect of Chinese on basis of the same toponyms he then interprets through this reconstruction. Such approach devalues his work and he is rightly criticized for it by some of the reviewers of his book (Pellard, 2005). It appears that in places his reconstruction is made so it fits his attempts to extract Japonic words, but, as we will see, sometimes it actually obscures the etymology. There is his tendency to render most of the stops and nasals in the coda of the Chinese

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2   Could be also Korean nab.

syllables as r, for example the word for 'tree' transcribed as 斤 (EMC *kɨn) is read by Beckwith as *kɨr, character 忽meaning 'fortress, town etc.' (EMC *xwət) is rendered as *χuər. This characteristic is supposed to be an archaism handed down from Old Chinese. (Beckwith, 2004, 99-101) However, most of the modern reconstructions of Old Chinese do not posit an -r final at all (among them Baxter, 1992). Therefore, there is probably no final -r to inherit at all. To make a concession here, the finals were quite often not that important because they frequently did not exactly fit the transcribed language. We cannot expect the transcribers to be too exact. Not to mention that we do not know who decided those words would be written that way. It is quite possible the original scribe was not a native speaker of Chinese, or that he was not a native speaker of the Koguryo language, possibly both. It is Beckwith's assumption that these are tightly fitting transcriptions, among other things, that is leading him astray. Sometimes it is hard to determine if we should ignore the finals (as they were ignored when the characters were used in ongana reading in Japanese), or if we should ignore only some of them (Later in history the Chinese finals -p, -t, -k were faithfully copied by the Japanese, but not the final -ŋ.) or if it is necessary to count with all of them.

Another problem is the character 尸: this character, in Japanese read as *shikabane,* was for some time considered to be read as lir, l, r etc. (Beckwith, 2004, p. 99) However, this is a mistake because it has never been read that way, it was quite regularly read as *ɕi or later as *ʂi. Schuessler in his reconstruction of Late Han Chinese renders it as *śi (which in his transcription is equivalent to *ɕi) We can be sure that it was read *ɕi around the year 400 CE when it was used in the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit word śīla (in Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra). Quite ironically, Beckwith himself first criticized this mistake, and then he repeated it in his own reconstruction of the so-called "Ancient Northeastern Middle Chinese". Beckwith's rationale for this is that he considers the character 隣 in Yulingun 有隣郡, which is the Chinese rendering for于尸郡, to be a phonetic imitation of 尸. However, there is no external evidence for this; it may as well be a simple translation or a completely unrelated name. This old mistake has again obscured the etymology in some cases. The name of a town Huagseong 朽岳城 was originally骨尸押[3] *Kwətɕi ʔaip/ʔɛ:p, the first part of the name is

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3   The last character actually looks like 土+甲, but let us presume that it is actually a mistake, the pronunciation would not be really different anyway.

suspiciously similar to the Japanese word kuchiru 朽ちる. It is true that this was read probably as something like kutiru in Old Japanese, however, we can see that t in front of high vowels is consistently transcribed as an affricate in morphemes attested in Samguk Sagi.

Let us have a look at the language itself:
Most of the place names come from the central part of the Korean peninsula, from the old provinces Hanju 漢州, Sagju 朔州 and Myeongju 溟州. A handful of words come also from the north, beyond the Yalü river. As a part of this analysis, the total of 130 place names have been transcribed from Samguk Sagi using Pulleyblank's reconstruction. According to this analysis, 26 of these consist predominantly of morphemes with Japanese cognates. Further 40 toponyms contain at least one morpheme that is possibly related to Japanese. The rest is indecipherable or obviously related to other languages. Even including place-names that are missing either the old name or its Chinese translation, the ratio of words containing possible Japonic morphemes is slightly over 50%. In a few instances the morphemes can be related to both Japanese and Korean:

EMC reading	Jap. cognate	Kor. cognate	Meaning
*maɨj/mɛ :j	mizu[4]	mul	water
*pa tsʰia	wata (OJ pata)	bada	sea
*maɨj/mɛ :j (ɕi)	nira (OJ mira)	maneul	leek
*ʔɨa	i (OJ wi)	u (from umul)	well, spring

The most problematic of these morphemes is the last one because it appears in two very similar place-names 泉井口縣 and 井泉郡/泉井郡 that would be rendered as 於乙買串 *ʔɨa ʔit maɨj/mɛ :j kwaɨn/kwɛ:n, respectively 於乙買 *ʔɨa ʔit maɨj/mɛ :j. In case of the second name, the scribes were not sure about the order of the characters which makes distinguishing between the similar morphemes *ʔɨa and *ʔit difficult. Here

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4   Probable vowel raising *medu>midu>mizu.

we consider the variant 井泉 to be the most probable one because then the vowels in these words fit the proposed reconstruction of proto-Japanese, and it is also more probable syntactically. The morpheme wi (well) is reconstructed to be the product of *ɨy which would fit quite close to *Ɂɨa, the morpheme *Ɂit, especially standing in front of the morpheme for water/river *maɨj/mɛ :j seems very close to the word izumi (OJ idumi) agreeing in vowel and even in the final -t!

The ration for words with predominantly cognates of Japanese was the highest in Hanju 漢州, followed by Sagju 朔州, then Myeongju 溟州 and the lowest north of Yalü. Including also words possibly containing a morpheme decipherable as Japanese, the ranking would be similar, only Sagju 朔州 would be first and then Hanju 漢州. This partially reinforces Toh Soo Hee's theory mentioned earlier.

Here is the list of morphemes most probably related to Japanese[5]:

Character	Rec. EMC	Jap. Cog.	Meaning	N. of toponyms
買	*maɨj/mɛ :j[6]	mi, mizu	water, river	11
蜜	*mit	mittsu	three	1
要(隱)	*ɁjiawɁɨn	ya, yanagi	poplar,, willow	1
忽次　古次	*xwət tsʰɨ*kɔtsʰɨ kuti		mouth	4
伏斯	*buwk siə/si	pukasi	deep	1
于次	*wua tsʰɨ	itu, itutu	five	1
呑/旦	*tʰən/tan	tani	valley	4
內米	*nwəjmɛj	nami	wave, rough w.	1
德	*tək	towo	ten	1

5   There are a few more but I did not include them to this list as they are even more tentative.

6   The morpheme mi (water) probably underwent vowel raising in Japanese *medu>midu (Frellesvig, Whitman, 2008)

古斯	*kɔ siə/si	kujika	water deer	2
烏斯含	*ʔɔ si ɣəm/ɣam	usagi	rabbit	1
功木	*kəwŋməwk	kuma	bear[7]	1
達	*dat[8]	takai	high, mount.	14
難(隱)	*nan(ʔin)	nana	seven	1
仇	*guw	ko (*kua)	child	1
沙伏	*ʂɛ:/ ʂai buwk	sabi	red (Jap. rust)[9]	1
內/奴	*nwəj/nɔ	no	land[10]	4
烏	*ʔɔ	i, ushi	cattle, boar[11]	4
斤	*kɨn[12]	ki, ko	tree	3
冬	*tawŋ[13]	toru	to take	1

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[7] Some would consider this word a culture word typical for the whole of northeast Asia.

[8] The final here is problematic.

[9] Using the word for 'rust' as a name of color and vice versa is not unique, i. e. red and rust in English and other Germanic languages, 'zrzavý' (red haired) and 'rez' (rust) in Czech etc.

[10] This might actually be two, albeit related, morphemes: na and no, no was *nwo in OJ. It might be also related to the Manchu word 'na' land. The character 野 is used as a *kungana* character for both no₁ and no₂ so there might have been an alternation.

[11] This morpheme is interesting because it connects both Japanese words *inoshishi* and *ushi*. Inoshishi can be analyzed as i no shishi (the meat of i) which was a word originally used also for deer, inoshishi then became synonymous with the animal it came from. Ushi is a word that could be hypothetically divided into u-si, si being a suffix. The phonetic correspondence for *ʔɔ and ModJ ushi seems to be quite regular as the Koguryo ɔ or ə correspond to ModJ u in most cases. Such vowel heightening is also proposed for Japanese by some scholars (Frellesvig and Whitman). There is also an attested alternation between wi and u in some cases which could explain this phenomenon.

[12] The back vowel actually fits some modern reconstructions of proto-Japanese (Frellesvig, 2010, p. 45). Ki (tree) was an otsu syllable which Frellesvig reconstructs as *kwi. This should according to Frellesvig lead to the proto-Japonic form *kiy.

[13] Vowels are problematic in this case, the character 冬 is later reconstructed as *təwŋ which

伊	*ʔji	iru	to enter	1

Many of these words are some of the most basic and stable in the vocabulary of human languages, appearing on various versions of the Swadesh list. (water, high, three, seven, mouth...) Swadesh lists are very useful for an overview, but in many cases they are not ideal. They do ignore many location/culture specific words that tend to be very old and to survive very long – words for domestic animals, higher numbers, etc. Therefore they can sometimes lead us astray when comparing languages. The second half of the Koguryo words are such basic words missing from the Swadesh list: (bear, rabbit, water deer, poplar), these words would have no value for comparison of languages that developed in places where these organisms are missing, but in northeast Asia they should be some of the most stable. Personal pronouns are missing from this list as they do not usually appear in place-names.

If Koguryoic[14] was a Japonic or Para-Japonic language (or a language in any way related to Japanese), these would be the words it would still share with Japanese at this stage of history as they are the most stable. More specialized vocabulary could have been already completely replaced or just lost in attested Japonic languages, and therefore unintelligible. We know that (proto-)Japonic had to be in place in what is nowadays western Japan already for at least a few centuries by the time these toponyms were written down and replaced. The names in Gishi Wajinden 魏志倭人伝 (1st half of the 3rd century CE) are demonstrably Japonic as Bentley has shown in his paper. (Bentley, 2004) Therefore, Japonic speakers had to be in Japan even earlier than that, already divided from Koguryoic by the sea. At least since that time, Koguryoic and Japonic would have been evolving separately. The example of Gishi Wajinden also shows us what difficulties one faces when trying to reconstruct a language from such a small corpus. Even though names attested there are Japonic, it does not mean we really understand all of them (especially the titles of rulers and chiefs).

There is one place-name worth commenting on – 難隠別, translated as 七重(縣), and its phonetic reconstruction is *Nanʔɨn biat/piat. The morpheme seven is quite transparent and has been one of the strongest

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would be more fitting as pJ *ə turns into OJ o. This character could actually represent a two-syllabic word in Koguryo.

14   If the language attested here can be called Koguryoic.

proofs that Koguryoic is related to Japonic languages. The rest of this name is more complicated. For now let us put aside the second morpheme *ʔɨn and focus on the last *biat or *piat. Even its translation as 重 makes it suspiciously similar to e, the OJ[15] *pye layer. Beckwith also notices this similarity (Beckwith, 2003, p. 134), but again reconstructs it with a final -r. It can be argued that it is not necessary and we can possibly ignore the final and reconstruct it simply as *pia which would be in line with the reconstructed pJ form *pia. This reading is even more probable because as Bentley mentions this classifier was used in OJ not only for fabric, but also for fences, snow and even clouds (Bentley, 2001, p. 74)

Finally we should take a look at the grammatical (or synsemantic) morphemes attested in the place-names. These are possibly:

Characer	EMC reading	N. of toponymes
隱	*ʔɨn	2, none in primary position
斯	*siǝ/si	15, none in primary position
乙	*ʔit	10, once in primary position[16]
次	*tsʰi	10, none in primary position
尸	*ɕi	11, none in primary position

Generally we can say there are two types of similar morphemes: 1) *ʔɨn and *ʔit, 2) *tsʰi 次, *si 斯 and *ɕi 尸. In the case of the group 2 we could set *tsʰi apart from the others because it appears also in final positions of the place-names unlike *si and *ɕi. Is it possible that *si and *ɕi are actually just two different ways how to write one morpheme?

Another question is of course the function of these morphemes. It is possible that some of them are just derivative morphemes used to create words out of some autosemantic morphemes. Let us first look at the group 1. These morphemes seem almost identical if we remove the final t or n. We are left with ʔɨ or ʔi if we are to believe the reconstructed vowel quality. The glottal stop could just point to the fact that these morphemes

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15 Old Japanese

16 ʔit ʔa tan乙阿旦縣 子春縣 This place-name is not recognizable, actually it is markedly different from most others, which means it is either in other language or it could be just mistranslated. The last morpheme tan would point to the meaning valley.

constituted their own syllable, similarly to Japanese particles. It is true we do not have nowadays a particle 'i' in Japanese, there are similar particles in Korean (the marker of nominative case i) and also in Manchu (where it actually forms the genitive case very similar to the modern Japanese particle *no* (Gorelova, 2002, p. 175-182), which would point to a relationship with these languages regardless of one's opinion of the Altaic theory. There is also a rather mysterious suffix -i which is supposed to have been at the end of many words in Old Japanese (Bentley, 2003). This has been proposed to be an old accusative marker (Miller), an active marker in a vestigial active/passive alignment system (Vovin) (Frellesvig, 2010, p. 131). Beckwith claims that it is related to the Old Japanese marker na. However, he does not present any compelling evidence for such a statement. Of course, there is a possibility we are talking really about two different morphemes in which case the preceding pertains mostly to the morpheme ʔit.

The morpheme *si again seems to be some kind of a marker of the genitive case. It is also the most frequented one; it appears in both toponyms with confirmed etymology and without. The morpheme *ɕi on the other hand appears mostly in names that are not entirely clear. The problems related to the reconstruction of the Chinese character 尸 have been already mentioned earlier.

There is a derivative morpheme shi used as a derivative suffix in adjectives in Japanese, which Beckwith notes could be a cognate to the suffix *si. This Japanese suffix can be used for derivation of adjectives from almost all types of words (although admittedly mostly from verbs, but also nouns). Of course, this theory is speculative. However, as adjectives appear very often in attributive constructions where they are dependent on nouns (in case of Japanese and other Asian languages in front of the head word), it is possible that some kind of reanalysis happened. From e. g. noun + genitive or attributive particle + head noun to adjective (stem + derivative morpheme) + head noun. In contrast to Beckwith's position, this analysis shows that this Japanese morpheme could be possibly a cognate to both *si and *ɕi. The reason for the claim that the character 尸 represents a genitive/attributive marker (or possibly a derivative morpheme) is that it does not appear word-initially, it does not appear at the end of a place-name (which makes the derivative morpheme theory less likely), and in most cases it could be subtracted, and the place-name would still fulfill the limit for at least one syllable (The only two names that break this rule are Mog-eunseong=*driawɕi xwət 木銀城=召尸忽 and Yulingun=*wuaɕi 有隣郡=于尸郡. However, this character does not have

to always represent said morpheme. It would be improbable for a language to use a syllable just for one derivative morpheme and no other.)

Beckwith also proposed a genitive/attributive marker *Nəy 乃 as a cognate of the Japanese, but he actually has almost no evidence for it. (Beckwith, 2003, p.118) There are just 4 attested place-names containing this morpheme, three of which cannot be considered to have this morpheme, because the character is in the word-initial position (Yeonseong=*Driaw ɕi xwət鉛城=乃勿忽, Sigseong=*nəjxwət息城=乃忽) or in the final position (Usuju=*ʔɔkənnəj 牛首州=烏根乃). That leaves just the toponym Huanghyo=*kwətnəjkɨn 黃驍=骨乃斤 where it could be a suffix or a particle, but we cannot reconstruct such a morpheme on basis of a single word because it may as well be a part of the first morpheme 'yellow' 黃 or the second morpheme 'strong' or 'good horse' 驍. To postulate a genitive/attributive marker under such conditions can be only called highly unscientific.

This analysis shows that there are some Japonic cognates in the Koguryo place-names in a state that can be characterized as:

1) These cognates seem to reflect Japonic morphemes before they underwent vowel raising.

2) There are examples fitting the proto-Japonic reconstruction by Frellesvig and Whitman.

3) The OJ plosive t is represented as an affricate in front of high vowels (sometimes also in front of *ɔ)

The language attested in these names seems to be indeed of the SOV type. The character of the names points at a left-branching language. Therefore it appears to be typologically similar to many other languages in northeast Asia considered by some to be the members of the Altaic family. If it is really related to Japanese or if it at least was in a prolonged contact with proto-Japonic, we can say that this contact with and/or split from Japonic had to happen before the Old Japanese stage of the language.

Conclusion

This paper has been an attempt to reexamine and reanalyze the extant place-names of the Koguryo state. It has become evident through this analysis that there are some morphemes that appear to be cognates to basic Japonic morphemes. Unfortunately, only a part of these place names can be

deciphered using Japonic languages.

When we consider this corpus as a whole, we will find out that transparent Japonic names are quite frequently finished with a morpheme we do not recognize from any form of Japonic, these are mostly *xwət (fort, town) *paʔi (crag, rock, mountain) or *ʔaip/ʔɛːp (peak). Therefore it is quite possible that the Japonic parts of toponyms are old names from a substrate language that have been appropriated by the new rulers. (And yet again it also does not meant that they really have been.) Maybe these words are Japonic and we just do not recognize them as such. It is a red thread running through this paper that for some conclusions we just do not have enough data. That is where in case of some researchers the kingdom of pure conjecture starts. Here we have tried to avoid such logical fallacies and to approach the topic anew. However, there are still many questions that remain to be answered. Can we really say if the language of Koguryo was Japonic? No, but there is evidence such language may have been spoken within the borders of the Koguryo kingdom. (Here we have to specify if we mean the language of the ruling class because there were probably many languages spoken in Koguryo.) Was it a substrate language already dead or dying out? Possibly, because it is not attested later, however this could have happened after the unification of the peninsula by Silla. Is the language in this paper in fact Early Paekche? It is plausible as the concentration of Japonic-like morphemes is high in the original territory of the Paekche kingdom, but they are not found only there.

The last question that we can answer comes back to the very beginning of this paper. Was Beckwith right? Or maybe to what extent was he right? Even though some of the approaches Beckwith uses and conclusions he comes to are highly dubious, it is evident that some of the presented material represents a language that was either related to Japanese or was in a prolonged contact with it. However, if we do not find more usable textual evidence, it will be probably impossible to give a definitive answer to any of the other questions.

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