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No Rush to Judgment: The Case against Japanese as an Isolate

判断を早まるな：日本語を孤立言語とする見解に対する考察

J. Marshall UNGER (J. マーシャル・アンガー)

“A false hypothesis is better than none at all, for no damage is done when it turns out to be false. But if it takes root, becomes generally accepted, and grows into a kind of dogma that no one dares to doubt or probe — now THAT is a multi-century disaster!”¹ Such an unhealthy hypothesis is the one that says Japan is an extraordinarily special case in world history. All cultures are different, but, some suppose, Japanese culture is transcendently unique.² This hypothesis typically includes the notion that Japanese ethnicity extends back into the enormously long Jōmon period, which began roughly 12,000 years ago. The linguistic version of this idea is that the Japanese language is what linguists call an ISOLATE. This is no harmless false hypothesis. It challenges the superior though more controversial one that the Korean and Japanese languages arose from a common prehistoric ancestor. But the reconstruction of proto-Korean-Japanese is far from complete, and therefore leaves room for skeptics to raise objections. My goal here is to show that, if we assume Japanese and Korean are NOT related languages, we are forced to accept conclusions much more unsatisfactory than any of the present weaknesses in the reconstruction, the coherence and details of which must ultimately determine whether the hypothesis should be rejected or promoted to the default working theory.

Scholars have compared Japanese with a large number of languages, including some quite different in overall structure, and not a few far removed from historical Japan in time, in space, or in both. If we do not yet have what most linguists would consider a definitive demonstration that Japanese is a relative of even one other language somewhere in the world, it is not for lack of effort or imagination! It is true that not all linguists currently agree that even the most likely candidate languages, such as Korean or Manchu, are sisters of Japanese. In this temporary or EPISTEMIC sense, Japanese can technically be called an isolate. But science is an ongoing process of framing and testing hypotheses that answer specific questions. When and from where did the earliest speakers of Japanese come to the islands

¹ My translation of *Eine falsche Hypothese ist besser als gar keine; denn daß sie falsch ist, ist gar kein Schade, aber wenn sie sich befestigt, wenn sie allgemein angenommen, zu einer Art von Glaubensbekenntniß wird, woran niemand zweifeln, welches niemand untersuchen darf, d i e ß ist eigentlich das Unheil woran Jahrhunderte leiden* (Goethe 1966: 51).

² This idea surfaces from time to time in books and articles of the genre known as *Nihonjinron*. Unger (1988) introduces two studies of *Nihonjinron* in English.

they inhabit today? To say that Japanese is an isolate in the epistemic sense does not answer such questions, nor does it show that Japanese cannot be related to Korean, Manchu, or — for that matter — to Sumerian (Yoshiwara 1991) or Zuñi (Davis 2001), to mention only two exceedingly far-fetched candidates with which it has been compared. To prove a non-relationship, one must show affirmatively that Japanese is an isolate in a permanent or DEONTIC sense. This goes far beyond observing that, in the present state of research, the case for Japanese and Korean being related is not as good as the case for the relationship of, say, Sanskrit and Greek, or of Finnish and Hungarian.

To say a language is an isolate in the deontic sense is equivalent to saying that, as far as anyone can tell, all its linguistic relatives died out before it was introduced into its current range. So let us first ask: in the case of Japan, when was that? Our earliest written mentions of Japan date from the 3rd century CE, long after the Chinese had begun writing histories, and we can infer quite a bit from non-linguistic evidence about the inhabitants of the islands for thousands of years before the earliest Chinese mentions. In fact, both the archaeologist J. Edward Kidder (2007) and the linguist Roy Andrew Miller (1981) have argued that proto-Japanese was spoken in the islands in the Middle or Late Jōmon period. Since Miller, at least, also claims that Japanese is a so-called Altaic language, it would not be a deontic isolate for him even if it WERE that ancient.

At any rate, most investigators agree that the preponderance of non-linguistic evidence points to the introduction of the language that became Japanese much more recently, some time between about 950 and 350 BCE. Radiocarbon dates of early artifacts favor the earlier date; the chronology of pottery styles and indisputable evidence of non-Jōmon settlements favor the later date. The consensus of scholarly opinion is in the process of shifting in favor of the earlier date, but the matter is not yet settled. Still, it is safe to say that Japanese has been spoken in the islands for only about 3,000 years, and that fact alone throws the strong-isolate assertion into doubt.

In part A of the outline in Appendix I, our present understanding of Japan during the 1st millennium BCE is summarized under three main headings.

- First, a major population replacement began sometime between about 950 and 350 BCE. The population of Final Jōmon period Japan began to be replaced by genetically dissimilar people around this time. Today, few pre-Yayoi inputs to the Japanese gene pool remain.
- Second, the cause of this population replacement was a migration from what is now southern Korea. The migrants brought with them the full complement of Korean Mumun or Megalithic culture, all the salient elements of which are reflected in the Yayoi culture of Japan. Settling first in northern Kyūshū, the migrant population grew, and after about 200 BCE, they expanded to the north and east rapidly. The distribution and dating of Yayoi settlements does not show a steady push east and north out of Kyūshū but rather leaps to sites well suited for wet-field rice. Also, the migration was

not a single event.

- Third, in contrast to the Yayoi expansion out of Kyūshū, which was rapid once it began, the transition from Yayoi to the succeeding Tumulus or Kofun culture, which started in the latter half of the 4th century CE, was gradual. It did not involve a single or sudden disruption. Although we can clearly see peninsular inputs in Kofun culture, most archaeologists today reject the so-called horserider invasion theories of the Japanese historian Egami Namio (1967) and the more recent Korean researcher Hong Wontack (1994, 2006).

These three conclusions follow from physical evidence collected by archaeologists and anthropologists, not from linguistic facts, so it is natural to ask why they are relevant to a discussion of linguistic affiliations. We know of many cases where languages spread across genetic or cultural borders. Conversely, we know that people of the same ethnic or cultural communities may use different languages. Therefore, one generally cannot build a theory of linguistic history on the basis of non-linguistic evidence alone. Nevertheless, such evidence does set realistic limits on the range of linguistic hypotheses one should entertain. For instance, in many places in the world, when people who rely on agriculture as their chief mode of subsistence impinge on the range of people who are primarily hunter-gatherers, it is the language of the agriculturalists that generally wins out. If proto-Japanese were a Final Jōmon period language, as Miller and Kidder imagine, then prehistoric Japan would be an exception to this rule. For that reason alone, it is more likely that proto-Japanese took root in the islands during and after the Yayoi migrations than before them.

We now turn to specifically linguistic considerations, Part B in the outline. As stated at the top of section 4, there is indisputable textual evidence that a Japanese-like language was once used on the Korean peninsula. Could this language have been that of the rulers of the kingdoms of Koguryō or Paekche, as claimed most recently by Christopher Beckwith (2007)? For the five reasons set out in 4a through 4e, the most likely answer to this question is no. Japanese-like morphemes appear in some place-names recorded in the earliest Korean historical text, *Samguk sagi*, but the distribution of these place-names indicates that they antedated the unification of the peninsula under Silla in the 7th century. Not long thereafter, King Kyōngdōk of Silla commanded that an official renaming of places be carried out. The simplest hypothesis is that the rulers of the three of the so-called Three Kingdoms of early Korea all spoke varieties of Old Korean, and that replacing old names with consistently structured Sino-Korean forms was politically motivated: it submerged Korean dialectal differences, at least in writing, and made clear that only Korean speakers could hold power.

What then WAS the connection between the Japanese-like language of the old place-names and the language that comes to dominate the adjacent islands? As I argue in section 5, the weight of the evidence is that proto-Japanese was the language of the Yayoi migrants. As pointed out in 5a, the 4th or 5th centuries CE are too

late for the arrival of proto-Japanese. Unless accompanied by a devastating military invasion, there would not have been enough time for all non-Japanese languages of the islands to have been extinguished, or for the degree of dialect separation we can already detect in Old Japanese period. On the other hand, as explained under 5b, we can also rule out a pre-Yayoi arrival of Japanese. What little we know about Final Jōmon languages indicates that Japanese was not one of them. If it had been, then, given the great length of the Jōmon period, we would expect to find more distinct languages in Japan than we do. Other unacceptable consequences follow if we place proto-Japanese too early in prehistory.

Finally, as explained in 5c, affirmative evidence suggests that proto-Japanese began to differentiate into dialects around the time of the Yayoi population expansion. Of all the many dialects of Japanese today, those found in the Ryūkyū islands seem the most divergent, yet a late, direct split of proto-Japanese into proto-Ryūkyūan and proto-main-island branches is too crude to explain the available evidence. This is true even if we adopt the proposal to reconceive of proto-Japanese as a young, shallow language family called JAPONIC. Pellard (2011) made a case for elevating individual Ryūkyūan dialects to the status of languages on a par with main-island Japanese itself. As I explain in 5c, I think his argument needs to be slightly qualified, but, judging from Pellard (2013), I doubt that he would seriously take issue with my main point.

Elementary linguistic considerations thus support proposition 5: proto-Japanese accompanied the introduction of Yayoi culture to northern Kyūshū from the southern Korean peninsula.

What happened linguistically when pre-Japanese speakers settled among hunter-gatherers of the Final Jōmon? The new arrivals no doubt interacted with the previous inhabitants of northern Kyūshū and borrowed a few words for features of their new environment from them, but the linguistic signs of a large lexical impact are absent, as explained in 6a through 6c. We can, for example, map no isogloss bundle that suggests a linguistic division of the islands that extends continuously from ancient to historical times: the well-known present-day East/West isogloss on Honshū is based on dialect differences that arose mostly in the Middle Japanese period, and the Japanese lexicon contains only a few Ainu loanwords. We do not find the sort of grammatical variation we would expect if Japanese were just Jōmon words poured into a Korean grammatical mold. None of this is surprising given the technical superiority and higher standard of living of the Yayoi agriculturalists, who, as we noted before, became the dominant genetic type in the population.

This brings us to the central question: was the pre-Japanese language of the Korean peninsula genetically related to some ancestor of what later became Korean, or not? In sections 7 and 8, we examine the implications of answering this question yes or no to see which are more reasonable.

Suppose first that Japanese and Korean are related. The first four maps of Appendix II show how a Tungusic, Koreanic, and Japonic languages could have split, in turn, from a prehistoric common Macro-Tungusic language. This model is consistent with Miyamoto's (2009) theory of the spread of millet, dry-field rice, and fi-

nally wet-field agriculture into the Korean peninsula and, eventually, the islands of Japan. For the purposes of this paper, the crucial point is that the Yayoi migrations could not themselves have been the occasion for the separation of pre-Korean from pre-Japanese in light of the linguistic evidence summarized in 7a through 7d. Let me briefly digress to give a single example that will give a flavor of the linguistic argument in 7d.

If you look up the word *saigusa* in the standard encyclopedic dictionary *Kōjien*, you will not find a main heading. Instead, you will be referred to *saigusa-matsuri*, the name of a festival held on 17 June at the Isakawa shrine in Nara. *Kōjien* implies that the fact that *saigusa* is written 三枝 is related to the use of three (三) branches (枝) to decorate the cask of *sake* associated with the festival. In Old Japanese, this name was pronounced *sakikusa*. It lost one medial *k* and voiced the other in Early Middle Japanese. The problem here is that 三 and 枝 are never read *saki* and *kusa* except in this word. Nevertheless, the four etymologies of OJ (Old Japanese) *sakikusa* listed in the *Nihon kokugo daijiten* treat it as a compound originally meaning ‘lucky grass’ or ‘flourishing grass’, i.e. *saki* + *kusa*.

In 1985, however John Whitman noticed that *sakikusa* resembled the Korean phrase for ‘three branches’. In Middle Korean, the pronunciation would have been even closer to *sakikusa*: *seyk-katsi*. Whitman thought he had, in this way, detected two pairs of Korean-Japanese COGNATES: *seyk* with *saki*, and *katsi* with *kusa*. Notice, however, that OJ *sakikusa* has four syllables. This is rather long compared with other matches between Korean and Japanese. Less obvious but also true is that the vowel correspondences between the Middle Korean and Old Japanese words involved are somewhat different from what we would expect on the basis of other K-J etymologies. Finally, although *seyk-katsi* may have been a perfectly ordinary noun phrase even in Old Korean, it had a highly specialized use as a name in Old Japanese. All these are features we would expect a BORROWED (rather than a cognate) word or phrase to have in the receiving language.

I therefore think Whitman erred in using this etymology in his reconstruction of the common proto-language from which Korean and Japanese arose. The phrase was almost certainly a loanword from Old Korean into Old Japanese, and it was not the only one. However, there are only about three dozen OJ words of this kind. That leaves a large number of OJ words with good matches in Middle Korean that are not unusually long, do share regular phonemic correspondences, and have similar meanings in both languages. The existence of a few early loanwords, therefore, does not in any way weaken the proto-Korean-Japanese hypothesis; on the contrary, such identifiable loanwords strengthen it by showing the futility of treating all K-J matches as borrowings. They also imply a long period of gestation for pre-Korean and pre-Japanese: the separation of the original speech community necessary for the formation of these two distinct languages must have occurred well before the Yayoi migrations began.

Returning from this digression into loanwords, we turn to section 8 and consider the possibility that Korean and Japanese are unrelated languages. In that case, all their similarities must be due either to chance or to contact. Leaving aside lexi-

cal similarities for the moment, what are the odds that the observed grammatical similarities between the two languages are accidental? As explained in 8a through 8e, there is only one geographical area nearby that where several strongly typed SOV languages have long been spoken. Korean and Japanese both have subject-object-verb syntax and postpositions, with inflectional morphology confined to predicates. Therefore, unless Korean and Japanese are BOTH isolates in the strong, deontic sense, their grammatical similarities surely have something to do with the languages in the nearby SOV area either because of genetic relationship or because of contact. To say the similarities are products of chance is merely to beg the question. Therefore, if Korean and Japanese are unrelated, we are forced to hypothesize a protracted period of contact between them to account for at least their grammatical similarities.

But, for the linguistic reasons 9a and 9b, this hypothesis lacks support. There are places in the world where, due to prolonged language contact in a stable ecological situation, members of the local community may come to use a common grammar with different lexicons, but such situations are comparatively rare, and language convergence of this kind is typically accompanied by other features. Thus, even before we get down to the business of testing specific genetic hypotheses about Japanese, we can safely rule out quite a few that might otherwise claim our attention, including the one that says Japanese is a deontic isolate. The non-linguistic evidence does not guide us to the nearest surviving linguistic relative of Japanese, but it does unclutter our field of view. It also shows us that, despite the slow progress in improving and expanding the proto-Korean-Japanese reconstruction, the pKJ hypothesis remains, for the reasons recapitulated in 10a through 10d, the best basis for further research.

I should add at this juncture that Martine Robbeets (e.g. 2010) has in recent years developed a theory of what she calls Transeurasian languages. The idea is to compare all the languages traditionally classified as Altaic plus Korean and Japanese, particularly with respect to morphology. This is methodologically somewhat different from earlier attempts, most notably by Miller (1971), to insert Korean and Japanese into the preexisting reconstruction of proto-Altaic developed by Nicholas Poppe (e.g. 1965) and others. As I note in 10b, although I am not yet prepared to accept the whole Transeurasian theory, I think Robbeets's approach is definitely a step in the right direction.

The proposition heading section 10 is fundamentally linguistic; the hypothesis stated in 11 and 12 is its non-linguistic complement. Hypothesis 13 brings us back to language, though this part of the story has quite a bit of non-linguistic support, and any alternative to the pKJ hypothesis must provide at least as plausible an account. For this reason, the details of 13 are not as important as the general conclusion that flows from it, stated in 14. We have enough circumstantial evidence to rule out a period of time during which Japanese could have been "koreanized" on the peninsula prior to the Yayoi migrations or in the islands after the advent of Kofun culture. This is no substitute for a comparative demonstration that Korean and Japanese are genetically related languages, but it does create a serious problem for

an affirmative claim that they are not — which would trivially be true if Japanese were an isolate in the deontic sense.

One can, of course, treat the comparison of two languages as a virtually mechanical exercise in phoneme algebra to be done without regard for non-linguistic facts except those that cannot be avoided when interpreting the meanings of particular lexical items. Adopting this approach, one can criticize many of the pKJ etymologies proposed so far and make an argument for Japanese as an isolate in an epistemic sense: if Japanese resembles Korean more than any other language, yet almost every pKJ etymology ever proposed can be rejected for some reason or other, then searching for other relatives of Japanese is hopeless. Whatever they were, they have left no trace. This is my understanding of the logic underlying Vovin (2010). But is it solid reasoning? The linguistic resemblances between Korean and Japanese must still, after all, somehow be accounted for, and the non-linguistic facts that inform our understanding of how and when Korean and Japanese speakers interacted must be respected.

These facts, as I have just explained, indicate that significant interactions between Korean and Japanese speakers could have occurred only in the islands from the 5th to 7th centuries CE. But historical documents show us that the extent of contact in that place and at that time — and even later in the 8th century — was quite limited. Therefore, even if Vovin's criticisms of Martin's (1966) or Whitman's (1985) version of proto-Korean-Japanese are to some extent justified, they certainly do not collectively prove that Japanese is an isolate in the strong sense. Indeed, in light of all the available evidence, even highly speculative attempts to relate Japanese to Austronesian (Kumar 2009) or Dravidian (Ono 1994) languages, which, for good reasons, have not found wide appeal among historical linguists, are better than the strong isolate hypothesis. They are, in my opinion, examples of the false hypotheses Goethe had in mind when he said that some are harmless.

The present reconstruction of proto-Korean-Japanese is still rather unsatisfactory in several respects, but that is, I think, largely because some of the etymologies proposed by Martin and Whitman, though superficially plausible, are mistaken. I addressed some of these issues in Unger (2009), and I am happy to say a very talented doctoral student of mine, Alex Ratté, is researching related problems at this time. He is working on articles that, I think, will greatly clarify some of the more problematic vowel correspondences in the pKJ reconstruction, and I foresee significant progress for the pKJ reconstruction in the years ahead.

But even now, I believe we know far too much about the prehistory of Northeast Asia, both linguistically and non-linguistically, to pretend that the appearance of the Japanese language in its present range is a mystery except in the weak sense: the work of scientific research is always subject to revision and never complete. Japanese — or perhaps we should say Japonic? — may be an epistemic isolate for the purposes of Wikipedia, but the idea that it is an isolate in the deontic sense is just, as Goethe would say, *Glaubensbekenntniß*.

Afterword

The first version of this paper was presented as a lecture at the same conference at which Pellard (2011) made the case for a young, shallow Japonic family. I took into account his remarks as well as those of the other participants at the conference, and delivered a revised lecture at the University of Vienna on 12 March 2013. This paper is a further major revision, including references and notes, which had to be omitted in the lectures, as well as new maps and new ideas stimulated by conversations with colleagues, especially John Whitman, with whom I worked at NINJAL as a Visiting Professor (23 August–30 November 2013).

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Appendix I

What Do We Know about the Relationship of Japanese and Korean?

A. Implications of non-linguistic data

- 1) *A major population replacement occurred in Japan starting during the 1st millennium BCE.*
 - a) From no later than 7000 BCE, the inhabitants of Japan, from Hokkaidō to Okinawa, were of a distinctive physical type, not found elsewhere in Asia, that resulted from the convergence of northern and southern paleolithic groups. Despite regional variations and climate changes that affected the size of this population, it maintained a fairly homogenous “affluent forager” culture, called Jōmon, until the middle of the 1st millennium BCE in most of Japan, and many more centuries in the Tōhoku region.
 - i) The succeeding Yayoi culture is distinguished by new practices (new pottery styles, wet-field rice cultivation, bronze, dolmen-building, etc.) as well as new diseases, plants, and animals.
 - ii) Although certain Yayoi and later cultural practices can be traced back into the Jōmon period (e.g. tattooing), post-Jōmon material evidence and textual references make it clear that they were not continuous developments but rather borrowings

- across a cultural boundary.³
- iii) The Jōmon genetic contribution to the gene pool of present-day Japanese speakers is slight.
 - (1) Yayoi and Jōmon remains differ in bones, teeth, and other markers.
 - (2) Yayoi remains show close affinities to both present-day speakers of Korean and Japanese, who are very similar genetically.
 - (3) Jōmon remains show the greatest similarity to the Ainu of Hokkaidō, whose culture incorporates Epi-Jōmon, Satsumon, Okhotsk, and Japanese elements.
 - (4) The Yayoi migrants first appear in northern Kyūshū, from where they spread rapidly into Honshū, Shikoku, and the rest of Kyūshū starting ca. 200 BCE.
 - (5) A rapid population increase in the main islands of Japan, to which both more efficient food production and immigration probably contributed, began around the same time.
 - b) Though neolithic cord-marked pottery is found on the continent in Korea and to its northeast and despite signs of trade between the islands and the peninsula, Jōmon settlements on the peninsula have not been found.
 - i) Only one Jōmon body, on an island off the southeastern coast facing Kyūshū, has been found.
 - ii) Archaeological and osteological data show no discontinuity in the peninsular population from the Chūlmun neolithic into the Mumun megalithic/bronze period.
- 2) *The population replacement was due to migrations from southern Korea that began after the Mumun cultural complex was well-established there.*
- a) A complex of wet-field rice, bronze, and dolmen-building had spread throughout most of the Korean peninsula by ca. 950 BCE (Miyamoto 2009, Whitman 2011).
 - i) Some influence of Mumun culture in Japan is seen in Late and Final Jōmon sites mostly in northern Kyūshū, which later was the initial locus of Yayoi settlement.
 - ii) The earliest Yayoi sites show that some Jōmon type individuals lived in a transitional or Early Yayoi cultural context.
 - iii) Radiocarbon dates for the earliest Yayoi artifacts predate the last material evidence for Final Jōmon settlements by several centuries in those areas where both are found. They also predate the earliest physical remains of Yayoi type individuals found so far. Immigration is the most natural explanation for these chronological overlaps.
 - b) Organized states do not appear on the Korean peninsula until the 4th century CE when the last two Chinese commanderies, Lèlàng and Xuántù, were overrun.
 - i) Earlier traditional dates for the founding of the kingdoms are obvious exaggerations intended to confer prestige by antiquity.
 - ii) Material culture in the southern area shows little differentiation until the 4th century.
 - iii) The spread of Korean speakers into the southern peninsula proceeded in stages roughly corresponding to waves of Yayoi migration.
 - (1) Korean speakers entered the southwestern or Mahan area first.
 - (a) According to the *Wèi zhì*, there were no horses in the Mahan area.
 - (b) The kingdom of Paekche, which developed later in the Mahan area, had

³ On tattooing (*irezumi*), see 設楽 (2013).

unusually close ties with the emerging Yamato state despite its relative geographic remoteness from Yamato.

- (2) Other Korean speakers entered the southeastern or Chihhan area, where the kingdom of Silla later emerged, just before the establishment of Chinese commanderies interrupted contact between Korean speakers living on the banks of the Yālù river from those in the south.
 - (a) The settlement of Izumo shows a second layer of contact specifically with the Chihhan/Silla area following initial Yayoi settlement.
 - (b) The northern group, which became a Chinese ally, gave rise to the kingdom of Koguryō, which eventually overthrew the commanderies and thus restored contact with Korean speakers in the south, who formed their own kingdoms in the 4th century.
 - (c) Present-day Korean and Japanese speakers are physically more similar to one another than either group is to speakers of any other adjacent language.
- 3) *The later transition from Yayoi to Kofun culture proceeded gradually and did not involve a single or sudden disruption of the Late Yayoi culture.*
 - a) The earliest tumuli date from the 4th century CE, but artifacts indicative of the new culture do not begin to appear in burials goods until the 5th century.
 - b) The transition from small- to large-scale tumulus building was gradual, not abrupt.
 - c) The dates inferred from the surviving histories of early “emperors” and warriors indicate that the 4th and 5th centuries CE were a time of transition.

B. Implications of linguistic data

- 4) *Place-names recorded in both logographic and phonographic forms show that a Japanese-like language was spoken on the Korean peninsula as late as ca. 700 CE.*
 - a) Most places with names containing Japanese-like morphemes are located in central or southern parts of the peninsula controlled only briefly by Koguryō.
 - b) No place-name containing Japanese-like morphemes refers to a place in the homeland of Koguryō north of the Yālù.
 - c) Japanese-like morphemes occur in place-names associated with each of the Three Kingdoms (Koguryō, Paekche, and Silla).
 - d) Korean-like morphemes appear even in some place-names ascribed to Koguryō and Paekche.
 - e) Chinese sources note that some commoners in Paekche spoke a language (implicitly not Chinese) different from the language of the rulers. Of the Three Kingdoms, only Paekche had a distinct Japanese name, viz. Kudara.
- 5) *The first variety of Japanese spoken in the islands, proto-Japanese (reconstructed through dialect comparisons), dates from the Yayoi period, and began to split into dialects at the time of the Yayoi expansion ca. 200 BCE.*
 - a) It could not have been introduced as part of the rise of the transition to Kofun culture in the 5th century.
 - i) At least two dialects — Yamato (central) and Azuma (northeastern) — are recorded in 8th-century texts, and proto-Ryūkyūan was arguably a dialect of southern Kyūshū of the 7th century (Pellard 2011). A century or two is not enough time for such a de-

- gree of dialect differentiation.
- ii) There is no compelling evidence of either a military invasion of the kind typically needed to force a subdued population to learn a new language or of a subsequent transitional period of bilingualism.
- b) It could not have been a pre-Yayoi language. If proto-Japanese had been a Final Jōmon language, implausible conclusions follow.
- i) Either the Yayoi agriculturalists gave up their own language and adopted the language of hunter-gatherers, or the language of the Yayoi migrants had separated much earlier from the language of a much older and genetically dissimilar population.
 - ii) There should be many distinct languages in the islands, not just Japanese and Ainu. (Even if one treats Ryūkyūan as a distinct language, that only makes three.) *Nihon shoki* and other early texts describe only a few groups (Kumaso, Hayato, and Emishi) as not speaking Japanese.
- c) Of all dialects, the Ryūkyūan now seem to be the oldest, but even proto-Ryūkyūan was probably not a FIRST-ORDER daughter of proto-Japanese (alias proto-Japonic).⁴
- (1) Not all distinctive Ryūkyūan linguistic features suggest great antiquity.
 - (a) Ryūkyūan pitch accent seems historically to be descended from the so-called Tōkyō Gairin type, to which several widely scattered main-island dialects also belong (de Boer 2010).
 - (b) Mid-vowel raising, common to all Ryūkyūan dialects, has affected mid vowels in Sino-Japanese words and mid vowels believed to have originated as diphthongs.
 - (c) Documentary evidence shows that some features of Ryūkyūan verb morphology claimed to be ancient are in fact late innovations (峠山 1972).
 - (2) Founder effects on many small, remote islands undoubtedly accelerated and intensified dialectal divergence.
 - (a) Robust, continuous contact between the Ryūkyū and main Japanese islands only began in the 17th century.
 - (b) Jōmon culture is not found south of Okinawa, and Ryūkyūan speakers did not settle in the Sakishima islands until the 13th century, yet the Sakishima dialects are the most divergent in the group.
 - (3) Archaeology suggests late permanent settlements by Japanese speakers.
 - (a) Yayoi culture is found nowhere in the Ryūkyū islands despite evidence of long-distance trade between Okinawa and Kyūshū in the Middle Yayoi.
 - (b) Wet-rice agriculture does not appear in the Ryūkyū islands until the 10th century.
- 6) *Final Jōmon languages influenced proto-Japanese only marginally.*
- a) There is no single isogloss dividing Japan with large numbers of synonymous non-cognate, non-foreign words on either side. Observed lexical differences define many intersecting isoglosses.
 - b) Borrowings from Ainu are few in number and fairly easily identifiable. If any language is likely to be the last surviving Final Jōmon language, it is Ainu.

⁴ See Pellard (2013) on competing models of Ryūkyūan settlement.

- c) The lower registers of a creole typically retain more of the syntax of the relexified language than do its upper registers. But the lower registers of Japanese differ from its upper registers mostly in lexicon and phonology rather than syntax. Japanese is thus unlikely to have originated as a result of creolization.
- 7) *If Korean and Japanese are genetically related languages, they must have separated before the rise of Megalithic culture on the peninsula.*
- a) There are almost no cognates referring to wet-field rice agriculture and bronze metallurgy.
- b) Contacts between the peninsula and islands were not severely attenuated during the Yayoi period, and were resumed during the Yayoi-Kofun transition. There was not enough time for Korean and Japanese to have become distinct languages had they been dialects of a single language as late as the Yayoi period.
- c) Flaws in individual etymologies proposed so far do not invalidate the proto-Korean-Japanese (pKJ) hypothesis. They suggest rather that the degree of semantic and phonological change in the daughter languages has been underestimated.
- d) About three dozen easily identified loans from Korean can be distinguished from etymologies that support a genetic relationship.
- i) These loans include words used in connection with Buddhism and other innovations of Kofun/Asuka culture.
- ii) They stand out because of their length, complexity of phoneme correspondences, limited distribution, and/or narrowed meanings.
- iii) Common OJ words that lack a K (Korean) match often have uncommon OJ synonyms that do match K words. In such cases, the matching OJ word is a likely borrowing from Korean.
- 8) *East Asian languages typologically similar to Korean and Japanese of the 1st millennium CE were spoken only in the transfluvial region north of present-day Korea.*
- a) Amuric (Nivkh), Kamchukotic (e.g. Chukchi), and Ainu are SOV languages but have ergative-absolutive and/or incorporating morphology.
- b) Sino-Tibetan, Austroasiatic, Austronesian, Daic, and Hmong-Mien languages generally have SVO or VSO syntax.
- c) There is no evidence that the ranges of Turkic, Mongolic, or Yeneseic languages (SOV) extending into this area during this period.
- d) Since Korean-Tungusic comparisons have produced fair results, Korean seems at least to have been in contact with Tungusic languages for some time (Lee & Ramsey 2011).
- e) The next nearest family of typologically similar SOV languages is Dravidian. Comparisons of Dravidian languages with Korean and Japanese have produced tantalizing results but no accepted demonstration of genetic relationship.
- 9) *Conditions for METATYPY — one language adapting its gross syntactic structure to that of another — were not present on the Korean peninsula prior to the Yayoi migrations.*
- a) We find little evidence of calquing or lexical borrowing, both of which we would expect in a case of metatypy.
- b) The mixture of dissimilar Japanese-like, Korean-like, and as yet unidentified morphemes in place-names of the Three Kingdoms is more indicative of short-term contact than of an extended period of the kind of intense multilingualism in a compact range

characteristic of metatypy environments.

- c) See again 2b: the era of the so-called Three Kingdoms of Koguryō, Paekche, and Silla (*samguk*) did not begin until the 4th century CE.

C. Tentative conclusions

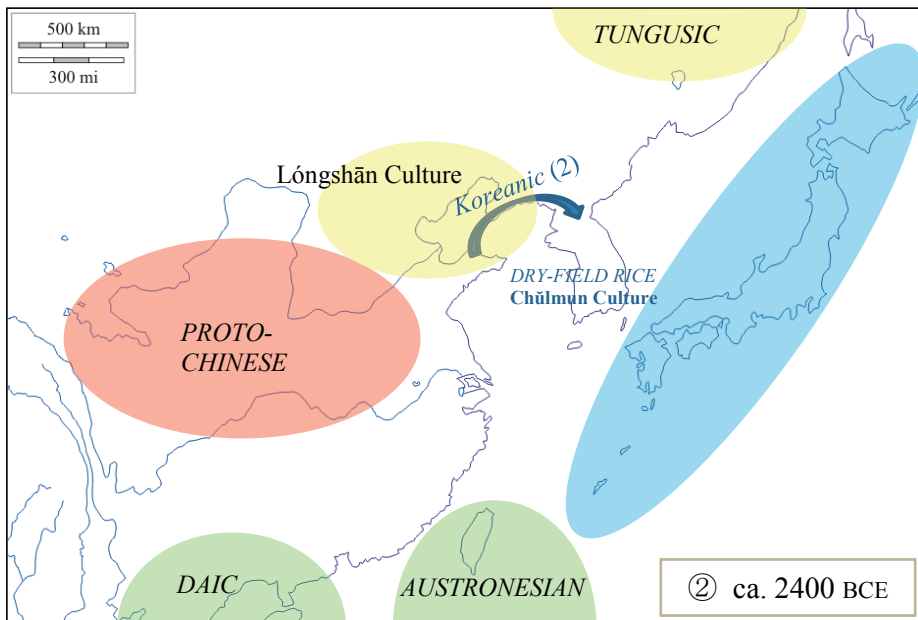
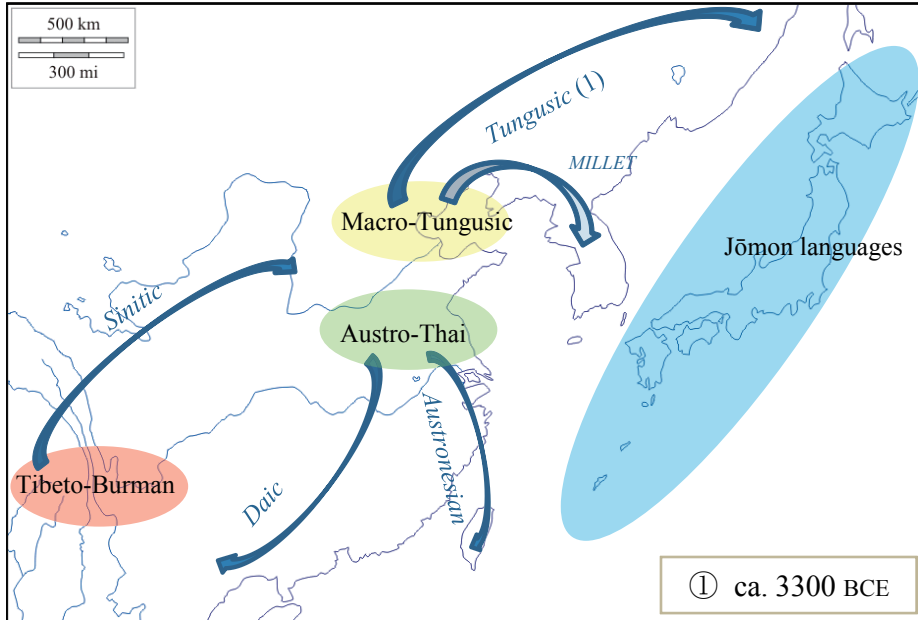
- 10) *The proto-Korean-Japanese hypothesis is the best working hypothesis available.*
- a) It is the most parsimonious hypothesis.
 - i) As invalid etymologies are weeded out, new matches are being found to take their place and improve the overall coherence of sound correspondences.
 - ii) Separating out early Korean-to-Japanese loanwords removes complications in sound correspondences. They are few in number, readily identified, and not suggestive of intimate, long-term contact.
 - iii) Grammatical morphemes are poor candidates for borrowing.
 - (1) Syntactic calquing is not observed.
 - (2) Both languages have focus particles that are similar in function and not found in nearby SOV languages. Though the attested reflexes are not directly cognate, they can be accounted for etymologically; focus particles thus appear to be a common innovation of Japanese and Korean.
 - b) Tungusic at least is an indisputable language family. Whether or not there was a Trans-eurasian family including Turkic, Mongolic, and Tungusic, a Macro-Tungusic family, of which pKJ was one branch, seems likely.
 - c) If the Macro-Tungusic home area were the region around the Bóhǎi Gulf from Shāndōng to Liáoníng, the separation of pre-Korean and pre-Japanese may be explained as follows (maps 1 through 3 in Appendix II).
 - i) As proto-Sinitic speakers moved from the Tibeto-Burman home area moved into the Huánghé valley (signaled by the spread of millet), proto-Tungusic speakers split off and moved north and northeast, ultimately into Eastern Siberia.
 - ii) The next group to split off consisted of pre-Korean speakers, who moved into Southern Manchuria.
 - iii) As Sinitic speakers thrived with the advent of rice agriculture, its techniques became known to the remaining coastal dwellers, who were subsequently assimilated or migrated. Pre-Japanese speakers brought wet-field rice to the peninsula.⁵
 - d) Any claim that Japanese or Korean is a true isolate must be affirmatively reconciled with non-linguistic data from archaeology and human genetics.
- 11) *The southward movement of para-Korean speakers spawned the Yayoi migrations.*
- a) There is a hiatus in the archaeological record of rice-farming villages on the peninsula from the 3rd to 1st centuries BCE (Whitman 2011).
 - i) The beginning of this hiatus corresponds to the spread of Chinese power into the neck of the peninsula during the Hàn dynasty.
 - ii) After the hiatus, the Korean Iron Age begins.
 - b) The intrusion of Korean and Chinese speakers into the peninsula trapped pre-Japanese speakers in a natural cul-de-sac.

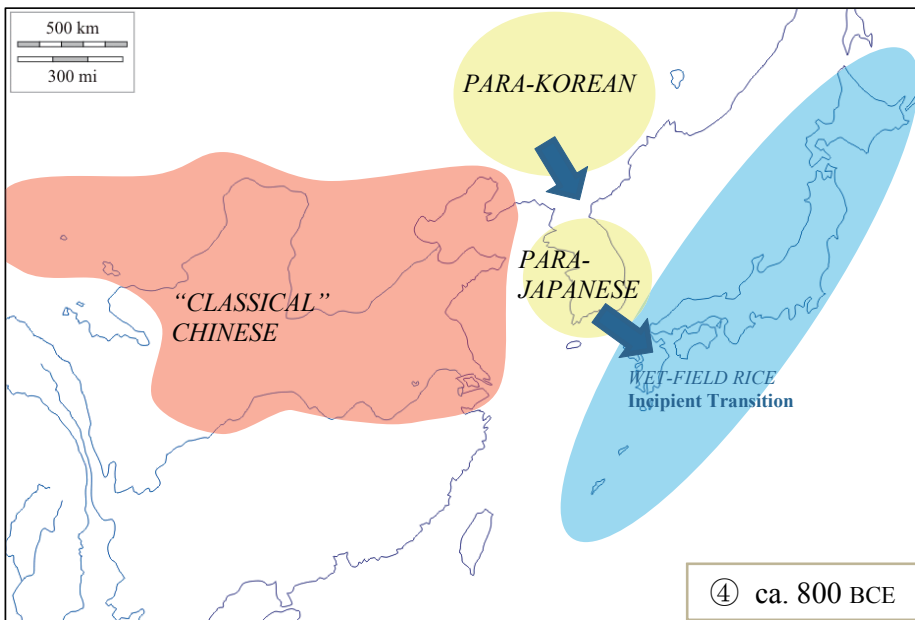
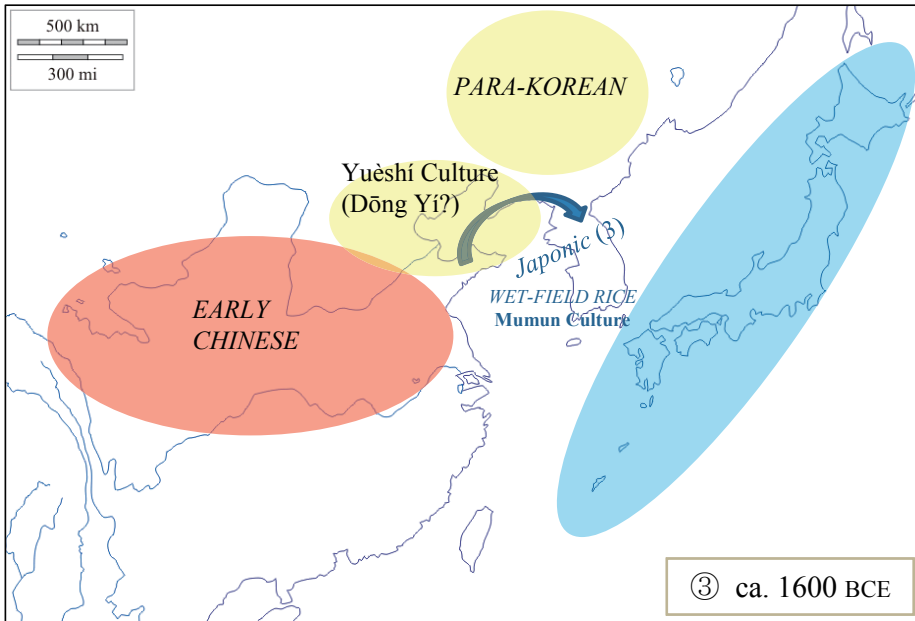
⁵ This scenario is consistent with Miyamoto (2009). Linguistic groups further south along the coast migrated either to Formosa (pre-Austronesian) or to southeastern China (pre-Daic).

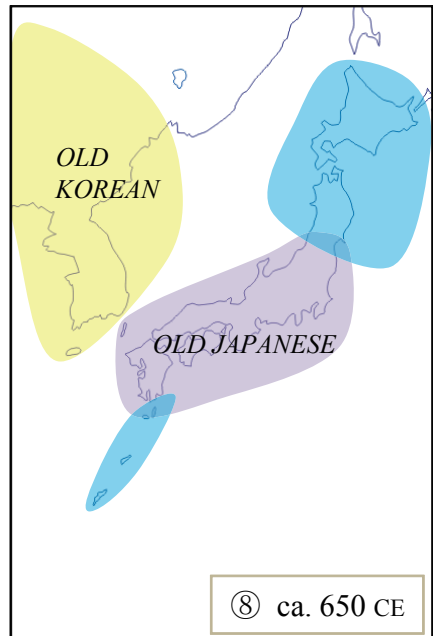
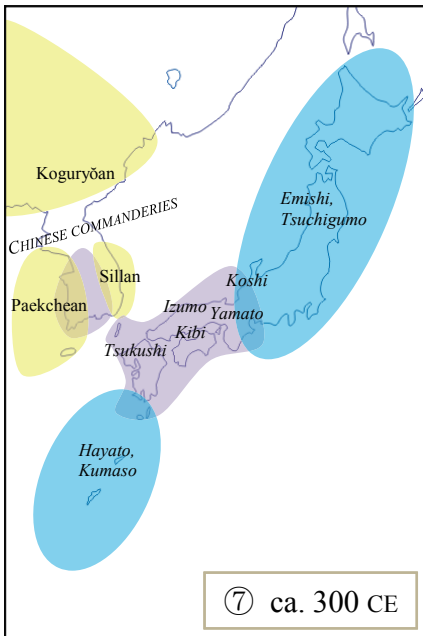
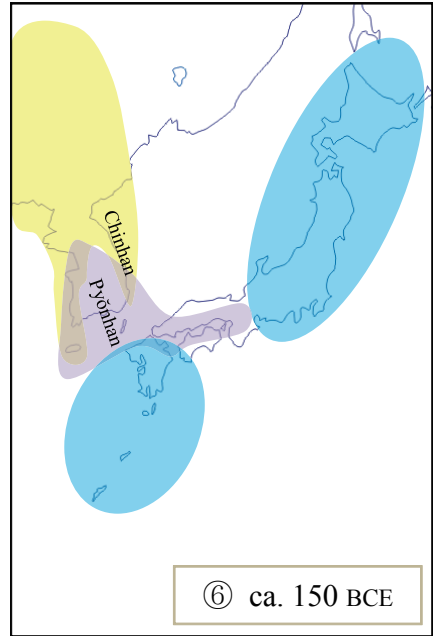
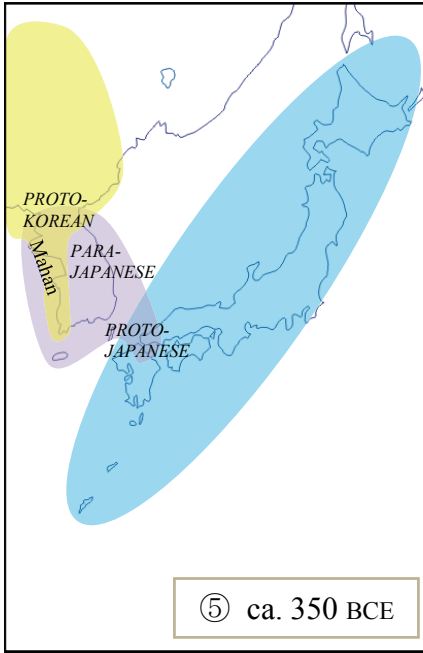
- i) At least two stages of migration occurred.
 - (1) In the first, pre-Japanese speakers from the southwestern quadrant of the peninsula settled permanently in northeastern Kyūshū and westernmost Honshū. They maintained contact with para-Japanese speakers in the Mahan area that became Paekche and the Pyōnhan area, over which Paekche and Silla subsequently struggled.
 - (2) In the second, pre-Japanese in the southeastern quadrant departed for the Izumo-Kibi region in Japan.
 - (3) Long-established para-Japanese place-names were retained by newcomer Korean speakers until the reformation of names under Unified Silla in the 8th century.
 - ii) The Chinese gave the politically disorganized Korean and para-Japanese groups to the south of the commanderies a recycled name for non-Chinese *γan 韓 because that syllable satisfactorily transcribed the word reflected in later Tungusic languages as *xala* 'tribe'. It was likely used by non-Chinese to the north as a pejorative for the southern groups, and became the source of K *kaya* ~ *kala* and J *kaya* ~ *kara*.
- 12) *The collapse of the Chinese commanderies doomed the survival of para-Japanese.*
- a) See again 2b iii) above.
 - b) See also maps 5 through 9 in Appendix II.
- 13) *Speakers of late para-Japanese introduced Old Korean and Early Middle Chinese words to Japan during the Kofun period.*
- a) Japan was not invaded by Puyōans, Paekcheans, or other non-Japonic peninsular peoples. Rather, para-Japanese speakers who had learned the rudiments of Korean culture used their knowledge to gain power and wealth in the islands. The history of this secondary development is reflected in the *Nihon shoki* records from the reign of Emperor Sujin onward.
 - b) Some Chinese stragglers who remained in Korea after the collapse of the commanderies (e.g. Aya 漢) joined para-Japanese speakers who struck out for the islands to seek their fortune. Even a few Korean-speaking renegades may have cast in their lot with the para-Japanese speakers.
 - c) Para-Japanese persisted longer in Paekche and Kaya than in other parts of the peninsula.
- 14) *There was never a period of interaction between Japanese and Korean of sufficient duration to alter the Japanese lexicon radically.*
- a) Assuming the languages are unrelated, pre-Yayoi interaction on the peninsula is not indicated (see 9).
 - b) Significant interaction in the islands during the Yayoi period is not indicated (see 5a).
 - c) Interaction from the Kofun period to the Nara period certainly occurred, but was limited in extent (see 7d).

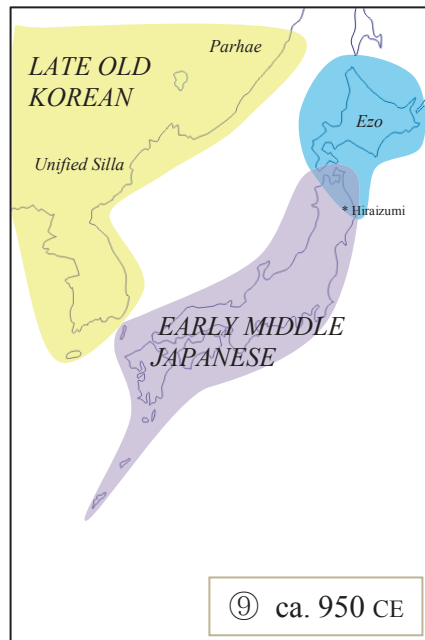
Appendix II

Hypothetical Linguistic Geography of Northeast Asia
from the Late Neolithic to Rise of the Three Kingdoms of Korea









Abstract: At present, no one has offered a definitive demonstration that the Japanese language is related to Korean, Manchu, Tamil, or any other language to which it has been compared. Thus, technically speaking, Japanese is an isolate, a language whose ancestors and all their other progeny now appear to be extinct. But to say that Japanese is an isolate does not answer specific questions, such as when and from where the earliest speakers of Japanese came to their present range. On the contrary, to claim that it does so is very different from merely giving reasons to reject this or that purported answer.

We have reasonably good estimates of the age of several large, highly diverse families of languages (e.g. Indo-European, Austronesian, Sinitic), and none is more than about 5,000 years old. Therefore, to say that Japanese is an isolate in the strong sense is to claim that it must be extraordinarily old, and that fate has annihilated every one of the other descendants of its ultimate ancestor over its immense lifespan. It is easy to imagine different prehistories in which such a situation arose, but none gets support from either non-linguistic or linguistic data, which are reviewed in detail in this paper. In the case of Japanese, pertinent non-linguistic evidence is copious and particularly useful in limiting the scope of realistic linguistic hypotheses.

《要旨》 日本語はこれまで、韓国語や満州語、タミール語などの言語と比較されてきたが、これらの言語と日本語との間の系統関係について説得力のある説はこれまでに提示されていない。このことを、日本語には「同じ系統に属する言語がない」という意味にとらえれば、日本語は孤立言語であるということになる。孤立言語とは、共通祖語から共に発達した他の言語が全て絶滅してしまい、一つだけが生き残ったと考えられる言語のことである。

日本語を孤立言語として扱ったとしても、例えば日本語話者の祖先がいつどこからこの地域にやってきたのか、というような、日本語の発達経緯に関するさまざまな疑問を解明することにはならない。だが、日本語と他の言語との系統関係を探り続けることで得られる知識は、たとえ不完全なものであるにしろ、日本語が孤立言語であると結論づけちゃうよりも、言語学的に貢献するところが大きい。

多様性に富み規模が大きいいくつかの言語族（例えば、インド・ヨーロッパ語族、オーストロネシア語族、中国語族）は、その共通祖語が話されていた年代がいつごろであるかについてかなり正確にわかっているが、これらの言語の存続が五千年を超えるものはない。それゆえに、日本語が厳密な意味での孤立言語であるという主張は、同時に、日本語が非常に古い言語であるということ、また、日本語が発達してきたと考えられるその途方もない長い時間の中で、同じ祖語から派生した日本語以外の全ての言語が絶滅する運命をたどったのだと主張することになる。そのような状況に至った経緯をさまざまに想像するのはたやすいが、本論文において詳しく検証するように、いかなる仮定的状況についても、言語学的あるいは非言語学的側面から立証することは難しい。日本の先史について言えば、関連する言語以外の情報がかなり豊富に存在するので、言語の発達経緯の研究過程で、そのような情報を、言語学的仮説の範疇を特定したり修正してゆくために大いに利用すべきである。

J. Marshall UNGER (J. マーシャル・アンガー)

Invited Professor, Department of Cross-Linguistic Studies, NINJAL (August–November 2013)

Professor, Department of East Asian Languages & Literatures, The Ohio State University (USA)

1975 Ph.D. Yale University (Linguistics)

Books:

- 2009 *The role of contact in the origins of the Japanese and Korean languages*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- 2005 *Ideogram: Chinese characters and the myth of disembodied meaning*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
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