

The relationship between Koreanic and Japonic Languages in prehistory and ancient history:
Historical texts and archaeological data revisited

Jangsuk Kim and Jinho Park (Seoul National University, Korea)

Some linguists argue that language of *Koguryeo*, an ancient state located in northern Korea and modern-day northeast China during the 1st century BCE through 7th century CE, belonged to Japonic family, or was a link connecting Koreanic and Japonic languages. Based on the toponyms presented in *Samgusagi*, the oldest historical text of Korea, they assert that northern Korean language had closer affinity to Japonic language than southern Korean language did. But, this claim is based on misinterpretation of politico-cultural situations described in *Samgusagi*.

Reinterpretation of the text and political situations reveals that most toponyms of Koguryeo shown in *Samgusagi* were in fact those of *Baekje*, a state located in central-southwestern Korea. We suggest that if there was an ancient language related to Japonic languages on the Korean Peninsula, it would probably have been southern Korean language (which might have been initially formed between the 15th to 13th centuries BCE as rice farming was introduced to southern Korea) rather than northern Korean language. Archaeological data strongly suggest that Japan had had closer interaction with southern Korea since the 10th century BCE, while there is little evidence for direct interaction with northern Korea. Various population estimates obtained from archaeological data demonstrate that farmers from southern Korea continuously moved to Japan during the first millennium BCE, especially at a large-scale between the sixth and third centuries BCE.

Archaeological and historical materials also suggest that southern Korea and Japan maintained close political and commercial interactions in the late half of the first millennium BCE and early half of the first millennium CE, and witnessed another large-scale population movement from southern Korean to Japan in the 7th century CE.