CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PROTO-JAPANESE-KOGURYOIC HOMELAND

Some scholars working on the problem of Japanese ethnolinguistic origins have long argued that on the basis of certain cultural features the Japanese people should have come from a part of continental Asia further to the south than Korea or other areas near Japan. A serious linguistic argument was made in support of this position by Murayama Shichirô (1966), who cited some parallels between Japanese and Tibeto-Burman. Other chapters of this book show that the proximal homeland of Japanese is the same as that of their close genetic relatives, the Puyo-Koguryoic languages—i.e., the Liao-hsi area and vicinity—and that Japanese-Ryukyuan and Puyo-Koguryoic diverged at about the time of the Yayoi migration to Japan. However, lexical evidence presented in this chapter, together with typological linguistic evidence and some cultural evidence (see Chapter 2), indicates that the Japanese-Koguryoic people migrated to the Liao-hsi area from much further south.

Directly to the south of Liao-hsi is a vast territory that has been Chinese-speaking from Antiquity on, and indeed it has long been accepted that a small number of Japanese words are loans from Old Chinese. These are generally thought to have been borrowed during the Later Han Dynasty or afterward, via trade and political contacts with China. Among the most frequently cited of these words are umā ‘horse’, borrowed from an early form of Chinese 马 má ‘horse’, and ume ‘plum’, similarly from Chinese 梅 méi ‘plum’. These etymologies have been accepted partly because neither horses nor plum trees are native to Japan and partly because both words are virtually identical to their Middle Chinese and Modern Mandarin equivalents except for the initial vowel or geminate nasal consonant of the Japanese forms. Other than these and a few other words, no Old Chinese elements have been considered to exist in Japanese. Yet it is clear that if the speakers of Proto-Japanese migrated to Japan from mainland East Asia in Antiquity, there must have been a much broader, deeper, and older loan relationship with languages there than that suggested by the above two words. To demonstrate this is not in fact very difficult (though ex-
plaining the relationship is another matter), but hitherto virtually nothing has been done on this problem. The present effort is only a beginning that barely scratches the surface of what should be a major subfield of Japanese historical linguistics.\(^1\)

There are ‘native Japanese’ words for numerous things, including animals, plants, and cultural artifacts, which were not found in Japan before—and in some cases even after—the Yayoi migration.\(^2\) Many of these words must have been brought to Japan with the Proto-Japanese Yayoi people. While some of them were clearly acquired in the Common Japanese-Koguryoic period in Northeast Asia, others, the words under consideration in the present chapter, have come from much further away in space and time. A few of the most salient etymologies are presented here with a view to locating the homeland, or *Urheimat*, of the Proto-Japanese-Koguryoic speakers. The phonological characteristics of most such words indicate they were borrowed into Japanese-Koguryoic from Chinese and other languages after the Shang dynasty (the Early Old Chinese period), but well before the Ch’in and Han dynasties (the Late Old Chinese period), in several stages, at least two of which are identifiable. The words belong to the ‘cultural vocabulary’ sector and the ‘primary vocabulary’\(^3\) sector of the lexicon.

**CULTURAL VOCABULARY**

*Japanese* uma ‘horse’

In addition to OKog *meru ‘colt’ (q.v. Chapters 3 and 6) and OJpn *uma ‘horse’, some form of the root syllable of a word for ‘horse’, *mar-*, is found in most eastern Eurasian languages—e.g., Mongol *mori-n*, Korean mal [mar] (from MKor măr) Mandarin Chinese mà, Burmese mrañ, and others. The Chinese word for ‘horse’, 马 NMan mà, from MChi *ma*\(^2\) (Pul. 206 *ma*\(^2\) /ˈmeː\(\text{}}}\), which was undoubtedly borrowed from the same western Eurasian source as the animal itself, is currently reconstructed by scholars working in the HSR (Historic

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\(^1\) This chapter is essentially exploratory, and more than the ideal number of mistakes may have been committed in it. I hope that future scholars will greatly improve on what is tentatively presented here.

\(^2\) The same point is made, with several other examples, by G.N. Kiyose (2002).

\(^3\) The term ‘primary vocabulary’ is used here to emphasize the fact that the traditional idea of ‘basic vocabulary’ is at best highly suspect. See Chapter 10.