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Kupchik, John 2023. *Azuma Old Japanese: A comparative grammar and reconstruction* (Trends in Linguistics. Documentation 40). Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. Pp. XXXIV + 522

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There are three key reasons why the very cover and title page of the book under review¹ here caught this writer’s eye: (1) the term *Azuma*, (2) the glottonym *Old Japanese*, and (3) the name of the author of the book. Actually, this writer has been familiar with all the three “lexical items”, yet it was spotting them together on the cover of a volume just released that triggered not only the present text but also an irresistible impulsion to have the book at hand on the shelf of his own library along with standing there other works of primary importance focusing on, or related to, Old Japanese. Astonishingly (or rather *not* astonishingly²), the date of publication of almost all of these works starts with <20> and almost all of them are either authored (~ coauthored) by Alexander (“Sasha”) Vovin or in some other way (acknowledgements of academic supervision or support, citations, references, polemics, etc.) associated with him.

In the second edition of his Western Old Japanese (WOJ) grammar (2020:20), he wrote that “[...] there are *very few general descriptions* of the” WOJ “language grammar published even in Japanese. Surprisingly enough, *none* of these descriptions *is complete*”³; he briefly characterized only one such grammar and three⁴ “much shorter works” (*ib.*) to

¹ Addressed, in the first place, to “general linguists” who are interested in results presented in such works, but not engaged or specializing in, or unrelated to, Japanological research.

² See Kupchik et al. 2021, especially “Biography ...” IX-XIV, “List of Publications...” XV-XXIX, *Tabula Gratulatoria* XXX-XXXIII, “Acknowledgements” XXXIV, and “Introduction” (by Kupchik, 1(-2)).

³ *Italics* afm for the purposes of this review; Vovin’s 2020 grammar expands over 1339 pp.

⁴ Actually two (Umetomo Saeki 1933 and Noriyuki Shirafuji 1987), the former republished in “several new and enlarged and improved editions” which “can be used as a very good introduction to Old Japanese, but [...] it still remains too sketchy in many details” (*ib.*). The only grammar, described as “the main and the most detailed” but “accessible only to the people who have mastered Classical Japanese” (*ib.*) was Yoshio

conclude his short survey with the sentence “There is only one general grammatical sketch of Old Japanese written in a Western language (Syromyatnikov 1972)” (*ib.*, 21)⁵.

The “only” Western-language sketch referred to above does but mention dialect differentiation: “Records of the 8th century do not reflect all the dialects, but mainly the Central Western and, to some extent, the Eastern [...] In the present work, Eastern dialectal features are rendered sporadically because of lack of space” (Syromyatnikov 1981:13⁶). “Mention[ing] just the *most fundamental ones*” among writings with Eastern Old Japanese in the focus of their authors’ attention, Vovin & Ishisaki-Vovin (2022: IX, also 483-4, 486-7) specifically refer to four such works, three by “Japanese” scholars (Yoshisuke Fukuda 1965, Tadao Hōjō 1966, and Yoshiharu Mizushima 1984) and only one by “Western” scholar: John Kupchik (2011).

The latter is a really fundamental and monumental, also in size (over 1050 pp.), PhD dissertation, considered “unpublished”⁷ in Vovin & Ishisaki-Vovin 2022: 486 despite being globally e-accessible. The title announces “a grammar of *Eastern Old Japanese dialects* [plural]”. Interestingly, all the three other works by Japanese authors referred to by the Vovins as “fundamental” include the word *Azuma* in their titles⁸. The lexeme itself is quite tricky. Generally, it is a proper noun~name, personal and geographic~topographical, and historical. As an *anthroponym*, it can function as a family name written in a number of “untypical~unusual ways” (the most frequent being 東, but also 吾妻, あずま, 吾孀, 阿妻, 我妻, 阿室, 安部間, 阿部摩, 四阿), or its constituent (like e.g. in *Azumai* 東井, *Azumaji* 吾妻路~東路~東道~東地, *Azumaya* 東家~東谷~東屋, *Azumana-*

Yamada’s “History of the Nara period grammar” of 1913 (with “several enlarged and corrected editions and many reprints”; Vovin also warns that “Yamada’s grammar does not really differentiate between Western and Eastern Old Japanese, treating them as if they were data from the same language”, although Yamada was aware of the grammatical differences (*ib.* also p. 1242).

⁵ A very competent opinion: the “Western language” in this case is Russian, Vovin’s native tongue. It was published in English translation in 1981 (in Bentley’s 2001: 2 opinion, it was “rather poorly translated from the original Russian”).

⁶ In the original (1972: 9): “В памятниках VIII в. отражены не все диалекты, а в основном центрально-западный и частично восточный [...]. В данном очерке по недостатку места восточные диалектизмы приводятся лишь спорадически”.

⁷ In this writer’s opinion, “traditionally”: seemingly, for a larger part of scholars more advanced in years who were professionally active in the pre-internet epoch treating PhD and other degree-dissertations as “unpublished” was obvious, hence using the attribute in reference lists was mechanical. This writer found it not only in the book just quoted. Vovin’s name appears on the title page of Kupchik 2011 as that of <Chairperson of the Dissertation Committee at Hawai’i>, cf. as well “Acknowledgements” (*ib.*, p. iii).

⁸ Fukuda 1965: *Nara jidai Azuma hōgen-no kenkyū* [a study of the Eastern Japanese dialects in the Nara period]; Hōjō 1966: *Jōdai Azuma hōgen-no kenkyū* [a study of the Eastern Japanese dialects]; Mizushima 1984: *Man’yōshū Azuma uta-no kokugogakuteki kenkyū* [a linguistic study of the *Man’yōshū*’s eastern poems]; all readings and translations, with minor cosmetics, taken from Vovin & Ishisaki-Vovin who listed also three other works by Mizushima with similar titles including <*Azuma*>. Evidently the title of the same 1966 work by Hojo (北条忠雄) – 上代東国方言の研究 in the original orthography - was in Kupchik 2011: transliterated as <*Jōdai tōgoku hōgen-no kenkyū*>, although in the case of Fukuda 1964 (奈良時代東国方言の研究) and Mizushima 1984 (萬葉集東歌の国語学的研究) the transliterations of both Vovins 2022: 483 and 487 and Kupchik 2011: 1014 and 1016 are the same. *Nota bene*, for Hojo 1966 both Kupchik 2011 and 2023 indicate different Publisher (Maruzen) than Vovin 2020 and Vovins 2022 (Nihon gakujutsu shinkōkai – the same as indicated on the book in this writer’s eyeshot).

da 東洋), or also as a (masculine) given name (e.g. 東, 吾妻, 雷, or アズマ in comics and for fictitious characters in other arts; see e.g. Nichigai 1990: vol. “family names” 11, 260, 374, vol. “given names” 7-9, 402-3, 550). As a *toponym* it appears (or appeared in the past until recent administrative changes) in names of mountains and volcanoes (e.g. Azumayasan 四阿山 2384 (Gumma), *Azuma kofuji* 吾妻小富士 1707 (Fukushima), Azumayasan 四阿屋山 1387 (Nagano), Azumaneyama 東根山 928 (Iwate), Azumayasan 四阿屋山 771 (Saitama), Azumadake 東岳 684 (Aomori), Azumanesan 東峰山 619 (Iwate), Azumamoriyama 東森山 153 (Miyagi), but also the whole volcanic *Azumayama* 吾妻山 Mountain Range (*Azuma kasan* 吾妻火山 ~ *Azuma rempō* 吾妻連峰)⁹, villages 東村 and towns 東町 (e.g. *Azuma-machi* in Inashiki, Ibaraki, till 2003, also *Azuma-chō* in Izumi, Kagoshima, till 2006) throughout Japan and as a constituent of endemic plant names (like *azumagiku* 東菊 [-*ezogiku* 蝦夷菊] *Aster dubius*; *azumanezasa* 東根笹 *Pleioblastus chino*; *azuma ichige* 東一華 *Anemone raddeana*; *azuma shakunage* 東シヤクナゲ *Rhododendron degronianum*), names of hotels and resorts (like e.g. *Sado Resort Hotel Azuma* on Sado Island or capsule hotel *Ryoma Higashi Azuma* and several others in Tokyo, not to speak of objects like *Hotel Azzun Orient Spa & Wellness* in Mazury Lakeland of north-eastern Poland with Website also in Japanese), boats, warships, even pieces of women’s wear (like footwear *azumageta* 東下駄 or overcoat *azuma kōto* 東コート). Close relations between anthroponyms and toponyms¹⁰ have been observed in very many (perhaps most) among the world’s languages (i.e., probably still less than 20% of them adequately studied, described, and known), hence all the lexemes quoted above in all probability can be treated as hyponyms to be reducible to (or to have their source in) their hyperonym (“common semantic denominator”) being the historical toponym *Azuma* defined by the immortal Edmond Papinot in his *Historical and Geographical Dictionary of Japan* as “the name formerly given to the 15 eastern and northern provinces of Honshū”¹¹. Great Japanese-English *Kenkyusha* dictionaries explain the entry word “Azuma” as “east; East [Eastern] Japan; the eastern provinces; the East land” (4th Edition 1974) and “the Kantō region [but in Japanese as “the old name of the Kantō region”: 関東地方の古称 *Kantō chihō-no koshō*]; Eastern [East] Japan; eastern provinces; *Azuma-no kuni* 東の国 the lands east of the Osaka barrier 逢坂の関より東 *Ōsaka-no seki-yori higashi*; the Kantō region; Eastern [East] Japan; the eastern provinces”. Great dictionaries record also other historical compounds and phrases of interest (not only to linguists) like highly contrasting *azuma-otoko* (東男) and *azuma-ebisu* (東えびす), the former positively underlining

⁹ Examples in part quoted from Tokuhisa et al. 2011: 26-7; numbers indicate elevation above sea level in meters (m.a.s.l.).

¹⁰ Personal names are often associated with names of places where their bearers come from and place names are often associated with the names of their discoverers, founders, owners, etc.

¹¹ P. 43 in the *First* [Charles E.] Tuttle [Company] edition, *Eighth printing* 1984 used. Papinot (1860-1942) related it “etymologically” with the legendary exclamation “*Azuma wa ya!* [吾妻はや <吾妻] ‘ah, ma femme!’”. His dictionary was first published in 1899 in French as *Dictionnaire japonais-français des noms principaux de l’histoire et de la géographie de Japon* and its English version released in 1906 is in consecutive editions and reprints on sale till these days.

masculinity (~machismo), the latter, clearly discriminatory, derogatively implying primitivism, cultural inferiority, barbarousness, hence contempt for persons spoken about¹².

In a very short “Preface” (pp. V-VI; one would definitely welcome its author to be much less economical in his words) to his *Grammar* presented here, and in the initial part of its “Introduction” (1-2), Kupchik defined his understanding of the term *Azuma*, or rather its understanding for the purposes of compiling his grammar (initially planned to be “a book about the phonology and phonetics”, only “later deciding” that it would be better to expand it into a full grammar” (V) – general linguists will be long blessing and praising him for such decision). In his words, the modifier *Azuma* in the glottonym <Azuma Old Japanese> is a toponym: “It should be noted from the outset that” he uses the glottonym (abbreviated to) ““AOJ” as a purely areal term” (1). This reviewer, however, eagerly looks at it as if at a new internationally acceptable language name, like e.g. **Azuman* (an extinct member of *Japonic languages*), on the horizon.

The author of the book returns to the term in the first sentences of the “Introduction”: “The Azuma Old Japanese (...AOJ) dialects were spoken in Japan during the Nara period (8th c. CE) in the eastern region called Azuma that stretched from present-day Shizuoka and Nagano, east to Ibaraki, and all areas between them extending southward to the Pacific. The large northeastern area [...] that covered present-day Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate, and Aomori” Prefectures “was also included” [...] (p. 1).

The date (1999)/2000 marked not only the turn of the century, and the millennium, but also the turn of the epoch in the history of Western research in/on the oldest attested~recorded stage of what gradually developed into the <modern Japanese language>. The 170 pages of (“only one”) Syromyatnikov 1972 (140 pages in the 1981 English

¹² Both Kenkyusha 4th and 5th editions translate the former as “a man from East(ern) Japan” (“regarded as more manly than those from the area around Kyoto”, 5th, p. 45) and illustrate it with the phrase *azuma-otokoni kyōonna*, translating it “the best men are found in Edo and the best women in Kyoto” and interpreting it “Go to East Japan for manly (masculine) qualities; go to Kyoto for womanly (feminine) beauty” (4th) and “Eastern Japan for manliness; Kyoto for feminine charm” (5th). The latter is translated in Kenkyusha 4th as “savages in the eastern provinces” and the *ebisu* component (noted with the character 夷) in a separate entry is rendered as “barbarian; a savage”; in Kenkyusha 5th it seems to be absent but both editions include the entry *tōi* (東夷) found also in Kenkyusha 2nd edition (here illustrated with two other very interesting historical terms: *tōi seibatsu* 東夷征伐 “the subjugation of the eastern barbarians” and *tōi sei shōgun* 東夷征將軍 “a commander of an expedition against the eastern barbarians; a military commissioner of the barbarian east”) and in many other monolingual (cf. e.g., Kodansha’s 1989:39 elegant explanation of the entry *Azuma ebisu* as 京都の人が東国の武士をさげすんでいった語 ‘a term used by Kyotoites to express looking down upon ~ spurning the warriors of the eastern provinces’) and bilingual (including Nelson and New Nelson, “a must” on the desk of almost every student of Japanese) dictionaries. Both the word *ebisu* and the character 夷 (read *ebisu* or *i*) were in the past predominantly used as ethnonyms for the ‘Ainu’. These, longish and possibly perceived as superfluous, lecture-like elucubrations in this footnote resulted from this writer’s astonishing observation that the historical toponym *Azuma* and its graphic notation as well as terms associated with it were not known even to many graduates in Japanese studies; the astonishment vanished immediately upon finding the absence of not only the appropriate entry in the first volume of the eight-vols. *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* (and its first *Supplement* (1986), too) but possibly even a single occurrence of the term throughout the entire 1983 edition as an inspection of its *Index* would suggest (while the entry “Satsuma Province” *Satsuma-no kuni*, considered in Japanese literature as opposite (at least “phonetically”: *-tsuma~zuma* implied ‘end, edge, verge, fringe, margin, rim, brim, brink, tip, side, shore, extremity, border, frontier, peripheries’) to “Azuma provinces” *Azuma-no kuni*, does have its place in vol. 7). Flash haphazard checking in a number of “histories of Japan”, “dictionaries of Japanese history” included, concluded with the same effect.

translation) mentioned above were replaced by the whole library of bulky publications of fundamental significance for the discipline (like e.g. Bentley 2001, Miyake 2003, Kupchik 2011, Vovin 2009-20, ²2020 (¹2005/I-2009/II), Vovin & Ishisaki-Vovin 2022, Kupchik 2023 focused on in the present text, Frellesvig & Kinsui 2024) as well as an eruption and proliferation of minor supportive contributions (e.g. Kupchik & Alonso & Miyake 2011:VVIII-XXIV, 5-64; resp. chapters in Frellesvig & Kinsui 2024) and numerous journal articles (e.g., listed in bibliographies attached in the works just mentioned). Research in the field was so intensive that “revised, updated, enlarged”, etc., editions proved necessary within a decade or two (cf. fn. 13).

Kupchik 2023 belongs also to this latter category, being (as expected) a “rewritten” Kupchik 2011. “Looking back on” his “dissertation several years later”, its author “realized it needed many significant revisions, rewrites, and additional analyses” (V). Such a sequence of events, approaches, and receptions of one’s own work should be considered normal and typical in academic biographies and dissertations should be first preprinted for bureaucratic (official) procedures and a “several years” buffer period before their final much more mature on many obvious reasons) publication proves always beneficial. The author’s “looking back” turned out to be very critical as he openly admits: “There were many typographical errors, topics with insufficient discussion, and my *views on certain aspects the data had evolved or changed completely over time*”. Rewriting involved additions of “a *significant amount of new text*” and “a few new chapters” but also replacement of “more than 400 pages [cf. the total number of pages mentioned above] of phonological comparison charts” with their summaries¹³, simultaneously reminding readers particularly interested in details about their availability in Kupchik 2011 (*ib.*, *italics* afm.).

The front matter of the book introduced here expands over 34 pages ([I]-XXXIV) and includes *i.a.* “Preface” (cf. above), two tables of contents (the first, IX-XI, standard size, and the other “Extended table of contents”, XIII-XXVIII), “Glossing [and] translation conventions” (XXIX), and “Abbreviations” (“Grammatical Terms”, XXXI-XXXII; “Azuma Old Japanese Provinces /Topolects”, XXXII-XXXIII; “Language varieties”, “Texts”, “Primary Manuscripts”, XXXIII; “Other” (three items), XXXIV). The idea to introduce the two tables of contents is an interesting logistic proposal welcomed and recommended for more frequent application¹⁴ in similar publications: each of them performs a different function¹⁵.

The core of the monograph is organized into ten units (the author calls them “chapters”¹⁶), the first of them being “Introduction” (1-21) which informs on grammatical and

¹³ This reviewer shares in full Kupchik’s opinion that it “would be easier to read and more useful for researchers” (especially those not intending to specialize in studying the history of the Japanese language to whom the present review is addressed in the first place).

¹⁴ But not overuse: probably in a majority of similar cases a good extensive index (or indices) surely is a better, more user-friendly, solution.

¹⁵ And both can be irritating, when only one of them is present and index is meager: while one is too laconic, not informative enough, the other is too time-consuming in use and often purposelessly increases redundancy. See further in this text mentioning the full title of the “Index”.

¹⁶ This reviewer is perhaps too old to get accustomed to treat introductions (also prefaces, conclusions, appendices, etc.), as <chapters> (in his world order, except for <preface>, they follow the <introduction>).

typological features of the language described as well as on its place on the linguistic map and among other -lects of the eighth century Japan, but also on the state of the art in *Azuman* philological and linguistic research. It also defines the “structure and aims” of the book and, since it is to be a grammar of a language (one of the -lects) in use more than a millennium ago, long since extinct but/and preserved in poetry only, briefly explains or informs on sources, manuscripts, versification, metrics, writing system(s) involved, phonetic and phonemic reconstructions, orthography and transliterations, to conclude with specifying the author’s goal – the key terms used are <descriptive grammar> and <reference grammar> (the latter being used in relation to chapters 3 to 10 – “the second section of the book”; 21) – *exactly* what *general* linguistics and linguists are in need of as far as Old Japanese is concerned.

[Chapter] 2 (23-104) constitutes a study of post-Proto-Japanese period sound changes involving reconstructions of several proto-lects (like Proto-Japanese, Proto-Eastern Old Japanese, Azuma Old Japanese topolects) and “numerous protoforms” to propose “a new subgrouping of the Old Japanese dialects” and “a detailed grouping of Eastern Old Japanese topolects. This chapter has many changes and revisions to the reconstruction and analysis presented in Kupchik” 2011 (23). [Chapter] 3 (105-17) entitled “Vowel elision, *rendaku*¹⁷, and assimilations” is also concentrating on phonemics, but the description is synchronic and focusing on Azuman.

[Chapter] 4 (119-42) “Lexicon” devotes about one page (119-20) to the native (Japonic stock) vocabulary, two and half pages (120-2) to Korean, five lines (140) to Chinese, a little over one page and half (141-2) to Austronesian, and eighteen pages (123-40)¹⁸ to Ainu loanwords¹⁹.

What follows is exactly what one expect to find in the first place in any grammar of any language one reaches for to consult. [Chapter] 5 treats “Nominals” ((143-243), subgrouped into nouns (143-209), pronouns (209-37) and number names (237-43, with classifiers); [chapter] 6 (245-73) describes uninflective adjectives (one example of a reduplicated adjective found, 251) and conjugable “adjectival” verbs (no tense and aspect); [chapter] 7 (277-426), “Verbs” constitutes the longest unit in the book, and no wonder: its first sentence confirms the expected: the verb indeed is “the most morphologically complex” lexical category in the language described – with grammatical categories of *i.a.* negation, aspect, tense, mood²⁰, voice, retrospection, honorification, rich inventory of categorial markers (*i.a.* affixes (292-383), auxiliaries (384-419), reduplication (425-6)). This “reference” part of the grammar ends with three short chapters on, perforce com-

¹⁷ ‘sequential voicing’ 連濁, the voicing of initial consonants in the non-initial components of compound words (e.g. *hitobito* < *hito* + *hito*, *tegami* < *te* + *kami*, *daidokoro* < *dai* + *tokoro*, *benjo* < *ben* + *sho*; in Old Japanese prenasalization was additionally involved).

¹⁸ 75% of the chapter text – the foremost important argument for this reviewer to secure a permanent place for Kupchik’s *Azuman* grammar on one of the more prominently exposed (still not clear, be it “Ainu” or “Japanese”) shelves of his library.

¹⁹ In the case of Ainu, it is a “critical assessment of [Vovin’s] proposals” (123) categorized into toponymic, lexical, and morphological borrowings, and into “plausible (accepted)” and “problematic (rejected)”

²⁰ “Arguably the most notable characteristic of [Azuman] verbs is the rich system of mood markers” (277).

mented lists of: 8 “Adverbs” (427-34, including adverbial constructions), 9 “Conjunctions” (435-40, and “Particles” (441²¹-82).

No special unit for syntax in the book but all relevant information (like primary and secondary word order, verb serialization, reduplications, particle placement) can easily be found in the units presented to readers above.

The final units of the book are: an appendix (“A classification of poems in [*Man'yōshū* poetic anthology] Book 14 based on linguistic features” with 379 footnote comments, 483-509), list of “References” (511-17), and “Index (supplement to the Extended Table of Contents)” (519-22).

To be sure, much more time than that passed since the publication date of the book under review²² and much more experience with staying and getting familiarized with it, consulting it, using for purposes now not to be named, is needed to more adequately and more objectively evaluate and appreciate its usefulness (especially, if its user does not aspire to get deeply involved either in the history of the Japanese language or, say, translating the *Man'yōshū* poetry). Nevertheless, this reviewer's early impressions from closer several hours long inspection of the volume are very positive and promising, the structure of argumentation makes the reading pleasant, and the transparent (often tabularized) presentation of the Azuman linguistic material strengthens the user's trust in its reliability. Definitely, with the release of this Kupchik's grammar we now have at our disposal what we never had before. It elegantly (also visually) complements the recent (21st-century) “whole Old Japanese library” mentioned above: phonetic and phonemic reconstructions, three grammars (Early Old Japanese prose, Western Old Japanese, Eastern Old Japanese), and two dictionaries (Eastern Old Japanese and Ancient Japanese phonograms)²³.

What general linguists are still lacking, however, are – suitable for them – dictionaries of earlier stages of Japanese²⁴.

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²¹ One more quotation: “Particles are a fundamental aspect of the grammar of the [Azuma Old Japanese] dialects. [They] can be separated into seven classes: focus..., emphatic..., question..., restrictive..., desiderative..., ironic..., and quotative particles” (441).

²² Oct. 24, 2023; this text typed May 2024.

²³ We avoid here discussing or listing electronic-only tools, seemingly quite numerous and seemingly not attractive to “non-Japanologist” linguists, like < Bjarke Frellesvig & Stephen Wright Horn et al. (eds.) 2023. *Oxford-NINJAL Corpus of Old Japanese* available at: <http://oncoj.ninjal.ac.jp/>> (probably the best source and tool in the making for Japanologist linguists).

²⁴ Like Old Japanese-to- [Western, e.g. English], but also... Classical Japanese (文語~古文)-to [Western], arranged user-friendly, perhaps with entries arranged like in e.g. standard *Kenkyūsha* dictionaries of Contemporary Japanese (transliteration – original orthography – equivalents in translation, preferably with examples and comments) but offering material of e.g. popular and indispensable in Japan 古語辞典 *kogo jiten* ‘dictionaries of Classical Japanese’. The lack of such dictionaries seems unbelievable.

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