

**[W10] – The (Pre)History of the Languages of Japan – Current issues and prospects**  
**Thursday September 7<sup>th</sup> – 13h30-17h**

**Organisers:**

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In spite of its tenacious reputation of being a monolingual country, Japan is actually home to a variety of languages that reflects a rich and complex linguistic history. Although this diversity is now finally starting to be acknowledged and protected, most of the minority languages of Japan are now severely endangered (Moseley 2009).

Thus, this workshop aims at embracing this diversity and at fostering multiple and interdisciplinary approaches to the questions regarding the linguistic (pre)history of Japan.

In this perspective, we will try to bring together researchers of diverse backgrounds and expertise, and to stimulate a discussion about the interactions of various approaches and scales of consideration.

**Context**

Over the past decades, a lot of research has been conducted on the history of the languages of Japan, and substantial advances have been made on the interaction between archaeological, genetic and linguistic data (for instance, Lee and Hasegawa 2011; Jarosz et al. 2022).

However, the hypothesis of a possible relatedness of the Japonic language family with any other neighbouring language families (and most notably with Koreanic) remains controversial (see for instance Vovin 2010 vs Robbeets 2005).

On an inner Japonic level, since the seminal works of Kindaichi Haruhiko and Hattori Shirō, the past decades have seen a spectacular surge of dialectology, which allowed new discoveries regarding the inner classification of Japonic (Kibe et al. 2021; Igarashi 2021), even though the classification of some famous “language islands” such as Hachijō are still a matter of debate (see Kupchik 2011: 7; vs Pellard 2015: 15 or 2018: 2).

In the meantime, Japan also saw important development in sociolinguistics (Heinrich and Ōhara, 2019; Asahi et al. 2022), which allowed to observe a lot of recent and ongoing language shifts, and especially the importance of new language contacts (ex. Long 2018).

On a philological scale, the numerous studies conducted recently on Eastern Old Japanese (Kupchik 2011; Vovin 2021), on Old Okinawan (Tawata 2010; Lin 2015; Serafim and Shinzato 2021), and the publication of the Oxford-NINJAL corpus of Old Japanese (NINJAL 2020) have dramatically transformed the access to ancient language data.

Similarly, a lot of progress has been made on the reconstructions of proto-languages, following the works of Martin (1987) and Thorpe (1983), and their revisions by Miyake (2003), Shimabukuro (2007) and Frellesvig and Whitman (2008). Intermediary proto-languages have also started to be reconstructed, for instance Proto-North-Ryukyuan (Lawrence 2009) and Proto-South-Ryukyuan (Jarosz 2019). However, in this perspective, one can but lament the lack of a proper etymological dictionary of the Japonic languages, since, sadly, Alexander Vovin could not complete his ambitious project during his lifetime.

On another note, a lot has also been uncovered on the (pre)history of Ainu languages since Vovin’s seminal work (1993), but a lot of questions still remain. Most notably, there is still no consensus regarding the origin of the Ainu, and Ainu can still not be classified as anything but an isolate. In parallel, however, the question of the contact and loans between Ainu and Japonic varieties has become a very active field of research (e.g.: Vovin 2009; Kupchik 2021).

Finally, based on Supalla's works on the linguistic history of the American Sign Language, Japanese Sign Language also has recently become an object of historical and comparative research (Nakamura 2006; Sasaki 2007; Kanda and Osugi 2011). Since that research, the critically endangered indigenous sign languages of Japan such as Amami Sign Language and Miyakubo Sign Language are also gaining rising attention (Kanda and Kimura 2016). However, there is still a lot to be discovered on the origin and evolutions of sign languages in Japan.

### **Research questions and goals:**

Our workshop aims at studying the history and prehistory of all indigenous languages of Japan. Those include discussions on the proto-languages, as well as the ancient and modern forms of all the following:

- mainland Japanese varieties
- Hachijō language
- Ryukyuan languages
- Ainu languages
- 'contact languages', such as Bonin English and Ogasawara Japanese
- sign languages: Japanese Sign Language, Amami Sign Language, Miyakubo Sign Language

Furthermore, we wish to study those languages from several perspectives. Thus, we welcome contribution propositions that may discuss (but need not be limited to):

- the prehistory of the languages of Japan and of their speakers
- the history of those languages
- the changes in the "linguistic ecology" of Japan
- the ongoing changes in the synchrony of the languages of Japan
- the languages of Japan outside of Japan, as heritage or migrant languages (for instance, in Hawai'i, in South America, etc.)
- the implementation of recent concepts and of new technologies to the historical linguistics of those languages

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**List of the accepted contributions in the presentation order:**

1. **13h30-14h** – Tomomi Satō (Hokkaido University) and Anna Bugaeva (Tokyo University of Science), *On stative/active intransitive split within tripartite alignment: A case of Kuril Ainu*
  2. **14h-14h30** – Moriyo Shimabukuro (University of the Ryukyus), *The debuccalization of \*p in the Naha dialect of the Ryukyuan language*
  3. **14h30-15h** – Tomohide Kinuhata (Fukuoka University), *Reconstructing the Proto-Japonic demonstrative system*
  4. **15h-15h30** – John L.A. Huisman (Uppsala University, University of Turku) and Bonnie McLean (Uppsala University), *The linguistic history of the Ryukyus: inheritance and contact*
- [15h30-16h – Break]**
5. **16h-16h30** – Tomasz Majtczak (Jagiellonian University in Kraków), *Old, Middle and New: Periodisation as a back-burnered topic in the diachronic research of Japanese. [Foreword to Discussion].*
  6. **16h30-17h** – *Discussion: The (Pre)History of the Languages of Japan – Current issues and prospects*

## On stative/active intransitive split within tripartite alignment: A case of Kuril Ainu

Tomomi Satō (Hokkaido University) and Anna Bugaeva (Tokyo University of Science)

Ainu, the only non-Japonic language of Japan, was gradually pushed from Honshū to the north so that “northern Hokkaidō was occupied by ethnic Ainu by c. 1000 CE, southern Sakhalin by c. 1300 CE, and the Kurile Islands... as late as c. 1500–1600 CE.” (Janhunen 2022: 63)

This paper focuses on the least documented Kuril variety of Ainu, which disappeared in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century without any substantial texts left. Using both published and archival Kuril Ainu materials, we attempt to reconstruct its system of organizing grammatical relations.

Just like Hokkaidō Ainu, Kuril Ainu shows mixed alignment in verbal indexing being nominative-accusative in 1SG, neutral in 2nd and 3rd SG/PL, and tripartite in 1PL exclusive and inclusive. We assume that like in Hokkaidō Ainu, 1PL inclusive in Kuril Ainu is marked on the verb by *an-* for the transitive subject (A), *-an* for the intransitive subject (S), and *i-* for the object (O), which presumably also have a number of other functions conventionally gathered under the ‘4th person’ label, for example, the impersonal (‘(some)one, people’), 2nd person honorific, and logophoric functions. However, unlike any other Ainu variety, Kuril Ainu demonstrates an additional stative/active intransitive split within the 4th person by marking the subject of stative predicates (So) with *i-*, which is the object marker, and the subject of agentive predicates (Sa) with the regular intransitive subject marker *-an*.

- (1) *i-okay hi* {4.O-exist.PL Q} ‘Is someone alive?’ (KS #312)  
*i-omke wa* {4.O-cough FIN} ‘Someone coughed.’ (KS #426, #462)  
*i-mokor-ci wa* {4.O-sleep-PL FIN} ‘People slept.’ (KS #1097, #1099)  
*i-merayke* {4.O-be.cold} ‘Someone felt cold.’ (Krasheninnikov 1755-II: 187)  
*i-mos wa* {4.O-wake FIN} ‘Someone woke up.’ (Dykowski 1891: 29)  
*i-ru wa* {4.O-melt FIN} ‘Something melted.’ (Dykowski 1891: 29)  
*i-wor-osma* {4.O-water-enter} ‘Something sank.’ (Dykowski 1891: 33)  
*tanto i-pirka* {today 4.O-be.good} ‘Today (the weather) is good.’ (Torii 1903: 131)
- (2) *sattek ek-an* {be.thin come.SG-4.S} ‘Someone came on foot.’ (KS #295)  
*ironno-an* {catch.prey-4.S} ‘Someone caught prey.’ (KS #525)  
*kunne-ipe-an* {be.dark-have.meal-4.S} ‘Someone had dinner.’ (KS #709)  
*hekirpa-an* {turn.around-4.S} ‘Someone turned around.’ (KS #743)  
*ma-an* {swim-4.S} ‘Someone swam.’ (KS #890)  
*as-an* {stand.SG-4.S} ‘Someone stood.’ (KS #1118)  
*terke-an* {jump-4.S} ‘Someone jumped.’ (KS #1125)

Semantics-driven intransitive splits are not unusual (cf. Old Japanese in Yanagida & Whitman 2009), but, to our knowledge, they have hardly ever been reported for a language with tripartite alignment, which is heavy enough by overdistinguishing grammatical relations. Unsurprisingly, the stative/active distinction has eventually been lost in most Ainu dialects.

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## Debuccalization of \*p in the Naha dialect of the Ryukyuan language

Moriyo Shimabukuro (University of the Ryukyus)

The purpose of this paper is to examine debuccalization in the Naha dialect (hereafter shortened to ‘Naha’) of the Ryukyuan Okinawan language, and to show how this change affected the language’s phonological system.

Concerning the historical development of Ryukyuan phonology, Iha (2000 [1910]), Hattori (1999 [1959]), Nakamoto (1976), and Thorpe (1983) claimed that *p* turned into *h*. Past studies also show that the *p* was  $\phi$  at some point before becoming *h*. This change can be attested by historical documents written in Korean and Chinese (Tawata 2010 and Li 2015).

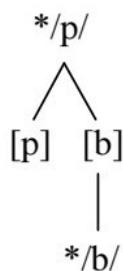
It is important to note, however, that this change did not necessarily occur in all dialects of the language – some still retained *p*. The word for ‘nose’ in Yoron dialect is *pana* (Kiku and Takahashi 2005), for example, while the same word is *hana* in Naha (Uchima and Nohara 2006). The same phenomenon of *h* and *p* can be traced to \*p in Proto Ryukyuan (PR).

As this paper demonstrates, *p* did not in fact completely shift to *h*, but rather a split, i.e., *p* splitting to *p* and *h*. Indeed, there are examples where *p* still exists, even in those dialects in which the change is said to have occurred. We know that *p* exists because native speakers recognize *p* in [kampaɸi] ‘scar’, i.e., /kaɸpaci/, not /kaɸhaci/, and minimal pairs such as one in below exists in Naha.

- (1) sampin ‘jasmine tea’: sammin ‘calculation’

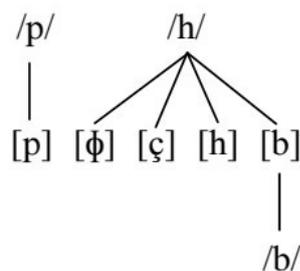
In Naha *p* and *h* are phonemic. The former can be realized as only [p]. Conversely, *h* can be [ɸ], [ç], [h], or [b]. The diagram below shows the relation between the phonemes and their allophones in both PR and Naha. (The diagram includes b to show that the sound [b] is an allophone of not only b, but also h in Naha.)

(2) Proto-Ryukyuan



>

Modern Naha dialect



Based on the distribution of the sounds [p], [ɸ], [ç], and [h] in the modern Naha phonological system, we hypothesize that there were three stages of changes in the complex structure of Naha’s development. A spirantization of *p* to [ɸ] occurred first. When followed by the vowel *i* a palatalization of *p* occurred, turning *p* into the sound [ç]. The occurrence of [ɸ] was eventually limited to the environment followed by *u*, and [h] to the environment with non-high vowels. As a result, in addition to *p*, the phoneme *h* was also established.

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## Reconstructing the Proto-Japonic demonstrative system

Tomohide Kinuhata (Fukuoka University)

The demonstrative system of Old Japanese (OJ) was significantly different from that of Modern Japanese (ModJ). While OJ *ko-* referred to proximate objects as with ModJ *ko-*, distal demonstrative pronouns, presumably *ka-*, were rarely used. *So-* was solely used as an anaphoric pronoun, not referring to a medial object deictically. (See Hashimoto 1966, Kinuhata 2022.) These distributions amount to the difference depicted in Figures 1 and 2.

Fig. 1: OJ

	deic.	anaph.
prox.	<i>ko-</i>	<i>so-</i>
dis.	( <i>ka-?</i> )	

Fig 2: ModJ

	deic.	anaph.
prox.	<i>ko-</i>	<i>so-/a-</i>
med.	<i>so-</i>	
dis.	<i>a-</i>	

Fig 3: PM-PR

	deic.	anaph.
prox.	* <i>ko-</i>	* <i>o-</i>
dis.	* <i>ka-</i>	

Recently, Kinuhata and Hayashi (2018) hypothesized a demonstrative system similar to OJ for Proto-Miyakoan (PM) based on the data from their Shinzato and Karimata dialects. Moreover, Kinuhata (2021) found the use of this system in the Irabu dialect of Miyakoan and discusses its origin in Proto-Ryukyuan (PR) (Fig. 3). While the above semantic resemblance is attractive, morphological issues remain in reconstructing a Proto-Japonic demonstrative system.

In reconstructing Proto-Old Japanese (POJ), one must consider anaphoric *si-* and demonstrative adverbs, i.e., proximate *ka-* and anaphoric *sika-*. The anaphoric adverb *sika-* evidently consists of the anaphoric pronoun *si-* and the adverb *ka-*. Comparing the anaphoric pronouns *so-* and *si-*, it is more probable for *si-* to be older than *so-* because 1) the former had constituted the anaphoric adverb *sika-* in OJ and 2) the formation of *so-* can be explained by an analogical extension of \**ko-* to \**si-*. That is, the vowel of \**ko-*, i.e., /o2/, was adapted to *si-* to create a new anaphoric pronoun *so-*. This process later created an anaphoric adverb *sa-* in Early Middle Japanese (EMJ) (Okazaki 2010), adapting the vowel of the demonstrative adverb *ka-*, i.e., /a/, to the anaphoric pronoun *so-*. Thus, we can assume at least three distinct morphemes for POJ, as in Fig. 4.

The demonstrative adverbs of Ryukyuan languages widely attest *ka-* for deictic use and *a-* for anaphoric use (cf. Nakamoto 1983, Uchima 1984). Since the proximate adverb *ka-* has the cognate in OJ, i.e., OJ proximate *ka-*, it traces back to Proto-Japonic (PJ) \**ka-*. Given the proximate adverb \**ka-* in PJ, the nominal \**ko-* and adverbial \**ka-* opposition could have analogically extended to the o- and a- in the anaphoric use. Therefore, we can consider the anaphoric morpheme o- and a- in Ryukyuan languages as later innovation, like *so-* and *sa-* in Japanese. Instead of postulating them, this presentation proposes reconstructing \**e-* for the anaphoric use in Proto-Ryukyuan. Though \**e-* does not have many reflexes in modern Ryukyuan languages, it surfaces as *isii-* (anaphoric adverbial with instrumental =*sii*) in the Irabu dialect of Ryukyuan (Tomihama 2013). This reconstruction leads us to posit four distinct morphemes given in Fig. 5 for PR.

Fig. 4: POJ

	deic.	anaph.
noun	* <i>ko-</i> , (* <i>ka-?</i> )	* <i>si-</i>
adv.	* <i>ka-</i>	

Fig. 5: PR revised

	deic.	anaph.
noun	* <i>ko-</i> , * <i>ka-</i>	* <i>e-</i>
adv.	* <i>ka-</i>	

Fig. 6: PJ

	deic.	anaph.
noun	* <i>ko-</i> , * <i>ka-</i>	* <i>se-</i>
adv.	* <i>ka-</i>	

Comparing the two reconstructed demonstrative systems in Figures 4 and 5 still leaves the questions regarding 1) what is the origin of /s/ in the anaphoric pronoun of POJ and 2) whether the distal pronoun *ka-* can trace back to Proto-Japonic (PJ). I will discuss in the presentation that the /s/ goes back to PJ and the rare attestation of distal *ka-* is due to the problem of source materials in OJ. These assumptions lead us to conclude that the PJ demonstrative system has four distinct morphemes, given in Fig. 6.

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## Reconsidering the classification of Hachijō: A glimpse from historical phonology

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Hachijō (locally simply called 島言葉 *Shima-kotoba* ‘island speech’) is an endangered minority language of Japan, originally spoken in the southern part of the Izu archipelago (primarily on the three islands of Hachijō, Kojima and Aogashima). Like most Japonic varieties, it was long considered a dialect of Japanese; however, the dominant view among specialists is now to treat it as a separate language. Being now critically endangered, Hachijō was included in 2009 in the online version of UNESCO’s *Atlas of the world’s languages in danger* (Moseley, 2009), alongside Ainu and six Ryukyuan languages.

On the other hand, the term ‘Eastern Old Japanese’ (EOJ) serves as collective term to refer to several dialects of Old Japanese that are primarily attested in the *Man’yōshū* (books 14 and 20), and in a few other minor sources (see Vovin, 2021). EOJ is usually considered as a ‘dialect continuum’ (Vovin, 2021:27) within Old Japanese, and, according to some, a few of those dialects might be divergent enough from Western Old Japanese (WOJ) to be considered a ‘separate branch of the Japanese subgroup of the Japonic language family’ (Kupchik, 2011: 6).

The classification of Hachijō within the Japonic language family has been a topic for discussion since at least the beginning of the Meiji period, when several phonological, morphological and lexical similarities were noted (first by Dickins and Satow, 1878: 464) between Hachijō and EOJ. Based on those resemblances, the idea that Hachijō could be a living descendant of EOJ gradually became somewhat widespread, see for instance: Tachibana & Tōjō (1934:45), Hirayama (1965), Hattori (1968), Ōshima (1975:52), Kaneda (2011:154), Kaneda & Holda (2018:1), Kupchik (2011:6; 2016).

According to this interpretation, Hachijō is usually supposed to be the sole descendant of EOJ, which would place it on its own branch within modern Japanese varieties. However, other specialists consider instead that EOJ could also be the mother language of other modern Eastern varieties of Japanese, in addition to Hachijō (see, for instance, de Boer, 2020:28).

Finally, Hachijō was also compared more recently with other Japonic branches, such as north-eastern Japanese dialects (especially Tōhoku, Akiyamagō and Toshima varieties), Kyūshū dialects and Ryukyuan languages; and, based on these comparisons, some specialists estimate that most of the similarities between EOJ and Hachijō are, in fact, most likely to be due to shared archaism rather than to shared innovation. Thus, according to them, there is not enough evidence yet to assert whether there is a direct genetic relationship between them (see for instance Pellard, 2018:2).

Thus, this talk aims at taking a closer look at the most recent descriptions of Eastern Old Japanese data (developed most notably by Kupchik, 2011 and Vovin, 2021) and at the most comprehensive Hachijō data (compiled in Baudel, forthcoming), in order to examine arguments for the classification of Hachijō.

Due to time limitation, this talk will focus solely on arguments from historical phonology, and mostly to the treatment of proto-Japonic vowels and glides.

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## [Foreword to discussion]

### **Old, Middle and New: Periodisation as a back-burnered topic in the diachronic research of Japanese**

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The proposed contribution to the workshop aims to raise the question of the periodisation of the history of the Japanese language, with the focus on its literate (written) phase.

There are two aspects to this problem, which – although seemingly independent of each other – are nevertheless partly connected: the division itself and the terminology.

The former aspect, that of establishing the time boundaries between periods, is a most basic element of any diachronic description, and yet most historical linguists of Japanese appear to settle for adopting the socio-political periodisation as it comes (see e.g. Frellesvig 2010, Miyake 2020; also Martin 1987, under the somewhat distanced heading “Periods discussed by Japanese grammarians”, and Calvetti 1999, with a longer elaboration). This is hardly satisfying or even acceptable in linguistic research.

Terminology, on the other hand, can be regarded as purely arbitrary and conventional, as well as language-bound, but certain names of periods – even if this is not fully intended – do suggest some stronger connection between particular stages of language development (cf. e.g. *Old Japanese / Early Middle Japanese / Late Middle Japanese* in Frellesvig 2010 versus *Old Japanese / Late Old Japanese / Middle Japanese* in Takeuchi 1999 – referring to the same three time spans).

In both cases the decision about the diagnostic features and their selection are of course of paramount importance, but for Japanese they are mostly left unmentioned.

The paper is not to propose any coherent and ultimate solution to the indicated problems, but rather to spark off a debate over this neglected point of diachronic study of Japanese. The widespread periodisation based on the socio-political history will be presented, its disadvantages discussed and compared with some other – far less popular but usually much better substantiated – propositions available in the relevant specialist literature (as e.g. Rickmeyer 2017 and Narrog 1999, with certain modifications and specifications in Majtczak 2016 and especially in Osterkamp 2021 on the one hand, or Satō 2001 on the other). A very interesting and desirable side effect of this paper might be a parallel consideration of the Ryukyuan languages and of the division of their history into periods.

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