
The volume under review contains ten contributions on the reconstruction of Proto-Japanese (PJ) by the leading specialists in the field. Proto-Japanese is defined as the common ancestor of the Japanese language proper and the Ryukyuan languages, and it corresponds to what is commonly referred to as “Proto-Japonic” in other works (Serafim 2003, Miyake 2003b, Pellard 2008, Vovin 2009). These contributions are revised versions of papers presented at the Workshop on Proto-Japanese held at the XVIIth International Conference on Historical Linguistics (Copenhagen, 2003).

1. OVERVIEW

This volume provides the state-of-the-art of the reconstruction of PJ as well as new proposals on a vast array of topics: segmental phonology, dialect evidence, accent, and morpho-syntax. The volume opens with an introduction summarizing the current thinking about Old Japanese (OJ) and PJ. The chapters are then organized into four parts covering all aspects of the proto-language.

The first part, “Reconstructing the basic phoneme inventory”, includes two contributions on the reconstruction of segmental phonology. The first one, by B. Frellesvig and J. Whitman, proposes to add a seventh vowel *i to the PJ vowel system on the basis that OJ1 -o alternates with both -wi (< *iːi) and -e (< *ɔi). In his

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1 In the volume under review, the *otsurui* syllables are transcribed as Cwi, Ce and Co, while the *kōrui* ones are transcribed as Ci, Cye and Cwo.
contribution, J. Unger adduces philological and dialectal evidence to reconstruct a PJ *η. He also argues for his own earlier proposal of a more complex PJ consonant system (Ramsey & Unger 1972). The main feature of his reconstruction consists in voiced obstruents which undergo lenition by the time of OJ.

While the reconstruction of PJ has been traditionally almost exclusively based on philological evidence and internal reconstruction of OJ, recent years have seen more and more studies incorporating evidence from the different Japanese dialects and the Ryukyuan languages. This is the case of the two contributions of the second part, “Use of dialects in reconstruction”. T. Onishi examines the problem of the divergence of the Japanese dialects and the geographic distribution of linguistic features. He reassesses the existence of a major division between Eastern and Western dialects in mainland Japan and then proposes an original calculation method to date the separation time between Eastern and Western Japanese. The next contribution by L.A. Serafim stresses the crucial importance of Ryukyuan for the study of the history of Japanese. The author gives an overall account of the phonological correspondences between Japanese and Ryukyuan and shows that the Ryukyuan data requires to reconstruct more vowels in PJ. On the other hand, Serafim argues that the Ryukyuan verb forms cannot be directly compared to those of Japanese. The chapter ends with a summary of the author’s hypothesis on the origin of the kakari musubi syntactic pattern.

The third part, “Reconstructing accent”, gathers three contributions on what is probably the most complex and controversial issue in Japanese historical linguistics: the reconstruction and historical developments of the accent/tone system. The first contribution by A. Matsumori concentrates on the system of proto-mainland Japanese. Matsumori argues that, contrary to the traditional assumption, we have to reconstruct a PJ system very different from that of Middle Japanese, with for example a very unique *HLH pattern for nouns of the class 3.1. The second