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A diachronic perspective on early Japanese adjectival morphology: Some more pre-Old Japanese copulas

Abstract:

This talk presents an analysis of the inflectional morphology associated with adjectives in Old Japanese (8th century), arguing that what has traditionally been thought of as inflectional endings (e.g. *-ku*, *-ki*, *-si*, etc.) in fact not only are (a) to be understood as originating in forms of an earlier copula, but also (b) can be analysed synchronically from Old Japanese as forms of a restricted copula. Based on this analysis, a hypothesis is proposed which links these forms and other inflectional material in Old Japanese (e.g. past tense suffixes used with verbs) and reconstructs a pre-OJ copula which can be reconstructed as **k- ~ *s-*, and which is reflected in a number of other grammatical elements in OJ, including the verb *se-* ‘to do’ (*suru*) and the demonstratives *ko* and *so*.