

In this talk, Bjarke Frellesvig will briefly introduce the *Oxford Corpus of Old Japanese* (abbreviated ‘OCOJ’), which is a heavily annotated digital text corpus containing all extant texts in Japanese from the Old Japanese period (mainly the 8th century AD), that is to say, the oldest texts written in Japanese. These texts in a sense represent or reflect a foundational stage of Japanese culture in the widest sense, and they are of great importance to anyone interested in the language, writing, literature, religion and beliefs, and/or history of early Japanese civilization. Frellesvig will talk briefly about general features of the OCOJ and its relevance to students and scholars working within East Asia.

One feature of the OCOJ is that the texts in the corpus are **romanized**, in addition to representing the original script of the texts, and one question which is often asked about the OCOJ is “Why is the OCOJ romanized?”; or, more generally, why should we romanize a corpus of Japanese? This is, at least superficially, a natural question, given that Japanese has a widely used and reasonably successful indigenous writing system. It is also a question which is relevant to other East Asian textual traditions: Why should we romanize texts written in the various East Asian scripts? Or shouldn’t we?

In this talk Bjarke Frellesvig will address these questions and try to give some answers. He will try to show that the arguments in favour of using, or at least including, a romanized transcription of Japanese texts when working with them are powerful and persuasive.