Some thoughts on relative clauses in ancient Japan

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Types of relative clauses in Old Japanese

- Prenominal relative clauses
- Stacked prenominal relative clauses
- Headless relative clauses
- 2–headed relative clauses
- Circumnominal relative clauses
- Adjectival root–Noun compounds
Examples

- [[naka-zari-si] tori] mo ki-naki-nu (M 1.16)
- [[sirwo-ki], [kurwo-ki] uma]
- [kanasi-ki] ga kwoma pa tagu-tomo (M 14.3451)
- [[kaze maziri ame puru ywo no ame maziri yuki puru] ywo] pa (M 5.892)
- [imo ga ipi-si] wo oki-te (M 20.4429)
- nigi-tape ara-tape (N)
The typological profile of OJ and beyond

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERB PATTERNER</th>
<th>OBJECT PATTERNER</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verb</td>
<td>object</td>
<td>ate + the sandwich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verb</td>
<td>subject</td>
<td>(there) entered + a tall man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adposition</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>on + the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copula verb</td>
<td>predicate</td>
<td>is + a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'want'</td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>wants + to see Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tense/aspect auxiliary verb</td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>has + eaten dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative auxiliary</td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>cf. 7 in §4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complementizer</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>that + John is sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question particle</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>cf. 8 in §4.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adverbial subordinator</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>because + Bob has left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>article</td>
<td>N'</td>
<td>the + tall man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plural word</td>
<td>N'</td>
<td>cf. 9 in §4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun</td>
<td>genitive</td>
<td>father + of John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun</td>
<td>relative clause</td>
<td>movies + that we saw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>standard of comparison</td>
<td>taller + than Bob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verb</td>
<td>manner adverb</td>
<td>slept + on the floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verb</td>
<td></td>
<td>ran + slowly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 39. Complete list of correlation pairs.
Some typology and statistics

- If VO then NRel
- If OV then RelN or NRel
- But:
  - If RelN, then SOV

- Circumnominal relative clauses are overwhelmingly found in SOV languages, often with or as a secondary strategy
Some typology and statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AFRICA</th>
<th>EURASIA</th>
<th>SEAsia&amp;Oc</th>
<th>Aus-NewGui</th>
<th>NAmer</th>
<th>SAmer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OV&amp;RelN</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OV&amp;NRel</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO&amp;RelN</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO&amp;NRel</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Order of noun and relative clause.
Prenominal relative clauses in Japanese

- They must be of some antiquity:
  - The only true productive means of constructing relative clauses in OJ
  - There are large numbers of prenominal relative clauses in OJ (although many of them involve 之 which is a linking element in Chinese)
  - They are probably not merely nominalization contructions, i.e. N–N constructions as suggested by Simpson (2003)
Prenominal relative clauses

- However:
  - The reconstruction of a PJ Adnominal form has been contested by Frellesvig drawing on evidence from phonology, morpho–syntax and dialects.
  - In spite of this, it is the only reconstructable RC type that is widely distributed.
Stacked prenominal RCs

- The variant with 2 Adnominals is rare
- They are fairly limited in OJ and onwards
- This could be due to:
  - Genre
  - Language
- They are a subtype of prenominal relative clauses and hence also ancient
Headless RCs are rare in OJ. They are only attested with adjectives. They are all found in book 14 of *Man’yôshû*. Dialect area B and unknown province. It would be odd if they did not exist as a subtype of prenominal RCs, but we cannot know.
Circumnominal relative clauses in Japanese

- They are recent innovations in OJ because:
  - Only 5 certain examples in the corpus
  - They do not follow the accessibility hierarchy (mainly genitives)
  - They only get more numerous in EMJ
- They are *not* postnominal relative clauses as some *kokugogakushas* have claimed
On the order of N and Rel

Statement 1:
Japanese has always had prenominal relative clauses.

Statement 2:
Japanese probably always had stacked prenominal RCs as a subtype

Statement 3:
We cannot know if Japanese has always had headless RCs

Statement 4:
Japanese have not always had circumnominal relative clauses.
2–headed RCs

- 2–headed RCs are very rare typologically
- In OJ they are limited to *Norito* (cf. Kaiser (1991) who calls them ’bookish’)
- The RC tends to be an adjectival root rather than a sentential RC
- They serve no clear function
- They should be distinguished from coordinative constructions like *the fish with the wide fin the fish with the narrow fin*
Adjectival root+noun compounds are found mainly in *Norito*.

It has been proposed that roots of adjectives are quite nouny, so these constructions are really more like N+N compounds.

There are no cases of verb root+noun constructions, so it was probably limited to adjectival roots.

Thus they were of limited function.
**Statement 5**
2-headed relative clauses are probably not ancient; they serve no clear function and are limited to a certain register.

**Statement 6**
Adjectival root+noun compounds are of limited distribution and function, but they could have competed with true RCs for a subset of constructions.
# Interim summary of RC types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ancient Japanese</th>
<th>OJ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prenominal RCs</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacked prenominal RCs</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headless RCs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–headed RCs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumnominal RC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectival root + noun</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What was "before"?

- Can we say something about the origin of prenominal RCs?
- Can we say something about CRCs
Prenominal RCs

- Did prenominal relative clauses develop from 2–headed ones (cf. Kaiser 1991)?
- Are prenominal relative clauses nominalizations that are juxtaposed to the head noun (cf. Simpson 2003)?
- Were prenominal relative clauses once infinite and related to the Adjectival root + N type?
2–headed monsters

Possible advantages:
- Seems appealing from an early generative perspective
- Would at least partially solve the connectivity problem (Bianchi 2002)
- Easy to ’explain’ how gapped prenominal RCs developed from 2–headed ones
- Equally easy to ’explain’ CRCs developed from 2–headed ones (cf. Kaiser 1991)
Arguments against 2-headed RCs as "primitive":
- The 2-headed structure has long since been dropped in generative syntax (not to mention the level of representation)
- 2-headed RCs seem to be less clause-like and more compound-like
- They are only found in a limited part of the OJ corpus
- Would only solve the connectivity problem to some extent
- Typologically unrecorded
2–headed monsters

- 2–headed could equally well have developed into circumnominal relative clauses by dropping the external head
- The same counter-arguments as with prenominal relative clauses apply
Statement 7
2–headed RCs did not develop into prenominal RCs

Statement 8
2–headed RCs did not develop into circumnominal RCs
The nominalization hypothesis

- First proposed by Konoshima (1962)
- Re-suggested by Simpson & Wu to fit a larger areal pattern of N+N juxtaposition to construct relative constructions (Tibetan, …..)
- This relates more to the functional side of the development of prenominal RCs than the morphosyntactic development
The nominalization hypothesis

- Counterarguments:
  - Nominalization using the Adnominal form is an OJ innovation
  - The Nominal form was used for nominalization
  - Headless relatives are rare and limited in distribution
  - Syntactic juxtaposition is rare in Japanese (but recall coordinative structures of the type *the fish with the wide fin the fish with the narrow fin*)
Infinite origin?

- Is the adjectival root + noun type RC a relict from a more common type of RC?
- Ohno 1978[1953] has been suggested that genitive \textit{rwo} \textasciitilde \textit{ru} is related to the PJ Adnominal *\textit{ru}.
- So relative clauses would have had the structure [Infinitive + genitive] head noun]
Infinite origin?

- They would not have resembled the Adjectival root + noun type since there is a genitive
- Not possible to have tense–aspect–mood
- A closer look at the Vovin–type RCs is needed
Statement 9
Prenominal RCs did not develop from juxtaposing a nominalized clause to a head noun

Statement 10
Prenominal RCs did not develop from infinite relative clauses
References


Questions and Comments Welcome

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