

Exploring Language Diversity *in Japan*

***How Philological and Linguistic
Analysis Can Work Together***

IN MEMORY OF ALEXANDER VOVIN

Japan's ecological variety, with no less than six different climatic zones, seems to parallel the panoply of different languages and dialects that have been attested in the Japanese archipelago. In addition to standard Japanese and its dialects, there exist other Japonic languages such as Ryūkyūan and Hachijō, as well as non-Japonic varieties represented by Ainu, Oroch, and Nivkh.

Information on such linguistic diversity was recorded in a number of written sources, such as the Man'yōshū and Omoro sōshi, among others. In addition, foreign observers also provided insightful evidence on languages spoken within present-day Japanese territory. Identifying with precision what languages were represented in the written sources is not an easy task, but in most cases the combination of a philological approach and the tools of historical linguistics might shed some light on the nature of the languages in question. Analyzing specific cases by researchers who focus on different sources will help to reveal how the careful coupling of these two approaches might prove rewarding, without denying the importance of fieldwork and synchronic studies.

Centered on the seminal work of Alexander Vovin (1961–2022), the workshop intends to show how this combination could be possible in practice. Professor Vovin had been involved in its planning from the start, and intended to contribute with a keynote speech. His untimely passing prevented us from including his contribution. This initiative will also be an homage to the memory of Alexander Vovin and his legacy by a number of scholars who had been working in close contact with him or with his style of scholarship as a source of inspiration.

Online Workshop from Kyoto

October 22, 2022

16:00–19:30 JST



ITALIAN SCHOOL OF
EAST ASIAN STUDIES



EFEO

École française d'Extrême-Orient

Exploring Language Diversity in Japan

IN MEMORY OF ALEXANDER VOVIN

Online Workshop from Kyoto

October 22, 2022 16:00–19:30 JST

PROGRAM

16:00	OPENING Silvio Vita (Scuola italiana di studi sull'Asia orientale) Christophe Marquet (École française d'Extrême-Orient)
16:10	Remembering Alexander Vovin
16:30	Introduction Paolo Calvetti (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
16:40	A New Look at Old Okinawan Phonetics and Phonology through the Prism of <i>Haedong chegukki</i> Marc Miyake (Independent scholar)
17:10	Lexical and Phonological Information on Okinawan in Chinese Sources from the Early 15th to the Mid-18th Century Georg Orlandi (Osaka University)
17:40	Conservative Features of Miyako-Ryukyuan Attested in its Oral Traditions —With a Focus on Nikolay Nevskiy's Research of the 1920s Aleksandra Jarosz (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń)
18:10	The Phonetics, Phonology, and Morphosyntax of East Sakhalin Ainu in Bronislaw Pilsudski's <i>Materials for the Study of the Ainu Language and Folklore</i> Elia Dal Corso (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
18:40	A Few Phonological and Lexical Insights on Early Hachijō (1781–1858) Étienne Baudel (École des hautes études en sciences sociales)
19:10	CONCLUDING REMARKS

* 5–10 minutes of discussion time will follow each presentation

Zoom meeting ID

879 7711 4958

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A New Look at Old Okinawan Phonetics and Phonology through the Prism of *Haedong chegukki*

Marc Miyake Independent Scholar

The Okinawan poetic anthology *Omoro sōshi* was compiled between 1531 to 1623. It was written almost entirely in syllabic *kana*, a script borrowed from the Japanese mainland. Spelling variations in *Omoro sōshi* indicate that script was not optimally suited for representing the sounds of Old Okinawan.

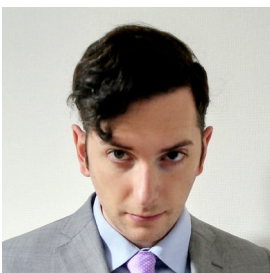
In *The Language of the Old-Okinawan Omoro Sōshi: Reference Grammar, with Textual Selections* (Brill, 2021), Leon A. Serafim and Rumiko Shinzato utilize those spelling variations to reconstruct the phonetics and phonology of Old Okinawan with reference to Thorpe's ("Ryūkyūan Language History," PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 1983) Proto-Ryukyuan reconstruction and the later Okinawan language.

Serafim and Shinzato (2021, 115) refer only once to the Old Okinawan phrasebook appended in 1501 to the *Haedong chegukki* 海東諸國紀 (Records of Countries Across the Sea to the East). Although the *Haedong* phrasebook is in the Hangul alphabet and hence a valuable external source of phonetic information on Old Okinawan, Serafim and Shinzato only cite it as an example of an Old Okinawan second person pronoun, *?ura*. They do not use *Haedong* to supplement *Omoro sōshi* spelling as a contemporary written source for the Old Okinawan sound system.

In this study, I will build upon their work by analyzing the *Haedong* transcriptions of Old Okinawan to refine their reconstruction of Old Okinawan sounds. This analysis will also necessitate a slight revision of Thorpe's reconstruction.

PROFILE

Marc Miyake (PhD, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) is an independent scholar formerly affiliated with the University of Oregon, the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, and the British Museum. He specializes in the phonological reconstruction of ancient Asian languages and the analysis of their scripts. He is the first to write a phonological and grammatical description of the extinct Sino-Tibetan Pyu language surviving on first millennium CE inscriptions in what is now Burma. He has an article on the origin of the Khitan large script of 9th–12th century CE Manchuria and Central Asia in press and is currently working on a description of the related Jurchen script. He is the author of *Old Japanese: A Phonetic Reconstruction* (Routledge, 2021).



Lexical and Phonological Information on Okinawan in Chinese Sources from the Early 15th to the Mid-18th Century

Georg Orlandi Osaka University

This presentation analyzes three Chinese sources from the early fifteenth through the mid-eighteenth century: the *Liúqiú guǎn yì yǔ* 琉球館譯語 (Translations for an Embassy to the Ryūkyū), the *Shǐ Liúqiú lù* 使琉球錄 (Records from an Embassy in the Ryūkyū), and the *Zhōngshān chuán xìn lù* 中山傳信錄 (Report of an Envoy to Chūzan). On the basis of the evidence found there, I will discuss, and eventually confirm, a series of sound changes that have supposedly occurred in the Okinawan language. In other words, this

study will demonstrate that these written sources can help us to validate the diachronic shifts postulated by experts. In addition, they also give us important clues on the time when the sound changes in question likely took place. In more general terms, the analysis presented will constitute an example of how a carefully conducted philological survey of historical documents that seem phonetically opaque, if carefully conducted, might prove rewarding for historical linguists.

PROFILE

Georg Orlandi (PhD, Xiamen University) is a JSPS postdoctoral fellow at Osaka University, specializing in historical linguistics, Japanology, and Sinology. His interests include every aspect of language and linguistics, especially phonetics and phonology, dialectology, and language classification. In addition to language, he is also interested in clidynamics and statistical analysis. Some of his recent publications include "On the Four Grades / Four Calls of Chinese Rime Tables" (*Historiographia Linguistica*, 48–1, 2021) and "The State of the Art of the Genetic Relationship of Japonic" (*International Journal of East Asian Linguistics*, 1 and 2, 2020).



Conservative Features of Miyako-Ryukyuan Attested in its Oral Traditions—With a Focus on Nikolay Nevskiy’s Research of the 1920s

Aleksandra Jarosz Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

The aim of this paper is to show how philological sources on Miyako-Ryukyuan can be used in the diachronic studies of the language, and by extension also in comparative Japonic linguistics. Following a brief introduction to the genetic positioning, typology, and current situation of Miyako-Ryukyuan, an outline of the rich oral traditions of the language will be provided. Despite being an essentially unwritten language, Miyako is accessible to some degree to philological-diachronic scrutiny owing to its abundant oral literature that has retained its traditional fixed forms of expression as well as archaic vocabulary and structure.

Among the researchers who have taken on the task of recording and transcribing Miyako oral traditions, the contributions of Nikolay Nevskiy from the 1920s are of particular value and are therefore the focus of this paper. By listing and discussing examples of conservative features that have been lost in the “spoken” register of Miyako, in the final part I will show how such philological data from Miyako may contribute to the understanding of Japonic history as well as to the reconstruction of Japonic proto-languages of different levels.

PROFILE

Aleksandra Jarosz is an associate professor in the Faculty of Humanities of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. She specializes in the descriptive and diachronic linguistics of South Ryukyuan, especially Miyako-Ryukyuan. She is also interested in historical sociolinguistics, archeolinguistics, language documentation, and linguistic vitality. She was a JSPS postdoctoral fellow at the University of the Ryukyus in 2017–2019.



The Phonetics, Phonology, and Morphosyntax of East Sakhalin Ainu in Bronisław Pilsudski’s *Materials for the Study of the Ainu Language and Folklore*

Elia Dal Corso Ca’ Foscari University of Venice

Collected between 1903 and 1904, the twenty-seven folklore texts edited and published by Bronisław Pilsudski in *Materials for the Study of the Ainu Language and Folklore* (De Gruyter, 1912) represent to date one of the largest and richest linguistic resources on the Ainu dialects spoken along the Sakhalin east coast. Despite the unavailability of an audio recording for these texts, Pilsudski’s painstakingly accurate transcription allows us to investigate the phonet-

ic, phonological, and morphosyntactic features of Sakhalin Ainu, a language that has now gone extinct. In this presentation, I focus on a number of these features (such as the phonetic status of the glottal stop, the presence of an impersonal-passive construction, and the use of applicative prefixes) and argue for the immense value of Pilsudski’s work for the reconstruction and description of Sakhalin Ainu.

PROFILE

Elia Dal Corso (PhD, SOAS, University of London) is an adjunct professor in Japanese language and Ainu language at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice. His research focuses primarily on the Sakhalin variety of Ainu and his specific interests include the tense-aspect-mood-evidentiality category, and verb semantics more generally. He is the author of *The Language and Folklore of West Sakhalin Ainu: A Re-edition of Kyōko Murasaki’s “Karafuto Ainugo” with Translation and Grammatical Notes* (Lincom Publishing, 2021).



A Few Phonological and Lexical Insights on Early Hachijō (1781–1858)

Étienne Baudel École des hautes études en sciences sociales

Hachijō is a critically endangered minority language of Japan, originally spoken on three remote volcanic islands in the southern part of the Izu archipelago (administratively in the Tokyo metropolis). Although it was long considered a mere Eastern dialect of Japanese, it is now receiving increasing attention, both within and outside Japan, because its classification has produced some debate (see Kupchik, *A Grammar of Eastern Old Japanese Dialects*, University of Hawai'i Press, 2011, vs. Pellard, "The Comparative Study of the Japonic Languages," keynote speech given at the symposium "Approaches to Endangered Languages in Japan and Northeast Asia: Description, Documentation and Revitalization," Tachikawa, Tokyo, 6–8 August, 2018).

Unlike many minority languages of Japan and Japanese di-

alects, Hachijō is fortunate enough to have several premodern attestations in more than a dozen manuscripts, dating from between 1781 and 1858. These sources include no less than eleven wordlists, two texts (namely, a letter and a theatrical dialogue), as well as countless isolated words and names, usually provided in *katakana*. Thanks to this diversity, these sources provide valuable insights to understand the language's history.

This presentation will therefore be dedicated to introducing these premodern sources and the linguistic data they provide, and then in the second part, I will briefly discuss the evolution that can be seen in these documents, especially in the lexicon and phonology.

PROFILE

Étienne Baudel is a PhD student in linguistics at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris, and a JSPS fellow at NINJAL (National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics [2023]). With a background in comparative historical linguistics, his research focuses primarily on the documentation, description, and classification of the Hachijō language of Japan. In addition to a variety of linguistic topics, his specific interests encompass historical linguistics, philology, and dialectology. Étienne Baudel is Alexander Vovin's last PhD student, and is expected to complete his PhD dissertation in 2023.

INTRODUCTION

PROFILE



Paolo Calvetti is Professor of Japanese Language and Linguistics at Ca' Foscari University in Venice. He was Director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Tokyo from 2017 to 2021, acting as Director of the Italian School of East Asian Studies (Kyoto) at the same time. His main research interests are the history of the Japanese language, Japanese sociolinguistics, and Japanese lexicography. His publications include *Introduzione alla storia della lingua giapponese* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1999), and, most recently, "Riconsiderazione del concetto di *keigo* e di linguaggio onorifico: la pragmatica del discorso nello studio e nella didattica della lingua giapponese," in *Riflessioni sul Giappone antico e moderno*, vol. 2 (Roma: Aracne, 2016), and "Strategies of Impoliteness in Japanese Spontaneous Talks," in *European Approaches to Japanese Language and Linguistics* (Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2020).