

## “Diachrony or Synchrony? Accounting for the Old Japanese particle *-tu*”

**ABSTRACT.** This study investigates the Old Japanese (OJ) postposition *-tu*, a problematic morpheme traditionally labeled “genitive”. Attestations of OJ *-tu* have perplexed historians of Japanese. It has a limited distribution, but its function appears to be genitive-like (1). Curiously, Frellesvig (2010) refers to OJ *-tu* as a “locative-genitive” in recognition of the fact that *-tu* is found predominantly in phrases relating to locations; however, OJ *-tu* is also used in both complex attribution and in counting (2). Up to the present, synchronic analyses of OJ *-tu* as “genitive” such as Hirata (2001) have had difficulties accounting for its full semantic distribution. This paper instead proposes a diachronic account of the distribution of OJ *-tu* that eschews the traditional genitive analysis in favor of reconstructing pre-OJ \**tu* as a dual ‘directional/instrumental’ postposition.

First, I show that both genitive and attributive uses of OJ *-tu* can be seen as developments out of a pre-OJ allative or directional sense. Reconstructing a pre-OJ postposition \**tu* ‘directional’ → OJ ‘genitive/attributive’ is supported by evidence from French prepositional developments, where directional prepositions developed into both a possessive and attributive sense (3). This proposal accounts for why OJ *-tu* is mostly found in locative expressions. OJ *-tu* developed into a genitive-like construction only in clauses where two nouns shared a spatial relationship that resulted in common association -- it is therefore unsurprising that OJ *-tu* is mostly found in locative expressions, since location is a prototypical kind of spatial relationship.

I also propose that the use of OJ *-tu* in counting reflects a distributive usage (‘by ones’), which in turn developed from a more general instrumental meaning (a function notably lacking among pre-OJ postpositions), which shows some cross-linguistic support. Not only does this resolve syntactic problems in synchronic genitive analyses attempting to unify these two usages, it also explains why both bare numeral expressions and numerals suffixed with *-tu* are attested in Old Japanese. I therefore reconstruct pre-OJ \**tu* with a dual \*’directional / instrumental’ meaning. This reveals a striking match with the Middle Korean (MK) directional / instrumental particle *-lwo*, from which I reconstruct proto-Korean-Japanese \**dwo* ‘directional/instrumental’ via well-attested sound correspondences between Japanese and Korean (4; Whitman, 1985).

Unlike some of the synchronic analyses proposed thus far, this diachronic look at OJ *-tu* offers a unified analysis of its attestations, accounts for its locative distribution, and even reveals a hitherto unrecognized cognate with Korean. At a time when synchronic approaches predominate in our fields, this analysis helps highlight the value of diachronic approaches towards understanding distributions. The fact that both pre-OJ \**tu* and MK *-lwo* can be reconstructed possessing the same two distinct meanings is noteworthy, a particular fact that provides an even stronger case for cognacy and for a diachronic approach to understanding OJ *-tu*.

## **EXAMPLES:**

- (1) *topo -tu kuni* ‘far-off land’  
     far    GEN? land  
     *kuni -tu kamwi* ‘god of the land’ (Hirata, 2001)  
     land  GEN? god

(2) *siko -tu wokina* ‘a stupid old man’.  
     stupid GEN? old man  
     *pito -tu* ‘one (of something)’ (Hirata, 2001)  
     one    GEN?

(3) French:     *la fille aux cheveux de lin*  
                 ‘the girl to the flaxen hair’   = ‘the girl of/with the flaxen hair’  
                 (directional)                         = attributive  
     French:     *le livre est à moi*  
                 ‘the book is to me’                     = ‘the book is mine’  
                 (directional/dative)                     = possessive

(4) pKJ \*dwo  
     → pJ \*dwo → \*two (loss of distinctive voicing) → \*tu (mid-vowel raising) → OJ *-tu*  
     → pK \*dwo → \*lwo (lenition of voiced stops) → MK *-lwo*

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