Bjarke Frellesvig describes the development of the Japanese language from its recorded beginnings until the present day as reflected by the written sources and historical record. Beginning with a description of the oldest attested stage of the language, Old Japanese (approximately the eighth century AD), and then tracing the changes which occurred through the Early Middle Japanese (800–1200), Late Middle Japanese (1200–1600) and the Modern Japanese (1600 onwards) periods, a complete internal history of the language is examined and discussed. This account provides a comprehensive study of how the Japanese language has developed and adapted, providing a much-needed resource for scholars. *A History of the Japanese Language* is invaluable to all those interested in the Japanese language and also students of language change generally.

A History of the Japanese Language

Bjarke Frellesvig
For my children and my wife
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Abbreviations

SYMBOLS

. syllable boundary
/.../ enclose phonemes or phonemic representation
//...// enclose underlying representation
=> generative rules (‘becomes in the course of derivation’)
> diachronic correspondence (‘becomes through time’)

GRAMMATICAL TERMS

ABL ablative
ACC accusative
ACOP adjectival copula
ADJ adjective
ADN adnominal
ALL allative
AUX auxiliary
CAUS causative
COM comitative
COMP complementizer
CONC concessive
COND conditional
CONCL conclusive
CONJ conjectural
CONT continuative
COP copula
DAT dative
DESID desiderative
EMPH emphatic
ETOP emphatic topic
EVID evidential
EXCL exclamatory
FOC focus
Abbreviations

GEN genitive
GER gerund
H high (tone or pitch)
HON honorific
HUM humble
IMP imperative
INF infinitive
INT intentional
intr. intransitive
k-irr k-irregular (ka-hen)
L low (tone or pitch)
LB lower bigrade (shimo nidan)
LM lower monograde (shimo ichidan)
MPST modal past
MVR mid vowel raising
NCONJ negative conjectural
NEC necessitive
NEG negative
n-irr n-irregular (na-hen)
NMLZ nominalizer
NMNL nominal
NOM nominative
NONPST nonpast
OPT optative
PASS passive
PCONJ present conjectural
PERF perfective
POL polite
PRES presumptive
PROV provisional
PST past
PSTCONJ past conjectural
PURP purposive
Q interrogative
QD quadrigrade (yodan)
RESP respect
r-irr r-irregular (ra-hen)
s-irr s-irregular (sa-hen)
SPST simple past
STAT stative
SUBJ subjunctive
Abbreviations

TOP topic
tr. transitive
UB upper bigrade (kami nidan)
UM upper monograde (kami ichidan)
VOL volitional

LANGUAGES

cNJ contemporary Modern Japanese
EMC Early Middle Chinese
EMJ Early Middle Japanese
EOJ Eastern Old Japanese
J-Ch Japano-Chinese
LMC Late Middle Chinese
LMJ Late Middle Japanese
MC Middle Chinese
MJ Middle Japanese
MK Middle Korean
NJ Modern (‘new’) Japanese
OC Old Chinese
OJ Old Japanese
pJ proto-Japanese
pK proto-Korean
SJ Sino-Japanese
Skt Sanskrit

TEXTS

Ars gr. Ars grammaticae iaponicae linguae
Arte Arte da lingoa de Iapam (page references are to Doi 1955)
Arte breve Arte breve da lingoa Iapoa
Bussoku Bussokuseki-ka
EN (Engishiki) Norito
Esopo Exopono fabulas
Feiqe Feiqe monogatari
Genji Genji monogatari
Ise Ise monogatari
KK Kojiki kayō (songs/poems in the Kojiki)
Kokin Kokinwakashū
MYS Man yōshū
NSK Nihon shoki kayō (songs/poems in the Nihon shoki)
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