The Japanese Copula: Forms and Functions (review)

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kaisetsu daijiten (Vol. 4, p. 151*)*, *Kokusho sōmokuroku* (1989 edition, Vol. 3, p. 772), and elsewhere as a work containing the teachings of the Shingon monk Shōken (1138–96) as transcribed by his disciple Jōken (1162–1231).

This reviewer was mildly distracted by glitches such as these, but they do not detract in any truly significant way from what is otherwise an impressive and convincing book demonstrating the results of Klein's many years of painstaking research in an almost overwhelming number of dauntingly difficult texts. While some of the results of that research have previously appeared in articles, this book represents the full fruition of her determined and tireless effort to give these "intriguing" esoteric commentaries, and their authors, their due. *Allegories of Desire* will take its rightful place alongside a small number of choice studies of comparable scholarly depth and ambition that have documented, in English, the endlessly fascinating story of what happened in *chūsei* Japan when the way of poetry and the way of Buddhism were perceived and pursued as one.

The Japanese Copula: Forms and Functions. By Tomiko Narahara. Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, 2002. x, 219 pages. $55.00.

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While "copula" is not a term that figures prominently in English grammar, it is commonly mentioned in Japanese linguistics, and students of the Japanese language encounter forms of the Japanese copula at a very early stage in their study. Although there can be differences of opinion as to the contours of what is included under the heading "copula" in Japanese, the term would generally embrace the forms *da* and *desu,* which occur in sentence-final position following a noun phrase in sentences such as *Naomi wa amerikajin da* "Naomi is an American," and *Ken wa kyoo yasumi desu* "Ken is off today," or following an "adjectival nominal," as in *Mizu ga kirei da* "Water is beautiful."

Narahara analyzes the copula from a number of perspectives, from traditional Japanese grammatical studies that employ descriptive terms such as *dantei-shi* ("judgement category, assertion category"), *shitei-shi* ("specifying category"), and *hantei-shi* (no specific translation given by the author) to the European philosophical analysis of the verb "to be" from Aristotle to Aquinas.

After these preliminaries (part one of the book), the author embarks on a morphological analysis of the copular forms at issue (part two), together

with an account of the historical development of the Japanese copula (part three), and then turns to a detailed account of the meaning and functions of the copula *da* and the social implications of the use or nonuse of *da* in terms of the gender and social hierarchy of discourse participants (part four).

The overall approach found in the book is fundamentally more "traditional" than one might expect in the current American linguistics scene, in that it refers to more traditional Japanese approaches to linguistics, although it also employs terminology that originates in Chomskyan syntax. The book, in this sense, may not be fully satisfying to those who expect to find morphological analyses of the copula in different theoretical frameworks and more up-to-date discussions on pragmatic and sociolinguistic implications of the use of copula, but it can serve well as a convenient and otherwise unavailable resource for researchers who do not have direct access to the relevant literature written in Japanese.

In part two of the book, the author proposes an inflectional morphology for the copula. The author argues that the copula *da* or *desu* does not function as a tense marker, in contrast to *datta* or *desita,* which contain the past-tense marking morpheme *-ta.* The morphological segmentation that the author proposes for *da* is *d-a,* where *d-* is the root of the copula and *-a* is an inflectional ending that indicates sentence end (pp. 73 – 74). For the prenominal forms of the copula *na* and *no,* as well as preverbal *ni,* she proposes morphological segmentation into a copula root, *n-,* and categorial markers *-a, -o,* and *-i,* which are, respectively, markers of "adjectival nominal predicate," "nominal predicate," and "adverbial predicate." Morphologists may not be convinced by the proposed segmentations, such as those on pages 79 – 80, but some will find them at least descriptive.

In part four, after providing some historical background on the formation of the "*d*-type" copula (e.g., *de aru, da, desu*), the book turns to pragmatics and discourse functions of the modern copula. The discussion is focused on the copula *da,* and the author identifies the function of the inflectional ending *-a* as indicating overt affirmation. In these chapters (10 and 11) the exposition becomes more engaging, and the author expounds on the most original claim in the study, which is that the copula expresses the speaker's knowledge or ignorance about the proposition of the sentence. It is unfortunate, however, that the discussion becomes more forced, partly because the examples are not quite convincing as to the relation between the core notion of "ignorative mode," i.e., "the speaker's lack of knowledge about the relevant information" (p. 163) and the use or nonuse of *da.* A further drawback is that the author explains the use of *da* in terms of the prescriptive account, supported by constructed examples, rather than as a description supported by naturally occurring data (chapter 11).

In defining the feature encoded in *-a* of *da,* the author refers to the concept of "anti-ignorative" or "ignorative" modes of speech. Her point about the affirmative feature of *da* or *-a* (p. 180) is well taken, but the benefit of in-

troducing the "ignorative" or "anti-ignorative" modes as a determining criterion is not obvious. It is not clear why a simpler statement, such as that *da* expresses the speaker's certainty of his or her knowledge and judgment, is not sufficient, especially because this pragmatic function of *da* was described or assumed in earlier studies and is referred to (e.g., p. 178) in the author's arguments.

Narahara presents a number of sentence types that she describes as in the ignorative mode (i.e., they express the speaker's lack of knowledge about the referenced information) and that she describes as therefore obligatorily excluding nominal predicates with *da.* These include: yes/no questions (exemplified below in example 2a); receipt of new information ["RNI"] (exemplified in 3a and 3b; some sentence final particles, such as *sa* (exemplified in 4); and epistemic modal predicates (exemplified in 5).

2a. *asoko sizuka *da* ka? [that place quiet COP KA]
2b. Cf. asoko sizuka *desu* ka? [that place COP.POL KA] "Is that place quiet?"
3. In response to an assertion, such as *asoko sizuka da yo* [that place quiet COP yo] "That place is quiet, I tell you":
    3a. *soo *da* ka [so COP KA] "I see." [intended meanings for * sentences]
    3b. *sizuka *da* ka [quiet COP KA] "It is quiet."
4. *motiron sizuka *da* sa [of course quiet COP sa] "Of course, it is quiet."
5. *Yuuta wa genki *da* rasii [Yuta TOP well COP seem] "Yuta seems to be well."[1]

The concept of an "anti-ignorative mode" could be said to provide a straightforward explanation for example 2. Example 3 could be viewed as an extension of that principle, where the speaker's *former* lack of knowledge of the content continues to prohibit the use of an anti-ignorative marker. Example 5, similarly, can perhaps be viewed as an extension of the principle in that the epistemic modal *rasii* "seems" conveys uncertainty as to the truth value of the expressed proposition ("Yuta is well") and is, thus, plausibly inconsistent with an anti-ignorative form.

To explain the unacceptability of example 4 in terms of the anti-ignorative mode, however, the author is forced to strain her theory. The sentence final particle *sa,* according to Narahara, "overtly expresses the speaker's assessment of the *addressee's* ignorance of the information" (emphasis added) (p. 157). To fit this within her account, the author treats this as a "sub-type of ignorative mode." Such an explanation, however, is at odds with the definition of the ignorative and anti-ignorative modes and with the use of those terms in the remainder of the book. In 4, the speaker is *not* ignorant of the proposition of his/her utterance, and the author's theory should

1. Examples 2a (p. 158), 3a (p. 161), 4 (p. 172), and 5 (p. 157) are taken directly from Narahara's book; emphasis added.

predict that utterance 4 is acceptable. The author's *ad hoc* solution to the challenge posed by 4—i.e., extending the notion of "ignorative mode" to cover the addressee's ignorance—would in turn wrongly lead to the conclusion that *da* should be allowed in a request for new information (such as example 2a), since the addressee of a question would be assumed to be not ignorant about the matter in question.

The last chapter of the book is devoted to discourse functions of *da* and, to a lesser extent, of the negative form, *zyanai.* The author's description of how one can exploit the meaning of *da* in a discourse context to express oneself would be of interest to any study related to stylistic choices. The author describes the "tone down strategy"[2] in terms of a typical situation that "when facing an addressee of higher power, status or authority, speakers tend to scale down their expression of certainty" by leaving out *da* ("zero-copula" in her term) (p. 182). In light of the expectation of the use of a tone-down strategy in such situations, the use of *da* may give rise to what the author terms "*da*-effects."

Da-effects are described as "assertive, authoritative or masculine tones yielded by the use of *da* that is perceived to be inappropriate for the speaker's gender or the hierarchical interpersonal relation between the discourse participants" (p. 184). The reference to the speaker's gender occurs throughout part four of the book (pp. 151–202), where the author annotates the majority of the example sentences according to the speaker's gender. For example, the author ascribes the difference between affirmations with and without *da* (e.g., *koko sizuka da yo/ne* versus *koko sizuka ∅yo/ne* "This place is quiet") solely in terms of the gender of the speaker (p. 153). She also describes the "application of tone down" in gender-related terms: "male speakers are expected to tone down *da* when facing a superior. Female speakers are expected to over-apply it" (p. 185). A difficulty in such gender-based explanations is that they are proposed without the support of empirical data, but are based on the author's intuition of the behavioral norms of male and female speech. Recent studies show that the features commonly attributed to the language used by men and women are constructs rather than reality, and the actual practice of speech is more fluid and dynamic.[3] The au-

2. This strategy is based on Talmy Givón, *Syntax: A Functional Typological Introduction, Vol. 2* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990), which was based on Andrew Syder and Frances H. Pawley, "The Reduction Principle in Conversation" (unpublished manuscript).

3. See, for example, Uchida Nobuko, "Kaiwa-kōdō ni mirareru sēsa," *Nihongogaku,* Vol. 12, No. 6 (1993), pp. 156–68; Okamoto Shigeko, "'Tasteless' Japanese: Less 'Feminine' Speech among Young Japanese Women," in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz, eds., *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 296–325; and Yoshiko Matsumoto, "Does Less Feminine Speech in Japanese Mean Less Femininity?" in Natasha Warner, Jocelyn Ahlers, Leela Bilmes, Monica Oliver, Suzanne Wertheim, and Melinda Chen, eds., *Gender and Belief Systems: Proceedings of the Fourth Berkeley Women and Language Conference* (Berkeley: Berkeley Women and Language Group, 1996), pp. 455–67.

thor's references to generational differences in gender norms do not do adequate justice to this variability. She mentions that "the phenomenon [copula alternation] has been noted in the literature but no account has been given for the significance of the gender governed stylistic copula alternation" (p. 154). This overlooks previous literature in sociolinguistics,[4] which has examined copula alternations based on naturally occurring data, including data showing the common use of *da* among middle-aged (middle-class) women.[5]

Although some points would benefit from further careful examination, Narahara's book remains an ambitious work that attempts to address the syntactic and pragmatic functions of the Japanese copula (and, in particular, of *da*) from a variety of linguistic approaches. This is a challenging endeavor, and the author deserves high credit for taking on the task. The only obvious lacuna in Narahara's wide-ranging work is the examination of copula sentences of the sort that are known within Japanese linguistics as *unagi-bun* "eel sentences," based on the representative example: "Boku wa unagi da" (meaning "I am the one who ordered eel"). Such sentences, in which the copula expresses more than could be covered by the verb "to be," have been most prominently studied by Okutsu Keiichiro.[6] Narahara simply states that she would not touch upon these "eel sentences," but it would have provided an interesting point to further the discussion on discourse functions of copula sentences. Narahara's work may well rekindle interest in *unagi-bun* and other copula sentences in Japanese, and encourage further cross-linguistic research on the copula in various languages.

Japan's Economic Dilemma: The Institutional Origins of Prosperity and Stagnation. By Bai Gao. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001. xi, 300 pages. $54.95.

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This book is a wide-ranging attempt to interpret the last 40 years of Japan's history with an eye to the genesis of Japan's current malaise. Gao argues that

4. See Katsue Akiba Reynolds, "Female Speakers of Japanese in Transition," in Sachiko Ide and Naomi H. McGloin, eds., *Aspects of Japanese Women's Language* (1986; reprint, Tokyo: Kuroshio Shuppan, 1990), pp. 129–46.

5. Yoshiko Matsumoto, "Gender Identity and the Presentation of Self in Japanese," in Sarah Benor, Mary Rose, Devyani Sharma, Julie Sweetland, and Qing Zhang, eds., *Gendered Practices in Language* (Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2002).

6. Okutsu Keiichiro, *Boku wa unagi da no bunpō* (Tokyo: Kuroshio Shuppan, 1978).