

July 4, 2005
TEAL-3 Draft

Ergativity and Bare Nominals in Early Old Japanese

Yuko Yanagida (University of Tsukuba)

1. Introduction

The purpose of my study is to show that the Japanese language in the *Nara* period (710-794) has some characteristics of ergative-absolutive languages. I extracted all the data from *Manyoshu*, the earliest written record of Classical Japanese, completed early in the ninth century. The groundwork of my study is Miyagawa (1989), who proposes that Japanese underwent change of case marking from abstract case assignment to morphological case marking. Old Japanese allows two kinds of objects, objects marked by *wo* and bare objects. Miyagawa observes that bare objects in Old Japanese must occur immediately adjacent to a verb, and suggests that they are assigned abstract case under government. Miyagawa's (1989) proposals are given in (1):

(1) Miyagawa (1989):

- (a) Abstract Case Assignment:
 - (i) A bare object occurs immediately adjacent to the verb
 - (ii) A bare object is assigned abstract case under government.
- (b) Conclusive vs. Attributive form:
 - (i) The conclusive form assigns abstract case.
 - (ii) The attributive form, which is nominal, has no case assigning feature.
- (c) Accusative Case Assignment:
The attributive form requires the morphological case marker *wo*.

From a complete survey of bare subjects in *Manyoshu*, I found that bare subjects, just like bare objects, occur immediately adjacent to a verb, which suggests that bare subjects are assigned abstract case in the same way as bare objects. Based on the fact that the subjects of intransitive and the objects of transitive verbs are morphologically unmarked, Old Japanese has ergative rather than accusative typology. In this paper, I explore the possibility that early Old Japanese has some characteristics of syntactically ergative languages. Before getting into bare subjects, I will first review my previous work on *wo*-marked objects in Old Japanese.

2. Obligator Movement of *Wo*-Marked Objects (Yanagida (forthcoming))

The particle *wo* in early Old Japanese differs significantly from that in Modern Japanese in that it can mark not only a direct object, but all kinds of internal arguments which are marked by the locative *ni* ‘to’ or *kara* ‘from’ in Modern Japanese. This is shown in (2a-e). In (2a), *wo* marks a goal argument, and in (2b-c) the source arguments. The particle *wo* is used to mark the locative adjunct in (2d) and the time adjunct in (2e-f).

- (2) a. Kisa-no wogaha-**wo** (平) yukite (332)
Kisa-GEN river-Obj go
‘...go to the river in Kisa.’
- b. Naniha-to-**wo** (平) kogi-dete mire-ba (4380)
Naniwa Bay-Obj row-out see-when
‘When (we) row from Naniwa Bay...’
- c. Nara-**wo** (平) ki-fanare...(4008)
Nara-Obj come-leave
‘...come away from Nara.’
- d. kafabe-**wo** (平) farusame-ni ware \emptyset_{subj} tatinuru (1696)
riverside- Obj spring rain-by I drained
‘I am standing in the rain of spring beside the river.’
- e. ame-no furu yo-**wo** (平) fototogisu \emptyset_{subj} naki-te yuku-nari (1756)
rain-GEN rain night-Obj cuckoo cuckooing go-AUX
‘At night when rain is falling, a cuckoo is frying.’
- f. aki-kaze-no samuki asake-**wo** (平) Sanu-no woka koyu-ramu kimi (361)
autumn-wind-GEN cold morning-Obj Sanu-GEN hill cross-AUX you
‘In the early morning when the autumn wind is cold, you are going now over the hill of Sano.’

Given that both arguments and adjuncts are marked by *wo*, *wo* in early Old Japanese is not an accusative case marker.

- (3) The particle *wo* is not an accusative case.

I found that there is a striking difference in word order between Modern Japanese and Old Japanese. In Old Japanese, when the subject is marked by the genitive *ga/no*, the object that follows must be morphologically unmarked. When the object is marked by *wo*, it must move over the subject. Some examples are given in (4-5). The quantitative data are given in (6).

[Subject-no/ga Object-Ø V] ...Basic Patterns

- (4) a. wago ofokimi miko-no mikoto-**no** (乃) ame-no sita-Ø_{obj} sirasi-mesise-ba (167)
 our prince-GEN noble man-SUBJ heaven-GEN under reign-POL-when
 ‘If our noble Prince was to reign the land...’
 b. Sayofime-no ko-**ga** (何) fire-Ø_{obj} furi-si yama-no na (868)
 Sayo-Hime-GEN dear-SUBJ scarf wave-PAST hill-GEN name
 ‘the name of the hill where Sayo-Hime waved her scarf’

[Subject-wo Subject-no/ga Ø V]

- (5) a. aki yama-**wo** (乎) ikani-ka (何) kimi-**ga** (君之) fitori koyu-ramu (106)
 autumn mountain-OBJ how-Q you-SUBJ alone cross-AUX
 ‘How do you cross the autumn mountain alone?’
 b. a-ga te-**wo** (乎) koyofi-mo-ka (毛可) tonon-wakugo-**ga** (我)
 I-GEN hand-OBJ tonight-FOC master-GEN young-son-SUBJ
 torite nageka-mu (3459)
 hold grieve-AUX
 ‘My master’s young son may hold my hand this evening and heave a sigh of sorrow.’

Quantitative Data

- (6) a. Subject-ga/no Object-Ø V.....88 examples (46 attributive)
 b. Object-wo Subject -ga/no/Ø V.....60 examples

Counterexamples:¹

- (7) a. Subject-ga object-wo V2 examples
 b. Subject-no object-wo V6 examples

Although there are some counterexamples, the data in *Manyoshu* shows that in the language of this period *wo*-marked objects must move outside a VP. I proposed that Old Japanese has the word order restriction, as given in (8).

- (8) Word Order in Early Old Japanese
 (i) A bare object must stay *in-situ*.
 (ii) An object marked by *wo* is necessarily definite and must move over a subject (OSV).

¹ The [subject-no object-wo V] pattern came to be used in the matrix clause in the early *Heian* period. In Yanagida (2005) I found 39 examples of this pattern in the text called *Konkomyou Saisho Oukyō* (The Sutra of Golden Light). I argue that this pattern is derived by the topicalization of a *no*-marked subject over a *wo*-marked object. *Konkomyou Saisho Oukyō* was originally written in India, and translated into Chinese in 703. This Chinese text was translated into Japanese in the early *Heian* period through a system called *haku-ten* ‘white markings’, which appeared on the original Chinese text, and were used as a way of translating Chinese into Japanese.

3. Bare Subjects

3.1 Non-active Intransitives

In order to examine the distribution of bare subjects, I extracted all examples of bare subjects from *Manyoshu*, and found that bare subjects appear immediately adjacent to the verb, just like bare objects as observed in Miyagawa (1989). The number of the verbs that appear with a bare subject is listed in Table 1, and some examples in (9).

Table 1 Verbs with Bare Subjects

Transitive verb (Agent, Experiencer)	Active Intransitive (Unergative)	Non-active Intransitive (Unaccusative)	
		Verb	Adjectives
34	18	95	38

- (9) a. Non-active Intransitive (unaccusative):
 ‘iku ‘live’, usu ‘disappear’, saku ‘bloom’, tayu ‘die’, tiru ‘fall’, nagaru ‘flow’
 ofu ‘grow’, sumu ‘live’, tatu ‘appear/stand’, naku ‘croak, chirp’, fuku ‘blow’,
 yuku ‘flow’, kuru ‘come’
- b. Active Intransitive (unergative)
 noru ‘ride’, yuku ‘go’, fasiru ‘run’, tudofu ‘gather’, sakaru ‘leave’, kaeru
 ‘return’, naku ‘cry’
- c. Transitive
 yobu ‘call’, kogu ‘row’, motomu ‘ask’, miru ‘look’, toku ‘untie’, motu ‘hold’,
 noboru ‘climb’, asaru, kufu ‘eat’, mofusu ‘tell’, furu ‘wave’, matu ‘wait’, siru
 ‘govern’, wasuru ‘forget’, kofu ‘long for’

For the purpose of this study, clauses are divided into four groups, as shown in (10).²

(10) Clause Type

- (a) Main: conclusive form, clause-final particles, Kakari-mubusi ‘focus concord’ construction, topic construction, conjunctive form
- (b) Conclusive: conclusive form inside to ‘that’-clauses, clauses selected by mi ‘see’
- (c) Attributive: the embedded clause selected by a postposition, *ni*, *made*, *wo*, *to*, etc.

² In OJ, clauses are characterized by inflectional forms of a predicate that include *mizen* ‘imperfect’, *renyoo* ‘conjunctive’, *shusi* ‘conclusive’, *rentai* ‘attributive’, *izen* ‘perfect’. Of these forms, the ones that are of particular interest are the attributive and conclusive form. The attributive form was primarily used in embedded clauses, while the conclusive is used to mark the sentence-final predicate of the matrix clause.

- (d) Ba-clause: perfect form (*izen-kei*) ‘since, because’, imperfect form (*mizen-kei*) ‘if’

A main clause ends with a predicate in the conclusive form or with a clause final particle. When it contains a *kakari*-focus particle, such as *zo*, *namu*, *ya*, *zo*, a predicate takes the attributive form. I also assume that a clause with the conjunctive form (*renyo-kei*) is main rather than embedded. The conjunctive form serves as a coordinator that links two or more clauses. A conclusive clause refers to that which is embedded, but ends with a predicate in the conclusive form. A conclusive clause has some main clause properties. The topic *wa* and *mo* can appear inside a conclusive clause. I assume that the main/conclusive clauses have a full fledged clausal projection. An attributive clause is either marked by a postposition, or modifies the following noun. A *ba*-clause ends with either a predicate in the perfect form (*izen-kei*) or imperfect form (*mizen-kei*).

Table 2 Non-active Intransitive

	Adjacent	Non-adjacent			
		Main (Conclusive)	Conclusive	Attributive	Ba-clause
Non-active intransitive	583+	75(39)	5	2	5

As shown in Table 2, 583 examples of bare subjects appear immediately adjacent to the non-active predicate. (This number does not include bare subjects that occur with adjectives. All adjectives can take a bare subject.) A bare subject adjacent to a verb can appear in a main clause as in (11), or in an embedded attributive clause as in (12).

Main Clause (Adjacent)

- (11) a. *waga fe-no sono-ni ume-ga hana-Ø_{subj} saku* (837)
 my house-GEN garden-LOC plum-GEN flower bloom
 ‘There bloom the plum-blossoms in the garden of my house.’
 b. *ifamura-ni kutsa-Ø_{subj} musa-zu*
 rock-LOC grass grow-not
 ‘On the rock the grass does not grow.’

Attributive Clause (Adjacent)

- (12) a. [*wominafesi-Ø_{subj} ofuru*] *safa...* (1346)
 patrinias grow marshy spot
 ‘the marshy spot where the patrinias grows’

- b. [ma-tori- \emptyset _{subj} tsumu] Unate no mori...(1344)
sacred bird live Unate-GEN wood
'the woods of Unate where sacred birds live'
- c. [kafazu- \emptyset _{subj} naku] Mututa no kafa... (1723)
'the river of Mutsuta where singing frogs are trilling loud'
- e. [ume-no fana- \emptyset _{subj} saki tiru] sono... (4041)
'the garden where the plum-blossoms scatter'
- f. [wominafesi- \emptyset _{subj} sakitaru] nobe... (3944, 3951)
'the field where the flowers of the patrinia were blooming'

Table 2 shows that subjects that do not occur adjacent to a verb must appear in main or conclusive clauses (with a few exceptions). The examples are given in (13-14).

Since non-adjacent subjects occur only in main /conclusive clauses, they are topicalized subjects. I take this as a null hypothesis.

Main Clause (not adjacent)

- (13) a. fagi-no fana- \emptyset _{subj} ima-**ka** tiru-ramu (2118)
bush clover-GEN flower now-Q fall-AUX
'Are bush-clover flowers falling now?'
- b. sigi- \emptyset _{subj} tare-ga tani-**ka** sumu (4141)
snipe who-GEN field-Q live
'Whose field do the snipes live in?'

Conclusive Clause (not adjacent)

- (14) a. aki-no fana- \emptyset _{subj} **kutsa-kutsani** ari to...(4255)
fall-GEN flower much be that
'(to say) that there are many sorts of flowers in fall season'
- b. ume-no fana- \emptyset _{subj} **ima** sakari nari mi-mu fito-mo gamo (850)
plum-GEN flower now bloom be see-AUX person wish
'I wish someone would see blossoms of the plum being now blooming.'

Some counterexamples are given in (15). In all cases, either an adverb or adjunct intervenes between the subject and the verb.

Attributive Clause (not adjacent)

- (15) a. koforogi- \emptyset _{subj} **safa-ni** naku yado-no fagi mi-ni...
'...to see the fine bush-clovers blooming in my garden where a lot of grasshoppers are chirping.'
- b. okitu kaze- \emptyset _{subj} **itaku** fukise-ba...(3616)
'Since the wind blows very hard...'
- c. sigure-no ame- \emptyset _{subj} **manakusi** fure-ba (1553)
'Since the seasonal shower comes falling down incessantly...'

From the above observation, we can safely conclude that bare subjects, like bare objects, are assigned abstract case under the strict adjacency requirement. That is, Old Japanese exhibits absolutive typology.

Hypothesis:

- (a) The bare subject that appears immediately adjacent to a verb is assigned absolutive case.
- (b) The bare subject that is not adjacent to a verb is a topic.

3.2 Transitive Verbs

Let us turn to transitive clauses. There are five transitive patterns that occur with a bare subject, as show in Table 3. (S and O are used to indicate that a subject and object are bare.) The examples of main and conclusive clauses are given in (16-17).

Table 3 Transitive

Transitive	Main (Conclusive)	Conclusive	Attributive	Ba-clause
SOV	29 (15)	6	5	0
OSV	9 (6)	0	0	0
SO-woV	2 (2)	0	0	0
O-wo SV	18 (1)		0	0
SØV	59()		0	4

Main clause

- (16) a. tidori-Ø_{subj} nanisi-**kamo** kawa-Ø_{obj} noboru (1251) (SOV)
 plover why-Q river go up
 ‘Why does the plover go up the river?’
- b. wago ookimi-Ø_{subj} kuni-Ø_{obj} sirasu-rasi (M. 933) (SOV)
 my emperor country govern-AUX
 ‘The emperor might govern the country.’
- c. mekari fune-Ø_{obj} ama-Ø_{subj} kogidu-rasi (1227) (OSV)
 gather-weed boat fishermen row-AUX
 ‘The fishermen row the boat to gather weeds.’
- d. waga furu sode-**wo** imo-Ø_{subj} mitu-ramu-**ka** (139) (O-wo SV)
 I wave sleeve-OBJ my deer see-AUX-Q
 ‘Did my deer see the sleeves that I waved?’
- e. fototogisu-Ø_{subj} fanatibana-**wo** tuti-ni tirasi-tu (1509) (SO-woV)
 ‘The common cuckoo may well scatter the fine flowers on the ground’
 ‘The boat that gathers weeds, the fishermen row’

Conclusive clause

- (17) a. [wago ofokimi- \emptyset_{subj} ame- \emptyset_{obj} sira-tsamu-to] omofa-ne-ba...(476)
my prince country govern-AUX-that think-NEG-since
'I did not think that our Prince would govern the country.'
b. [ware- \emptyset_{subj} kutsa- \emptyset_{obj} tore-ri] mi-mu fito-mo gamo (1943)
I weed take-AUX see-AUX person wish
'I wish someone see me gathering weeds.'
c. [ama-wotome-domo- \emptyset_{subj} tamawo- \emptyset_{obj} karu] miyu (3890)
I see fishermaids gathering the pretty weeds.

The result indicates that bare subjects in transitive clauses are topics since they are restricted to main/conclusive clauses.

Hypothesis:

A bare subject in a transitive clause is a topic.

I found five examples of bare subjects in attributive clauses and 4 examples in *ba*-clauses. Since these subordinate clauses do not allow topicalization, the bare subjects cannot be topics. I will return to these possible counterexamples in section ?.

3.3. Two Kinds of Intransitives

In Old Japanese, active intransitives behave like transitives in that a bare subject occurs only in a main/conclusive clause. This is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Active Intransitive (Unergative)

	Main (Conclusive)	Conclusive	Attributive	Ba-clause
Adjacent	17 (11)	2	1	0
Non-adjacent	8 (5)	1	0	0

Main clause (adjacent)

- (18) a. Irago-no sima-fe kogu fune-ni imo- \emptyset_{subj} noru-ramu-ka (42)
Irago-GEN Isle-LOC row boat-LOC my maid go-AUX-Q
'Does my maid go in the boat they may row to the Isle of Irago?'
b. ko- \emptyset_{subj} naku ramu (337)
the child may be crying.
c. tabibito- \emptyset_{subj} utinabiki nerame-yamo (46)
traveller lie down sleep
'Would the travellers lie down and fall into sleep?'

Conclusive clause (adjacent)

- (19) Imo-ga sima katami-no ura-ni tadu- \emptyset_{subj} kakeru miyu (1199)

‘I see cranes flying above the Isle of Maid and Katami Bay.’

Main clause (non-adjacent)

- (20) a. ime-ni ware- \emptyset _{subj} koyofi ita-ramu (2912)
‘I shall call on you this evening in your dream.’
b. omofi tuma- \emptyset _{subj} kokoro-ni norite (3278)
loving lord heart-in ride
‘My loving lord rides on my heart.’

Hypothesis:

A bare subject in an active intransitive is a topic.

Interestingly, the motion verb *kuru* ‘come’ behaves like a non-active intransitive in that a bare subject can freely appear inside the relative clause as in (21a-b).

kuru ‘come’

- (21) a. [okitu-nami- \emptyset _{subj} ki-yoru] famabe (3237)
offing-wave come shore
‘the shore where the waves in the offing come’
b. [tubame- \emptyset _{subj} kuru] toki...(4144)
swallow come time
‘the time when swallows are coming.’

The motion verb *yuku* ‘go’ behaves like a transitive in that a bare subject only occurs in the matrix clause, as in (22a). When it appears inside attributive and *ba*-clauses, it is marked by the genitive particle *ga* or *no* as in (22b-c).

yuku ‘go’

- (22) a. ume-no fana- \emptyset _{subj} saki tiru sono-ni ware- \emptyset _{subj} yuka-mu (1900)
plum-GEN flower bloom garden-LOC I go-AUX
‘I will go into the garden where plum-blossoms are blooming.’
b. [kimi-**ga** yuku] umibe-no yado (3580, 3724)
you-SUBJ go sea facing-GEN inn
‘the inn facing to the sea where you go’
c. Naniwa he-ni hito-**no** yuke-ba...(1442)
Naniwa LOC person-SUBJ go-when
‘when the man went to Naniwa...’

When a bare subject occurs inside the relative clause, it has the meaning of ‘flow’ rather than ‘go’, as in (23).

yuku ‘flow’

- (23) [Asuka-gawa-Ø_{subj} yuku] se wo haya-mi ... (2713)
Asuka-river go water-SUBJ fast-MI
‘since the river of Asuka where the water flows is very fast...’

There is another crucial difference between *kuru* ‘come’ and *yuku* ‘go’, which will be discussed in section 4.

4. Ergative Case

It is widely recognized that the case particle *i* in Old Japanese is treated as a nominative case among traditional grammarians. Vovin (1997), however, proposes that the case particle *i* is an active case that marks the subject of transitive and of active intransitive verbs. In *Manyoshu*, however, there are only 5 examples of the case particle *i*, which are all listed in (24a-e).

The Case marker *i* (5 examples in *Manyoshu*)

- (24) a. katare katare to norase-koso Sifi-**i**-wa mawose (237)
‘You says “Speak speak”, so, Sifi says...’
b. fafa-**i** more-domo..(3393)
‘Though my mother protects (me)’
c. ufara-wotoko-**i** ame afugi tsakebiorabi....(1809)
‘The man from Unai looked up the sky and shouted’
d. Kii-no sekimori-**i** todomete-mu-ka (545)
‘Will the barrier-keeper of the Province of Kii stop me?’
e. imo-**i** ofofosi-mise-mu (3161)
‘My maid will worry (about me).’

An interesting fact is that there are a number of the same phonetic form *i* prefixing to an active predicate in *Manyoshu*. I found a total 73 examples of the prefix *i*, 28 of which are used with *yuku* ‘go’, but no example with the verb *kuru* ‘come’. This clearly shows that the subjects of the verb *yuku* ‘go’ and of *kuru* ‘come’ take different case markings in early Old Japanese.

The Prefix *i* (73 examples, 28 example with *yuku* ‘go’)

- (25) a. Nara-no miyako-no Safo-gawa-ni **i**-yuki itarite (79)
Nara-GEN capital-GEN Saho-river-LOC I-go arrive
‘I arrived at the River Sahokawa at Nara.’
b. Kume-no wakugo-**ga i**-fure-kemu iso-no kutsa-no -ne (435)

- Kume-GEN youth-SUBJ I-touch-AUX rock-GEN grass-GEN-root
 ‘the root of the grass that the youth of Kume might have touched.’
- c. *atsanagi-ni i-kaki-watari yusiwo-ni i-kogi-watari...*(M. 1520)
 morning-calm-LOC I-paddle-go evening tide-LOC I-row-go
 ‘When the morning sea is calm, (he would) toil hard to paddle, and on evening tide, (he would) go rowing...’
- d. *Ama-no-gawa fasi watase tanabata-no i-watara-samu ...*(2081)
 Heaven-GEN river bridge span Weaver-maid-SUBJ cross-AUX
 ‘Span a bridge across the Heaven’s river, so Weaver-maid may cross....’
- e. *wotimidu i-tori kite kimi-ni maturite* (3245)
 rejuvenating water I-get come lord-DAT offer
 ‘...get the rejuvenating water and offer it to my lord.’
- f. *Woti-no kosuge...i-kari moti-ki sika-naku-ni i-kari moti kite* (3323)
 Ochi-GEN sedge I-cut bringe sit-NEG I-cut bring come
 ‘The short sedges of Ochi, you cut and bring me, I never sit on, yet you cut and bring me.’
- g. **photogisu** *Nifu-no yamafe-ni i-yuki naka-nimo* (4178)
 cuckoo Nifu-GEN mountain-loc I-go cuckoo-EXCL.
 ‘I wish the cuckoo would go and call to the mountain of Nifu.’

The predicate prefixed with *i* can occur with the genitive subject marked by *ga* or *no*, as shown in (25b, d), and a topicalized bare subject as in (25g), but there is no example in which a non-topicalized bare subject occurs with a predicate with *i*.

In ergative languages, ergative case is identified with genitive, equated with the case on the possessor in noun phrases. In Old Japanese *ga* and *no* share the grammatical function of genitive. The subject of embedded clauses, most prominently, attributive clauses, is marked by the genitive *ga* or *no*. It is well known that there is a semantic restriction on the use of *ga*; personal pronouns are only used with *ga*, but not with *no*. While *no* can be used with both human and non-human subjects, the use of *ga* is restricted to animate and human subjects. Under my study, this semantic difference is not inherent in the genitive particles, but due to the difference in their case assigning properties. This is stated in (26).

- (26) The genitive *ga* and *no*
- a. The subjects of a transitive and of an active (i.e., unergative) intransitive are marked by either *ga* or *no*.
 - b. The subjects of a non-active (i.e., unaccusative) intransitive must be marked by *no*.

What follows is that the genitive *ga* is equated with ergative in early Old Japanese.

(27) The genitive *ga* assigns ergative case.

Examples (28a-b) show that the subject that appears immediately adjacent to a non-active verb can be marked by *no*. (In most cases, however, the subjects adjacent to a verb are bare.)

- (28) a. aki kaze-**no** (能) fukamu sono tuki (3586)
autumn wind-SUBJ blow that time
'the time when autumn wind blows'
b. fana-**no** (能) saku tuki (4066)
flower-SUBJ bloom time
'the time when the flower is in bud.'

There are some counterexamples in which *i* is used with a non-active predicate, as in (29).

- (29) Miwa-no yama- \emptyset _{topic}...Nara-no yama-no yama-no ma-ni **i**-kakuru-made
Miwa-GEN Mt. Nara-GEN Mt.-GEN mountain-GEN behind I-hide-until
miti-no kuma **i**-tumoru-made-ni tubarani-mo mi-tutu yuka-mu (17)
road-GEN side I-cover-until closely-FOC see go-AUX
'Until Mt. Miwa hides behind the side of Mt. Nara, and until (clouds) drift
across every corner of roads, I go watching the mountain.'

In (29), *kakuru* 'hide', and *tumoru* 'heap' are non-active intransitives and take the non-human subject.³ Note that one of the most prominent rhetorical devices used in *Manyoshu* is known as 'personification'; the natural objects, such as mountain, cloud, river, are very often used metaphorically to describe a writer's internal state of mind at that very moment. The use of *i* may indicate that the mountain is described as being a person. In (29), *Miwa-no yama* 'Mt. Miwa' is the subject of *kakuru* 'hide', which is prefixed with *i*, but it is a topicalized subject that appears in the matrix clause, not inside the clause that contains *kakuru* 'hide'.

Although the case particle *i* is premature in *Manyoshu*, I found many cases of the case particle *i*, as in (30) in the text called *Konkomyou Saisho Oukyoku* (The Sutra of Golden Light) (see footnote 1).

³ When *kakuru* 'hide' takes an agentive subject, it behaves like an active intransitive in that a bare subject only appears in main/conclusive clauses. So whether a verb belongs to an active or non-active intransitive is in part determined by the semantic properties of the subject, such as agentivity or affectiveness (see Dixon 1994:85).

- (30) mazusii fito-**i** zai-wo motome-mu
 poor man-ERG fortune-OBJ look for-AUX
 ‘Poor men will seek a fortune.’ (KSO:Ch 1-2)

Since both the prefix *i* and the case particle *wo* appear only with an active predicate, it seems natural that they are morphologically related. I suspect that the prefix *i* is in fact a pronominal clitic attached to the verb, and was reanalyzed as a case particle in the early *Heian* period.⁴ The fact that the two kinds of intransitives take a different case pattern supports the view that early Old Japanese has some characteristics of ergative-absolutive languages.

5. Objects with the Attributive Predicate

Miyagawa (1989) proposes that while a conclusive predicate assigns abstract case, an attributive predicate, which is nominal, has no case assigning property. According to Miyagawa (1989), the object of an attributive predicate must be assigned case from the particle *wo*. Miyagawa’s hypothesis is primarily based on Mastunaga’s (1983) observation that an attributive predicate appears only with a *wo*-marked phrase. Under my observation, as shown in (31), 46 out of a total 88 transitive clauses have a bare object that appears immediately adjacent to an attributive predicate. These are all taken as counterexamples to Miyagawa’s hypothesis. Importantly, however, most of bare objects that appear adjacent to an attributive predicate are noun heads. Among 46, only one example appears with a phrasal object. The example is given in (32). Motohashi (2003) listed 100 examples of bare objects that appear with an attributive predicate in the Nara period. 59 examples are N-heads that appear strictly adjacent to the verb. The quantitative data are given in (33). When phrasal objects appear with an attributive predicate, they occur in clause initial position, as shown in example (34).

Yanagida (forthcoming)

Quantitative Data

- (31) [Subjects-ga/no Bare NP Attributive]46 examples
 (a) N-head.....45 examples
 (b) Phrasal bare NP...1 example (in the main clause)

⁴ Muranaka (1981:251) argues that case particles in Japanese have their origins in pronouns.

- (32) . . .tanome-**ya** kimi-ga [waga na] nori-kemu (2639)
 trust-FOC/Q lord-SUBJ my name tell-AUX
 ‘Since (he) trusts in me, has the lord told my name?’

Motohashi (2003)

- (33) [bare NP_{OBJ} Attributive]94 examples
 (a) N-head.....57 examples
 (b) phrasal bare NP...37 examples
 (i) Clause Initial.....31
 (ii) Others.....6

- (34) [Tomo-no Ura-no iso-no muro-no ki] **mimu**-goto-ni afi-misi imo-wa
 Tomo Bay-GEN beach-GEN cypress-GEN tree see whenever see maid-TOP
 wasura-e-me-yamo (447)
 forget-AUX-Q
 ‘Whenever I see the cypress-tree by the beach beside Tomo Bay, would I ever
 forget my dear who stood by me and saw it?’

I speculate that a phrasal object in clause initial position as in (34) is either dislocated by heavy NP shift or base-generated in the left peripheral topic position. (A topic may serve as what is known as *joshi* ‘introductory verse’, an important rhetorical device used in the *Manyoo* poems. The introductory verse modifies the contents of the succeeding verse.) If we exclude these cases, almost all bare objects with an attributive predicate are N-heads. What I would like to explore is the possibility that an N-head immediately adjacent to an attributive predicate is incorporated into the verb. Object incorporation is widely observed in ergative languages.

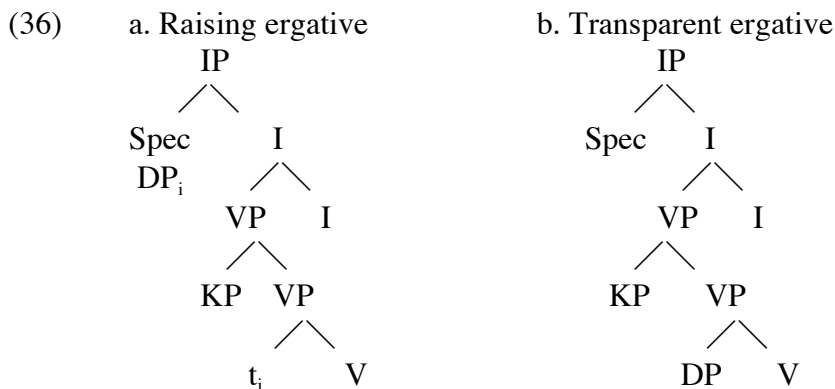
Assuming that attributive predicates do not assign case, an object is either incorporated into a verb in which case, it need not be assigned case under Baker (1988), or moves to a position outside a VP.

- (35) Attributive Predicate [V+N]
 (a) An N-head is incorporated into a verb.
 (b) A subject marked by the genitive *ga/no* must stay *in-situ*.
 (c) An object marked by *wo* must move outside a VP.

6. Analysis

6.1 Bittner and Hale (1996)

In order to account for case marking in Early Old Japanese, I will follow the theory of Case proposed by Bittner and Hale (1996). Note that ergative languages are divided into two types (Dixon 1979). In morphologically ergative languages, an object with absolutive case stays inside a VP. In syntactically ergative languages a DP with absolutive case undergoes A' movement. Given that ergative languages typically lack rigid SIVO order, Bittner and Hale (1996) suggest that an ergative subject stays inside a VP (i.e., distinguished adjunct) and cannot move to Spec(IP). An absolutive object, on the other hand, moves to Spec(IP), which is an A' position under their analysis. The two types of ergative languages, syntactic and morphological, which they call 'raising' and 'transparent' have the structure given in (36a-b).



Under their analysis, morphological case such as ergative, heads K, while absolutive/nominative case is K-less since K is not morphologically realized. They suggest that morphological case is assigned under a structural relation, which they refer to as "Case binding" (for the technical definition of Case binding, see Bittner and Hale 1996:12(22)). Under their definition of case binding, the ergative subject, namely, KP, in (36) is case-bound by Infl. Nominative/absolutive case, on the other hand, must not be case bound, because a verb in ergative languages never serves as a case-binder. The K-less nominal (i.e., DP or NP) must then satisfy the following condition.

(37) K Filter (Bittner and Hale 1996)

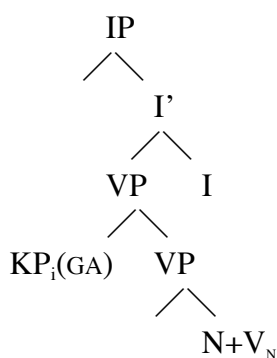
An argument chain headed by a K-less nominal (DP or NP) contains a position that is c-commanded and governed by K or C, and does not contain any Case-bound position.

The object DP is not governed by a Comp, since a VP serves as a barrier for government. Thus, in raising ergative as in (36a), the DP has to move to Spec(IP) to satisfy the K-filter. Transparent ergative, as illustrated in (36b) differs from raising ergative in that V raises to Comp. Bittner and Hale assume that a VP is “transparent” for government when V moves to Comp by head-to-head movement, permitting Comp to govern the object DP.

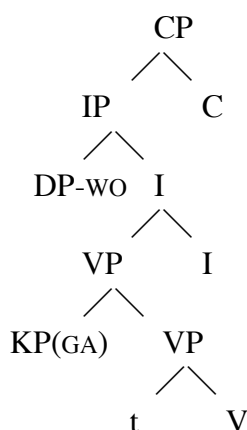
6.2 Subjects

Let us assume with Bittner and Hale (1996) that absolutive objects must be governed by a Comp. The two kinds of attributive clauses are represented in (38).

(38) a. Attributive



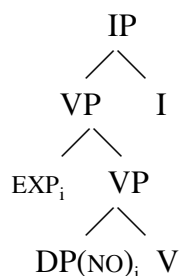
b. Attributive



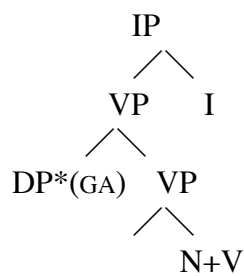
An attributive predicate does not move to Comp since head movement to Comp is not allowed inside subordinate clauses. A bare object not governed by a Comp is incorporated into a verb, as illustrated in (38a). As I discussed earlier, *wo* is not a case assigner, and *wo*-marked phrases in early Old Japanese must move over a subject. Suppose that a *wo*-marked object moves to Spec(IP), following Bittner and Hale (1996),

the structure in (38b) is identical to raising ergative illustrated in (36a). Now consider the two types of intransitives, as illustrated below:

(39) a. Unaccusative



b. Unergative



A bare subject must appear immediately adjacent to a non-active predicate, just like a bare object. This may indicate that a bare subject of a non-active intransitive appears in the object position (i.e., unaccusative). It does not seem to move to the subject position given that no element can intervene between the subject and the verb. If a bare subject remains *in-situ*, it is not governed by Comp, since a VP serves as a barrier for government, leading to a violation of the K-filter. (I assume with Bittner and Hale (1996) that a verb is not a case binder.) A possible alternative, as shown in (39a) is that a covert expletive appears in the subject position, and that the bare subject that remains *in-situ* is licensed by coindexation.

Let us turn to active (unergative) intransitives. A bare subject does not appear adjacent to an active intransitive. Let us assume with Bittner and Hale (1996) that unergative intransitives have a kind of light verb constructions (such as *sigoto suru* ‘work do’) in which there is an object which is obscured by subsequent incorporation at PF (resulting in unergative active system, i.e., Bittner and Hale 1996:28)). A bare subject with absolutive case may not appear in the subject position, since this position is case-bound by Infl, in a violation of the K-filter. A bare subject in an active intransitive is a topicalized subject, which I assume to appear in Spec(IP). The subject that appears in the ‘distinguished subject position’ inside a VP is marked by the genitive *ga* which assigns ergative case.

6.3 Change of the Case Marking System

So far I have provided empirical arguments for the view that early Old Japanese has an ergative-absolutive typology. Since modern Japanese has an accusative typology, a question now remains as to how exactly the change took place in the history of Japanese. In the following section, I suggest a possible account for change of case marking using the framework proposed by Bittner and Hale (1996). Based on the study done by Klokeid (1978) of the languages of Wellesley Island in Australia (Lardil, Kayardild, Yangkaal, etc.), Bittner and Hale make the generalization given in (40).

- (40) The historical origin of the accusative construction has been shown to be reanalysis of a verb that contains an adjoined N (Bittner and Hale 1996:40).

The driving force for this reanalysis is the universal convention stated in (41).

- (41) Direct Case realization (Bittner and Hale 1996)
If \square Case-binds an overt empty-headed KP, then the empty K is realized as
a. ERG, if \square is I (or D);
b. ACC if \square is V (or P) and has an adjoined D.

Bittner and Hale propose that the accusative case is assigned if the case binder is a verb with an adjoined D. Such a verb results from reanalysis of a lexical head N adjoined to a verb, more specifically an antipassive verb, as the functional category D. The antipassive construction has the following properties.⁵

- (42) Antipassive (cf. Baker 1988)
(a) Antipassive applies to an underlying transitive clause and forms a derived intransitive.
(b) The subjects of the antipassive are assigned absolutive case.
(c) The antipassive morpheme is N which eliminates their case assigning feature.
(d) An object is assigned structural oblique from a verb or incorporated into a verb.

In the antipassive, there is an explicit morpheme adjoined to a transitive verb. The verb's thematic direct object appears as an oblique case instead of as a surface direct object. The antipassive is illustrated in example (43) cited by Bittner and Hale (1996).

⁵ Under Bittner and Hale (1996), while nominative/absolutive objects must not be case-bound, oblique objects are case-bound by a verb in the antipassive construction.

- (43) a. Juuna-p Anna kunip-p-a-a
 Junna-ERG_i Anna_j kiss-IND-3SG_i-3SG_j
 ‘Junna kissed Anna.’
 b. Juuna (Anna-mik) kunis-si-v-u-q
 Juuna_i (Anna-INS) kiss-APASS-IND-3SG_i
 ‘Juuna kisses/is kissing (Anna).’
 (Inuit (Eskimo-Aleut:West Greenland))

It is widely known that an attributive predicate in main clauses was used with a *kakari*-focus particle in early Old Japanese, but came to be used without a *kakari*-focus particle from approximately tenth to fifteen centuries. The attributive form then took over the conclusive form. Miyagawa (1989) and Miyagawa and Ekida (2003) show that the merger of these two verbal conjugations led to the spread of the accusative case particle *wo*. Miyagawa and Ekida (2003) gave extended data in the *Heian* period, and show that while the objects of a conclusive predicate are morphologically unmarked, an attributive predicate consistently takes an object marked by the particle *wo*. If this is interpreted as change of case marking from ergative to accusative, we would predict that the shift of case marking may follow from the universal convention given in (41). A question then arises as to whether early Old Japanese has an antipassive construction. Note that in some languages, as given in (44), the object noun root is incorporated into the verb in the antipassive construction.

- (44) a. Simiyeeni-sgu-m-hoon
 smoke-APASS-ADJ-fish
 ‘to smoke fish’
 b. lit’s il-sgu-m-daala
 count.up-APASS-ADJ-money
 ‘to keep track of money’
 (In Nisgaha, a Tsimshian language of British Columbia, Mithun 1984)

As suggested earlier, a bare N-head in early Old Japanese is incorporated into an attributive predicate. The attributive clause then may be similar to the antipassive in the language given in (44). Recall that there are cases in which a bare subject and object appear inside an attributive clause, as indicated in Table 3. In all cases, bare objects are N-heads that are presumably incorporated into a verb. The examples are given in (45).

Attributive (SOV)

- (45) a. [ama-wotome- \emptyset_{subj} sifo- \emptyset_{obj} yaku] keburu (366)
fishermaid salt burn-N smoke
'rising smoke with which some fishermaids burn salt'
- b. [Nanifafito- \emptyset_{subj} asibi- \emptyset_{obj} taku] ya no susite-are-do...(2651)
Naniwa men fire burn-N hut-SUBJ sooty-be-CONJ
'As the huts of Naniwa men in which they build fires are sooty...'
- c. [Sayofime- \emptyset_{subj} fire- \emptyset_{obj} furi-si] yori oferu yama-no na (871)
Sayohime scarf wave-PAST -N after given mountain-GEN name
'The name of the mountain given after Sayohime waved her scarf on this mountain'

Since topics are not allowed inside the attributive clauses, the bare subjects in (45) cannot be topics. (45) then may be similar to the antipassive in which the subject is assigned absolutive case. Note, however, that the subject of the attributive clause is generally marked by *ga*. This is shown in example (3b), repeated in (46).

- (46) [Sayofime-no ko-**ga** (何) fire- \emptyset_{obj} furi-si] yama-no na (868)
Sayo-Hime-GEN dear-SUBJ scarf wave-PAST hill-GEN name
'the name of the hill where Sayo-Hime waved her scarf'

Example (46) has the same structure as (45). Since there are only 6 examples of the clause like (45), it is not clear whether they are analyzed as derived intransitives (i.e., antipassive) or as genuine counterexamples. Regardless of whether Old Japanese has an antipassive, we can still make a strong claim that reanalysis of the attributive morpheme, that is, adjoined N, is directly responsible for change of the case marking system, which follows from the universal convention (41) proposed by Bitter and Hale (1996)

6.4 Conclusive Predicates

Finally, let us turn to the issue concerning conclusive predicates. Note that the ergative subject of the conclusive clause may not be realized as *ga*, since *ga* is genitive and only used for the subject of the nominalized clause. As indicated in Table 3, the basic structure of the conclusive clause is SOV. Both subject and object are morphologically unmarked. A bare object immediately adjacent to a conclusive predicate can be either phrasal or N-head. When the subject is present, the bare object that follows tends to be an N-head, as in (47).

- (47) wago ookimi- \emptyset _{subj} kuni- \emptyset _{obj} sirasu-rasi (M. 933) (SOV)
 my emperor country govern-AUX
 ‘The emperor might govern the country.’

When the subject is not present, a phrasal object can appear immediately adjacent to a verb, as in (48).

- (48) Afadi-no Nosima-no famakaze-ni [imo-ga musubisi fimo]- \emptyset _{obj} fuki-kafesu (251)
 Awaji-GEN Nojima-GEN biny wind-LOC maid-SUBJ tied string blow-flutter
 In the briny wind at the Cape of Nosima, Awaji County, someone blew my
 strings of clothes my maid tied.

This means that unlike attributive predicates, bare objects of conclusive predicates can remain *in-situ*. Furthermore, *wo*-marked objects rarely occur with conclusive predicates. Let us look at the quantitative data given in (49).

- (49) a. Subject \emptyset Object-wo V: 2
 b. Object-wo Subject \emptyset V: 18(1)

In the matrix clause, there are 18 examples in which a *wo*-marked object precedes a bare subject. In most cases, they occur in interrogative clauses marked by a Q particle, as illustrated in (50a-b).

- (50) a. koromo-no fimo-**wo** are- \emptyset _{topic} tokame-ya-mo (3585)
 dress-GEN lace-OBJ I untie-Q
 ‘The lace of dress, I will not untie, will I?’
 b. wa-ga furu sode-**wo** imo- \emptyset _{topic} mitu-ramu-ka (139)
 I-SUBJ wave sleeve-OBJ my deer see-AUX-Q
 ‘Did my deer see the sleeve that I waved?’

There is only one example that ends with a conclusive predicate.

- (51) isi-**wo** tare- \emptyset mi-ki (869)
 stone-OBJ who see-PAST-CONCL
 ‘The stone, who saw?’

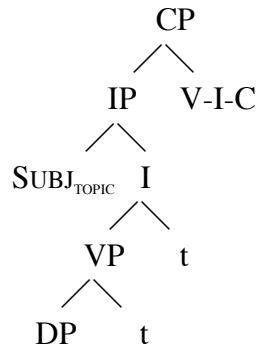
(51) is a genuine counterexample since the interrogative pronoun cannot be a topic. Although a *wo*-marked object does not occur with a bare topicalized subject, it seems that when a subject is marked by the topic *wa*, a *wo*-marked object can appear in a position preceding the subject, as in (52).

- (52) musubisi fimo-**wo** ...ware-**fa** tokimi-zi (M. 2919)

knot lace-OBJ I-TOP untie-not
 ‘The lace we knot (together), I do not untie myself.’

Putting aside a clause like (52), I assume that a *wo*-marked object rarely occurs with a conclusive predicate. Given that a topicalized subject appears in Spec(IP), the structure of the conclusive clause is represented in (53).

(53)



Suppose that a conclusive predicate is a morphological realization of V-to-C movement, as indicated in (53). Then, under Bittner and Hale (1996) the DP is governed by Comp and hence need not move. A problem is that if a topicalized subject appears in Spec(IP) and a bare object stays inside a VP, there is no way to determine whether a clause that ends with a conclusive predicate is ergative or accusative. My speculation at this point is that Old Japanese has a mixed case marking system, ergative and accusative. Syntactic ergativity is manifested in main/embedded attributive clauses in early Old Japanese.

7. Summary

To summarize, I made the following proposals:

(54) Ergativity in Old Japanese

(a) *wo* is not an accusative case.

(b) Absolutive Case Assignment:

(i) Both the subject of intransitive and object of transitive verbs are assigned absolutive case, which is morphologically unmarked.

(ii) The genitive *ga* assigns ergative case.

(c) Attributive form:

(i) The attributive form is a nominal head adjoined to a verb.

(ii) VP internal bare objects are incorporated into a verb (i.e., Noun Incorporation).

(iii) A *wo*-marked object must move over a subject (i.e., Syntactic ergative).

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