

Old (8th century) Japanese Texts – 2017/2018

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Trinity Term, 2 hours of tutorial per week.

Students taking this option will need to have attended the lecture series Introduction to Old Japanese, 1 hour per week in HT. Some knowledge of 'Classical Japanese' may also be an advantage.

The purpose of this option is for students to learn to read, translate and comment on texts written in Old Japanese, the oldest known form of the Japanese language (from the Asuka/Nara period). The writing, the vocabulary, and the grammar of Old Japanese are significantly different from that of the canons of Classical Japanese literature from the Heian period onwards. The texts will be read and studied from a linguistic, rather than literary, point of view, focusing on the special features of Old Japanese script, phonology and grammar. These texts raise many points of interest for all students of Japanese, but knowledge of Old Japanese is an especially valuable addition to the study of Classical Japanese.

Most of the texts from this period are poetry. We will read texts from the poetry anthology the *Man'yōshū* (compiled after 759 AD), which is the main source of texts from the period, and we will also read poems from other sources: some of the *Bussokuseki-ka* ("Footprints of the Buddha"), a series of poems carved in stone in the Yakushi-ji in Nara sometime after 753 AD; and some longer poems that appear within the first Imperial History (*Kojiki*).

We will also read works written in a ritualistic prose, beginning with a selection of Imperial Edicts (*Senmyō*), and some related poetry from the *Shoku nihongi*. We will also read two liturgical texts from the *Norito*: *Tatuta no kaze no kamwi no maturi* ("Festival of the wind spirits of Tatsuta") and *Tatarigamwi wo utusiyaru* ("Driving away a vengeful spirit").

Finally, we will read some of the few texts written in Eastern Old Japanese, a group of dialects with characteristics that are different from the language of the capital, which is that reflected in the majority of sources. Students taking this option should also follow Professor Frellesvig's lecture series *Introduction to Old Japanese* in Hilary Term.