

# Editor's preface

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Pages vii–viii of

**Using Tonal Data to Recover Japanese Language History**

**Elisabeth M. de Boer**

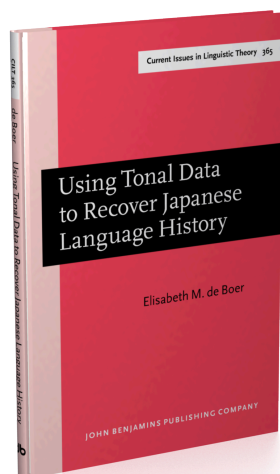
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## Editor's preface

When the author, Elisabeth M. de Boer, died of cancer at age 57 in August 2023, she left behind not only her husband Pierre Eijgenraam and her sons Loek and Hajo but also many academic colleagues who had long appreciated her energy and perseverance, and the nearly complete manuscript of the book you are now reading.

I met Elisabeth<sup>1</sup> in Vancouver, B.C. at the Fourteenth International Conference on Historical Linguistics. From that first meeting, when she told me of her interest in Japanese tonology, until her untimely death, I was immensely gratified to see her steady and rapid growth as a scholar of Japanese historical linguistics, starting with her doctorate under Frederik Kortlandt at Universiteit Leiden. I was deeply touched when, before entering hospice, Elisabeth asked me to edit and index her manuscript.

Elisabeth explains her goals in writing this book in the Introduction. I have kept them firmly in mind while editing her text. I have retained the eleven-chapter structure of her manuscript, but have redrawn her data tables for legibility, introduced some terminological conventions for brevity, and corrected various small errors along the way, adding cross-references to help the reader where that seemed advisable.

I offer my sincere thanks to Petros Loukareas, Elisabeth's student and research assistant at Ruhr-Universität Bochum, who retrieved and copied numerous files from Elisabeth's computer, copied them for me, and answered my many queries about the manuscript.

My thanks go also to S. Robert Ramsey for his constant encouragement and help. As the reader will see, Ramsey's linguistically informed interpretation of the notations for tones in Middle Japanese manuscripts was the key that enabled de Boer to construct an integrated theory of Japanese dialect divergence consistent with fieldwork data, textual evidence, and the principles of linguistic geography. The present book, which lays out the essentials of this theory, is especially timely

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1. I use her first name because of the friendship we developed during many conversations about her work we had over the years – in Arnhem, Paris, Montreal, and Jena, and through email and phone calls. For me, a professor almost twenty years her senior, our relationship was one of the most rewarding mentoring experiences I have ever had.

given the unwillingness of linguists in Japan to give Ramsey's and de Boer's arguments the kind of serious consideration they deserve.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, I wish especially to thank Joseph Salmons of the University of Wisconsin – Madison, the editor of *the Current Issues in Linguistic Theory* series, and the staff at its publisher, John Benjamins, for their support and understanding in seeing this project through to completion. Without their generous trust, this volume would not have been possible.

J. Marshall Unger  
Silver Spring, Maryland  
11 July 2024

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2. See, for instance, the dismissive footnote 2 on p.116 of the recently published Hirako et al. 2024.