

**Classical Japanese:
A Grammar**

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Basic Grammatical Terms and Concepts

1.1 Subject and Predicate

Each sentence in classical Japanese is a relationship between the subject and the predicate, in which the predicate (述語 ^{じゆつご}) makes a statement about the subject (主語 ^{しゆご}). The subject usually is a nominal (such as a noun or pronoun), and the predicate usually is a verb, an adjective, an adjectival verb, or a copula. The following are three basic subject + predicate relationships:

1. **Subject + verb.** The verb indicates the action of the subject.

ほととぎす鳴く。 *Hototogisu naku.*

The cuckoo (*hototogisu*) sings (*naku*). (*Makura*, sec. 99, NKBT 19:149)

2. **Subject + adjective.** The adjective describes the state of the subject.

峰高し。 *Mine takashi.*

The peak (*mine*) is high (*takashi*). (*Kaidōki*, SNKBT 51:108)

3. **Subject + copula.** The copula, which directly follows a noun, usually identifies the subject.

我れは龍王なり。 *Ware wa ryūō nari.*

I (*ware*) am (*nari*) the dragon king (*ryūō*). (*Konjaku*, vol. 5, NKBT 22:371) (Here the copula is the declarative verb *nari*, "to be," which equates "I" with the "dragon king.")

In classical Japanese, the subject is often implied rather than stated.

1.2 Sentence Structure

1. **Simple sentence.** The subject and predicate appear only once.

潮満ちぬ。 *Shio michi-nu.*

The tide (*shio*) has come in (*michi-nu*). (*Tosa*, NKBT 20:30)

2. Parallel and complex sentences. The subject and predicate appear more than once, in a parallel or subordinate relationship.

父^{ちち}はなほびとにて、母^{はは}なむ藤原^{ふじわら}なりける。 *Chichi wa naobito ni-te, haha namu Fujiwara nari-keru.*

The father (*chichi*) was an ordinary person (*naobito*), and the mother (*haha*) was a Fujiwara. (*Ise*, sec. 10, NKBT 9:118)

雨^{あめ}など降^あるもをかし。 *AME NADO FURU mo okashi.*

The falling (*furu*) of the rain (*ame*) is wonderful (*okashi*). (*Makura*, sec. 1, NKBT 19:43)

人^{ひと}の心^{こころ}すなほならねば、偽^{いつは}りなきにしもあらず。 *HITO NO KOKORO SUNAO NARA-NE-BA, itsuwari naki ni shi mo ara-zu.*

Since (*ba*) the heart (*kokoro*) of a person is not frank (*sunao*), there is no (*ara-zu*) absence (*naki*) of falseness (*itsuwari*). (*Tsurezure*, sec. 85, NKBT 30:158)

1.3 Autonomous Words and Dependent Forms

All words in classical Japanese belong to one of two broad categories: autonomous words (自立語) and dependent forms (付属語). Autonomous words can stand alone as independent words, but dependent forms cannot.

雪^{ゆき}も降^あらず。 *Yuki mo fura-zu.*

The snow (*yuki*) also (*mo*) does not fall (*fura-zu*). (*Sarashina*, NKBT 20:515)

In this sentence, the subject, *yuki* (snow), and the verb, *furu* (to fall), are autonomous words. But because the particle, *mo* (too), and the auxiliary verb, *zu* (which follows the stem of the verb *furu* and negates it), do not make sense by themselves, they are called dependent forms.

The function of these dependent forms (such as particles and auxiliary verbs) is to connect autonomous words, to modify them, and to reveal the judgment of the speaker.

1.4 Inflected and Noninflected Forms

Two general grammatical categories are inflected forms (用言 ^{ようげん}) and noninflected forms. Inflected forms inflect, or conjugate, thereby altering the meaning of the word.

書かず ^か. *Kaka-zu.*

"S/he does not write." (The *mizenkei*, or imperfective form, of the verb *kaku*, "to write," followed by the negative auxiliary verb *zu*.)

書きて... *Kaki-te...*

"Writing..." (The *ren'yōkei*, or continuative form, of the verb *kaku*, "to write," followed by the conjunctive particle *te*.)

書け ^か *Take!*

"Write!" (The verb *kaku*, "to write," in the *meireikei*, or imperative form.)

Verbs (動詞 ^{どうし}), adjectives (形容詞 ^{けいようし}), adjectival verbs (形容動詞 ^{けいようどうし}), and auxiliary verbs (助動詞 ^{じょどうし}) are inflected forms. Of these inflected forms, verbs, adjectives, and adjectival verbs are autonomous words, but auxiliary verbs are dependent forms because they cannot stand alone.

Nouns (名詞 ^{めいし}), pronouns (代名詞 ^{だimeiし}), adverbs (副詞 ^{ふくし}), conjunctions (接続詞 ^{せつぞくし}), attributive words (連体詞 ^{れんたいし}), interjections (感動詞 ^{かんだうし}), and particles (助詞 ^{じょし}) are noninflected forms. Of these noninflected forms, nouns, pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, attributive words, and interjections are autonomous words, but particles are dependent forms. Noninflected forms that can function as the subject of a sentence (nouns and pronouns) are referred to as nominals (体言 ^{たいげん}).

Inflected forms

Autonomous words	Verbs	書く ^か (to write)
	Adjectives	高し ^{たか} (high)
	Adjectival verbs	静かなり ^{しづ} (quiet)
Dependent forms	Auxiliary verbs	ず ^ず (negation)

Noninflected forms

Autonomous words	Nouns	やま (mountain)
	Pronouns	そこ (there)
	Adverbs	いと (very)
	Conjunctions	しかれど (but)
	Interjections	ああ (my!)
	Attributive words	いわゆる (so-called)
Dependent forms	Particles	に (at)

1.5 Inflected Autonomous Words

1. **Verbs (動詞)** are inflected autonomous words that describe an action or a process. (Except for *rahen* irregular verbs such as *ari*, "to be," all verbs in the *shūshikei*, or final form, end with the vowel *u*.) For example, 行く *yuku* (to go), 放つ *hanatsu* (to let go).
2. **Adjectives (形容詞)** are inflected autonomous words that describe a condition, emotion, or character. (All adjectives in the *shūshikei*, or final form, end with *shi*.) For example, 高し *takashi* (tall), 美し *utsukushi* (adorable).
3. **Adjectival verbs (形容動詞)** are inflected autonomous words that also describe a condition, emotion, or character. (The *shūshikei*, or final form, ends with one of the copular auxiliary verbs *tari* or *nari*. Adjectival verbs often appear in the *ren'yōkei*, or continuative form, in which they function like adverbs and modify a verb.) For example, 静かなり *shizuka-nari* (quiet), 堂々たり *dōdō-tari* (dignified).

1.6 Inflected Dependent Forms

1. **Auxiliary verbs (助動詞)** are inflected dependent forms that mainly follow verbs, adjectives, and adjectival verbs, whose meaning they modify. (Some auxiliary verbs, such as the copular *nari*, also follow nominals.) Examples of auxiliary verbs are *ki* (recollective), *mu* (intentional/speculative), and *zu* (negative).

雨降らず。 *Ame fura-ZU*.

The rain (*ame*) does *not* fall (*fura-zu*). (*Tosa*, NKBT 20:38) (*Fura* is the *mizenkei*, or imperfect form, of the verb *furu*, "to fall," and *zu* is a negative auxiliary verb indicating that the "rain does *not* fall.")

1.7 Noninflected Dependent Forms

1. **Particles** (助詞) such as *mo*, *ga*, *ni*, and *te* are noninflected dependent forms indicating the relationship between autonomous words.

よしの ^の 山 ^{やま} *Yoshino NO yama*

"the mountain of Yoshino"

1.8 Noninflected Autonomous Words

1. **Nouns** (名詞) and **pronouns** (代名詞) are nominals, or noninflected autonomous words, which can function as the subject of a sentence. They can also be the object of a transitive verb. For example, 山 (mountain), 月 (moon).

2. **Adverbs** (副詞) are noninflected autonomous words that modify a verb, adjective, or adjectival verb. For example, *いと* (very), *やや* (gradually), *しばし* (for a while).

かきつばたいとおもしろく咲きたり。 *Kakitsubata ITO omoshiroku saki-tari.*

The irises (*kakitsubata*) were blooming (*saki-tari*) *very* (*ito*) beautifully (*omoshiroku*). (*Ise*, sec. 9, NKBT 9:116) (Here the adverb *ito* [very] modifies the adjective *omoshiroshi* [beautiful].)

3. **Conjunctions** (接続詞) are noninflected autonomous words connecting one clause to another. In contrast to conjunctive particles (such as *te* or *do*), which are dependent forms and cannot stand alone, conjunctions are autonomous words. For example, *しかも* (furthermore), *されど* (but).

ゆく河の流れは絶えずして、しかももとの水にあらず。 *Yuku kawa no nagare wa tae-zu-shite, SHIKAMO moto no mizu ni ara-zu.*

The flow (*nagare*) of the passing river (*yuku kawa*) is unending (*tae-zu*) and at the same time (*shite*); furthermore (*shikamo*), it is not the original water (*moto no mizu*). (*Hōjōki*, NKBT 30:23)

4. **Interjections** (感動詞 ^{かんだうし}) are noninflected autonomous words that express emotion, draw the attention of the listener, or respond to a question. For example, ああ (ah), あな (my!).

あな, うらやまし. ANA *urayamashi*.

My! (Ana) How enviable. (Tsurezure, sec. 167, NKBT 30:225)

5. **Attributive words** (連体詞 ^{れんたいし}) are noninflected autonomous words that modify nominals. They differ from adjectives and verbs in that they are not conjugated. For example, ある (a certain), あらゆる (every), いわゆる (so-called).

いはゆる 折り琴, 繼琵琶これなり. IWAYURU *origoto*, *tsugi-biwa kore nari*.

This was the *so-called* folding koto (*itayuru origoto*) and portable lute (*tsugi-biwa*). (*Hōjōki*, sec. 3, NKBT 30:37)

1.9 Modifying Words

A modifying word (修飾語 ^{しゅうしやくご}) directly modifies or describes the following word or phrase. Some modifying words (verbs, adjectives, and adjectival verbs) are inflected, and some (attributive words and adverbs) are not inflected. An attributive word modifies a nominal, and an adverb modifies an inflected form.

Modifying words are divided into two general categories: continuative modifying words and attributive modifying words. Attributive (*rentaikai*) modifying words (連体 ^{れんたい} 修飾語 ^{しゅうしやくご}) modify nominals. In the following example, the adjective *fukashi* (deep), in the *rentaikai*, or attributive form, modifies the noun *mizu*, "water."

深き 水は涼しげなし. FUKAKI *mizu wa suzushige nashi*.

Deep (*fukaki*) water (*mizu*) has no (*nashi*) sense of coolness (*suzushige*). (*Tsurezure*, sec. 55, NKBT 30:135)

Continuative (*ren'yōkei*) modifying words (連用 ^{れんよう} 修飾語 ^{しゅうしやくご}) modify inflected forms. In the following example, the adverb *ito* (very) modifies the adjectival verb *aware-nari* (moving).

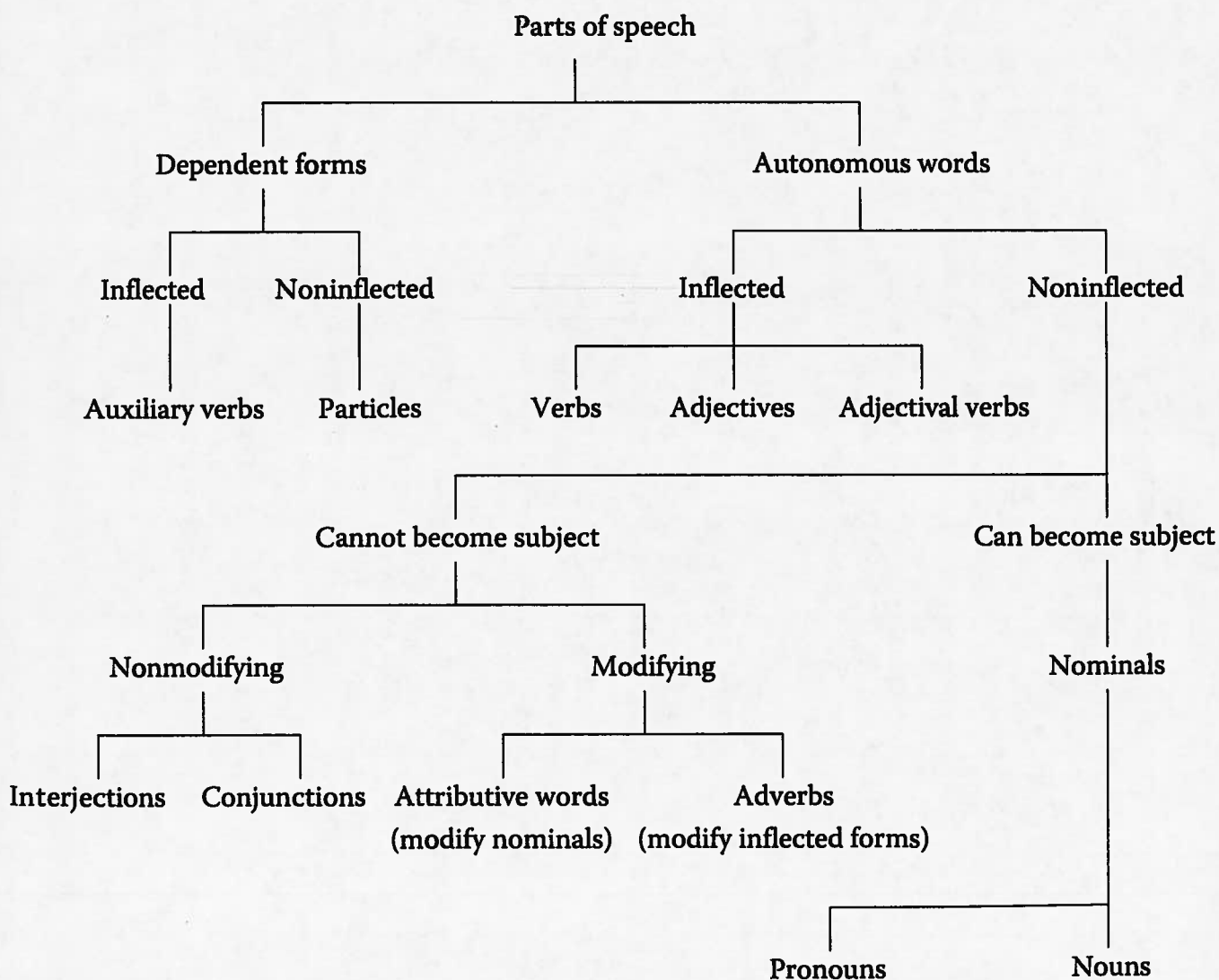
寺のさまも、いとあはれなり. Tera no sama mo, ITO *aware nari*.

The appearance (*sama*) of the temple (*tera*) is very (*ito*) moving (*aware nari*). (*Genji*, Wakamurasaki, NKBT 14: 178)

Nonmodifying words (interjections and conjunctions) cannot modify nominals or inflected forms.

1.10 Parts of Speech

The eleven parts of speech (品詞 ^{ひんし}) just described belong to one of three fundamental categories: (1) autonomous words / dependent forms, (2) inflected forms / noninflected forms, or (3) modifying words / nonmodifying words. These categories are related as follows:



Orthography and Pronunciation

The writing system for classical Japanese, now called the *historical kana system* (歴史的仮名遣い), differs from the *modern kana system* (現代仮名遣い), which is used in contemporary Japanese. The historical *kana* system was used until the writing reform initiated by the Japanese government in 1946, shortly after World War II.

2.1 Table of Fifty Sounds

The historical *kana* system is summarized in the table of fifty sounds (五十音図), which was established in the Heian period.

TABLE OF FIFTY SOUNDS

	<i>a</i> -vowel	<i>i</i> -vowel	<i>u</i> -vowel	<i>e</i> -vowel	<i>o</i> -vowel
<i>a</i> -row	あ	い	う	え	お
<i>k</i> -row	か	き	く	け	こ
<i>s</i> -row	さ	し	す	せ	そ
<i>t</i> -row	た	ち	つ	て	と
<i>n</i> -row	な	に	ぬ	ね	の
<i>h</i> -row	は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
<i>m</i> -row	ま	み	む	め	も
<i>y</i> -row	や	い	ゆ	え	よ
<i>r</i> -row	ら	り	る	れ	ろ
<i>w</i> -row	わ	ゐ	う	ゑ	を

The table of fifty sounds consists of ten “rows” (ぎょう)—*a*-row, *k*-row, *s*-row, and so on—with five vowels each: *a*, *i*, *u*, *e*, and *o*. With the exception of the first row, each row starts with a different consonant: *k*, *s*, *t*, *n*, *h*, *m*, *y*, *r*, and *w*. The *i* and the *e* vowels in the *y*-row are the same as the *i* and *e* vowel grades in the *a*-row, and the *u*-vowel grade in the *w*-row is the same as the *u*-vowel grade in the *a*-row. Accordingly, there actually are forty-seven different sounds in the fifty-sounds table. Today, two of those *kana*, the ゐ

(*wi* or *i*) and the ゑ (*we* or *e*) in the *w*-row, are no longer in use, leaving forty-five different sounds in modern Japanese.

2.2 Voiced Sounds

In modern Japanese the surname 山崎 can be read at least two different ways, as Yamazaki or as Yamasaki. The *sa* is referred to as *seion* (清音^{せいおん}), or “clear sound,” as opposed to *za*, which is referred to as *dakuon* (濁音^{だくおん}), or “voiced sound.” This distinction between clear and voiced sounds, which existed from as early as the Nara period, is not made in the table of fifty sounds. Therefore, the following “voiced” *kana* are needed to supplement the fifty-sounds table:

<i>g</i> -row	が	ぎ	ぐ	げ	ご
<i>z</i> -row	ざ	じ	ず	ぜ	ぞ
<i>d</i> -row	だ	ぢ	づ	で	ど
<i>b</i> -row	ば	び	ぶ	べ	ぼ

Note that *n*-row, *m*-row, *y*-row, *r*-row, and *w*-row *kana* never have voiced sounds.

In addition to the voiced sound, there is a “half-voiced sound,” or *han-dakuon* (半濁音^{はんだくおん}), found in the *h*-row. The half-voiced sound is marked by a small circle in the upper right-hand corner.

<i>p</i> -row	ぱ	ぴ	ぷ	ぺ	ぽ
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The voiced *s*-row じ and the voiced *t*-row ぢ originally were pronounced differently, but by the Muromachi period they overlapped, as did the voiced *s*-row ず and the voiced *t*-row づ. Today, therefore, the historical *kana* ぢ and づ are read the same way as じ and ず are, respectively. For example, the classical Japanese adverb いく (izuku, where) becomes はずく (izuku, where) in modern Japanese.

2.3 Sound Changes

A new sound that emerged in the Heian period and that does not appear in the fifty-sounds table is the *n* (ん), or “nasalized sound,” *hatsuon* (撥音^{はつおん}). The *n* is used, for

example, when a medial or final *mu* is shortened to *n*. For example, *yomi-te* (よみて) became *yon-de* (よんで). For more on sound changes (*onbin*), see appendix 2.

2.4 Pronouncing Historical *kana*

For modern readers, the main adjustments in the pronunciation of historical *kana* are in *w*-row and *h*-row *kana*.

2.4.1 *w*-Row Pronunciation

1. In modern Japanese, *o* (or *wo*, を) is used only for writing the case particle を, but in classical Japanese it also appears as an interjectory particle and a conjunctive particle and is widely used in multisyllabic words. This を is now pronounced the same as the modern Japanese お (*o*).

をとこ (男, *otoko*, man), をんな (女, *onna*, woman), をがむ (拝む, *ogamu*, to pray), まをす (申す, *mōsu*, to speak)

2. In modern Japanese, the *kana* ゐ (*wi*) and ゑ (*we*) are pronounced い (*i*) and え (*e*).

田舎 (いなか, *inaka*, country), 参る (まゐる, *mairu*, to go), 声 (こゑ, *koe*, voice), 笑む (あはむ, *emu*, to smile)

2.4.2 *h*-Row Pronunciation

H-row は, ひ, ふ, へ, ほ are pronounced either *ha*, *hi*, *hu* (*fu*), *he*, *ho*, or *wa*, *i*, *u*, *e*, *o*, depending on their position in a word.

1. When an *h*-row *kana* appears at the beginning of a word, it is pronounced the same as in modern Japanese.

はな (鼻, *hana*, nose) is pronounced *hana*; ふみ (文, *fumi*, letter) is pronounced *fumi*.

2. When an *h*-row *kana* appears in the middle or at the end of a word, it is pronounced *wa*, *i*, *u*, *e*, or *o*.

川 (かわ, *kawa*) is pronounced *kawa*; 宵 (よひ, *yoi*) is pronounced *yoi*; 言へば (when one says) is pronounced *ieba*; 庵 (いほり, *ieba*) is pronounced *ieba*; 庵 (いほり, *ieba*) is pronounced *ieba*.

いおり (*iori*); 家 (house) is pronounced いえ (*ie*); 前 (front) is pronounced まえ (*mae*). The particle は, which indicates the topic of a sentence, is pronounced *wa* (わ) in both classical and modern Japanese.

2.5 Pronouncing Long Sounds

A “long sound” (長音) (ちょうおん) is a vowel lengthened by adding う (*u*) or ぶ (*hu*). Long sounds probably did not exist in the ancient period and probably are the result of the influence of Chinese graphs or compounds. The following are the basic rules for the pronunciation of these long sounds in historical *kana*:

2.5.1 a-Vowels

When an *a*-vowel (as in *ta*, *ha*, *ma*, *wa*, etc.) is followed by either *u* or *hu*, it is read as おう (*ō*).

尊し (honorable) is pronounced とうとし (*tōtoshi*).

更衣 (imperial consort) is pronounced こうい (*kōi*).

2.5.2 i-Vowels

When an *i*-vowel (as in *hi*, *ri*, *shi*, etc.) is followed by *u* or *hu*, it is pronounced ゆう (*yū*).

日向 (a province in Kyūshū) is pronounced ひゅうが (*Hyūga*).

急なり (sudden) is pronounced きゅうなり (*kyū-nari*).

言ふ (to say) is pronounced ゆう (*yū*).

2.5.3 u-Vowels

When a *u*-vowel (as in *ku*, *yu*, etc.) is followed by *u* or *hu*, it is pronounced ふう (*fū*).

食ふ (to eat) is pronounced ふう (*fū*).

結ふ (to tie) is pronounced ゆう (*yū*).

2.5.4 e-Vowels

When an *e*-vowel (as in *ke*, *te*, *he*, etc.) is followed by *u* or *hu*, it is pronounced よう (yō).

け^ふ 今日 (today) is pronounced きょう (kyō).

え^う 要 (important part) is pronounced よう (yō).

て^ふ 蝶 (butterfly) is pronounced ちょう (chō).

2.5.5 o-Vowels

When an *o*-vowel (as in *o*, *ko*, etc.) is followed by either *u* or *hu*, it is pronounced おう (ō).

お^ふ 追ふ (to pursue) is pronounced おう (ō).

Advanced Study and Reference

2.5.5A The *Iroha* Poem

Sometime between the middle and the late Heian period, someone composed the *iroha-uta* (伊呂波歌), *iroha* poem, which later became one of the models for the forty-seven-*kana* system. The poem has traditionally been attributed to Kūkai 空海 (774–835), the founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism. The *iroha* poem uses forty-seven *kana* in a seven-five pattern without repeating any of them.

いろはにほへと ちりぬるを わかよたれそ つねならむ うゐのおくや
ま けふこえて あさきゆめみし ゑひもせず。

If the *kana* are voiced (using *dakuten*) and characters are added, we get a five-seven syllabic *imayō* (popular) song.

いろ にほ ち わ よたれ つね うゐ おくやま けふ こ
色は 匂へど 散りぬるを、我が世誰ぞ 常ならむ。有為の奥山 今日越え
て、あさき ゆめみ し ゑひもせず。 *Iro wa nioe-do chiri-nuru o, waga yo tare zo*
tsune nara-mu. Uti no okuyama kyō koe-te, asaki yume mi-ji ei mo sezu.

Even if the colors (*iro*) (of the world) are brilliant (*nioe-do*), they end up fading (*chiri-nuru*)! In our world (*wa ga yo*), who is immortal (*tsune-nara-mu*)? (No

one.) Today, crossing over (*koe-te*) the distant mountain (*okuyama*) of illusion (*ui*), I do not intend to see (*mi-ji*) shallow (*asaki*) dreams (*yume*) or to be intoxicated (*ei mo se-zu*). (*Nioe-do* is the *izenkei* of the *yodan* verb *niou*, "to be brilliant," and the conjunctive particle *do*. *Chiri-nuru o* is the *ren'yōkei* of the *yodan* verb *chiru*, "to scatter," the *rentaikei* of the perfective auxiliary verb *nu*, and the interjectory particle *o*. *Tsune nara-mu* is the noun *tsune*, "permanence," the *mizenkei* of the copular *nari*, and the *rentaikei* of the speculative auxiliary verb *mu*. *Mi-ji* is the *mizenkei* of the *kami-ichidan* verb *miru*, "to see," and the *shūshikei* of the negative intentional auxiliary verb *ji*. *Ei mo sezu* is the *ren'yōkei* of the *yodan* verb *eu*, "to be intoxicated," the bound particle *mo*, the *mizenkei* of the *sahen* verb *su*, and the *shūshikei* of the negative auxiliary verb *zu*.) Note that in the voiced version the *iroha* poem uses the *w*-row kana *i* ゐ (ヰ), *e* 𑖇 (ヱ), and *o* を (ヲ) for the same sounds as *a*-row kana *i*, *e*, and *o*.

Verbs

3.1 The Six Inflected Forms

Verbs, adjectives, adjectival verbs, and auxiliary verbs have six inflected forms: the *mizenkei* (imperfective form), *ren'yōkei* (continuative form), *shūshikei* (final form), *rentaikei* (attributive form), *izenkei* (perfective form), and *meireikei* (imperative form).

3.1.1 The *Mizenkei* (未然形), or Imperfective Form

The *mizenkei* (literally, "not-yet-realized") form generally indicates action that has not yet taken place. It is followed by an auxiliary verb of intention (*ji*, *mu*, *muzu*), conjecture (*mashi*), desire (*mahoshi*, *namu*), or negation (*zu*); by the conjunctive particle of hypothesis (*ba*); or by the final particles of desire (*baya*, *namu*). Because the negative *zu* often follows the *mizenkei*, it is sometimes called the negative form.

つきなく、雪も降らず。 *Tsuki naku, yuki mo FURA-zu.*

There is no (*naku*) moon (*tsuki*), and the snow (*yuki*) does not fall (*fura-zu*). (*Sarashina*, NKBT 20:515) (*Fura-zu* is the *mizenkei* of the verb *furu*, "to fall," and the *shūshikei* of the negative auxiliary verb *zu*.)

3.1.2 The *Ren'yōkei* (連用形), or Continuative Form

The *ren'yōkei* (continuative) form indicates that the action or process expressed by the verb is either taking place or has already taken place. The *ren'yōkei* is often followed by an auxiliary verb (*ki*, *keri*, *kemu*, *tsu*, *nu*, and *tari*) that indicates that the action has already occurred or been carried out. The *ren'yōkei* also is followed by a conjunctive particle (*te*, *tsutsu*, *nagara*) indicating simultaneous or continuative action. For this reason it is sometimes called the conjunctive form.

あめ雨まことに降りぬ。 *Ame makoto ni FURI-nu.*

The rain truly (*makoto ni*) fell (*furi-nu*). (*Makura*, sec. 99, NKBT 19:151) (*Furi-nu* is the *ren'yōkei* of *furu*, "to fall," and the *shūshikei* of the auxiliary verb *nu*, which indicates the completion of action.)

3.1.3 The *Shūshikei* (終止形), or Final Form

The *shūshikei* (final) form marks the end of the sentence and indicates that the action is taking place in the present (except when marked by a temporal marker like *mukashi*, "long ago.") The *shūshikei* can also be followed by an auxiliary verb (*beshi*, *meri*, *ramu*, *rashi*, hearsay/suppositional *nari*) expressing speculation about the present.

いささかに^{あめ ふ}雨降る。 *Isasaki-ni ame FURU.*

The rain (*ame*) falls (*furu*) little by little (*isasaka-ni*). (*Tosa*, NKBT 20:38)

3.1.4 The *Rentaikai* (連体形), or Attributive Form

The *rentaikai* (attributive) form directly modifies a nominal (noun, pronoun) or an implied nominal.

雨まじへ^{ゆき ふ}雪降る夜。 *Ame majie yuki FURU yo.*

An evening (*yo*) in which snow (*yuki*) falls (*furu*), mixed (*majie*) with rain (*ame*). (*MYS*, vol. 5, no. 892, NKBT 5:99)

3.1.5 The *Izenkei* (已然形), or Perfective Form

The *izenkei* (literally, "already-realized") form generally indicates that an action has already taken place. It is often followed by the conjunctive particle *ba* (because, when) or the concessive particle *do/domo*.

あかつきより^{あめ ふ}雨降れば... *Akatsuki yori ame FURE-ba...*

Because rain (*ame*) had been falling (*fure-ba*) since (*yori*) early morning (*akatsuki*)... (*Tosa*, NKBT 20:38)

3.1.6 The *Meireikei* (命令形), or Imperative Form

The *meireikei* (imperative) form indicates a command. With some verbs it is customary to add the emphatic final particle *yo*.

降れ降れ、こ^{ゆき}雪。 *FURE, FURE, koyuki.*

Fall (*fure*)! Fall! Powdered snow (*koyuki*). (*Tsurezure*, sec. 181, NKBT 30:238)

3.2 Regular Verbs

Verbs (動詞) usually describe or explain an action. With the exception of the irregular *rahen* verb conjugation, all *shūshikei* (final) forms of the verb end with the vowel *u*. Of the nine verb conjugations in classical Japanese, five are regular and four (*kahen*, *sahen*, *rahen*, *nahen*) are irregular. The nine verb conjugations are

Regular conjugations

<i>yodan</i>	よだん 四段	Four-grade conjugation
<i>kami-ichidan</i>	かみいちだん 上一段	Upper one-grade conjugation
<i>shimo-ichidan</i>	しもいちだん 下一段	Lower one-grade conjugation
<i>kami-nidan</i>	かみにだん 上二段	Upper two-grade conjugation
<i>shimo-nidan</i>	しもにだん 下二段	Lower two-grade conjugation

Irregular conjugations

<i>kahen</i>	ぎょうへんかく カ行変格	<i>k</i> -row irregular conjugation
<i>sahen</i>	ぎょうへんかく サ行変格	<i>s</i> -row irregular conjugation
<i>rahen</i>	ぎょうへんかく ラ行変格	<i>r</i> -row irregular conjugation
<i>nahen</i>	なぎょうへんかく ナ行変格	<i>n</i> -row irregular conjugation

The vowel grades are divided into upper grade (*a*, *i*) and lower grade (*e*, *o*), with *u* considered to be a middle or neutral grade. The verb conjugations are identified by the number of vowel grades (*dan*) and by whether the vowels appear in the lower grade or the upper grade.

The *yodan* (よだん), the four-grade conjugation, has four different vowel grades (*a*, *i*, *u*, *e*).

The *kami-ichidan* (かみいちだん), the upper one-grade conjugation, has one vowel grade (*i*) in the upper grade.

The *kami-nidan* (かみにだん), the upper two-grade conjugation, has two vowel grades (*i* and *u*), one of which is in the upper grade.

The *shimo-ichidan* (しもいちだん), the lower one-grade conjugation, has one vowel grade (*e*) in the lower grade.

The *shimo-nidan* (下二段), the lower two-grade conjugation, has two vowel grades (*u* and *e*), one of which is in the lower grade.

3.2.1 Yodan Verbs

Yodan (四段) verbs, the four-grade conjugation, have four different vowel grades (*a*, *i*, *u*, *e*) in the stem.

Yodan		MZ	RY	SS	RT	IZ	MR
	思ふ						
Upper	<i>a</i> -grade	は					
	<i>i</i> -grade		ひ				
Middle	<i>u</i> -grade			ふ	ふ		
Lower	<i>e</i> -grade					へ	へ
	<i>o</i> -grade						

An example is *kiku* (聞く, to listen).

	Stem	Stem	Frequently followed by
<i>mizenkei</i>	<i>kika</i>	きか	ず, む, ば
<i>ren'yōkei</i>	<i>kiki</i>	きき	たり, て
<i>shūshikei</i>	<i>kiku</i>	きく	
<i>rentaikei</i>	<i>kiku</i>	きく	こと, とき
<i>izenkei</i>	<i>kike</i>	きけ	ど, ども
<i>meireikei</i>	<i>kike</i>	きけ	

Mizenkei: 聞か^きでなんありける。KIKI-de nan arikeru.

She would *not* listen (*kika-de*). (*Ise*, sec. 23, NKBT 9:126) (*Kika-de* is the *mizenkei* of the *yodan* verb *kiku*, "to listen," and the compound particle *de*, which combines the negative auxiliary verb *zu* and the conjunctive particle *te*. *Nan* is a sound change of *namu*, an emphatic bound particle.)

Ren'yōkei: この歌^{うた}どもを, すこしよろしと, 聞^ききて... *Ko-no uta-domo o, sukoshi yoroshi to, KIKI-te...*

I listened (*kiki-te*), thinking (*to*), "These (*ko-no*) songs (*uta-domo*) have some (*sukoshi*) merit (*yoroshi*)." (*Tosa*, NKBT 20:41) (*Kiki-te* is the *ren'yōkei* of *kiku* and the conjunctive particle *te*.)

Shūshikei: 夏は郭公を聞く. *Natsu wa hototogisu o KIKU.*

In the summer (*natsu*), I listen (*kiku*) to the cuckoo (*hototogisu*). (*Hōjōki*, NKBT 30:37) (*Kiku* is the *shūshikei* of *kiku*.)

Rentaikai: 鳴く鹿の声聞く時ぞ秋はかなしき. *Naku shika no koe KIKU toki zo aki wa kanashiki.*

When (*toki*) I hear (*kiku*) the voice (*koe*) of the crying deer (*naku shika*), autumn (*aki*) is sad (*kanashiki*). (*KKS*, Autumn, no. 215, NKBT 8:144) (*Kiku toki* is the *rentaikai* of *kiku*, modifying the nominal *toki*, "time.")

Izenkei: ほととぎす鳴く声聞けば時すぎにけり. *Hototogisu naku koe KIKE-ba toki sugi-ni-keri.*

When I heard (*kike-ba*) the call (*koe*) of the cuckoo (*hototogisu*) singing (*naku*), (I felt that) time (*toki*) had passed (*sugi-ni-keri*). (*MYS*, vol. 14, no. 3352, NKBT 6:409) (*Kike-ba* is the *izenkei* of *kiku* and the conjunctive particle *ba*, indicating time.)

Meireikei: 女, よく聞け. *Nanji, yoku KIKE.*

Hey you (*nanji*), listen closely (*yoku kike*)! (*Konjaku*, vol. 2, NKBT 22:165) (*Kike* is the *meireikei* of *kiku*.)

Of all the conjugations, the *yodan* has by far the largest number of verbs.

3.2.2 Kami-ichidan Verbs

Kami-ichidan (上一段) verbs, the upper one-grade conjugation, have, in the stem, one vowel (*i*) in the upper grade.

Kami-ichidan

		MZ	RY	SS	RT	IZ	MR
見る							
Upper	<i>a-grade</i>						
	<i>i-grade</i>	み	み	みる	みる	みれ	みよ
Middle	<i>u-grade</i>						
Lower	<i>e-grade</i>						
	<i>o-grade</i>						

An example is *miru* (見る, to see).

	Stem	Stem	Frequently followed by
MZ	<i>mi</i>	見	ず, む, ば
RY	<i>mi</i>	見	たり, て
SS	<i>miru</i>	見る	
RT	<i>miru</i>	見る	こと, とき
IZ	<i>mire</i>	みれ	ど, ども
MR	<i>miyo</i>	みよ	

Mizenkei: 我等を見んこと... *Ware-ra o MI-n koto*...

As for trying to look (*mi-n*) at us (*warera*)... (*Tsurezure*, sec. 194, NKBT 30:251) (*Mi-n* is the *mizenkei* of *miru*, "to see," and the *rentaikei* of the intentional auxiliary verb *mu*, which has undergone a sound change to *n*.)

Ren'yōkei: 月な見給ひそ. *Tsuki na MI-tamai so*.

Don't look (*na mi-tamai so*) at the moon (*tsuki*)! (*Taketori*, NKBT 9:59) (*Na mi-tamai so* is the negative adverb *na*, the *ren'yōkei* of *miru*, the honorific supplementary verb *tamai*, and the negative imperative final particle *so*.)

Shūshikei: 春は藤波を見る. *Haru wa fuji-nami o MIRU*.

In the spring (*haru wa*), we look at (*miru*) the waves (*nami*) of wisteria (*fuji*). (*Hōjōki*, NKBT 30:37) (*Miru* is in the *shūshikei*.)

Rentaikai: ^{われ}我, ^{あさ}朝ごとと^ゆ夕ごとに^{みる}見る^{たけ}竹の^{なか}中に... *Ware asa-goto yû-goto ni MIRU take no naka ni...*

The inside (*naka*) of the bamboo (*take*) that I look at (*miru*) every morning (*asa-goto*) and every evening (*yû-goto*)... (*Taketori*, NKBT 9:29) (*Miru take* is the *rentaikai* of *miru*, modifying *take*, "bamboo.")

Izenkei: ^{ひめぎみ}姫君の^{かほ}顔を^{みる}見れば... *Himegimi no kao o MIRE-ba...*

When they (her parents) looked (*mire-ba*) at the face (*kao*) of the noble's daughter (*himegimi*)... (*Tsutsumi*, Haizumi, NKBT 13:425) (*Mire-ba* is the *izenkei* of *miru* and the conjunctive particle *ba*, together indicating temporal causality.)

Meireikei: ^{いさ}魚と^{とり}鳥とのありさまを^{みる}見よ. *Io to tori to no arisama o MIYO.*

Look at (*miyo*) the appearance (*arisama*) of fish (*io*) and birds (*tori*)! (*Hôjôki*, NKBT 30:43) (*Miyo* is the *meireikei* of *miru*.)

There are about ten verbs in the *kami-ichidan* category.

<i>miru</i>	^{みる}	To see	<i>iru</i>	^い 鑄る	To cast
<i>niru</i>	^に 似る	To resemble	<i>iru</i>	^ゐ 居る	To sit
<i>niru</i>	^に 煮る	To boil	<i>mochiiru</i>	^{もち} 用ゐる	To use
<i>hiru</i>	^ひ 干る	To dry up	<i>iru</i>	^ゐ 率る	To lead
<i>iru</i>	^い 射る	To shoot	<i>kiru</i>	^き 着る	To wear

These *kami-ichidan* verbs are used to create compound verbs like *hiki-iru* ^{ひき}率ゐる (to lead), *kokoro-miru* (^{こころ}試みる, to try), and *kaeri-miru* (^{かへり}顧みる, to look back on).

3.2.3 Shimo-ichidan Verb

The one *shimo-ichidan* (^{しもいちだん}下一段) verb, the lower one-grade conjugation, has one lower-grade vowel (*e*) in the stem.

Shimo-ichidan

蹴る		MZ	RY	SS	RT	IZ	MR
Upper	<i>a-grade</i> <i>i-grade</i>						
Middle	<i>u-grade</i>						
Lower	<i>e-grade</i> <i>o-grade</i>	け	け	ける	ける	けれ	けよ

This *shimo-ichidan* verb is 蹴る (*keru*, to kick).

	Stem	Stem	Frequently followed by
MZ	<i>ke</i>	蹴	ず, む, ば
RY	<i>ke</i>	蹴	たり, て
SS	<i>keru</i>	蹴る	
RT	<i>keru</i>	蹴る	こと, とき
IZ	<i>kere</i>	蹴れ	ど, ども
MR	<i>keyo</i>	蹴よ	

Mizenkei: かの典薬の助は蹴られたりしを病にて死にけり. *Ka-no tenyaku no suke wa KE-rare-tari-shi o, yamai nite shi-ni-keri.*

That (*ka-no*) assistant director (*suke*) of the Medical Ministry (*tenyaku*) was kicked (*ke-rare-tari-shi*), and he ended up dying (*shi-ni-keri*) of illness (*yamai*). (*Ochikubo*, vol. 4, NKBT 13:247) (*Ke-rare-tari-shi* is the *mizenkei* of the verb *keru*, "to kick," the *ren'yōkei* of the passive auxiliary verb *raru*, the *ren'yōkei* of the durative auxiliary verb *tari*, and the *rentaikei* of the recollective auxiliary verb *ki*.)

Ren'yōkei: 頭蹴われ、腰踏みおられて、おめき叫ぶ物おほかりけり. *Kashira KE-wara-re, koshi fumi-ora-re-te, omeki-sakebu mono ōkari-keri.*

There were many (*ōkari-keri*) who had their heads (*kashira*) kicked and split open (*ke-wara-re-te*), whose hips (*koshi*) were stomped on and broken (*fumi-ora-re-te*), and who screamed (*omeki-sakebu*). (*Heike*, vol. 5, Fujikawa, NKBT 32:374) (*Ke-wara-re* is

the *ren'yōkei* of *keru*, the *mizenkei* of *waru*, "to split open," creating a compound verb, and the *ren'yōkei* of the passive auxiliary verb *ru*.)

Shūshikei: さと寄りて一足づつ蹴る。 *Sato yori-te issoku-zutsu KERU.*

He quickly (*sato*) approached (*yori-te*) and kicked (*keru*) with each foot (*issoku-zutsu*). (*Ochikubo*, vol. 3, NKBT 13:164) (*Keru* is the *shūshikei*.)

Rentaikai: 「蹴る事か。」 *Mari o KERU koto ka.*

"Do you mean (*koto ka*) to kick (*keru*) the football (*maru*)?" (*Ukiyo*, vol. 4, NKBT 90:334) (*Keru* is the *rentaikai*.)

Meireikei: この尻蹴よ。 *Ko-no shiri KEYO.*

Kick (*keyo*) these buttocks (*shiri*)! (*Ujishūi*, no. 31, NKBT 27:114) (*Keyo* is the *meireikei* of *keru*.)

3.2.4 Kami-nidan Verbs

Kami-nidan (上二段) verbs, the upper two-grade conjugation, have, in the stem, two vowels (*i* and *u*), one of which (*i*) is in the upper grade.

Kami-nidan

		MZ	RY	SS	RT	IZ	MR
Upper	<i>a</i> -grade						
	<i>i</i> -grade	ぎ	ぎ				ぎよ
Middle	<i>u</i> -grade			ぐ	ぐる	ぐれ	
Lower	<i>e</i> -grade						
	<i>o</i> -grade						

An example is *sugu* (過ぐ, to pass).

	Stem	Stem	Frequently followed by
MZ	sugi	過ぎ	ず, む, ば
RY	sugi	過ぎ	たり, て
SS	sugu	過ぐ	
RT	suguru	過ぐる	こと, とき
IZ	sugure	過ぐれ	ど, ども
MR	sugiyo	過ぎよ	

Mizenkei: このほど^す過ぎ^ば... *Ko no hodo SUGI-ba...*

If one *passes* (*sugi-ba*) this period (*ko no hodo*)... (*Genji*, *Wakana ge*, NKBT 16:377-78) (*Sugi-ba* is the *mizenkei* of *sugu* plus the conjunctive particle *ba*, indicating a hypothetical.)

Ren'yōkei: 昼^{ひる}の^{あか}明^さにも^す過ぎ^て... *Hiru no akasa ni mo SUGI-te...*

Surpassing (*sugi-te*) even the brightness (*akasa*) of noon (*hiru*)... (*Takekoto*, NKBT 9:63) (*Sugi-te* is the *ren'yōkei* of *sugu* and the conjunctive particle *te*.)

Shūshikei: 清見^{きよみ}が^{せき}関^を過^すぐ... *Kiyomi-ga-seki o SUGU.*

We *pass* (*sugu*) the barrier (*seki*) at Kiyomi. (*Izayoi*, SNKBT 51:193) (*Sugu* is the *shūshikei*.)

Rentaikai: む^すな^{こと}しく^き過^すぐる^事を^を惜^しむ^べし... *Munashiku SUGURU koto o oshimu-beshi.*

You should (*oshimu-beshi*) regret *passing your life* (*suguru koto*) in vain (*munashiku*). (*Tsurezure*, sec. 108, NKBT 30:177) (*Suguru* is the *rentaikai* of *sugu*.)

Izenkei: 家^いの前^{まへ}を^す過^すぐれば... *Ie no mae o SUGURE-ba...*

When we *passed* (*sugure-ba*) the front (*mae*) of the house (*ie*)... (*Sarashina*, NKBT 20:522) (*Sugure-ba* is the *izenkei* of *sugu* and the conjunctive particle *ba*, together indicating temporal causality.)

Meireikei: はやく^す過ぎよ. *Hayaku SUGIYO*.

Quickly (*hayaku*), pass by it (*sugiyō*)! (*Makura*, sec. 99, NKBT 19:149) (*Sugiyō* is the *meireikei* of *sugu*.)

There are many *kami-nidan* verbs, including 起^おく (*oku*, to wake up), 落^おつ (*otsu*, to fall down), and 恥^はづ (*hazu*, to be embarrassed).

Advanced Study and Reference

Kami-nidan verbs include three *y*-row verbs, which can be confusing.

老^おゆ (*oyu*, to age): 老^おい, 老^おい, 老^おゆ, 老^おゆる, 老^おゆれ, 老^おいよ

悔^くゆ (*kuyu*, to regret): 悔^くい, 悔^くい, 悔^くゆ, 悔^くゆる, 悔^くゆれ, 悔^くいよ

報^{むく}ゆ (*mukuyu*, to return a favor): 報^{むく}い, 報^{むく}い, 報^{むく}ゆ, 報^{むく}ゆる, 報^{むく}ゆれ, 報^{むく}いよ

3.2.5 Shimo-nidan Verbs

Shimo-nidan (下二段) verbs, the lower two-grade conjugation, have, in the stem, two vowels (*u* and *e*), one of which (*e*) is in the lower grade.

Shimo-nidan

		MZ	RY	SS	RT	IZ	MR
	捨 ^す つ						
Upper	<i>a</i> -grade						
	<i>i</i> -grade						
Middle	<i>u</i> -grade			つ	つる	つれ	
Lower	<i>e</i> -grade	て	て				てよ
	<i>o</i> -grade						

An example is *kuru* (暮^くる, to grow dark).

	Stem	Stem	Frequently followed by
MZ	kure	くれ	ず, む, ば
RY	kure	くれ	たり, て
SS	kuru	くる	
RT	kururu	くるる	こと, とき
IZ	kurure	くるれ	ど, ども
MR	kureyo	くれよ	

Ren'yōkei: かくて今日^{けふ}暮^くれぬ。 *Kakute kyō KURE-nu.*

Thus (*kakute*) today (*kyō*) came to an end (*kure-nu*). (*Tosa*, NKBT 20:49) (*Kure-nu* is the *ren'yōkei* of *kuru* and the *shūshikei* of the auxiliary verb *nu*, which is perfective.)

Shūshikei: 雨^{あめ}降^ふり日^ひ暮^くる。 *Ame furi, hi KURU.*

The rain (*ame*) fell (*furi*), and the sun (*hi*) went down (*kuru*). (*Oku*, Nasu, NKBT 46:73) (*Kuru* is the *shūshikei*.)

Rentaikai: 暮^くるるほどには... *KURURU hodo ni wa...*

While (*hodo ni*) the day was coming to an end (*kururu*)... (*Tsurezure*, sec. 137, NKBT 30:204) (*Kururu* is the *rentaikai*.)

Izenkei: 暮^くるればもろともに来^きあひぬ。 *KURURE-ba morotomo ni ki-ai-nu.*

Since the day came to an end (*kurure-ba*), they both (*morotomo*) came and met. (*Yamato*, sec. 147, NKBT 9:312) (*Kurure-ba* is the *izenkei* of *kuru* plus the conjunctive particle *ba*, indicating cause.)

Meireikei: 日^ひも疾^とく暮^くれよかし。 *Hi mo toku KUREYO kashi.*

May the sun set (*kureyo kashi*) soon (*toku*)! (*Konjaku*, vol. 16, NKBT 24:435) (*Kureyo* is the *meireikei*.)

There are many *shimo-nidan* verbs, which is the second most common conjugation after the *yodan*: 受^うく (*uku*, to receive), 捨^すつ (*sutsu*, to abandon), 比^{くら}ぶ (*kurabu*, to compare), and 求^{もと}む (*motomu*, to seek out).

Advanced Study and Reference

The *shimo-nidan* conjugation includes verbs such as 得 (*u*, to be able) (え, え, う, うる, うれ, えよ) and 経 (*fu*, to pass time) (へ, へ, ふ, ふる, ふれ, へよ) in which the stem and the inflected ending overlap.

Shimo-nidan verbs also include *w*-row verbs like 植う (*uu*, to plant) (植系, 植系, 植う, 植うる, 植うれ, 植系よ) and 飢う (*uu*, to starve) (飢系, 飢系, 飢う, 飢うる, 飢うれ, 飢系よ).

Irregular Verbs

4.1 Irregular Verbs

Irregular (変格^{へんかく}) verb conjugations do not conform to the rules followed by the five regular verb conjugations. The irregular verb conjugations are *nahen*, *rahen*, *kahen*, and *sahen*.

4.1.1 Nahen Irregular Verbs

Nahen (ナ変^{なん}) verbs have an *n*-row irregular conjugation (ナ行変格^{ぎょうへんかく}). The primary example is *shinu*, "to die."

	Stem	Stem	Frequently followed by
MZ	<i>shina</i>	死 ^し な	ず, む, ば
RY	<i>shini</i>	死 ^し に	たり, て
SS	<i>shinu</i>	死 ^し ぬ	
RT	<i>shinuru</i>	死 ^し ぬる	こと, とき
IZ	<i>shinure</i>	死 ^し ぬれ	ど, ども
MR	<i>shine</i>	死 ^し ね	

The only two verbs that belong to this category are *shinu* (死^しぬ, to die) and *inu* (往^いぬ, to go, to leave). (The perfective auxiliary verb *nu* also has a *nahen* conjugation.)

Mizenkei: 死^しなば^{いっしょ}一^し所で死^しなん. *SHINA-ba issho de SHINA-n*.

If we are going to die (*shina-ba*), let us die (*shina-n*) in one place (*issho*). (*Heike*, Hōjūji kassen, vol. 8, NKBT 33:158) (*Shina-ba* is the *mizenkei* of *shinu*, "to die," and the conjunctive particle *ba*, indicating a hypothetical condition. *Shina-n* is the *mizenkei* of *shinu* and the *shūshikei* of the auxiliary verb *mu*, indicating intention. *N* is a nasalized sound change from *mu*.)

Ren'yōkei: 朝^{あした}に死^しに, 夕^{ゆふ}に生^うまるるならひ . . . *Ashita ni SHINI, yūbe ni umaruru narai . . .*

A way of life (*narai*) in which people *die* (*shini*) in the morning (*ashita ni*) and are born (*umaruru*) in the evening (*yūbe ni*) . . . (*Hōjōki*, NKBT 30:23) (*Shini* is the *ren'yōkei* of *shinu*.)

Shūshikei: 焔ほのほにまぐれてたちまちに死しぬ。 *Honō ni magure-te tachimachi ni SHINU*.

They are engulfed in (*magure-te*) the flames (*honō*) and immediately (*tachimachi-ni*) die (*shinu*). (*Hōjōki*, NKBT 30:25) (*Shinu* is the *shūshikei* of *shinu*.)

Rentaikei: 生まれ死しぬる人ひと . . . *Umare-SHINURU hito* . . .

A person who is born (*umare*) and then dies (*shinuru*) . . . (*Hōjōki*, NKBT 30:23) (*Shinuru* is the *rentaikei* of *shinu*.)

Izenkei: 又またかく死しぬれば . . . *Mata kaku SHINURE-ba* . . .

Furthermore (*mata*), since I am going to die (*shinure-ba*) like this (*kaku*) . . . (*Ochikubo*, book 4, NKBT 13:208) (*Shinure-ba* is the *izenkei* of *shinu* plus the conjunctive particle *ba*.)

Meireikei: 北きたの方かた, 憎にくし, とく死しねかしと思おもふ。 *Kita-no-kata, nikushi, toku SHINE kashi to omou*.

The principal wife (*kita no kata*) thought (*to omou*), "Despicable (*nikushi*). Die quickly (*toku shine kashi*)!" (*Ochikubo*, vol. 4, NKBT 13:210) (*Shine* is the *meireikei*.)

Helpful Tips

The *nahen* conjugation is identical to the *yodan* conjugation (in having four vowels, *a*, *i*, *u*, and *e* in the stem) except for the *rentaikei* (*nuru*) and the *izenkei* (*nure*), which are irregular.

Nahen							
	死 <small>し</small> ぬ	MZ	RY	SS	RT	IZ	MR
Upper	<i>a</i> -grade	な					
	<i>i</i> -grade		に				
Middle	<i>u</i> -grade			ぬ	ぬる	ぬれ	
Lower	<i>e</i> -grade						ね
	<i>o</i> -grade						

Historical Note

Beginning in the mid-Edo period, the *nahen* verb 往ぬ (*inu*, to leave) became a *yodan* conjugation. At about the same time, 死ぬ (*shinu*, to die) became a *yodan* verb, marking an end to the *nahen* verb.

Both the *nahen* verb, *shinu* (to die), and *inu* (to leave) are similar in that they have to do with disappearing. The same can be said of the perfective auxiliary verb *nu*, which marks the end of an action and also has a *nahen* conjugation.

4.1.2 *Rahen* Irregular Verbs

Rahen (ラ変) verbs have an *r*-row irregular conjugation (ラ行変格). The primary example is *ari* (to be).

	Stem	Stem	Frequently followed by
MZ	<i>ara</i>	あら	ず, む, ば
RY	<i>ari</i>	あり	て
SS	<i>ari</i>	あり	
RT	<i>aru</i>	ある	こと, とき
IZ	<i>are</i>	あれ	ど, ども
MR	<i>are</i>	あれ	

Mizenkei: 深き故あらん. *Fukaki yue ARA-n*.

There is probably (*ara-n*) a profound reason (*fukaki yue*). (*Tsurezure*, sec. 236, NKBT 30:279) (*Ara-n* is the *mizenkei* of *ari*, "to be," and the *shūshikei* of the auxiliary verb *mu*, which here is speculative and has undergone a nasalized sound change to *n*.)

Ren'yōkei: 昔男ありけり. *Mukashi otoko ARI-keri*.

It is said (*keri*) that long ago there was (*ari*) a man (*otoko*). (*Ise*, sec. 2, NKBT 9:111) (*Ari-keri* is the *ren'yōkei* of *ari* and the *shūshikei* of the auxiliary verb *keri*, meaning hearsay past.)

Shūshikei: 月の都の人にて、父母あり。 *Tsuki no miyako no hito ni-te chichi haha ARI.*

"I am (*ni-te*) a person (*hito*) of the capital (*miyako*) of the moon (*tsuki*), and I *have* (*ari*) a father (*chichi*) and mother (*haha*)." (*Takekoto*, NKBT 9:60) (*Ari* is the *shūshikei* of *ari*.)

Rentaikai: この国にある物。 *Ko-no kuni ni ARU mono.*

Something (*mono*) that *exists* (*ni aru*) in this (*ko-no*) country (*kuni*). (*Takekoto*, NKBT 9:33) (*Ni aru* is the locative case particle *ni* and the *rentaikai* of *ari*.)

Izenkei: さすがに住む人のあればなるべし。 *Sasuga ni sumu hito no ARE-ba naru-beshi.*

As I had expected (*sasuga-ni*), it is no doubt (*naru-beshi*) because there *are* (*are-ba*) people (*hito*) who live there (*sumu*). (*Tsurezure*, sec. 11, NKBT 30:98–99) (*Are-ba* is the *izenkei* of *ari* and the conjunctive particle *ba*, which indicates cause.)

Meireikei: いくにもあれ、しばし旅だちたるこそ... *Izuku ni mo ARE, shibashi tabi-datchi-taru koso...*

Wherever (*izuku*) it may *be* (*are*), when you travel (*tabi-dachi-taru*) for a while (*shibashi*)... (*Tsurezure*, sec. 15, NKBT 30:102) (*Are* is the *meireikei* of *ari*.)

Helpful Tips

The *rahen* conjugation is identical to *yodan* conjugation (with four vowels, *a*, *i*, *u*, and *e* in the stem) except for the *shūshikei* form (*ri*), which is irregular. In modern Japanese, the *rahen* became the *godan*, a variation of the *yodan*. All verb conjugations end in *u* except for that of the *rahen*, which ends in *ri*.

Rahen		MZ	RY	SS	RT	IZ	MR
あり							
Upper	<i>a</i> -grade	ら					
	<i>i</i> -grade		り	り			
Middle	<i>u</i> -grade				る		
Lower	<i>e</i> -grade					れ	れ
	<i>o</i> -grade						

Advanced Study and Reference

There are only four *rahen* verbs: *ari* (有り, to be), *ori* (居り, to be still, to sit), *haberi* (侍り, to serve a superior), and *imasogari* (いまそがり, to be). *Imasogari* (mod. Jpse: いらっしゃる) is the honorific form of *ari* and *ori*. *Ari*, *ori*, *imasogari*, and *haberi* also function as supplementary verbs, following the *ren'yōkei* of the main verb. All four of these verbs pertain to existence or a continuing state.

... たてれどもを居れども... *tate-re-domo ORE-domo*.

... whether standing (*tate-re-domo*) or sitting (*ore-domo*). (*MYS*, vol. 5, no. 904, NKBT 5:119) (*Ore-domo* is the *izenkei* of the verb *ori*, "to sit," and the concessive conjunctive particle *domo*.)

よしかげは、きりどわきにかしこまりてぞ侍ける。 *Yoshikage wa kirido no waki ni kashikomari-te zo HABERI-keru*.

Yoshikage waited (*kashikomari-te*) by the side (*waki*) of the side door (*kirido*), ready to be of service (*haberi-keru*). (*Masukagami*, Mikamiyama, NKBT 87:295) (*Haberi-keru* is the *ren'yōkei* of *haberi*, "to serve a superior," and the *rentaikei* of the recollective *keri*, "tied" to the emphatic bound particle *zo*.)

そのみかどのみこたかい子と申すいまそがりけり。 *So-no mikado no miko Takaiko to mōsu-IMASOGARI-keri*.

There was (*imasogarikeri*) a child (*miko*) of that emperor (*mikado*) called (*to mōsu*) Takaiko. (*Ise*, sec. 39, NKBT 9:133) (*Mōsu* is the *rentaikei* of the verb *mōsu*, "to call," modifying an implied "person." *Imasogarikeri* is the *ren'yōkei* of *imasogari*, "to be," and the auxiliary verb *keri*.)

Historical Note

Ori, *haberi*, and *imasogari* all emerged from the verb *ari*, "to exist, to be," which might be called the "master" *rahen* verb. *I-ari* (居あり) (*ren'yōkei* of *iru*, "to sit," plus *ari*) became *ori* (をり, to be still, to sit). *Hai-ari* (這ひあり) (*ren'yōkei* of *hau*, "to

crawl," plus *ari*) became *haberi* (はべり, to serve a superior). *Imasu-ka-ari* (座す処あり) (literally, "to have a place to sit") became *imasogari* (いまそがり) (honorific "to be").

The *i* at the end of the *shūshikei* of a *rahen* verb indicates existence or a continuing state. In this regard, the *rahen* verbs are very similar to adjectives, which also end in *i* and also describe a continuing state. For example, the adjective *takashi* can be interpreted to mean "to be tall."

From the end of the Heian period through the beginning of the Kamakura period, the *rentaikei* of the *rahen* verb began to be used as the *shūshikei*, turning the *rahen* verb into a *yodan* verb. The *shūshikei* of *ari*, "to be," became *aru*, which is what it is today in modern Japanese. The *rahen* conjugation does not exist in modern Japanese.

4.1.3 *Kahen* Irregular Verb

The one *kahen* (力^カ変) verb has a *k*-row irregular conjugation (カ行^{ぎょう}変格). This verb is *ku* 来, which means (1) to come, (2) to go, and (3) to visit, arrive.

	Stem	Stem	Frequently followed by
MZ	<i>ko</i>	こ	ず, む, ば
RY	<i>ki</i>	き	たり, て
SS	<i>ku</i>	く	
RT	<i>kuru</i>	くる	こと, とき
IZ	<i>kure</i>	くれ	ど, ども
MR	<i>ko(yo)</i>	こ(よ)	

In the Heian period, the *meirekei* was normally *ko*.

Mizenkei: 秋風吹かむをりぞ来むとする。 *Aki-kaze fuka-mu ori zo KO-mu to suru.*

I will come (*ko-mu to suru*) when (*ori*) the autumn wind (*aki-kaze*) blows (*fuka-mu*). (*Makura*, sec. 43, NKBT 19:92) (*Ko-mu to suru* is the *mizenkei* of *ku*, the intentional auxiliary verb *mu*, the case particle *to*, and the *rentaikei* of the verb *su*, "to do.")

Ren'yōkei: かの唐船来けり。 *Ka no morokoshi-bune KI-keri.*

That Chinese boat (*morokoshi-bune*) came (*ki-keri*). (*Taketori*, NKBT 9:42) (*Ki-keri* is the *ren'yōkei* of *ku* and the recollective auxiliary verb *keri*.)

Shūshikei: ひとびとたえずとぶらひにく。 *Hitobito taezu toburai ni KU.*

People (*hitobito*) ceaselessly (*taezu*) came (*ku*) to visit (*toburai*). (*Tōsa*, NKBT 20:32) (*Ku* is the *shūshikei* of the verb *ku*.)

Rentaikai: 山の方より人あまた来る音す。 *Yama no kata yori hito amata KURU oto-su.*

There was the sound (*oto-su*) of many people (*hito amata*) coming (*kuru*) from the direction (*kata yori*) of the mountain (*yama*). (*Sarashina*, NKBT 20:501) (*Kuru* is the *rentaikai* of *ku*.)

Izenkei: 春来れば雁かへるなり。 *Haru KURE-ba kari kaeru nari.*

Since spring has come (*haru kure-ba*), I hear (*naru*) the wild geese (*kari*) returning (*kaeru*). (*KKS*, Spring 1, no. 30, NKBT 8:110) (*Kure-ba* is the *izenkei* of *ku* and the conjunctive particle *ba*, indicating causality. *Kaeru-nari* is the *shūshikei* of the verb *kaeru*, "to return," and the auditory/hearsay auxiliary verb *nari*.)

Meireikei: 「その見こち率て来。」 *So-no ko kochi i-te KO.*

"Bring (*i-te-ko*) that (*so-no*) child (*ko*) here (*kochi*)!" (*Yamato*, sec. 169, NKBT 9:341) (*I-te-ko* is the *ren'yōkei* of the *kami-ichidan* verb *iru*, "to lead," the conjunctive particle *te*, and the *meireikei* of *ku*.)

Kahen

		MZ	RY	SS	RT	IZ	MR
	来						
Upper	a-grade						
	i-grade		き				
Middle	u-grade			く	くる	くれ	
Lower	e-grade						
	o-grade	こ					こ(よ)

4.1.4 *Sahen* Irregular Verbs

Sahen (サ^{へん}変) verbs have an *s*-row irregular conjugation (サ^{ぎょうへんかく}行変格). The primary verb is *su* ず (to do).

	Stem	Stem	Frequently followed by
MZ	<i>se</i>	せ	ず, む, ば
RY	<i>shi</i>	し	たり, て
SS	<i>su</i>	す	
RT	<i>suru</i>	する	こと, とき
IZ	<i>sure</i>	すれ	ど, ども
MR	<i>seyo</i>	せよ	

As an intransitive verb, *su* means that a certain situation “exists” or “occurs.” As a transitive verb, *su* can mean (1) “to do” or (2) “to place” (in a particular situation).

Mizenkei: 死^しなぬ薬^{くすり}も何^なにかはせむ。 *Shina-nu kusuri mo nani ka wa SE-mu.*

What would I *do* (*nani ka wa se-mu*) with medicine that prevents death (*shina-nu kusuri*)? (It would be of no use.) (*Taketori*, NKBT 9:66) (*Se-mu* is the *mizenkei* of *su* and the intentional auxiliary verb *mu*.)

Ren'yōkei: 長^{なが}雨^{あめ}, 例^{れい}の年^{とし}よりもいたくして。 *Naga-ame rei no toshi yori mo itaku SHI-te.*

The long rains (*naga-ame*) were more intense (*itaku shi-te*) than in usual (*rei*) years (*toshi*). (*Genji*, Hotaru, NKBT 15:430) (*Itaku shite* is the *ren'yōkei* of the *ku* adjective *itashi*, “intense,” the *ren'yōkei* of the *sahen* verb *su*, “to occur,” and the conjunctive particle *te*.)

Shūshikei: 男^{をとこ}もすなる日記^{にき}... *Otoko mo SU-naru niki...*

A diary (*niki*) that I hear that men *keep* (*su nari*) . . . (*Tosa*, NKBT 20:27) (*Su naru* is the *shūshikei* of the *sahen* verb *su*, “to do,” and the *rentaikei* of the hearsay auxiliary verb *nari*.)

Rentaikei: 昔^{むかし}の人の袖^{ひと}の香^{そで}ぞする。 *Mukashi no hito no sode no ka zo SURU.*

It *had* the scent (*ka zo suru*) of the sleeve (*sode*) of a person (*hito*) of the past (*mukashi*) (whom I knew intimately). (*KKS*, Summer, no. 139, NKBT 8:130) (*Zo suru* is the emphatic bound particle *zo* and the *rentaikei* of *su*, “to make.”)

Izenkei: 十一日じふいちにちの月つきもかくなむとすれば... *Jūichi-nichi no tsuki mo kakure-na-mu to SURE-ba*...

When the moon (*tsuki*) of the eleventh day *was* about to disappear (*kakure-na-mu to sure-ba*)... (*Ise*, sec. 82, NKBT 9:160) (*Kakure-na-mu to sure-ba* is the *ren'yōkei* of the *shimo-nidan* verb *kakuru*, "to disappear," the *mizenkei* of the perfective auxiliary verb *nu*, the *shūshikei* of the speculative auxiliary verb *mu*, the case particle *to*, the *izenkei* of *su*, and the conjunctive particle *ba*, indicating temporal causality.)

Meireikei: 京みやうにのぼりて宮仕みやづかへをせよ. *Kyō ni nobori-te miya-zukae o SEYO.*

Go up (*noborite*) to the capital (*kyō*) and serve at the imperial court (*miya-zukae wo seyo*)! (*Yamato*, sec. 148, NKBT 9:316) (*Seyo* is the *meireikei*.)

Helpful Tips

The *sahen* verb *su* is frequently combined with Sino-Japanese nouns to create verbs like 具ぐす (to accompany), 愛あいす (to love), and 拝はいす (to bow, show respect). There are also words with a sound-change to *n-zu*, as in 覧らんず (honorific "to see"), 信しんず (to believe), and 重おもんず (to value).

Aside from such compound verbs, there are only two *sahen* verbs: *su* (to do) and the honorific verb *owasu* おはす (honorific "to be").

Sahen verbs are similar to *shimo-nidan* verbs except that the *ren'yōkei* form (*shi* instead of *se*) is irregular.

<i>Sahen</i>		MZ	RY	SS	RT	IZ	MR
	す						
Upper	<i>a</i> -grade						
	<i>i</i> -grade		し				
Middle	<i>u</i> -grade			す	する	すれ	
Lower	<i>e</i> -grade	せ					せよ
	<i>o</i> -grade						

Historical Note

Originally, the only *sahen* verb was *su* (す), but *su* combined with other words to form new verbs that ended in *su*.

From the end of the Heian period and after, the *rentaikei* form *suru* (to do) of the *sahen* verb began to be used as the *shūshikei* form (in *Heike monogatari* and other texts), which is the way it is today in modern Japanese.

Points of Interest

By far the most widely used verb conjugation is the *yodan* conjugation. The next most common is the *shimo-nidan*, followed by the *kami-nidan*, a very distant third. The other six conjugations are limited to a small number of verbs. Aside from compounds and nasalized variants, the four irregular conjugations (*kahen*, *sahen*, *nahen*, and *rahen*) add up to only nine different verbs (see appendix 8).

<i>kahen</i>	来
<i>sahen</i>	す, おはす
<i>nahen</i>	死ぬ, 往ぬ
<i>rahen</i>	あり, をり, はべり, いまそがり

4.2 Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Intransitive verbs (自動詞) describe action that takes place on its own accord, whereas transitive verbs (他動詞) describe action that is imposed on someone or something else. Transitive verbs always have an object, which is generally marked by the case particle *o* or *wo* (を). Also note the following possibilities:

1. Intransitive and transitive verbs may have the same conjugation.

あめそそ 雨注ぐ The rain *pours down*. (*yodan* intransitive verb *sosogu*)

みづ そそ 水を注ぐ *Pour* the water. (*yodan* transitive verb *sosogu*)

2. Intransitive and transitive verbs may have different conjugations.

きやう そだ 京に育つ *To grow up* in the capital. (*yodan* intransitive verb *sodatsu*)

子を育つ *To raise (the child).* (*shimo-nidan* transitive verb *sodatsu*)

水流る *The water flows.* (*shimo-nidan* intransitive verb *nagaru*)

水を流す *To let the water flow.* (*yodan* transitive verb *nagasu*)

4.3 Supplementary Verbs

Supplementary verbs (補助動詞) function like auxiliary verbs, augmenting the main verb that they follow. Supplementary verbs follow the *ren'yōkei* of the main verb.

In the following examples, the same verb is used first as an independent verb and then as a supplementary verb.

男ありけり。 *Otoko ARI-keri.*

There *was* (*ari*) a man (*otoko*).

われはさるものにあらず。 *Ware wa saru mono ni-ARA-zu.*

I (*ware*) *am not* (*ni ara-zu*) that kind (*saru*) of person. (*Ni ara-zu* is the *ren'yōkei* of the copular *nari*, "to be," the *mizenkei* of the supplementary verb *ari*, and the negative *zu*.)

Ari is an independent *rahen* verb meaning "to exist," "to live," or "to possess," but it also functions as a supplementary verb (補助動詞) that follows the *ren'yōkei* of adjectives, adjectival verbs, and copular auxiliary verbs (*nari*) and indicates the existence of that particular condition.

白き御衣を給ふ。 *Shiroki onzo o TAMAU.*

He *gave* (*tamau*) a white robe (*on-zo*). (*Tamau* is a *yodan* honorific verb meaning "to bestow.")

白き御衣を着給ふ。 *Shiroki onzo o ki-TAMAU.*

She *wore* (*ki-tamau*) a white robe. (*Ki-tamau* is the *ren'yōkei* of the *kami-ichidan* verb *kiru*, "to wear," and the *shūshikei* of the *yodan* honorific supplementary verb *tamau*.)

Tamau is an honorific verb meaning "to bestow," but it came to be used primarily as an honorific supplementary verb that turned the verb it followed into an honorific verb. For more information about honorific supplementary verbs, see chapter 18.

4.4 Sound Changes in Verbs

Sound changes (^{おんびん}音便), which make words easier to pronounce, began in the Heian period and included four fundamental sound changes in verbs.

4.4.1 *i*-Sound Change (^{おんびん}イ音便)

Ki, *gi*, and *shi* in *yodan* verbs became *i*. The consonants *k*, *g*, and *s* dropped out, leaving only the vowel, and sometimes the consonant was followed by a voiced conjunctive particle, as in *de* for *te*.

^か書きて (*ren'yōkei* of *kaku*, "to write," + conjunctive particle *te*) → ^か書いて

つなぎて (*ren'yōkei* of *tsunagu*, "to connect," + conjunctive particle *te*) → つないで

4.4.2 *u*-Sound Change (^{おんびん}ウ音便)

Hi, *bi*, and *mi* in *yodan* verbs became *u*.

^あ争ひて (*ren'yōkei* of *arasou*, "to fight," + conjunctive particle *te*) → ^あ争うて

^よ喜びて (*ren'yōkei* of *yorokobu*, "to delight in," + conjunctive particle *te*) → ^よ喜うで

4.4.3 Nasalized Sound Change (^{はつおんびん}撥音便)

Bi and *mi* in *yodan* verbs and *ni* in *nahen* verbs became a nasalized *n* followed by a voiced conjunctive particle (as in *de* for *te*) or a voiced auxiliary verb (as in *dari* for *tari*).

^と飛びて (*ren'yōkei* of *tobu*, "to fly," + conjunctive particle *te*) → ^と飛んで

^つ摘みたり (*ren'yōkei* of *tsumu*, "to pick," + auxiliary verb *tari*) → ^つ摘んだり

^よ読みて (*ren'yōkei* of *yomu*, "to read," + conjunctive particle *te*) → ^よ読んで

^し死にて (*ren'yōkei* of *shinu*, "to die," + conjunctive particle *te*) → ^し死んで

4.4.4 Compressed Sound Change (促音便)^{そくおんびん}

Chi, *hi*, and *ri* in *yodan* verbs and *ri* in *rahen* verbs became *tsu*. Although the small *tsu* appears in the *Heike monogatari* (14th c.), *tsu* did not consistently become a small *tsu* until the Edo period.

勝ち_て (*ren'yōkei* of *katsu*, "to win," + *te*) → 勝つ_て → 勝っ_て

思ひ_{たり} (*ren'yōkei* of *omou*, "to think," + *te*) → 思つ_{たり} → 思っ_{たり}

あり_て (*ren'yōkei* of *ari*, "to be," + *te*) → あつ_て → あっ_て