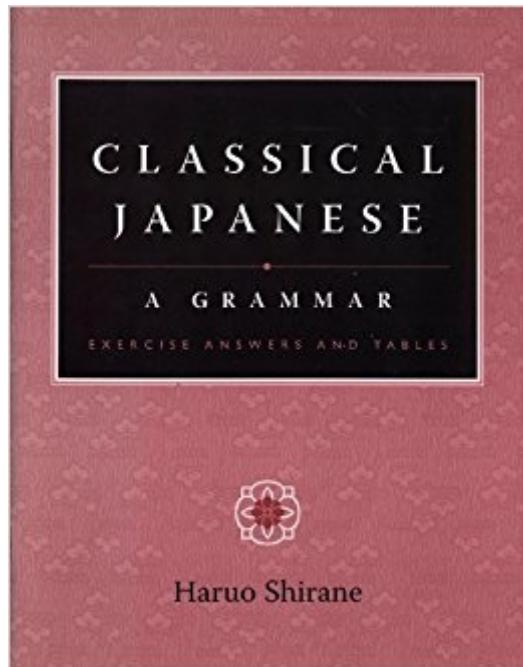


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# Classical Japanese: A Grammar



## **Synopsis**

Classical Japanese: A Grammar is a comprehensive, and practical guide to classical Japanese. Extensive notes and historical explanations make this volume useful as both a reference for advanced students and a textbook for beginning students. The volume, which explains how classical Japanese is related to modern Japanese, includes detailed explanations of basic grammar, including helpful, easy-to-use tables of grammatical forms; annotated excerpts from classical premodern texts. Classical Japanese: A Grammar - Exercise Answers and Tables (ISBN: 978-0-231-13530-6) is now available for purchase as a separate volume.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This comprehensive guide... includes in-depth explanations, exercises and literary excerpts useful to beginners as well as advanced speakers. (Columbia College Today) A significant contribution to the field of premodern Japanese language and literary studies. (Stephen D. Miller *Monumenta Nipponica*)

Haruo Shirane is Shincho Professor of Japanese Literature in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia University. He is the author of *The Bridge of Dreams: A Poetics of The Tale of Genji* and *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Basho*; and an editor of *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature and Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology, 1600–1900*.

This book has been invaluable to me as I've been working on a translation project of texts that, despite being from the early 20th century, use many classical constructions. The explanations in English are great, as are the many examples from classical texts. Most helpful to me has been the listing of modern Japanese "equivalents" for each grammatical structure or point. I've been doing the exercises in the back as I complete each section, and have referred to past "lessons" over & over as I work on my own project. The index & tables at the back of the book are enormously helpful -- the whole thing is very well organized. My only wish is that the book weren't so large. I appreciate the book's generous font size, but the whole book seems bigger than necessary.

This grammar is a great textbook/grammar for learning Classical Japanese. The text is kind of like a pedagogical grammar of the language, with many examples from actual Japanese literature. This is perhaps the strongest point of the book. As an earlier book, *Introduction to Classical Japanese* by Akira Komai, relied on artificial sentences rather than actual sentences. This book is intended for use by people with some knowledge of modern Japanese, but I would surmise that even someone with little-to-no knowledge of Japanese can get something out of this text. The grammar sections are very clear and have many examples so you can see the language in action. And the vocabulary is introduced in the examples (though not in a conventional way). And with the companion volumes of *Classical Japanese A Grammar - Exercise Answers and Tables* and *Classical Japanese Reader and Essential Dictionary* you can get even more out of the text with little-to-no knowledge of Japanese. Of course I'm not advocating this, as a beginner-intermediate knowledge of Japanese is advised. But this should give a good idea of the easy to understand nature of the book, and its clear and concise format. The historical notes and comparative Modern Classical comparisons are also quite interesting and helpful.

I rented this as a self-taught refresher course after having taken a semester of classical Japanese years ago. This text is comprehensive, well-organized, and overall very useful for study. Also, as a spot reference in years to come, it is set up to be convenient for looking up specific items. I am grateful that the option of rental was available through , and I will probably purchase a copy for future use.

This is the book that taught me what I know of classical Japanese, and with that proficiency I was eventually able to read *Hojoki* (Account of a Ten-Food-Square Hut) in its entirety. The text is well

organized and the explanations are clear, and (most importantly) it's a complete grammar, not a partial one like Wixted's Handbook to Classical Japanese (which is a fine book in its own right). I came to this with a pretty solid grasp of modern Japanese, and I wouldn't recommend doing otherwise. I say this for two reasons. One is that classical Japanese is intrinsically harder than modern, and to get through this book I drew on every bit of what I already knew, and even then it was challenging. The other is that, even if you manage to complete this course without knowing the modern language, once you do so there's nowhere else to go. Yes, there's Shirane's reader (companion volume to the grammar), and that gives some great practice, but the texts it contains only amount to a smattering, and to my knowledge there are no other CJ readers aimed at English speakers. This means that to get more reading practice you have to turn to Japanese editions, and the commentary and grammar notes that they contain are of course in modern Japanese. The edition of Hojoki that I read is one created for high-school/college students, and while the critical and explanatory apparatus is outstanding, full MJ proficiency is simply taken for granted; these are the parts of the book that you're meant to read without trouble. However, the need to learn MJ first shouldn't be frustrating for anyone. There are numerous great modern literary works, and even if you only learn the modern language you'll never lack great material for reading. And after a few years devoted to that, Shirane's text is a reasonable next step. Finally, I disagree with the reviewer who criticized the binding and paper quality. Both are fine, at least in the edition that I have.

This is a wonderful organization of grammatical points for reference ... but an awful book to learn from if you don't have some course to go with it. If you need it for class or want a reference for things you already have a solid understanding of, a great book, but if you are trying to learn Classical Japanese grammar from scratch, not so good

This book is well-written and gives a complete enough grammar of Classical Japanese grammar and spelling, with lots of examples from classics. My one nit- I didn't like the Word-document-esque formatting. The book is much bigger and heavier than it needed to be (although it is a nice-looking hardcover).

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