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This book celebrates decades of the author’s research on syntax, case marking, and argument structure. The topics, which range from numeral quantifiers to genitive subjects and analytic causatives, are discussed from the generative perspective. Although Japanese serves as the departure point in all case studies, the selection of languages that are covered is very broad: from Old English to Altaic Dagur and from Slavic languages to Mitla Zapotec. The book thus makes an important contribution both to universal grammar and to our understanding of language diversity.

The book is organized in an original way, with two chapters presenting the author’s earlier work and more recent developments in each of the five major topics. Such composition enables the author to show the evolution of his ideas in time, and places them in the changing theoretical context. This ongoing debate makes the book fascinating to read and provides a vivid demonstration of the global changes in the generative framework.

All topics concern the interaction of case marking, argument structure, and word order. The first topic deals with numeral quantifiers in Japanese, which can be separated from the nouns they modify. According to the author, this phenomenon supports the hypothesis of A-movement in unaccusatives and passives. The second topic is ditransitive constructions in Japanese, which allow for different order of the recipient/goal and theme. The author argues against the popular account based on the notion of scrambling as a defining property of Japanese, and shows that Japanese ditransitives are not fundamentally different from the English double-object and prepositional-object constructions.

Next, the book offers a discussion of the nominative/genitive subject alternation in Japanese, contrasted with similar phenomena in Altaic languages, and pinpoints similarities between the genitive of dependent tense in Japanese and the genitive of negation in Slavic. The fourth topic is causative constructions in Japanese, which are discussed in a broader context of the division of labor between syntax and the lexicon. Using the notion of blocking, or pre-emption, and, more recently, ideas from distributed morphology, the author explains how ‘elsewhere’ causatives with –sase in Japanese and make in English can function as lexical or analytic causatives, depending on the availability of a free slot in the lexicon.

The final topic is the change in accusative case marking in Japanese. Drawing on numerous examples from ancient texts, the author shows how the competition between three options for accusative case marking (namely, abstract case, morphological case, and head incorporation) that were available in Old Japanese and Early Middle Japanese has been won by the morphological case option. He also provides arguments for why this development fits the general principles of universal grammar.
This book is very rich in examples, combining contemporary language data with diachronic and developmental evidence. The writing is very lucid and accessible, even to a non-specialist. The book can be recommended to anyone who is interested in linguistic theory and universal grammar.