



2014 BEAL Forum: Keynote speaker abstract.

**How many syllables are reflected in Early Middle Japanese *yo*?
From one end of Japanese language history to the other**

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According to the longstanding standard theory or *teisetsu* going back to Hashimoto Shinkichi, there were two distinct syllables yo_1 and yo_2 in Old Japanese, which merged by the Heian period into *yo*. This claim was challenged by Roland A. Lange in the 1970s, who presented cogent evidence against it from his study of *Man'yōshū*. It is interesting to note that the history of the word for 'sulfur', which I here trace back from the present day to the Early Heian period, corroborates Lange's argument in an unexpected way.