Rendaku as a rhythmic stabilizer in Eastern Old Japanese poetry

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The Eastern Old Japanese dialects, spoken in the 8th century and attested in books 14 and 20 of the *Man'yōshū* poetry anthology, are a heterogeneous group of related language varieties that each display some of the earliest attested examples of *rendaku*. Morpheme-based *rendaku*, which manifests when a phonologically reduced, nasal-initial copula, case suffix, or final syllable of a nominal root fuses with a following voiceless onset, is the most commonly attested type. In fact, it may even occur twice in the same line. An example is given in (1) below.

(1)   M20:4368.1-2 (Pitati province)
久自我波々 / 佐氣久阿利麻弖
ku^{n}zi-$^\eta$-gapa pa / sake-ku ari-mat-e
PN-**GEN**-river TOP / be.safe-AVINF ITER-wait-IMP
'Be waiting for me safely, at Ku^{n}zi river!'

The underlying form in the first line of (1) is /ku^{n}zi-nə kapa pa/.

Examples of process-based *rendaku* are also attested, in which case no segmentable morpheme can be derived from the resulting voiced onset. This type of *rendaku* is only attested a few times, and only in reduplicated forms. It has a function of pluralization, which is not found in morpheme-based *rendaku*. An example is shown in (2) below.

(2)   M20:4391.1-3 (Simotupusa province)
久尔具尔乃 / 夜之里乃加美尔 / 奴作麻都理
kuni-$^\eta$**guni**-nə / yasiri-nə kami-ni / nusa matur-i
province-**REDUP**-GEN / shrine-GEN deity-DAT / paper_offering offer-INF
'I make paper offerings to the deities in the shrines of many **provinces**.'

This talk will focus on the use of morpheme-based *rendaku* to maintain rhythmic stability in poetic verse. It will be argued that this function is implemented to avoid a hypermetrical line when no adjacent vowels exist as candidates for elision. Furthermore, it will be argued that *rendaku* is preferred to vocalic elision when both are available options for maintaining the rhythmic stability of a line. Linguistic constraints blocking *rendaku* will also be discussed to explain hypermetrical examples with potential, yet unrealized, morpheme-based *rendaku*.