

# **Hachijō and South Ryukyuan languages and East-Northeast Japan dialects from the viewpoint of the concentric circle theory of dialect divergence**

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This paper deals with grammatical forms whose origin can be traced down to *shiari* and *beshi*.

One of the authors (Akihiro Kaneda) is a native speaker of the Yamagata dialect in Northeast Japan (Tōhoku) and has also directly researched the Hachijō language, and the Miyako-Ōgami and Iriomote-Sonai dialects of the Yaeyama language.

*Shiari*-type forms, which could be observed in Old Japanese language of the Nara period, were already nearly extinct in Early Middle Japanese of the Heian period. However, they are still encountered in the contemporary Hachijō and South Ryukyuan languages. The Hachijō language displays the form *nomar-* (<\**nomi ari*), in which the vowel fusion results in the vowel *a*, and is consistent with the forms found in *Man'yōshū*'s *Azumauta*. For comparison, in Central Old Japanese the corresponding form was *nomer-* (<\**nomi ari*), where the vowel fusion resulted in the vowel *e* (cf. *nomu* 'drink'). The grammatical meaning of *shiari*-type forms varies from dialect to dialect and ranges from tense (past) to aspect (evidentiality), but all these forms are linked to Old Japanese, and show distribution consistent with the concentric circle theory of dialect divergence (*hōgen shūkenron*). Forms such as *kagaru* (cf. *kaku* 'write'), which phonetically resemble *shiari*-type forms are also observed in a number of dialects of Northeast Japan, but they are not related to Old Japanese.

Grammatical forms related to *beshi* have long been confirmed in dialects of East (Kantō) and Northeast Japan, but it has now become clear that they also appear in South Ryukyuan languages. It is thought that they had been present there before the widely used *hazu*-type presumptive forms appeared. In South Ryukyuan languages which have both *hazu*-type and *beshi*-type forms, the former imply a greater degree of certainty, and the latter have

the meaning of doubtfulness. In South Ryukyuan languages, like in the dialects of East and Northeast Japan, *beshi*-type forms are used in a volitional or volitional-hortative meaning.

In the light of their current distribution in geographically distant South Ryukyuan languages and dialects of East-Northeast Japan (and their grammatical meaning), the fact that *beshi*-type forms were present in Central Old Japanese and in Early Middle Japanese, and that before becoming extinct they were also found in West Japan, also support the concentric circle theory of dialect divergence.