

The Hachijō Dialect—Comparison with Eastern Old Japanese

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The number of the Hachijō dialect speakers is estimated at several hundred on the Hachijō island and less than ten on the Aogashima Island. The dialect was added to the UNESCO list of endangered languages along with the Ainu language and Ryukyuan dialects.

The current Township of Hachijō comprises five former villages, which show dialect differences. They are Mitsune-Ōkagō, which are located in low flat parts of the island, and are referred to as lowland or *sakashita* areas, and Kashitate-Nakanogō and Sueyoshi, which lie in the mountainous parts of the island, and are referred to as highland or *sakaue* areas. The lowland and highland dialects display significant phonological differences in regard to the amalgamation of consecutive vowels into long vowels and diphthongs. Also, the pronunciation in Sueyoshi is clearly different from that in Kashitate and Nakanogō. Further differences can be observed in elderly speakers in smaller localities even within the same area. However, there are very few grammatical differences between all the five villages.

The adnominal form of the verb with the *-o* ending (*iko toki=iku toki*) and the adnominal form of the adjective with the *-ke* ending (*akake hana=akai hana*), as well as the presumptive *-namu*, the dialect equivalent of *-ramu* (*furunouwa=furu darō*), are grammatical features remnant from the Azuma dialect of the Nara Period. Many finitive verbal forms in this dialect are based on adnominal forms, however, the above mentioned *furu* which appears in the presumptive mood is thought to derive from the old finitive form *an* as such cannot be used as a narrative finitive verbal form. Also, sentences with the emphatic *kō* (the equivalent of the Old Japanese *koso*) require a *kakarimusubi* predicate in the perfective base (*izenkei*) form. Interrogative sentences with *ka*— mainly used in dubitative questions which do not necessarily require answers—require a *kakarimusubi* predicate in the adnominal form of *-namu*.

Synthetic tense and aspectual forms *nomowa* (*nomu*) and *nomara* (<* *nomiarowa*) correspond to the old conjugation forms, where tense and aspect were not distinguished. On the other hand there exist analytic forms *nonde arowa* and *nonde arara*, which correspond to *nonde iru* and *nonde ita* in the standard language. The strong conjugation synthetic forms such as *nomara* derive from **nomiari*, while synthetic forms in the weak conjugation derive from the adnominal form of **mite ari*. In present use these forms have retained the meaning of ‘continuation of the state resulting from a change’.

There are no finitive verbal forms in the strong conjugation such as **nomitara* or **nondara* that would correspond to the old Japanese *nomitari*, however, there are forms resembling the north-eastern (Tōhoku) *nonda*, *nondatta*. They are thought to have been introduced at a later stage. The complementary distribution of *-ri* and *-tari* is thought to be an earlier phenomenon than the coexistence of *nomeri* and *nomitari* in the Nara Period.

Aspectual meaning verbs had in the old Japanese language is thought to be particularly well preserved in emotive sentences when the speaker expresses the ongoingness of, or the state resulting from an event(change or action) happening in front of his eyes. The presence or absence of *ari* is then used to distinguish nuances such as ‘discovery’ or ‘sensing’.