

The Characteristics of the Accentual Unit in the Yonaguni Dialect (Okinawa Prefecture)  
through Comparison with other Japanese/Ryukyuan Dialects

Kohei Nakazawa (Yonaguni-chō Education Board)

**Yonaguni Island and the Yonaguni dialect**

Yonaguni Island (The Yonaguni dialect: *dunaN Cima*) is one of the Yaeyama Islands in Okinawa Prefecture, Japan. This island is located halfway between Taiwan and Iriomote Island (the largest island of the Yaeyama Islands), and the westernmost and the farthest from Tokyo in Japan.

The Yonaguni dialect (*dunaN munui*), spoken by around 400 people on the Yonaguni Island, belongs to the Macro-Yaeyama subgroups of Southern Ryukyuan. It is therefore a sister language of Yaeyama Ryukyuan (Lawrence 2008, Pellard 2009).

**The accent system of the Yonaguni dialect**

The Yonaguni dialect has a three-pattern accent system, in which three tones are lexically contrastive. The tone domain is *bunsetsu*, or the syntactic phrase consisting of a content word, optionally with one or more particles. The three accent patterns in the Yonaguni dialect, High, Low and Falling are called A, B and C (Uwano 2010).

The High tone (Type A) is evenly high throughout the *bunsetsu* domain, with the rise in pitch at the first syllable in polysyllabic phrases. The Low tone (Type B) is evenly low throughout *bunsetsu*. The falling tone (Type C) is similar to Type A, but the final syllable has the power to lower the following syllable, and if the last syllable is heavy, it is pronounced with a falling contour, as in (1).

(1)	CVV	CVCV	CVCV with <i>aN</i> ‘be’	CVCV with <i>=N</i> ‘too’
Type A	[naa ‘name’	sa[gi ‘saké’	sa[gi a]N ‘there is saké’	sa[giN ‘saké, too’
Type B	kii ‘tree’	mami ‘bean’	mami [a]N ‘there are beans’	mamiN ‘bean, too’
Type C	[wa]a ‘pig’	sa[Ta ‘sugar’	sa[Ta] a]N ‘there is sugar’	sa[Ta]N ‘sugar, too’

“ [ ” represents the rise in pitch and “ ] ” the fall in pitch. Capital letters “K, T, P, C” indicate unaspirated consonants [k, t, p, ts], while “N” is a moraic nasal.

On the other hand, some compounds have different pitch patterns from simple nouns. These compound patterns can interpret as the two-accentual-unit forms as in (2).

(2)	N[su]-ka[mi] ‘miso pot’	{C+C}	( <i>Nsu</i> {C} ‘miso’, <i>kami</i> {C} ‘pot’)
	Cu[ri]-ha[gu] ‘medicine chest’	{C+A}	( <i>Curi</i> {C} ‘medicine’, <i>hagu</i> {A} ‘box’)
	si[ru]-Nna ‘rope to express birth’	{C+B}	( <i>siru</i> {C} ‘birth’, <i>Nna</i> {B} ‘rope’)

Examples shown in (3) should also be regarded as two-accentual-unit forms, even though they have the same pitch patterns as simple nouns, from the viewpoint of “tone preservation rule”.

(3)	ta[gi-huTi] ‘bamboo broom’	{A+C}	( <i>tagi</i> {A} ‘bamboo’, <i>huTi</i> {C} ‘broom’)
	ta[gi-duga] ‘bamboo floor’	{A+A}	( <i>tagi</i> {A} ‘bamboo’, <i>duga</i> {A} ‘floor’)
	Nni-Kuru ‘rice bag’	{B+B}	( <i>Nni</i> {B} ‘rice’, <i>Kuru</i> {B} ‘bag’)

### Comparison with other Japanese/Ryukyuan dialects

Two-accentual-unit forms are not only observed in the Yonaguni dialect, but also in other dialects. Examples shown in (4)(5)(6) are from the Hateruma dialect which is one of the Yaeyama dialects (the data are from Aso and Ogawa 2016).

- (4) *misju-duri* ‘sparrow’                      {R+F}                      (*misju*{R} ‘miso’, *turi*{F} ‘bird’)  
*pe-mura* ‘south village’                      {H+F}                      (*pe*{H} ‘south’, *mura*{F} ‘village’)  
*da-na* ‘your name’                      {F+F}                      (*da*{F} ‘you’, *na-naN*{F} ‘name’)

“Cj” indicates a palatalized consonant ([C<sup>j</sup>]) and “j” is the approximant [j]. The Hateruma dialect has three accent patterns, High {H}, Rising {R} and Falling {F}, but Two-accentual-unit forms are found if the second member of compounds has the Falling tone. Moreover, the second members don’t always preserve their own accent: only the tone of the first members remains as shown in (5).

- (5) *jamatu-pitu* ‘Japanese people’                      {R}                      (*jamatu*{R} ‘you’, *pitu*{F} ‘people’)  
*nisi-kaci* ‘north wind’                      {F}                      (*nisi*{F} ‘north’, *kaci*{F} ‘wind’)  
*pe-kaci* ‘south wind’                      {H}                      (*pe*{H} ‘south’, *kaci*{F} ‘wind’)

It is interesting that some clitics also possess their own accent in the Hateruma dialect.

- (6) *usina*{H}*bagi*{F} *NguN*{F}                      ‘go to Okinawa (island)’ *bagi*{F} ‘until’, *NguN*{F} ‘go’  
*takiduN*{H}*bagi*{F} *NguN*{F}                      ‘go to Taketomi (island)’

Recently, it has been revealed that Southern Ryukyuan dialects have the accent systems with a prosodic unit “Prosodic Word (PwD)” (Igarashi 2016, Matsumori 2016). The Yonaguni and Hateruma dialects don’t have this unit, but their two-accentual-unit forms give a hint to consider the historical development of southern Ryukyuan accent systems.

What compose a PwD differs among dialects, but commonly, a root and a clitic with two morae or over could be the one. It indicates that a PW has, or at least once had, its own accent.

Historically, two-accentual-unit forms in compounds are observed in Early Middle Japanese such as [midu]-u[mi ‘lake’] ([midu ‘water’, u[mi ‘sea’]). And particles also have their own accent: [mu]ra=[ga ‘village (nom.)’, [mu]ra=ma[de ‘to village’. Most of the Japanese and Ryukyuan dialects have lost the original accent of clitics (especially one mora clitics) and members of compounds. Two-accentual-unit forms in the Yonaguni and Hateruma dialects seem to be the reflection of the ancient accent system of Japonic (Japanese and Ryukyuan) language.

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