

An Introduction to Ryukyuan Languages

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Ryukyuan languages: an introduction

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1 Introduction

This book, entitled *An Introduction to Ryukyuan Languages* (IRL), is a collection of grammatical sketches of six Ryukyuan languages: Ura and Yuwan (Amami Ryukyuan), Tsuken (Okinawan), Ikema and Ōgami (Miyako Ryukyuan), and Hateruma (Yaeyama Ryukyuan). The target readers of IRL are not limited to specialists of Ryukyuan; IRL is open to both specialists and non-specialists including theoretical linguists, typologists, and linguists working on non-Ryukyuan languages. In fact, IRL is deliberately organized in such a way that common typological topics likely to be asked by a non-specialist of a given language (e.g. word order, case alignment, morphological typology, property-concept encoding, etc.) are addressed by all authors (see § 3 of this introduction for more detail). IRL is, literally, an introduction to Ryukyuan languages.

In this introductory chapter I will aim to provide some basic background information of Ryukyuan languages (such as geographic, genealogical, and socio-historical information) and a typological summary of Ryukyuan languages.

2 Basic background of Ryukyuan

Ryukyuan is a group of languages belonging to the Japonic Family, spoken in the southern extreme of Japan archipelago called the Ryūkyū Islands. From north to south lie four major groups of islands that form the Ryūkyū Islands: the Amami Islands, Okinawa Islands, Miyako Islands, and Yaeyama Islands (Amami belongs to Kagoshima Prefecture, whereas the others belong to Okinawa Prefecture, thus there is an administrative border crosscutting the Ryūkyū Islands).¹ IRL thus covers the languages of all these major island groups. It

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¹There is an ongoing debate as to whether Ryukyuan is a dialect or a group of dialects of Japanese. However, this issue is socio-political and ideological rather than linguistic. Even linguistically, there is no strong argument for referring to Ryukyuan languages as Japanese dialects: there is no mutual intelligibility between Ryukyuan and Japanese, and even between Amami, Okinawan, Miyako, and Yaeyama. See [Shimoji and Heinrich \(forthcoming\)](#) for a fuller and intense discussion.

is true that there is a considerable internal variation both in phonology and grammar within the languages of each island group and that the six varieties included in this book do not fully sketch out this variation, but IRL will nevertheless serve as a useful summary of the typological diversity found in Ryukyuan languages (see §3 for a typological summary on Ryukyuan languages).

The total number of speakers of Ryukyuan languages is unknown, as there is no statistical data available for this information. The total population of the areas where Ryukyuan languages are spoken is 1,452,288 (as valid in 2005: 85,434 for Amami Region, 1,366,854 for Okinawa Prefecture including Mainland Okinawa and Miyako-Yaeyama).² As all the authors of this volume report, proficient speakers are limited to old generations, typically in their 50's and older, which means that the total number of speakers of Ryukyuan should be much smaller than the figure of 1,452,288.

It is useful at this stage to make brief notes on the socio-political and historical issues surrounding Ryukyuan languages, even though this book is intended to promote the understanding of synchronic and typological characteristics of Ryukyuan languages as compared with other languages.

As mentioned above, Ryukyuan languages are Japonic languages, with Ryukyuan being in sister relationship with Japanese (which, of course, falls into several divisions). A currently widely accepted hypothesis about the genealogical grouping is that Ryukyuan falls into two major subdivisions, Northern Ryukyuan (Amami-Okinawa) and Southern Ryukyuan (Miyako-Yaeyama). Further subgrouping is far beyond the focus of this chapter or of this entire book. Readers interested in more detailed discussions of Ryukyuan (or Japonic) historical linguistics are referred to vast literature on Ryukyuan (or Japonic) historical linguistics which include the following: Hattori (1959, 1978–1979) *inter alia*, Thorpe (1983), Uemura (1997), Serafim (2003), Lawrence (2000, 2006), Bentley (2008), and Pellard (2009a,b).

Early Japonic speakers from Mainland Japan are believed to have come southward to the north parts of the Ryūkyū archipelago sometime between the 2nd and 6th centuries (Uemura 1997), or the 8th to the 9th centuries (Serafim 2003). The crucial issue here is that the period during which the proto-Ryukyuan *separated* (in terms of historical linguistics) from other Japonic languages do not necessarily coincide with the period during which the proto-Ryukyuan speakers actually *settled* on the Ryūkyū Islands. That is, it is possible that the proto-Ryukyuan was spoken on south Kyūshū for some time and the proto-Ryukyuan speakers then moved southward to arrive eventually in the Ryūkyū Islands.

²These figures are based on the following websites: <http://www.pref.kagoshima.jp/tokei/bunya/kokutyo/h17kokutyo/nennrei.17.html>, <http://www.pref.okinawa.jp/toukeika/estimates/2005/year/year.html>

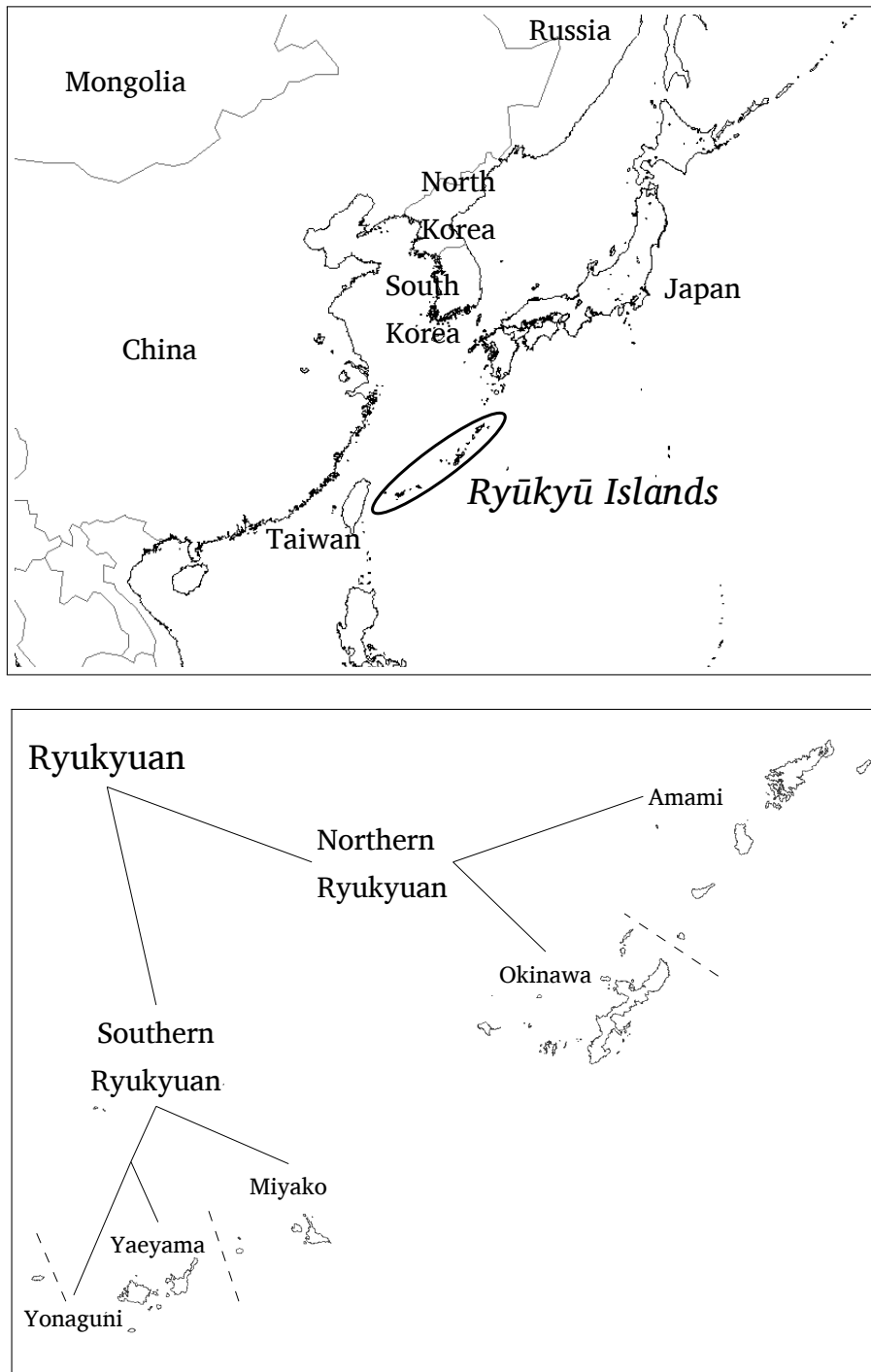


Figure 1: Ryūkyū Islands and the Ryukyuan languages

After the proto-Ryukyuan speakers settled on the Ryūkyū Islands, there was no massive and continuous socio-cultural contact between the Ryūkyū Islands and Mainland Japan until the 17th century, when the Ryūkyū Islands were conquered by the Satsuma Domain from Kyūshū, the southernmost large island of Mainland Japan.

The Miyako and Yaeyama Islands (collectively called the Sakishima Islands) and their history are full of uncertainties both in terms of archaeology and historical linguistics. Recent archaeological and anthropological studies have revealed that there had been no major population movement from Okinawa to the Sakishima Islands until the 13th century (Asato and Dohi 1999). Until the 13th century, there may have been some indigenous people on the Sakishima Islands, who were decimated by the Ryukyuan newcomers, or gradually assimilated by them to become Southern Ryukyuan speakers. The question of exactly who the indigenous people were is controversial. Some researchers assert that they came from Indonesia or the Philippines (Kanaseki 1976, Asato and Dohi 1999). Linguistically speaking, a different prediction is made: all evidence available so far seems to be that Amami-Okinawan and Southern Ryukyuan are in sister relationship, both branching off from Proto-Ryukyuan.

3 Ryukyuan languages: typological summary

One striking feature of Ryukyuan languages is their typological diversity. Also, some languages have turned out to exhibit features that call attention of general linguists and typologists. In what follows I give an outline of these typological features, focusing both on phonology and morphosyntax.

3.1 Phonology

Basically, Ryukyuan languages share a number of phonological characteristics with Japanese, such as voicing opposition for obstruents, basic CV(C) structure, moraic rhythm, and pitch accent. However, there is considerable variation within Ryukyuan languages, and some languages show considerable divergence in terms of the above-mentioned general phonological characteristics usually found in Japonic languages. For example, Ōgami (Pellard, this volume) has no voice opposition for obstruents, and has a possible syllable shape of CCVC as well as a surprisingly rich inventory of syllabic consonants, some of which may even carry an onset, as in /kff/ [kʰ:] ‘make’.

3.1.1 Phonemes and phonotactics

Let us start with typological characteristics of phoneme inventories and phonotactics of Ryukyuan languages, focusing mainly on the six languages covered

in IRL. Amami Ryukyuan (Niinaga and Shigeno, this volume) is characterized by the existence of central vowels (high and mid) and a number of glottalized consonants (which are phonemically analyzed as a laryngeal phoneme + C). The laryngeal phoneme, according to Niinaga and Shigeno, bears a mora and comes only root-initially. Thus in Yuwan, for example, /ʔma/ [ʔma] ‘horse’ has the structure LCV where L(aryngeal) and CV each have one mora. Tsuken (Central Okinawan) also has glottalization phenomena, but it is much more restricted, restricted to glides and two vowels /a/ and /i/ (see Matayoshi, this volume).

Southern Ryukyuan languages generally lack, or have only a limited number of, glottalized consonants, even though there are certain exceptions to this generalization (e.g. Yonaguni). Some Miyako Ryukyuan varieties have a very limited number of glottalized consonants. In Irabu, for example, glottalization occurs only with /t/ and /c/, as in /ttjaa/ [ʔtʰa:] ‘then’ and /ccir/ [ʔtʰi] ‘pipe’. What characterizes Southern Ryukyuan languages instead is a rich inventory of syllabic consonants. Syllabic consonants are so prominent in Miyako Ryukyuan that Shimoji (2006b) posited the syllable template O + N + C (Onset, Nucleus, and Coda) rather than C + V + C (Consonant and Vowel) for Irabu, to reflect the fact that the categories consonant and vowel in this language do not necessarily correspond to syllable margin and syllable nucleus. As illustrated in the Irabu examples in (1), whereas vowels are inherently nucleic (i.e. they only occur as syllable nuclei), resonant and fricative consonants may be *contextually* nucleic: on the one hand, they occur in syllable margins when adjacent to a vowel or vowels (see /m/ in (1a) below); on the other, they are nucleic if no vowel is adjacent (see /m/ in (1b) and (1c)). A syllabic consonant may even carry an onset, as illustrated in (1d-e).

(1) Irabu

			Syllabification	Syllable structure
a. /nam/	[nam]	‘wave’	nam	ONC
b. /mna/	[mna]	‘shell’	m.na	N.ON
c. /mm/	[m:]	‘potato’	mm	NN
d. /pžtu/	[pžtu]	‘man’	pž.tu	ON.ON
e. /prrma/	[p]:ma]	‘daytime’	prr.ma	ONN.ON

The following examples come from Ōgami (Pellard, this volume). In this language, too, syllable slots (nucleus and margins) and vowel/consonant features do not show one-to-one correspondence. The following examples show that the fricative /s/ is contextually nucleic.

(2) Ōgami

a. /us/	[us]	‘cow’	us	NC
b. /ss/	[s:]	‘dust’	ss	NN
c. /kss/	[ks:]	‘breast’	kss	ONN

See Pellard's description in this volume for a more detail on syllabic consonants in Ōgami, a language having a typologically striking feature of syllabic fricatives.

3.1.2 Suprasegmentals

Let us now turn to suprasegmental characteristics that Ryukyuan languages manifest. Mora is crucial in most (all?) Ryukyuan languages, and this is clearly seen in each sketch of this book. Most Ryukyuan varieties have the cross-linguistically common minimality constraint, which requires a phonological word to have at least two morae. There is some internal variation in this regard, however. In Irabu (Miyako Ryukyuan, [Shimoji 2008a](#)), this minimality constraint (MC in (3) below) applies to a non-cliticized word form (i.e. MC applies before cliticization occurs). As shown in (3), the noun root *ti* 'hand' is always subject to lengthening of the vowel to meet the minimality constraint without respect to whether it is followed by a clitic.

- (3) Irabu
- a. *ti* → [MC] → *tii*
 - b. *ti* → [MC] → *tii* + =*nu* (GEN) → *tii* = *nu*

By contrast, in Hateruma (Aso, this volume) the constraint applies to a cliticized form (i.e. MC applies after cliticization occurs). Thus in (4) below the root *si* 'hand' is not lengthened when attached by a clitic, since the root + clitic satisfies the minimality constraint.

- (4) Hateruma (examples by courtesy of Aso Reiko; see also her chapter in this volume)
- a. *si* → [MC] → *sii*
 - b. *si* + =*nu* (GEN) → [MC] → *si* = *nu*

One common view on clitics is that they are grammatical words that are phonologically bound (see [Zwicky 1977](#), [Haspelmath 2002](#), [Dixon and Aikhenvald 2002](#)). This simple generalization may entail that phonological boundness is of either-or kind rather than of more-or-less kind. However, linguists all know that this is untrue. The clitic is a cross-linguistically swing category, exhibiting an intermediate status between an affix and a full word. Thus it is a meaningful, and in fact an important, question *to what extent* (as opposed to *whether*) a clitic is phonologically bound to the host. In Hateruma, clitics are bound both in terms of word minimality and accent (see Aso this volume). In Irabu, whereas clitics come outside of the phonological word domain in terms of minimality constraint, other prosodic evidence shows that clitics are integrated into the host, e.g. with respect to tone assignment ([Shimoji 2009c](#)). Thus Hateruma clitics are phonologically more integrated into the host than Irabu clitics.

As compared with mora, syllable seems to play a marginal role in Ryukyuan languages, even though it still remains unclear to what extent and in what way syllable is crucial in Ryukyuan languages. Pellard (this volume) clearly argues for postulating the phonological unit syllable in addition to mora, in explaining a certain morphophonemic alternation. Shimoji (2006b, 2009c) notes that rising pitch within a syllable is dispreferred in Irabu, a fact that also supports the view that syllable plays a role in Ryukyuan phonology.

Word-level prosody of Ryukyuan languages have been relatively well studied (see Uwano 1999, Matsumori 2001, Lawrence 2001 for useful summaries written in English). This area also presents phenomena that will attract the attention of theoretical phonologists. Typically, Ryukyuan languages have a lexically contrastive pitch accent system built on moraic rhythm, where a specific mora within a word is accented (i.e. serves as locus for a distinctive pitch event such as abrupt falling/rising pitch) and the locus of accent is lexically determined.³ Many Ryukyuan languages have an accentual system with two or three contrastive pitch patterns (two-pattern or three-pattern accent). Exploring Ryukyuan accentual systems brings a number of interesting and difficult issues to linguistic theory (see Lawrence 2001), but I would like here to focus on one such issue only. Most of the accentual systems of Ryukyuan languages have been described by referring to mora/syllable rather than higher prosodic constituents such as foot. In some Ryukyuan languages, however, foot plays a crucial role in the organization of word-level prosody. For example, Nakijin (Northern Ryukyuan, Lawrence 1990) has an iambic rhythm of short and long vowels based on feet. The prosodic organization of some Miyako Ryukyuan languages is also highly noteworthy. In these languages, the basic prosodic unit is clearly mora, but there is a higher prosodic constituent, or bimoraic foot, to which tone is assigned (Shimoji 2009c). Thus, these languages have a tonal foot (Leben 1997), a prosodic unit not common cross-linguistically. In Irabu, for example, H(igh) tone appears at regular intervals by grouping four feet into two ‘foot groups’ in which each foot group has one H-toned foot. Thus Irabu prosody is characterized by a foot-based alternating rhythm of tone features (*H-L alternation*, Shimoji 2009c). Ikema (Hayashi, this volume) is interesting in that this H-L alternation conspires with lexical tones (type α and type β , see Hayashi et al. 2008 for detail). The Ikema fact suggests that H-L alternation and lexical word tone are independent processes (i.e. they occur in different layers of prosodic organization). In Irabu lexical word tone is absent (i.e. Irabu words are accentless) and H-L alternation directly manifests itself in its word-level prosody.

³Alternatively, this kind of system may be interpreted as a word tone system, where specific pitch contour patterns are attributed not to the locus of accent but to specific tonal melodies (see Hayashi and Aso, this volume). Tonal melodies are either lexically distinctive or non-distinctive. Yuwan (Niinaga, this volume) has three tonal melodies, and it is lexically determined which tonal melody appears in which lexeme.

3.2 Morphosyntax

3.2.1 Clause structure

As in other Japonic languages, Ryukyuan languages are verb-final languages with a modifier-head order and a dependent-marking system. They prefer SV as an unmarked word order for intransitive clauses, and AOV as an unmarked word order for transitive clauses. As “pro-drop” languages, however, ellipsis of core arguments is quite common.

3.2.2 Case alignment system

Most Ryukyuan languages display a nominative-accusative case alignment system, but Hateruma (Aso, this volume) is noteworthy in that case marking for S/A and O is neutralized (both types of core arguments are zero-marked).

- (5) *pitu* = \emptyset *budur-ja-ta-n*
 person = CORE dance-PRF-PAST-RLS
 ‘People danced.’ [Intransitive: S marked by = \emptyset]
- (6) *aboa* = \emptyset *ija* = \emptyset *mir-i* *bir-ja-ta-n*
 mother = CORE father = CORE look-MED PROG-PRF-PAST-RLS
 ‘(My) mother was looking at (my) father.’ [Transitive: A/O marked by = \emptyset]

In this language, the relative order of A and O marks the grammatical relations, according to Aso. Thus if the first and second words in (6) is switched, the result is that the A is interpreted as father, and the O as mother.

In those Ryukyuan languages which have a nominative-accusative system, even though S/A marking and O marking are distinct by definition, several interesting characteristics are observed for S/A marking on the one hand, and O marking on the other.

S/A marking (by nominative case) and possessor marking (by genitive case) are formally syncretized in many Ryukyuan languages (more precisely, the same case marker is used for both S/A and NP modifier).⁴ This kind of identical marking for subject and possessor is well attested cross-linguistically, for example in Austronesian languages, and this marking pattern is crucially related to nominalization processes. What is more interesting cross-linguistically in Ryukyuan languages is their elaborate system of S/A/Poss marking sensitive

⁴In Japonic languages, genitive case (or attributive case) is used to mark possessor, attributive modifier, and other various relations established between the modifier and the head of an NP. Thus the term *genitive* should not be interpreted in the restrictive sense of *possessive*. Thus *dus* = *nu sjasin* (friend = GEN picture) in Irabu, for example, may be interpreted as (a) a friend’s picture (possessive reading) or (b) a picture of a friend (non-possessive reading), the exact interpretation being dependent on pragmatic inference (e.g. contextual information).

to animacy hierarchy. In many Ryukyuan languages the syncretized S/A/Poss marker is =ga/=nu (or similar forms), and the choice between these two is based on animacy-definiteness of the NP to which the marker is attached (see Niinaga and Pellard, this volume). Niinaga reports an interesting case marking strategy found in Yuwan. Here, S/A is marked by =ga/=nu, whereas a possessor is marked by an adnominal word (which never carries any case marker), =ga, =nu, or =Ø. These elaborate distinctions in S/A/Poss marking are explained by referring to animacy hierarchy, according to Niinaga. His account of the nominative =ga/=nu and the genitive =ga/=Ø/=nu in terms of animacy hierarchy is summarized as follows (see Niinaga, this volume, for detail).

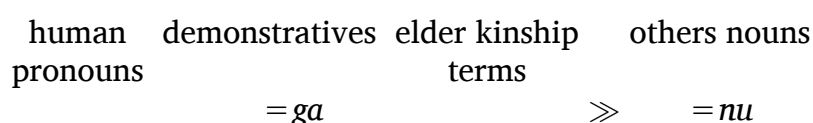


Figure 2: Nominative hierarchy

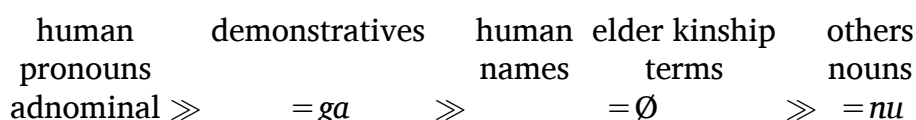


Figure 3: Adnominal and genitive hierarchy

Miyako Ryukyuan languages have an interesting object marking system, where O in a dependent clause of clause-chaining constructions may receive a special marking (Koloskova 2007, Shimoji 2008a; see also Pellard and Hayashi this volume). Koloskova and Shimoji argue that this special object marker primarily marks low transitivity of O. Shimoji further states that the restriction of this marking to chained clauses is explained by the fact that this marking helps disambiguate the foreground-background discourse functions of the chained clause in which it occurs. Thus, this object marking seems to demonstrate [Hopper and Thompson \(1980\)](#)'s well-known Transitivity Hypothesis, which says that low transitivity marking in natural language functions to secure the distinction of discourse grounding. Interestingly, this marker is identical in form to a topic marker. Shimoji interprets the object marker as second accusative case marker homophonous to a topic marker, whereas Hayashi (this volume) argues that this object marking may be interpreted as yet another function of a topic marker.

3.2.3 Word class assignment

Nominals and verbs are unambiguously distinguished in all Ryukyuan languages. A nominal is defined syntactically as it lacks inflectional morphology,

whereas a verb is defined by its inflection. Many authors of this volume define a noun as a word that only heads an NP, and a verb as a word that inflects.

As is common cross-linguistically, the word class assignment of property concept words (PC words) varies in Ryukyuan languages. However, certain patterns do emerge by examining the six languages of Ryukyuan dealt with in this volume.

In these languages most PC roots are bound, and certain morphological strategies are necessary to make them stand as a word. One such strategy is nominal compounding where a PC root and a noun root are compounded to form a nominal word. In Yuwan (Niinaga, this volume), for example, the PC root *kjura* ‘beautiful’ may be compounded with the noun root *?kin* ‘kimono’, and the resulting word form is *kjura-gin* ‘beautiful kimono’. Likewise, in Ikema (Hayashi, this volume) the PC root *imi* ‘small’ may be compounded with the noun root *ffa* ‘child’, and we get *imi-ffa* ‘small child’. This type of compounding seems to be widespread both in Northern and Southern Ryukyuan, but in Hateruma (Aso, this volume), this kind of compounding is generally absent, and Aso (p.c. 2010) gave just a few examples that she encountered: *bu-zara* (big-plate) ‘big plate’, *bu-bi* (big-finger) ‘thumb’, and *aga-pana* (red-flower). Here, the PC roots participating in compounding have different shapes from those that occur elsewhere (cf. *busa* ‘big’, *aka* ‘red’), indicating that this kind of compounding is lexicalized. In Miyako Ryukyuan at least, the noun root may be a formal noun *munu*, which is often de-substantivized and only serves as a structural head. In Irabu (Shimoji 2008a, 2009a), for example, there are expressions like *imi-munu* (small-D.SUB) ‘small (thing)’ and *sabic-munu* (lonely-D.SUB) ‘(I feel) lonely’.

Another very common morphological strategy found in Ryukyuan languages for word formation of PC roots is verbalization. That is, a PC root is transformed into a verb stem by a verbalizer affix, to which a verbal inflectional affix (es) is attached. All the languages dealt with in this book have this strategy. In traditional Ryukyuan linguistics, PC words created by this process have been analyzed as adjectives based mainly on their semantic properties, but a stricter word class assignment reveals that the word form in question is nothing but a verb, since the set of inflectional affixes is identical to that for other verbs (see each sketch of this book). In many Ryukyuan languages this verbalization strategy and the compound nominal formation noted above are the only two major word formation processes for PC words.⁵ That is, in these languages PC words are either nouns or verbs, and there is no need to postulate the word class adjective (see Niinaga, Shigeno, Matayoshi, Hayashi, and Aso, this volume).

Miyako Ryukyuan is quite interesting in the word class assignment of PC words. They typically have a distinct word class adjective, which is morphosyn-

⁵In addition, a PC root may be transformed into an adverb and a state noun. For example, Yuwan (Niinaga, this volume) has a PC adverb such as *həə-ku* (fast-AVLZ) ‘quickly’ and a PC state noun such as *taa-sa* (high-NLZ) ‘height’.

tactically distinct from nominal and verb, and the adjective class in these languages mainly functions as NP modifier (see [Shimoji 2009a](#) for a detailed discussion). The adjective in Miyako Ryukyuan is formed by reduplicating a PC root (or a derived PC stem) with lengthening of the final segment of the reduplicant. Thus in Irabu, from the PC root *imi*- ‘small’ it is possible to form the adjective *imii-imi*. In Ōgami, there are two types of adjectives. One is a reduplicated form as noted above. The other is what Pellard (this volume) calls similitive adjective, where a PC root is affixed by the similitive *-ki*, as in *kssiti-ki* (beautiful-SIMIL) ‘seems to be beautiful’. Ikema lacks the reduplication strategy for PC roots, so this language lacks the adjective class in effect (Hayashi, this volume).

3.2.4 Topic and focus marking

Ryukyuan languages have an interesting system of information structure marking with their rich inventory of topic and focus markers. Topic marking is typically done by *=(j)a* or a similar form. In Southern Ryukyuan, object topic is distinctively marked by *=ba* (Hayashi, Pellard, and Aso, this volume). Or conversely, this distinct marking justifies the postulation of the grammatical relation direct object in these languages (see, for example, [Shimoji 2008a](#)). A focus marker is typically *=du* (or a similar form, like *=tu* in Ōgami) but some Ryukyuan languages have a more elaborate inventory of focus markers. Irabu ([Shimoji 2008a](#)) is one such language, where focus marking morphology is sensitive to sentential type (declarative and interrogative): *=du* for declarative clauses, *=ru* for Yes-No interrogative clauses, and *=ga* for Wh interrogative clauses. Yuwan (Niinaga, this volume) lacks *=ru*, but the distinction between *=du* and *=ga* is observed. In Ikema, the single focus marker *=du* is used for all sentential types (Hayashi, this volume). In Hateruma, focus marking is done by *=du* or *=ru*, and according to Aso, the choice between these two is based not on sentential type but on argument status (see her chapter).

Ryukyuan languages have a typologically remarkable focus construction, which is traditionally called *kakari-musubi* (literally “governing-and-concordance”) in Japanese linguistics. The standard definition of *kakari-musubi* in the literature of Japanese and Ryukyuan linguistics is that *kakari-musubi* is a syntactic construction in which the use of a focus particle triggers the use of specific inflection (i.e. adnominal form or *izen* form), instead of the expected conclusive form (based on [Shinzato and Serafim 2003](#): 189). This construction has been lost in Standard Modern Japanese, but is still active in many Ryukyuan languages. In Yuwan (Niinaga, this volume) the specific inflection in the presence of a focus marker is a special form, rather than an adnominal form. The Yuwan *Kakari musubi* thus presents an interesting divergence from a standard *kakari-musubi* in that the special verb form is not an adnominal form, as Niinaga points out. In Irabu ([Shimoji in press](#)) there is negative concordance (as

opposed to positive concordance where the presence of a focus marker triggers the use of a specific verbal form as is usual in a standard *kakari-musubi* and in the Yuwan *kakari-musubi*), where the presence of a focus marker *blocks* the use of a specific verb form, i.e. a realis form. Thus Ryukyuan languages show synchronic and typological variation with regard to the syntactic organization of *kakari-musubi*.

4 Organization of IRL

IRL is a product of the collaborative research project *Toward an easy access to research outcomes of Ryukyuan studies*. The Project was a two-year project with eight collaborators, and ended with completion of two research outcomes: IRL and the Project website (see below for more detail). Our Project was one of the three projects accepted and granted by Collaborative Research Development Program, Linguistic Dynamics Science Project (LingDy) in Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.⁶

Each grammatical sketch of IRL adopts the same descriptive format, which is designed to address common typological features such as phoneme inventory, syllable structure, the definition of word, affix, and clitic, word classes, coordination-subordination distinction, etc. When this book project started I asked each contributor to choose one of two descriptive formats, Standard set and Concise set. The Standard set consists of nine to eleven sections, whereas the Concise set consists of seven sections. Three contributors chose SS (Ninaga, Pellard, and Aso), and the other three chose CS (Shigeno, Matayoshi, and Hayashi). These sets overlap in important typological topics such as basic clause structure and word class assignment. Of course, some sections have been added or deleted by the author of a language, where such addition/deletion turns out to be necessary. But it was emphasized that all contributors try to follow the descriptive format they chose. This uniformity in section organization in each sketch was intended to allow readers to do a quick and clear comparison of typological features among the six languages.

Each grammatical sketch is followed by a sample text. This text is based on the same visual stimulus, or the Pear story, a silent movie devised by Wallace Chafe to serve as stimulus for eliciting a narrative (Chafe 1980). Each author collected a narrative text in the field by using the Pear story movie, and transcribed the text with interlinear glossing. Thus each text goes with the same story line, but different discourse organization strategies may be found in different languages (this is an interesting future research topic that we did not pursue for the purpose of our Project). The wav sound file of the Pear story of

⁶The following webpage describes the aim of the program and lists links to three accepted projects including ours. <http://lingdy.aacore.jp/en/activity/wakate.html>

each language together with the pdf version of the grammatical sketch can be downloaded for free at the following website which was created by our Project: <http://lingdy.aacore.jp/PearStory/>.

Abbreviations

AVLZ	adverbializer	POSS	possessive
CORE	core argument	PRF	perfect
D.SUB	de-substantive	PROG	progressive
GEN	genitive	PAST	past
MED	medial verb	RLS	realis
NLZ	nominalizer		