

An Introduction to the Japonic Languages

Shimoji, Michinori
Kyushu University

Kato, Kanji
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Carlino, Salvatore
Kyushu University

Tamamoto, Koji
Kin Town Office of Okinawa Prefecture

他

<https://hdl.handle.net/2324/7342430>

出版情報 : Endangered and lesser-studied languages and dialects. 1, 2022-11-03. Brill
バージョン :
権利関係 : Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International



Preface

The present volume is the first in the series *Endangered and Lesser-Studied Languages and Dialects*, a brand-new series of monographs of Brill which focuses on ‘poorly studied languages and dialects around the world’ and ‘especially welcomes contributions on languages of Japan and the rest of the Asia-Pacific region.’ In their special website, the series editors clearly state that ‘(t)he single most important imperative of contemporary linguistics is to document, describe, and analyze endangered languages and other lesser-known languages and dialects.’¹

With this strong emphasis on the description and documentation of endangered languages, I had a clear picture in mind about what the volume should *not* be. I did not want to make our volume a collection of various topics on various languages, where a chapter describes the word prosody of language A while another chapter describes the verbal conjugation of language B, etc. Such an unfocused collection of grammatical topics would leave us with a pile of incomplete work which never qualify as a holistic documentation of the languages being described.

I did not want to make it what I call a ‘collaborative grammar’ either, where different authors describe different topics of a single language X with a view to providing a grammar of X. Unfortunately, such work is not a grammar as a coherent description of a language. First, it crucially lacks cohesiveness in analysis or in terminology. Imagine that phonemization differs in the phonology chapter and the morphology chapter of a grammar of a particular language. Second, it may end up an arbitrary collection of topics which may not represent the whole system of the language, picking up interesting topics (interesting for the authors) and disregarding others.

The question remains. What should the present volume be, then? With much help from the contributors of the volume, my answer has now been embodied as a collection of grammatical sketches of nine Japonic languages (four from Japanese dialects and five from Ryukyuan languages) where each chapter is dedicated to the phonological and grammatical description of a particular language/dialect, covering a wide range of descriptive topics from phonology to discourse with the primary data collected and analyzed by the author. A thirty-page grammatical sketch would not be sufficient for being called a detailed grammar or for being regarded as the language’s substantial

¹ <https://brill.com/view/serial/ELSL>.

documentation, but the authors will keep on further refining and ‘growing’ their grammatical sketches to make them detailed grammars in the future. Or, it may be an interested reader who will do this job, e.g. as his/her PhD project. At any rate, our volume will serve as a good introduction to the language described in each chapter.

As a final note, I must confess that I had not ever thought of publishing this volume until the end of July, 2021 (Yes, six month before the final submission to Brill), when NINJAL, a collaborative institution of the Brill series, contacted me asking if I was interested in publishing a book about Ryukyuan languages and Japanese dialects. It was a great opportunity for me, but taking the offer of publishing a book within half a year was clearly a gamble. Undoubtedly, the project was made possible by the excellent contributors whom I asked to join me and who took the bet with me. Most of the contributors are post-doc researchers and postgraduate students, but they are mostly the only specialists of their subject languages, strongly determined to describe and document their subject languages. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to these people, who were always quick and responsive in every step for final submission, were generous in sparing their time on the project, and were crazy enough to enjoy the jeopardy like myself.

Mr. Kanji Kato wrote a sketch grammar of Tokunoshima, a Northern Ryukyuan language. He was formerly my student and is now a PhD student at TUFS. He helped me edit the volume with his excellent skill of handling LaTeX and Python. Ms. Aoi Matsuoka, Ms. Yuko Urabe and Ms. Danning Wang are currently my PhD students and wrote grammatical sketches of Yanagawa (Kyūshū Japanese), Shiraho (Yaeyama, Southern Ryukyuan) and Aragusuku (Miyako, Southern Ryukyuan) respectively. Mr. Naoyuki Hirokawa is also my student and works on the Shiiba dialect of Miyazaki Prefecture, Japan. He and I co-authored a grammatical sketch of Shiiba (Kyūshū Japanese). Dr. Salvatore Carlino, who completed his PhD at Hitotsubashi University and is now a PD researcher at my lab, wrote a grammatical sketch of Iheya (Okinawan, Northern Ryukyuan). Dr. Natsuko Nakagawa got her PhD at Kyoto University and is assistant professor at NINJAL. She wrote a grammatical sketch of Nambu (Eastern Japanese). Dr. Tatsuya Hirako is an associate professor at Nanzan University. He got his PhD at Kyoto University and is a specialist of historical phonology. He wrote a grammatical sketch of Izumo (Western Japanese). Mr. Koji Tamamoto, who got his MA at Kyoto University and works at Kin Town Office of Okinawa Prefecture, Japan, wrote a grammatical sketch of Kin (Okinawan, Northern Ryukyuan).

Dr. Wayne Lawrence kindly checked both the content and wordings (and English) of each chapter and provided us with his invaluable feedback, which was so quick and precise. Dr. Shoichi Iwasaki read a draft of my introduction

chapter and gave me helpful and encouraging advice. Dr. Yuto Niinaga, Dr. Christopher Davis, Dr. Aleksandra Yarosz, Dr. Izumi Konishi, Dr. Nana Tohyama, Dr. Gijs van der Lubbe, Dr. Kan Sasaki were kind enough to spare time for reviewing the chapters of our volume and giving detailed comments to them.

The current volume is partly supported by JSPS KAKENHI (17K13465, 18J21798, 19H01255, 19H01261, 19J20370, 19J20288, 20K20704, 21H00352, 21K18376, 21H04351). Chapters 2 and 7 are funded and peer-reviewed by NINJAL Collaborative Research Project ‘Endangered Languages and Dialects in Japan’. Chapter 3 is supported in part by the NINJAL Collaborative Research Project ‘Endangered Languages and Dialects in Japan’ and research grant 17H02332. Chapter 6 is supported in part by NINJAL Collaborative Research Project ‘Endangered Languages and Dialects in Japan.’ Chapter 8 is supported in part by Nanzan University Pache Research Subsidy 1-A-2 for the 2021 academic year. Chapter 9 is supported in part by JST SPRING (JPMJSP2136). Each chapter of the present volume contains two or more maps in the introductory section. The maps in Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10 were drawn with Python (by courtesy of Kanji Kato), and the source information for drawing maps was collected from Global map: Japan (Geographical Information Authority of Japan) and National land information (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism).

Michinori Shimoji

February, 2022