

## **Proposing a unified writing system for a non-standardised minority language – The example of Hachijō**

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Hachijō is a minority language of Japan, now primarily spoken on two islands of the Izu archipelago, roughly 300 km south of the Tōkyō Bay. Virtually all of its native speakers being elderly, it is considered to be endangered, and was included in UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in danger* in 2010.

Not unlike Ryukyuan languages, Hachijō was for a long time not considered to be an independent language, but rather a dialect of Japanese, even though mutual intelligibility between Hachijō and the neighbouring Japanese varieties is probably very limited (IANNUCCI, 2019: 103-105). While there has recently been some effort in Japan to recognize Hachijō as a minority language, very few concrete actions have yet been taken to enforce its protection. Notably, Hachijō has never been standardised, and no writing system has ever been developed to encourage its daily use.

This fact is very unfortunate, as the lack of a unified spelling prevents its use in education and media, and might impair the availability of written materials for both linguists and native speakers.

Moreover, while Hachijō was traditionally an oral language, it does not mean at all that it has no literature. As a matter of fact, it does, in the contrary, have very rich oral traditions, which include folk tales, songs, theatre plays, poems, prayers, proverbs, riddles, etc. But, while those materials have partly been collected and transcribed, no unified writing system was ever created for them, causing frequent ambiguities and preventing to create a comprehensive corpus of the language.

Thus, creating a unified writing system for Hachijō could, in my opinion, prove useful for both linguists and native speakers.

Therefore, this presentation will aim at examining how we can propose a unified writing system through the example of Hachijō, following the model given by Aleksandra JAROSZ (2014) about Miyakoan.

In order to so, we will:

- list the qualities we expect from a writing system, and observe Hachijō's specificities within this frame (regarding phonology, local variations, lemmatisation, etc.)
- study and compare the various strategies used so far to write Hachijō
- propose our solution of a united writing system for Hachijō

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