PHONETIC FUSIONS IN THE LANGUAGE OF OKINAWA AND A COMPARISON WITH MAINLAND JAPANESE

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The Ryukyus (generally called *Ruuchuu* in the local dialects) with the central island of Okinawa (*Uchinaa*) are inhabited by people whose tongue is a very curious idiom which some linguists regard as an extreme branch of southern Japanese dialects. It seems, however, more correct to specify it as a separate language and the only language relative to Japanese. A survey of its fusional features will serve to support this claim, as they are of a much more radical nature and interfere with the fundamental character of the language much more than is the case with mainland Japanese.

Between Kyushu and Taiwan, a chain of tiny islands forms an archipelago called Ryukyu in Japanese. Politically, they are the prefecture of Okinawa (Okinawa-ken) as a part of the Japanese state. The name of the prefecture is drawn from the name of the main island, which is the largest and lies approximately in the centre of the archipelago – the island of Okinawa.

Until the beginning of the 17th century, the Ryukyus had had a full independence, enjoying some three centuries of a historical boom connected with sea trade and the centralization of the archipelago under the royal rule based in Shuri on the island of Okinawa. The language there spoken bore a remote kinship to the Japanese spoken in the islands further to the north of the kingdom. The locals called Japan "Yamatu", which is the continuation of its ancient name in the slightly changed local phonetics. In their language, the archipelago is called *Ruuchuu* or *Duuchuu*, the main island is *Uchinaa*, and the name of the old royal capital sounds *Shui*.

From the beginning of the 17th century, the process of a gradual incorporation into the Japanese state started, first as subjugation to the South Kyushu domain of Satsuma as a result of a war, and in the Meiji era, the Ryukyus were one of the first objects of the Japanese policy of territorial expansion, along with the northern island of Hokkaido, which both became an integral part of Japan. The former Ruuchuuan (Ryukyuan) king was interned in Tokyo (the same model was used several decades later in the case of the annexation of Korea). With the central

administration and education system, also came the use of the Japanese language, especially after the codification of the Tokyo dialect as the national standard language (hyoujungo), and a gradual, but radical, Japanization caused that the local vernacular found itself next to extinction. The last two decades have witnessed a rise of awareness of the local characteristics even in Japan, hand in hand with which also go endeavours to produce as complete as possible a record of the dying out idioms both of Hokkaido (Ainu) and of the Ryukyu, which, in the case of the latter, might still have a chance to result in a revival, as speakers of the language still form a substantial part of the adult generation there, unlike in the case of the speakers of Ainu up in Hokkaido.

Let it be pointed out that there is no SINGLE Ryukyuan (or Ruuchuuan). The archipelago is characterized by chain affinity, with closer linguistic similarities between neighbouring islands and with the difference growing, the larger the gap. The dialect that is known best is the literary language of the former royal capital of Shuri (*Shui*), belonging to the dialects of the southern part of the island of Okinawa and called *Uchinaa-guchi* (the Okinawa speech or Uchinaan). And this will also be the object of this study.

The study is based on materials published in Japanese both in Okinawa and in mainland Japan (see Literature), some of which are relatively recent, which is a fact that might make up for the lack of a field work, as I have not yet had the opportunity to visit Okinawa in person. Similarly to some of the authors (like Yushia Machigani[1]), I tend to regard the language of Okinawa as a separate language, a fact which, as will be shown, is strongly supported by the results of the research presented here. That is also the reason why I introduce a naming system based on the original local pronunciation (Ruuchuu, Uchinaa), leaving the traditional, Japanese-based names just as explanatory notes.

In the sphere of phonetic fusions, Uchinaan represents a system amazingly different from that found in Japanese (and presented in a foregoing study of mine: Phonetic Fusions in Japanese. Asian and African Studies vol. 13, 2004/1), thus a concise survey of the main phonetic distinctions migh be useful, though a full description would surpass the purpose of this study.

SOME PHONETIC SPECIFICS

The most prominent phonological differences between Uchinaan and Japanese are:
– first, it is the vocalic system, in which a single relaxed Uchinaan [ɪ] (or a strongly closed [e]) corresponds to both [i] and [e] in Japanese, the same holding for a relaxed [u] (or a strongly closed [o]), which corresponds to both the Japanese

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[1] Yushia calls mainland Japanese "Yamato-go (Yamatu-guchi)" or "Chuuou-Nihongo" (Central Japanese) and defines the similarity between Uchinaan and Japanese as follows: *Uchinnaa-guchi to Yamato-go no henka no sa wa oomune, Eigo to Doitsugo no sa ijou de aru to omowareru.* (It would seem that the range of difference between Uchinaan and "Yamatoan" is, in general, larger than that between English and German.) (Yushia, p. 4)

[u] and [o]. Where [e:] and [o:] occur in Uchinaan, it is the result of later phonetic changes like monophthongization (Uchinaan shikee for Japanese "sekai"), and sometimes cross-morpheme fusions, which is relevant for the matter of this study (wakakoo "wakaku wa").

- second, the consonantal system embraces the transition of palatalized [k'], [g'] into the original [ć], [dź]. The affricatization occurs not only before the original i, but also before the original u (kachuN for Japanese "kaku") and a palatalization before –u also occurs in t ("ts"): uchuN = "utsu". However, these latter modifications are really fusions, as explained below under 2.a.
- the final nasal syllabic –N corresponds, besides its Japanese counterpart, also to various shortenings from syllables starting in a nasal consonant (matchi-N = "matte-mo", iN = dog, Jap. "inu").
- the presence of the glottal stop in front of liquids is important as contrastive with its absence. It occurs especially before liquids arisen from high vowels (?wiijuN = "oyogu").

1. SYNTACTICAL FUSIONS

1.a . Questions in –i

Emphasized questions like:
    iaa du ichuru-i? ("kimi koso iku ka?")
    are often pronounced with the "-ru-i" fused into [ri:].

Moreover, the question form of past -taN is -tii:
    tutaN (= took, "totta") – tutii?
    kachaN (= wrote, "katta") – kachii?

1.b. The imperative construction consisting of the imperative basis (meireikei) + the sentence-final particle YOO fuses into a long ee: mati-yoo > matee (= Japanese "mate yo!")

1.c. The nominalizers shi, yaa

The particle shi, similar in function to the Japanese koto or mono, is attached to the preceding verb in a way which, in the synchronical perspective, looks like fusion: yudooshi (= "yonde iru koto/mono), not *yudooru shi (see also 2.a., the shortened rentaikei).

The nominalizer yaa (= "mono"): sagiyaa = "sageru mono", mutchaa = "motsu mono".

The following also probably belong here: churasaa ("utsukushii mono", from churasaN = beautiful "utsukushii"), gunaa (= "chiisai mono"), nandooruu (= "namerakana mono"), shiruu (= "shiroi mono"), kuruu (= "kuroi mono"), nichooruu / nichooraa (= "nite iru mono").

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2. MORPHOLOGICAL FUSIONS

2.a. VERBAL BASES

The present-day Uchinaan verb appears to be the result of radical fusional processes. The form corresponding to the plainest –U form of the Japanese verb is preserved only in the negative imperative form with the particle na: shinu na, kuru na, iku na. However, these are so exceptional and apparently out of the system that they may well be a borrowing from Japanese.

This is not a place to give a full survey of the Uchinaan verbal system, which rivals its Japanese counterpart both in the number of verb classes and the number of the bases. Moreover, scholars differ in their opinions on it and indeed in the naming of the bases and research is continuing. I shall confine myself to the points most relevant to the purpose of this study.

The bases common with Japanese can be called SINGLE BASES:

Mizenkei:	ika, mata, tura	(= "ika, mata, tora")
Ren'youkei:	ichi, machi, tui	(= "iki, machi, tori")
Negative imperative:	iku, matsu, turu	(= "iku, matsu, toru")
Izenkei + meireikei:	iki, mati, turi	(= "ike, mate, tore")

The rest of the bases are a result of the fusion, apparently of the ren'youkei with the verb uN corresponding to the Japanese "iru / oru". They can be called FUSED BASES:

Shuushikei:	ichuN, machuN, tuyuN
Rentaikei:	ichuru, machuru, tuyuru
Shortened rentaikei (or kihonkei):	ichu, machu, tuyu

They all correspond to the Japanese forms iku, matsu, toru, but in different syntactical functions. Shuushikei is the sentence-final form, rentaikei the attributive form, and shortened rentaikei serves for affixing particles like ga (WH question), mi (Y/N question), shiga (but), sa ("yo"): Taa machu ga? = "Dare wo matsu ka?"

The Uchinaan verb seems to have brought to perfection a process started somewhere in proto-Japanese, which is the differentiation of the predicative (shuushikei) and attributive (rentaikei) forms of verbs, or, indeed, retained this distinction and enlarged it onto the whole system of verbs. Modern Japanese lacks this distinction completely (the predicative "hito ga koeru" = people go over, and the attributive "koeru hito" = people who go over, or people over whom /something/ goes) and in classical Japanese only vocalic verbs and the verb ARI with its derrivatives, were distinguished for the two functions (the predicative "koyu, ari" and the attributive "koyuru, aru"). Uchinaan has this distinction for all its verbs, with the non-past sentence-final predicate form in –uN, the attributive in –uru. The verb aN (= be, Japanese "aru"), short for ayuN, has the attributive "aru".

The fusional character of these bases accounts for the palatalization of the root final consonant (ichuru < ichi + uru, machuru < machi + uru, as contrasted to the non-palatalized izenkei forms kaki, mati). This etymology is also reflected in the fact that these forms combine the meaning both of the Japanese "matsu" and "matte iru": machuru can mean not only "matsu" (= waits) but also "matte iru" (= is waiting), analogical to the classical Japanese form "mati-wiru" (which could thus be its direct etymological counterpart).

The shortened rentaikei can be, then, taken as a reflexion of the old Japanese "RU-less" forms, or as a fusion of the RU with the following particle, which, however, seems a rather far-fetched solution. Nuu soo ga? = Nani wo site iru ka? (the usual for "site iru" being sooru) (see also l.c.).

Moreover, there are weak forms, which, by means of regular derivation from the fused bases, are equivalent to the original single bases:

Weak mizenkei:	ichura, machura, tuyura
Weak ren'youkei:	ichui, machui, tuyui
Weak izenkei + meireikei:	ichuri, machuri, tuyuri

2.b. The topical particle –YA fuses with the preceding sound in the following way:

a + ya > aa
i + ya > ee
u + ya > oo
N + ya > noo (exception: waN "ware"> waNnee, because waN has developed from waNni)
   Thus: kuri ("kore") – kuree ("kore wa"), kutu ("koto") > kutoo ("koto wa")
   However, long vowels do not fuse: suu ya = "chichi wa, ojisan wa", Uchinaa ya = "Okinawa wa".
   This particle also forms one of the conditionals, used after the izenkei basis: mati + ya > matee ("mateba, matsu nara, matsu node"). It also forms a part of the negative construction in adjectives after the adverbial form in –ku: wakaku + ya + neeN > wakakoo neeN ("wakaku (wa) nai").

2.c. The gerund form in –TI

In the formation of the gerund, the fusion of the original ren'yookei with the suffix TI represents a far more complex system than its Japanese counterpart. The following chart gives the verb, its Japanese counterpart, then the ren'yookei form and the fused gerund form:

?ichuN = iku	?ichi	?iji
nachuN = naku	nachi	nachi
?wiijuN = oyogu	?wiiji	?wiiji

machuN = matsu	machi	matchi
shinuN = shinu	shini	shiji
yubuN = yobu	yubi	yudi
yumuN = yomu	yumi	yudi
aN = aru	ai	ati
tuyuN = toru	tui	tuti
shijuN = sugiru	shijii	shijiti
ukyuN = ukeru	ukii	ukiti
chuuN = kuru	chii	chi
suN = suru	shii	shi
akasaN = akai	akasai	akasati

The forms derived from the gerund stem by fusion of the final –i with the following auxiliary verb:

-aN = past: matchaN ("matta")
-ooN = "te iru": matchooN ("matte iru")
-eeN = perfect: matcheeN ("matta n da")
-oochuN = "te oku": matchoochuN ("matte oku")

2.d. The polite auxiliary verb –abiiN

The Uchinaan counterpart to the Japanese polite "–masu" form is the auxiliary verb –(y)abiiN attached to the infinitive (ren'yookei) basis. As there is a junction of two vowels (the –i of the basis and the a- of the auxiliary), cases of fusion occur:

machuN ("matsu" = waits) – ren'yookei: machi + abiiN > machabiiN
(chi + a > cha)
tuyuN ("toru" = takes) – ren'yookei: tu(y)i + abiiN > tuyabiiN or tuibiiN
(yi + a > ya/i!)
aN ("aru" = is) – ren'yookei: ai + abiiN > ayabiiN or aibiiN
suN ("suru" = does) – ren'yookei: shii + abiiN > syabiiN, sabiiN
(the latter form is the more general nowadays)

2.e. Provisional forms

Forms like -ABIREE (present condition) and -ABIRAA (past condition) reflect the Old Japanese difference between –aba and –eba and the long final vowel is a fusion of the basal vowel with the following suffix related to the topic particle.

2.f. The honorific -miseeN

This form, attached to the ren'yookei, expresses the esteem in the verb referring to the activity of an esteemed person, thus yumi-miseeN corresponds to the Japanese "o-yomi ni naru" or "yomareru". Its frequent fused version is yumiNseeN.

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2.g. The shuushikei forms have fused alternatives:

tuyuN ("toru") > tuiN
kwiyuN ("kureru") > kwiiN

2.h. Forms of adjectives

The main difference between the Japanese and Uchinaan adjective is that the former is historically based on the adverbial –ku form (wakaku = youthfully), whereas the structure of the latter has the –sa form for its basis, known in Japanese as the substantive (wakasa = youthfulness). The emotional adjectives, known in Japanese as ending in –shii (hoshii = is desirable, I want), have a fused substantive form in –sha (< -shisa): fusha = desirability. However, this sha is often pronounced [sa] as well, thus the difference between the two groups has been becoming blurred in recent times.

Most of the Uchinaan adjectives derive their forms from the fusion of the substantive form and the verb aN (= be):

wakasaN (= "wakai", is young) < wakasa + aN
fushaN (= "hoshii", is desirable, I want) < fusha + aN

There are also other forms: wakasaru = young (attributive), wakasati = being young ("wakakute" in Japanese).

The original division of the two parts is still possible, especially in poetry for the sake of the syllabic rythm: wakasa-ati (normal wakasati) < wakasa arite = being young, in Japanese "wakakute".

It is worth mentioning that in the dialect of the Miyako island, formation from –ku exists, identical with the mainland Japanese pattern: bakakary = is young, analogical to the classical Japanese "wakakari" (<wakaku + ari).

Attributive –i form can be found in some adjectives, for example ii (= "ii", is good). These are probably borrowings from mainland Japanese, cf. also yuu (= "yoku", Western Japanese "yoo") and the attributive yukaru (= "yokaru, yoki, yoi", good).

The shortened rentaikei can be found in forms like:

akasa-ga = "akai ka"
akasa-mi = "akai ka"
akasa-kutu = "akai node"
akasa-shiga = "akai ga"

3. LEXICAL FUSIONS

3.a. uttii = the day before yesterday, "ototoi"

3.b. Wan = "ware".

The first person pronoun represents several fused forms. The original form of waa, waN (= I, probably akin to Japanese forms "ware, wagami") is wanni, still to

be seen in some contexts: wanni-N = me too, wanni-Nkai = to me, the fused topic form wannee.

On the other hand, the form taking the particle –ga is waa: waa-ga

The plural form wattaa might be a fusion from the original washita which is still used in poetry, or can be an independent formation from waa.

3.c. Mausu > maasu = salt

3.d. the plural –taa

    *wami ("ware") > wattaa
    naa ("anata") > nattaa
    ?iaa ("kimi") > ittaa
    kuri ("kore") > kuttaa

3.e. The copula

The Uchinaan copula yaN is probably a fusion similar to the western Japanese ya. It can be regarded a result either of –ni aru or nite aru > de aru. The similarity with the topic particle –ya seems rather a coincidence.

Nevertheless, the Uchinaan copula differs from its Japanese counterpart in that its connection with the preceding word is not so strong and can be separated from it easily. This is best seen in the emphasized utterances, which have a direct counterpart in classical Japanese (extinct in modern Japanese). In classical Japanese, the emphasizer (namu, zo) was inserted into the copula:

Sakura ni ari, sakura nari = It is a sakura.

Emphasized: Sakura ni ZO aru.

(The verb undergoes the kakarimusubi process, taking the rentaikei form, ari changing into aru.)

The same is possible in Uchinaan, with the difference that the emphasizer du is not inserted into the copula, but separates the preceding word from it:

Nifee yaibiiN = Thank you

Emphasized: *nifee DU yaibiru

This is the original form, which, however, undergoes a further fusional process:

du yaibiru > deibiru > deebiru

A SUMMARY OF THE FUSIONS
IN THE JAPANO-UCHINAAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

Summing up all the cases of phonetic fusions in Uchinaan and Japanese, taking into account also the various dialects and old Japanese (under study in the previous article), the result shows that the scope of phonetic variations of the fusions is extremely large and includes a whole range of possibilities of phonetic combinations.

Fusions are phonetic changes involving a LOSS of some of the elements. Of course, we are here only concerned with those cases of phonetic fusions, which occur where two morphemes meet. The classification of loss cases can basically undergo a quadruple division: a vocalic loss, a consonantal loss, a syllabic loss and a glide loss. Vocalic harmony and gemmination also occur, and of course there are various complex cases of combinations of these.

VOCALIC LOSS occurs at the *end of the word* (no > N, yukamu > yukaN), in an *interconsonantic position* and between the members of a *hiatus*.

In an *interconsonantic position*, there can be a *simple dropping* of a vowel (otofito > otowito > otowto = otouto, tatite > tatte) or a combination with a *change or loss of either of the flanking consonants* (arite > atte, yumi miseeN > yumiNseeN, sinite > shinde, fimukasi > fimkasi > higashi, yobite > yonde. Loss: soo des ne > soosne, fushisa > fusha).

Hiatuses are original or secondary – results of a loss of an intervocalic consonant (takaki > takai). Those of the the the latter that occurred a long time ago, could undergo changes identical to those occurring in the original ones (takaku > takau > [takoo]).

Vocalic losses in hiatuses include cases in which *two identical vowels* merge into one (wakasa aN > wakasaN), or, if the two vowels are *different*, the resulting fused vowel can have the quality of the *first* one (de arimasu > desu, tuyi abiiN > tuibiiN), the *second* one (takaku ari > takakari, machi abiiN > machabiiN), or a *different one from either* of the original members of the hiatus (to ifu > tefu, matchi aN > matcheeN).

CONSONANTAL LOSSES and changes include cases already mentioned above like the *loss* of an intervocalic consonant (takaki > takai), *change* of either of the consonants flanking a lost vowel (sinite > shinde), and *voicing* of an intervocalic consonant (are to mo > aredomo, tuki-komori > *tukkomori > tugomori).

SYLLABIC LOSSES can occur at the *end* of the word (naru > na, yokaru > yoka) or *inside* (Satoko-chan > Satchan) and the result can include a more *complex* combination of changes (te shimau > tchau, mimu > miN > *miuN = miyuN > miyoo, saburafu > *saNburawu > *sauNrau > sooroo).

GLIDE LOSS can be seen in iotacized diphthongs, the real loss being on various stages of the process according to the phonetic quality of the previous consonant. A complete loss of the –y-glide exists in S, Z, T, D (to ifu > tefu > tewu > tyeu > choo, also its modern counterpart to iu > tiu > tyuu > chuu), a partial loss is heard in N, H, K, G (*ko fi > kefu > kewu > *kyeu > kyou > [k'o:]), while after P, B, M, R, the –y-glide is still clearly preserved.

VOCALIC HARMONY as a relic of the phonetic characteristic existing in proto-Japanese can be guessed in old-Japanese cases like *mafe-tu kimi > mautigimi, *ko fi > *kefi (> kefu >> kyoo), and woti-tu fi > wototufi, from which directly derives the Kansai "ototsui", whereas the Eastern "ototoi" signals an interstage *wototowi, testifying to there having been one more phase of vocalic harmony on the way.

GEMMINATION is a regular feature especially in the Sino-Japanese compounds where, as mentioned above, it often represents a pronunciation much closer

to the original period Chinese pronunciation than do the separate on'yomi of the characters. Furthermore, thanks to the preservation of the proto-Japanese gemminated PP as opposed to the plain P that became the present-day H, we can be aware of proto-Japanese gemminations that with other consonants are more difficult to trace back, as gemmination was, in general, not recorded in the classical script:

proto-Japanese *ya pari > yaPari/yaPPari > yaHari / yaPPari

proto-Japanese *nit pon > niPon/niPPon > niHon / niPPon

proto-Japanese *a pare > aPare/aPPare > aFare / aPPare > aWare / aPPare

(Nevertheless, none of these cases seem to have much to do with phonetic fusion as treated in this study, since they are mainly connected with emphasis and stylistic expressivity.)

V. CONCLUSION

Phonetic fusion is an integral part of the basic setup of the languages of the Japanese family, namely Japanese and Uchinaan (Uchinaaguchi, Okinawan). Though being more typical for languages of the inflective type, it has been there throughout the known history of these two agglutinative languages. Comparison between them indicates divergent tendencies: one to *get rid* of the fusion in Japanese, and one to *use it abundantly* in Uchinaan. The freedom in utilizing this means has made the dialect of Okinawa a language very different from Japanese. Comparison of modern Japanese with Uchinaan and with classical Japanese shows clearly a reduction in frequency of fusions in modern Japanese, and their very existence in it seems to be more of a relic, heritage and continuation of the more ancient tendencies, rather than a new phenomenon.

As to the phonetic quality of fusion, it reminds one of similar phonetical phenomena known in other languages in cases where words or morphemes meet – sandhi in Sanskrit, liaison in French, initial mutations in Celtic languages.

Just like in Sanskrit there is internal and external sandhi, fusions can also be divided into internal and external – depending on whether they occur within a word or between words. In many cases, however, the difference between separate words and members of one lexical unit is dubious, so this distinction does not seem to be very useful and is of a rather formal character.

Of course, there are also other differences between Japanese fusions and Sanskrit sandhi. Sankrit sandhi tends to follow strict rules according to which the sounds coalesce into the resulting sound, while our fusion shows, more often than not, numerous irregularities, even varieties and alternatives for the same case. For example, in Sanskrit A + U would always form a sandhi of long O, while its classical Japanese counterpart can have several outcomes: AU > U (afUmi) but also AU > A (tofotAfumi).

Little can be said of any kind of a regularity of the resulting sound in the fusion in Japanese; nevertheless, two tendencies have been discovered:

1. the oucome can *tend towards that member of the original combination which is of a greater – grammatical or lexical – value*, (while for the Sanskrit sandhi

they are of an equal, purely phonetic, value). For example, in the cases of fusion of the topic particle WA, the resulting vowel tends to be A in most cases, as significant of the original particle (soto wa > sotaa, boku wa > bokaa).

2. in some cases again, a tendency towards a front resulting vowel is traceable if one of the original vowels is I, and that not only in the times where vocalic harmony still might have worked (to ifu > tefu, ki ari > keri, mi ari > meri, utusi omi > utusemi), but also nowadays (nai > nee, sugoi > sugee).

To a certain extent, the character of how the neighbouring vowels in compounds were treated in old Japanese ressembles that known in classical Greek, rather than Sanskrit internal sandhi. Take for example words like ἱππαγωγός (hipp'-agOOgos), μονόφθαλμος (mon'-ophthalmos), φίλιππος (phil'-(h)ippos), with extreme cases of fusion like φιλλέλλην (phillellEEn) = who loves the Greeks (from phil' + hellEEN). These drop the stem vowel of the former member, unlike Sanskrit in which both are preserved, producing a sandhi with the following vowel: *loka-uttara- > lokottara-.

The mutations in Celtic languages and liaison in French are probably connected historically, as French arose as a Romance language from Latin adopted by Celtic speakers who apparently continued their pronunciation habits even when speaking the new language. Compared with the fusions, affinity can be observed, in that *the very presence of a phonetic modification can express a grammatical meaning*: in Uchinaan, the change of the final i into EE expresses the topic, just like in Gaelic the "aspiration" (spirantization would be a more exact phonetical term) of the inititial consonant expresses the vocative case: cara = friend, chara = oh friend!, being originally an abbreviation from "a chara".

(In Celtic, however, this is not the domain of initial mutations only - for example the change of the final consonant from non-palatal into palatal can express genitive or plural (bord = a table, boird = of a table, tables. And, of course, cases like this are by no means limited to Celtic.).

The French liaison differs from these in that it basically *preserves the otherwise lost* markers of grammatical meanings.

Furthermore, synizesis, one of the aspects of external fusion, is comparable to a very similar phonetic process known in Latin and Italian where it has been widely used both in poetry and in colloquial speech, reducing the number of the syllables:
Japanese: yondE Ikanai > [yondekanai]
Italian: che mena drittO Altrui per ogne calle [dritt(w)altrui] (Dante, Inferno, I/6.).

One of the reasons why modern Japanese kyootsuugo tends to be somewhat less fusional could lie in the fact that it is based on the Tokyo dialect, with its roots in the former "Azuma" (Eastern) dialects that seem to have been more strictly syllable-based than the speech of the imperial capital in the West, which, on the other hand, tended towards mellow and refined diction for which fusions were the ideal means at hand, or rather, a logical outcome thereof. In a somewhat daring generalization this could be ascribed to the harshness of the speech of the samurai as contrasted to the smoothness of the speech of the courtier.

In comparison with Japanese, Uchinaan appears a sort of a *"paradise of fusions"* where they led to a completely new system of verbal bases, the weak bases unknown in Japanese. On the other hand, there are also the *"seeming fusions"* which may appear as fusions but are most probably mere relics of a more ancient period before the seemingly missing particle had ever been introduced (like the shortened rentaikei without the –ru element in it). Nevertheless, the richness of fusion in Uchinaan is its very typical feature and it has changed the character of the language to such an extent that it is distinctly different from Japanese and adds to those arguments, which support the claim of the language of Uchinaa/Okinawa to be a separate language.

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