

# Stress in Ambai, and how it became that way

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Ambai is an Austronesian language of eastern Yapen island, in North-west New Guinea, quite closely related to the other Austronesian languages of Yapen island barring Wabo (see Anceaux 1961, Silzer 1980 for discussion of the relationships). It is spoken by approximately 10,000 first-language speakers, divided into a number of mutually intelligible dialects; here we focus on the easternmost dialect, spoken in Warironi village (Randowaya II). In this talk we present the one of the more interesting phonological issues in Ambai, stress. While most words show regular trochaic stress, as in (1). A large number of words, all involving a final *-i*, *-y* or *-ay*, which sometimes show alternation between *-i* and *-ay*, appear with antepenultimate stress, (2). These can be explained diachronically by appealing to historically epenthetic final vowels which have not all stabilised into the prosodic system. There are addition patterns commonly found with 5- or 6-syllable words, involving apparently extrametrical internal syllables, and in one word is a final stress pattern found, the realisation of an underlying final stress pattern that is implicit in the differential behaviour of verbs under suffixation, and which is preserved in the more conservative languages of western Yapen island, such as Ansus.

## Most common stress pattern

- (1) a. 2-syllabic 'σ σ  
 b. 3-syllabic σ 'σ σ  
 c. 4-syllabic ,σ σ 'σ σ  
 c. 5-syllabic σ ,σ σ 'σ σ  
 d. 6-syllabic ,σ σ ,σ σ 'σ σ

## Jod-final stress pattern

- (2) a. 2-syllabic 'σ σ  
 b. 3-syllabic 'σ σ σ  
 c. 4-syllabic ,σ σ 'σ σ  
 c. 5-syllabic ,σ σ 'σ σ σ  
 d. 6-syllabic σ ,σ σ 'σ σ σ

## Common stress pattern in long words

- (3) a. 5-syllabic ,σ σ σ 'σ σ  
 d. 6-syllabic σ ,σ σ σ 'σ σ

## (Vanishingly) rare stress pattern

- (4) a. 4-syllabic ,σ σ σ 'σ