



Ryukyuan Language Crisis

Mark Anderson

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Long denigrated as dialects of Japanese, the Ryukyuan languages are today recognized as languages in their own right. However, speakers of Ryukyuan languages have suffered from stigmatization, oppressive language policies and domination from outside the Ryukyu Archipelago. As a result, the Ryukyuan languages are now severely endangered. This volume depicts, roughly in chronological order, aspects which have led to the language crisis in the Ryukyus today. Taking account of these factors is important because endangered languages can only be maintained and revitalized on the basis of a comprehensive understanding of why these languages became endangered in the first place. The chapters of this book have been written by leading experts in Ryukyuan sociolinguistics and the scope encompasses the entire field. It sheds light on the dark side of language modernization, on a misplaced obsession with monolingualism, and on Japan's difficulties in surmounting its invented self-image.

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