

Okinawa: Domination and Response at Japan's Periphery

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Prospects for the Survival of the Ryukyuan Language: A Language-Planning Perspective¹

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Preliminaries

My initial interest in the Ryukyus was purely linguistic, stemming from a desire to bring the most important data into the best possible characterization of proto-Japano-Ryukyuan. Inevitably I found myself in sympathy with a language and culture that were being pushed to the brink of extinction by Japanese language and culture; wondering at the ease with which was glossed over -- if known at all -- the forced assimilation of a people into the Japanese polity who had so recently known the taste of linguistic and political independence.

Most of the world's languages are in danger of extinction because of the spread of large nation-states and the concomitant spread of those states' standard languages, so it should be no surprise to Ryukyuanists and Ryukyuanists that the Ryukyus are in the process of suffering the same sort of fate as myriad other places throughout the world. However, it certainly won't hurt, and it may well help, for Ryukyuanists and friends of the Ryukyus to know the big picture, and not think that somehow the Ryukyus are unique in their struggle or in their possible fate.

What does the future hold in store for Ryukyuan language and culture? I start from an assumption that Ryukyuan in some form is worth saving, and a sad but certain understanding that *little* of the

diversity of modern-day Ryukyuan languages and dialects will be saved under the best of circumstances. Furthermore, given current trends, we may assume that *all* varieties of Ryukyuan will perish.

Can the Ryukyuan culture survive their loss? I would like to consider alternative models from outside Japan in order better to understand the question. Is there any way to buck the linguistic trend, either within the Japanese state, or through political independence? I will briefly consider some linguistic options, given the posed alternatives of remaining politically Japanese or of becoming an independent state.

I should add that it is not my business to say in any sort of detail what sort of a political or social blueprint will effect the salvation of the Ryukyuan language or culture -- it is simply not something that I know very much about. What I and other linguists can contribute is background on how other languages have fared in similar straits, information on how language planning is carried out, and suggestions on how to proceed given certain perceived political eventualities.²

Identity and ethnicity

In recognizing ethnic identity, *difference* rather than some clearly definable characteristic is the most important element.³ Thus it is *not* a paramount necessity that language itself be the defining difference. Depending on the ethnic group it might be religion or something else. This should mean that losing its original language is not the end of the road for a culture (Edwards 1985:98). Again, to reiterate, *difference*, however determined, must be there.

Having said all this, I can nevertheless state that language is very frequently *perceived* as being a central differentiator, and indeed often functions as one (Edwards 1985:1-22).

What is the necessary relationship, if any, between polity and language?

The Ryukyus exist within a much larger, non-Ryukyuan state, the standard language of which is not Ryukyuan; and Ryukyuan is actually composed of approximately four languages, divided into innumerable dialects. There surely are no Ryukyuan ignorant of the Japanese language. We may wish to compare the similar but not identical case of Irish ethnicity vis-à-vis Britain, where the Irish are clearly different both culturally and politically (though their political difference is recently won), but where only a few thousand Irish citizens speak Irish natively, and all others natively use Irish varieties of English (Edwards 1985:49-65).

What are the functions of language?

It is said that language is the primary mode of communication between human beings, and surely it is a primary mode of thinking as well. Its function as a mode of communication is *helped* by its being shared by large numbers of people. While communication is helped, the widespread use of a language is at odds with *another* aspect of language, namely its frequent use as a primary carrier of ethnic identity (Edwards 1985:16); in this function, one might say that its primary function may be (though does not have to be) to *hinder* communication beyond the boundaries of the ethnic group.

Edwards (1985:18) points out, however, that language may merely be trundled out on occasion by people who are no longer able to use it, purely for its symbolic function of differentiating the group. Certainly the Ryukyuan arts that have a linguistic component, such as *kumiodori*, *ryûka*, folksong, etc., are already on their way to having just such a symbolic function. This is most clearly visible in expatriate communities, such as Hawaii, where such language is painstakingly learned by young people for performance only. To be sure, though, the waters are muddied by the fact that the language of *kumiodori* and *ryûka*, in any case, is already a *classical* one, and not the language of current speech.

The function of language that is of most interest here is that of serving as a carrier of ethnic identity, though this is a tricky issue. For example, English is spoken as the dominant and native language at least in England, Scotland, Ireland, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and possibly even South Africa. Obviously the language itself cannot always be the major signal of ethnicity, though indeed its particular variety is closely associated with the ethnic identity of its speaker. In the case of the Ryukyus, there are several languages, but most people would probably admit to only one major culture, differentiated into small subcultural areas that are associated with the individual languages. I will have to defer to others on this matter.

Certainly Standard Japanese serves to identify people as members of the Japanese polity, though it does not appropriately identify clearly definable ethnic groups within that polity, which include relatively small numbers of ethnic Ainu, Koreans, and

Chinese, as well as a slightly larger number of Ryukyuan (somewhere between one and two million). In addition it does little to identify many of the ethnic subgroups of Japanese, who speak not only slight regional variants of Standard Japanese (frequently referred to as the "common language" or *kyôtsûgo*) but also more authentically regional dialects that are historically older. Such a statement goes against the commonly held myth that Japanese society is quite homogeneous. This myth is shared as much by non-Japanese as by Japanese themselves, and, indeed, among circles of Japan specialists the native Japanese are perhaps more likely to recognize homogeneity as a myth than their non-Japanese counterparts.

Questions of the hierarchical relations of languages

Much as egalitarian-minded people may dislike contemplating it, nonetheless languages *do* displace each other,⁴ often because of politics and economics. Frequently, declining languages stop being spoken in their own culturally central areas, such as cities, and become associated with low-status activities, such as farming and country ways (Edwards 1985:48ff,62). This in itself, in modern societies, is practically enough to seal their fate, quite apart from wishes for their survival fervently expressed (usually in the dominant language) by the very people who are adopting or have adopted the dominant language.⁵

We find examples of such expressed wishes in the Ryukyus and mainland Japan, with the appearance especially in the past ten or twenty years of many books and articles about Ryukyuan

independence and sovereignty (e.g., SOB 1981.48, 1982.53, Arasaki et al. 1982), and about the beauty and importance of the Ryukyuan languages and dialects (Nakamoto and Higa 1984), all, of course, written in Japanese.⁶

Quite frequently the new language first comes in as a second language of a cultural elite in the cities, and acquires native-language status among those whose parents might not have spoken it natively, but is still one of *two* languages spoken *natively*. This situation is called diglossia (Fishman 1989a), and is frequently a stage in the replacement of one language by another, though it need not be so (Fishman 1989a,c).⁷ However, in modern nations, the pattern of diglossia as a stage in replacement is all too common. The ascendant language gains a foothold as the language of public discourse (as indeed Japanese enjoys that status now in the Ryukyus), and the declining language is used in fewer and fewer situations, usually as a home or market language. Eventually speakers appear who know the declining language only passively, and then speakers appear who know only phrases or words. Ultimately a few traces of the declining language are left as regional borrowings in the ascendant language, and at this point the language may be said to be "dead" in that area. As the range of the declining language shrinks off into ever more inaccessible places, then the whole language is dying, and eventually it succumbs to whatever pressures have convinced people to abandon it, be they internal (for example, a desire for economic betterment for their children) or external (for example, a campaign against the language by central authority) (Edwards 1985:47-98). Prof. Shinzato touches on a number of these points in relation to

Ryukyuan.

Japan's record of contact with other languages & cultures

The current situation in the Ryukyus.

I must preface my remarks here with a caveat. As far as I know, no large-scale sociolinguistic study of the current state of knowledge of Ryukyuan has been undertaken, so my remarks will necessarily be impressionistic.

It should not be surprising that the most advanced state of language death is precisely in the cultural center of the Ryukyus, namely southern Okinawa island, where the bulk of the population is. Two factors seem to be involved:

First (and less importantly), there has been a great influx of people from outlying areas of the Ryukyus, since the economic opportunities are all to be found in south-central Okinawa. Not only do these people speak dialects different from Naha-area dialects; many even speak different Ryukyuan languages. They need a common vernacular in which to communicate. That vernacular might once have been the dialect of Shuri, the old capital, but now, insofar as people do make a linguistic adjustment to local language, it must be to a lingua franca based on the closely related dialect of Naha (Uemura 1975:14). That adjustment is not necessary, however.

Second, the pressure from the political center of Japan, linguistically in the form of Standard Japanese, has been quite intense (Uemura 1975:13-14). Prof. Shinzato has elaborated upon this, so I need not go into it in detail. I will only point out that the

effect has been to "pull the carpet out from under," so to speak, any variety of southern Okinawan as a standard language.⁸

The current situation in mainland Japan

First I will briefly consider the current influence of Standard Japanese. It is widely pointed out that the Standard language is being adopted by younger people, or else that the Standard language is having a marked effect on the use of dialect by younger people, throughout Japan, and that this is being helped both by education and the media, particularly television and radio (e.g., Kindaichi 1981:55-57). The fact that a cultural center should influence language everywhere within its sway is no surprise, all the less so given the highly centralized Japanese state and the high degree of development of mass communications, to say nothing of the mythology of the homogeneity of the Japanese people.

Main-islands Japanese-speaking groups (absorption of groups in prehistory and early history)

The record of Japan in the past has been one of absorption of other cultures and languages/dialects (cf., e.g., Uemura 1975:24-28). The polities of the area spanning northern Kyushu to Kansai (west-central Honshu) -- the area surrounding the Inland Sea, in effect -- were welded together into a proto-state by the rulers of the Kansai area, the state that we might call Yamato (Uemura 1975:26, citing Fukuda Yoshisuke; Uemura 1977:232). Surely those states gave up much of their cultural and linguistic differentness as the price for becoming part of the Yamato polity (Uemura 1975:24-26), though we would be

hard put to spell out the facts for this pre-historical period, except through a very treacherous reading of the bones of myth and legend.

Hayato: This group of peripheral Kyushu was absorbed in the earliest historical period (Uemura 1977:234). Uemura has suggested that it was the group from which the Ryukyans descended (1977:234-237). If this be so, it is of great interest (on two grounds) that the language of the descendants of those peoples is now clearly classifiable as Japanese, not Ryukyuan, and that the speakers of these dialects constitute a dialect chain⁹ not with the Ryukyus but with the rest of Japan. First, it suggests the historical power of the Japanese state to overwhelm a group of speakers of a significantly different speech variety¹⁰ -- and therefore underscores the historical continuity (see below) of Japanese linguistic and ethnic attitudes toward those groups that fell within the boundaries of that state. Second, it suggests that surface similarities of speech varieties are not to be trusted in determining their historical relationships.¹¹

*Emishi:*¹² According to Uemura (1977:233) the Emishi or Ezo were inhabitants of northern Honshu beyond the immediate borders of the Yamato state in the early Nara period, borders that approximately coincided with the present line defining the Northeast (i.e., Tôhoku) of Honshu. While the Yayoi culture area did extend all the way to northern Honshu by the end of the first century A.D., it did so with an admixture of the previous Jômon culture, unlike western-Honshu Yayoi culture; and tumuli, characteristic of the succeeding proto-state period, never extended to northern Tôhoku.

Uemura also points out Fukuda's hypothesis that the Yamato sphere of influence seems to have been coextensive with the ceremonial use of bronze bells, with the implication that the Yamato did not control Eastern parts of the Tumulus-culture area until quite late. The Emishi were subjugated and slowly absorbed in the process of the northeastward spread of the Yamato state in the early historical period.

The present-day inhabitants of the former Emishi territory speak dialects of Japanese, a language unrelated¹³ to Ainu. Uemura points out (citing Kindaichi Kyôtsuke's and others' research) that at least the northernmost of the inhabitants of Honshu spoke Ainu up until the beginning of the historical period, and notes that Ainu place names are widely distributed in northern Honshu. Naturally these people were Japanized, so that today little trace of their past remains except in place names. What will the fate of *Ryukyans* be?

The Ainu (death of language and culture in recent times)

Within historical times the Ainu, a completely non-Japanese group of Hokkaido, have seen themselves all but absorbed culturally and linguistically into the Japanese cultural group.

Shibatani (1990:3) notes that the Japanese government does not even keep census figures for the number of Ainu, since the official policy is one of assimilation. But the number is thought to be around 16,000, with less than one percent of pure blood remaining.

Shibatani also notes (1990:3-4) that the Ainu language is almost completely extinct, no longer used for daily communication, and remembered dimly by only a few old people.

However, their case is somewhat different from that of the Ryukyus, because Hokkaido is broad in extent and has seen a remarkable influx of Japanese from Honshu (particularly from Tôhoku) since modernization, thus swamping the Ainus culturally, linguistically, and genetically (cf. the statement above by Shibatani).

On the other hand, the movement of ethnic Japanese into the Ryukyus has been limited (but see Prof. Taira's contribution to this volume), to the extent that one may surmise that ethnic Japanese will never outnumber Ryukyuans in their homeland. Thus the character of the Japanese incursion is not so much physical as institutional and cultural. Ryukyuans are being swamped not by numbers, but by the political and social strength of the mainland culture, imported through indoctrination, i.e., education (cf. Prof. Shinzato's contribution to this volume) and the mass media. This includes linguistic indoctrination. Thus, the Ryukyuan gene pool may continue to be quite different indefinitely, but language (and perhaps culture) are another story.

Korea and Taiwan (experiences within the recent colonial context)

Japan gained control of Taiwan in 1895, and had complete control of Korea by 1910. It was forced to relinquish control of both, along with many other territories, at the close of World War II (Kerr 1974; Miyata 1983:283-284).

The Japanese expected both ethnic Chinese and Koreans to become Japanese, beginning with forcing them to learn the Japanese language (Kerr 1974:84ff, 162f, 176, 178, 186, 195f; Miyata 1983:283-284). Thus both the Taiwanese and the Koreans' fate

would have been to become Japanese, if enough generations had passed. It would have been a replay of what had happened much earlier within the home islands as the Yamato culture spread.

Models of language interaction from outside Japan

In order to help understand the range of possibilities for what might happen to the Ryukyus, I will briefly examine the language / culture / polity interface in other areas (all but the last within a hegemonic context).

Irish, Ireland, and English

What has happened to the Irish language in its own homeland, Ireland? Ireland lost its independence over a period of time, just as the Ryukyus did, eventually completely succumbing politically to its more powerful neighbor, England. Along with that long political decline came a slow decline in the Irish language, especially in the cities, and especially from 1750 to 1850 or so (Macnamara 1971:65-66). By the 1851 census only five percent of the population described themselves as monolinguals in Irish, and 23 percent as bilinguals. Now there are only a few thousand native speakers of Irish, all far from the cities, and few Irish monolinguals (Macnamara 1971:65-66). About three percent of the school-age population uses Irish at home (Macnamara 1971:66).

Note the parallel to the Ryukyus, though the Ryukyus are not as far advanced in their linguistic disintegration, the inception of which only dates from about a century ago (cf. Prof. Shinzato's paper). It may be well, though, to note that all Ryukyuans are

bilingual, and, as Edwards (1985:71) says, "When a language possesses no more monoglots, the process of decline has very often begun." It is probably correct to say that the speed of loss of Ryukyuan is far greater than the speed of loss of Irish, partly because of the extremely centralized and controlling nature of the Japanese state, and partly because of the pervasive effects of modern mass media. Furthermore, while Irish never stopped being written, there is currently no writing in Ryukyuan outside of the lyrics of songs, as far as I am aware. In other words, there is no Ryukyuan-language press.

The movement for a free Ireland started *after* most people had abandoned the language, in the 1800's, and it was eventually successful, but in a now largely Anglophone country (Macnamara 1971:66). One possibility for the future of the Ryukyus, if independence ever comes about, is that there will be a culturally different Ryukyuan state in which a Ryukyuan version of Standard Japanese is spoken nearly everywhere.

Macnamara (1971:66-67) points out that Ireland, in the process of converting to English, underwent a large-scale conversion of its literature to English from Irish, a long-range task of translation, since that literature could no longer be understood by the great body of the Irish public. This is not to say that education in Irish was abandoned, but at the same time it is true that the number of bilinguals has become relatively small, to say nothing of native speakers of Irish.

If Ryukyuan vanishes, should a similar project of translation into Japanese of Ryukyuan literature be attempted? Some of this has

already been done, but much remains untranslated.

Despite the gradual movement toward extinction of the Irish language, a discernibly Irish culture remains, though Anglicized (Fishman 1989c). It is notable that Irish English has adapted in various ways, especially in its lexicon, to the Irish culture.¹⁴ Presumably the Ryukyuan version of Standard Japanese, which also has quite noticeable Ryukyuan aspects, will continue to adapt to Ryukyuan culture as it becomes the only vehicle for the transmission of that culture. It is questionable, however, whether the drift to Japanese culture can be stopped unless Ryukyuan are willing to make the sort of cultural stand that the Irish have made.¹⁵

English and the languages of India

In India, English was the language of empire, and it remains today after independence as one of the two important national languages (along with Hindi) in a country with hundreds of indigenous languages (Edwards 1985:177). It is spoken natively by few if any native Indians, and serves as a means of communication across linguistic gulfs. Thus English, a language brought in from outside India, is the medium for national communication even after the English themselves have packed up and gone.

If Japan ever becomes a *former* colonizer of the Ryukyus, then India comes into focus as a parallel case, because of its use of English as a unifying language, since none of their own languages covers the entire polity. There are a number of languages in the Ryukyus, and yet they may all take second place in national communication to Japanese, even if the Japanese pack up and go.

If the Japanese language remains the only language held in common by all Ryukyuan, then the case will be *somewhat* parallel. It would be *fully* parallel if a Standard Ryukyuan were also in use. The former course implies a forfeiture of a right to a standard Ryukyuan, whereas the latter suggests the possibility that there might be some way for a Standard Ryukyuan to coexist with Standard Japanese. In this scenario no attempt would be made to crush the local languages, but Japanese (perhaps with a Standard Ryukyuan) would remain the Ryukyuan national standard. It would be a free choice of Ryukyuan to communicate with each other in a version of the language of their much larger northern neighbor, just as Indians frequently use Indianized English for national-level communication.

The difference here between the case of India and Ireland is that Ireland has only one language besides English, while the Indian subcontinent has many, and Ryukyuan also has more than one. Note, however, India's huge population, as opposed to the relatively small population of the Ryukyus, suggesting the difficulty of maintaining a number of varieties of Ryukyuan.

Russian and the languages of the Soviet nationalities

The Soviet Union allowed the survival of national languages, even encouraging their literatures, even while being a hegemonic state.¹⁶ One possible scenario would be for Japan to grant limited autonomy to the Ryukyus, as the Soviet Union did for its own nationalities. This would include allowing bilingual education (legally, at least, even non-Russian monolingual education was allowed in the USSR), the

fostering of Ryukyuan-language media, and the resurgence of the public and official use of Ryukyuan within a Ryukyuan autonomous region. Needless to say, this scenario is quite farfetched, given the record of Japan in suppressing other cultures and languages or dialects from ancient times up to the present day.¹⁷

Is it appropriate to implement such a policy in mainland Japan as well, where the issue is more strictly one of bidialectalism? Cf. the publication in Tōhoku of a grammar of the Kesen dialect, cited in Kindaichi et al. (1989:930-931), and seen in that article, apparently in a positive light, as an act of linguistic nationalism. Is a lack of a negative attitude indicative of a shift in the viewpoint of the linguistic intelligentsia? Their tendency to support policies of central language exclusivity has been castigated by Tanaka (1980).

If that tendency is indeed still strong, it can be seen that the issue of the definition of the relation of Ryukyuan to Japanese is of great importance, since the success of the centralizers in setting the terms in which any discussion is held (that is, as a matter of variant dialects of a single language as opposed to that of a different language or languages) has tended to keep any divergent opinions from spreading outside of very narrow circles.

Limited sovereignty within the United States: The case of Hawaiian
Within the United States, groups of peoples subjugated in the course of American expansion are newly vocal in demanding some sort of nation-within-nation status, and often combine such efforts with efforts to preserve or resuscitate their endangered languages. The ethnic Hawaiian sovereignty movement is one of these, though there

are many disagreements among those calling for sovereignty (Dudley and Agard 1990:129-140). The State government *does* recognize Hawaiian claims to some sort of sovereignty, though nothing has yet been worked out (Dudley and Agard 1990:107-128, and newspaper reports as of 1995). It has declared both English and Hawaiian official state languages, and has even established a number of Hawaiian immersion programs in elementary schools to counter the rapid decline of the Hawaiian language. These official actions are in tandem with the increase of interest in the last couple of decades in preserving Hawaiian language and culture. Hawaiian-language courses at the University of Hawaii have become more popular. However, Hawaiian continues to be spoken natively by only a few thousand,¹⁸ and all Hawaiian native speakers are also equally proficient in at least Hawaiian Creole English, or even standard English.

Ultimately, though, for Hawaiian as for Ryukyuan language, we may say that survival is assured only so long as children learn that language as their first language, in the home. If the language is learned as a second language only, then it is an artifact, and will probably not be used actively. Cf. the case of Irish (Edwards 1985:53-65). Applying what we see in Hawaii to the Ryukyus, we suspect that a mere resurgence of interest in Ryukyuan culture and language, even where aided by the local authorities, may be only a waystation to the loss of the language. Goodwill and good intentions alone will not save Ryukyuan.¹⁹

The special case of Hebrew

What happens if Ryukyuan does die out? Can it be resuscitated? There exists one example of such a resuscitation, namely Hebrew (Edwards 1985:86-87). Hebrew among the Jews of the diaspora came to be used as a second language, replaced everywhere by other languages. It was through the movement of Zionists to Palestine in this century, together with their insistence on raising their children in a language that was to them only a second language, that Hebrew was reborn.

What lesson does this example teach to those who might envision the resuscitation of Ryukyuan in the future? First, it is that there is but one example in all the world's languages, so the odds are against it happening again. Second, it is that such an attempt must have a very rich corpus of recorded language from which to be undertaken. Mere wordlists or dictionaries will never suffice. Since Ryukyuan is almost sure to die out within a few decades, at minimum a large body of texts, grammars, dictionaries, etc., would be required for such a magical feat to be possible. Much work has been done in the collection of wordlists, but texts are at least as important, including video- and audio-tapes.

Possibilities for the salvation of Ryukyuan through its standardization

Language planning and language policy

Nations manage their languages to varying degrees. Some operate on the basis of consensus, with self-appointed experts and loose-knit networks of educators and lexicographers keeping linguistic order.

The United States springs immediately to mind. Some exert more control, as in Japan or Britain, where official media and the educational establishment decree what the standard is. Many have official overseers of the language, such as the Académie Française in France, which attempt to various degrees to influence usage, including what might be called "language purity," in which attempts may be made to replace loanwords with words made up of native morphemes. Countries often have ministries or departments where standards for official language are worked out and promulgated through education and the media, such as in Greece, where the old official written language was scrapped by a law of April 30, 1976, in favor of a written variant of the spoken language (Clairis 1983:351). And so on. I will make some suggestions in what follows as to how some hard choices relating to a standardization of Ryukyuan may help to save some vestige of Ryukyuan language.

Language planning refers to the conscious attempt to influence the development of a particular language or language variety. Edwards (1985:88-89) breaks it down as follows: The language planning model consists of four steps, namely (1) norm selection, (2) norm codification, (3) functional implementation, and (4) functional elaboration. (1) and (3) are the more important, because they reflect decisions made at a societal level -- probably by "politicians, administrators, and rulers" (Edwards 1985:89), after which the linguists can take care of (2) and (4), the nuts-and-bolts part. (1) refers to choosing the language that will function as the base of the language to be planned; (2), the language planners' standardization of (typically) grammar (including phonology, morphology, and syntax --

see below), lexicon, and orthography; (3), official steps (such as use and promulgation in media and education) to spread the officially chosen variety, and evaluation to monitor acceptance; (4), retention of viability in a modern setting through (typically) lexical modernization and expansion. Edwards stresses the importance of the decision-making, making it plain that the planners (i.e., the linguists) themselves are simply there to do what needs to be done to implement those plans. In the simplest of worlds this is true, but language planners often do take positions that they try to convince others to adopt, a fact that Edwards grudgingly admits.

Finally Edwards states, "Theory aside, the language planner *cannot* be neutral -- at least not in the field -- since he [sic] has been called in to assist in a process of social change" (1985:89).

Next I will discuss the emotional reactions that may be associated with the term.

The term "language planning" is in and of itself value free, that is, descriptive. Language planning can be applied to any language or dialect, whatever its association with dominant groups. Even if you associate dominant languages with a negative valuation and dominated languages with a positive one (and this certainly goes beyond empiricism pure and simple), you can nonetheless not then automatically negatively value language planning on the assumption that it is the tool of hegemonic power. The fact is that it is the tool of whoever proposes to use it, since it may be used to crush, to save, or to ignore minority languages. It is, in other words, nothing more than a tool, and tools are good or bad according to what you do with them. By saying this I merely wish to stress that

language planning must be looked at coolly, even by those whose blood boils when they think of how the Japanese standard-language movement in Okinawa was involved in the present sad condition of the Ryukyuan languages.

Why have language planning?

Language planning is, then, a double-edged sword. It facilitates communication within a politically defined unit, and yet it also entails making hard choices about what is to be preserved and developed and what is to be allowed to wither. Frequently what withers is the language of a group not associated with the political and cultural center.

In the case of an autonomous or independent Ryukyu, one deep-seated problem is going to be whether a standard Ryukyuan language is to emerge at the expense of more geographically restricted languages -- in other words, the same as the Ryukyuan experience of Japanese linguistic hegemony, only on a much smaller geographical and population scale.²⁰ What right do Ryukyuans who happen to live in southern Okinawa have, one could well ask, to dictate the abandonment of bona fide different languages in other areas of the Ryukyus for the sake of a new "national" standard?²¹ Or would the state (or prefecture) attempt, on the Soviet model, to encourage the continued existence of regional varieties, perhaps even at any level deemed fit by the local speakers,²² while at the same time officially promulgating the national (or prefectural) standard through the school system and the media?

Multiple Ryukyuan languages, and the hard choices necessary for salvation

There are five languages in the Japano-Ryukyuan archipelagos. Four of them are in the Ryukyus, and the Japanese language itself, in its myriad dialectal forms, is on the Japanese mainland.²³ The four Ryukyuan languages are Northern Ryukyuan (in the Amami and Okinawa island groups), Miyako, Yaeyama, and Yonaguni. Almost all of the Ryukyuan languages are in *Okinawa* Prefecture, save for the *northern* half of Northern Ryukyuan, namely Amami, which constitutes the *southernmost* limit of *Kagoshima* Prefecture.²⁴

I assume that all Ryukyuan cultures have more in common with each other than any of them has with Japanese culture, though I will make no attempt to prove it.

The Ryukyuan population is small, only between one and two million people. To attempt to save every variety of Ryukyuan is to squander the energy that might possibly save just one variety, and that one only with luck. There would be a point of diminishing returns reached in trying to shore up the speech of a few hundred or a few thousand speakers.²⁵

An official attempt at a single standard language will go against the tendency of Ryukyuans to form small cooperative groups, often at just the village level, and their concomitant tendency not to view themselves as Ryukyuans first and foremost. Thus I am not sanguine about consensus on the point.

Nevertheless just *one* variety must be chosen, and that variety must be taught throughout the Ryukyus, with the possible exception of Amami, since Amami is in Kagoshima prefecture.²⁶ Thus a

commitment must be made to letting the other dialects take care of themselves, probably meaning eventual extinction for all other varieties, given the way modern states operate, with universal education and media in a standard language.

I ignore here the question of scale, since one could ask why we should bother saving *any* variety of Ryukyuan, since it forms only a tiny sliver in the hide of Japan in any case. I simply assume that Ryukyuan is worth saving, but that all varieties of it are not possible to save.

The choice of the base language for standardization

There is a Naha-based lingua franca being used at least in the area of the old Chûzan kingdom, which is also the most heavily populated area of the Ryukyus, and it is probably understood throughout Okinawa. This dialect is almost identical to that of Shuri, the old de facto standard of the Ryukyu kingdom.²⁷ Because Naha is both the cultural and the population center of the Ryukyus, its language should, then, serve as the base for a new standard Ryukyuan.

Paradoxically, this language is also the most weakened and the most Japanized, but I don't believe that anyone would seriously put forward a dialect from any other area as a candidate for the basis for standardization.

Should "regional standards" be maintained/taught within each island group?: Pertinent here is the problem of bilingualism or trilingualism and the duplication of effort. One problem is that, in the creation of standard languages with ever-smaller population

bases, all the efforts that go into the creation of a standard language, such as the process of managing a new lexicon, or developing and teaching an orthography and written style, would have to be widely duplicated, presumably done in parallel for Yonaguni, Yaeyama, Miyako, Okinawa, and even Amami. Also to be considered are the relative sizes of the populations to be served by such regional standards, all of which are much smaller than Okinawa proper. Perhaps attention could be paid to the means by which each regional variety is to be written, leaving all other matters entirely to the whims of the populations concerned. If they saw fit to do something with their writing system (print newspapers, books, broadsides, whatever), then the system could be used as a nucleus for more concerted work, whereas if people went nowhere with it, the regional variety would simply be allowed to develop on its own, either developing as a low-level lingua franca for the region, to be used as a family and market language, or being abandoned over a period of time for the Ryukyu-wide standard.²⁸

Should regional standard languages exist in addition to a Ryukyu-wide standard, or in place of one?: If the Ryukyus never become independent, and if only regional standards are found acceptable by the Japanese government, could this be seen as "divide and conquer" on the part of Tokyo, to guarantee splintering of Ryukyuan into regional, competing centers? Historically, Ryukyuan have been splintered, as noted above.

The connection to politics

I noted that I did not expect the Hawaiian language to fare well despite the good wishes of the government of the State of Hawaii, and considerable efforts in the education establishment to resuscitate it. Can we hope for anything better for Ryukyuan in a setting where there is no independent Ryukyuan state and where Ryukyuan must co-exist with the overwhelmingly stronger Japanese language? Diglossia will almost surely lead to loss of Ryukyuan. Both Hawaiian and Irish are spoken by small, isolated communities, and despite efforts to shore up both languages, those communities are being swamped by the much more powerful English around them. For Irish, this is true *despite* the political independence of Ireland from Great Britain. The same is happening now in Ryukyuan, and naturally enough the weakening of Ryukyuan is most advanced at the center.

The Japanese Ministry of Education is highly unlikely to allow the teaching of a standard Ryukyuan. Ryukyuan needs a playing field steeply inclined *in its favor* in order to survive. Even a status equal to Japanese will probably not suffice, if we look at the Irish case.

What I am suggesting is that nothing short of exclusive use of a standardized Ryukyuan will save it. This means that Ryukyuan must gain a great enough measure of sovereignty, if not outright independence, to assure that Japanese will become only a second language, a second choice that people use only when traveling to Japan or dealing with Japanese people. If Ryukyuan is to be saved, all education must be in Ryukyuan, and Ryukyuan must become the language of public as well as private life.

Again, because such a change requires a tremendous commitment on the part of the *entire* population, I consider it unlikely, even assuming that all the unlikely things already mentioned happen. If people are not shown how their life will be bettered, including economically, they surely will not choose to go back. In short I believe that people's attachment to their language, especially in the Naha area, is not strong enough to lead to efforts capable of saving it. Other pressures push harder in the other direction. Any steps to save Ryukyuan then must include moves to make people's lives better if they are to be successful.

How to establish a standard: How would the establishment of *any* standard be effected? Would it come about after the establishment of some degree of sovereignty, or could it be seen as a stepping-stone to sovereignty? The Irish (i.e., the Gaelic League) started their work of language restoration before gaining independence from Great Britain, around 1900, and their doing so can be seen as a step in the gaining of that independence (Macnamara 1971:67-68).

If the change is to be effected initially before any sovereignty is obtained, is it to be done by the Okinawan Prefectural Government? Or is it to be done privately (as were the Gaelic-League beginnings in Ireland)? In either case, it may well be planned out by panels of respected linguists, say, under the auspices of the Okinawa Gengo Kenkyū Sent, [Okinawa Center for Language Studies or OCLS], an organization in Okinawa currently headed by Professor Uemura Yukio,²⁹ who has been interested in aspects of education in standard language for a long time. The heading of such

a project by this organization would be a natural first step, since there is the widest possible network of linguists already associated with it, and since they have already grappled with issues of standard-language education, albeit *Standard Japanese*.

Then opportunities must be found to spread the use of Ryukyuan into domains now monopolized by the Japanese language, such as the print media.

The importance of education

Already many younger Okinawans (Okinawans are the most numerous Ryukyuan) are growing up monolingual in Japanese. Thus any effort to stabilize Ryukyuan must have as one of its most important components the inculcation of the newly set up standard language through schools. Textbooks would have to be written in Ryukyuan, and classes conducted in it. It would be best if this could be done officially, but if it could not, then those wishing to see Ryukyuan continue as a viable vehicle for Ryukyuan culture would have to set up as many alternative schools as they possibly could, and ask students to come to them during non-school hours, since unofficial schools would never be allowed by the central authorities (i.e., the Japanese Ministry of Education) to replace official ones. The approach outlined here would be one more way of exerting unofficial, private pressure on the part of as many people as could be mobilized, pressure to replace the current system with a new one.³⁰

In any case, what role bilingualism would play in education is not clear. Should Ryukyuan-Japanese bilingualism be fostered? Will Ryukyuan be able to survive if it cannot have a monopoly position as

the only standard language of the Ryukyus? This question is especially important to answer given the fact that the only likely outcome of a sovereignty movement within the Ryukyus will be some larger measure of control of internal affairs, but this measure of control is extremely unlikely to include abolishment of the use of standard Japanese in the schools.

One more point needs to be reiterated. If the people themselves are not willing to use in their own homes as well as in their public lives whatever Ryukyuan standard is promulgated, then nothing at all will guarantee its survival against Japanese. Use at the most daily and humble level is the sine qua non of a campaign to maintain some form of Ryukyuan.³¹

Possible aspects of a standardized Ryukyuan

Let us assume, for the sake of playing out the possibilities, that everything turns out in favor of Ryukyuan. What does it need to become a full-fledged modern national language? It needs a standard phonology (proper pronunciation, including accent), a standard morphology (things such as verb, adjective, and noun paradigms), and a standard syntax (that is, the way sentences are strung together). This will be the easy part. Plenty of treatments of Shuri and Naha phonology, morphology, and syntax already exist, and a duly constituted body would make short work of such matters.

First, lexicon: I assume that it would be necessary to establish an adequate vocabulary for the new standard language. This would involve the descriptive work of seeing what vocabulary is already in

common use, on the assumption that the standard language would be based on a southern Okinawan variety.

Decisions would have to be made on how newly needed words should be coined (or indeed, whether this matter should not simply be left to chance, as it is in English and Japanese, for example).

Next, loanwords: If matters of lexicon are not left to chance, it would have to be determined just when it is acceptable to borrow a word, versus coining it. Should restrictions be placed upon the borrowing of Japanese words, especially when they might replace serviceable Okinawan ones?

Here the question of what constitutes Ryukyuan language at its core is raised. Is Ryukyuan a grammatical and morphological system only? What role does lexicon play in deciding that what we're talking about is "Ryukyuan"?

In particular, if lexicon more than anything else determines what Ryukyuan is, at least for cultural purposes, then a lexically altered Japanese would suffice perfectly well as the vehicle for Ryukyuan culture. Such has been the fallback position for Irish culture.

However, the existence of a different grammatical and morphological system has a value not only in determining language difference in measurable terms, but also in symbolic terms -- the very fact of different grammatical rules may be taken as one signal of cultural, ethnic, or political difference as well.

What role will pervasive bilingualism play in the handling of loanwords? This topic deserves much more discussion than I can

give it here, since the question of the possible continued presence of the Japanese language in Okinawan public life must be faced squarely.

Next let me bring up lexicography, the creation of dictionaries of standard Okinawan/Ryukyuan: Actually, excellent dictionaries of a few individual dialects have come out in recent years. Especially noteworthy are the following: (1) *Okinawago jiten*, the dictionary of Shuri dialect (KKKJ 1963), the final stages of compilation and production of which were overseen by Professor Uemura; (2) *Okinawa Nakijin hōgen jiten*, by Nakasone Seizen (Nakasone 1983); and (3) the two-volume set of dictionaries of Yamatama dialect of Amami 'shima by Osada et al. (1977-1980).

What will be required, however, will be a dictionary of the standard language, and it could easily be patterned upon the *Okinawago jiten*. Unlike the latter, it should probably *not* include vocabulary used only in Classical literature or *ryūka*. See below.

Written language: Probably the single most vexing problem will be the re-establishment of a written language. While this also involves the establishment of written versus spoken style, in what follows I will focus upon the bricks rather than the house, that is, upon letters and spelling. (Cf. also Serafim 1991.)

The question of how to write the standard language includes both the choice of the letters themselves, whatever they may be, and the rules for putting those letters together, i.e., orthography.³²

Should it be romanized?: Romanization has already proved itself useful in the printing of the *Okinawa-go jiten*, that is, the dictionary of Okinawan, which was issued under the auspices of the Japanese National Language Research Institute in 1963. It would be a relatively easy thing to adapt that phonemicization for use as an official orthography.³³ It would be very easy to teach, after the initial changeover, during which many complaints about the difficulty of romanization would undoubtedly be heard, especially from older people.³⁴

The usefulness of romanization is in that it is the nearest thing to a universal system of writing for the world's languages that humans have, and would receive wide acceptance abroad, except, of course, within Japan itself, where undoubtedly the feeling would be widespread that the adoption of romanization was not a good idea to begin with, but in any case a rebuff to Japan. Insofar as the Ryukyuans themselves wanted to make a strong statement that their new standard language was completely independent of Japanese, they might want to break with tradition and adopt a romanized orthography.

Should it be invented afresh?: Here we have the model of Korean *han'g!!uUl*, which were invented in 1446 for the express purpose of fitting neatly into the Korean phonological system (Quinones 1983). It is of more than passing interest also that the adoption of *han'g!!uUl* signaled a clearcut break from Chinese characters, given that Korean was only written in poetry up to that time, and as such with phonetic (*man'yôgana*-like) characters only slightly adapted from Chinese.

Thus it could be seen as a step in cultural independence.³⁵

Would it be worthwhile for Ryukyuans to do something like what the Koreans did? Such a system might impede Ryūkyuans' learning other systems, and it would certainly impede others' learning Ryukyuan, thus serving to isolate Ryukyuans in the regional and/or world stage. Romanization would foster outside contacts more fully, unless Ryukyuans saw the greatest profit to be gained by making it as easy as possible to interact with the Japanese (for which see below). This is no small issue given the near-certainty that any standardization and promulgation of Ryukyuan would probably have to be done within the Japanese polity and also in the context of complete bilingualism (at best!). Furthermore, Ryukyuans, even if independent, are likely to remain within the Japanese cultural and economic sphere far into the future.

Should it be a kana-based orthography?: There is a de facto written standard, in marginal use for writing the classical language of *kumiodori*, or musical plays, and *ryūka*, or Ryukyuan songs.³⁶ Only a small cadre of intellectuals knows it. It is a cumbersome historical orthography, and it utilizes a mixture of *hiragana*, or syllabary letters, and *kanji*, or logographs. As such it resembles the pre-war Japanese orthography. There is an even older system seen only in the earliest, archaic documents and stone inscriptions, consisting almost entirely of *hiragana*. Ryukyuans of the fifteenth and sixteenth century barely felt the need for *kanji* to write their own language.³⁷

Anyone who knows some modern Okinawan knows that

hiragana or *katakana* are ill suited to writing it, save through the heavy use of digraphs (such as those used to write Japanese *yō'on* syllables, for example <kiyo> for kyo) and other special conventions. Any choice in favor of using straight Japanese *kana* will require the standardization of such conventions. Various linguists have come up with their own schemes.³⁸

Funatsu Yoshiaki has written an Okinawan language textbook (1988)³⁹ in which he creates new *hiragana* by fusing existing ones, and then develops a system of spelling for Okinawan. This is certainly a viable approach, since it adapts *hiragana* to Ryukyuan.⁴⁰

A *kana*-only spelling system would be most efficient in conjunction with a system utilizing spaces between words, requiring a decision on the units that spaces ought to be put between. This is what is known in Japanese as *wakachi-gaki*, and is prevalent in materials written entirely or nearly entirely in *kana*, usually meant for children. Since those materials *are* meant for children, they carry with them unfortunate psychological connotations that must be consciously overcome if such a system is to be put into effective use. In particular, Ryukyuans might be loath to use a *wakachi-gaki* system if they felt that Japanese would look down on them as the linguistic equivalent of children, and on their language as if it were child language. To give in to Japanese criticism would saddle them with the same heavy burden that the Japanese themselves now shoulder.

Coinages and the writing system: Since Ryukyuan is currently largely spoken and not written, it stands to reason that no argument

can be marshalled to claim that *kanji* are necessary to the language in order to function to disambiguate homonyms, since *kanji* certainly aren't necessary in speech, and they aren't necessary in myriad non-*kanji*-using languages in order to make oneself understood in writing.⁴¹ Thus, when new words are coined, there will be no reason to coin homonyms in large number, and then to rely on *kanji* to disambiguate them. Processes of learned-word coinage will proceed as in languages with non-*kanji*-based writing systems, in which any coinages badly interfering with communication will quickly be altered or abandoned.⁴²

Should it be a mixed kana-kanji orthography, or not?: Generally, to mix *kanji* and *kana* is a bad idea, since it would take the most complicated possible system as the standard orthography. All else being equal, education would proceed much more smoothly and easily if *kanji* were dispensed with, and only romanization or *kana* were used. (See Unger 1987.)

A compromise: Now, the question is, is all else equal? Perhaps not. First, all educated Ryukyuans are literate in Japanese. Second, the more education one has had, and the older one is, the more attached one tends to be to the Japanese system of writing in general, and to the mixed *kana-kanji* orthography in particular. Thus a sudden introduction of a *kana*-only system, let alone of a romanized system, might result in a great deal of negative feeling directed against the attempt at re-introducing a written Ryukyuan, since many do not clearly distinguish between written language and language in

general. Thus the whole enterprise might be endangered because of deeply embedded attitudes about Japanese writing that actually have little to do with Ryukyuan itself.

There may be a compromise leading to at least all-*kana* usage. Funatsu (1988) opts for a mixed *kana-kanji* orthography, that, however, *always has furigana attached to the kanji*. This system (whether utilizing Funatsu's *kana* or more conventional ones), if combined with a *wakachi-gaki* system, could serve as the base for compromise. Students beginning school would be taught only the *kana* system with *wakachi-gaki*, whereas older people would be taught and expected to read and write a mixed system, always with *furigana* for the sake of the younger people, and with *wakachi-gaki*. The media would initially start out with the compromise system as well, but at set intervals lower-frequency words would be switched over to all-*kana* spelling, until no *kanji* were left in the system, say, over a period of about forty years. Such an approach would cause minimum disruption for older people, and yet not permanently saddle succeeding generations with a bad system. The compromise would render a move to romanization at a later date a less likely eventuality, but such a compromise might be necessary in order to secure initial wide-spread acceptance.

If all Ryukyuan dialects die

Cultural replacement: If no form of Ryukyuan survives, will Ryukyuan culture also eventually be replaced by Japanese culture? I think that the answer is, not right away. Ryukyuan will probably

retain a sense of separate identity for a long time. But if the experience of other groups (e.g., Hayato, Emishi, Ainu) that have been absorbed by Japan is any indication, eventually Okinawans will become just another regionally variant group of Japanese, no different in this regard from natives of the various mainland prefectures.

Resurrecting a dead Ryukyuan: If Ryukyuan language is entirely replaced by Japanese, will it be possible at some future date to resurrect it? Given the availability of tapes of radio and television programs, and of at least a couple of films, perhaps it would be possible, if linguists were to analyze the materials carefully, check them against pre-existing written materials in particular, and then attempt to teach it as a second language, whence it could be taught by the second-language speakers to their children as a first language, supplanting Japanese. It is quite clear from a description such as this that such an eventuality is unlikely in the extreme.

Tailoring Standard Japanese: Finally, can and should standard Japanese be "tailored" to fit the needs of Ryukyuan culture? Will this happen automatically? Actually, it already has, to some extent, in the form of the regional common language (*kyôtsûgo*). But language planning might do a better job of it. If Ryukyuan consciously and willfully "take control" of their common language, then they can tailor it to fit their own needs instead of the needs of faraway Tokyo, paying attention, for example in the written language, to how words will be borrowed from Ryukyuan dialects and how they will be

spelled. Thus spellings could be agreed upon through the publication of official or semi-official dictionaries of words and expressions found only in the regional standard. Similarly, a commitment can be made to using the standard Ryukyuan version of Japanese in the media and other public arenas. This would constitute an official (local) abandonment of a commitment to maintaining a national version of the standard Japanese language.

Conclusion

If Ryukyuan is to be saved, the alarm of intellectuals is not enough; it must also involve the orchestrated will of the elites of Ryukyuan society and ordinary people, through the use of the new standard Ryukyuan in various aspects of public life, such as publication (e.g., newspapers, magazines, general-interest books, and textbooks); radio, television, and film;⁴³ to say nothing of official Okinawan documents and debate in government councils. Those who are capable of using it as a home language must take care to use it in rearing their children, so that the intergenerational loss of the language is turned around. Those who don't know it should make a commitment to study it and to start using it. In short, people need to commit themselves to using the language in all affairs, from kitchen to university podium, from village religious ritual to big-city television program.

Individual efforts are already under way. Takamine Gô has made two full-length films in Okinawan language, and one of those films, "Untama Girû," won the Grand Prize at the Hawaii International Film Festival in 1990. Funatsu has published his Okinawan-language

textbook. Intellectuals and professors debate schemes for independence and sovereignty.

Today there is a political, social, and language-conscious ferment throughout the world. It appears that the time is right for new initiatives. If Ryukyuan language is to be saved, citizens and scholars must band together and begin the process of language standardization and the expansion of its use even without the prospects of either sovereignty or independence. No one can guarantee success, but, we may say: "*Maybe* damned if you do, *definitely* damned if you don't."

Endnotes

¹ I gratefully acknowledge input through discussion with Rumiko Shinzato Simonds, Sally Serafim, Steve Rabson, Koji Taira, Eitetsu Yamaguchi, and George DeVos. While I have gained much in my discussions with them, any shortcomings in this paper are entirely my own.

² In this day of increasing calls for self-determination, of breakaway Baltic and Yugoslav republics, of native Taiwanese nationalism -- indeed, of the crumbling of the Soviet Union --, it is a good time to look at the Ryukyus' linguistic and political options. I hope this study will help set the stage for such a comparison.

³ Edwards (1985:10) defines ethnicity as follows:

Ethnic identity is allegiance to a group -- large or small, socially dominant or subordinate -- with which one has ancestral links. There is no necessity for a continuation, over generations, of the same socialisation or cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. This can be sustained by shared objective characteristics (language, religion, etc.), or by more subjective contributions to a sense of 'groupness', or by some combination of both. Symbolic or subjective attachments must relate, at however distant a remove, to an observably real past.

⁴ Even though each language is as good as any other language in carrying out the necessities of a culture, since languages can quickly

adapt to new needs (Edwards 1985:19).

⁵ Cf. Edwards (1985:98/195) on how likely a move to some past situation is to be: "It is noteworthy how many language activists, incidentally, are *not* themselves members of the group in question" (i.e., "the atypical minority-within-a-minority" that relearns or starts again to use the "original group language").

⁶ This is not meant as a castigation of the authors of such works, for I count many of them as my friends, and sympathize with them.

⁷ "Diglossia" appears to be used in both a wide sense (as in this discussion) and in a more narrow sense, where Fishman, in the articles cited, defines it as a technical term in which the linguistic situation has to be stable for at least three generations. That stability is lacking in the Ryukyus.

⁸ I should add that there are also Ryukyuan expatriate communities. The most important is in fact that community that has moved to Japan proper, especially, it is said, in the Osaka area. There are also expatriate communities in Hawaii, the U.S. mainland, and Latin America. My own conversations with young Okinawan-Americans in Hawaii make it obvious that most do not know either Japanese or Okinawan. Many study Japanese in school.

⁹ Hockett (1958:323-324) sees a language as consisting of a chain of speakers, the speech of each of whom is linked in a chain of mutual comprehensibility, if not of all to each other, at least linked through some intermediary. There is no requirement that all

speakers of a language be able to understand each other. Indeed such a requirement would make it impossible to say, using objective linguistic criteria, just what a language is.

¹⁰ Uemura (1977:234) notes that interpreters were required in the governance of the Hayato people.

¹¹ For more on this point, see Serafim (1988).

¹² Also called Ezo.

¹³ Very few linguists are willing to postulate any genetic relation between Japanese and Ainu.

¹⁴ And the English spoken in Ireland has also been affected by Irish syntax, most notably in its wide use of focus constructions where standard English would eschew them.

¹⁵ Though some might argue that Ryukyuans have *indeed* decided to make their stand on cultural, not linguistic, grounds.

¹⁶ However, lest the policies of the USSR should seem too rosy, Edwards (1985:180) also notes that there was always a hope, even from Lenin's time, that the nationalities would gravitate toward Russian; and, from the time of Stalin to that of Brezhnev, a push was on to improve the status of Russian in non-Russian-speaking areas. Needless to say, current events have changed all this. These changes, too, are of some value for Ryukyuans in assessing the possibilities for the future, both linguistically and politically.

¹⁷ It is a matter for Ryukyuans themselves to decide whether they wish to have such autonomy, and I don't wish to suggest that I know what the character of that public opinion presently is or may be in the future.

¹⁸ The number is 9,060 according to BEDT (1990:46), in Table 28, as a home language, at all levels of ability. The number who can speak it "very well" is 6,580.

But, according to a reference librarian at the Hawaiian-Pacific Collection of Hamilton Graduate Library at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, a figure of 2,000 is widely circulated as an accepted estimate. Since the figures of 9,060 and 6,580 are self-reported, and since they are "based on 5-percent Public Use Microdata Sample," they should probably be seen as an upper bound.

¹⁹ Not everyone is as pessimistic on this point as I am here. Niklaus Schweizer, a professor of German and a Hawaiian-language activist at the University of Hawai'i, believes that small children learning Hawaiian in immersion programs are bringing Hawaiian-language use back to their families, and that in a hundred years we will see complete diglossia in Hawaiian and English in a certain proportion of the population (personal communication, September 1995).

²⁰ See below for more discussion of this topic.

²¹ One may well ask at this juncture whether the continuing overwhelming influence of at least the broadcast media of Japan

proper might not simply spell the doom of any variety of Ryukyuan, much less the strictly local ones. This would amount to the Standard Japanese fish eating the Standard Ryukyuan one even as the latter is in the process of eating the smaller Ryukyuan fry.

22 It is pointed out in Kindaichi et al. (1989:930-935) that the days of actively trying to destroy local speech varieties ended in the 1940's, after the repressive policies of the Okinawan educational authorities became known even in Japan proper, leading to a nationwide debate and a swing away from an official pro-Standard, anti-local policy. The central question, then, seems to be: is the government role vis-à-vis local languages one of hindrance, neutrality, or help?

23 For the sake of this discussion I am of course ignoring the spread of Standard Japanese throughout Japan.

24 See more discussion on Amami below.

25 The prefectural population is about 1,100,000; that of Okinawa proper is ca. 975,000; of Miyako island, ca. 48,000; of Ishigaki island (Yaeyama), ca. 39,000; of Kume island (Okinawa), ca. 10,000 -- as of 1980 (Ôshiro 1983:478-479).

26 The experience of Greece may be instructive. The original nation that won its independence from the Ottoman Empire did not include all contiguous Greek-speaking areas. It was added to piecemeal later, until nearly all Greek-speaking areas were included ("Greece":382-386).

How would an effort on the part of Okinawa Prefecture or of a new independent Ryukyuan nation to regain control of Amami be seen by the Japanese national government, by Kagoshima Prefecture, and by the citizens of Amami itself? Especially if it spelled the doom of Amami varieties of Ryukyuan just as surely as if Amami were to remain within the Japanese polity? What would be the effect of some Ryukyuan being independent (or at least having sovereignty over some of their affairs) and others remaining in the grip of Japan?

27 The phonology of the language of the male aristocracy is now defunct, so that probably the main feature that distinguishes this language from that of Naha is now only its accent system.

28 There are regional languages of song that might well survive indefinitely, especially insofar as the particular varieties are associated with religious practice. These would not necessarily be the same as the local lingua francas. Uemura (1975) presents a sharp-eyed discussion of the role of the "common language of song" (*kayô kyôtsûgo*) in Japano-Ryukyuan language history.

29 A possible alternative is the Hôsei Daigaku Okinawa Bunka Kenkyûjo [Hosei University Institute of Okinawan Studies] in Tokyo.

30 I have to say in passing that I find such an eventuality unlikely. It seems to me that Ryukyuan will inevitably be (at least) linguistically Japanized because of intense economic pressures. Take, for example, the pressure exerted by the system of university examinations. Few parents would risk their children's future for the

sake of repropagation of the Ryukyuan language, even if it coexists with a movement for independence.

31 Such a statement at first may seem to be contradictory, since the current situation is that, if Ryukyuan is used at all, it is used in just such humble circumstances as the home. But note that education in Ryukyuan will result in its increasing use by people at the center *first* in circumstances other than as a home language, in other words it will reverse the situation currently seen among older people and among people not living at the cultural center. That is because younger people at the center will feel more comfortable with Japanese at such a time as the resuscitation of Ryukyuan is begun.

32 An unavoidable issue in today's society will also be how the orthographic system interacts with computers, typewriters, and typesetting. We may also include issues such as the recognition of writing by artificially intelligent systems, and if we do, we would be hard put to imagine why the choice of a mixed *kanji-kana* orthography would make any sense, since language recognition systems would have to be unduly complex to handle the problems, whereas it would be straightforward to design language recognition software for any other writing system at all, but especially for romanization (see below). See Unger (1987) for a critique of the Japanese writing system, and of attempts to use it in advanced language recognition systems.

33 Or, cf., e.g., Iha (1974), where a typographically simple orthography is employed.

34 Should it seem bizarre that an East Asian polity should have a roman orthography, simply recall that Vietnamese is written using romanization.

35 *Han'g!luUl* were, however, not wholeheartedly adopted by Koreans until this century -- interestingly enough, at the time that Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910 (Quinones 1983).

36 Cf. KKKJ 1963:51-52, and the plentiful examples in that dictionary interspersed in the text proper.

37 For more information in English on Okinawan writing systems, see Serafim (1991).

38 Cf. Nakamoto 1990:89 for an example of a short text written out by him in *katakana*, complete with word spaces. (See below for word spaces.)

39 That such a book should have been written at all is in itself groundbreaking.

40 Unfortunately Funatsu also adopts a mixed *kanji-hiragana* orthography, no doubt influenced by Japanese. This is not at all necessary. But see below for a compromise solution.

41 That is not to say that ambiguities do not exist in all languages. But people deal with them without resorting to special writing conventions, both in speech and in writing.

42 In any case, the pro-*kanji* argument using homonyms is quite

overblown, even for Japanese.

⁴³ At least two such films have been made by Takamine Gô so far. I, for one, would like to know whether an Okinawan-language script for the film exists, and just how it was written out, since that would constitute a de facto attempt at orthography for something that right now has no official orthography.

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