

Kyushu dialects and the difference between Northern and Southern Ryukyuan languages

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It is evident that within the Ryukyuan language group there is a large linguistic gap between the Northern and Southern Ryukyuan languages. However, the origin of the North-South difference within Ryukyuan has not been discussed much thus far. Grammar is more conservative in character compared to lexicon and phonology. When comparing Ryukyuan with the Kyushu dialects, it can be established that some of the features of Southern Ryukyuan date back to Proto-Japano-Ryukyuan, and that Northern Ryukyuan has certain features in common with Kyushu dialects. We argue that the linguistic gap between Northern and Southern Ryukyuan can be attributed to two large-scale migrations from Kyushu to the Ryukyu Islands.