Ryukyuan languages are divided into six different regional languages: Amami, Kunigami, Okinawan, Miyako, Yaeyama, and Yonaguni, according to the UNESCO’s classification presented in 2009. Two of these six Ryukyuan languages -- Kunigami and Okinawan -- are the languages originally spoken on Okinawa Island, the homeland of most of the Uchinaanchu in Hawai‘i. While a number of Okinawan immigrants to Hawai‘i were from the areas where Kunigami was spoken, the degree of recognition of Kunigami appears not to be as high in the Okinawan community in Hawai‘i.

“Rikka, Uchinaa-nkai!” is the only Uchinaaguchi (Okinawan language) textbook written in English (or in Portuguese) which targets the descendants of Okinawan immigrants, mostly those fluent in English (or Portuguese). However, “Rikka, Uchinaa-nkai!” only provides one example of the varieties of languages spoken on Okinawa Island, and neither teaches nor deals with Kunigami. This talk will discuss the history and characteristics of “Rikka, Uchinaa-nkai!” and will discuss the possibility of the “Neo-Okinawanization” that textbooks like “Rikka, Uchinaa-nkai!” tend to promote. It will also introduce some of the linguistic characteristics of Yambaru Hougen (northern Okinawa dialects). Lastly, from the perspective of descriptive grammar, I will point out the key role of “Rikka, Uchinaa-nkai!” and propose strategies to protect and preserve Ryukyuan languages.

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Date: March 3, 2017
Time: 5-6:30 pm
Place: Tokioka Room (Moore Hall 319)