

On “Modern (Standard) Japanese” within the history of the Japanese language

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In this talk I will give a condensed overview over the history of the Japanese language and outline the major changes that have taken place in the language since its first attested stage. On that background I will discuss the place of Modern Japanese within the overall history of the language. I will present and discuss some material produced by Jesuit missionaries in Japan around 1600. This material is important for evaluating the provenance and formation of Modern Japanese and more particularly for answering two questions concerning Modern (Standard) Japanese:

1. Is there a significant break in tradition between the Kansai based language reflected in most pre-modern written sources and the Tokyo based contemporary standard Japanese?
2. Has Japanese changed significantly since the beginning of the 17th century?