

The World of Chu Nom and Mojikyo (文字鏡)

Representatives from Mojikyo Institute

FURUYA Tokio 古家 時雄; Vice president of Mojikyo Institute

YATAGAI Tsuneo 谷田貝 常夫; President of NPO Mojikyo-Net

TANIMOTO Sachihito 谷本 玲大; Counselor of Mojikyo Institute

We are very happy to have this opportunity to make an introduction about the Mojikyo.




I What is Mojikyo?

Mojikyo is a Database of the numerous Kanji 漢字 characters which have its root in China and have been used in Southeast Asia after being transformed in many cases. Furthermore, Mojikyo contains a Research Engine, a very sophisticated and comprehensive one. The numbers of the collected Kanji in Mojikyo are as shown below.

II Short History of Kanji

There are many characters in Southeast Asia which have been derived from Kanji. Now we are going to look through the history of those characters.

Mincho Kanji 明朝	110,000
Oracle Bone signs 甲骨文	3,300
Sanscrit 梵字	4,200
Tangut script 西夏文字	6,000
Seal style characters 篆書	10,000
Total	133,500

Vietnam	Century	China	Korea	Japan
	15 b.c.	(Oracle Bone character) 甲骨文 		
	3 b.c.	(Bronze Vase character) 金文		
	1 b.c.	(Seal style) 篆書 		
Kanji imported as the ruler-nation's character	2 b.c.	(Semi-cursive characters) 行書 	Kanji imported	
	5		Rito reading and Korean Kanji invented	
	6			Kanji officially imported

Tang's dictatorship in Vietnam	7	(Kaishu style) 楷書 鷄	Dictator system by China	
	8		Civil Servant's test by Kanji	
	9			Kana, an original letter system inaugurated
Han Viet sound invented	10			
Chu Nom invented	13			
Use of Chu Nom recommended	14			
	15		Hangull, the Korean original characters invented	
Westerners' use of Alphabet for Vietnamese language	16			Appearance of the first book using Roman Alphabet appeared
Romanization enforced by the French	20	Making of Simplified Kanji Characters	Single use of Hangull	

III Languages of Vietnam and China, and of Korea and Japan

The Chinese language consists of uni-syllable words and is isolative, and as the Vietnamese language has the constitution similar to the Chinese one, the incorporation of the Chinese Kanji is not very difficult. Because the isolative languages involve no words with grammatical function, the word order becomes very important.

On the otherhand, the Korean and Japanese language are very different from those of China and Vietnam. They are said to have the characteristic nature of Altaic language and are the agglutinative language (Their syllables are very simple. The 'r' sound and difficult-to-pronounce consonant do not appear as the initial sound of a word, and the connection between words is so weak that they can make a sentence as long as one wishes.) Because of their characteristics, it was quite difficult to adapt Kanji to Japanese and Korean. For the purpose of adaptation they invented the unique methods in Korea and in Japan. One is Rito and the other is Kana. By the use of them, one could notate the grammatical particles which have not existed in Chinese and Vietnamese, and thus manage to change the Chinese word order into their own. Let us compare the Chinese sentence to the Japanese one.

我未見君 = 我 未だ 君を 見ず

IV The language inherent to a nation, and its Internationality

a The identity of ethnic language

A nation in many cases is a group of people who uses the same language. Though they have used the same Kanji in Vietnam, Korea and Japan, they have not only changed the sound of Kanji by inventing

Kun (translated) reading but also the new shapes of Kanji. Chu Nom is the typical example of the new -shape Kanji. Among Chu noms, there are the characters which borrowed only the sound of Kanji, as well as the new characters which combine the sound part and meaning part of Kanji.

b Internationality of Kanji

However, almost 60 percent of the vocabulary in Vietnamese, Korean or Japanese is said to have been born from Kanji. Accordingly, when a sentence includes such Kanji, our understanding of a sentence in any of those language is a little easier.

Sometimes, the pronunciation of a words is similar among those languages like the words 注意 or 國語, and we can know the meaning of the words through pronunciation too, from association.

And the shapes of the characters are sometimes identified too. We the Japanese may catch the meanings of such Chu Noms like 歪 or 疒 through their shape, and such words like 吧 暮 辭 麪 are also understandable if we come to know the principle of Chu Nom character making.

On such grounds, we suggest that if all the nations willingly use Kanji in their sentences, our mutual understanding will be enhanced considerably.

V The use of Kanji in computer

As if taking hints from the relations between 字儒 (Chu Nho) and 字喃 (Chu Nom), we the Japanese made the particular Kanji character similar to Chu Nom from the traditional Chinese characters utilizing the principle of Kanji construction. These new characters are used daily by the Japanese as Kokuji (國字), but they are not used by the Chinese..

For example,

Kokuji “畑” means the dried slash-and-burn field by its two parts “火 fire” and “田 rice puddle” .

Kokuji “辻” means the crossroad.

Quite by chance, you can find the characters of the same shape in Chu Nom.

Chu Nom “畑” means the light from the meaning part of “火 fire”, and the sound comes from “ 田 den”.

Chu Nom “辻” means the number ten from the sound part of “十 muoi”, and “十 ten” is the meaning part.

Let us show you another example of Japanese Kokuji.

“働” was invented in Japan. It means “labor” or “人 man and 動 motion”, and this character was exported back to China along with many other Kanji made in Japan (Kokuji) . The Japanese have invented many new Kanji of this kind by combining the separable Kanji parts into single character which we can both pronounce and decipher.

The Mojikyo system created by us can denote all the parts of a Kanji broken down analytically. The purpose of the breakdown made on every Kanji is to identify other character easily by using the broken down parts.

For example, let find out the characters which include the part ”動 to move”. 14 characters are found quite easily, and the 3 characters among them are Chu Nom such as,

「働(&M080075;)」

「働(&M063361;)」

「働(&M063340;)」

