OLD JAPANESE
EARLY WRITING IN JAPAN AND OLD JAPANESE SOURCES
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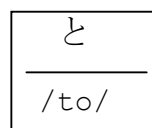
1. WRITING
1.1 Types of writing
Before addressing writing in Japan it is necessary to say a few words about writing in general. Writing is a *representation* of language: Elements of writing represent, or stand for, elements of language. Depending upon the nature of the linguistic elements which elements of writing stand for there are in principle two types of writing: First, writing which represents those elements of language which *carry* meaning: words or morphemes. This is *logographic* writing. Second, writing which represents those elements of language which *distinguish* among elements carrying meaning: phonemes or phonological units of greater or smaller extent. This is *phonographic* writing. Below, these two types of writing are illustrated with examples from NJ. (a) shows logographic writing, with 時 standing for the word which has the sound shape /toki/ and the meaning 'time'; 時 does not stand primarily for the meaning or the sound shape, but for the word, linguistic sign, which comprises both. (b) exemplifies phonographic writing, with と standing for the syllable /to/;

と can thus be used to write any occurrence of /to/ regardless
of the word of whose sound shape /to/ forms part.

                (a)   (b)

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┌─────────────┐
│ 時          │
│ ┌─────────┐ │
│ │ /toki/  │ │
│ │ ─────── │ │
│ │ 'time'  │ │
│ └─────────┘ │
└─────────────┘
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┌─────────────┐
│ と          │
│ ─────────── │
│ /to/        │
└─────────────┘
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Note that actual orthographic systems and practices rarely, if
ever, limit themselves to one of these types of writing. Thus
DeFrancis (1984) convincingly argues that Chinese, which is the
stock example of logographic writing, not only has a strong
phonographic element, but further that this is more prominent than
the logographic element. Conversely, most writing systems have
a certain logographic element, including the use of alphabet
writing to write English; for example, *red* and *read* (past tense
of the verb 'to read') are written differently although they are
homophonous. The practice of putting spaces between words also
contributes an element of logography to alphabet writing.

1.2 Introduction of writing in Japan; early writing culture
The Japanese were exposed to written matter as early as mid-Yayoi.
Thus, inscribed Chinese coins have been unearthed in excavations
of sites dating from the first century AD. There is no evidence
of any awareness of the function of writing at that early stage,
however, and it is likely that also the characters which appear
on mirrors and other artefacts produced in Japan through the third
and fourth centuries were simple ornaments, in imitation of those
found on articles from the continent. To all appearances, writing
as such, in the form of Chinese Classics, was introduced into Japan
early in the fifth century as part of the great cultural influx
from Paekche. Kojiki (Philippi 1968, chapter 104) and Nihon Shoki
(Aston 1896, book X, chapter 10) recount this event as the advent
of the scribes Wani and Akichi in the years Ôjin 15 and 16 (now
thought to be early in the fifth century, possibly 404-5; the
traditional dating is 284-5). For some time, writing remained in
the hands of hereditary professional scribes (*fubito*) who were
of continental heritage. Through the sixth and seventh centuries
Sinitic culture, including Chinese Buddhism, flowed into Japan
through Paekche. In the course of this, written Chinese assumed
enormous importance in matters of state, philosophy, and religion.
Any serious engagement with such matters required knowledge of
written Chinese. Likewise, writing was for some time equivalent
with writing in Chinese, and in fact, a form of Classical Chinese
remained the medium for much serious writing well into the modern
period. Also composition of Chinese poetry became highly regarded
and remained so long into the medieval period. The oldest surviving
poetry anthology in Japan is *Kaifûsô* (ca. 751) which is a
compilation of Chinese poetry written in Japan. One reason for

the scarcity of Japanese sources from the 9th century is that literary writing in Chinese became very popular and almost replaced writing in Japanese.

1.2.1 Reading Chinese; ondoku, kundoku

As the importance of reading Chinese increased, so did naturally the study of the Chinese language. This study focused for many on the ability to read and interpret important Chinese texts. In the course of widespread acquisition, a standardized reading pronunciation of Chinese, which underwent some modification compared with the original, arose resulting in a Sino-Japanese sound system, somewhat removed from the model and adapted to native habits of pronunciation, but not identical with the native sound system. This may be likened, for example, to the Englishman's school pronunciation of French.

Reading and reciting Chinese texts ('*kanbun*') in Sino-Japanese is known in Japanese as *ondoku*, 'sound reading'. Ondoku contrasts with *kundoku* 'meaning reading' which consists in translating Chinese into Japanese. It is thus not really a way of 'reading' a text, but it has come to be thought of in that way. *Kanbun kundoku*, the practice of translating Chinese into Japanese rather than reading it in the Chinese, probably gained currency through the seventh century. Through time systems of annotating Chinese texts to facilitate their translation into Japanese arose, such as marks indicating the translated word order, the socalled *kunten*.

By extension, this gave rise to an involuted practice of writing Japanese by translating it into Classical Chinese with the purpose of translating the resulting text back into Japanese (or 'reading' the text in Japanese), sometimes providing conventionalised orthographic clues to doing so in the form of *kunten*. This has further led to a confusion – prevalent today in Japan – of written Chinese and Japanese. *Kanbun*, which properly signifies writing in Classical Chinese, is often thought of as a form of Japanese which requires some transposition to be 'read' in Japanese (in reality translated into Japanese). When trying to understand this, two factors must be kept in mind: First, early writers were bilingual in written Chinese and Japanese. Second, writing itself was from the outset associated with Chinese. Thus for a person with Japanese as his native language, both writing and reading would very often involve some element of translation, into Chinese when writing and into Japanese when reading.

1.2.2 Sinograph readings: on-*readings* and kun-*readings*

Study of Chinese has always for many been equivalent to the study of Chinese characters, *sinographs*. Focusing in this way on individual sinographs, the two ways of 'reading' Chinese texts has resulted in sinographs acquiring what is often thought of as two kinds of Japanese 'readings': The '*on*-reading' of a sinograph is its codified Sino-Japanese sound value, i.e. the adapted Sino-Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese, or Sino-Japanese, word or word part which the sinograph stands for. The '*kun*-reading' of a character, on the other hand, is originally a Japanese gloss

for a Chinese word written by that character. More generally, the kun-reading of a character is the sound shape of a Japanese word(part) associated with that character. Today, kun-readings are fully conventionalized and Japanese sinograph dictionaries will list the authorized kun-readings of each character. Needless to say, this was not the case in the Old Japanese period where there was much fluidity in the association of Japanese words with sinographs.

1.3 Writing in Japanese
The earliest attestation of writing in Japanese dates from the fifth century, but it is not until the middle of the seventh century that writing in Japanese became widespread. Throughout the Old Japanese period Japanese was written entirely be means of sinographs.

1.3.1 Adaptation of Chinese script
It is not known when or how the Chinese script began to be used to write Japanese. Nor is it clear by what stages this took place. It *is* clear enough, however, that it makes little sense to consider this from a purely Japanese perspective. This development should be seen within the wider context of the adaptation within the Sinitic cultural sphere of Chinese script to write local languages, which took place earlier on the Korean peninsula than in Japan. There is ample evidence, in the form of orthographic 'Koreanisms' in the early inscriptions in Japan, that the writing practices employed in Japan were modelled on continental examples; later texts with Koreanisms include the epitaph from the grave of Ô Yasumaro, the compiler of Kojiki. It is quite clear that scholars from the Korean peninsula, particularly Paekche, played an essential role in the development of writing in Japanese by introducing, practising (as scribes), and teaching methods of writing already in use on the Korean peninsula. It is important to appreciate, however, that the presence of identifiable 'Koreanisms' in a text simply means that it incorporated writing practices developed on the continent; it says nothing about where, by whom, or indeed, in which language the text was written. Whether specific early texts were written by first, second, or third generation 'immigrants' or by 'Japanese' is a question which presumes notions of nation and ethnicity entirely inappropriate to the time and the circumstances. A more interesting question, but one we are unlikely ever to be able to answer, is whether early logographic texts, such as the *Hôryûji Yakushi nyorai* statue inscription, are in fact written in Old Japanese and not in Old Paekche or some other form of Old Korean.

Chinese script may be adapted to write other languages either logographically or phonographically. Pre-alphabetic writing in Korean comprises the following three main types: (a) pure logographic writing, with sinographs used for lexical words, but with no indication of grammatical particles or morphology (the socalled *sekichey* 'Gelöbnisschrift'). (b) Logographic writing, with conventionalized logographic writings for grammatical elements (*itwu* 'clerk readings'). (c) Logographically written

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lexical items supplemented by phonographically written grammatical elements (*hyangchal*). These types are all found in the Old Japanese text corpus. It is likely that the correspondences in specific types of writing on the continent and in Japan reflect a common continental source rather than parallel developments and there is therefore little sense in trying to reconstruct an independent course of evolution of adapting Chinese script to write Japanese. It is possible, however, to identify two writing practices which are not documented in Korean sources and which seem to be independent developments which took place in Japan: (a) writing extensive text passages entirely or mostly phonographically, reflected in the widespread use of *man'yôgana*; (b) distinguishing orthographically between lexical and grammatical elements, as in *senmyôgaki*.

1.3.2 Logographic writing of Japanese
The principle for logographic adaptation of Chinese script is that you represent a word with a character which stands for a Chinese word which is semantically or referentially similar to the word you wish to write. In a sense, you translate the word you want to write into Chinese and use the character which stands for the resulting Chinese word. Simplistically put, you take the meaning associated with a character with no regard to its sound value. For example, 犬, which in Chinese stands for the word *qu/n* 'dog', could be, and today is, used to write the Japanese word *inu* 'dog'; or it could be used to write the English word *dog*. In particular, logographic use of sinographs to write another language is closely linked to the practice of translating Chinese into that language, i.e. *kanbun kundoku* and its continental models. *Kanbun kundoku* provided important input into the adaptation of Chinese script to write Japanese: in the first instance by providing an association between the Japanese language and writing itself, and second by linking individual sinographs up with Japanese vocabulary items which could then be written by these sinographs.

1.3.3 Incipient logographic writing; 'hentai kanbun'
Both in Japan and Korea, early materials include inscriptions written in something like Chinese, but with the order of sinographs to some extent reflecting Korean or Japanese syntax, as well as with certain uses of grammatical elements not found in Chinese. It is thought that such texts generally reflect attempts to write Korean or Japanese rather than lack of competence in Chinese. The result are texts which by the looks of them neither are in Chinese or in Korean or Japanese. In Japanese such texts are said to be written in *hentai kanbun* 'anomalous Chinese (writing)' or *waka kanbun* 'Japanized Chinese'. *Hentai kanbun* can be taken to refer to any text which in some way deviates from the norms of Classical Chinese, but it is mostly used more narrowly about texts which are thought to have been intended to represent Japanese. Such texts are characterised by some measure of Japanese word order and/or some expression of Japanese grammatical elements. In later periods, intricate systems of conventions evolved for writing and reading Japanese in this way. The earliest extant text in Japan thus written is the *Hôryûji Yakushi nyorai* statue (second half

of the 7th century); also the main text of the Kojiki (712) is written in this way. Texts in *hentai kanbun* can include phonographically written material, but before anything else, *hentai kanbun* and its continental model typify the first steps towards logographic writing of local languages by means of sinographs. It is clear that the evidential value concerning the Japanese language of texts written in *hentai kanbun* is very limited.

1.3.4 Phonographic writing of Japanese
Phonographic writing makes possible a precise and unambiguous recording of linguistic forms, something which is not possible to the same extent in logographic writing. The principle for phonographic use of sinographs is that you represent a sound sequence - usually a syllable - with a character otherwise used logographically to write a word whose sound shape is similar to the syllable you want to write. Simplistically, you take the sound value (or reading) associated with a sinograph with no regard to its meaning. For example, 弥 which stands for the word *mí* 'full, fill, more' in Chinese, could be used to write the syllable /mí/ in Chinese regardless of the word in which it occurs. Or it could be borrowed to write the sound sequence /mi:/ in English, or /mi/ in Japanese. Thus for example, in both Chinese and Japanese the loan word meaning '(Catholic) mass' borrowed in the late 16th century from Portuguese *missa* is written 弥撒, standing for Chinese *mísa*, Japanese *misa*. In China itself there is a long tradition for transcribing foreign names and words whose sound shape is thought to be important in this way. That was for example the case with the religious terminology of Buddhism when it was introduced into China,1 or with the recording of foreign words in Chinese histories.
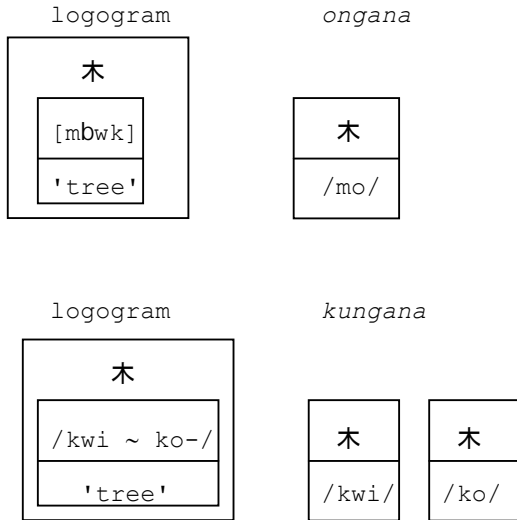
1.3.5 Man'yôgana
Sinographs used to write Japanese phonographically are termed '*man'yôgana*' after their extensive use in the Man'yôshû. Use of man'yôgana continued long into medieval times, also after the emergence of the simplified kana characters in the Heian period. Sometimes the term 'man'yôgana' is mistakenly used to refer to the entire orthography of the Man'yôshû, but this is wrong on two counts: First, 'man'yôgana' refers exclusively to phonographic writing; and second, man'yôgana are used also in other texts.

It is customary to distinguish between two basic types of *man'yôgana*, depending on the provenance of their sound values: *ongana*, used on the basis of their *on*-readings; and *kungana*, used on the basis of their *kun*-readings. This is illustrated below with 木 which was used both as an *ongana* and as a *kungana*. Logographically, this character wrote words meaning 'tree' and the like. It was used as a *kungana* for the syllables /ko/ and /kwi/

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1 Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese, but important concepts and terminology in them were rendered phonographically because their sound shape was thought to be related to their function.

because the Old Japanese word meaning 'tree' had the variants *ko- ~ kwi*. It was used as an *ongana* for the syllable /mo/ because the phonetic manifestation of the Chinese word meaning 'tree' was similar to the phonetic manifestation of the Old Japanese syllable /mo/.

logogram   *ongana*

木
[mbwk]
'tree'

木
/mo/

logogram   *kungana*

木
/kwi ~ ko-/
'tree'

木	木
/kwi/	/ko/

Below are given some more examples of man'yôgana.

Sinograph	**ongana**	Early Middle Chinese	**kungana**	OJ word
比	**/pi/**	pjiʰ/bjiʰ; pji& bji		
肥	**/pwi/**	buj		
怡	**/mye/**	mjib&		
売	**/mye/**	mav jʰ, mɛːjʰ		
米	**/me/**	mej&		
古	**/kwo/**	k]&		
許	**/ko/**	x b &		
子	**/si/**	tsv&/tsi&	**/kwo/**	*kwo* 'child'
木	**/mo/**	mbwk	**/ko, kwi/**	*ko- ~ kwi* 'tree'
八	**/pa/**	pb t/pɛːt	**/ya/**	*ya* 'eight'
田	**/de/**	dɛn	**/ta/**	*ta* 'paddyfield'

In a very general sense, sinographs were used as *ongana* on the basis of a perceived phonetic similarity between the OJ syllables they represented and their Chinese pronunciation. There are two points to be made in that regard: (a) It is not clear whether this 'Chinese' pronunciation was Sino-Japanese, a variety of Sino-Korean, or a variety of Chinese, even less so, from which period. Both Sino-Japanese and Sino-Korean from the eighth century and earlier are unknown. Early Middle Chinese (*c.* 601) is available in a number of reconstructions; I follow Pulleyblank's (1984) reconstruction here. (b) In addition to phonetic and phonological considerations, it is likely that scribal tradition brought along from the continent by scribes, as well any number of other 'extra-phonological' factors, played an important part in the choice of sinographs to act as *ongana*. Consider for example the

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sound values (including the NJ on-readings) of 売 (EMC:
*maʋjʰ/meːjʰ; Go-on: *me*; Kan-on: *bai*), 米 (*mejʹ& mai; bei*), and
怡 (Miyake *myibʠ (= Pulleyblank mjibʹ&; mi; bi*). It is clear that
売 has sound values far more similar to 米 than to 怡, yet 売 is
used, like 怡, as an ongana for the syllable /mye/, as opposed
to 米 which is used to write /me/.

1.3.6 Mixed writing; senmyô-gaki
Many, if not the majority of, Old Japanese texts are written in
a mixture of phonographic and logographic writing. Whereas some
mixed texts have no clear functional differentiation between
phonograms and logograms, others mainly use phonograms to write
grammatical elements and logograms to write lexical words. A
distinctive way of writing which has become known as *senmyô-gaki*
'Edict-writing' (after its use in the Senmyô), is a mixture of
logographic and phonographic writing in which phonographically
written grammatical markers were written in smaller size
characters than the rest of the text. *Senmyô-gaki* is a refined
writing system, indicative of a sophisticated grammatical
understanding of the language, bearing witness to the effort that
went into developing methods of writing Japanese. It is similar
to the mixed writing of modern Japanese, in the sense that both
exhibit a high degree of orthographic distinction between lexical
words and grammatical elements. *Senmyô-gaki* is usually thought
to have developed as an aid to recitation.

Senmyô-gaki is usually associated with Senmyô and Norito which
are the main texts written in this way. It is, however, not
exclusive to them, but is found in other texts as well. Both *mokkan*
and archival records from the mid eighth century show that the
practice of distinguishing in size between characters used
phonographically for grammatical markers and others was well
established by that time, but it is not clear how far back this
type of writing dates, and thus if all Senmyô and the Norito were
originally recorded in this way. Thus *mokkan* from the second half
of the seventh century include texts in writing which otherwise
is very similar to *senmyô-gaki*, but without a distinction in size.

1.4 Problems of decipherment
Writing is a representation of language and reading consists in
reconstructing a linguistic specimen, a text, from its written
representation, i.e. decoding the text. It thus requires knowledge
of the 'code of transmutation' employed when a text was written
down, i.e. transmuted into writing. Although reading is
commonplace and we tend to think little of it, it is in principle
a complicated process. This is clear when we approach texts
representing an older language stage or an unknown language with
the purpose of establishing what the texts might mean or what the
language might be like. This is very different from mapping our
knowledge of a language unto a written representation of a text
in order to recover it. Individual OJ texts exhibit some degree
of consistency in their orthography, but viewed as a whole the
OJ orthography is enormously complicated. This holds in particular

for the orthography of the main source of the OJ language, the Man'yôshû which, as mentioned below, is not a single text, but a compilation of texts. The complexity of the OJ orthography means that deciphering the OJ text corpus is no simple matter and there are in fact still many obscure points despite a long philological effort.

1.4.1 Polyvalence and equivalence
The main regular problems of decipherment are posed by the polyvalence and equivalence of sinographs: (a) Sinographs used to write OJ were *polyvalent* in several respects. First of all, they could be used as logograms or as phonograms. As shown in the examples above, sinographs used as phonograms could be used as *ongana* or as *kungana* and some were used as *kungana* for different syllables (this mostly confined to different variant forms of one word). When used as logograms, sinographs could be used for different OJ words. For example, 去 (EMC *k^hb 去 'go away, depart') could stand for the words *sar-* 'leave' or *yuk-* 'go'. (b) On the other hand, some sinographs were *equivalent* in the sense that one linguistic unit could be represented by several different sinographs. For example, the word *yuk-* 'go' could be represented logographically with amongst others 行 (*paʋjŋ/pe:jŋ 'walk, go'), 逝 (*dʁiaj^h 'pass away, die'), 去 (*k^hb 去 'go away, depart'), or 往 (*wuaŋ 往 'go'). The origin of such usage is the translational inequivalence between Chinese and Japanese: several OJ words could be used to translate 去, and vice versa several Chinese words could be translated by OJ *yuk-*. Finally, each syllable could be written phonographically by a number of different sinographs; for example, in the Man'yôshû more than 20 different sinographs are used as *man'yôgana* for the syllable /ka/.

The problems of decipherment posed by polyvalence and equivalence cannot be solved on the basis of the texts alone. However, the main texts were read and copied through time and annotated in order to facilitate reading when in later periods the language and the orthography became obsolete. There is thus a tradition concerning these texts which formed the point of departure for a long and thorough philological effort of decipherment; and today the phonographically written portions of the OJ texts are deciphered to general satisfaction on most points of significance.

1.4.2 Reading tradition
Reading tradition gives voice to the logographically written portions of the Old Japanese texts. Undoubtedly the traditional readings are in many cases correct, in the sense that they reflect the words and word forms which were originally intended in a text. Strictly speaking, however, the readings constitute hypotheses about the texts; often probable hypotheses, well founded on sound knowledge of the language and on tradition, but all the same hypotheses which mostly remain unverifiable. Generally, we cannot *know* which words are represented in an older logographically written text. On this background it is obvious, but still enormously important to make clear, that no argument about the

phonology or morphology of Old Japanese can be based on logographically written text portions and their traditional readings. They can provide valuable clues in matters of syntax, but also in this area caution must be exercised.

1.4.3 Rebus writing
A special and intriguing problem is posed by obscure rebus writings, employed in particular in the Man'yôshû. Two well known examples will suffice here. The first is found in M 9.1787 where a form of the word *ide-* 'emerge, come out' is written by the five characters 山上復在山 which stand for words meaning 'mountain top again exist mountain', in Chinese forming a sentence 'there is a mountain on top of another mountain', or 'there is a 山 on top of another 山', in reference to the graph 出 which is more conventionally used to write *ide-* and which does look like a 山 on top of another. The second, from M 11.2542, has *nikuku* (the Infinitive of the adjective *niku-* 'hard') written by 二八十一, where 二 is a regular *ongana* for /ni/, but 八十一, '8-10-1' here standing for a word meaning '81', is used for the syllables /kuku/ because the character for the word meaning 'nine' was used as *ongana* for the syllable /ku/ and 81 is equal to 9 x 9. The orthographic playfulness evident in these writings highlights that writing in Japanese in many cases was no practical matter of communication, but a leisure activity.

1.5 Examples
The following are three examples of Old Japanese writing, the first poems in the Kojiki and in the Man'yôshû, respectively, and the first sentence in the first Engishiki Norito. The texts are transcribed using CAPITALS for logograms, *plain italics* for *kungana*, and ***bold italics*** for *ongana*. The Kojiki text is written entirely in *ongana*; it consistently uses the same sinographs for each syllable, e.g. 都 for /tu/ in *tatu* 'rise', *tuma* 'wife', *tukuru* 'make'. The Man'yôshû text is written in a complicated mixture of logographic and phonograpic writing, using different ways of writing the same words, e.g. *moti* 'holding' written once phonographically as 母乳, with an *ongana* and a *kungana*, and once logographically as 持. The Norito text is written almost exclusively logographically, with only the complementizer *to* written in a small size *ongana*.

Kojiki (K 1)
Text: 夜久毛多都伊豆毛夜幣賀岐都麻碁微爾夜幣賀岐都久流曾能夜幣賀岐
Interpretation:

夜 久毛	多都	伊豆毛	夜 幣 賀岐	都麻 碁微 爾
ya-kumwo	***tat.u***	***idumwo***	***ya-pye-gaki***	***tuma-gomwi ni***
eight-cloud	rise.Adn	Izumo	eight-fold-fence	wife-enclosing Dat

夜幣賀岐	都久流	曾 能 夜 幣 賀岐	
ya-pye-gaki	***tukur.u***	***so no ya-pye-gaki***	***wo***
eight-fold-fence	make.Concl	that Gen eight-fold-fence	Excl

'The many-fenced palace of Idumo # Of the many clouds rising - # To dwell there with my spouse ## Do I build a many-fenced palace: # Ah, that many-fenced palace!' (Philippi 1968:91)

(NJ reading: *yakumo tatsu # Izumo yaegaki # tsumagomi ni # yaegaki tsukuru # sono yaegaki o*)

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Man'yôshû (M 1.1)
Text: 篭毛與美篭母乳布久思毛與美夫君志持此岳尓菜採須兒家吉閑名告紗根
Interpretation:
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篭	毛 與	美 篭	母乳	布久思 毛 與	美夫君志
KWO	*mo yo*	*mi*KWO	*moti*	*pukusi mo yo*	*mibukusi*
basket	Foc Emph	Hon-basket	hold.Inf	shovel Foc Emph	Hon-shovel

持	此	岳 尓	菜	採 須	兒
MOTI	KO	NO WOKA *ni*	NA	TUMA-*su*	KWO
hold.Inf	this	Gen hill Dat	greens	pinch-Hon.Adn	child

家	吉閑名	告 紗根
IPYE	*kika*na	NORA-*sa*ne
home	ask.Desid	tell-Hon.Desid

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'Girl with your basket, with your pretty basket, with your shovel, with
your pretty shovel, gathering shoots on the hillside here, I want to
ask your home. Tell me your name!' (Levy 1981)
(NJ 'reading': ko mo yo # miko mochi # fukushi mo yo # mibukushi
mochi # kono oka ni # na tsumasu ko # ie kikana norasane)

Norito (EN 1)
Text: 集侍神主祝部等諸聞食登宣
Interpretation:
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「集侍	神主·	祝部	等、	諸
"UGWONAPAR-ER.U	KAMUNUSI,	PAPURI-RA,		MOROMORO
gather-Stat.Adn				

聞食」	登	宣
KIK-OSI-MYES.E"	*to*	NOR.U
hear-Hon-Hon.Imp	Comp	say

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'Hear me, all of you assembled kamunusi and hafuri. Thus I speak.'
(Philippi 1990:17)
(NJ 'reading': ugonawareru kannusi, hoorira, moromoro
kikoshimese to noru)
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2. SOURCES
2.1 Japanese words in foreign sources

The Chinese history *Wei Zhi* (*Chronicles of Wei*, in Japanese known
as *Gishi*; a history of the Wei state (220-65), compiled towards
the end of the third century) has a section, *Wo ren zhuan* (*Account
of the Dwarfs*; Japanese *Wajinden*), which describes people living
on the Japanese archipelago, also citing 53 phonographically
transcribed words from the language spoken by these people. These
words are often thought to be from an earlier stage of Japanese.
Almost all are proper nouns or titles, with little known about
their meaning. Among them are 邪馬台 and 卑弥呼 which have entered
Japanese folklore in the forms *Yamatai* (usually thought to
represent an earlier form of *Yamato* (OJ *yamato*), an autochtonous
name for Japan) and *Himiko* (a legendary early female ruler; no
OJ attestation). It is unlikely that the words in *Wo ren zhuan*
are anything but ad hoc transcriptions made by Chinese; they should
not be thought to represent conventional writings of these names
and words. Indeed, the Japanese are not thought to have been
literate in the third century. The transcriptions have not been
deciphered, i.e. their sound values are not known, and they are
not easily decipherable. The material against which they must be

checked are the latest reconstructions of Old Chinese, which are, however, in themselves hypothetical. Even if assuming sound values close to those which the characters had when used to transcribe OJ words more than four centuries later, only in some cases do the words resemble known OJ words. (Miller 1967:12-27 is an optimistic attempt to identify these transcriptions with Japanese vocabulary, well representing the mainstream of traditional scholarship on the subject.) It is not even evident that these words represent a language related to OJ. It is, in short, not possible to draw any conclusions about 'Japanese' on the basis of the transcriptions in *Wo ren zhuan*.

2.2 Early inscriptions, wooden tablets, and archival records. The oldest sources of Japanese in Japan are inscriptions made on stone and metal (swords and mirrors), the earliest thought to date back to the 5th century. The Japanese in these inscriptions is limited to proper names in texts otherwise written in Chinese or *hentai kanbun*. The following three are the most important early inscriptions:

Inariyama tumulus sword inscription. ?471 (/?531). Excavated from a tumulus in Saitama Prefecture. Thought to be the oldest inscription made in Japan. The inscription is dated as a cyclical year which corresponds to 471; another possibility is 531. It is the longest early inscription, consisting of 115 characters, 46 of which are used phonographically to write Japanese personal and place names. The inscription employs features which are characteristic of early writing in Korea in terms of the shape of characters and the choice of characters used as phonograms; it also contains a significant grammatical Koreanism (中 used as a locative marker).

Eda Funayama tumulus sword inscription. Late 5th or early 6th century. Kumamoto Prefecture. The text is thought to have been 75 characters long, but because of lacunae only 64 are legible. It is in Chinese, but with the same grammatical Koreanism as the Inariyama tumulus sword inscription. Has Japanese names written phonographically. However, the writer is identified as 張安 (Zhang An), clearly someone of continental origin.

Yakushi nyorai statue inscription. Probably second half of 7th century. Hôryûji Temple in Nara. 90 characters. Oldest extant inscription written in *hentai kanbun*; it has both some Japanese word order and some logographic expression of Japanese grammatical elements.

There also exists a large corpus of more than 10.000 early archival records on paper (*komonjo*) from the eighth century; out of these, however, only two are written phonographically in Japanese.

Recently, a large number of wooden tablets with writing on them (*mokkan*) dating from mid seventh to mid eighth century have been unearthed in different parts of Japan, the majority, however, around the old capital areas (Nara, Fujiwara). The existence of

wooden tablets has been known for a while, but it is only in the post war period, and in particularly through the 1980s and 1990s, that large numbers have come to light. The total of these wooden tablets is now in excess of 150.000. They are usually short, often written in Japanese. The writing ranges from labels through writing practice and scribbles to letters. *Mokkan* constitute the earliest evidence of popular writing in Japanese, showing that writing in Japanese was widespread in the second half of the seventh century.

Inscriptions archival records, and wooden tablets are valuable for their authenticity. They are, of course, enormously important to historians. They also provide important information about early use of writing in Japan and about the development of writing in Japanese. However, on the whole, these materials contribute little to our understanding of the Old Japanese language as such when compared with the texts of the eighth century. It should be mentioned, though, that *mokkan* offer glimpses of language use which seems spontaneous and informal. The language of *mokkan* may thus be thought to be closer to the spoken language of the time than the edited and polished language in the preserved 8th century texts. For all that, *mokkan* may at best serve as a corrective to our knowledge of the Old Japanese gleaned from other sources.

2.3 8th century texts.
The bulk of our sources of Old Japanese are texts from the eighth century. They have been handed down in copy and many competing manuscripts exist, all of which date from later periods. A philological tradition going back to the Tokugawa period, however, has made it possible to arrive at critical editions which are widely accepted as representing fairly well the texts of the eighth century. The standard editions of these texts are those in Iwanami's NKBT series.

As mentioned, the texts comprise both logographic and phonographic writing. It goes without saying that it is the phonographically recorded texts or text portions which are the most important for the study of the language. It is important to keep in mind that no argument about the phonology or morphology of Old Japanese can be based on the traditional readings of logographic passages. They can provide valuable clues in matters of syntax, but also in this area caution must be exercised. There are two main genres of text in the material: poetry and prose. Stylistically, these texts are either in highly formal, ritualistic prose or in a poetic form, either songs which were handed down (and thus subject to some edition both in that process and in that of recording) or elaborate poems. In any case, the language of these texts is probably in some aspects quite far removed from contemporary spontaneous and informal spoken language. In addition, there are Japanese vocabulary items and proper names in texts written in Chinese or in *hentai kanbun*, in the form of phonographically written items inserted directly into the texts, or explanatory notes written as part of the original text (as opposed to later additions). Needless to say, this in the main provides information about the OJ lexicon, not its grammar. Notes and glosses added onto Chinese

texts in order to facilitate their interpretation and translation into Japanese, the socalled *kunten shiryô*, constitute important material for the study of EMJ. Although the practice probably caught on already towards the end of the Nara period, surviving materials from that time are insignificant. The main sources for the Old Japanese period (and a few other texts cited) are mentioned in the following.

2.3.1 Poetry

The main corpus for OJ is the poetry in Kojiki, Nihon Shoki, and Man'yôshû. This constitutes the material on which most of our knowledge about OJ rests. The poetry comprises large portions written phonographically, thus making possible a comprehensive study of the phonology and morphology of OJ. Because of the general nature of poetry and the specific rhythmic constraints of Japanese poetry, with its dominant 5-7 syllable metre, these materials provide less information about syntax.

Kojiki (*Record of ancient matters*). History, compiled 712. Written in *hentai kanbun*, but contains 112 songs, as well as proper names and vocabulary, written phonographically.
[Index: Takagi and Tomiyama 1974; translations: Philippi 1968; Chamberlain 1883].

Nihongi (/*Nihon Shoki*) (*Chronicles of Japan*). History, compiled 72O. Written in Chinese, but contains 128 songs, as well as proper names and vocabulary, written phonographically.
[Text and index (songs and Japanese vocabulary): Ohno 1953; translation: Aston 1896].

Man'yôshû (*Collection of myriad leaves*). This is the main source of the Old Japanese language in terms of quantity. It is a poetry anthology of more than 4.500 poems in 20 volumes; it was compiled in late Nara or early Heian; the latest poem is dated 759; the earliest poem is usually thought to date back to the middle of the fifth century. The poems are in Japanese, written both phonographically and logographically; most poems present a mixture of phonographic and logographic writing, but the proportion differs enormously. The poems in the anthology are drawn from several sources, both older and contemporary. It is thus not a single text, but a collection of texts from different times; consequently there is no overall orthographic consistency. There is, however, a substantial, identifiable portion representing early Nara OJ and another representing mid Nara OJ. Eastern dialects are also represented: Vol. 14 contains *Azuma uta*; vol. 20 has 93 *Sakimori uta*.

The following is the traditional periodization of the poetry in the Man'yôshû (period '0' is songs (like those in K and NS), whereas periods 1 onwards are considered poetry proper).

0	456 - 628
1	629 - 672
2	672 - 710
3	710 - 733

4   733 - 759

Volumes: I 456 – 707; II approx. same; III *zôka*, 690 – 729, contains poems up to 745; IV poems from all four periods, also up to 745; V 728 – 733; VI 723 – 744; VII almost entirely anon., probably periods 2 and 3; VIII much overlap with vols. III, IV, VI in authors and thus dates; IX from period 1 up to 744; X anon., dates unknown, probably from Asuka, Fujiwara into Nara; XI probably from Asuka, Fujiwara to early Nara; XII probably from Asuka, Fujiwara to early Nara; XIII has been thought to belong with vols. I and II as the oldest, probably up to early Nara, but has a number of archaic elements in metric and other form; could be archaisms rather than genuinely old; XIV *Azuma uta*, difficult to date because of their oral nature; XV 730s (excepting some traditional poems); XVI difficult to date, but is said to contain poems going back to Asuka and Fujiwara; many travelogues. Vols. XVII - XX are said to be the poetic diary of Ôtomo Yakamochi: XVII 731 – 748; XVIII 748 – 750; XIX 750 – 753; XX 753 – 759, contains 93 *sakimori uta*.

[Index: Masamune 1929; translations: Pierson 1929-64; partial translations of note: Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkôkai 1940, Levy 1981].

2.3.2 Prose
The prose corpus consists of ritualistic texts: Norito and Senmyô; it is smaller and less informative than the poetic corpus. It is mainly written logographically, with some vocabulary and grammatical endings noted phonographically. It is particularly in the study of some aspects of OJ syntax, especially the use of noun particles, that these texts play a role. They also contribute to lexical studies and give an insight into ritual uses of language. The Norito in particular are thought to reflect quite early features of the language. Both Norito and Senmyô are inexhaustively studied; Bentley 2001a is an important, recent study of Norito.

Norito. Liturgies. Comprises ritual prayers and blessings (aka *yogoto*). 27 are recorded in volume 8 of the Engi-Shiki ('Procedures of the Engi Era', completed 927). Written in *senmyoo-gaki*. Bentley argues convincingly for the existence of an older and younger layer among the Norito. Are usually held to have no evidential value concerning the *koo-otu* syllable distinctions, because of the date(s) of recording; do not differentiate tenues and mediae. Bentley maintains, however, that the oldest Norito reflect kô-otsu values, even for $mo_1 … mo_2$.
[Index: Okimori 1995; translations: Bock 1972, Philippi 1990; grammar: Bentley 2001a].

Senmyô. (*Imperial edicts*). Recorded in the Shoku Nihongi (797; history, covering 697-791). Written in *senmyôgaki*.
[Text and index: Kitagawa 1982; translations: Zachert 1950, Snellen 1934-7].

2.3.3 Others
Fudoki (*Records of wind and earth*). Topographies compiled on the order given in 713 by the emperor Genmei to the governors of the provinces to provide information about local products and produce, the fertility of the land, and folklore. Five Fudoki have survived

- only one (Izumo) in its entirety: *Hitachi Fudoki* (compiled between 714 and 718); *Izumo Fudoki* (completed 733); *Harima Fudoki* (compiled around 715); *Bungo Fudoki*, *Hizen Fudoki* (compiled in the 730's). Izumo Fudoki is written in *hentai kanbun*, the rest in Chinese; they contain phonographically written poems (some 20), place names and vocabulary.
[Index: Soda 1966; Watanabe 1979; translation: Aoki 1997].

Bussokuseki-uta (*Footprints of the Buddha poems*). 21 poems inscribed on a stone at the Yakushi-dera in Nara. The provenance is unknown as is the date of inscription, but it is thought to date after 753. Written entirely phonographically, mostly keeping tenues and mediae distinct and maintaining the kô-otsu distinction (except for $to_1 … to_2$; $no_1 … no_2$). Valuable because of its authenticity.
[Text, index, translation: Miller 1975]

Kakyô Hyôshiki. First poetic treatise (*kagakusho*) written in Japan. 772, by Fujiwara Hamanari; in Chinese, but with phonographically written poems. ZdB says there are mistakes in *kô-otsu* values, but according to Bentley (2001a:35) these are mostly because of undistingushed *mo*.
[Text, annotation, index: Okimori *et al.* 1993]

Kogoshûi ('Gleanings in Old Words'). History; compiled 807 by Imbe Hironari (then in his seventies); mostly in Kanbun, but contains two poems and phonographically written vocabulary.

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