

## The Role of *kunten* Materials in the Process of Sino-Japanese Hybridization\*

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### *Abstract:*

The history of the Japanese written language can be seen as a main frame of different registers of the native language – *buntai* 文体 – intersecting at various levels with a foreign one, namely classical Chinese. Although these diatypes are different, they are all part of the same lexico-syntactic repertoire shared by the community and whose use is determined by context. Hence, the type of code in use depends on the field and purpose of the message. In recent years the field has been enriched by a number of thought-provoking theories. However, *buntai* studies still constitute a complex and intricate discipline within which numerous questions remain to be answered. This paper will a) provide a review of existing scholarship on the role played by *kunten* materials in defining the formation process of Sino-Japanese hybrid writing – *wakan konkōbun*; b) outline, for the first time, the main differences between the two most controversial forms of written language, Japanized written Chinese – *waka kanbun* – and Sino-Japanese hybrid writing, and redefine their role within the history of the Japanese written language; c) survey textual evidence to show how an embryonic form of Sino-Japanese hybrid writing existed before the twelfth century, proving that the evolution of *wakan konkōbun* is not directly linked to the formation of middle Japanese.

*Keywords:* Kanbun kundoku, Kunten Materials, Sino-Japanese Hybridization, Wakan konkōbun

\* This study presents some of the findings of the research project “*Wakan konkōbun* in the Insei period: The Case of *Gukanshō*” 院政期の和漢混淆文の研究 - 『愚管抄』を中心に (Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research – C (General) 2014-2016, project director: Valerio L. Alberizzi). Unless otherwise indicated, English translations are by the author.

## 1. Sino-Japanese Hybridization

### 1.1 Sino-Japanese Hybrid Writing and its Relation with *kunten* Materials

The history of the Japanese written language can be seen as a main frame of different registers of the native language – *buntai* 文体 – intersecting at various levels with a foreign one, namely classical Chinese. Although these diatypes are different, they are all part of the same lexico-syntactic repertoire shared by the community and whose use is determined by context. Hence, the type of code in use depends on the field and purpose of the message.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years the field has been enriched by a number of thought-provoking theories. However, *buntai* studies still constitute a complex and intricate discipline within which numerous questions remain to be answered. The issue of classification is one of them and, along with the lack of an established scholarly vocabulary in the field, probably one of the most urgent.

This is particularly true for what is probably one of the most controversial issues in the history of the Japanese language: *wakan konkōbun* 和漢混淆文 – the Sino-Japanese hybrid writing. The highly hybridized nature of this written form has made it difficult to classify and has spurred a lively debate.

The term has been used to indicate any style combining classical Chinese with Japanese in one way or another.

The vast array of terms used to indicate this type of written language is in and of itself testament to the complexity of the task involved with defining its characteristics. To name but a few, such terms include *kojikitai* 古事記體, *wakan kōzatsubun* 和漢交雜文, *wakan majiribun* 和漢交り文, *konkōtai* 混交體 (Konakamura 1879: 289-298), *wakan konwabun* 和漢混和文 (Mikami and Takatsu 1890: 27-28), *zatsubuntai* 雜文体 (Yano 1886: 245), *wakankon'yōbun* 和漢混用文 (Yamamoto 1965: 355), *gazoku setcchūtai* 雅俗折衷體 (Tsubouchi 1981: 140-159), and, more recently, *wakan yūgō* 和漢融合 (Ogawa 2008: 119).

Terminological issues aside, the most common explanation considers *wakan konkōbun* as an independent form of the written language which developed since the twelfth century. Scholars argue that *wakan konkōbun* is based on the syntaxes of both native and Sinicized forms of the written language from the tenth century which integrate a vernacular lexicon – i.e. *zokugo* 俗語 – with non-orthodox Chinese features, both lexical and syntactic. As such, the Sino-Japanese hybrid would be on a par with such traditional forms of the Japanese written language as *wabun* 和文, *kanbun* 漢文 and *waka kanbun* 和化漢文. The general trend among scholars has been to consider *wakan konkōbun* as an independent type of written language. However, since the

<sup>1</sup> In linguistics, a diatype is a type of language defined by its purpose, identified by peculiar choices in vocabulary and grammatical constructions, etc. (Gregory 1967: 177-197).

1980s others have challenged its role as an independent form of the Japanese language (Yamada 1979: 257-277).

Be that as it may, as a practice of textual decodification *kanbun kundoku* 漢文訓読 undeniably represents a fundamental step in the assimilation of the native language within a Sinicized context. By means of an autochthonous register, the Chinese characters of the original text were given a corresponding Japanese reading whenever necessary. This was achieved by way of the so-called *kanaten* 仮名点, small gloss phonograms inserted to the right of the main characters in the text. By glossing the inflectional morphemes associated with Japanese verbs and adjectives, the same technique also allowed to reconcile the differences between an isolating language, Chinese, and an agglutinative one, Japanese.

Japanese scholars currently acknowledge the significance of these glossed materials – *kunten shiryō* 訓点資料 – for synchronic and diachronic studies of the Japanese language. However, the results achieved in this field by of a small group of specialists who began their research in the early twentieth century are still relatively new.

Moreover, while recent theories have been of great interest, one cannot deny that the study of *kunten* materials is still a narrow field not only in the West but also in Japan, and carries almost no practical application in the humanities, especially the history of language and literature. The difficulty in establishing a common basic knowledge of *kunten* materials among specialists may also be attributable to the fact that most scholars consider *kundoku* as an expedient devised by and for those who cannot read a Chinese text in the original, which de facto places *kundoku* in a lower “didactic” place within the studies of Chinese and its reception among foreign cultures.

There is no denying that one must tread lightly in using these sources as evidence for the historical evolution of the Japanese language, not only because the glosses were provisional notations jotted down quickly in the interlinear spaces of the main text, but also because they reflected the proficiency (or lack thereof) of the glossator, and as such errors were bound to occur. Nevertheless, the study of *kunten* materials still brings to light a highly refined system with a long tradition, a system that has played a key role in the evolution and formation of the Japanese language and that, over the centuries, has sustained an array of intellectual activities many of which are worthy of scholarly consideration.

Aside from the distinctive traits of the language – *kuntengo* 訓点語 – revealed in *kunten* materials, the usefulness of these sources extends to other forms of pre-modern writing as well. Therefore, the language of *kunten* materials plays a fundamental role in defining the features of almost all forms of written Japanese that show a contamination between Sino-Japanese and autochthonous writings, forms such as *waka kanbun* or the aforementioned *wakan konkōbun*.

In the pages that follow, I will:

a) provide a review of existing scholarship on the role played by *kunten* materials in defining the formation process of Sino-Japanese hybrid writing – *wakan konkōbun* – in order to expand our understanding of the field and to stimulate future inquiries;

b) outline, for the first time, the main differences between the two most controversial forms of written language, Japanized written Chinese – *waka kanbun* – and Sino-Japanese hybrid writing, and redefine their role within the history of the Japanese written language;

c) survey textual evidence to show how an embryonic form of Sino-Japanese hybrid writing existed before the twelfth century, proving that the evolution of *wakan konkōbun* is not directly linked to the formation of middle Japanese.

### 1.2 Wakan konkōbun, a *Brief History*

A brief history of the evolution of the Japanese written language would set its beginning in the eighth century. At that time, a flourishing interest in Chinese culture resulted in the development of a written language highly indebted to continental models. This was followed, in the tenth century, by the emergence of a new native style codified in the refined literary prose of the period. Later on, the turbulent years of the late twelfth century brought great change not only in society but also in language: with the spread of Buddhism among commoners, *literati* monks and scholars began to create of a new, hybrid form of expression, merging the rational Sinicized variety of the eighth century with the tenth-century lyrical native style, and paving the way for pre-modern Japanese.

This historical junction is usually identified with the emergence of the Sino-Japanese hybrid writing. For example, *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature* reads:

Wakan konkōbun 和漢混淆文. A style mingling Japanese and Sinified readings of characters, words, and elements, as opposed to *wabun*, which uses more or less exclusively Japanese readings and diction. The mixed style is represented most beautifully in classical literature by the Heike Monogatari, but in effect this mixed style is the basis of much classical writing and of modern Japanese.

(Miner *et al.* 1985: 303)

In a reference work on medieval history and culture Deal offers a similar yet more accurate definition:

Japanese-Chinese mixed style (*wakan konkōbun*) is, strictly speaking, a form of classical Japanese. It is a hybrid writing style that intermingles Japanese and Chinese character readings, grammar, and lexical items. Japanese-Chinese mixed style evolved

out of the practice of adding marks to Chinese texts in order that they could be read more easily by Japanese readers. This style developed in the medieval period and was used into the Edo period. Classic examples of compositions in this style are two Kamakura-period texts, *Heike monogatari* (*Tale of the Heike*) and *Hojoki* (*An Account of My Hut*).

(Deal 2006: 246)

These definitions clearly rely on Japanese sources and are based on theories that are well accepted among Japanese scholars. The works that Japanese scholars more often tend to associate with the formation and evolution of the Sino-Japanese hybrid writing are war tales – *gunki monogatari* 軍記物語 – random jottings – *zuihitsu* 隨筆 –, travel diaries – *kikō* 紀行 – and anecdotal literature – *setsuwa* 説話 – literary genres that emerged in, or flourished since the twelfth century.

Among the best known twelfth-century texts are the war tales of *Hōgen monogatari* 保元物語 and *Heiji monogatari* 平治物語, anecdotal literature in the league of *Uchigikishū* 打聞集 and *Konjaku monogatari* 今昔物語集, and the transcribed sermons of *Hokkeshuhō* ipp'yakuza kikigakishō 法華修法一百座聞書抄. Thirteenth-century works include *Heike monogatari* 平家物語, the most famous and most poetic of all war tales, but also the random jottings of *Hōjoki* 方丈記 and travel diaries such as *Kaidōki* 海道記 and *Tōkan kikō* 東関紀行. Finally, the war tales of *Taiheiki* 太平記 and *Gikeiki* 義経記 and *zuihitsu* such as *Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草 are examples of fourteenth-century literary works written in late Sino-Japanese hybrid.

Yamada Yoshio's 山田孝雄 (1873-1958) path-breaking works on *Heike monogatari* played a pivotal role in strengthening the connection between the epic account of the struggle between the Taira and Minamoto clans and *wakan konkōbun* as its representative literary style. In *Heike monogatari* 平家物語考 (Reflections on *Heike monogatari*, 1911) as well as in the monumental *Heike monogatari no gohō* 平家物語の語法 (The language of *Heike monogatari*, 1914) Yamada praises the text of *Heike monogatari* as the most elegant form of Sino-Japanese hybrid writing.

This form of written language, he contends, perfectly harmonizes Chinese vocabulary – *kango* 漢語 – and the native syntactical structure in one single context, bringing the development of Sino-Japanese to fruition and making it into a full-fledged form of expression. Also distinctive to the *Heike monogatari*, Yamada argues, are a highly refined prose consisting of antithetical constructions based on alternating seven-five syllables (characters) as well as the use of vernacular. Following a thorough examination of all extant copies of the manuscript conducted on behalf of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Yamada concluded that the most accurate text was the copy of an early manuscript from the second and third years of Enkyō 延慶 (1309-1310) known as *Enkyōbon Heike monogatari* 延慶本平家物語 (Yamada 1915: 24-25).

Coincidental as it may be, one cannot help but notice the similarity between Yamada's descriptions and the main features of *wakan konkōbun* as outlined earlier. Especially influential to later theories may have been Yamada's thesis on the role played by alternate prose, a style reminiscent of the Six Dynasties (220-589 AD) parallel prose – i.e. *pianwen* 駢文. Most twentieth-century works identify this elaborate style, which makes extensive use of such poetic techniques as parallelism, sound patterns, and allusion, as one of the distinguishing traits of the Sino-Japanese hybrid prose. The best-known examples thereof are the opening Sections of *Heike monogatari* and *Hojōki*. Let us take a closer look at the *Heike*:

祇園精舎の鐘の聲、諸行無常の響あり。娑羅雙樹の花の色、盛者必衰のことはりをあらはす。おごれる人も久しからず。只春の夜の夢のごとし。たけき者も遂にはほろびぬ、偏に風の前の塵に同じ。

'The sound of the Gion Shōja bells echoes the impermanence of all things; the color of the śāla flowers reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline. The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind.'

(Kindaichi *et al.* 1959: 83; Engl. trans. by McCullough 1988: 23)

A quick look at the structure of these famous lines reveals certain features that a Japanese reader would have perceived as new and different in tone with respect to existing literature. First, as Yamada points out (1915: 24-25), we have four distinct couplets that parallel each other in structure: *Gion shōja no kane no koe | shogyō mujō no hibiki ari; Shara sōju no hana no iro | jōsha hissui no kotowari wo arawasu; Ogoreru hito mo hisashikarazu | tada haru no yume no gotoshi; Takeki mono mo tsui ni wa horobinu | hitoe ni kaze no mae no chiri ni onaji*. Numerous quotations from religious works contribute to the creation of a highly Sinicized tone: *shogyō mujō* 諸行無常 is a direct quotation from the first verse of a *gāthā* – *ge* 偈 – a poetic composition included in the *Mahāparinirvāna sūtra* – *Nehangyō* 涅槃經.<sup>2</sup> The corresponding phrase in the following couplet, *jōsha hissui* 盛者必衰, is taken from *Ninō kyō* 仁王經, an apocryphal *sūtra*. Finally, the second phrase in each of the last two couplets is a free adaptation from *Ōjō kōshiki* 往生講式, Eikan's 永觀 (1033-1111) treatise on the proper rituals to be observed during the ceremonies of Pure Land Buddhism.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the syntactical structure and the word

<sup>2</sup> 諸行無常、是生滅法、生滅滅已、寂滅為樂 (諸行は無常なり、是生滅の法なり、生滅滅し已つて、寂滅を樂と為)。'All things are in a state of incessant change, this is the law of birth and death. When birth and death come to the end one can enjoy the perfect enlightenment'. Cf. Takakusu (1930: 1, 204).

<sup>3</sup> 一生は是風前之燭。萬事皆春夜之夢。(一生は是風前之燭、萬事は皆春の夜の夢)。'One life is like a light in front of wind, all things are like a dream in a spring night'. Cf. Takakusu (1930: 84, 880).

order are clearly Japanese, and as such they offset the strong continental nuances of the text.

Lexical choices should also be considered. In the opening lines of the *Heike monogatari* Chinese vocabulary is limited to eight words, all of which come from the religious works cited in the first two couplets. Their presence is offset by the juxtaposition of native vocabulary – *wago* 和語 – based on this parallel pattern:

祇園精舎の鐘の聲、諸行無常の響あり。娑羅雙樹の花の色、盛者必衰のことはりをあらはす。

☐☐gen ☐gen ☐, ☐☐gen ☐verb. ☐☐gen ☐gen ☐, ☐☐gen ☐verb.  
☐ = Chinese vocabulary (*kango*); ☐ = Japanese vocabulary (*wago*)

The second pair of couplets, however, features native vocabulary only, with the single exception of the word *gotoshi*. This comparative auxiliary is extensively featured in *kunten* materials but never appears in the ornate native prose of the tenth and eleventh centuries which uses the expression *yō nari* やうなり to convey the same concept. Here we have the juxtaposition of two expressions pertaining to two different linguistic registers, one Sinicized (*gotoshi*) and one native (*onaji*). Though not identical, they carry virtually the same meaning.

おごれる人も久しからず。只春の夜の夢のごとし。  
たけき者も遂にはほろびぬ、偏に風の前の塵に同じ。

☐☐etop ☐. ☐☐gen ☐gen ☐gen ☐.  
☐☐etop ☐☐. ☐☐gen ☐gen ☐abl ☐.  
☐ = Chinese vocabulary (*kango*); ☐ = Japanese vocabulary (*wago*)

The skilled use of these techniques is what Yamada and other scholars praised as the well-balanced literary quality of the Sino-Japanese hybrid prose.

Unfortunately, most definitions of *wakan konkōbun* rely solely on the opening paragraphs of these famous works of literature and fail to investigate the linguistic features of this written form as they appear throughout the entirety of the texts.

### 1.3 Wakan konkōbun *Features and waka kanbun*

As pointed out in 1.1, in its literal meaning of “mixed Sino-Japanese writing”, *wakan konkōbun* indicates any linguistic form that combines classical Chinese and Japanese in a variety of ways. A proper definition of *wakan konkōbun* and other hybrid forms is key to the formulation of a basic taxonomy of the Japanese written language in historical perspective, and as such it tends to be a contentious issue.

With the exception of a cluster consisting of utterances in Chinese that conformed to the lexical, syntactical, and orthographical conventions of

continental prose – *kanbun* – and of their Japanese equivalent – *wabun* –, it is difficult to categorize all Sino-Japanese hybrid forms produced over the centuries.

The main problems one encounters in the analysis of these texts include their large numbers as well as the variety of syntactic and lexical irregularities within each work. These inconsistencies stem, among other things, from such factors as convenience in practical use and varying levels of proficiency (or lack thereof) in writing in Chinese. Still, the increased reliance on these diatypes helped strengthen the features of the native Japanese language against the background of a Sinicized context.

A more balanced and comprehensive approach to the issue of taxonomy would give proper relevance to the two so-called “pure” forms of writing, Chinese and native, while considering *waka kanbun* as a third, independent entity, one that played a pivotal role in the development of the written language by enabling the exchange of linguistic features between the other two.

As a written form which preserved the visual outline of a Chinese text but was very different from it in lexicon and syntax (particularly in word order), *waka kanbun* has found a place in most modern taxonomies of the Japanese language, for it showcases the orthographical features of a Chinese script but is closer to the native language in phrase structure. Unfortunately the same is not true for *wakan konkōbun*, which has always been considered a linguistic riddle to be used at a scholar’s convenience in the formulation of various theories.

As Table 1 shows, a comparison of the main features of these two written languages highlights common traits as well as obvious differences.

Table 1. Main Features of *waka kanbun* and *wakan konkōbun*

	<i>Waka kanbun</i>	<i>Wakan konkōbun</i>
Syntax	Word order is mainly based on <i>kanbun kundoku</i> with the exception of some passages where the word order follows the Japanese syntax	Word order is mainly based on Early Middle Japanese with the exception of some passages where it follows Sinicized forms of writing
Vocabulary	Vocabulary is mainly based on Sinicized forms of writing	Vocabulary is based both on native and Sinicized forms of writing, with a slight prominence of the latter
	Use of Sino-Japanese vocabulary created in Japan ( <i>wasei kango</i> 和製漢語)	Use of Sino-Japanese vocabulary created in Japan ( <i>wasei kango</i> 和製漢語)
	Use of formal nouns ( <i>keishiki meisshi</i> 形式名詞)	Use of formal nouns ( <i>keishiki meisshi</i> 形式名詞)
	Use of honorific language ( <i>keigo</i> 敬語)	Use of honorific language ( <i>keigo</i> 敬語)



Writing systems	Pure logographic script	Composite logographic and phonogrammatic script
	Some characters are used with functions that are different from old and middle Chinese	Some characters are used with functions that are different from old and middle Chinese
	Honorific auxiliary verbs and other elements usually rendered in the text by means of a Chinese character	Honorific auxiliary verbs and other elements usually rendered in the text by means of Chinese characters or phonograms
	Japanese lexicon is written in Chinese characters	Japanese lexicon is written both in Chinese characters and phonograms
	Use of phonograms to record words other than people, place names or proper names	

Compared to the strongly Sinicized tone of *waka kanbun*, this blend of native and continental expressions was certainly easier to read in private as well as before an audience. At the same time, as Table 1 shows, Japanized written Chinese and Sino-Japanese hybrid writing share more than one feature, which may have made it difficult to tell one from the other.

One may say that *wakan konkōbun* resulted from a native reader's interpretation of a text in Japanized written Chinese. This interpretation was then integrated with a growing number of syntactical, lexical, and orthographic Japanese features. Because the Sinicized traits of both forms share as a common basis the language mirrored in the *kunten* materials, it becomes difficult to tell one from the other. For this reason, the study of *kunten* materials is fundamental in determining the characteristics of Sino-Japanese hybrid writing, as the following pages will illustrate.

## 2. The Contribution of *kunten* Materials to the Studies of *wakan konkōbun*

### 2.1 Vocabulary and its Use

As shown in Table 1, the vocabulary of Sino-Japanese hybrid writing is based both on native and Sinicized forms.

Ki no Tsurayuki's 紀貫之 (868-945) preface to the *Kokin wakashū* 古今和歌集 (905) provides a case in point. Entirely written in *hiragana* 平仮名, this text is often referred to as the first complete document in pure Early Middle Japanese, the one that marks the beginning of Japanese poetic criticism in the literary circles of the time as distinct from the otherwise prominent Chinese poetic forms. However, Japanese scholars have demonstrated that

the preface is not an original composition, but a sort of adaptation inspired by the foreword to the *Classic of songs – Shijing* 詩經. A closer analysis does indeed reveal the presence of a vocabulary used exclusively in the glossed readings of Chinese manuscripts.

こゝに、いにしへのことをも、哥のこゝろをも、しれる人、わづかにひとり、ふたり也き。しかあれど、これかれ、えたるところ、えぬところ、たがひになむある。  
‘After that there were one or two poets who knew the ancient songs and understood the heart of poetry. However, each had strengths and weaknesses’.

(Saeki 1958: 99; Engl. trans. by Rodd 1996: 43)

そのほかに、ちかき世に、その名きこえたる人は、すなはち僧正遍昭は、哥のさまはえたれども、まことすくなし。たとへばゑにかけるをむなを見ていたづらに心をうごかすがごとし。

‘Among the others, one of the best known of recent times was Archbishop Henjō, whose style is good but who lacks sincerity. His poetry is like a painting of a woman which stirs one’s heart in vain’.

(*Ibidem*: 100 and 43)

大伴のくろぬしは、そのさまいやし。いはどたきどおへる山人の花のかげにやすめるがごとし。

‘Ōtomo no Kuronushi’s songs are rustic in form; they are like a mountaineer with a bundle of firewood on his back resting in the shade of the blossoms’.

(*Ibidem*: 101 and 46)

たとひときうつりことさり、たのしびかなしびゆきかふともこのうたのもじあるをや。

‘Times may change, joy and sorrow come and go, but the words of these poems are eternal’.

(*Ibidem*: 103 and 47)

Adverbs, connectives, and auxiliaries such as *tagahi ni* たがひに, *tatoheba* たとへば, *ga gotoshi* がごとし, *ihaba* いはば, and *tatohi* たとひ are generally absent from the court literature of the Heian period, but are frequently used in the glossed readings of Chinese texts. While it is difficult to prove that their presence in the preface is directly linked to vernacular readings of the *The Classic of Songs*, one may argue that such a vocabulary was at least known to the author, who used it almost naturally.

The same introduction features other unique traits, for instance old Japanese words with glossed text vocabulary that reveal a close relationship between the author and official documents that used a diatype uncommon in everyday parlance.

Tsurayuki is also the author of the *Tōsa nikki* 土左日記 (935), a pioneering work written in a genuine native style that uses *hiragana* as its main orthographic outline. Even this work, however, is in many ways different from

the great classics of court literature and shows a strong influence of Sinicized diatypes both in terms of vocabulary and contents.

といふあひだにかちとりものあはれもしらで、おのれしさをくらひつれば、はやくいなんとて、「しほみちぬ。かぜもふきぬべし。」とさわげば、ふねにのりなんとす。

‘[...] while he was reciting the poem, the captain of the boat, a rude man who did not know the *aware* of things, having being paid enough to drink as much as he wanted, was anxious to leave immediately. “The tide has risen! The wind is blowing!”, he shouted, going on board’.

(Suzuki 1957: 30)

ころざしあるにたり。

‘He seemed to be a well-mannered and kind man’.

(*Ibidem*: 31)

あるひとのこのわらはなる、ひそかにいふ

‘The child of one of the passengers bashfully said ...’

(*Ibidem*: 33)

そもそもいかよんだるといふかしがりてとふ。

‘Tell me, then, what was your poem going to be?’, asked a person eager to hear [the child’s poem]’.

(*Ibidem*: 34)

Much in the same way as the preface to the *Kokinshū*, we see here a number of adverbs and connectives that were not generally used in tenth- and eleventh-century Japanese literary prose. Instead of *tagahi ni* or *hisoka ni* ひそかに, a text in pure Japanese would make use of such expressions as *katami ni* かたみに, *shinobiyaka ni* しのびやかに, or *shinobite* しのびて. These words all share the same semantic value, but the last three are better contextualized within a native written form. This choice cannot be simply explained in terms of a close relationship between the author and the world of orthodox Chinese. Moreover, the *Tosa nikki* features traits such as *kakari musubi* 係り結び that pertain to the vocabulary of Early Middle Japanese. A comparison with the *waka kanbun* diaries of noblemen and court officials led some scholars to postulate that Tsurayuki attempted to realize a *kana* version of this written diatype, a diatype with which he must have been well acquainted (Tsukishima 1981: 389-401). This theory would explain the presence of elements of different origins within the same context. After being properly polished, this prose paved the way for the refined, “pure” native written language of a later age.

### 2.1.1 Contrastive Dimorphic Expressions

The aforementioned passages from Tsurayuki's writings combine a vocabulary frequently adopted in *kunten* materials with a text written in compliance with a Japanese syntax rich in native expressions.

In 1963 Tsukishima Hiroshi 築島裕 (1925-2011), one of the leading scholars in the research on the language of *kunten* materials, identified two groups of words specific to a written language form and organized them in a systematic taxonomy. Tsukishima conducted a detailed survey on *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 and *Daijionji Sanzōhōshiden* 大慈恩寺三蔵法師伝, two works that epitomized the native and the Sinicized style respectively. *Daijionji Sanzōhōshiden* is a document with glosses dating back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. By comparing the lexicons of these works, Tsukishima concluded that the vocabulary of *kunten* materials and the vocabulary of Early Middle Japanese documents can each be categorized in two subgroups. The first consists of “characteristic language” – *tokuyūgo* 特有語, which indicates expressions belonging exclusively to either a Sinicized or a native written form. The second subgroup, “deployable language” or *yōgo* 用語, includes expressions which are usually associated with one of the two diatypes but can also be deployed in different contexts.

Of course, while the presence of native and Sinicized words in the same context may attest to a mixed lexical inventory, it does not tell us anything about the intentions of the author. It would be interesting to know whether the combination of native and Sinicized words was completely random or whether the choice of words followed a certain logic.

A comparison between expressions that, despite being unique to one of these written forms, share the same semantic area, would more effectively bring to light the differences between a Sinicized and a Japanese context. The coexistence of such expressions within the same text would not only attest to the existence of a Sino-Japanese hybrid writing but would also provide insights as to the intent of the text itself.

Once again Tsukishima's research provides us with valuable data. As part of his survey, Tsukishima identified one hundred and twenty-two expressions, all with the same meaning, which are characteristic of Sinicized or native diatypes. He named them “contrastive dimorphic expressions” – *nikei tairitsu hyōgen* 二形対立表現. Both Tsukishima (in his later works) and other scholars have since cast doubt on the reliability of some of these elements. Nevertheless, this group of words is still considered an important starting point for researchers.

Adverbs are a grammatical category that well epitomizes the use of contrastive dimorphic expressions in context. These words provide information about the manner, degree, place, or circumstances of the activity denoted by the element with predicative function. There exists a remarkable difference in

the use of adverbs of state (*jōtai fukushi* 情態副詞) used to indicate swiftness such as *sumiyaka ni* スミヤカニ (a word typical of *kunten* materials) and the use of the native pair *toshi* とく and *hayashi* はやく. The same goes for degree adverbs (*teido fukushi* 程度副詞) that denote a rapidly accelerating process such as the Sinicized *masumasu* マスマス and *iyoiyo* いよいよ vis-à-vis the Japanese *itodo* いとど.

Let us take a closer look at the former as used in the *Heike monogatari*.

Throughout the *Heike monogatari*, *sumiyaka ni* is used nine times: two examples are found in Mongaku's 文覚 subscription list and in the *Heike sanmon rensho* 平家山門連署, the written petition addressed by the Heike to Enryakuji 延暦寺.

殊には、聖靈幽儀先後大小、すみやかに一佛眞門の臺にいたり、必ず三真万徳の月をもてあそばん。

‘And in particular, I ask that the spirits of all who die, whether early or late, high or low, may go immediately to lotus pedestals in the true Pure Land of which the Lotus Sutra tells, and that they may be assuredly bask in the moonlight of the myriad merits of the three bodies’.

(Kindaichi *et al.* 1959: 358; Engl. trans. by McCullough 1988: 180)

これによて或は累代勳功の跡をおひ、或は當時弓馬の藝にまかせて、速に賊徒を追討し、凶黨を降伏すべきよし、いやしくも勅命をふくんで頻に征罰を企つ。  
‘Consequently, we have been honored by an imperial command to emulate the illustrious deeds of our forebears and make use of our present martial skills in order to swiftly conquer the rebels and bring the evil faction to his knees’.

(*Ibidem*: 90 and 239)

The other sentences containing *sumiyaka ni* are the following:

一院の御詔に速に追出しまいらせよと候。

‘[...] I have been ordered by the retired emperor to expel you immediately’.

(*Ibidem*: 132 and 264)

こはいかに、昔はむかし今は今、其義ならば速かに追出したてまつれとて  
‘“Nonsense!” Koreyoshi said. “The past is the past; the present is the present. If that is their attitude, we’ll chase them right away now”’.

(*Ibidem*: 133 and 265)

堂衆等師主の命をそむいて合戦を企、すみやかに誅罰 (ちうばつ) せらるべきよし、  
‘The worker-monks are preparing to give battle again in defiance of instructions from their teachers and masters. They must suffer swift punishment’.

(*Ibidem*: 195 and 86)

昔より、此所は國方の者入部する事なし。すみやかに先例にまかせて、入部の押妨をとどめよとぞ申ける。

‘Provincial officials have never invaded these precincts in the past,’ the angry monks protested. “Follow the precedents! End this violent trespass at once!”

(*Ibidem*: 127 and 49)

たとひ報謝の心をこそ存ぜず共、豈障碍をなすべきや。速にまかり退き候へ。

‘Even if you feel no gratitude, how can it be right for you to obstruct this birth? Leave immediately!’

(*Ibidem*: 219 and 102)

In the aforementioned examples, the adverb is used to express swift and stern orders and we can also assume that its pronunciation was associated with a particular tone of voice. In the remaining two examples, *sumiyaka ni* is adopted to portray almost identical situations: when Yorimasa 頼政 hastens his son Nakatsuna 仲綱 to yield his own horse to Munemori 宗盛, who demanded it insistently; and when Emperor Nijō 二条天皇 orders the wife of the retired emperor Konoe 近衛天皇 to enter his court – in this case *sumiyaka ni* is used by her father, the Minister of the Right Kin’yoshi 公能, to persuade her.

たとひこがねをまろめたる馬なり共、それほどに人のこわう物をおしむべき様やある。すみやかにその馬六波羅へつかはせとこそ給ひけれ。

‘Even if the horse were made of gold, you could not hold onto him in the face of such demands. Send him to Rokuhara at once,’ he said’.

(*Ibidem*: 291 and 143)

既に詔命を下さる。子細を申にところなし。たゞすみやかにまいらせ給べきなり。‘Argument is out of the question, now that the edict has already been handed down; you must just go as soon as possible’.

(*Ibidem*: 109 and 38)

In both cases, *sumiyaka ni* is used to emphasize feelings rooted in the speaker’s heart, as with Yorimasa’s indignation, which will eventually bring him to betray Munemori, or with Kin’yoshi’s regret for the unfortunate fate of his beloved daughter.

In other words, in the *Heike monogatari sumiyaka ni* indicates not only swiftness but also a strong resolution usually associated with grudge, grievance, orders, and commands. In this case, pronunciation played a pivotal role.

These words were especially necessary in war tales such as the *Heike monogatari*, a literary genre developed primarily to be recited aloud with the accompaniment of music. A particular intonation was probably linked to *sumiyaka ni*, and used to evoke empathy for the characters’ personal stories. This is probably one of the distinguishing features that best epitomize the so-called “literary quality” of *wakan konkōbun*.

To express swiftness in letters and correspondence the *Heike monogatari* exclusively deploys the adverb *hayaku* はやく, which belongs to a native register of the language. *Hayaku* is used only six times: in the letter with which Kiyomori 清盛 grants pardon to the Kikai ga shima 鬼界が島 exiles; in the *sanmon chōjō* 山門牒鏐, the petition to Enryakuji penned by the Miidera 三井寺 monks; in Mongaku's subscription list; in the Fukuhara imperial edict (the *Fukuhara inzen* 福原院宣); and in the reply sent to the Retired Emperor by Munemori 宗盛 on the twenty-eight day of the second month of the third year of Juei 壽永. The last example is the complaint against Tadamori 忠盛 presented by the nobles to Emperor Toba 鳥羽天皇. Since it is reasonable to assume that the formal act consisted of a written document, we can conclude that *hayaku* in the *Heike Monogatari* is purportedly used as a specific word in the formal written epistolary language.

The other native word conveying almost exactly the same meaning as *sumiyaka ni* is *toku*, the adverbial form of the adjective *toshi*.

In the *Heike monogatari* as well as in other medieval works this adverb is used both in its basic form – *toku* – and its reduplicated one – *tokutoku* – together with *tō* (*toku* → *to + u* → *tō*) and *tōtō*, the euphonic variants generated by deleting the consonant /k/. A perusal of *toku*'s and *tō*'s correspondence reveals that they appear seven and four times respectively, while *tokutoku* is used twelve times and *tōtō* thirty-two. The striking difference in use between the basic and the reduplicated forms can be explained in the light of the ability of words to convey rhythm and musicality in texts intended to be recited aloud. For example, in the entire text of the *Genji monogatari tokutoku* is used only once; it appears all but four times in the *Makura no sōshi* 枕草子.

Glosses testifying to the use of *toku* as a modifier of the variable parts of the speech in *kunten* materials are common, but there are no attested cases of the use of the corresponding euphonic variant, *tō*.

The difference between the seven sentences using *toku* and the four containing *tō* is too small to make a case for a clear distinction in their respective uses, although one can say that the former is associated with slightly more formal contexts than the latter. The correspondence of *tokutoku* and *tōtō*, on the other hand, offers an excellent case study for comparison.

*Tokutoku* is used three times as an epistolary term associated with emotional involvement and the transience of human life: in the letters to Koremori 維盛 from his sons, in the missive for Yorimori 頼盛 from Kamakura, and in Nōen's 能円 message to his wife. In passages adopting direct speech, the function of *tokutoku* as a male expression used in extremely tense and grave situations does not change.

とく々頭をとれとぞの給ひける。

'Just take my head and be quick about it.'

(Kindaichi *et al.* 1960: 221; Engl. trans. by McCullough 1988: 317)

たゞ芳恩には、とく々かうべをはねらるべしとて。

‘I ask only that you cut off my head with as little delay as possible’.

(*Ibidem*: 262 and 338)

たゞ御恩にはとく々頸をめされ候へ。

‘The only favor I want from you is a swift execution’.

(*Ibidem*: 389 and 407)

The remaining five examples capture similar situations: the words of the *kanpaku* Motofusa 基房 to the Emperor Takakura 高倉天皇, infatuated with Aoi no mae 葵前; Yoshitsune’s 義経 incitement to the crew upon setting sail during a storm; the words of Tsuginobu 嗣信 and Yoshimori 義盛 to motivate the sailors; Kiyomune’s 清宗 words upon seeing Munemori 宗盛 parting from his eight-year old boy, Yoshimune 義宗; and the words Rokudai 六代 uttered as he was parting from his mother.

*Tōtō*, on the other hand, is used in relatively ordinary situations, and in ten out of thirty-two examples it is used without the modified element.

「とう々。御房は事あやまつまじき人なれば。」とてゆるされけり。

‘“You are not the kind of man who creates problems. Go along,” he said’.

(*Ibidem*: 263 and 127)

「こゝにぶゑんのひらたけあり、とう々」といそがす。

‘We have some “unsalted” finger mushrooms. Hurry up and fix them’.

(*Ibidem*: 140 and 269)

There is only one exception when *tō* is used in lieu of *tokutoku*. Kiyomune’s last words before being beheaded contrast sharply with his father’s, who died chanting Amida’s name. This infuses the scene with a remarkably emotional aura.

「今はおもふ事なし。さらばとう」とぞの給ひける。

‘There is nothing left to worry me now. Be quick about it’.

(*Ibidem*: 371 and 396)

As the aforementioned examples indicate, adverbs of state in the *Heike monogatari* were not only selected for their specific linguistic functions but also for their musicality.

One can thus postulate that the so-called literary quality of *wakan konkōbun* was characterized by the intentional use of a relatively new group of expressions that served a dual function: one merely lexical, and one “contextual” and related to the rhythm with which they infused the narration.



## 2.2 Syntax

The coexistence of native and Sinicized vocabulary within the same document does not, in and of itself, establish the Sino-Japanese hybrid as a mature and complete form of the written language. As mentioned earlier, merging a Sinicized context with a Japanese one is an elaborate process that involves different degrees of complexity and obeys rules that cannot always be easily identified.

To be on a par with such traditional forms of the Japanese written language as *wabun*, *kanbun* and *waka kanbun*, *wakan konkōbun* must feature specific syntactical traits. Once again, research on *kunten* materials is of great help.

The identification of these traits could be pursued through two different channels: one would look at the coexistence, within the same text, of syntactical structures characteristic of both diatypes. The other would look for new structures born out of the natural merger of the two separate ways of expression, structures never before detected in the so-called “pure” forms of the written language.

Examples of the latter first appear in literary works produced around the early twelfth century such as *Uchigikishū* and other examples of anecdotal literature. The identification of these structures was made possible by research conducted on “predicative adverbs” (*chinjutsu fukushi* 陳述副詞). This adverbial category, related to the modal characteristic of the utterance, is used to establish a strong, unchangeable agreement with the predicate of the sentence to which it is connected and involves the adoption of a fixed grammatical pattern – *bunkei* 句型.

If a native text features a certain grammatical pattern [A ... B] and a Sinicized text is defined by a fixed correspondence [C ... D], then a document in Sino-Japanese should feature a concordance between [A ... D] and [C ... B]. When these crossed patterns are present in the same text they testify to the high level of completion reached by this written form.

To offer one example, *imada* イマダ is an adverb pertaining to a Sinicized context that introduces a negative clause ending with the negative suffix *zu*, meaning ‘not... yet...’. Such use is related to the interpretation of the character 未 found in the vernacular reading of a Classical Chinese text. The function of 未 cannot be expressed only with one word, but needs to be rearranged in two separate parts of the text. The character is thus read twice: first as an adverb, and second as a negative suffix in the sentence. For this reason scholars name this group of characters ‘twice-read characters’ or *saidokuji* 再読字. To help the reader decode the text properly, 未 usually bears two set of glosses: one referring to the adverbial reading – usually an *i* that stands for the *i* of *imada* –, and one indicating the negative suffix. As a result, when *imada* is used in infinitive and adnominal contexts it is defined by the following two patterns: *imada ... zu shite* and *imada ... zaru*.

However, to express the same meaning early middle Japanese texts such as *Genji monogatari* adopted a completely different pattern, one based on the link between the adverb *mada* and the variant *nu* of the negative suffix *zu*, according to the two following concordances for the infinitive and adnominal use: *mada ... de* and *imada ... nu*.

Hybrid grammatical patterns of *wakan konkōbun* are thus defined by the crossed concordance of the native adverb *mada* with the negative suffixes *zu shite* and *zaru*, and by *imada* with *de* and *nu*.

In the *Heike monogatari*, *imada* is used one hundred and fifty-six times as opposed to *mada*, which is used only three times, which hints to a strong Sinicized tone as a defining trait of the war tale. A closer look at the sentences containing an infinitive pattern shows that in two cases *imada* is related to *zu shite* and in one with *nu* according to a hybrid pattern.

いまだともかうもし奉らでをきまいらせて候

‘I have not been able to bring myself to do anything about him yet. He is still here’.

(*Ibidem*: 400 and 412)

An examination of the sentences with an adnominal structure yields an especially interesting result. Only in eight cases is *imada* used with *zaru* according to the orthodox Sinicized pattern; in twelve it is used with *nu*, which indicates the prevalence of the hybrid pattern over the native one.

いまだ死期も來らぬおやに身をなげさせん事、五逆罪にやあらんずらむ。

‘I suppose it must be accounted one of the Five Deadly Sins to make a parent drown before her time’.

(Kindaichi *et al.* 1959: 103; Engl. trans. by McCullough 1988: 35)

淀・はづかし・宇治・岡の屋、日野・勸修寺・醍醐・小黑栖・梅津・桂・大原・しづ原・せれうの里と、あふれみたる兵共、或はよろいきていまだ甲をきぬもあり、或は矢おうていまだ弓をもたぬもあり。

‘Agitated warriors came galloping from places scattered far and wide – Yodo, Hazukashi, Uji, Oka no ya, Hino, Kanjūji, Daigo, Ogurosu, Umezu, Katsura, Ōhara, Shizuhara, Seiryō no sato: some dressed in armor but not yet wearing helmets, some bearing arrows on their backs but not yet carrying bows’.

(*Ibidem*: 176 and 76)

いまだ遠からぬふねなれ共、涙に暮てみえざりければ、鐔都たかき所に走あがり、澳の方をぞまねきける。

‘Although it had not gone far, he was too blinded by tears to see it. He raced to a hilltop and beckoned toward the offing’.

(*Ibidem*: 216 and 100)

人の七八は、何事もいまだおもひわかぬ程ぞかし。

'Ordinary children do not reach the age of reason at seven or eight. Alas!'

(*Ibidem*: 320 and 159)

年月はかさなれ共、昨日今日御別のやうにおぼしめして、御涙もいまだつきせぬに、治承四年五月には第二の皇子高倉宮うたれさせ給ひぬ。

'Despite the passing of the years, he had continued to feel as though he had parted from her only yesterday or today, and his tears were still flowing when his second son, prince Mochihito, was slain in the Fifth Month of the fourth year of Jishō.'

(*Ibidem*: 401 and 206)

無間の底に墮給ふべきよし、閻魔の廳に御さだめ候が、無間の無をかゝれて、間の字をばいまだかゝれぬなり

'It has been decided by the tribunal that the Chancellor-Novice will fall to the bottom of the [Hell of Punishment] Without Intermission [Mugen] [...] Enma has written the *mu* of Mugen, but he has not put in the *gen* [intermission] yet.'

(*Ibidem*: 408 and 210)

同廿二日、新攝政殿とゞめられ給ひて、本の攝政還着し給ふ。纔に六十日のうちに替られ給へば、いまだ見はてぬ夢のごとし。

'The new regent, Moroie, was relieved of his post on the Twenty-Second, and his predecessor, Motomichi, was reinstated. For Moroie, replaced after a mere sixty days, the experience was like an unfinished dream.'

(Kindaichi *et al.* 1960: 184; Engl. trans. by McCullough 1988: 295)

白茸毛なる老馬にかゞみ鞍をき、しろぐつははげ、手綱むすでうちかけ、さきにおたてて、いまだしらぬ深山へこそいり給へ。

'He put a gold-mounted saddle and a polished bit on an old whitish roan, tied the reins, tossed them over the animal's neck, and drove it before him into the unknown mountain fastnesses.'

(*Ibidem*: 198 and 303)

行きき未いづくとも思ひ定めぬかとおぼしくて、一谷の奥にやすらふ舟もあり。

'Others hesitated in the offing beyond Ichi no Tani, as though still unable to settle on a destination.'

(*Ibidem*: 227 and 320)

いまだ卅にもならぬが、老僧姿にやせ衰へ、こき墨染におなじ袈裟、おもひいたる道心者、浦山しくおもはれけん。

'[...] a man who resembled an emaciated old monk (though he was not yet thirty), dressed in a black robe and a black surplice.'

(*Ibidem*: 270 and 343)

是も八嶋へまいるが、いまだ案内をしらぬにじんじよせよ

'I am heading toward Yashima myself, but I am not sure of the direction. Be my guide.'

(*Ibidem*: 309 and 362)

So far, researchers in Japan have identified the six patterns shown in Table 2. While this is an important step in the study of Sino-Japanized hybrid syntactical structures, the field is still young and will require more surveys in the future.

Table 2. Sino-Japanese Hybrid Writing Grammatical Patterns

	native	sinicized	sino-japanese
pattern I	<i>dani...mashite</i> だに…まして	<i>suru...ifamuya</i> スラ…イハムヤ	<i>dani...ifamuya</i> だに…イハムヤ <i>suru...mashite</i> スラ…まして
pattern II	<i>mada...de</i> まだ…で <i>mada...nu</i> まだ…ぬ	<i>imada...zushite</i> イマダ…ズシテ <i>imada...zaru</i> イマダ…ザル	<i>mada...zushite</i> まだ…ズシテ <i>mada...zaru</i> まだ…ザル <i>imada...de</i> イマダ…で <i>imada...nu</i> イマダ…ぬ
pattern III	<i>yō...nite</i> やう…にて	<i>gotoku...shite</i> ゴトク…シテ	<i>yōni...shite</i> やうに…シテ <i>gotoku...nite</i> ゴトク…にて
pattern IV	<i>e...de</i> え…で	... (ni) atawazu <i>shite</i> … (ニ) アタハ ズシテ <i>suru koto (wo)...</i> <i>ezushite</i> スルコト (ヲ) エズシテ	<i>e...zushite</i> え…ズシテ ... (ni) atawa de … (ニ) アタハで <i>suru koto (wo) ede</i> スルコト (ヲ) エで
pattern V	<i>nadoka...bekiya</i> などか…べきや <i>nadoka...n</i> などか…ん <i>ikadeka...bekiya</i> いかでか…べきや <i>ikadeka...n</i> いかでか…ん	<i>ani...nya</i> アニ…ンヤ	<i>nadoka...nya</i> などか…ンヤ <i>ikadeka...nya</i> いかでか…ンヤ <i>ani...bekiya</i> アニ…べきや <i>ani...n</i> アニ…ん

pattern VI <i>tsuyu...de</i> つゆ…で <i>tsuyu...nu</i> つゆ…ぬ	<i>katsute...kotonashi</i> カツテ…コトナシ <i>katsute...zushite</i> カツテ…ズシテ	<i>tsuyu...kotonashi</i> つゆ…コトナシ <i>tsuyu...zushite</i> つゆ…ズシテ <i>katsute...nu</i> カツテ…ぬ <i>katsute...de</i> カツテ…で
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### 2.3 Writing Systems

The history of any written language is made more difficult by the nature of the writing system(s) used to express such language. In the case of written Japanese, the features commonly used to classify the various forms of the language tend to be lexical or syntactic. However, scholars rarely distinguish between ‘style’ – *buntai* – and the orthographic forms conventionally used to identify it. In other words, the evolution of the Japanese written language as outlined in 1.2 should be presented along with a discussion of the evolution of the writing systems from *kanji* 漢字 to *kana* 仮名. One should point out that, the more the Japanese attempted to write entire texts in their own language, the more they had to rely on a phonemic script.

If one follows this approach, a different story emerges. At the beginning of its history, Japanese was an unwritten language; writing became possible only after the introduction of Chinese characters. Consequently, the first written form the Japanese learned was classical Chinese – *kanbun*. *Kanji*, an orthographic form deeply linked to the language it conveyed, were the tools used to express that writing. The tenth century kicked off the process of standardization of *katakana* 片仮名 and *hiragana*. The latter in particular found wide application in *wabun*, the new, native literary prose court ladies used to convey the innermost feelings of the human heart. The emergence of new social dynamics and the decentralization of culture in the late twelfth century resulted in the creation of a hybrid form of expression that merged the formal world of men (revolving around diatypes expressed with the aid of Chinese characters) with the lyrical one of women (heavily relying upon a pure phonogrammatic system of writing – *wakan konkōbun*).

For didactical purposes we can draw a parallel between a written language and the orthographic forms adopted therein. However, this does not mean that variations in the writing systems naturally imply discrepancies at a syntactical or lexical level.

For a long time Japanese scholars have argued there existed a relationship between a codified group of writings and the orthographies adopted to record them. Such trend is also revealed in the different taxonomies of the Japanese language that have been presented since the nineteenth century, tax-

onomies that show a combination of syntactic and orthographic approaches in categorizing the different models of classical Japanese. In this respect, the Sino-Japanese hybrid writing offers a poignant example of grammatological classification of a written diatype because, as far as writing systems are concerned, both *wakan konkōbun* and *kana majiribun* 仮名交じり文<sup>4</sup> can be understood as “mixed forms of Chinese and Japanese”.

Of course, it was the development of purely phonogrammatic writing systems such as *hiragana* and *katakana* that boosted the growth of an authentic Japanese culture and the flowering of a refined literary prose during the ninth and tenth centuries.

With the creation of *hiragana* and *katakana* – obtained respectively by the cursivization and the reduction of Chinese characters to their elemental components – the Japanese language achieved its full potential. Such potential was achieved by a multilayered orthography which involved the adaptation of a system borrowed from a foreign country combined with two different sets of native signs. Still, in its early stages this system was far from efficient as a form of expression.

In other words, a variety of systems was used across the social spectrum to convey at least three different linguistic diatypes – i.e. Chinese, Japanese and Sino-Japanese .

The main issue, then, is to define who and when used which system, as well as to identify the addressee and the context and purpose of a text; one must also determine whether the adoption of one orthography in lieu of another required specific choices at the lexical or syntactic level. According to Tsukishima Hiroshi:

The definition used so far has not always been clear, being used to indicate a text that mixes *wabun* with *kanbun* (*kundoku*) and, in most cases, adopts *kanji kana majiribun* as formal orthography. Specifically, *wakan konkōbun* indicates the style of *gunki monogatari* of the Kamakura period such as the *Heike monogatari* and *Taiheiki*. In this kind of writing, based on the syntax of Middle Japanese as seen in *wabun* and *kanbun kundoku* materials, numerous Chinese loan words (*kango*) are used alongside late Middle Japanese vernacular expressions; elements of *hentai kanbun* are also very common. In a broad sense *wakan konkōbun* can be defined as a *buntai* that merges elements of *wabun* and *kanbun kundoku*, although this sort of generalization is not always possible. One can say with certainty that *kanji kana majiribun* is a definition pertaining to the classification of writing systems while *wakan konkōbun* is a concept used in the taxonomy of contexts.

(Kokugo Gakkai 1980: 937-938)

<sup>4</sup> The precursor of modern orthography, where Chinese characters are used as semantic elements and supplemented by phonograms for inflections and particles.

A survey of the history of written Japanese reveals the presence of embryonic forms of Sino-Japanese hybrids since the very beginning of Japanese history. The evolution of *wakan konkōbun* does not seem directly linked to the development of writing systems, as variations in the practice of copying texts and manuscripts might have altered the style of a text at surface level.

Some of the texts preserved in the Shosōin 正倉院 testify to the use of a mixed semantic-phonogrammatic script since the second half of the eighth century. This 748 example is one of the oldest (Sakakura 1969: 17-26; Kotani 1971: 16-25).

是以祖父父兄良我仕奉禱留次尔在故尔海上群大領司尔仕奉止申  
是を以て、祖父・父・兄らが仕へ奉りける次に在るが故に、海上の群の大領司に  
仕へ奉らむと申す。

‘Therefore, being in direct line of descent from my grandfather, my father and my brothers who all have served [from generation to generation], I request to be placed in active service under the Governor of a district near the sea’.

(Yamaguchi 1993: 30. The highlighted characters were written in small size)

With the exception of the opening connective, an elementary Chinese structure easily reorganized to mirror the Japanese syntax, the entire text is written following the Japanese word order and features native lexical features such as honorifics. Like a modern text in *kanji kana majiri* 漢字仮名交じり, moreover, independent words are recorded by means of Chinese characters that are used semantically, while inflexive morphemes and postpositions are rendered by means of small *kanji* that are used phonetically.

The same strategy is deployed in imperial proclamations – *senmyō* 宣命 – or in *shintō* prayers – *norito* 祝詞 – where the semantic component is usually written with a Chinese character and all inflexive endings are written with small Chinese characters used as phonograms and placed to the right or center of the main column of the text. This orthographic form, known as *senmyōtai* 宣命体, appears extensively in the *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀 (797), in the *norito* of the *Engi shiki* 延喜式 (927), and in some private writings (Shirafuji 1967: 2).

The theory according to which there exists a correspondence between diatypes and orthographic forms may have been influenced by the strong visual component of the Japanese script, a script in which each sign reveals at a basic visual level the socio-cultural context within which it was adopted. Chinese characters were difficult to separate from the language they were meant to express; the same holds true for *hiragana* with the native language and for *katakana* with the Sino-centered variants. Nevertheless, this convention did not prevent Ki no Tsurayuki, Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長 (966-1028), Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 (1162-1241), as well as several anonymous writers from relying on the script they considered best suited to the specific context.

The theories of another prominent Japanese scholar, Kasuga Masaji 春日政治 (1878-1962), may lie behind the interpretation according to which *wakan konkōbun* is a mixture of *kanji* and *katakana*, as seen in medieval war tales such as the *Heike monogatari*.

Kasuga is the author of *Saidaijibon Konkōmyō saishōōkyō koten no koku-gogakuteki kenkyū* 西大寺本金光明最勝王經古点の国語学的研究, the monumental and path-breaking philological study of a copy of the *Konkōmyō saishōōkyō* 金光明最勝王經<sup>5</sup> discovered at the Saidaiji 西大寺 in Nara (Kasuga 1985). This precious *kunten* material was produced around 762 and annotated in 830. Kasuga's work demonstrates that *Konkōmyō saishōōkyō* is in fact a character-by-character rendering of orthodox Chinese. From a grammatological point of view, this document showcases the combination of a logographic system – i.e. Chinese characters – with a phonogrammatic one (*kana*) used to integrate native readings and dependent words.

Based on a study of the techniques used to render a Chinese text into Japanese with the aid of glosses Kasuga argued that an embryonic form Sino-Japanese hybrid appeared since the beginning of the ninth century (Kasuga, 1983: 246-247).

In other words, according to Kasuga the extrapolation of glosses from the interlinear space of the manuscript and the reorganization of their content into an independently coherent text gave birth to the Sino-Japanese hybrid writing, a writing which then came to full fruition with the war tales of the twelfth century.

The *Tōdaiji fujumonkō* 東大寺諷誦文稿 from the first half of the ninth century shows an intermediate step in this process. Whereas in *Konkōmyō saishōōkyō katakana* script for interlinear glosses is smaller and secondary to the main body of the text, in *Tōdaiji fujumonkō* both logographic and phonetic signs are equal in size, just as in the modern language. It would have been natural for a monk to use the orthographical form he was more familiar with – i.e. a mixture of *kanji* and *katakana* – to record annotations and personal thoughts on the message he would then deliver to the public. Freed from specific linguistic conventions, our monk would naturally use in the same context the expressions he deemed best suited to his purpose, mixing native and Chinese vocabulary along with a combination of native and non-orthodox Chinese syntax, and representing them graphically in a mixture of *kanji* and *katakana*.

The religious sphere was undoubtedly a great source of innovation when it came to the writing system. Adding vernacular readings to an orthodox Chinese text by means of marginal glosses in *kana* meant a step towards the creation of a Sino-Japanese hybrid and toward the introduction of *katakana* as a special purpose script.

<sup>5</sup> A translation of the *Suvarna-prabhāsōttama-sūtra* by Yijing (635–713), a monk of the Tang period (618-907).



However, at this stage, the glosses were minor fragments that only partially suggested readings or inflective parts of the speech; the body of the text was not coherent as a unit, and the main Chinese script was covered with annotations. Also, as mentioned earlier, the combination of logographic and phonogrammatic systems is evident in yet another group of texts from the late eight century, namely the drafts of sermons and the *shintō* prayers, which opens the door to yet new avenues of investigation.

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