

Kanji as a Solidarity Marker: Modern Japanese psyche behind the use of characters

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Abstract

When William Labov suggested the concept of solidarity in 1972, his intention was to explicate the correlation between the use of a specific language and the deepening of one's sense of belonging. In that year, Labov studied the language of Martha's Vineyarders and found that the stronger is their sense of solidarity with Martha's Vineyard, the more frequent is their use of a phonetic feature that by then was peculiar to the island. In view of its wider applicability, the author of the present paper aims to develop it as a theory - the theory of solidarity. The framework and thrust of this hypothesis are sketched out in chapters 4 and 5 where it is portrayed as comprising two subsidiary concepts juxtaposed with each other, namely "cohesion" and "defense." The divergence of English as an international language that has been growing since the mid-20th century will perhaps best illustrate the gist of this theory. Linguistic divergence, it is said, is the price an international language must pay for its throne as an international language. But why? It may well be assumed that even at the cost of English as a means of communication across cultural, ethnic and national boundaries, Indians, Filipinos, Nigerians, and other English speakers, not excluding native speakers of English, need to be armed with their own varieties of English for solidarity purposes, that is, to at once unify and guard themselves vis-à-vis outgroups. In this paper, the theory of solidarity is applied to the use of *kanji* by modern Japanese as a means of written expression. The author intends to argue that despite the repeated tides of abolitionism and reductionism *kanji* has survived to this day because it has provided a unique solidarity marker for Japanese.

KEY EXPRESSIONS: *kanji*, *kana*, status planning, corpus planning, solidarity, cohesion, defense

O. Introduction

This article intends to address the issue delimited in its title and subtitle, namely "*Kanji* as a solidarity marker: Modern Japanese psyche behind the use of characters." It can be delineated in more specific terms by being rephrased as "Why hasn't *kanji* fallen into disuse through the process of Japan's modernization?" That is the question raised here for our consideration. Although the discussion is restricted to modern Japanese sociolinguistic psychology, it is the author's hope and expectation that what is observed and discussed here as modern Japanese psychology will be found to hold across national boundaries. In keeping with the specific objective of this article, however, we will confine the scope of consideration to modern Japanese psyche and be concerned with observations within the context of modern Japanese language planning and language policy proposals as reflections of the Japanese psychology in question.

It has been frequently pointed out that Chinese characters, a written medium originally meant for an isolating language that Chinese is, are inadequate means of writing Japanese as an agglutinating language. While it has benefited Japanese culture to an immeasurable extent, this linguistically heterogeneous medium of written expression has been the cause of constant headache for Japanese,¹ with a consequence that the unique logo-syllabic script called *kanji-kana majiribun* is said to be a poor compromise.² We feel tempted to go on to discuss our topic along these linguistic and applied linguistic lines. Just because it is likely to blur

our focus, we will remain sociolinguistic in our approach throughout our discussion.

1. Con-kanji policy proposals and planning

A quick review of the history of modern Japan will demonstrate that our "Why *kanji*?" question is a fair and pertinent one for one thing because there has been an abundance of status planning proposals against the continued use of characters, so much so indeed the very fact that never in the history of modern Japan has *kanji* been officially banned comes to us as a fresh surprise.

As early as 1866, that is to say, two years before the Meiji Restoration, Maejima Hisoka (1835-1919), who is known to us today as the founder of modern Japanese postal system, became the first proponent in modern Japan of the abolition of *kanji* in favor of *kana*, thereby kindling flames of *kana*-only movements. In that year, Maejima presented the last Tokugawa shogun Yoshinobu with a petition entitled "A Proposal for the Abolition of *Kanji*." Reacting to Maejima's cry for *kanji*'s abolition, *Romaji-kai* (The Romanization Club), the predecessor of the still active *Nippon Romaji-kai* (The Society for the Romanization of Japanese Script), was set up by Tanakadate Aikitsu (1856-1952) in 1885 in support of the idea of ousting *kanji* as well as *kana*. While in 1920 *Kamamoji-kai* (The *Kana* Club), which also lasts to this day, was founded by a group of advocates of *katakana*. Though *Romaji-kai* and *Kanamoji-kai* did not join forces, the two groups of campaigners shared common ground in that they were both against the use of *kanji* and protested vehemently against the continuation of *kanji* use.

Although anti-*kanji* moves and movements, being adversely affected by the mood of the times during the Taisho and early Showa periods, fell into decline as Japan got increasingly closed to Western values and prepared for a series of wars, attacks against *kanji* resumed with the war defeat of 1945 as a turning point, as epitomized by the Yomiuri Newspaper's November 1945 editorial headed "Abolish Chinese Characters." Following on from the war defeat, there arose in rapid succession one criticism after another of the way the Japanese language and script were before the war, as we will see later in this chapter. Just think that at the outbreak of the Manchuria Incident in 1931, for instance, the newspapers had no alternative but to use a great deal of Chinese characters, including a vast array of exotic ones, so as to report on its development and Chinese personal and place names involved. Ultra-nationalism and militarism on the one hand and all-syllabic script on the other turned out to be incompatible. History's no little irony is that the fact that the East-Asian character-using nations fell prey to the Japanese military deterred *kanji* abolitionism from gaining ground in prewar Japan. To that extent, it is little wonder that postwar newspapers and intellectuals tended to associate Japan's loss of World War II with the extensive use of *kanji*. It is not that all those campaigners' voices were officially listened to. No doubt, however, such expressions of anti-*kanji* sentiments affected policy makers in drawing up official policies on the reduction in the number of recommended *kanji*, as we will note later in the present chapter.

The chronology of con-*kanji* movements that have surfaced in modern Japan does not end here by any means because there have been numerous intellectual and political leaders who went so far as to propose the abolition of the Japanese language itself in favor of "more advanced" languages. For the sake of our present discussion, suffice it to mention three major ones. The Education Minister in the second Ito Hirobumi Cabinet Mori Arinori (1847-1889) was so irrevocably motivated by the conviction that "if we do not adopt a language like that of the English, which is quite predominant in Asia, as well as elsewhere in the commercial world, the progress of Japanese civilization is evidently impossible," (Kawasumi, 1978: 47) he gave a serious consideration to the adoption of English as Japan's national language. Unless he had been counseled against by the Yale College linguist William Whitney whose advice Mori asked for in 1873, probabilities are that English would have been designated as modern Japan's national language in place of Japanese. Analogous to this is the proposal made in 1946, one year after Japan's defeat in World War II, by the noted novelist Shiga Naoya (1883-1971) to the effect that French be designated as postwar Japan's national language. History was repeated yet again in 2000 when English was proposed as Japan's second official language by the 21st-Century Policy Discussion Forum commissioned by the then Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo. Although those con-Japanese policy proposals were not directly attacks against *kanji*, we can safely deduce that resistance to the persistence of *kanji* was in the

background of the leaders' minds.³ The early Meiji period marked the first epoch during which Japanese, being preoccupied with a sense that their country lagged behind, were least confident in themselves. Japan's war defeat in 1945 shattered their confidence for a second time. Each time they lost confidence in their power as a nation, Japanese leaders ascribed it to their use of Japanese and *kanji*. It seems hardly unreasonable, therefore, to contend that the 2000 proposal for the designation of English as Japan's second official language was occasioned by their loss of confidence in their national power after the collapse of bubble economy.

Turning our attention to the corpus planning that came into effect in the last century, we see that the number of *kanji* for everyday use has been reduced almost steadily as modern Japan has matured. That toward the end of the nineteenth century considerably more than 3,000 characters were in common use is amply evidenced,⁴ whereas in 1942 the Education Ministry published *Hyoujun kanjihyou* (List of Standard Characters) limiting the number of *kanji* to be used in government offices and society in general to 2,669 graphs. Postwar days saw a further curtailment of the number of recommended characters: in 1946 *Touyou kanjihyou* (List of Characters for Current Use) containing only 1,850 graphs was announced, although in 1981, a slightly expanded *Jouyou kanjihyou* (List of Characters for General Use) containing 1,945 graphs was given the Japanese nationals afresh. Our "confidence" theory is valid in explaining the corpus planning as well: the Meiji Restoration propelled the dwindling of *kanji* from well over 3,000 to 2,669, and the war defeat prompted policy makers to radically reduce its number from 2,669 to 1,850. In particular, the substantial restriction on the number that happened in 1946, together with the sweeping changes from *rekishiteki kanazukai* (historical *kana* usage) to *gendai kanazukai* (modern *kana* usage) that took place in the same year, must have been almost revolutionary in their impact. We may confirm at this stage of observation that in terms of both status planning and corpus planning modern Japan has not been unequivocally supportive of *kanji* and that all through modern Japanese history there has been an undercurrent of stubborn resistance to it demonstrated by individuals who have dismissed characters as counterproductive to Japan's modernization and postwar rehabilitation and democratization.

2. Resilience of *kanji*

For all those flames of anti-*kanji* moves and movements, that persistent medium of writing Japanese has survived as the integral part of the national language. For one thing, mere employment of reduction policies could not diminish *kanji*'s importance partly because those government initiatives were not rigidly prescriptive in nature and there was little binding about them. The principally guideline nature of the major Lists launched by the Education Ministry is suggested by their names, viz. *Hyoujun kanjihyou* (List of Standard Characters), *Touyou kanjihyou* (List of Characters for Current Use) and *Jouyou kanjihyou* (List of Characters for General Use). For that reason, despite the Preamble statement of *Touyou kanjihyou* (1946) that "This list shows the limits of the characters to be used in laws and ordinances, official documents, newspapers, magazines, and society in general," the number of *kanji* appearing in newspapers and magazines in general, for instance, has never dropped below 3,200 or so.⁵ *Jouyou kanjihyou*, being intended to "provide a guide to character use in the general life of society" (The Preamble to *Jouyou kanjihyou*, 1981), is the least binding and the most accommodating. Compulsory education had to keep within bounds set by the guidelines⁶ and government offices were obligated to conform to them. But never did terms used in academic, literary, scientific and other fields outside the "general life of society" come within the purview of the Education Ministry's guidelines. Thus, post-secondary education was largely exempted from the grips of the Ministry's guidelines.

One constant voice of opposition to the reductionism was raised by the general public on the basis of their putative preference for *kanji* names. Five years after *Touyou kanjihyou* was put into effect, the Ministry had to loosen it by permitting the use of ninety-two added graphs for the given names of newborn babies, while in 1976 a further twenty-eight *kanji* were approved for the same purpose, and ultimately in 1981 the number of name characters was further increased from 120 to 166. These were only about given names. What about family names, place names, and other proper nouns, such as college names and company names? Policy designers had to find themselves helpless in the face of such a culturally deep-rooted attachment to *kanji* shared by the

general public. To quote from the Preamble to *Jouyou kanjihyou* (1981), "The list does not concern itself with characters used in place names, personal names, etc." A mere roll-call of a class of 50 college students in Japan would suffice to demonstrate that the Japanese tradition is on *kanji*'s side, there being absolutely no family names and very few given names written in *kana* signs only on that roll. We will come back to a similar issue in chapter 7 with a discussion of a more serious Japanese tradition that interfered with reformism. The point to be noted here is that a perception of *kanji* as part and parcel of Japanese cultural heritage has been too deeply-seated in the minds of the populace to eradicate. This realization, pertaining as it does to the ultimate question whether it is the grass roots or leaders who keep history evolving, is of no little significance when we look back on modern Japan's history in which the use of *kanji* has never been totally banned despite a recurrent surge of abolitionism launched by the cream of society.

FINISHED FILES ARE THE
RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC
STUDY COMBINED WITH THE
EXPERIENCE OF YEARS.

One other thing that merits mention in the present context is the role played by *kanji* in today's busy lives of general society. In response to the question: "Please count the number of F's in the above text," most native speakers of English are said to answer "three" despite the fact that the text contains six F's.⁷ This Q and A demonstrates to us that English-speaking people are in the habit of picking out content words, *i.e.* nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs and paying little heed to function words, *i.e.* prepositions, articles, conjunctions, etc. when they skim through a text. Not just native speakers of English, but also Japanese readers do the same when they skim through books and newspapers or scan journals for information in their busy daily lives. Deserving of note in this connection is the common practice in today's Japanese of employing *kanji* and, to a considerably lesser extent, *katakana* to write content words, and reserving *hiragana* for function words.⁸ This practice, suggestive of the way Japanese people transmit and receive information mainly through the medium of *kanji*, can be an index to the degree of importance *kanji* assumes for the general public in their everyday language lives.

The present writer once asked the young South Korean members of his audience at a lecture if they knew Lee Eolyeong, an internationally acclaimed South Korean critic. When the Korean critic's name was shown in characters (李御寧) on the blackboard, there was no response whatsoever. Immediately after his name was pronounced, a commotion was caused among the young students. So they knew him, only they could not recognize his name in *hanja* (characters). Recent *hangeul*-only policy of R.O.K. has produced a phonogrammic generation in that country. What about Japan? Even though the younger generation of Japanese are said to be no longer proficient at writing or reading characters, they remain *kanji*-oriented in the deepest sense of the phrase because they still recognize the signified at once phonetically and logo-visually, so Ms. Goto (後藤) and Ms. Goto (五島) are not identified as namesakes as far as their recognition goes. If today's generation of South Koreans are radio-type recognizers, their Japanese counterparts remain TV-type recognizers. Japanese have been like that ever since the introduction of Chinese characters (ca. first century AD). They still are.

3. Uniqueness of *kanji*

Exhibit 1 shows eight character-using cultures past and present. As a result of the modern orthographic revisions and reforms in some of these cultures, the character-using cultural sphere was dismembered in such a way as to fall apart into the unimodal group (China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Singapore) and the multimodal group (South Korea, HK, Taiwan, and Japan) with Japan being the only trimodal culture in existence. At the same time, some of the member cultures discontinued to use characters (North Korea and Vietnam) and the others remain character-users (China, South Korea, HK, Taiwan, Japan, and Singapore), while

simultaneously the character-using camp in turn was split into the SCC economies (China and Singapore) and CCC economies (South Korea, HK, Taiwan, and Japan). It looks as though each culture had been in pursuit of an orthography idiosyncratically its own.

Exhibit 1

Culture	Script mode	Script type	other
China	unimodal	SCC	
N. Korea	unimodal	<i>hangeul</i>	
Vietnam	unimodal	Roman alphabet	
Singapore	unimodal	SCC	
S. Korea	bimodal	<i>hangeul</i> + CCC (<i>hanja</i>)	
Hong Kong	bimodal	CCC + Roman alphabet	
Taiwan	bimodal*	CCC + Roman alphabet	
Japan	trimodal	CCC (<i>kanji</i>) + <i>hiragana</i> + <i>katakana</i>	<i>on</i> and <i>kun</i> readings

- SCC - simplified Chinese characters
- CCC - complicated Chinese characters

* This is the case with the local vernacular called Taiwanese, not the official Chinese language.

Scrutiny of Exhibit 1 reveals that the idiosyncrasy of the Japanese orthography lies largely in its use of a trimodal script consisting of *kanji*, *hiragana* and *katakana* as well as in the fact that of all the derivatives of Chinese characters *kanji* alone is accompanied by two different types of readings called *on* and *kun*. It is this combination of two complexities that provides awful intricacies for the Japanese writing and presents the greatest obstacle not just for foreign learners of Japanese - even Chinese learners will be lost in the maze of a spate of *on* and *kun* readings linked with a single morpheme - but for Japanese themselves as well. One has to heave a sigh of despair at the thought of the doubled burden imposed on *kanji* learners. Given the conventional educational practice of devoting the better part of the 9-year-long general education to teaching *kanji*, it is far from unreasonable that we should ask why *kanji* persists. Our answer to this self-posed question is: it is precisely because of the excessive complexity of *kanji* that it has lasted to this day. Here, complexity and peculiarity are co-terminous; the very fact that *kanji* is complex accords the Japanese writing system its peculiar uniqueness. That's that. The outstanding question now is, why does uniqueness lead to longevity?

4. Cohesion (or language as a binder)

Ask university students, "Why do we use language?" Nine students out of ten are bound to answer, "To communicate with other people." Admittedly, this is a perfectly acceptable answer and a most widely recognized one at that. However, communication is not the only reason why we use language. Other than as a vehicle of communication, we use language for a number of reasons, of which we will pause with one that concerns the role of language as a binder of people. The following quote can serve to illustrate this point:

'Ah, there's not enough carbol-fuchsin.'

'What?'

'The carbol-fuchsin's running out.'

When talking with his fellow intern Toda, Suguro would frequently use a few words of Osaka dialect. This had been a custom with them ever since they had become classmates in college. In the past it had been a tacit symbol of their friendship.

- Shusaku Endo, *The Sea and Poison* (Trans. by M. Gallagher, 1972)

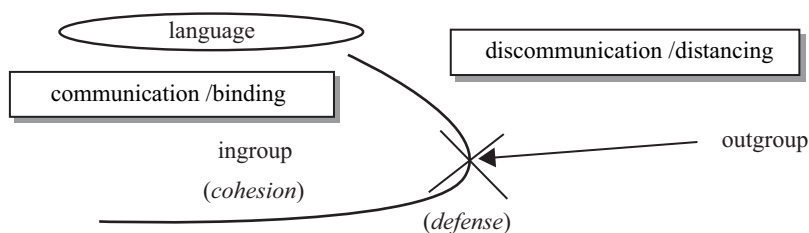
It is frequently observable that close friends, lovers, or twin brothers for that matter share a special language. If not for a readily available language like Osaka dialect shared by Suguro and Toda, they will create fragments of expressions to be used only by and for themselves. Probably it is an unconscious effort on their part, but that way they can strengthen their ties. By expanding the scope of grouping beyond two people and considering familial, collegial and other types of larger relations, we come to realize that the same use of language abounds in our daily lives. Why do Europeans make a distinction in the use of 2nd-person pronouns between 'familiar' form and 'polite' form, such as *tu* and *vous* (French), *du* and *Sie* (German), and *tu* and *usted* (Spanish)? Why does English have terms of endearment (or saccharine terms) to call someone close by, such as sugar, honey, dear, sweetheart, etc.? Why does a teacher say to school children, "Good morning, Class. How are *we*?" (Paternal 'we') Why do APUers speak APU language, such as "Are you S or M?" and "climb (down) the mountain"?⁹ The view of language as a binder is impressively useful and revealing. It provides solutions to all these whys and many more. However, it needs to be borne in mind that the concept of cohesion, referring to 'language as a binder,' is merely one half of a whole picture.

5. Defense (or language as a defense mechanism)

The American sociolinguist William Labov studied the language of Martha's Vineyarders and found a close correlation between the linguistic change in progress and local identity. Martha's Vineyard is a small Atlantic island floating three miles off the coast of Massachusetts. The islanders, numbering 6,000 or so, earned a living mostly from whaling, commercial fishing and agriculture, but each summer some 42,000 tourists came to stay there for varying periods of time. Gradually, the local economy and the traditional life of Vineyarders were challenged by the summer residents and the vacation economy. Around that time, the already developed pattern of de-centralization of diphthongs in such words as *house*, *about*, *wife* and *right* was observed to be reversed by "the most stubborn **defenders** of their own way of living," (Labov, 1972: 29; emphasis added by the current writer) who tended to centralize the first part of the diphthongs. Based on the literature survey and his own research, Labov (1972: 36) says, "When a man says [rɛit] or [hɛus], he is unconsciously establishing the fact that he belongs to the island: that he is one of the natives to whom the island really belongs." Labov is of the view that such a sound change happened to "the most **close-knit** group on the island" (Labov, 1972: 37; emphasis added by the current writer) contemporaneously with the rise of tourism in defense of their identity as original inhabitants, in an unconscious effort to show their solidarity and their difference from the summer population.

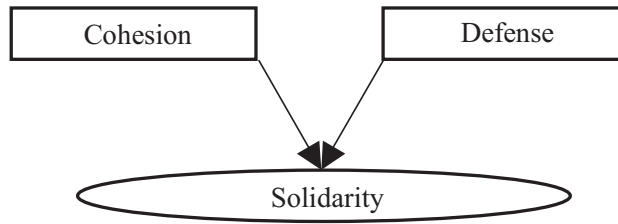
The first key word here is defense. We now realize that language is Janus-faced. Internally it functions as a means of communication and binds members of an ingroup, as we already noted in the previous chapter (*cohesion*). But externally it works as a medium of discommunication and dissociates ingroup and outgroup, thereby guarding the ingroup members (*defense*). To illustrate this point, Koreans can communicate with other Koreans because they speak the same language; their language promotes intra-group communication and at the same time it binds the group members. Japanese do the same: they can communicate and team up with each other by the use of Japanese. But Koreans and Japanese cannot communicate - at least not as easily as Koreans and Koreans or Japanese and Japanese - because they speak different languages, and thus they are distanced by language. This much can be graphically shown as follows:

Exhibit 2 Language as a Janus-faced entity



Building on Labov's second key concept, *i.e.* close-knit, we might as well weave together the two faces of language - cohesion and defense - in terms of solidarity and view them as two constituents of the same concept of solidarity. Just like the human world abounds with examples of language as a binder (*cohesion*) as noted earlier, so too it is overflowing with manifestations

Exhibit 3



of language as a defense mechanism (*defense*). Why is women's way of speaking Japanese systematically different from the way men speak the same language? Why is the language called Hindi in India called Urdu in Pakistan despite the fact that they are one and the same language?¹⁰ Why, in the first place, do different ethnic groups have different languages? Why are there as many as 6,800 languages in the world at all? The list could go on and on. All these are ascribable, in the final analysis, to the self-protective instinct that inheres in human beings. Naturally, then, any group of people must have self-defensive measures, to guard themselves from potential attack from outside. We assume that their language as a defense mechanism is principal of such protective measures.

6. Kanji as a solidarity marker

So any group of people must have a solidarity marker. Here a 'solidarity marker' connotes a cohesion marker and a defense marker at the same time. The fact that Yiddish was proclaimed a national Jewish language in 1908 to promote the then emerging Zionist movement comes to mind as a notable illustration of language as a powerful unifying marker. The example of Civil Rights activists seeking to win an official recognition of Black English to differentiate themselves in the U.S. during the 1960s comes to us as another shining example of language as a boundary marker. For Greeks, the use of Greek alphabet can serve the same purpose. Those without the slightest acquaintance with Greek letters could not make head nor tail of the following words, and might ask for more open door on the part of the "all-Greek-to-me" language. From the standpoint of Greek people, however, spelling them 'Rome,' 'Londino,' 'Athena,' 'Oslo' would mean giving up an important part of their self-protective measures.

ΡΩΜΗ(ρωμη)
ΛΟΝΔΙΝΟ(λονδινο)
ΑΘΗΝΑ(αθηνα)
ΟΣΛΟ(οβλο)

Given that any nation or ethnic group must have such a marker, what marker or markers are Japanese armed with? The Japanese language could be counted as one. But it is only in the sense that any language you learn after puberty is as difficult to surmount as an enemy's defensive wall. Since the so-called neighborhood effect is operative when a Korean learns Japanese, she will find her target language relatively easy, but it must be conceded that compared to her process of acquiring Korean as 1st language, her acquisition of Japanese is incomparably more painstaking, especially if she is an adult learner in the applied linguistic sense of the word. On the strength of Lenneberg's Critical Period hypothesis, we could liken a before-puberty language

to a God-given and an after-puberty language to the forbidden fruit. To acquire the former, you do not need to make a lot of effort, while the latter is such a different experience that you have to make a great deal of conscious effort to acquire it, and oftentimes it is a painful process. The Lennebergian hypothesis can be explained in terms of *defense*. Were Japanese as an after-puberty language easy enough for outgroup members to acquire, lots of them could jump over the fence built up by the Japanese language and steal cultural, technological, corporate and even diplomatic secrets in existence on Japan's side of the fence, in which event Japan as an independent country would be jeopardized. This is no longer a hypothetical situation, but is becoming a reality. The present writer has a goodly number of foreign acquaintances who speak Japanese fluently – some of them are so proficient at speaking it that it looks as though there is no barrier separating us and them. Such is not the case actually, though, because those foreign speakers of Japanese who can be compared to an average Japanese in terms of all-around skills are few and far between. Speaking and listening are alright, yet it usually takes them ten times as much time to read Japanese, and writing *kanji* fluently is simply beyond foreign speakers from non-character-using cultures. Japan is still safeguarded by its unique writing system. If there is one difference lying between Greece and Japan, it is the fact that whereas Greece is doubly guarded by Greek, an Indo-European language without a branch to belong with, and Greek alphabet, Japan is increasingly giving up on the fortress built up by the Japanese language and singly fortified by its writing system, specifically *kanji*.

Portuguese missionaries who visited Japan in the 16th century reached the conclusion, after having hard times learning Japanese, that the Japanese language had been so invented by the Devil as to hinder the spread of the Gospel. In the words of Seeley (2000, Preface) who recounted that anecdote, "No doubt in forming this view, the missionaries had in mind the Japanese writing system with its myriad intricacies. Compared with that period, the use of script and written styles in Japan today is greatly simplified, but even so written Japanese has the dubious distinction of being the most complicated system of writing in use in the modern world in no small part because of the prolixity of *kanji*." Prolixity, intricacies, complexities, cumbersomeness, or whatever you name it. That is the precise reason why *kanji* can play a vitally important role as a solidarity marker for Japanese and has lasted to this day for all howls of criticism of it. Investing nine years of compulsory education in the acquisition of a cohesion and defense marker is no futile national project.

7. National polity issue

The current writer has taken a keen interest in a certain comparative attitudinal study lately. The comparison is between modern Korean attitude to *hanja* and modern Japanese attitude to *kanji*. In more specific terms, why could North Koreans get rid of logogram characters once and for all more than half a century ago? The expression "once and for all" that can be applied to North Koreans may not be applicable to South Koreans, who are not as resolute in their determination to do away with *hanja*. Whereas the exclusive use of *hangeul* has been instituted in North Korea, we are under the impression that cautious steps have been taken in that direction in South Korea. The fact remains, though, that taking over from *hanja* which predominated on the peninsula before World War II, *hangeul* is there to stay as the dominant script in postwar Korea. This is an impressive contrast to the way things are in Japan, where people still enjoy a fairly extensive use of *kanji*.

Since both Korean and Japanese are agglutinating languages, it is hardly possible for us to seek a linguistic reason for this contrast. It is linguistically sound to claim that a phonogram, whether it be a phonemic type like *hangeul* or a syllabic type like *kana*, is a more efficient medium of writing an agglutinating language and that logograms like Chinese characters are not fully competent when it comes to notating an agglutinating language. The invention by Japanese of *kana* syllabaries largely during the ninth century and the invention of *hangeul* by Koreans in the mid-15th century, therefore, are not just noteworthy cultural achievements but history's necessities as well. But this piece of linguistics applies to both Korean and Japanese, and does not explain why characters have been all but disincorporated from Korean while they remain embedded as part of Japanese writing. Any sociolinguistic reason? This is such a big issue, one will need to embark on years of exhaustive multidisciplinary studies,

even including political science and economics, to come up with a definite clue. For now, we are only able to partially satiate our intellectual curiosity.

With a view to keeping the reader in suspense, the author will intentionally choose to develop his ideas in an inductive way. William Wyler's 1953 film *Roman Holiday* can be interpreted as a story of Princess Ann (Audrey Hepburn) of a Northern European Constitutional Monarchy falling in love with Rome rather than with the American reporter Bradley (Gregory Peck). The denouement of the story goes like this: at the last press conference in Rome Princess Ann is asked which of the European capitals she has covered in that leg of her journey suits her best of all; she is about to answer, as previously instructed, that each city is unforgettable in its own way – when suddenly she comes to her own and says as if convulsively, "Rome! By all means, Rome." It is a consensus among a quarter of historians that a constitutional monarchy is an expression of an inferiority complex in disguise.¹¹ Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, Thailand, Japan and other peripheries, geographically and culturally, tend to preserve monarchies. In the case of Northern and Western European monarchies, their sense of inferiority is felt toward Rome as the cultural heartland. So when Ann said, "Rome! By all means, Rome," she gave expression to the love with the Eternal City shared by people in the backward country of the north. India is to Thailand what Rome is to European monarchies, and what India is to Thailand, China is to Japan.

One serious stumbling block to the orthographic reforms in modern Japan has been its national polity. According to academic sources cited in Seeley (2000:148), the following is what happened in the 1930s: "the Education Minister Hiraō Hachisaburo," who was originally in favor of abolishing *kanji*, "was subsequently forced to draw back from that view in both the Upper and Lower House after his critics maintained that to abolish characters would mean changing the form of imperial rescripts, an act which, they argued, would be disrespectful toward the emperor and would have a negative effect on the Japanese spirit because writing and thought were, in their view, inseparable." *Kanji* being the long-established medium of writing imperial rescripts, any degree of denial of characters, in the logic of Hiraō's critics, would suggest the same degree of disrespect toward the emperor and resistance to the imperial system. We can reasonably infer that such an ideological climate that prevailed in the 1930s and 40s blocked abolitionists' way in a serious manner and discouraged reformists a great deal. This view of characters as inseparable from the preservation of the national polity, the sources go on to say (see Seeley, 2000: 48-9), had repercussions on postwar orthographic reforms as well. The case in point is 朕 [chin] (Imperial 'we') that no one but the emperor uses and yet is included in both *Touyou kanjihyou* and *Jouyou kanjihyou*. We are brought back to a case where a Japanese heritage – in this case, an extremely influential one – is favorable to the continuation of *kanji* use. Put in this context, the fact that Mori Arinori was assassinated by an ultra-nationalist sixteen years after his express intention to abandon Japanese and *kanji* was made public would strike one as emblematic. Even in the postwar context, a picture of the emperor expressing himself in all-*kana* signs on official occasions would not agree well with the consciousness of the populace. Anyhow, this can explain if only partly why what happened to the two Koreas as republics has not happened to Japan as a constitutional monarchy.

Forcing ourselves to link this particular discussion with the foregoing one on solidarity, we could develop the following argument: the two peninsular countries have been culturally more independent – or less dependent rather – vis-à-vis China; for a solidarity marker, they could turn to their own invention in preference to the borrowed medium, whereas unlike Korea whose monarchical rule ended as early as 1910, Japan has had to preserve its monarchism to cover up for its greater insularity and thus has had no other choice but to be left heir to a Chinese-donated means of written expression. The fact that *kana* was a creation based on *kanji* while *hangeul* was not based on *hanja* can be a piece of evidence in support of our argument. All this can reinforce the validity of our theory of solidarity because it comes to that just like Japanese have been in need of *kanji* as their solidarity marker, Koreans have needed a solidarity marker for themselves and found it in the presence of their own invention. Koreans and Japanese are no exceptions to the solidarity rule. Only, one has created a solidarity marker, nurtured that native-born marker and all but instituted it as an exclusive means of expressing Korean identity, while the other has watered a borrowed

medium, localized it, and has kept treasuring that localized script as a means of marking their solidarity.

A parallel could be drawn between character issues and alphabetization issues in the insular and peninsular countries. 1885 witnessed the emergence in Japan of two systems of alphabetizing Japanese in quick succession to be later called *Hebon-shiki romaji* (Hepburn Romanization system) and *Nippon-shiki romaji* (Japanese Romanization system) respectively. The past 120 years of modern history has proved to be in favor of the former. Despite the well-intentioned intervention by the government that promulgated in 1937 *Kunrei-shiki romaji* (Cabinet Directive Romanization system), integrating the two predecessors, it is the system associated with an American Presbyterian missionary James Curtis Hepburn that has been the most widely accepted. Even today, *Hebon-shiki* remains the most popular system of alphabetizing Japanese script. What about Korea? Although North Korea still uses the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system set forth in 1939, apparently the M-R system has seen better days in South Korea, where the government instituted a new Romanization system in 2000. As far as South Korea and Japan are concerned, it is basically the same story recounted. South Koreans opted to depart from, and intend to ultimately oust, the spelling system offered by the Westerners, whereas Japanese have valued and still prize the system popularized by a Westerner.

We are reminded that the Chinese government got rid of the Wade-Giles system of alphabetizing Chinese by introducing the Pinyin Romanization system in 1957. Having been devised on the basis of Roman alphabet as applied to English, the Wade-Giles system dating back to the mid-19th century, the McCune-Reischauer system, and the Hepburn system are so similar to one another, one need not study how to read them provided they know some English. Had they kept those English-based alphabetization systems, it might not just have been of practical benefit but have resulted in a measure of a sense of linguistic and cultural homogeneity in the minds of East-Asians. Why did they have to miss such a rare chance? The official and outward reason is linguistic: the East-Asian powers that be are unanimous that those English-based systems have been makeshift spellings to be replaced sooner or later by scientifically better notation systems. Sociolinguistically, we could apply the theory of solidarity here as well. The transparency of the Romanization systems of Western origin had been detrimental to East-Asians, or so it was conceived, to the point where their respective senses of solidarity were perceived to be threatened. Japanese who keep using the Hepburn system look something of an exception to this mindset. But remember that even Japanese did develop a system of their own in an effort to guard themselves.¹² By the same token, debate over Pinyin or Common Pinyin (Taiwanese version of Pinyin) has been heated in Taiwan since the late 1990s between Pro-mainland Kuomintang and Taiwan Independents.

Our discussion has proceeded in a serious vein, yet it is concluded in a hopeful and proactive tone with a faith in a wider applicability of the theory of solidarity.

Notes:

1. Throughout their history of *kanji* use, Japanese have racked their brains how to represent grammatical particles (*joshi*) and inflectional affixes in particular because the donor language has neither grammatical particles nor inflectional endings. Even today, no small proportion of Japanese are often at a loss whether to choose the explicit type (e.g. 表わす, 行なう) or the implicit type (e.g. 表す, 行う) of *okurigana*, i.e. *kana* to represent inflectional suffixes.
2. See, for example, Umesao (2002), p. 3.
3. Mori states that "the written language now in use in Japan...is a deranged Chinese, blended in Japanese." (Kawasumi, 1978: 48), while Shiga writes "Romanization movements and all-*kana* movements have been so slow to bear fruit," (Kawasumi, *op. cit.*: 800) implying that he is not against such movements *per se*.
4. See Seeley (2000), p. 141.
5. See Seeley, *op.cit.*, p. 157.
6. Two years after *Touyou kanjihyou* took effect, *Touyou kanji beppyou* (Separate List of Characters for Current Use) with 881

- kanji* to be taught in the first six years of compulsory education was approved and promulgated by the Cabinet. See Seeley, *op. cit.*, p. 155.
7. See Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., and Hyams, N. (2003), p. 74.
 8. In all probability, this is a postwar notation practice originating with *Touyou kanjihyou* (1946) whose Preamble states that "As far as possible, pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, interjections, auxiliary verbs, and particles are to be written in *kana*." For *Jouyou kanjihyou* (1981), much the same principle of character selection operates, though "characters for pronouns, adverbs, and conjunctions which are widely used" are revived as inclusions. (The Preamble to *Jouyou kanjihyou*) Presumably, those postwar notation guidelines did much to give the Japanese nationals a sense of demarcation between content words and function words.
 9. "APUers," meaning members of APU (Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University) community, is in itself a constituent vocabulary item of APU language. *Kokusai-gakusei* (international student), a compound word in common use among APUers, is another constituent of APU language; in standard Japanese, it is called either *ryuugakusei* or *gaikokujin-gakusei*. Since APU comes with the College of Asia Pacific Studies (APS) and the College of Asia Pacific Management (APM), the expression "Are you S or M?" enjoys wide currency on campus, while "climb/climb down the mountain" are the oft-used APU phrases for "go to school/leave school"; this is because its campus is located 300 meters above sea level.
 10. For similar examples, note the following:
 - Bahasa Malay (in Brunei and Singapore), Bahasa Malaysia (in Malaysia) and Bahasa Indonesia (in Indonesia)
 - Dari (in Afghanistan) and Farsi (in Iran)
 - Serbian (among Orthodox Serbs) and Croatian (among Roman Catholics)
 - Hangukmal* (in South Korea) and *Joseonmal* (in North Korea)
 11. For detailed discussion on a constitutional monarchy as an expression of inferiority complex in disguise, see Kishimoto (2004), pp. 123-134.
 12. *Nippon-shiki romaji* (Japanese Romanization system) mentioned above was devised by a physicist named Tanakadate Aikitsu (1856-1952) in 1885.

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