

December 2019

## Etymologies of Chinese Hànzì and Japanese Kanji: Explanations on Liùshū 六書 and Rikusho 六書

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### Recommended Citation

Funk, William P.M. (2019) "Etymologies of Chinese Hànzì and Japanese Kanji: Explanations on Liùshū 六書 and Rikusho 六書," *Chinese Language Teaching Methodology and Technology*. Vol. 2: Iss. 2, Article 6. Available at: <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/cltmt/vol2/iss2/6>

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### Cover Page Footnote

This paper would not be possible without the generous contributions of the Mandel Foundation, my professor of Japanese Kalyan Dasgupta MA of Linguistics, and everyone in the Confucius Institute at Cleveland State; especially Dr. Huiwen Li Ed.D and Shunqin Li MA of Chinese Linguistics.

## Chinese and Japanese Hànzì and Kanji Etymologies: Explanations on *Liùshū* 六書 and *Rikusho* 六書

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### ABSTRACT

This paper outlines *Liùshū* 六書 interpretations of Chinese character etymology to help co-create a better approach for educators in supporting character literacy development in students of the East Asian languages that utilize Chinese writing. The *Liùshū* 六書 *Rikusho* 六書 approach to character instruction can be interpreted as a strategy to spark interest in western learners providing more detailed explanations that deal with the pictographic and compound nature of Chinese character formation. All non-English words are *italicized* or **bolded**, Chinese based terms are in Mandarin *Pīnyīn* 拼音, and Japanese terms are written in *Romaji* ローマ字 representing their differences phonetically to integrate foreign terminology.

**Keywords:** Chinese, Japanese, Cross-Cultural Studies, Hànzì, Kanji, 漢字, Etymology, Xǔ Shèn 許慎, Liùshū 六書, Rikusho 六書, 汉字的素养历史, 漢字的素養歷史, 漢字の識字歴史, 语言学, 語言學, 言語学

As one of the longest surviving forms of human writing and orthography still in use to this day, Chinese *Hànzì* 漢字 and Japanese *Kanji* 漢字 have made many transformations throughout our existence. The earliest scripts and forms that were written in the sands of coastal fronts and in the mud of riverbanks were either taken by weathering or time, but those designs and traditions have survived through less frail organic elements such as fired clay, wood, bone, and stone. Of the few artifacts that were engraved two and a half millennia ago that have survived from uncharted conflicts, dynastic change, evolution, and other phenomena to that which we are unaware; we should try to appreciate their existence for the ideas and manifestations they exemplify. The more refined and uniform characters smoldered, molded, and settled in bronze and iron have remained just as much as the decorated ancient ceramics we still possess— but the scribed ink of candle ash and boiled tree sap adorning the scrolls and letters of old are the most fragile and delicate remnants of early expression, philosophies, and literacy of East Asia; there is no knowing what we have lost in time.

*Hànzì* embodies an intriguingly simplistic aesthetic at times. At other times *Hànzì* are very intricate and ornate in their appearance. As the brush strokes mass and accumulate and the radicals become more confined and compounded — the deeper the logograph and morpheme's ideology, meaning, and semantic qualities are portrayed. In the logographs that make up the traditional scripts, Wu (2016) wrote that in each character lies the wisdom of one's ancient ancestors; a wisdom that has been crystalized or preserved across the ages. Over time, *Hànzì* have been shared and scattered cross-culturally consolidating many linguistic boundaries and vast distances of geographical area from the Chinese mainland to parts east of the lower Mekong River, down the shores of Vietnam, from the Korean Peninsula beyond the East Sea to the Japanese archipelago; reaching isolates as far as the South Pacific to Singapore. Although their

significance has in turn suffered and been devalued over time, traditional *Hànzì* are a small opening, aperture, or portal into the past orthographic and linguistic anomalies that exist in East Asia's less mapped structure of origin, language family, or proto-language.

On the surface, to western learners, the written logographs or ideograms that represent the Chinese and Japanese languages are seemingly complex. However, the deeper philosophical aspects of character writing used in the creation of *Hànzì* are very sound, very coherent, simple, as well as puzzling. As educators, we should hope to entice learners of all ages to solve their complexities, see them for their simplicities, and nurture a deeper appreciation in both our students and ourselves. It should be taken seriously that we ourselves are the last line of defense to defend all that is still good and pure in this world. It is important to preserve our ancient arts and traditions to the best of our abilities; lest society forgets where it is from—our true origin and identity can be forgotten.

## Xǔ Shèn, the *Shuōwén Jiězì*, and Educational Constitution

The earliest explanations and interpretations of *Hànzì* etymology stem from the work of *Xǔ Shèn* 許慎 (58 AD - 148 AD) the lexicographer, philologist, and *Hàn* 漢 scholar who created the massive pivotal work and dictionary the *Shuōwén Jiězì* 說文解字. Shèn sought to revive all he could after the scholarly histories and Confucian classics of the *Qíncháo Shídài* 秦朝時代 (221 BC - 206 BC) had been burned and eradicated in the *Hàncháo* 漢朝 (206 BC - 220AD) transition. The *Shuōwén Jiězì* defined the etymology of 9,353 *Hànzì* under 540 *Bùshǒu* 部首 or radicals describing the origins of phonetic value and meaning in *Hànzì*. Shèn's accounts focus most on the history of earlier written forms of Chinese based in *Gǔwén* 古文 conveying a valuable window into the early literacy of the mainland which is possessed in the postface of the dictionary. Bottéro & Harbsmeier (2008) describe *Xǔ Shèn* as making a brief and “*en passant*” explanation of *Liùshū* 六書 or the six ways of Chinese character formation. However, the *Liùshū* descriptions are inseparable from the 9,353 *Hànzì* etymologies within the text and are an invaluable tool in reaching for a deeper understanding in western learners of all ages.

Much like the statements made by *Xǔ Shèn* throughout the *Shuōwén Jiězì*, many aspects in understanding of character origins he had said was lost and left with the ancients of the *Shāng* 商, *Zhōu* 周, and *Qín* 秦 dynasties. The ancient language of the *Hàn* period and the *Shuōwén Jiězì* is at times cryptic and impedes on modern clarification. Some modern scholars, linguists, and educators have embraced this work, revived, and reinterpreted *Xǔ Shèn*'s discourse through commentaries and translations. Those who have analyzed the philosophy of the Chinese language and writing historically such as the *Qīngcháo* 清朝 philologist *Duàn Yùcái* 段玉裁 (1735 AD - 1815 AD) and Prussian philologist Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767 AD - 1835 AD) reach for more transparency lying deep within the ancient ways. Their depth in these matters is more than this paper will attempt to explain as the purpose of this content is to create instructional assets for linguists and educators to improve on East Asian literacy development.

In *Xǔ Shèn*'s time according to O'Neill (2013), *Liùshū* was used to teach students Chinese characters in what *Xǔ Shèn* referred to as “juvenile pedagogy.” In my own experience, the Chinese and Japanese taught in institutions of higher learning both domestic and abroad sees modern-day literacy instruction absent of *Liùshū* descriptions from Second Language Acquisition or SLA; natives teaching within and outside of East Asia show the baton was not passed. For concise measures, the focus remains in providing explanations on *Xiàngxíng* 象形,

*Zhǐshì* 指事, *Huìyì* 會意, *Xíngshēng* 形聲, *Jiǎjiè* 假借, and *Zhuānzhù* 專注 characters bringing them into more familiar terms. Those who study Chinese, Japanese, classical Korean, or historical Vietnamese can benefit from understanding *Liùshū* beyond defining meaning in words as all have used *Hànzì* in their language at some point in history. Though the character formations of *Jiǎjiè* and *Zhuānzhù* are less relevant in interpreting modern characters, I will explain them for aesthetic purposes. *Xiàngxíng*, *Zhǐshì*, *Huìyì*, and *Xíngshēng* formations are the most relevant to teaching in modern writing and should be the primary focus of classroom interpretation.

As the writing system has evolved and been adapted to other languages, so too has the interpretations of *Liùshū*. The Japanese have a similar account of the six types of character formation as *Liùshū* is referred to as *Rikusho* 六書. As the Japanese have adapted the writing system for their own use, some examples might not reflect their Chinese origins. In general, orthographic universal terms act similar to ‘cognates’ as the categories use the same Chinese characters. However, over time the Japanese have exercised some character simplification to *Kanji* and use applied Japanese phonetics reflecting the phonological constraints of the language. Dissimilar to the presence of ‘cognates,’ the phonetics of orthographic universals at times contrast comparing equivalent terms. Halpern (2001) explains the six different types of *Rikusho* 六書 referred to as special *Moji* 文字. Though there may be subtle differences between interpretations, the same principles apply based on *Liùshū*.

## **Xiàngxíng 象形 “Pictographic”**

*Xiàngxíng* characters or *Shōkei Moji* 象形文字 as they are referred to in Japanese once accumulated to the largest proportion of *Hànzì* that made up the written language. *Xiàngxíng* or *Shōkei Moji* are pictographically shaped to represent the morphemes which they symbolize. In the modern case of the 200 plus *Bùshǒu* or Japanese *Bushu* 部首 radicals in Chinese writing, *Xiàngxíng* characters are an essential building block to *Hànzì* character formations, and one key to unlocking a deeper level of literacy involved in Chinese and Japanese SLA. As the original *Xiàngxíng* character designs slowly evolved over time, they developed into more ‘systematic’ more ‘exact’ expressions based on the calligraphic principles of brush writing. Li, Han, and Becker (2018) outline these proper brush writing techniques in calligraphy noting the 38 different *Kǎishū* 楷書 brush strokes that encompass the written language, also explaining the histories of Chinese literacy to depict the evolution and ‘systematic’ change of *Hànzì*. Though these principles changed the designs and logographs in subtle ways, the modern-day representations are still understood as pictographic; a pictograph representing a tangible object or the object serving as an intangible idea.

The ☼ ‘Sun’ 日 character, for instance, was depicted as an imperfect circle with a horizontal stroke through the middle similar to our view of the Sun. As the character was hatched and carved into moveable or solid organic material it appears imperfect; the process would be near impossible unless a stencil, protractor, or compass was available to make the circle perfect. As the traditions of calligraphy were passed down through the generations, paper was developed, and strides were made in widespread literacy through the *Lìshū* 隸書 ‘clerical script’ to *Kǎishū* 楷書 ‘standard script’ transition; the ☼ ‘Sun’ 日 or ‘day’ character later came to be represented as a more refined vertical rectangle. The same metamorphosis changed the logograph that represented an 眼 ‘eye’ 目 as the curved horizontal oval became a more ‘systematic’ and ‘exact’

sectioned vertical rectangle. The outer portions representing the white of the eye or sclera which surrounds the colored area or iris were changed to fit the principles of brush writing.

Based on the *Xiàngxíng* examples given by Wu (2016) such as ‘power’ or ‘strength’ 力, ‘evening’ 夕, and ‘heart’ 心, *Xiàngxíng* morphemes also came to represent abstract concepts becoming more than just the tangible. ‘Power’ or ‘strength’ as an abstract manifestation is represented as a pictograph of a 耒 ‘plow’ 力, the ideas of ‘strength’ or ‘power’ come from the concept of what the 耒 ‘plow’ 力 represents as a metaphor. ‘Evening’ which is represented by the pictograph of a 夕 ‘crescent moon’ 夕 indicates a time when light slowly fades to darkness with a half-lit or new moon describing darkness or times of less light, in Mandarin X7. An interesting *Xiàngxíng* logograph in 心 ‘heart’ 心 sees that even abstract matters beyond the organ itself are similar to western reasoning; for example: ‘caring,’ ‘concern,’ and ‘state of mind’ all use the 心 ‘heart’ 心 logograph. Other *Xiàngxíng* characters like ‘turtle’ 龜, ‘fish’ 魚, and ‘dragon’ 龍 display a greater degree of complexity visually but are less simple in logic (Figure 1). Again, as the origin of Chinese writing came from pictographic orthography, there are more examples of *Xiàngxíng* characters. To be concise, these pictures or logos became more than what they initially represented. When explained further in this presentation through *Huìyì* and *Xíngshēng* characters, *Liùshū* should make more sense to interpret to western learners.



Figure 1. *Guī* 龜 *Yú* 魚 *Lóng* 龍 in Oracle Bone Script or *Jiǎgǔwén* 甲骨文

## Zhǐshì 指事 “Indicative”

*Zhǐshì* characters or *Shìjì Moji* 指事文字 are logographs that apply indicating factors within the graphs or indicate through the graphic representation itself ways to explain various concepts such as directions and numbers, also forming other abstract intangible substance. Some *Zhǐshì* characters use existing graphs like 本 ‘origin’ 本, which consists of 木 ‘tree’ 木 and the indicating line at the root; the indicator at the root represents “origin” an abstraction of a root as a metaphor. Other characters like the directions of 上 ‘above’ 上 and 下 ‘below’ 下 are original graphs that make meaning through representation. 上 ‘Above’ 上 is indicative by a top-heavy graph stopping at the bottom, and 下 ‘below’ 下 is depicted by a line at the top of the graph with an indicator below. The number 一 ‘one’ 一 is indicated by a single line, 二 ‘two’ 二 by a pair of lines, and 三 ‘three’ 三 by a trio of lines which are simple indications of the numbers they represent. The numbers 五 ‘five’ 五, 七 ‘seven’ 七, and 十 ‘ten’ 十 according to Wu (2016) are also indicatives or “explicit” characters. The characters representing numbers are in some cases indicative while in other cases considered *Jiǎjiè* characters; see the *Jiǎjiè* section for definition and examples.

Indicatives make up a much smaller proportion of *Hànzì* as opposed to the number of *Xiàngxíng* and *Huìyì/Xíngshēng* compound characters. However, the *Zhǐshì* explanation is needed for its occurrence in *Hànzì* formations. Though there are more examples of *Zhǐshì*

formations such as 天 ‘Heaven’ 天, what is most important to understand is that indicative characters are graphic representations containing indicating factors representing the intended meaning of the logograph.

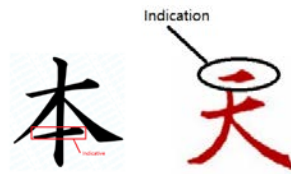


Figure 2. Indication Marks

## Huìyì 會意 “Logical Compounds”

*Huìyì* characters or *Kaì Moji* 会意文字 are extensive in numbers and primarily made up of combinations of *Xiàngxíng* constituents combined to make compound characters that describe intent and meaning figuratively. *Huìyì* characters express the most emphasis on philosophical matters within the writing system with some that have a simplistic rationale and with others that can elude even those that have studied an entire lifetime. *Huìyì* interpretations bring an added element of storytelling to the classroom and pose both a good opportunity for language instructors to share fun anecdotes in their presentations, as well as priming more serious second language (L2) seekers in their literacy development.

Writing brush’s story in etymology consists of the 竹 ‘bamboo’ 竹 radical in a modified form (𦰩), and a pictograph of a hand holding a 聿 ‘writing brush’ 聿. The associative properties that signify a ‘writing brush’ 筆 are compounded for this intended meaning. As for the *Jiǎntǐzì* 简体字 or simplified form of ‘writing brush’ 笔, the compound character still maintains a *Huìyì* formation replacing the utensil (聿) with the 毛 ‘hair’ 毛 Hànzì below the bamboo radical (𦰩). Traditionally, calligraphy brushes made of bamboo and animal hair are used in calligraphy accumulating to the compounded logic of the object’s logograph. In modern innovations both the Chinese morpheme of ‘writing brush’ *bǐ* 筆, and the multiple Japanese readings of ‘writing brush’ *fude* 筆 have extended meanings including literary or artistic tasks, other writing utensils, and people of writing such as scribes and authors. Halpern (1999) shows the multiple Japanese readings of all documented Japanese *Kanji*, *Fude* 筆 is also read as *hi*, *hitsu*, and *pitsu* in certain situations; for example *hisha* 筆者 or ‘writer,’ *tokuhitsu suru* 特筆する ‘to note or make mention specially,’ and *enpitsu* 鉛筆 or ‘pencil.’ Pan et al. (2009) show the same correlations in uses of *bǐ* 筆 as we consider cross-cultural interpretations. Other logical or associative compounds such as 明 ‘bright’ 明 or 森 ‘forest’ 森 also use of simple compound logic. 明 ‘Bright’ 明 a compound of the ‘day’ or 日 ‘sun’ 日 logograph and the 月 ‘moon’ 月 logograph consisting of the two brightest celestial bodies in view from the Earth’s surface, and 森 ‘Forest’ 森 consisting of three 木 ‘tree’ 木 logographs as an accumulation of a wooded area.

Other *Huìyì* compound logographs show a higher degree of abstraction than the previous examples. Taylor & Taylor (2014) and Powell (1982) both explain *dōng* 東 philosophically to define its compound symbolism as a 木 ‘tree’ 木 and 日 ‘Sun’ 日 to symbolize the Sun rising through the branches of the tree as it becomes a focal point on the eastern horizon; 東 ‘east’ 東.

Kwan (2011) provides an even deeper example abstraction through a translation of *Xǔ Shèn's* discussion on 幾 meaning “small” or “danger” explaining that “It is made up of 丝 (two threads of silk) and 戍 (garrison), which means to keep watch with troops. What is small as two threads of silk but needs to be guarded, is something dangerous.” (p. 429) In this example we see through ancient philosophy and interpretation of some *Huìyì* compounds, more profound attributive properties can be associated with their formation.

It is important to note that Kwan (2011) and Wu (2016) both state some *Huìyì* compounds hold dual status and ambiguity. *Huìyì* formations can be considered *Xíngshēng* characters due to the phonetic radical having relevance. In the following section, I will explain one important concern with these dueling anomalies. To understand *Huìyì* compound logographs are simple in that they are made up of two or more constituents with an intended logic ascribing to a multitude of concepts. However, if a compound logograph is bound phonetically, the *Huìyì* categorization can be negated to become a *Xíngshēng* formation. It is important to note that classroom instruction is solely based on the teacher's discretion, understanding, ability to articulate the true depth, meaning, and etymology of the *Hànzì* or *Kanji*; *Huìyì/Xíngshēng* compound character interpretations are at times left for your personal perspectives to initiate.

## *Xíngshēng* 形聲 “Pictophonetic”

*Xíngshēng* characters or *Keisei Moji* 形声文字 in modern writing make up the largest group of character formations within the six ways of character creation. Similar to the *Huìyì* formation, *Xíngshēng* characters are compound logographs made up of existing strains or radicals within the writing system, the difference lies in that one component or radical is purely for phonetic purposes. Throughout the evolution of Chinese writing, both semantic and phonetic values became relevant to each individual graph allowing those under the writing system to associate these properties within the creation of compound characters. Somewhat similar is the Japanese interpretation of *Keisei Moji* as the semantics of the logographs are often universal. However, teaching *Keisei Moji* adds a degree of difficulty for Japanese professors needing to consider all the phonetic readings and applications of an individual *Kanji*. Again, the instructor's discretion, understanding, ability to articulate, and decision on which angle to approach a character's etymology needs to consider the multiple *Onyomi* 音読み Chinese readings of *Kanji*, and the multiple *Kunyomi* 訓読み colloquial native Japanese derivative readings as they are relevant to *Keisei Moji* explanations; Chinese instruction is free of this obstacle.

In Chinese, *Xíngshēng* phonetic radicals do not always mirror the phonetic value of the indicating radical. At times the phonetic radical only hints to the intended phonetics of the logograph. At other times, phonetic radicals have subtle variations such as voiced and unvoiced pairs, share a consonant beginning, have the same syllable ending, and last, there are times of similar phonetic value with only a change in tone. As mentioned earlier some characters can be considered both *Huìyì* and *Xíngshēng* logographs due to the phonetic value of a component having semantic relevance. 李 ‘Plum’ 李 (Figure 3), for example, according to Wu (2016), holds dual *Huìyì/Xíngshēng* values consisting of 木 ‘tree’ 木 and 子 ‘child’ 子 with the intended meaning of fruit as a ‘child below the tree’ in its *Huìyì* interpretation; like ‘the fruit not falling too far from the tree.’ 李 李 in Chinese gains semantic value from mù 木 and retains phonetic value zi 子 in a *Xíngshēng* interpretation; 李 and zi are both similar in syllable ending and in the initial consonants sharing coronal *natural class* articulatory phonetics. In this case, only a



‘subtle’ phonetic transfer is made from the radical’s phonetic attachment. Through the phonetic study of radicals, this occurrence becomes more relevant while comparing other *Xíngshēng*.

**Pā** 趴 is one example of a *Xíngshēng* character where there is a voiced and unvoiced pair from the phonetic component. *Pā* 趴 meaning to lie prone receives its semantic value from **zú** 足 which is a pictographic ‘foot’ and receives its phonetic value from **bā** 八 the number ‘eight’ 八. *Pā* and *bā* are ‘unvoiced’ and ‘voiced’ phonetic pairs referred to in articulatory phonetics as “plosives.” **Dēng** 燈 meaning light or lamp exemplifies phonetics that do not change as the phonetic radical is from *dēng* 登 gaining semantic value from 火 ‘fire’ 火. However, ‘ascend’ 登 can also be visually representational of a lantern which is something to consider as 火 ‘fire’ 火 can represent the light emitted from the lantern; in this interpretation, it could be both a ‘logical compound’ and a ‘pictographic’ representation in *Liùshū*.

In Japanese, the *Kanji* of ‘language’ 語 has the compound properties of 言 ‘words’ 言, 五 ‘five’ 五, and 口 ‘mouth’ 口 that portrays associatively multiple listeners and one speaker in what is perhaps storytelling or an ongoing dialogue. In a pictophonetic interpretation of ‘language’ 語 (Figure 3), the *Kanji* gains phonetic value from **go** 五 and has a semantic value that comes from **gen** 言. ‘Language’ 語 can also be a verb and is read as *kata* in *kataru* 語る meaning ‘to tell’ and *katarau* 語らう meaning ‘to talk together.’ ‘Language’ 語 is also a morpheme in the noun ‘story’ read as *gatari* in *mono gatari* 物語; in correlation to the Chinese *Wùyǔ* 物語 with the same semantic value. In this original interpretation, it is possible to examine characters with your own awareness. Again, *Xíngshēng* characters are compounded with a semantic and phonetic component and some *Huìyì* characters can be considered *Xíngshēng* characters. Not all phonetic radicals mirror right and exact the intended sound, but in some way indicate or hint to the intended sound of the phonetic component. At this point in time, the most relevant character formations have been explained.

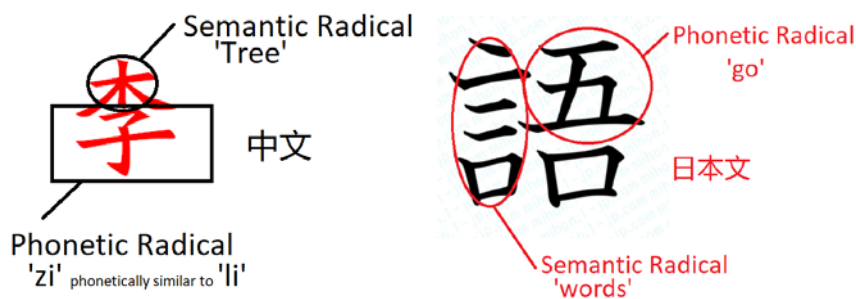


Figure 3. Semantic Phonetic Compound Interpretations

## *Jiǎjiè* 假借 “Phonetic Borrowing”

*Jiǎjiè* characters or *Kasha Moji* 仮借文字 are similar in numbers to indicative characters (*Zhǐshì* or *Shiji Moji*). Though there are few *Hànzì* of this type, their existence also demands a category of explanation. *Jiǎjiè* characters originate from one of the previous four categories that were borrowed for phonetic purposes for morphemes that did not have a character of its own. Essentially, it is a character that was once something else and based on the character’s phonetics

came to define another morpheme. Again, this category is more a historical narrative and as time has passed over almost two millennia it has become less relevant.

As was mentioned earlier some of the characters used to represent numbers are of this group, but again a category based on phonetics will vary in a cross-linguistic comparison when considering *Jiǎjiè* and *Kasha Moji*. The number 四 ‘four’ 四 at one time according to Wu (2016) originally meant to gasp or pant and symbolized a breathing nose. As the phonetics of the lexeme ‘four’ are *Sì*, the sound was like that of the respiration of breathing in and out; over time the character was substituted. The number 六 ‘six’ 六 symbolized an ancient dwelling, the number 八 ‘eight’ 八 originally meant to divide, the number 九 ‘nine’ 九 symbolized an animal with a long tail 𪛗; all had similar phonetics historically and were relevant to the said numbers when the *Hànzì* were substituted. Kwan (2011) interprets *Duàn Yùcái*’s discussion of 10,000 萬 (Figure 4) as once representing a scorpion, and as the phonetics were similar came to mean 10,000 which has been simplified in modern use (万). All considered *Jiǎjiè* characters or phonetically borrowed as once representing a different lexeme.



Figure 4. Traditional *Wàn* 萬 in *Jiǎgǔwén* 甲骨文

丩 *Bù* 不 which is used for negation in Chinese represents a sprout or seedling coming from the ground. 的 *De* 的 which is the possessive particle in Chinese according to Wu (2016) once meant “bright colored” in ancient Chinese. 我 *Wǒ* 我 which is the personal pronoun referring to self originally represented an ancient weapon. Halpern (2001) shows 𪛗 *tō* 𪛗 once represented an ancient sacrificial vessel and now is used for beans in a *Kasha Moji* interpretation. The most important thing to understand of *Jiǎjiè* is that over time some *Hànzì* have been adapted from other morphemes with similar phonetics; hence the term “phonetic borrowing.”

## *Zhuānzhù* 轉注 “Derivatives”

*Zhuānzhù* characters or *Tenchū Moji* 轉注文字 have very few examples which I have discovered in my personal research, but in theory, can be abundant based on how they are developed. Wu (2016) and Kwan (2011) both note that the *Zhuānzhù* formations are ambiguous seeing *Hànzì* that are synonymous and call for subtle variation in the formation of another character make for the *Zhuānzhù* formation as well as *Hànzì* that are created from existing forms with minor modifications centered around a radical or class heading. Kwan (2011) quotes *Xǔ Shèn*’s explanation as “*Zhuānzhù* means establishing a class as a heading and is assigning it to those (characters) with which its meaning fits,” (p. 426) referring to them as **annotative derivatives**.

Wu (2016) explains 它 *tā* 它 in its original use meant ‘snake’ and came to be used for the pronoun ‘it,’ over time. The new use of the *tā* 它 created a need for a new character, when *Shé*

蛇 was developed it added ‘worm’ or ‘insect’ as a sematic radical (虫) *Shé* 蛇 in creation is the *Zhuānzhù* formation having a basis in the class heading of *tā* 它. Kwan (2011) bases other examples of empirical studies that consider Hànzì created from *Huán* 環. Before the jade radical was added later in the evolution of writing (玉), any Hànzì created around *Huán* without the jade radical are considered *Zhuānzhù* formations and have synonymous to meanings in “roundness.” *Xǔ Shèn*’s only classical example of *lǎo* 老 and *kǎo* 考 (Figure 5) is synonymous meaning old age and has a small variation between the two with *lǎo* 老 as the class heading. Within the 60,000 plus Hànzì that exist, it is possible other Hànzì share the attribute of being created around a class heading or other characters were created out of synonymous relationships; *Xǔ Shèn* would not have mentioned *Zhuānzhù* if it did not have a purpose. What is most important to understand from these interpretations is that either a character was adapted for another term and created a need to replace the character, or a character was formed around a radical or class heading with a synonymous background.

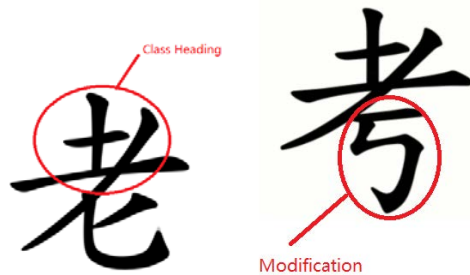


Figure 5. *lǎo* 老 class heading and *kǎo* 考 *Zhuānzhù* Modification

## Conclusion

*Liùshū* and *Rikusho* instruction is an element to consider in furthering fluency in not only SLA but also in teacher education for more quality informative forethinking instructors. Students working to acquire deeper literacy can benefit in understanding how character formations are developed in a system of writing that is very extensive and at times complicated; to say the least. The final development not yet discussed in detail is the importance of *Bùshǒu*, *Bushu*, or radical studies. Taylor & Taylor (2014) reference radicals as numbering 214 which was cited from the 18<sup>th</sup> century *Kāngxī Zìdiǎn* 康熙字典 (1710 AD). However, according to Huang & Huang (1989), it is believed to be slightly less. To understand the constituents or components that make up all Hànzì or Kanji, one should try understanding these 214 radicals for their semantic value, phonetic value, etymology, and origin; this would nurture a deeper understanding in both educators and their students. As there is no specific text to date on the subject of *Bùshǒu*, *Bushu*, or radical studies; there is a need for the development of SLA texts that consider radical studies. This, in turn, can further programs that offer certifications in East Asian languages outside of the traditional language courses and calligraphy classes adding an element to further the development of those aspiring to obtain an L2 in these disciplines.

As a student of Japanese and Chinese for more than three years at the college level, I still feel underdeveloped in my chosen L2 of Japanese; Chinese studies were additional to my character literacy development. Educators and those that have achieved L2 proficiency through

university study will often agree that immersion studies are the key in L2 fluency. The major tasks of SLA to consider are *reading*, *writing*, *speaking* and *listening* which are tasks that are often divided up amongst one two-hour block per class on average two to three times per week. In theory, if the tasks of *reading* and *writing* were developed early in 100 level courses to build a foundation for *listening* and *speaking*, by either the 200 level or early in the second half of the 100 level, the tasks could be split or focused on in two separate times for instruction. In turn, this would allow more classroom time and credit hours to devote to L2 proficiency. Furthermore, as *Bùshǒu* and *Bushu* add an element of cross-cultural comparisons, it might also be considered that departments within higher institutions have more connecting agreements that bring L2 seekers of Japanese studies and Chinese studies together. As attrition rates see 200 level beyond courses suffer from not meeting enrollment gaps, bringing cross-cultural aspects of study into the classroom can allow students to remain focused as they progress into their third and fourth years.

A serious consideration lies in how much an institution is willing to budget for language studies, how well departmental agreements can be willing to meet one another halfway, and how far we are willing to go to expand these developments. One would need to mind enrollment levels in beginner courses, mind the intent of students in their L2 mission, and statistical analysis would need to be shared between departments of East Asian Studies, International Studies, and Linguistics, for example; it really depends on the institution. However, there is no stopping anyone from the development of adding *Bùshǒu* and *Bushu* studies to the SLA agenda, and the development of a westernized textbook devoted to character literacy is certainly not out of the question.

#### Author Note

This paper would not be possible without the generous contributions of the Mandel Foundation, my professor of Japanese Kalyan Dasgupta MA of Linguistics, and everyone in the Confucius Institute at Cleveland State; especially Dr. Huiwen Li Ed.D and Shunqin Li MA of Chinese Linguistics.

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