

Report of Scheduled Activity:

AEARU Symposium on the Culture of Chinese Characters Kyoto University December 15–16, 2011

The history of Chinese characters in the various countries and regions of East Asia stretches far into the past. Texts written in Chinese characters played a central role in the development of the region's various civilizations. Through examining the ways in which the characters were employed, both unifying and distinctive characteristics of the region's cultures become clearly apparent. In all cases, however, Chinese characters functioned as an international writing system with the power to facilitate a common cultural community.

This symposium does not aim to focus on Chinese characters as a mere writing system, but rather, as the word "culture" in the symposium's title suggests, it aims to examine the role of the characters in a wider sense: as an axis around which scholarship, science and the arts in East Asia revolve.

Outline of Session Themes

Session 1:

Overview – The Culture of Chinese Characters in East Asia

After the end of World War II, the situation with regards to Chinese characters in the various countries of East Asia underwent considerable changes. This session will present a general summary of the specific situations in the five AEARU regions of China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Taiwan, discussing how the various issues were resolved and in what ways the evolution of Chinese characters in those regions is expected to proceed.

Session 2:

Chinese Characters and Modernization

This session will be divided into two parts, each focusing on a different aspect of the East Asian region's modernization process. The first part will focus on the issues faced by various East Asian countries and regions in finding appropriate linguistic translations for new concepts, and the second will look at the ways in which the region's traditional scholarship was affected by the influx of western ideas.

Part 1: Translations

In all East Asian countries and regions, modernization began with the introduction of modern



western civilization. The initial problem, however, was how to express and write about concepts (philosophy, economy, liberty, etc.) and objects (telephones, railways, constitutions, etc.) which had not previously existed in East Asia, and how to disseminate those new expressions.

From an external perspective, the most immediately apparent indicators of the progress of a nation's modernization are the establishment of a new political and economic system, and the advancement of research in the natural sciences. To facilitate the introduction into East Asian countries of concepts, objects and phenomena which had originally been expressed in English and other western languages, various approaches to developing equivalent expressions in the languages of the various East Asian countries were employed, generally through the use of Chinese characters. Among those various approaches to translation there are discernable examples of both success and failure. This session will focus on identifying the common elements and discussing the examples of regional originality which can be found therein.

Part 2: Traditional Scholarship – Cultural Inheritance and Conflict

In China, there is the saying “make the past serve the present, make foreign things serve China and weed through the old to bring forth the new” (古為今用, 洋為中用, 推陳出新 *gǔwéijīnyòng, yángwéizhōngyòng, tuīchénchūxīn*). Likewise, in Japan there is the phrase “Japanese spirit with western learning” (和魂洋才 *wakon yōsai*). These phrases embody a philosophy adopted throughout East Asia in the wake of its encounter with modern western culture: an endeavor to harmonize the region's traditional scholarship and culture as much as possible with modern western ideas, and through this fusion strive for greater achievements. This session will look at fields such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, pharmacy and agriculture to examine the process by which, within the tide of modernization, elements of the highly developed traditional scholarship of East Asia were sublimated into new forms through direct contact with the west. This session will also consider the changes which occurred in western society through its contact with countries which use Chinese characters, and the new potential of Chinese characters in modern globalized society.

Session 3:

Chinese Characters in the Information Age

As is the case throughout the world, the writing of documents and text using information technology devices is becoming the everyday norm in East Asia. This is resulting in an ongoing visible change in the culture of Chinese characters. This session will take a broad look at language and information technology devices. Specifically, the session will examine language and computer related issues surrounding the automation of translation, and the situation with regards to multicultural communication uninhibited by a language barrier.

Public Symposium:

Chinese Character Education and Promoting the Culture of Chinese Characters in East Asia

The afternoon of the symposium's second day will feature a public symposium held in cooperation between Kyoto University and the Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation (JKATF) in association with AEARU. The JKATF was established in Kyoto in 1975 to promote the study of kanji (Chinese characters) both in Japan and internationally. In 1992, the JKATF was authorized by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology (MEXT) as an incorporated foundation. Three times per year, the foundation holds public examinations on Chinese character knowledge and aptitude. The test focuses on reading and writing skills and the comprehension of compound phrases composed of multiple characters. The tests are divided into ten levels of difficulty, from level one, which is at the level of an elementary school graduate, to level ten, which is very advanced. The foundation is Japan's largest testing and certification organization, with over 2,500,000 people taking the examinations every year. In cooperation with the JKATF this symposium will feature keynote speeches and a panel discussion session focusing on the various issues surrounding study and education relating to Chinese characters.

The JKATF and Kyoto University are both located in Kyoto, Japan's traditional cultural center, and they have enjoyed an amicable non-commercial research-based relationship. Kyoto University president, Dr. Hiroshi Matsumoto is an adviser to the JKATF, and the head of this symposium's Organizing Committee, Prof. Tetsuji Atsuji of Kyoto University's Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies, is a member of the foundation's Board of Councilors. In this role Prof. Atsuji assists with ensuring the validity and relevance of the Kanji Aptitude Tests.

Conducting the Kanji Aptitude Tests is the main undertaking of the JKATF. The association has a highly beneficial impact on Chinese character reading and writing skills in people all ages, from children to adults, including those who are no longer in formal education. As the association does not directly employ its own research staff, it often seeks the cooperation of Kyoto University on matters relating to advanced education and research. In light of this collaborative relationship, both the JKATF and Kyoto University anticipate that the symposium's panel discussion session will provide an excellent opportunity to build on the results that our joint undertakings have accumulated in Japan, and develop wider connections with the East Asian region.

Symposium Program: The 1st AEARU Symposium on the Culture of Chinese Characters
December 15-16, 2011 Kyoto University

December 15, 2011

Time	Session	Speaker			Moderator
		University	Name	Presentation Title	
9:00	Registration				
9:30	Welcome Address				Prof. ATSUJI
9:45-10:15	Keynote Speeches	Kyoto University	Dr. Hiroshi MATSUMOTO	Modern Westernization and the Culture of Chinese Characters: The Foundation of East Asian Culture	Prof. ATSUJI
10:15-10:45		The General Association of Chinese Culture	Prof. Chao-Shiuan LIU	Chinese Characters and their Cultural Influence	
10:45-11:15	Session 1 Overview - The Culture of Chinese Characters in East Asia	Kyoto University	Prof. Tetsuji ATSUJI	The Standardization of Japanese Kanji	Prof. ATSUJI
11:15-11:45		Peking University	Prof. Yang SHEN	Some Issues on Kanji Reform in China	
11:45-11:50	Photo Session				
11:50-12:45	Lunch (Buffet) and Poster Session				
12:45-13:15	Session 1 Overview - The Culture of Chinese Characters in East Asia	Seoul National University	Prof. Byung-Joon KIM	The Introduction of Chinese Characters into Korea: The Role of the Lelang Commander	Prof. ATSUJI
13:15-13:45		Tsing Hua University - Hsinchu	Dr. Kuan Yun HUANG	The Chinese Writing System in Its Formative Stage: New Discoveries, New Researches, New Horizons	
13:45-14:15		The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Prof. Qin LU	Standardization of Chinese Characters for Computer Use in Hong Kong	
14:15-14:30	Coffee Break and Poster Session				
14:30-15:00	Session 2: Chinese Characters and Modernization Part 1: Translations	Kyoto University	Prof. Masakatsu FUJITA	Modernization and Traditional Culture: Focusing on Translation	Prof. FUNG
15:00-15:30		The University of Hong Kong	Prof. Kam-Wing FUNG	Galileo's Journey to the East: His Works and Instruments in the World of Chinese Characters	
15:30-16:00		Peking University	Prof. Shaochang YAN	The Significance of Kanji in the East-Asian Circle of Civilization	
16:00-16:15	Coffee Break and Poster Session				
16:15-16:45	Session 2: Chinese Characters and Modernization Part 2: Traditional Scholarship - Cultural Inheritance and Conflict	Kyoto University	Dr. Makoto Mark TAKETO	Modern Medicine and Usage of Chinese Characters in Japan	Dr. TAKETO
16:45-17:15		Seoul National University	Prof. Jung-Sam YUM	Western Understanding of Chinese Characters: The Case of Matteo Ricci's Xiguojiifa (西國記法)	
17:15-17:45		Nanjing University	Prof. Yulai ZHANG	The Nature, Function and Reformation of Chinese Written Characters	
17:45-18:15		Kyoto University	Dr. Hiroaki ISOBE	Should We Keep Local Languages and Chinese Characters in Top Sciences? A Case of Astrophysics	
19:00-21:00	Reception (Kyoto Brighton Hotel)				

December 16, 2011

Time	Session	Speaker			Moderator
		University	Name	Presentation Title	
9:30	Registration				
10:00-10:30	Session 3: Chinese Characters in the Information Age	KAIST	Dr. Key-Sun CHOI	Multilingual Terminology	Prof. KUROHASHI
10:30-11:00		Tsinghua University - Beijing	Prof. Maosong SUN	Chinese Language Processing	
11:00-11:30		Kyoto University	Prof. Sadao KUROHASHI	Development of a Japanese-Chinese Machine Translation System: Kyoto EBMT System	
11:30-12:00					
12:00-13:00	Lunch (Buffet) and Poster Session				
Public Symposium: Chinese Character Education and Promoting the Culture of Chinese Characters in East Asia					
12:30-13:30	Registration				
13:30-14:00	Welcome Remarks				
14:00-14:45	Session 1: Keynote Speeches	Miyamoto Institute of Asian Research	Mr. Yuji MIYAMOTO	The Vital Role Played by Chinese Characters in East Asia	Prof. ATSUJI
14:45-15:30		Waseda University	Prof. Dr. Hiroyuki SASAHARA	The Increasing Interest in Chinese Characters in Japan and its Background	
15:30-15:45	Break				
15:45-17:05	Session 2: Panel Discussion Session	Miyamoto Institute of Asian Research	Mr. Yuji MIYAMOTO		Prof. ATSUJI
		Waseda University	Prof. Dr. Hiroyuki SASAHARA		
		Kyoto University	Dr. Hiroshi MATSUMOTO		
		Peking University	Prof. Yang SHEN		
		Seoul National University	Prof. Byung-Joon KIM		
		Tsing Hua University - Hsinchu	Dr. Kuan Yun HUANG		
17:05-17:15	Closing Remarks	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Prof. Qin LU		