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Shared Literary Heritage in the East Asian Sinographic Sphere

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter traces the origins and nature of the shared literary heritage in the East Asian “Sinographic Sphere,” namely China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, focusing on developments before the early modern period, in keeping with the temporal and thematic scope of this handbook. It explores modes of cross-cultural communication and textual culture conditioned by the Chinese script, including gloss-reading techniques, “brush talk,” and biliteracy; surveys shared political and social institutions and literary practices, sustained by the flourishing book trade; and touches on the rise of vernacular literatures, the dynamic between Literary Chinese and local vernaculars, and the role of women. With the recent death of Literary Chinese as the lingua franca of East Asia we are facing a new phase in world history. The Chinese-style literatures of East Asia point to cultural commonalities and tell stories of creative engagement with Chinese literary history that offer insights about Chinese literature.

Keywords: Sinographic Sphere, East Asian literatures, vernacular, biliteracy, East Asian women writers, logographic scripts, gloss-reading, Japanese literature, Korean literature, Vietnamese literature

THE twentieth century is a much-invoked inflection point. The end of traditional multiethnic empires and the rise of industrialized mass warfare, media revolutions, and of course “modernity” are considered unprecedented in the history of humanity. But one irreversible turning point has gone largely unnoticed: the death of Literary Chinese as the authoritative lingua franca of East Asia, the so-called “Sinographic Sphere” of China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, of cultures that traditionally relied on the Chinese script and literary language. This is a major event in human cultural history, as it means the disappearance of the world’s last cultural sphere where a strongly “logographic” script (which records the meaning of “words” rather than sound value as “phonographic” alphabets or syllabaries do) enabled the thriving of distinctive literary cultures for almost two millennia. The invention of writing started with logographic scripts: Egyptian hieroglyphs, Mesopotamian cuneiform, Chinese characters, and Mesoamerican glyphs. But they all have long since died out and been replaced with phonographic scripts, with the exception of Chinese characters. As an effect of the regional hegemony of Chinese empires, many surrounding states adopted Chinese culture and its script during the first millennium CE. Although Japan, Vietnam, and Korea went on to develop their own phonographic scripts right before or during the second millennium CE which led to the blossoming of local vernacular literatures and the eventual abandonment of Chinese characters in Vietnam and, increasingly, in Korea, Literary Chinese remained the language of government, scholarship, Buddhism, and refined belles-lettres well into the twentieth century.

(p. 511) Pre-twentieth-century East Asia was thus “biliterate” (Denecke 2014a, 45–56), relying on two written idioms, namely Literary Chinese and local vernaculars. In the early twentieth century, vernacular movements led by reformers and revolutionaries inspired by Western ideas of “nation-states” and “national languages” swept East Asia’s old lingua franca so effectively aside that at the beginning of the twenty-first century its true historical significance in the region is largely forgotten. Nowadays, the school curricula and public consciousness in Japan, Vietnam, and Korea celebrate the works of their vernacular literature as the true “national literary tradition” and tend to consider the commanding corpus of Chinese-style texts that until only a century ago stood at the center of education and literary life as a somewhat exotic and difficult foreign relict. This modernist mythology of national literature is not just untrue to the history of each individual tradition and of East Asia as a whole, it also fosters further divisiveness in a region which in the current media is largely defined negatively through the lingering painful memories of war and Japan’s imperialist expansion, colonial exploitation, and more recently economic and military competition.

Little did the early-twentieth-century language modernizers realize in their patriotic zeal and frantic search for national salvation how unique and convenient the lingua franca of Literary Chinese had been. Today, acknowledging its centrality for East Asian culture can evoke specters of Chinese hegemony for Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese, especially in the light of China’s meteoric political and economic rise on the world stage over the past

couple of decades. But do its extinction and replacement with Global Anglo-American as the new lingua franca in the region have any more savory political and cultural connotations?

This chapter sketches the nature and significance of East Asia's "Sinographic Sphere." It explores the usefulness of the concept, discusses the channels of cultural contact and shared material culture characteristic of that sphere, and explains what strategies were used to adapt China's textual heritage to local conditions and how they resulted in distinctive literary cultures that shared as much as they differed.

The term "Sinographic Sphere" defines East Asia through its logographic script and textual heritage. What cultural phenomena do logographic scripts enable? What is the nature and significance of East Asia's biliteracy? What does it mean that the world's last surviving transnational logographic "script world" has now disappeared (following on the death of cuneiform around the second century CE)? And how can we bring the memory of East Asia's biliteracy back into public consciousness and mobilize it for building a shared regional identity for today's East Asia? While even a summary treatment of these questions, in particular of the last two, goes far beyond the scope of this essay, they mark the horizon of this chapter's inquiry and of the prominent inclusion of East Asia's Chinese-style literature in this handbook.

This essay aims to illustrate the shared literary heritage in the Sinographic Sphere, focusing, spatially, on its surviving states, namely Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Temporally, it focuses on the first millennium CE but sometimes reaches far beyond the timeframe of this handbook, especially in the case of Korea and Vietnam, due to the poor survival of early sources. This makes sense, because the significance of the Sinographic Sphere and its recent demise are best grasped in the *longue durée*.

(p. 512) **Names**

"East Asia" commonly refers to "Greater China" (including the PRC, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and sometimes Singapore), Korea, Japan (including the former Ryukyu kingdom), and Vietnam. Today, both Western and East Asian languages use terms borrowed from the Greek "Asia" to refer to this region (Ch. *Dong Ya*, J. *Higashi Ajia*, K. *Tong Asia*, V. *Đông Á*). In Herodotus's *Histories*, Asia is one of the three continents of the world, alongside Europe and Africa. In antiquity, its meaning ranged from, most broadly, the iconic Other—the Persian Empire and the "Orient"—to a Roman province in modern-day Turkey. This sweeping range of meaning continues today, as "Asia" is perceived as an ominous historical force, as in popular notions of the twenty-first century as the "Asian century," but also a geographical region (South Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, etc.).

Concepts characterizing the region in cultural terms emphasize China's hegemonic influence: "Sinic world" (Reischauer 1974; Huntington 1993) or "Sinosphere" (Fogel 2009; used differently in Matisoff 1990). The shared religious traditions and ideologies of Confucianism, Buddhism, and statutory law are often evoked to define commonality. The concept of a "Sinographic culture sphere" (J. *Kanji bunkaken* 漢字文化圏, used here in the short form "Sinographic Sphere") defines commonality based on a shared script and textual culture. A postwar historian of Early China, Nishijima Sadao, developed this concept in detail when formulating a broader theory of the "East Asian World." He saw the adoption of Chinese characters by peripheral states not as a reverential bow to a "higher civilization" but as an inevitable tool for those states to maintain diplomatic ties with China through the correspondence required by the tribute system. The adoption of Chinese characters in turn gave access to the world of Chinese political thought, law, scholarship, the Buddhist canon in translation, and literature, among others; it established Literary Chinese as a lingua franca in the region, enabling communication across radically different vernacular languages and also making possible the recording of those vernaculars (Nishijima 1983: 586–594).

The concept of a "Sinographic Sphere" is certainly not unproblematic (Lurie 2011: 348–353), but its advantages arguably outweigh its problems. It highlights writing as a catalyst in the creation of a distinctive East Asian cultural sphere. The best way to see the transformative power of the shared script is to look at the broader implications of the adoption of Chinese characters in East Asia (Denecke 2014b). First, it created biliteracy and biliterate literary traditions, recorded in Chinese-style and vernacular idioms. Biliteracy differs from both bilingualism and diglossia. Unlike with the "bilingualism" of the European Middle Ages, whereby the educated classes learned written and spoken Latin in addition to their local vernaculars, elites in East Asia did not need to learn a form of spoken Chinese to read and write Literary Chinese. Because of the logographic nature of the Chinese script they only needed to master a reading technique to voice a Chinese text by pronouncing the Chinese characters in their own vernacular (p. 513) and rearranging or adding grammatical elements as needed. Especially in Early Japan, hardly anybody spoke any form of Chinese beyond people of continental descent and the handful of students and of monks who were sent on government-sponsored fellowships to study the latest trends in Buddhist doctrine. Instead, Japanese were largely monolingual, voicing Literary Chinese texts through a reading technique called "gloss-reading" (J. *kundoku* 訓読), which involved switching the Chinese words into Japanese word order, voicing them in Japanese pronunciation, and adding the wealth of Japanese morphology, such as cases and inflections, that Chinese does not have. Although the technique of glossing, in particular the process of reading texts written in a more prestigious "cosmopolitan" language in a more local vernacular language, is certainly ubiquitous and an "essential stage" in the borrowing of writing systems (Whitmann 2011), the strongly logographic nature of the Chinese script produced different patterns of linguistic and literary interaction, and, ultimately, made for quite distinctive literary cultures in the Sinographic Sphere compared to premodern Europe's alphabetic script sphere. For example, in contrast to the bilingualism of medieval Europe, rooted in Latin as a shared

spoken language, East Asia shared a “grapholect,” or “scripta franca,” as one might call it. The term “diglossia” is as inappropriate as “bilingualism” in the premodern East Asian context. It typically refers to the coexistence of high- with low-register languages, such as local dialects, exemplified by High German and Swiss German or Modern Standard Arabic versus Egyptian, Sudanese, or Levantine Arabic. Dialects, though used in certain local genres of literature, are clearly subordinated to the high languages employed in administration, the media, school education, and literary production. This can certainly not be said of Japan (on the problems of the concept of “diglossia” from a Korean perspective, see King 2015). Although Chinese-style writing was overall the authoritative “high language” of government, clergy, and belles-lettres, certain genres and occasions demanded the authoritative “high” use of vernacular Japanese: prayers to the gods (J. *norito* 祝詞), early imperial decrees (J. *senmyō* 宣命), poems praying for the safe travel of overseas embassies, and the courtly genre of *waka* 和歌 poetry since the tenth century are all examples of “high” use of the supposedly “low” vernacular and show that premodern Japan does not fit the diglossia model.

Second, the shared logographic script produced a distinctive mode of communication: when envoys from different polities met, they communicated in “brush talk,” conversing by passing a piece of paper back and forth, in the absence of a common spoken language. Though unable to talk about the weather or lunch, in writing they could commune on the most sophisticated level or grace each other with poems steeped in the shared canon of the Confucian Classics and poetry, thus confirming their belonging to the Sinographic Sphere, while exploring their differences.¹ Both Chinese dynasties and the peripheral states benefited from this “imagined community,” as we can see in the poem written by Emperor Xuanzong of Tang 唐玄宗 (685–762) for the Japanese (p. 514) ambassador Fujiwara no Kiyokawa 藤原清河 (d. ca. 778), who came to China in 752. Its closure blends a compliment for the Japanese ambassador with the celebration of China’s cultural power: “Thanks to this astonishing Confucian gentleman, Our royal transformative power will shine brightly abroad” 因驚彼君子，王化遠昭昭 (*Quan Tang shiyi* 1.1). Ironically, Kiyokawa had little chance to do so, because his attempts to return home failed and he lived out his life in China.

Arguably poetry, rather than more informational prose, was the lingua/scripta franca of premodern East Asia. It communicated sentiments of friendship and commonality and thus was often used during the decisive official moments of cross-cultural encounter, namely welcome or farewell banquets. The power of this traditional mode of communication was illustrated one last time in Shiba Shirō’s 柴四郎 (1852–1922) *Strange Encounters with Beautiful Women* (*Kajin no Kigū* 佳人之奇遇, 1885–1897; adapted by Liang Qichao 梁啟超 [1873–1929] into Chinese and by Phan Châu Trinh 潘周楨 [1872–1926] into Vietnamese). At one point in the novel, four national activists—a Japanese and a Chinese man, and a Spanish and an Irish woman—compose Chinese-style poems when in Philadelphia, the embodiment of liberalism. How else should this cosmopolitan company

have communicated? But by that time the prominent use of Chinese-style poetry in a supposedly “modern” political novel was criticized (Sakaki 2006: 156–176).

As we will see below, the shared script also produced distinctive modes of textual circulation and translation in East Asia. Chinese and Chinese-style texts circulating between the different East Asian polities could be read and understood by any sufficiently literate person, even if a given text was ultimately voiced in Japanese, Korean, or Vietnamese and not mutually intelligible in speech; unlike in monolingual cultural spheres with phonographic scripts, translation was not needed, as the vernacular voicing of Chinese texts was part of general literacy training. When full-fledged translations or adaptations of Chinese texts into the vernacular became popular in the early modern period, they were part of vernacularization processes propagating Chinese texts to women, commoners, and children.

All these peculiarities of East Asian cross-cultural communication and textual culture are ultimately rooted in the power of the logographic writing system and make the description of East Asia as a distinctive cultural sphere, the Sinographic Sphere, highly meaningful. As attractive as the recently proposed idea of a “Sinographic Cosmopolis” based on Sheldon Pollock’s model of a “Sanskrit Cosmopolis” and its vernacularization (Pollock 2006) is, the lack of importance of script in the South Asian case and the lack of a full-fledged cosmopolitanism, for example during the early and medieval periods in Japan, makes this idea not quite applicable to the East Asian case (King forthcoming). The Chinese script could certainly be used phonographically, as in China itself in the transcription of foreign names and words, where characters were used for sound rather than meaning. However, it was the logographic use of Chinese characters that created commonality, just as the development of syllabaries (sometimes based on the simplification of Chinese characters used phonographically) eventually led to the creation of vernacular scripts and regional difference.

(p. 515)

Channels

Conquest and colonization, the processes that drove “Hellenization” and “Romanization” in antiquity and later “Europeanization” or “Westernization” from the age of exploration through the colonial period, were not the main catalysts of “Sinicization” in East Asia (Chapter 31). The Japanese archipelago was never conquered or colonized. And although parts of today’s Korea and Vietnam were colonized during the Han, the periods of most intense adoption of Chinese culture in Korea during the Three Kingdoms 三國 (first century BCE–668 CE), Unified Silla 統一新羅 (668–935), Koryŏ 高麗 (918–1392), and Chosŏn 朝鮮 (1392–1910) periods did not occur under direct Chinese imposition; even in Vietnam, which has the longest and most violent history of Chinese domination (for most of the millennium before 938 and again during the Ming invasions of 1407–1427), the most

significant periods of adaptation of Chinese culture occurred during the independent Lý 李 (1009–1225), Trần 陳 (1225–1400), and Nguyễn 阮 (1802–1945) dynasties.

Chinese empires were certainly built through expansive warfare, and there were formative moments of military conflict in East Asia: Emperor Wu of Han's 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) conquest of Nanyue 南越 (V. Nam Việt, sometimes already considered a “Chinese” state, as it was founded by a Qin military commander), and of Old Chosŏn, traditionally assumed to have been founded by Korea's legendary ancestor Tan'gun 檀君, brought along Han Dynasty soldiers, writing, and culture.

The second formative moment, intensified by the reunification of China under the Sui and Tang dynasties, saw the birth of East Asia proper, the emergence of secondary state formation on the Chinese periphery and the development of a power balance between the East Asian states that was to last, with modifications, for one and a half millennia. Emperor Yang of Sui's 隋煬帝 (r. 604–618) disastrous attempts to conquer Koguryŏ and the internecine struggle between the Three Kingdoms of Koguryŏ 高句麗, Paekche 百濟, and Silla 新羅, resulted in unification of most of the Korean peninsula under Silla by 668. Silla had defeated its two competitors with the help of Tang armies and was hard pressed, though ultimately successful, in expelling its former ally, who had his own plans for Korea.

The military conflicts between the Sui reunification of China (589) and Silla's unification of Korea (668) triggered anxiety and hastened programs of centralization on the Japanese archipelago. The adoption of the new imperial title Tennō 天皇 and of the less “barbarian” name of Nihon 日本 (rather than Wa 倭), court ranks, and the imperial ancestor cult of the sun goddess Amaterasu in Ise, as well as the first attempts to trace and legitimize the Yamato state through historical chronicles, fall roughly between the late sixth and the late seventh centuries. This was also one of the rare moments in East Asia's premodern period when migration played a formative role in the spread of Chinese culture. Although there is ample evidence of close connections between Japan and the Korean peninsula in the prehistoric period, the scope and the vectors of cultural (p. 516) flow from the continent through Korea to Japan—in particular the degree to which technologies travelled with migrants—remains hard to quantify. But we know for sure that the destruction of Paekche by Silla in 663 led to an exodus of its elites to Japan, which benefited greatly from this influx of know-how through continental scribes and craftsmen. Possibly about a third of eighth-century Japanese bureaucrats could trace their origins to Korea (Farris 1998: 121). Before the early modern period, this type of formative migration remained quite rare within East Asia. But seventeenth-century Vietnam, for example, saw a significant influx of Chinese migrants. They formed the Sino-Vietnamese diaspora community of the Minh hương 明香 (明鄉), who came to dominate the diplomatic corps of nineteenth-century Vietnam (Whitmore 1996, 223).

Although neither the Sui nor the Tang ambitions with regard to Korea were realized, the military unrest in the region during the seventh century led to a spectacular spread of Chinese culture that marks the emergence of East Asia as a thriving multistate region

united by the creative adaptation of Chinese cultural precedents. In a third formative moment for East Asia, this balance was thoroughly upset by Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 豊臣秀吉 (ca. 1536–1598) invasions of Korea during the last decade of the sixteenth century, in an attempt to reach China and invert the East Asian order. It was later dismantled by East Asia's fourth transformative moment, Japan's victory over China in 1895 in the first Sino-Japanese War, which reversed the millennia-old power balance between China and its periphery, unexpectedly propelling Japan to a hegemonic position. We still live in this moment of a fundamental reshaping of the East Asian power balance.

If not conquest, colonization, or migration, the main mode through which Chinese culture spread in East Asia and catalyzed secondary state formation was diplomacy within the perimeters of the Chinese tribute system. From the first half of the first millennium CE, emergent leaders of tribal confederations sent tribute goods and missions to Chinese dynasties in exchange for investment with prestigious Chinese titles. Diplomatic literacy, the ability to engage in proper diplomatic protocol with China through “state letters” (Wang 2005: 139–179), was a crucial precondition for negotiating relations with China; it also stimulated the domestic use of writing in the fledgling peripheral states. In the hagiographic tenth-century *Shōtoku taishi denryaku* 聖德太子伝略 (*Abridged Biography of Prince Shōtoku* [574–622]), the Japanese prince, the symbolic figurehead of the introduction of Buddhism and Chinese-style state building, is shown drafting diplomatic letters to the Sui emperor and hosting poetry banquets for foreign envoys. And in *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (*History of the Three Kingdoms*, 1145), King Munmu 文武王 (r. 661–681) praises the abilities of the extraordinary scholar-official Kangsu 強首 (d. 692), who lived through the stormy military unrests of the seventh century and negotiated the tricky diplomacy with the Tang court through the Silla unification:

Kangsu served as a scribe, conveying our intentions in letters to China, Koguryō, and Paekche, and successfully established friendly relations. Our former king (Muyōl 武烈王) pacified Koguryō and Paekche with military aid from Tang China, but his military achievements were also based on Kangsu's literary ability.

(*Samguk Sagi* 46.429)

(p. 517) The power of literary ability and diplomatic literacy is put on a par with military might.

Most often, measures of Chinese-style state building in East Asia aimed at centralization. Central administrative structures were created, authoritative titles for rulers introduced, administrative records kept, court histories—often expressions of a fledgling native consciousness—compiled, and, for daily court routine, Chinese-style clothing, reign periods, and calendric systems adopted or adapted; Chinese-style law codes were promulgated, Buddhism was propagated, and the provinces were connected to the center through administrative hierarchies, infrastructure, and registration systems for tax collection and military conscription.

Shared Literary Heritage in the East Asian Sinographic Sphere

It is important not to overemphasize direct Chinese influence, because the mutual interaction between China's peripheral states was at least equally important for their adoption of Chinese culture. Koguryŏ, for example, during its entanglement with Chinese dynasties adopted some aspects of Chinese culture several centuries earlier than Silla, on the southeastern side of the Korean peninsula. In fact, both Koguryŏ and Paekche, Silla's western neighbor facing the continent, seemed to have helped the largely preliterate Silla cope with Chinese-style diplomatic correspondence until the first half of the sixth century, when Silla rapidly developed into a Chinese-style polity. Similarly, the impact of all three kingdoms on Japan—whether in Buddhist doctrine, practice, and sculpture or scribal culture, gloss-reading techniques, and Confucian education—is pervasive and yet to be assessed in its full scope (Farris 1998, chapter 2; Como 2008).

Strategies

Paradoxically, Chinese culture could become the shared heritage of East Asia only because it was strongly nativized in the peripheral states and adapted to their sociopolitical, practical, and aesthetic needs. Two elements were particularly important for the nativization of Chinese textual culture: the development of reading and writing techniques that made Chinese texts accessible and digestible, and the establishment of Confucian academies that provided prestigious education, conferring authoritative social status or even government positions.

The unifying power of the Chinese script in the Sinographic Sphere stands in stark contrast to the radically different languages that relied on it. While Classical Chinese is largely an isolating monosyllabic language with word order on the SVO (subject-verb-object) model and shows little inflection or affixing (like Vietnamese), Japanese and Korean are agglutinative languages at the opposite end of the linguistic spectrum: words, morphemes, are usually polysyllabic; verbs and adjectives are highly inflected and heavily affixed; objects precede their verbs (SOV), and particles are needed to mark syntactical function.

This disjunction between a shared script and radically different grammar patterns proved an enormous challenge in particular for early Korean and Japanese writers and readers of Literary Chinese. The response to this challenge was the development of (p. 518) gloss-reading techniques that allowed rendering a Chinese sentence in native syntax and sound and, conversely—and this is crucial—inscribing texts in accordance with Chinese syntax, so that it was encoded in the lingua franca of the region and remained legible to all members. Because Japan developed the most pervasive, continuous, and well-documented gloss-reading strategies, I focus on the Japanese case to explain the process. The common technique for reading Chinese texts in Japan has been *kundoku* 訓読 or “reading through (Japanese) glossing” (Kin 2010; Lurie 2011, chapter 4). Comparable to Chinese commentators who glossed ancient words with contemporary language (Ch. *xungu* 訓詁), a Japanese reader would vocalize a Chinese phrase in accordance with Japanese syntax and pronunciation. In Modern Mandarin, for example, the famous opening of the Confucian *Analects* reads *xue er shi xi zhi, bu yi yue hu* 學而時習之、不亦說乎 (“to learn and sometimes review what one has learned, is that not pleasure?”). A Japanese reader could voice these characters, with variations depending on period and context, for example as *manabite toki ni kore o narau, mata yorokobashikarazu ya*.

The Japanese vocalization of a Chinese sentence through *kundoku* involved three procedures. First, the association of Chinese logographs with Japanese words (e. g., 習 “review” with the Japanese word *narau*). Second, the transposition of the phrase into Japanese word order (e.g., inverting object and verb: inverting the Chinese *xi* (“reviewing”) *zhi* (“that which [one has learned]”) into the Japanese *kore* (“that which

[one has learned]”) *narau* (“review”). Third, the addition of suffixes and particles (e.g., the object marker *o* in *kore o narau* (“review what one has learned”).

In Japan, the earliest appearance of *kundoku* markings (J. *kunten* 訓点), a practice that extends the Chinese use of tone marks (J. *shōten* 声点), dates to the late eighth century, but evidence for *kundoku*-style grammatical inversions of verb and object, for example, are already visible in seventh-century wooden tablets. Recent research indicates that *kundoku* practices reached Japan through Korea. In particular, the practice of dry-point glosses, marking up texts with a sharp point such as the other end of a writing brush, seems to have Korean origins and appears often in texts associated with Huayan 華嚴 Buddhism (J. *Kegon*, K. *Hwaŏm*), which was influential in Nara-period Japan (Lurie 2011: 195–202). To write Chinese-style texts, writers used “reverse *kundoku*,” producing texts in Chinese word order and without grammatical markers. The extraordinary efficiency, thanks to Chinese characters, of these reading and inscription techniques was exploited for the last time by the throngs of Chinese who went to study in Japan in the early twentieth century. Liang Qichao wrote a treatise on how to use *kundoku* to help his compatriots learn modern Japanese more quickly and gain access to the wealth of Japanese translations of Western works—a more efficient route than having to learn European languages (Kin 2010: 82–86).

Because of the grammatical similarities between Korean and Japanese, the gloss-reading techniques developed on the continent were highly successful in Japan. While *kundoku* was not the only method of reading Chinese texts in Japan, it was by far the most overwhelmingly used, and one that did not change substantially throughout the premodern period. Premodern Korea, however, saw the development of several reading and writing techniques (see also Chapter 34). Because of the complexity of consonant (p. 519) clusters in Korean, in contrast to the comparable simplicity of both the Chinese and Japanese syllabic systems, scribes faced greater challenges representing Korean with the available Chinese character phonograms. Also, the greater exposure to and authority of Chinese culture probably played a role in the less continuous history of Korean writing practices (Lee and Ramsey 2000: 44–60). *Hyangch'al* 鄉札 (“local letters”) was the most radical and accurate attempt to record Korean with Chinese characters. It resembled Japanese *man'yōgana* 万葉仮名 writing, since it recorded phrases mostly phonographically, using Chinese characters like a phonographic syllabary, in addition to mixing them with semantically used Chinese characters. Although it probably had wider usage than we can grasp in Silla sources, it survives only in the transcription of twenty-five “native” or “local songs” (K. *hyangga* 鄉歌) from the Three Kingdoms, Unified Silla and early Koryŏ periods, after which it died out.

In contrast, the most passive method of inscribing Korean texts was writing in Literary Chinese while inserting reading marks consisting of smaller (and sometimes simplified) characters indicating word order changes, particles, and inflections: *kugyŏl* 口訣 (“oral formula,” or *t'o* 吐) resembles *kundoku* and *kunten* and allows transformation of a Chinese sentence through gloss marks into Korean (Whitman 2011). The gloss marks are similar to the use of *katakana*. Covering the broad spectrum between the two polar opposites of

hyangch'al and *kugyŏl*, *idu* 吏讀 (“clerical reading”) describes all sorts of inscriptional methods that show varying degrees of nativization in terms of word order, affixation, and particles, depending on the writer’s ability and ideological and generic choice. It was mostly used for practical administrative genres and was in wide use until the nineteenth century.

Scholars have struggled to conceptualize the act of gloss-reading. Although sometimes described as translation of sorts, *kundoku* is not translation in any conventional sense, because there is only one text (not an original and a translation). Also, premodern Japanese were largely monolingual but did not perceive Chinese texts as foreign. *Kundoku* was simply a reading and writing technique that was part of domestic literacy training.

Besides the shared script and gloss-reading and writing techniques, the thorough education in canonical Chinese texts created commonality in East Asia. There is no space here to go into the intricate history of the various government-sponsored and private educational institutions in premodern East Asia. Suffice it to say that the elite education at the state-sponsored academies, with their detailed institutional regulations of personnel, curriculum, exam procedures, and genres, contrasts sharply with the private-based, unregulated, and elusive education system in Western antiquity (Denecke 2014a, chapter 1). The Spanish rhetorician Quintilian (ca. 35–100), our most extensive source on education in Rome, defines it as learning how to read and write and studying grammar and literature, geometry, astronomy, principles of music and logic, and rhetoric and philosophy, the ultimate goal of such a comprehensive education. But not least because education was private, the concrete nature, trajectory, and content of ancient Greco-Roman education remains hard to delineate from surviving sources. Also, the status of the instructors differed radically in early East Asia and in Rome, where bilingual Greek (p. 520) slaves and freedmen—paradoxically, a socially lower but culturally higher class—taught elite males Greek and Latin literacy; it would be rather ludicrous to imagine Chinese slaves as instructors in the East Asian state academies. And although, conversely, students and monks from the peripheral countries were sent to study in China, not unlike Romans who routinely completed part of their training in the Greek-speaking parts of the Roman world, their number was very small in comparison. The most exceptional case of “outsourced education” in early East Asia was probably Silla, which even sent members of the royal family to study in China. Silla provided the greatest number of foreign students in late Tang schools, with eighty-eight Sillans passing the Tang civil service examinations during the ninth century, among them the brilliant Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn 崔致遠 (857–?) (Holcombe 2011: 113; see also Chapter 34).

The foundation of Confucian academies appears in later historical sources as a symbolic moment in the civilizational process. Koguryŏ presumably founded its first institution in 372, the same year the first Buddhist monk arrived; Paekche seems to have had a thriving textual culture, encompassing the reading of histories, administration, medicine, and divination by the sixth century (*Sui shu* 81:1818); Silla saw the foundation of its first academy in 682 (set up together with a Ministry of Works and Ministry of Adornments

and Lacquer [*Samguk sagi* 8, 80], roughly contemporary to the foundation of an academy in Japan, whose organization was first laid out in the Taihō 大宝 Code of 701; and the first imperial academy in Vietnam was founded in 1076. Although there were professional tracks such as mathematics, law, or calligraphy in different periods and states, the heart of these academies was the study of the Confucian Classics, the histories, and ornamental belles-lettres such as the *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*). It was part of the curriculum in Silla (*Samguk sagi* 38.366–367) and a centerpiece, together with China's first three official histories, of Japan's Letters Track (J. *kidendō* 紀伝道), which rose to great popularity in the ninth century and produced the majority of Heian scholar-officials. Intimate knowledge of the *Wen xuan* and the histories provided students with a broad command of administrative and ritual prose, with a repertoire of Chinese historical anecdotes and moral exemplars, and with precious literary vocabulary. Already the earliest extant Japanese poetry anthology, *Kaifūsō* 懷風藻 (*Florilegium of Cherished Airs*, 751), plotted its preface on the *Wen xuan* preface, and Heian literary culture was saturated with references to the *Wen xuan*. So iconic was the stature of this collection that scholars in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam eventually produced their own *Wen xuan* featuring choice pieces of their local Chinese-style traditions: Fujiwara no Akihira's *Honchō monzui* 本朝文粹 (*Literary Essence of Our Court*, 1060s), Sō Kōjōng's *Tong munsŏn* 東文選 (*Eastern Wen xuan*, 1478, 1571), and Bù Huy Bích's *Hoàng Việt văn tuyển* 皇越文選 (*Wen xuan of the Imperial Việt*, 1825) (see also Chapter 19).

East Asia's academies were associated with an examination system. What stunned early modern European missionaries in China was the connection between a state-run examination system and recruitment into civil service. The idea of a system that seemed to place merit over birth and allow for dramatic social mobility was most attractive for contemporary Europeans in the grip of the hazards of absolutist monarchies. Although access to the academies was often limited to children from families of a certain rank, and (p. 521) much modern scholarship has highlighted the limitations for social mobility in these systems, it is important to acknowledge the very existence of institutions that in their principles and ideological rhetoric rewarded moral and academic worth.

Again, it is impossible to outline the exact nature and complex development of the exam system in the various East Asian states within the scope of this chapter. Silla established a form of examinations in 788, and Koryŏ initiated exams in 958, which basically continued until 1894 (see also Chapter 34). Vietnam established exams in 1075 and held on to the system the longest of all East Asian states, namely until 1919, when Emperor Khải Định 啓定 of the Nguyễn 阮 Dynasty abolished it because the court was “determined to reform,” and the old civil service examination was deemed to “incompetently serve as a method of recruiting talents” (*Nam phong* 17 [1918]: 310). As in China, in early modern Korea and Vietnam the civil service examinations were not merely one social institution among many. They had a sweeping grip on the moral values, marriage politics, economic choices, political practices, daily lives, and literary imagination of its people. And they created public spectacles. In Chosŏn Korea, the government opulently feasted the three highest-ranking graduates, with a procession to the Confucius Temple and a parade on horseback followed by musicians and actors. With more than 14,606 candidates chosen in

the highest-level examination (K. *munkwa* 文科) on 744 occasions throughout more than 600 years of Chosŏn history, the spectacle of exam success (and failure) was omnipresent (Lee 2003: 2). In Vietnam, during their long history of 845 years (1075–1919), the civil service examinations had about 3,000 candidates who passed its highest level (V. *tiến sĩ* 進士), and their names are inscribed on stelae in the Temple of Literature in Hanoi (Cōng Hậu 2013).

Japan did not develop a civil service examination system. Heian Japan did have a three-step exam system, with testing on the bureau, ministry, and imperial levels. But due to the power of aristocratic lineages, exam success did not translate into recruitment and political success. Scholars did have authoritative status, which is even obvious in parodies castigating their stuffiness, presumption, and lackadaisical diction appearing in vernacular works such as Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari* 源氏物語, ca. 1014). But after the heyday of the State Academy during the eighth and ninth centuries, its social significance declined, to the point that it was not even rebuilt when it burned down in the twelfth century (Ury 1999: 373). With the famous exception of Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903), who earned senior first rank posthumously after dying miserably in exile due to machinations of the ascendant Fujiwara clan, scholars were and remained typically of middle rank. The function of the Academy was taken over by clan schools (J. *bessō* 別曹), and Confucian learning became a hereditary profession, with members of the Nakahara and Kiyohara clans specializing in the Classics and members of the Sugawara, Ôe, and some branches of the Fujiwara clan focusing on the Letters track (Ury 1999, 367–75).

Confucian academies and the examination system produced a distinctive literary culture with local inflections throughout East Asia. Students and graduates were educated to share a canon of textual knowledge and of commentarial literature and exegesis, to develop strategies to apply this knowledge to policy questions in writing, and to acquire (p. 522) sophisticated fluency in administrative genres. Also, the Confucius cult, in particular the usually biannual celebration in honor of Confucius (釋奠 Ch. *shidian*, K. *sŏkchŏn*, J. *sekiten*, V. *thích điệ*n) connected the academies and Confucius temples to the court and its political ideology. Though already stipulated in the *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*), the ceremony came into its own in the Six Dynasties Period and was adopted throughout East Asia. It continues (or has recently been revived) in Confucius temples throughout East Asia. The celebration could take distinctive local forms. The first celebration in Japan is recorded for 701, and in early Japan it featured lectures on a canonical text and the composition of poems on a specific topic line drawn from the day's text. This differed from contemporary Tang practice, which seems not to have included poetry composition, and even from Six Dynasties precedents, which included poetry composition but, for all we can see, in archaicizing tetrasyllabic stanzaic poems without topic lines.

By virtue of their curriculum, students and graduates shared an outlook on life that emphasized self-cultivation, the duty of both obedience and remonstrance, the rhetoric of lamenting lack of official success or of “not meeting one's time” and finding an

appreciative ruler and patron; disappointment, strained effort, and periods of unemployment—the often vastly more pervasive flipside of exam triumph and career success—fostered sentiments of reclusion and retreat from society. These themes became a prominent part of the literary repertoire of East Asia’s Chinese-style literary traditions.

Literary Culture

Books

The most momentous object of transcultural exchange in East Asia was undoubtedly the book, in various forms. The material foundation of the thriving literary cultures of East Asia was the importation or production, preservation, and circulation of texts. There are cases of texts from the peripheral states that presumably made their way to China even as early as, in Japan, two sutra commentaries attributed to Prince Shōtoku 聖德太子 that were taken to Koguryō and China in the seventh and eighth centuries (Kornicki 2001: 306–312). But the ostentatious pride that usually resonates in anecdotes surrounding such rare cases highlights the fact that the overwhelming majority of the book flow went from China to its neighboring countries. Books, both Buddhist and secular, were brought back from tribute missions to China, requested from China by courts, or brought back home by monks. Japanese missions to Korea were nicknamed “sutra-seeking missions” in Korea, because Japanese officials made altogether eighty official request for complete sets of the Buddhist canon, the best available edition being the one produced in Koryō Korea based on Song and Khitan versions and reprinted again in the thirteenth century, after the printing blocks were destroyed by the Mongols (Kornicki 2011: 71). The prominence of books in the material flows in East Asia has led the Chinese scholar Wang Yong 王勇 to coin the notion of a “book road” (Ch. *shuji zhi lu* 書籍之路, (p. 523) J. *bukku rōdo* ブックロード). Wang created the concept to draw attention to a model of cultural interchange distinct from the Eurasian “silk road,” which transported largely material goods. Books, however, were both material objects and intellectual vectors. This is a valuable concept, although we need to keep in mind that the East Asian book road, unlike its Eurasian correlate, was largely a one-way street flowing out of China into the periphery, and that the books were largely in one “language,” East Asia’s lingua franca of Literary Chinese.

Literary cultures are as much shaped by the survival of texts as by their loss. In Korea, regular national disasters and invasions—such as those of the Mongols, Japanese, and Manchus—caused massive damage to book collections. Even more dramatically, in Vietnam no manuscript or printed text before 1697 survives (Chapter 36). The fifteenth-century scholar Hoàng Đức Lương 黃德良 laments the lack of surviving Sino-Vietnamese texts, faulting not just destruction in times of turmoil but also censorship and lacking

efforts to compile and transmit texts. Consequently, people fell back on Tang poetry and retrievable Chinese texts:

Alas! How can it be possible for a civilized country which has been established for thousands of years to lack writings to prove its culture, but instead to recite the words of Tang writers? How sorrowful it is!

(Trần Văn Giáp 1990: 37-38)

In the preface to the “Bibliographical Treatise” of the *Đại Việt thông sử* 大越通史 (*General History of the Great Việt*), Lê Quý Đôn 黎貴惇 (1726-1784) added to these reasons the lack of a central library, the exaggerated focus on works related to exam success rather than literary worth, and even a kind of bibliophilic hoarding that led people to collect but refuse to share or circulate their treasures.

East Asia’s archetypal moment of book loss that mesmerized later imagination was the legendary “burning of the books” at the order of the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇帝 (r. 221–210 BCE) in 213 BCE. It became a symbol used to explain Japan’s extraordinary success in book preservation. There is no question that in Japan, as elsewhere, many texts fell prey to time or were transmitted only in fragments, but Japan managed to become the “outsourced treasure-house” of Chinese texts lost on the continent. The most recent compilation of so-called *issonsho* 佚存書 (“lost-and-preserved texts”) runs to seventy volumes and over 38,000 pages (Jin 2012). From at least the Song, the Chinese resented this state of affairs, as evident in Sima Guang’s 司馬光 (1019-1086) “Song on a Japanese Sword” (“Ribben daoge” 日本刀歌, preserved in Ouyang Xiu’s 歐陽修 [1007-1072] personal collection, Jin 2014). He explains that Xu Fu, dispatched to the island of immortals before the burning of the books, brought Chinese books to Japan and laments that the Japanese court forbids returning these long-lost books to China, and the Japanese instead pay the Chinese off with cheap rusty swords! Since the nineteenth century, the rediscovery, philological study, and editing of such texts have become a source of vivid exchanges between Chinese, Korean, and Japanese literati. These stories of textual loss with a transcultural happy, if often complex, ending make for a distinctive phenomenon in East Asian cultural history.

(p. 524) **Anthologies, Genre Hierarchies, Genres**

Literary anthologies were a crucial vector for textual preservation in East Asia. Whereas Greco-Roman antiquity produced few anthologies, and generally only of epigrams, the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) and canonical medieval literary collections set a precedent for prolific literary anthologization in East Asia, and their production, commissioned or private, and comprehensive or personal collections transmitted a great part of premodern East Asian literary production. Anthologies differ from integral texts in fundamental ways. By knitting pieces from different authors, periods, and contexts into a single narrative, compilers produce their own supernarrative and become authors of sorts. They can inscribe political, cosmological, and aesthetic agendas into a collection's configuration and arrangement scheme that exceed or even contradict the original texts. They are "supertexts" of sorts. This makes imperially commissioned anthologies—so common in East Asian history—particularly interesting, as they reveal a characteristically complex relationship to the court, state ideology, and literary memory.

One reason anthologies became such a successful literary form was the genre spectrum and genre hierarchy in East Asia. Epic poetry and drama, the most authoritative genres in the European genre hierarchy, were ill-suited for anthologization. But short lyrical poetry, which in Europe only became more esteemed with the Middle Ages, stood at the top of the East Asian genre hierarchy and lent itself to collection in anthologies. East Asian authors produced Chinese-style texts in a wide variety of genres, although *shi* 詩 poetry had a particularly prominent position. They were not productive in the "Classics" and "Masters" category of the four-fold bibliographic scheme—canons that were basically closed before the emergence of East Asia and to which later authors could only contribute in the form of commentarial literature. In the "Histories" category, teams of court historians produced more or less Chinese-style official histories in Japan (the Six National Histories [*Rikkokushi* 六国史] of the eighth through ninth centuries), Korea (*Samguk sagi*, which partially transmits the lost early historiography from Korea's Three Kingdoms Period; *Koryōsa* 高麗史 [*History of Koryō*, fifteenth century]; and *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 [*Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 1413–1865]), and Vietnam (the lost *Đại Việt sử ký* 大越史記 [*History of Great Viet*, 1272] and its extant expansion *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* 大越史記全書 [*Comprehensive History of Great Viet*, 1479 and 1697]). Alongside official historiography there existed a swath of historiographical genres—local, clan-based, private, professional, written in different linguistic forms, even in the vernacular, depending on time and place.

The bulk of East Asia's Chinese-style literary production fell in the "Collections" (*ji* 集) category, and literati throughout East Asia basically produced in all major Chinese genres ranging from rhapsodies to various forms of *shi* poetry, and from ornamental parallel prose to administrative prose and religious genres like prayers, funerary genres, or laments. Still, it is important to keep in mind that behind the same genre label, local incarnations that developed rather differently from Chinese precedent could lurk. For example, the popular "poetry prefaces" 詩序 (Ch. *shixu*, J. *shijo*) in Heian Japan were

(p. 525) a companion genre to the distinctively Japanese genre of “Topic Poetry” (J. *kudaishi* 句題詩), heptasyllabic regulated poems composed on five-character topic lines according to a strict rhetorical template, which was probably inspired by Tang examination poetry and became the most important poetry genre used on formal court occasions and excursions from the mid-tenth century (Satō 2007, Denecke 2007). Or the Chinese genre labels can hide different status in local literary culture: while “rhapsodies” never quite took off in Japan and never played the authoritative roles they did in Chinese cultural history, “pseudo-biographies” 假傳 (Ch. *jiazhuan*, K. *kajŏn*), originally probably inspired by texts like Han Yu’s “Biography of Fur Point” (*Mao ying zhuan* 毛穎傳), had a disproportionately large presence in Koryŏ and Chosŏn literary life and helped develop new modes of prose fiction (Lee 2003: 136–138; Liu 2012; Wang 2009: 225–236).

Vernacular Scripts and Literatures

One thing that came to diversify East Asia and distinguish each of its literary traditions was the development of vernacular scripts and literatures. Although the inscription technique did not change (*man’yōgana*, *hyangch’al*, and *chữ nôm* 字喃/喃/喃 script already mixed logographic and phonographic uses of Chinese characters to inscribe the local vernaculars), the emergence or promulgation of vernacular scripts did eventually facilitate vernacular literary production.

Based on cursive writing and simplifications of phonographically used Chinese characters, Japan’s *hiragana* 平仮名 and *katakana* 片仮名 syllabaries emerged around the ninth century. Cursive *hiragana* became the medium of choice for vernacular poetry and fledgling vernacular prose, while square *katakana* was primarily used for glossing Buddhist texts. In Vietnam, *chữ nôm*, using both standard Chinese characters and locally invented ones to record vernacular Vietnamese, took shape as a writing system under the Lý 李 dynasty, and started being employed for literary composition during the Trần 陳 dynasty (Nguyễn Quang Hồng 2008: 126–127). The demotic script had its heyday between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries and was mostly used by Vietnamese literati. It was also employed in written format for interpreting (*diễn nghĩa* 演義) Confucian texts and other Chinese works. A number of Chinese novels were adapted into Vietnamese using the *nôm* script. The most famous example is the *Tale of Kiều* (*Đoạn trường tân thanh* 斷腸新聲, aka *Truyện Kiều* 傳翹), a verse adaptation of the Chinese *Tale of Jin, Yun, and Qiao* 金雲翹傳 by the poet Nguyễn Du 阮攸 (1765–1820). These Vietnamese adaptations, which often greatly differed from their Chinese base stories, enjoyed a wide array of audiences, including literati, women, and commoners. Unlike the forty-seven letters in each of the *kana* syllabaries, *chữ nôm* was not a systematic syllabary but consisted of an extensive set of more than 37,000 characters (Vũ Văn Kính 2005, 7). Though not an official writing system, the *nôm* script lingered even after 1910, when the French protectorate of Tonkin (northern Vietnam) officially adopted *chữ quốc ngữ* 國語 (“script for the national language”), an adaptation of the Roman (p. 526) alphabet devised by the seventeenth-century French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes and other missionaries.

Vernacular verse narratives in *chữ nôm* woodblock print still had a readership until the 1930s, despite the widespread use of the Roman *chữ quốc ngữ*.

Korea's vernacular script, *han'gŭl* (originally called *hunmin chŏng'ŭm* 訓民正音 "correct sounds for the instruction of the people"), was invented at King Sejong's 世宗 (r. 1418–1450) court and promulgated in 1446. As the first text written in *han'gŭl*, scholars composed *Yongbiŏch'ŏn'ga* 龍飛御天歌 (*Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*), a panegyric song cycle in 125 cantos praising the achievements of the founders of the Chosŏn dynasty, complete with a Chinese version (at the time more comprehensible) and a scholarly commentary (Lee 1975). Unlike other East Asian scripts that derive from Chinese characters and adhere to their syllabic nature, King Sejong's court created a twenty-eight-letter alphabet (though still arranged in syllabic blocs), with consonants visualizing their physical place of articulation and vowels representing metaphysical symbols of heaven, earth, and humankind (Ross King in Daniels 1996, section 17). Although the king's and scholars' explicitly articulated goal was to devise a script that anyone could learn in a morning, or "even an idiot, in no more than ten days" (Desgoutte 2000: 54) the general consensus has been that *han'gŭl* was to remain of low status and little used, a bare literacy tool for women and children, until its sweeping national promotion in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, this view is increasingly questioned, because the invention of *han'gŭl* enabled the flourishing production of bilingual vernacular editions (*ŏnhaebon* 諺解本), in particular of canonical Confucian and Buddhist texts (see also Chapter 34).

Despite fundamental differences between the history and nature of East Asia's vernacular scripts, it is safe to say that vernacular scripts were more easily associated with female reading and writing, private and personal concerns and romance, and more popular genres—they were also called "female hand" (*onnade* 女手) and "female script" (*amgŭl* ㅁ글) in Japan and Korea respectively; in Vietnam, women writers generally employed the demotic *nôm* script for their compositions. In contrast, Chinese characters suggested primarily male authorship and consumption, official purpose, and authoritative genres ranging from administrative prose to miscellaneous essays and poems composed at homosocial male gatherings.

However, biliteracy and vernacular literatures took different trajectories throughout East Asia. Premodern Korea did have vernacular literature, but the vernacular "literary tradition" before the early modern period appears as a rather erratic set of thinly documented genres. There are twenty-five "native" or "local songs" (*hyangga*) recorded in *hyangch'al*, and twenty-two "Koryŏ songs" (*Koryŏ kayo* 高麗歌謠, 10th–14th cent.) recorded in *han'gŭl* in later Chosŏn anthologies. From the fifteenth century, a variety of vernacular forms emerged, such as *akchang* 樂章 ("eulogies"); *sijo* 時調, the metrically most clearly defined and most successful Korean genre, still popular today; and the lengthier narrative *kasa* 歌詞. These genres, together with vernacular novels, *p'ansori* 판소리 pieces, and autobiographical memoirs by female authors, most famously Lady Hyegyŏng 惠慶宮 (1735–1816) (Kim Haboush 1996), make up the bulk of premodern vernacular texts. Various reasons contributed to this disparate history of vernacular

(p. 527) literature in Korea: the lack of a uniform writing system to record vernacular language; pervasive oral transmission, which we can only grasp through later recording and redactions by moralistic Chosŏn scholars; and the high prestige of Chinese-style writing, which pushed vernacular genres into low status in the genre hierarchy.

Vietnam's vernacular literature, though considered secondary to Chinese-style literature, still enjoyed a certain standing with both emperors and literati. Emperor Lê Thánh Tông and the members of the learned "Altar of Poetry" (Tao Đàn 騷壇) society compiled the brilliant *Hồng Đức Quốc Âm Thi Tập* 洪德國音詩集 (*Anthology of Verse in National Language from the Hồng Đức Reign*, fifteenth century). Two of the greatest intellectual figures of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Vietnam, Nguyễn Trãi 阮鵬 (1380–1442) and Nguyễn Bỉnh Khiêm 阮秉謙 (1491–1585), composed *Quốc Âm Thi Tập* 國音詩集 (*Collection of Verse in National Language*) and *Bạch Vân Quốc Ngữ Thi Tập* 白雲國語詩集 (*Collection of White Cloud Verse in National Language*). Thanks to the typological and syntactical proximities between Vietnamese and Chinese, Vietnamese poets could emulate almost all Chinese poetic forms, such as regulated poetry, rhapsodies, and eulogies, while composing in the vernacular. Thus the vernacular literature in *nôm* script can be treated as the naturalization of Chinese textual culture in the local Vietnamese context.

Only Japan developed a continuously flourishing and quite independent vernacular literary tradition from its literate beginnings. The more than four thousand and five hundred vernacular poems preserved in the eighth-century *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (*Collection of Myriad Leaves*, ca. 759) stand in stark contrast to the two dozen Korean *hyangga*, especially because we know of a large ninth-century poetry collection, *Samdaemok* 三代目, that is lost but might have given us many more clues about the role of *hyangga* in Silla literary culture. But we cannot simply explain away the remarkable difference between the emergence and development of vernacular literatures in early Japan and Korea with reference to coincidences of transmission. For various complex reasons, the fate of Japan's thirty-one-syllable vernacular *waka* poetry became intimately intertwined with court culture from the tenth century, in the form of imperially sponsored anthologies, editing projects, court events such as poetry contests, and hereditary poetry lineages of court nobles (such as the Rokujō 六條 and Mikohidari 御子左 [Nijō 二條, Kyōgoku 京極, Reizei 冷泉] houses). This enabled, uniquely in premodern East Asia, the elevation of a vernacular genre to the level of Chinese-style poetry. Thanks to the prominence of its use as a manual for *waka* composition, the *Tale of Genji* was also gradually canonized from the thirteenth century. But we must not forget that the elevation in the genre hierarchy mostly applied to the *Genji*; generally, tale literature (*monogatari* 物語) remained of low status, alongside vernacular diaries and drama such as *Noh*, *bunraku* 文楽, and *kabuki* 歌舞伎, which only with the Meiji Period (1868–1912) were suddenly elevated to the unprecedented, distorting heights of a "national canon of Japanese literature." True, the "Koryō songs" were adapted for court *entertainment*, and actually survive because their melodies were adopted into the Chosŏn repertoire and recorded in compendia of court music (Lee 2003, chapter 5). But *waka* rose to a *courtly art*, and the probably rather low-

class performers of Koryō songs, with their dancing, trilling of melodic nonsense lines, and earthy, sometimes bawdy amorous themes, are a far cry from the Japanese courtiers' chanting of *waka* poems, with their superbly codified diction, elite flair, and firmly established tradition of scriptualization and anthologization. (p. 528)

Women Writers

Although vernacular genres in all East Asian traditions were more strongly associated with women, in terms of production, performance, consumption, and content, men did also, in some cases quite prominently, participate in the vernacular literary sphere. The opposite was not true to the same degree. Despite variations depending on place and period, East Asia's Chinese-style literary sphere was male-dominated. In early Japan, where women appear in authoritative roles as imperial ancestor (the sun goddess Amaterasu), tribal chiefs, empresses, and household leaders, there were some female authors writing in Chinese-style forms. But they disappear after the ninth century, which is often blamed on the influence, however weakened, of Confucian law codes promoting patrilineal registration and male-dominated hierarchies (Sekiguchi 2003). In the mid-Heian period, women continued to participate in the consumption of Chinese and Chinese-style literature, famous examples being Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (d. ca. 1014) and Sei Shōnagon 清少納言 (d. early eleventh century), who knew their Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) much better than some of their male family members or colleagues at court. But it would have been improper for them to write in Literary Chinese; and even a woman's frequent use of Chinese characters (rather than *kana* letters) was castigated as stiff, unfeminine, and pretentious. Only the much diversified and socially dramatically broadened literary stage of the Edo period (1603–1868) saw some women—most famously Ema Saikō 江馬細香 (1787–1861), the companion of the poet and historian Rai Sanyō 賴山陽 (1780–1832)—emerge as Chinese-style authors (Nagase 2007).

Only a few works by women were published in Chosŏn Korea, although there is a large corpus of *kasa* poems written by women in *han'gŭl* and circulating among family and friends (Kim 1996: 122–136). But very few women left poems in Chinese-style forms, except for famously rare cases such as Hō Nansŏrhŏn 許蘭雪軒 (1563–1589), whose talent in Chinese-style poetry was promoted by her brother, the scholar Hō Pong (Kim Kichung in Kim-Renaud 2004, chapter 4).

Women could actively participate in the male-dominated sphere of Chinese-style writing by playing by its rules, but they could also use its language to unmask male privilege, polygamy, and misogynist social conventions. Take for example Hồ Xuân Hương 胡春香 (1772–1822), who together with Nguyễn Du is considered one of the key founding figures of Vietnamese national literature and is still quite alive in popular imagination today. Her erudition matched that of the greatest scholars of her time, but in her writings she used boldly colorful and coarse language. Although the bulk of her oeuvre is written in *chữ nôm*, she also used Chinese-style writing, elegantly and discreetly revealing the fragile fate of women. The transition to modernity fostered particularly interesting profiles of

socially active women voicing their visions in various idioms and (p. 529) media. Suong Nguyệt Anh 孀月英 (Nguyệt Anh the Widow), editor-in-chief of the first Vietnamese newspaper for women, composed poems in Chinese-style forms and in *chữ quốc ngữ* vernacular, also translating Chinese vernacular novels and writing editorials defending women's rights.

A New Era for the Sinographic Sphere

The Sinographic Sphere has entered its third and final phase. After the functioning of Literary Chinese as a lingua franca within China and the Chinese states of the first millennium BCE and its retooling as the lingua franca in East Asia over roughly the first two millennia CE, it has virtually disappeared at the beginning of the third millennium, and the commonality it afforded is waning. Obviously, Chinese characters are still used in East Asia, although, interestingly, Korea and Vietnam, the states with the traditionally stronger links to Chinese culture, make drastically reduced use of them or have virtually completely abandoned them. Unfortunately, discussions about the “future” of the Sinographic Sphere rarely pinpoint the heart of the matter, namely the monumental inflection point constituted by the death of Literary Chinese in the twentieth century. They tend to focus on peripheral cultural remnants of the Sinographic Sphere: the fate of Chinese characters in the face of the simplified/traditional character divide, the ideological shadows of Confucianism, economic success, modernization, and cultural difference from the West (e.g., Mizoguchi 1992: 423–478).

Instead, a thorough assessment of the consequences of the death of Literary Chinese and the distorting effects of the ideology of “national literature” on literary studies in the region is urgently needed; the neglect of Chinese-style literature, the misrepresentation of traditional literary culture and genre hierarchy (and compensatory upgrading of folk and vernacular literature), the meaningless split into Chinese-style and vernacular literature, and the lack of an integrated study of East Asia's unique biliterate traditions plague literary historiography in all East Asian countries. At its extreme, the national-literature model resulted in attempts to completely excise all Chinese-style texts from literary history, as with scholars in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s—hard pressed during yet another time of war and occupation—who tried to shrink the Vietnamese tradition exclusively to texts written in the vernacular (Phạm Văn Diêu 1960: 44).

Thus, studying the Chinese-style literature produced in East Asia is a project of historical revisionism, an antidote to the distortions of modern models of national literary historiography as well as to the divisive issues of colonization, war wounds, and territorial quibbles that currently dominate East Asian foreign relations. Reconstructing and revitalizing the shared heritage of East Asian “Letters” 文, the basis for East Asian

commonality is thus as much a historical duty as it is an ongoing project of shared memory and reconciliation (Kōno et al. 2015).

But studying East Asia's Chinese-style traditions also contributes to a deeper understanding of Chinese literature and culture (Zhang 2011). Not only can pronunciation (p. 530) glosses and the modern languages help reconstruct the phonology of earlier stages of the Chinese languages, the "outsourced treasure house" of Chinese texts preserved outside China is a rich trove of source materials. Furthermore, compilations of Tang poetry produced in East Asian countries, for example Japanese "couplet charts," can help us reconstruct more of the contemporary Tang canon and glance behind the veil that the canonization of Tang poetry during the Song Dynasty has imposed on us. Also, the history of East Asia's Chinese-style literature can serve, in the form of a heuristic experiment, as an alternative literary history of China, in which originally Chinese literary phenomena play out differently when introduced into a different sociopolitical environment and literary culture. This can help us to carefully rethink entrenched teleologies of Chinese literary history.

As we move into the third phase of the Sinographic Sphere, when ideologies of the modern nation-state have made historical awareness and scholarly research of Chinese heritage in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam challenging and even unpopular, it is an explicit goal of this Handbook to inspire China scholars to seriously study the rich and thought-provoking Chinese-style literatures of East Asia for their historical importance, heuristic value, and contemporary relevance to East Asia's peaceful integration.

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Notes:

(¹) For Vietnam, see Kelley 2005. Brush talk exchanges could have considerable domestic impact in the countries involved, as seen with the 1764 Chosŏn mission to Japan. See Zhang 2011: 95-148.

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