

# The Challenges Facing Present and Future Research into Stylus Writing In Japan

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The existence of a kind of writing which done by making indents on paper in old texts was discovered in the second half of the twentieth century. This discovery\* has opened up a new field of research in the twenty-first century. This symposium we boldly present, to you, this research results from Prof. Nam pung-hyun and Dr. Andreas Nivergelt . Through recognizing the importance of stylus writing (*kakuhitsu*) research and the overcoming of the difficulties of developing proper research techniques that we have made progress in this area of research.

\*Here “discovery” means not only the finding of new material but also as something which has value as research material, rather than something which is only “discovered”.

Although I given this paper the title *The Challenges Facing Present and Future Research into Stylus Writing In Japan* the discovery of new stylus writing material not only in Japan but also in Korea and China means this paper must encompass that of East Asia, and it is from this viewpoint of stylus writing that I would like to deliver this paper.

## I – The Discovery of Stylus in East Asia

1. Stylus writing was first discovered in Japan forty-five years ago in the fall of 1961 (the 36<sup>th</sup> year of Showa). Stylus writing\*\* or *kakuhitsu* is the use of a pen-like writing instrument to “write” words, diagrams or marks to facilitate reading in old texts. Old texts prior to the 19th century were generally written with brush (and ink). While writing with a brush leaves clear black inks marks. But stylus writing leaves only an indent and is “colorless”. This is the main reason scholars have not researched into this area until now.

\*\*1 The first known use of the word *kakuhitsu* or “stylus writing” was in *The Tale of Takamira* on 11th century work (Heian Period). It appears as “*kakuhichi*” in *hiragana* (Japanese script). And in the “*Goukeshidai*”, a Japanese Classical historical text it is written as “*kakuhitsu*” in Kanji (Chinese characters).

\*\*2 Either hard wood (see the handbook or photo No. 1), ivory (photo No. 2.) or bamboo (photo No. 3.) is used to make a stylus “pen”. Ivory stylus pens were used by nobility, indicating social status may affect the type of stylus pen you may own. Stylus pens found in the possession of inheritors have thus far numbered 40. Some wood and bamboo stylus pens which have been discovered were broken during use and within their cracks and splits have been discovered old mulberry fibers from the paper that was being written on (see photo Nos. 4 and 5).

\*\*3 As a recognized writing instrument it was noted in the cultural dictionary “*Ruijuumojisho*” of the 15th century (1486 or Bunmei 18) under the entry for *bunpitsu* (writing instruments). “*kakuhitsu*” (stylus pen) was listed along side “*fude*” (ink brush).

Since the first discovery of the existence of material with stylus writing, new discoveries have been made annually to now. The discoveries, which now number over 3,350\*\*\* individual pieces, have mainly been centered around the (collections in) old temples and shrines of the old capitals of the Kinki region.

\*\*\*1 Period – The oldest work on paper with stylus writing dates from the 749 (Tempyo-Syoho 1) a document from Shosoin from the Dianagon Fujiwara Family to the *Todaiji* head office (photo No. 6). The most recent example of stylus writing is “*Shotaikoujituoku*” by *Higashi Onna Kanjun* in 1914 (Taisho 3) in which the readings of the names of people are marked (by stylus writing). And in the time between these two works, from 9th century (Heian period) to 19th century (Meiji period), there is a large body of material from each and every period (Kobayashi Yoshinori, “A Guide to Research in Stylus Writing” Vol. 2 (of 3) part 1 (2004)). Stylus writing and reading markings were also found on the wooden tallys found at the Fujiwara palace ruins and at the Heijoh palace ruins.

\*\*\*2 Area – From Hokkaido in the north to Okinawa islands in the south stylus writings have been discovered from old historical houses, depositories for classic texts, libraries, museums and from temples and shrines in all 47 prefectures of Japan. We therefore now know that stylus writing is used in the entire Japanese Archipelago . It is also noted that stylus writing in different parts of the country had their own marking conventions (Kobayashi Yoshinori, “A Guide to Research in Stylus Writing” Vol. 3 (of 3) part 3 (2004)).

\*\*\*3 Information about the language – By far the most common type of stylus writing that preserved are those in Buddhist sutras and the Chinese canon (Chinese Classics) in the original Chinese. Stylus writing was used for notes in Japanese where pronunciation and reading order have been written beside the text (photo No. 7). This was a method used to help make sense of the sutras and Chinese classics in ancient times.

Stylus writing was used as a way to take notes during a lecture, or make notes on important documents without actually marking them, or when it is troublesome to use Indian ink. Also it was taken along as a way to take notes during travel.

Stylus writing is therefore not only for notes to reading of texts, but also for commentary on Japanese *hiragana* texts, to polish *waka* (the Japanese 31 syllable poem), to learn *kanji* (Chinese characters), to write secret letters, to take notes on old texts, to make an under-sketch for a painting, etc. In short, there is no shortage of usage of stylus writing.

\*\*\*4 Form of the book – scroll books, manuscripts, single-sheet folded books, etc. All types of books have been found with stylus writing. Most often seen in manuscripts, in the margins of woodblock prints, in between lines, on the back pages, where ever there is blank space, etc. But a 100 page bound book and 4 letters written entirely in stylus writing has been discovered (photo No. 8). (Kobayashi Yoshinori, “An All Stylus Book – The Value of the Appearance of the Folded Two Page Book” (September, 2000).

2. *The Discovery of the Stylus Writing in Korea and the introduction of stylus writing to Japan from Shila Dynasty*

The existence of stylus writing in Korea was confirmed from a search done during a visit to Korea in July, 2000. With this discovery it was then discovered that in scriptures from the Shiragi that were introduced into Japan had the Shiragi method of stylus reading marks on these scriptures. In the archives of the Otani University in Kyoto a volume of the “Han HiRyou Ron”, a scripture written by the Shila monk Gengyou in introduced into Japan in the 8th century. It had become part of the library of Empress Komyou and it was stamped with the Empress’s personal seal. Research shows that the stylus writing on it was written prior to the seal being applied and that it was written in the Shila dialect for reading as well as notations for chanting in Sanskrit (photos No. 9 and 10). (Kobayashi Yoshinori, “A Guide to Research in Stylus Writing” Vol. 1 (East Asia) (2004)).

3. *The Discovery of Stylus Writing in Mainland China*

A) Kandai tallies – In 1985 (Showa 60) it was announced in a paper that stylus markings were discovered on the 2,000 year old “Bui-Kankan” manuscript during a search for stylus writing in various regions of China. After this initial find, stylus writing in the “Kyoen Kankan” document, in the possession of the Taiwan Taipei Central Research Lab for Languages, was proven to be a form of “carved writing”. (Kobayashi Yoshinori, “A Guide to Research in Stylus Writing” Vol. 1 (East Asia) (2004)).

B) Dunhuang Documents – In 1993 a survey of documents in the British Library, and in an independent survey done by the team led by Dr. Yoshizawa Yasukazu of the British and Paris National Libraries, and yet another survey of the National Library of Taiwan in 2000 44 Dunhuang documents from 5-10th century period were found to contain stylus translation notes, pronunciation notes of Chinese characters, explanatory notes (photo No. 11) or notation of Sanskrit chants, or marks to help identify phrase demarcations. (Kobayashi Yoshinori, “A Guide to Research in Stylus Writing” Vol. 1 (East Asia) (2004)).

C) The Soh Dynasty Publications – Chinese character readings, notation for Sanskrit chants, phrasing marks, and a script resembling the *Okoto* marks used in Korea (though different in content) was discovered in The Complete Soh Dynasty Sutra Collection brought to Japan (published 1079-1173, 1191 Second Edition).

D) Ming and Ching Period – Various stylus markings on various works were also discovered on Ming and Ching period hand-written and printed documents.

II – Some characteristics of the contents of stylus documents in East Asia and present conditions of research.

1. The commonality of Japanese, Korean, Chinese stylus documents are they all contain Chinese reading notes, notes and notation for Sanskrit chants, phrasing marks, etc. Although they all use their own languages as stylus marking, they all have in common the methodology for noting sounds and meaning, notations for Sanskrit chants, etc. They have in common these marking. We can assume there was an influence from these markings we can pursue the challenge of exchange of language cultures in East Asia.

A) *The relationship between 8<sup>th</sup> century stylus documents of the Japan and Shila Dynasty*

We discovered notes and notations in the Shila language in the “Han Hi Ryouron” in the Otani University archives. We also found stylus writing of Japanese reading marks and Sanskrit notations on the 8<sup>th</sup> century Kegon Sutra. More discoveries have been made since then. The contents of the stylus writing in the “Han Hi Ryouron” and the Shila text were almost identical. So it can be hypothesized that the *kunten* method was originally from Shila. (Kobayashi Yoshinori, “The Source of the Japanese Marking System”, *Kyuuko* Vol. 49 (2006)).

Connecting these two facts it can be argued that the Japanese katakana, which was already in use in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, which is similar to the simplified characters in the “Han Hi Ryouron”, it may have been derived from Shila.

B) *The Relationship between the Dunhuang documents and the stylus writings of the Japanese Tendai Sect*

In the stylus marking of the Dunhuang documents there included marking for Sankrit chant notations and markings for the four tones of Chinese, which resemble some the of markings in Japanese documents from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. We can assume they were brought back by Japanese Tendai monks who went to China. (Kobayashi Yoshinori, “A Guide to Research in Stylus Writing” Vol. 1 (East Asia) (2004)).

C) *The Relationship between the Soh Dyansty Sutra reading system and the Japanese/Korean reading system*

The markings used in the Complete Soh Dyansty Sutra Collection were used as a “concrete” method to read the new material. While there are some common marks between the Shila markings and the Japanese markings there were also differences in usage. So it is necessary to rethink the conditions and make comparisons with Japanese *kunten*.

2. While the stylus writing system in China, Japan and Korea all influenced each other they later developed separately.

These are some of the special characteristics of Japanese stylus writing:

- A) The stylus marks for reading Chinese works used for the understanding of the sutras were used from the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Nara Period) but from the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Heian Period) it was the norm to use white marks and red marks in conjunction with stylus writing. White and red markings were generally used to add notes and personal memos. Notes were also written directly on to the words to reflect the expression’s verb forms or proper reading.

So for example in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century work in the “Syami-jikkai-Igi Kyo” from the Ishiyama Temple storehouse the standard practice during this period was to use *katakana* marking but the more colloquial *hiragana* was used instead and the more colloquial forms of “*muzu*” and “*ore*” were used.

- B) Writings from different regions which include stylus writing use the local dialects of their own region. Photo No. 13 shows “yogu”, the Tohoku region pronunciation for “yuku” (to go). And photo No. 14 shows “Chihame”, the Okinawan pronunciation for the standard “Kihame” (to investigate thoroughly”). This opens up new material for the study of Japanese dialect history.

### III – The challenges from now

1. Ever since stylus writing was discovered the sphere that is called “Chinese character-based” texts found in Japan, Korea and China, we have been able to consider all three on the same platform for comparison. From this we have the great challenge of following up the trail exchange in East Asia.
2. We must discover new fields of research for stylus writing which are hidden and in slumber. Some noteworthy areas include:
  - A) A survey of the stylus writing of the 8<sup>th</sup> century Japan (Nara Period)
  - B) A survey of the relationship between the white and red markings to stylus writing of the Heian Period (9<sup>th</sup> century)
  - C) A more thorough survey of the world’s 50,000 document base of Dunhuang documents, its words and markings.
  - D) Obtain material on the sutra readings (The Complete Soh Dynasty Sutra Collection) dating from the Soh Dynasty period which are stored in the various temples in Japan.
3. To get an overview of the stylus writing types in Japan, Korea and China. In Japan stylus marks are used in many other areas, not only for sutra reading. And in Korea the stylus is used also for under-sketching (in painting) and classic texts. (Dr. Nam pung-hyun)
4. Work in authentication of the stylus notation and markings.
  - A) Authenticating the period in which the stylus writing was made.

Most stylus writing do not give a date of writing. So in works with stylus writing how do we authenticate the date of the stylus notes?
  - B) The authentication by a number of scholars is necessary.

Stylus writing which comes to us from over 1,000 years ago can be difficult to read (the marks are faint at best) depending on how well it has been stored or, restored, etc. Expert techniques and the use of a “stylus-scope” is necessary. Even so the writing may still be difficult to read. We hope that we will be able to improve the “stylus-scope” technology so that one day anyone will be able to read stylus writing.
5. Develop specialists of stylus research and cooperative research with related areas outside of linguistics.