

漢字の悟り

KANJI NO SATORI

by

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Abstract: Kanji No Satori

A translation of the title would read the "wisdom of Chinese-Japanese characters". The growth of Asian language instruction in British Columbia public schools has witnessed an unprecedented number of students enrolled in Japanese as a second language classes. For students with no prior experience with Chinese script the Chinese-Japanese characters, or kanji, can prove to be a barrier that limits progress in the written instruction and learning of Japanese. Current teaching methods such as those from Japan may continue to be in popular usage, but educators in British Columbia need to acknowledge that given the differences between the Japanese teaching environment and our own, classrooms attempting to establish interest in Japanese as a language of study require techniques that allow for the student to invest in their own learning process, particularly given the distance from the target culture.

While the kanji have been long perceived as extremely difficult to learn and appreciate, I propose through a personal narrative that the characters can be appreciated by more students when it is recognized that the setting of the Canadian classroom and the students in it, can become participants in the intermingling of two languages generally considered to be vastly different, yet as revealed by the etymology of the kanji have very much in common. As human constructs, these characters may be deconstructed by students who then reconsider the inherent meanings of the intertext, the internal structure, of the kanji. With an appreciation of the multilayered context of the symbol explored in a familiar language, students may then apply their acquired knowledge and skill into newer intercultural contexts of Japanese and English.

My conviction is that the kanji are central to a personal exploration of Japan. The very nature of the characters as moving, timeless symbols of human interpretation was considered in this study, as was the inherent pedagogical quality of their etymological structure. This personalized research was concerned with the re-writing and re-learning of written Japanese for the North American learner. The question was one of equipping the Japanese as a second language learner with a new perspective that will enable them to use the innately human view of language revealed by the kanji. Commentators on linguistics and semiology such as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva were cited in probing the symbolic foundations of language, and our ability to play with meanings we so often take for granted in communicating our ideas. Exposing the hidden and unused meanings within the characters is described as a valuable contextual experience, and a method, in combination with other classroom approaches, of instilling motivation to learn the target language.

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INTRODUCTION: OPENING UP TO THE REALM OF STROKES

The Situational Context and the Emergence of the Research Question

At one time observers of language education in North America found themselves in a peculiar situation. They were able to study a target audience sharing a native language as they attempted to learn a new form of communication. Increasingly, the likelihood of finding a community in British Columbia where all learners share a common language is diminishing, and there is little doubt that paradoxically, this diminishing increases the amount of intercultural contact on many levels and in varying degrees. Established languages in our province have begun a co-existence with emerging languages, and similarly, once dominant languages of the foreign language classroom have shifted to provide space for languages only recently heard in many schools. During the 1980's British Columbia's secondary schools reflected a wave of rapidly growing interest in Asian languages in education that saw record growth in the enrollment of students in Japanese language classes. Responding to Japan's well-documented economic success, communities across North America began discussing the possibility of offering a language that was previously rarely considered for study, perhaps seen as too challenging for the average learner, or simply limited in applicability and not worth the effort. In the 1990's the evidence is clear. Teachers of Japanese have become a more common sight in many school districts, more students are experiencing

study of a language their families may have never considered and as represented by community interest, there is room for further growth. Fresh perspectives on the process of learning Japanese are timely. The partners in the process in North America undoubtedly find that prevailing attitudes cast Japanese as a very difficult language to use functionally, let alone "master". Traditional teaching methods, in particular those imported from Japan, once seemed the obvious choice for the teacher searching for proven methods, yet educators also know that such importation assumes we are teaching in school environments similar to Japan, the very culture said to be profoundly homogeneous and vastly different from the increasingly heterogeneous contexts of British Columbia where these fledgling classrooms are attempting to establish themselves.

If one considers the teaching of the Japanese writing system as an example, North American teachers have already gone to sources outside of the target culture for learning methodology. In fact, any method that allows for an open, exploratory usage of the Japanese syllabary, with a built in reinforcement of their form and stroke order, would prove popular with teachers. From my experience, both hiragana and katakana (the two syllabary systems) continue to be learned and used in the classroom at a generally comfortable and successful rate. The stumbling blocks, at the same time as they are crucial communicative building blocks, are the characters of Chinese origin (kanji), borrowed centuries

ago from the culturally dominant empire of East Asia at that time.

My enrollment in the Asia Pacific Educational Graduate Studies Program offered by the University of British Columbia coincided with my hope as a teacher to explore some of the possibilities for common ground between cultures on the Pacific Rim. As a teacher I have experienced a constantly moving landscape of language interaction surrounding me on any given day. The languages I hear, write, speak and read with greatly varying degrees of comprehension were brought to North America on the oceans of the world and continue to gain fluidity along-side the closeness of the largest body of water on our planet. These languages know only the boundaries put upon them by their conduits, the bearers of symbols either superficial or of lasting meaning, latent or manifest. To the over stimulated eye, the written word does not appear to have the power to penetrate a given setting, nor to a deeper memory, but in linguistically non-obvious ways its influence is a potential tool for the language learner. I see in the kanji symbols, at once so intricate and formidable, characteristics both impenetrable while full of potential to create familiar spaces for those who seek hidden meanings.

Educators are known to exhort students to look for the sub-text when examining writing, and while this is no easy task in one's native language, it is a relatively unexplored skill for the student of a non-native writing system.

Etymology, traditionally conceived, is usually thought of as better left in the hands of trained academics or anachronistic amateurs. The kanji were a powerful visual force during my first visit to Japan, an ever present reminder of the importance of the literary in a society that borrows and adapts, but also institutionalizes the symbol. When overwhelmed by unfamiliar characters, it is tempting to commit them to a sort of backstage of the mind, treating them with the peripheral glance one accords the advertisements and restaurant fronts of any North American street where Chinese characters are perceived to predominate. Yet, as I apprehend this intercultural space, here lies a potentially vital opportunity for students to begin a personal approach to learning written Japanese: Begin your appreciation for the multilayered context of the symbol in familiar surroundings, and take your newly-developed skill with you to different contexts that become, henceforth, less 'unknown' and 'foreign'. Once I sensed that I was on a promising road to an individual appreciation of writing in Japan, I uncovered a growing conviction that kanji are central to a personal participation in exploring and constituting culture. Additionally, the very nature of the characters as moving, timeless symbols of human interpretation has led me to surmise that they hold within them the very context or intertext that learners can use to gain a foothold in the process of learning to write in Japanese.

This study, thus, was concerned with the re-writing and in some cases, re-learning of written Japanese for the North American learner. It hoped to address questions that will lead to further probing of the sub-texts that lie within fragmented written symbols. Essentially, the question dealt with equipping the Japanese language learners with a new perspective that will enable them to inhabit and use the intercultural spaces overlapping and separating English and Japanese. The process depends on a valuing of intercultural learning and not simply a studying of the target language in isolation. Specifically, the study's question became, "How can we encourage student appreciation of the use of kanji in the Japanese language through a personalized re-writing of their inherently symbolic foundations?". The process of self-learning can teach the student to dwell in the space shared by the different languages there to find both commonalities and differences. So in-dwelling, the kanji speak to me as a neglected pedagogical tool, though recognized as a critical variable in writing Japanese. By decomposing a character into discernable elements, one can create a meaningful context for re-composing the space between English and Japanese, enacting meanings productively in difference. This productivity will lead to the motivation to delve into the many characters awaiting the learner with growing eyes for their ability to teach. The study will discuss the many forms of dissecting Japanese-Chinese characters, and suggest how journalizing about these

practices at etymological deconstruction can help students gain an expanding perspective on a different culture and its writing system.

The Conceptual Context

As this study constituted a personal account of a view of teaching and learning an integral part of the Japanese writing system, it leaned heavily on a writer whose ideas on the subject of Japan have had a more lasting effect on East-West cultural contact than many realize. In fact, it is fitting that Roland Barthes had a profound influence on this study through his thoughts on the centrality of the intertext in language. It is appropriate that Barthes' musings help students to embark on a personalized journey in the context of fundamental elements of the Japanese language. The review of related literature that supports the strength of the intertext and the potential for play in language appear as a very eclectic collection of writings of researchers and commentators who deal with an array of issues ranging from the Japanese language to the Canadian classroom. Their inclusion in the study may seem at once a complex, distant message simultaneously linked to our world of instruction (such as a sketch of learning approaches to kanji) and as "foreign" as many of the languages dwelling in our midst (in the sense of our need as teachers to search for new meaning in the classroom). Renowned semiologists such as Roland Barthes and Mikhail

Bakhtin add weight to the discussion of the intertext and its role in language, but the stress is on a proposal of a potentially useful way of compositioning and inscribing the kanji into our classrooms rather than an intellectualization of the characters.

In summarizing ideas of Barthes, Jerome Klinkowitz wrote: "the ideal work is infinite, with the measure of its success no longer in its finality but in the labour it exhibits, the production it engenders in our readers..." (Klinkowitz, 1988, p.54). The aim in this study has been to show how we can instill in students the desire to become part of the production of a seemingly complex script, and to be motivated to continue interacting with the intertext of the languages. This may prove to be an important method of personalizing their learning, and restoring energy to the languages in context. The citings in the thesis originate from contexts and continents all over the world, but their merging on the Pacific will provide evidence of the intercultural exploration now under way. Writers so seemingly far removed as Bakhtin and Dorinne Kondo expose entranceways into the world of "culturally specific constructs" Kondo is enamored with (Kondo, 1990, p.34). Languages are living, and even the historical symbols we base them on shift in their meaning, so that they instill a pleasure for experiencing the past and present. The contact creates the inscribing of new meaning, a window for learners into a new culture. The intertext opens windows to

our upbringing and parallel experiences on the Pacific, as well as to completely new territory intertwining language and culture.

The framework of my writing rests on an autobiographical approach to uncovering the multilayers of meaning within kanji. Kristeva and Barthes speak to "holes in symbolization" (Clark and Hulley, 1991, p.163) that may assist us in creating a new language of thought. There is a source of light in using Japanese-Chinese characters - first as the basis for tools (they are, after all, a hybrid product of two cultures) such as mnemonic phrases in English that lead us to meaningful story or narrative concerning personal history and the interaction of two cultures. By demonstrating to students that "structure contains activity" (Klinkowitz, 1988, p.44), the teacher can relate significant source of knowledge and initiate a playful, worthwhile learning process. Ultimately, the proposal will suggest an approach that will allow the learner to take part in the process of appreciating and anticipating the slippery personality of the language symbols of both East and West, and consider what it has to teach us about the interaction of language and culture. The main approach, a pedagogical tool of worth, boils down to a non-definitive evaluation of the multiple meanings in the interstices of the kanji. Re-stated, as a question: "What can an etymological dissection of the Japanese-Chinese character teach the learner about

the interplay of language and culture in both English and Japanese?"

Approach to the Study

The study highlighted each section of discussion by using the title "stroke". I have come to feel that this designation represents an important element of the study, that is, it alludes to the characters in their most basic form. The strokes that comprise any of the thousands of characters are respected components in many aesthetic circles of East Asia, and beyond this appreciation of the final product, there is also the ordering of strokes, equated with writing literacy wherever characters of Chinese origin are used. More important for my approach, however, is the fact that the non-native learner of Japanese is most likely thrown into a literary world of handwriting and meaning of which they have had no previous parallel experience. For example, the premise of Stroke One is founded on the need for a consideration of the challenges facing the learner of kanji, and the need to advertise some of the hidden advantages in kanji for unlocking cultural and linguistic doors to Japan and the West. My ordering of the six strokes is not meant to be linear, so while they may be read independently or as a whole, they also constitute an approach to considering the cultural and linguistic aspects of written symbols. The kanji personify a variety of

etymological possibilities that open up a space of exploration and meaningful intention for the learner.

Stroke One is clearly my own impression of the intercultural contact of two languages that have been popularized (almost ritualized) as existing on opposite communicative poles. In this sense, the Pacific has been portrayed as impassable. In actuality, it is becoming evident that the shores are closer than before, and that educators need to find ways to improve the awareness for a deeper learning about the other side of the Pacific. We should avoid playing into the hands of the ever present myth of unlearnability and portrayal of East Asian language learning as a process of the "survival of the fittest". With recent appeals for teaching approaches that combine more cultural content with language, teachers confront a paradoxically challenging intersection in their classrooms. That is, which alternatives to choose in bringing relevance to the learning of both language and culture in the second language classroom without alienating beginning students with methodology that could be considered more appropriate for the target culture. The strokes of the study attempt to reveal the kanji as characters full of potential for a re-learning of our own language and the beginning of a journey into a new language. The pedagogical spaces of the Pacific seem simultaneously near and distant as we approach the next century, an indication that they are shifting as the very tectonic plates that support this huge expanse of water.

The search for universals or parallels in language is a never-ending one, and the premise of this study has been that students may come to realize that the search is less for absolutes, than a valuable opportunity to re-learn established symbols and concepts in a dynamic, intercultural context. What follows are thematic writings of six strokes which I have titled as follows.

Stroke One - The Landscape of the Stroke: Moving Beyond the Myth of Unlearnability

Stroke Two - The Productive Corpus of Kanji in the Space of Ambivalence

Stroke Three - Language and Intertext: Exploiting Resistances in Written Symbols

Stroke Four - Artifacts (?) that Shift in a Living Landscape: Finding and Constituting Meaning in Uncovered Etymology

Stroke Five - Demystifying Classification or a Personalized Re-Classification of Kanji

Stroke Six - The Doubling of Kanji and a New Appeal to the Senses

I began this study immersed in the call of Kanji no Satori (Wisdom in Kanji) and found a written world of strokes that involves a fascinating mix of East-West language and culture. I have 'concluded' this study with a short revisitation of the six strokes. I have called this a Meditation, a trait essential to an appreciation of the stroke and subsequently an important component in developing an eye for the Satori of Kanji.

Stroke One - The Landscape of the Stroke: Moving Beyond the Myth of Unlearnability

Recent and current trends in modern language teaching often point out that culture and language are inseparable in the successful learning environment. Yet, where does the educator begin? Whether the instructor focussing on a single target language or the teacher attempting to delve into the realm of the Pacific Rim and its variety of languages and nations, it is indeed a challenge to resist the "museum approach" to culture that verges on becoming a classroom cliché. How do we justify the intermingling of culture and language in the volatile setting of North America where there is a need to be concerned about how such important variables are manipulated in the classroom? The forthcoming discussion proposes a look at a strong link between our culture and others long seen by the West as

foreign. As such there will be a great deal of focus on the Chinese characters East Asia has become famous for producing. Roland Barthes has said that culture in all of its aspects is a language. It is, in fact, this kind of language understanding we can learn to use for communication across seemingly vast separations and differences. If a new understanding of language and culture can enable us to transport the classroom to new lands, to new doorsteps, then for this study the fundamental symbolic building blocks of the Japanese language are the keys to many previously closed doors.

Mysterious, intricate and complex - there is an existing myth supported by both Japanese and non-Japanese that Japanese is difficult to learn. Granted, for the western learner of Japanese, the grammar differs greatly from, say, that of English grammar. As well, a Canadian student does not have the advantage of cognates in studying Japanese (Rogers, 1991, p.447). Fortunately, an increasing number of Western learners are acquiring spoken language capability in Japanese, showing just how consistent the pronunciation is, how the grammar is highly systematic, and all in all, how it throws far fewer exceptions at the newcomer than does English (Harz-Jorden, 1987, p.140). If it is not a formidable language to learn, then why the long-held myth of unlearnability?

Understandably, many equate time and commitment with degree of difficulty, and it is true that what differs most

from European languages is the Japanese writing system. The writing system is made up of three kinds of letter symbols: **kanji** (often called Chinese ideographs or characters, hereafter referred to as 'Sinographs'), **hiragana** and **katakana**. Kanji are symbols with sounds and meaning, and function much like the symbols "%" and "\$" appearing in written English. The hiragana and katakana are phonetic symbols, each representing either vowel sounds or a consonant-vowel syllabic "cluster" (a syllabary). Hiragana are predominantly used in combination with kanji in a Japanese sentence. Katakana is used to inscribe loan words from foreign languages, such as "keeki" for "cake". Without a doubt, it is the kanji that provide the most formidable task for the learner of Japanese. Rather than becoming a source of dreaded rote learning, frustration and all-out fear in the classroom, it is my thesis that they hold a potential for teaching that may have the ability to instill confidence in the student of Japanese and motivate them to continue their study of East Asia and the Pacific.

Consider the landscape on which the reverence of the stroke meets the sacredness of the word. On two shores of a vast ocean we are able to isolate elements of our language and appreciate them as individuals would a particular scene of natural beauty. The Japanese hold the handprinted word in high esteem, and this may well be the fundamental reason for the writing of this study. To this day I encounter Westerners determined to learn Japanese who are leaving

their knowledge of the written word, as it is used in Japan, far behind their motivation in practicing the spoken word. Where does this mentality spring from? Is it an oversight by only a portion of foreigners interested in Japanese, or does it reflect back on the West, revealing something of our nature as learners and borrowers of things foreign? Is our emphasis in the classroom focussed on the oral tradition even more than we realize? There may be much to learn from the study of a writing system that will help us to reflect upon and re-experience our own approach to Roman script. Foreign language learning is often said to improve personal knowledge of our native language, but the focus need not always be on oral and grammatical skills. We sometimes print and write in an individual vacuum after the first years of schooling, soon left to flounder or fly while developing handwriting idiosyncracies either excepted or exposed by teachers. The landscape then, is the arena in which our students confront the new culture. This is an area that may be constantly re-defined by both teacher and student through their use of the intertext (absorption of another text into our own) and the intercultural (the mingling and fusing of cultures). In this atmosphere of ambivalence the search is not for definitions to nail down these concepts, but the creation of a new domain of inspiration and self-learning which I will refer to as a new space: the learning our students have yet to discover

through an individual blending of languages, cultures, and symbols.

In East Asia, and Japan specifically, the high respect accorded to calligraphy and those practiced in the art of handwritten characters is, at the very least, impressive (Yang Ling, 1986). As calligraphy flourished in China, spreading to Japan, the art came to have significance in how it showed the individual flair of the artist, and to this day seals or signatures of famous calligraphers fetch big sums. There is said to be much to learn from the handwriting of a person who is conscientious enough to provide a handwritten note in the busy life of present day urban Japan - to the point where a well-timed personally written memo can be a very adept skill in human relations and business dealings. The calligraphic style of a writer is also said to denote such traits as moral beliefs, mood or character. Western educators taking a closer look at the handwritten word in the classroom might well notice significant changes in their students during a school year.

It may seem facile to discuss the Japanese approach to handwriting in such terms as respect, skill and determination. After all, such terms are thrown about in the popular debate surrounding the Western envy of the economic success enjoyed by Japan. For all of the debate, just how much closer are we to appreciating the culture of our Pacific neighbours, and dropping the list of cliches and hearsay that so often frame our opinion of the Japanese?

Just as the writing characters of Japan hold significance when taken out of their more known context, so too do the doors that await to be opened with further probing. The all important first step, however, is the invitation of the blank paper to the waiting brush and the meeting of these two elements so revered in Japanese written folklore. A Japanese child's first contact with this crucial notion is often an uncertain one. A line, at once so simple, soon develops into the fundamental tool shaping the written world of kanji: the stroke.



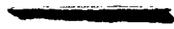
hand

brush

field

KAKU: The combination of hand holding brush above a field signifies a partitioning of the land through ink, as on a map (Henshall, 1988, p.24). The fact that this character has come to mean stroke, diagram or picture in a language where image and written symbol are so closely intertwined is fitting, and of great etymological value. A related symbol for the calligrapher: FUDE.

one



bamboo

hand

brush

The above literally means one brush (or writing instrument), and really that is all that the Pacific writer has ever needed: one stroke of the pen aware of its writing surface. The landscape of the stroke is provided for, and at times, inescapable. Handwriting in our schools today, for instance, takes place on as many landscapes as there are hands holding the pen. The appreciation of language and its metaphorical boundaries varies widely among students. What is perhaps unfortunate is that we have lost sight of where our pen or pencil touches paper. One might surmise that in today's information society our thoughts are too rapid, our intellects too subdivided, to take a step back (in time - a negative action?) and re-focus on the merits of thoughtful handwriting. My suspicions are that the focus on handwriting in our schools has become in general a remnant of a time when there was more attention and respect (diligence? skill?) paid to personalized handwriting on paper. There were even attempts at systemization (italic, etc.), as evidenced by those alphabetic writing charts remembered as a staple in the North American elementary classroom. While modern technology and changing values leave us approaching the printed word differently with each decade, we are missing much by assuming the same has taken place on the other shore of the Pacific. A brief look at

the evolution of the Chinese characters now called kanji by the Japanese is very insightful.

person

借

pile up

Much to the chagrin of the learner of Japanese, the number of Chinese characters borrowed over the centuries for permanent use has really "piled up". Yet, beneath the surface uses of such a script lie the hidden meanings and symbols awaiting re-exploration; a teacher initiated, student experienced re-invention of a foreign system full of possibilities for the familiar.

The question to explore is the possibility of re-writing characters and cutting through to an area common to all of the languages on the Pacific. Can we instill our students with the motivation to re-explore symbols by a personal route? Like questioning explorers we need to probe for sub-texts within the topics of the classroom; this will take a new adjustment of the eyes trained to see an expected dimension of meaning. The context is one of understanding - a possibility for creating openings between Roman-English script and Chinese-Japanese characters. We can learn more about a foreign writing system by thoughtfully comparing it to our own, but how do we take a further leap and provide space in which they might co-exist? Where might the two

systems meet on the Pacific Rim, and what may we learn from the intermingling of our written languages? Finally, how will the spaces within such foreign words, characters or symbols, be described, ultimately re-scribed, to and by our students?

Public school students on both sides of the Pacific are sublimely oblivious to the debate surrounding the appropriate label to give Chinese characters: pictogram/graphs, ideograms/graphs, simple, compound, phonetic loans - students of kanji can be a pessimistic lot, whose apprehension Lawrence Rogers summarizes:

...their attitude toward kanji actually spans a wider spectrum of negative emotion, on the usually unexamined assumption that the writing system is archaic and irrational, a tiresome relic they resent having to deal with. This misconception has been around for some time and has been entertained by the Japanese themselves, not to mention the Chinese and Koreans.

(Rogers, 1991, p.447)

Those who seem to be most intimidated by kanji are often the very people who have been studying spoken Japanese for some time but have not been able to bring themselves to take on the written language. Obviously, many must see the learning and possibly the usage of kanji as a very depersonalized experience; a paint-by-number nightmare, minus the printed stroke order as an assuring guide. On a wider spectrum, many in the West have the perception that the Japanese educational system is also a dehumanized process.

woman

努力

strength

strength

DORYOKU. Effort. Japanese elementary school students often labour under these characters prominently posted on their classroom walls (Inagaki, 1989, p.23), a constant and tangible reminder of the effort required to learn the characters borrowed from the Chinese centuries ago. After a few years of basics, students are inundated with strokes that magically take on meaning individually and in relation to others. The compositioning of the radicals - the interplay of the character- can be a powerful learning and experiential tool for the newcomer to East Asia. Three radicals comprise the first character above, "DO", and the student opts for one of several methods of remembering the entire symbol: stroke order, radical, Chinese reading, Japanese reading - so much opportunity for meanings to slide about. There may be something in the fact that when you ask a native user of kanji (Japanese/Chinese characters) for a concise "translation" of one symbol, it seems more difficult for them than when you ask the same question of two or more characters in combination. It is precisely this ambiguity of the solitary symbol that needs exploration. I have great sympathy for students still required to learn several thousand of these characters from rote. Fortunately, they

are surrounded by these living signs in daily life. Still, this type of study takes DORYOKU to new heights. One English mnemonic for "DO" (the first character above) is to "Try with slave-like effort", as the radicals are a combination of "slave" and "strength" (Henshall, 1988, p.171). This may well be one Japanese secret to learning. Though this system of writing is perhaps forboding early on, Canadian students could be guided into a less intimidating, more personalized context for studying the kanji.

At times I cynically surmise that many Japanese educators are grateful for the existence of kanji in their writing system. Their difficulty makes the road to knowledge longer, and suits the competitive examination system. Regardless, we must accept the beauty and complexity of kanji at one time, to twist Kristeva's words slightly, somehow find the meaning in the "simultaneously familiar and radically alien" (Moi, 1986, p.36). By familiar is meant the fundamental logic and appeal of a pictographic character such as KI (木: tree), in which one can immediately sense the etymology. From grades one to six in Japan, however, there are 42 characters that incorporate this radical. Consider the enigma of the following:

tree		west	}	float
		show		

HYO. A slippery but revealing symbol in isolation - the left hand side has the familiar "tree", but the right combines "show" with "west" to create "float". When we express ourselves in even the seemingly most basic terms we are still floating amidst meanings. This character could represent "mark; sign; write down; or express". Why not mask? When we commit ink to paper we may have any of these in mind, all existing behind (within?) a single composition.

Many foreign students of kanji approach their work as though they are breaking a code - another perspective is to "breach" the inherent meanings (Barthes, 1982, p.69). By giving new perspective to the characters, they may no longer loom large as the barriers they continue to be between East and West. Their building blocks could be the basis for a bridge (a hybrid span, constructed by two seemingly distant cultures) on the Pacific Rim. Uncertain where the bridge will lead? The challenge is to acknowledge the breach of meaning between cultures that is symbolized and realized within the neglected context of the kanji.

Thumbing through my elementary school kanji dictionary, I find some fading examples of my attempts to "break the code":



stop

inner: rice

outer: mouth

HA="Teeth ensure rice stops in mouth" (Henshall, 1988, p.86). I wonder if mnemonics are the key to remembering so many characters? Native readers would hardly want such "intertext" interfering with their reading (or might many?). Another example:



west

} need

woman

IRU="Every western has a vital need of a woman" (Henshall, 1988, p. 182). Students often enjoy devising their own memory tricks. Such jingles may decontextualize characters in a way that is amusing, but may not help us to create a new language of thought. What kind of knowledge can this search help us to find? Kristeva speaks to "holes in symbolization", and there may be a source of light in using characters as the basis for a meaningful story such as a narrative concerning personal history or two cultures. This could lead to an enlightening doubling of kanji. The next step is to discover how to tap into the hidden knowledge of a writing system unfamiliar to the holder of the instrument waiting to brush paper.

Speak

識

Sign

In SHIKI we find "sign, mark, recognition, knowledge". This single combination leads in so many directions, offering up signposts to follow to areas of more weight and significance. It first reads like a Western construct, where making your "mark" is having your "say". Knowledge on the opposite side of the Pacific may be better thought of as knowing when to speak, show a sign or leave a subtle mark. Where are the parallels? We can begin with the familiar, lead to the "alien" and come to see that the compositioning is often "simultaneously familiar and radically alien" (Moi, 1986, p. 76) Students may come to form their own concept of the known, related to the inter-character and intra-character spaces as well as the abundant inter-character similarities. We have experienced stories that create openings, and here we have symbols with the potential of accomplishing the same.

Thus far the discussion has spoken to the reading of a given character and its possible meanings and how we may interpret kanji and their respective components in our search for "living" experiences between cultures. There is another form of living through a word, and that is in the process of putting pencil or ink to paper. For many people

a calligraphic representation of already complex characters renders them indecipherable. Re-considered, there is a process in writing kanji that can help us stretch the boundaries of meaning; it could be thought of as spreading its etymological base. On this base we can lay the meanings that lead to a "recasting" of the symbol (Kondo, 1990, p. 17). This recasting is in itself a source of experimentation and empowerment. At once a newly formed road to another cultural landscape, and a way of creating a personal view of the character. Echoing Sheila Moore's notion of empowerment, I want to show the teaching potential of kanji: the space where with just one symbol we can offer a gift of possibilities (Aoki, 1993, p.26).

My profound belief in this introductory stroke is that once the essential meeting of instrument and paper occurs, the learner will begin the journey of breaking down barriers. There is value in pursuing written knowledge in and of itself, and the added benefit with kanji is that the journey can be as enlightening as the destination (if we ever reach it). Here Roland Barthes has much to add: "structure contains activity; truth is no longer...a nut to crack, but an onion to peel" (quoted in Klinkowitz, 1988, p. 47). If we are able to lead students towards these limitless layers and encourage a fresh approach to the learning of a formerly unlearnable written language (Rogers, 1991, p. 446), we have initiated the all important engagement in the play of the intertext. Moving beyond the

label of unlearnability will take the classroom into a more confident arena of connecting shadows (Barthes, 1975, 32). These shadows have long passed over the Pacific, in many shapes and sizes, as numerous as the clouds that hover over them. An environment with a vehicle for sending messages, deciphering codes, is needed by languages closer in meaning than they appear. A working through (Lyotard, 1991, p. 26) of the kanji may energize the start of the intercultural process of dwelling in a new space of learning. The text produced by the kanji can be shadows that reveal meaning for a new language on both shores of the world's largest ocean.

Stroke Two - The Productive Corpus of Kanji in the Space of Ambivalence

A single consciousness, a single voice, is never sufficient. The life of the word consists in passing from mouth to mouth, from context to context, from collective to collective, from generation to generation. Every member of a speech collective receives the word from an alien voice, is filled up with alien voice. The word comes from another context, saturated with alien voice".

(Barthes, 1986, p. 124)

There are those of us who inhabit this world of signs and are able to transform the Barthes' words by dwelling on the medium of the written word, emphasizing the space we occupy by moving from character to character. A single written word or picture can hold substantial/significant meaning, much more than "native" writers of the symbol often realize. Along with speech, we often pass along our writing systems

to future generations. Many put importance in the clarity of hand written text, and though we may be losing aesthetic values to the onset of technology, we cannot disregard the respect given to the properly chosen symbol. Human inscription seems to go beyond the spoken word, but what of the written one? Despite the different languages on the Pacific, where might an intertext be created for common experiences?

In elucidating Mikhail Bakhtin's ground breaking ideas on the structure of language, Julia Kristeva writes that Bakhtin pointed the way to the notion of the intertext. The literary word for Bakhtin is conceived of as an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point of fixed meaning (Moi, 1986, p. 36). With writing, a dialogue is unavoidably created triadically among the writer, the addressee and the cultural content. It appears that in our teaching of kanji, symbols loaded with intertextual and intercultural potential, we are missing the opportunity to involve the student in a participatory journey through time and culture. Armed with knowledge of the intertext of kanji, the student can experience a greater awareness of the dialogue Bakhtin describes. Students who place themselves and their subjects within an intercultural dialogical space, where more and more educators are searching for commonalities on the Pacific, have much to gain from this view of writing. To quote Julia Kristeva, "Bakhtin situates the text within history and society which are then

seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them" (Moi, 1986, p.36). The promise of this approach lies in the fact that the writer is in the midst of a seeming fundamental unit of culture that is not only manageable for the learner, but also replete with learning possibilities. Where do we place the focus of our writing if not on the very building blocks of the writing system under study? Does not our faith (confidence) increase as our own native language narratives bring us closer to a new, at one time intimidating, language?

altar

社

earth

Re-writing the above character (YASHIRO/SHA) will serve to highlight two of Bakhtin's important contributions to the language of this study: the "doubling" of dialogue and the "carnival" in discourse. The use of doubling in the classroom is merely an emphasis on an often forgotten skill present in our everyday discourse. From an early age children enjoy double meanings, commonly known or privately held in their native (subconscious?) language. This appreciation for the flexibility of language, usually avoided in second language classrooms, can be exploited by

the learner in transferring this skill to a new language proficiency. Additionally, students or budding Japanophiles, may use their native language to personalize the doubling of Japanese characters.

If this doubling is combined in an outlook that sees the ongoing carnival in language, learners will have a new perspective from which to approach the target characters. Appreciating the carnivalesque is essentially seeing with widened eyes. In Barthes' words, "awakening to the fact". To Barthes' mind the satori of writing occurs when we awaken to understanding the symbol as an event that we personally interpret rather than as a culturally fixed point beyond our view in complexity and unpredictability (Barthes, 1982, p. 78). In reality, both of these words, complex and unpredictable, of most always negative connotation can be turned into main attractions on the fairground of the carnival. The very complexity so attributed to a kanji's character becomes a prerequisite for the intertext of the stroke's landscape : components come alive the more they playfully interact with one another. Unpredictability, therefore, is also a weapon in the arsenal of novices, whereby they affix their own label to a character's composition. This unpredictability may prove both trying for the teacher, and as well a further tool of familiarization for the learner. The carnival in language may be exemplified in something as simple as creating fun with shared meaning, or finding in the interstice of

etymology an intertwining of various latent meanings and related images. Through the narrative, familiarization may breed confidence in the characters.

The left and right hand components of YASHIRO/SHA (社) may stand alone on the communicative terrain of the Pacific, but it is when they are combined that an uncanny doubling occurs. Here, altar and earth, thought to symbolize "earth god" (土) or "local deity" (木), have become in combination a representation of shrine. It also forms part of the word for "company" (会社); and "society" (社会), presumably through its association with "parish", that is, a "group of people with a common interest". A glimpse into the intertextual play within this one character shows the type of dialogue Bakhtin seems to espouse in his revolutionary writing. Had Bakhtin experienced contact with Chinese characters, he would likely have seen the potential for the carnival, described by Kristeva:

As composed of distances, relationships, analogies and non-exclusive oppositions, it is essentially dialogical. It is a spectacle, but without a stage; a game, but also a daily undertaking, a signifier, but also a signified. That is, two texts meet, contradict and relativize each other. A carnival participant is both actor and spectator; he loses his sense of individuality...

(Moi, 1986, p. 49)

There is no need to indulge in complex semiotics with Bakhtin because he offers a freedom of movement, described by Julia Kristeva, allowing the writer to insert himself into the text by re-writing, and creating, if you will, a

personal intertextuality. The "double meaning" inherent in any dialogue, any word, is the very opening students of kanji can use as a foothold on the stroke landscape; they can participate in creating a stage on the Pacific Rim from which to intertwine languages - a space where two texts meet, one familiar and the other at once different but somehow not unfamiliar. Certainly, it is not difficult to see how "altar" became "shrine" and ultimately represents "society". One of the central questions of this stroke surrounds this simple etymological skill: by entering the past when breeching the intertext, do we not learn more about the progression of our cultural writing habits of another nation, and through them appreciate more our own? History and morality are re-read and rewritten daily within the infrastructure of the intertext.

Bakhtin dwelled in a world far removed from our own time, yet his thoughts on discourse help us to see that a living example of a distant culture, considered anachronistic by some, can actually serve as a guide into the present and future of the eastern Pacific Rim. There are also writers who bring the kernel of Bakhtin's thought closer to our present discourse on the ever expanding intercultural intertext. Fortunately, much has been translated and elaborated by Julia Kristeva, whose writing has placed the intertext within the contemporary world of the intercultural writer. Fundamentally, it would seem, Kristeva wants the writer of the Pacific or elsewhere, to

bear in mind that all forms of discourse are constructed in and by the social space in which they are spoken (Moi, 1986, p. 65). In her experience with different languages, she has come to see the relationship between dialogue and ambivalence that Bakhtin described. Any text, therefore, is the "absorption" of another and intertextuality replaces intersubjectivity (Moi, 1986, p. 39). Here Kristeva develops a new notion of "intertext", one filled with great potential for the student of written Japanese symbols. On the subject of carnivalism, Kristeva sees "a space where texts meet, contradict and relativize" each other (Moi, 1986, p. 49). Re-reading, re-writing, repetition and illogical constructions all have their place in the carnival, so why not on the landscape between languages and cultures where they give shape and meaning to an ocean void of definition for many inhabitants along its shores? Yet, if the way in which the signifier is related to the signified is arbitrarily decided, how do we instill our students with the confidence to undertake the study of kanji? For example, what sense can be made of the following intertext?

1111
1111
1111
1111

IU - "to say", is considered to be an independent symbol, and a carries with it a very Japanese pronunciation. It also means "speak; word; speech; call". Can we derive any of these from "edged tool" and "mouth"?

By searching through the kanji variations utilizing "IU" as a building block, it can be seen how much potential there is for expanding our knowledge by intertextual comparison, re-telling the adage "in the beginning was the word. First, there is "language" itself (語). A student might then compare this to "story" (話); "belief" (信) or perhaps the more legalistic "evidence" (証), all in-corporating a vital element of the word. There are also the more academic "speech" (説), "lecture" (講) and "lesson" (課). In searching for other methods to reach students in the Japanese classroom there is always the introduction of the narrative of the "poem" (詩), aptly summed up by Ted Aoki as " a dwelling place of mortals where one may hear the inspired beat of earth's desire". Whether in a single character or in a series, the kanji teach us to dwell poetically and continue searching among the multitude of topics as with the "speech patterns" of the Pacific. Increasingly, for better or worse, the sharper tongue is the respected and victorious tool in the oral tradition of the West. By emphasizing the power of the handwritten word on the opposite side of the Pacific, we may be able to educate our students to consider the seemingly rapidly disappearing art of the well-written,

clearly hand-written statement. If there is a lesson to be learned from a discussion on the omnipotence of stroke order, it might well be that in some cultures the written word carries far more weight than the spoken, and that speaking too much, even eloquently, may be taken as less than sincere. A focus on the importance of handwriting during a kanji lesson opens the door to learning possibilities, which, simultaneously, sheds light on shadowy characters. Ultimately, we are revealing the hidden advantages of the intertextual character - exploiting the play of etymological structure so that it loses its intimidating rigidity and becomes flexible before the (new) eyes of the learner.

Perhaps, after some thought and musing, a student could surmise that universally over time words have developed by cutting our speech into units (as in IU: ). In fact "one word" reads like so:



There is a real rhythm to such semantics; the strength of the carnival lies in the freedom for individual interpretation. Rather than present kanji as a historical and linguistic coincidence, the teacher can instill an

appreciation for their doubling, that is, for the very richness found in the diversity of a single character; the carnival can be found at play in the intertext of characters surfacing all around the eastern, and in this century, western, Pacific Rim. They continue to beckon those who have balked at their tempting, revelatory shadows to date. And what of those successful explorers into the world of kanji, who would not stop at rumours of unsurpassable challenges? By what methods did they (no doubt individually) gain writing confidence and proficiency? The carnival is out there, tents pitched in many private studies and public libraries. Whether the writers of a distant continent realize, they have constructed the very "dialogic spaces" needed for exploration into the shared intertext among languages which, initially, seem to have so very little in common. The carnival is inherent to language and written communication. The play with the previous character does somehow indicate, across distance and time, that we require the skills to uncover and produce previously unseen language, in all of its playfulness and value.

A divided corpus (Barthes, 1975, p. 34) aptly describes the kanji. They have been transported between vastly different cultures and have been the harbingers of a dominant religion, writing system and subsequent literary world from China, through Korea and Vietnam, to ultimately find a home centuries ago in a land in search of a written tradition. The Japanese have arguably become the strongest

proponent of Chinese characters, being meticulously careful to transform them into their own. The kanji dwell and thrive in the space of an archetypal modern society, almost in defiance of the latest gadgets they inevitably become etched upon. They appear so archaic, so far removed from what is perceived as the late twentieth century fast lane of sophisticated international communication, an encumbrance to the computer age yet an indispensable set of symbols that dance as they lead us through doors of knowledge that will otherwise remain shut. Whether they be seen as living anachronisms, textbook tormentors, barriers to communication, or keys to unlocking long misunderstood cultures, the kanji are a challenge - the learner chooses to make them a source of motivation or a hindrance the experience of learning Japanese. The corpus of a kanji hearkens back to the past, but its intertextual potential can be a powerful tool in the present and future of communication on the Pacific.

The recommendation in this writing is to insert a particular personality into each kanji, to delve into a new world of writing using elements of different languages, and initiate a continual play of intercultural meaning. We can leave the world of the classroom and embark on a self-discovery that winds through etymology, history, language, sociolinguistics and the ever elusive "foreign" culture. These disciplines, at once, are too much to ask of a language student to synthesize into one character. While

re-thinking the capacity of a universality of meaning (as captured in the intertext of a new word in a language under study), however, a teacher might establish a field of play - a carnivalesques framework - that may distance the teacher-learner relationship and send the student off into a private carnival of strokes. The writer of primal influence on this proposed approach to seeing the written symbols of the Japanese language is undoubtedly Roland Barthes. Throughout **Empire of Signs**, Barthes illuminates signs and rituals in Japan that, by his own admission, cannot be approached from a Western frame of reference. It may be that Barthes' writing is difficult to appreciate for those who have not experienced the aesthetic (not the technology) of Japan. Barthes' sentences can be approached in so many ways that it is best to start with his influence on the very title of this thesis.

Japan caused a number of "flashes" within Barthes, and early in the work he describes his experience.

This situation is the very one in which
a certain disturbance of the person occurs,
a subversion of earlier readings, a shock
of meaning lacerated, extenuated to the
point of its irreplaceable void, without the
object's ever ceasing to be desirable.

Writing is after all, in its way, a satori...

(Barthes, 1982, p. 4)

Barthes, in part, used satori as a way of showing the need to create an emptiness in language. He seems to have felt that in order to fully appreciate a different culture, we need to approach the subject from a new (empty) perspective,

leaving behind our own ideology (tinged with narcissism in the West, for example). Satori is a powerful dividing tool as seen by Barthes, "a seism which causes knowledge", and this can be understood as any disturbance interpreted by the student in the here and now (Once again, the importance of "awakening to the fact"). The very page on which the above quote is taken from stands opposite a page what appears as vastly more space, immensely more imposing, filled only by the single character for nothingness (BU/MU):



wheat sheaf

fire

Again, nothingness for the learner can be transporting their thoughts out of the classroom to a location closer to the target language. To "undo our own reality" is to create a fissure or interstice for the characters to be learned. Barthes points out that in Japan "the empire of signifiers is so immense, so in excess of speech, that the exchange of signs remains of a fascinating richness, mobility, and subtlety..." - trapped in the instrumental language and tools of curriculum as described by Ted Aoki, we need to explore the possibility that the development of an interstice can assist students of a very different and

challenging written language deal with the inevitable ambiguities they will encounter in its usage.

Trinh Minh-Ha skillfully brings the often underrated ideas of Barthes closer to a focus on the importance of an East-West intercultural understanding. In her narrative on **Empire of Signs**, she hints at how Barthes' major "flashes" can be re-read to equip and encourage the traveller on the ever-shifting Asian landscape. How do we safely divide the body of meaning in a different language? A language that seems placed so far from our level of consciousness when it uses a word like "satori". With the conclusion of this stroke, Barthes provides a clue:

...it is not a question of being concise (i.e., shortening the signifier without diminishing the density of the signified) but on the contrary of acting on the very root of the meaning, so that this meaning will not melt, run, internalize, become implicit, disconnect, divagate into the infinity of metaphors, into the spheres of the symbol.

(Barthes, 1982, p. 75)

Student and teacher need less mysticism, less dictatorship of stroke ordering and more self-experience and knowledge, summed up so frequently now in the popularized "empowerment". More than power, Barthes foresaw the need to gain knowledge through re-writing. If satori is a "powerful seism which causes knowledge" (Barthes, 1982, P. 4) - this vacillation of the subject, of established meaning, can then be transformed into a useful learning tool. If emptiness forces a re-writing, what does the divided symbol and

subsequent clash of cultural meaning entail for the learner on the Pacific?

Stroke Three - Language and Intertext: Exploiting Resistances in Written Symbols

Language has an appeal to the senses. Not a concept far removed from our education: the oral piece of pie, the poem cut like a cake, even the font that fancies its subject. French - whether falling on unappreciative ears or not - has a reputation of beauty, and as more and more languages of the Pacific intermingle, tastes are undoubtedly forming of the languages receiving greater exposure. Students enrol in language classes for reasons of form, finance and other idiosyncratic factors that often centre on the spoken challenge at hand. In fact, it is reasonable to conclude that the very thought of learning a different script in addition to a new spoken tradition keeps many in the West from even considering a course of any East Asian language. Part of the traditional solution has been to follow the practices of the target language's teaching practices, but how can educators expect to incorporate the classroom approach of Japan, for example, in a country with such a different school environment as Canada's? The more familiar a character is, the more easily remembered it will be. Rote learning of kanji, as favored by the Japanese, is unlikely to break down the barrier of unfamiliarity for Canadian students. Teachers of Japanese in Canadian schools

need to encourage students to appreciate how a character is made up, how it acquired its shape and how it came into existence. This may go a long way towards making the Japanese language classroom more inviting and less daunting. Just as students have a distinctive personality of their own, so does each kanji. The challenge is not only to instill an appreciation for the properly struck character, but to foster an attitude whereby the student can independently work through what once seemed merely a lifeless and anonymous jumble of lines and dots. A valuable learning process occurs when we give any character a chance to be seen and understood in a different light. If we can create an appeal to the senses, the students will continue the process of building bridges across the Pacific.

Less commonly known are the ancient spans of the Pacific, at times hidden in the historical writing of East Asia, a large body of knowledge locked behind a longstanding barrier of Chinese script. At the beginning of the eighth century A.D., when Beowulf was written, Japan had no writing system of its own. Japan's first history book, the *Kojiki* (literally, Records of Ancient Matters), was compiled under the emperor's orders at this time. Introduced to the Japanese 200 years earlier, the "kanji culture" (Saito, 1981, p. 38) had come by way of the ancient Korean kingdom of Paekche. Paekche existed in the southwestern part of the Korean peninsula from the fourth century A.D. through the seventh century A.D. During the sixth century A.D. the king

of Paekche is purported to have sent scholars and two books to a Japanese emperor. One of the books described the teachings of Confucius, and the other was an introduction to kanji. This initial bridge across a relatively small corner of the Pacific benefitted Japan immensely, serving as a link not only to Korea, who it is believed was the kanji intermediary for the Japanese, but also opening the archipelago to the influence of China. Thus, a bridge of communication and contact that has stood for centuries was built on the desire for a new, formidable language.

tree

橋

structure

HASHI: this character incorporates some of the concepts associated with a solid structure. Fittingly for those who see the future potential for language exchange on the Pacific, there are also two mouths (凵) prominently placed on this bridge. Many Koreans and Chinese came to ancient Japan, and their lasting heritage created families of intellectuals and specialists (Saito, 1981, P. 38). The Japanese may have transformed the characters into their very own, but they remain indebted to originators of the kanji. More importantly, the Japanese have adopted and assimilated a "foreign" culture since ancient times, in large part with

the aid of symbols that still contain the power and flexibility to be the foundation for modern bridges on the Pacific.

Strength in ambiguity. Western businesses still attempting to forge a niche in Asia might give frustrated, half-hearted chuckles at this concept. I suspect the ambiguity of kanji comes from the very nature of their origin: at times pictographic, symbolic, ideographic or phonetic in origin and usage, they seem to be floating enigmas that dance on paper. They seem well suited to their environment, instruments of a reputedly enigmatic and multi-layered language. More art than writing to the Western eye, they take on a new personality when necessary and show a remarkable flexibility of meaning. Perhaps they are as precise, mobile and ultimately empty as Barthes describes many of the other functionalized, ritualized objects of the Japan he interprets. Of these ever-present concepts in **Empire of Signs**, mobility has the most potential for the classroom, a carnivalesque usage of kanji that seeks not precision, but an opening of the character to individual interpretation. Much can be said about "nothing".



This character (MU), also highlighted in the previous stroke, flashes across the page in **Empire of Signs**, a striking contrast to the roman script filled page opposite. Which has more effect on the reader: a page of carefully arranged and spelled ideas or a single character? Even a kanji of somewhat confused and obscure etymology such as "MU" lends itself to a wonderfully exaggerated personalization on the part of the student: "Dancing fire leaves nothing" is one possibility that could send students off on a journey that works through this symbol.

The intertext of kanji is a space for learning, and in a myriad of ways the surface structure of these characters create openings to spaces behind the mystical wall - an area of play. Initially, a typical Western reaction to the predetermined stroke order of kanji might be "why?". Top to bottom; left to right; horizontal strokes usually preceding vertical strokes when crossing...the directives go on, but once ink has dried on paper or chalk dust cleared on the blackboard, who would ever know? The Western student, swimming in a rough sea of stroke formation, might understandably have difficulty determining which stroke was written first. Why not allow for individual stroke interpretation so long as the final product is achieved? These are questions a teacher might best be prepared to address in a diplomatic tone, rather than an ominous one. Among all of the possible responses, one seems as good as

any: "it just won't look the same". Of course, a teacher of kanji could also speak to the judgemental glances or the sometimes open disapproval shown by native writers if you stray from the intended stroke order and subsequently lead the class through a window into aspects of a conformist society. Considering the already tentative nature of the beginners' pen, it would be better to offer up a simple character to illicit some play:

person

休

tree

"Person resting against a tree is on vacation" (Henshall, 1988, p. 5): YASUMI. What could be better than to bring some rest and relaxation into class, or even mention a forthcoming holiday. A teacher may even prefer to provide the two root derivatives and have students guess at a possible usage before revealing the commonly known meaning. At any level, familiarity breeds confidence, and an understanding of how a symbol came to be may create an appreciation for the very culture that insists on the correct movements (at times a single, subtle sweep of the brush) to complete a character; here person and tree form the meaning for "rest" or "holiday".

Reverence for handwriting and stroke order seem so removed from the technological appreciation we bestow upon Japanese products. Insinuating that stroke order and an eye for detail in handwriting are the foundation of the much heralded precision of the Japanese worker may be a start in bringing this distant world of brush and paper closer to our side of the Pacific. This is a hand/written (aesthetic and sentiment being so inextricably tied together) tradition of Asia that we are missing, so close to us on the Pacific.

water

波

skin

A handy mnemonic: "Waves form the skin of the water" (Henshall, 1988, p. 110), but too often we wait for the breaking water to hit us before realizing their hidden potential - If we meet different languages half way, simultaneously diving beneath an unfamiliar surface, we can reach areas of learning and remembrance. The undulating wave motion of the Pacific has carried travellers to many unknown destinations. Waves in fact symbolize a little understood source of energy that dwells on the vast space of the Pacific. While it is difficult to imagine the infinite number of water droplets propelling vessels around the

"skin" of the world's largest ocean, it is also not easy to envisage the communicative power of the characters of Chinese origin that float around the Pacific Rim before one has actually started the personal journey through time and stroke appreciation

To exploit is to make use of a known advantage, a positive image when used in the sense of the kanji revealing similarities between the Japanese approach to communication and culture and the student's. Once again, the learner can utilize the very arbitrary way in which the signifier is related to the signified as a personal tool. Possession of this skill creates a true chance at continuous self-learning. To exploit is also to see the hidden possibilities within a single character, and to devise personal approaches to appreciation of the etymological and sociolinguistic background that has created the symbol. Perhaps some see the wave as a water movement rather than its skin, but in explaining and comparing the obvious and non-obvious ways of seeing a symbol, the process of breaching the intertext begins.

Jean-Francois Lyotard borrows the phrase "working through" from Freud in order to suggest a type of inquiry that will have us continually remembering, repeating, and re-writing our journey to modernity. This modernity is most importantly an unceasing working through a subject without end. While it is incredibly daunting for the student of kanji to embark on a course of learning through thousands of

symbols so difficult to recall with the agility one would like, Lyotard offers some solace for the learner bombarded by a world full of fragments that come together as a sentence, a scrap of information, or a word:

By proceeding in this way, one slowly approaches a scene, the scene of something. One describes it. One does not know what it is. One is sure only that it refers to some past, both furthest and nearest past, both one's own past, and others' past. This lost time is not represented like in picture, it is not even presented. It is what presents the elements of a picture, an impossible picture. Re-writing means registering these elements.

(Lyotard, 1991, p. 70)

The scene is the established symbol that needs familiarization. By exploiting the resistances in kanji, that is, occupying the intertext, we open up a new world of learning possibilities. Lyotard is explaining that sentiment from the past is all we know. A growing fascination with script such as kanji includes recognizing its past and present. The sentiments of past are represented in symbols that continue to hold value of meaning in the present. Lyotard's lesson is that the journey is a continuing one. For the student comfortable with expressing personal narrative, but unfamiliar with a previously unknown system of writing, there is a reassuring, legitimizing opportunity for the past to weld with future knowledge in a world of established native language symbols and newly found communicative opportunities in a different language.

Intercultural socio-linguistic sentiment may teach to us through recognizable themes. The classroom needs to provide the demystification of a different language, while encouraging students to continue to uncover and discover new themes for exploiting the resistances in the perceived "wall" of misinformation on kanji. Difficulties tend to be exaggerated by beginners as, or the seeming intricacies magnified by those who have become proficient at using Japanese as a second language but embellish the difficulty of their accomplishment (Rogers, 1991, 446). Worse yet are the very enigmatic successful learners who appear to covet their characters and keep novices with a growing interest in Japan at arm's length, storing kanji like the miser with a secret cache of gold. By learning to appreciate the skills that uncover the intertext of the kanji, both breeching and splicing of radicals, students will hopefully build the motivation and confidence to take a step towards a new type of personalized literacy. The kanji do represent life and death - they are artifacts that continue to shift with the frequency of the neon sign. Seeing with new eyes is to experience a new literacy that first isolates kanji as single units standing singly as indisposable instruments or fundamental expressions of meaning, and then continues to carry the learner to higher levels of contact and experience with the Japanese culture.

Minh-ha Trinh also shows how Barthes portrays his notion of the void in *Empire of Signs*. If writing is

satori, that elusive word, then the seism causing the loss of meaning, or a suspension of belief in meaning, is the very spark needed to re-evaluate our own culture and learn about a different one. On Barthes preoccupation with the void and Asia, Trinh writes:

These statements present the two inseparable faces of a single entity. They open, as would a dice throw, a text in which the (named) Void moves beneath multiple forms, showing us at each pause in its displacement, a new face. This philosophy, this doctrine, ...belongs to a network of closely connected signifiers and signified ...

(Trinh, 1991, p. 209)

Barthes obviously felt a vibrancy by situating himself in the Void. Splitting a kanji and creating the desire for a non-definitive working through of a new language by re-writing and re-learning of meaning is a step towards developing a new appeal to the senses. Finding pleasure in the floating symbol of the Pacific, even relishing the stroke count, can begin with an intermingling of the concepts embedded in a kanji.

rice



woman

hold

KAZU: "Woman counts number of rice grains by hand" is the mnemonic suggested by one text (Henshall, 1988, p. 43).

Student attempts at such bridging of meaning can reveal gender attitudes that may persist to this day. The point is to initiate the inter-play that will find students uncovering the intertext of kanji. One might say, as Ted Aoki has suggested, that the texture of the character is revealed through this process - beyond devising a possibly handy jingle, the real mnemonics are the lasting familiarity and appreciation of the writing system of a different culture. Who did the rice counting in Japan? For that matter, just who is responsible for the dreaded system of ordering strokes!

On the surface it is difficult to imagine how languages as different as Japanese and English can co-exist in the Chinese characters developed centuries ago. Yet, they do come into contact (fuse?) in the many loan words of modern Japanese. Beyond the making of a language game, it is not always apparent what can be learned by demystifying a Japanese character - Barthes points out how "the distinction will not be the source of absolute classifications, the paradigms will falter..." (Barthes, 1975, p. 4). This is important to retain when using one's language and background to interpret the ideas or symbols of another. We cannot be absolutely certain of our reading, but we may experience more meaningful layers through our writing and probing. This experience may be seen purely aesthetically (calligraphy) but inescapably, through dissection and (personal) interpretation, the experience

takes on aspects of the elemental: the need, form and significance of communication.

The truly revelatory space of Barthes' void as proposed by this thesis may well be the cohabitation of two languages working side by side: "the meaning will be precarious, revocable, reversible, the discourse incomplete" (Barthes, 1975, p. 4), so that for the student of a new language the skills learned with elements of the meaning can be transferred to cultural experiences that are simply living, not absolute.

Rather naively, the Pacific is often portrayed as possessing two shores, distant and oppositional. An image of greater significance for future learning on this ocean might be that of a constantly shifting intercultural and intertextual space under pressure from forces surrounding and even occupying it. Of particular importance from a geographic point of view are the tectonic plates, or edges, that dictate so much of this region's direction on our planet. In a similar way, as related by Ted Aoki, we see and hear evidence of a language/word tectonics within a commonly accepted symbol. The architectonics (Aoki) of language and symbol constantly shift and move in and around us with more power and frequency than we realize. As with the wave, educators need to explore the tectonic possibilities for both the geographic and communicative worlds of the Pacific, playing with historical events, contemporary positions, and future predictions of movement.

For the Japanese classroom, this entails a re-examination of kanji learning: re-thinking and re-writing until forboding characters transform into interesting and indispensable symbols.

weight

動

strength

UGOKU: Combining "strength" with "weight" to perhaps symbolize the exertion of a force, or more succinctly "strength moves heavy object". Exposing two edges in meaning is the lasting result of breaching the kanji. The obedient edge (Barthes, 1975, p.6) is exposed, with all of its pre-conceived uses, and the more enigmatic, less decipherable edge that seems to offer so much possibility for learning remains to be revealed and interpreted by the splicing of the text. In the context of the less defined edge, we find a redistribution of language, as evidenced by the exploitation of kanji, that reveals just how we reach a compromise in our understanding of other languages and culture. Too often, this compromise ends on a resigned note, rather than igniting an exploratory theme in language learning. The kanji are untapped image reservoirs awaiting

our attempts, no less nor more compromised, to interpret the ongoing meeting of edges on the Pacific.

Stroke Four - Artifacts (?) that Shift in a Living Landscape: Finding and Constituting Meaning in Uncovered Etymology

The intertext of the Chinese-Japanese character is a context where past, present and future continue to co-exist whether we have an appreciation for their construction or not. For the calligrapher who values the aesthetic pleasure of each individual character, there is a richness of content and association in the finished symbol that could well evoke an emotional response in the viewer. Resembling an abstract work of art, the structure of strokes, the layout of characters and their rhythmic changes show just how the strokes can involve intimidating forms for the learner, but also hold a wealth of language learning. For the teacher who approaches the kanji as a shifting set of symbols, rather than as a stagnant mass of ordered strokes, there is great potential to instill the learner with some of the enthusiasm of the Chinese calligrapher. The characters involve a great variety of changes, representing form and idea, abstraction and reality, grace and strength, and from the very introduction of their usage, it is possible to reveal these qualities. A character possesses a structure containing a composition waiting to be written. The writing

need not be as linear as the very strokes on which it is based, but a rendering of the symbols' etymology into a realm of familiarity. With this stroke it will be seen, in fact, that experiencing the collision of past and present in the Chinese-Japanese character will help the learner to break from the bonds of the sequential to develop an individual non-linear space. The compositioning of this space, be it in the practice of the newly learned symbol or a narrative, will be the force that generates meaning. Just as Chinese calligraphers are exploring new realms of their art, determined to respect the approach of the individual in order to blend the traditions of the past with new ideas (Ling, 1986, p. 67), it is time to reapproach our methods of teaching kanji in Japanese classes while remembering the foundations of the symbols.

Keeping in mind that any system of communication starts with interconnected patterns of shared knowledge, it is possible to draw some insightful conclusions by tracing a very basic symbol to associated meanings that incorporate "a thread" of the original character. A straying from the linear approach to teaching the Chinese-Japanese characters entails a move away from the view of the symbol as a straight, predictable progression of strokes from the blackboard in the notebook. This one-dimensional stance has dominated the school in many disciplines, seen at once as an advantageous sequence to follow for both the teacher and student. With one of her introductions in **The Kristeva**

Reader, Toril Moi considers linear time in language as "the enunciation of a sequence of words" (p.187), that in its predetermined position attempts to be unreasonably all encompassing and exclusionary. By casting the kanji in this stroke infused light, the teacher robs the classroom of the opportunity to tilt the character in various directions and consider its non-linear nature. Without losing an appreciation for the importance of stroke order, students can indulge in a valuable learning process that emphasizes space as well as sequence, while allowing to assign their own classifier to the sign, making for a multiplicity of interpretations for one symbol. In this more tangible form of uncovering the etymology of the kanji, it is possible to show the participant in what amounts to a linguistic archaeological dig that they can indeed take part in the pleasure of discovering meaning in a new writing system.



ITO: Representing a skein of yarn, originally doubled (糸) (Henshall, 1988, p. 9). When we talk of appreciating a new language and instilling students with the motivation to carry on their study of the target language, we really are

initiating a doubling, an interweaving of two languages. In Japanese and English we have the contact of cultures (no matter where the latter may be spoken) of two threads that share many habits of comprehending knowledge and meaning. As with the very nature of Chinese-Japanese character, we need to free ourselves of the notion of the linear so that more of the universal breaks through in our understanding of a culture as supposedly "foreign" as Japanese. Stretched to its full length, a thread has the appearance of a limited material of one direction and few alternate uses. Woven through other fabric or similar threads of varying size and length, the single thread takes on many shapes. Thus, the meeting of the threads in English and Japanese, creating a patchwork of ongoing structure and meaning, promoting meaning in structure: a structure that allows the learner to develop a personal picture of how the language of the symbol exists in the intertext.

thread



meet

An embroidered picture, a meeting of threads no less, has come to mean more generally "picture"(E). Threads meet in an embroidered picture, giving meaning beyond the linear.

In treating the kanji as a picture awaiting interpretation, the Japanese second language (JSL) classroom is helping participants to take the enigmatic meaning of the character and free it from the complex combination of constructed meaning and connotation. The re-stroking of a completely new code for a kanji does not mean that true meaning is lost for the learner when they come to see that a rewriting of the text is possible - there is no omnipotent force burdening the imagination, but the chance to move beyond the surface and still retain the spontaneity of people making the world intelligible to themselves, as the founders of Chinese-Japanese characters once did. Why hide our students from the very foundation of the system they want so much to learn to view in their own way? Understandably, the kanji seem distant for learners unfamiliar with the script. Klinkowitz, elaborating on ideas of Barthes, sums up the sentiment by arguing that in disguising the code by which a construction has been built, we disintellectualize the message by establishing in nature the arbitrary constraints of a culture (Klinkowitz, 1988, p. 47). When we find our own significance for objects, we give them a personal authenticity. Through the proper practice of splicing the kanji and illuminating the threads that give them meaning, we bring ourselves a little closer to the East, a world that arguably has done far more to meet other languages on the Pacific. It is time for North American learning habits to

delve into the loaded image, and initiate a new kind of pedagogical strategy.

thread

練

east

REN: Practice. The thread meets the east and the new intertext created is a study in itself. If the text is a tissue, something woven (Klinkowitz, p.49), then this signifying practice is in itself the energy that motivates the fusion of text, language, and writer. The linguistic or social action that results from the play of two cultures is a new approach to learning a different writing system than we are used to. In fact, it is not inconceivable nor unrealistic to consider the learner as simultaneously a student of linguistics as they carve through the kanji. For those in want of a label, this is the creation of a work used in appreciating a previously unknown script, perhaps a post-modern creation,

...a weaving which deliberately unravels in its reading - and the fabric of this texture comes from the interlacing of codes which the semiologist separates into its component parts.

(Klinkowitz, 1988, p. 49)

The unearthing of these codified artifacts makes it possible for the student to begin a re-defining of texture and the landscape language intersect. This crossroad has the ability to teach meaning as well as direction.

Similarly, language and meaning continue to intertwine on the Pacific, often so deftly that their contact is taken as a given, meaning cloaked in the threads of more than one language. The learner of kanji needs to begin searching for strokes and symbols that lie just below the surface of the world of meaning they are used to inhabiting. While necessitating a step back in linguistic time, the experience also entails, perhaps more importantly, a journey to new space. The teaching of etymology in many classrooms has been rare or often as one-dimensional as the very stroke order so vaunted by many kanji educators. Rather than continuing to vivify stroke order and simultaneously cut out other options for learning the characters, the atmosphere of the classroom should accept this linearity of the symbol while moving on to a more powerful re-writing of kanji. Students enjoy the opportunity of exploring shape and meaning within a symbol. During the process of learning the (admittedly less challenging) kana syllabary, students have benefitted from activities that allow for a playful approach to the symbol's structure. Mnemonics for hiragana and katakana do not completely do away with structure, as students must stay within the guidelines of the symbols used by the target language, but the opening of the field of play

means that there is a chance to relish the experimentation with line and shape. These types of individualized mnemonics have merit in the exercise they encourage, the creation of openings for the learners' mind, instead of the closing of any gaps that might see symbols in a different light. It is this very skill, the creation of personal images within the structure of a character, that can also be used in experiencing the historical and semantic pleasure of the kanji. Finding meaning in previously uncovered etymology involves the willingness to inscribe new meaning in long established forms.

Here another concept of Barthes is helpful in describing the fundamental strength of the text as a vessel full of more symbolic liquid than we realize, in turn giving power to the idea of the kanji as a conveyor of a wealth of hidden learning experiences. In the following passage from **The Pleasure of the Text** there is also a hint of the potential for using different languages for moving beyond the dominant beliefs and expectations that surround them:

There are those who want a text (an art, a painting) without a shadow, without the "dominant ideology"; but this is to want a text without fecundity, without productivity, a sterile text.... The text needs its shadow: this shadow is a bit of ideology, a bit of representation, a bit of subject: ghosts, pockets, traces, necessary clouds...

(Barthes, 1975, p. 32)

To my mind, wrapped in the desire to bring the variety and play of the kanji closer to students who feel so far removed

from its origins, we have here a legitimation of their attempts to break down and decipher the linguistic importance of the Chinese-Japanese character on a personal level. "To identify accurately language's image-reservoirs" (Barthes, 1975, p. 33) is a powerful metaphor for those who are willing to follow through on the very real possibility of deconstructing the symbol. In the case of the Chinese-Japanese character, the symbol already holds so much semantic information that our task is made a pleasurable one. Uncovering the multilayers of meaning that compose a kanji is a route to new experiences on the Pacific, as well as parallel contexts that help us to get behind culturally specific constructs and value them as important markers of the target language - markers that seldom lose their ability to dance on the page for us once we have identified and tagged them in our own characteristic way.

An image reservoir also implies that readers of the sign may enter this etymological space in a way that suits their need to create meaning that will help them to better appreciate the source of the character and its use on the Pacific. What better learning experience can there be than a self-guided journey from the past to the present usage of the character to be learned? The term "artifact" is therefore a slippery one when applied to a kanji, because its personality slips in and out of historical context, depending on how it is at once structured and perceived. From the aesthetic point of view the exquisitely stroked

kanji is "art". The "fact" comes in to play when we take Barthes' advice and avoid a reverence of meaning, limiting the symbol to a locked position. For him the stereotype is to rob the word of its magic and enthusiasm, as though it is natural to accept a recurring word as adequate to express "each occasion for different reasons, as though to imitate could no longer be sensed as an imitation: an unconstrained word that claims consistency and is unaware of its own insistence" (Barthes, 1975, p. 42).

生

IKIRU: "live". The kanji of this basic verb is a seemingly simple yet enigmatic character, offering the learner a confusing array of meanings. IKASU, can mean "bring into full play", "keep alive", "revive" or "let live". It is also part of the construction for "teacher",

previous

先生

life

and "pupil",

life

生徒

follower

who play the crucial interpretive roles in the JSL classroom. In the context of this classroom, two players (emphasis on "play") so well-endowed with life (生) - the very character inscribed in their names - seem properly placed for continuing the process of languaging between cultures. Keeping a language alive is far too large a burden to be considered solely the responsibility of a secondary classroom, but there is nevertheless the opportunity to keep the language interaction "alive" with the interplay of kanji at times contextualized by English. The uncovering of the historical intertext is a beginning in the creation of a new motivation for the student of kanji. In the musings of Barthes is found a passage that hints at the space the kanji archaeologist might occupy.

It would be good to imagine a new linguistic science that would no longer study the origin of words, or etymology, or even their diffusion, but the progress of their solidification, their densification throughout historical discourse, this science would doubtless be subversive, manifesting much more than the historical origin of truth: its rhetorical, languaging nature.

(Barthes, 1975, p. 43)

And so, etymology is only one aspect, one stroke towards completing the character that breathes life back into the language. Bringing the meaning of a language into "full play" involves preparing for shifts in meaning that can be unpredictable and indecipherable for the learner. Shifts in meaning, however, give the artifact credibility on a landscape where multiple meanings for one word/character, its changing usage in relation to other characters and cultures, we can say that an appreciation of language contact has taken place. Can we really expect to appreciate an artifact, given the omnipotence of the here and now in our daily lives? Important to remember is that an artifact, while commonly thought of as a primitive tool, is also an object of human work; here again we have a concept befitting the kanji. Coming across an activity in a teaching manual based on the use of artifacts, I find that one main objective is to explain that our impressions of people, places and things are the result of what we observe and what we know. Certainly artifacts are well-suited for testing the observation powers of a class. The historical aspects of many cultural objects often go unnoticed or too rarely explored. The meeting of kanji and English will continue to generate new definitions for communication on the Pacific. Re-defining an artifact in a living language, between living languages, is a further key in exposing the non-linear nature of the Chinese-Japanese character.

Stroke Five - Demystifying Classification: A Personalized Reclassification of Kanji

Writing about the intertextual construction of the kanji takes the students into a space where it is possible for them to understand how people give meanings to the signs and symbols of our writing systems, more than do the words we are so used to communicating with. The use of the narrative in examining the kanji can help to de-emphasize the power of the word, re-contextualize the sign (through a historical reading), and ultimately create a meaning that was not present in the words before. Elaboration of meaning is not a skill that one comes by easily, but as one finds enjoyment in uncovering the intertext, it must be asked just how to approach a system of at least 2,000 characters, each with its own structure. The Japanese educational system has techniques for classifying kanji, which will be considered alongside a recommendation for a new outlook on learning the Chinese-Japanese characters. We begin with a discussion of the stroke, and its use as a metaphor in this writing.

The properly placed stroke can mean everything in a society like Japan where the Chinese character has taken on a literary mystique and power not yet understood by most Westerners, and is perhaps taken for granted by many in the East. The well-timed hand-written note to a superior, complemented by a smattering of appropriate characters, can be a very shrewd business skill. The Japanese seemingly

adopted the notion of pride in a long literary tradition along with the characters that arrived from China. The people continue to possess aspects of what might be called a reverence for kanji, a respect that is best revealed through the brush. There are hours of calligraphy practice during the average school life of a Japanese student, even more if they choose to seriously pursue the "way of writing" (The literal reading of the characters representing 'calligraphy' in Japanese). Calligraphy teachers host a healthy population of pupils who often begin their practice from an early age. I have often wondered if this situation might ever occur in a North American context, with such handwriting activity based on a respected approach to the Roman alphabet. Perhaps this is not realistically imaginable.

There is something poetic in the Chinese character that has thus far escaped our appreciation on this side of the Pacific. Generally, the practice of writing symbols with traditional ink and paper becomes more abstract and aesthetically based as a pupil progresses, but one fact is certain: all aspects of the stroke are scrutinized. The shape, angle and thickness of the stroke will all reflect back on the writer once the teacher has evaluated the final product. In fact, to use a tone of finality in describing the act of writing a character under these conditions is to forget that the process of mastering each individual component of the character is the greater task for the

calligrapher. An otherwise skillfully drawn character might be ruined (in the eyes of some) by a hastily lifted brush forcing the final stroke in an improper direction. Aside from the desired shape of the character under study, there is the acquired talent of knowing when to take the brush off the paper at the right moment, or knowing at which point to let the remaining ink rest in place as a final emphasis on the overall work. The numerous positions of the stroke are all variables in the desired balance of the writer, and in this sense the ambiguity of the stroke is a foreshadowing of the enigmatic, playful nature of all kanji.

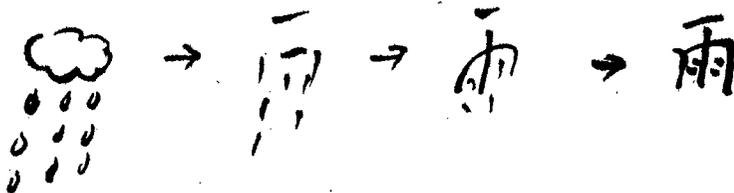
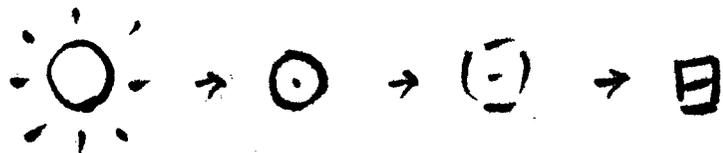
Whether the first stroke or the last stroke is the challenge, the continuing importance attributed to a meaningful rendering of the Chinese-Japanese character, and in particular the proper balance of strokes, is preeminent in the mind of the Eastern writer. My usage of the stroke as a demarcation of each of the sections of this thesis represents how I hope to reveal that a re-focus on the compositioning of the character allows for a new discourse in the JSL classroom. This shift in learning practice is made possible through the knowledge that we can create our own meaning for a character by re-living the poetics of this cultural work. The stroke is the means by which we begin our appreciation for the poetry contained within the symbol. Poetry itself has multiple meanings, and this kind of acknowledgement is a step towards allowing for a site where the symbols of the Japanese language can also have various

interpretations. The disembodied character is still held together by the strength of the stroke - the focus of its position is shifted to where the order in which we write them takes secondary importance to the way in which the student chooses to re-compose the order of the radicals within one character. This collaborative re-writing, between student and target culture (as well as two languages), leads to an accumulation of images for the student that is the beginning of a new classification "system" for the kanji. Central to this premise are the various ways in which the Japanese attempt to systematize the many thousand kanji available for everyday written communication. It will also become clear that the discourse from within which I write is one that attempts to deconstruct some of the traditional perceptual barriers that confront students of Japanese so that they might be encouraged to begin a process of rebuilding the characters on their own terms and continue on with meaningful self-learning.

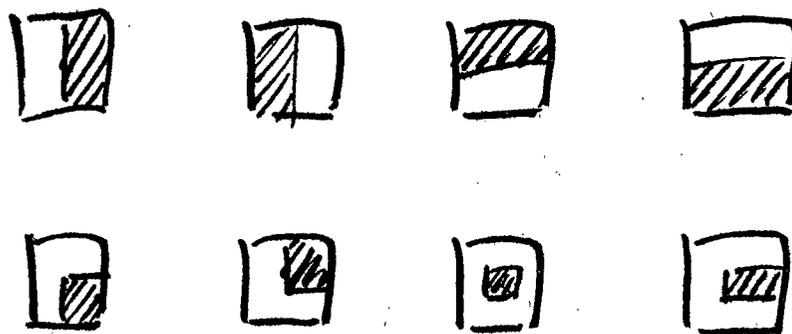
The conditions that prompted this writing can be succinctly described. After teaching JSL for three years, I asked myself how I could realistically expect to motivate students to begin a commitment to a written language that requires the learner to become familiar with an intimidating number of characters and an intricacy of the symbol they might previously have had no contact with. Additionally, the approaches to learning the characters one commonly finds in place in the Japanese educational system do not take into

account the student of kanji who is for all intents and purposes removed from the milieu of the symbol. The North American teacher of kanji must consider ways to take advantage of the meeting of Pacific languages in the classroom. There is no denying the importance of placing the Chinese-Japanese character within its cultural context as soon as one may be exposed to it, and at the conclusion of this stroke it will be suggested how North American educators might approach the kanji with this in mind. What follows is a discussion of various methods of classifying the characters, including how the satori of kanji incorporates elements of all of these before turning to the inherent image and meaning-generating faculties of the student that are an integral part of the premise behind this thesis.

A typical kanji dictionary for the Japanese learner inevitably refers to the source of the characters and often provides a few examples that suggest how the Chinese people of centuries ago began creating the symbols of a written system.



It is not difficult to see how two trees (林) became woods and three of the same symbol logically represents forest (森). Character dictionaries will also tell the curious-minded that such characters as 'evening' (夕) and 'mouth' (口) came together in 'name' (名) because the evening is just the time when it becomes necessary to call a person by name, as their face is no longer visible. Examples such as these provide the background for what are considered more serious systemizations of the characters. First, an emphasis on the various bushi or radicals of which the characters are comprised. There are at least nine positions in which these radicals appear throughout the many kanji, as shown by the blank areas of the squares below.



This approach recommends that the student focus not only on these areas as a way by which to understand the compositioning of the kanji, but also become familiar with

the more common radicals that occupy these positions for example, the symbol for person (人) often occupies the left side position as in the symbol for worker or servant.

person

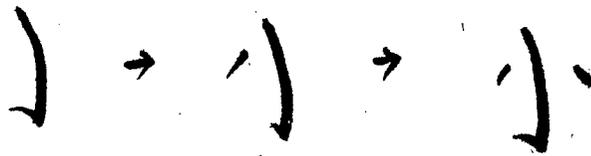
仕

earth

The advantages of depending on this type of classification would be in the knowledge of the workings of the kanji, and an insight into the interrelated nature of the sign. By relying on this view of the symbol the student develops an ability to codify where radicals should fit into a given character, and a sense of balance for the finished product as one invariably fits it into a predetermined space of writing. This square may be powerfully spatial, but need not necessarily limit the imagination of the learner. Proficient users of kanji use this system for everything from checking their knowledge of a character to learning the positioning of a new symbol. One might even argue that it is an indispensable tool used by most Japanese, and as such cannot be ignored by anyone who wishes to seriously attempt a learning of kanji. Regardless, it is no easy task to comfortably confront the novice with this approach, not at least until they have learned a few hundred characters, a store of symbols to serve as a foundation upon which to

build a greater aptitude for the written symbols of Japanese.

Next, the ever-present emphasis on stroke order. Without an ordering of the strokes that comprise a character, many argue, the Chinese-Japanese characters would lose an important component in the system of classifying the characters. The stroke is an ordering within the system because it allows the user to fall back on the 'proper' method of writing in times of doubt. 'Small' must be written as below:



Fire, comprised of only one more stroke, is written as so.



It then follows that there are further exceptions for the learner to master, but not before the essential stroke rules that ensure a properly balanced character. Here too, we have a rigid process deemed essential for the writer of

kanji and proven helpful in developing an appreciation of the placement of strokes in relation to each other. To expect North American learners of Japanese to adopt this system as a foundation of kanji knowledge, however, would be expecting too much of only one facet of the handwriting process of the Chinese-Japanese character. A greater flexibility is possible when the learner has no background in kanji. The defabrication of the sign system to show how people construct a useable reality of symbols can be achieved by a less exhaustive stripping of the stroke from its context. Certainly the student may trace back the stroke order or take a stroke count for such purposes as searching out the pronunciation or meaning of the character. This is a long established practice in Japan. For the purpose of finding the intertextual within the text, however, the classroom requires a movement that searches beyond the linearity of these systems of classification. The kanji have been consistently presented to students on a flat, tabular space rather than as a stereophony (Klinkowitz, 1988, p. 49). Study of a closed, accountable structure is not what founds the text according to Barthes, but rather "the study of the outlet of the text on to other texts, other codes, other signs; what makes the text is the intertextual (Klinkowitz, 1988, p. 49). Even the breakdown of the characters into their ONYOMI (Chinese etymological pronunciation) and their KUNYOMI (Japanese etymological pronunciation) serves the learner valuably for ordering the

various symbols into useable categories. We again come across a system that is already predetermined for the student, a field of play where sounds and strokes occupy culturally conceived boxes. These are essential in amassing a knowledge of kanji, but my theme has constantly been one of appreciation of an intricate language and a motivation to continue a study of their compositioning. Here we have a key concept for the learner of kanji. To invest in the compositioning of a symbol is to recognize its linearity and bear in mind the classification habits of the target culture, but also to develop the skill of constructing a new system of non-linear doubling. Roland Barthes practised a lifelong enjoyment in narrative that situated him in an activist mode. Not only is the content and structure of the symbol under scrutiny then, but abrasions made upon the surface transform into a text of pleasure, coming from culture and not breaking from it. This is linked to a comfortable practice of reading, a vision that may help the Japanese language classroom re-focus on the target culture..

Text of bliss (jouissance): the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.

(Barthes, 1975, p. 14)

This kind of activity produces a desire for the text within the reader, or at the very least a memorable reading. Now

then for a placing of the kanji within the pleasurable or carnivalesque discourse.

"By remembering that the text is a productivity, the reader can meet it in the very theatre of production" (Klinkowitz, 1988, p. 55). The space learners can dwell in is one of double meaning for the kanji. Poetic language is inherently double, according to Julia Kristeva. Within the space of texts, and the interior of the text, dialogue and ambivalence produce a poetic doubling of meaning (Moi, 1986, p. 38). In revealing Bakhtinian dialogism as both subjectivity and communication, Kristeva further clarifies the importance of intertextuality and the sign. In poetic language every word is double and the doubling of meaning means that a new world of dialogical exchange between languages. With the kanji as a tool, we can construct a dialogic space that incorporates the signs of both East and West. The semiotic arguments of Kristeva are important because they legitimate the notion that student efforts situating the kanji by personally decomposing their text creates an ambivalent coexistence of languages that represents a double of lived experience (realism and the narrative). This entails that the study of kanji through writing leads to a study of language that offers an alternative approach to monological discourse, one long dominated by the classification of the stroke. In dialogical discourse, then, the stroke becomes both subject and object, a writing that exploits excesses and emphasizes

the carnival of language. For Kristeva, dialogic discourse includes the polyphonic as well. Writing, then, becomes a reading of the structure, which ironically "reads itself and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis". (Moi, 1986, p. 42). Perhaps the splitting and re-writing of a Chinese-Japanese character can be thought of as an inscription of the sign.

The duplicity of language is revealed in the kanji. In an address to an Alberta Teachers' Association Multicultural Council, Ted Aoki chooses to exploit resistances in a character frequently seen in Chinese restaurants. "Double happiness" reveals the innate nature of the kanji as instruments of learning and symbolism.

A Japanese Canadian like myself who speaks no Chinese, but who can read some Chinese characters because the Japanese, renowned borrowers that they are, borrowed the Chinese language holus bolus, might try to offer a reading in English of this Chinese character. Here is an attempt:

well-being



mouth

plants

"Double happiness is a dwelling in the midst of life where people engathered partake in the nourishing gifts of the earth".

(Aoki, 1991, p. 35)

Metaphor and the shifting contexts of meaning within kanji somehow aptly suit one another. A poetic doubling is also easily attained by establishing a personal classification of any character that confronts the curiosity of the learner of Japanese. It is not possible to forget the metaphoric advantages of Chinese-Japanese characters once one embarks on this type of language acquisition through the intertext.

Its etymology is constantly visible. It retains the creative impulse and process, visible and at work. After thousands of years the lines of metaphoric advance are still shown, and in many cases actually retained in the meaning... The memory can hold them and use them... With us the poet is the only one for whom the accumulated treasures of the race-words are real and active. Poetic language is always vibrant with fold on fold of overtones and with natural affinities, but (with kanji) the visibility of the metaphor tends to raise the quality to its intensest power.

(Fenollosa, 1968, p.25)

It is enough for philosophers to play with meaning in language when it is there for our students. Perhaps as Edward Fenollosa suggests, the Chinese character sheds light on our forgotten mental processes (p.21). Undoubtedly, kanji are indispensable for understanding the poetical raw material afforded not only by Japanese as the target language, but the range of interlingual contact that opens up for the student of the kanji as independent units is a new field of play where meaning for the characters flashes through the monologic classification of the past, producing a meaning typified by personal derivation.

The Chinese-Japanese character defies linearity in terms of its poetics and etymological structure. I feel that Roland Barthes would appreciate a re-writing of the characters, and ultimately a re-classification of their place on the Pacific. My task has been one of reinterpreting his writing in light of the potential for kanji in our classroom. If this is a new theory of reading the kanji, there may be some clues already provided.

...a theory of reading...is absolutely dependent on a theory of writing: to read a text is to discover - on a corporeal, not a conscious level - how it was written, to invest oneself in the production, not the product. This movement of coincidence can be initiated either in the usual fashion, by pleasurably reliving the poetics of the work, or in a more modern way, by removing from oneself all forms of censorship to allow the text the freedom of all of its semantic and symbolic excesses; at this point, to read is truly to write...

(Barthes, 1985, p. 189)

In re-reading each kanji that comes under study, the student initiates a re-writing that becomes a poetic placing of signs in motions - symbols of Japanese and English that dwell on the Pacific.

Ted Aoki provides a further example of a character that speaks to the polyphony of meaning within the sign.

speech

詩

earth

metron

mouth

} temple

To dwell poetically is to be in
the dwelling place of mortals
where one may hear the inspirited
beat of earth's measure. So inspired,
in the sounding forth, may echoes of
geo-metron sound and resound.

(Aoki, 1991, p. 32)

There is a pleasureable doubling in the above passage and a meaningful story that illustrates the power capable of a reading produced of an Eastern (Oriental) by a Western (Occidental) source. "Word", "object", "symbol"; these nouns do not describe the process of transforming the characters into a source for a story or narrative. Both Kristeva and Barthes speak of "holes in symbolization" that may help us to create a new language of thought. There is a source of light for such a hole when we use the kanji as the basis of mnemonic phrases or personal descriptions that lead to a meaningful narrative that bridges two cultures. It has been described how "structure contains activity" and now we find the linear leading to the poetic, the stroke multiplying and accommodating shades of meaning. The personalized reclassification of the kanji begins with the recognition of these characters as cultural products loaded with symbolism. It continues to create spaces for learning the more we consider its double nature.

...unlike physical and biological facts, cultural facts are twofold...they refer to something else: as Beneviniste has observed, it is the discovery of language's "duplicity" which gives Saussure's reflection all its value...there is a unity in the symbolic field, and culture in all its aspects, is

a language.

(Barthes, 1986, p. 13)

The intertext of the kanji provides a particularly well-suited playing field for discovering the dual aspect of language and culture, as well as an intertext that continuously reveals new meaning to the learner.

Stroke Six - The Doubling of Kanji and a New Appeal to the Senses

Globally, the written word is transmitted in a dizzying myriad of ways, all cultures paying it heed in one form or another. Often the form of this transmittance is taken for granted as it speeds from sender to receiver, so that the message has almost entirely outstripped the method in terms of importance. In many societies an increasing reliance on technology and the pace of life dictates that we demand clear, standardized printed writing, but in the rush to streamline communication, we have possibly left behind - or are losing - an important aesthetic by which we used to interpret ourselves and others. Teachers continue to admonish students for what is considered to be poor handwriting, but I would bet few classes are encouraged to be expressive with the handwritten word. Understandably, we can't always be expected to appreciate the historical significance of the symbols we use or the etymology of the words that communicate our ideas. People do not want to

live in the past, particularly with a cumbersome mode of expression slowing down their thought and actions. Yet, it is accepted by many that the ability to see (appreciate, interpret) the many aspects of one concept can lead to knowledge. Recognition of the signs of language, and how they influence us, is a powerful source of "place"; for those of us dwelling in both the East and West, on the rim of a vast Pacific, I have thus far been portraying the kanji as constructs holding more for us than we realize, or at least utilize. With this stroke the emphasis will continue to be one of revealing the unused meanings of the kanji, and also considering the process of doubling that involves the re-writing and re-learning of the characters through the recompositioning of their intertextual personality. This consideration of Chinese-Japanese characters and the intermingling of concepts both East and West on the Pacific, would benefit from a discussion of the importance of space as used throughout the strokes.

Setting unavoidably involves spatiality. If we are to consider the kanji in a light that outshines their perception as barriers to understanding, we must situate them in the East-West space of the Pacific. This space, though shifting and watery, can also be imagined as a new landscape or ground of difference within which to compose an intermingling of concepts from diverse languages. The learner is equipped with reaching this space of intercultural contact when the intertext of the kanji is

used as a source for appealing to a sense of linguistic discovering and inventing. The characters teach aspects of aesthetics and cultural insights that guide the student to a new view of Chinese-Japanese characters. During the process of describing the innately representative intertext of a kanji, the experience of readjusting our perspective on the Japanese language might be best thought of as in-scribing meaning. The doubling of the characters, that is, the re-writing and re-learning which become a product of deconstructing the intertext, opens doors to a space where the learner gains an enlightening view of the setting where Japanese and English meet on the Pacific.

The concept of space and opening are in fact closely related when revealed by the instructive intertext of one kanji. In 'kan' we find door or gate (門) combined with 'sun' (日) to form a poetic doubling of its own.



Where sunlight shines through there is a good opportunity to gain a fresh view of what previously had been buried in the shadows. Readjusting our perspective on intercultural spaces entails taking the initiative for learning the kanji when there is a growing sense of appreciation for the

setting of their composition. In *Empire of Signs*, Barthes tells how

...a friend's remark on Japanese opens up a whole fictive realm, of which only certain modern texts (but no novel) can afford a notion, permitting us to perceive a landscape which our speech (the speech we own) could under no circumstances either discover or divine.

(Barthes, 1975, p.7)

Consider the power of the learning tool that can be both the door, the light and the space that propels the learner into a setting where they see that one of the more powerful hidden advantages of Chinese-Japanese characters is that we can use our native language to break down their intertext, and inscribe meaning into a neglected etymology by taking part in the doubling of the meaning under study. Instructors can benefit by using this new setting for viewing the characters in combination with already proven JSL teaching strategies. Highlighting unusual meanings of the kanji on the landscape where English and Japanese co-exist in the writings of students, however, provides a valuable opportunity for learners to gain confidence in the target language and consider how the use of their own will also bring them closer to the distant shores of the new Pacific.

Cultural values are transmitted from generation to generation by forms of communication - through language, gestures, movements and other non-verbal aspects. The truly

exciting teaching characteristic of the Chinese-Japanese symbols derives from their natural ability to combine the many forms of communication by surrendering a process of etymology to the learner. By participating in the doubling of the kanji and bringing the character's meaning closer to them in the re-writing, students may be taught through discovery and invention, how languages are symbolic and complex, no matter how distant the culture in which they are used. Aside from the inherent value attached to this knowledge and consequent self-teaching, I view these characters as the tools by which to begin a humanized occupation of Pacific spaces. Here we have the combination of a basic character, 'person' (人) with 'space' (間).

人 間

This meeting of concepts forms the compound word for 'human' and to my mind plays with our notion of complexity. Certainly, the kanji often are an intimidating array of strokes. Yet, when the characters are seen as human constructs, in a space of language that redistributes the cultural communication we all participate in, there is a sense of their doubling in meaning, value and existence that leads to an appeal to the learning sense of the JSL student.

All human interaction occurs within a particular language-charged space, and in the kanji we have written symbols that can serve as guides into a new socio-linguistic realm for the North American learner, as well as agents of self-reflection and individual learning.

As space and landscape predominate my writing of the pedagogical merit of a review and re-inscribing of kanji, it is useful to stress the double nature of characters that also speak to the topic of this stroke through their etymology. There may be no greater spatial area for meaningful comparison between East and West, Canada and Japan, than the homes in which we dwell. I could also refer to this almost universally known private space as a home or dwelling, and in Japanese there is an important distinction of terms surrounding the notion of where we choose to reside for most of our lives. By inscribing intercultural meaning into the Chinese-Japanese characters that represent the various views of 'dwelling', I hope to reveal how a redistribution of culturally similar notions leads to a new understanding or re-learning of the meeting of two languages. Joy Hendry, in her commentary on the importance of the presentation of space in Japan, **Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation and Power in Japan and Other Societies**, offers a distinction between view of space both East and West.

For many Westerners a house is a thing,
an object...But to the Japanese it is
a context - or rather a shifting set

of smaller contexts within a larger one...not a box with openings, as in the West, but a space-moulding system.

(Hendry, 1993, p.98)

The challenges awaiting the newcomer to Japan seem to become magnified in a Japanese home, and it is no small challenge to give students a sense of the space they enter once their shoes are taken off and the first tentative step is taken into the world of the inhabitant. An intriguing comparison of dwellings might also characterize the intertext of the kanji: "a shifting set of smaller contexts within a larger one...not a box with openings as in the West, but a space moulding system". To a fascinating degree the learner of the Chinese-Japanese characters must come to terms with how they will appreciate the doubling (or tripling or more) of the kanji and find the openings that will be personally important for a valuable re-writing of the symbol. A "space-moulding system" implies for me a powerful object, one that through proper interpretation can lead to the further spaces through doors of learning. Similar to a chosen path into a home, our choice of revealing the hidden realm of meaning within a kanji holds much cultural meaning. The JSL teacher can find a suitable context from which to breach some of these values and issues within the intertext of the character for 'house', as well as related symbols that force us to reconsider and possibly readjust our Western concept of these terms.



roof

boar or pig

For those accustomed to surroundings that resemble a pigsty, this could be a particularly easy kanji to remember. Etymologically, the combination of these two symbols is thought to derive from the supposed ancient practice of keeping pigs in house (Henshall, 1988, p. 24). Ironically, it now also means a (house of) a specialist. 'IE' then, refers to a house or even one's own house, though it is treated as a more formal and generic form of the concept. For expressing more personal or private connotations of the term, along the lines of 'home', the Japanese use 'UCHI', an interesting choice given the characters basic meaning of 'inside'.



person

dwelling

The action of entering takes one inside, to an interior as revealed by the character that is open to the outside and not boxed in. The Japanese home is suitably represented by a character that appears quite simple, while revealing

complex cultural traits that teach the learner a great deal about a private space in a distant land. Additional readings of related characters provide more intermingling of shared concepts. The more formal "dwelling, address or residence" is often expressed by sumu (in combination with other characters).

person

住

master

The right-hand radical originally represented a stylized lamp burning oil () but became a symbol for master of the house, who issued the command that the lamp be lit. The house where one lives, then, is where they are master or "where a person is master of the lamp" (Henshall, 1988, p. 93). The doubling of kanji can occur within the target language, the descriptive language of the student, or a fascinating mixture of the two. It is also of true cultural value to note that the design of the Japanese home allows for various forms of entry, just the number and difficulty of radicals comprising a kanji initially limits the beginners' forays into the intertext. Imagine, if you will, a visitor new to Japan who was oblivious to the many customs involved with entering the home. The perceived meaning of the kanji leads to an instructive lesson on the various

different degrees to which Japanese domestic space may be penetrated.

First of all there is a porch, which may be entered with very little ceremony by anyone who cares to call at the door. It is here that bills will be paid, messages left, and other minor business negotiated. The only ritual to be observed by those who enter is to call out a greeting, and in the country the outer door may be opened without even knocking or pressing a bell. This is unwrapping the outermost layer of domestic space, but the level of communication is fairly distant.

(Hendry, 1993, p.99)

As dwellers of a domestic space, humans assume certain commonalities in the home among cultures, yet after more comparison the customs to be learned can be very insightful. During my first home stay in Japan, I seemed to take some time getting used to the sliding of the entrance door to the front hallway with no warning. In some ways I was always more than a little surprised by deliveries and the call from just inside before the visitor departed. Valuing the signs of a different culture also entails valuing the signs of that unpredictable setting. A final character related to private and domestic spatiality is TAKU, 'house' or 'home'.



roof

rooted plant

This lower radical is a depiction of a plant which has taken root, indicated by the growing head and roots (). Some scholars take roof and rooted plant to act ideographically in expressing 'the building in which one takes root or settles' (Henshall, 1988, p. 293). While it can refer to one's home, it has more formal connotations, and in a society as custom-bound as Japan, the polite form of any concept is utilized a great deal. In fact, it is very useful to consider each of these series of related characters on their own, placed into a context where they might best be used in communicating to students directly on Japanese language and culture. It intrigues me, for example, that fairly formal or official visits to the Japanese home now often take place in a western room with tables and chairs. The language used, most likely semi-formal at the very least, and the setting as well, indicate a meeting of the personal world of the home with the outside - a partial penetration of the domestic space. There is also a great deal of symbolism in the popularity of a western setting for the hosting of outsiders visiting a Japanese home. So many possibilities for cultural discussion in the classroom. There are additional characters that express concepts such as residence, household and family that are closely linked to those revealed in this stroke. The opportunity for doubling and intercultural comparison of meaning that ties to a

perception of space on both sides of the Pacific is indeed full of instructional depth. The kanji provide the landscape for us to move the Eastern perception of space closer to where we dwell.

My as yet few years of teaching kanji have influenced my conviction that yes, it is necessary to present the Chinese-Japanese characters as a writing system, "a system with the rules and patterns that one expects and usually finds in constructs fashioned by the human mind over time" (Rogers, 1991, p.446). In my pursuit of kanji knowledge in the JSL classroom it is precisely this human element that I prefer to stress with students. The moment of appreciation comes closer to hand (and writing instrument) when the components of kanji take on a human face, infused with the cultural perception of its originators, but also those who use the characters today.

The Sinographic lexicon, for example, does not consist of thousands of structurally unrelated kanji, each to be learned without regard to any other. Rather, kanji are constructed of discrete components, typically two or three to a character, from a finite stock of components, of which there exist a relative handful. Tradition decrees 214 of these, but the more commonly used elements probably amount to less than two-thirds that number.

(Rogers, 1991, p.446)

Even the most tentative JSL novice, determined to avoid considering numbers of kanji to be learned, can take solace in such an optimistic passage. The fact that the semantic

classifiers of the kanji (the radicals or components) are essentially the keys to the intertext implies to me that once a learner begins their appreciation of how they are structurally related, the real motivation to learn more characters has the chance to take hold. The development and consideration of the interstice, where Barthes wished to dwell and pose such questions as "How did you satisfy that vital need of communication?" (Barthes, 1982, p.9), will become the kanji learner's expanding field of confidence. In my understanding of re-writing the kanji, dwelling in the interstice of a sign or character is an attempt to initiate a fuller understanding of the symbols that humans have constructed for communication. Perhaps the development of an interstice can help students of very different written languages, as represented by English and Japanese, deal with the ambiguities and unexpected cultural habits they will encounter in its use. "How beneficial it would be, conversely, to gain a version of the irreducible differences which a very remote language can, by glimmerings, suggest to us". (Barthes, 1975, p.6). My perception of these glimmerings in the space of the JSL classroom where so many activities attempt to inject the basic structures of language with an insight into culture, is that the kanji provide the opportunity to single out words that allow the student to speak to both languages of instruction. By taking the kanji out of their regular context the student is able to add some personal flavour so that "their weight

within his own writing is preserved, instead of being surrendered to the system of meaning constructed by others..."(Klinkowitz, 1988, p.51). This disassembly of the character is at once mechanical and personal and may allow the learner to attach their own significance to the symbol's meaning before or after encountering it within the context of a page of Japanese writing. Certainly, other JSL methods are needed to tackle the literal meaning of a passage, but in undoing a kanji the learner can become the self-provider of a valid introduction or conclusion to the scope of a character's meaning, while touching upon fundamental intercultural concepts. The dwelling, and parts of it as represented by radicals such as "roof" () appear throughout the interconnected writing system known as kanji - why not attach these to our own understanding of these notions and redistribute them among newly learned Japanese customs and an appreciation for writing Chinese- Japanese characters? If inserting mystery and enigma into the personality of a kanji opens up the intertext so that we might dwell in an interstice on the Pacific, then the very shifting plates on which intercultural communication rests may become far less perilous than those forces involved in physical tectonics.

Linguistic tectonics are one of the central challenges in the attempt to construct bridges to cultures across the Pacific and discover themes for learning a new script like kanji. This stroke has followed a perspective of

legitimizing a new appeal to the senses in the JSL classroom by defining the kanji as bridges to a space on the Pacific closer to the target culture. The interstice represents the space we choose to occupy situated between the target culture and our own, helped by the instructive power of the kanji's intertext. My intention has been to emphasize the need for self-learning and creating a desire for a nondefinitive exploration of the characters. Barthes, indeed, has written on the subject of playing with language and how "the meaning will be precarious, revocable, reversible, the discourse incomplete..." (Barthes, 1975, p.4). On a basic level the discourse is never ending for the learner of a second language, and when we intermingle English and Japanese within the intertext, we have the cohabitation of languages working side by side. This I sense in Barthes 'precarious discourse' - an opportunity to define the kanji as instruments of meaning that in their musicality and playfulness allow for a redistribution of cultural concepts that divide English and Japanese. For Barthes "such redistribution is always achieved by cutting. Two edges are created..." (Barthes, 1975, p.6). The cutting or splicing of kanji and the subsequent interpretation of the intertext's meaning by the student may serve as banks of understanding on which to build bridges across the Pacific. In readjusting our perspective through the doubling of kanji, the JSL classroom adds a method of teaching and learning which I feel advances our concept of culture and

language, and complements current approaches in the classroom by raising central aspects of the goals and objectives now sought.

Finally, consider the humanizing notion of the kanji as cultural constructs. In our attempt to remain open to a process of self-learning and the role of intercultural contact, I see a readjustment of our perspectives so that evaluating the kanji in English takes on legitimacy, particularly when the student is developing an appreciation for their composition. "Culture then recurs as an edge: in no matter what form" (Barthes, 1975, p.7). Our perception of culture and language learning would benefit from a view that in my opinion takes advantages of a tool that allows us to shed light on spaces of learning. On both shores of the Pacific we have occupied a relatively stable home, but only by venturing into the shifting waters where cultures meet will we begin to bring some new meaning into the kanji instruction of the JSL classroom.

earth

場

sun

light rays

BA: place or "Place where the sun shines down on the ground" (Henshall, 1988, p.40). Contrast the above

character with a symbol that is very similar, but for the exchange of 'earth' for 'water'.

water



sun

light rays

YU: hot water. The presence of water significantly changes the meaning of the above character, and in future we will need to consider more carefully the influence of such waters as the Pacific on the languages we hope to successfully study. When our outlook begins to take in the reflections of wavelight on an intercultural, shifting Pacific, I feel we will move towards a greater understanding of the pedagogical strengths of the kanji, with self-learning an important force in moving away from the space where we simply 'teach' the characters.

Meditation: The Satori of Kanji

The temptation to compare the 'inscrutable' Eastern mind with its Western counterpart has never really entered my plans for this writing on the place of the Chinese-Japanese characters in the language classroom. I suspect that the measurement of language and related semiotics is

not a skill most users of symbols have time for. The site of my explanation, however, has brought me into a usage of terms that I hope will teach us to work in difference and learn from the advantages of dwelling in an intercultural space. My emphasis has been on texture and play, strongly influenced by the theory as reflexivity Roland Barthes greatly admired in the writing of Julia Kristeva. Barthes has been my guide through a series of related writings that have transformed my initial suspicion that the kanji held in them a great teaching and learning potential. The 'reflexivity' I would hope to bring to the JSL classroom is part of a process whereby the instructor introduces a skill of writing and description that includes "the reversed gaze of language upon itself" (Barthes, 1989, p.148). Such is the nature of this reflexivity that it lends itself well to a cultural interaction where the characters of Japanese begin a learning process for the JSL learner that also relies on English. Inserting imagination and play into these symbols and encouraging a discourse of inter-societal communication is precisely what it seems this "script from hell" (Rogers, 1991, p.446) needs in order that it might lend its fascinating constructs to a new context for the North American student. Much of the inspiration for my writing comes from learners' reactions of fear in the face of a Japanese text that includes kanji, and my belief that it is possible to develop an appreciation for their compositioning that leads to a valuable skill in learning

Japanese. The satori of kanji will be part of a discourse that proposes we begin to see language differently and bear in mind how "society is a means of contact and of comprehension" (Kristeva in Barthes, 1978, p.449). My intent is to present this final stage of writing as a meditation which signifies the practice of considering one's efforts once the calligrapher's brush has lifted from the paper. The calligrapher remains in a meditative posture - as I will do by continuing my narrative - while living in the character that has been produced. This act involves some meditation and a consideration of the factors that have most influenced the writing - its shape, texture and meaning. All of these elements play a role in constituting my perception of the satori of kanji.

In **Empire of Signs** Roland Barthes envisaged Japan as an immense reservoir of empty signs all inspiring a meditation on semantics (Trinh, 1991, p.210). In my reading of Barthes, I constantly find myself able to fill these signs he deconstructs (packages, bows of respect, haiku, cuisine) with the very meaning the author seems to want to provoke from the reader: a personalized journey through a language of exploration, amusement and displacement (Barthes, 1978, p.168). The potential for opening any sign and exposing its pedagogical value has been exemplified for me by many of the passages in **Empire of Signs** and **The Pleasure of the Text**. The signal to my thinking on the composition and classroom presentation of the kanji is that instructors have much to

share by showing the production of the product to the class. Barthes provides examples of the Japanese chef preparing food in front of the customer and describes how this activity is literally graphic and I think of the writing of a Chinese-Japanese character. The product is arranged, yet need not be pre-arranged to the extent where we have no stake in the play of its strokes as we are learning it. This French semiologist has captured my imagination by leading me to writers such as Julia Kristeva and her subversion of authority (Barthes, 1986, p.168). In the JSL classroom there is not only the authority of the teacher's knowledge dominating the learning landscape, but the dictated, culture-bound rules of the stroke that I feel inhibit fruitful play with the body of the characters held up for study. The dictatorial linearity of the stroke order represents for me a kind of monologic thinking that attempts to compartmentalize and limit the etymological potential of the kanji.

Breaking free of a pre-determined field of instruction and learning to interpret the kanji through English eyes does not mean that the JSL classroom will lose some of its focus on the target culture, but will legitimize a rendering of new symbols by creating conversations and narrative. The real challenge is to insert Barthes' reflexivity into our instruction, and bring to our teaching the kind of enthusiasm we see in his walks throughout *Empire of Signs*. Haiku for him represents a "repetition without origin, a

memory without person, a language without moorings" (Barthes, 1970, p.79). The kanji surround the visitor to Japan, from street to subway they are like countless stories waiting to be interpreted by the stroke, the event.

What I am saying here about the haiku I might also say about everything which **happens** when one travels in the country I am calling Japan. For there, in the street, in a bar, in a shop, in a train, something always **happens**. This something - which is etymologically an adventure - is of an infinitesimal order: it is an incongruity of clothing, an anachronism of culture, a freedom of behavior, an illogicality of itinerary, etc. To count up these events would be a Sisyphean enterprise, for they glisten only at the moment when one **reads** them.

(Barthes, 1970, p.79)

My focus as a teacher of Japanese is not only of the adventure through culture an appreciation of etymology can provide, but that the personalized reading of the strokes of a kanji is an event that can continue to glisten after our initial contact with the character. The layering of meaning and the re-compositioning of the symbol are the choices left to the student encouraged to explore the workings of the kanji. Echoing the sentiments of Ted Aoki, there is a danger in temporal thinking that ignores works that are not linear. 'Trapped' in the instrumental language of curriculum, we can explore ways of breaking free from linearity by modelling a personalized uncovering and constituting of meaning in the intertext of Chinese-Japanese characters.

As I contemplate the purpose of opening the kanji to a new kind of complexity involving an intertextual discourse between Pacific languages, the writing of the strokes stands out as an attempt to at once encourage confidence and appreciation of these symbols in my students. If the empty signs that produced a meditative musing on semantics in Barthes have helped me to explore where I dwell between Japanese and English, I would hope my students will also one day engage in meditation and consider how working with a new language gives them an inspired sense of learning and a re-consideration how pencil is put to paper via the interaction of symbols, both cultural and intercultural.

Remembering the clucks of disapproval my handwriting in my native language produced in grade school teachers, I was certain when I began studying Japanese that any kanji I wrote would be doomed to an equivalent grotesqueness, but that gloomy expectation, over time, has proven false. I have also noticed, moreover, that my hand in English seems to have improved over the years, a development I attribute to the discipline and aesthetic sense that writing, writing, and rewriting kanji instills in the hand and, perhaps, the psyche as well.

(Rogers, 1991, p.450)

The exciting notion for me, as traditionally minded and respectful of admirable handwriting though I am, is the thought that a developing sense for the compositional aesthetics of kanji and a re-writing of its meaning may in fact be the new chapter in the philosophy of language Fenollosa felt hinged on the poetical and metaphorical qualities of the Chinese character (1991, p.21). In fact

Barthes adds further weight to the idea of the re-constituted, retrospective adventure of the writing that attempts to link East and West. He uses satori as an awakening to the fact - apprehension of the thing as event and not as substance, attaining to the anterior shore of language. The other shore is only too well known in the JSL setting, but I feel we need to intermingle our notion of description "a Western genre... its spiritual equivalent in contemplation..." and bring into our learning setting more of a meditative illumination of the adventure involved in re-discovering language. If contemplation following the strokes is not a final commentary, it is hopefully a learning experience that is remembered when we encounter the character again, or perhaps often as we re-trace the very strokes that constitute the event as re-writing. Meditation, illumination, interstice, intertext - all part of the musicality of the kanji, and part of the productivity that moves the learner along a path of continuing language appreciation.

Early in **Empire of Signs** satori is described as a seism which causes knowledge (Barthes, 1970, p.4), and by creating an emptiness of language, I take this to be an undoing of our own which can serve to help us perceive the difference in a new language. To come to know the inconsistencies and limits of our own language by inscribing the characters of a Japanese with a new interpretation will require more of the learner than contemplation. I have introduced the intertext

as the body of a kanji that will yield valuable images as its components break down for our personal interpretation. As we begin to appreciate the system of components and how they represent a very human attempt at communication, there occurs for me a transfer into a dwelling space closer to the culture of Japan, or for that matter any locale where the characters of Chinese origin are used and I might add, respected. This interstice is a space which has yet to be located or occupied because in my opinion the journey through a new and distant language is very individual. Intertextuality and the doubling of both the meaning of kanji and the Japanese-English contact produce a discourse of choice. The interstice can only be defined by a writer who inscribes and begins a meditation that means we select an item, cast a light on various sides of the selected object. It may lack specific edges (Barthes, 1970, p.26) but in reaching a theme we are dwelling in the interstice - a kind of meditation. In writing and re-writing the characters I feel we are taking part in an action representative of thought as well as productive of thought. The view from the interstice, and of the interstice, is fundamental to a new discourse on the Pacific.

...this discourse transforms us, displaces us,
gives us words, meanings, sentences which
permit us to work and to release in ourselves
the creative movement itself: permutation.

(Barthes, 1986, p.170)

Displacement in the language classroom provokes thought, and for students of Japanese kanji are the medium whereby they

can truly take a step closer to the target culture. My hope as an instructor is to occasionally assist my students in removing their imaginations from the classroom, it is possible to afford learners the time to experiment with intercultural discourse. Given words, meanings and sentences we are provided with the food for thought that leads to composition or narrative, building to the 'creative movement' where we see our language interacting with the one we are attempting to learn. I see this as a form of meditation in the JSL classroom, perhaps a silence to conclude an activity - a productive sign that quietly speaks of a self-selected student production. Working with a graphic object entails an inscribing that can apply to almost any aspect of culture. The labour of our thought forms "a product whose meaning is not final but progressive..." (Barthes, 1970, p.26). As Barthes describes the play of the graphic artist or chef with the tools of their trade, I envision a space in the JSL curriculum where it is the student who owing to the 'permutation' of the interstitial moment is able to play, write and produce.

Both the mathematical view of permutation (any one of a total number of groupings, or subsets, into which a group, or set, of elements can be arranged) or its reading as any alteration, hold a metaphorical lesson for the kanji as graphic units with an ability to teach to us something of ourselves and the new. Whereas the haiku, through its concise message of symbol, metaphor, morality, image and

sentiment seems to offer the West certain rights its own literature denies it (Barthes, 1970, p.70), I see within the kanji an opportunity to be personal and exploratory, operating within what the meaning of the character offers, but not limited to one interpretation of its etymology and significance.

You are entitled, says the haiku, to be trivial, short, ordinary; enclose what you see, what you feel, in a slender horizon of words, and you will be interesting; you yourself (and starting from yourself) are entitled to establish your own notability; your sentence, whatever it may be, will enunciate a moral, will liberate a symbol, you will be profound....

(Barthes, 1982, p.70)

Once more I sense a call to a space that holds much for the classroom owing to its ability to speak to our desire to learn about how language structures our lives and how communication operates in bringing cultures together. This embodied language of life is illustrated by writing systems such as kanji, a permutation of complex groupings and subsets that are pre-arranged, yet leave themselves open to an altering that is the productivity we seek in our classrooms.

Do I simply portray the satori of kanji as an "awakening to the fact" of the symbol as substance and event? I suspect any effort to translate satori into English loses an element of the true essence of this Zen term, as transformation of a word is slippery, elusive process. Illumination, revelation, intuition - all

ambiguous words for the language classroom. To my mind revealing the intertext of the character which represents the word somehow legitimatizes my attempt to describe something of the nature of its meaning.

heart

悟

}

I/me

mouth

Satoru, the verb form of satori or enlightenment, has come to symbolize "perceive or discern". By considering each of the components of the character, we find a combination that may have had connotations of balance and proper proportion before expressing enlightenment. Could it have been that enlightenment in the heart, as a way of seeing things in proper proportion, led to perception and discernment? (Henshall, 1988, p.396). The right hand radical is also a component of language, a fitting reminder to the essential purpose in my writing of the strokes. My contemplation here may be considered a form of meditation on one character or a look back at all of the characters inscribed throughout the strokes. Within the context of the stroke and attempting to learn these characters, writing like satori is an 'awakening to the fact' that any inspired writer can turn the kanji into a contemplation, meditation, or illumination of the symbol as an event. As the character 'satoru' speaks to us,

we can speak with our own hearts and allow the thoughts and words to enlighten the journey into a new language.

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