

Chinese Characters — A World View

Translating, Introducing and Inviting to Shirakawa Shizuka's Kanji Dictionary
'Explanation of Common Use Kanji' and Shirakawa Kanji Science
An Appreciation of the Historical Method in Oriental Studies

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「漢字—そこに示された世界観」

—白川文字学へのいざない、「常用字解」の翻訳と紹介を通じて—
東方学における歴史的方法論を評す

要旨

拙論は、白川文字学を歴史的、学問史的に位置づけることを主に目指すものであるが、それは筆者の『常用字解』（白川静）の英訳の成果でもある。

冒頭に、19世紀スコットランド生まれの碩学であり、四書五経等の英訳者でもある James Legge（中国名・理雅各、1815-97）の「歴史的かつ字形学的な漢字字書が望まれる」という引用を提示し、白川文字学が初めてこれに応えたものであることを指摘しておいた。そして筆者の翻訳経験に基づいて従来の諸用語の批判的検討を行いながら、いくつかの新しい専門用語を紹介したあと、さらに、西洋言語学派の漢字誤解の代表例、漢字を表音文字とするアプローチなどの先入観や偏見にふれ、白川文字学がそれらとは対照をなすことを明らかにしようとした。そして、それを通じて従来の偏った見方を修正し、欧米等の学者の漢字理解に資し、かれらの悩みの解決に資するものとしようとした。特に、筆者は、西洋言語学には「文字学」という概念がないため、「文字学」と「語源学」の意味を白川静の代表作に沿ってそれぞれ定義する。また、論文全体を通じて漢字と儒教、仏教の歴史的関係について考慮した。

加えて拙論は、東アジアの共通文化である祖先礼拝が漢字の基底にあることを明らかにする。西洋ではローマ古代の「祖先供養」の文化が弱まり、キリスト教の祖先礼拝への態度も宗派によって異なる。そこで、宗教改革時のルター、いわゆるプロテスタントやイエズス会などの思想を、中国古代とその古典、儒教と比較し、祖先礼拝における漢字の具体的役割を紹介する。イエズス会の中には祖先礼拝に対して寛容な態度もあり、東アジア学にさまざまな貢献もあったが、結局は漢字と祖先礼拝についての不十分な理解が彼らの失敗を招き、今日まで「西洋」と「東洋」の相互対話を難しくしている点も、筆者は指摘したい。

I. Introduction

It is my objective here to introduce students of Kanji (Chinese Characters) to some observations and ideas of immediate interest in the work of Professor emeritus Shirakawa Shizuka (1910-

2006). Some — probably surprising — comparisons of the society and thought that shows in Kanji with world history shall complement this attempt. Shirakawa has convincingly solved what students of these intricate characters might term the riddle of cracking the Chinese puzzles. With him, the irresponsible guessing ‘method’ in character explanation has come to an end, answering the call of James Legge (1815–97) from 140 years ago:

“A great desideratum in the study of the Classics of China is a really good dictionary. ... the Chinese themselves have no dictionary which gives a satisfactory historical analysis of the characters of the language and traces from the primary meaning of each term its various subsequent applications. When a dictionary shall have been made on true principles by some one who understands the origin of the characters, and has pursued the history of every one through the various forms which it has assumed, the interpretation of the Classics will be greatly helped.” (The Chinese Classics, Vol. 3, Shoo King, Preface viii, 1865)

In contrast to Legge and the last two thousand years, in terms of scientific understanding of Chinese characters, we live in a time when they can be regarded as explainable for the first time in history. Notwithstanding that Shirakawa has accomplished some of his important basic achievements already about fifty years ago, it also is a fact that outside of Japan they have not yet found the appreciation they deserve, as circumstances had not been favourable enough to detect the Nobel prize worthiness of his work. Learners who want to learn the Japanese or Chinese language and characters will here have the real key to their task. Easier it will not get. In my estimation learners will save at least three years of the usual period necessary for learning when using this dictionary. The intelligent learner can now steer clear of wasting his or her time with wrong explanations of Kanji.

Prospective Kanji learners often find themselves in the problematic situation that they have no (good) teacher for what they want to learn. My translation of Shirakawa’s dictionary, the *Explanation of Common Use Kanji* (Japanese original Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2003), itself the result and quintessence of long research, enables the first ever systematic and thorough understanding of Kanji in a Western language. It realizes a plan formed by a considerable number of philosophers and scientists for hundreds of years that had not yet been realized. The excavations of the Zhōu royal graves and their findings in 2004, for example, once more have illustrated the thoroughness of Shirakawa’s research. More than 3300 years after their genesis, the way to a thorough understanding of Kanji is and will forever be through the work of Dr. Shirakawa. This character dictionary finally making Kanji intelligible therefore also is ideal for self-study. When I began my studies, I wished I had such a guide that does not force to follow mechanical, inhuman, or authoritarian learning methods, which do not rely on natural understanding. Finally, with this

dictionary, the user has the definite key to memorizing Kanji, a standard work indispensable for future Kanji learning.

The motivation enabling such studies and this translation, which would probably rather have been the duty of a veteran, is the result of severe doubts during my studies of history, Japanese, East Asian culture, and, last but not least, philosophy, which often is characterized as the science of seeing, thinking and judging for oneself critically. I observed and could not help thinking that the approaches to languages of philosophers of language, linguists (e.g. Saussurians), and the like, rather impede an understanding than clarify the nature of Chinese writing. I was searching for a perennial method to understand the history of Japanese and East Asian thought and its by-product, philosophy.

During the first visit of an official Japanese delegation to Europe in 1862, three delegates visited the etymologist Jacob Grimm (1785-1863), the famous compiler and author of the standard etymological dictionary of the German language at his home. In our days, however, no foreign delegation visiting Japan had taken the chance to pay a visit to Dr. Shirakawa, so I gave it a try and was welcomed. In 2003, during my second visit, he showed me the unpublished Japanese manuscript of his latest dictionary, the 常用字解 'Jôyô Jikai: Explanation of Common Use Kanji.' It then came to my mind that it would serve the task of a first correct introduction into the world of Kanji, giving answers to my and other scholar's questions. Therefore, I became the initiator and translator of this English version.

After years of preparative studies and a translation process of about three years, it seems that this is the only translation of one of Shirakawa's major works in English with his consent. Students and teachers who wanted to understand the basics of Kanji thoroughly and methodically so far were driven to despair by near random methods ignoring the facts. I am confident that students who want to understand and learn Chinese characters will find a way to accomplish their original aim through this translation.

The basis of these dictionary explanations is Shirakawa's copy of the original material for more than sixty years on twenty thousand pages. Any researcher who considers himself apt to try an equal critique of its soberly grounded explanations will have to show off comparable fieldwork. This, however, has not happened for the last fifty years, a period of missing experience not possibly ever able to be made up. Japanologists and Sinologists everywhere therefore will welcome this work, as only through Shirakawa's originally Japanese work the correct explanation of the Chinese Characters can be known.

One reason for the lacking appreciation of Shirakawa's work is rooted in the fact that nowadays the Japanese as well as a lot of 'Western' scientists, naturally, for the greater part atheists, often mistakenly decide to have no interest at all in the ways of religious thinking whatsoever and therefore also leave the human common basis of all religion out of sight.

To subjectively and fragmentarily mention only a few, among 'Western' classics that can give insight into primitive religion also applicable to Kanji are aspects of the basic philosophical research of David Hume (1711-1776) on polytheism, Auguste François-Xavier Comte's (1798-1857) 'law of three stages,' and Sir James George Frazer's (1854-1941) pioneering work — it already had found the appreciation of young scholar Shirakawa — being a paragon of what corresponds to Comte's first 'stage' of animism, and the like. These, and a lot others, have not yet been sufficiently and practically applied to unsolved problems in intercultural comparative studies with Kanji. Shirakawa's research opens the way for such comparative research. Sometimes knowledge of the ways of thinking of the ancients and the Jewish-Christian world even of e.g. the Old Testament may also help rational fantasy a little for thinking into the world of the Kanji system. In this way, the understanding of superstitious elements of the poly- or pantheistic world of Kanji can also be prepared by knowing about monotheist superstition.

After a while, readers who want to learn Kanji and have come to put their trust into the explanations will discard views based on the customs of the usage of phonetic writing, gradually become more and more convinced by the inherent rationality and logic of the underlying system and will notice to have found a most intelligent tool for an understanding of archaic or ancient Chinese culture in their very hands, the only possible basis for a not blindly automated learning of Kanji. Initial *trust*, however, a real key notion in the Eastern teachings of Buddha and Confucius, in these explanations will prove helpful for the smooth development of your study.

One of the misunderstandings cleared away by Shirakawa is the false belief that Chinese characters were developed from the 'Yi Jīng: Book of Change' (for this check 'Moji Kōwa I: Lectures on Characters I,' Chap. 'Moji Izen: Before Writing,' Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2002). This, of course, is not meant to in any way diminish the meaning of the superb classic. Worse, with Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843), some Japanese Shintoists even have proposed the absurd theory of 'Jindai Moji: Characters from the Age of the Gods' of Japan as basis for the hexagrams of the 'Classic of Change' and then also of the Chinese characters. It is very humorous though that one could easily gather dozens of volumes of rather dubious citations from modern, recent, and present Sinologists and Japanologists of rank and from textbooks that give mistaken information

on Kanji. However, I refrain from my favourite pastime here. Believing the own trained eyes is the only medicine to free oneself from this misinformation. There is no ‘Kanji science’ yet in the ‘Western’ realm taking pride in its allegedly high scientific standards, and, when trying to find out something about Kanji, one too often finds opinions instead of thorough, historically grounded knowledge. Correct basic notions and teaching about this most basic and daily tool of East Asian studies do not yet exist.

In learning about the culture of East Asia, i.e. China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan, the Chinese characters are the common foundation of their cultures respectively, and learning them should come first for everybody who wants to build his knowledge on fact and not on hearsay.

It may at first seem nonsensical, but one should be aware that, although fast finding of characters certainly is valuable for learners, it can lead to become overly dependant on the dictionary. Finally, in such cases, it may even lead to the opposite of the intention, as the basis of Kanji remains obscure.

Recognition of the difference of 語源 ‘sound etymology’ and 文字学 ‘kanji science’ (which, therefore, should not be called etymology), the teaching on the relationship of character shape and meaning should be regarded as a basic knowledge for students of Japanese. There are dictionaries for the various traditions. In his most voluminous dictionary, the masterpiece ‘Fathoming the Characters’ (1996), Shirakawa provides additional information on the sound-‘etymology’ branch of Chinese characters, which, however, can only be successful on the basis of his correct science of character form and meaning, as we will see that only through understanding the shape one can precede to a meaningful investigation of its sound in the next step. In ‘Jikun: Japanese Kanji Readings’ (1987), he gives a ‘sound etymology’ of Japanese.

II. On Transcription, Matters of Form, and Terminology

Vocabulary in the original has the form of a Japanese-Japanese definition and is given in adequate translation.

Few Japanologists seem to have read the proclamation of the Japanese prime minister from 9 December 1954, in which capitalization of nouns in alphabetical transcription of Japanese is sanctioned. After all, it still is nothing less than the *official* Japanese transliteration system. Accordingly, capitalization is applied in this translation to clearly mark nouns for learners who often do not know which word is a noun, and which is not. Thus, to counter the weakness of modern English spelling which does not clearly mark nouns, I come back to the traditional

English capital spelling of nouns as usual some hundred years ago.

In transcription, the *Kunreishiki* or *Kunrei system* (i.e. system of Kun-reading rules) is applied with its both tables giving preference to the second table which includes elements taken in from the Hebon system (しや : sha し : shi, しゆ : shu, しよ : sho, つ : tsu, ちゃ : cha, ち : chi, ちゆ : chu, ちょ : cho, ふ : fu じゃ : ja, じ : ji, じゆ : ju, じよ : jo) and the Nippon system (づ : du, を : wo).

It has to be noted that Shirakawa gives the reading of bronze inscriptions and citation from classical dictionaries or the like in *historical kana* transliteration, which differs from the *present kana* reading. In the translation, *historical kana* readings have been altered and rendered according to the present widespread (Kunrei) system. Sometimes both transliterations are given.

The ^ mark indicates a long vowel according to the *Kunrei* transcription system, not the ˉ mark typical for (an)other system(s). The terms ‘archaic’ and ‘ancient’ are not used with disparate meanings as can sometimes be observed in phonology.

The terms ‘on-sound’ and ‘on-sound marker’ can be substituted for ‘on-reading’ and ‘on-reading marker.’ The plural of Japanese ‘kami: god’ also is ‘kami.’ It generally is translated with ‘god(s),’ ‘deity,’ or ‘deities.’ As polytheistic deities are meant, small capitals are used for ‘god(s).’ Although an early ‘abstract’ god shows in the tortoise plastron writings, usually these gods are, albeit far, ancestors.

Although they often do, the ‘Examples of use’ not always give the compounds used most frequently but sometimes rather introduce to a selection of high-quality Japanese. Thus, a certain part of the vocabulary given by Shirakawa is a selection of compounds that would not appear in the average beginner’s dictionary.

Another special trait is worth mentioning here. Like in his previous character dictionaries, unusual for a character dictionary in our days, Shirakawa refrains from including one-character abbreviations indicating foreign country names in the headlines as well as in the explanations. I take this as a hint that his attitude towards this sometimes wholesale and openly discriminating or racist practice is critical, which also is supported by several references in his Collected Works to the old Chinese ‘(China or) Middle Blossom’ thought, i.e. the display of disdain for other peoples or nations by a name character with negative associations chosen for them in contrast to positive ones for the own people, culture or country. A reading of the character explanation 博 ‘haku: extensive’ with a *locus classicus* from the bronze inscriptions regarding the 獫狁 ‘Xiān Yūn, Ken’in’ tribe (Northern people, named with the animal-classifier) should give the student a taste of the actual use of such characters in historical context. Such naming attacks also have played and still play their notorious role in history and politics, and they aim at conscious and ‘subconscious’ mental derangement of those given such corrupted names. Needless to state,

nowadays everywhere where Chinese characters are used nobody would like such a general name for their country and doubtlessly would take fierce measures against it. *Scripsit et animas salvavit.*

The language of a dictionary necessarily is nearly stenographic; it requires terseness, brevity and a sense of classical purity. Its sentences are seldom poetic. Even less so is the telegraphic brevity of Classical Chinese that has influenced the Shirakawa style. Nevertheless, I did not feel the need to equally abbreviate sentences, to prefer a fragmentary translation style to one with grammatically correct complete sentences, or to copy the at times militarily short monosyllabic staccato of Classical Chinese with its repertoire of basic sounds remindful of early child's language. For the sake of lucidly introducing to and conveying the 'etymological' use of language of the original, Kanji elements and Kanji are included in the explanations. In order to not break the flow of reading too often, however, for the convenience of the reader, I have refrained from doing so in those rare cases where the result would have been too artificial if rendered in English. *To* I have generally used before a verb and for the central meanings given in the headlines in order to indicate the infinitive form.

Pinyin, i.e. the present Chinese readings for the corresponding characters used in China and also in the text itself are provided for names and titles in transcriptions or the like, when considered appropriate. This character dictionary may also serve as preparation for those who want to really understand and learn the abbreviated characters used in China, because their forms also have to be traced historically. The unabbreviated characters also are identical with the forms used in Taiwan without interruption. Therefore, thorough, now comfortable, learning of them has its beginner's standard textbook here, too. For an understanding of the abbreviated characters, one just has to add an understanding of the handful of mechanical abbreviation principles that were applied to their creation in addition to the fundament provided by my dictionary translation.

Terminology

Obviously, East Asia is in increasing dialogue with other parts of the world. This dialogue should not be built on a shaky foundation. One prerequisite for a solid foundation when writing and speaking about Kanji in a meta-language like English is the appropriate use of terminology, which serves as a marker for the real state of information and teaching of Chinese characters. In Confucius' ethical and political program, the *Rectification of Names* already is a main point. It means a philosophy aiming at reconsideration of everyday naming and of verbal violence that

forces certain ideas and concepts onto people's minds, so that it can not lead to disturbance of society in all branches of life. It can be helpful when thinking about terminology, as I will do here. Although no character explanation, even a correct one, can substitute for practical knowledge and writing practice, trustworthy terminology is required. There are a lot of problematic or false notions widely used in the field that can mislead learning, once they hoaxed the mind of the unwary, which is why I use terms that learners will find more convincing, like the following:

1. Tortoise Plastron, not Tortoise 'Shell'

Those thousands of tortoises used for divination seem to have died in vain. Few term coining scholars ever took the pain to verify which one of the two shells of these tortoises was used; a rough translation with 'shell' or 'carapace' misses the specific original meaning of the Kanji 甲 and gives an unclear view of the matter. The flat belly plate was used in what amounts to a percentage of more than 90 % of cases; the carapace, however, which is the hooked back shell, only in very rare exceptions. Why? It is too hard to be carved in. The character 甲 originally shows the flat 'plastron' with the vertical and horizontal notched natural 'lines' of the belly or breast shell. Good terminology is specific, not general.



Thus, I use the term 'plastron' as the correct term for the belly plate employed. The earlier misleading term had made its way into the dictionaries from where the next trustful student or specialist picks them up and often copies it thoughtlessly. The upper side of the tortoiseshell, the carapace, probably was only exceptionally used when one was busy and there was no tortoise at hand, thus one had to rely on other shells remaining from previously killed tortoises.

2. 'Etymology'?

The notion of etymology (literally: teaching of *etymos*, i.e. the true, the real) is taken from Greek, an Indo-European language and of course has to be modified for application to the Chinese characters. At least, the notion of (graphic) 'etymology' may enable a first if inaccurate provisional comparison of the lineage of Indo-European words with that of Chinese writing. With the apostrophized term 'etymology,' I refer to the science of the meaningful shapes of the Chinese characters that can only be researched on the basis of the individual original tortoise

plastron, bone, and bronze inscription forms. By that nature, 'historical', as used in the subtitle, may be thought of as a substitute term for 'etymological.' Obviously, originally, the Greek term 'etymology' confines the object thus termed to Indo-European languages and to the phonetic aspect. Therefore, in the strictest sense of the word, it is the wrong term in the context of Kanji form analysis and should not be used, or, at least, be apostrophised. As is done here for pedagogical purposes, it has to be handled with great caution.

3. 'Simplified' Character?

Among the at first look inconspicuous terms that, however, actually have the effect of deceiving students is the manipulating English term 'simplified characters.' Every student of Kanji will soon notice that proceeding step by step with Shirakawa's explanations, which give meaningful insight into the standard character forms (otherwise termed 'traditional') is the only access to rational Kanji learning and memorization. Abbreviated characters are not 'simple,' as they too often impede thorough understanding of meaning that had been more clearly given before by its fully pictographic predecessor. Thus, the naming 'regular characters' for the unabbreviated character forms and 'shortened characters' for the abbreviated characters seems to be more appropriate.

4. 'Radical' and the 'Six Scripts or Categories'

部首 'Bushu: section headers' are classifiers merely for the purpose of a useful dictionary arrangement. They are neither the 'roots' of Kanji development, nor does knowledge of them guarantee a perfect knowledge of Kanji. It may be better to think that it just happened that they occur as parts of Kanji in considerable number. Therefore, the translation and naming 'radical' for them is not merely unlucky, it is false, as the basic Latin *radix* means 'root.' The Bushu classification of the '*Shuō Wén Jiě Zì, Setsumon Kaiji: Explanation of the Simple and Analysis of the Complex Characters*' (2nd century AD) with its 540 classifiers made its appearance about more than 1400 years after the first Kanji and that of the *Kāng Xi* character dictionary with its 214 classifiers in 1716 about 2800 years *after* Kanji invention. The word 'radical' simply is misleading.

Why has 'Western' Kanji research not made it into the first ranks of research in the real sense of the word? Because of lacking appropriate learning facilities, non-natives usually have to set out at the starting point of abstract Kanji theories and classifications like the 'Six Scripts,' including, among others, a most cryptic class the meaning of which was controversial so far. Its final explanation by Shirakawa deserves broad appreciation. Nevertheless, this will not change the fact that it is nearly irrelevant for the basics of Kanji learning itself.

Although Shirakawa has given a new explanation of this class in his last publication, he also

has pointed out that the ‘Six Categories or Scripts’ of characters are a classification that can not be a real help when starting to learn Kanji. Kanji are idealized representations of social life with its rites, wars and what not; they are not visualizations of abstract principles as are easily expressible and possible to invent with words in alphabetical writing. Kanji classifiers do not function as generic notions; they are not logical operators in the abstract sense, and the other elements next to the classifiers basically do not have a mere abstract role of giving additional logical specifications of this operator. The whole of the interconnected parts of characters, with rare exceptions, always display scenes related to the Ancient Chinese society and is fully explainable only in connection to its ways.

The clear indication of a character’s on-reading by the on-sound marker is the great benefit of the picto-phonetic characters, however, Xù Shèn (30-124, or ca. 58- ca. 147), in his *Shuō Wén* not only gives a murky definition, I have not found that he even categorizes a single of the about 9300 characters he explains in his dictionary according to that categorization. Various present dictionaries accordingly give various categorizations up to today. This is a strong indicator that the thorough beginner does good to forget about them. The Kanji elements may be regarded one by one unsystematically, basically, however, the Kanji have their individual meanings due to combination not of isolated elements but the social actions represented by them and by parts always related to the whole of an action in the mind of a person taking part in that society. The logic of the construction of Chinese characters is the logic of the ways of its ancient society.

No legendary four-eyed Cāng Xié, nor Fú Xi as held in folklore belief, nor any group said: ‘Well, let’s sit down and make up characters according to six principles.’ They are later, abstract fabrications of those who had long lost the correct knowledge of Chinese characters. This is why they do not help. Learners may even know the category names for each individual character, but their knowledge of Kanji may be limited to a handful.

The once prevailing indiscriminating term ‘Ante Ch’in period’ or ‘pre-Chin period’ for the time before 221 BC also is to blame for having kept the heads dizzy and with it the knowledge on the proceeding period of vital importance for the Chinese mind, the development of writing and creation of characters during the Shāng and the Zhōu period. According to the *law of cause and effect*, ignorance of the basis of a culture results in serious misconceptions of the complete culture, society, its history and ways of thinking and of the actual meaning and development of characters.

Kanji lead directly into the heart of ancient Chinese life, society and thought, the basis of the later Confucian worldview — without ‘abstract’ theory. Oversimplified, generalized or fancy terminology, although it certainly often achieves its aim of showing off or intimidation should

make learners suspicious. Kanji are neither only 'ideographic,' 'pictographic' — albeit these terms are appropriate for their origin — nor are they just 'phonetic' or anything abstractly one-sided. Learners have to be warned to enter discussion on such abstract terminology. Counterexamples for every term can easily be found.

III. Getting Started in Studying Kanji: Clearing away hitherto Misunderstandings

Naturally, only the tip of the iceberg of biased opinions obstructing Kanji learning can be hinted at here. For the learner's benefit, some critical remarks are necessary, and deficiencies in earlier misrepresentation on Kanji have to be pointed out, as there are probably few scientific fields prone to more misinformation. Now, however, we live in an age where such misunderstandings weigh heavily. Here, too, a little learning is a dangerous thing. Occasionally, 'Westerners' are paid lip service and are made to believe that, anyway, Kanji 'will be abandoned soon' and are invited to feel comfortable in their ignorance. Sometimes, even East Asian intellectuals of unquestioned education openly 'speak out' for abandoning Kanji. Established facts, however, show the absurdity of this stance. Just to the contrary, the development of word processing has led to an easy handling of Chinese characters that nobody would not have dreamt of before compared with that of the past which for the present generation used to the comfort of personal computers is a kind of long forgotten toil. Therefore, it certainly is a gross illusion to expect an abolition of Kanji. To the contrary, they are effectively helped by technological development.

It is not exaggerated to state that situations of complete helplessness can wait for those without knowledge of Kanji in East Asia and that, often enough, understanding of Kanji was, is, and will be of vital importance.

The writing and pronunciation of e.g. a European language in methodical learning will forever start with the ABC. The mental sanity of anybody denying this would naturally be doubted. Reading and writing are key abilities of close interrelation. Accordingly, it is common sense that meaningful East Asian studies also have to start with basic Kanji reading and writing. The understanding of every single word is the most basic requirement for any correct translation and therefore also the basis of intercultural understanding.

Historically, Kanji from the standpoint of missionaries were often seen as an obstacle. Certainly, the long intolerant, anti-iconic and iconoclastic tradition in monotheist religions and sects plays not a small role here, too. Notwithstanding, with the first Latin, French, English, and German translations of the classics, and, especially since the nineteenth century, few exceptional personalities, like Legge and Richard Wilhelm (1873-1930), such a biased attitude was

overcome, and we were presented with standard translations of the important Chinese classics. In the dictionary translation, for quotations from the 'Book of Odes,' in the dictionary translation the quality of such translations as of Legge and Bernhard Karlgren (1889-1978), which will always remain superior achievements, usually were sufficient, and they were often taken over, or adapted. It is obvious that newly grounded aspects of explanations of prominent early classics like the 'Dào Dé Jīng: Classic of the Way and Virtue,' the 'Lún Yǔ: Relations and Aphorisms,' (vulgar 'Analects') the 'Shī Jīng: Book of Odes' and the like in the light of Shirakawa Kanji science will further their understanding and explanation. Therefore, even if one is not interested in the Confucian classics, one should bear in mind their important role for our knowledge of Chinese antiquity.

So far, even in East Asia and naturally so much more elsewhere, there are many legends on Kanji that hinder their rational study and understanding. Although some Kanji students might find it desirable to list up those who have misled Kanji study, there is not enough space available here to honour those names. It has to be left to the reader to judge the merits of Shirakawa's work and contrast it with the picture of present East Asian studies in detail. Accordingly, a part of this article rather has to be dedicated to point out some of the hitherto most widespread and grotesque misunderstandings, and erroneous methods.

As anywhere, there is the problem of where to start. One of the alternatives, for example, is between rather mechanical learning of a succession of sounds, through the above mentioned 'Bushu,' i.e. classifiers or of meaningful groups. It seems, however, the real problem is to get started at all. With the Shirakawa method, as it finally gives the correct explanations of all the characters, it actually does not matter that much which *Common Use Characters* to start with, because to proceed means to get aware of meaningful groups of related Kanji. Some of the hitherto Western and Eastern approaches, however, even convey the impression that explainers are convinced of having invented the characters themselves, as they ignore the reality of the historical way of Kanji development. That every character can be fully understood only by exactly knowing and understanding the development of its subsequent historical stages should not be belittled as 'curiosity.' As one integral part of the history of mankind, the Chinese characters have just one correct, factual, historical development, plain and to be discovered only inductively and empirically. Whatever irrational fantasy departing from the facts is a hindrance here.

IV. Kanji and Confucianism

In scientific writing on the history of thought, philosophy, and politics, reference to the

ideographical or structural aspects of Chinese characters may still be rare. Increasingly, however, it has become an accepted means of argumentation for clarifying (so far often rather *trying* to clarify) and backing of arguments. It can be observed more often in the case of 'Western' than of East Asian authors, who often handle these matters naturally and 'unconsciously.' There can be no doubt that, in a strict sense, an understanding of the history of thought is impossible without a correct 'character science.' In this sense, history of Chinese and East Asian thought as a science especially for the very early times is, for the first time, enabled on the basis of Shirakawa Kanji science.

Even if one is not interested in the Confucian classics, one should bear in mind their important role for our knowledge of Chinese antiquity. When dealing with an era, country, school of thought, or personage imbued with the spirit of the Confucian classics, the 'etymological' method can be most appropriate. What came to be called Confucian Classics are a primary source, basis as well as subject for concrete 'etymological' research. Shirakawa, in his many works, has concretely applied this method, e.g. to the 'Book of Odes' and the 'Lún Yǔ, Rongo: Relations and Aphorisms' of Confucius (551-479 BC), and other classics. Grammar, of course, is what makes the basic difference between written Chinese and Japanese. The common basic writing units of both languages, however, are the Chinese characters. Pictographs were the indispensable basis of written grammar, as, at a later point of development, they came to be used for their sound value, and various grammatical functions were assigned to them by mere social convention, ignoring their original meaning.

All this will or at least should have major implications for the study of the history of Eastern thought. It will influence the look at the history of Confucianism especially, in which we often find eminent Confucian thinkers pointing to the shape of characters in order to try to proof notions of their doctrine. Once and for all Shirakawa Kanji science puts an end to fantasy 'explanations' not grounded in the original materials. It ignores pure 'folk etymologies.'

This common sense approach appreciating the *law of cause and effect*, i.e. the simple fact that like with everything else that has a history one has to start at the beginning also with Kanji seems to have been too clear to be grasped by the champions of East Asian studies.

Of course, Confucianism has to be understood on the basis of what was before. Now, this 'before' is provided by the Kanji. Confucians were historians. They preserved and selected with appropriate reverence and balanced trust. Confucius treasured historical documents and his reverential attitude of preservation helps our understanding of Chinese antiquity today. Confucians deserve acknowledgement for and appreciation of their endeavor to preserve what has been overcome, even including what they could not understand fully, because their

conservative spirit and professional respect towards the ancient historical documents was a precondition for our thorough understanding today, more than 3000 years after the invention of the characters.

An exemplary citation shall suffice to demonstrate the importance of historical documentation for Confucius:

The master said “I am able to describe the ceremonies of the Xià dynasty, but the state Qǐ cannot sufficiently attest my words. They cannot do so because of the insufficiency of their records and wise men. If those were sufficient, I could adduce them in support of my words.” (Legge, ‘Analects’ III, 9; this saying is also found in: ‘The State of Equilibrium and Harmony’ (vulgar: ‘Doctrine of the Mean’), paragraph 28.

In this sense, the valuable role of Confucianism is that of transmission of knowledge on antiquity. If Confucian ethics distilled from the *Lún Yǔ* — which itself highlights mainly conclusions — were really inherent in Chinese characters, Confucianism would not have been necessary historically. Rather, would that have been the case, the shaping of Confucian ethical education would certainly not have been the toilsome task it actually had proved to be historically. Confucian ethics has to be cultivated separately in human mind and human action, as it cannot really be found in the characters. Nowadays, South Koreans prove that Confucian values also due to their abstractness can survive without or with only a few Kanji (for names) — due to its abstract potential maybe even better in abstract phonetic writing. Although that had been hard to imagine for Confucians, after the introduction of the new phonetic Korean writing *Hangul* in 1446, (Neo-)Confucian spirit still pervades in South Korea.

At the time of Confucius, a but faint notion of the real basis of Chinese characters was still alive. Confucius, however, also must have seen clearly that the (special) ethics he had in mind was not really ‘included’ in the characters. He protested deliberate changes of characters in order to not disturb society, but he had not the knowledge of their origin as now is accessible thanks to Shirakawa. It is easily perceivable that even Confucians often preferred the 大学 ‘Da Xue: Big Teaching’ (for adults) to the 小学 ‘Xiao Xue: Small Teaching’ (not to be confounded with its equally termed other meaning, the basic pedagogical writing of Zhū Xī (1130-1200) with this title), which was neglected. The meaning of ‘Small Teaching’ relevant here is that of the science of Chinese character formation, the founding philology of Kanji. It is the much later Confucians like Xū Shèn (Kyo Shin, on him see ‘The History of Kanji and the *Shuō Wén Jiě Zǐ*’ in the dictionary), about 500 years later who interpreted metaphysics and abstract morality into the characters where they never had been originally. Shirakawa also has pointed out that Zhū Xī’s

Neo-Confucian 訓詁学 ‘Kunkogaku: i.e. teaching on the understanding or interpretation of the characters, hermeneutics or exegetics’ often is false.

“The exegetics of the Zhū Xī school often is mistaken.” (‘Mojī kōwa IV: Lecture on Characters IV,’ Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005, p. 240)

Now Shirakawa, 1900 years after the completion of the standard dictionary *Shuō Wén* has given an all-comprehensive differing view on the characters in their beginning stage and has made it clear once and for all that it rather is the customs, practices and thought of the ancient society at a stage of history of course long before Confucianism, the five elements and Yin-Yang theory, which are at the basis of the Chinese characters.

Shirakawa alludes to his own method to a certain extent when he mentions the discovery of Troy by Heinrich Schliemann (1822-90), which became possible on the basis of Homer’s verses applied literally (*Collected Works*, vol. 4, p.11). Schliemann had visited Japan and China before his discoveries. There are obvious identical methodical traits in both epoch-making pioneering works. In Shirakawa’s case, it actually is the most decisive factual turn in the study of Chinese characters and its factual basis is the excavation of tortoise plastron materials first discovered in 1899.

In 1970, as reaction to a review of one of his books by quarreler Tōdō Akiyasu (1915-85), well-armed Shirakawa launched a crushing attack on the unbalanced methodology of the ‘Ongiha,’ i.e. those who methodically proceed by attributing the meaning of a Chinese character mainly to its on-sound or on-reading rather than its shape. In the same sense he took up those lightweight of methodology in the fifteenth and final volume of his early masterpiece being a complete correction of the ‘*Shuō Wén Jiě Zì, Setsumon Kaiji: Explanation of the Simple and Analysis of the Complex Characters*,’ the hitherto Bible of Chinese character study, the 說文新義 ‘Setsumon Shingī: *New Meaning of the ‘Shuō Wén, Setsumon’*’ in the chapter 古代文字學の方法と目的 ‘Method and Aim of the Science of Ancient Characters’ (p. 259(3303)- 281(3325)). Similarly, in a far historical parallel, the explanatory history of Egyptian hieroglyphs also knows a central misleading classic from the fifth century, which was corrected by Jean François Champollion’s (1790-1832) *Précis du Système hiéroglyphique*, 1823.

The *Shuō Wén, Setsumon* as hitherto ‘Bible’ provided a convenient and opportune metaphysics, which Shirakawa in his one by one overhaul of that sacrosanct work has substituted with Kanji reality.

To the learner’s benefit, he puts it clearly:

“The biggest part of the divination and bronze inscription characters are pictographs, the sounds of which can only be guessed by way of connection or association in their use as sound markers in picto-phonetic characters. However, there are a lot among the picto-phonetic characters, which only were created later, and it is conceivable that changes of on-sound have occurred meanwhile. Accordingly, the first form of a character cannot be explained by its on-sound, rather the meaning of a character has to be certified by its form first.” (‘Setsumon Shingi: *New Meaning of the ‘Shuō Wén, Setsumon’*,’ vol. 15, p. 3305; cf. also 字統 ‘Jitō: *System of Characters*,’ Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2004, p. 20-21).

‘Western’ audiences, when lectured on the history of East Asian thought sometimes are surprised when the subject of Chinese characters and their basic ideographic nature is brought up. The surprise vanishes when one realizes the basic synthesis and identity of thought or meaning and character form as it originally existed and acknowledges that with the signs and symbols a society creates and gives to the next generation, the basis of this society and its social thought shows. The individuals of a generation left and leave the characters behind for the next, which then again leaves them behind for the next generation. In the case of pictographic writing, thus, if these signs are not changed, the basic thought of the people of the society that have created them is inherently preserved with their meaningful forms as long as they are in use.

V. More Aberrations in Kanji Learning, Teaching, and Studies

Why, 150 years ago, Western Kanji studies were often on a higher level than today? The cultural unity of the East Asian ‘unabbreviated’ Kanji realm, then still including Vietnam, was more obvious. When studying this dictionary, everybody will realize that the original characters much clearer demonstrate their meaning than later deformations. Therefore, this dictionary will also prove to be of use to those who are interested in the East Asian history of thought of the Kanji realm, all the more if they want to face original texts with the historical Kanji. Another reason for the ruin or downfall of Kanji studies in the meantime is the broad influence of various academic cliques, in linguistics and other related fields, and the influence of so-called structuralism of De Saussure and others that has ruled the linguist world in the 20th century and in relation to which linguists and a lot of scholars have come to define their position. Although De Saussure, in the introduction to his main work, had excluded Chinese characters from his discourse, linguists under his influence more or less ventured to theorize Kanji inside Indo-European linguistics. The original meaning of the Latin ‘lingua’ of ‘linguistics’ (it simply means ‘tongue’) was forgotten but

nonetheless haunts linguists by naming a science ignoring the non-voluble aspects of a writing that does not represent sound at all. Certainly, an inflexible *monotheism of one sense* does not enable to make clear distinctions.

Shirakawa himself has pointed out that the phonetic stance of Mongin Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913) — besides, aptly demonstrated by the prevalent profile photographs of him emphasizing his ears and marginalizing his eyes — does not help to understand Kanji. Generally not very open for critique, cantankerous and too proud to study scientific fields that could change his opinions, but nearly deified by linguists, the phonetician had done better to take advice from his brother Léopold (1857-1913), a Sinologue, before waiting to learn Chinese until being fatally sick in 1912, shortly before he died from cancer of the larynx. Needless to state, it takes courage to cut oneself off from such influence from Western 'linguistics' in terms of 'Kanji studies' and even from the greater part of East Asian Kanji studies.

Exclusive use of the alphabet leads to revere the monotheism of sound and only sound connected to shapes without meanings in them. In contrast, Kanji open a new channel of visual communication. They, at least, have the three dimensions of 1. *Form*, 2. *Meaning* and 3. *Sound*. And, for this reason, Kanji can never be described with one general term, be it 'logogram' or the like. It is all of them and more, even more in Japanese.

“By systematically listing Japanese words and by systematically listing readings and meanings of Kanji the corresponding relationship of both is enabled and becomes meaningful. Such a corresponding relationship is something completely different from the object of the linguistics of the Indo-European languages.” (‘Jikun: Japanese Kanji Readings,’ Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987, p. 32)

The explanation of Chinese characters is impossible with terms of the apparatus of classical ‘Western’ or Indo-European grammar or linguistics. They just have nothing to do with neither the most complicated apparatus of De Saussure’s or any other model of the latest fancy grammatical and linguistic theories ignoring the greater part of visible data. Any such trial has to be based and is enabled now on the basis of Shirakawa’s work.

So far, due to wrong methods, at least what concerns Kanji learning, the appropriate question concerning Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and even thorough Vietnamese language education at schools and universities instead of “How many years?,” “What do you win?” maybe should be an ironical “How many years do you lose?”

With Chinese characters and their on-readings Japanese learn a foreign language. One of the reasons for Japanese research being so well developed is that transliteration of the original

ancient Chinese into the grammatical structure of Classical Japanese notation is impossible without a thorough understanding of the original, with Kanji providing that meaning. Chinese do not need such a method and in comparison therefore seem to tend to take the aspect of thoroughly understanding the meaning a little less serious.

VI. Buddhism, Confucianism and Chinese Characters

The relation of Buddhism to Confucianism is one important side of East Asian history and thought. In Korea, Confucians had protested against Buddhists who were rather in favour of the introduction of *Hangul*, the Korean ‘alphabet.’ Buddhism should also not be ignored for the reason that it often is shamanism and animism in disguise which incorporates its gods and learned notions from Brahmanism and folk religions in its practices and worldview.

Although most Buddhist calligraphy is sober, serene, clear and can be read comfortably, one should, however, always remember that it is the Buddhists with their translations of sutras from Sanskrit and the older Pali who first have employed Chinese characters exclusively for their phonetic value, and that, due to its origins, Sanskrit and Pali are the standard languages in the Buddhist worldview as Stupa or Tōba, Buddhist tombs and monuments show. The Buddhist religious message is in a way independent from Chinese characters — certainly more independent than the Confucian message. Buddhism employs the characters for its message, whereas, in archaic China, in a strict sense, writing itself at the same time was an act of ancestor worship.

On the other side, the visual world of Kanji that also shows the state of beginning civilization shortly after the most primitive stage was overcome seems in some characters to be the early version of a horror strip. Who thinks that this graphicness is problematic has to be reminded that — with abstract notions and perceptions of the senses being the two possible sources of human knowledge or thought — in the realm of religion, abstractness can be and has been another possible trigger of deviations. That abstractness and iconoclasm in no way guarantees peacefulness may easily be known by a glance at the history of the most abstract monotheist sects. Here, as elsewhere in objective scholarship, the scientist first has to try hard to understand the interrelatedness of such facts thoroughly before giving value judgments. Therefore, this character dictionary as introduction to the world of Kanji conveys the factual basis for an understanding of the animistic, primitive and, from the specific modern ‘enlightened’ viewpoint, sometimes-brutal state of society after basic culture had been established in China of the Shāng

dynasty.

The convinced Buddhist who studies this dictionary sees a way of life and society that tends to not respect the *sila*, i.e. basic attitude of *ahimsa*, non-violence, which, in first line, of course, strictly forbids to kill any living being and that is sunk in delusion. Starting with the tortoises killed for divinatory use, those Kanji that show human beings or animals being killed or used as offerings contradict this all-important first principle. The ancient society Kanji represents also is contradictory to vegetarian life, a consequence of this principle. Confucius, although he would not like to be near a kitchen, ate meat light-heartedly, whereas vegetarianism has become the genuine Buddhist way of life. Such observations, however, can only be strived here. Suffice it to state that, in principle, it is a diametrical opposition of ethics.

The following shall introduce a more positive and enlightening root of Kanji.

VII. Ancestor Commemoration, a Religious Essential, and Kanji

I have to introduce an unusual subject outside East Asia here. Naturally, this cannot be the place for an exhaustive comparison of worldwide religions in terms of ancestor worship. Nevertheless, some hints on the mental side and the *law of cause and effect* related to Kanji shall be given. In this paragraph, I have to confine the flashlights of my comparative comments on this side of religion to those creeds and denominations I hope to know sufficiently well. It proves to be really interesting and rewarding to turn the perspective and see things of other cultures from the East Asian view, which I adopt here. If the observation is correct that the presently used adjective 'ancestral' is a corruption of the etymologically correct 'ancestorial,' and as this can be an indicator of diminished insight into the matter of ancestor memory, which is nearly forgotten as basis of society and religion outside East Asia, some general comparative explanations may not be out of place here.

The age of development of Kanji was one when elephants, rhinoceroses, tapirs and tigers were still indigenous in China as its ancient bronzes and character forms show. Kanji, however, contain mental aspects that are more difficult to grasp for a human mind from other cultures. The custom of ancestor worship, functioning as an important backbone for understanding the genesis of Kanji, is one of them. Keeping strictly to the perspective from this aspect only, its basics will be discussed in the following. This ancestor worship is not abstract but rather concrete and personal. We find it today with the ancestor altar in East and South East Asian homes, also in Japan where it is omnipresent in the form of the 'Butsudan: (Buddhist) home ancestor altar' enshrining the family ancestors in the households of family heads. It has become an act related

to Buddhism, which goes well together with this central Confucian tradition although it strikes that originally it is not quite as central as in Confucianism. Nevertheless, it is enumerated as duty in the Dighanikaya (Dirghagama, Cháng Ā Jí Mó, Chôagon), one of the important collections of the Pali canon. In Japan, the more abstract 'Ujigami: clan gods' and country gods and the like are regarded as exclusively belonging to the realm of Shinto and have their shrines enshrining them. Basically, they are a limited number of special people of the nation who have lived a long time ago.

The line of arguments will be developed in the following based on the hypotheses that ancestor worship or commemoration is a key to world history and its mirror. Its a priori importance is based on the *law of cause and effect*, the simple fact that nobody can exist without ancestors. Among others, especially the wealth of factual information Sir Frazer has presented in his anthropological research, the at least approximate correctness of the main traits of which I accept and take for granted here, has shown the central role of ancestor memory or worship for religion. In parts of the world where ancestor memory is not made the centre of life consciously and directly, we have to look for it in religion, where it resides in unconscious, abstract, or institutionalised and sometimes-incapacitating forms.

As was mentioned, with Kanji writing, East Asian people practice some kind of unbroken ancestor worship. The basic thought is that to not revere and consciously appreciate what the ancestors have done for oneself and one's family in the long run makes people unhappy. This is the basis of East Asian humanism and its peace over a long time. Rather the opposite has happened in fatally thoughtless European schisms with the Eastern 'Orthodox' churches and reformation sacrificing the unity of church, i.e. organized ancestor memory, for ridiculous abstract differences bringing cruelty to people of a lot of countries. These cut off a part of human beings from personal ancestor worship of their preceding generations, making ancestor worship even more problematic, unregulated, unnatural, and artificial — if observed at all — and it paved and still prepares the way for wars hundreds of years later. Although, like the other fundamental ceremonies, funerals and cemeteries were under control of the Church, insightful ancestor worship and its appropriate mental attitude became rare; decisive details were left in chaos and, in contrast to the antiquity reflected in Kanji, there never was a definite and worldwide unique system, or at least a kind of ideal of responsibility inside families and no elaborate family ancestor worship or commemoration like that recorded in the Confucian classics or as, later, was further specified by Zhū Xi on their basis.

The foundation of a new religion or denomination is by no means a small feat and offers plenty

opportunities for (questionable) heroism; however, already common sense shows that in religions and countries with strong rivalry of denominations the rational root of ancestor worship often is suppressed, and false religious emotionality that perceives the own generation absolute takes the place of rational insightful ancestor memory. As a result, often emphasis on will becomes the notion of new religions, which turn away from what is not subject to any willpower whatsoever, one's individual ancestry. In religion and elsewhere, emphasis on will must finally lead to the stance of feeling justified to absolutely realize that will under any circumstances, be it in a criminal way, be it war.

Those who use their eyes and hearts can detect the related phenomena in certain degree not only in parts of Europe, but all over the world where relevant comparable 'reformations' have occurred. Adding up to human character incompatibilities, they can even become time bombs for societies in which provision of a proper frame for perennial ancestor worship generation for generation was neglected or destroyed. In a period of world history destroying this frame, even in China, abandonment of Confucian organized worship at the beginning of the 20th century, according to the *law of cause and effect*, of course has led to war or civil war. History shows that all this is not theory but reality.

Indeed, there are individuals with inborn persistent apathy towards their ancestors everywhere. Powerful institutions, however, which had regulated ancestor worship, stabilized society and preserved exemplary patterns for commemoration of ancestors were destroyed and were exchanged with chaos. These are observations from a cultural and anthropological standpoint taking into account the real fundamentals, not the political turmoil as secondary collateral effects of their abandonment. Worldwide, followers of new religions tend to ignore such fundamentals of the *law of cause and effect*.

To think about Confucian abstract values is delusive without taking into account their basis, the ancestor worship as introduced in detail in e.g. the 礼記 (禮記) 'Book of Rites,' or the 家礼 (家禮) 'Jiā Lǐ, Karei: Book of Family Ritual' by the inaugurator of Neo-Confucianism, Zhū Xī (1130-1200), based also on the former, which, in a concrete manner, has shaped East Asian ancestor worship over hundreds of years far more than most other Confucian writings or lengthy abstract discussions.

Zhū Xī thus put emphasis on family lineage and worked out the standard work on family rituals, but, due to great temporal distance from the then lost original character materials, was less diligent in understanding the lineage of characters or words although the subjects are strongly interconnected, as the user of this dictionary will not fail to notice. What might be seen as strict reverence of the monarchy and aristocracy of the Shāng and Zhōu dynastical ancestors,

in the case of Confucius, in contrast to the usual perception at first glance, are shining examples that have widely spread among the people. It was widely understood that rather than fanaticism help towards a rational insightful memory for everybody is the aim of Confucius and his followers. Therefore, its practice became the basis of East Asian 'idealism' or 'spiritualism.'

The main subject of ancestor commemoration and the results of the foregoing analysis call for an exemplary application in comparison with other cultures. Such an application is added here as excursus to demonstrate how the results of Shirakawa Kanji science also serve as a practical tool for comparing cultures. It should not be viewed as a digression from the main subject treated above. Rather, it is objectively interconnected.

VIII. *Excursus: The Reformation and East Asian Culture of Ancestor Commemoration in Comparative View*

Martin Luther (1484-1546 [The tradition assuming 1483 as year of birth was falsified. Luther habitually lied about it.]) protested mass for the souls of the dead, which he regarded was built on the 'lies of the devil.' Like others, with 'God' and 'Devil' he stressed abstractions and generalizations against commemoration of once extant real ancestors by descendants. To give a minimum of relevant information on the person, in my opinion, it is all too obvious that Luther's attitude towards and criticism of his mother's (1459-1531) and his father's (1459-1530) towering temper (according to one biographer, Erikson, his father was suspected to have killed a shepherd), and his father's violent brother, a drunkard well-known to the courts, led him to change the writing of his family name from Luder (which means 'low scoundrel, rascal') to Luther. The following is from nearly the only concrete episode on parental education given by Luther himself, therefore asking to be understood representatively:

"My parents constrained me very strictly, to the point of cowardliness. My Mother punished me so hard over a single nut that the blood flowed. And with such strict discipline they finally drove me to the monastery," Table Talks # 3566, (Cp. also # 1559)

Later, he was strict and harsh to his own children, as an episode proves that, like the one cited above, has even entered the Table Talks (# 6102). *For Luther*, especially in the initial years of the reformation movement, *an ancestral spirit was hardly more than a poltergeist causing fear*. Such a negligent attitude was probably also widely typical for Catholicism as its clergy, due to (official) celibacy without family itself, frequently also lacked - and still lacks - insight and conviction of this pivotal positive custom of their own church, which shows in the inability to explain it with common sense, thus straightforwardly begging to be ruined. Rebuttal was not clearly addressed

to this point, as no basis for this distinguished virtuous custom of the Roman Catholic Church can be found in the New Testament. It can be regarded as a clerical, institutionalised continuation of the Roman worship of Lares, Manes, and Penates (household gods, ancestral souls). It also should pass as common sense that clerics who hold commemorative mass in accordance with the wish of relatives take a fee for this service, as, in contrast to Oriental viz. East Asian (Confucian, Buddhist, Shinto, or other) custom, it was not held at home, but in churches, offering the public an opportunity for participation. The Buddhist priest also is paid for conducting ceremonies at the temple or when visiting homes. Had Luther been a compromising character, maybe a more flexible interpretation of his notion of 'priesthood of laypeople' would have included lay rituals of ancestor commemoration.

Translation and thorough reading of the parts of the Old Testament that are basic for all three Mosaic religions already taught Luther a negative attitude that decidedly stigmatises individual ancestor commemoration as a kind of evil sorcery. The main *loci classici* in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament traditionally ascribed to Moses, Deuteronomy 18 v. 9-12, Leviticus 19 v. 26, 31, 20 v. 6, 27; furthermore I Samuel 28 and Isaiah 8 v. 19 leave the strong impression that with the calling of ancestral souls they forbid to think about something very real. Luther's first open attack on ancestor commemorative mass in his works, relating to this subject of the years 1520-21 mark severe provocations, which made positions finally irreconcilable and became the decisive trigger for the so called reformation, if the standard perspective of East Asian ancestor commemoration is applied. On the back side of this general attack that led to cutting of a considerable part of mankind from ancestor commemoration is his personal family situation. This, however, is my plain personal opinion and the result of persistent historical studies and is a perspective that, to my knowledge, so far has not yet been appreciated.

In this line, the 'problem' clever missionaries like to point to is that 'evil' ancestors are seemingly glorified in worship. Naturally, the actual character of ancestors cannot change posthumously. How early Chinese emperor Shùn coped with the behaviour of his cruel parents and brother already is a subject of Confucianism, especially in the work of Mencius (372-289 BC). Similar tasks of problematic ancestry are supposed to be clarified by insightfulness: calm memory of the good and not that good character elements of ancestors in respect to the *law of cause and effect* may even, to use a more recent term, have some quasi psychotherapeutic effects, and is of course not tantamount to indiscriminating, blind devotion. Furthermore, ancestral piety will inevitably lead to the acknowledgement of previous positive ancestors which show when going back to earlier generations. Rather than the ignorant accusation of 'idolatry,' the

mental process involved may correspond to ‘salvation’ in Christian religion.

From early on, a realistic human character science based on various Oriental Classics helped to recognize the different inborn characters of family members as indicated by the time of birth and to draw conclusions for family relations. Today, the range of its application ranges from finding out and trying to understand human beings who by birth are not inclined to actively conduct ancestor worship to accurate individual health advice. Such a philosophy contributed to the culture of ancestor commemoration. Its permanence and actuality is an indicator that the ‘Classic of Change,’ for example, is one of the perennial pillars of East Asian life and culture.

To take back the administration and practice of ancestor commemoration from the Catholic Church to the families, though complicated by the existence of ‘religious’ and ‘non-religious’ personalities not inclined to it inside and outside of religions giving it a cultural basis as in East Asia would have been a worthwhile task for a ‘reformation’ aiming at enlightened human beings. To my knowledge, however, no such movement has ever occurred in ‘Western’ societies. In comparison, what regards this aspect, one may even come to the conclusion that the Romans with their division between public or state cult and private family cult have reached a much higher degree of civil enlightenment.

What, however, once again, happened was that, like already in Catholicism in that era, Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560), Luther’s diligent co-worker and organizer of the reformation, and others, allowed erroneous ‘Western astrology’ to take root in every aspect of private and public life. Contradictory, but strangely mixed with Christian monotheism, it shared its basic Ancient Greek trait of a ‘religion of nature’ with the ‘Classic of Change.’ It seems, however, that it is not as helpful and accurate and therefore did not have its effect of stabilizing the roots of society.

Considering all this, maybe it is not the value of ‘the’ abstract ‘human being,’ but rather such concrete family and insightful ancestor worship and commemoration that follow rules worthy of being held universal. Real old religions ascend to power, accumulate virtue and solidify convictions through hundreds and thousands of years of ancestor worship and commemoration of followers and thus have relative big potential to be peaceful when practiced with insight; less so the younger religions neglecting or ignoring ancestor worship. Acknowledgement of the *law of cause and effect* in the wide sense in terms of ancestor memory helps to understand that establishment of new denominations which start new traditions of ancestor commemoration rituals and funerals, if followed exclusively, after spreading cut off the first generation from all their ancestors, the next from that of their grandparents, and so forth, with destabilizing mental effects, although material culture may improve. The principle of compromise after German reformation: *cuius regio, illius et religio* (‘Who owns the land also determines the denomination of

its people) a c t u a l l y destroyed the relation of people to their ancestors. Similar always happened where and when the hegemony of a region with no native traditional custom of ancestor commemoration changes into the hands of another ruler or country. History has also seen several cases of people of a country or county who were forced to converse its traditional denomination due to the sex craze or other fancy of just one ruler.

Apart from doctrinal decorations, this is why later or new religions often result in failure or even violence and crime: no feigned copy of notions of older religions can substitute ancestral essence.

In the case of the Catholic Church, due to the hierarchy it has given itself, the decision on the question of permission or prohibition for Chinese Catholics to take part in ancestor worship depended on the personal common sense, learning and intelligence of the respective Pope, and the factual knowledge of his advisers. Pope Clement XI (1649-1721) finally decided against the Jesuits who, with some insight, from Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) on, had tolerated ancestor worship. For the Chinese emperor, in a lot of respects, the Jesuits, who had renounced their families, resembled Buddhist monks. With their appointment as mandarins, an honour also extending to the preceding three generations posthumously, Ricci, the Fleming Ferdinand Verbiest (1623-1688) and other Jesuits were given ample opportunity to understand the ways of a Confucian society based on ancestor commemoration. Emperor Kāng Xī (1662-1722), after a kind of edict of tolerance in 1692, a broad hint that did not help the Pope to start thinking, in 1717 prohibited Christianity as a reaction to the Papal prohibition of ancestor worship or commemoration. In Japan, Christianity was forbidden in phases the most incisive were in 1587 and 1614. Regarding China, in 1715, a Papal decree that prescribed an oath of obedience in this matter, to be taken by all missionaries, for Chinese Christians was nothing less than tantamount to the denial of Chinese as human beings. In 1742, Benedict XIV (1675-1758) put the final prohibition even more drastically. Papal learning needed nearly 200 years to finally correct it, in around 1939.

Maybe also overly impressed by the indeed sad abuses of clerical nepotism in his time, Luther's move to abolish memorial services from an intercultural long-range view will be judged as overreaction without insight into the essence of the matter, as that was the only institution in charge of ancestor memory in case of insightful administration, a but poor remnant in a culture already scarce of it. Already the titles of most of his works show that his unyielding fighting spirit mainly concentrated on the abuses only. It led this denomination to lose sight of this human basis of all real religion. Protestant missionary Blodget D.D. summed up attitudes on the matter as follows:

“At the present time [1877] all Christians, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike, or very nearly all, would oppose the worship of Confucius, and of ancestors, as contrary to the purity of Christian doctrine. All would condemn the Jesuits in regard to these two points, as making an unwarranted compromise with heathenism.”

Not by chance, as a pointer to what is the real pivot of Chinese and East Asian thought, in 1716, after a work of five years, the 康熙字典 *Dictionary of Kāng, Xī Cí Diǎn* (Kōki Jiten) the classification system of which, however, is not without faults, was published with an introduction by the emperor. It still is regarded and used as the standard Kanji classification system. As can be learned from Shirakawa's 金文通釈 'Kinbuntsūshaku: Complete Explanation of Bronze Inscriptions,' which includes a history of bronze inscription research, bronze inscription studies already had a long tradition at that time and, at least, one could have been conscious of the original role if not identity of ancestor worship or commemoration and Chinese characters.

One of the examples of woman conducting rituals, as many are given in this dictionary, demonstrates the context: 安 means the newly wed wife conducting a ritual of acceptance in the mausoleum of the husband's family receiving the spirit of the husband's ancestors. As by doing so, for the first time, she is accepted as a full member among the new relatives, it has the meaning of 'peaceful.' The character form 禮 (now, the *Common Use Character* is 礼) 'rite, ritual, ceremony; etiquette, courtesy' is to be understood in this general sense: following and conducting the rites and worshipping the ancestors accumulates virtue and will make 豐 'rich' (Cf. also 婦 etc.).

Conclusively, it has become clear how writing Chinese characters in themselves was, and in a way still is, an act of ancestor worship. Certainly, if one had to invent a system that enables insightful ancestor worship or commemoration, it would share many traits with such idealized, not too specific forms.

Truly, it has to be appreciated that Confucians are 'close' to Kanji, however, their relation to Kanji already is somehow abstract, complicated and less straightforward than that of earlier times. Notwithstanding, the thought of Confucius can never be appreciated fully, e.g. his attitude of preserving the rites of the early dynasties, especially the Zhōu dynasty, without knowledge of the thought inherent in Chinese characters as is presented in my translation of Shirakawa's Kanji dictionary.