

心  
人  
日  
水  
馬

**PICTOGRAPHIC  
LANGUAGES:**  
AN EXPLORATION OF  
INSPIRATION AND EVOLUTION

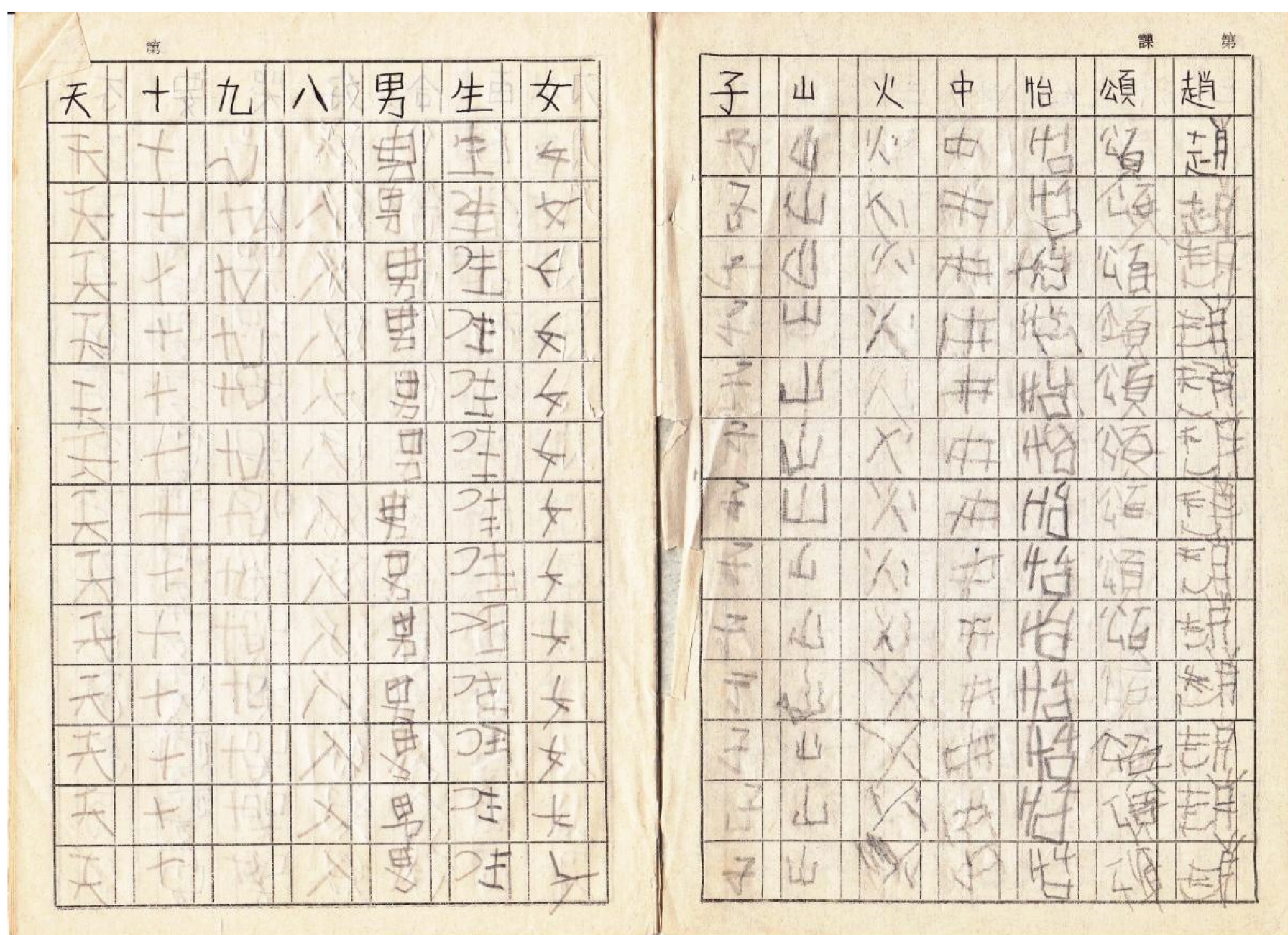
NAOMI CHIU  
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AHS CAPSTONE 2021

# AUTHOR'S NOTE

MY PARENTS WERE THE FIRST OF THEIR FAMILIES TO IMMIGRATE TO THE UNITED STATES, MY MOM FROM TAIWAN IN 1979 AND MY DAD FROM HONG KONG IN 1982. THEY CAME WITH THEIR PARENTS AND THEIR SIBLINGS AND LANDED IN NEW YORK CITY WHERE THEY'VE LIVED EVER SINCE. I GREW UP SURROUNDED BY 3 GENERATIONS OF MY FAMILY IN CLOSE PROXIMITY, FULLY STEEPED IN THE CHINESE CULTURE THAT MY PARENTS BROUGHT WITH THEM FROM THEIR MOTHERLANDS. I LEARNED MANDARIN AND CANTONESE AT HOME WITH MY PARENTS AND PRACTICED BY TRYING TO SPEAK WITH MY GRANDPARENTS. EVERY SUMMER, IN THE WEEKS BEFORE WE LEFT FOR CAMP, MY BROTHER AND I WERE SENT TO MY GRANDMA AND AUNT'S HOUSES WITH WORKBOOKS OF CHINESE CHARACTERS TO PRACTICE WRITING. I GOT SCOLDED MANY TIMES BY MY GRANDMA FOR MY AWFUL HANDWRITING SINCE I WAS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT COPYING THE CHARACTERS AS FAST AS I COULD WITH NO REGARD FOR THE ACCURACY OR CONNECTIVITY. WE SHOPPED AT CHINESE GROCERY STORES EVERY WEEK, WENT TO CHINATOWN FOR THE CHINESE BAKERIES AND EATERIES. AND OF COURSE, THE HIGHLIGHT EVERY YEAR WAS CHINESE NEW YEAR, A TIME FULL OF FESTIVITIES, VISITS TO EXTENDED FAMILY THAT WE DIDN'T SEE THAT OFTEN, GRAINY VIDEO CALLS TO THE FAMILY MEMBERS ACROSS THE SEA, AND LOTS AND LOTS OF FOOD. THERE WAS ALWAYS THE LARGE BANQUET ON THE NIGHT OF THE NEW YEAR, AS CHINESE SUPERSTITION MANDATES THAT THERE MUST BE LEFTOVERS SO THAT YOUR YEAR WILL ALSO BE FULL OF ABUNDANCE, BUT MY PERSONAL FAVORITE WAS ALWAYS THE SWEETS THAT WE ONLY ATE FOR THE NEW YEAR. STARTING AS EARLY AS 2 WEEKS BEFORE THE NEW YEAR, I WOULD ALWAYS COME HOME FROM SCHOOL TO MY MOM BUSY IN THE KITCHEN MAKING 年糕 (NIAN GAO OR STICKY RICE CAKES), 发糕 (FA GAO OR FORTUNE CAKES), 马蹄糕 (MA TI GAO OR WATER CHESTNUT CAKES), AND 萝卜糕 (LUO BO GAO OR TURNIP CAKES). I WAS ALWAYS IN CHARGE OF HELPING MY DAD FILL THE CANDY TRAY, A LACQUERED WOODEN BOX THAT WE FILLED WITH RED BEAN AND GREEN TEA CANDIES, ORANGE JELLIES, CANDIED LOTUS ROOTS, RED ROASTED WATERMELON SEEDS AND WHATEVER ELSE MY PARENTS HAD BOUGHT FOR THAT YEAR. MY MOM'S RULE WAS THAT I WAS ALLOWED TO HAVE ONE SWEET FROM THE CANDY BOX PER DAY AS WELL AS ONE OF THE VARIOUS CAKES THAT SHE WOULD MAKE.

WHEN I WAS LIVING AT HOME WITH MY FAMILY, IT WAS ALWAYS REALLY EASY TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH MY CHINESE HERITAGE AND CULTURE. I ALWAYS HAD MY PARENTS TO SPEAK CHINESE WITH AND I WAS NEVER WANTING FOR CHINESE FOOD; WE WENT TO MY GRANDMA'S HOUSE TWICE A WEEK FOR DINNER IN ADDITION TO EVERYTHING ELSE MY PARENTS COOKED AT HOME. BUT WHEN I MOVED 4 HOURS AWAY TO NEEDHAM, MA FOR COLLEGE, I STARTED FEELING DISCONNECTED. I RARELY SPOKE TO ANYONE IN CHINESE WHILE AT SCHOOL AND NOTHING THAT THE DINING HALL PROVIDED COMPARED TO THE HOME-COOKED CHINESE FOOD THAT I ATE AT HOME. I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO GO HOME TO CELEBRATE CHINESE NEW YEAR. AT FIRST IT DIDN'T BOTHER ME; IN FACT, I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE. BUT WHEN I WENT HOME AND STRUGGLED TO SPEAK IN MANDARIN WITH THE PROPER TONES AND INTONATION WITH MY GRANDMA, I REALIZED HOW IMPORTANT MY CULTURE WAS TO ME. I STARTED TRYING TO SPEAK IN ONLY CHINESE WHENEVER I CALLED HOME AND LEARNED HOW TO COOK THE DISHES THAT I HAD GROWN UP EATING WHEN I WAS HOME DURING BREAKS. THIS PAST FALL, I HAD THE CHANCE TO TAKE A BEGINNING CHINESE CLASS AND I TOOK IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON READING AND WRITING CHINESE WHICH HAD NEVER REALLY STUCK WITH ME. AS A KID, I THOUGHT LEARNING HOW TO READ AND WRITE CHINESE WAS BORING AND EXHAUSTING. WHAT I LEARNED IN THAT CLASS HELPED ME FEEL CONNECTED TO MY CULTURAL ROOTS AND FOR MY CAPSTONE I WANTED TO LEARN MORE AND THAT WAS HOW THIS PROJECT CAME TO BE. I WANTED TO EXPLORE THE NUANCES OF THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE AND TO SHARE WHAT I FOUND WITH OTHERS, TO HIGHLIGHT THE BEAUTY FOUND IN EACH CHARACTER AND THE MEANINGS THAT THEY HOLD.



A SCAN OF ONE OF THE PAGES FROM MY CHINESE NOTEBOOK. THE FIRST ROW WAS WRITTEN BY MY MOTHER FOR ME TO COPY, EVERYTHING UNDERNEATH IS A PRODUCT OF MY OWN HAND.

# HISTORY OF THE CHINESE WRITING SYSTEM AND JAPANESE KANJI

WITH ORIGINS DATING BACK TO THE SHANG DYNASTY (1766-1122 BC), WRITTEN CHINESE REMAINS AS ONE OF THE OLDEST, CONTINUALLY USED WRITING SYSTEMS TODAY. WITH A HISTORY SPANNING OVER 3 MILLENNIA, THE FORM OF THE CHARACTERS AND THEIR USAGE HAVE UNDERGONE MANY CHANGES OVER TIME. THE FIRST KNOWN USAGE OF WRITTEN CHINESE IS FROM DIVINATION INSCRIPTIONS ON TORTOISE SHELLS AND ORACLE BONES. THE CHARACTERS USED IN THESE INSCRIPTIONS WERE LARGELY PICTOGRAPHIC IN NATURE, DRAWINGS MADE TO CAPTURE SNAPSHOTS OF THE WORLD AROUND THEM AND THE MEANING HELD WITHIN. WHILE SPOKEN CHINESE DIVERSIFIED OVER TIME AS LOCAL DIALECTS EMERGED WITH DIFFERENT ACCENTS AND PRONUNCIATIONS, WRITTEN CHINESE REMAINED A SINGLE UNIFIED SYSTEM. THIS WAS INTEGRAL TO THE LATER FORMATION OF A CENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT IN CHINA AS OFFICIAL BUSINESS COULD BE CONDUCTED THROUGH WRITING ACROSS ALL REGIONS IN CHINA. THE SUCCESS OF THE CHINESE CENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT WAS THE CATALYST FOR THE USAGE OF CHINESE CHARACTERS IN OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES, SUCH AS JAPAN, KOREA, AND VIETNAM. AS THEY MODELED THEIR GOVERNMENTS AFTER CHINA'S, THEY ALSO ADOPTED THE WRITING SYSTEM INITIALLY AS THE LANGUAGE OF ADMINISTRATION THAT EVENTUALLY TRICKLED OUT INTO MORE COMMON USAGE. THIS IS WHERE THE JAPANESE KANJI WRITING SYSTEM COMES FROM, AS THE JAPANESE TOOK THE CHARACTERS FROM THE CHINESE LANGUAGE TO REPRESENT THEIR JAPANESE COUNTERPARTS. THE CHINESE CHARACTERS USED IN JAPANESE KANJI USUALLY HAVE 2 METHODS OF INTERPRETATION, ONE FROM THE ORIGINAL PRONUNCIATION OF THE CHINESE WORDS (ONYOMI) AND ONE FROM THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE ASSOCIATED JAPANESE WORDS (KUNYOMI). JAPANESE KANJI ARE USED TO REPRESENT NOUNS, ADJECTIVE STEMS, AND VERB STEMS, WITH ENDINGS ADDED ON IN HIRAGANA OR KATAKANA (TRADITIONAL JAPANESE SCRIPTS).

THE CHINESE WRITING SYSTEM IS EXTREMELY COMPLEX, WITH PICTOGRAPHIC CHARACTERS THAT REPRESENT A SINGLE IDEA OR WORD, REQUIRING MEMORIZATION AND MASTERY OF HUNDREDS OF CHARACTERS FOR EVERYDAY USAGE. WHILE THIS MAY SEEM TO BE A DAUNTING TASK, TO MEMORIZE A UNIQUE CHARACTER FOR EACH WORD, UNDERSTANDING THE ORIGINS AND BREAKDOWN OF THE CHARACTERS PROVIDES CLUES TO HELP WITH DETERMINING THE MEANING OF EACH CHARACTER. THE MAJORITY OF THE WRITTEN CHINESE CHARACTERS CAN BE SORTED INTO 6 CATEGORIES:

## 1. PICTOGRAPHS

COMPOSING ABOUT 4% OF CHARACTERS USED TODAY, THESE CHARACTERS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF IMAGES TAKEN FROM THE REAL WORLD. THESE ARE SIMPLE CHARACTERS THAT CAN BE VIEWED AS THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE MORE COMPLEX IDEAS AND CHARACTERS THAT WERE DEVELOPED LATER.

EXAMPLES:

- 人 – PERSON (TWO LEGS)
- 日 – SUN (A RADIATING DOT)
- 山 – MOUNTAIN (3 MOUNTAIN PEAKS)
- 水 – WATER (THE FLOW OF A RIVER)

## 2. IDEOGRAPHS

WITH INSPIRATIONS LESS LITERAL THAN THE PICTOGRAPHS, IDEOGRAPHS ARE ILLUSTRATIONS THAT CONVEY MORE ABSTRACT CONCEPTS. THESE ARE OFTEN ALSO SIMPLE IN MEANING AND USED TO BUILD MORE COMPLEX IDEAS IN MORE COMPLEX CHARACTERS.

EXAMPLES:

- 上 – UP (DOT ABOVE A HORIZONTAL LINE)
- 下 – DOWN (DOT BELOW A HORIZONTAL LINE)

## 3. COMPOUND IDEOGRAPHS

COMPOUND IDEOGRAPHS COMBINE PICTOGRAPHIC AND IDEOGRAPHIC CHARACTERS TO PRODUCE A SUGGESTED MEANING. THESE MEANINGS OFTEN BUILD OFF OF THOSE OF THE CHARACTERS INCLUDED WITH A METAPHORICAL UNDERSTANDING.

EXAMPLES:

- 明 (BRIGHT) = 日(SUN) + 月(MOON) – 2 BRIGHTEST THINGS IN THE SKY

## 4. PHONETIC LOANS

THESE CHARACTERS ARE THE MOST SIMILAR TO THE PHONETIC ALPHABETS USED IN MOST OTHER LANGUAGES. THEY ARE OFTEN USED FOR THEIR PRONUNCIATION, TO REPRESENT A WORD WITH A SIMILAR PRONUNCIATION BUT ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT MEANING. THEY ARE NOT USED IN EVERYDAY SPEECH BUT RATHER IN POETRY AND LITERATURE AS WELL AS TO TRANSLATE FOREIGN WORDS INTO CHINESE.

EXAMPLE:

- 纸 (ZHI) = 是 (SHI) (TO BE) IN LITERATURE
- 波士顿 (BOSHIDUN) = BOSTON (PHONETIC TRANSLATION)

## 5. PHONETIC COMPOUNDS

THE MAJORITY OF CHARACTERS USED TODAY FALL INTO THIS CATEGORY, COVERING ABOUT 80-90% OF COMMONLY USED CHARACTERS. THESE CHARACTERS ARE COMPOSED OF RADICALS, OR SIMPLIFIED CHARACTERS, THAT CONVEY MEANING AND PHONETIC COMPONENTS THAT HINT TOWARDS HOW THE CHARACTER IS PRONOUNCED. UNLIKE THE FIRST THREE CATEGORIES OF CHARACTERS, THE MEANINGS OF THESE CHARACTERS ARE DETERMINED BY ASSOCIATION FROM THE RADICALS AND PRONUNCIATION BASED ON THE PHONETIC COMPONENT, RELIANT ON KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORAL LANGUAGE TO DERIVE MEANING. MOST NEW CHARACTERS CREATED TODAY FALL INTO THIS CATEGORY.

EXAMPLE:

- 冲 (CHONG) – POUR = 中 (ZHONG) – PHONETIC COMPONENT + 冫 (WATER RADICAL)

## 6. DERIVATIVE CHARACTERS

THIS CATEGORY OF CHARACTERS COVERS ARCHAIC CHARACTERS THAT ARE NO LONGER USED IN THE MODERN SYSTEM AND WHOSE MEANINGS ARE NO LONGER CLEAR.

THESE 6 CATEGORIES GIVE A SENSE ON HOW THE CHINESE WRITING SYSTEM DEVELOPED, STARTING WITH SIMPLE PICTOGRAPHS AND IDEOGRAPHS TO CAPTURE BASIC IDEAS AND COMPOUND CHARACTERS BEING DEVELOPED TO CAPTURE MORE COMPLEX MEANINGS AND DEVELOP THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE AS A MODE OF COMMUNICATION. WHILE UNIFIED IN MEANING, WRITTEN CHINESE ALSO VARIES IN FORM DEPENDING ON THE SCRIPT USED. THE TWO MAIN FORMS OF CHINESE ARE TRADITIONAL AND SIMPLIFIED. TRADITIONAL CHINESE WAS THE ORIGINAL FORMAL WRITING SYSTEM AND IS STILL USED TODAY IN HONG KONG, TAIWAN, AND OTHER CHINESE SPEAKING COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE OF MAINLAND CHINA. SIMPLIFIED CHINESE WAS DEVELOPED IN 1954 IN MAINLAND CHINA, REDUCING THE COMPLEXITY AND NUMBER OF STROKES FOR CHARACTERS TO PROMOTE MASS LITERACY BY MAKING WRITTEN CHINESE EASIER TO READ AND WRITE. CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY IS USED FOR ORNAMENTAL PURPOSES, WITH ADDITIONAL FLOURISHES AND FOCUS ON FORM THAT NOT FOUND IN THE MAIN WRITING FORMS. SOME SUB-CATEGORIES OF CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY INCLUDE SEAL SCRIPT WHICH IS USED FOR NAME CHOPS OR PERSONAL SEALS, CURSIVE SCRIPT THAT ENABLES FASTER WRITING SPEEDS (SIMILAR TO ENGLISH CURSIVE) AND CLERICAL SCRIPT WHICH WAS USED IN THE HAN DYNASTY FOR ARTISTIC FLAIR.



# HEART



## GENERAL INFORMATION

PINYIN: XĪN  
 ONYOMI: シン (SHIN)  
 KUNYOMI: こころ (KOKORO)  
 MEANING: HEART/MIND/SPIRIT

心 IS THE CHINESE CHARACTER FOR THE HEART, MIND AND SPIRIT. THE CHARACTER IS SIMPLIFIED FROM A STYLIZED HEART WITH DOTS TO CONVEY THE IDEA OF FLOWING BLOOD. THE CHINESE PRONUNCIATION IS WITH THE FIRST TONE (A HIGH FLAT TONE). THE JAPANESE ONYOMI PRONUNCIATION IS DERIVED FROM THE ORIGINAL CHINESE PRONUNCIATION WHILE THE KUNYOMI PRONUNCIATION COMES FROM THE ORIGINAL JAPANESE WORD FOR HEART.

## CULTURAL MEANING

UNLIKE MOST WESTERN PHILOSOPHIES THAT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN A PERSON'S LOGIC AND EMOTIONS, SEPARATING THE HEART AND THE MIND, THESE ARE TYPICALLY REGARDED TOGETHER IN CHINESE CULTURE. THE HEART IS REGARDED AS THE CENTER OF A PERSON, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY, FROM WHICH EVERYTHING ELSE STEMS FROM. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEART IN RELATION TO A PERSON'S IDENTITY CAN BE SEEN IN THE VAST NUMBER OF CHARACTERS THAT INCLUDE 心 WITHIN IT AS A RADICAL.



(YÌ)

REMEMBER, MEMORY



(XIǎNG)

TO THINK, PLAN, WISH



(RĒN)

TO ENDURE, BEAR, SUFFER



(ZHÌ)

PURPOSE, WILL, DETERMINATION



(ZHŌNG)

LOYALTY, DEVOTION, FIDELITY

WORDS DEALING WITH EMOTION AND INTERNAL THOUGHTS OFTEN HAVE 心 AS A RADICAL. SOMETIMES 心 IS SIMPLIFIED TO 忄 WHEN USED AS A RADICAL. THE PRESENCE OF 心 IN CHARACTERS THAT HAVE TO DEAL WITH INTERNAL PROCESSES ARE INDICATIVE OF THE CHINESE VIEW OF HOW THE HEART IS THE CENTER OF A PERSON AS WELL AS HOW EMOTIONS ARE FELT WITH ONE'S ENTIRE BEING.

THE JAPANESE ALSO HOLD A SIMILAR MEANING FOR HEART, AS THE CENTER OF A PERSON CONSISTING OF HEART, MIND, AND SPIRIT. IN JAPANESE, THE CHARACTER 心 IS USED ONLY FOR THIS MEANING, WITH SEPARATE WORDS FOR THE ACTUAL ORGAN, しんぞう (SHINZO, HIRIGANA) AND DECORATIVE HEART SHAPES, ハト (HATO, KATAKANA). WORDS THAT USE THE 心 KANJI SIMILARLY POINT TO THE JAPANESE MEANING OF A PERSON'S HEART.



(ちゅうしん)  
(CHUSHIN)

CENTER, MIDDLE, CORE, FOCUS



(かんしん)  
(KANSHIN)

CONCERN, INTEREST



(しんり)  
(SHINRI)

STATE OF MIND, MENTALITY, PSYCHOLOGY



(としん)  
(TOSHIN)

CITY CENTER, HEART OF THE CITY



(あんしん)  
(ANSHIN)

RELIEF, PIECE OF MIND

SIMILAR TO CHINESE, 心 IS USED FOR EMOTIONS AND INTERNAL ASPECTS. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEART AS THE CENTER OF A BEING IS ALSO SEEN AS 心 IS USED IN WORDS DEALING WITH THE CENTER OF THINGS OUTSIDE OF A PERSON.





# PERSON



人 IS THE CHINESE CHARACTER FOR A PERSON. THE CHARACTER WAS ORIGINALLY OF A SIDE PROFILE OF A PERSON BOWING, WITH THE LEFT STROKE REPRESENTING THE ARMS AND THE RIGHT STROKE REPRESENTING THE LEGS. OVER TIME THE CHARACTER BECAME A REPRESENTATION OF TWO LEGS. THE CHINESE PRONUNCIATION IS WITH THE SECOND TONE (A LOW TO HIGH TONE). THE JAPANESE ONYOMI PRONUNCIATION IS DERIVED FROM THE ORIGINAL CHINESE PRONUNCIATION WHILE THE KUNYOMI PRONUNCIATION COMES FROM THE ORIGINAL JAPANESE WORD FOR A PERSON.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

PINYIN: RÉN  
ONYOMI: ジン (JIN) OR ニン (NIN)  
KUNYOMI: ひと (HITO)  
MEANING: PERSON

## CULTURAL MEANING

AS HUMANS ARE SOCIAL CREATURES, IT IS A GIVEN THAT PEOPLE ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO SOCIETY AND CULTURE. WHILE THERE IS NO UNIQUE SIGNIFICANCE OF A PERSON TO CHINESE CULTURE, 人 IS THE MOST COMMONLY USED RADICAL IN THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE SINCE DEALING WITH PEOPLE IS IMPORTANT FOR COMMUNICATION.

仁

(RÉN)

HUMANENESS, BENEVOLENCE, KINDNESS

他

(TĀ)

HE/HIM

仑

(LÚN)

LOGICAL REASONS, LOGICAL ORDER

信

(XÌN)

TRUST, BELIEVE; LETTER

WORDS DEALING WITH PEOPLE AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS AND INTERACTIONS OFTEN HAVE 人 AS A RADICAL. 人 IS SIMPLIFIED TO 亻 IN SOME CHARACTERS. THE USAGE OF 人 IN CHARACTERS HIGHLIGHT WHAT ATTRIBUTES DEFINE HUMANITY AS WELL AS INTERPERSONAL INTERACTIONS.

大 太 天

(DÀ)

LARGE

(TÀI)

TOO (EXCESSIVE)

(TIĀN)

SKY

WITH A UNIVERSAL AND CLEAR MEANING THAT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD BY ANYONE, 人 WAS ALSO USED AS A BUILDING BLOCK FOR MORE COMPLEX CHARACTERS. CHINESE CHARACTERS WERE DERIVED FROM 人, WITH ADDITIONAL STROKES ADDING EMPHASIS AND MEANING TO CREATE NEW CHARACTERS. THE CHARACTER FOR LARGE COMES FROM THE IDEA OF A LARGE PERSON WITH AN ADDITIONAL STROKE REPRESENTING OUTSTRETCHED ARMS. AN ADDITIONAL STROKE UNDER THE CHARACTER FOR LARGE ADDS EMPHASIS BECOMING THE CHARACTER FOR TOO (EXCESSIVE). A STROKE ADDED TO THE TOP OF THE CHARACTER FOR LARGE INDICATES THE SPACE ABOVE MEN, BECOMING THE CHARACTER FOR SKY.

SIMILAR TO CHINESE, JAPANESE USAGE OF 人 IS BASED NOT ON ANY CULTURAL IMPORTANCE BUT RATHER THE UNAVOIDABLE FOCUS ON PEOPLE.

人間

(にんげん)  
(NINGEN)

HUMAN BEING, MAN, PERSON

個人

(こじん)  
(KOJIN)

INDIVIDUAL, PERSONAL, PRIVATE

人気

(にんき)  
(NINKI)

POPULARITY

人口

(じんこう)  
(JINKOU)

POPULATION, COMMON TALK

IN JAPANESE, THE 人 KANJI IS USED IN WORDS ABOUT PEOPLE, BOTH THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE POPULATION. 人 IS USED AS THE BASE UNIT THAT IS THEN ADDED ONTO TO CREATE ADDITIONAL MEANING.





# DAY



## GENERAL INFORMATION

PINYIN: RÌ  
 ONYOMI: ジツ (JITSU)  
 KUNYOMI: ヒ (HI)  
 MEANING: DAY, SUN

日 IS THE CHINESE CHARACTER FOR THE SUN. THE CHARACTER WAS ORIGINALLY OF A DOT INSIDE A CIRCLE, TO REPRESENT THE RADIATING SUN. THE CIRCLE BECAME A SQUARE WHEN CHINESE SCRIPT WAS STANDARDIZED, AND CURVES WERE REPLACED WITH STRAIGHT STROKES TO MAKE WRITING EASIER. THE CHINESE PRONUNCIATION IS WITH THE FOURTH TONE (A SHARP, STRONG HIGH TO LOW TONE). THE JAPANESE KUNYOMI PRONUNCIATION COMES FROM THE ORIGINAL JAPANESE WORD FOR THE SUN.

## CULTURAL MEANING

TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE, THE SUN WAS THE MOST DEFINITIVE DEMARCATION OF DAYS. AS AN IDEOGRAPH, 日 IS USED TO INDICATE SPECIFIC DATES, HOLIDAYS OR DAILY ACTIVITIES. MORE ABSTRACTLY, 日 IS ALSO USED FOR WORDS WITH MEANINGS ASSOCIATED TO ATTRIBUTES OF THE SUN LIKE LIGHT AND HEAT.



(Zǎo)  
 EARLY, MORNING



(Xún)  
 TEN DAY PERIOD;  
 PERIOD OF TIME



(Gàn)  
 SUNSET, DUSK;  
 EVENING



(Hàn)  
 DROUGHT, DRY



(Xū)  
 SUNRISE, DAWN

THE RADICAL 日 IS USED WITH WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SUN WHETHER IT BE DAYS AND DATES OR SPECIFIC QUALITIES OF THE SUN.

KNOWN AS “THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN”, 日 IS USED IN THE KANJI FOR JAPAN, (日本 – NIHON). ORIGINALLY JAPAN WAS CALLED 倭 (WA) IN CHINESE, MEANING “DWARF” OR “SUBMISSIVE”. HOWEVER, AS JAPAN GREW AND DEVELOPED AS A NATION, THIS NAME WAS FOUND TO BE INSULTING AND IN 703, JAPAN’S NAME WAS CHANGED TO 日本 AT THE REQUEST OF JAPANESE ENVOYS, WHICH IT HAS REMAINED UNTIL THIS DAY. 日 IS USED TO REFER TO JAPAN AND ITS PEOPLE AS WELL AS WORDS RELATING TO DAYS AND THE SUN.



(どうじつ)  
 (DOJITSU)  
 THE SAME DAY



(まいにち)  
 (MAINICHI)  
 EVERY DAY



(にちや)  
 (NICHYA)  
 DAY AND NIGHT, ALWAYS



(にほんじん)  
 (NIHONJIN)  
 JAPANESE PERSON

日 IS OFTEN USED IN A SIMILAR MANNER TO HOW IT IS USED IN CHINESE. 日 IS ALSO USED FOR REFERRING TO JAPAN AND ITS PEOPLE.

# WATER

## GENERAL INFORMATION

PINYIN: SHUǐ  
ONYOMI: スイ (SUI)  
KUNYOMI: みず (MIZU)  
MEANING: WATER

水 IS THE CHINESE CHARACTER FOR WATER. THE CHARACTER IS SIMPLIFIED FROM A PICTOGRAPH OF A FLOWING RIVER, WITH A DEEP UNINTERRUPTED FLOW AT ITS CENTER AND SHALLOWER, DISRUPTED FLOWS ALONG THE BANKS. THE OUTER EDGE STROKES WERE COMBINED IN THE MODERN VERSION TO REDUCE THE CHARACTER'S STROKE COUNT. THE CHINESE PRONUNCIATION IS WITH THE THIRD TONE (A LONG, HIGH-LOW-HIGH TONE). THE JAPANESE ONYOMI PRONUNCIATION IS DERIVED FROM THE ORIGINAL CHINESE PRONUNCIATION WHILE THE KUNOMI PRONUNCIATION COMES FROM THE ORIGINAL JAPANESE WORD FOR WATER.

## CULTURAL MEANING

TO THE CHINESE, WATER IS THE SOURCE OF ALL LIFE. IN CHINESE MYTHOLOGY, DRAGONS ARE BELIEVED TO CONTROL THE RAIN THAT FILLED THE RIVERS. CHINESE CULTURE IS CENTERED AROUND THE INTERNAL WATERWAYS THE COVER THE COUNTRY, THE MOST IMPORTANT OF WHICH IS THE YELLOW RIVER AROUND WHICH THE FIRST CHINESE CIVILIZATION THRIVED. WITH THE MAJORITY OF CHINA LANDLOCKED, CULTURAL FOCUS NEVER SHIFTED TOWARDS THE OCEAN THAT ONLY THE COASTAL PROVIDENCES EXPERIENCED. IN FACT, THE OCEAN WAS OFTEN VIEWED AS A GIANT MOAT THAT SEPARATED CHINA FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD, A GREAT UNCROSSABLE EXPANSE. LIKE MANY CIVILIZATIONS, THE FAMILIARITY OF WATER ALSO LENT ITSELF TO ANALOGIES COMPARING LIFE TO FLOWING STREAMS. 水 AS A RADICAL IS USED FOR MANY ASSOCIATIONS, WHETHER WATER ITSELF IS THE MAIN IDEA OR THE IDEAS SURROUNDING WATER AND ITS MOVEMENTS IN THE RIVERS AND STREAMS.

(ZHǐ)  
JUICE, SAUCE

(FÚ)  
TO FLOAT

(CHŌNG)  
TO RINSE, TO RUSH

(YǒNG)  
SWIMMING

(MÉI)  
NONE, TO NOT HAVE;  
TO DROWN

WORDS THAT ARE ASSOCIATED TO WATER USE 水 AS A RADICAL WHICH TAKES THE FORM OF 氵. LIQUIDS OFTEN INCLUDE THE 水 RADICAL AS AN ASSOCIATION TO WATER'S STATE OF MATTER. OTHER ASSOCIATIONS USED WITH THE 水 RADICAL INCLUDE WATER RELATED ACTIVITIES AND ABSTRACT MEANINGS TAKEN FROM WATER ANALOGIES.

(YǒNG)  
ETERNAL

水 ALSO SERVES AS THE BASE PICTOGRAPH FOR MORE COMPLEX PICTOGRAMS THAT BUILD OFF THE KNOWN BEHAVIOR OF WATER AND DERIVES ABSTRACT MEANINGS FROM THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, THE CHARACTER FOR ETERNAL COMES FROM A PICTOGRAPH SHOWING 2 RIVERS FLOWING TOGETHER, BRINGING AN IMAGE OF PERPETUITY.

AS AN ISLAND NATION, WATER FOR JAPAN CARRIED DIFFERENT CULTURAL CONNOTATIONS FROM CHINA. MUCH OF JAPAN'S ECONOMY WAS BASED ON THE SEAS SURROUNDING THE ISLANDS FOR FISHING AND SAILING. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OCEAN IS CAPTURED IN THE SEIGAIHA PATTERN THAT IS ICONIC TO JAPANESE CULTURE AND THE MEANING ASSOCIATED TO IT. INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN WAVES, THE PATTERN OF CONCENTRIC ARCS THAT EVOKE THE CONSTANTLY MOTION OF THE OCEAN REPRESENT GOOD LUCK, POWER, AND RESILIENCE, REFLECTING THE VIEWS THAT THE JAPANESE HAD OF THE OCEAN. FRESHWATER ALSO HOLDS SIGNIFICANT IMPORTANCE IN JAPANESE CULTURE AS THE MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN OF THE ISLANDS MADE FRESH WATER HARD TO COME BY, BRINGING FOCUS TO WATER SOURCES AND PURITY.

(すいじゅん)  
(SUIJUN)  
LEVEL, STANDARD;  
(WATER LEVEL)

(しみず)  
(SHIMIZU)  
SPRING WATER

(すいどう)  
(SUIDO)  
WATER SUPPLY

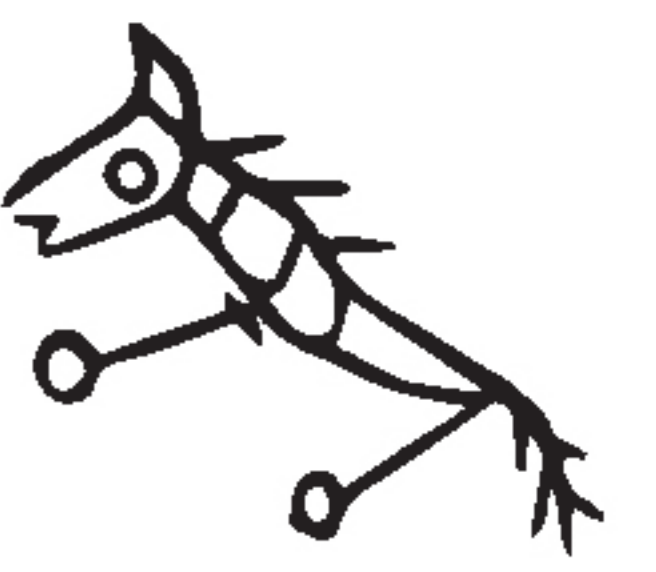
(すいでん)  
(SUIDEN)  
RICE PADDY

(すいえい)  
(SUIEI)  
SWIMMING

IN JAPANESE, THE 水 KANJI IS USED LESS FOR METAPHORICAL ANALOGIES BUT MORE PRACTICAL NOUNS, HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF DRINKABLE WATER'S CONSERVATION AND USAGE.



# HORSE



馬 IS THE CHINESE CHARACTER FOR HORSE. THE CHARACTER IS SIMPLIFIED FROM A HORSE WITH A FLOWING MANE, REPRESENTED BY THE TOP HALF, WITH ITS LEGS AND TAIL REPRESENTED BY THE LOWER HALF. THE CHINESE PRONUNCIATION IS WITH THE THIRD TONE (A LONG, HIGH-LOW-HIGH TONE). THE JAPANESE ONYOMI PRONUNCIATION IS DERIVED FROM THE ORIGINAL CHINESE PRONUNCIATION WHILE THE KUNYOMI PRONUNCIATION COMES FROM THE ORIGINAL JAPANESE WORD FOR HORSE.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

SIMPLIFIED: 马  
PINYIN: Mǎ  
ONYOMI: マ (BA)  
KUNYOMI: うま (UMA)  
MEANING: HORSE

## CULTURAL MEANING

THE USE OF 马 AS A RADICAL IS UNRELATED TO THE MEANING OF HORSE IN CHINESE. THIS RADICAL IS USED MAINLY AS A PHONETIC COMPONENT, SERVING AS AN INDICATOR OF WHAT PRONUNCIATION OF THE COMPOUND CHARACTER IS.

妈

(MĀ)  
MOTHER

骂

(MÀ)  
TO REPRIMAND

吗

(MA)  
QUESTION INDICATOR  
(USED AT THE END OF A SENTENCE)

玛

(Mǎ)  
AGATE

码

(Mǎ)  
DIGIT

马 IS A RADICAL COMMONLY USED AS A PHONETIC COMPONENT. ALL OF THE CHARACTERS IN THIS SET WITH THE RADICAL 马 ARE PRONOUNCED AS MA WITH DIFFERENT TONES AND DIFFERENT MEANINGS. THESE MEANINGS ARE HINTED BY THE OTHER COMPONENTS IN THE CHARACTER AND DIFFERENTIATED IN ORAL SPEECH BASED ON CONTEXT.

IN JAPANESE, OFTENTIMES THE ORIGINAL CHINESE PRONUNCIATION IS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH THE KANJI IN EVERYDAY USAGE. THEY ARE USED MOSTLY AS REPLACEMENTS FOR THE JAPANESE WORDS ALLOWING THEM TO BE WRITTEN IN CHARACTERS INSTEAD OF BY PRONUNCIATION WITH HIRAGANA OR KATAKANA. AS A RESULT, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 马 AS A PHONETIC COMPONENT IS NOT OBSERVED IN JAPANESE KANJI. THE KANJI IS USED FOR THE ASSOCIATION TO HORSES.

出馬

(しゅつば)  
(SHUTSUBA)  
GOING ON HORSEBACK;  
GOING IN PERSON

競馬

(けいば)  
(KEIBA)  
HORSE RACING

馬場

(ばば)  
(BABA)  
HORSE-RIDING GROUND

競馬場

(けいばじょう)  
(KEIBAJYO)  
RACETRACK

IN JAPANESE KANJI, THE USE OF 馬 (KANJI USES ONLY TRADITIONAL CHINESE SCRIPT) IS FOR ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH HORSES. JAPANESE KANJI RARELY USES CHINESE PRONUNCIATIONS SO THE IMPORTANCE OF 馬 AS A PHONETIC COMPONENT IS NOT CARRIED OVER.



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