
Wherever we turn in Japanese culture and civilization, at least in the historical period, we confront evidence for the enormous importance of writing throughout Japanese life. What is true of contemporary Japan, with its word-processors and fax-networks, is *mutatis mutandis* also true of earlier centuries. The Nara Period had its colleges of scribes busy turning out copies of Buddhist and Confucian texts. The Kamakura regime reached out its hand of control into virtually every aspect of human life largely through a vast document-based bureaucracy churning out mountains of texts. And the three hundred years of the Tokugawa hegemony saw reading and writing become not only the prestige occupation for what still persisted in calling itself the "warrior class", but also common coin among merchants and many other commoners. To study Japan while ignoring the nature, function, and history of writing is to overlook one of the most massive cultural monuments in the entire history of man in the Far East – as if one were to study Egypt but in the process manage to overlook the pyramids, not to mention the hieroglyphs.

Strangely enough, despite the enormous proliferation of Japanological publications of every possible variety and subject-matter over the last several decades, there have been only two full-scale attempts at the study of the Japanese writing system especially focused upon its history. The first was Y.S. Habein, *The History of the Japanese Written Language* (Tôkyô: Tôkyô University Press, 1984), an incredible farrago of fantasy and foolishness, published in all seriousness by Japan's most prestigious academic institution.1 This book told us nothing about the Japanese writing system or about anything else, for that matter. All that it achieved was to pose the question – as yet unanswered – whether such books appear because no one at the Tôkyô University Press can read English, or because no one there can read Japanese. The second attempt, a long chapter on "Schrift und Schriftgeschichte" by Wolfram Müller-Yokota in the otherwise eminently useful *Sprache und Schrift Japans* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989) edited by Bruno Lewin in the *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, while head-and-shoulders above Habein, nevertheless still left much to be desired.2 These problems with the existing contributions to the subject made the anticipation with which one greeted the news of this new book

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1 See the review in *Journal of Japanese Studies* 12, 1986, 227–32.

all the more lively. But the hopes thus entertained have been more or less dashed. Once more, the pyramids have been overlooked, and with them, the hieroglyphs as well. We still do not have what Western Japanology needs: a sound, reliable account of the history of writing in Japan.

Given the importance of his topic, it would be pleasant to be able to report that Professor Seeley has approached his self-appointed task not only through the study of the Japanese secondary literature (for which his book gives much, if too often diffuse and undigested, evidence), but also with due attention to basic issues of the nature of writing systems in general, and in particular, to the nature of their relationship to language. But for this, unfortunately, his new book shows little if any concern.

What one misses most of all in these pages is an attempt to define "writing" and "writing systems" in sociolinguistic terms—a definition (or definitions) that would relate these entities to the employment of language. Of that, one finds nothing. Seeley begins, continues, and ends still simply talking about "writing" and "writing systems", but he never tells us what he means by these key terms.

Several times, to be sure, Seeley mentions the problem of whether or not, at some early period in their history, the Japanese did or did not understand "the function of writing" (pp. 12, 13). But he never tells us what he himself understands by "the function of writing". And with this major lapsus in his presentation, much of what he has to say on the subject turns out to be far less informative than it might otherwise have been.

Indeed, given the total absence of any attempt at the theory of writing, and the striking lack of any indication that Seeley himself has paid sufficient attention to this cardinal issue, the reader of his book soon gets the uncomfortable feeling that for the author, "writing" is something that exists somewhere in a sociolinguistic vacuum, a strange activity entirely divorced from all other human behavior, scratching marks on stone, metal, or paper, but marks that exist only for and in themselves, merely as marks and as nothing else, without any immediate or compelling relationship to language or society.

Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. One hopes that Seeley too would agree that such a sterile, in vacuo approach to writing as an activity unrelated to human society is pointless and unproductive. But in that case, Seeley ought first of all to have taken the trouble to evolve for himself, and then to share with his readers, a theory of writing and a hypothesis of writing systems that would relate these specific behavior-patterns as they surface in Japanese society to other, less national-specific, norms. This he has not troubled to do.

Closely tied to this primary and fatal lapsus is Seeley's approach to Chinese script and the Chinese writing system. It goes without saying that a solid theore-
tical approach to these two enormous subjects is a *sine qua non* of any attempt to treat Japanese writing and the Japanese writing system, which derive directly from the Chinese. Here too, and equally unfortunately, Seeley has not taken sufficient time and effort to acquaint himself with any useful methodological approach to the issues involved. Instead he has been satisfied to repeat unaltered a hoary set of "common sense" – and highly misleading! – clichés about Chinese script and language that, in their turn, render many of his statements about the use of Chinese characters in the Japanese writing system misleading and at times downright erroneous.

For Seeley, the Chinese writing system is not a means for writing the Chinese language; indeed, as we shall see shortly below, for Seeley, the Chinese language itself does not really exist. Rather, Chinese characters for Seeley are also mere marks-on-paper that exist in yet another sociolinguistic vacuum. They are said to have "readings", and they are said to have "meanings" (p. 1). But what is never clearly enough said about them is that they are nothing more or less than symbols used to write (or, represent) words in the Chinese language; and that it is these words – not the characters that are used to write them – that have sounds (i.e., "readings") and sense (i.e., "meanings").

This approach to Chinese as found in Seeley's book is one with which many readers will of course be familiar. In many ways it sums up the once-fashionable "Orientalistic" view of China, its language, and its culture as something inscrutable and beyond the ken of the "European mind". It survives even today in certain scholarly circles. In and of itself this view, grossly misleading though it surely is, might even be said to constitute a quaint historical-cultural artifact – a former misconception of the East by the West that is worthy of study in its own right, less for what it tells us about "them" than for what it tells us about ourselves.

But whatever may be said in its favor – and that is at best, not very much – it must be pointed out that for the past several decades most responsible Sinological circles have resolutely moved away from this "Orientalistic" approach to Chinese script. For all its difficulties and elaborations, the Chinese script is a writing system like any other: it is only a way of writing a language, to which primary sociolinguistic institution (i.e., body of social behavior and interaction) it stands in an entirely secondary relationship.

But since Seeley has unwisely chosen to discuss Chinese not from this now generally accepted point-of-view, but from the old "Orientalistic" approach that would find in its writing system characters that have in and of themselves "readings" on the one hand and "meanings" on the other, it follows as a necessary consequence that he soon becomes embroiled in needless complications when he turns to the task of describing how Chinese script was borrowed in order to write Japanese. Seed sown by soiled hands grows as well as that sown by clean, the lotus
blooms pure white though its roots are mired in the mud. But Seeley’s description and attempt at a history of the Japanese writing system are both unable to rise above the soil and mud of the unfortunate, unsatisfactory, and simply incorrect view that he entertains concerning the Chinese script.

So serious, indeed, is this problem that before long we find Seeley unwittingly denying the very existence of the Chinese language itself. Out of his erroneous view of Chinese writing he has, in a manner of speaking, evolved an equally erroneous conclusion about the Chinese language. For him, the Chinese script does not write the Chinese language: the script has “readings” and the graphs have “meanings”, but there are no words. And if there are no words, then there is — and was — no language — which is, of course, quite absurd, though it is precisely what Seeley ends up telling his readers.

Of course, this wholesale annihilation of the Chinese language is no original invention of Seeley. He has found the model for it in the secondary literature of the kokugogaku, which long ago internalized the Chinese script, until now it is unblushingly brought forward by the Nihonjin-ron advocates as a quintessentially Japanese cultural artifact, something that resembles the people and the country in being “better than what foreigners have”. Seeley also takes the tune from his Japanese mentors in similarly consigning to indecent obscurity all evidence for the Korean language and especially for the Old Korean hyangga orthography, clearly the ultimate surviving model for the orthography of the Man’yōshū and other old Japanese “mixed script” (i.e., phonogram, logogram, rebus) texts. Ogura Shinpei, discoverer and first decipherer of the hyangga, immediately recognized and acknowledged the debt of the Old Japanese to their Korean models. It was still possible to write such things in Ogura’s time, but not today, and Seeley has evidently never heard of them. Once Seeley has thus annihilated the Chinese language, more suffers than simply “the history of writing in Japan”; out the window, baby-with-the-bath-water, also goes a major portion of the history of the Japanese language, since for Seeley there are no Japanese words borrowed from Chinese, there are only “readings”. And how could there possibly be Chinese loanwords (or even more far-fetched, Korean loanwords?) in Japanese, when neither Chinese nor Korean ever existed? The entry of massive numbers of Chinese loanwords into Japanese, and in

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3 Suzuki Takao in particular has written on this theme with special fervor. In his Tozassreta gengo, Nihongo no sekai (1975) he attempted to illustrate the “superiority of the Japanese script”, i.e., of Chinese characters used to write Sino-Japanese neologisms, with a particularly ludicrous example. See the reviewer’s Japan’s Modern Myth, The Language and Beyond (New York & Tokyo, 1982), p. 189ff.; Suzuki’s original argument may now also be inspected in the translation of his 1975 book by I. Hijiya-Kirschmireit, Eine verschlossene Sprache, Die Welt des Japanischen (München, 1990), p. 94ff.

4 In his Kyōka oyobi Rité no kenyū, Keijō Teikoku Daigaku [sic!], 1929.
particular the manner in which this flood of borrowings was facilitated by the use of Chinese characters in writing Japanese texts, is one of the genuinely important, and truly significant, chapters in human sociolinguistic history. In it, language is intimately bound-up with "the history of writing in Japan". But concerning it, there is not one word in this entire book.

There is a single exception to Seeley's thoroughgoing anathema against Chinese. In a longish note (33 on pp. 25–26) Seeley begins to waffle a bit, almost to the point of actually mentioning "the Chinese language" and making an arcane reference to "Koreanism". Unfortunately, this note is too little and too late, moreover it is couched in a curious crab-wise style that stresses what Seeley does not want us to understand, but does not help us to understand what he is trying to say: "Use of the term 'Chinese style' is not meant to imply that the Chinese language was not known and used in Japan" – then why use the term? Seeley lamely argues that "it is not always possible to be certain that the language which a writer ... intended to represent was Chinese as opposed to Japanese" – but surely from this difficulty it hardly follows that it was always some "style" of Japanese. This note reads like a proleptical accretion added after Seeley's text was finished, probably in response to a perceptive reader's comment that hit on this point; but it was not a good idea. As the note now stands it merely muddies the water. Without it the text has at least the merit of consistency; it is wrong and misleading, but consistently so.

In thus annihilating the Chinese language totally out of existence, of course, Seeley ultimately obscures one of the most important and significant episodes of human history in the Far East, namely the extensive employment that the Japanese have also made of the Chinese language – not merely of the Chinese script, not merely of the Chinese characters, but of the language as well – over the centuries of their history. For Seeley all this never happened. Roughly equivalent would be to write about the history of Europe but attempt to conceal from one's readers that the Crusades ever took place.

This obliteration of the Chinese language from the pages of Seeley's history may be documented from virtually every page of his book; here we shall necessarily content ourselves with a few representative examples, from among the hundreds that might be cited in evidence.

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5 This difficulty of not always being able to be certain precisely which language a given text is "in", or what language a given author is "trying to write in", is no Japanese monopoly or speciality. Between 1710 and 1740 Abbot Rupert II of Ottobeuren found the leisure to compile fourteen huge volumes of his diary, but for all that, he never was able to decide which language he was writing in, as witness such expostulations, "Ich habe vermeint, ich mache mir coram Deo et hominibus ein meritem...", etc., etc. (cited from W. Braunfels, Abendländische Klosterbaukunst, Köln 1978, p. 309, q.v. for a rich hoard of similar language-mixture). If the Japanese (and Seeley) knew of such texts, would they call them Doku-Ra hentaibun? Or would it be Dokubun Ra-majiri-tai?
"The form of writing that was brought over to Japan at this period was Chinese, that is to say, Chinese characters arranged according to the conventions of classical Chinese syntax" (p. 6). Such are the lengths to which Seeley is prepared to go in order to deny to himself and to his readers that Chinese as a language ever existed, and that Chinese as a language was ever used in Japan. For him, it is just marks on paper: "characters arranged according to the conventions of classical Chinese syntax"! When it comes to the Japanese themselves (concerning whom Seeley too often employs the rather unfortunate expression "native Japanese" [e.g., p. 26]: what other kind is there?), they are described as having "difficulty ... composing in the Chinese style" (p. 26). The syntactic requirements of the Chinese language are spoken of as requirements of "Chinese style" (p. 27). The text known today as the Kaifūsō is the first anthology of Chinese-language poetry written in Japan by Japanese; but for Seeley, it is not in the Chinese language, it merely contains "Chinese style poems" (p. 80).

For centuries, the major British universities have annually published collections of poetry and prose written in Greek and Latin by the fellows. Until recently, a Latin address was an integral part of the commencement ceremonies at Harvard College. All these texts were in Latin or Greek; Latin and Greek are languages — as is Chinese. Simply because the Oxford and Cambridge prize collections are written by Englishmen, or Scotsmen, or Irishmen, or because the Latin orations at Harvard were composed by Americans, we do not refer to them as being merely in "the Latin, or the Greek, style". They may have been in bad Latin or good Latin, bad Greek or good Greek. But they were in those LANGUAGES; and a language is not a "style".

Much of the poetry in the Kaifūsō betrays signs of its foreign authorship. To learn to write in a foreign language is anything but easy, and to learn to write poetry in a foreign language is a particularly tedious task. But the errors and poetic infelicities in the Kaifūsō, or in the many other Chinese language texts written in early (and later on, in not-so-early) Japan, do not in any way obscure the fact that these texts are in Chinese, not in "Chinese style".

This book never recovers from Seeley’s initial major misstep. From denigrating the Chinese language into a mere style, Seeley then goes on to create out of whole cloth an enormous inventory of "styles" that are supposed to be descriptive of different varieties of Japanese. They are never defined, nor is their connection with language ever made clear. For Seeley, they are all nothing more than different ways

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6 The review by Iriya Yoshitaka of Kojima Noriyuki’s 1964 edition of the Kaifūsō in Vol. 69 of the Nihon koten bungaku taisetsi in Chūgoku Bungakushō 20, 1965, 130–48 is particularly relevant to this point, and especially interesting for pointing out specific solecisms in the Chinese language of these poems that later were canonized in the Japanese schools, where eventually they became "models of poetic expression".
for arranging marks on paper.

Thus, over and above a "Chinese style" we have a "hybrid style" and a "Japanese style" (p. 46), all undefined, undescribed, and unclear in so far as their relationship to language is concerned. This goes on and on; we have a "Chinese-orientated hybrid style" (p. 75), as well as a "Japaniscised hybrid style" (p. 101, note 24). And of a certain text, we are even told that its orthography (sic!) is a "heavily-Japaniscised hybrid" (p. 103, caption to Plate 21). One can only reflect with pity upon the struggles of students in various parts of the world in the years ahead who try to make some sense or system out of all this, when in plain truth there is none. This is a cruel thing to have done to the many readers sincerely interested in Japan and in the history of humanistic institutions in Japan who will turn to this book and try to make something out of these almost infinitely elaborated – and quite equally meaningless – categories of "style".

In the course of attempting to "explain" the unexplainable, Seeley brings off a number of truly memorable purple passages, a few of which must be quoted intact if the reader of this review is to get an idea of how far all this pointless "style" discourse actually goes in these pages:

"Individual hybrid texts tend typically to gravitate towards either a Chinese or a Japanese model, rather than a point approximately midway between the Chinese and Japanese styles" (p. 28).

"Most – if not all – Japanese scholars seem to regard senmyō as being in Japanese rather than hybrid style, but the present writer classifies these texts as hybrid due to the presence of a small number of Chinese-type constructions" (p. 29 note 43).

"Although the Japanese style provided means of avoiding the difficulties of the Chinese style and, to a lesser extent, the hybrid style also, at first – during the latter part of the seventh century – it seems to have enjoyed little popularity" (p. 31).

"As for the written form of the Nihon shoki, the style is Chinese, except for a relatively small number of sequences in hybrid style, and the songs, which are in Japanese style" (p. 48).

"The incipient tendency from about the end of the eighth century to mark Chinese or Chinese style texts for reading as Japanese probably reflects the growing importance of this reading method in relation to the ondoku method, ... " (p. 62).

Once more, one can only commiserate with students who will inevitably waste time and energy in the vain attempt to understand this.

But the problem of terms in this book is even greater than the above remarks can document. On virtually every page, Seeley lets himself drift without a rudder in a sea of half-understood, half-explained quasi-technical terms, among which his elaborate proliferation of this or that "style" is only the tip of the iceberg. He
reproduces, always without sufficient explanation and almost always without any good reason, the over-elaborate terminology with which Japanese *kokugogaku* has always treated the details of the writing system. He also goes one unnecessary and misleading step further in too many cases where he treats as technical terms what are in Japanese merely descriptive phrases, e.g. *kanjikanamajiribun* (pp. 59, 90). Sometimes this happens because Seeley has not himself understood the term (or pseudoterm) at issue: *seion* (p. 77, note 50) is never explained, though it is very simple, meaning nothing more or less than syllables with voiceless initials; and what is the student to make of the rendering of *hansetsu* (i.e. Chin. *fan-ch’ieh*) as “exponential analysis” (p. 121, note 70)?! (The term is of course a commonplace of Chinese historical phonology, where it refers to the analysis of a syllabic morpheme into ‘initial’ and ‘final’.)

Particularly bewildering are Seeley’s macaronic coinages that combine a Japanese term with an English partner: “on phonograms” (p. 45, twice, and passim); “irregular kun reading” (p. 45), not to mention romanizations of Japanese words (which usually are not technical terms) that are not only unexplained (or explained unsatisfactorily), but for which the Chinese characters are missing in the unwieldy “character concordance” (sic! it is simply a glossary) that occupies pp. 216–29 (e.g., *iten*, p. 69; *hekian*, p. 109 note 17).

Seeley’s command of English-language technical terms, even the simplest, is even less secure than his control of Japanese. Almost every one he attempts must be rewritten. A sample: ‘romanisation’ (spelling sic!), p. [xi], read: ‘reconstruction’; ‘equivalent’, p. 17, read: ‘transcription’; ‘particle’, p. 19 note 11, p. 29 note 43, read: ‘relative’; ‘transliteration’, p. 20, p. 24, p. 27 and passim, read: ‘transcription’; ‘actual text’, p. 26 note 37, read: ‘transmitted text’; ‘semantic association’, p. 29 note 42, read: ‘translation’. And more than once, one is at a loss to suggest what he ought to have written, so obscure is his language: ‘associated meaning’ and ‘associated sense’ (both p. 52) apparently mean the same: but what?

Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Seeley’s book collapses under the sheer weight of its half-understood and mostly-misleading would-be technical terminology in both Japanese and English from p. 1 on, where he fumbles badly at an attempt to define and explain *kun*; and his terminological confusion peaks on p. 153 when he renders *tōyō kanji* as “List of Characters for Current Use”. From this point on there are still 90 pages to go, all blurred by Seeley’s misunderstanding of the term *tōyō*. Again, there is a proleptic rejoinder somewhat after the fact (p. 158: “The term *tōyō kanji* has been rendered in the present study as ‘characters for current use’, though it could equally well be translated as ‘characters for temporary use’”. If so, why not do it?). But even this misses the point of the exercise by going on to say, “Implicit in this term, in other words, [sic!] was the suggestion that the T[ōyō] K[anji] list was to be modified as necessary at some time in the
future." Hardly. The qualifying term tōyō implied that the kanji would serve as a temporary expedient only until the Japanese government saw fit to abolish them entirely and use romanization instead, a step which at that point in history was still being strongly advocated by certain elements in Washington and in General Headquarters, Tōkyō. Involved here is no mere quibble about how to translate something; this really deals with "the history of writing in Japan", and Seeley has simply got it wrong.

Compared with this lapsus, Seeley's other obfuscations of Japanese history in particular and of far Eastern culture in general are only minor blemishes. More than once he writes of what he terms "a feature arising naturally out of the need or desire to write rapidly" (e.g., p. 61). But dare we today ascribe such totally modern motives and values to the cultures of past periods and far-distant lands? I think not. Nor do I believe that either an Old Japanese or a Heian scribe would have found anything at all "natural" in any of this. Seeley asks us to believe in the existence of "ideals of lucidity on the one hand and reasonable brevity on the other" in eighth-century Japanese élite circles (p. 46). Most of us who have studied Japan and the Japanese would have the greatest difficulty citing specific examples of such ideals in Japanese society even in this year of grace 1992, much less, with Seeley, in the eighth-century.

Since there is virtually no attention to the Japanese language in this book, it is not surprising that the phonology of Old Japanese hardly receives mention. But on those few pages where it does appear, Seeley shows that he is as sadly out of his depth on this topic as he is when discussing writing. A few names and words are sometimes written in Old Japanese, sometimes not, for no discernible reason (e.g., 'Achiki', p. 4, but 'Atiki', p. 5); other half-hearted attempts in this direction vocalize only a part of the word ('SiFimaro' for 'SiFimarō', p. 60 note 6), while still other references to the Old Japanese vowels (e.g., p. 50, p. 105 note 6) begin to give the impression that Seeley is not only highly insecure but actually quite uninformed about all this vowel business. And at last this impression is confirmed, in spades. In two passages Seeley tips his hand to reveal that he plainly has no idea what any of this is about: he never even mentions the Old Japanese vowels.

An American Japanologist who was personally involved with these matters in post-war Japan wrote, "The reduction to 1,850 characters is undoubtedly meant to anticipate a future time when all the kanji will be outlawed and when the Japanese language will be written entirely in romanization" (J.K. Yamagïwa, 'Reforms in the Language and Orthography of Newspapers in Japan', Journal of the American Oriental Society, 68, 1948, 47). The Yamagiwa eye-witness documentation for this in situ understanding of the tōyō in tōyō kanji is cited, together with the correct interpretation of the term, in my book The Japanese Language (1967), pp. 135–38. Seeley cites this book several times, always for the most trivial matters (e.g., p. 76 note 46), but shows no sign of having read those portions of it that, like these pages on tōyō kanji, actually deal with "the history of writing in Japan".
in his attempt to “explain” kó and otsu (p. 189), nor does he realize that the term jódai tokushu kanazukai also refers to exactly the same phenomenon (p. 105 note 7).  

But Seeley’s cursory treatment of the details of Old Japanese phonology is only the tip of an iceberg of scholarly naïvité and lack of background that rears itself on virtually every page of this book. Is it possible to write a “history of writing in Japan” and never mention the Bussokuseki poem-stele inscription at the Yakushi-ji in Nara, or the Wei chih transcriptions of putative Japanese names and titles that became the models for the Nara scribes? Seeley never alludes to either. Surely nothing could be more central to the “history of writing in Japan” than the genesis and nature of the kana syllabaries, especially the question of the influence of Indic phonological theory and praxis upon the development of the kana by way of Buddhist siddham studies. Of all that there is not one word in this book, nor a single citation of the monumental study by Mabuchi Kazuo, Nihon ingakushi no kenkyú (2 vols., 1962–63) in which these issues were long ago ventilated in exemplary fashion. Instead, Seeley leads the reader to suspect that, just as in the case of the Old Japanese kó and otsu vowels, so also in the case of the kana, he simply does not understand what the term really means: if he did, why would he “explain” the gojú onzu as “a traditional conceptual framework for pre-modern Japanese language theory” (p. 140 note 16)? The Tódai-ji fujumon-kó is twice described as “a draft version of a Buddhist liturgical text” (pp. 70, 92); Seeley must never have read it. It is not the Nihongi but the Kojiki that ends with the reign of Suiko (p. 47). Three passages from the Kojiki (pp. 4–5; 43–44) and the Nihongi (p. 5) that Seeley pretends to have translated ab initio are so transparently copied from the published translations of Philippi and Aston, resp., that they cross that thin line that divides flattery-by-imitation from down-right plagiarism. In all three passages, Seeley has tampered with the published translations (which he never credits) only by introducing a few infelicities of style and making a few unexplained and unnoted deletions (he also has ‘vol. 2’ incorrectly for vol. 1 as the source for his second Nihongi passage, p. 5 note 7). So also for three allegedly original translations by Seeley of fragmentary passages from the Genji monogatari said to include “references to kana and other script forms” (p. 79).  

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8 Needless (perhaps) to add, it is a matter of acute embarrassment for the reviewer to find himself thanked by Seeley, especially in connection with the transcription of Old Japanese (pp. ix–x; also on an unnumbered page ff.). It is not pleasant to find oneself held responsible, if only in part and by implication, for even a small portion of this farrago.

these fragments deal with the aesthetics of Heian calligraphy, not with the nature or function of writing, and the conclusions that Seeley tries to draw from them are unsupported by their evidence. But even granting that, Seeley's Englishings are only even moderately close to the sense of the originals when he borrows (without giving credit) from Seidensticker and Waley. When he is really on his own amidst the thickets of Heian prose he is so far off target that it is difficult to identify what lines in the text-edition he is trying to render even given his (for once) correct page numbers.10

Still more scholarly naïveté surfaces in his hundreds of citations crediting E.O. Reischauer as the author of every article in the nine volumes of the Kōdansha Encyclopedia of Japan, as also in footnote after footnote carefully crediting this or that Japanese book or article as the authority for the most ordinary information (e.g., p. 4 note 5 citing not one but two authorities to the effect that "kisi . . . is explained . . . as a term denoting an official Korean rank" — were there any "unofficial Korean ranks")? Nor is Seeley by any means inept at tautology: "A major role of katakana was to indicate pronunciation" (p. 110 note 22; what then were its minor roles?).

Culling Seeley's clichés and tautologies from these pages may provide a certain amount of sport; but the same can hardly be said of the truly staggering numbers of examples of slovenly English and stylistic eyesores to be found in these pages: 'actually occurring', p. 16; read: 'actually occurring'; 'occurrence', p. 17 note 6, read: 'attested'; 'just proper nouns', p. 44, read: 'only proper nouns'; 'content-matter', p. 47, read: 'contents'; 'firstly', p. 50 note 33, read: 'first'; 'most well-known', p. 52, read: 'best known'; 'simplification to', p. 59, read: 'simplification of'; 'pointed to', p. 108 note 14, read: 'pointed out'. The split infinitive roams unchallenged in these pages ('to clearly regret', p. 81; 'to falsely present', p. 113; 'to overtly indicate', p. 206), as does the misplaced modifier: 'which are more durable than paper' in note 1 on p. 16. And like far too many foreign students of Japanese, Seeley has emerged from his struggles with the language now unable to write a plain English declarative statement without making proleptic provision for a Japanese . . . wa somewhere along the way: 'As for the written form of the Nihonshoki, the style is Chinese, . . . ' (p. 48). Borrowing a card from Seeley's terminological deck, we might term this sort of diction "a hybrid style which is very close to English style" — or is it "a Japanese-oriented hybrid style of English"?

10 Seeley particularly tips his hand in his "translation" of his fragment (b), where his interpolation of "the type normally written by men" obviously is taken over from Waley's free-wheeling paraphrase, itself devised in a rather desperate attempt to "make sense" of the text's ni(k)ki. In the context of the passage the word is not 'diary' but instead refers to prose captions written into a picture-scroll. But even correctly understood, none of the three fragments does anything to clarify Heian understanding of the terms mana and ka(n)na.
Perhaps the publishers believed that, English being the author’s “native language”, it was not necessary to employ a competent English-language copy-editor before setting the book in type. They were wrong. Quite apart from such questions of incorrect grammar and questionable syntax as are sampled above, if Seeley’s curious penchant for employing double-hyphens incorrectly for commas in punctuating restrictive secondary clauses (e.g. ‘further examples – though without accompanying photographs – are to be found...’, p. 99 note 17 and passim hundreds of times) had been controlled by an editor, the book would have been probably only one third as long as it now is.

The type-setting and press-work are, one must finally report, quite on a level with the author’s scholarship. The plates are murky and generally unreadable. Cutting-and-pasting work to insert kana into camera-ready copy has been done in a slovenly fashion, leaving irrelevant and bewildering vertical lines in the text that will puzzle and mislead many (e.g., the line between yo and wi, p. 111, line 1; the line before wo, loc. cit., line 13; the lines following o and wi, loc. cit., line 23; the two lines similarly disfiguring p. 115, line 9, and the one at the end of loc. cit., line 10, etc.; many more could be cited). Those who can read Japanese will only be annoyed; those who cannot will be seriously puzzled. Particularly in view of the enormously high price of the book, this is a shocking example of the printer’s art. And if E.J. Brill intend to continue with further volumes in their Japanese Studies Library, then they ought to supply their print-shop with suitable macrons for printing Japanese long vowels on their smaller italic font (the dieresis that appears here from time to time, e.g., in the caption to Fig. 5, p. 94, is hardly a substitute, and even the proper macron is too little and too small, loc. cit.). Even more importantly, Brill should submit the next MS proposed for this series to competent readers who know English and at least something about Japanese. If that had been done in this case, we would not now have the problem of this book, written by an author who not only does not understand what “romanization” is, but cannot even spell the word correctly (vide supra).

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Das neue Jahrbuch, herausgegeben vom Staatlichen Museum für Völkerkunde München und vom Institut für Völkerkunde und Afrikanistik der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München besticht durch soliden Druck, festen Leineninband und gute Illustrationen. Der erste Band ist eine Festschrift für den ungarischen, in München wirkenden Völkerkundler László Vajda, dessen Porträt als