

## Chinese and Sino-Japanese lexical items in the Hachijō language of Japan

Due to the diffusion of *Hàn* characters and of Chinese political, scientific and cultural models during the Middle Ages, Chinese loanwords now form a significant part of the lexicon of many Eastern-Asian languages, which, following Samuel Martin (1953: 4) are often called ‘Sino-Xenic’ languages. This statement is true for almost all the languages of Japan, with the notable exception of Ainu.

Thus, in standard Japanese, Chinese loanwords are so numerous that, for the most part, they form their own lexical category called 漢語 *kango* ‘*Hàn* words’, which is considered distinct from ‘loanwords’ *per se*, called *gairaigo* 外来語. Those *kango* are found in all semantic fields of Japanese, and are estimated to form about one third of the commonly used Japanese lexicon, and possibly more than half of the language’s lexemes. To some extent, they do have a few morphosyntactic, phonological and lexical idiosyncrasies within Japanese, but they were also ‘nativised’ and altered in many ways, and many new compounds not originally existing in Chinese were also coined within this category. Thus, they are best referred to as ‘Sino-Japanese’ words, rather than ‘Chinese loanwords’.

Similarly, the remote Hachijō language, spoken on small volcanic islands in the south east of Tōkyō, features many Chinese and Sino-Japanese lexical items.

Those are, not unlike Standard Japanese *kango*, found in various semantic fields, such as:

- daily-life objects: *hacchi* ‘bowl’ (SJ 鉢 *hachi*), *dōsoku* ‘candle’ (SJ 蠟燭 *rōsoku*), *indō* ‘ashtray’ (cognate of SJ 印籠 *inrō* ‘seal box’ / ‘pill box’), etc.
- natural species: *dēzu* ‘soybean’ (SJ 大豆 *daizu*), *renge* ‘pink wood-sorrel’ (SJ 蓮華 *renge* ‘lotus flower’), etc.
- social concepts: *bibbō* ‘poverty’ (SJ 貧乏 *bimbō*), *shōbē* ‘trade’ (SJ 商売 *shōbai*), etc.
- family sphere: *kyōdē* ‘siblings’ (SJ 兄弟 *kyōdai*), *kajoku* ‘family’ (SJ 家族 *kazoku*), etc.
- abstract concepts: *ē* ‘love’ (SJ 愛 *ai*), *jiki* ‘strength’ (SJ 力 *riki*), etc.
- religious concepts: *nebbutsu* ‘prayer to Buddha’ (SJ 念仏 *nembutsu*), *yuhē* ‘mortuary tablet’ (SJ 位牌 *ihai*), etc.
- counting and dating: *ippo* ‘one long object’ (SJ 一本 *ippon*), *dēnen* ‘next year’ (SJ 来年 *rainen*), etc.

Similarly, like in standard Japanese, they also underwent various evolutions and alterations, that makes them mixed Sino-Japanese lexemes rather than mere Chinese loanwords.

The existence of those ‘Sino-Hachijō’ lexical items has long been noted and proved especially useful in the study of Hachijō’s historical phonology. Indeed, since most of them do have a clear cognate in standard Japanese and are commonly shared by all the varieties of Hachijō, they are especially useful to observe the phonetic innovations common to all Hachijō varieties, as well as to identify some of the isoglosses between them.

However, to the best of my knowledge, those words have so far never been investigated in any scientific study as forming a distinct lexical category within Hachijō; nor have they, as it seems, been compared with their equivalent in standard Japanese.

Therefore, this presentation will be dedicated to the description of Chinese and Sino-Japanese lexical items in Hachijō, in various aspects, such as:

- their history within Hachijō language, and their various layers of borrowings and adaptations
- their phonological structure and evolutions
- their morphosyntactic behaviour and associated markings
- their frequency of use in both ancient sources and in the contemporary language

In all those aspects, those words will also be compared to their Standard Japanese counterparts, in order to observe both the similarities and the differences between them, and to better understand the lexical structure of both languages.

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