

**KOKUJI (国字): THE JAPANESE “NATIONAL CHARACTERS”.
A CASE STUDY: THE JAPANESE ACQUATIC FAUNA**

Giovanni Borriello*

Roma Tre University, Italy

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Abstract:

The great influence that the Chinese writing system has had on the Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese writing systems is widely demonstrated. Nevertheless, besides the use of the characters directly imported from China, these cultures have had the necessity to create “national characters” to satisfy the needs of their own languages. This paper, that analyzes this phenomenon in the Japanese environment, begins with an analysis of the reasons that have pushed the Japanese “to create” own characters and the reasons why at a certain moment such “creation” has been suspended. In the second part of the paper samples of kokuji will be presented that can be circumscribed to those with radicals 魚・鳥・木・草 and that result to be surely the most numerous and related to species of flora and fauna japonica.

Key words: Kokuji, Japanese Kanji, National Characters.

On Web page <http://homepage2.nifty.com/TAB01645/ohara/index.htm> is possible to read the following presentations in Japanese and English for the first *kokuji* online dictionary edited by Ōhara Nozomu¹:

「俚・厶・畠・鯁」が国字ではないというみなさんは驚かれますか。この辞典では、定説ともいえる扱いを受けてきた文字についても再調査を行い、国字説の誤りを是正するとともに、多くの新たな国字の追加を行っています。

読者の皆様方からのご指摘の点を含め改善に努めてはいますが、改善すべき点は残っています。ご質問のメールもいただけるようになりましたが、本辞典の内容に対する典拠を付けた反論もお待ちしております。

読者の方からのメールにより、欧米からもアクセスしていただいていることがわかりました。

リンクしていただいているページも増えつつあります。基本的にリンクフリーではありますが、リンクした旨ご連絡いただくようお願いします。

日本を代表できる「和製漢字の辞典」として恥ずかしくないものにしていきたいと存じますので、気が付かれた点や感想・質問など遠慮なくメールしていただきますようお願いいたします。

漢字・ジテン（辞典・字典・事典を含む）に関する質問をお受けするために掲示板を、私の全てのWebページを一覧できるように『ジテン・フェチの漢字辞典』を、開設いたしましたので、こちらもご利用ください。²

Wasei Kanji no Jiten – Dictionary of Kanji created in Japan is the first online dictionary dedicated to Kokuji (Kanji created in Japan). Almost all Kanji (Chinese characters) in Japanese were imported from Chinese. But some characters were created by Japanese people. We call them Kokuji 国字 (literally “national characters”). For example, touge 峠, mountain pass was created combining ‘mountain’ 山, ‘up’ 上, and ‘down’ 下. This dictionary includes some Kokuji and Kanji which was thought as Kokuji.³

* Giovanni Borriello PhD (giovanni.borriello77@gmail.com), Professor of History and Institutions of Asia, Roma Tre University, Italy.

¹ Ōhara Nozomu (ed. by), *Wasei kanji no jiten*, 2000, <http://homepage2.nifty.com/TAB01645/ohara/index.htm> (13.06.2015)

² <http://homepage2.nifty.com/TAB01645/ohara/index.htm> (13.06.2015)

³ <http://homepage2.nifty.com/TAB01645/ohara/abstract.htm> (13.06.2015)

It is known that the Japanese enriched the vocabulary of Chinese characters (*hanzi*, *kanji*) with characters of their own coinage, called *kokuji* ('national characters')⁴. Overall, their number was calculated in 1500⁵. In general, they could be introduced to make use graphically locutions, concepts, especially names of things found absent in Chinese lexicons. It can be confirmed at first glance from the high percentage of *kokuji* with radicals of "tree" and "fish", likely to indicate actual or presumed native species, of which precise corresponding Chinese appeared missing. The matter would appear more compelling because among the other things is well-known the variety and richness of the Japanese flora and fauna patrimony with an high number of species listed as *japonicae*, even if they are not exclusive of Japan, but in any case "typical" of its terraqueous environment⁶.

Now, if we extrapolate the *kokuji* of its aquatic fauna, we are faced with a list of characters, such as the following, taken from the *Dōbun tsūkō*⁷ by Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725): 鮎 *namazu*, 鰯 *iwashi*, 鱈 *tara*, 鮎 *dojō*, 鮭 *subashiri*, 鮪 *bora*, 鰺 *isaza*, 鰩 *konoshiro*, 鰻 *ugui*, 鱈 *kazunoko*, 鰻 *gigi*, 鰻 *kochi*, 鰻 *mate*, 鰻 *shiira*, 鰻 *eri*, 鰻 *asari*.

Reviewing them individually, we find the following data on the basis of the main current lexicons and any possible recurrences in Chinese⁸:

鮎 *namazu* 'Japanese catfish' (*Parasilurus asotus*)⁹;

鰯 *iwashi* 'Japanese sardine' (*Sardinops melanostictus*)¹⁰;

⁴ They are also referred to as *waji* 和字・倭字, *wazokuji* 和俗字, *honpō seisakuji* 本邦製作字, *wasei kanji* 和製漢字.

⁵ Anne Commons, "The development of *kokuji* ('Chinese' characters coined in Japan)", in *Fifth Annual Graduate Student Conference on East Asia*, Columbia University, 1996.

⁶ For an overview of the phenomenon, see Giovanni Borriello, "The Historical Development of the *kokuji* 国字 Phenomenon in Japan", *Susret Kultura* 6, *Međunarodni interdisciplinarni simpozijum Susret kultura*, II, Filozofski fakultet, Novi Sad, 2013, I, pp. 507-512. <http://digitalna.ff.uns.ac.rs/sadrzaj/2013/978-86-6065-040-7121>

⁷ Itani Zen'ichi (edited by), Arai Hakuseki, "Dōbun tsūkō", *Arai Hakuseki shū*, Tōkyō, Seibundō shinkōsha, 1936, pp. 407-476.

⁸ In *References*, they are reported the abbreviations for the dictionaries and lexicons consulted for the following notes.

⁹ *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* confirm the use of the *kokuji*. For the lemma *namazu*, *Kokujikō* by Ban Naokata and *Wasei kanji no jiten* report the *kokuji* 鮎 too; *Kenkyūsha* 32, *Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha* 74 report, always with the same meaning, the character 鮎, that is unanimously classified as *kokuji*. *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* gives for *namazu* the character 鮎, ascribing the lemma to the area of Wakayama. Of the three *kokuji* reported, *Ricci* attests the character 鮎 with the reading *nien*.

¹⁰ For the Chinese, *Ricci* gives the same character with the reading *ruo* and the same meaning.

鱈 *tara* ‘Japanese variety of cod’ (*Gadus morhua*)¹¹;
 鮎 *dojō* ‘Japanese loach’ (*Cobitis barbatula*)¹²;
 鮓 *subashiri* ‘Unidentified variety of Japanese marine fauna’¹³;
 鮠 *bora* ‘Japanese flathead grey mullet’ (*Mugil cephalus*)¹⁴;
 鮡 *isaza* ‘Biwa goby’ (*Chaenogobius isaza*)¹⁵;
 鮟 *konoshiro* ‘Japanese gizzard shad’ (*Konosirus punctatus*)¹⁶;
 鮡 *ugui* ‘Big-scaled redbfin’ (*Leuciscus hakonensis*)¹⁷;
 鮓 *kazunoko* ‘Herring roe’¹⁸;
 鮓 *gigi* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Pelteobagrus nudiceps*’¹⁹;
 鮓 *kochi* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Platycephalus indicus*’²⁰;
 鮓 *mate* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Platycephalus indicus*’²¹;
 鯨 *shiira* ‘Japanese dolphin fish’ (*Coryphaena hippurus*)²²;

¹¹ In Chinese, the character is attested with the reading *xue* as generic name for ‘cod’.

¹² The character is given in *Morohashi, Nelson and Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma *dojō*, *Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha 74* give the character 鮎, a common use Chinese character with reading *qiu* and the meaning of ‘small fish that lived in the mud’; for the same lemma, *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* use the compound 泥鮎, *niqiu* in Chinese.

¹³ The *kokuji* is given in *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma *subashiri*, *Kōjien* introduces the compound 州走, of common use in Chinese with the reading *chouzou*. The lemma is not reported in *Kenkyūsha 32, Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten*.

¹⁴ The *kokuji* is given in *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma *bora*, *Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha 74* introduce, always with the meaning of ‘Japanese flathead grey mullet’, the character 鮠. The latter character is recorded, both in *Dōbun tsūkō* by Arai Hakuseki and in *Morohashi* as *kokuji* and with the reading of *kochi* too.

¹⁵ The *kokuji* is given in *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For *isaza*, *Kōjien* uses the character 鮡, of common use in Chinese with the reading *sha* for ‘white shark’.

¹⁶ The *kokuji* is given in *Morohashi, Wasei kanji no jiten* and *Nelson*; for the same lemma *konoshiro*, *Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha 74* introduce the character 鮟, a common use character in Chinese.

¹⁷ The *kokuji* is given in *Morohashi, Kōjien* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma *ugui*, *Kenkyūsha 32* and *Kenkyūsha 74* introduce the Chinese compound 石斑魚 *shibanyu*.

¹⁸ The *kokuji* is given in *Morohashi, Nelson, Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma *kazunoko*, *Kenkyūsha 74* gives the characters 数の子. *Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* don’t record the entry.

¹⁹ The *kokuji*, with the related lemma of *gigi*, is given in *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* only.

²⁰ All the Japanese dictionaries, except for *Kokujikō* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten*, that don’t record the lemma, identify this fish with the same *kokuji*. In Chinese, the *kokuji* is attested with the reading *yong* and with the same meaning in *Ricci* and in *Han Ying Da Cidian*.

²¹ The *kokuji* is given in *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* only. *Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* don’t record the lemma *mate*.

²² *Kokuji* and lemma attested in *Morohashi, Wasei kanji no jiten, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 32* and *Kenkyūsha 74*.

鰩 *eri* ‘Japanese lizardfish’ (*Synodus saurus*)²³;

蜆 *asari* ‘Japanese little-neck clam’ (*Tapes philippinarum*)²⁴.

To the list of Arai Hakuseki, we can add the following *kokuji*, extrapolated from other lexicons:

鰩 *anago* ‘Japanese variety of conger of the Species *Conger japonicus*’²⁵;

鮎 *ayu* ‘Japanese sweetfish’ (*Plecoglossus altivelis*)²⁶;

鰭 *azarashi* ‘Japanese hair seal’ (*Phoca vitulina*)²⁷;

蝦 *ebi* ‘Japanese lobster’ (*Uruptychus japonicus*)²⁸;

鰩 *hamo* ‘Japanese barracuda’ (*Sphyraena japonica*)²⁹;

鱈 *haraka* ‘Unidentified variety of Japanese marine fauna’³⁰

鱈・鱈 *hatahata* ‘Japanese sandfish’ (*Arctoscopus japonicus*)³¹;

²³ The *kokuji* is attested in *Morohashi*, *Kōjien* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. *Morohashi* records the reading *eso* too, that we can find also in *Kenkyūsha 74* to which is ascribed, in this latter dictionary, the character 鱈 of common use in Chinese with the reading *kuai*. *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* gives for the same *kokuji* the reading *eso* ascribing it to the area of Wakayama. In Chinese, the *kokuji* is attested only in *Giles* with the reading *ren* to indicate a ‘fabulous creature half man, half fish’.

²⁴ *Kokuji* and lemma attested in *Morohashi*, *Nelson* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma *asari*, *Kōjien* introduces the mixed form 漁り, while *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* use the Chinese compound 淺蜆 *jianli*.

²⁵ The *kokuji* is recorded only by *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma *anago*, *Kenkyūsha 32* uses the transcription in hiragana あなご replaced in *Kenkyūsha 74* with the compound 穴子, of common use in Chinese with the reading *xuezu*.

²⁶ *Wasei kanji no jiten* only gives the *kokuji* 鮎; *Kenkyūsha 32* and *Kenkyūsha 74* give for the lemma the character 鮎, that is a common use character in Chinese with the reading *nian*, for an unspecified variety of trout. In turn, *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* ascribed the previous character assigning it also the readings *ai* and *ae*.

²⁷ *Wasei kanji no jiten* only confirms the *kokuji*. For the lemma *azarashi*, *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha 74* use, always with the meaning of ‘seal’, the compound 海豹, that is of common use in Chinese with the reading *haipao* and the meaning of ‘sea lion’, other name for ‘seal’, while this lemma is not recorded in *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten*.

²⁸ The *kokuji* is recorded in *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Morohashi*, *Kōjien* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma *ebi*, *Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* introduce the compound 海老, *hailao* in Chinese.

²⁹ The *kokuji* is attested in *Morohashi* and in *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma *hamo*, *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* introduce the character 鱈 of common use in Chinese with the reading *li*.

³⁰ *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* agree on the generic designation. Other dictionaries don’t attest the *kokuji* or the lemma.

³¹ The first *kokuji* is recorded in *Morohashi*, *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha 74*, *Nelson* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*; *Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha 74* give the character 鱈 too, that *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* classify as *kokuji*, while *Gendai*

鮨 *haya* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Leuciscus macropus*’³²;

鰩 *hirame* ‘Japanese halibut’ (*Paralichthys olivaceus*)³³;

鰯 *hokke* ‘Japanese mackerel’ (*Pleurogrammus azonus*)³⁴;

鰯・鰯・鰯 *ina* ‘Japanese amberjack’ (*Seriola dumerili*)³⁵;

鰯 *inada* ‘Japanese amberjack’ (*Seriola lalandi*)³⁶;

鰻 *kajika* ‘Japanese sculpin’ (*Cottus hilgendorfi*)³⁷;

鰻 *kamasu* ‘Japanese saury’ (*Cololabis saira*)³⁸;

鰻 *karasumi* ‘Mullet roe’³⁹;

鰻・鰻 *karei* ‘Japanese plaice’ (*Pleuronectes platessa*)⁴⁰;

Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten for the same lemma gives the transcription in hiragana はたはた ascribing the noun to the area of Akita.

³² *Kokuji* given only in *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* records only the lemma with the transcription in hiragana はや, that ascribes to the area of Kyōto.

³³ Both *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* record the character, but *Morohashi* gives it also the readings *-hei*, *-byō*, and doesn’t classify it as *okuji*. *Kōjien* introduces for the same lemma the compounds 平目 *pingmu* and 比目魚 *pimuyu*. *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* uses only the compound 平目 *pingmu*, ascribing it to the area of Shichio, while both *Kenkyūsha 32* and *Kenkyūsha 74* use for the lemma *hirame* the compound 比目魚 *pimuyu*. In Chinese, the *okuji* is attested with the reading *p’ing* in *Ricci* and in *Han Ying Da Cidian*, that identifies it with the Japanese *hirame*. The fact that the character is a *okuji* seems to be sure as confirmed in the definition that we can find in the Chinese dictionaries. Then, it was replaced by the Chinese characters that, alluding to the characteristics of the eyes, better identify the fish.

³⁴ *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha 74*, *Nelson* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* report it as *okuji*. *Kenkyūsha 32* doesn’t record the lemma, while *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* uses the transcription in hiragana ほっけ, ascribing the lemma to the area of Fukushima.

³⁵ The first character is recorded in *Morohashi* and in *Wasei kanji no jiten*, but *Morohashi* doesn’t classify it as *okuji*. For the lemma *ina*, *Wasei kanji no jiten* records the *okuji* 鰯 too, while *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha 74* introduce, for the same lemma, the *okuji* 鰯. The latter is recorded, both in *Dōbun tsūkō* by Arai Hakuseki and in *Morohashi*, as *okuji* and with the reading of *kochi* as well. Indeed, *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* gives for *ina* the Chinese character 鰯 with the reading *shi* and with the same meaning, but ascribing the noun to the area of Kyōto.

³⁶ *Wasei kanji no jiten* only gives the *okuji* 鰯. For the lemma *inada*, *Kōjien* uses the transcription in hiragana いなだ, while *Kenkyūsha 32* and *Kenkyūsha 74* introduce the common Chinese character 鰯 *qiu*, with the meaning of ‘Japanese amberjack’. For the same lemma, *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* introduces the already reported character 鰯, as previously seen, for the lemma *ina*, ascribing it to the area of Shizuoka and of Ishikawa and implicitly meaning the identity between *inada* and *ina*.

³⁷ The *okuji* is attested in *Morohashi*, *Wasei kanji no jiten* and *Nelson*. For the lemma *kajika*, *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kōjien*, and *Kenkyūsha 74* introduce the character 鰻, that is a common use character in Chinese with the reading *qiu*.

³⁸ *Wasei kanji no jiten* only gives the *okuji* 鰻. For the lemma *kamasu*, *Kōjien* introduces the character 鰻 *xu*, while *Kenkyūsha 32* and *Kenkyūsha 74* give the compound 梭魚 *suoyan*. Indeed, the lemma is not recorded in *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten*.

³⁹ The *okuji* is recorded in *Wasei kanji no jiten* only. *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha 74*, for the lemma *karasumi*, use the transcription in hiragana からすみ. Such form in hiragana is given in *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* as well and ascribed to the area of Ōshū.

鰹 *katsuo* ‘Japanese Skipjack tuna’ (*Katsuwonus pelamis*)⁴¹;
 魷 *kawagisu* ‘Japanese gudgeon’ (*Pseudogobis esocinus*)⁴²;
 鯧 *kisu* ‘Japanese whiting’ (*Sillago japonica*)⁴³;
 鯉 · 鯽 *koi* ‘Japanese carp’ (*Cyprinus carpio*)⁴⁴;
 鯨 *kujira* ‘Japanese whale’ (*Balaena mysticetus*)⁴⁵;
 鱒 *masu* ‘Masu salmon’ (*Oncorhynchus masou*)⁴⁶;
 鮓 *mebaru* ‘Japanese rockfish’ (*Sebastes inermis*)⁴⁷;
 鰯 *muroaji* ‘Japanese horse mackerel’ (*Trachurus japonicus*)⁴⁸;
 鰹 *mutsu* ‘Japanese blue fish’ (*Scombrops boops*)⁴⁹;
 鮠 · 鯰 *namazu* ‘Japanese catfish’ (*Parasilurus asotus*)⁵⁰

⁴⁰ The first *kokuji* is given in *Morohashi* and in *Wasei kanji no jiten* only. The latter gives the *kokuji* 鰹 too. For the lemma *karei*, *Kenkyūsha* 32, *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha* 74 and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* record the Chinese character 鰹 *die*.

⁴¹ *Kokujikō*, *Kenkyūsha* 32, *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha* 74, *Wasei kanji no jiten* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* record the *kokuji* 鰹 present in *Morohashi* as well, but not classified as *kokuji*. In the consulted Chinese dictionaries, the *kokuji* 鰹 is attested with the reading *jian* in *Giles* and in *Ricci* only.

⁴² *Wasei kanji no jiten* only gives the *kokuji* 魷. For the lemma *kawagisu*, *Kenkyūsha* 32 uses the mixed form 川ぎす, while *Kenkyūsha* 74 introduces the compound 川鯧, where the second character is recorded as *kokuji* in all the Japanese dictionaries consulted, except for *Dōbun tsūkō* that doesn’t record the character.

⁴³ The *kokuji* is recorded in all the Japanese dictionaries consulted, except for *Dōbun tsūkō* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* that don’t give the *kokuji* and the lemma *kisu*. In Chinese, the *kokuji* is attested with the reading *xi* and with the same meaning in *Ricci* and in *Han Ying Da Cidian*.

⁴⁴ The first *kokuji* is recorded in *Wasei kanji no jiten* only, that for the lemma *koi*, gives the *kokuji* 鯉 as well, that *Morohashi* doesn’t classify as *kokuji*. For the lemma *koi*, *Kenkyūsha* 32, *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha* 74 and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* introduce the character 鯽, that *Nelson* only classifies as *kokuji*. In Chinese, the character 鯽 is recorded with the same meaning and reading *li* in *Ricci* only.

⁴⁵ *Wasei kanji no jiten* only gives the *kokuji* 鯨. For the lemma *kujira*, *Kenkyūsha* 32, *Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha* 74, and the *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* as well, use the Chinese character 鯨 *jing*.

⁴⁶ The *kokuji* is attested in *Wasei kanji no jiten* only. For the lemma *masu*, *Kenkyūsha* 32, *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha* 74 introduce the character 鱒, that is a Chinese character with the reading *zun*. Indeed, *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* for the same lemma uses the transcription in hiragana ます, ascribing the lemma to the area of Fukushima.

⁴⁷ *Wasei kanji no jiten* and *Nelson* only register the *kokuji* 鮓. For the lemma *mebaru*, *Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha* 74 introduce the compound 眼張 of common use in Chinese *yanzhang*. Indeed, there aren’t attestations in *Kenkyūsha* 32 or in *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten*.

⁴⁸ *Morohashi*, *Kōjien* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* attest the *kokuji* 鰯, while for the lemma *muroaji*, *Kenkyūsha* 32 and *Kenkyūsha* 74 introduce the compound 室鰯, that are common use characters in Chinese with the reading *shisao*.

⁴⁹ *Wasei kanji no jiten* only registers the *kokuji*, while for the lemma *mutsu*, *Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha* 74 introduce the Chinese character 鰹 *lu*, *Kenkyūsha* 32 gives the compound 石鰹魚; for the same lemma, *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* uses the transcription in hiragana むつ ascribing the noun to the area of Shiga.

⁵⁰ See note 4.

鯖 *saba* ‘Chub mackerel’ (*Scomber japonicus*)⁵¹;

鮭・鱒・鱈 *saku* ‘Chum salmon’ (*Oncorhynchus keta*)⁵²;

鮫 *same* ‘Japanese variety of great white shark’ (*Carcharodon carcharias*)⁵³;

鯨 *shachi* ‘Japanese variety of killer whale’ (*Grampus orca*)⁵⁴;

舩 *tai* ‘Japanese mirror dory’ (*Zenopsis nebulosa*)⁵⁵;

鱒 *tai* ‘Red seabream’ (*Pagrus major*)⁵⁶

鰻 *ugui* ‘Big-scaled redfin’ (*Leuciscus hakonensis*)⁵⁷;

鯷 *urumeiwashi* ‘Sardine variety of the Species *Etrumeus micropus*’⁵⁸.

Now, of these *kokuji* listed:

⁵¹ *Wasei kanji no jiten* and *Morohashi* give the character 鯖, that *Morohashi* doesn’t record as *kokuji*. For the same lemma, *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* introduce 鯖, a common use character in Chinese with the reading *qing*.

⁵² With *saku* is identified a variety of ‘salmon’ (*Oncorhynchus keta*), the most important Japanese species of salmon, that it is possible to find mainly in the Tonegawa and Nakagawa rivers. *Wasei kanji no jiten* gives the *kokuji* 鮭, that *Morohashi* records for the lemma *saku*, but doesn’t classify it as *kokuji*. In the Chinese dictionary consulted, the only one that gives this character is *Giles* with the reading of *jie* and the meaning of ‘to dissect’ or ‘to cut (slice) the fish to be dried’. For the lemma *saku*, *Kokujikō* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* give the *kokuji* 鱒 and 鱈 as well, that are not in the other Japanese lexicons consulted. For the same lemma, *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* introduce, giving the readings *sake* and *shake* too, the common use character in Chinese 鮭 *kui*.

⁵³ *Wasei kanji no jiten* only gives the *kokuji* 鮫. For the lemma *same*, *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha 74* use the character 鯨, that is a common use character in Chinese *chao*.

⁵⁴ *Morohashi*, *Kōjien*, *Nelson*, *Wasei kanji no jiten* and *Kenkyūsha 74* give the *kokuji* 鯨. It is not attested in the other Japanese and Chinese dictionaries.

⁵⁵ *Wasei kanji no jiten* gives the *kokuji* 舩, that *Morohashi* records for the lemma *tai*, but doesn’t classify it as *kokuji*. It is not attested in the other Japanese dictionaries consulted. Indeed, the *kokuji* is recorded in all the Chinese dictionaries consulted with the reading *fang* and the same meaning. So is it really a *kokuji* or simply a Chinese character acquired from Japan, then abandoned because not indicating an important character or species?

⁵⁶ *Wasei kanji no jiten* only gives the *kokuji* 鱒. *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten*, for the lemma *tai*, introduce the character 鯛, that it’s a common use character in Chinese with the reading *tiao*.

⁵⁷ *Dōbun tsūkō*, *Morohashi*, *Kōjien* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* give the *kokuji* 鰻, that it’s not attested in the other Japanese characters. For the lemma *ugui*, *Kenkyūsha 32* and *Kenkyūsha 74* introduce the compound 石斑魚 *shipayu*. Indeed, the lemma *ugui* is not recorded in *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten*.

⁵⁸ With *urumeiwashi* is identified a ‘Sardine variety’ of the Species *Etrumeus micropus*. *Wasei kanji no jiten* gives the *kokuji* 鯷, that is not attested in the other Japanese dictionaries. For the lemma *urumeiwashi*, *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* introduce the compound 潤目鰹 *runmuruo*, of common use in Chinese. The lemma is not attested in *Kenkyūsha 74*.

Forty-nine are names of fishes:

鮎・鮎・鯰 *namazu* ‘Japanese catfish’; 鰯 *iwashi* ‘Japanese sardine’; 鱒 *tara* ‘Japanese variety of cod’; 鯽 *dojō* ‘Japanese loach’; 鰱 *bora* ‘Japanese flathead grey mullet’; 鰍 *isaza* ‘Biwa goby’; 鰻 *konoshiro* ‘Japanese gizzard shad’; 鰺 *ugui* ‘Big-scaled redbfin’; 鮪 *kochi* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Platycephalus indicus*’; 鰺 *mate* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Platycephalus indicus*’; 鰹 *shiira* ‘Japanese dolphinfish’; 鰩 *eri* ‘Japanese lizardfish’; 鰻 *anago* ‘Japanese variety of conger of the Species *Conger japonicus*’; 鰻 *ayu* ‘Japanese sweetfish’; 鰻 *gigi* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Pelteobagrus nudiceps*’; 鰻 *hamo* ‘Japanese barracuda’; 鰻 *hatahata* ‘Japanese sandfish’; 鰻 *haya* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Leuciscus macropus*’; 鰻 *hirame* ‘Japanese halibut’; 鰻 *hokke* ‘Japanese mackerel’; 鰻・鰻 *ina* ‘Japanese amberjack’; 鰻 *inada* ‘Japanese amberjack’; 鰻 *kajika* ‘Japanese sculpin’; 鰻 *kamasu* ‘Japanese saury’; 鰻・鰻 *karei* ‘Japanese plaice’; 鰻 *katsuo* ‘Japanese Skipjack tuna’; 鰻 *kawagisu* ‘Japanese gudgeon’; 鰻 *kisu* ‘Japanese whiting’; 鰻・鰻 *koi* ‘Japanese carp’; 鰻 *masu* ‘Masu salmon’; 鰻 *mebaru* ‘Japanese rockfish’; 鰻 *muroaji* ‘Japanese horse mackerel’; 鰻 *mutsu* ‘Japanese blue fish’; 鰻 *saba* ‘Chub mackerel’; 鰻・鰻・鰻 *saku* ‘Chum salmon’; 鰻 *same* ‘Japanese variety of great white shark’; 鰻 *tai* ‘Japanese mirror dory’; 鰻 *tai* ‘Red seabream’; 鰻 *ugui* ‘Big-scaled redbfin’; 鰻 *urumeiwashi* ‘Sardine variety of the Species *Etrumeus micropus*’.

Three of marine mammals:

鰻 *azarashi* ‘Japanese hair seal’, 鰻 *kujira* ‘Japanese whale’, 鰻 *shachi* ‘Japanese variety of killer whale’.

One of crustaceans:

鰻 *ebi* ‘Japanese lobster’.

One of molluscs:

蜆 *asari* ‘Japanese little-neck clam’.

Two of roe:

鱈 *kazunoko* ‘Herring roe’, 鱈 *karasumi* ‘Mullet roe’.

Two are varieties of “Unidentified variety of Japanese marine fauna”:

鮭 *subashiri*, 鮭 *haraka*.

Therefore, we have in total fifty-eight *kokuji* of which thirteen are still in use today. From the series of forty-nine *kokuji* related to the fishes’ names, there are the following ten: 鰯 *iwashi* ‘Japanese sardine’; 鱈 *tara* ‘Japanese variety of cod’; 鮪 *kochi* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Platycephalus indicus*’; 鰯 *mate* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Platycephalus indicus*’; 鰯 *shiira* ‘Japanese dolphinfish’; 鰯 *gigi* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Pelteobagrus nudiceps*’; 鰯 *haya* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Leuciscus macropus*’; 鰯 *hokke* ‘Japanese mackerel’; 鰯 *katsuo* ‘Japanese Skipjack tuna’; 鰯 *kisu* ‘Japanese whiting’; 鰯 *tai* ‘Japanese mirror dory’.

Of the three *kokuji* relating to the names of mammals, the only one still in use is 鰯 *shachi* ‘Japanese variety of killer whale’.

Of the two names of unidentified marine species remains in use only 鮭 *haraka* that in the Japanese dictionaries used is reported exclusively as “fish” (魚).

Summing up, we can deduce the following situation. Many *kokuji*, and they were the majority, or thirty-three, fall into disuse. They could be introduced when Japanese were not even aware of the existence of corresponding *kanji* (or *kanji* compounds). Once it was found to have in the Chinese vocabulary, they were abandoned in favor of the latter. This is the longer list: 鰯 *anago* → 穴子 ZH *xuezu*; 鰯 *asari* → 浅蜆 ZH *dian li*; 鮎 *ayu* → 鮎 ZH *nian*; 鮠 *azarashi* → 海豹 ZH *hai pao*; 鰺 *dojō* → 鰺 ZH *qiu* · 泥鰺 ZH *niqiu*; 鰻 *ebi* → 海老 ZH *hailao*; 鰺 *eri* → 鰺 ZH *kuai*; 鰻 *hamo* → 鰻 ZH *li*; 鰻 *hirame* → 平目 ZH *pingmu* · 比目魚 ZH *pimuyu*; 鰻 *inada* → 鰻 ZH *qiu* · 鰻 ZH *shi*; 鰻 *isaza* → 鮫 ZH *sha*; 鰻 *kajika* → 鰻 ZH *qiu*; 鰻 *kamasu* → 鰻 · 梭魚 ZH *suoyu*; 鰻 *karei* · 鰻 *karei* → 鰻 ZH *die*; 鰻 *kawagisu* → 川鱧 ZH *zhuanxi*; 鰻 · 鰻 *konoshiro* → 鰻 ZH *ji*; 鰻 *kujira* → 鰻 ZH *jing*; 鰻 *masu* → 鰻 ZH *zun*; 鰻 *mebaru* → 眼張 ZH *yanzhang*; 鰻 *muroaji* → 室鰻 ZH *shisao*; 鰻 *mutsu* → 鰻 ZH *lu*; 鰻 *saba* → 鰻 ZH *qing*; 鰻 · 鰻 · 鰻 *saku* → 鰻 ZH *nian*; 鰻 *same* → 鰻 ZH *chao*; 鰻 *subashiri* → 州走 ZH *chouzou*; 鰻 *tai* → 鰻 ZH *tiao*; 鰻 *ugui* → 石斑魚 ZH *shipayu*; 鰻 *urumeiwashi* → 潤目鰻 ZH *junmuruo*.

A number of *kokuji*, to be precise eight, falls into disuse, because they had to prevail on them other *kokuji*. Indeed, we have found that some nouns had been created with more *kokuji*, who apparently had been introduced as “neologisms” created in different locations or by different “authors”; it was the case for the following: for the lemma *bora* (‘Japanese flathead grey mullet’), they had been introduced two *kokuji* 鰻 · 鰻, the latter prevailed on the first one; the same phenomenon was found for the lemma *hatahata* (‘Japanese sandfish’), where among the two *kokuji* created, 鰻 · 鰻 prevailed the second one. For the lemmas *koi*, *ina* and *namazu*, for which they had come into use even three *kokuji*, 鰻 *koi* · 鰻 *koi* · 鰻 *koi*; 鰻 *ina* · 鰻 *ina* · 鰻 *ina*; 鰻 *namazu* · 鰻 *namazu* · 鰻 *namazu*, prevailed respectively 鰻 *koi*, 鰻 *ina* e 鰻 *namazu*. They were probably *kokuji* adopted to designate an identical variety or fish species maybe in different regions and then replaced by those of more frequent or widespread use that consolidated the coding.

Finally, a series of seven *kokuji* was replaced, as we have already seen, or by one or more *kanji* or by transcriptions in *kana* only: 鰻 *anago* → あなご · 穴子 ZH *xuezu*; 鰻 *inada* → いなだ; 鰻

masu → 鱒 ZH *zun* · ます; 鱚 *mutsu* → 鮭 · 石鰻魚 · むつ, 鱒 *hatahata* → はたはた · 鱒
hatahata, 鱒 *hokke* → ほっけ; 鱒 *karasumi* → からすみ.

So from the analysis of a small group of *kokuji* emerges already the complexity of the phenomenon that is behind the characters created in Japan. Definitely a phenomenon rarely studied in Japan itself, where it tends to talk only of *kanji* and *kana* and to limit the notion of *kokuji* mostly to the “Japanese” writing in general⁵⁹.

In truth, that of *kokuji*, as complex of characters come into use in Japan, is a phenomenon that follows the entire course of the Japanese language and writing and should therefore be put in an historical context through a precisely record of the occurrences of each characters in the texts that have remained and their frequency at least in the literary use. The study should also be thorough about the possible “geographical” pertinences of each attributions of the names, as already reported in the notes for some *kokuji* or their transcriptions in *kana*. They are examples: 鱒 *masu* → ます e 鱒 *hokke* → ほっけ ascribed to the area of Fukushima; 鱚 *mutsu* → むつ ascribed to the area of Shiga; 鱒 *hatahata* → attributed to Akita and 鱒 *karasumi* → からすみ to Ōshū.

The sampling shown authorize us to conjecture that the phenomenon has manifested itself already at the beginning of the adoption of the Chinese writing. It can explain how many characters of local creation prove then superfluous to the finding of Chinese counterparts already in use and then become obsolete.

It may be also interesting to note that of all the above mentioned *kokuji*, it seems that the Chinese used just the following eight entered and remained in current use: 鰩 *eri* → ZH *kuai*; 鰩 *hirame* → ZH *ping*; 鰩 *iwashi* → ZH *ruo*; 鰩 *katsuo* → ZH *jian*; 鰩 *kisu* → ZH *xi*; 鰩 *kochi* → ZH *yong*; 鰩 *tai* → ZH *fang*; 鰩 *tara* → ZH *xue*.

⁵⁹ Satō Kiyoji (ed. by), *Kokugaku kenkyū jiten*, Tōkyō, Meiji shoten, 1972, p. 77

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