Calligraphy & the Japanese Writing System

Andy Wang

Calligraphy beyond China

While most often associated with the Chinese Language and China itself, Calligraphy has impacted culture all around east asia.

China's historical status as a center of power in the region meant that its culture heavily influenced cultures that are adjacent to it.

Today, Calligraphy is one of the most visible symbol of the influence of chinese culture abroad.



Chinatowns



Chicago

Boston

Trấn Quốc Pagoda, Hanoi, Vietnam



Gwanghwamun, Seoul, South Korea



The Japanese Script

すべての人間は、生まれながらにして自由であり、かつ、尊厳と権利とについて平等である。人間は、理性と良心とを授けられており、互いに同胞の精神をもって行動しなければならない。

Sample Text: Excerpt from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Origin

It is unknown if Japan had a writing system prior to the importation of Kanji.

Japanese social elites became fluent in classical chinese (and therefore the chinese script) sometime after the 4th century AD.

Sometime in the 8th century AD, man'yōgana was adopted to write japanese by taking chinese characters that are phonetically equivalent.



漢委奴國王印 (King of Na gold seal) The first know sample of Chinese Writing in Japan (57AD)

Early Japanese Calligraphy

The upper class learned classical chinese and absorbs aspects of its culture - like calligraphy:

Right:

楽毅論 (Gakki-ron) 光明皇后 (Empress Komyo) - 744 AD Considered an very important copy of 王羲之 (Wang Xizhi)'s work 古賢之意宜以大

Man'yōshū 万葉集

Man'yōgana 万葉仮名

和湖京市明日香川原富州宇天皇代天豊財重旦姓是 五本面光額田王歌木并 うあついしてとうとてしれいつ 金野乃美草對青屋持礼里之免道乃宫子能 天皇十一年已或冬十二月己己朝五千幸于 二馬大集時物多桂稻穗而養之仍作於了 若疑從此便幸之於 伊与温湯宫当 書是時宫前在二树木此久二村故地比未 也但山上憶良大夫類聚秋林日記日 右检日本書紀無幸代讃岐国二軍日未详 しけっせんとうころかっとれちすい かられているはから、はれば、 あれたとのととのいう

山越乃風乎時自見寐夜不落家在缺乎愚而

Katakana Man'yōgana & Katakana Man'yōgana later became the other two systems of japanese writing, hiragana (平仮名) and katakana (片仮名). Katakana, or "fragmentary kana" is used in japanese for foreign words & loan words. Its "fragments" comes from the regular chinese script (楷書).

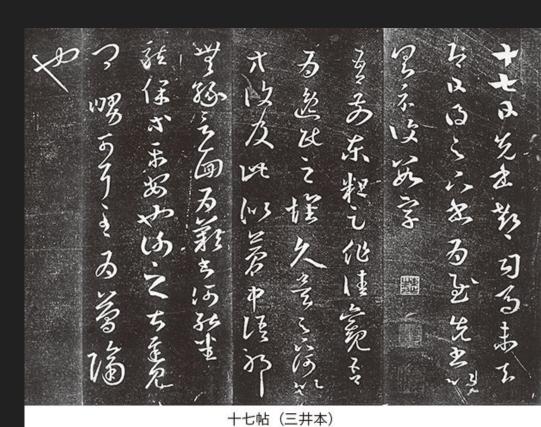
The Cursive Script

草書 is a much less orderly style of calligraphic writing.

It is faster to write than the traditional clerical script.

Right:

十七帖 (The Seventeenth) 王羲之 (Wang Xizhi) - 347- 361 AD Considered a landmark piece for "modern cursive"



Development of Hiragana

Top: man'yōgana / kanji

Middle: sōgana / "cursive characters"

Bottom: hiragana / "simple characters"

During the Heian period (9-12th century) AD), sōgana can into use in literature.

Sōgana was later further simplified and became what is known today as the hiragana syllabary.

Hiragana

ひひ比

ぬぬ奴

ゑゑ恵

るる

Kana Development Chart														
Hiragana			平仮名	Katakana								片仮名		
あ安安	いり以	うす宇	えれ衣	おお於	ア	阿	イ	伊	ウ	宇	工	江	才	於
かかかか	きる機	く々久	け计計	222	カ	加	キ	機	ク	久	ケ	介	コ	己
さき左	しし之	すすす	せせ世	そそ曽	サ	散	シ	文	ス	須	セ	中	ソ	曾
たな太	ちか知	りら三	てて天	とと止	タ	多	チ	千	ツり	州川	テ	天	٢	止
な奈奈	に仁仁	ぬな奴	ね袮祢	の乃乃	ナ	奈	=	仁	ヌ	奴	ネ	祢	1	乃
はは波	ひひ比	ふふ不	へ了部	ほほ保	/\	1	ヒ	比	フ	不	^	部	ホ	保
まま末	みる美	むむ武	めか女	もも毛	マ	末	111	111	4	牟	メ	女	モ	毛
や也也	必以以	ゆ中中	WILL	よよ与與	ヤ	也	Y	以	ユ	由	1	衣	3	與
らら良	り利利	る石留	九九礼	ろろ呂	ラ	良	リ	利	ル	流	レ	礼	口	呂
わわ和	るね爲		ゑゑ恵	をも遠	ワ	和	中	井	于	宇	ヱ	恵	ヲ	乎
		んえ无				3		367 363	ン	尓				

Hiragana in everyday use







Hiragana in everyday use







Thank you

The nature of Scripts

Language and scripts change over time.

The Chinese script has seen many different mediums and styles throughout the centuries.

Changes are not insular, and can affect the scripts of surrounding cultures.

