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as Transregional Languages:
With Implications for Terminology
Regarding “*Kanbun*”

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“Literary Sinitic” and “Latin” as Transregional Languages:
With Implications for Terminology Regarding “*Kanbun*”

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The widespread use of the terms “Literary Sinitic” and “Latin” beyond their areas of origin has often been commented upon.¹ But there are problems with some of the generalizations that have been made as a consequence. First, contrasting “Literary Sinitic” — as a written language only — with “Latin” — as both a written and spoken language — is misleading. Second, under the rubrics “Latin” and “Sinitic” (or “Literary Sinitic,” etc.), a wide range of practice is generally lumped together indiscriminately, resulting in inappropriate generalizations. Third, such misunderstandings have contributed to incorrect conclusions in reference to *kanbun*.

First, the distinction between “Latin” as both a spoken and written language, and “Literary Sinitic” as only a written one, is at best misleading.² Classical Latin “is a highly artificial construct

¹ For example, David B. Lurie, “The Latin of East Asia?” in his *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 342–53; and Peter Kornicki, “The Latin of East Asia?” in his *Having Difficulty with Chinese?: The Rise of the Vernacular Book in Japan, Korea and Vietnam*, 10 March 2008; online version: <http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/217831:1-21>.

² Kornicki is unequivocal: “Latin was a spoken as well as a written language while Chinese was only a written language” (“The Latin,” 9). Victor Mair limits the generalization to medieval Europe, “where Latin was both sayable and writable and hence could serve as a complete vehicle both for the speech and the writing of the educated”; “Buddhism and the Rise of the Western Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55.3 (August 1994): 730. Years earlier, Yi Ki-moon had made a similar point: “[A]n important difference between *hanmun* and Latin is overlooked: the former was purely a written language, whereas the latter was a written as well as spoken language of the universities”; “Language and Writing Systems in Traditional Korea,” in *The Traditional Culture and Society of Korea: Art and Literature* (Occasional Papers 4) (Honolulu: The Center for Korean Studies, 1975), 21–22, as cited by Ross King, “Ditching ‘Diglossia’: Describing Ecologies of the Spoken and Inscribed in Pre-modern Korea,” *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies*

which must be regarded linguistically as a deviation from the mainstream of the language, namely Vulgar Latin.³ Medieval Latin texts varied widely, but were more likely to be influenced by the spoken language than the exemplary written models of the classical period. And as for the great flowering of Neo- (or Humanistic) Latin from the fourteenth century onward, “[i]n morphology..., as also in syntax and in general aspects of lexical style, written Neo-Latin succeeded in affecting a *classical appearance*”;⁴ it was a learned, contrived language — in the sense that classical Chinese had been an acquired, non-spoken language in China, to say nothing of elsewhere.

As for Latin’s being the European *lingua franca* over the past millenium and more, the extent of actual oral communication in the language has been vastly exaggerated. There were few native speakers by the later centuries of the first millenium CE; proto-European languages were well in the ascendant.⁵ And for many who “spoke it,” Latin did not come easily. The medieval studies scholar Mark Bloch “emphasise[d] the ‘constant approximations’ resulting from scholars having to keep passing from ‘interior speech’ to Latin.”⁶ In her provocatively titled article, “Did Medieval Monks Actually Speak Latin?”⁷ Julie Barrau makes the telling comments: “Latin fluency was not an automatic part in the linguistic, intellectual and spiritual repertoire of a choir monk in the High Middle Ages.”

15,1 (Apr. 2015): 5 n. 6.

³ Robert G. Coleman, “Latin Language,” in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, with asst. ed. Esther Eidinow (4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 796, as cited by Keith Sidwell, “Classical Latin — Medieval Latin — Neo-Latin,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin*, ed. Sarah Knight and Stefan Tilg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 14. Note the progression of the spoken language from Vulgar Latin to Proto-Romance to Romance languages.

⁴ Sidwell, “Classical Latin — Medieval Latin — Neo-Latin,” 22; emphasis added.

⁵ In Britain, for example, native speakers of Latin disappeared in the seventh century; T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350–1064* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 95. The shift occurred over a longer period in Romance-language areas. “[About the year 1000], [a]part from Latin, understood and used by a tiny minority, there existed a number of more or less individualised dialects,...”; Philippe Wolff, *Western Languages AD 100–1500*, tr. Frances Partridge (New York: McGraw Hill, 1971), 139.

⁶ Wolff, *Western Languages*, 137.

⁷ In *Monastic Practices of Oral Communication (Western Europe, Eleventh–Thirteenth Centuries)*, ed. S. Vanderputten (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 293–317. The citations that follow are from pp. 316, 305, 312.

“[T]here are many reasons to think that speaking Latin did not necessarily follow an ability to read it” “Vernacular languages may therefore be the principal but barely acknowledged linguistic vehicle of everyday life, because a significant part of the brethren could speak nothing else.”

If the class and educational levels of medieval monks were generally low, the spoken competence of the highly educated was not necessarily much better. As G. G. Coulton has written:

Even in the highest University circles, it may be doubted whether a dozen people anywhere could sit round the fire and discuss the problems of life and death in Latin.... Very few can have been the speakers who could bring out, or the hearers who could seize without excessive efforts, those finest shades of expression.

...

It is an exaggeration to speak of Latin as ever becoming a real second vernacular, except perhaps in Italy and Spain.... Though all University lectures were in Latin, schools and colleges often paid a “lupus” (i.e., *wolf*; the nickname given to a scholar holding his scholarship by the tenure of acting as reporter [i.e., spy] against all fellow-scholars who lapsed into the vernacular)...⁸

With the establishment of universities in Paris, Bologna, Oxford, etc., lectures, texts, and translations (e.g., from Arabic), often with glosses and commentaries (in Latin and/or the vernacular),

⁸ *The Medieval Scene: An Informal Introduction to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), 125, 124–25. For more recent treatment, see Thomas Haye, *Lateinische Oralität: Gelehrte Sprache in der mündlichen Kommunikation des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Latin Orality: Learned, Non-Vulgar Language in Oral Communication of the High and Later Middle Ages) (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2005). Re the “Lupus,” note the section by Hastings Rashdall, “Latin-Speaking and the ‘Lupus,’” in his *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, pt. 2, *The English Universities* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 627.

were sold by commercial stationers who would farm out portions of a manuscript (*peciae*) for scribes to transcribe.⁹ This had the side effect of diminishing the need to understand spoken Latin.

A devastating picture of spoken Neo-Latin in the period of the so-called Republic of Letters is drawn by Françoise Waquet in her *Latin, or the Empire of a Sign: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*.¹⁰ As she writes:

But how, in reality, did those who “understood one another’s speech”... speak Latin?... Usually the sources refer to speech which is incorrect, awkward or ridiculous, and describe situations in which communication is approximate at best, or difficult, sometimes impossible. The existence of a small number of superior talents does little to temper this dominant impression of very mediocre performance.... [The language,] through the whole of the modern era, had hardly risen above the most mediocre level of oral practice.

“Literary Sinitic,” as suggested by the rubric, was not a spoken language.¹¹ But one can overstate its *written* nature. It is virtually impossible for someone to compose in a language — any language — without pronouncing it in some form at least silently. Given the prodigious amounts of material traditionally memorized in East Asia, vocalization had to be internalized; it would be

⁹ Bernhard Bischoff refers to thirteenth-century transcription conventions that “enabled the hearers to transcribe even from lectures, the ‘reportatio’”; students could write “from the dictation of the master (the ‘pronuntiatio’).” “Such texts even passed into circulation, whether authorised or not”; *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 226. Cf. Graham Pollard, “The *Pecia* System in the Medieval Universities, in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts & Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and Andrew G. Watson (London: Scolar Press, 1978), 146–61.

¹⁰ Tr. John Howe (London: Verso, 2002). The citations that follow are from pp. 152, 154, 171.

¹¹ “Some Styles of Literary Sinitic (Classical Chinese) from the Warring States (esp. late) and Qin-Han periods incorporated a few bits of spoken language (as occasionally in quoted speech), but it wasn’t until Buddhism came to China that spoken language began to infiltrate writing in increasingly greater proportions”; Victor Mair, personal communication, 19 Dec. 2017.

externalized when reciting one’s lessons,¹² performing ceremonial chanting, and intoning poetry on social or other occasions. It mattered little that what was recited was not a *spoken* language. Its oral use served important social ends.

As for the lumping together of vast amounts of disparate material, some of the variety of Latin has already been suggested. “Old Latin” and “Late (Classical) Latin,” as the names suggest,¹³ imply difference from the “standard” classical language. And Medieval Latin is multifarious: “we do find during the Middle Ages a good deal of Latin that deviates considerably from Classical Latin norms”; at the same time, “we also find highly wrought texts that show minimal evidence of what we tend to think of as characteristics of all Medieval Latin.”¹⁴ And in the study of Neo-Latin, the interaction between “Latin” and writings in the vernacular cannot be overlooked.¹⁵

“Classical Chinese” (or “Literary Sinitic”), to say nothing of “standard classical Chinese,” is an abstraction, a fiction.¹⁶ When those who speak of “Literary Chinese” — especially in reference to

¹² “The Daily Schedule of Study in the Cheng Family” by Cheng Duanli (程端禮) (Yuan dyn.) included the regimen: “Read each small section one hundred times; recite it one hundred times. Then recite a large section all the way through... [E]venings, recite and review in continual order the books already read”; John Meskill, *Academies in Ming China: A Historical Survey* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1982), 161.

¹³ The former dates roughly to 100 BCE, the latter roughly from 150 CE; Jan M. Ziolkowski, “Towards a History of Medieval Latin Literature,” in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. F. A. C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 509.

¹⁴ Sidwell, “Classical Latin — Medieval Latin — Neo-Latin,” 18.

¹⁵ “Acquired second languages are always susceptible to influences of the native substrate, particularly in areas such as phonology, vocabulary, and idiom. Latin was no exception”; Michael W. Herren, “Latin and the Vernacular Languages,” in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, 124. Also, as one author states: “modern scholarship has come to recognize the distinctiveness of British Neo-Latin”; and another: “French writers asserted their own Neo-Latin identity”; Estelle Haan, “The British Isles,” 428, and Paul White, “France,” 411; both in *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin*. A third of the *Handbook* is divided into chapters on regions: Italy, Iberian Peninsula, The Low Countries, etc., where interaction with the local vernacular is frequently referred to.

¹⁶ Moreover, Chinese syntax was influenced by non-Chinese contact: in historic times, at different periods by Sanskrit and Pali, by Mongolian, and by Manchu; and in pre- or early-historic times, by less clearly definable influences: Tibeto-Burman, Tai-Kadai, Miao-Yao, Austroasiatic, and Austronesian; Cao Guangshun (曹广顺) and Yu Hsiao-jung (Yu Xiaorong, 遇笑

kanbun writings “in Chinese” by Japanese (and such texts in Korea and Vietnam) — what exactly are they referring to? The problem of identifying “Literary Sinitic” in China, not to mention elsewhere, might be illustrated by the singular case of *Mengzi zhangju* (孟子章句 *Mengzi*: Chapter Summaries and Commentary Paraphrases) by Zhao Qi (趙岐) (d. 201), the subject of a book by W. A. C. H. Dobson: *Late Han Chinese: A Study of the Archaic-Han Shift*.¹⁷ Three texts are involved in the work. First, there is the *Mengzi* itself of five hundred years earlier, which forms the backdrop to the Zhao commentary and is the subject of its explication. Second, there are the *zhang* 章 chapter summaries of the text by Zhao. And third, there are Zhao’s *ju* 句 commentary paraphrases of the text.

The three texts respectively reflect three styles of classical Chinese that involve three different time periods. In reverse chronological order, the commentary paraphrases of Zhao Qi are in the LATE-HAN CHINESE of his time; they share many similarities with expressions found in the early-medieval *Shishuo xinyu* (世說新語 A New Account of Tales of the World) by Liu Yiqing (劉義慶).¹⁸ The *Mengzi* of half a millenium earlier is in “STANDARD” CLASSICAL CHINESE. (Indeed, it is often taken to be *the*

容), “Language Contact and Its Influence on the Development of Chinese Syntax,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Linguistics*, ed. William S-Y. Wang (王士元) and Chaofen Sun (孙朝奋) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 204; and Zev Handel, “The Classification of Chinese: Sinitic (The Chinese Language Family),” in *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Linguistics*, ed. William S-Y. Wang and Chaofen Sun, 34, 36–37.

¹⁷ Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964.

¹⁸ Note the table that highlights the contrast between particles and phrases used in two of these three time-periods, and includes those in a fourth; Dobson, *Late Han*, 112-14. It lists (A) particles found in *Mengzi*, (B) late-Han equivalents used by Zhao Qi, and (C) modern-Chinese expressions that the late-Han examples anticipate. Cf. Yoshikawa Kōjirō (吉川幸次郎), “The *Shih-shuo hsün-yü* and Six Dynasties Prose Style,” tr. Glen W. Baxter, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 18 (1955): 121–41. Note also the 14-page summary in *Cahiers de linguistique - Asie orientale* 31.1 (2002): 117–30, of the 294-page doctoral dissertation (Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2001) by Ngan Yuk Han, “Evolution des constructions ‘verbe + complément du chinois bas-archaïque au chinois haut-médiéval (5^{ème} av. J.-C. – 6^{ème} siècles): Analyse diachronique.” Moreover, in regard to the Six Dynasties period, “scholars have pointed out a number of distinctive linguistic features in the language of the translated sutras during the Medieval Period that are contact-induced”; Gao and Yu, “Language Contact and Its Influence on the Development of Chinese Syntax,” 205, where reference is made to Zhu Guanming (朱冠明), who “lists eighteen unusual syntactic features”; cf. the latter’s since-published book: *Xian-Qin zhi zhongguo Hanyu yufa yanbian yanjiu* (先秦至中古汉语语法演变研究 [Studies on the Grammatical Transformation of the Chinese Language from Pre-Qin to Medieval Times]) (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2016).

standard classical-language text.) And evocative of the Chinese of still more centuries earlier are the chapter summaries by Zhao Qi, which “are written in a highly contrived and lapidary style ... replete with archaic usages drawn indiscriminately from the Classics of all periods of ARCHAIC CHINESE.”¹⁹ The *Mengzi*, whose presence is understood, is straddled, as it were, by paraphrase dating from centuries later and by chapter summaries that evoke markedly earlier archaic language.

It is as if we had three versions of the same Latin text: one in Classical Latin, another in medieval Latin, and still another in quasi-Old Latin. In both cases, one might ask: Which of these is/are in “Literary Chinese”? Which of these is/are in “Literary Latin”?

The writings of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) present a similar problem. Apart from writings in “strict” classical Chinese, we have compositions by him in a classical language mildly influenced by Song-dynasty colloquial, such as his three poems in the *Qianjiashi* (千家詩 The Thousand Poets Anthology).²⁰ And we have the *Zhuzi yulei* (朱子語類 Recorded Conversations of Zhu Xi), which includes a great deal of colloquial expression.²¹ Where does “Literary Sinitic” end and “Vernacular Sinitic” begin?²² Apposite are the comments of Ross King and Christina Laffin: “The challenge is to critique and dismantle the largely artificial and entirely modern divides that separate traditional

19 Dobson, *Late Han Chinese*, xix–xx, slightly modified. For examples of Archaic Chinese usage, see his *Early Archaic Chinese: A Descriptive Grammar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

20 Namely, #086, #164, and #165 (also #143 by attribution) among the 224 poems in the anthology, as numbered by Yang Jiahao (楊家豪), annot. and trans., *Qianjia shi duben* (千家詩讀本 [The Thousand Poets Anthology: A Reader]) (Tainan: Wenguo Shuju, 2004).

21 For English-language discussion of Zhu Xi and the colloquial language, see Getty Kallgren, *Studies in Sung Time Colloquial Chinese as Revealed in Chu Hi's Tsiianshu* (Stockholm: G. Kallgren, 1958), and Daniel K. Gardner, “Modes of Thinking and Modes of Discourse in the Sung: Some Thoughts on the *Yü-lu* (‘Recorded Conversations’) Texts,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30.3 (August 1991): 574–603. (Surprisingly, the latter work’s bibliography omits the former.) Note also Sun Chaofen, *Word-Order Change and Grammaticalization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), *passim*, where examples from another colloquial-influenced text, *Zutangji* (祖堂集 [Patriarchs Hall Anthology]), and *Zhuzi yulei* are included.

22 The distinction is drawn by Victor Mair, “Buddhism and the Rise of the Western Vernacular in East Asia,” 707–13. These categories are more porous and complicated than some scholars who apply them seem to have understood.

literary production in cosmopolitan Sinitic from literature in the vernaculars, and ‘modern’ from ‘pre-modern.’”²³

Kanbun writings have been referred to variously in the West as being “in classical Chinese,” “in Literary Chinese,” “in *wenyan* 文言,” “in Chinese,” and “in Chinese style.” More recently, “in Literary Sinitic” has gained some currency. Contrasted with these is the expression “in Sino-Japanese.”

But the problem with any term that includes “literary” should be apparent. Not only is it the one above, of determining what exactly constitutes “Literary Chinese.” An even greater problem is posed by the fact that “literary” strongly suggests a belletristic register.²⁴ Is it proper to label the vast number of Japanese documents in *kanbun* “literary”?²⁵

Also, to say that *kanbun* compositions by Japanese are “in Literary Chinese” (or “in Literary

²³ Draft introduction to their translation of Saitō Mareshi (齋藤希史), *Kanbunmyaku to kindai Nihon: Mō hitotsu no kotoba no sekai* (漢文脈と近代日本: もう一つのことばの世界 [*Kanbunmyaku: The Literary Sinitic Context and the Birth of Modern Japanese Language and Literature*]) (Tōkyō: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 2007), slightly modified. Cf. the comments of Kees Versteegh: “In a diglossic speech community there are no discrete varieties, but linguistic variation is organized along a continuum between the standard language and the vernacular. Both ends of the continuum represent constructs: at the top the standard is the codified norm, and at the bottom end of the continuum the idealized vernacular consists in a conglomerate of non-standard features. One of the most characteristic features of such a diglossic situation is that the speakers themselves usually regard the entire spectrum of variation as the expression of one single language, even when ‘objective’ features of the extreme ends of the continuum would seem to indicate differently”; “Dead or Alive? The Status of the Standard Language,” in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text*, ed. J. N. Adams, Mark Janse, and Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 68.

Moreover, the cultural unity often imputed to the use of Latin in the medieval West is also considerably more complicated than is generally assumed: “The circumstances in which Anglo-Latin literature was produced thus necessarily emphasize complex negotiations of center and periphery, of the literary work and its supplementary context, of the individual’s subjectivity split by the exigencies of language, of self and other. Such a characterization troubles certain idealized assumptions about the cultural unity of the Latin Middle Ages that were enshrined in much twentieth-century medievalist scholarship,” in David Townsend, “Medieval Anglo-Latin Literature,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

²⁴ The evaluative dimension is highlighted, for example, in David Knechtges’ rendering of *wen* in the title to the *Wen xuan* (文選): specifically, *Selections of Refined Literature*.

²⁵ As for what is considered “literary,” germane is the theoretical discussion in John M. Ellis, “The Definition of Literature,” in his *The Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 24–53.

Sinitic,” etc.) can be misleading, given Japanese coinages and usages; some are, but some are only partially so. All depends on what one means by “Literary Chinese” or “Literary Sinitic.” The problem is as Wiebke Denecke has stated:

Sino-Japanese is a highly hybrid language, because, although written in Chinese syntactical order, it encompasses a rich spectrum of registers that are genre-dependent and range from Sino-Japanese poems that could well have been written by a Chinese author to prose diaries that could come close to Literary Japanese.²⁶

The word *kanbun* as used in Japan is ambiguous as to whether a work “in (classical) Chinese” is by a Chinese or by a Japanese. Years ago, I proposed a straightforward distinction in English:

When speaking of *kanbun* works by Japanese, I suggest that the language they use, one based on the classical language of China, be called “Sino-Japanese.” And only when referring to Chinese traditional texts written by Chinese would we say that they are written in “Chinese.”²⁷

By analogy, “Sino-Korean” and “Sino-Vietnamese” would also be used.²⁸ (Strictly speaking, given the basic language structure involved, “Japanese-Sinitic,” “Korean-Sinitic,” and “Vietnamese-Sinitic” would be more accurate.) If writing “in Sinitic” is “transnational,” it would nevertheless be

²⁶ “Janus Came and Never Left: Writing Literary History in the Face of the Other,” in *Studying Transcultural Literary History*, ed. Gunilla Lindberg-Wada (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2006), 280.

²⁷ John Timothy Wixted, “*Kanbun*: Histories of Japanese Literature, and Japanologists,” *Sino-Japanese Studies* 10.2 (April 1998), 23. The article was reprinted in *PMAJLS: Proceedings of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies* 4 (Summer 1998) (issue title: *The New Historicism and Japanese Literary Studies*, ed. Eiji Sekine), 313. And it was published as “Kambun, historias de la literatura japonesa y japonólogos,” tr. Amalia Sato, in *Tokonoma: Traducción y literatura* (Buenos Aires) 6 [Fall 1998]: 129.

²⁸ And these terms — “Sino-Japanese,” etc. — are precisely the ones that have been used by the majority of European scholars writing about *kanbun*.

useful to distinguish “written Sinitic” originating in China from “written Sinitic” composed in Japan or Korea. The terms “Sino-Japanese” or “Sino-Korean” have the advantage of identifying BOTH *the transregional language* AND *the place of origin*.²⁹ Moreover, they are easy to understand and simple to apply.

The use of “Literary Chinese” entails still another dimension that confuses the issue: the mix of “Literary Sinitic” and “Vernacular Sinitic.”³⁰ Many of the *kanshi* by Mori Ōgai 森鷗外 (1862–1922) are recognizable as “Literary Chinese” in terms of diction, word order, rhyme scheme, and even tonal rules. Certain locutions he uses, however, are influenced by traditional Chinese vernacular language,³¹ while others fit more directly the rubric of modern spoken Chinese. More interesting (and problematic) is sentence structure likely reflecting Japanese influence; a *kundoku* glossing of texts reveals how naturally one repeated locution is understood as “Japanese.” Moreover, Ōgai sometimes uses terms that are incomprehensible without a knowledge of Japanese. And there are occasions when his wordplay makes sense only when the Chinese characters are given a Japanese reading. In sum, many of Ōgai’s *kanshi* do not fit either category well: neither “Literary Sinitic” nor “Vernacular Sinitic.”³²

Moreover, there has long been a need to emphasize to Japanologists that *kanbun* writings are not in a “foreign” language, still less that they are “foreign” to Japan.³³ *Kanbun* is not only important for

29 Victor Mair, whose work is often cited by those who would use “Literary Sinitic” for *kanbun*, indicated (in a personal conversation, 11 Nov 2016) that he has no problem with the term “Sino-Japanese”: “It’s okay, as long as some form of ‘Sino- or Sinitic’ is there.”

30 See n. 22 above.

31 As is the case in his most famous fiction writing; Maeda Ai (前田愛), “Ōgai no Chūgoku shōsetsu shumi” (鷗外の中国小説趣味 [Ōgai’s Interest in Chinese Fiction]), in *Hikaku bungaku kenkyū: Mori Ōgai* (比較文学研究: 森鷗外 [Comparative Literature Studies: Mori Ōgai]), ed. Yoshida Seiichi (吉田精一) and Fukuda Rikutarō (福田陸太郎); gen’l. ed. Hasegawa Izumi (長谷川泉) (Tokyo: Asahi Shuppansha, 1978), 48–63.

32 For detailed treatment of the mix of language found in Ōgai’s *kanshi*, see John Timothy Wixted, “*Kanshi* as ‘Chinese Language’: The Case of Mori Ōgai,” in *Reconsidering the Sinosphere*, vol. 2, *Ideology, Morality, Aesthetics and Identity Formation*, ed. Nanxiu Qian, Richard J. Smith, and BOWEI ZHANG (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press), forthcoming.

33 “What is the upshot [of the attitude that *kanbun* is ‘Chinese’ or ‘foreign’]? A vicious circle: people [Japanologists] shy

Japanese studies; it is literally *at the center of* the culture. Any label that refers to *kanshi/kanbun* as being simply “(Literary) Chinese” (or “[Literary] Sinitic”) deflects from that centrality. The headword “Japanese” in “Sino-Japanese” helps identify *kanbun* for Japanese as being “ours.” (“Japanese-Sinitic” would serve much the same purpose.)

In making a case against general use of the term “Sino-Japanese,” Peter Kornicki has argued:

[W]e do not describe the Latin of Erasmus as Dutch-Latin, that of Francis Bacon as Anglo-Latin, that of Descartes as Franco-Latin, that of Dante as Italo-Latin, that of Leibniz as Germano-Latin, that of Comenius as Czech-Latin, or that of Janus Pannonius as Magyar-Latin. “Latin” alone suffices....³⁴

But that is not the case.

The entry for “Anglo-Latin Literature to 1847” in *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature* does not refer to Francis Bacon, but does name Bede, Aldhelm, and Alcuin; More and Campion; Milton, Herbert, Crashaw, Marvell, and Cowley; as well as Johnson, Addison, and Gray.³⁵ And specifically in reference to Bacon, it has been stated: “The most important fact to be borne in mind at this point is, that Bacon wrote most of his works in Latin. He was, as Bede and Aelfric before

away from what they do not know, stay permanently ignorant of it, and its non-importance of course is often thereby confirmed, especially because of natural reluctance to draw attention to one’s weaknesses”; Wixted, “*Kanbun: Histories of Japanese Literature, and Japanologists*,” 29 (rpt. ed., 322, tr. ed., 136).

³⁴ “A Note on Sino-Japanese: A Question of Terminology,” *Sino-Japanese Studies* 17 (2010): 33. The point is repeated by Matthew Fraleigh, *Plucking Chrysanthemums: Narushima Ryūhoku and Sinitic Literary Traditions in Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016), 22. (He also cites and endorses the quotations in n. 2 above; 10 and 14.) It is true that, when speaking in general terms, “‘Latin’ alone suffices....” At the same time, it can be misleading to use the unqualified umbrella-term “Latin” for writers active over a period of more than two millennia (much as it can be misleading to use the terms “classical Chinese” or “Literary Chinese” to describe writings over the same period).

³⁵ Margaret Drabble, Jenny Stringer, and Daniel Hahn (3rd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

him, an Anglo-Latin author.”³⁶ Note also the sections on “Anglo-Latin literature” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature* and *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*.³⁷

The terms “Germano-Latin” and “German-Latin” appear in scholarship on early texts.³⁸ And in regard to Leibniz, we are told in a recent study that his first major treatise on medicine, *Directiones ad rem medicam pertinentes* (Directions Pertaining to the Institution of Medicine), is best characterized as being in “Germano-Latin.”³⁹

Furthermore, one finds references to “Hungaro-Latin sources.”⁴⁰ And ironically enough, the first Latin grammar in Hungary (by János Sylvester, c. 1504–c. 1555) was titled *Grammatica Hungaro-Latina* (or *Gramatica Hungarolatina*).

One does, in fact, find chapters entitled “French Latin,” “Spanish Latin,” “Portuguese Latin,” and “Italian Latin” in a work whose purview extends to the Renaissance, which includes treatment of regions not having a Romance-language vernacular: specifically, “Netherlands Latin,” as well as “Anglo-Latin” and “German Latin.”⁴¹

It would be preferable, given the gradualness of the transition to French, Italian, and other Romance languages,⁴² to view them simply as being branches of Latin. In other words, modern French,

³⁶ Theodore Whitefield Hunt, *Representative English Prose and Prose Writers* (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1887), 221.

³⁷ The former is cited in n. 23 above.

³⁸ For example, the ninth- (or possibly tenth-) century *Waltharius* has been referred to as a “Germano-Latin epic”; Ford B. Parkes, “Irony in *Waltharius*,” *MLN* [*Modern Language Notes*] (German Issue) 89.3 (Apr., 1974): 459.

³⁹ Justin E. H. Smith, *Divine Machines: Leibniz and the Sciences of Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 33.

⁴⁰ They appear three times in K. Czeglédy, “Sacred Kingship among the Peoples of the Steppes,” a nine-page undated translation (available online at <https://www.medievalists.net/2012/02/sacred-kingship-among-the-peoples-of-the-steppes/>) of “Das sakrale Königtum bei den Steppenvölkern,” *Numen* 13 (1966): 14–26.

⁴¹ Timothy J. McGee, A. G. Rigg, and David N. Klausner, eds., *Singing Early Music: The Pronunciation of European Languages in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

⁴² Note, for example, three of the chapter titles in Paul M. Lloyd, *From Latin to Spanish*, vol. 1, *Historical Phonology and Morphology of the Spanish Language* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1987 [*Memoirs* vol. 173]): “From Earlier to Later Latin,” “From Late Latin to Old Spanish,” and “From Medieval to Modern Spanish.”

modern Italian, etc., could well be included under the general rubric “post-Latin” — as “Franco-Latin,” “Italo-Latin,” etc.⁴³

Kornicki advocates that “Sino-Japanese, Sino-Korean, and Sino-Vietnamese” be used “principally to denote texts that depart from Sinitic norms and therefore were not portable to other societies in Asia.”⁴⁴ But what are these “Sinitic norms”?⁴⁵ What constitutes “portability”?⁴⁶ Such a practice, it seems, would lead to more problems than it solves.

All classifications, by their nature, have advantages and disadvantages; inevitably they entail anomalies. The question is whether the advantages in their use adequately outweigh the disadvantages. They should clarify considerably more than confuse; and their heuristic value should exceed the effort needed to understand or use them. Such labeling can be helpful.

“English literature,” “Irish literature,” and “English” are all fraught terms. They continue to be used, because in shorthand terms they identify bodies of material or a language, whatever their ambiguities, that most readers and listeners can understand; they differentiate them from other such large-scale categories.⁴⁷

43 In such a case, “neo-Latin” (contemporaneous writing *in* the language) would be considered *parallel to* “post-Latin” (and, if necessary, further subdivided).

44 “A Note on Sino-Japanese,” 43.

45 Are they what he refers to as works “written in perfect or well-nigh perfect Sinitic (literary) Chinese”? (Kornicki, “A Note,” 42). That brings us back to the problem of what constitutes “Literary Chinese.” In fact, are Ōgai’s *kanshi* “in perfect Sinitic” (as treated in the article cited in n. 32)? This is much as if one expected medieval Latin authors to read like Cicero.

46 Fraleigh provides a fairly narrow definition of *kanbun* and refers to portability. He lists what he calls “the principal characteristics of *kanshi*: that they are composed in the written language of Literary Sinitic, that they observe the formal features of classical Chinese poetry, and that they have an extremely high degree of regional intelligibility” (*Plucking Chrysanthemums*, 17–18). But there are problems of portability and comprehensibility with ostensibly intelligible texts from another region in East Asia. Mori Ōgai’s *kyōshi* (“mad poem”) does not fit the definition, and many of the inordinate number of puns in his *kanshi* cannot be understood without a knowledge of Japanese: for example, *hōgai* 方外 vs. Ōgai 鷗外 in one poem, and *mino* 蓑 vs. the Japanese homophone *mino* 箕 in another, as treated in the article cited in n. 32.

47 It does no good to overstate that by using the term “Sino-Japanese” one is reifying such a body of writing in Japan; Kornicki uses “reify” three times in “A Note on Sino-Japanese.” Use of “Sino-Japanese” does not “distinguish it *hermetically* (emphasis added)” from other writing in Japan (Kornicki, “A Note,” 34). Nor does it reflect the assertion of “an altogether

If the “push-pull” between those who would use “Literary Sinitic” (or one of its variants) and those who prefer “Sino-Japanese” (etc.) is irresolvable, an alternative term might be in order. “E.A.-*criture*” (derived from “East Asian-*criture*”) might be considered. The term would encompass sinographic writing in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, and include China as well.⁴⁸

“E.A.-*criture*” has several advantages. First, it emphasizes *the written nature* of the shared language. Second, it is *pan-East Asian*. Third, it is *geographically neutral*. Fourth, it allows for *degrees of portability*. And fifth, it *avoids the problem of “literary” value*.

separate category of literary expression” (Fraleigh, *Plucking Chrysanthemums*, 22).

48 Cf. use of the term *scripta franca* by Wiebke Denecke, “Worlds Without Translation: Premodern East Asia and the Power of Character Scripts,” in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Sandra Berman and Catherine Porter (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 209.

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