

About languages used in Komonjo (an ancient document)

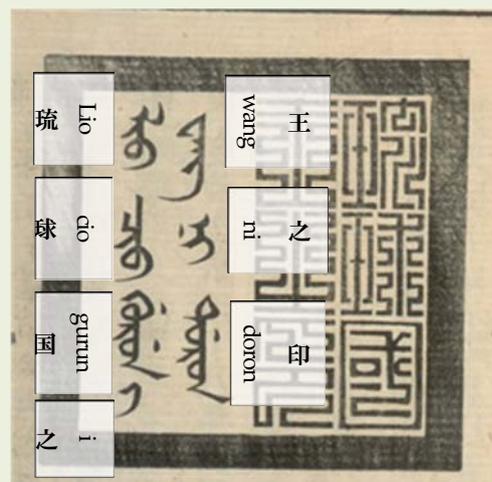


Haisai! Kijimun yaibi'in (Hi! I'm Kijimun.) In this month, I am going to introduce a character and languages used in valuable materials in Special Collection owned by the University of the Ryukyus library!

• Languages used in Komonjo (an ancient document)

In the valuable materials of Special collection of the library, various languages are used. Here are some examples of the real documents.

- Japanese: Official documents within Ryukyu Kingdom or diplomatic documents to Satsuma(to Japan) were written in Japanese. Most of Komonjo of the library are written in Japanese.
- Chinese: In Ryukyu, diplomatic documents toward China, Korea and Southeast Asia were all written in Chinese(Kanbun: Chinese classics). Knowing Chinese language helped Ryukyuan people to contact with foreigners, even if they drifted ashore in the place where they were completely strangers. For example, "Kanbunshū", Miyara Dunchi/Douchi collection No.43, is the document with which we can see how local officer of Yaeyama tried to communicate with Chinese officer when they had drifted ashore in China.
- Manchu: Manchu was originally official language of Qing Dynasty to whom Ryukyu Kingdom brought tributes, as Qing was a Dynasty of the Manchus. On the page 31st of Chuzan denshinroku maki ni (Iha collection No.18), there is an image of the stamp of the king of Ryukyu which was used before 1756. It was the stamp conferred from Chinese Emperor of Qing Dynasty, and on that stamp, Chinese classics and Manchu are put down together.
- Chinese characters made in Ryukyu: As "畑(hatake)" and "辻(tsuji)" are the Chinese characters made in Japan, there are also the Chinese characters made in Ryukyu. "羣(gushi)" of 羣宮城(gushimiyagi: gushināgushiku(in Okinawan dialect)) which is an old name of Nahashi Orokumiyagi present-day is the Chinese character made in Ryukyu. On the 27th page of "Yorozushū", Miyara Dunchi/Douchi collection No.3, there is a name of place, 羣宮城(gushimiyagi: gushināgushiku). Besides, there are "璣(kyo)" which is mainly used for a person's name and "鉞(hera)" which is one of farm tools.
- Others: In reading Kanseki(Chinese classics which were issued in pre-modern period), there is a technique to write a letter or a guiding marks for rendering Chinese into Japanese with a pen made by ivory or by bamboo, without using Japanese ink. This technique is called "Kakuhitsu" and it is visible to the naked eye, but it cannot be copied or photographed. In a part of the Chinese classics of this library, we can see some notes by Kakuhitsu.



Record of transmitted facts of Chūzan, vol. 2

(Iha Fuyū Collection No.18)

With "Digital Archive of Ryukyu/Okinawa Special Collection", you can find valuable materials written in various languages. Let's check it via QR code!

References : 新城敏男「近世八重山士族の異国語習得」(『首里王府と八重山』2014年, 岩田書院), 黨武彦「清代文書行政における内閣の政治的機能について-日本・琉球関係档案を素材として」(『東京大学史料編纂所研究紀要』No.16, 2006年)

Printed by Okinawan Materials Staff, University of the Ryukyus Library on May 1, 2017

