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Shorthand Transcription and the Meiji Political Novel[1]

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I. Introduction

This article situates Yano Ryūkei (矢野龍渓)'s political novel *Sēbe Meishi Keikoku Bidan* (斉武名士経国美談, *Illustrious Statesman of Thebes,* 1883–1884) at the nexus of discursive changes in the literary, oratorical, and print culture regimes in Meiji-era Japan. A best-selling work of historical fiction, *Keikoku Bidan* was set in ancient Greece and attempted to faithfully represent the Western origins of democracy espoused in early Meiji by the People's Rights Movement. Not only did the novel foreground the classical art of oratory, whose rise in popularity in early Meiji Japan led to the new concept of *enzetsu* (演説, speech), it also introduced the technique of shorthand transcription, or *sokki* (速記), for the composition of the novel. This system was based upon the newly imported phonetic notation invented by Isaac Pitman (1813–1897) in 1837. Appearing prior to the rise of the unified style, *genbunitchi* (言文一致, the unification of speech and writing) or the realist (写実主義的) novel in the early 1890s, Yano's *Keikoku Bidan* was a hybrid of Tokugawa, Meiji, and Western literary practices that was not destined to become part of the literary mainstream. Indeed, even as a political novel, it demonstrated characteristics that were unique to its own discursive and material production. Yet it is precisely here and in Yano's later writings on language and script reform that the phonetic foundations of the Meiji episteme come more clearly into focus. Accordingly, it is my primary aim to explore Yano's advocacy of shorthand and its contributions to the transformation of modern Japanese literature, language, and script. However, I also wish to gesture toward some of the broader shifts toward phonetics that spread to China and Korea by the 1890s

1. This whole paper follows the Yale Romanization system.

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that are indicative of a regional shift in the relationship to Chinese literacy.

It is instructive to begin examination of *Keikoku Bidan* from the perspective of media history, particularly the close ties between journalism and literature in the first decades of Meiji. Yano Ryūkei (pen name of Yano Fumio [矢野龍渓, 1851–1931]) was the editor-in-chief of the *Yūbin Hōchi* (郵便報知, *Postal Report*) newspaper, founded by Japan's first Postmaster General and national language reformer, Maejima Hisoka (前島密, 1835–1919). He is best known for his *Kanji Gohaishi no Gi* (漢字御廃止之儀, *Proposal to Abolish Chinese Characters*) submitted to the shogunal authorities in 1866 while still an instructor at the Kaiseijo, the shogunate's school of Dutch Learning. It was a brash missive that went unanswered even as the shogunate was faced with an unprecedented crisis of foreign incursions and teetered on the verge of collapse. In spite of these exigencies, it is today widely regarded as the opening salvo in the reform of Japanese script away from the heterogeneity of Japanese écriture and toward the hegemonic use of the unified style. For instance, it is the first of one hundred sixty-nine documents that make up the six stages of development in language historian Yamamoto Masahide (山本正秀)'s *Kindai Buntai Keisei Shiryōshū* (近代文体形成資料集, *Source Materials for the Formation of a Modern Writing Style*).[2]

Through his connections to the Maejima and the newspaper, Yano was exposed to the latest innovations in language and script reform. Perhaps most significantly, this included the new transcriptive techniques first pioneered by Pitman that were adapted to Japanese in the early 1880s. Yano rose to the forefront of Meiji reformers who embraced shorthand as a cutting-edge technology for transforming Japanese ecriture and national language. It is well known in the origins of modern Japanese literature that *Yūbin Hōchi* shorthand reporter Wakabayashi Kanzō (若林玵蔵, 1857–1938) transcribed Sanyūtei Enchō (三遊亭圓朝)'s *rakugo* (落語)[3] tale *Kaidan Botan Dōrō* (怪談牡丹燈籠, *Ghost Story of the Peony Lantern*, 1884), which was serially published

2. Although he was by no means the only scholar engaged in this endeavor, Yamamoto was principally responsible in the late 20th century for defining and elevating the history of a triumphant unified style. Many factors were at work including the postwar loss of empire and teleological retrenchment of Japanese national particularity in ethnolinguistic terms; the tight correlation between modern literary style and the heights of linguistic expression; and the renewal of standardization efforts in postwar compulsory education and mass media (radio and television).
3. Literally, "fallen words." *Rakugo* is a form of Japanese verbal entertainment.

to great fanfare. Less often remarked upon is the fact that Yano employed two shorthand reporters, including Wakabayashi, to take down his dictation in order to compose the two volumes of *Keikoku Bidan*. Notwithstanding the fact that *sokkibon* (速記本), or transcribed *rakugo* and *kōdan* (講談)[4] stories, came to be regarded from *Kaidan Botan Dōrō* onward as a stylistic template for the realist novel, whereas the political novel quickly faded in popularity and died out, Wakabayashi's hand in both works points to a critical stage of overlap between these incipient genres. There was also a close connection between speech, writing, and the values of transparent democratic governance at play in the narrative of Yano's novel aided by its composition in shorthand. I further wish to evaluate how Yano's *Nihon Buntai Moji Shinron* (日本文体文字新論, *A New Theory of Japanese Style and Script*, 1886), also published by the *Yūbin Hōchi*, studied style and script reform across a span of modern and ancient languages. Although its mention of phonetic shorthand is admittedly brief, Yano expresses a clear admiration for its capability to overcome the heterogeneity of scripts inherited from the ancient regime.

Ⅱ. Shorthand Transcription and the Meiji Political Novel

The Meiji political novel was a short-lived genre that reached its apex in the 1880s just prior to the emergence of literary realism. Benjamin Disraeli's *Coningsby* (1844; translated into Japanese in 1884) and the works of Victor Hugo were among the first adaptations and translations of the Western novel in Japan that contributed to fiction's positive re-evaluation away from the Neo-Confucianist contempt for *gesaku* (戯作, light fiction, especially of the late Edo period) popular literature. Christopher Hill has argued persuasively about the relationship between national sovereignty and history that frequently obtains in the political novel as a comparison between states that went beyond the Japanese polity:

> Meiji political novels were not limited to negotiating social change within one national territory, however. They also explored the relationship between a unitary Japanese history (which they were also writing), and

4. *rakugo* and *kōdan* are forms of comic and dramatic tueatrical storytelling usually with minimal use of props.

> the histories of other nations. A prominent example is Tōkai Sanshi's *Kajin no kigū* (Chance encounters with beautiful women, 1885–97), which recounts, among many events, the history of the Carlist rebellion in Spain, resistance to Russian and Turkish campaigns in the Caucasus, the colonization of Madagascar, and the fall of Urabi Pasha in Egypt. The novelists undoubtedly gestured toward other histories to inspire readers with stirring examples like the fall of the Bastille, but in the process they also suggested that the histories of other countries could be abstracted as models for the history of the Japanese nation. (338)

Keikoku Bidan was no different in this regard, as it expressed the desire to bring about a transformation in Japanese national subjectivity and the governing institutions of state by making recourse to ancient Greece. The novel's commercial popularity enabled Yano to privately fund a trip to Europe to study different political systems and to participate more vigorously in the debates over *kokugo kokuji mondai* (国語国字問題, the question of national language and script). His research and writing of *Nihon Buntai Moji Shinron* was likewise a product of *Keikoku Bidan*'s success.

Keikoku Bidan was based on Yano's translation (*honyaku,* 翻訳) and adaptation (*honan,* 翻案) of material from a half-dozen English sources on Greek history, a process Yano referred to using the neologism *sanyaku* (纂訳), which means something like "compilation-translation."[5] Translation and adaptation were closely related strategies in early Meiji for disseminating Western concepts and categories of knowledge, especially in literature. In the preface to volume one, he expresses his dissatisfaction with the lack of detailed studies of Thebes in English. Although he had originally intended to translate an existing text, when a suitable text did not present itself, he determined to produce his own. He explains that his purpose was to write an "official history," *seishi* (正史), with only slight embellishments to entertain and edify the audience: "I added human emotion and humor to lend interest as a novel" (之ヲ補述シ人情滑稽ヲ加テ小説体ト為スニ至レリ) (qtd. in Ochi 165–66). But as I

5. For a discussion of translation, adaption, and their implications for Yano's intervention into genre paradigms of the early Meiji novel, see: Hideo, Kamei. "Sanyaku to Buntai: 'Shōsetsu Shinzui' Kenkyū*"* [Compiling and Style: A Study on "Shosetu Shinzui,"「小説神髄」研究纂訳と文体]. *Hokkaido Daigaku Bungakubu Kiyō* [Journal of Hokkaido University's Department of Culture, 北海道大学文学部紀要] 40 (2): 1–59.

have already identified, there is another crucial aspect of its composition that set it apart from other political novels: it was the first literary work in the Meiji era to be transcribed in phonetic shorthand. Yano decided to enlist the aid of shorthand reporters to write the novel after an injury to his right arm occurred during his political activities helping to establish Ōkuma Shigenobu (大隈重信)'s, Constitutional Reform Party, *Rikken Kaishintō* (立憲改進党), and the People's Rights Movement, *Jiyū Minken Undō* (自由民権運動), thereby incapacitating his ability to write effectively. He called on *Hōchi Shimbun* (報知新聞) shorthand reporter Satō Kuratarō (佐藤蔵太郎) to transcribe volume one (1883) and Wakabayashi Kanzōv (若林玵蔵) for volume two (1884).

Yano set his sights on recounting the origins of the West in ancient Greece, tracing the rise of Thebes from a tributary of Sparta to conquering its former oppressor and eventually unifying the Hellenic world. Despite the exotic locale, the text was very much consistent with Edo cultural productions set in earlier historical places and times, as per the *sekai* concept in kabuki, which was used to evade censorship and deliver veiled political critiques. Yano, however, sought the intellectual high ground by making his novel historically as well as politically serious. His focus was not simply on reveling in the glories of the Grecian past, but looking forward to the future of the modern nation-state. His novel can thus be read as an allegory of Japan overcoming the unequal treaties imposed by the West, or, more pertinently to his immediate political ambitions, the defeat of the Meiji oligarchs by democracy.

The full Japanese title, *Sēbe Meishi Keikoku Bidan* (斎武名士経国美談), is often rendered by contemporary scholars into English as *Illustrious Statesmen of Thebes*. There was, however, already an English translation provided on the original cover by Yano as *Young Politicians of Thebes*. Possibly Yano chose a less florid rendition to better communicate its political content to Meiji youth. It was, to be sure, a significant departure from the semi-erotic tones implied by *bidan*, "a beautiful story." Nevertheless, Yano's own translation curiously omits the main part of the title, *Keikoku Bidan*. *Keikoku* comes from the *Kaifūsō* (懐風藻, 751 CE), the oldest anthology of Chinese poetry in Japan. *Keikoku* echoes the title of the third oldest anthology of Chinese poetry in Japan, the *Keikokushū* (経国集, 827 CE), which in turn expresses the power of words to regulate political affairs, and maintain social and cosmological order. Consequently, even as Yano based his political novel on classical Greece, he also turned to the Sino-Japanese classics to affirm the value of writing in the service of the state.

John Mertz astutely points out that the narrative is rife with Greek concepts of the public (presented in the novel as *ōyakem,* 公), the assembly, and above all, political speaking or oratory. He calls attention to the novel's scenes of the lecture hall, the great assembly hall, and what he calls "the voice of the crowd," which provides the loci of narrative tension and the diffusion of political authority from a single speaker to a community of listeners, that is to say, the audience of the nation.[6] If I may extrapolate a bit further, herein lies the unification of state power with the people. It is a relation expressed by Yano not according to a notion of transcriptive realism or the illusion of a vernacular narrative voice, but through classical eloquence and moral persuasion.

In the preface to volume one, Yano briefly sums up the collaborative process in which he dictated to Satō.[7] Due to the large number of homophones obscuring the meaning of the text, he recounts that Satō would frequently visit him for clarification during his convalescence. Consequently, Yano edited it "by his own hand" (*tezukara,* 手自ら) (Yano, *Keikoku Bidan* 4).[8] Nevertheless, he credits Satō and shorthand for enabling the rapid composition of the text. Although to my knowledge only Kamei Hideo has made any mention of Japanese shorthand by Satō,[9] Maeda Ai also points out that he wrote a political novel of his own, *Zanfū Hiu Seiro Nikki* (世路日記 慘風悲雨, 1884), patterned after the adaptation of Bulwer-Lytton's *Ernest Maltravers*, *Karyū Shunwa* (花柳春話, *A Spring Tale of Blossoms and Willows,* 1878–1879).[10] Satō published his novel under the literary pseudonym Kikutei Kōsui (菊亭香水), and followed a more conventional approach to the political novel than Yano. More work needs to be done in this area, but I should note that Satō is mentioned in connection with Yano's *Keikoku Bidan* in the preface to another similarly named political novel, Katō Masanosuke (加藤政之助, 1854–1941)'s compilation-translation,

6. For an overview of the political and narratological dimensions of this text, see: Mertz's *Novel Japan* (208–18, 230–32). I would also strongly recommend his analysis of the marginalization of the political novel from the canonical accounts that begin with Tsubouchi Shōyō and Futabatei Shimei, "Political Novels and the Canon of Modernity" (243–67).
7. See Maeda's annotation of *Keikoku Bidan* in *Meiji Seiji Shōsetsu-shū* (450).
8. Also referenced in preface to Vol. 2, 2.
9. See Kamei Hideo's "Kansakushasei to Kanzokushasei Oyobi Buntai no Mondai." I am indebted to one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing out this rare reference to Satō, whose role is often obscured behind Wakabayashi.
10. See the annotation of *Keikoku Bidan* in *Meiji Seiji Shōsetsu-shū* (450).

Eikoku Meishi Kaiten Kidan (英国名士回天綺談, 1885). In this divergence the full contours of the early Meiji novel from the "mainstream" codes of the political novel to Yano's experimentalism to the shorthand transcription of *rakugo* and *kōdan* become apparent: a discourse network of transcription as well as a genealogy of texts.

Yano also mentions the artist Kamei Shiichi (亀井至一), whose lithographic illustrations appear in both volumes. While effusive in praise of Kamei's ability to "capture the appearance" (*arisama wo moshitari*, 有様ヲ模シタリ) of historical figures and customs of ancient Greece, Yano uses the illustrations more or less in the manner of Western fiction merely to visually reinforce the verbal narrative's depiction of monumental architecture and democratic assemblies. While he eschewed the sort of minute descriptive language Tsubouchi Shōyō (坪内逍遥, 1859–1935) would advocate for in lieu of illustration in *Essence of the Novel*, Yano makes a clear break with the word play and word-image co-figuration of *gesaku*. Lastly, returning to his comments about the text as both a history and a novel, Yano makes a preemptive objection in the preface against labeling his work a "popular historical novel" (*haishi shōsetsu,* 稗史小説). From his point of view, this was a disingenuous genre that invented fictitious worlds instead of accurately portraying this one. Simply put, the political novel that Yano had in mind therefore had no precedent in terms of genre or composition. What makes this comment more provocative is the fact that the transcription of Enchō's *Peony Lantern* was commissioned by the Tokyo Haishi Shōsestu Shuppansha (東京稗史小説出版社, Tokyo Popular Historical Novel Publishers).

In the preface to the second volume, Yano's interest in script reform is more explicit, anticipating the linguistic concerns he would address in *Nihon Buntai Mojis Shinron*. Under the separate heading "On Style" he provides a series of simple observations about literary origins: "Before *Sashiden* (左氏伝), there was no *Sashiden* style. After *Sashiden* came out, then for the first time there was a *Sashiden* style" (*Keikoku Bidan* 3). He repeats this rhetorical gesture with respect to the *Tale of Genji*, the *Shiki* (史記,[11] Records of the Grand Historian, 2nd C. BC), and the *Taiheiki* (太平記, *Chronicle of the Great Peace*, late 14th C.), remarking that style is not a question of an age or era, but innovation. Before a style may be identified as such, there must first be a unity (*ittai*, 一体) to transmit and reproduce. Still, he avers, the formation of a literary style does not necessarily beget others, nor is it free from the conditions of its time

11. Especially the Chapter Shih Chi.

(*jizoku,* 時俗).

Yano then describes his own efforts to analyze and contribute to the linguistic reforms since the Imperial Restoration. He expounds upon the four dominant modes of literary writing in Japan in the 1880s: "Japanese" (*wabuntai*, 和文体), "Classical Chinese" (*kanbuntai*, 漢文体), "vernacular speech" (*zokugo-rigen*, 俗語俚諺), and "direct translation from European languages" (*ōbun-chokuyakutai*, 欧文直訳体) also known simply as the "translation style" (*yakubuntai*, 訳文体) (*Keikoku Bidan* 6). The last is a mixture of the previous three, which he remarks "from the standpoint of conservative-minded writers of only one style, it must in fact seem to have a monstrously strange (*kikai genyō*, 奇怪幻妖) form." By everyday logic, he continues, it makes more sense to use one "instrument" (*kikai*, 器械) than to try to combine four at once (8). Yano thus consciously identifies the motif of the ghostly homophone caught in the machinery of writing.

Yano admits that he tried to use all four styles in the second volume, in particular the vernacular style. Unfortunately, the more diligent his efforts the more they met with laughable results, until he finally gave up and just wrote as it came naturally to him. His inability to create a vernacular style notwithstanding, Yano introduced shorthand as a compositional, if not yet explicitly literary, strategy for "writing things down just as they are." Much as the preface deals with style and language, the postscript pertains to the utility of scripts. He contrasts the newly adapted shorthand to the more widespread, workaday uses of the translation style:

> Whether it is used in the court, a social gathering or my request today for precise note-taking, there are many needs for this kind of [shorthand] practice. Yet in many cases, the form of note-taking is that of "translated writing in Chinese," not words written down precisely as they are spoken. No matter how carefully one employs the translated Chinese style, it never gives any evidence of speech as it was enunciated. This is one of its major shortcomings.
>
> 法廷や講場や今日我邦ニ精密ノ筆記ヲ要スルノ地處ハ其數甚ダ多々ナリ然ルニ其ノ筆記法ヲ問ヘハ概子皆漢文譯文体ニシテ人々ノ發吐セシ言語ヲ其儘精密ニ筆記スルモノニアラス已ニ漢文譯文体ヲ用ウル以上ハ如何ニ精密ニ之ヲ筆記スルトモ決シテ發吐セル言語ノ直証ト為スニ足ラス其レ一大缺典ナリ。 (1)

While it would be tempting to enfold his comments into the discourse of the unified style, it is probably more accurate to say that Yano recognized shorthand as a technical accomplishment, not as a literary style in its own right.

This would appear to be borne out by the postscript to the novel. Yano had Wakabayashi write out the first several lines of the text accompanied by kana-only and kanji-kana script. We must remember there was no unified Japanese language at this time, and the status of shorthand as a supplement or alternative national script had not yet been foreclosed. Setting aside his injury as a rationale for turning to the prosthesis of shorthand, Yano reveals an interest that preceded the adaptation of shorthand to Japanese syllabary:

> I thought it a shame that there was nothing in Japan like Western shorthand notation, and I explained to my acquaintances about the need for its development. But some time later I heard about [a group of] people who were experimenting with shorthand. After trying to decide how best to support their efforts, I settled on asking for their assistance in quickly completing this section of the book.
>
> 余ハ西洋速記法（シヨルト、ハント）ノ我邦ニ行ハレサルヲ憾ミ當テ余ノ知人ニ説テ之ヲ創起セシメント企テシ事アリ然ルニ其後チ是業ヲ講習スル者アリト聞キ大ニ之ヲ賛翼セシニ何ソ圖ラン今日其助ヲ借テ余カ此編ヲ速成スルニ至ラントハ。(1)

In the postscript, the three scripts appear side-by-side for the first time to a larger reading public. Shorthand is made visible as the phonetic, if still indecipherable, ür-script beneath the surface of the text. It was as writing under erasure that shorthand would be divested of its claims to phonetic transparency and transcriptive realism in the formation of the modern Japanese novel.

Yano's advocacy of shorthand would continue several years later in *Nihon Buntai Moji Shinron*.[12] In a familiar criticism of the unfiltered transcription of speech, Yano compares the polished style of a professional theatrical storyteller

12. For further analysis of the basic organization of the text, see Tanikawa Keiichi's *Rekishi no Buntai* [Style of History and Appearance of Novel, 歴史の文体, 小説のすがた]. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2008; Wada Sakiko (和田佐規子)'s "Meiji no Hyōgenryoku: Yano Ryūkei, Ryobuntairon ni Kan Suru Ichikōsatsu" [Meiji's Expression: Yano Ryukei's Study on "Ryobuntairon," 明治の表現力: 矢野龍渓「両文体」論に関する一考察]. Hikaku Bungaku Bunkaronshū [Comparative Literature · Literary Studies, 比較文学 · 文化論集] 23 (2006): 26–41.

(*kōdanshi*, 講談師) and "the average person" (*jinjō no hito*, 尋常の人), to point out the need for a concise yet lively style. He reflects on the need to create an "ordinary language" (*nichijō no kotoba*, 日常の言葉; *jōgo*, 常語 for short) that would enable everyone to become what we might call speech-writers: "[It is] a serious issue that we must produce an ordinary language in Japan that can be written just as it is [spoken]" (*nari*, 日本ノ常語ヲ其ノ儘ニ文章ト為シ得ヘキヤ否ヤノ一大問題 [なり]) (*Nihon* 43).[13] The speech one writes should not be disorganized or excessively prolix, but normalized through the oratory arts (*wagei*, 話芸). Yano repeatedly alludes to the figure of the storyteller in *rakugo* and *kōdan* in his discussion of a written vernacular, although he eschews the term *genbun itchi* popularly attributed to Mozume Takami (物集高見, 1847–1928). In a continuation of this argument, Yano holds up equivalent passages of the literary (*bungotai*) and spoken (*kōgotai*) forms of English to demonstrate the problem is not one in Japanese alone.

He then devotes the final chapters to exploring the comparative advantages of phonetic (*onji,* 音字) and figural (*keiji*, 形字) scripts. Unlike shorthand practitioners with their concerns for the hand and ear in recording speech, he primarily investigates practices of reading and the mechanics of the gaze. Interlinear sentence spacing, the composition of letters, and the movement of the reader's eyes were all crucial factors in assessing the visual field he calls "the world of the eye" (*me no seka,* 眼の世界). Yano was not only concerned with the popularization of typography, but its physiological demands on the eye. Yano describes the mechanical workings of the human eye as virtually equivalent to a photographic lens (*shashin kikai no megane,* 写真機械の眼鏡) (*Nihon* 142). In a series of anatomical illustrations, the eye is dissected into optical nerves and muscle fibers, followed by geometric charts mapping the angles of movement for the eyes and resultant potential for eyestrain. He compares different conventions in reading order in Chinese and Japanese (from top to bottom and right to left), English (from left to right and top to bottom), and alternatives from ancient Greek, Sanskrit, Arabic, and Mongolian. Yano argues that the reading of Chinese characters in fact induces less strain than Western languages, whose arrangement on the page induces an asymmetrical

13. While premodern thought and literature are rife with examples of the so-called "common man" (*bonbu*), Yano's reference to the average person and common language is indelibly linked to the establishment of normal schools (*jinjōgakkō*) and other standardizing institutions and measures.

movement in the left eye relative to the right. Such was the seriousness with which the fitness of Japanese writing on the world stage was to be evaluated.

Yano disapproved of simplistic dichotomies between phonetic and figural writing systems. Throughout the text he is at pains to point out all sorts of anomalies such as the fact that even in the modern West there are nonverbal symbols used all the time such as $ and &.[14] In a further rebuttal, Yano situates ancient Phoenician and Assyrian script alongside the Chinese I-ching for the purpose of demonstrating the existence of figural scripts in Western antiquity and phonetics in Chinese antiquity. While he let slip the opportunity to comment upon the phonetic aspects of Chinese characters, Yano sought to transcend the binary opposition of phonetically standardized and therefore supposedly superior languages of the West, and the heterogeneous and figural makeup of Japanese.

After extensively surveying ancient and modern scripts, Yano comes around to shorthand in the chapter on reading order. Referring to what he calls a "radical view" amongst Western language reformers (*chokushin no rikutsu*, 直進の理屈, or "forthright logic," is parenthetically remarked in katakana *radikaru bīu*, ラディカルビイウ), he reminds the reader the alphabet is not a recent invention such as the steam engine or telegraph, but a legacy of the ancient Phoenicians that has been passed down to the present day with incomplete standardization. If one were to look for a contemporary analog to those more recent inventions, he suggests, it would be the invention of phonetic shorthand. Indeed, Yano allows that if certain trends continue, shorthand may yet displace the alphabet in the West. He insists,

> In addition to their form, the letters of shorthand notation are easy to read. Lately, in Europe as well, shorthand has gained considerable force, with the number of young businessmen who can read it on the rise. There are even arguments in favor of replacing the alphabet with these letters. If we are going to reform Japanese writing, we might be better off foregoing Romanization and take up shorthand instead.
>
> 又形ノ上ヨリ云フモ早記法ノ字ハ見分ケ易シ近来ニテハ欧州ニテモ早記法大ニ

14. Although Yano does not mention it, the ampersand (&), in fact, originated in the classical Latin shorthand as a ligature of the Latin "et." In this sense, its provenance is more closely linked to the antecedents of shorthand than he may have known.

> 勢ヲ得テ羅馬字ニ代フル世ノ中ト為ルヘシトノ評判モ有ル位ニ至レリ左レハ日本ノ文字ヲ改ムルホドナラハ舊物ノ 羅馬字ヨリ寧ロ直進シテ茲ニ至ルコソ宜シカルヘシ。(209)

Although this can hardly be misconstrued as a wholesale endorsement of shorthand, as early as 1883–1884, Yano introduced shorthand in the production of his political novel *Keikoku Bidan* and regarded it as integral to the formation of a modern language and literature prior to the transcription of Enchō's *Peony Lantern*. If shorthand was not yet the definitive answer to the establishment of a modern Japanese language and script, it was articulated as a contender whose merits lay not in the accumulated weight of tradition, but in unencumbered utility.

Ⅲ. Conclusion

The term "genbun itchi," coined by Mozume in 1886, began to gain currency only after these constellations had coalesced into a new discourse of modern Japanese language and literature that left behind political novels such as Yano's. Yet we cannot impose the teleology of the unified style back onto the mid-1880s (as Yamamoto does), when it was by no means a universal goal for literature any more than it was for national language and script reform. Instead, I have sought to closely examine literary practices and concepts through the medium of shorthand that brokered the possibility of the unified style through its co-figuration with transcriptive realism. What emerges from the disparate fields of judicial and parliamentary reporting, public speaking, *rakugo*, *kōdan*, and so forth is the rapid convergence of media, language, and a discourse of realism that "captures things just as they are." Faith in the commensurability of speech and writing, including the cognate belief that phonetic scripts can capture an actuality rather than approximation of the scene of writing, was nevertheless predicated on these ideological and material developments.

By way of conclusion, I would like to look beyond the immediate context of *Keikoku Bidan* to shorthand's adoption and parallel developments elsewhere in East Asia. With respect to Chinese language and script reform, shorthand made inroads from the 1890s into the early decades of the twentieth century amidst a broader reconceptualization of phonics. Jing Tsu (石靜遠) has analyzed the late Qing phoneticization movement, as well as the pioneering

work of figures such as Wang Zhao (王照) and Mok Lai Chi (莫礼智), who sought to use phonetic notation to modernize the Chinese script. Mok in particular espoused Pitman's shorthand and received Pitman's official support with the publication of his "Cantonese Phoneticization Scheme" in the *Phonetic Journal* in 1893 (23). Further examples of indigenously derived phonetic scripts expanded heretofore-neglected discursive possibilities in the modernization and standardization of a Chinese national language. As Tsu insists, "They were interested in forging a new connectivity among the diverse empirical phenomena of speech through the materiality of writing, rather than abstracting a theory that would necessarily truncate the multifaceted ecology of tongues" (32).

There is, moreover, the singular example of a pre-existing writing system in East Asia that, well in advance of phonetic shorthand, used iconic representations of the speech organs in the form of the script itself: Hangul. The Korean script, attributed to King Sejong and his scholars in the Hall of Worthies circa 1443–1446, was designed in morpho-syllabic fashion to approximate the Korean pronunciation of Chinese characters (*hanja,* 漢字). As Geoffrey Sampson has argued, Hangul and Pitman's shorthand were similarly "featural" in the way they graphically encode the phonemes they represent. Of course, Hangul also represented the cosmology of the court in which it was invented with notation for Heaven (round dot), Earth (horizontal line) and Man (vertical line). For much of its early modern history it was a script rejected by the aristocracy who derided it as fit only for commoners and women, and not suited for representing the legitimacy of true literacy (Oh 183). At the end of the cosen dynasty, then, Hangul was revived as part of the Korean nationalist movement from the late 19th century through the 1980s, and it continued to be taught in Korean-established schools after the 1910 annexation by Japan. Hangul was used in a mixed script with Chinese characters in late 19th century, akin to Japanese use of Kana syllabary and Chinese characters. Inaba Tsukio (稲葉継雄) has likewise historicized the contributions of Fukuzawa Yukichi (福沢諭吉)'s protégé Inoue Kakugorō (井上角伍朗) in introducing the two journals *Kanjō Junpō* (漢城周報, 1883) and *Kanjō Shūhō* (漢城旬報, 1886) to Korea. In particular, the latter was "ceased to use the usual literary style of official documents purely in *kanbun*, for the first time making use of the mixed script of Chinese characters and Hangul" (Inaba 209).

I raise these admittedly impressionistic connections to Chinese shorthand and Hangul for the purpose of further accentuating the historical contingency

of shorthand in Japan. Where Japanese and Chinese shorthand (and other experimental scripts) were typically seen as untested and somewhat dubious foreign imports in their respective national contexts, and hence easily discarded once their essential utility had been extracted, Hangul in Korea was re-integrated as something essential to modern national identity even as its role as national script continued to evolve over the twentieth century. Yet there is no question that by the late 1890s, when the invention of Chinese shorthand and the revival of Hangul took place, standard Tokyo dialect and the *genbun itchi* style were already widely in use in Japan, such that any historical indebtedness to phonetic shorthand had by then all but disappeared from contemporary literary accounts and popular memory. Yano's *Keikoku Bidan* is the exception that proves the rule insofar as it preserves especially in visual form the co-presence of the different scripts. The result was the eventual erasure of this history of scripts, especially the experimental outliers to "national scripts" (*kokuji*) from what is often treated as the tightly linked relationship between national literature (*koku bungaku*) and national language (*kokugo*).

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Abstract

This paper offers an analysis of Yano Ryūkei's political novel *Sēbe Meishi Keikoku Bidan* (*Illustrious Statesman of Thebes,* 1883–1884). This best-selling text, which was set in ancient Thebes and strove to represent the possibilities of political transformation espoused by the People's Rights Movement, was also a striking demonstration of the possibilities of shorthand for re-conceptualizing the relations of political thought and literature. Yano employed a mixed style based on classical Japanese grammar, for which enlisted the participation of two shorthand reporters to transcribe the two volumes of the text. Although his novel was unable to become a template for the mainstream of modern Japanese, it is precisely here and in Yano's later writings on language and script reform that the phonetic foundations of the Meiji episteme come more clearly into focus. Accordingly, it is my primary aim to explore Yano's advocacy of shorthand and its contributions to the transformation of modern Japanese literature, language, and script. However, I also wish to gesture toward some of the broader shifts toward phonetics that spread to China and Korea by the 1890s that are indicative of a regional shift in the relationship to Chinese literacy.

Keywords: Meiji, political novel, media history, Japanese literature, script

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