

20201026 **Phonograms and Logograms**
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My first encounters with the Japanese language were when I was under ten in the Philippines in the 1970's, as I saw toys packaged with Japanese glyphs on them and viewed samurai television shows from Japan. I did not feel "foreignness" about these things as a child, as they seemed part of the Philippine spectrum. It would not be until my teenage years in Canada in the 1980's that I would self-study a bit about Japanese. In the university, UBC, I took one year of Japanese. The language has become really an important component of my personality. It would lead me to an exciting job in neon-lit, temple-filled Japan, as I was a Software Engineer.

In Grade 7, in Canada, I encountered Egyptian writing and Greek writing in my Social Studies classes. I made a diorama depicting Egyptian life using DAS air-hardening modelling clay for the figurines and woven dried grass for little boats. I learned about Egyptian religion, about polytheism, about mythology, about hieroglyphics, and so on. For part of the study of Ancient Greece, the class had a toga party, complete with delectable food. For the class, my teacher had me make the written instructions for using the Greek alphabet for making name tags. I was one of the two favoured "teacher's pets" in the class. The other was a Taiwanese, my friend, Tom Sun.

So, my early education gradually introduced me to various phonograms and logograms.

In my exotic trip to Cancún in Mexico in 1992, I became hotly interested in Maya glyphs, which seemed to work like Japanese, as there were phonographic and logographic components. Mesoamerican cultures, including Maya and Nahuatl (Aztec), excited me, as they still do today.

Today, I know a lot about Sinitic and Japonic scripts. A motivation for these cultures to conserve logograms is to distinguish the many homonyms in their languages. Native Japanese, like Tagalog, did not have many homonyms in ancient times, but through centuries of borrowing from Sinitic languages, many homonyms started appearing in the language. Sinitic and Japonic languages are from different families.