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(U) Curiosa Scriptorum Sericorum:**To Write But Not to Communicate**

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(U) *The Chinese-Japanese script has been available for purposes of concealment and duplicity for about 2,100 years and has in fact been so used in a number of times and places and circumstances. This article traces the development of Chinese calligraphy, discusses Chinese and Japanese seals, and gives examples of the use of Chinese script to conceal the meanings of words. It also treats official attempts to simplify the written languages of Japan and Communist China.*

(U) To look at modern Western abstract art is a pleasant experience, but in general it is not an experience in communication, and most of the art critics of today would insist that no one should expect it to be an experience of communication. In fact, there is a philosophical position about abstract art that has been present, I suppose, ever since the Dadaists, and certainly there is a possibility that it existed even before that, which asserts that it is not the business of the artist to communicate, nor is it the function of the art work itself to be a communication. Sarah Newmeyer, in her 1955 book, *Enjoying Modern Art*, [1] comes back again and again to the theme that abstract art is a "catharsis — a means of sweeping the slate clean of all the old familiar facts and fashions." Staying within the definition of art *somehow*, modern painters and modern sculptors go about producing scratches on the *tabula rasa* of the imagination. You look at this stuff and get your mind swept clean, and then they will make scratches on it for you, and you may or may not experience anything; if you do — good; if you don't, all right, go and look at something else. But since the function of abstract art is essentially to suggest emotions and emotional sets and sometimes parts of your

own history, to you, the viewer, many people find abstract art less than satisfying.

(U) When, therefore, a section of the globe decides to turn its script into one of its primary art forms, major communications problems ensue. If the script is alphabetic, like Arabic, or syllabic, like the Japanese kana, the meaning is usually established without too much difficulty (although I have a Turkish ceramic tile which has a great Arabic hieroglyph on it for which Arabic and Turkish scholars have given me four distinct and totally unrelated readings). But if the script is pictographic, or ideographic, or a combination of the two, or, worse still, a combination of the two with phonetic implications sometimes — and that's the classical case, I suppose, of the Sino-Japanese script — it is possible to use that script for many purposes, including the purpose of concealing a meaning instead of revealing it. The thesis of this paper, therefore, is that the Seric script — that collection of characters belonging to China and used from time to time by Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, and other neighbors at various stages of their development — has been available for purposes of duplicity for about 2,100 years and has in fact been so used in a number of times and places and circumstances.

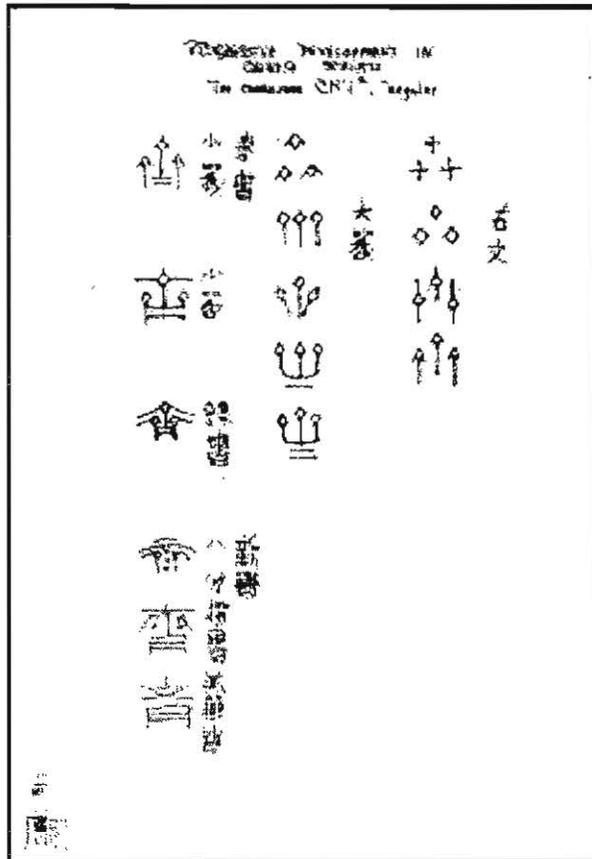
(U) The history of Sino-Japanese writing is well known, thanks to the efforts of Giles, [2] Wieger, [3] Karlgren, [4] and their successors. By way of review, however, of the manner in which the script developed, it will be helpful to look at Plate I to see how one character, *ch'i*, the base meaning of which was "regular," originated and developed through the years. The forms of *ch'i* are arranged here in

UNCLASSIFIED

Page 73

three columns as it occurred in the historical development of the characters.

(U) At the bottom of the first column of Plate I are the present official reading and the present official writing of that word. At the top of this column is the first form in which it was found. Now, it is hard to see how you get from the top form to the bottom form, unless you put your mind to it.



(U) Plate I

(U) Chinese calligraphers, who are a fruitful source of information about this sort of thing, have arbitrarily cut up the Chinese scripts into historical periods, and everything that is too early for them to be at all accurate about they call *ku wen*, and these are characters essentially which precede, let us say, the Chou Dynasty (columns 2 and 3 on Plate I). They are found on oracle bones; they are found on old bronzes; they are found scratched on shards, all over the Honan Plain; and we find forms of this

sort repeating the regularity of a triangle in various shapes.

(U) Back when these things were done, in the first and second millennia before Christ, nobody felt any urge to spell right. If people had an idea, they wrote it down as it occurred to them, and the decipherment of ancient script is therefore an art in itself. But along about the end of the Chou Dynasty we begin to see more regularity appearing in the patterns. A kind of script with many variations grew up — there are five of them — which is generally called the *ta chuan*, which technically means “the great seal script” — not because the characters of the script were used on seals, but because someone in the well-known linguistic procedure of back-formation decided when the *hsiao chuan*, the small seal character, was devised they had better call what came before it the big one.

(U) The *hsiao chuan* came in the third century BCE at the time of the first great emperor, the man who called himself Ch’in Shih Huang Ti, the first emperor of the Ch’in Dynasty. Under this egregious and highly conceited monarch, the script was standardized and codified, ostensibly by his learned and even more arrogant prime minister, a man named Li Ssu, who caused to be invented and compiled a list of standard forms of characters for the first time. These characters, the *hsiao chuan*, were instantly hailed, given a great vogue, and finally cast in mental concrete three hundred fifty years later when Hsu Shen, commonly called Hsu Shu Chung, compiled the great dictionary called the *Shuo Wen Chieh Tzu*, and devised the so-called “radical” technique for classifying graphs.

(U) It is possible to assert that an old-fashioned man of Han, still living today, might yet consider the *hsiao chuan* as his country’s official script. One form of it, with merely stylistic modifications, became at once the standard seal script of China, Japan, and Korea, and is still so used. Ch’en Chih-Mai, in his book *Chinese Calligraphers and Their Art*, [5] calls it *mo chuan*, “private secretary’s

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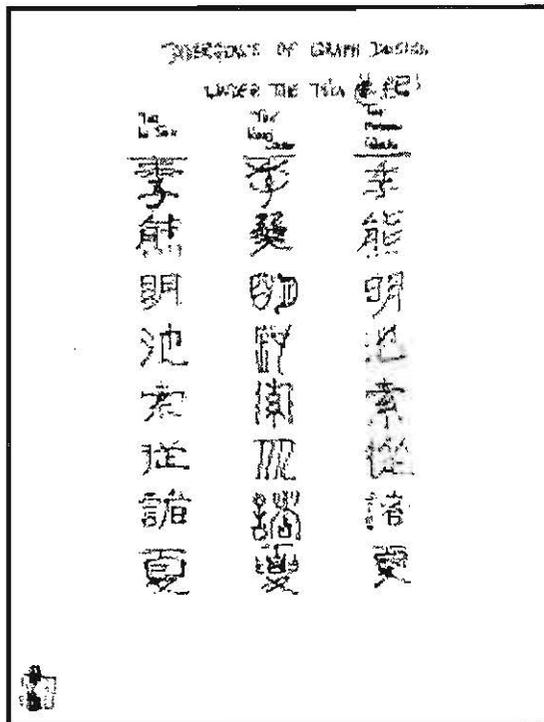
script." There are examples in the center column of Plate II and in the seals on Plate III.

(U) But once this lovely script was standard, it immediately became apparent that it was unusable for ordinary business. Something further had to be done, and something further was done. Something which came to be called *li shu* appeared, the little man's character, the character of the inferior man. And it came about in an interesting way. After all the harrow had started about the *hsiao chuan* as beautiful script, someone discovered that you couldn't very well write documents and take court records and put out newspapers and things of the sort in that script without having a year-and-a-half delay in publication. So they hunted around for somebody to simplify it and they found him — a man named Ch'eng Miao — in prison, where he had been placed by that same prime minister. He had spent ten years in the Yun Yang prison for opposing the introduction of the seal script, during which time he had devised a cursive script and had completed 3,000 graphs. So they dragged him out and said, "Well, have you anything better to offer?" And he said, "It just happens that for ten years I have been working on exactly that." Thus, with typical consistency they pulled him out of prison and made him a censor. And the *li shu*, the underling's script, which was more easily written and less stylized, grew from that and became the basis of the present-day square-character Chinese script. In Plate II there are enough examples to throw doubt on the classical theory that the *hsiao chuan* is the root of all modern scripts. I should place the common origin much earlier, in the *ta chuan* period; but quite clearly, much of the modern script is from the *li shu* almost directly.

(U) In the later Han Dynasty a calligrapher appeared who said, "We can write prettier characters than that (Plate I, 1st column, 3rd character). We'll write characters like that (Plate I, 1st column, 4th character)." And so he called them *pa fen*, which roughly, you might say, means eighty percent; but they never could agree on eighty percent what. It is either eighty percent *li* and twenty percent *chuan*,

or is it twenty percent *li* and eighty percent *chuan*, depending upon which author you read. Nobody has ever collected enough of them to make a statistical study, and when somebody does, he'll ask you to put it on a machine. This type of character (Plate I, 1st column, 4th character) became a thing of beauty; it was taught in the schools right up to the fall of the Manchu Dynasty as a standard script in which people had to learn to write if they were to pass civil service examinations. And from that ultimately by perhaps the time of the Sung Dynasty characters of this sort (Plate I, 1st col., 5th char.) were in use. Now we have gone a bit further and have abbreviations (1st col., 6th char.) written by people who are in too much of a hurry to write those things (1st col., 5th char.), which are easier ways of writing those things (1st col., 4th char.), which are prettier ways of writing those things (1st col., 3rd char.), which are different ways of writing those things (1st col., 1st and 2nd char.).

(U) If we look at Plate II, I think we can see enough evidence that there are really two sources for the present-day Chinese script. To eliminate



(U) Plate II

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any doubt, these are in three columns: the modern graph, the *kai shu* graph, is on the right; the *hsiao chuan*, the beautiful official small seal characters, in the middle; and the *li shu* on the left. In some characters we find great similarities, for example, the first one in each column. This is the character for the name *Chi*. Today it is written like that (3rd col., 1st char.), and both of the scripts in column one and column two produce more or less the same effect.

(U) When, however, you come down to the word *hsiung*, a bear, you have something else. It looks like that (3rd col., 2nd char.) today and it quite clearly came from the second character in column one. It takes a great stretch of the imagination to say that it came from that (2nd col., 2nd char.). Although I have heard people explain how it came from that, I am utterly unconvinced.

(U) The third character down in the third column is the familiar word *ming*, for "brightness." Everyone explains to beginning Chinese students that this represents the sun and moon, which are sources of brightness. Actually, in the *hsiao chuan* (2nd col., 3rd char.) it represents the moon shining in a window. And as far as the *li shu* is concerned, it is an eye looking at the moon (1st col., 3rd char.).

(U) In the modern character, a round puddle of water (3rd col., 4th char.) comes from the *li shu* and certainly not from the *hsiao chuan*. That miserable-looking thing (3rd col., 5th char.), a kind of rope, comes directly from the fifth character in column one and has absolutely nothing to do with that (2nd col., 5th char.). Again, such people as Wiegner explain how, if you untwist that thing in the middle, you get that thing in the bottom, if you put that on the top and then flatten those out to go that way. [Explains how the fifth character in column two became the fifth character in column three.]

(U) The word meaning "from," the word *ts'ung*, which looks today like that (3rd col., 6th char.), never looked like that before. In the *hsiao chuan* (2nd col., 6th char.) it is a couple of people look-

ing over their right shoulders, I suppose, if you are looking at the people. And it is quite a different kind of thing in the *li shu* (1st col., 6th char.); so somebody decided that that would look better if one wrote it with all the feet in it, and that's when it started looking like *that* (3rd col., 6th char.).

(U) We have the familiar word *chu*, which means "all," or "every," and which is made up of a speech radical and the character *che* (3rd col., 7th char.), which, as any Chinese instructor will tell you, doesn't look like that in either script. And again we have a *K'ang Hsi* invention of about the year 1660, unrelated, really, except in concept, to the earlier scripts.

(U) The last character in column three is one we will have a chance of seeing in another form later on, the character for summer, *hsia*. This started out (2nd col., last char.) by being two hands holding an eye with a handle on it on top of another hand underneath. It takes a little figuring out; I don't know quite why that means "summer," or why it ever did. And Professor Sherman Lee, who is Curator of the Cleveland Museum of Art, is convinced that originally that meant a spider, because it has entirely too many hands in it for anything else. In the *li shu* it took its modern form, the last character in column one.

(U) We have now reviewed enough historical development to examine a very common technique of excluding the "common reader" from knowledge of written texts, namely, the use of antique diction, or of antique scripts, beyond the reader's knowledge. It is easily seen that the documentary or literary style, with its formalisms and circumlocutions, is well designed to be read by scholars only. The elegant literary style, which the English, French, the Dutch, and the Americans found so plaguing in the 18th and 19th centuries, was just as plaguing to the average Chinese — and for that matter is still. Since about 1920 there has been a concerted effort to get everyone to write in the colloquial style, and the situation has been somewhat ameliorated; but for centuries the government scholar could conceal

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his intentions from his less-well-trained brother by writing them out in plain Chinese. The use of antique forms is a well-known Chinese tradition both in spoken forms and in written forms. We have been given the present by successive generations of Chinese of written Chinese of all sorts. We now distinguish Archaic Chinese, which is anything before about AD 500, and Ancient Chinese, which is anything after AD 500 up to modern Chinese, which nobody can date.

(U) The theory is that everybody who can read Chinese can read all of it. It is a fable that all the Chinese can read all the Chinese. It might be well to note here that, whereas working dictionaries of Chinese contain from 4,500 characters (e.g., C. C. Huang's effort of 1968 [6]) to, say, 14,000 characters (e.g., H. A. Giles' dictionary, [7] Wieger's list [3] and comparable Chinese works), it takes a knowledge of only about 1,500 characters to read a newspaper; and two or three hundred are enough to read signboards in city or countryside. There are — and have been for centuries — millions of Chinese who have only a minimal knowledge of characters, and who may know no "unusual" characters except the generation-designator in their own names. The expressions of the old days are not the expressions of today; furthermore, the expressions of the old days were very often poetic and they were circumlocutory. People didn't have twelve-letter words, but they had sixty-four-stroke characters! Even the simplest classics contain passages that modern editors can't deal with. Take a look, for example, through Herrlee Glessner Creel's book on Classical Chinese by the inductive method and you will find that every now and then he is completely stymied for a reading. [8]

(U) So the meaning of what is being written can easily be kept from the common reader. We ought to think about the common reader for a moment, the people who in literary Chinese are called *yu min*, "stupid people," and who call themselves *yi*, "the ants." The common reader of Chinese needs to know what says "Wine Shop" and what says "Men's Room" and what says "Trains for Peking," and he

doesn't have to know much more than this. Hence, large characters painted in front of shops represent a very small vocabulary. And a large number of Chinese have always been able to read this vocabulary. But when it comes to reading more than that, by questions of style, by the use of words, by the use of phrases, it is quite easy to leave your common reader behind in what he will think of as a sea of horribly classical, horribly formal, very beautifully written and totally unintelligible grammar.

(U) The Chinese, however, not only kept the language under control, addressing themselves to the audience they wanted by their choice of words, but they also kept all the previous scripts active. A person who wanted to be a civil servant had to learn to write all of them. And that went on until the end of the examination system. All of these scripts were kept alive, and as a result one variation of the *hsiao chuan*, the small seal script, the first official script, became in fact a seal script. With the tremendous influx in use of seals, which came with the Ch'ing Dynasty, we begin to see seals everywhere that have ancient alphabets, ancient characters, ancient crafts on them, as you will note on Plate III. All of these seals but two are Ch'ing.

(U) The first seal in column one, which says "Seventy-Two-Year-Old Son of Heaven," was done by our Chinese friend Ch'ien Lung, the Ch'ien Lung emperor who had the 18th century pretty much all to himself in one of the longest reigns in China. When he turned seventy, he had lots of seals saying this engraved for himself and he stamped them on everything in sight. If you go to any major art collection and look at the Chinese collection, you will find that hammered on everything he got his hands on, which was almost everything in China. The second seal in the first column, which says just plainly, "This is the Cheng Teh imperial seal," (*Ching teh yu pao*), is the seal that was affixed to the treaty that opened the Port of Canton to foreign trade in 1519. So that is Ming. Again, this was thirteen hundred years after modern scripts had come into existence. The seal of Hsia, the Marquis Ying, is undatable as far as I am concerned (*Hsia Ying Hon Yin*, 3rd seal

in col. 1). It is a great big piece of jade carved in a deliberately antique style. I do not know whether it was made by somebody who lived and died in 1898 or by somebody who lived and died in the year 600. The name is an old, old name, and there are many Hsia's still about.

(U) Continuing with Plate III, we have in the first seal of the second column a modern example of what happens when the adjutant general gets your orders. This says plainly, and it says nothing else but, "Imperial Seal." It is a Japanese production, carved on a block of wood, and anybody who had authority to make copies of documents had one.



(U) Plate III

(U) Where the emperor had put his signature, the official stamped that as authentication. Once again, this, dating back to just before the Second World War, is in a script dating back to two hundred years before Christ. The second seal in column

two, the personal seal of General Honjo Shigeru, the man who was in command in Manchuria at the time that Manchuria was taken over by the Japanese, is in the same style. The seal immediately below it is the seal of the last but one commander of the northern ports under the Manchus, in which he brags himself up, "Northern Ports Commander, a humble scholar."

(U) Religious influences come in, and you pick up ancient — in this case very ancient — characters on a very old seal, and they are not always very legible (col. 2, 4th seal). At the top is a character that may mean hoarfrost or that may mean thunder; nobody can be sure. And the flower at the bottom of the seal comes off rather badly; it's rather like a frayed toothbrush. That sort of expression, however, is familiar to the Seric peoples, both Japanese and Chinese, and they don't have much trouble with it. They will look at it, and if they can read it as being something weather, moon, or some kind of flower, they are happy. The last seal (2nd col., 5th seal) is the sort of thing that the Chinese and Japanese have a way of stamping at the beginning of their letters. They sign their letters with a seal, because they are all taught to forge. If you can't write like everybody else, you can't get out of school. So they have seals, and they register these seals. They have other seals for fun, like this last one in column two, which suggests that, if you wake up sober, perhaps the best thing to do is to get drunk. Once again, this is in a script that died before Christ was born.

(U) I suppose the classic use of this kind of script was that attributed to Liu Shao Chi, who stood for the old imperial examinations, and when called upon to write a poem, couldn't think of a poem. He was supposed to compose one, but nothing came of it. He had, however, a long time ago memorized a piece of Sung poetry, a very obscure piece of Sung poetry, and he wrote it in the hsiao chuan script with such style that he took first in the examination. It was fifteen years later before someone found out that he hadn't written the poem in the first place.

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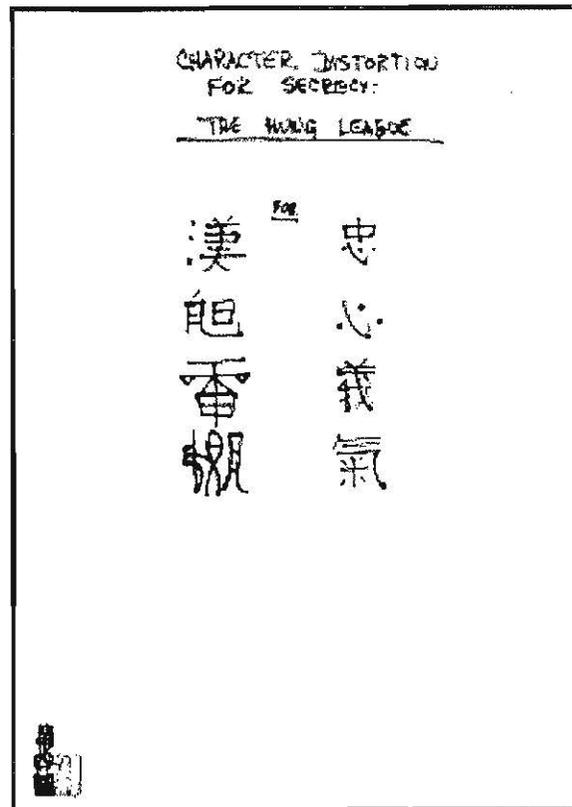
(U) So ancient styles of conversation, ancient styles of writing, ancient scripts have been used for a long time to control the reading audience, to let them in on things, or to cut them out. It goes further than that, though; it reaches the point of deliberate manipulation of the scripts for reasons of privacy. I am brought immediately to consideration of the Hung League, which is another name for the Triad Society, which is another name for the Three United Society, which is another name for The Fragrant Pine Society. The author of the definitive book on this, a Japanese named Hirayama Amane, found seventy-three names for this society, [9] a secret society that began in a desire of the Chinese under the Manchus to throw off Manchu rule and reestablish a Chinese government. The societies promptly went underground and promptly devised methods of modifying characters, so that people who found their records would not know what they had found.

(U) There are four characters on Plate IV which are taken from a seal found in Malaya in 1868, as the old *hung bang*, southern Chinese warfare, moved into Malaya and was taken up by the secret society. They were forever saying things like "A loyal heart and a proper bearing." They had mottoes like this, and they put them on all their seals, like the second column of Plate IV. But for the first character they wrote the first character in column one, and they would explain it by saying that they had taken the bar off the side of the chung and put it over here, and then the four strokes of the heart radical and put them in there — one, two, three, four; and then they had added a lot of stuff to keep other people from knowing what they did. Similarly, the heart character itself (2nd col., 2nd char.) was replaced by something for which I can offer no explanation whatever, except that when they were going to do something like this (1st col., 2nd char.) they had five radicals they would use in a position of this sort surrounding an irrelevant character — and you just had to memorize those. I think the third character in the first column was drawn up by the president of the society after a night of too much rice wine. It bears no relation to any other kind of Chinese

script of any period whatever. The last one in the first column I had to trace five times to get the thing they had, because it is hard to tell where the strokes begin and end.

(U) There is, however, a very carefully organized system of distorting ordinary characters for communication that was put into effect by the Hung League in the 19th century. The whole thing is written out in L. F. Comber's book on Chinese secret societies in Malaya, which is one of the Asian Society's publications. [10] This was a deliberate attempt to create cryptography out of the ordinary written script, and it succeeded very well. It deceived the police, and that was the point of it. And since by the time these people became active in Malaya the police were English anyway, they could simply have written it in Chinese.

(U) Another way of dealing with this business of mutation of characters is the mutation of seal



(U) Plate IV

characters. There was a general during the Second World War, a Chinese general of the Nationalist persuasion, named Tai Li. Tai Li was forever cutting seals. He had all sorts of other curiosities about him too. He poisoned rice, and he had a fourth wife who taught Chinese to a Marine colonel, and some of you know that story. He had a series of seals which were designed to start a letter, to be apparently meaningless, and to convey to his subordinates that he wanted some action done, like "Behead the bearer." Now, this sort of thing was really quite easily done, as we can see from Plate V. Suppose you want to say, "Disregard this letter," but you really don't want everybody to know it (first line: *wu ku t'zu hsin*). You go back in the dictionaries and you find all the ancient forms of the four characters you want; so for the character *wu* we can take any character in the second line, and for *ku* we take any character in the third line, and so forth.

(U) The last character in the second line was taken from the bottom of an old brass pot. People assumed it meant "letter"; so it has been in the dictionaries ever since. You can go through with the word "letter" and find all these and, arbitrarily taking the last one to make this simple, you take that choice for that, and that choice for that and that choice for that and make up a seal in the usual Chinese order — first, second, third, fourth character. And then, just to complicate it and make it a bit prettier, you mash the top ones into the bottom ones and get the lower right seal, which nobody is ever going to be able to read, until it has been shown to him, and then he'll never forget it.

(U) Now, has this ever really been done? Yes, it has, by General Tai Li, as I said before. I now offer you on Plate VI a group of seals of my own collection, none of which has ever been read. As a matter of fact, on the sixth seal in the first column



(U) Plate V



(U) Plate VI

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I don't know which side is up. The owners of seals frequently didn't know which side was up and they would write a *shang* on the back of the seal so they could tell which side to hold at the top when they printed it. The first seal in the first column is a Japanese name, I think, and the best guesses we have to date are *Take* [bamboo] this and *Take* [bamboo] that. So far I have two guesses surviving out of thirty opinions. The second seal is done in a deliberately antiquarian style going all the way back to the large seal character. It is not written in large seal character Chinese; it is, I suspect Japanese. And when a Japanese shows you his name in kanji, the first thing you ask him is, "How do you say it?," for it isn't at all apparent how you say it. He can pronounce it any way he wants to, like g-h-o-t-i — "fish." This could be anything; it will take a long, long time to figure it out.

(U) The third seal, people tell me, is a totem; they tell me it is a man's name; they tell me it is a Christian symbol. All I know is that some Japanese used it for a long time. The large seal at the right middle of the plate is interesting; this is a brand, a piece of copper that is made to be heated and burned on wood. It looks like a perfectly good Chinese character in there, but it isn't. There is no such character; there never has been such a character. Even if you ignore part of it as a decoration, there is no such character. But the right side is *ka* and the left side is *ne* under *ha* and that could be taken as a picture of a mountain, which would be *yama*. So this could be *yamakane*; then, again, it might not. The user would know. The fourth and fifth seals in column one have been deliberately distorted to resemble flowers. I suspect that there is a silk radical in there somewhere. I have no idea what script these are in, or [what] the sixth seal is in. This one is the same thing both sides up. And I don't even know what language underlies it.

(U) This curious round seal at the bottom of column one was picked up in Hokkaido at the end of the war. It is a wooden seal with a *shang* on the top; so I know it is right-side up. I don't know what this seal is; everybody tells me that it can't be

Mongol because the dots are on the wrong side. It has to be Manchu; but there isn't any such Manchu. So these things do exist, they come into people's hands, and there you are!

(U) One last thing we'll talk about and then we are through. We can destroy a people's knowledge of their language and of their history and of their past by modifying the script in which they are written under guise of simplifying it. This is now going on in Communist China and Japan, although Japan has carefully covered its bets by playing up its syllabic script while it reduces the number of standard Chinese characters it uses.

(U) I suppose the worst attempt to change Chinese culture by changing Chinese script is *pinyin*, which is the romanization of Chinese now being attempted on the mainland. In the form in which it was originally offered in 1956, it had lots of horrible characters which were not roman letters. They did away with those and got it down to roman letters. They did away with the tone designators and got something which produces a reasonable approximation of spoken Mandarin Chinese. This had the immediate effect of separating the South from the North — and you know what happens when you separate the South from the North. The South of China has always been the revolutionary part of China. In the South of China, they talk dialects which are closer to Classical Chinese than is the Mandarin, or official dialect, the development of Peking speech. And, in fact, it really doesn't help little Chou more in his Chinese school to read *wu* and learn he has to pronounce it *ung*, than to read the character he was reading in the first place. I don't see much future for this project; I really don't, unless they can somehow convert about 120,000,000 Chinese into talking another kind of Chinese.

(U) The Japanese, having the *kana* available to them and incidentally having more characters of this sort than the Chinese ever had, got the number of *t□y□* kanji down to 1,800 by the end of the war. These are the characters that print shops are

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required to keep in stock. They simplified some of those in a reasonably historical way. With the aid of hiragana and katakana, they succeeded in producing a kind of writing on a mixed type that is extremely hard to learn but quite easy to read, once you have learned it. But what has happened to the Japanese public is rather interesting. The Japanese public has gone right ahead ignoring the limitations of kanji to 1,800. The first thing the government discovered when it implemented that limitation was that they had dispossessed several million Japanese of their proper names; so they all had to be put back. And then they found that there were all sorts of things which, once having been said in sixteen or seventeen well-chosen syllables, could easily be expressed by one old-fashioned kanji that wasn't on the list; so they picked those up and put them back. And right now I would say that the average literate Japanese — and most Japanese are literate — deals with 3,500 to 4,000 characters that are in common use today, although 1,800 is all that he is supposed to have. There is a piece of legislation now before the diet reducing the t□y□ kanji to 800. Everyone expects it to be passed and to have the same effect on Japanese private culture that the Volstead Act had on American private culture. After all, you can't read the *Genji Monogatari* (Tale of the Genji) in kana until somebody writes it in kana.

(U) But the Chinese Communists, I am afraid, have finally succeeded. They started on the first of February 1956, with some simplifications that were familiar by that time. (Plate VII shows several of these abbreviated forms.) Some of these were quite well known and caused nobody any trouble at all. You know some from common practice, like the first character in the second and third lines; you can even find these in old dictionaries. Sometimes they went to the past, and from the *hsiao chuan* they created the first character in the fourth line, which replaced the second character in the fourth line. As we had previously seen, this is the character *sung*, "from." Some they borrowed baldly from the Japanese, as the first character in the first line.

(U) That was Stage I. Stage II, however, offered a little additional complication. They picked up 285 additional characters and started simplifying things right out of nowhere. Thus, the word "to fly" became the first character in line five, which looks a little like somebody sick going backwards. And this thing with "winter" in it (6th line, 1st char.) replaces the old, familiar character for "illustration," or "book" (6th line, 2nd char.). The first character in line seven replaces the second, and that's interesting, because this is a very common spelling character. You will find the first one used for spelling; but now you will find the second one also used for spelling, a character that has other connotations to the oriental mind, words related to the color red and things of that sort.

(U) So they were beginning to confuse the thing; they were beginning to poison the spring at that point. And finally they went to the grass writing, where there are all sorts of horrible things waiting for anybody who wants them, and picked up such things as the first form in the eighth line of characters, which is an old grass fashion of writing the gate radical. They cut down our friend, the fish, until he looked like that (ninth line, first character)! And they insulted everyone who has a dragon in his name — and I have a dragon in my name — by replacing the dragon by a dog with a stick in his tail (last line). These were effective in March 1956, a month after the simplifications had been introduced.

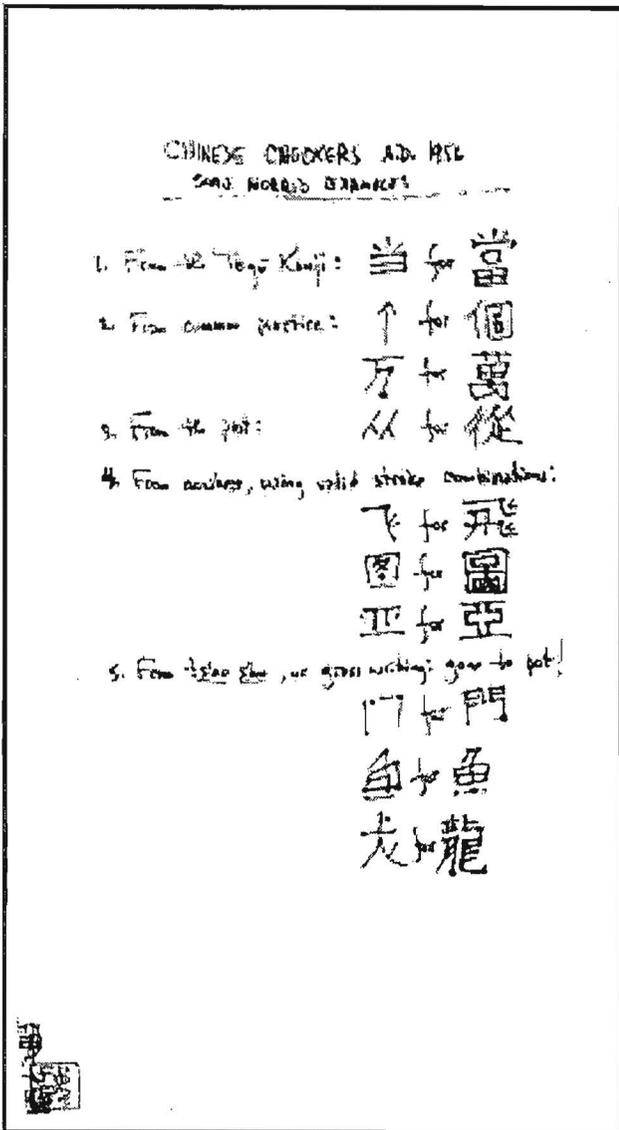
(U) The final move — and the really horrible move — was the rewriting of fifty-four radicals. There are 214 radicals in the present system of character classification, and the Chinese Communists have rewritten fifty-four of them and allowed their use at any point in any character where that particular combination of strokes may appear. Having done all this and got the generation of reading Chinese used to the fact that they could read the abbreviations easily, they then stopped teaching ordinary Chinese. And if you go to China now, and you want to learn Chinese, you will learn only the abbreviated form. Now, it is one thing to know

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Chinese and read abbreviations; it is another thing entirely to know only the abbreviations and to be

paganda and dropping them over the mainland, which nobody could read except the old folks and the government. And I am afraid we are about to be treated to the spectacle of a country completely cut off from its past by a logical development of its own script. Not a very cheerful thought, but there it is!



(U) Plate VII

presented with a literary text. The result is that the average Chinese educated under Mao is not able to read his history, unless he is one of the people who, having been selected, cleared, and found to be party-loyal and all that, are allowed to study the old script; and this is perhaps one in every 20,000 or 30,000 Chinese today. The rest of them have to read the government output. The Nationalist Chinese did not recognize this at once and began putting out all sorts of interesting pieces of pro-

(U) To pursue these oriental crypto-scripts to their basic meanings is a very interesting exercise. I have found it is a useful hobby, having been led to it by an abiding interest in Sino-Japanese sphragmatics. And I daresay there are other motivations that might easily be found.

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(U) Dr. Shaw died of a stroke on Monday, March 6, 1971, at the age of fifty-two, in Fredericksburg, Virginia. See the necrology in the NSA Technical Journal, Vol. XVI, No. 2, Spring 1971.

(U) This is an edited version of Dr. Shaw's last public address at NSA, a lecture before the NSA Crypto-Linguistic Association on January 11, 1971. It is based on a fusion of a tape recording of this lecture and a handwritten textual version.

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(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36