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Čínsky znak na obálke znamenajúci 'východ', pochádzajúci od Liu Xie 劉解 (1781–1840), bol vyrytý do nefritu podľa vzoru zo začiatku nášho letopočtu. · The Chinese character with the meaning 'east' employed on the cover is cut as a seal by Liu Xie, on the basis of models from the beginning of our era.

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# How Many Jōyō Kanji Readings Are Rarely Used?

Patrick KANDRÁČ

*Abstract* The overwhelming number of kanji readings is considered one of the main factors why Japanese kanji are so difficult to master. Whereas Japanese children have about 9–12 years to memorize them, foreign students usually have only 4–6 years. Given that there are a significant number of jōyō kanji readings that have a low rate of acquisition even in the case of native Japanese, it can be argued that it is not necessary for students of Japanese as a second language (JSL) to learn all of the readings. In fact, through an analysis of vocabulary data from three freely accessible Japanese language corpora, we demonstrate in this study that over one-fifth (21.24 %) of the jōyō kanji readings can be deemed redundant for the vast majority of L2 learners. Given that this is the first study to utilize multiple sources in order to analyze the applicability of kanji readings, I hope that it will inspire other researchers and teachers to investigate this topic further, and that it will encourage authors of kanji textbooks intended for JSL students to thoroughly consider whether it is really beneficial to list all the readings that appear in the official jōyō list.

*Keywords* kanji, Japanese, readings, jōyō, Japanese as a Second Language

## *Introduction*

The primary goal of this study is to determine the ratio of jōyō kanji readings that are almost never used in practice. It is well known that Japanese do not learn all kanji readings at elementary school. In fact, even though they ought to learn all 2,136 jōyō kanji before they graduate from high school, there are still more than 300 readings left to be learned later. Of the total 4,388 jōyō kanji readings, Japanese children in elementary schools are supposed to learn about 60%, in high school they encounter another 30%+, and after finishing high school they are expected to master the remaining 7–8% (Monbukagakushō 2017). The main

reason for this distribution is to reduce the burden of learning and remembering a high number of readings (Paxton 2015, 54; Hagiwara 2017, 24). However, this system is currently employed almost exclusively in Japan, which means that foreigners who are learning Japanese as a second language (JSL learners) usually have to learn all readings of kanji. Although there are some textbooks (for example Tobira) that leave out a few readings deemed inappropriate for the targeted level, it is not a common practice. As a result, students often encounter these readings in other learning materials, such as when studying for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT). Given that JSL students who seek to pass the JLPT N1 exam are required to master the same number of kanji readings as native Japanese in a much shorter time, it is not surprising that they feel overwhelmed when studying kanji such as “明” or “上”. Even though these characters are often taught in the first grade, they have an exceptionally high number of readings. Taking into consideration the limited time most JSL learners have at their disposal before they graduate (4–6 years compared to 9–12 years in the case of native Japanese), it is perhaps reasonable to avoid delaying the acquisition of the readings, but it still remains an open question whether it is really necessary to teach JSL students all 4,388 jōyō kanji readings. If it is possible to reduce the burden by even 10%, should we not strive to do so?

If we compare Japanese kanji with Chinese hanzi 汉字, there is only one significant difference, and that is the number of readings a character can have. Only one-fifth of all Chinese characters have more than one reading. Moreover, in almost half of the cases, there is only a slight change in tone (Swofford 2010). In contrast, more than half of all Japanese characters have more than one reading, and over 100 of them have more than three readings (Joyce, Masuda, and Ogawa 2014, 180). Therefore, it can be argued that the excessive number of readings is the main reason why Japanese kanji are considered so complex and difficult to master (Kanō 2017, 2). JSL students are often encouraged to pass the JLPT N1 within 4–6 years. Based on my personal experience, the majority will settle for the JLPT N3 or N2. While some of them may decide to undertake N1 a year or two after graduation, more often than not they abandon the idea when they face cramming obscure grammatical constructions and thousands of rarely used words. Therefore, I believe that there is a clear discord between what JSL students are



expected to achieve and what the vast majority of them are able to achieve during those 4–6 years of studying Japanese. It would be much more realistic to expect learners to reach the JLPT N2 level of knowledge. This would significantly reduce the burden that students have to cope with when at the same time learning other subjects, and possibly even working part-time. Thus, the main objective of this study is to find out by what percentage this workload can be reduced in the case of potentially excessive kanji readings.

In order to determine which jōyō kanji readings are not important for students who do not necessarily aim to achieve near-native proficiency in Japanese, I decided to use vocabulary frequency data from three freely accessible online databases, namely (a) *Matsushita Vocabulary Database for International Students Ver. 1.0* (2011), (b) *NINJAL-LWP for Tsukuba Web Corpus* (2012), (c) *Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese* (2012). The usefulness of a kanji reading was estimated based on the usage frequency of the most commonly used word in which the reading appears. The readings were divided into three categories: often used, sometimes used, and almost never used (rarely used). Despite the relatively conservative criteria, it soon became apparent that the number of almost never used readings would be much higher than I had anticipated.

## 1 Literature Review

This is the first study that attempts to analyze the importance of jōyō kanji readings by utilizing data from multiple corpora. Despite the fact that jōyō kanji readings are distributed among three levels (elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school) in Japan, I was unable to find a document that would unequivocally clarify the process of categorization. There is only a brief description provided in a document titled “The list of on-kun readings sorted based on the elementary, high school and university levels” (*On-Kun no Shō, Chū, Kō Nado Gakkō Dankaibetsu Warifurihyō* 音訓の小・中・高等学校段階別割り振り表) published by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 2017 (Monbukagakushō 2017), and Tanbo (2018, 39–52) focuses on the selection of the kyōiku kanji,<sup>1</sup> not

1 After the 2021 reform, the list contains 1,026 characters, which Japanese children are expected to learn during their six years at elementary school.

their readings. Even an extensive document titled “Jōyō kanji acquisition and instruction: Categorically sorted list for learning kanji” (*Jōyō Kanji no Shūtoku to Shidō: Fu, Bunrui Gakushū Kanjihyō* 常用漢字の習得と指導付・分類学習漢字表) from 1994 does not clearly explain the mechanism behind the distribution of kanji readings (NINJAL 1994). Moreover, although some textbooks<sup>2</sup> tend to leave out a substantial number of readings, they do not provide specific information that would explain why those readings were excluded.

The lack of conclusive information on the importance of kanji readings is especially alarming given the lack of academic studies on the subject. Among the very few exceptions, I will mention the study *Identifying Useful Phonetic Components of kanji for Learners of Japanese* published in 2013 (Toyoda, Firdaus, and Kanō 2013). The authors not only highlight which components are useful, but they also explain why other components are either less useful or not useful.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, they mention the term “applicability”, which in this particular case refers to the degree of vocabulary scope of a specific phonetic component (Toyoda, Firdaus, and Kanō 2013, 245). In other words, students should not only memorize these components for the sake of learning the kanji reading, but they should also be able to associate the reading with at least one commonly used word.

However, most kanji textbooks above beginner-level teach all readings regardless of their applicability. The reason for this seemingly dictionary-like approach is, for the most part, the sheer obligatory sense of responsibility the authors themselves feel in order not to deprive the readers of kanji readings they may later encounter in the JLPT test. In fact, some authors make it clear that the book should be used only as a point of reference and not as teaching material.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, textbooks such as *The Complete Guide to Japanese Kanji*, *Kanji in Context*, or *Kanji Look and Learn* are all arguably supposed to serve as teaching

2 These include mostly beginner-level and intermediate-level materials, such as *Basic Kanji Book*, *Tobira* or *Minna no Nibongo*.

3 They also mention two other studies conducted on this topic, Kanō (1993) and Townsend (2011). The main problem with these studies is that the authors analyze readings at the character level instead of the word level.

4 Hence, for example, the use of the word “reference” in the case of *Kanji in Context*.

materials, but their authors have mostly ignored the issue of applicability. As a result, these books contain hundreds of readings with extremely low applicability. For example, the Sinojapanese reading *jū* of the kanji “拾” does not appear in any commonly used words, and even kanji dictionaries such as *The Kodansha Kanji Learner's Dictionary* do not provide a single word that would utilize this reading. Nevertheless, the authors of the textbook *The Complete Guide to Japanese Kanji*, the most recent edition of which was published in 2016, decided that it is necessary for students of Japanese to at least be aware of this reading and many others like it. On the other hand, it is perhaps reasonable to assume that if someone has purchased a book titled *The Complete Guide to Japanese Kanji*, they are probably devoted to learning all the kanji along with all their standard readings.

## 2 Methodology

In this section, I explain how the frequency data from the three databases used were interpreted and why I made certain decisions. First, I provide additional information about the databases (corpora), such as their scope and limitations. Second, I clarify the criteria used for the categorization of a kanji reading into one of the three groups (often, sometimes, almost never used). Third, I explain why I opted for determining the importance of a kanji reading based solely on the usage frequency of its most commonly used word. In short, my goal has been to devise a simple but reliable method that would meaningfully reflect the data provided by the corpora.

### 2.1 Brief description of corpora

In order to obtain accurate data, it was necessary to utilize more than one source. On the other hand, there was no reason to construct a complex network of databases, as this would only make the interpretation of data time-consuming and overly complicated. Therefore, it was decided to implement two main sources of frequency data: *Matsushita Vocabulary Database for International Students Ver. 1.0* (MVD) and *NINJAL-LWP for Tsukuba Web Corpus* (NLT), as well as one additional source, namely the *Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese* (BCCWJ). Looking at these sources more closely, it is clear that MVD is not a corpus, but rather a vocabulary list arranged by frequency of use. However, given

that MVD utilizes data from the BCCWJ and Yahoo *Chiebukuro* 知恵袋, there is no reason to doubt its applicability. The fact that I was able to successfully categorize 4,369 out of 4,388 readings (99.6%) indicates that there was indeed no need to employ more databases. The only issue was the character *tochi* “栃” which has only one reading but does not appear in any of the three databases. Due to its recent addition to the kyōiku kanji list, I decided to categorize its Japanese reading as sometimes used (↔).

*Matsushita Vocabulary Database* (MVD) is a freely accessible vocabulary database that was compiled by Tatsuhiko Matsushita in 2010. The original version contains 60,894 entries, but for the purpose of this study I opted to use the version aimed at international students, which was created in 2011 and contains over 20,000 entries. It is important to note that the database comprises loanwords written in katakana as well as a few Japanese particles. MVD differs from NLT and the BCCWJ in several aspects. First of all, it includes several proper nouns, such as “神戸” and “横浜”. Second, it seems to overestimate the usage frequency of some Japanese readings. This is apparent if we examine words like “床屋” and “故”, which are classified as often used (↑) in MVD, whereas NLT categorizes them as almost never used (↓). The main issue in this particular case is related to adverbs because most of them are written in hiragana instead of kanji. MVD classifies readings like *moshikuwa* “若しくは” and *tadashi* “但し” as often used (↑) even though they are often used only in their hiragana form and not the kanji form. Last but not least, given that I decided to use the shortened version of the database (about one-third of the original one), it makes sense that I was not able to find some low-frequency words, such as the verbs *mureru* “蒸れる” and *murasu* “蒸らす”. Nevertheless, this did not prove to be a problem, since this shortcoming was compensated for by the use of the NLT corpus, which covers low-frequency words.

*NINJAL-LWP* (NLT) is an extensive corpus that encompasses over one billion entries gathered from Japanese websites. It was compiled by the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL) in collaboration with the Institute for Language Research known as LAGO. It can be accessed from the website of the International Student Center of the University of Tsukuba, and makes use of the lexical profiling method. The most frequent entry belongs to the

verb *iru* “いる” (“to be”) (11,403,947). The main difference between NLT and MVD stems from the fact that the entries in NLT are not ordered, therefore instead of using the term “frequency number”, I will use the term “frequency value”. There are however a few more aspects unique to this source. First, it contains a minimum number of proper nouns. Second, some three-character compounds have a higher frequency value than two-character words from which they are derived. For example, “同窓会” has five times higher frequency value than “同窓”. Third, some verbs are indexed under a less frequent reading, such as “解ける” which is usually read as *tokeru* instead of *bodokeru*. Lastly, a few verbs cannot be looked up directly because they are either provided in hiragana or have been absorbed by a more popular homonymous verb. However, it is often possible to find out their frequency value by consulting the “基本” section of the related entry, as can be seen in Figure 1. Thanks to this, I was able to classify a few dozen additional readings.

測る			頻度=28,286
グループ別    パターン頻度順    基本    ?			
▼ 書字形			
測る	17810	63%	
はかる*(踏る; 図る; 測る)	15557		
計る	8837	31%	
量る	1624	6%	
察る	8	0%	
揣る	7	0%	
▶ 活用形			
▶ 後続助動詞の割合			

Figure 1  
Frequency values of homonymous verbs in NLT.

The *Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese* (BCCWJ) is a corpus which contains more than one million words from various sources such as magazines, news, blogs, and internet forums. These were collected over a 30-year period from 1976 to 2006. The corpus was created by National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL) and utilizes the same principles as NLT, therefore it suffers from the same limitations.

## 2.2 Categorization of kanji readings

Choosing an appropriate source of data is undoubtedly a good starting point for any analysis, but the crucial part is to set criteria meticulously, otherwise the analysis may yield unreliable results. Thereby, it is important to be able to refer to already existing criteria, as this should, at least in theory, provide a more realistic perspective. In this study, I refer to the vocabulary criteria used for the JLPT exam. Although there is no official list of words recommended for each JLPT level, students who want to pass the exam are generally expected to know at least 800 words for the N5, 1,500 for the N4, 3,700 for the N3, 6,000 for the N2, and 10,000 words for the N1 level (Cernak 2017). As I mentioned earlier, the sources of data used in this study differ in terms of their size and whether they utilize a frequency number or frequency value, so it was necessary to establish the kanji reading categorization criteria for each of them separately.

MVD contains over 20,000 entries, which prompted me to distribute them into three groups: often used (1–3,000), sometimes used (3,001–10,000), and almost never used (> 10,000). The number 3,000 was selected as the dividing line because it represents the rounded average of the 3,700 words needed to pass JLPT N3 and the 2,500 words that are included in the *Matsushita Vocabulary Database: Basic* 2500 list. Moreover, as mentioned in Yencken's work (2010, 175), it is thought to be a tipping point for meaningful reading comprehension. Any word with a frequency number above 10,000 was classified as almost never used since it should be beyond the N1 level of proficiency. This is a prime example of a rather conservative approach, because, as I mentioned earlier, it may be worth reconsidering the adjustment of the instruction of kanji readings in accordance with the N2 level instead of the N1 level.

NLT comprises over 100,000 entries, but incorporates a frequency value instead of a frequency number, therefore the ranges of distribution into three groups are reversed compared to MVD: often used (> 20,000), sometimes used (5,001–20,000), and almost never used (< 5,000). The values should correspond to some extent with the MVD distribution, as they were determined and adjusted by randomly choosing 50 words and comparing their usage frequency in MVD and NLT. To ensure the validity of this rather arbitrary comparison, the process was then repeated three times.

The BCCWJ covers over 85,000 entries and incorporates frequency values. However, since the BCCWJ is smaller than NLT, their distribution ranges are not identical. Thus, after thorough analysis, the following frequency value ranges were established: often used (> 4,000), sometimes used (500–4,000), and almost never used (< 500). Initially, the distribution range for almost never used words was < 1,000, but due to its negligible effect, I decided to extend it to < 500, which allowed me to move up by about 20 words. It should also be noted that the BCCWJ was utilized only in cases where a word was classified as almost never used (↓) by both MVD and NLT.

Once the usage frequency distribution ranges for each group in each database were determined, it was necessary to establish the process of categorization. I deliberately chose only three databases to work with in order to save time, but they proved to be so reliable that I eventually made the decision to utilize the BCCWJ only if a word was classified as almost never used (↓) according to both MVD and NLT. Therefore, in most instances, it was sufficient to group the readings based on the data from MVD and NLT. Yet again, in a somewhat academic fashion, I opted to categorize the readings in a rather conservative manner, by determining the group to which a reading belongs based on the source in which its most frequently used word has the highest frequency of use. In a few cases, this approach proved to be arguably flawed (for example, categorizing *yue* “故” as often used based solely on MVD, despite its low frequency of occurrence in NLT and the BCCWJ), but this was the price that had to be paid in order to minimize the number of rarely used readings. After all, the main goal was to identify the number of rarely used readings, so there was no need to create additional rules that would affect only the other two groups. Several examples of the categorization process are provided in Table 1. The capital letter X indicates that the entry was not found in the respective data source.

Table 1  
*Categorization process of selected readings*

Kanji	Reading	Word	MVD	NLT	BCCWJ	Group
営	kun: itonamu	営む	3,837 ↔	17,717 ↔	1,843 ↔	↔
炎	on: en	炎症	12,885 ↓	18,029 ↔	714 ↔	↔
故	kun: yue	故	1,620 ↑	(3,265 ↓)	(307 ↓)	↑
彙	on: i	語彙	13,902 ↓	7,743 ↔	367 ↓	↔
岡	kun: oka	福岡	3,263 ↔	X	X	↔

### 2.3 Usage frequency of the most common word

Probably the most time-saving decision was to determine the usage frequency of a reading based solely on the word in which it appears most frequently. This method was almost exclusively applied to those Sinojapanese readings that appear in multiple words. Of course, it was not always necessary to find the most frequent word. In fact, it was sufficient to find a word that belonged to the highest category, i.e., often used (↑). Thanks to this, I was able to categorize almost all jōyō kanji readings relatively quickly and almost without any drawbacks. The only noticeable issue involved the kanji, Sinojapanese reading does not appear in any frequent words, but can be found in several rarely used words. It can be argued that if there is a reading that is used in only one sometimes used word, it can be considered less important than a reading that is used in ten or twenty almost never used words. However, this problem posed a serious dilemma only in a few instances, so it did not prove to be statistically significant. Nevertheless, in Table 2, I compare the Sinojapanese readings of kanji *i* “彙” and *ei* “銳”. While the former appears in only one relatively useful word, the latter appears in several less frequently used words.



Table 2  
*Comparison of the vocabulary frequency data of two selected readings*

彙 <i>i</i> ↔				銳 <i>ei</i> ↓			
WORD	MVD	NLT	BCCWJ	WORD	MVD	NLT	BCCWJ
語彙	13,902	7,743	367	銳敏	14,418	1,136	170
彙報	X	26	2	銳利	X	705	95
				銳角	X	890	69
				銳氣	X	121	15
				精銳	15,190	2,019	178
				新銳	14,592	1,715	191

### 3 Results

In this section, I focus mainly on the interpretation of the results that emerged from the analysis of the usage frequency of the vocabulary for almost all 4,388 jōyō kanji readings. The complete list is freely available on the Internet, and encompasses not only an explanation of the methodology but also a list of the changes that occurred during the revision of version 1.0 (Kandrac 2022). First and foremost, I will answer the main research question: “How many jōyō kanji readings are rarely used?” and I will discuss its potential implications. Second, I will mention a few problematic readings that I was not able to include in the analysis, and the reasons why this happened. Third, I will explain why some adverbs are indexed differently in MVD and NLT. Lastly, I will provide some fascinating examples of words that belong to different frequency groups across all three databases.

#### 3.1 Rarely used readings

Thanks to the selected databases and criteria, I was able to categorize 4,369 of the 4,388 jōyō kanji readings. Thus, the databases I opted to employ allowed me to effectively categorize almost all of the jōyō kanji readings. Using the method explained in the methodology section, I found that more than one-fifth of all the readings could be considered as almost never used, and therefore not relevant for students who are aiming to continue beyond the JLPT N2 or even N1 proficiency level. The exact numbers are provided in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Frequency distribution of the applicable jōyō kanji readings*

Often used ↑	Sometimes used ↔	Rarely used ↓	Total
2,070	1,731	928	4,369
47.38%	31.38%	21.24%	100%

Given that more than a fifth (928 out of 4,369, 21.24%) of the analyzed readings are almost never used in practice, it is undoubtedly possible to significantly reduce the burden of learning hundreds of readings with little to no usage. Most textbooks require students to learn readings that are far beyond their level of comprehension. Moreover, many of these readings are rarely used even in everyday texts and are thus not useful for the vast majority of JSL learners. Based on the analysis, it can be argued that there is definitely an opportunity to ease the task of learning kanji, and the only question that remains is whether we are bold enough to make good use of it.

It should be mentioned that the analysis identified 179 kanji with a single, almost never used reading. If we thoroughly examine the frequency data of these kanji, we can argue that the majority of them should be removed from the jōyō list. The list clearly contains several archaic terms whose inclusion is questionable at best, yet the possibility of their removal in the foreseeable future is rather slim. In any case, the main goal of this study was to analyze usage frequency data of all jōyō kanji readings, so I have refrained from altering the original jōyō kanji list in any shape or form. However, if we exclude all 179 kanji along with their readings, the proportion of almost never used readings would drop by 17.9% (749 out of 4,190), which is, needless to say, at least a slight improvement.

It is also intriguing to compare the distribution of readings with the one used in Japan. According to “The list of on-kun readings sorted based on the elementary, high school and university levels”, there are 318 readings that should be learned after graduating from high school. They account for 7.25% of all 4,388 readings, and although this is considerably less than 20%, it is still relevant. When I compared the Multicriteria-based ordering (MBO) list 6.2 which utilizes data from this study and from the above-mentioned Japanese document, I noticed that

more than half of the readings that belong to the senior high school (kō 高) category are not present in the list, and there are only about 40 kō readings that appear in the MBO 6.2. What is more, some of them have actually been classified as almost never used, but I decided to include them in the list due to the sense of uniqueness they bring to a kanji. For example, students might remember the kanji “瞬” better thanks to its Japanese reading, *matataku*, rather than its Sinojapanese reading. The same can be said for the character “偽” with its Japanese reading *nise* and for some other kanji as well. All in all, it can be said that there is a coherence between the results of this study and the data provided by Monbukagakushō. Such an observation undeniably substantiates the reliability of databases and criteria chosen for the categorization in this study.

Personally, I am not aware of any textbook that incorporates more than 1,000 kanji but does not list all or almost all of the kanji readings. Naturally, there are plenty of beginner-level or intermediate-level textbooks that limit the number of readings based on the appropriate level, but they often include advanced vocabulary anyway.<sup>5</sup> The topic of readings struck me for the first time when I was looking into kanji ordering. I found that while kanji such as “煮” and “者” may seem close to each other because they have the same component and the same Sinojapanese reading *sha*, in reality “煮” appears only in one word in which it makes use of its Sinojapanese reading, that is *shafutsu* “煮沸”. Therefore, some students might prefer to simply learn the word instead of the kanji reading itself. There are several examples where I encountered the same issue, and this prompted me to take a closer look at kanji readings. I believe that the authors of kanji textbooks should pay more attention to the applicability of readings, rather than simply copying the official list provided by the Japanese government which is aimed at native speakers of the Japanese language who have at least twice as much time to learn kanji compared to JSL learners. Moreover, even if one considers Sinojapanesereadings to be extremely important, there are still hundreds of Japanese readings that are not useful to learn for the vast majority of L2 students. The only benefit of learning a Japanese reading is that it facilitates long-term retention of the character because it grants a certain uniqueness to it. However,

5 For example, the word “類義語” provided for the kanji “類” in the *Basic Kanji Book* on the page 198, or the word “頭金” listed for the kanji “頭” in the *Minna no Nibongo* on the page 135 (lesson 36).

this does not mean that it is worthwhile to remember hundreds of obscure Japanese readings that are almost never used in practice. Several examples of these readings are provided in the paper *Jōyō kanji acquisition and instruction: Categorically sorted list for learning kanji* which, among many other things, lists the on-kun level acquisition rates for the kanji with particularly high number of readings (NINJAL 1994, 88–89). Based on the data, it can be said that remembering verbs like *wakatsu* “分かつ”, *samasu* “冷ます”, *hayasu* “生やす”, *noboseru* “上せる”, or *kudasu* “下す” is so difficult even for native Japanese children that it does not really make sense to require beginner-level or even intermediate-level L2 students to learn them.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.2 Troublesome readings and adverbs

Although I was able to categorize almost all readings, in a few cases I had no option but to exclude a reading from the analysis. There were 19 readings in total that ended up being unclassified. In other cases, I was able to categorize the reading despite various complications. An example of an uncategorized reading is *jaku* in the kanji “着” since no word was found in any of the databases that employed this reading. As for problematic readings, the main issue was posed by words that have two different ways of reading, such as *shikyaku/shikaku* “刺客” or *sekō/shikō* “施工”. In addition, there were a couple of words whose reading indexed in NLT does not correspond to the reading given in the official list. For example, the word “薪” has the Japanese reading *maki* according to NLT, but the official list states that its Japanese reading is *takigi*. Since these kinds of complications can be explained, I opted to include these readings in the final analysis.

Another fascinating difference between MVD and NLT was related to adverbs and their connection with the particle “に”. While both the jōyō list and

6 Most of them have an acquisition rate between 10–50% even after four years of practice. The data from the previous page (NINJAL 1994, 87) also clearly suggest that students are more effective when retaining the readings of kanji with fewer readings for both active (writing) and passive (reading) production. While it is important to point out that the difference is mostly only up to about 10%, this is not the case for students with one or two years of practice in the reading proficiency, because there is 15–25% difference between the kanji with one reading and the kanji with more than two readings.

MVD distinguish between adverbs that can and cannot stand alone, NLT indexes all of them together with the particle “に”. Several examples are provided in Table 4.

Table 4  
*Comparison of adverb indexing across three sources*

Jōyō list	MVD	NLT
すでに	既に	すでに
おおいに	大いに	大いに
ただちに	直ちに	直ちに
かり	かり	仮に ↑ and 仮 ↓
まこと	X	誠に

During the categorization process I discovered a few words whose usage frequency showed to be inconsistent across the three corpora. Although a pattern can be observed in some cases, some of them remain a mystery. A few of these words can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5  
*Words with inconsistent frequency data*

Word	MVD	NLT	BCCWJ
腫瘍	13,156 ↓	22,514 ↑	1,032 ↔
漏洩	19,218 ↓	9,413 ↔	232 ↓
嬢	1,123 ↑	3,489 ↓	980 ↔
下宿	1,254 ↑	2,731 ↓	498 ↓
生ける	12,420 ↓	22,429 ↑	2,769 ↔

The words in Table 5 are good examples of why it is important to draw data from multiple sources. Most of them are categorized into a different frequency group in each of the three databases. Moreover, even “下宿” would have been classified as sometimes used according to the BCCWJ if its frequency value had exceeded 500. In the case of the first word “腫瘍”, its high frequency in NLT can be justified by the fact that several medical terms have too high a frequency value within this

source. Another example is the word “炎症”, which MVD categorizes as almost never used, but based on NLT it is on the borderline between sometimes used and often used. As far as the second word, *reading* “漏洩”, its low frequency number in MVD may be due to the character “洩”, because it does not belong to the jōyō list. As for the word “嬢”, it is necessary to point out that MVD has a tendency to overestimate the usage frequency of single-character words for some reason. The kanji “嬢” is usually used as a suffix, so it is understandable why it has a low frequency number. The last two words remain a mystery, as there is almost no plausible explanation for their inconsistency.

### *Conclusion*

In this study, I determined that, according to data from three extensive Japanese language corpora, over 20% of all jōyō kanji readings are almost never used in practice. Given that I chose rather conservative criteria for the process of categorization, it is undoubtedly possible to significantly reduce the burden L2 students have to cope with when they are required to learn and remember hundreds of advanced-level readings with little to no usage. A number of steps need to be undertaken to be able to change the current system. First and foremost, it is vital to consider lowering the expectations towards L2 students in regard to the process of learning kanji, and to raise their awareness to the drawbacks of remembering hundreds of redundant readings (and characters), as this is thought to be one of the main demotivating factors of learning the Japanese kanji. It would probably be also beneficial for aspiring authors of kanji textbooks to acknowledge the issue of redundant readings, given that even native Japanese allegedly have trouble remembering some of them. Last but not least, as I demonstrated in this study, the problem of redundant readings is, to a certain degree, related to the selection process of the jōyō kanji list. The proportion of rarely used readings could be reduced by almost one-sixth by simply removing 179 low frequency-use characters from the list.

Taking into consideration the scope of the analysis, it was inevitable to categorize readings based on the most common word approach to save valuable

time. It could certainly be debated to use a more thorough approach, but given the similarity to the official Japanese on-kun reading list (Monbukagakushō 2017), it seems that for the purpose of this study, the simplified approach was more than sufficient. There may also be one or two objections regarding the databases used. Despite their few negligible limitations, I strongly believe that the analysis proved their efficiency, as only 19 readings ended up unclassified. Of course, it would have been beneficial to use even more sources, but this would have made the whole process of categorization more complicated and time-consuming.

All things considered, in this study, I was able to show that there is a meaningful way to facilitate the task of learning kanji by reducing the number of kanji readings. My intention is to implement these results in the MBO lists 6.2–6.4, which contain 1,500, 1,336, and 1,136 kanji, respectively. I believe that the results of this work will prove useful to both students and teachers, as no research to date has provided specific data on the usage frequency of jōyō kanji readings. There is undoubtedly more to be examined in this domain, but I hope that this study constitutes a good steppingstone to future research.

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# Application of the Positive Japanese Experience for Teacher Induction in Slovakia

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*Abstract* Improvement of the existing induction system for novice teachers in Slovakia has become a current issue. In light of the high level of teacher attrition, an upcoming problem of teacher shortage, and their early drop-out from the profession, the government has to introduce the necessary amendments to the current system of teacher's professional adaptation to work and develop effective policies to attract and retain teachers in the teaching profession. The survey results, conducted among the novice teachers from secondary schools in Slovakia, showed the aspects of the early stage of teachers' development program that need to be addressed. After analyzing the positive experience of the existing program in Japan that provides effective support for novice teachers, some recommendations have been offered.

*Keywords* teacher induction program, novice teachers, Slovakia, Japan

## *Introduction*

It is a well-known fact that the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers, and the professional development of teachers plays a vital role in it. In the European Commission handbook for policymakers, professional development is described as:

[...] a lifelong process that starts at initial teacher education and ends at retirement. Generally, this lifelong process is divided into specific stages. The first stage concerns the preparation of teachers during initial teacher education, where those who want to become a teacher master the basic knowledge and skills. The second stage is the first independent steps as teachers, the first years of confrontation with the reality of being

a school teacher. This phase is generally called the induction phase. The third phase is the phase of the continuing professional development of those teachers that have overcome the initial challenges of becoming a teacher.<sup>1</sup>

Formal and informal teacher induction activities provide novice teachers<sup>2</sup> with the support needed during their transition from initial teacher education to actual teaching. The importance of the induction period for teachers is also stated in the European Commission handbook for policymakers. “The point at which newly educated teachers transfer from initial education and move into professional life is seen as crucial for further professional commitment and development and for reducing the number of teachers leaving the profession” (European Commission 2010, 9).

Induction as early career support is a widespread practice in Europe. In most education systems, it is a compulsory practice. Our survey was conducted in order to understand the current state of early career support in Slovakia. It took place in May–June 2022 as a part of the research project “Application of the positive Japanese experience in the professional adaptation of novice teachers in Slovakia.” The research was carried out within the UMB Support Scheme for International Researchers program at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica.

The Google Form survey was sent to principals’ e-mail addresses in 2155 primary schools (základné školy) that provide education at first and second primary education stages (9 grades). Two different types of questions were included: closed and open-ended ones. Teachers with up to 5 years of official working experience were asked to respond to the questionnaire. Out of 136 responses, 116 were appropriate for the analysis.

The geographical distribution of the respondents is shown in Figure 1.<sup>3</sup> The profiles of the participants are summarized in Table 1.

1 European Commission. 2010, 3–4. Developing Coherent and System-wide Induction Programmes for Beginning Teachers—A Handbook for Policymakers.

2 In our study, the term “novice teachers” is used for those teachers who are in the first stage of their career. The terms used to refer to these teachers vary greatly, e.g., “beginning/new teachers”, “newly qualified teachers”, “early career teachers”.

3 Some of the survey findings are illustrated in Figures 1–4.

## 1. Regions

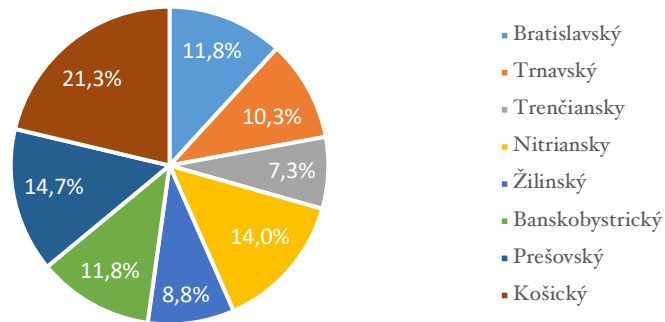


Figure 1  
*Geographical distribution of the respondents in Slovakia.*

Table 1  
*Profiles of the participants (n=number of teachers)*

Category	Differentiation of participants (n)
Age	20–25 years old (36)
	26–30 years old (56)
	31–40 years old (22)
	41–50 years old (18)
	more than 50 years old (4)
The highest level of education completed	stage I—Bachelor's degree (9)
	stage II—Master's degree or its equivalent (123)
	stage III—Ph.D. or equivalent level (2)
Form of employment	full-time (120)
	part-time (16)
	artistic contract (0)
Official teaching experience in number of years	0–1 year (55)
	2–3 years (48)
	4–5 years (13)
	more than five years (20)

Looking back at their first year of work in terms of difficulty, 35.3% of teachers defined it as “very complicated”; 41.2% as being “quite difficult”; 22.8% considered it to be “acceptable”; and only 0.7% as being “not complicated” (see Figure 2).<sup>4</sup>

15. How do you rate your first year as a teacher in terms of difficulty?

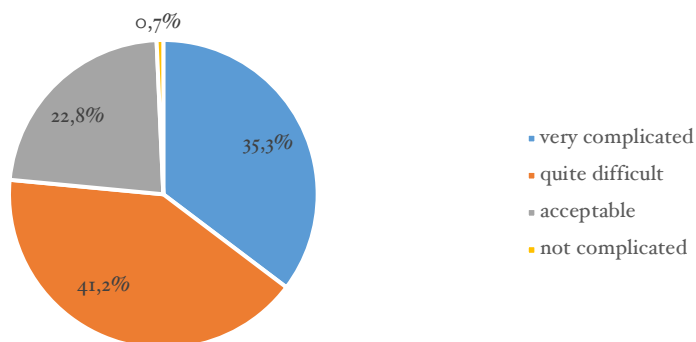


Figure 2

*The difficulty of the first year as a teacher.*

Considering the psychological pressure of the first three years, 36.8% of teachers stated that they had thought about resigning from school.<sup>5</sup>

The results show that beginning teachers encounter multiple difficulties during the first year of work. They are as follows: lack of experience in managing a large volume of paperwork (62.5%); communication with students' parents (42.6%); lack of professional skills or knowledge of the subject (36%); communication with students and the class as a whole during school and after school hours (33.1%); organizational issues during school events, holidays, study tours (23.5%); burnout or emotional exhaustion (22.8%); relationships in the team

<sup>4</sup> Data based on teachers' answers to Question 15: “How do you rate your first year as a teacher in terms of difficulty?”

<sup>5</sup> Question 6: “Did you think about leaving school during your first three years?”

(14%). Among other difficulties mentioned in an open-ended option of a response were “integrating children with special needs”, “peer pressure to teach my classes according to their preferences”, and “failure to solve long-term problems with IT technology”. Only 2.2% of respondents replied that they did not have any difficulties.<sup>6</sup>

The early analysis allows us to conclude that the effectiveness of existing support provided to novice teachers in Slovakia is insufficient. Therefore, studying the models of induction programs to find positive ideas for introducing and implementing better support in professional adaptation for beginning teachers is a current issue. The Japanese model was selected as a successful example existing among Asian countries.

### 1 Slovakia—*The Current State of the Induction Program*

Before 1989, every newly qualified beginning teacher had his or her mentor (uvádzajúci učiteľ) who introduced them to the teaching practice. The earliest so-called official methodological support is dated 1986. However, it was non-legislated then (Szimethová et al. 2012, 170).

In 2009, Slovakia introduced a new legislative system for supporting beginning teachers, and adaptation training (adaptačné vzdelávanie) became compulsory. The regulations for it were stated in the Law on Teaching Staff and Professional Staff with Amendments to Certain Laws, 317/2009, §36.<sup>7</sup> This induction program is considered to be the first part of the Lifelong Learning process (kontinuálne vzdelávanie) stated in §35 of the same law.

Within the system of adaptation training, each beginning teacher formally gets a mentor (senior teacher). We can say that already existing mentoring practice received a formal status. The implementation of it is rather flexible. It has a duration of minimum three months (usually up to one year) and has to be finished within the first two years. The program content depends on the school

6 Question 27—“What difficulties did you personally encounter in the first years of work?”—several options were possible.

7 For this law see Slov-Lex. Legislative and Information Portal.

principal and a mentor but is compiled according to the framework program of adaptation training issued by the Ministry.

In most EU countries with top-level regulations on induction programs, they have a duration of one year. We consider this time frame to be the most reasonable. As our survey shows, 25% of teachers felt fully adapted to their duties after three months, 23.5%—after six months, and 22.8%—after a year. As a whole, 71.3% of teachers felt confident with their work within one year. Other 11.8% of teachers responded that after 2–3 years, 2.9%—after 4–5 years, and 14% of teachers had not adapted yet (see Figure 3).<sup>8</sup>

28. When did you feel that you had already fully adapted (psychologically and professionally) to your current duties?

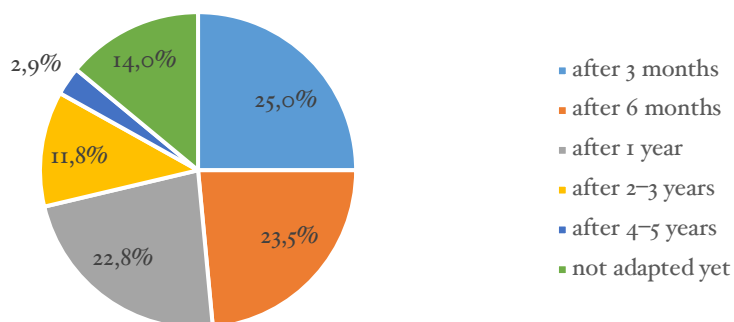


Figure 3

*The duration of adaptation of novice teachers to school duties.*

The goal of adaptation training for beginning teachers and beginning specialists is the acquisition of professional competencies necessary for the independent performance of the activities, which cannot be obtained by completing an

8 Question 28: “When did you feel that you had already fully adapted (psychologically and professionally) to your current duties?”



educational program in the required field of study that provides the required level of education (Law 317/2009, §36).

According to the survey, 65.5% of the teachers with no more than 5 years of official teaching experience said they had taken part in formal or informal induction during their entering the profession. Out of 116 respondents, 22.4% said they had done it as a part of the compulsory novice teacher program, 43.1% stated that it had been on their initiative, and 34.5% said they had not participated in any teacher induction practice.<sup>9</sup>

In comparison, TALIS<sup>10</sup> survey conducted in 2018 shows that 35.4% of novice teachers in Slovakia (having less or equal to five years of teaching experience) did not participate in formal or informal induction activities at their current school (OECD 2019). Considering the data, we cannot see any noticeable positive tendency in the enrollment number.

Mentoring is recognized as the main element of the program. As it is formal and prescribed by law, it is supposed to be strictly followed. According to TALIS results, 21.8% of novice teachers with up to 5 years of experience had an assigned mentor in 2018 (OECD 2020). We have observed a noticeable change that has happened in recent years. According to our survey results, 94.5% of respondents stated they had a mentor, and only 5.5% responded negatively.<sup>11</sup>

The respondents of the survey claimed to have received the following assistance from their mentors: 72.1% had professional consultation on the subject, and the same percent received help with paperwork, 56.6% had psychological support from their mentor, 43.4% received advice on lesson planning, and 22.1%—on the issue of maintaining discipline in the classroom.<sup>12</sup>

9 Question 17: “Did you take part in any induction activities?” The responses were filtered by the years of teaching experience based on the answers to Question 6: “What is your official work experience as a teacher in number of years?” Only the responses of the teachers with less than 5 years of experience were taken into account.

10 TALIS-2018 (Teaching and Learning International Survey) is an international teaching and learning study carried out by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

11 Question 20: “Have you been formally assigned a mentor—a senior teacher who you could turn to for help?”

12 Question 22: “What help did the mentor provide?” Several options were possible.

Alena Lampertová studied the existing mentoring practice in Slovakia. She questions the actual efficacy of it in her article “Adaptation Program for Beginning Teacher—Help or Obligation?”: an important question is whether this document<sup>13</sup> actually serves as a support for the beginning teachers or if it becomes only a legislative obligation (Lampertová 2012, 251). As she concludes:

The quality of the involvement of the beginning teacher by the mentor will always depend on how both of them will approach it, to what extent they will tolerate and accept each other, and how they will trust each other. (Lampertová 2012, 257).

Considering the results of the responses to Questions 17 and 20, we can see a substantial difference. It shows that most novice teachers were unaware that having a mentor meant they were undergoing compulsory adaptation training. This unawareness can also lead to the formality of the program, confirmed in other studies.

Unless teachers have an internal consciousness that adaptation training is important and has its meaning, they will not follow it, even if it is legislation. It is possible to assume that this reluctance to accept something new is not only related to the increase in work for teachers but also to the fact that, from their point of view, not enough space was devoted to the issue before its launch. (Lampertová 2012, 257).

We also support the abovementioned idea that one of the factors of teachers’ reluctance to accept the induction practice can be an increased teaching load. According to our survey, 4.4% of respondents stated that during the first year their workload had been reduced “significantly”, 24.3% said that only “slightly”, and 71.3%—“not reduced at all” (see Figure 4).<sup>14</sup> Moreover, 55.9% reported working long hours during their first year of work at school.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The law on adaptation training.

<sup>14</sup> Question 19: “Was the workload reduced in the first year?”

<sup>15</sup> Question 14: “Did you have overtime in your first year of work?”

19. Was the workload reduced in the first year?

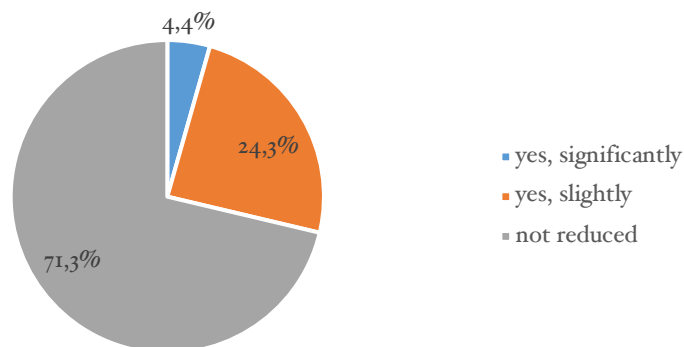


Figure 4

*The reduction of the workload of novice teachers during their first year.*

Nevertheless, we can see the positive changes initiated by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport in Slovakia. It has tried to reduce the extensive administrative workload, which is a burden to teachers. In 2015, the Ministry formed a working group composed of education representatives and ministry officials to relieve teachers of administrative work. Accordingly, some procedures were simplified, automated or even eliminated. As it is pointed out in TALIS results report of OECD (2020): “the country has declared its commitment to addressing workload issues through statements in the government manifesto and in the first action plan of the National Reform Programme for Education (2018–19).”

Lampertová makes a statement about the implementation of adaptation training in practice: “results show that beginning teachers see their mentors just as formal ones, but in practice, they look for informal support from colleagues who could be described as informal mentors” (Lampertová et al. 2012).

Our study supports this statement. We can indirectly form an opinion on what kind of psychological climate is present among teaching staff.<sup>16</sup> In total, 38.9% of teachers responded that they had “often” or “quite often” received help

<sup>16</sup> Question 26 “How often did colleagues provide you with help (advice, explanation of duties, help with administration)?”

from their colleagues; 50.7% stated that other teachers had helped them when they asked for it; 10.3% said they had rarely had any help. In fact, there were no negative responses to the question. However, there were comments such as “some colleagues see you as an incompetent teacher” or “one of the difficulties was peer pressure to teach my classes according to their preferences.” We can also recall the result mentioned above that 14% of novice teachers stated relationships with the staff among their work difficulties.

Moreover, there are 81.4% of teachers in lower secondary schools who “agree” or “strongly agree” that there is a collaborative school culture that is characterized by mutual support (OECD 2020). Based on the data, we can conclude that the teaching environment in Slovakia may be generally considered supportive and helpful, with exceptions possible in any working environment.

Although the out-of-school part is not compulsory and is not supported on a legislative basis, 49.5% of respondents who had formal or informal induction training stated that they had visited courses, workshops, or lectures in educational centers.<sup>17</sup>

The induction program ends with an “exam” in a form determined by the school principal. In most cases, it is an open lesson attended by the three-member committee (Szimethová et al. 2012, 170).

Having open hours (otvorené hodiny) was confirmed by 58.8% of the respondents, and 41.2% said they had not had them.<sup>18</sup> Of those who had open lessons, 84.5% replied that the lesson “was attended by the school management, the school principal, a representative or a head of the subject committee.” The mentor was present at 66.7% of open lessons, and 28.6% said some colleagues had attended it.<sup>19</sup> Attending other senior colleagues’ lessons was mentioned by 57.4% of respondents.<sup>20</sup>

17 Question 18: “Where did these courses/workshops/lectures take place (both online and in person)?”

18 Question 24: “Did you conduct open lessons at school?”

19 Question 25: “Who attended your open lesson?”

20 Question 23: “Have you attended the lessons of your colleagues?”

A protocol signed by the committee and a final report of a mentor are submitted as formal feedback at the end of the induction program. In case of unsuccessful completion of the program, novice teachers can undergo it once more with the permission of the head of the school. The employment relationship may be terminated if a novice teacher does not complete the adaptation training.<sup>21</sup>

As the survey results show, 54.4% stated that they had received written feedback as a kind of evaluation at the end of the induction program, 26.5% stated that they had not received it, and 19.1% did not know if there was any feedback.<sup>22</sup>

The TALIS survey revealed that most teachers and school leaders view their colleagues as open to change and their schools as places that can adopt innovative practices. In Slovakia, 83% of teachers also report that they and their colleagues support each other in implementing new ideas (OECD 2020).

The novice teachers wished to have the following support at the following ratio (see Table 2).<sup>23</sup>

Table 2

*Preferred kind of support for novice teachers (n=number of teachers)*

Kind of support	n	Ratio
Seminars to exchange experience among new teachers	66	48.5%
Receiving a mentor	64	47.1%
Allocating time for self-education (e.g., one day a week)	63	46.3%
Reducing the workload of a novice teacher	50	36.8%
Development of the professional orientation at the university	56	41.2%

Furthermore, some comments were written in a free writing space. Among them, four comments expressed hope for “decent financial compensation/motivation”, three stated that “there was enough of everything”, and one “wanted universities to provide more teaching practice”.

<sup>21</sup> The Law on Teaching Staff and Professional Staff, 317/2009, §36.

<sup>22</sup> Question 13: “Did you receive a written evaluation of your work after the end of the introductory period?”

<sup>23</sup> Question 31: “What kind of support do you think is appropriate for new teachers?”

Among EU countries, Slovakia has one of the lowest percentages of teachers satisfied with their salary—17.9%. Only Iceland (6.2%), Portugal (9.4%), and Lithuania (11.1%) have the lower rate, while Malta (17.9%) has the same percentage.<sup>24</sup>

The high-level dissatisfaction with the salary has been confirmed in our survey. In response to Question 30—“Are you satisfied with your current salary?”—30.9% said “not at all”, while 39.7% said “rather dissatisfied”, for a total of 70.6% negative feedback. The percentage of teachers satisfied with their salary is only 4.4%, and 25% indicated they were “more satisfied than not”, giving us 29.4% positive feedback on the issue. One of the respondents pointed out:

Unfortunately, it is not easy to find a job as a young person. I see the problem in the fact that the older teachers stay, and everyone keeps their place. Next year the project will end, and I can start somewhere again. There is no motivation in the education system for young people.

Another comment confirming the same idea was: “I am in favor of increasing the salary of the employees, which will be adequate and come closer to other European countries, because, unfortunately, smart people leave education to earn more.”

It is necessary to mention that salaries for novice teachers vary significantly across Europe. Gross statutory starting salaries can go from €5 000 to €80 000 per year, depending on the country. Slovakia is among the eight EU member states where the teachers’ statutory starting salaries can be found in “the middle group”—over €9 000 and below €20 000 per year. The others are Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia.<sup>25</sup>

However, we can see that the government is taking steps to improve the situation. In its report, the European Commission states that Slovakia is found among the EU countries with the highest increases in salaries of teachers over the

24 European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice. 2021. Teachers in Europe: Careers, Development and Well-being. Statistical annex, Table 1.9.

25 European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2021, 13. Teachers’ and School Heads’ Salaries and Allowances in Europe—2019/20.

last five years. The percentage change from 2014/15 to 2019/20 shows a raise of 39%.<sup>26</sup>

The biggest issue in Slovakia remains the social status of teachers. According to TALIS-2018 results, 5% of teachers “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement that their profession is valued in society. This is the lowest level of prestige of the teaching profession among other OECD countries in the survey, where the average level of agreement on the issue is 31% (OECD 2021). Based on TALIS-2013 results, we can observe that there are no positive improvements in the issue because the situation remained the same for Slovakia five years ago.

The abovementioned issues strongly contrast with the high requirements placed on the educational level of teachers in Slovakia, which has the highest number of teachers with a master’s degree as the highest level of formal education completed among EU countries—96.2%.<sup>27</sup>

The low social status of teaching profession and high requirements to the education level can result in teacher shortage. Other researchers confirm the crisis that the teaching profession in Slovakia is currently going through. “The Slovak teaching profession is in a difficult situation. There are signs that the country is facing a teaching staff shortage and that the demand for new teachers will continue to grow” (Pupala et al. 2020, 97). In order to attract more people to teaching, the policymakers first have to adjust the average salaries of teachers to make them consistent with the qualifications required. In order to find ideas for reforming the current system of teacher induction in Slovakia, we will study the effective example of the Japanese program.

## 2 *Japan—A Successful Model Program Among Asian Countries*

The practice of supporting novice teachers (*shinninkyōin* 新任教員 or *shinninkyōshi* 新任教師) in Japan is recognized as one of the most successful and effective in the world. It is confirmed by numerous international comparative studies of scientists

26 European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2021, 23. Teachers’ and School Heads’ Salaries and Allowances in Europe—2019/20.

27 European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2021, 65. Teachers in Europe: Careers, Development and Well-being.

on the best induction programs and analytical materials of foreign organizations.<sup>28</sup> The criteria for evaluating the program's success are the level of support for beginners and staff retention. In earlier studies, it has been determined that Japan has extensive experience in the practical support of novice teachers (Luchenko 2018a, 13).<sup>29</sup> As a result, teacher adaptation support in Japan is considered to be a model practice worthy of further research (Britton 2003; Howe 2006; Lewis 2000; Shimahara and Sakai 2002; Stevenson and Stigler 1992).

In 2019, Olha Luchenko was invited by the Japan Foundation to participate in a Program for Specialists in Cultural and Academic Fields in Osaka, Japan. Several interviews were conducted with the officials at prefectural (Saitama) and city (Osaka) educational centers to discuss their role in the induction program. There was also a visit to Kyoei university in Kasukabe (Saitama prefecture) for an interview with Professor Setsuko Waida—a researcher who had studied the topic in depth for several years. Professor Waida received a Grant for scientific research. Having conducted interviews with more than 30 local governments across the country, she compared the existing support practice for newly appointed teachers in search of effective adaptation support measures. Some of the professor's answers and comments on novice teachers' adaptation to work in Japan will be referred to in our study.

The plans for an induction program (*shoninsha kenshū* 初任者研修) or internship<sup>30</sup> have a long history as the Ministry of Education wanted to introduce it in the 1950s (Shimahara and Sakai 1992, Friehs 2005). A mandatory program was introduced in 1989 and gave the government greater control over beginning teachers. The legislative regulations are stated in the Law for Special Regulations

28 See Britton 2003; Howe 2006; Fulton et al. 2005; Moskowitz and Stephens 1997; Wong et al. 2005; Paine 2010; Stern 2012; National Science Foundation, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

29 This part of the article is based on Luchenko's PhD dissertation "Professional adaptation of novice teachers to school work in Japan", written under the supervision of Professor Valentyna Gryniowa (H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University).

30 Teacher induction programs are referred to as internship in some studies.



Concerning Educational Public Service Personnel (*kyōiku komuin tokureihō* 教育公務員特例法).<sup>31</sup>

According to this regulation, the training of novice teachers is defined as “the conduction of practical training during class and subject management on issues necessary for the performance of official duties among newly appointed teachers of elementary, lower and higher secondary municipal schools within one year from the date of their acceptance.” The induction program for novice teachers, which is at least 90 days a year, supports professional development and adaptation (Waida 2011).

The official purpose of the teacher internship is to develop “practical teaching competence”, “a sense of mission in teaching”, and “a broad perspective as a teacher” through in-service education during the first year (Shimahara and Sakai 1992).

Therefore, the induction program focuses on the improvement of teaching through the introduction to the culture of teaching and practical instructional skills. Nobuo Shimahara and Akira Sakai (1992) describe the content of the teachers’ practical competence as “skills, knowledge, and orientation to handle classroom management, teaching, lesson plans, student guidance, extracurricular activities, moral education, relations to parents and teacher committee work.”

The Ministry of Education of Japan (MEXT) divides the content of the teacher induction program into seven broad categories: basic knowledge, class management, subject management, moral education, special activities, integrated classes, the guidance of students, and professional orientation. As we can observe, most of the categories fit under “practical competence” content.

The induction program has two main components:

- in-service training (*kōnai kenshū* 校内研修) lasts two days per week at individual schools supervised by the guiding teacher with minimum 60 days per year;
- out-of-school training (*kōgai kenshū* 校外研修) is provided in prefectural educational centers one day per week with minimum 30 days per year.

Formal support for newly employed teachers enabled by the teacher induction program is consistent with Japanese organizations’ emphasis given to on-the-job training, particularly in the first year of employment (*shinnin kenshū* 新任研修).

31 For this law see E-GOV. Law search 法令検索.

This kind of assistance is supplemented with the traditional informal support of the other teachers in school to ensure that novice teachers adapt successfully. Informal support is considered to be more important than formal. It was found that the program allows certain flexibility for its implementation. MEXT gives the outline as a starting point, and the schools design their plans (Luchenko 2018a, 13). As Professor Waida pointed out, the difference in the induction program plans across the country is substantial.

Mentors or guiding teachers (*shidō kyōin* 指導教員) play the most prominent role in the socio-psychological and professional adaptation of newly appointed teachers.

Studies on Asian archetypes of mentoring are of particular interest to us because they can show the different attitudes to the ancient practice that remains in Western and Asian countries nowadays. The collectivist notion is embodied in China and Japan's mentoring ideals (Lunsford 2016).

Mark Bright (2005) considers Japan an ideal comparison to the Western<sup>32</sup> approach because of its own version of mentoring. The notions that are common in Japan such as *sensei* (先生), *senpai* (先輩) and *kōhai* (後輩), *oyabun* (親分), and *kobun* (子分) represent the complex idea of mentoring in Japan.

The prototype of a mentor in the modern sense in Japan is *sensei*. The word literally means “a person who was born earlier” (先—before, 生—be born). Although *sensei* means a teacher, it is also used when addressing or referring to physicians, clergy, scientists, architects, politicians, and lawyers. It is also used as an honorific title added after the name.

Yasuyuki Iwata observes that this kind of thought<sup>33</sup> seems to be related to Buddhism with its respect for elderly persons or ancients. The term *sensei*, which is widely used in Japan, means not only a teacher with the necessary knowledge and skills but, in a broad sense, refers to a mature person who is more experienced and has high moral and ethical qualities (Iwata 2006).

The *senpai-kōhai* (senior-junior) relationship, which has been common since the school period and involves friendly interaction between individuals, becomes

32 The United States and European countries.

33 Respect for human maturity from longer lives.

the basis for beginners' perception of mentoring as one of the forms of cooperation that organically appears at the beginning of work.

The *oyabun-kobun* (leader-subordinate) relationship is similar to an apprentice mentoring model. It occurs in settings characterized by trades or industries with laborers and is characterized by respect and a sense of obligation (Lunsford 2016, 13).

Therefore, we can say that *sensei*, *senpai*, and *oyabun* are the prototypes of a mentor in Japanese culture.

In his study of mentoring models in Japan, Bright points to generalized aspects of Japanese culture that facilitate effective mentoring:

- 1) the high value placed on the community;
- 2) the high value placed on obligation and duty between individuals;
- 3) the notion of respect for elders;
- 4) the concept of seniors protecting juniors from failure;
- 5) the predominance of working relationships based on personal, not contractual bonds;
- 6) the high degree of racial and gender congruence, which facilitates "strong tie" relationships between mentor and mentee. (Bright 2005, 334).

The success of the in-school part of the internship depends heavily on the personal relationships of mentors and novice teachers. The uniqueness of the formation of relations between a mentor and a novice teacher in Japanese society is that they are developing under the influence of a complex cultural phenomenon *uchi-soto* 内・外 (inside-outside).

These two notions are deeply embedded in everyday life and permeate aspects of every interaction between individuals and groups in Japanese society. *Uchi* is the inner self, the core, the part that belongs to a whole, and *soto* is an outsider, well-respected and treated honorably, but not part of the self of the *uchi* social group. (Asada 2012, 139).

The decisive factor in the productivity of their cooperation is the mutual perception of the novice and the experienced teacher as members of *uchi*-group. In this case, beginners tend to express their concerns and problems freely, and the instructions of experienced teachers tend to be consultative. Otherwise, the attitude towards beginners as outsiders from *soto*-group leads to the directive nature of the relationship. As a result, the newly appointed teachers do not seek informal support from their mentors and can experience problems in socio-psychological adjustment (Luchenko 2018b, 239).

Shimahara's findings suggest that supervision of beginning teachers in Japan is, in most cases, non-directive, actual tutoring is quite limited, and internship is viewed as an apprenticeship.<sup>34</sup> The ethos of equality is a sacred norm among teachers, and most mentors (65%) think that novice teachers should be "minimally supervised" (Shimahara and Sakai 1992).

Having studied the archetypal nature of mentoring and the influence of traditional teaching culture on the relationships between mentors and novice teachers in Japan, it can be said that mentoring in Japan has not only historical roots, but is a natural form of relationships in modern society.

Guiding teachers are matched by subject matter. A principal and a mentor devise a year-long plan based on regional and local guidelines. The mentor's role is critical; they work with a novice teacher about two days per week and minimum 60 days per year. They have no financial benefit, but their teaching responsibilities are reduced, and they have three meetings per year at local in-service centers (Fulton et al. 2005).

When we interviewed Professor Waida, she spoke candidly about the role of all the parties in the in-service part of the program. Although the main person for a newly employed teacher is considered to be a mentor, if their relationships do not go well, then the principal, vice-principal, or colleagues provide the support. She also pointed out that the latter are divided into *dōki* (同期) and *senpai* (先輩) colleagues. The former are new teachers who came in the same year and can provide psychological help. The *senpai* colleagues are elder and more experienced teachers who help with professional issues. *Senpai* teaching in the same grade or the same subject are very important. Once a teacher gets the position, the teaching staff is always very helpful. The professor also noted that the environment in Japanese schools is not competitive.

The TALIS-2018 survey revealed that 83.2% of teachers in lower secondary schools "agree" or "strongly agree" that collegiality in schools is characterized by mutual support.<sup>35</sup>

34 They learn to teach by observing and interacting.

35 OECD 2020.

We noticed the friendly environment in Japanese educational establishments during school visits in 2012 and 2019. When a young teacher had any problem with a technical appliance or needed to give out copies to the students, the older teachers, who were present at the lesson, eagerly helped.

The school can hire a part-time teacher as an additional instructor to compensate for the reduced teaching load of a new teacher. If there is no experienced subject specialist who can advise a newcomer in the school, there can be arrangements made to get support from one at another school in the district.

Japanese teachers are usually moved from one school to another every three to six years. It is not unusual for a teacher to be moved to another school just to become a guiding teacher or create a new opening at a strong school to accommodate a new teacher (Padilla and Riley 2003, 279). Periodically moving from one school to another is believed to improve the teaching of individual teachers and the school system as a whole (Padilla and Riley 2003, 264).

Apart from scheduled topics to be discussed with the assigned guiding teacher, they also work on teaching techniques and professional confidence. They do not keep to the devised plan rigidly but refer to it as a guide. Its primary function is to ensure coverage of essential topics (Padilla and Riley 2003, 262).

New teachers' workload is usually reduced to 75% of an average teaching load: normal upper secondary and elementary load is 16–17 hours per week, and the average lower secondary load is 20–23 hours per week (Padilla and Riley 2003; Fulton et al. 2005).

One of the interesting differences that can be found in various teaching environments is the willingness to visit other teachers' lessons and conduct open lessons themselves to work on improving their practical teaching skills.

In Japan, teaching is viewed as a public activity, open to scrutiny by many. The induction process welcomes beginners into that open practice. It provides beginning teachers with many regular opportunities to observe their peers, their guiding teachers, and other teachers in their school, as well as those in other schools. No special arrangements need to be made for schools, and teaching are organized to allow such open observations. (Wong et al. 2005, 382).

Novice teachers conduct two or more open lessons in their first year that are observed by prefectural administrators, the guiding teacher, the school principal or assistant principal, and other teachers in the school.

*Lesson study* (*jūgyō kenkyū* 授業研究) is one of the main techniques used to improve teaching skills in practice. The concept of *lesson study* originated in Japan more than a hundred years ago (in the early Meiji era), where it is widely viewed as the method of professional development for teachers (Baba and Kojima 2004; Lewis 2000; Shimahara 1999; Stigler and Hiebert 1999; Yoshida 1999; Arani 2010; Makinae 2010).

*Lesson study* is a form of research, whereby colleagues will gather together and observe, and then critically discuss a lesson taught by one of their peers, with the aim of improving the quality of lessons and achieving more effective teaching methods. (JICA 2004, 15).

Takuya Baba and Michio Kojima<sup>36</sup> observe that through the medium of *lesson study*, teachers bridge the gap between the Courses of Study<sup>37</sup> and classroom lessons and bring about changes in their teaching by gradually adding practical improvements. *Lesson study* consists of three elements: the study of teaching materials, the experimental lesson itself, and the lesson discussion meeting. These are called the principles of “Plan-Do-See” (JICA report 2004, 227).

Catherine Lewis points out the benefits of the method. During *lesson study*, teachers work collaboratively to:

- formulate long-term goals for student learning and development;
- plan, conduct, and observe a “research lesson” designed to bring these long-term goals to life, as well as to teach particular academic content;
- carefully observe student learning, engagement, and behavior during the lesson;
- discuss and revise the lesson and the approach to instruction based on these observations. (Lewis 2002).

Mohammad Arani’s study asserts that “the Japanese model of *lesson study* supported schools in managing micro-level educational reform in practice, bringing teachers together to learn from each other and to develop the school’s capacity for promoting learning and fostering shared values” (Arani et al. 2010, 183). It is defined as one example of the Japanese practice of continuous improvement (*kaizen* 改善).

36 The History of Japan’s Educational Development (see JICA report).

37 Equivalent to the national curriculum.

Professor Waida pointed out that *lesson study* is actively used in elementary schools, less frequently in lower secondary, and rarely in high secondary schools. She noted that novice teachers eagerly wish to improve their teaching and consciously want to participate in *lesson study*.

One of the main points of the practice of *lesson study* is to focus on evaluating the lesson and criticizing the teaching methods, not the teacher.

Team-teaching<sup>38</sup> is also a popular method in Japan—58.3% of teachers in lower secondary schools report engaging in it at least once a month (TALIS 2018).

As it was mentioned earlier, peer communication with *dōki* is considered to be very important for a novice teacher in Japan. However, it sometimes happens that there is only one newly appointed teacher in a school at a certain period. Educational centers provide a chance for all novice teachers of the district to meet and communicate. Because of the COVID pandemic recently, these are primarily online meetings.

We believe that creating opportunities for interactions of novice teachers outside schools, where there is no external evaluation of mentors or senior colleagues, will expand the outlook of beginners, give them ideas for solving their own pedagogical problems, and relieve psychological stress.

New teachers must also submit a culminating “action research” project based on a classroom lesson they would like to investigate. This project is usually about 30 to 40 pages in length and is to be handed in to the prefectural education office (Padilla and Riley 2003, 264).<sup>39</sup> These projects are accumulated in the prefectural in-service offices and are available for other teachers to use (Wong et al. 2005, 382).

We consider the implementation of a research project by beginners to be one of the positive aspects of the induction program in Japan. It provides an opportunity to learn more deeply about pedagogical topics directly related to the class. After the previous experience of the theoretical approach in higher education, beginning teachers are much more inclined to more practical research because it can be applied during teaching. Supporting independent research promotes the self-improvement of teachers, primarily through the analysis of their practical experience.

38 An instructional strategy also known as collaborative teaching where novice teachers and mentors or senpai colleagues work together.

39 No formal feedback on it is provided.

Teaching in Japan is regarded as a high-status occupation and a dignified profession. Being a teacher in Japan carries with it respect and honor and the label *sensei*. This term carries a high degree of regard and is considered an esteemed salutation. Japanese salaries generally match the high esteem of the profession (Padilla and Riley 2003, 270). In compliance with the law, “special measures have been taken so that public school teachers receive a higher salary than general public officials” (MEXT 2000).

The relatively high public appraisal of teachers’ social status seems to be due to the following factors: First of all, in Japan, a country with few natural resources, a certain level of importance and significance is recognized for the teaching profession that cultivates the human resources who will shoulder the next generation. Secondly, teachers’ job consists of teaching knowledge and skills necessary for every citizen to live as a member of society. Teachers in public schools have the status guaranteed as education officials. From the perspective of securing human resources, teachers are paid good salaries compared to ordinary public officials. (OECD review 2004, 19-20). Summarizing the peculiarities of the Japanese induction program, we can define them as follows: regulatory framework, targeted financing, standardization on the level of MEXT, organization, and implementation on the national, prefectural, municipal, school and personal level; variation of components, content, methods, and forms; availability, usage of IT, correspondence to local needs, needs of beginners and schools; broadening of new teachers’ mind, assistance in the development of scientific abilities, integration of research into practice, multilevel performance monitoring, accountability, mentor training, involvement of supplemental instructors and part-time lecturers.

### 3 *Comparison of the Teacher Induction Programs in Slovakia and Japan*

Having analyzed the two induction programs, we can sum up the compulsory elements in both of them. A brief comparison is given in Table 3.



Table 3  
*Comparison of induction models in Slovakia and Japan*

Key elements of induction	Slovakia	Japan
Status of induction: formal and compulsory	+	+
Duration of induction	3 months–1 year	1 year
Place	in-school practice	in and out of school practice
Induction occurs during a probationary period	+	+
Mentoring support	+	+
Courses/seminars attended in person or online	not compulsory	+
Reduced teaching load: for novice teachers	-	+
for mentors	-	+
Team teaching	-	+
Evaluating novice teachers at the end of induction	+	+
Open lessons	in most cases but not compulsory	+
Specific key components		submission of the action research project; <i>lesson study</i>

As we can observe, teacher induction has a formal and compulsory status in both countries, and occurs during a probationary period with mentoring support as its key element. Both practices conclude with an evaluation of novice teachers. However, in Japan, it is well-balanced with other components such as mandatory out-of-school practice (courses, seminars, peer interaction). We can say that the improvement of practical teaching skills is more regulated in Japan's program; it

is implemented with obligatory lesson observations, open lessons, *lesson study*, and a research project, which is usually based on novice teachers' own practice during the induction year and can serve as a self-analysis.

#### 4 Conclusion

We can say that the result of the induction program in Slovakia, which relies only on mentoring, highly depends on the relationships between the two parties—a novice teacher and a mentor. In order to balance the decisive influence of a mentor's evaluation that is solely present in a school component of the induction training, it would be reasonable to include compulsory out-of-school training.

The formation of a conscious desire among beginners to improve their pedagogical skills throughout their careers is one of the critical factors. Its enhancement can prevent initial maladjustment after employment. To motivate young teachers to participate in induction programs consciously, the salary system can incorporate incentives such as increasing government grants for new teachers.

Having analyzed Japan's teacher induction practice, future directions for applying Japan's positive experience in the postgraduate education system in Slovakia were suggested with regard to both historical, cultural, and social background factors of both education systems. The perspective directions are as follows: enhancement of teachers' social status and prestige of the pedagogical profession, optimization of novice teachers' and mentors' work, team-teaching (beginners and mentors), promotion of favorable psychological environment among teaching staff, creation of opportunities for peer interaction, conduction of research projects (portfolio) by beginning teachers, the introduction of *lesson study*, reducing mentors' and new teachers' teaching load.

#### Abbreviations

EACEA     European Education and Culture Executive Agency (European Commission)

MEXT	<i>Monbukagakushō</i> 文部科学省 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology).
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey.

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# The Collections of Names, Words, and Syllables in the *Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣā* of Sthiramati: Introduction, Annotated Translation

Maxim VOROSHILOV

*Abstract* This paper examines the concept of the collections of names, phrases, and syllables (“*nāmakāya*”, “*padakāya*”, “*vyañjanakāya*”) found within the exposition on formations dissociated from thought (*cittaviprayuktasaṃskāras*) in the *Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣā* of Sthiramati. The *Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣā* of Sthiramati is a commentary (“*vibhāṣā*”) on the *Pañcaskandhaka* by Vasubandhu. In a way, it could be called a compendium of Abhidharmic terms and concepts. The text explores the concepts of the collections of names, phrases, and syllables. Its treatment of the subject differs from that of Sarvāstivāda. For instance, the lengthy discussions we find in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* or the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* are practically absent. The way the subject is presented has more in common with the contemporaneous works of Yogācāra Abhidharma than those of ancient canonic works of Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, or later works, like the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. The article will explore the definitions and characteristics of *nāmakāya*, *padakāya*, *vyañjanakāya*, and will include an annotated translation of the examined passage of the text.

*Keywords* Buddhism, Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, Yogācāra, Sthiramati, Vasubandhu, *cittaviprayuktasaṃskāras*, the collections of names, phrases, and syllables

## I Introduction

The present paper studies a portion of the *Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣā*<sup>1</sup> (henceforth, PSkVi) of Sthiramati, a commentary on the *Pañcaskandhaka* of Vasubandhu, focusing on a group of three particular dharmas—names, words, and syllables (“*nāmakāya*”, “*padakāya*”, “*vyañjanakāya*”). The research includes an introduction, annotated translation, and a conclusion. My translation is based on the edition of J. Kramer of the manuscript preserved at the China Tibetology Research Center (Beijing) (see References). While translating the Sanskrit text, I also consulted the Derge (Tōhoku 4066) and Peking (Ōtani 5067) versions of the Tibetan translation included in bsTan ‘gyur.

In my research, I relied on the following secondary sources: first of all, the paper by P. Jaini named “The Vaibhāṣika Theory of Words and Meanings” included in his *Collected Papers on Buddhist Studies* (Jaini 2001a, 201-217), the chapter “Name, phrase and syllable” in *Disputed dharmas* by Collette Cox (1995, 159-171), chapter 11 named “The Category of Conditionings Disjoined from Thought” on the *saṃskāras* (Dhammajoti 2007, 371-417) in Dhammajoti’s *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, the English translation of the Tibetan version of the text by Artemus Engle (Engle 2009). I consider all the research mentioned extremely informative and elucidating on the issue being explored.

The choice of the text is justified by the following reason: from the time of being evolved in my PhD studies that focused on the concept of Dependent Arising in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (henceforth, AKBh), I have been attracted to the subtleties of the Abhidharmic discussion and argumentation. While working on the mentioned passage of AKBh, I felt a need to be well acquainted with the precise definitions of the traditional terms and concepts as well as their context. Consequently, I felt that there should be more research on the texts that provide consistent and in-depth definitions and descriptions of Abhidharmic terms and concepts that could enable one to understand the exact meaning and

1 On “sporadic” researches of PSkVi and translations of the Tibetan versions of the text, see Kramer, *Sthiramati’s Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣā*, X. As for the contents, it is suggested to consult a number of J. Kramer’s informative papers dedicated to the contents of the *Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣā* (see References).



purport of a term the way it was understood and seen by the tradition. Though AKBh is often seen as one of such texts I found that, with all its subtlety and comprehensive encyclopaedic grasp of the material, it is not a text that one can approach easily without any prior knowledge of Abhidharma. One of the reasons is that the terms are not elaborated on in a progressive way: for example, to understand what is meant by the term *karman*, one has to look it up in chapter 4. The concept of *kleśas* and their varieties is explained in chapter 5. Basically, one might have to read through a lot of material without knowing what take a tradition has on basic terms that have already been used in the text.

It is from this perspective of trying to figure out the building blocks of Abhidharma understanding that one should explore the concepts through our text, the *Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣā*. The value of the text as a source of technical terminology of Abhidharma has also been mentioned by the editor of the text, J. Kramer. She notes:

Representing two of the few Abhidharmic works of the Yogācāra school known to be extant in Sanskrit, the texts [*Pañcaskandhaka* of Vasubandhu and the *Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣā* of Sthiramati] are significant sources for the technical terminology of this tradition, providing valuable information on the philosophical development and on the process of reshaping the canonical concept of the five constituents (“*skandhas*”), twelve bases (“*āyatana*”), and eighteen elements (“*dhātu*”). (Kramer 2013, IX).

The three *dharmas* I intend to examine are included in the list of formations (“*saṃskāra*”) dissociated from thought, or, *cittaviṣayakasaṃskāras*. The *saṃskāras* dissociated from thought are a class of phenomena that has been introduced by Sarvāstivāda or, to be precise, the Vaibhāṣika School, i.e. the School of the Great Commentary (*Mahāvibhāṣā*).<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, they have been included in the

<sup>2</sup> Sarvāstivāda created an impressive corpus of literature of its own which has mostly been preserved in Chinese translations. The tradition reached its apotheosis in the form of one of the most popular, and most-studied non-Mahāyāna tradition text known as the *Abhidharmakośabbāṣya*. The *Jñānaprasthāna*, and the commentary on it also known as the *Mahāvibhāṣā* are considered among the most authoritative and known canonical texts of Sarvāstivāda orthodoxy.

*Pañcavastuka* classification of the universal phenomena.<sup>3</sup> According to Dhammajoti, their number has not always been agreed on, and the fourteen *saṃskāras*<sup>4</sup> have not been established earlier than the *Abhidharmabīḍaya* (Dhammajoti 2007, 375).

A short note on the exploration on the collections of names, phrases, and syllables in the *Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣā* vs the explorations of these in the old Sarvāstivāda treatises should be provided.

One should note that it is not in the style and scope of PSkVi to offer lengthy discussions and go into details. A reader who would expect to find the discourses of the scale, depth, and polemical ardour we find in the AKBh, or the insightful grammarian commentaries characteristic of Yaśomitra's style is in for a disappointment. The style of the text is characterized by brevity. It is noteworthy that some of the positions are shared by Asaṅga and Haribhadra (Jaini 2001, 203), but not by the Sarvastivāda thinkers.

At the core of the issue was the question of the Buddha's speech, Buddhavacana, or to be precise, should it be considered as belonging to the Form or to the *saṃskāras*.

- 3 The concept of the traditional Sarvāstivāda model of the pañca vastu, five realities, (or, five subject matters) classify the universe into five main groups: form, mind (thought), thought concomitants, formations dissociated from thought, unconditioned dharmas. The model of the five realities is different from the five aggregates model: the five vastu describe the whole universal phenomena, including nirvāṇa—while the five aggregates only describe the cyclic transient world.
- 4 This is the list of these saṃskāras according to PSkVi: obtainment, absorption without concepts, absorption which is cessation, a state without concepts, life principle, "participation in the heaps" ("*nikāyasabbhāga*"), birth, ageing, duration, impermanence, names, phrases, syllables, quality of being an ordinary human, advancing (*pravṛtti*), distinction ("*pratiniyama*"), connection ("*yoga*"), speed ("*java*"), sequence, time, place, number, aggregate (Kramer 2013, 74-88). It is worth mentioning that Sthiramati here adds nine saṃskāras which are not present in the root text, the *Pañcaskandhaka*. Among other research publications, *Disputed Dharmas* by Cox, the exposition of Dhammajoti on *cittaviprayuktasaṃskāras* in his *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Cox 1995, 371-417), as well as Jaini (2001, 239-260), are highly recommended.

It is beyond the purpose of the present research to go into these details but at the same time, it is only reasonable to mention the context to be aware that the material we find in PSkVi might be only a tip of the iceberg in terms of the wealth of discussion and proposed theories. For those, who would like to get into the details C. Cox traces this discussion in the main Sarvāstivāda treatises.<sup>5</sup>

## 2 *Translation*

### 2.1 The collections of names

The collections of the names (*nāma*) are the appellations (*adbhivacana*) of the nature [of *dharmas*].<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Cox 1995, 160-169.

<sup>6</sup> This repeats almost verbatim the definition given by Asaṅga in the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (AS): *nāmakāyāḥ katame | dharmāṇāṃ svabhāvādbhivacane nāmakāyā iti prajñaptiḥ* || (Pradhan 1950, 11).

It is called “name” because it bends (*namayati*)<sup>7</sup> the knowledge<sup>8</sup> towards different kinds of referent (*abhidheyam abhidheyam<sup>9</sup> prati*).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, [the name] is a collection of letters about which an agreement has been achieved (*kṛtāvadhi*)<sup>11</sup> in regard to signifying particular objects (*artheṣu*). Collections (*śamudāya*) of names or letters [are known as] groups of names. Since the nature of *dharmas* cannot be explained, appellation (*adbhivacana*) is a speech (*vacana*) that has been arbitrarily imposed (*adbhāropya*) [in order to designate objects]. Nature is [*dharma*’s] own characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*). What manifests

- 7 Associating the idea of the name with the idea of bending or bowing (*nam*) is not unknown in the Buddhist philosophical treatises. It is, for example, expressed in Vasubandhu’s AKBh when he discusses the *nāma* as a part of *nāmarūpa* limb of dependent arising:

It is called name because it bends towards (or, bows to) objects due to the force of name, indriyas, and objects.—By force of what kind of name? That one which is recognised in the world, which makes one perceive such and such objects, for example, horse, cow, form, taste and so on. —Why do we call this name—name?—Because that name bends towards such and such meaning (or, object). Others hold that when the body is cast away here, it is due to bowing to the next birth that *skandhas* not related to form are [called] name (*nāmendriyārthavaśenārtheṣu namatīti nāma | kutamasya nāmno vaśena | yadidaṃ loke pratītaṃ teṣāṃ teṣāṃ arthānāṃ pratyāyakaṃ gaur aśvo rūpaṃ rasa ity evamādi | etasya punaḥ kena nāmatvam | teṣu teṣv artheṣu tasya nāmno namanāt | iba nikṣipte kāya upapattiyantare namanān nāmarupiṇaḥ skandhā ity apare ||*). (Pradhan 1967, 142).

- 8 Knowledge (*jñāna*) probably means a cognition. Tibetan has *rnam pa shes pa* (*vijñāna*, consciousness, mind), which seems to fit much better in the present context.
- 9 Tibetan has *brjod par bya ba dang brjod pa la* “toward what is to be expressed and the expression”. Following the Tibetan, one would be justified concluding that the translators were translating *abhidheyam abhidhānam* ca.
- 10 The name is defined in AKBh in the following way: “Among those, name is the one that causes a concept to arise. For instance, form, sound, and so on.” (*tatra saṃjñākaraṇaṃ nāma | tadyathā rūpaṃ śabda ity evamādiḥ*) (Pradhan 1967, 80).
- 11 Compare AKBh: “By which sound the meaning is made clear? That sound about which the speakers agreed that it signifies a certain object. Like, it has been agreed that the word go (cow) has nine meanings” (*kena punar ghoṣeṇārthaḥ pratīyate | yo ’rtheṣu kṛtāvadhir vaktṛbhis tadyathā gaur ity eṣa śabdo navasv artheṣu kṛtāvadhiḥ*) (Pradhan 1967, 80).

the nature of *dharmas*, whose nature cannot be told, is that designation (*abhidhāna*) known as name. For example, eye, ear, form, sound.

## 2.2 The collections of phrases

The groups of phrases (*pada*) are appellations [highlighting] distinctive characteristics in the *dharmas*. The phrase (*pada*) is called a phrase because, due to it, objects with distinctive characteristics<sup>12</sup> are obtained (*anena padyate*).<sup>13,14</sup> Thus, the word phrase (*pada*) means something different from the name and the usual mundane meaning of the word phrase. Though a name and phrase are basically a collection of letters (*varṇa*), because their meaning is different, they are different. Because nature is the basis, nature was mentioned before the distinctive characteristic was mentioned. Moreover, the distinctive characteristics are like impermanence and so forth. They are, essentially, affirmative statements and negative statements.

The distinctive characteristic (*viśeṣa*) is what distinguishes the nature which is not present elsewhere. For example, the *saṃskāras* are impermanent. All the *dharmas* are void of self. Nirvāṇa is peaceful.<sup>15</sup>

The following is communicated [here]: the name is nothing more than the designation of an object's nature. The designation of a distinctive nature (or, state) of the object is a phrase. The rest<sup>16</sup> should be understood (*viññeyam*) from the exposition of the names.

12 AKBh elaborates on what this specific or particular (*viśeṣa*) is in the following phrase: “*Pada* is a phrase, as much as there is a complete explanation of the meaning; for example, when by saying: all the *saṃskāras* are impermanent etc, the particulars of the relation of action, quality, grammatical time are explained.” (*vākyam padaṃ yāvata 'rthaparisaṃāptis tadyath 'ānityā vata saṃskārā' ity evamādi yena kriyāguṇakālasaṃbandhaviśeṣa gamyante*) (Pradhan 1967, 80).

13 The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* has a very similar definition: *padakāyāḥ katame | dharmāṇāṃ viśeṣādbhivacane padakāyā iti prajñaptiḥ* || (Pradhan 1950, 11).

14 Yaśomitra explains *padyate* as *gamyate* “is understood” (Wogihara 1932-1936, 182).

15 Cp. AKBh: *padakāyāḥ tadyathā sarvasaṃskārā anityāḥ sarvadharma anātmānaḥ śāntaṃ nirvāṇam ity evamādi* | (Pradhan 1967, 80).

16 It must refer to *adbhivacana*, which is a part of the *mūla*, but has not been commented on.

### 2.3 The collection of syllables

The collection of syllables (“*vyañjana*”) [indicates] phonemes (“*akṣara*”), because they manifest both those [names and phrases].<sup>17</sup> Since through them, [names and phrases] are manifested, they are called *vyañjanas* (manifesting). The collection (“*kāya*”) of *vyañjanas* is the meaning of the compound *vyañjanakāya*. The word collection (“*kāya*”) is intended to mean that all the *vyañjanas* are included (“*upādāna*”). If only word those (“*tacchabdāt kevalāt*”) were mentioned, connection with the next word (“*anantarasyaiva saṃbandha*”) would be doubted. If only the word “both” were used, it would not be clear which both [is meant]. Therefore, [it must be specified that] saying both means both of them. Thus, it is being told that is called *vyañjana* (manifesting) because it manifests next word [that means] name and phrase.

But how [can it be said] that *akṣaras* manifest names and phrases?

Because the designations name and phrase (“*pada*”) are assigned to the *akṣaras* that, having assembled in groups, became expressions (“*adbhivacana*”) of the nature and the distinctive characteristic (“*viśeṣa*”) [of things].

So, since names and phrases are manifested with the help of *akṣaras*, the *akṣaras* do not possess the nature of informative speech (“*vāgvijñapti*”). These [*akṣaras*] are known in the world as letters (“*varṇa*”) like letter a and so on.<sup>18,19</sup>

These, moreover, are called *varṇas* (letters) because, being the support of names and phrases, they correctly express (“*saṃvarṇ*”) the meaning. Furthermore, they possess *akṣaratva* (imperishability) because they don’t perish (“*kṣarati*”) [in the] synonyms. For example, the word “eye” (“*cakṣus*”) perishes (“*kṣarati*”) <sup>20</sup> in

17 In the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*: *vyañjanakāyāḥ katamāḥ tadubhayāśrayeṣu akṣareṣu vyañjanakāyā iti prajñaptiḥ | tadubhayābhivyañjanatām upādāya | varṇo ‘pi so ‘rthasaṃvarṇanatām upādāya | akṣare punaḥ paryāyākṣaraṇatām upādāya ||* (Pradhan 1950, 11).

18 Cp. AKBh: *vyañjanakāyāś tadyathā ka kha ga gha nety evamādi |* (Pradhan 1967, 80).

19 In the present sentence, the editor emended *akṣarā* of the manuscript to *akārā* (Kramer 2013, 86). Arguably, it is possible to suggest that *akṣarādayo* could be interpreted as *akṣara+ a (ā) +ādayo*.

20 Tibetan does not succeed in rendering *kṣarati*: it uses *zhen dag ti gyur ba* which means “becomes different”.

other synonyms [of the word eye)] like guide (“*netra*”).<sup>21</sup> It means that meaning (lit., what is expressed)<sup>22</sup> can be conveyed by synonyms.

So, on the other hand, there is no synonym (“*paryāya*”) of the letter *a* by which what is called letter would be known, without letter *a* being mentioned<sup>23</sup>.

And to that extent (“*etāvat*”), everything—including nature, a distinctive characteristic (“*viśeṣa*”) and their conventional use (“*vyavahāra*”)—all this is designated by those (“*tat sarvam ebhir anuvyavahriyate*”) therefore they are established (“*vyavasthāpita*”) as the collections of the names, phrases, and syllables. In this way, also the establishment (“*vyavasthāna*”) of other *saṃskāras* dissociated from thought should be understood in relation to their purpose (“*prayojanāpekṣayā*”), in the manner of the collections of the names,<sup>24</sup> phrases, and syllables.

### 3 Conclusion

The purpose of the present paper has been to address a very interesting and thought-provoking issue which is the collections of names, phrases, and syllables in the PSkVi. In course of the study, it was revealed that the discussion has a rich

21 Kramer apparently interpretes *caḥṣu* as not belonging to a compound while Tibetan sees it as a part of the compound: *mig dang 'dren byed*.

22 The Tibetan rendering of the Sanskrit *abbhidheyatva*—*brjod par bya ba nyid*—does not have any indication of the Instrumental case. Though it is sometimes difficult to judge the syntax of the Tibetan translation, it seems that they were translating *abbhidheyatvam* i.e. it was the Nominative case not the Instrumental.

23 In Sanskrit it runs in the following manner: *yenākārābbidhāna muktākāro gamyeta*. Literally, it should be translated as follows: “There is no other synonym (*paryāya*) of the letter *a* by which letter *a* would be understood without letter *a* (*mukta-ākāra*) [being mentioned].” At the same time, the compound *muktākāra* can be interpreted as *mukta-ākāra* i.e. “released from / devoid of its form.” The author might have consciously played with these two meanings which both make sense in this context.

24 In the last sentence both Pekin and Derge omit *ming* (“*nāma*”) as has been reported by Kramer 2013, 86.

tradition rooted in the canonical Sarvāstivāda treatises as well as in the texts of the Pāli canon. Though, initially, my interest was piqued due to the fact that the present texts is extremely valuable as a source of information on the terminological corpus of Abhidharma, later the richness of the discussion, that has been on the collections of names, phrases, and syllables, in the realm of the Indian philosophical thought for centuries, gives the exposition present in our Yogācāra text a special importance: we witness the acceptance of the theory by another tradition, which apparently accords it a considerable value and deems it necessary to introduce some new elements in the present concept.

In the nearest future, I intend to contribute more to the study of this subject studying the present exposition in the light of contemporaneous Yogācāra texts.

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# *Diksha* in the Christian Ashram Movement: A Transformative Ritual as an Indicator of the Transformation of Indian Christianity

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*Abstract* The study addresses the initiation ritual of *diksha*, which has become an integral part of spiritual practice amongst some groups of the so-called Christian Ashram Movement. Although the Christian adoption of *diksha* ritual appears to be one of many interreligious and intercultural borrowings from the Hindu tradition, it represents a very significant indicator that takes us farther from *diksha* ritual itself and leads us to a better understanding of the history, philosophy, and practice of Christian Sannyasis and the Christian Ashram Movement. *Diksha* was incorporated into the practice of the proponents of the Christian Ashram Movement as a symbolic tool of the initiation and transformation of an individual. At the same time, it contributed to the transformation of interreligious boundaries in terms of reinterpreting the philosophical as well as practical relationship between Christianity and Hinduism. Such a process, which according to some spokesmen of the Movement is supported theologically by the *Nostra Aetate* Declaration of the Second Vatican Council and philosophically by the advaitic perspective, has relativized the differences between religions and their goals, leading to a “mission without conversion” approach. The goal of this study is to describe the ritual process of *diksha* in the Christian Ashram Movement and consequently to discuss the historical and social prerequisites that led to the acculturation of *diksha*, along with many other selected elements of the Hindu tradition, into the philosophical and practical framework of the Movement.

*Keywords* Christian Ashram Movement, Christian Sannyasis, *diksha*, enculturation, interreligious boundaries, Hindu-Christian dialogue

### *Introduction*

The Christian Ashram Movement and Christian Sannyasis represent a unique phenomenon that grew out of the religiously heterogeneous environment of India on the one hand and the intercultural confrontation between India and Europe on the other. With a degree of simplification, we could say that the Movement is characterized by a tendency to adopt selected elements of the Hindu religion into the Christian worldview and practice. However, there is still a vital and passionate academic discussion attempting to answer the question of whether such a transformation of the Christian worldview and practice has transformed the very categories of Christianity and Hinduism, as well as the boundaries between the two religions. The primary goal of this study is to investigate how the Movement deals with *diksha*, a ritual of passage and initiation of the disciple by the guru, which has been adopted from the Hindu tradition. I consider the ritual of *diksha* as an indicator, which can potentially offer new perspectives to the debate about the nature of the aforementioned transformations and reinterpretations of Christian teachings under the influence of the Hindu tradition. My overreaching aim, however, is to contextualize the crossing of interreligious boundaries by the Christian Ashram Movement within the wider scope of its historical and social circumstances. Since neither *diksha*, nor the crossing of interreligious boundaries have a tangible existence *per se*, I consider knowledge of this determining and framing context to be a prerequisite for an effective academic discussion concerning such phenomena.

#### 1 *Origins of the Christian Ashram Movement and Christian Sannyasis*

The Christian Ashram Movement was founded more than a decade before the Second Vatican Council gave green light to the *inculturation* ambitions. Among the pioneers of the Movement were the French priest Jules Monchanin (Swami Paramarupyananda, 1895–1957) and the French Benedictine monk Henry Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda, 1910–1973), who founded the Saccitananda-Shantivanam ashram in Tamil Nadu in 1950. In 1958, the British Benedictine Bede

Griffiths (Swami Dayananda, 1906–1993) and the Belgian Cistercian Francis Mahieu (Francis Achariya, 1919–2002) established another ashram called Kurishumala, located in Kerala. Francis Mahieu is also the founder of the Kristya Sannyasa Samaj organization.

All the pioneers of the Movement eagerly studied the Hindu scriptures and were deeply influenced by the *advaita vedanta* philosophy.<sup>1</sup> To this day, *advaita* is a crucial tool for Christian Sannyasis and their followers in interpreting the Bible, Christian teachings, and the surrounding world (see Štipl 2020; Perumpallikunnel 2011). Adopting the lifestyle of Hindu renunciates is a characteristic part of the Movement's agenda. For instance, its followers undergo the initiation ritual of *diksha*, wear saffron robes, take Sanskrit names and are strict vegetarians.

After the Second Vatican Council, Christian scholars centred around D. S. Amalorpavadas, established the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre in Bangalore. There they developed *Bharatiya Pooja* (Indian worship), a concept of the Christian mass inspired by the Hindu concept of *pooja*, the ceremony of worship of the gods. Hence, when conducting *Bharatiya Pooja*, priests and monks employ Hindu musical patterns, paraphernalia, mantras, texts, concepts, and ways of worship. *Bharatiya Pooja* was developed in several languages, but the Malayalam version is practically a part of everyday life of the Kurishumala ashram. The monks of Kurishumala are allowed to conduct *Bharatiya Pooja* every day except on Sundays and holidays.

## 2 Confrontations with *Diksha* and *Sannyas*

The first record of a Christian missionary in India attempting to adopt Hindu customs points to the Italian Jesuit Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656). The initial stages of his mission were not very successful, since there was a lack of sympathy, especially amongst the upper castes, towards missionaries who consumed meat and alcohol and did not keep very high standards of hygiene. However, Roberto de Nobili incorporated Brahmanical habits into his missionary practice. He

<sup>1</sup> *Advaita Vedanta* represents a monistic, non-dual approach to reality which, according to Advaitic interpretations of the Vedanta, is made up of only one essence or principle. The differences between objects are only illusory.

became a vegetarian and abstinent, and began wearing the Brahmanical thread *yagno-pavita* around his body and a braid of hair on top of his shaved head. De Nobili introduced himself as a Brahmin who studied in Rome. He was also inspired by life in Hindu ashrams and adopted the lifestyle of Sannyasis (Štipl 2020, 68).

While de Nobili's approach should probably be understood solely as a missionary strategy (Štipl 2020, 49), as the "tactical mimicry" of a sophisticated missionary, a few centuries later a personality with a more sincere interest in Hindu religion and philosophy appeared. We have already mentioned Henry Le Saux Abhishiktananda, one of the fathers of the Movement and co-founder of the Saccidananda-Shantivanam ashram, whose personality brought a lot of confusion among his Christian contemporaries, as well as among later academics who attempted to describe and interpret his religious beliefs, practice, and identity.

According to some scientists, Le Saux's initial motivation to study Hindu scriptures was no different from that of Roberto de Nobili. He simply considered knowledge of Hindu texts, customs, and culture as an effective tool for spreading the Gospel among Hindus, which, as Perumpallikunnel claims, was Le Saux's "white man's burden" (Perumpallikunnel 2011, 58). The first tipping point in Le Saux's approach came with his (and Bede Griffith's) meeting with the well-known Hindu guru Raman Maharishi. Henry Le Saux gradually became more and more attracted to spending his time wandering around Arunachala Mountain with sadhus. Accompanied by Hindu sannyasis, he met the Shaivite sadhu Swami Gnanananda Giri, who became his guru and initiated him through the ritual of *diksha*. Thanks to Le Saux's biography and his own records in his diary, we can state that his relationship with Swami Gnanananda absolutely and definitively transformed his perception of Christianity. Le Saux's quest for a balance between his Christianity and his affinity to the Shaivite guru could be well illustrated by the following words from his diary:

Why oppose Christ as my guru? Is my guru not the very form under which Christ presents himself to my senses, to my eyes, to my ears, for my prostration, in order to help me reach himself, in the depth of my soul, where he is, which He is in truth? Christ is more truly close to me in my guru than in any memory I may have of his appearance on earth. The meeting with the guru is truly an epiphany [...].

The Christ of memory and faith; Christ manifested in the guru of flesh—these exist with a view to inner manifestation, the encounter, the recognition. (Abhishiktananda 1998, 139).

Instead of spreading the Gospel among Indian non-Christians, Le Saux engaged himself with pilgrimaging to Hindu sites, taking part in Hindu rituals and meditating before Hindu deities, whom, at least in the case of Shiva, he considered to be identical with Jesus. In his diary, Le Saux once exclaimed: “How mysterious that Christ can take for a Christian a form of Shaivite guru!” (Stuart 1995, 89).

In late June 1972, Le Saux, at the time known as Swami Abhishiktananda, also gave *sannyasa diksha*, or in Abhishiktananda’s own term, *ecumenical diksha*, to his disciple, the young French seminarian Marc Chaduc. The ritual of *diksha* took place by the Ganges near the Shivananda ashram in Rishikesh. The initiation of Chaduc was conducted by Abhishiktananda and his Hindu fellow sannyasi Chidananda. The ritual was simple and designed specifically for this occasion (Stuart 1995, 301). In a letter to his friend, Abhishiktananda describes the ritual as follows:

[...] Marc has received the sannyas in the Ganga from Chidanandaji and myself. Very simple ceremony, but it was simply too beautiful. The three of us were simply radiant. Deep in the Ganga he pronounced the old formula of renunciation. I join him; he plunges into (the) water; I raise him up, and we sing our favorite mantras to the Purusha. He discards all his clothes in (the) water, and I received him as from the maternal womb. We envelope him in the fire-colored dress. We communicate to him the mahāvākyas, and I give him the “envoi”: “Go to where is no return [...]”. And immediately he went on, his begging bowl in hand, to I do not know where [...]. (Stuart 1995, 302).

### 3 *Diksha in the Shantivanam and Kurishumala Ashrams*

In this part of the paper, I will focus my attention on the description of the ritual process of *diksha* in the ashrams of Shantivanam and Kurishumala. The following lines and findings are based on my field research conducted in both the ashrams.

There are two types of *diksha* in Shantivanam. The first one is addressed to the oblates of the ashram. According to my key informant John Martin Sahajananda, a former abbot of the ashram, this kind of *diksha* is available to

anyone, regardless of their religion, who wants to be “an instrument of peace and the propagator of interreligious dialogue” (author’s interview with John Martin Sahajananda).

The ritual starts with the chanting of the *Gayatrimantra*, followed by readings from the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, and the homily. Afterwards, the adept takes vows and receives the monk’s robes (*kavi*) and the isosceles cross (known as the *cosmic cross*).

While a relatively simple ritual of the oblate, *diksha* has a unified procedure, the scenario of the *sannyasa diksha* is highly variable and differs from adept to adept in order to suit their personality. The prime era of the *sannyasa diksha* practice in Shantivanam was in the time of Bede Griffiths, who initiated his naked disciples in the nearby Kaveri River. Today, the ritual practice of *sannyasa diksha* is on the decline and is being substituted with traditional forms of Catholic initiation of monks.

The specific understanding of *diksha* and the resulting renunciation in Shantivanam could be well illustrated by the words of John Martin Sahajananda. He claims:

This is the Christian sannyas which we should distinguish from the Hindu sannyas. It is about the renunciation, but not in the sense of material renunciation, but in the sense of renouncing our limited identity and of searching our real identity. [...] One doesn’t need to live in celibacy, one can live the life in marriage. You transform your desires to God’s desire. That is the ascetics I propose. (Author’s interview with John Martin Sahajananda).

It was probably the stricter lifestyle and order in Kurishumala that resulted in more stable forms of the performance of *diksha*. There are three types of *diksha* initiation in Kurishumala.

The first type is called *sadhaka diksha* and is for newcomers to the ashram. *Sadhaka diksha* takes place during *satsang*, the evening meeting of the ashram community. The ritual is relatively short and simple. The adept is asked at the beginning whether their decision to become a *sadhaka* is voluntary. After their positive response, they undress, have their hair cut by the monks, and are given the white robes of a *sadhaka*.



After a year of being a *sadbaka*, an adept can request the second stage of initiation called *brahmacharya diksha*. The ritual represents a synthesis of the Benedictine tradition and the *diksha* known in the world of Hindu *sannyasins*. At the beginning of the ritual, the adept bows to the abbot and touches their feet. They are then asked what they are looking for and they answer: “God’s mercy, your guidance and the help of the whole community to be received in the Kurishumala ashram.” This declamation is followed by the abbot’s discourse on St. Benedict’s observance and a reading about *brahmacharya* from the Chandogyapanishad. After the adept pledges their devotion to the ashram communities and their rules, they obtain a *kavi* that has been sprinkled with Holy water. The abbot, as gurus in the Hindu tradition do during initiation, whispers a mantra in the neophyte’s ear. The mantra is usually the *prayer of heart* that is widely used, mainly amongst orthodox Christians.<sup>2</sup> The person who has undergone the *brahmacharya diksha* is now allowed to grow a beard.

The final level of the initiation of monks is *sannyasa diksha*, which is available for those who have been in the state of *brahmacharya* for three to five years. However, this *diksha* refers to the Hindu tradition in a terminological rather than a practical sense. The ritual draws on the Syriac scripture of *Morano Ethó*. In the translation of Bede Griffiths, this ritual is also known as the *Ritual of Clothing Monks*. In reality, the only reference to the Hindu tradition is the saffron robe and the Sanskrit name which the adept receives during the ritual.

While the *diksha* in Shantivanam plays a rather symbolic and philosophical role, the monks in Kurishumala believe in its direct effect on spiritual life and they view *diksha* as an inevitable precondition for the further spiritual progress of an individual. This approach could be represented by the words of Kurishumala’s abbot, Father Ishananda:

The change after receiving the diksha needs its time. Diksha is like the second birth. As you can read in the Bible, first is the second birth and only after this birth the change in spiritual life can come. We must pass this second birth and then we can grow spiritually. (Author’s interview with Ishananda).

2 “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

4 *Diksha: From a Transformative Ritual to the Transformation of Interreligious Boundaries?*

In the Hindu tradition, the integration of the initiate in the line of guru-disciple continuation (*parampara*) is an integral part of *diksha*. In the case of Christian sannyasis, the question arises as to who is the guru and to which *parampara* do the initiated swamis belong?

Are they attached to any *parampara* at all? Taking a closer look at the life of Henry Le Saux, we find that he was initiated by the Shaivite sadhu Swami Gnanananda Giri, but he did not receive the sannyasi name of Abhishiktanda from him. He chose the name Abhishiktananda (along with Monchanin—Paramarupyananda) before his initiation, on the occasion of the founding of the Shantivanam ashram. Yet he never introduced himself (or at least there is no record of such circumstances) in the sense of *dasanami*.<sup>3</sup> In other words, he never used the sannyasi “surname” Giri that represented the lineage of his guru Gnanananda Giri. As one of my informants from the Shantivanam ashram told me, he “never used the *parampara*”.

In the religious and philosophical worldview of the movement and its followers, the guru is Christ himself. They have developed the concept of Christ as the inner guru (*paramguru*, or *sadguru*) (see Schouten 2008). It is necessary to add that the idea of God as the inner guru is not an “invention” of the Christian Ashram Movement, and we can trace such a concept, for example, in the teachings of the North Indian *sants* (see Gold 1987). Furthermore, we should not forget Roberto de Nobili either. He articulated the idea that *diksha* gains its validity through Christ as the inner guru.

However brave the experiments of the Movement’s leaders and followers with crossing the boundaries between Christianity and Hinduism (and however confusing the religious identity of figures such as Abhishiktananda may have been), there is apparently no record or evidence of any acceptance of any formal lineage

3 The concept of *dasanami* (“ten names”) refers to the Hindu tradition of monastic orders founded by the 8th century vedic scholar, Adi Shankara. After the passing the sanyasi *diksha*, adept obtains one of ten names (Giri, Puri, Bharati, etc.) referring to *sampradaya*.

of the Hindu sannyas orders. On the contrary, monks belonging to the Movement tend to emphasize their affiliation to Catholic monastic orders. Christian sannyasis seem to have adopted the initiation ritual from the Hindu tradition, while at the same time, at least in the sense of affiliation to a formal chain of guru and disciple continuity, they maintain disengagement and do not feel attached to the historical continuity of Hindu gurus and disciples. The *diksha* ritual is the instrument that binds neophytes to adhere to the Catholic order or Catholic ashram, but never to the Hindu *parampara*.

*Diksha* in the Christian Ashram Movement represents a *rite of passage* to a particular level of monastic life (or an affiliation to the order). The individual who undergoes *diksha* adopts, alongside the Christian tradition, the selected formal tradition of Hindu sannyasis. Meanwhile, this individual integrates certain Hindu philosophical perspectives (predominantly through Hindu scriptures) into their Christian worldview. The non-dual monistic philosophy of *advaita* plays a crucial role in interpreting the message of Christianity, and it is a prerequisite of a practical approach towards Hinduism or other religions. While the teachings of *advaita* claim that the distinctions between objects are illusory and there is only one essence behind all things, the followers of the Movement add that there can be no objective distinctions between religions either.

We can therefore recognize two transformative aspects of such renunciation that are reflected in the *diksha* ritual. The first one is extrinsic and stems from the renunciation of mundane activities, statuses, and social identity (e.g., eating meat, individual economic activities, sexual relations, civil name etc.). The second aspect is intrinsic and lies in the renunciation of the individual's "limited" religious identity. As John Martin Sahajananda asserted in his lesson for followers of the movement:

Hence it is possible to purify our ego without belonging to any formal religion or practice. Our goal should be very clear. It is unity. We need to transcend or renounce or outgrow or expand our limited identities that divide us for the sake of divine identity that unites us.

### 5 *Transformed Hinduism as the Source of Transformation of Christianity*

It is not possible to analyze the *diksha* in the Christian Ashram Movement (nor its references to the wider topics of *indigenization* of Christianity<sup>4</sup> in India and the crossing of interreligious boundaries) as a purely philosophical or theological “product”. The concept of *diksha* as presented in this text did not appear in isolation from its historical background and present or recent social circumstances. Approaching this phenomenon from the perspective of the social sciences enables a closer understanding of the social conditions that form a crucial part of the matter. Meanwhile, such an approach could shed more light on the social response to the appeal of the Movement and its teachings.

We can trace the ideological source of indigenization (as understood and practiced by the Movement) back to the colonial era and Bengal Renaissance. Both historical periods are inextricable from the influence of contemporary Oriental studies and Indology. Indology contributed crucially to the ideological development of the Bengal Renaissance as well as to the subsequent redefinitions of Hinduism. Scholars in the field of Oriental studies have examined the religions present in India predominantly through their historical texts, and have not paid much attention to the living form of religious life of their contemporaries from various strata of Indian societies. As Ronald Neufeldt asserts: “The true history of India was to be found in the poets of the Rig Veda, the writers of the Upanishads and the founders of Vedanta and Sāṃkhya, not in the millions of villagers who die every day steeped in the drowsy life of their ritual and devotional practices, essentially ignorant of the higher thoughts of India’s ancient texts.” (Neufeldt 1989, 34).

Moreover, even as the Indologists extended their focus to the contemporary and living aspects of the religion, their informants or collaborators were from the upper, mainly Brahmin castes. This approach predetermined the academic discourse on the essential or central “core for Hinduism” (Neufeldt 1989, 38),

4 In this sense, the missionary strategy of the various Christian churches was based on the adjustment of Christian teaching and practice to the culture, worldview, language, and traditions of the target population.

which mostly ignored the diversity of philosophical schools, religious traditions, or local cults of the widespread vernacular masses. Consequently, the concept of Hinduism was constructed and defined in line with such discussions,<sup>5</sup> on the basis of textual (more Sanskrit than vernacular) heritage, and on the basis of the interpretation of this heritage by Brahmin informants. As Smith critically asserts: What exists cannot be defined. What obstructs a definition of Hinduism, for instance, is precisely the richness of what exists, in all its extravagant variety from century to century and from village to village. The empirical religious tradition of the Hindus developing historically in the minds and hearts and institutions and literatures and societies of untold millions of actual people is not a form, but a growing congeries of living realities. It is not to be compressed within or eviscerated into or confused with any systematic intellectual pattern (Smith quoted in Lorenzen 1999, 633).

Educational institutions founded and run by the British mediated the understanding of Hinduism, as developed by Western Indology, to the emerging representatives of the new Bengal elites (*bhadralok*) and to the prospective well-known religious thinkers and reformers. These figures, such as Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen or Swami Vivekananda, were confronted with the British exaltation of Christianity over Hinduism. In reaction, they developed their Hindu apologetics emphasizing the universality of Hinduism and focused on presenting similar principles present in both religions. The modern sadhu, ideally with a Western educational background, became the hero of the Bengal Renaissance. As Bharati (1970, 278) claims: “Yet, all ‘modernites’ overtly or covertly admire and venerate the ‘scientific’, ‘modern’ man who wears monastic robes [...]”

Philip Singer calls the process of the emergence of new modern sadhus “sadhuization” (Singer quoted in Bharati 1970, 277). It should be added that the emergence of new sadhus during the Bengal Renaissance went hand in hand with

5 The academic debate on the role of colonial science in conceptualizing Hinduism has been going on for decades. Some well-known academics, such as Ronald Inden, claim that Hinduism is a religion believed by Indologists. On the other hand, those like David Lorenzen point to pre-colonial articulations of Hindu religious identity and emphasize the role of medieval ethnic and religious interactions that have contributed to modern Indian and Western academic conceptualization of Hinduism (see Lorenzen 1999). However, there is a wide consensus regarding the essentialising nature of the colonial scholarly definitions of Hinduism.

the establishment of new ashrams attracting an increasing number of people. The ideas of Christian Sannyas and the Christian Ashram Movement, or in other words, the ideas of the “sadhuization” and “ashramization” of Catholic monastic life arose directly from the legacy of the Bengal Renaissance. The ritual of initiation of Catholic monks inspired by Hindu *diksha* is one of the many examples of “sadhuization” pervading Indian Christianity.

However, the distance that separates the modern sadhu from his matted-haired, chillum-smoking and begging counterpart is no shorter than the distance between the new interpretations of Hinduism (based on Oriental studies) and the Hinduism of the vernacular and lower-caste masses. The *advaita* of an Aghori sadhu seeking his initiation around cremation grounds is clearly not the same as the *advaita* of Vivekananda or the *advaita* of the Christian Ashram Movement. In fact, the ideological fathers of the Movement aborted the long tradition of European missionaries who “undertook studies of vernacular literature, mainly religious literature, long before Orientalist scholars did the same” (Lorenzen 2006, 123), and switched to the Orientalists’ focus on Sanskrit and Brahmanic texts. Zdeněk Štipl concisely comments on the Movement’s ideological preference for Sanskrit and Brahmanic heritage:

Despite the proclaimed effort to make Christianity in ashrams more Indian, the whole ashram ideology draws exclusively on the Brahmanical concept of Hinduism and focuses only on the Sanskrit religious tradition. [...] In particular, the Catholic ashrams with their lifestyle and adopted spiritual values really resemble “Brahmanical institutions” (Štipl 2020, 200).

The modern, intellectualistic, Brahmanical approach to Hinduism, based on texts and incorporated into Christianity, is far removed from millions of non-privileged, less educated, and more traditional Christians as well as Hindus. The Movement’s (neo)*advaita* strongly resonates with the modern approach to the religion, as represented, for example, by Aurobindo, who viewed individual progress as a renunciation of religion, whether Christian or Hindu (Neufeldt 1989, 39). It is worth noting that such an approach to religion brought huge popularity to Ramakrishna Mission, a famous outcome of the Renaissance.

The Movement’s attempt to transform Christianity clearly depends on the modern transformation of Hinduism and draws directly on its heritage. Perhaps

this is why both transformed Christianity and Hinduism have become very attractive to certain social groups in India and the West, while other groups have remained unaffected.

*Conclusion: The Persisting Boundaries between Social Groups*

The heritage of the modern neo-*advaita* discourse projects itself into the Movement's concept of the *Mission without conversion*. This conception understands religious identity as functional and historically determined; treats the missionary quest for converts as a colonial practice; and relativizes interreligious boundaries that bring tensions and conflicts instead of peace. Conversion should not be a transition from one religion to another, but rather a profound internal change without the need to change the religious adherence of the individual (see Sahajananda 2013).

However, the concept of *Mission without conversion* seems to be a philosophical as well as a practical, even apologetic, standpoint, especially when considering the accusations made by the representatives and organizations of the Hindutva ideology (e.g., Vishva Hindu Parishad) who claim that the Movement's adoptions from Hinduism are just insincere traps to catch and subsequently convert the Hindu population. The appeal of the *Mission without conversion* is proving to be even more valid in the recent circumstances of the anti-conversion law and rising attacks on India's Christian communities, accompanied by the tacit ignorance of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

As I have tried to prove in this text, the Christian Ashram Movement stands at a similar distance from both the Indian Christian and Hindu traditions of the masses. Due to the Movement's modernist and intellectualist approach to religion (inherited partly from the era of colonial science and Bengal Renaissance), its teachings are more available, attractive and appealing to India's well-educated urbanities who are in a better economic and social situation, as well as to their counterparts from other, specifically Western, countries. The Christian Sannyasis have apparently succeeded in the task of crossing religious boundaries by addressing their teachings to a few intellectuals, yet they have not been successful in crossing the boundaries between social groups. Perhaps the near future will challenge them to try it, since anything that is not known and understood is

generally considered a threat. And the current political leaders clearly know that pointing out alleged threats is the best strategy for mobilizing the broad socially and economically deprived masses.

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*Recenzje · Reviews*

Chen, Li-Chi and Anna Sroka-Grądział (eds.). *Contemporary Studies in Chinese Languages, Literature, and Culture*. Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, 2022—268 pp. ISBN 978-83-8018-532-6.

Dominik DUDA

The volume in review represents a collection of articles by international scholars of diverse backgrounds. It is the first volume of a journal, which is intended to be the first journal in oriental studies published in an up-and-coming academic centre in Bydgoszcz, Poland. As the editors point out in the foreword, Chinese studies have been flourishing throughout the last decade, and Poland is no exception. The area of studies that has been initiated here relatively late, in comparison to other significant European countries, has seen a huge boost with the creation of new centres in Lublin, and Bydgoszcz to name just a few. After this eventful decade, which was marked by such major events as the covid-19 pandemics and the outbreak of war in Ukraine, it is a good time to look back on what has been new in Chinese studies. The volume in question provides us with such a snapshot of contemporary research in Chinese linguistics, society, culture, language teaching, and literary studies.

It consists of nine articles written in English, divided into three sections. The first section is dedicated to general Chinese linguistics. The second section includes papers on society, culture, and language. The theme of the third section is language learning. Finally, the last section includes a sole paper on literary studies.

In chapter 1, which opens the linguistics section, Chinfa Lien investigates the interdeterminacy of Taiwanese Southern Min how words, namely an adverb of degree 佸 *jua7* and an adjective of quantity 幾 *kui2*. The syntactic and semantic properties of these words present complex patterns that are being unravelled in the paper. This research has theoretical implications not only for typological studies on Chinese dialects, but also for studies in the semantic and syntactic language universals concerning degree and quantity.

In chapter two, Grace Chen-Hsiu Kuo explores the role of autistic traits and working memory in prosodic perception. In the course of the research, native speakers of Mandarin language were recruited to complete tests in which they had to identify prominent words and prosodic boundaries. The study sheds light on the complex relationships between the aforementioned factors. The article encourages further research into this topic.

Chapter three, which opens the second part of the volume, touches upon the ethnolinguistic of Malaysia. Ralf Vollmann and Tek Wooi Soon conduct their research in a pivotal moment, when the new generation of Chinese diaspora members gradually shifts their language habits, replacing traditional southern dialects with modern standard languages. In the course of this research, the speakers were reproducing sentences in their native languages. The results show grammatical and lexical convergence processes between all the spoken variants. The paper also contributes to general studies on the vitality of Chinese dialects, which has been a topic of academic discussion in recent decades (Norman 1988, 252).

Chapter four presents the lexicographical aspect of nationalism in modern China. Chin-Fung Ng examines semantic changes in the definition of the word *rénmín* in four editions of the encyclopaedic dictionary *Cíhǎi*, published between 1936 and 2009. The research shows ever-changing, recurring, and overlapping semantic features over their political contexts. The shift in meaning over time demonstrates the impactful concepts of the ambiguity of political ideas and semantics as a battlefield of ideologies.

In chapter five, Chihsia Tang explores the patterns in which the gender of sender and receiver affects communication. The research was carried out on over 1000 tokens collected in Taiwanese social context, in the context of complaint communication. The patterns in which both genders adjusted their expression are then analyzed in order to determine the preferred masculine and feminine traits in Taiwanese society. The results are closely aligned with other research on the topic. There is a much higher degree of profanity and emotional intensity in men's speech, while that of women tends to be containing less force (Eckert 2003, 176-183).

In Chapter six, Shu-Fen Chen analyzes grammatical errors made by Polish students who learned Chinese as a second language. Focusing on errors is in alignment with multiple views present in modern didactic studies. Errors are an important part of second language acquisition not only for learners, who can develop their competence in an inductive way through reflection on the mistakes made (Zajdler 2010, 102-103), but also for teachers, for whom it can serve as a valuable feedback. The findings of the paper show surprising and interesting patterns, particularly the high percentage of omission and misselection errors in the collected tokens, which Chinese teachers should consider.

Chapter seven elaborates on a specific type of object-fronting sentences in Chinese. Chinese word order is far from being stiff, and object fronting is a

common and diverse phenomenon (Sun 2006, 184). I-Chun Chen chooses to research sentences in which object-fronting is mutually present with compliments and particles. Such sentences pose a potential problem for learners, as there is a risk of errors in the sentence order, namely placing the object back after the verb. The analysis of particular sentences and suggestions for teachers especially contribute to the paper being a worthy lecture for anyone involved in Chinese language teaching.

In chapter eight, Min-Qi Chen investigates the reception of L2 students of the Chinese writing class. Differences in response to two established methods are being analyzed, namely the process-oriented method and the product-oriented method (Coffin 2003, 33). As the results of the questionnaires and interviews show, the students tend to prefer the former method while admitting strong points of the latter, like practicing grammar structures before the start of writing. The article is an important contribution to the research on the reception of didactic methods by students and, at the same time, an informative source for teachers of Chinese writing classes.

Chapter nine compares Han dynasty lessons for women with two similar works compiled during Ming era China and Edo era Japan. Tsui-Hua Wu highlights some incredibly long-lasting traits present in Confucian societies throughout the millennia. Traditional views on gender roles and women's virtues have proved to be extremely influential, although social background has changed. The paper also demonstrates how the teachings for women underwent a change from being self-prescribed and marginal during the Han to being encouraged and disseminated on a national scale by men in premodern times. The details of these interesting trends require further research.

The volume is an important contribution to Chinese studies in Central and Eastern Europe, combining varying perspectives from all over the academic world and diverse fields of research within Chinese studies. The high quality of the papers sets a good model for further volumes and other projects concerning the discipline in the region. Still, it is reader friendly and I believe its impact is going to go beyond the academic world, reaching students and everyone interested in China, not only in Central and Eastern Europe.

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