KOKUJI (国字): THE JAPANESE “NATIONAL CHARACTERS”. A CASE STUDY: THE JAPANESE ACQUATIC FAUNA

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Article History:
Submitted: 15.06.2015
Accepted: 30.06.2015

Abstract:

The great influence that the Chinese writing system has had on the Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese writing systems is widely demonstrated. Nevertheless, besides the use of the characters directly imported from China, these cultures have had the necessity to create “national characters” to satisfy the needs of their own languages. This paper, that analyzes this phenomenon in the Japanese environment, begins with an analysis of the reasons that have pushed the Japanese “to create” own characters and the reasons why at a certain moment such “creation” has been suspended. In the second part of the paper samples of kokuji will be presented that can be circumscribed to those with radicals 魚・鳥・木・草 and that result to be surely the most numerous and related to species of flora and fauna japonica.

Key words: Kokuji, Japanese Kanji, National Characters.
On Web page http://homepage2.nifty.com/TAB01645/ohara/index.htm is possible to read the following presentations in Japanese and English for the first kokuji online dictionary edited by Ōhara Nozomu:

「俥・柾・畠・鯰」が国字ではないというとみなさんは驚かれますか。この辞典では、定説ともいえる扱いを受けてきた文字についても再調査を行い、国字説の誤りを是正するとともに、多くの新たな国字の追加を行っています。

読者の皆様方からのご指摘の点を含め改善に努めてはいますが、改善すべき点は残っています。ご質問のメールもいただけるようになりましたが、本辞典の内容に対する典拠を付けた反論もお待ちしております。

読者の方からのメールにより、欧米からもアクセスしていただいていることがわかりました。

リンクしていただいたページも増えつつあります。基本的にリンクフリーではありますが、リンクした旨ご連絡いただくようお願いします。

日本を代表できる「和製漢字の辞典」として恥ずかしくないものにしていきたいと存じますので、気が付かれた点や感想・質問など遠慮なくメールしていただきますようお願いいたします。

漢字・ジテン（辞典・字典・事典を含む）に関する質問をお受けするために掲示板を、私の全てのWebページを一覧できるために『ジテン・フェチの漢字辞典』を、開設いたしましたので、こちらもご利用ください。2

Wasei Kanji no Jiten – Dictionary of Kanji created in Japan is the first online dictionary dedicated to Kokuji (Kanji created in Japan). Almost all Kanji (Chinese characters) in Japanese were imported from Chinese. But some characters were created by Japanese people. We call them Kokuji 国字 (literally “national characters”). For example, touge 峠, mountain pass was created combining ‘mountain’ 山, ‘up’ 上, and ‘down’ 下. This dictionary includes some Kokuji and Kanji which was thought as Kokuji.3

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2 http://homepage2.nifty.com/TAB01645/ohara/index.htm (13.06.2015)
3 http://homepage2.nifty.com/TAB01645/ohara/abstract.htm (13.06.2015)
It is known that the Japanese enriched the vocabulary of Chinese characters (hanzi, kanji) with characters of their own coinage, called kokuji (‘national characters’)\(^4\). Overall, their number was calculated in 1500\(^5\). In general, they could be introduced to make use graphically locutions, concepts, especially names of things found absent in Chinese lexicons. It can be confirmed at first glance from the high percentage of kokuji with radicals of “tree” and “fish”, likely to indicate actual or presumed native species, of which precise corresponding Chinese appeared missing. The matter would appear more compelling because among the other things is well-known the variety and richness of the Japanese flora and fauna patrimony with an high number of species listed as japonicae, even if they are not exclusive of Japan, but in any case “typical” of its terraqueous environment\(^6\).

Now, if we extrapolate the kokuji of its aquatic fauna, we are faced with a list of characters, such as the following, taken from the Dōbun tsūkō\(^7\) by Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725): 鮎 namazu, 鰤 iwashi, 鰤 tara, 鮭 dojō, 鮫 subashiri, 鮫 bora, 鰤 isaza, 鰤 konoshiro, 鰤 ugui, 鰤 kazunoko, 鰤 gigi, 鰤 kochi, 鰤 mate, 鰤 shiira, 鰤 eri, 鰤 asari.

Reviewing them individually, we find the following data on the basis of the main current lexicons and any possible recurrences in Chinese\(^8\):

鮎 namazu ‘Japanese catfish’ (*Parasilurus asotus*)\(^9\);

鰤 iwashi ‘Japanese sardine’ (*Sardinops melanostictus*)\(^10\);

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\(^4\) They are also referred to as waji 和字・倭字, wazokuji 和俗字, honpō seisakujī 本邦製作字, wasei kanji 和製漢字.


\(^8\) In References, they are reported the abbreviations for the dictionaries and lexicons consulted for the following notes.

\(^9\) Morohashi and Wasei kanji no jiten confirm the use of the kokuji. For the lemma namazu, Kokujikō by Ban Naokata and Wasei kanji no jiten report the kokuji 鮎 too; Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien and Kenkyūsha 74 report, always with the same meaning, the character 鮎, that is unanimously classified as kokuji. Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten gives for namazu the character 鮎, ascribing the lemma to the area of Wakayama. Of the three kokuji reported, Ricci attests the character 鮎 with the reading nien.

\(^10\) For the Chinese, Ricci gives the same character with the reading *ruo* and the same meaning.
鱈 tara ‘Japanese variety of cod’ (Gadus morhua)\(^{11}\);

鱰 dojō ‘Japanese loach’ (Cobitis barbatula)\(^{12}\);

鱲 subashiri ‘Unidentified variety of Japanese marine fauna’\(^{13}\);

鱲 bora ‘Japanese flathead grey mullet’ (Ogcocephalus nasus)\(^{14}\);

鱲 isaza ‘Biwa goby’ (Chirocentrus dumerili)\(^{15}\);

鱲 konoshiro ‘Japanese gizzard shad’ (Konosirus punctatus)\(^{16}\);

鱲 ugui ‘Big-scaled redfin’ (Leuciscus hakonensis)\(^{17}\);

鱲 kazunoko ‘Herring roe’\(^{18}\);

鱲 gigi ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species Pelteobagrus nudiceps’\(^{19}\);

鱲 kochi ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species Platycephalus indicus’\(^{20}\);

鱲 mate ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species Platycephalus indicus’\(^{21}\);

鱲 shiira ‘Japanese dolphin fish’ (Coryphaena hippurus)\(^{22}\);

\(^{11}\) In Chinese, the character is attested with the reading xue as generic name for ‘cod’.

\(^{12}\) The character is given in Morohashi, Nelson and Wasei kanji no jiten. For the lemma dojō, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien and Kenkyūsha 74 give the character 魚, a common use Chinese character with reading qi and the meaning of ‘small fish that lived in the mud’; for the same lemma, Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten use the compound 泥鱈, niqiu in Chinese.

\(^{13}\) The kokai is given in Morohashi and Wasei kanji no jiten. For the lemma subashiri, Kōjien introduces the compound 州走, of common use in Chinese with the reading chouzou. The lemma is not reported in Kenkyūsha 32, Kenkyūsha 74 and Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten.

\(^{14}\) The kokai is given in Morohashi and Wasei kanji no jiten. For the lemma bora, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien and Kenkyūsha 74 introduce, always with the meaning of ‘Japanese flathead grey mullet’, the character 魚. The latter character is recorded, both in Dōbun tsūkō by Arai Hakuseki and in Morohashi as kokai and with the reading of kochi too.

\(^{15}\) The kokai is given in Morohashi and Wasei kanji no jiten. For isaza, Kōjien uses the character 魚, of common use in Chinese with the reading sha for ‘white shark’.

\(^{16}\) The kokai is given in Morohashi, Wasei kanji no jiten and Nelson; for the same lemma konoshiro, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien and Kenkyūsha 74 introduce the character 魚, a common use character in Chinese.

\(^{17}\) The kokai is given in Morohashi, Kōjien and Wasei kanji no jiten. For the lemma ugui, Kenkyūsha 32 and Kenkyūsha 74 introduce the Chinese compound 石斑魚 shibanyu.

\(^{18}\) The kokai is given in Morohashi, Nelson, Wasei kanji no jiten. For the lemma kazunoko, Kenkyūsha 74 gives the characters 数の子. Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien and Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten don’t record the entry.

\(^{19}\) The kokai, with the related lemma of gigi, is given in Morohashi and Wasei kanji no jiten only.

\(^{20}\) All the Japanese dictionaries, except for Kokujikō and Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten, that don’t record the lemma, identify this fish with the same kokai. In Chinese, the kokai is attested with the reading yong and with the same meaning in Ricci and in Han Ying Da Cidian.

\(^{21}\) The kokai is given in Morohashi and Wasei kanji no jiten only. Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 74 and Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten don’t record the lemma mate.

\(^{22}\) Kokui and lemma attested in Morohashi, Wasei kanji no jiten, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 32 and Kenkyūsha 74.
鰨 eri ‘Japanese lizardfish’ (*Synodus saurus*)\(^{23}\);

鱸 asari ‘Japanese little-neck clam’ (*Tapes philippinarum*)\(^{24}\).


To the list of Arai Hakuseki, we can add the following kokuji, extrapolated from other lexicons:

鰤 anago ‘Japanese variety of conger of the Species *Conger japonicus*\(^{25}\);

鰤 ayu ‘Japanese sweetfish’ (*Plecoglossus altivelis*)\(^{26}\);

鰤 azarashi ‘Japanese hair seal’ (*Phoca vitulina*)\(^{27}\);

鰤 ebi ‘Japanese lobster’ (*Uruptychus japonicus*)\(^{28}\);

鰤 hamo ‘Japanese barracuda’ (*Sphyraena japonica*)\(^{29}\);

鰤 haraka ‘Unidentified variety of Japanese marine fauna’\(^{30}\)

鰤・鰤 hatahata ‘Japanese sandfish’ (*Arctoscopus japonicus*)\(^{31}\).

\(^{23}\) The kokuji is attested in *Morohashi, Köjien* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. *Morohashi* records the reading *eso* too, that we can find also in *Kenkyūsha 74* to which is ascribed, in this latter dictionary, the character 魚 of common use in Chinese with the reading *kuai*. *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* gives for the same kokuji the reading *eso* ascribing it to the area of Wakayama. In Chinese, the kokuji is attested only in *Giles* with the reading *ren* to indicate a ‘fabulous creature half man, half fish’.

\(^{24}\) *Kokuji* and lemma attested in *Morohashi, Nelson* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma asari, *Kōjien* introduces the mixed form 漁り, while *Kenkyūsha 32*, *Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* use the Chinese compound 浅蜊 *jianli*.

\(^{25}\) The kokuji is recorded only by *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma anago, *Kenkyūsha 32* uses the transcription in hiragana あなご replaced in *Kenkyūsha 74* with the compound 六子, of common use in Chinese with the reading *suezu*.

\(^{26}\) *Wasei kanji no jiten* only gives the kokuji 魚; *Kenkyūsha 32* and *Kenkyūsha 74* give for the lemma the character 鮎, that is a common use character in Chinese with the reading *nian*, for an unspecified variety of trout. In turn, *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* ascribed the previous character assigning it also the readings *ai* and *ae*.

\(^{27}\) *Wasei kanji no jiten* only confirms the kokuji. For the lemma azarashi, *Kenkyūsha 32, Köjien* and *Kenkyūsha 74* use, always with the meaning of ‘sea lion’, the compound 海豹, that is of common use in Chinese with the reading *haipao* and the meaning of ‘sea lion’, other name for ‘seal’, while this lemma is not recorded in *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten*.

\(^{28}\) The kokuji is recorded in *Kenkyūsha 32, Morohashi, Köjien* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma ebi, *Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* introduce the compound 海老, *hailao* in Chinese.

\(^{29}\) The kokuji is attested in *Morohashi* and in *Wasei kanji no jiten*. For the lemma hamo, *Kenkyūsha 32, Köjien, Kenkyūsha 74* and *Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* introduce the character 魚 of common use in Chinese with the reading *li*.

\(^{30}\) *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* agree on the generic designation. Other dictionaries don’t attest the kokuji or the lemma.

\(^{31}\) The first kokuji is recorded in *Morohashi, Köjien, Kenkyūsha 74, Nelson* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*; *Kōjien* and *Kenkyūsha 74* give the character 魚 too, that *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* classify as kokuji, while *Gendai*
鰤 *hayashi* ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Leuciscus macropus*’

鰥 *hirame* ‘Japanese halibut’ (*Paralichthys olivaceus*)

鰙 *hokke* ‘Japanese mackerel’ (*Pleurogrammus azonus*)

鰙・鰙・鰕 *ina* ‘Japanese amberjack’ (*Seriola dumerilii*)

鰕 *inada* ‘Japanese amberjack’ (*Seriola lalandi*)

鯧 *kajika* ‘Japanese sculpin’ (*Cottus hilgendorfi*)

鯉 *kamasu* ‘Japanese saury’ (*Cololabis saira*)

鰤 *karasumi* ‘Mullet roe’

鰤・鰤 *karei* ‘Japanese plaice’ (*Pleuronectes platessa*)

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*Nihongo Högen Daijiten* for the same lemma gives the transcription in hiragana はたはた ascribing the noun to the area of Akita.

32 *Kokujī* given only in *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten*. *Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten* records only the lemma with the transcription in hiragana はや, that ascribes to the area of Kyōto.

33 Both *Morohashi* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* record the character, but *Morohashi* gives it also the readings -hei, -byō, and doesn’t classify it as kokujī. *Kōjien* introduces for the same lemma the compounds 平目 pimuyu and 比目魚 *pingmu* and 平目 魚 pihinyu. *Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten* uses only the compound 平目 pingmu, ascribing it to the area of Shichio, while both Kenkyūsha 32 and Kenkyūsha 74 use for the lemma hirame the compound 比目魚 pimuyu. In Chinese, the kokujī is attested with the reading p’ing in Ricci and in *Han Ying Da Cidian*, that identifies it with the Japanese hirame. Tha fact that the character is a kokujī seems to be sure as confirmed in the definition that we can find in the Chinese dictionaries. Then, it was replaced by the Chinese characters that, alluding to the characteristics of the eyes, better identify the fish.

34 *Kōjien*, *Kenkyūsha 74*, *Nelson* and *Wasei kanji no jiten* report it as kokujī. *Kenkyūsha 32* doesn’t record the lemma, while *Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten* uses the transcription in hiragana ほうけ, ascribing the lemma to the area of Fukushima.

35 The first character is recorded in *Morohashi* and in *Wasei kanji no jiten*, but *Morohashi* doesn’t classify it as kokujī. For the lemma ina, *Wasei kanji no jiten* records the kokujī 鰢 too, while Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien and Kenkyūsha 74 introduce, for the same lemma, the kokujī 鰤. The latter is recorded, both in Dōbun tsūkō by Arai Hakuseki and in *Morohashi*, as kokujī and with the reading of kochi as well. Indeed, *Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten* gives for ina the Chinese character 鰤 with the reading shi and with the same meaning, but ascribing the noun to the area of Kyōto.

36 *Wasei kanji no jiten* only gives the kokujī 鰤 For the lemma inada, *Kōjien* uses the transcription in hiragana いなだ, while Kenkyūsha 32 and Kenkyūsha 74 introduce the common Chinese character 黄 qiu, with the meaning of ‘Japanese amberjack’. For the same lemma, *Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten* introduces the already reported character 鰤, as previously seen, for the lemma ina, ascribing it to the area of Shizuoka and of Ishikawa and implicitly meaning the identity between inada and ina.

37 The kokujī is attested in *Morohashi*, *Wasei kanji no jiten* and *Nelson*. For the lemma kajika, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien, and Kenkyūsha 74 introduce the character 黄, that is a common use character in Chinese with the reading qiu.

38 *Wasei kanji no jiten* only gives the kokujī 鰤 For the lemma kamasu, *Kōjien* introduces the character 鰤 xu, while Kenkyūsha 32 and Kenkyūsha 74 give the compound 梱魚 suoyan. Indeed, the lemma is not recorded in *Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten*.

39 The kokujī is recorded in *Wasei kanji no jiten* only. Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien and Kenkyūsha 74, for the lemma karasumi, use the transcription in hiragana からすみ. Such form in hiragana is given in *Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten* as well and ascribed to the area of Ōshū.
鯖katsuō ‘Japanese Skipjack tuna’ (Katsuwonus pelamis)\textsuperscript{41};

鯱kawagisu ‘Japanese gudgeon’ (Pseudogobis esocinus)\textsuperscript{42};

鰤kisu ‘Japanese whiting’ (Sillago japonica)\textsuperscript{43};

鰫・鯉koi ‘Japanese carp’ (Cyprinus carpio)\textsuperscript{44};

鰫kujira ‘Japanese whale’ (Balaena mysticetus)\textsuperscript{45};

鰤masu ‘Masu salmon’ (Oncorhynchus masou)\textsuperscript{46};

鰫mbaru ‘Japanese rockfish’ (Sebastes inermis)\textsuperscript{47};

鰘muroaji ‘Japanese horse mackerel’ (Trachurus japonicus)\textsuperscript{48};

鰱mutsu ‘Japanese blue fish’ (Scombrops boops)\textsuperscript{49};

鰗・鰘namazu ‘Japanese catfish’ (Parasilurus asotus)\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{40} The first kokujī is given in Morohashi and in Wasei kanji no jiten only. The latter gives the kokujī 鯖 too. For the lemma karei, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 74 and Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten record the Chinese character 鰣 die.

\textsuperscript{41} Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 74, Wasei kanji no jiten and Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten record the kokujī 见 present in Morohashi as well, but not classified as kokujī. In the consulted Chinese dictionaries, the kokujī 见 is attested with the reading jian in Giles and in Ricci only.

\textsuperscript{42} Wasei kanji no jiten only gives the kokujī 见. For the lemma kawagisu, Kenkyūsha 32 uses the mixed form 川ぎす, while Kenkyūsha 74 introduces the compound 川鰤, where the second character is recorded as kokujī in all the Japanese dictionaries consulted, except for Dōbun tsūkō that doesn’t record the character.

\textsuperscript{43} The kokujī is recorded in all the Japanese dictionaries consulted, except for Dōbun tsūkō and Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten that don’t give the kokujī and the lemma kisu. In Chinese, the kokujī is attested with the reading xi and with the same meaning in Ricci and in Han Ying Da Cidian.

\textsuperscript{44} The first kokujī is recorded in Wasei kanji no jiten only, that for the lemma koi, gives the kokujī 鯉 as well, that Morohashi doesn’t classify as kokujī. For the lemma koi, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 74 and Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten introduce the character 鰤, that Nelson only classifies as kokujī. In Chinese, the character 鰤 is recorded with the same meaning and reading li in Ricci only.

\textsuperscript{45} Wasei kanji no jiten only gives the kokujī 鯉. For the lemma kujira, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien and Kenkyūsha 74, and the Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten as well, use the Chinese character 鯨 jīng.

\textsuperscript{46} The kokujī is attested in Wasei kanji no jiten only. For the lemma masu, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 74 introduce the character 鰤, that is a Chinese character with the reading zun. Indeed, Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten for the same lemma uses the transcription in hiragana ます, ascribing the lemma to the area of Fukushima.

\textsuperscript{47} Wasei kanji no jiten and Nelson only register the kokujī 鯤. For the lemma mbaru, Kōjien and Kenkyūsha 74 introduce the compound 眼張 of common use in Chinese yanzhang. Indeed, there aren’t attestations in Kenkyūsha 32 or in Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten.

\textsuperscript{48} Morohashi, Kōjien and Wasei kanji no jiten attest the kokujī 鯤, while for the lemma muroaji, Kenkyūsha 32 and Kenkyūsha 74 introduce the compound 室鯤, that are common use characters in Chinese with the reading shisao.

\textsuperscript{49} Wasei kanji no jiten only registers the kokujī, while for the lemma mutsu, Kōjien and Kenkyūsha 74 introduce the Chinese character 鰫 lu, Kenkyūsha 32 gives the compound 石鰫魚; for the same lemma, Gendai Nihongo Högen Daijiten uses the transcription in hiragana むつ ascribing the noun to the area of Shiga.

\textsuperscript{50} See note 4.
Now, of these kokuji listed:

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51 Wasei kanji no jiten and Morohashi give the character 魚, that Morohashi doesn’t record as kokuji. For the same lemma, Kenkyūsha 32, Kenkyūsha 74 and Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten introduce 魚, a common use character in Chinese with the reading qing.

52 With saku is identified a variety of ‘salmon’ (Oncorhynchus keta), the most important Japanese species of salmon, that it is possible to find mainly in the Tonegawa and Nakagawa rivers. Wasei kanji no jiten gives the kokuji 魚, that Morohashi records for the lemma saku, but doesn’t classify it as kokuji. In the Chinese dictionary consulted, the only one that gives this character is Giles with the reading of jie and the meaning of ‘to dissect’ or ‘to cut (slice) the fish to be dried’. For the lemma saku, Kōjien and Wasei kanji no jiten give the kokuji 魚 and 魚 as well, that are not in the other Japanese lexicons consulted. For the same lemma, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 74 and Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten introduce, giving the readings sake and shake too, the common use character in Chinese 魚 kui.

53 Wasei kanji no jiten only gives the kokuji 魚. For the lemma same, Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien and Kenkyūsha 74 use the character 鱼, that is a common use character in Chinese chao.

54 Morohashi, Kōjien, Nelson, Wasei kanji no jiten and Kenkyūsha 74 give the kokuji 魚. It is not attested in the other Japanese and Chinese dictionaries.

55 Wasei kanji no jiten gives the kokuji 鱼, that Morohashi records for the lemma tai, but doesn’t classify it as kokuji. It is not attested in the other Japanese dictionaries consulted. Indeed, the kokuji is recorded in all the Chinese dictionaries consulted with the reading fang and the same meaning. So is it really a kokuji or simply a Chinese character acquired from Japan, then abandoned because not indicating an important character or species?

56 Wasei kanji no jiten only gives the kokuji 鱸. Kenkyūsha 32, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 74 and Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten, for the lemma tai, introduce the character 鱸, that it’s a common use character in Chinese with the reading tiao.

57 Dōban tsūkō, Morohashi, Kōjien and Wasei kanji no jiten give the kokuji 鱸, that it’s not attested in the other Japanese characters. For the lemma ugui, Kenkyūsha 32 and Kenkyūsha 74 introduce the compound 石斑魚 shipayu. Indeed, the lemma ugui is not recorded in Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten.

58 With urumeiwashi is identified a ‘Sardine variety of the Species Etrumeus microps’. Wasei kanji no jiten gives the kokuji 鯖, that is not attested in the other Japanese dictionaries. For the lemma urumeiwashi, Kōjien, Kenkyūsha 74 and Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten introduce the compound 潤目鯖 runmaruo, of common use in Chinese. The lemma is not attested in Kenkyūsha 74.
Forty-nine are names of fishes:


Three of marine mammals:


One of crustaceans:

鰤 ebi ‘Japanese lobster’.
One of molluscs:
鰐 asari ‘Japanese little-neck clam’.

Two of roe:
鰐 kazunoko ‘Herring roe’, 鰐 karasumi ‘Mullet roe’.

Two are varieties of “Unidentified variety of Japanese marine fauna”:
鰐 subashiri, 鰐 haraka.

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Therefore, we have in total fifty-eight kokuji of which thirteen are still in use today. From the series of forty-nine kokuji related to the fishes’ names, there are the following ten: 鰐 iwashi ‘Japanese sardine’; 鰐 tara ‘Japanese variety of cod’; 鰐 kochi ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Platycephalus indicus*’; 鰐 mate ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Platycephalus indicus*’; 鰐 shiira ‘Japanese dolphinfish’; 鰐 gigi ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Platycephalus indicus*’; 鰐 haya ‘Japanese variety of marine flora of the Species *Leuciscus macropus*’; 鰐 hokke ‘Japanese mackerel’; 鰐 katsuo ‘Japanese Skipjack tuna’; 鰐 kisu ‘Japanese whiting’; 鰐 tai ‘Japanese mirror dory’.

Of the three kokuji relating to the names of mammals, the only one still in use is 鰐 shachi ‘Japanese variety of killer whale’.

Of the two names of unidentified marine species remains in use only 鰐 haraka that in the Japanese dictionaries used is reported exclusively as “fish” (魚).

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Summing up, we can deduce the following situation. Many kokuji, and they were the majority, or thirty-three, fall into disuse. They could be introduced when Japanese were not even aware of the existence of corresponding kanji (or kanji compounds). Once it was found to have in the Chinese vocabulary, they were abandoned in favor of the latter. This is the longer list: 鯖 anago → 穴子 ZH xuezu; 鯖 asari → 浅鰤 ZH dian li; 鰤 ayu → 鮎 ZH nian; 鰤 azarashi → 海豹 ZH hai pao; 鰤 dojō → 魚 ZH qiu · 泥鰤 ZH niqiu; 鰤 ebi → 海老 ZH hailao; 鰤 eri → 魚 ZH kuai; 鰤 hamo → 鰤 ZH li; 鰤 hirame → 平目 ZH pingmu · 比目魚 ZH pinmuyu; 鰤 inada → 魚 ZH qiu · 鰤 ZH shi; 鰤 isaza → 魚 ZH sha; 鰤 kajika → 魚 ZH qiu; 鰤 kamasu → 鰤 · 梭魚 ZH suoyu; 鰤 karei · 鰤 karei → 鰤 ZH die; 鰤 kawagisu → 川鰤 ZH huoxi; 鰤 · 鰤 konoshibo → 魚 ZH ji; 鰤 kujira → 魚 ZH jing; 鰤 masu → 鰤 ZH zun; 鰤 mebaru → 眼張 ZH yanzhang; 鰤 muroaji → 室鰤 ZH shisao; 鰤 mutsu → 鰤 ZH lu; 鰤 saba → 鰤 ZH qing; 鰤 · 鰤 鰤 saku → 鰤 ZH nian; 鰤 same → 鰤 ZH chao; 鰤 subashiri → 州走 ZH chouzou; 鰤 tai → 鰤 ZH tiao; 鰤 ugui → 石斑魚 ZH shipayu; 鰤 urumeiwi → 潤目鰤 ZH junmuruo.

A number of kokuji, to be precise eight, falls into disuse, because they had to prevail on them other kokuji. Indeed, we have found that some nouns had been created with more kokuji, who apparently had been introduced as “neologisms” created in different locations or by different “authors”; it was the case for the following: for the lemma bora (‘Japanese flathead grey mullet’), they had been introduced two kokuji 鰤 · 鰤, the latter prevailed on the first one; the same phenomenon was found for the lemma hatahata (‘Japanese sandfish’), where among the two kokuji created, 鰤 · 鰤 prevailed the second one. For the lemmas koi, ina and namazu, for which they had come into use even three kokuji 鰤 · 鰤 · 鰤, 鰤 koi · 鰤 koi · 鮎 koi; 鰤 ina · 鰤 ina · 鰤 ina; 鰤 namazu · 鰤 namazu · 鰤 namazu, prevailed respectively 鮎 koi, 鰤 ina e 鰤 namazu. They were probably kokuji adopted to designate an identical variety or fish species maybe in different regions and then replaced by those of more frequent or widespread use that consolidated the coding.

Finally, a series of seven kokuji was replaced, as we have already seen, or by one or more kanji or by transcriptions in kana only: 鰤 anago → あなご · 穴子 ZH xuezu; 鰤 inada → いなだ; 鰤
masu → 鰤 ZH zun・ます; 鰤 mutsu → 鰤・石鯖魚・むつ, 鰤 hatahata → はたはた・鱩 hatahata, 棲 hokke → ほっけ; 棲 karasumi → からすみ.

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So from the analysis of a small group of kokuji emerges already the complexity of the phenomenon that is behind the characters created in Japan. Definitely a phenomenon rarely studied in Japan itself, where it tends to talk only of kanji and kana and to limit the notion of kokuji mostly to the “Japanese” writing in general\(^59\).

In truth, that of kokuji, as complex of characters come into use in Japan, is a phenomenon that follows the entire course of the Japanese language and writing and should therefore be put in an historical context through a precisely record of the occurrences of each characters in the texts that have remained and their frequency at least in the literary use. The study should also be thorough about the possible “geographical” pertinences of each attributions of the names, as already reported in the notes for some kokuji or their transcriptions in kana. They are examples: 魚 masu → ます e 魚 hokke → ほっけ ascribed to the area of Fukushima; 魚 mutsu → むつ ascribed to the area of Shiga; 魚 hatahata → attributed to Akita and 魚 karasumi → からすみ to Ōshū.

The sampling shown authorize us to conjecture that the phenomenon has manifested itself already at the beginning of the adoption of the Chinese writing. It can explain how many characters of local creation prove then superfluous to the finding of Chinese counterparts already in use and then become obsolete.

It may be also interesting to note that of all the above mentioned kokuji, it seems that the Chinese used just the following eight entered and remained in current use: 魚 eri → ZH kuai; 鮨 hirame → ZH ping; 魚 iwashi → ZH ruo; 魚 katsuo → ZH jian; 魚 kisu → ZH xi; 鰺 kochi → ZH yong; 魚 tai → ZH fang; 魚 tara → ZH xue.

\(^59\) Satō Kiyoji (ed. by), Kokugaku kenkyū jiten, Tōkyō, Meiji shoten, 1972, p. 77
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