オンライン日本語　入門編

Online Japanese for Beginners

序章

Introduction

日本語とは

What is the Japanese Language

Japanese is a language primarily spoken by Japanese people and is mostly used in Japan. Although there are no accurate statistics, it is estimated that there are approximately 130 million speakers, including Japanese people living overseas, people of Japanese descent, and a part of people living in the regions where Japan used to rule.

日本語の構成
にほんご　こうせい

The Structure of the Japanese Language

The Japanese language consists of hiragana, katakana, kanji, English alphabets and Arabic numbers.

"Kana" is a syllabary which is derived from kanji. It takes the shapes and sounds of kanji. It is said that the literal meaning of "Kana" comes from "仮の文字" which means temporary word or "借りた文字" which means borrowed word. "Kana" can be classified into "Hiragana" and "Katakana".

ひらがな　と　由来
ゆらい

Hiragana and its Origin

Hiragana was developed from the highly cursive script style of kanji, which is used as a borrowed word (shakuji). It has been used since the late 9th century.

ひらがなの由来 （Origin of Hiragana）

安	以	宇	衣	於
あ	ゟ	ぅ	え	扵
あ	い	う	え	お

メモ(Memo)

カタカナ と 由来(ゆらい)

Katakana and its Origin

Katakana is a Japanese syllabary which originates from one of the kana systems, borrowed word (shakuji). Katakana derives its letters from kanji, taking bits and pieces of kanji symbols to form its individual characters. It has been commonly used since about 10th century.

カタカナの由来(ゆらい)（Origin of Katakana）

阿 → 阝 → ア
伊 → イ → イ
宇 → 宀 → ウ
江 → エ → エ
於 → 方 → オ

メモ(Memo)

50音図

<ruby>おんず</ruby>

Gojuon (fifty-sounds) Table

	あ column	い column	う column	え column	お column
あ row	あ a	い i	う u	え e	お o
か row	か ka	き ki	く ku	け ke	こ ko
さ row	さ sa	し shi	す su	せ se	そ so
た row	た ta	ち chi	つ tsu	て te	と to
な row	な na	に ni	ぬ nu	ね ne	の no
は row	は ha	ひ hi	ふ fu	へ he	ほ ho
ま row	ま ma	み mi	む mu	め me	も mo
や row	や ya	（い i）	ゆ yu	（え e）	よ yo
ら row	ら ra	り ri	る ru	れ re	ろ ro
わ row	わ wa	（い i）	（う u）	（え e）	を wo
syllabic nasal	ん n(m)				

The gojuon table classifies Japanese seion (voiceless/clear sounds) into vowels and consonants, and arranged them on a table vertically and horizontally.
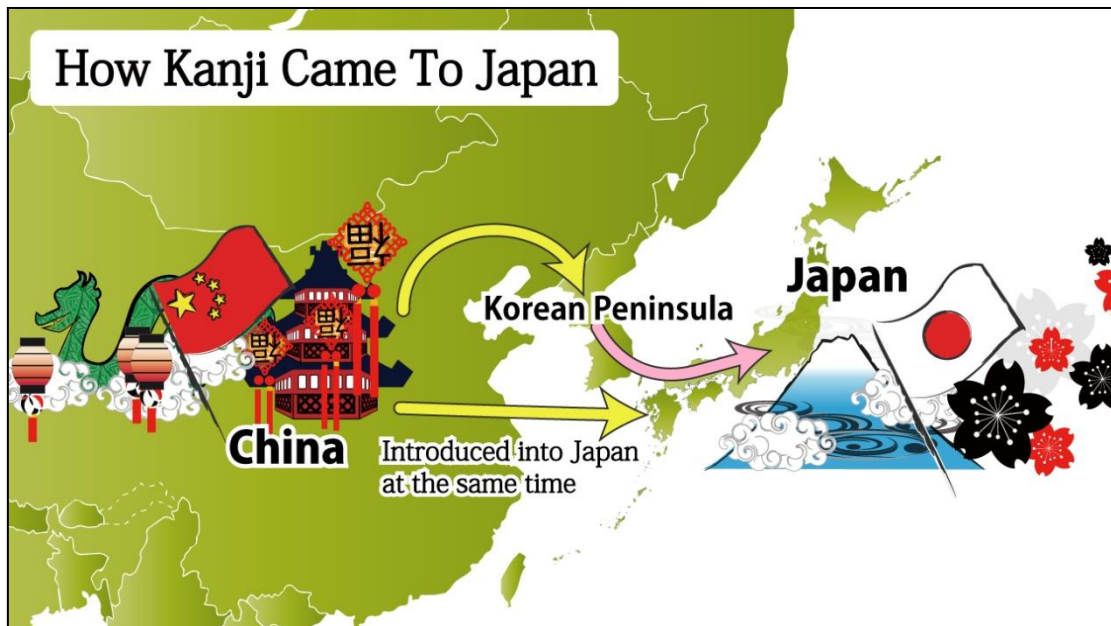
Characters in the same column have the same vowel , so that each column is called "あ column", "い column", "う column", "え column", "お column".

Characters in the same row have the same consonant, so that each row is called "あ row", "か row", "さ row", "た row", "な row", "は row", "ま row", "や row", "ら row" and "わ row".

 "ん" doesn't belong to any row or column.

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Kanji Character

Japanese kanji have two readings: the "phonetic reading" and the "Japanese reading".

The phonetic reading is based on the sounds of the original kanji. It sounds like the pronunciation of the Chinese kanji.

Example:

ぶんか	あい
文化	愛
culture	**love**

The Japanese reading is the native Japanese pronunciation of the kanji character. This reading has nothing to do with the original kanji sound. It is a pronunciation of the native Japanese word.

Example:

みず	おとこ	おんな
水	男	女
water	**man**	**woman**

メモ(Memo)

がいらい ご
外来語

Loanword

Loanwords were borrowed from other languages and came to be incorporated into the Japanese language. They are mostly introduced from western countries and are mostly written in katakana. The names of people, places and products from overseas are mostly expressed as loanwords.

Example: コーヒー   ニュース
             Coffee   **News**

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外来語