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Kambun Tetrads in Japanese and Other East Asian Languages

The present study is aimed at investigating phenomena which seem to be undoubtedly an important question in describing the linguistic structure of three modern languages of East Asia, namely Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese. Moreover, to considerably large extent it may be also expanded to the language whose ancestor had centuries ago became a source of processes that resulted in the existing shape of these languages, i.e. Modern Standard Chinese.

The existence of large lexical strata of Classical Chinese origin in these languages is a fact easily observable to everybody who happens to come even into a very superficial contact with either of the tongues. This is not merely because the Sino-xenic (i.e. Sino-Japanese, Sino-Korean, Sino-Vietnamese) elements within each language are large in amount but also due to characteristic peculiarities in their linguistic behaviour. All these peculiarities stem from clear-cut autonomy which the borrowed Classical Chinese, i.e. guest elements, have preserved within respective host tongues regardless of the inevitable assimilation process. Due to typological discrepancies between the host languages and the guest language (e.g. the synthetic and agglutinative Japanese or Korean vs. analytic and isolating C.C., analytic and isolating Vietnamese with postpositional modifiers vs. analytic and isolating C.C. with prepositional modifiers) the assimilation has basically not exceeded the phonemic level and the Sino-xenic elements form in each language a kind of systemic enclave with its own grammatical subrules.

The autonomous position occupied by elements borrowed from C.C. within their host systems is reflected in a fact of sociolinguistic character: the native speakers of Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese feel clearly their diversity from the rest of the respective languages but they do regard them as a part of their native tongues.

Thus in the grammatical typology of natural languages we can introduce a polysystemic model of their structure, i.e. a single system consisting of separate subsystems with different sets of rules applying to separate subvocabularies, namely genuine rules encode and decode genuine grammatical forms, borrowed Sino-xenic rules encode and decode Sino-xenic forms. Consequently, from the point of view of their structure all languages in question seem to form East Asian linguistic circle which means that all they are mutually connected in a very special way. They are distinct as to their relationship, i.e. they do not form a language family, but they all share one subsystem. The shared Sino-xenic subsystem may be not entirely common to all the host languages on all levels of its structure, since the phonemic level, for example, is an individual property of each host language. Also on the other levels all Sino-xenic subsystems are partly diversified, with some important differences in their lexical or morphemic composition and combinability, as well as in the grammatical structure itself. But this cannot prevent us from speaking of another phenomenon involving the very structure of these languages, namely co-systemism, even if we have to agree that it is of a limited character.

The phenomena to be discussed here have been noticed by linguists long ago and two observations seem to be worthy of recalling. First remark was made by Edward Sapir as early as in 1921: "Chinese has flooded the vocabularies of Korean, Japanese and Annamite for centuries, but has received nothing in return. (...when we realize that) an educated Japanese can hardly frame a single literary sentence without the use of Chinese resources... There are just five languages that have had an overwhelming significance as carriers of culture. They are classical Chinese, Sanskrit, Arabic, Greek and Latin." (Sapir, 1921; 205-207). The second one is that of Bernhard Kalgren made in 1949: "It was just during the period between the sixth and ninth centuries that Chinese culture spread like a mighty wave over all East Asia: to Korea, Japan and Annam. Chinese literature was zealously studied, and thousands of Chinese words were taken over into Korean, Japanese and Annamite, just as words were borrowed from Latin by the European languages, only in much larger scale. One may say that practically every current Chinese word exists as a potential loan word in Japanese." (Kalgren, 1949; 39)

Here, we shall observe the phenomena of polystemism and co-systemism limiting our perspective to a fragment of the linguistic system, firstly in Japanese and later in other East Asian languages. What we shall try to stress is that this is not a problem of borrowed words, as both Sapir and Kalgren have suggested so impressively, but a question of entirely different type of contacts between natural languages.

There is in modern Japanese a very peculiar set of expressions traditionally called *yoji jukugo* 四字熟語 'quadri-ideographic phrases (or idioms)'. The meaning of the term *yoji jukugo*, as we can see, is based precisely on the written structure of the phrases in question, i.e., on the number of Chinese characters

forming their strictly graphic shape. This enables lexicographers to include in this category of expressions various elements differing widely in their structure and function. Among them may be, for instance, common nouns or nominal phrases like:

Kabukiza 歌舞伎座 'Kabuki Theater'
jishshōshugi 実証主義 'positivism'
Kankoku jinkō 韓国人口 'Korean population'
hisenkyoken 被選挙権 'right to be elected'
yūka shokubutsu 有花植物 'flowering plants'
yōshoku shinju 養殖真珠 'cultivated pearls'

and sentence-like elements as:

dōsei-kyōshi 同生共死 'to live and die together'
mushi-manrui 無死満塁 'no down, full bases (in baseball)'
ikkyō-ryōtoku — 一挙兩得 'two birds with one stone (two gains with one move)'.
zendai-mimon 前代未聞 'unprecedented, never heard of before'
ryūgen-higo 流言飛語 'unfounded rumors'
yudan-taiteki 油断大敵 'carelessness is a big enemy'

On the other hand, four-character phrases may be semantically regular strings like:

mushozokusha 無所属者 'a free-lance'
jibi-inkō 耳鼻咽喉 'nose, ear(s) and throat'
ippatsu-hitchū — 一発秘中 '(make) one shot and hit the target'

or clearly idiomatic expressions as:

dōshō-imu 同床異夢 'even very close people have different minds (lit. the same bed but different dreams)'
happō-bijin 八方美人 'everybody's friend; opportunist' (lit. eight-side directed charm)
shinshutsu-kibotsu 神出鬼没 'to be elusive, difficult to find' (lit. god appears, devil disappears)

According to dictionaries these may comprise Sino-Japanese morphemes, as in the above-quoted strings, or even genuine Japanese elements like:

Kiritsubo Genji 桐壺源氏 'short-lived zeal (in learning); lit. to go no further than the "Kiritsubo" chapter of "Genji monogatari"'

jūnin-tōiro 十人十色 'many men, many minds; lit. ten people, ten colours' (both morphemes in *jūnin* are Sino-Japanese, while in *tōiro* they are genuine)

Shirakawa yofune 白河夜船 'say something beside the point; lit. night-time voyage on the (non-existent) Shirakawa (river)' (all constituent morphemes are genuine)

zendama-akudama 善玉悪玉 'the good man and the bad one' lit. good gem, bad gem (both constituents are hybrids comprising Sino-Japanese adjectives *zen* 'good' and *aku* 'bad' combined with genuine noun *tama* 'gem')

umisen-yamasen 海千山千 'to know all tricks, be well experienced' lit. at sea thousand and in the mountains thousand, i.e. years of life (*sen* is a Sino-Japanese numeral combined with genuine nouns *umi* 'sea' and *yama* 'mountain')

Being diversified to such extent, the tetrads present a very difficult task in their description within the modern Japanese grammar. Therefore their definition has to be changed from the traditional graphemic one into morphemic one, i.e., the tetrads shall be understood not as 'four-character strings' but as quadromorphemic ones. Secondly, as for their constituent morphemes they shall be limited to those containing the Sino-Japanese (*kango* 漢語) morphemes only. But even these limitations do not eliminate common-noun combinations like:

shikin ketsubō 資金欠乏 'lack of funds'

jōyō kanji 常用漢字 'common use character(s)'

mikaitakuchi 未開拓地 'unreclaimed land, virgin soil'

which are plain phenomena of simple word-formative and syntactic combinations. Among Sino-Japanese morphemic tetrads there are, however, many examples of structurally more complex phrases and even sentence-like strings which are very instructive as clear evidence of the autonomous position which the Sino-Japanese elements have preserved within the present-day linguistic structure of Japanese.

It is obvious to everybody that the *kambun* tetrads are loan-clauses (sentences) rather than plain loanwords. This makes their investigation more as a problem of the grammatical structure of the Japanese language but here the traditional distinction between a word and a sentence seems to be of no use at all, since many of such sentence-like strings can be used in both functions. Thus, the tetrad

akufu-haka 悪婦破家 'bad wife ruins house'

is a clear example of a *kambun* sentence, while

hakushi-jakkō 薄志弱行 'infirm in will and weak in attitude' (lit. faint will, weak conduct)

can have also nominal uses, as

hakushi-jakkō no hito 薄志弱行の人 'a man of weak character'.

Whenever a tetrad plays the role of a single word it may be accompanied by a genuine Japanese grammatical morpheme, auxiliary verb *suru* する, copula *de aru* である or some grammatical particles like *no* の, *na* な, *ni* に, *de* で, *o* を and *to* と. All these elements serve as connectors combining the tetrad with the rest of the sentence and such uses can be regarded as a kind of syntactic nominalization:

seikō-udoku suru 晴耕雨読する 'live a happy life' (lit. work in the field in fine weather and read at home in rainy weather)

- jimon-jitō suru* 自問自答する 'answer one's own questions' (lit. self-question, self-answer)
- mugai-yūeki de aru* 無害有益である 'be not only harmless but useful' (lit. no harm, be use)
- munen-musō de aru* 無念無想である 'be void (free) of all thoughts' (lit. no desire, no thought)
- iku-dō'on ni* 異口同音に 'unanimously' (lit. different mouths, same voice)
- zengo-fukaku ni naru* 前後不覚になる 'become unconscious' (lit. before-after-not conscious)
- hanshi-hanshō no (me ni au)* 半死半生の (目にあう) 'be half killed' (lit. half-dead, half-alive)
- yūjū-fudan na (seikaku)* 優柔不断な (性格) 'indecisive, irresolute character' (lit. gently, softly indecisive)
- rōyō-danjo o (towazu)* 老幼男女を (問わず) 'irrespective of age and sex' (lit. old-child-man-woman)
- hanshin-hangi de* 半信半疑で 'half in doubt' (lit. half-believe, half-doubt)
- baji-tōfū to (kikinagasu)* 馬耳東風と (聞き流す) 'turn a deaf ear to' (lit. horse ear, eastern wind).

From the point of view of their grammatical structure the *kambun* tetrads represent a guest (borrowed) system within a host (genuine) one, i.e., they consist of Sino-Japanese morphemes combined accordingly to Sino-Japanese grammatical rules. Therefore they may be an interesting object of investigation not only for Sinologists but also for students of Japanese. The former tend to regard them as mere escapees from Chinese and, what seems the most common attitude, evaluate their grammaticalness from the point of view of Classical Chinese grammar. Still, for the latter it would be interesting to describe the tetrads as assimilated and permanent immigrants, i.e. to observe their behaviour within the host language.

It is interesting that some of the tetrads have been partly transformed grammatically into genuine structures and in result their parallel, more or less accurate, counterparts appeared in the host genuine system. This means that their originally Sino-Japanese constituents are combined according to genuine grammatical rules:

cf.

fuhen-futō 不偏不党 (lit. no company, no party)

and

hen sezu tō sezu 偏せず党せず 'free from affiliations, nonpartisan'

fuki-fu'un 富貴浮雲 (lit. riches-honors floating clouds)

and

fuki wa fu'un no gotoshi 富貴は浮雲の如し 'riches and honors are like floating clouds'

keiten-aijin 敬天愛人 (lit. respect heaven and love people)

and

ten o kei shi, hito o ai su 天を愛し、人を愛す 'respect Heaven and love humanity'

shichū-kyūkatsu 死中求活 (lit. while dying demand rescue)

and

shichū ni katsu o motomu 死中に活を求む 'try to find a way out of a hopeless situation'.

Needless to say, the above genuine version of *kambun* tetrads represent another grammatical subsystem of present-day Japanese, namely the *bungo* subgrammar.

As we can see, the difference between genuine and Sino-Japanese strings is of a grammatical rather than merely phonological character since (apart from some slight peculiarities in allophonic composition and combinability) both the Sino-Japanese and genuine ones consist generally of the same phonemes. However, due to the great number of homophones within the *kambun* morphemes, here the efficiency of phonological system seems to be considerably limited and this results in the fact that *kambun* tetrads usually cannot be perceived in the spoken subcode but they have to be additionally seen in written form. This is also the reason why they have their above-mentioned partly genuine counterparts, adapted for use in spoken form in order to be less homophonous.

Still, in the tetrads themselves we can observe some important structural peculiarities which make them more comprehensible in spoken form too. The most important feature here is their clearly observable syntactic divisibility and bipartite character. This makes their structure almost transparent as to the function of constituent morphemes. This bipartition, however, results from two different reasons and must be taken into account from two different perspectives.

First, we can see here such a bipartition from the point of view of the guest system and it is of both semantic and syntactic character. What we can notice here at first glance is symmetry of constituents as to their syntactic position and semantic function. It must be added, however, that when we speak of morphemes in this case we have in mind their status from the point of view of the host system where they are bound elements and are required to be combined in pairs as minimal acceptable syntactic items. Apart from this external perspective, within a strictly internal one, i.e. as elements belonging to Sino-Japanese subsystem and viewed as to their mutual relations all these elements acquire more independent status not really far from that of single words or syntactic items.

Within such symmetric structures most of constituent morphemes are synonyms or antonyms of an analogous syntactic role:

a) tetrads with synonymous constituents

akusen-kutō 悪戦苦闘 'fight desperately, with one's back to the wall'
(lit. bad fight, painful struggle)

biji-reiku 美辞麗句 'beautiful words, flowery speech' (lit. beautiful words, elegant phrases)

kyōryoku-dōshin 協力同心 'to join forces (efforts) and bring hearts together' (lit. joined forces, common hearts)

kinka-gyokujō 金科玉条 'a golden rule' (lit. golden ordinance, precious paragraph)

zennan-zennyō 善男善女 'pious people' (lit. good-natured men, good-natured women)

zenchi-zennō 全知全能 'omniscient and omnipotent' (lit. all knowing, all mighty)

b) tetrads with antonymous constituents

dōkan-kyōku 同甘共苦 'share one's joys and sorrows' (lit. same sweets, common bitterness)

yūmei-mujitsu 有名無実 'to exist only in name' (lit. exist-name, no-reality)

daidō-shōi 大同小異 'to be substantially the same' (lit. big sameness, small difference)

hyakubun-ikken 百聞一見 'to see is to know' (lit. hundred hearings, single seeing)

isshin-ittai 一進一退 'one step forward, one step back' (lit. one forward one back)

gaijū-naigō 外柔内剛 'gentle at a glance but tough inside' (lit. outside soft, inside hard)

c) tetrads consisting of antonymous pairs

kido-airaku 喜怒哀樂 'all sorts of emotions' (lit. joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure)

kokon-musō 古今無双 'unparalleled in history' (lit. past-present-not exist two)

shūshi-ikken 終始一貫 'to be coherent, consistent' (lit. end-beginning one piece)

tōzai-nanboku 東西南北 'north, south, east and west; everywhere'

tenchi-chōkyū 天地長久 'Heaven and Earth are eternal; something lasts extremely long'

wayō-setchū 和洋折衷 'a mixed Japano-Western style, arrangement' (lit. Japanese-Western compromise)

d) tetrads with repeated constituents

i-i-daku-daku 唯唯諾諾 'to be yielding, to repeat: yes, yes' (lit. so, so, yes, yes)

mei-mei-haku-haku 明明白白 'clearly' (lit. bright, bright, clear, clear)
nen-nen-sai-sai 年年歲歲 'every year, year by year' (lit. year, year, generation, generation)
sensen-kyōkyō 戰戰恐恐 'with great fear, nervously' (lit. fighting, fearing)
seisei-dōdō 正正堂堂 'open and above-board; fair and square' (lit. 'right and noble')

e) tetrads with partly repeated constituents

jigō-jitoku 自業自得 'to suffer consequences of one's deeds; one must lie on the bed one has made' (lit. self-made self-obtain)
sōshi-sōai 相思相愛 'to love each other' (lit. mutually care for, mutually love)
issoku-ippan 一宿一飯 'to get a place to sleep and something to eat' (lit. one stay, one meal)
fusoku-furi 不即不離 'to be neutral, noncommittal' (lit. neither closely nor far)
fumin-fukyū 不眠不休 'without sleep or rest, all day and night' (lit. no sleep, no rest)
shihō-happō 四方八方 'in all directions, on all sides' (lit. four sides, eight sides).

The syntactic function of constituents within a tetrad is always clear with the predicate easily recognizable. Therefore we can indicate various syntactic schemes underlying single tetrads with different parts of speech: nouns (N), verbs (V), adjectives (ADJ), postpositions (POSTP), adverbs (ADV) and syntactic functions (signaled suprasegmentally by means of order of elements which is a basic typological property of Classical Chinese as an isolating and analytic language): subject (Sub), predicate (Pred), modifier (Mod), locative (Loc) and object (Obj), cf.

fushō-fuzui 夫唱婦隨 'husband orders and wife obeys'

(N Sub + V Pred) x 2

dōkō-ikyoku 同工異曲 'be practically the same, there is little to choose' (lit. same work, different tune; in music or literature)

(ADJ Mod + N) x 2

enkō-kinkō 遠交近攻 'to treat well distant ones and antagonize neighbours' (lit. far-associate-close-attack)

(ADV Mod + V Pred) x 2

koju-shōka 枯樹生花 (genuine: *kareki ni hana ga saku*

枯れ木に花が咲く) 'to be born again, to rejuvenate' (lit. flowers blossom on a withered tree)

(ADJ Mod + N Loc) + (N Sub + V Pred)

kajō-chūyu 火上注油 'to pour oil on the flames'

(N + POSTP) Loc + (V Pred + N Obj)

unchū-hakkaku 雲中白鶴 'white crane flying in clouds; beautiful view'

(N + POSTP) Loc + (ADJ Mod + N)

jinmen-jūshin 人面獸心 'human face but the heart of beast'

(N Mod + N) x 2

kachō-fūgetsu 花鳥風月 'beautiful view; flowers, birds, moon and wind' (as in Classical Chinese poetry or painting)

N x 4

Secondly, we can notice here also a bipartition from the point of view of the host system. Such a bipartition is different as to its source but analogous as to its results. It stems from the fact that the *kango* morphemes in Japanese are of bound character and tend to combine with their neighbours within a tetrad. We can illustrate this property in the following way:

-A-, -B-, -C-, -D- → (AB)(CD)

We should remember, however, that the so-called bound character in general is not a peculiarity of Sino-Japanese morphemes. In the genuine forms, such as grammatical forms of Japanese verb, we can call all the constituent morphemes bound ones. Cf.

kaw-ase-rare-ta 買わせられた '(sb) was forced to buy'

As we can see within the whole verb form, consisting equally of four morphemes, there is no single element which could be independent, non-bound word. In this respect the genuine grammatical forms show full analogy with the *kango* tetrad:

koshoku-kokō 古色古香 'old colour and old smell; the beauty of old things'

(-ko- + -shoku-) + (-ko- + -kō) → (AB)(CD)

But contrary to the *kango* phrase, the genuine one does not show any divisibility based on the above-mentioned structural symmetry and therefore must be represented by different scheme:

kaw-ase-rare-ta: -A-, -B-, -C-, -D- → (A)B)C)D).

This kind of bipartition may be sustained also by specific accentuation patterns which in many cases are of bipartite character too or at least the bipartite way of accentuation is among acceptable patterns: cf.

muni-musan 無二無三 'recklessly, desperately' (lit. no two, no three, i.e. just one way to become Buddha)

with single accentual pattern of *mu^ˊni-* *mu^ˊsan*, and

muri-mutai 無理無体 'by force, forcibly' (lit. no reason, no body, i.e. to prevent from doing something)

with three accentual patterns: *mu^ˊrimutai*, *mu^ˊri mu^ˊtai* or *mu^ˊrimu^ˊtai*.

Apart from accentual patterns there are also some other signals which sustain such divisibility of tetrads. This is the role of intermorphemic consonantal assimilations like voicing, gemination and labialization which in tetrads appear only between A and B or between C and D. Therefore we have:

jōi-gedatsu 上意下達 'to convey the will of those who govern to those who are governed'

(CD = *ge* + *tatsu*)

ui-tempen 有為轉變 'everything is changing'

(CD = *ten* + *hen*)

but the tetrad:

rakuhitsu-ten'yō 落筆点蠅 'exquisite skill, masterly performance'
(lit. dropped brush draws a fly)

cannot be pronounced as

**rakuhitten'yō*.

The only exception is the case when the same elements are repeated within a single tetrad like in:

fushōbushō 不承不承 'reluctantly, unwillingly'

where the accentual pattern is *fu*¹*shōbu*¹*shō*.

It will be interesting to note that there are cases when both perspectives, i.e. both types of subordination to the host system or to the guest system, are contradictory to each other. For instance, in the tetrad:

chōyū-kōgan 朝有紅顏 'in the morning one has red face... (but in the evening his body will be nothing but white bones)

genuine:

ashita ni kōgan... (arite. *yūbe ni wa hakkotsu to nareru mi nari*)
朝に紅顏有りて...(夕べには白骨となれる身なり)

the constituent elements are combined in the (A(B(CD))) pattern from the first perspective and in the ((AB)(CD)) pattern from the second one, i.e. the syntactic structure seen from the point of view of the guest system is in conflict with the bipartition structure imposed by the host system. Similarly, in the tetrad:

chōfū-bōyū 朝不謀夕 'in the morning nobody plans anything for the evening'

genuine:

ashita ni yūbe o hakarazu 朝に夕べを謀らず

we have a contradiction of analogous kind, i.e. between the pattern (A(BC)D))), imposed by the guest system, and the same bipartite pattern ((AB)(CD)) as a result of its genuine subordination.

Now, we can try to widen our perspective and bring into account examples of tetrads in other East Asian Languages where they are in use as frequently as in Japanese.

When we look into various lexicographic publications devoted to this category of expressions which recently have been widely published in Japan, Korea, China

and even Vietnam, we can easily found other Sino-xenic counterparts for nearly all Sino-Japanese tetrads known from their uses in Japanese texts:

Cf.

自給自足 'be self-sufficient' (lit. self-supply, self-suffice)

J.*jikyū-jisoku*

K.*chagŭp-chajok*

C.*zì jǐ zì zú*

V.*tự' cấp tự' túc*

千辛万苦 'indescribable hardships' (lit. thousand-bitterness, ten thousands-bitterness)

J.*senshin-banku*

K.*ch'ŏnshin-mango*

C.*qián xīn wān kǔ*

V.*thiên tân vạn khổ*^p

口是心非 'to be insincere' (lit. mouth-yes, heart-no)

J.*kōze-shinhi*

K.*kushi-shimbi*

C.*kǒu shì xīn fēi*

V.*khẩu thị tâm phi*^p

見利忘義 'to forget one's duty in order to make profit' (lit. see-profit, forget-duty)

J.*kenri-bōgi*

K.*kyōlli (= kyōn + ri)-mangŭi*

C.*jiàn lì wàng yì*

V.*kiến lợi vong nghĩa*

先義後利 'duty in the first place and profit in the second' (lit. before-duty, after-profit)

J.*sengi kōri*

K.*sŏnŭi-huri*

C.*xiān yì hòu lì*

V.*tiên nghĩa hậ u lợi*

千山万水 'many mountains and many rivers' (lit. thousand-mountain, ten thousand, myriad-water)

J.*sensan-bansui*

K.*ch'ŏnsan-mansu*

C.*qiān shān wàn shuǐ*

V.*thiên sơn vạn thủy*^p

百戰百勝 'to be always victorious' (lit. hundred-war, hundred-victory)

J.*hyakusen-hyakushō*

K.*paektchŏn-paeksŭng*

- C.bǎi zhàn bǎi shèng
 V.bách chiến bách thắng
 百發百中 'never miss the target' (lit. hundred-shot, hundred-hit)
 J.hyappatsu-hyakuchū
 K.paekppal-paektchung
 C.bǎi fǎ bǎi zhòng
 V.bách phát bách trúng
 空前絕後 'the first and probably the last, unprecedented' (lit. emptiness before and nothing after)
 J.kūzen-zetsugo
 K.konjōn-chōlhu
 C.kōng qián jué hòu
 V.không tiể tuyệt hậu
 同生同死 'to share life and death, to live and to die together' (lit. same-life, same-death)
 J.dōsei-dōshi
 K.tonsaeng-tongsa
 C.tóng sheng tóng sì
 V.đồng sinh đồng tử²
 百川歸海 'the sea refuses no river; all roads lead to Rome, (lit. hundred rivers return to the sea)
 J.hyakusen-kikai
 K.paekch'ōn-kwihae
 C.bǎi chuān guī hǎi
 V.bách xuyên quy hải²

Listed above are only a few examples of tetrads, which must be regarded not merely Sino-xenic strings incorporated into host genuine environment but a unique linguistic and literary genre common to all languages discussed here. Despite their nominal treatment in East Asian lexicography they are undoubtedly sentence-like items and this feature makes them extremely useful as slogans, mottoes, maxims, proverbs or just as tokens of the speaker's erudition.¹

They represent a wide area of East Asian civilization and being a part of common subsystem they are easily transposable from one East Asian language to another through a simple substitution of their elements. Therefore, here, their co-systemism means that there is no need of translation since their grammar is interiorized into linguistic competence of East Asian speakers as a separate Classical Chinese decoding subgrammar. This also means that in description of their linguistic status and function we have to distinguish the internal relations within a tetrad (i.e. the syntactic relation between A and B, C and D) on the one hand,

¹ The linguistic material discussed here has been checked in the following sources: Nguyễn Văn Bao 1998, KSSO 1999, Yi Sang-Ga 1998, Takeda A. 1990, Shintō K. 1986.

and the external relations between the tetrad and the genuine environment which shows at least in Japanese and Korean a clear tendency to nominalizing subordination on the other. The systemic peculiarities in the structure and function of Sino-xenic tetrads we have discussed above, using Japanese examples, such as homophony and polysemy of constituents, syntactic bipartition, structural symmetry, uses of synonymic and antonymic structures, are clearly observable in all languages forming this unique and interesting for further investigation linguistic circle.²

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² Other aspects of East Asian polysystemism and co-systemism are discussed in: Huszcza 1987, 1991 and 1998.