Notes on the HENTAIGANA「江」and the ARCHAIC HIRAGANA YE by Japanese experts

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THE BOTTOM LINE of this issue is that ARCHAIC HIRAGANA YE as a phonetic value can be represented with the HENTAIGANA「江」as a glyphic image. In other words, the ARCHAIC HIRAGANA YE is one of the usages of the HENTAIGANA「江」.

1. It is commonly accepted by researchers in Japanese language studies that each of the phonetic values /e/ and /je/ was independently used by circa. A.D. 950, and later this difference between /e/ and /je/ disappeared.

2. This difference between /e/ and /je/ is evidenced by usages found in 万葉仮名 (*Manyogana,* a writing system composed of Chinese characters used to represent phonetic values only) and *Katakana* (syllabic characters used to transliterate 漢文訓点史料, historical documents in Chinese annotated with Japanese scripts).

3. In that era (middle of the 10th century or earlier), there used to be more than one ways for selecting *Manyogana* or *Katakana* (early *Katakana*) characters to represent one phonetic value, and there existed some accepted conventions. So, there were multiple ways in representing the phonetic value /je/, for which different characters could be used. It was not always represented with the only same character. Of course, different characters used to represent the sound could have different frequencies, and there might be characters with higher or lower frequencies. However, there was no orthography to prescriptively specify one particular character to be the only character to represent the phonetic value /je/.

4. The existence of the differentiation between /e/ and /je/ by using 万葉仮名 (*Manyogana*) and *Katakana* characters in the middle of the 10th century or earlier may tempt us to guess that similar usages of *Hiragana* characters for phonetic differentiation had existed. However, there were too few documents written in *Hiragana* before the middle of the 10th century. This prevents researchers in this field from saying anything conclusive about the point. Also, it should be noted that *Hiragana* as a writings system was established in the 10th century. Details of the writing practices in those days are not clearly known. Although some papers discuss some different usages of *Hentaigana* characters in the manuscript of *Tosa Nikki* (土佐日記), those discussions are based on manuscripts transcribed in later years. Therefore, it is thought that it may be possible to predict different phonetic values, but it's not appropriate to predict characters and character shapes, based on the non-original transcribed copies.

6. In and after the Meiji era, researchers began to use 漢文訓点史料 (historical documents in Chinese with guiding marks and characters for Japanese readers) to investigate the history of the Japanese language. Some researchers devised a method to represent the phonetic value /je/ by using the *Hentaigana* character「江」, when they transliterated Chinese texts with *Hiragana* characters, mainly for the purpose of denoting transcribed texts or key characters in *Kana* glyph shape tables. However, today, this method is rarely used by researchers.

6. Based on these, it is appropriate to conclude that the *Hentaigana*「江」can be used to represent the phonetic value /je/ as one of its possible usages.

私の結論は、"ARCHAIC HIRAGANA YE" は変体仮名「江」(HENTAIGANA-E1)の用法の一つである、となります。

1. 国語学の定説では、10 世紀半ば（950 年頃）まで、ヤ行 /je/ が日本語音韻上の独立した音節として存在していた（後に /e/ と合流し区別を失う）。

2. ヤ行 /je/ とア行 /e/ の音韻上の区別は、10 世紀半ば以前の万葉仮名（万葉集など）や片仮名（漢文訓点資料）の書き分けによって証明される。

3. 10 世紀半ば以前の万葉仮名や片仮名（初期の省画仮名）に書き分けがあるといっても、ヤ行 /je/ を代表する唯一の万葉仮名字体や片仮名字体があったわけではない。ヤ行 /je/ を表す複数の万葉仮名字体、複数の片仮名字体があった（もちろん、複数字体のうち度数が高い・レンジが広いものが認められようが、正書法の如き規範が存在したような事実はない）。

4. 10 世紀半ば以前の万葉仮名や片仮名に書き分けがあったのであれば、平仮名でも書き分けがあったことが想定されるが、10 世紀半ば以前の平仮名資料が乏しく（そもそも文字体系としての平仮名は 10 世紀に成立したとされる）、実態がよくわからない。土佐日記写本の書き分けを扱う論文があるが、後代の写本によるため、音韻を推定することはできようが、文字・字形を推定することは適切ではないと考える。

5. 明治近代になってから、漢文訓点資料を日本語史研究に使うようになった。10 世紀半ば以前の訓点資料の書き分けを平仮名で表現する際、ヤ行 /je/ に変体仮名「江」を用いる方法が考案された。書き下し文や仮名字体表の見出しを表現するためである。しかし、この方法は、現在の日本語史研究ではあまり用いられていない。

6. 変体仮名「江」の用法の一つに、ヤ行 /je/ を表現することがある、とするのが適切である。