

Chinese “Face” in Japanese and English (Part 1)

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Chinese “face” meaning ‘prestige ; honor ; pride ; status ; dignity’ is a globally pervasive loanword. This paper compares the twenty-five, twelve, and one century histories of “face ; prestige” lexicalizations in Chinese, Japanese, and English ; surveys other languages, and discusses the sociolinguistic universality of “face.”¹

INTRODUCTION

The term “face” keeps cropping up in our conversation, and it seems such a simple expression that I doubt whether many people give it much thought. Recently, however, we have heard this word on the lips of foreigners too, who seem to be studying it. They find it extremely hard to understand, but believe that “face” is the key to the Chinese spirit and that grasping it will be like grabbing a queue twenty-four years ago [when wearing queues was compulsory]-everything else will follow. (Lu Xun, [1934] 1959 : 129)

“Face” has been analyzed from diverse disciplines-sinology (Macgowan 1912, Lu 1934), anthropology (Hu 1944), sociolinguistics (Yang

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1945), sociology (Stover 1962, Ho 1974, 1975), psychology (Goffman 1955, Chu 1983, Bond 1991), literary psychology (Eberhard 1967), communicative politeness (Brown and Levinson 1978), psycholinguistics (Huang 1985), theoretical semantics (Allen 1986), and comparative politics (Pharr 1989). However, “face” has never been thoroughly investigated as a linguistic borrowing. Considering these multi-disciplinary “face” analyses, the focus of the present study is lexicological, comparing developments of ‘face; prestige’ collocations in Chinese, Japanese, and English.²

For the sake of brevity, the following discussion is limited to citation forms of “face” words or collocations defined in dictionaries; in English for example, *lose face*, *save face*, *save-face*, *face-saving*, and *face-saver* are discussed, but non-dictionary expressions such as *gain face* are not. “Face” lexemes are presented in chronological order, citing the historical terminus, when known, for each word.³ Only the oldest usages of Chinese and Japanese “face” lexemes are translated, while others are simply cited by source date and original title. The initials C, J, E, and O designate Chinese, Japanese, English, and other languages in enumerating

2. Note the following abbreviations and conventions: ~ = alternate forms, “coll.” = colloquial or slang usage, and “lit.” = literary, poetic, elegant, or archaic usage. Double quotation marks are used for literal meanings and single quotation marks for semantic meanings; e.g., *liǎnsè* 臉色 “face color” ‘complexion; countenance’. Modern Chinese is romanized in the Pinyin system and Japanese in the Hepburn system. Karlgren’s (1957) reconstructions are cited for Archaic and Ancient Chinese. Since most dates are from the Current Era, C.E. ~ A.D. is omitted.

3. Dates of earliest recorded usages are cited from the *Dai Kan-Wa jiten* 大漢和辭典 (1960) and *Zhongwen dacidian* 中文大辭典 (1980) for Chinese, the *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 日本国語大辭典 (1976) for Japanese, and *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed., 1989) for English.

lexical items ; e.g., C1 *miàn* 面, C2 *miǎnnèn* 面嫩. Semantic glosses are abbreviated towards core meanings, but any word glossed as ‘honor’ also effectively means, or can be translated, ‘prestige’, ‘dignity’, etc.

The first section investigates Sinitic ‘face ; prestige ; honor’ words *miàn* 面, *yán* 顏, and *liǎn* 臉. The Chinese lexicon extended “face” metaphorically into numerous terms for its “loss ; lack” : e.g., C66 *bùyào liǎn* 不要臉 “not want face” ‘selfishly inconsiderate’ or C56 *yánmiàn sǎodì* 顏面掃地 “sweep (someone’s) face in the dirt” ‘to thoroughly discredit’.

The second discusses Japanese *men* 面, *tsura* 面, *omo(te)* 面, and *kao* 顏 ‘face ; prestige’ words. Besides directly borrowing Chinese “face” terms (e.g., J24 *tetsumenpi* 鉄面皮 < C12 *tiěmiànpi* 鉄面皮 “iron face skin” ‘brazen ; shameless’), Japanese invented expressions emphasizing “saving /gaining” rather than “losing face” (e.g., J85 *kao o uru* 顔を売る “sell face” ‘become popular ; gain influence’).

Section three examines the comparatively recent English ‘face ; prestige’ terms. The loan translation E1 *lose face* < C62 *diū liǎn* 丟臉 ‘lose face’ resulted in coining the antonymous E2 *save face* and its derivations (e.g., E4 *face-saving*). Almost all English terms derived from Chinese are loanwords (e.g., *kowtow* < *kōutōu* 叩頭 “knock head”), a few are calques (*brainwashing* < *xǐnǎo* 洗腦 “wash brain”), but *face* meaning ‘prestige ; respect ; dignity’ is a unique semantic loan translation.

The fourth surveys “face ; countenance” > ‘prestige ; honor’ borrowings and innovations in Oriental and Occidental languages, makes some general conclusions about why ‘face’ > ‘prestige’ polysemy is an

“invisible” borrowing, and considers *face* as a linguistic universal. Lastly, some suggestions are made for future research.

1 ‘FACE ; PRESTIGE’ IN CHINESE

Interesting as the Chinese physiological face is, the psychological face makes a still more fascinating study. It is not a face that can be washed or shaved, but a face that can be “granted” and “lost” and “fought for” and “presented as a gift.” Here we arrive at the most curious point of Chinese social psychology. Abstract and intangible, it is yet the most delicate standard by which Chinese social intercourse is regulated. (Lin Yu-Tang, 1935: 199-200)

Chinese ‘face ; countenance’ words *miàn* 面 §1.1, *yán* 顏 §1.2, and *liǎn* 臉 §1.3 were semantically extended into at least ninety-eight collocations for ‘prestige ; honor ; reputation’;⁴ usually lexicalized in compounds (e.g., C5 *miànmù* 面目 “face and eyes” ‘face’).

1.1 *Miàn* 面

Miàn < *mǐǎn*- < **mĭan* 面 is the primary Chinese ‘face’ word, dating back to Shang dynasty (?16th-11th cents. B.C.E.) oracle inscriptions (e.g., 𠄎) where it pictured a face with an 目 ‘eye’. This polysemous *miàn* 面 lexeme can mean: ‘face, countenance ; to face/front on ; surface, top ; face to face, in person ; outside ; top/right side ; (mathematical) plane ; breadth ; overall area ; side, aspect ; extent, range ; position, direction ; a numerative’, and :

C1 *miàn* 面 “face” ‘prestige ; reputation ; honor’ [cf. J1]

C2 *miànyǒu nǎnsè* 面有難色 “face has difficult color” ‘look embar-

4. Hu’s (1944) seminal study of Chinese “face” lists twenty-five expressions ; five for *liǎn* and twenty [he enumerates twenty-one, but there is no “7” 1944 : 56] for *miànzi*.

rassed ; be/appear reluctant’ [cf. C46]

C3 *miànnèn* 面嫩 “face delicate” ‘timid ; sensitive’ [cf. C58]

C4 *miànshāng wúguāng* 面上無光 “face without light” ‘loss/lack of prestige’ [cf. C82] .

Chinese uses these *miàn* 面 expressions C1-4 less commonly than *miàn* compounds below meaning ‘prestige’ : *miànmù* 面目 C5-7, *miànpí* 面皮 C8-12, *miànzi* 面子 C13-34, *tǐmiàn* 体面 C35-41, and *qíngmiàn* 情面 C42-46.

Miànmù 面目 “face [and] eye[s]” ‘face ; countenance ; appearance ; aspect’ is the oldest Chinese word for figurative “face.” In modern usage, *miànmù* 面目 more often means ‘appearance ; look’ (e.g., *miànmù yīxīn* 面目一新 ‘completely new look’) than ‘shame ; dishonor’ in :

C5 *miànmǔ* 面目 “face” ‘respect ; social standing ; prestige, honor ; sense of shame’ (?600 B.C.E. 詩經) [cf. J5]

C6 *wúmiànmǔ jiàn rén* 無面目見人 “without face to see people” ‘very ashamed’ [cf. C49]

C7 *kǔi wúmiànmǔ jiàn rén* 愧無面目見人 “ashamed without face to see people” ‘too ashamed to face anyone’.

Hu (1944 : 53) cites the *Guanzi* 管子 “Writings of Master Guan”-traditionally attributed to Guan Zhong 管仲 (d. 645 B.C.E.), but (Fung 1937 : 417) “obviously much later, possibly third century” B.C.E.-as the first usage of *miànmù* 面目 meaning ‘prestige’. Duke Xuan 桓公 of Qi (685-643 B.C.E.) regrets breaking a deathbed promise to his prime minister Guan Zhong, and says :

If the dead have no consciousness, it will be all right. But if they should have consciousness, [吾何面目以見仲父於地下] what [*miànmù*] would I have to see [Guanzi] under the ground? (國學基本 ed. 2/41, tr. Hu *ibid.*)

This allegedly first *miǎnmù* 面目 ‘shameless’ context closely resembles two passages in 3rd cent. B.C.E. histories. In the *Guoyu* 國語 “Discourses of the States” (四部叢刊 ed. 19/18a ; cf. rewording in 20/5a), King Fuchai 夫差王 of Wu (r. 495-473 B.C.E.) says almost exactly the same thing as Xuan: “吾何面目以見員也 How can I have the face to see my officials?” In the *Zhanguoci* 戰國策 “Records of the Warring States” (四部叢刊 ed. 3/82a), King Zheng 政王 of Qin (i.e., the first Qin dynasty emperor, 259-210 B.C.E.) asks a confessed embezzler 有何面目復見寡人 (Crump 1979: 145) “Then how could you be so shameless as to have audience with me again?”

The *Guanzi* 面目 may have copied this “face” line from the *Guoyu* or *Zhanguoci*, but both were preceded by several centuries in a (?10th-7th cents. B.C.E.) *Shijing* 詩經 “Book of Poetry/Odes” (199/8) *miǎnmù* 面目 usage ambivalently meaning ‘facial appearance’, ‘ashamed’, or ‘unashamed’. This unresolved ambiguity is owing to a context with the self-antonymous *tiǎn* 覷 ‘ashamed; unashamed’⁵ in the line “有覷面目 have (?un)ashamed *miǎnmù*” where 覷 is interpretable (Yuan and Tang 1981: 312) as an 慚愧 ‘ashamed’ [cf. C7] or a 狡獪 ‘cunning’ demeanor. Karlgren over-literally translates by splitting linguistic atoms (e.g., 面目 ‘face’ into “countenance and eyes”):

If you were a spectre or a demon, you could not be caught hold of ;
[有覷面目] but since you as a normal face have a countenance and
eyes, I regard you, the man, as (having no limit :) acting recklessly.
(1950: 150 ; cf. 1964, no. 614)

5. Cf. *tiǎnyán* 覷顏 ‘shamefaced’, *miǎntiǎn* 面覷 ‘blush’, *tiǎnliǎn* 覷臉 ‘shameless’, and *tiǎnkānliǎn* 覷看臉 ‘brazen it out’.

Most commentators accept the interpretation of *tiǎn* 覩 as an ideograph signifying 面 ‘face’ + 見 ‘see’ > ‘having a visible face’,⁶ but that is semantically dubious, if not pleonastic, in context with 面 ‘face’. This oldest recorded *miànmù* 面目 makes better contextual sense as ‘brazen-faced’ (modified by 覩 ‘?cunning’), much like another *Shijing* ode (§1.2) using 顏之厚 “facially thick” to denote ‘unashamed’.⁷

Miǎnpí 面皮 means “facial skin” literally (e.g., *miǎnpí zhōu* 面皮皺 ‘wrinkled face’) or ‘shame’ figuratively in:

C8 *miǎnpí* 面皮 “face skin” ‘sense of shame/honor’ (西京雜記) [cf. J22]

C9 *bō miǎnpí* 剝面皮 “peel face skin”⁸ ‘to shame; to humiliate’ (?360 語林) [cf. J27]

C10 *miǎnpí hòu* 面皮厚 “face skin thick” ‘thick-skinned; shameless; brazen’ (620 南史)

C11 *miǎnpí báo* 面皮薄 “face skin thin” ‘thin-skinned; diffident; sensitive to shame’ [cf. C96]

6. 目 is used in a few ideographs, e.g., 看-手 ‘hand’ over 目 ‘eye’-for *kàn* ‘see; look at; watch’ §1.4., and 相-木 ‘tree’ and 目 ‘eye’-for *xīàng* ‘look at; appraise’.

7. The earliest dictionary definitions of *tiǎn* 覩 circularly refer to the *Shijing*. The (?3rd cent. B.C.E.) *Erya* 爾雅 (2/255) defines 覩 as *huā* 媿 (written with 女 ‘woman’ and 舌 ‘tongue’) ‘?unashamed’, a “dictionary word” without any textual usages, but defined in the (?200) *Fangyan* 方言 (2/37, 10/3) as a southern Chinese word for 獠 ‘mischievous, cunning’. The received text of the (ca. 100) *Shuowen* 說文 (9/15a) defines *tiǎn* 覩 as 面見 ‘see face to face’ and (12/16b) *huā* 媿 as 面醜 ‘ugly face’. However, many commentators discount these as miscopies, agreeing with Kong Yingda (574–648) who quotes these *Shuowen* definitions as 面見人 ‘see a person face to face’ and 面覩 ‘(?un)ashamed face’.

8. Cf. C9 with *bōpí* “peel the skin” 剝皮 ‘to skin; to extort’ and English to *fleece*.

C12 *tiěmiànpí* 鉄面皮 “iron face skin” ‘brazen; shameless’ (?960 北夢瑣言) [cf. J25].

The oldest term could be C8 or C9. The former C8 面皮 is found in the *Xijingzaji* 西京雜記 “Miscellaneous Records of the Western Capital,” a text of uncertain date containing Han era anecdotes, attributed to Liu Xin 劉歆 (?53 B.C.E.–C.E. 23), edited by Ge Hong 葛洪 (284–363) and Wu Jun 吳均 (469–520). In a story (抱經堂 ed. 下 3a) set during the 32–5 B.C.E. reign of Emperor Cheng 成帝, Cao Yuanli 曹元理 discovered a rat in the granary, and angrily told his friend Chen Guanghan 陳廣漢 who was responsible, “Not knowing rats were destroying the rice cannot be compared to being shamed.” The latter C9 剝面皮 first occurs in Pei Qi’s 裴啓 (fl. 362) *Yulin* 語林 “Forest of Sayings”; Jia Chong 賈充 (217–282) asked “Why would you skin someone’s ‘face?’” and Sun Hao 孫皓 answered “Because of hating his/her [顏之厚 cf. C50] shamelessness.”⁹

Miànzi 面子 (with the common enclitic *-zi*) ‘face; outside; surface; (garment) facing; veneer; appearance’ is used in the following phrases regarding ‘face; prestige’:

C13 *miànzi* 面子 “face” ‘character; reputation; self-respect; prestige, honor; social standing’ (1060 唐書) [cf. J29]

C14 *gù miànzi* 顧面子 “consider face” ‘be concerned about prestige’ [cf. C54]

C15 *jiǎngjiū miànzi* 講究面子 “stress face” ‘be particular about prestige’ [cf. C41]

9. The (ca. 290) *Sanguozhi* 三国志 “Tale of Three Kingdoms” biography of Sun Hao has a more literal sense: “或剝人之面或鑿人之眼 or peel someone’s face, or chisel out someone’s eyes.”

- C16 *zēngjiā miànzi* 增加面子 “increase face” ‘gain prestige’ (esp. through charity, etc.)
- C17 *zhēng miànzi* 爭面子 “struggle for face” ‘try to gain prestige /status (over someone); “keeping up with the Jones”’
- C18 *gěi miànzi* 給面子 “give face [esp. with praise]” ‘show respect (for someone’s feelings)’
- C19 *liú miànzi* 留面子 “leave face” ‘give/grant (someone) a chance to regain lost honor’¹⁰
- C20 *fūyán miànzi* 敷衍面子 “padding [with] words face” ‘show deference’
- C21 *kān wǒde miànzi* 看我的面子 “look at my face” ‘do (something) as a favor for me’
- C22 *jiè mǒumǒurènde miànzi* 借某某人的面子 “borrow someone’s face” ‘take advantage (of an acquaintance)’
- C23 *tuō mǒumǒurènde miànzi* 託某某人的面子 “request someone’s face” ‘ask a favor (of someone)’
- C24 *bǎoquān miànzi* 保全面子 “preserve intact face” ‘maintain/uphold honor’
- C25 *yào miànzi* 要面子 “want face” ‘eager to gain reputation’
- C26 *zhuǎn miànzi* 轉面子 “turn/change face” ‘restore lost prestige’
- C27 *ài miànzi* 愛面子 “love face” ‘(overly) concerned about honor’
- C28 *yǒu miànzi* 有面子 “have face” ‘esteemed; honored; respected’

10. In explanation of *liú miànzi*; a Chinese “does not crush an opponent in public argument, leaving him with nothing to say looking very much of a fool,” Bloodworth (1967 : 301) says, “He is content to let the man know that he could do this if he chose.”

- C29 *méiyǒu miànzi* 没有面子 “not have face” ‘lack prestige; not well known’
- C30 *méi miànzi* 没面子 “not [have] face” coll. ‘not well known; lack prestige’
- C31 *shī miànzi* 失面子 “lose face” ‘lose prestige/honor’ [cf. J32]
- C32 *diū miànzi* 丢面子 “lose face” ‘lose prestige/honor’
- C33 *miànzhishàng bùhǎokàn* 面子上不好看 “face not look good” ‘lose honor/respect’¹¹
- C34 *sīpò miànzi* 撕破面子 “tear up face” ‘unconcerned about honor’ [cf. C75].

C13 *miànzi* first occurs in the *Tangshu* 唐書 “Tang [dynasty] History” (185, cf. C53); Zhang Jun’s 張濬 (d. 904) biography tells how he wanted to violate a direct command by prematurely attacking a rebellion. Yang Fugong 楊復恭 asks “Why would you on [punning 一面 ‘one face’] one side disobey orders? Do you want to make [(cf. C71) 面子] ‘face?’” Zhang quips, “After the rebels are controlled, then [my] face will be seen.” C25 *yào miànzi* 要面子 specifies ostentatiously trying to “gain face,” and is semantically close to English *save face* §3.3. The 面子 collocations C28 and C29 with *yǒu* 有 ‘have’, e.g., *wǒmen yǒu miànzi* 我們有面子 “we have face” ‘we honor/respect each other’, bespeak the reciprocity of “face” (Ho 1975: 873-4, Huang 1985: 71).

Tǐmiàn 体面 “body face,” affixed with *tǐ* 体 ~ 體 ‘body; shape; form; substance; content; style; system’, means ‘face; good looking; elegant; literary form/style [= *tǐcāi* 体裁]’, and ‘honor’ in:

11. C33 especially refers to loss of respect or prestige due to neglecting a minor social convention.

- C35 *tǐmiàn* 体面 “face” ‘prestige ; dignity ; honor ; honorable’ [cf. J35]
- C36 *shī tǐmiàn* 失体面 “lose face” ‘be disgraced ; lose prestige’
(?1400 水滸傳)
- C37 *yǒushī tǐmiàn* 有失体面 “have loss of face” ‘lose prestige ; lose honor’
- C38 *bùtǐmiànde* 不体面的 “not facial” ‘disgraceful ; disreputable’
- C39 *wéichí tǐmiàn* 維持体面 “maintain/preserve face” ‘keep up appearances’ [cf. J39]
- C40 *zhuāng tǐmiàn* 妝/装体面 “dress up face” ‘pretend to be well off’
- C41 *jiǎngjiū tǐmiàn* 講究体面 “stress face” ‘concerned with honor’ [cf. C15].

C36 occurs in the early Chinese novel *Shuihuzhuan* 水滸傳 “Tale of the Marshes” (41) which portrays the rebel Song Jiang 宋江 (fl. 1101-1120) as “trembling and fearful, lest he would lose face.” Ho explains *tǐmiàn* 体面 as :

An aspect of face which applies especially to men of social prominence is known as [*tǐmiàn*], an expression without an exact equivalent in English. [*Tǐmiàn*] is the social front, the ostensible display of one’s social standing to the public. It is both a prerogative and an implicit obligation for the socially prominent to be particular about [*tǐmiàn*], i.e., to [(C41) *jiǎngjiū tǐmiàn*]. (1974 : 241)

Qíngmiàn 情面 “feelings face”,¹² with *qíng* 情 ‘expressive face ;

12. Cf. the reverse *miànqíng* 面情 ‘intercourse ; friendship’ and *miànziqíng* 面子情ル ‘superficial friendliness’.

feelings ; sentiment ; love ; favor ; kindness ; situation ; condition', means 'feelings ; kindness ; sensibilities' or interpersonal "face" in :

C42 *qíngmiàn* 情面 "face" 'prestige ; favor ; kindness ; partiality (out of respect for someone)' (1694 福惠全書)

C43 *liú qíngmiàn* 留情面 "leave face" 'spare (someone's) feelings' [cf. C19]

C44 *bùjiǎng qíngmiàn* 不講情面 "not stress face" 'spare (someone's) feelings'

C45 *bùyuàn qíngmiàn* 不願情面 "not desire face" 'have no consideration for prestige'

C46 *qíngmiàn nánquè* 情面難卻 "face difficult to decline" 'hard to refuse (some request) because of friendship' [cf. C2].

Qíngmiàn is a comparatively modern *miàn* 'prestige' compound, first recorded three centuries ago in the *Fuhuiquanshu* 福惠全書 "Complete Book of Blessings" (錢穀部): "And [破] smash to pieces scholarly 'face'." This *pò* 破 'break, broken ; cleave ; defeat ; expose' has an analogous "break [face]" meaning in C34 *sīpò miànzi* 撕破面子 and C75 *sīpò liǎn* 撕破了臉, but it has a different sense-like English *break up*-in *pòyán* 破顏 "break face" 'break into a smile'.

The above *miàn* 'prestige' meanings of *miànmu* 面目, *miànpí* 面皮, *miànzi* 面子, *tǐmiàn* 体面, and *qíngmiàn* 情面 reveal a measurable, quantifiable concept of "face." Hu says *miàn* :

can be borrowed, struggled for, added to, padded, -all terms indicating a gradual increase in volume. It is built up through initial high position, wealth, power, ability, through cleverly establishing social ties to a number of prominent people, as well as through avoidance of acts that would cause unfavorable comment. (1944 :

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In contrast, *yán* 顏 and *liǎn* 臉 below are less quantifiable.

1.2 Yán 顏

Yán < *ngan* < **ngan* 顏 ‘face’, which first appeared on (11th-7th cents. B.C.E.) Western Zhou dynasty bronze inscriptions (e.g. 鬲), has meanings of ‘face; (esp.) forehead;¹³ countenance; prestige; color, dye; a surname’. *Yán* means ‘face; prestige’ uncompounded in C47-49 or compounded in *yánhòu* 顏厚 C50-52 and *yánmiàn* 顏面 C53-C56.

C47 *yán* 顏 “face” ‘prestige; reputation; honor’

C48 *diū yán* 丟顏 “lose face” ‘lose prestige’

C49 *wúyán jiànrén* 無顏見人 “without face to see people” ‘too ashamed to appear in public’ [cf. C6]

A semantic connection exists between ‘facial makeup’ and ‘color’, cf. English *put on one’s face* ‘apply makeup’. For example, *yánsè* 顏色 “face color” can mean ‘facial expression’ or ‘hue, color’ (cf. coll. *yánshai* 顏色 ‘pigment; dyestuff’). In discussing Chinese ‘sex’ terms, Eberhard notes *yán* 顏:

Which in classical Chinese is the word often used to express “loss of face,” has in addition to the main meaning of “face” also the connotation of “color” and, derived from this connotation, the second connotation, “sex.” The second word for sex, [*sè* 色], also has the basic meaning of “color.” Both words clearly refer to

13. This 顏 ‘face’ meaning seems to have originally specified the ‘brow; forehead’. The *Shuowen* (9A/1) defines 顏 as 眉目之間 ‘space between the eyebrows and eyes; ?eyelids’, but this is corrected by commentators to 眉之間 ‘space between the eyebrows’. The *Fangyan* 方言 (10/34) defines 顏 as a southern Chinese dialectal term for 額 ‘forehead’.

impressions of the eye. (1967: 12)

Compare the 色 “colors” in C2 and J81 with the collocation *miànbùgǎisè* 面不改色 “face does not change color” ‘remain calm; without batting an eyelid’.

Yánhòu 顏厚 “face thick” ‘thick-skinned; countenance’ is lexicalized in:

C50 *yánhòu* 顏厚 “face thick” ‘thick-skinned; brazen; impudent, shameless; dishonorable’ (?600 B.C.E. 詩經)

C51 *hòuyán* 厚顏 “thick face” ‘thick-skinned; shameless; brazen’ (?200 B.C.E. 荀子) [cf. J67]

C52 *yánjiǎ* 顏甲 “face shell/armor” ‘thick-skinned; brazen’ (?950 開元天寶遺事).

Yánhòu 顏厚 originated in the ancient *Shijing* (cf. C5) phrase 顏之厚矣 (with the possessive/attributive particle 之) “oh! thick-faced” > ‘shameless’: (198/5, tr. Karlgren 1950: 148) “the artful words [of slanderers] are like a reed-organ; that (is =) shows the thickness of their face (their shamelessness).”¹⁴

Yánmiàn 顏面 is a “face face” synonym-compound meaning literal ‘face’ (e.g., *yánmiàn shénjīng* 顏面神經 ‘facial nerve’), ‘countenance’, or

14. The reverse C51 *hòuyán* 厚顏 ‘shameless’ first appears in the (?3rd cent. B.C.E.) *Xunzi* 荀子 (Harvard-Yenching ed. 21/16, Dubs 1928: 278) warning that wrong-minded people will “be shameless and allow outrageous acts.” A (4th cent.) forged section of the *Shujing* 書經 (8/9) says “顏厚有忸怩 thick faces are blushing.” A poem (北山移文) by Kong Zhigui (447-501) criticizes a “厚顏無恥 thick (skinned) face without shame,” and this became a classical phrase for ‘impudent; shameless’.

figurative “face” in:

C53 *yánmiàn* 顏面 “face” ‘honor ; prestige’

C54 *gùquán yánmiàn* 顧全顏面 “consider the whole face” ‘spare (someone’s) feelings’

C55 *sǎo tāde yánmiàn* 掃他的顏面 “sweep his/her face” ‘insult (someone)’

C56 *yánmiàn sǎodi* 顏面掃地 “face sweep dirt” ‘thoroughly discredit (someone)’ [cf. J73].

The inception of *yánmiàn* “face” meaning ‘prestige’ is historically uncertain. C53 meaning visitors’ ‘faces’ was first recorded in the *Tangshu* 唐書 (132, cf. C13) biography of Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721). C56 uses the term *sǎodi* 掃地 “sweep [in the] dirt” meaning ‘drag (esp. honor, creditability, etc.) in the dirt’; compare Chinese *míngyù sǎodi* 名譽掃地 “sweep (someone’s) reputation in the dirt” ‘totally defame’ with Portuguese 021 *ficar com a cara no chão* “have (one’s) face on the ground” ‘be embarrassed to death’.

Chinese uses *yán* 顏 less commonly in expressing ‘face ; prestige’ than either *miàn* 面 above or *liǎn* 臉 below.

1.3 Liǎn 臉

Liǎn < *liǎm* 臉 is the most recent Chinese ‘face’ word, and people began figuratively using it to mean ‘prestige’ circa 1400 [see the P.S.]. Citing the (1716) *Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典, Hu (1944: 45) erroneously concludes that *liǎn* 臉 was first used during the Yuan dynasty (1277-1367). However, *hóngliǎn* 紅臉 “red face” ‘blushing face’ occurs in a poem 妾薄命詩 by Liang dynasty Emperor Jian Wen 簡文帝 (r. 550-551) and C58 *liǎn-nèn* 臉嫩 “delicate face” ‘bashful’ in one by Tang Emperor Yuan Zong 玄

宗帝 (r. 713–757).¹⁵

The basic senses of *liǎn* 臉 are ‘face; countenance; (to) front’ (cf. 面 §1.1 ‘to face/front’). Metaphorical *liǎn* “face,” denoting the entirety of ‘prestige; reputation; character’, is lexicalized in *liǎnshàng* 臉上 C80–88, *liǎnmiàn* 臉面 C89–92, and *liǎnpí* 臉皮 C93–98 compounds, and alone in C57–79:

C57 *liǎn* 臉 “face” ‘respect; character; reputation; prestige’

C58 *liǎnnèn* 臉嫩 “face delicate” ‘bashful; shy, timid; inexperienced’ (?750) [cf. C3]

C59 *liǎnrǎn* 臉軟 “face soft/tender” ‘kindhearted; sensitive (to others); good-natured’

C60 *liǎnyìng* 臉硬 “face hard” ‘hardhearted, ruthless; flinty’ [cf. C94]

C61 *liǎnhòu* 臉厚 “face thick” ‘insensitive; thick-skinned’¹⁶ [cf. J69]

C62 *diūliǎn* 丟臉 “lose face” ‘lose prestige; be disgraced/dishonored’

C63 *shīliǎn* 失臉 “lose face” ‘lose prestige; be disgraced/dishonored’

C64 *shāngliǎn* 傷臉 “injure face” ‘discredit; shame’

C65 *gěi mǒumǒurén diūliǎn* 給某某人丟臉 “give someone loss of face” ‘dishonor; discredit’

15. 紅臉 also means ‘flushed (from agitation)’ or ‘red face (signifying heroic or honest characters in Beijing opera)’. *Liǎn* 臉 ‘face’ collocations were frequently employed by Tang (618–907) dynasty poets; e.g., Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) used *huāliǎn* 花臉 “flower face” ‘beautiful visage’.

16. C61 is expanded in the idiom *liǎnhòu bùāiè* 臉厚不挨餓 ‘a thick-skinned person need not starve’.

C66 *bùyào liǎn* 不要臉 "not want face" 'brazen; shameless; selfishly inconsiderate'

C67 *wúliǎn* 無臉 "without face" lit. 'audacious; shameless' [cf. C68]

C68 *měiyǒu liǎn* 沒有臉 "without face" 'audacious; wanton; shameless; disgraced'

C69 *méiliǎn jiàn rén* 沒臉見人 "without face to see people" 'too ashamed to face anyone' [cf. C6]

C70 *kàn tāde liǎn* 看他的臉 "look at his/her face" 'beg a favor (from someone)'

C71 *zuò liǎn* 作臉 "make face" 'do credit to (oneself); succeed'

C72 *zuò chūsǐ liǎndeshì* 做出死臉的事 "do kill face thing" 'disgrace (oneself); do something disgraceful'

C73 *liǎnhǎn* 臉罕 "face seldom/rare" 'shameless'

C74 *liǎntàihǎn* 臉太罕 "face extremely seldom/rare" 'too shameless; audacious'

C75 *sīpòle liǎn* 撕破了臉 "torn up face" 'unconcerned about shame; not spare (someone's sensibilities)' [cf. C34]

C76 *zhuǎn liǎn* 轉臉 "turn/change face" 'to honor; restore prestige' [cf. C26]

C77 *shǎng liǎn* 賞臉 "bestow face" 'to favor (someone by granting a request); give (someone) prestige'

C78 *shǎng liǎn cǐguāng* 賞臉賜光 "bestow face grant honor" 'give (someone) prestige' [cf. C4 and C82]

C79 *liǎndà* 臉大 "face big" 'influential; unabashed' [cf. C92]

C68 *měiyǒu liǎn* 沒有臉 and C66 *bùyào liǎn* 不要臉 strongly imply 'having no regard for reputation; unconcerned with violating morality'. Hu (1944: 51-52) contrasts *měiyǒu liǎn* as "the most severe condemnation

that can be made of a person” and *būyào liǎn* as,

a serious accusation meaning that ego does not care what society thinks of his character, that he is ready to obtain benefits for himself in defiance of moral standards.

Liǎnshàng 臉上 “on/in/above the face” is transferred to mean ‘honor’ in these expressions specifying ‘unable to “face” doing (something disgraceful)’:

C80 *liǎnshàng* 臉上 “face” ‘honor; respect’

C81 *liǎnshàng mǒbukāi* 臉上抹不開 “face cannot plaster [over]” ‘very ashamed; mortified’

C82 *liǎnshàng wúguāng* 臉上無光 “face without light” ‘lose prestige; feel ashamed’ [cf. C4 and C78]

C83 *liǎnshàng bùhǎokàn* 臉上不好看 “face not look good” ‘shameful; discreditable’ [cf. C90]

C84 *liǎnshàng xiàbulái* 臉上下不來 “face cannot come down” ‘too ashamed’

C85 *xiàbulái liǎn* 下不來臉 “cannot come down face” ‘too ashamed’

C86 *liǎnshàng guòbuqù* 臉上過不去 “face cannot go through” ‘unable to do (something disgraceful); too ashamed’

C87 *liǎnshàng bùdéjìng* 臉上不得勁 “face not get strength” ‘to look sheepish, appear ashamed’

C88 *yuánshàngliǎn* 圓上臉 “round up face” ‘do something out of respect (for someone)’.¹⁷

17. Neither C85 (cf. C84, using *xià* 下 ‘down; below; descend’, the antonym of *shàng* 上 ‘up; above; ascend’, in *xiàbulái* 下不來 ‘cannot; will not; feel em-

Liǎnmiàn 臉面 “face face” is a synonym-compound (cf. C53 顏面 above) meaning ‘face; countenance’, e.g., *liǎnmiàn fāguāng* 臉面發光 “face emits light” ‘shining countenance’; or ‘reputation’ in:

C89 *liǎnmiàn* 臉面 “face” ‘reputation; prestige; influence; self-respect’

C90 *liǎnmiànshàng bùhǎokàn* 臉面上不好看 “face not look good” ‘shameful; discreditable’

C91 *kàn wǒde liǎnmiàn* 看我的臉面 “look at my face” ‘show me consideration’

C92 *liǎnmiàn dà* 臉面大 “face big” ‘having great influence’ [cf. C79].

The above *liǎnmiàn* terms visually depict “face.”

Liǎnpí 臉皮 “facial skin” denotes ‘sensitivity to opinions of others’, comparable with English *thick-/thin-skinned*, in these collocations:

C93 *liǎnpí* 臉皮 “face skin” ‘sensitivity; compassion’

C94 *liǎnpí yìng* 臉皮硬 “face skin hard” ‘hardhearted, ruthless; uncompassionate’ [cf. C60 and C92]

C95 *liǎnpí hòu* 臉皮厚 “face skin thick” ‘shameless; brazen; defiant of public censure’

C96 *liǎnpí báo* 臉皮薄 “face skin thin” ‘diffident; sensitive to criticism; bashful; easily embarrassed’ [cf. C11]

C97 *hòuliǎnpí* 厚臉皮 “thick face skin” ‘thick-skinned; brazen; cheeky’

C98 *liǎnhān pihòu* 臉憨皮厚 “face foolish skin thick” ‘shameless;

barrased’) nor C88 (with the reverse 上臉) is technically a *liǎnshàng* 臉上 collocation, but they are grouped here owing to semantic similarities.

brazen’.

Chinese “thick-skinned” C95 is more common than “thin-skinned” C96, as seen in the noun-phrase C97 and the couplet C98 with *hān* 憨 ‘foolish; silly; naive’ (e.g., *hānhòu* 憨厚 ‘simple and honest’) which also, like 厚, means ‘thick’.

1.4 Summary

Overall, four Chinese lexical constructions-‘thick/thin’, ‘look’, ‘have’, and ‘lose’-recur with the ‘face’ words *miàn* 面 §1.1, *yán* 顏 §1.2, and *liǎn* 臉 §1.3.

First, Chinese antithetically modifies all three “face” words with *hòu* 厚 ‘thick; deep; great’ and *báo* ~ *bó* 薄 ‘thin; small; slight’ to describe ‘(in)sensitivity to prestige’. The ancient reversible “thick face” terms C50 顏厚 and C51 厚顏 evolved into the synonym C61 臉厚 and the “thick facial skin” lexemes C10 面皮厚, C95 臉皮厚, and C97 厚臉皮. “Thin facial skin,” in contrast, is expressed with C11 面皮薄 and C96 臉皮薄. In every case, “thick faced” means ‘thick-skinned; shameless; brazen’, and “thin faced” ‘thin-skinned; diffident; highly sensitive’.

Second, owing to the importance of the visible face, *kàn* 看 ‘see; look’ meaning ‘have consideration for’ and *bùhǎokàn* 不好看 ‘not look good’ describe ‘face’ (cf. *jiàn* 見 ‘see; appear’ in C6, C7, and C49). You can use C21 看我的面子, C70 看他的臉, or C91 看我的臉面 in asking someone to do a favor; and use C33 面子上不好看, C83 臉上不好看, or C90 臉面上不好看 to describe ‘discreditable; shameful’ behavior which “does not look good on the face.”

Third, there are several expressions for reciprocally *yǒu* 有 ‘having’ or *méiyǒu* 没有 ‘not having’ “face.” “Having face” was first seen in the classical *Shijing* and *Zhanguoci* quotes §1.1, and people currently use, for instance, C28 有面子 in collocations like *dàjiā yǒu miànzi* 大家有面子 ‘everybody has mutual honor’. “Not having face” is another matter; C29 *méiyǒu miànzi* 没有面子 (cf. its colloquial C30 没面子 variant) means ‘not well known; lacking prestige’; while C68 *méiyǒu liǎn* 没有脸 is a stronger ‘wanton, shameless’ insult.

Fourth, “losing face” can be expressed with the common ‘lose’ verb *shī* 失 and the rarer *diū* 丢 (written 一 ‘one’ over 去 ‘go,’ which the [?1610] *Zihui* 字彙 graphically interprets as 一 ‘once’ something is 去 ‘gone’, it is ‘lost’). *Shī* 失 ‘lose; miss; deviate’ refers to ‘losing face’ in C13 失面子, C36 失面体, C37 有失面体, and C63 失脸;¹⁸ while *diū* 丢 ‘lose; get rid of; throw away; put aside’ is used in the salient ‘lose face’ C32 丢面子 term, as well as C48 丢颜, C62 丢脸, and the causative C65 给某某人丢脸. Three other *diū* expressions are ‘lose face’ synonyms:

diūchǒu 丢醜 “lose ugliness/shame” ‘lose honor; be disgraced’
(?1700 桃花扇),

diūrén 丢人 “lose person”¹⁹ ‘lose face; be disgraced’,

diū tāde rén 丢他的人 “lose his/her person” ‘put (someone) to

18. Cf. “losses” of other body-parts: *shī jiǎo* 失脚 ~ *shī zú* 失足 “lose foot/feet” ‘slip; stumble’, *shī kǒu* 失口 “lose mouth” ‘slip of the tongue’, and *shī shǒu* 失手 “lose hand” ‘accidentally drop’. Some similar English examples are given in §3.3.

19. Hu (1944: 50) hypothesizes this *rén* 人 ‘person’ stands for *réngé* 人格 ‘character, moral quality; personality; dignity’, but another possibility would be *rén* 仁 ‘goodness, humanity; benevolence’.

shame’.

Diūchǒu 丟醜 was first recorded in the play 桃花扇 “Peach Blossom Fan” by Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648-1718).

Table 1 gives a general semantic overview of Chinese “face” lexicalizations, roughly divided between negative “lose” and positive “save” senses; but in Chinese, the positive aspect is more often expressed with “maintain; gain; increase” than literally “save” verbs. Some collocations are difficult to classify in this binary opposition, e.g., C46 *qíngmiàn nánquē* 情面難卻.

Table 1 – Chinese Semantic Distribution

LEXEMES	“LOSE FACE”	“SAVE FACE”
<i>miàn</i> 面	2	2
<i>miànmù</i> 面目	2	1
<i>miànpí</i> 面皮	3	2
<i>miànzi</i> 面子	6	16
<i>tǐmiàn</i> 体面	3	4
<i>qíngmiàn</i> 情面	2	3
<i>yán</i> 顏	2	1
<i>yánhòu</i> 顏厚	3	0
<i>yánmiàn</i> 顏面	2	2
<i>liǎn</i> 臉	14	9
<i>liǎnshàng</i> 臉上	7	2
<i>liǎnmiàn</i> 臉面	1	3
<i>liǎnpí</i> 臉皮	4	2

Most Chinese “face” lexemes are equally lexicalized in expressing “lose”

and "save." The only notable exceptions are a predominance of "saving" for C13-34 *miànzi* terms; and "losing" for C50-52 *yānhōu*, C57-79 *liǎn*, C80-88 *liǎnshàng*.

Recent studies of Chinese "face" (most of which overlooked *yán* 顏 §1.2) have principally accepted Hu Hsien Chin's distinction between a person's *miànzi* 面子 'social status' and *liǎn* 臉 'moral character'. Hu (1944 : 45) dichotomized *miànzi* as "a reputation achieved through getting on in life, through success and ostentation" versus *liǎn* which :

represents the confidence of society in the integrity of ego's moral character, the loss of which makes it impossible for him to function properly within the community.

Ho qualified Hu's 臉 versus 面子 differentiation :

although the distinction between the two sets of criteria for judging face-based on judgments of character and, broadly, of the amoral aspects of social performance-is justified, it cannot be anchored to a linguistic distinction between the two terms, [*liǎn*] and [*miànzi*], as proposed by Hu. However, we may continue to use these terms in the senses that Hu has defined. (1975 : 868)

On the basis of experiments showing that Chinese high school students defined losses of *miànzi* and *liǎn* interchangeably-while university students distinguished them-Huang concluded that :

Succinctly, among college subjects, loss of *miànzi* is more definitely tied to failure to measure up to one's sense of self-esteem or to what is expected by others, whereas loss of *liǎn* is closely tied to transgression of social codes. Hu's (1944) forty year old distinction between the two Chinese concepts of faces appears to stand very well, even today. (1987 : 73)

The validity of this *miànzi/liǎn* distinction is linguistically evident in the *yào* 要 ‘want; desire’ collocations C25 要面子 ‘eager to gain reputation’ and C66 不要臉 ‘brazen disregard for honor’.

For more than twenty-five centuries, the Chinese lexicon has been developing various “face” terminologies, particularly “losing face” synonyms. This is similar to Japanese in §2 but different from English in §3.

2 ‘FACE ; PRESTIGE’ IN JAPANESE

A better example [than playing “footsie”], however, is what used to happen in *yobai*, “night crawling,” a custom that alas, has now become too old-fashioned for modern youth. The young men would present himself to his beloved on a dark night, his head swathed in towels to conceal his identity. In face, of course, the girl usually knew who it was that was coming to seek her favors. But if she wished to refuse him she could do so without his losing face since that was hidden and the fiction could be maintained that she did not know it was he that she was refusing. (Herbert Passin, 1979 : 17)

Japanese has eighty-nine ‘face ; prestige’ terms (including literary ones); a few less than Chinese but far more than other languages. The Japanese lexicon imported figurative “face” and developed it into a number of locutions not found in Chinese.²⁰

In the following discussion, only infinitive forms are listed (with a few salient exceptions, e.g., J83 and J85), but Japanese conjugation generates myriad other forms. For instance, *kao o tsubusu* 顔を潰す “crush face” ‘dishonor’ is cited as J79, but not *kao o tsubusareru* 顔を潰される

20. Japanese adopted English *face* in *nyū feisu* ニューフェイス ‘new face [i.e., newcomer]’, *pōkā feisu* ポーカーフェイス ‘poker face’, and *feisu-ofu* フェイスオフ ‘face-off’.

“cause face to be crushed” ‘cause dishonor’, *kao o tsubusanai* 顔を潰さない “not crush face” ‘not dishonor’, etc.

The Chinese ‘face’ words *miàn* 面, *yàn* 顔 and *liǎn* 臉 have (*on-yomi* 音読み) Sino-Japanese pronunciations from Middle/Ancient Chinese: *men* < *miän* 面, *gan* < *ngan* 顔, and *ken* < *kiäm*: ~ *liäm*: 臉. At the Sinitic level of the Japanese lexicon, *men* 面 §2.1 is a common lexeme (e.g., *mendō* 面倒 “fall on face” ‘difficulty; trouble’), *gan* 顔 has limited usage (e.g., *ganmen* 顔面 ‘face’ < C53), while *ken* 臉 is rarely used. At the native Japanese level, 面 and 顔 have three (*kun-yomi* 訓読み) readings: 面 for elegant/literary *omo(te)* §2.2 ~ colloquial *tsura* §2.3, and 顔 for standard *kao* §2.4.

Kobayashi (1983) historically analyzed Japanese ‘face’ words and discovered *omote* 面 to be the oldest, first recorded during the seventh and eighth centuries. From the ninth to fourteenth centuries, the nobility used *kao* 顔 for ‘face’ while the commoners used *tsura* 面. Up to the present, *kao* has meant ‘face’ neutrally and *tsura* colloquially.²¹

2.1 Men 面

Japanese *men* < C1 *miän* 面 ‘face; features; mask, face-guard; surface; side; aspect; numerative (for mirrors, inkstones, etc.)’ meaning ‘honor’ is lexicalized alone in:

J1 *men* 面 “face” ‘honor; prestige’

J2 *men o nugu* 面を脱ぐ “remove face” ‘shame; dishonor’ (1711

21. There is modern dialectal variation (Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo 1969, no. 106) with ‘face’ being called *tsura* in Tohoku, Kyushu, and Okinawa, while normally called *kao* elsewhere.

冥途の飛脚)

J3 *men o kaburu* 面を被る “cover face” ‘mask; conceal/reveal shame; dishonor’ (1766 本朝三国志)

J4 *men no kawa o hagu* 面の皮を剥ぐ “peel face skin” lit. ‘shame; humiliate’ [cf. J27 and J64].

Chikamatsu Monzaemon’s 近松門左衛門 (1653-1724) ballad-drama entitled *Meido no hikyaku* 冥途の飛脚 “Netherworld Courier” (2) has the earliest usage of *men* ‘honor’ independently in J2: “Although people criticize achievements of loyalty and will, I want to reveal my true ‘face’.”

Four Sino-Japanese ‘face; prestige’ loanwords below use *men*: J5 *menboku* 面目 < C5 *miānmù*, J22 *menpi* 面皮 < C8 *miānpí*, J29 *mentsu* 面子 < C13 *miānzi*, and J35 *taimen* 体面 < C35 *tǐmiàn*. The only Chinese *miān* compound not taken into Japanese is C42 *qíngmiàn* 情面 because it was coined in the late seventeenth century, subsequent to most Japanese “face” borrowings.

Menboku 面目 “face [and] eye[s]” < C5 *miānmù* 面目 ‘face; honor, prestige’ is differentiated in pronunciation from *menmoku* 面目 ‘face; appearance; aspect’,²² though they are, to some degree, interchangeable. In contrast with the infrequent Chinese *miānmù* 面目 C5-7 terms, *menboku* is the most common Japanese ‘face; prestige’ term, in these seventeen collocations:

22. 目 can be pronounced *boku* in *kan-on* 漢字 ~ *moku* in *Go-on* 呉音. This *menboku* ~ *menmoku* distinction was first recorded in the (1603) *Nippo jisho* 日葡辞書. Cf. the semantic change from Chinese *zhēnmiānmù* 真面目 “straight faced” ‘true features/colors’ to Japanese *majime* 真面目 ‘serious; earnest; honest’.

- J5 *menboku* 面目 “face” ‘honor ; prestige ; reputation ; dignity’
(?900 菅家文章)
- J6 *menboku-nai* 面目ない “have no face” ‘shameful ; ashamed’²³
(?970 宇津保物語)
- J7 *menboku o ushinau* 面目を失う “lose face” ‘disgrace ; humili-
ate’ (?1200 金刀比羅本保元)
- J8 *menboku o hodokosu* 面目を施す “bestow face” ‘gain honor ;
give/get credit (for something)’ (1254 古今著聞集)
- J9 *menboku shidai* 面目次第 “face order” ‘according to degree of
status’ (1396 高野山文書)
- J10 *menboku o hai ni mabusu* 面目を灰に塗す “smear face with
ashes” ‘dishonor ; discredit’ (1670 雄長老狂歌集)
- J11 *menboku o tsuto ni tsutsumu* 面目を苞に包む “wrap up face in
straw” ‘brazen ; shameless’ (1785 世話尽)
- J12 *menboku o tsukeru* 面目を付ける “attach/apply face” ‘save/
gain honor’ (1792 詞葉新雅)
- J13 *menboku ga tatsu* 面目が立つ “face stands” ‘protect/save
honor’ (1871 春の潮, cf. J61)²⁴
- J14 *menboku o tsubusu* 面目を潰す “crush face” ‘ruin (someone’s)
dignity’ (1871 春の潮)
- J15 *menbokudama o fumitsubusu* 面目玉を踏み潰す “trample face
eyeball” lit. ‘dishonor’ (1876 西洋道中膝栗毛)²⁵

23. “Have no face” variants of J6 include *menboku ga nai* 面目が無い lit. ‘ashamed’ (1644 虎明本狂言), *menboku-nage ni* 面目なげに lit. ‘shamefully’, and *menboku-nashi* 面目なし ‘shameful’.

24. Cf. the common verbalism *menboku o tateru* 面目を立てる “stand up the face” ‘save (someone’s) honor’.

25. *Menbokudama* 面目玉 “face eye-ball” ‘prestige’ in J15 is a variant of

J16 *menboku ni kakawaru* 面目に係わる “concerns face” ‘(esp. pledging) on one’s honor’

J17 *menboku o tamotsu* 面目を保つ “preserve face” ‘maintain dignity ; uphold honor’

J18 *menboku kaifuku* 面目回復 “face recovery” ‘recovery of honor ; restoration of prestige’

J19 *menboku shittsui* 面目失墜 “face loss” ‘loss of prestige/honor’

J20 *menboku yakujo* 面目躍如 “face vivid” ‘uniquely prestigious’²⁶

J21 *menboku maru-tsubure* 面目丸潰れ “face collapse” lit. ‘utter loss of prestige’.

J5 *Menboku* 面目 ‘honor’ dates back a millennium to the *Kanke bunsō* 菅家文草 “Sugawara Family Poems” (4, 寄白菊四十韻 ; cf. J67) saying “Honor and pleasure are scarce, cares and worries are disturbing.” Saiki (1968) discusses in detail the salient “lose face” term J7 *menboku o ushinau*.

Menpi 面皮 “face skin” < C8 *miānpi* 面皮 ‘face ; countenance’ is a literary term for ‘sensitivity to shame’ in :

J22 *menpi* 面皮 “face” ‘honor ; flattery’ (1710 浮世草子)

J23 *menpi atsushi* 面皮厚し “face skin thick” lit. ‘shameless’ (1698 書言学考節用集) [cf. C10]

J24 *tetsumenpi* 鉄面皮 “iron face skin” ‘impudence ; audacity’ (1770 源頼家源実朝鎌倉三代記) [cf. C12]

menboku, cf. *me-no-tama* 目の玉 “eye’s ball” ‘eyeball’.

26. J20 is also pronounced *menmoku*, esp. in the expression *menmoku yakujotaru mono ga aru* 面目躍如たるものがある ‘doing something characteristic of one’s fame’.

J25 *menpi o kaku* 面皮を欠く “lack/miss face” ‘be dishonored’
(1823 浮世柄比翼稻妻)

J26 *menpi o ushinau* 面皮を失う “lose face” ‘lose honor’ (?1865 身光於竹功)

J27 *menpi o hagu* 面皮を剥ぐ “peel face skin” ‘shame ; humiliate ; unmask, expose’ (1917 異端者の悲しみ) [cf. J4, J64]

J28 *menpi ni kakari* 面皮に係り “concerns face” lit. ‘concerns honor’.

The *Shogen jikō setsuyōshū* 書言字考節用集 “Practical Guide to Literary Words” (9) first used J23 in recommending “to eliminate brazenness.” Two of these collocations are direct Chinese loans: J25 *tetsumenpi* 鉄面皮 “iron face skin” < C12 *tiěmiànpi* 鉄面皮, and J27 *menpi o hagu* 面皮を剥ぐ “peel face skin” < C9 *bō miànpi* 剥面皮. This “peeling off” was further Japanicized into J64 *tsura no kawa o hin muku* 面の皮をひん剥く.

Mentsu 面子 < C13 *miànzi* 面子 ‘face ; surface’ (cf. Japanese *menko* 面子 ‘a card game something like slapjack’) means ‘honor’ in these literary coinages :

J29 *mentsu* 面子 “face” ‘prestige ; honor’

J30 *mentsu o tateru* 面子を立てる “stand up face” ‘save (someone’s) honor’ (1943 北京の幽霊)

J31 *mentsu o tamotsu* 面子を保つ “protect face” ‘protect (someone’s) honor’ (1953 火の鳥) [cf. C24]

J32 *mentsu o ushinau* 面子を失う “lose face” ‘lose prestige/honor’ [cf. C31]

J33 *mentsu ni kodawaru* 面子にこだわる “particular about face” ‘caring about honor ; conscious of prestige’

J34 *mentsu ni kakawaru* 面子に係わる “concerns face” ‘a matter

of honor’.

While not directly borrowed from Chinese, the recent Japanese J30 is rather Chinese-sounding, as first used in Iizawa Tadasu’s 飯沢匡 (b. 1909) *Pekin no yūrei* 北京の幽霊 “Ghost of Peking,” “Can you say honor has been attained by not burying the master?”

Taimen 体面 “body face” < C35 *tǐmiàn* 体面 ‘face; dignity; prestige’ (cf. the reverse *mentei* 面体 ‘face; countenance; features’) means ‘appearance’ in the sense of doing something “for appearances sake”:

J35 *taimen* 体面 “face” ‘honor; dignity; prestige; appearances’ (1871 西国立志編)

J36 *taimen o kegasu* 体面を汚す “to dirty face” ‘disgrace/discredit (oneself)’ (1886 当世書生氣質)

J37 *taimen o kison suru* 体面を毀損する “injure face” lit. ‘dishonor’

J38 *taimenjō* 体面上 “on face” ‘for honor/appearance’s sake; for one’s reputation’

J39 *taimen o ijisuru* 体面を維持する “maintain face” ‘keep up appearances’

J40 *taimen o tamotsu* 体面を保つ “protect face” ‘save honor; keep up appearances’

J41 *taimen o tsukurou* 体面を繕う “repair face” ‘put up a good front; save appearances’

J42 *taimen o omonjiru* 体面を重んじる “respect face” ‘value/respect one’s honor’.

J35 体面 was first recorded (and noted to mean J5 *menboku* 面目) in Nakamura Masanao’s 中村正直 *Saikoku risshihen* 西国立志編 “Success of Western Countries”—a revealingly titled translation of Samuel Smiles’

Self-Help-referring to “the power of maintaining individual honor.” J39 体面を維持する directly derives from C39 *wéichí tǐmiàn* 維持体面, while all the others are Japanese innovations. Compare the 上 ‘on’ in J38 *taimenjō* 体面上 with C33 *miǎnzhishàng bùhǎokàn* 面子上不好看 “does not look good on the face” ‘lose prestige’ and the various C80-89 *liǎnshàng* 臉上 “on the face” ‘respect’ expressions.

2.2 Omote 面

The poetic *omo* ~ literary *omote* 面 ‘face; surface; countenance’²⁷ is figuratively lexicalized in:

J43 *omote* 面 “face” lit. ‘prestige; honor’ (?720 日本書紀)

J44 *omote o fuse* 面を伏せ “hide/lower face” lit. ‘strongly shamed; mortified’ (?970 宇津保物語)

J45 *omote okosu* 面を起す “raise up face” lit. ‘gain respect; give honor/esteem’²⁸ (?970 宇津保物語)

J46 *omote oku* 面置く “place/leave face” lit. ‘ashamed’ (ca. 1000 源氏物語) [cf. J68]

J47 *omote o suru* 面を摩る “rub face” lit. ‘lose prestige; dishonor’ (1470 吾妻問答)

J48 *omote o yogosu* 面を汚す “to dirty face” lit. ‘dishonor; shame’ (?1480 曾我物語)

J49 *omote tsuyoi* 面強い “strong face” lit. ‘unashamed; brazen’ (?1480 文明本節用集)

27. *Omote* 面 is etymologically related with *omote* 表 ‘surface; exterior; front’; Kobayashi (1953: 42) suggests a ‘face; countenance’ derivation < *omo* 面 ‘face’ + *te* 手 ‘hand’ as a directional suffix.

28. J45 has a syntactic variant of *omote okoshi* 面起こし “face raising” ‘gain prestige; give honor’.

J50 *omote yowai* 面弱い “weak face” lit. ‘ashamed ; bashful’ (1603 日葡辞典)

J51 *omote ni kakisu* 面に垣す “to fence face” lit. ‘hide one’s face in shame’ (1720 信田小太郎)

J52 *omote ga tatsu* 面が立つ “stand up face” lit. ‘save/gain prestige’ (1809 霊験曾我籙)

J53 *omote o kaku* 面を虧く “lack/lose face” lit. ‘lose prestige/honor’ (1830 南総里見八犬伝)

J54 *omote ni doro o nuru* 面に泥を塗る “daub mud on the face” lit. ‘dishonor’ [cf. J61, J73]

J55 *omonashi* 面無し “faceless” lit. ‘shameless’ [cf. C6].

While *omote* has limited modern usage (e.g., *mizu no omote* 水の面 ‘water surface’), it was the first Japanese “face” word recorded to mean ‘prestige ; honor’.²⁹ The *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 “Chronicles of Japan” writes J43 *omote* as 面目 (usu. pr. *menboku*, J5). After Empress Sahohime 挾穗姫 was unable to carry out her brother’s planned assassination of Emperor Suinin 垂仁 (supposedly in 26 B.C.E.), she asked, (tr. Aston 1972 : 172) “Even though I am Empress, with what countenance can I preside over the Empire, after bringing to ruin the Prince, my elder brother?”

Some *omote* archaisms have novel verbs for Japanese “face ; prestige” lexemes, e.g., *fuseru* 状せる ‘lay down ; cover ; conceal ; hide’ in J44 ; others have commonplace predicates, e.g., *yogosu* 汚す ‘stain ; soil’ in J36, J63, and J77. The “strong/weak” contrast in J49 and J50 compares with Chinese “thick/thin” faces discussed in §1.4.

29. The (645-760) *Manyōshū* 万葉集 “Myriad Leaves Collection” (5.804) uses *omote* (written 意母提) to literally mean ‘face ; countenance’.

2.3 *Tsura* 面

Tsura is currently a vulgar/slang Japanese term for ‘face’, similar in usage with English *mug* (cf. outmoded slang *phiz* < *physiognomy*). From its original ‘cheek’ denotation (cf. *cheeky* §4.2), the word *tsura* came to mean ‘face; countenance appearance’. Modern Japanese generally uses *tsura* in frozen forms; e.g., *tsura-ate* 面当て “face hit” ‘spiteful words; innuendo’ or *tsura-gamae* 面構え “face structure” ‘expression; look’. *Tsura* ‘honor’ collocations include:

J56 *tsura* “face” ‘prestige; honor; shame’

J57 *tsura o sageru* 面を下げる “lower face” lit. ‘ashamed; shame’ (1711 女殺油地獄)

J58 *tsura o nuguu* 面を拭う “wipe/mop face” lit. ‘to shame; shameless’ (?1720 雪女五枚羽子板) [cf. J59 and J76]

J59 *tsura oshinuguu* 面押し拭う “wipe away face” lit. ‘to shame; shameless’ (?1720 艶容女無衣)

J60 *tsura o fumu* 面を踏む “trample face” ‘dishonor; shame’ lit. (?1800 柳多留)

J61 *tsura ni doro o nuru* 面に泥を塗る “daub mud on face” lit. ‘dishonor’ (1871 春の朝, cf. J13)

J62 *dono tsura sagete* どの面下げて “however face hangs down” lit. ‘disgraced; hang one’s head in shame’

J63 *tsura-yogoshi* 面汚し “face dirt” coll. ‘disgrace; dishonor; shame’

J64 *tsura no kawa o hin muku* 面の皮をひん剥く “peel face skin” ‘shame’ [cf. J4, J27]

J65 *ii tsura no kawa* 好い面の皮 “good face skin” coll. ‘shame on him/her’.

J57 ‘shameless’ was first recorded in the ballad-drama *Onnagoroshi*

aburajigoku 女殺油地獄 “Woman Killer’s Oil Hell” describing “a brazenly shameless public nuisance.” Most of the above *tsura* terms are uncommon in modern usage, excepting slang J63 面汚し and J65 好い面の皮 (with *ii* “good” ironically flip-flopped > ‘bad’; cf. English *bad* ‘good’ slang).

2.4 Kao 顔

Kao 顔 is the most common Japanese word for ‘face; countenance’, and was anciently pronounced *kanbase* < *kaobase* (cf. Sino-Japanese *gan* 顔 in J67 and J81). The *kao* “face” terms below are semantically divided between ‘honor; prestige’ in J66-81 and ‘influence; status’ in J82-89.

First, in the sense of personal ‘honor’ there are sixteen *kao*-isms:

J66 *kao* 顔 “face” ‘honor; prestige; influence’ (?1690 枕童児拔差万遍玉茎, cf. J83) [cf. C47]

J67 *kōgan* 厚顔 “thick face” lit. ‘impudence; audacity; shamelessness’ (?900 菅野文章) [cf. C51]

J68 *kao okankata nashi* 顔奥かん方なし “nowhere to place face” lit. ‘ashamed’ (?1080 狭衣物語)

J69 *kao ga atsui* 顔が厚い “face is thick” lit. ‘shameless; brazen’ (1678 色道大鏡)

J70 *kao o kegasu* 顔を汚す “dirty/soil face” ‘disgrace; discredit; dishonor; humiliate’ (1698 新色五卷書)

J71 *kao no kawa ga atsui* 顔の皮が厚い “face skin is thick” ‘shameless; brazen’ (1711 傾城禁短気) [cf. C50]

J72 *kao ga tatsu* 顔が立つ “face stands” ‘save one’s honor’³⁰ (1720

30. *Kao o tateru* 顔を立てる “stand up face” ‘save/preserve (someone’s) honor’

関取千両幟)

J73 *kao ni dorō o nuru* 顔に泥を塗る “daub mud on the face” lit. ‘disgrace; discredit; scandalize’ (?1780 火燧ひらき) [cf. J54, J61]

J74 *kao awasareru* 顔合わされる “able to meet face” ‘unashamed’ (1782 虎寛本狂言)

J75 *kao o fumu* 顔を踏む “trample on face” ‘dishonor; shame’ (1787 通信総籙)

J76 *kao o nuguu* 顔を拭う “wipe off face” ‘remove shame/dishonor’ (1808 時桔梗出世請状) [cf. J58]

J77 *kao ga yogoreru* 顔が汚れる “dirty/soil face” ‘disgrace; dishonor’ (1813浮世床)

J78 *kao ni kakawaru* 顔に係わる “concerning face” ‘regarding honor’ (1872 恋慕相撲春顔触)

J79 *kao o tsubusu* 顔を潰す “crush face” ‘dishonor’ (1935 すい言葉廓流行)

J80 *kao ga nai* 顔が無い “without face” ‘ashamed (to do something)’ [cf. C49]

J81 *ganshoku nakarashimeru* 顔色なからしめる “cause to lose face color” lit. ‘to shame; to outshine (someone)’.

The original *kao* 顔 ‘(dis)honor’ usage is Sino-Japanese J67 *kōgan* 厚顔 in the *Kanke bunsō* 菅家文草 (2, cf. J5): “Gossiping tongues reveal over-pretentious people, mirrors know a crone even with makeup on her ‘thick face.’” The J73 term 顔に泥を塗る “daub mud on the face” may have been modeled upon C81 *liǎnshàng mǒbukāi* 臉上抹不開 “cannot plaster over the face” ‘ashamed’, and is comparable with the Russian collocation

is a common variant.

029 below.

Second, terms in which *kao* denotes social ‘influence; status’ include:

J82 *kaoyaku* 顔役 “face service/role” ‘influential person; boss’ (1050 南水漫遊拾遺)

J83 *kao ga ureru* 顔が売れる “able to sell face” ‘influential; popular’ (?1690 枕童児拔差万遍玉茎, cf. J66)

J84 *kao ga warui* 顔が悪い “face is bad” ‘without influence; unimportant’ (1770 廓通遊子)

J85 *kao o uru* 顔を売る “sell face” ‘gain influence; become popular’ (1780 折句式大成) [cf. J83]

J86 *kao o kasu* 顔を貸す “lend/loan face” ‘do (someone) a favor’ (1824 明鳥彘端)

J87 *kaomake suru* 顔負けする “defeat/lose face” ‘put (someone) to shame; embarrass; humiliate’ (1873 梅雨小袖昔八丈)

J88 *kao ga hiroi* 顔が広い “face is wide” ‘widely known; influential’ (1915 あらくれ)

J89 *kao ga kiku* 顔が利く “face is effective” ‘influential; well-known.

The earliest *kao* ‘influence’ collocation is J82 *kaoyaku* 顔役 which the *Nansui manyu shūyi* 南水漫遊拾遺 “Gleanings from Southern River Travels” (4) notes to have originally been a Kabuki “face role” term for an actor with a *kaodatsu* 顔立 ‘established face’ (cf. the 立 terms below).

2.5 Summary

Japanese ‘face; prestige’ phrases exemplify all three types of Weinreich’s §3.4 phrasal loan translations: direct loans coming word for

word (though in different word order) from Chinese (e.g., J32 *mentsu o ushinau* 面子を失う < C31 *shī miānzi* 失面子 ‘lose face’);³¹ loan renditions based on Sinitic models (e.g., J7 *menboku o ushinau* 面目を失う ‘lose face’ is analogous with *shī* 失 and C5 *miànmi* 面目; but there is no Chinese *失面目); and original loan creations without Chinese counterparts (e.g., J79 *kao o tsubusu* 顔を潰す “smash/demolish face” ‘dishonor’). One unchanged Chinese pattern is “thick-/thin-faced” meaning ‘(in)sensitivity to shame’ §1.4. Compare Japanese *atsukamashii* 厚かましい “thick” meaning “thick-faced” ‘shameless, impudent, brazen’ and English *thick* meaning “thick-headed” ‘ignorant; stubborn’.

Table 2 gives a general semantic overview of Japanese “face” lexicalizations. Similar to Chinese, some expressions are difficult to classify in binary “losing” or “saving” terms, e.g., J9 *menboku shidai* 面目次第.

Table 2 – Japanese Semantic Distribution

LEXEMES	“LOSE FACE”	“SAVE FACE”
<i>men</i> 面	3	1
<i>menboku</i> 面目	8	9
<i>menpi</i> 面皮	5	2
<i>mentsu</i> 面子	1	5
<i>taimen</i> 体面	2	6
<i>omote</i> 面	9	4
<i>tsura</i> 面	9	1
<i>kao</i> 顔	13	11

31. There are three other direct loans: J27 面皮を剃ぐ < C9 剃面皮, J25 鉄面皮 < C12 鉄面皮, and J39 体面を維持する < C39 維持体面.

Compared with roughly equal numbers of Chinese (Table 1) collocations for “saving” and “losing face,” a few more Japanese coinages emphasize “losing” it (see Table 3). The only exceptions are predominance of “saving” in J29-34 *mentsu* 面子 and J35-42 *taimen* 体面 lexicalizations.

The Japanese loan renditions and creations are notable for using sundry verbs regarding “face.” Eight predicates are frequently employed with ‘face; prestige; honor’. Only *kakaru* 係る ‘concern; affect; involve’ has a semantically neutral sense (J16, 28, 34, and 78). In the constructive senses of ‘save/gain (face)’, *tateru* 立てる ‘stand; raise; set /put up’ ~ *tatsu* 立つ ‘stand up; erect; rise’ (J13, 30, 52, 57, and 72);³² and *tamotsu* 保つ ‘keep; preserve; maintain; sustain’ (J17, 31, and 40, cf. C24 保全面子) are employed. In the destructive senses of ‘lose (face)’, five verbs are utilized: *ushinau* 失う ‘lose; miss; be deprived of’ (J7, 19, 26, and 32); *tsubusu* 潰す ‘crush; smash; squash; ruin; demolish’ (J14, 15, 21, and 79); *kegasu* ~ *yogosu* 汚す ‘dirty; stain; pollute; defile; disgrace; dishonor’ (J36, 48, 63, 70, and 77; owing to the Japanese moral senses of “purity”); *nuru* 塗る ‘daub; paint; smear’ (J10, 54, 61, and 73); and *nai* 無い ~ *nashi* 無し ‘not have; lack; without’ (J6, 55, 68, and 80). Only one of these verbs has a Chinese “face” analogue: *ushinau* 失う ‘lose’ and *shi* 失 in C31, C36, C37, and C63.

Two remarkable aspects of Japanese “face” expressions are their large number and degree of obsolescence (esp. in J43-55 and J56-65).

32. In J72, *tatsu* 立つ ‘stand up; raise’; rise’ compares with *kaodachi* 顔立ち ‘facial; features; countenance’ or *omodachi* 面立ち (an archaic variant of *kaotsuki* 顔つき ‘face; countenance; looks’).

The transplanted Chinese idea of 'face ; prestige' prospered more extensively in Japanese lexical fields than in any language infra.

(to be continued)