

# Silence 沈黙 in Japanese Communication

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## INTRODUCTION

This is an in depth analytical observation of ‘silence’ (沈黙 - *chinmoku*) – a unique way of expression in Japanese communication. Being an ancient mode of expression, *chinmoku* exists in Japanese in formal and informal conversation - from the Kindergarten to the imperial household. When observed on linguistic anthropological grounds, *chinmoku* has its historical roots in ‘noble silence’ of early Buddhism and ‘thundering silence’ (雷鳴の沈黙 – *raimei no chinmoku*) of Zen Buddhism of Japan.

## PURPOSE

This study aims to examine how *chinmoku* exists as a living practice in Japanese communication while certain native traditions of communication ceased to exist with the flow of time.

## APPROACH

For this study, primary sources on the history of Japanese communication were read in Japanese originals and English translations with special attention to origin, evolution and basic characteristics of *chinmoku*. Secondary literature both in Japanese and English was referred and Japanese experts were consulted to gather rare data that remain unrecorded.

## FINDINGS

The study reveals, e the historical origin and nature of present practice of *chinmoku*. ‘Japanology’ is the scientific study of unique way of thinking, practices and features of Japanese culture. The present study sheds light on understanding the cultural atmosphere of a unique mode of communication in one of the foremost international and academic languages that emerged and lived through powerful civilizations of Asia. From the linguistic

anthropological point of view, it observes how a system rare and unique in communication as 'silence' continues to exist as a living tradition in the Japanese society.

**KEYWORDS**

*chinmoku*, Japanology, Linguistic Anthropology, noble silence, thundering silence

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