

Japanese Loanwords in *the Oxford English Dictionary* and in the English version of Kæmpfer's *the History of Japan*

Schun DOI

1. Introduction

All languages include a greater or lesser proportion of borrowed words, or loanwords, in their vocabulary, and English is no exception. As an international language, English has not only had a great influence on other languages, but has also absorbed much new vocabulary from them. Japan, with her own unique culture, has contributed quite a large number of loanwords to the English language.

A language borrows words and expressions from another language to produce loanwords. ‘Borrowing’ seems to be the commonest term used to describe the process whereby a language takes over words from another language, and ‘loanword’ is the name given to those words that have been taken over in this way. From another point of view, borrowing and loaning are both sides of the same phenomenon. From the perspective of the recipient language, the words are borrowed; from the viewpoint of the source language, the words are loaned.

The meaning of ‘loanword’ has been defined in a number of ways. To give an example, Ui (1980: 1) describes a ‘loan-word’ as “a word which has become firmly established in the vocabulary of a given language.” To give another example, the *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* defines ‘loanwords’ as “vocabulary whose basic form and meaning are taken directly from another language, then integrated with lesser or greater fidelity into the phonological and grammatical systems of the matrix language” (Haugen & Mithun 2003: 243). This definition is considerably wider than that of Ui’s. In this paper, ‘loanwords’

will be used in a slightly wider sense than that of Haugen and Mithun; that is, all words that have entered the English lexicon via the Japanese language will be treated equally as 'Japanese loanwords'.⁽¹⁾

The major objective of this paper is to investigate what kinds of Japanese loanwords are to be found in the English language. For this purpose, *the Oxford English Dictionary* (the OED, hereafter) will be used.⁽²⁾ With some 300,000 headwords and as many as 2,437,000 quotations (Berg 1993: 195), it is unquestionably the largest and most authoritative English dictionary.⁽³⁾ In addition to this first objective, in view of the fact that *the History of Japan* (i.e., Kämpfer 1728) is the greatest single contributor of Japanese loanwords found in the OED, the Japanese words included in this two-volume book will be examined in detail in order to elucidate the influence that they had on the dictionary.

2. Japanese Loanwords in the OED

There are as many as 823 words of Japanese origin found in the entries of 585 headwords in the OED (Doi 2008b; Tokyo Seitoku English Study Society 2003, 2004). Among these, 469 are listed as headwords, including 76 that were newly incorporated into the three-volume *Additions Series*. Looking at the Japanese loanwords listed in the main body of the Second Edition, one notices that most of the words are those that represent the traditional culture of Japan: *adzuki*, *koi-cha*, *hanami*, *yūzen*, and *zabuton*, to name just a few. In contrast, many of those entries in the *Additions Series*, exemplified by words like *kaizen*, *kanban*, *Nikkei*, and *shosha*, have an economic or industrial origin.

Other words of Japanese origin occur as derivational or associated sub-heads. There are 53 such words. For example, *tycoonship*, *Shintoism*, *shogunate*, *judogi*, and *sobaya* fall into this category. Also there are eight Japanese loanwords that are given in the OED as alternative spellings of a headword. These include *e-makimono*, *haikai*, *hokku*, *osae waza*, *Risshu*, *seni*, *Sho-Ho-Ye*, and *toko*.

To see what Japanese words have successfully been incorporated into the English vocabulary, it is also necessary to look at those words that appear only in the definition or the illustrative sentences. Thus far, 293 such words of Japanese

origin have been found, though there is a considerable possibility that further such loanwords might be found. Examining these 293 loanwords, it is noticeable that there are three significant groups of words that constitute a sizeable fraction of this category: expressions that have to do with judo, names for the epochs of Japanese history, and those words that have some relationship with other existing headwords. The first group consists of names of techniques used in judo competitions, or *waza*,⁽⁴⁾ such as *ippon seoi nage*, *katame-waza*, *o-uchi-gari*, or *yoko-tomoe-nage*. The second category consists of such terms as *Azuchi-Momoyama*, *Edo*, *Fujiwara*, *Genroku*, *Taisho*, and so on. The last group is composed of words relating to the OED's headwords of Japanese origin; for instance, *to*, *do*, and *fu* in relation to the OED headword *ken* (the Japanese prefecture), or *bu* and *cho* in relation to *sun* (the Japanese measurement of length).

2.1. The Semantic Distribution of the Headwords of Japanese Origin

To have an accurate idea of the kinds of words that were taken into the English lexicon by way of the Japanese language, the Japanese loanwords found in the OED as headwords were categorised into fields. The semantic fields which were made use of by Matsuda (1985), Tsuchihashi (1997), and Watanabe (2000) were consulted and used as a foundation for determining the fields; nevertheless, I have devised my own set of 35 semantic fields as shown in (1).

(1) The 35 semantic fields:

Administrative units; Arts and crafts; Botany; Bushido; Characters and letters; Chemistry and physics; Clothing and footwear; Commodities; Culture; Customs; Economy and business; Entertainment; Food and drink; Games; Greetings and chants; Historical periods; Housing; Lineage and family; Literature; Measurement; Medicine; Mineralogy; Monetary; Music; Nature; Professions and status; Religion; Residents and emigrants; Social systems; Sports and martial arts; Transportation; Weaponry; Zoology; and Others

Observing the distributions of the Japanese loanwords leads to the conclusion

that the fields deeply associated with Japanese culture have the most words listed. This supports the idea that “many of the new words have been taken over ready-made from the people from whom the idea or the thing designated has been obtained” (Baugh & Cable 2002: 303). Thus, the five largest semantic fields with their examples are given in (2).

(2) The five largest semantic fields:

1. Food and drink (e.g., *adzuki, koi-cha, miso, nori, shoyu*)
2. Arts and crafts (e.g., *Arita, Imari, kakemono, nanga, yūzen*)
3. Sports and martial arts
(e.g., *basho, harai-goshi, judo, randori, sumo*)
4. Professions and status (e.g., *daimio, jito, kurumaya, tycoon, omi*)
5. Religion (e.g., *bonze, Jōdo, koan, Shinto, Zen*)

The above was the data from the main 20-volume Second Edition of the OED. Looking into the three-volume *Additions Series*, however, it is noticeable that there are also many words of economic or industrial origin, together with words related to the culture of Japan. The complete list of Japanese loanwords found in the *Additions Series* is shown in (3).

(3) The 76 Japanese loanwords found in the *Additions Series*:

Akebia, basho, beta, Betamax, Bon, dotaku, gaijin, ibotenic, ippon, kainic, kaizen, kanban, Karaoke, magatama, makiwara, mura, nandin, nandina, Nikkei, ninja, ninjutsu, Obaku, ramen, Rinzai, rishitin, ryu, Ryukyu, Ryukyuan, sai, seiza, seoi nage, sewamono, Shihan, Shinkansen, shippo, shodan, Shorin ryu, shosha, Shotokan, Showa, shunto, shuriken, shuto, skosh, sogo shosha, Sohyo, sokaiya, sosaku hanga, suimono, sumi-gaeshi, sutemi-waza, Suzuki, tachi, Tanabata, tanto, tempo, Tojo, tokkin, Tokugawa, Tokyoite, tomoe-nage, tori, tsugi ashi, Tsukahara, tsurikomi, uchimata, ude, uki, ura-nage, wakame, washi, waza-ari, Yamaguchi-gumi, yoko-shiho-gatame, yondan, zaitech

(Doi 2008b; Tokyo Seitoku English Study Society 2003)

2.2. The Chronological Distribution of the Headwords of Japanese Origin

For this study, the loanwords of Japanese origin found in the OED as headwords were arranged in chronological order, and then divided into groupings of 50-year periods. This span of 50 years was chosen rather expediently. (4) below shows the distribution of the ‘first citation’ dates for the Japanese loanwords in the spans of 50 years.

(4) The distribution of the ‘first citation’ dates of Japanese loanwords in the OED:

-1600	2	1801-1850	16
1601-1650	20	1851-1900	186
1651-1700	5	1901-1950	157
1701-1750	39	1951-	132
1751-1800	5		

(Doi 2006: 14-15)

The earliest loanword of Japanese origin to be recorded in the OED is *Kuge* (a Japanese court noble), which, according to the OED, initially appeared in 1577.⁽⁵⁾ There is a dramatic increase of borrowing in the later half of the 19th century; in all likelihood this was a consequence of Japan’s opening her ports to the West and ending her segregation from other nations. After the ratification of the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854, contact between Japan and western countries dramatically increased; and consequently, the rate of borrowing increased as well. There is one particular work that contributed a considerable number of Japanese loanwords into the English language prior to 1854: Engelbert Kämpfer’s *the History of Japan*, which was published in 1727 and reissued in 1728.^{(6),(7)}

3. Outline of *the History of Japan*

3.1. About the Author, Engelbert Kämpfer

Engelbert Kämpfer was born in Lemgo, a town in present Germany, in 1651. He came to Japan when he was 39 years of age as a medical doctor to the Dutch East India Company and to the Dutch factory and trading house at Dejima,

Nagasaki. He shipped off from Java in what is now Indonesia in July 1690 to arrive at Dejima in September of the same year. He departed from Japan in September 1692 for Batavia, which is now called Jakarta, and returned to Holland in the October of 1693. During his residence in Japan, he had the chance to travel twice between Nagasaki and Edo (now Tokyo) in the company of his superior, the Governor of the Dutch Trading House, and was admitted to the presence of the then reigning shogun Tsunayoshi. Kämpfer made observations on and recorded what he was informed of and caught glimpse of during his stay at Nagasaki and his two travels; and after returning to his native Germany, organised them into a batch of manuscripts, which in due course developed into *the History of Japan* that we shall be examining here. Kämpfer died in his hometown in 1716.

3.2. *About the History of Japan*

When Kämpfer organised his manuscripts, they were written in 'High Dutch', or German, which was his native tongue.⁽⁸⁾ The manuscripts were sold by Kämpfer's uncle, his heir, to an Englishman, who immediately resold them to Sir Hans Sloan. Sir Sloan appointed Johann G. Scheuchzer, who was a physician in London and was a fellow of the Royal Society, to translate them into English. As a result, *the History of Japan* as we know it today was first printed and published in London in 1727 for a limited subscribing audience. Because this first issue received publicity and gained popularity, a second impression was issued in 1728 for the general public. (5) below is the full title and the author's information as seen on the title page of this 1728 reissue.

(5) The complete information as given on the title page:

The history of Japan: Giving an account of the antient [sic] and present state and government of that empire; of its temples, palaces, castles, and other buildings; of its metals, minerals, trees, plants, animals, birds and fishes; of the chronology and succession of the emperors, ecclesiastical and secular; of the original descent, religious, customs, and manufactures of the natives, and of their trade and commerce with the Dutch and Chinese.

*Together with a description of the kingdom of Siam.
Written in High Dutch by Engelbertus Kämpfer, M. D. physician to the
Dutch embassy to the Emperor's court; and translated from his original
manuscript, never before printed, by J. G. Scheuchzer, F. R. S. and a
member of the college of physicians, London.
With the life of the author and an introduction. To which is added, part
of a journal of a voyage to Japan, made by the English in the year 1673.
Illustrated with many copper plates.
London: Printed for the publisher, and sold by Thomas Woodward at the
Half-Moon over against St. Dunstan's Church Fleetstreet, and Charles
Davis in Pater-Noster Row. MDCCXXVIII.*

As can be comprehended from the content of the complete title in (5), this book consists of a variety of sections, which deal with various aspects of Japanese nature, history, society, and culture. Also, there are some descriptions of Japanese trade during her segregation from most other nations. The appendices present more details on the flora of the Japanese land and on the commerce with the Dutch and the Chinese.

This two-volume book composed by Kämpfer had a considerable influence over many people who afterwards came to Japan, and on the many works written by them about this country. For example, as Hayakawa (2003) has pointed out, the influence of *the History of Japan* can be seen in Carl Peter Thunberg's *Flora Japonica* (published in 1784) and Philipp Franz von Siebold's *Nippon* (seven volumes published between 1832 and 1852) and his other books on the subject of Japan. *The History of Japan* is also the furthestmost contributor of Japanese loanwords in the OED as already observed (in footnote 6).

4. The Digitalisation of *the History of Japan*

The History of Japan was digitalised for the following four purposes: (a) to make an exhaustive list of Japanese words found there; (b) to consult the original and obtain an understanding of the characteristics of the loanwords

found there; (c) to systematically comprehend the Romanised spelling influenced by the German language used in the volumes; and (d) to compare the Japanese words found in this text and the Japanese loanwords found in the OED in order to see what influence *the History of Japan* had on the OED.

The original text used here was the facsimile copy of the 1728 reissue, which was published by Yushodo Booksellers, Tokyo in 1977. The text was digitalised in the following manner. The two-volume work was first scanned and converted into electronic text files. Twelve files were made: the Front Matter of Volume 1; Book 1; Book 2; Book 3; Book 4; the Explanation of the Plates of Volume 1; the Front Matter of Volume 2; Book 5 Chapters 1-11; Book 5 Chapters 12-15; the First Appendix; the Second Appendix; and the Explanation of the plates of Volume 2.

There were several problems which occurred during the course of this digitalising. The processor could not recognise the composite glyphs (fi, fl, ft, and œ, to give a few examples) or the long s's (ſ) of the 18th-century press, and generated quite a jumble whenever they occurred. These had to be corrected manually. After these e-texts were made, they were compared with and emended from the original, a procedure which took over 1½ years. Eventually though, the whole two-volume work was completely digitalised.

5. Japanese Words to Be Found in *the History of Japan*

In the course of the digitalising process, the Japanese words found in *the History of Japan* were marked up, so that they could be retrieved easily by electronic searches. While emending and checking the e-texts, the Japanese translation by Imai (1973)⁽⁹⁾ was also consulted to make sure that the mark-up was accurately done. After the digitalising was completed, a list of the Japanese words found in this work was made by electronically searching the words that were marked accordingly. Also, as there was already a list of Japanese words found in *the History of Japan* organised by Hayakawa (2003), but not from an electronic source, this was consulted to make an 'exhaustive' list of Japanese words found in this important work. This list consists of some 1,500 words.

5.1. The Influence of *the History of Japan* on the OED

Comparing the Japanese words found in *the History of Japan* and the loanwords of Japanese origin found in the OED, 74 words are found in both sources. Looking into these words, a number of instances of the influence of *the History of Japan* on the OED can be seen. By way of illustration, three of these will be presented here. Firstly, the capitalisation of a word, which is a major characteristic of the nouns in *the History of Japan*, is seen in some of the OED entries of Japanese origin; for example, *Bon*, *Rōjū*, *Eta*, *Kuge*, and *Mikado*. As Kämpfer's original was written in German, all the nouns in his manuscript was naturally given a capitalised initial letter; and Scheuchzer, who did not know much about the Japanese language, retained them when he translated the text. This might have had some influence on some Japanese headwords in the OED. Secondly, there is one Japanese loanword that is listed in the OED with exactly the same spelling (but without the initial capital letter) as *the History of Japan*: *sasanqua*. This could be another influence that *the History of Japan* had upon the OED. Lastly, there are many spellings from *the History of Japan* given as alternative spellings of the headwords found in the OED.

5.2. The Characteristics of the Romanisation System Used in *the History of Japan*

Some characteristics in the Romanised spellings can be observed. First of all, such pairs of letters as *f*–*f*, *F*–*T*, *J*–*T*, *J*–*F*, and *K*–*R* are confused in many places. Strictly speaking, these are not spelling variations; on the contrary, they are transcriptional inaccuracies or printer's errors. One of the interesting points with regard to the Romanisation system of *the History of Japan* is that *kf* is employed to resemble the /ku/ sound of the Japanese words. This is probably due to the influence of German, although this requires further investigation. A further characteristic of the loanwords of Japanese origin found in this book is that *fā*, *fī*, *fū*, *fē*, and *fō* are made use of wherever the sounds /ha/, /çi/, /φu/, /he/, and /ho/ occur in the current pronunciation of Standard Japanese. This may possibly be due to the influence of the pronunciation of Nagasakian Japanese in the Edo period, but here again, further investigation is needed to substantiate

such a conclusion. These investigations are to be carried out in a future study.

One of the other characteristics of the Romanised spellings in *the History of Japan* is how Kämpfer made use of vowels. Many vowel letters are left out or mistaken, in terms of the current Romanising models. This seems to be a result of the fact that Kämpfer tried to write down devoiced vowels as he heard them. According to Miyajima (1961), such devoiced vowels seem to have existed in the pronunciation of 17th-century Japanese when Kämpfer visited Japan; thus it is plausible that these vowel alternations were notations of those devoicings that occurred in the speech of the Japanese people at that time.

From the above, it can be concluded that the irregular Romanising spellings are not necessarily due to spelling changes that occurred in the process of naturalising. This is contrary to what Kimura-Kano (2006: 41-42) asserts about orthography adaptation. The use of diacritical marks, frequent use of hyphenation, or capitalised common nouns could be a consequence of the author's attempt to accurately write down the words as he perceived them. Thus, they are not spelling adaptations.⁽¹⁰⁾

6. Pluralisation of the Words of Japanese Origin

Kimura-Kano (2006: 16-18) has clearly epitomised the interesting findings of Cannon (1984) on the plural forms of the Japanese loanwords. Of 490 loanwords of Japanese origin recorded in average English dictionaries, 311 are nouns, of which 125 have not fitted comfortably into the common pluralisation system of English. This considerably increases the total number of irregular plurals in the English lexicon: 89 take the zero-suffix plural, 29 can take either zero or the regular *-s* plural, and seven collective nouns occur with the zero plural only. Cannon considered the reasons of such irregularity, but could not reach any firm conclusion. The reasons he considered are given below in (6).

- (6) Reasons for the irregular plurals of Japanese loanwords as considered by Cannon:
- a. Length of time in language

- b. Semantic characters
- c. Phonological characteristics
- d. Morphological characteristics
- e. Occurrence in everyday English

(Kimura-Kano 2006: 17-18; Cannon 1984)

As for the length of time, Cannon (1984) shows that many words which are relatively old came into English with the zero plural and still retain it. However, there being many exceptional instances, he could not come to a satisfactory conclusion. Looking at the Japanese words found in *the History of Japan*, the situation is also not so simple. Even in the same chapter, or even on the same page, there sometimes occur both zero and regular plurals. A convincing explanation for such inconsistency has yet to be found; this is a further aspect to be investigated in the future.

As for the semantic field of the Japanese loanwords, Cannon (1984) found that ‘status’, ‘measurements’, ‘ethnology’, ‘profession’, and ‘religion’ are the major categories which have zero-suffix plurals. The Japanese words in *the History of Japan* fit perfectly into this tendency. This is quite natural as these categories often materialise as collective nouns. On the other hand, no phonological or morphological features that can be used to successfully determine which kind of plural the loanword attains have been found, either by Cannon or by this study. Cannon also notes that 21.8% or 27 out of 136 of the Japanese loanwords that are considered to be completely assimilated into English on his naturalisation scale take the zero inflection plural.

From the above, it must be concluded that a study of the Japanese words in *the History of Japan* cannot provide a diagnosis for deciding whether a particular word attains a zero plural or a regular inflection. Rather, this study has simply confirmed the observations of Cannon (1984) and Kimura-Kano (2006) that the situation is not very clear-cut.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, the OED and *the History of Japan* were investigated to see what kinds of Japanese loanwords can be identified in English. The OED contains 469 headwords of Japanese origin. When all Japanese loanwords are counted, including those that appear only in the definition or the illustrative sentences, there are as many as 823. Most of these are deeply related to Japanese traditional culture.

Although the earliest Japanese loanword found in the OED is *Kuge*, which first appeared in 1577, much of them are relatively new. This might be because the range of contact between the West and Japan was quite limited for a long period of time in the past: until the mid-19th century, Japan closed her seaports to almost all European nations. Also, it might be due to the attitudes of Westerners towards the acceptance of loanwords: as Kato (1996: 69) has put it, this attitude was “temperate” and “selective”. Things have changed, however, and as Japan has developed, Western people have begun to see more of current Japan rather than the stereotyped images inherited from earlier times. The older loanwords refer to folk culture and the status systems of olden times; on the other hand, the newer ones consist more of technical terms and economic elements.

As for *the History of Japan*, it has been found to include words relating to nature, history, society, culture, and trade; that is, from all of the various aspects dealt with in this book. The ‘exhaustive’ list of Japanese vocabulary found in this important work consists of more than 1,500 words.

A second aim of this paper was to consider what influence the Japanese words in *the History of Japan* might have had on the OED. Hence, the Japanese words in the two sources were compared. This found 74 Japanese words that appear in both. Signs of some influence of *the History of Japan* on the OED could be seen: (a) capitalisation of the first letter of a noun; (b) *the History of Japan* spelling adopted in the OED; and (c) *the History of Japan* spelling given as alternative spellings.

Some characteristics of the Romanised spellings could also be seen. In particular, there can be observed some influences from German. Other characteristics

involve the pronunciation of Japanese during the Edo era and specifically in the Nagasaki area. Thus, the irregular Romanising spelling is not necessarily due to changes that occur in the course of adaptation, contrary to what Kimura-Kano (2006) has suggested: they could simply be an ad hoc and idiosyncratic Romanising system adopted by a specific author.

The interesting theme of the pluralisation of nouns of Japanese origin has been discussed in some previous studies but without any firm conclusions. This problem was studied in this paper also but it was only to confirm that it does not admit of any simple explanation.

Notes

1. There are, however, other words that the Japanese language contributed to the English lexicon: “hidden Japanese contributions”, as Warren (2008) puts it. These include loan translations, terms coined in English by Japanese authors, anglicisation of coinages by Japanese authors in a third language, and others. Such words will not be discussed extensively in the present paper.
2. The OED used here in this paper is the Second Edition on CD-ROM version 3.0 (2002).
3. This is not to say that the OED is *the* prescriptive authority. Dictionaries have their own purpose and scope: this determines what information to include or exclude. Tomita (2005) points this out convincingly. Also, languages continue to shift over time, thus making dictionaries outdated in a few years; hence the need for frequent revisions. Therefore, no sole dictionary can be an absolute authority. Still, the OED is highly authoritative in being the largest English dictionary ever, and is considered as such among almost all researchers of English.
4. Interestingly, this word, *waza*, is not found in the OED, while words such as *waza-ari*, *nagewaza*, and *osaekomi waza*, which could be called derivative forms, are found.
5. Serjeantson (1935: 239) gives *bonze* (a Buddhist clergyman) of 1588 to be the first Japanese loanword. This could be due to her using the first edition of the OED.
6. According to Ohwada (1995, 1997), this two-volume book written by Kämpfer and translated by Scheuchzer has contributed the most to the OED in regards to Japanese loanwords. This book comes first in place for both rankings that Ohwada has calculated: the source of the first citation of the headword and the number of times a work has been cited. Of the 373 headwords that Ohwada

consulted, 43 had *the History of Japan* as its first citation, a commanding lead over *the Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* which comes in second with 17 citations. Among the 2,109 illustrative sentences in the 373 headwords he consulted, 57 were from *the History of Japan*; again with a considerable lead over the *Encyclopædia Britannica* with 50 (this number includes citations from the first to the 14th editions of the encyclopædia).

7. As indicated by Wada (1977), the original 1727 issue and the 1728 reissue use an identical typeset; and the only dissimilarity was that the 1728 reissue contains a second appendix. The version consulted for this paper was that of the 1728 reissue; however, the copy referred to in the OED cannot immediately be identified.
8. On the title page of *the History of Japan*, as will be observed in (5), it is noted that the volumes were “written in High Dutch”, which should mean ‘in German’ when the birthplace of the author was taken into account. As the words ‘Dutch’ and ‘German’ was in earlier times used compatibly when there was not a unified German nation or a Holland commonwealth (see the OED s.v. Dutch, *a.*, *n.* (*adv.*); *Wisdom*² s.v. Dutch), it is quite plausible to regard this ‘High Dutch’ to be ‘High German’.
9. This is not a translation of the English version; rather, it was translated from the modern German version which was published in 1964 (Christian Wilhelm von Dohm (ed.), *Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan*, Brockhaus, Stuttgart). However, this is generally regarded as the most authoritative and complete Japanese translation of *the History of Japan* now available. Although there are some dissimilarities among the English and German versions, they are quite minor, and these differences are clearly noted in this 1973 translation by Imai.
10. For discussion of the many Romanisation styles and conventions that have been proposed and used for the Japanese language, see Kusakabe (1977); and for discussion of the spelling change of the Japanese loanwords in the OED, see Doi (2006: 47-52, 2008a: 69-71).

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