

## OLD JAPANESE

### LOANWORDS

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#### 1. Loanwords in Old Japanese

##### 1.1 Ainu

#### 2. Continental loanwords; Korean, Chinese, Sanskrit.

##### 2.1 Korean

##### 2.2 Chinese

##### 2.3 Sanskrit

#### 3. Phonological adaptation.

References

### 1. Loanwords in Old Japanese

The etymological study of the lexicon of OJ, the question of its provenance, and the sorting of inherited from borrowed wordstock are part of the issue of the genetic affiliation of Japanese: OJ words which are similar to, or take part in sets of sound correspondences with, words from another language may be cognate with these words; they may be borrowings from the other language; they may themselves be the source of borrowings into the other language; or the similarities may simply be due to chance. We are more fortunate for the later historical stages of Japanese, but for the OJ language as it presents itself to us, we simply very often do not know and many attempts to identify old loanwords within OJ are highly speculative.

It is beyond doubt that OJ includes many old loanwords from the languages around Japan - especially words relating to agriculture, seafare, warfare, spiritual and religious life, government, and administration - but that we will not be able to identify them as loanwords on other than extra-linguistic grounds. It is for example a reasonably safe bet that OJ *iraka* 'roof, roof tile' is a loanword, but we do not know from where. In other cases we believe that a word must be borrowed and can come up with several likely sources but cannot choose between them. It is, for example, very likely that the Japanese word for 'horse', OJ *uma*, is borrowed and there are indeed words in surrounding languages which mean 'horse' and which are similar to *uma*, e.g. EMC \*~~ma~~ MK *ˈmol*, Mongolian *morin*. Mongolian and Korean may be genetically related to each other and/or to Japanese, so the MK and Mongolian forms may be cognate, but one language may also have borrowed the word from the other. And is the Chinese word the source of borrowing, or, perhaps more likely, itself borrowed? And from where did Japanese get the word?

On the other hand, note should be taken of the recent work of Unger (2001, 2003) which provides a linguistic basis for identifying candidates for loanwords. Unger brings attention to a number of cases in which a word in Korean (e.g. MK *ˈpal*



It is traditional to distinguish between 'loanwords' and 'Sino-Japanese' vocabulary, the former usually designating loanwords from other languages than Chinese. Here the distinction will be made between fully assimilated nativised loanwords, including those of Chinese origin, and the huge Sino-Japanese vocabulary which has been used through the history of Japanese, as an adapted form of Chinese, in various specialised discourses. The two are very different and only the former will be discussed here. Chinese served not only as a source of Chinese vocabulary, but also as a medium for the introduction of much Buddhist vocabulary originally from Sanskrit. Sacred names and terms were usually not translated into Chinese, but transcribed phonographically in sinograms (see Writing and sources).

Through pre- and proto-history many Japanese speakers would have had some facility in one or more continental languages, ranging from fishermen and traders communicating with their continental colleagues to highly learned clergy. Use of different foreign continental languages in Japan, especially Korean languages and varieties of Chinese, would have been quite widespread at different times and particularly within limited social or professional circles.

Most continental culture was in pre- and proto-historic times transmitted to Japan via the Korean peninsula. Today Korean is one language with dialects which all descend from Middle Korean, which in turn continues the linguistic tradition of the Kingdom of Silla. Until unification under Silla in 668 there were, however, three main kingdoms on the Korean peninsula: Kokwuryo, Paekche, and Silla, each with its own language whose mutual relations and relations with Japanese have not been clarified. From the early fifth century contact with and immigrants from the kingdom of Paekche seem to have played a particularly significant part in the transmission of continental material and intellectual culture, including Chinese language, writing, learning, and also later, Buddhism (which seems to have been introduced from the middle of the sixth century). With this came new vocabulary. In addition to loanwords from Korean languages, much borrowed vocabulary of ultimately further origins must be thought to have entered Japanese through some Korean language, or through Korean speakers, but in most cases details remain obscure and beyond our grasp.

### **2.1 Korean**

The following words may be thought to have been borrowed from a Korean language. Usually we do not know which, but must simply assume an earlier cognate form of an attested Middle Korean word as the source, (a), but in a few cases we can

tentatively identify Paekche as the source language  
(reconstruction of Paekche forms follows Bentley 2000), (b).

(2)

- (a) **karamusi** 'ramie (fabric, cloth), Chinese silk plant', MK *mwo*si 'ramie fabric, cloth' (OJ *kara-* 'China, Korea, foreign').  
**kasa** 'bamboo hat, umbrella', MK *kas* 'id.'.  
**kudira** 'whale' MK *kworoy* 'id.'.  
**mori** 'woods', MK *mwoy*h 'mountain', pK *\*mwo*'*lih*.  
**para** 'field, plain' MK *pel* 'id.'.  
**patake** 'field', MK *path* 'id.'.  
**pyera** 'spatula, pallet', MK *pyet* 'moldboard'.  
**sarapi** 'spade' (EMJ), MK *salp* 'id.', possibly further from OC *\*tshrap*, cf. OJ *sapi*, *sapye* 'spade' below (3).  
**sitogi** (EMJ) 'rice cake for ceremonial purposes', MK *'stek* 'rice cake'.  
**uri** 'melon' MK *'woy* 'cucumber', pK *\*wo*'*li*.
- (b) **kopori** 'district', Paekche *\*kɕpCɾi*, MK *'kwo*'*wolh*.  
**kuti** 'hawk', Paekche *\*kutI* 'falcon'.  
**kwi** 'fortress, walled city', Paekche *\*kV* 'id.'.  
**sasi** 'walled city', Paekche *\*casI*, MK *'cas* 'id.'.

## 2.2 Chinese

The following may be thought to be early loans from Chinese. At least some of the words in (3) are quite old and represent direct borrowings. Those in (4) are transparent and probably not very old borrowings from Chinese, probably best thought of as nativised character readings. In Chinese historical phonology EMC and LMC are fairly securely reconstructed and more recently our understanding of OC phonology, too, is improving. We are therefore sometimes able to determine which stage of Chinese a borrowing originates in. (Reconstructions of EMC and LMC are from Pullleyblank 1984; the reconstructed OC forms follow Miyake (1997 and p.c.).)

- (3) **kama** 'pot', 罍 OC *\*khaam*.  
**kama** 'sickle', 鎌 OC *\*gryam*.  
**ke** 'spirit' 氣 EMC *\*k<sup>h</sup>ʷ<sup>h</sup>*, OC *\*khʷs*.  
**kinu** 'silk', 絹 OC *\*kwyans* (EMC *\*kɕwian<sup>h</sup>*)  
**kuni** 'country', 郡 OC *\*guns* (EMC *\*gun<sup>h</sup>*)  
**saga** 'characteristic; good omen', 性 OC *\*saNG* (EMC *\*siajNG<sup>h</sup>*) 祥 EMC *\*zʌŋg*.  
**sapi**, **sapye** 'spade', 𠂔 EMC *\*t<sup>h</sup>ɕp/t<sup>h</sup>e:p*, OC *\*tshrap*. Cf. *sarapi* above (2). It is possible that OJ *sapi/sapye* was borrowed from EMC while the ancestor of MK *salp* was borrowed from OC, further being borrowed into EMJ in the shape *sarapi*.  
**sugu** 'pair' (in *sugu-roku* 'pair-six', the name of a game of dice), 双 OC *\*sroNG*.  
**ume** 'plum', 梅 OC *\*hmay*.
- (4) **gakwi** 餓鬼 EMC *\*NGa<sup>h</sup>* *kuj&* 'glutton, hungry ghost'.  
**pakase** 博士 EMC *\*pak* d<sup>ɔ</sup>v& 'expert, authority'. This word is not phonographically attested in OJ, but was surely used as it was an important official title in the ritsuryoo system. The regular character reading has given NJ *hakusi* '(academic) doctor, Ph.D.'.

**puse** 布施 EMC \*p]ʰ ʰiʰ 'temple offering, charity' (Chinese loan translation of Skt. d~na 'offering, alms').  
**saka** 尺 EMC \*tʰiajk 'unit of measure; shaku'.  
**saye** 賽 LMC \*saj` 'game (of dice)'. From EMJ this word became *sai*.  
**we** 画 EMC \*pwa]ʰ 'picture, drawing'.  
**zeni** (EMJ) 錢 EMC \*dzian 'money'.

### 2.3 Sanskrit

The following words can be traced back to Sanskrit (or, in one case, Pali), (5). Almost all ultimately derive from Buddhist contexts, but became everyday words and most remain in use today. A few words are included which are not attested until EMJ but which were probably in use in OJ. In a few famous examples we can trace the route of transmission and find both Chinese and Korean related forms, (b), but for several of the oldest and most naturalised loanwords that is not possible, (a). It is worth noting that in addition to Buddhist inspired vocabulary a word for 'rice', which surely must be old, is of Sanskrit origin. It is also worth noting that most of these words survive into the modern language.

The words in (6) derive from Chinese transcriptions of Buddhist names and terms. (a) are from OJ and exhibit some signs of nativisation. Interestingly, *baramoni* and *daniwoti/danawoti* are found in a section of the Man'yooshuu (in book 16) which exhibits Sino-Japanese vocabulary, suggesting that they at the time were thought of as being of Chinese origin. The words in (b) are some common EMJ words, originating as straightforward character readings, which have remained in the language and are still in use. Any word written in Chinese in this way would have been available in Sino-Japanese character readings in EMJ and onwards.

(5)

(a) **ama** (EMJ) 'nun', Pali *amm~* 'mother'  
**kapara** (EMJ) 'ceramic roof tile', Skt. *kap~la* 'cup, jar, dish; cover'.  
**kasa** 'scab, the pox', Skt. *khasa* 'itch, scab'.  
**mara** 'penis', Skt. *m~ra* 'death; the evil one, the tempter; god/passion of love'.  
**pata** 'bannner, standard', Skt. *pat~k~* 'id.'.  
**sara** 'plate', Skt. *ṅar~va* 'shallow cup, dish, plate'.  
**uru-** (EMJ) in e.g. *urusine* 'nonglutinous rice', Skt. *vr̥ṣhi* 'rice' (OJ *-sine* (~ *ine~ina-*) 'riceplant').

(b) **potoke** 'Buddha, Buddha image', MK *pwuthye* 'Buddha', 仏陀 EMC \*but tʰa 浮屠 OC \*buu daa, Skt. *buddha* 'Buddha'.  
**pati** 'bowl', MK *pali*, 鉢 OC \*pat, Skt. *p~tram* 'vessel'.  
**tera** 'temple', MK *tyel* 'temple', 刹 EMC \*tʰaʌt < OC \*tshraat/ksraat, Skt. *kṅetra* 'place'.

(6)

(a) **baramoni** 'Brahman' 波羅門, EMC \*pa la mCn, Skt. *Br~hmana*. *-moni* is the traditional reading of the 門 of the single occurrence of this word in the Man'yooshuu; in EMJ a regular character reading came to be used: *baramon*, which is form the word has today.

**daniwoti/danawoti** 'benefactor' 檀越, EMC \*dan wuat, Skt. *d-<sup>h</sup>napati* 'benefactor; giver; giving-lord'. The shape of this word is not attested phonographically; it is used once logographically in the Man'yooshuu and tradition reads it as here; in EMJ a regular character reading, *dan.wotu*, came to be used, but the nativised version survived in a reduced form, *danna* 'benefactor', eventually giving NJ *danna* 'husband, master'.

**kyesa** 'priest's robe' 袈裟, EMC \*kaV "aV; LMC \*kja: "a:, Skt. *kaS-ya* 'the (yellow) robe of Buddhist clergy'. In addition to preserving *kesa* in the original meaning, NJ also reflects this word in *oogesa-na* 'pompous' (oo- 'big').

(b) **aka** 'Buddhist water offering; container for this; wine (priests' secret language)' 闍伽, EMC \*Sat gva, Skt. *argha*, 'value', *arghyam* 'water offered to a guest at a respectful reception'.

**amida** 'Amitabha Buddha' 阿弥陀, EMC \*Sa mji t<sup>h</sup>a, Skt. *amit-bha*.

**bosatu** 'Bodhisattva' 菩薩, EMC \*b/ sat, Skt. *bodhisattva*.

**butu** 'Buddha, Buddhism' 仏(陀), EMC \*but (t<sup>h</sup>a), Skt. *buddha*.

**daruma** 'Bodhidharma' 達磨, EMC \*dat ma, Skt. *bodhidharma*.

**naraku** 'hell' 奈落, EMC \*na<sup>h</sup> lak, Skt. *naraka* 'id.'.

**setuna** 'instant' 刹那, EMC \*t<sup>h</sup>awt na<sup>h</sup>, Skt. *kSaNa* 'instant, moment'

### 3. Phonological adaptation.

In most cases we do not know the exact shape of the proximate source of loanwords in OJ and it is therefore difficult to say much about the phonological adaptations that took place in the course of the borrowing. Some forms appear shortened or otherwise simplified in comparison with the distal source, e.g. OJ *uru-* from Skt. *vr<sup>h</sup>shiH*, but it is not possible to know where in the course of transmission of this word the abbreviation took place. In particular, if a word passed through Chinese it would have been made to conform to its largely monosyllabic morpheme structure, cf. Skt. *p~tram* giving OC \**pat*.

It is easy, however, to see that some adaptation to the simple syllable structure of OJ took place, most conspicuously in the insertion of epenthetic vowels to avoid syllable final consonants. The addition of *-i* or *-u* to loanwords is well known from NJ, and OJ *kinu* and *kuni* are examples of that, as is perhaps also *pai* (although the MK shape *pali* makes us suspect that the *-i* may predate the arrival of the word in Japan). However, this seems to have become more common from EMJ onwards. A more widely used strategy in the older loanwords was the insertion of a postconsonantal *-a* to echo the preceding vowel: OJ *kasa* (cf. MK *kas*) *kama* (OC \**khaam*), *pakase* (EMC \**pak d<sup>h</sup>va*), *para* (MK *pel*) are straightforward examples of this, but others include *pyera* < pre-OJ \**pyara* (MK *pyet*), *tera* < \**tyara* (MK *tyel*).

### References

General: Miller 1967, Robbeets 2003:135-53, T.Satoo 1982, K.Satoo 1982, Umegaki 1978, Unger 2001, 2003; Sanskrit: Suzuki 1978; Korean: Kanno 1978, Bentley 2000; Chinese: Miyake 1997.