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Title	Remarks on Kaempfer's Imatto Canna
Author(s)	Okada, Kazuhiro
Citation	Journal of the graduate school of letters, 14, 15-35
Issue Date	2019-03
DOI	https://doi.org/10.14943/jgsl.14.15
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/73479
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	14_03_Okada.pdf



Remarks on Kaempfer's *Imatto Canna*

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Abstract: Engelbert Kaempfer's *The History of Japan* describes an unusual Japanese script, *Imatto Canna*. Although the term can be attested in Japanese literature as such, the Japanese use of the term (*Yamato-gana* in modern orthography) is itself varied and does not superficially agree with Kaempfer's. This paper attempts to classify the Japanese usages of this term and untangle the differences between Kaempfer's works on Japanese scripts. A comparison between his published works and his manuscripts reveals that his original understanding of *Yamato-gana* was not far from the Japanese use of the term, but that some misinterpretations arose during *The History of Japan*'s editing process.

(Received on December 17, 2018)

1. Introduction

The term *Imatto Canna* seems to carry little meaning: it appears to change what it signifies flexibly according to the context, as in Wittgenstein's theory of a language-game. Placed in a multiplex translation, it sounds odd to modern ears (see also Fig. 1):

- (1) [...] The *Firo Canna*, and *Catta Canna* characters, as they are call'd at the top of the several columes wherein they are plac'd, are common to the Japanese in general, and understood by the common people. The *Imatto Canna*, or rather *Jamatto Canna* characters are in use only at the court of the *Dairi*, or Ecclesiastical Hereditary Emperor, and are so call'd from the Province *Jamasijro*, in which lies *Miaco*, the residence of the *Dairi*. [...] (Kaempfer *History*, 2: Explanation of Tab. XLV, 1728)

Kaempfer's rendering of Japanese words appear unfamiliar. As Kaempfer wrote Japanese words as he heard them, rather than using a particular Japanese orthography like as the preceding Portuguese missionary did (Michel 1993, 198-204), we can safely ignore the differences in rendering: *Firo Canna* for hiragana, *Catta Canna* for katakana, and *Imatto Canna* for *Yamato-gana*. In any case, the oddness of the description "Yamato-gana" does not disappear.

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ALPHABETA JAPONUM														Tab. XLV.	
Character Composit.	Imatto Canna	Gata Canna	Ere Canna	Imatto Canna	Gata Canna	Ere Canna	Imatto Canna	Gata Canna	Ere Canna	Imatto Canna	Gata Canna	Ere Canna	Imatto Canna	Gata Canna	Ere Canna
玄 天	る	ナ	な	ミ	メ	メ	カ	カ	カ	リ	カ	カ	ア	ア	ア
宮 天	ル	ナ	ナ	ミ	メ	メ	カ	カ	カ	リ	カ	カ	ア	ア	ア
雲 雲	ル	ナ	ナ	ミ	メ	メ	カ	カ	カ	リ	カ	カ	ア	ア	ア
令 天	ル	ナ	ナ	ミ	メ	メ	カ	カ	カ	リ	カ	カ	ア	ア	ア
玄 天	る	ナ	な	ミ	メ	メ	カ	カ	カ	リ	カ	カ	ア	ア	ア
登 以	ル	ナ	ナ	ミ	メ	メ	カ	カ	カ	リ	カ	カ	ア	ア	ア
登 以	ル	ナ	ナ	ミ	メ	メ	カ	カ	カ	リ	カ	カ	ア	ア	ア
登 以	ル	ナ	ナ	ミ	メ	メ	カ	カ	カ	リ	カ	カ	ア	ア	ア
登 以	ル	ナ	ナ	ミ	メ	メ	カ	カ	カ	リ	カ	カ	ア	ア	ア
登 以	ル	ナ	ナ	ミ	メ	メ	カ	カ	カ	リ	カ	カ	ア	ア	ア

Fig. 1 Kaempfer History, 2: Tab. XLV 'Alphabetum Japonum'

In (1), this notable Occidental traveller reports an unusual script that were used *only* at the Japanese court(!). This reference to the province of the Court does not explain why it is called *Yamato*, which refers to present-day Nara, and which hosted several sites of the Court before it was moved to Yamashiro. In fact, there is no relation between the site of the Court and *Imatto Canna*: As Philipp von Siebold rightly observes, those Kaempferian alphabets were not restricted to such a closed circle, but were used among every group of people in the nation. He adds that *Imatto Canna* is intermingled with hiragana (Siebold 81-82).¹ What, then, is this other row of kana syllabaries?

In fact, the term *Yamato-kana*, or *Yamato-gana* (大和仮名) in modern pronunciation was used in Japan as in the following:

(2) 一字借音 大和仮名の字を兎の筆始め (Buson, 1779, 369)²

Itizi syakuon: Yamato-gana, i-no zi-o tigo-no hude hazime (One letter for one sound: The letter *I* in

¹ To consider Siebold's description and that of later Japanology works is an exciting endeavour in itself, but one that exceeds the scope of the current paper. Here, I shall cite only where he criticised Kaempfer: 'Kaempferus hoc alphabetum in curia *Daili*, quae est *M'jako* in provincia *Iamasiro* unice adhiberi affirmat, id quod tunc temporis fuisse, non nego, affirmans, idem nunc cum illo *Hirakana* simul ubique in quotidiana scribi conversatione' ('Kaempfer maintained that this alphabet is employed in the *Dairi* alone, which is *Miyako* in the province of Yamashiro. However, I cannot agree that it was so even at the time. In confirmation of this, today it is written everywhere together with hiragana in daily written correspondence', Siebold 82, fn. 3).

² Hereafter, Japanese quotations will be given a modern transliteration in *kunrei-siki* and my rather literal translation, unless otherwise noted. The bibliography, on the other hand, will be Romanised in the Hepburn method. Where needed, the year of citation is supplied for the sake of readability.

Yamato-gana, as a boy's first writing of the year)

This poem apparently refers to a script not limited to the palace, as the sound of 'Yamato-gana i' rhymes with the addressee of the poem, 'Yamato Karai' (大和何来), a commoner poet and friend of Buson. As (Yada 2005a, 757, n. 8) points out, here the term refers to hiragana, because 'considering educational standards in the pre-modern period, it cannot be anything other than hiragana, as it begins with the letter *I*; in other words, following the order set down by the *Iroha* poem'.

What is puzzling, however, is that kana studies have also stated that *Yamato-gana* is an equivalent of *katakana*:

- (3) 片仮字一ツニハ大和仮名トモイヘリ (Arai, 1760, Vol. 3, f. 1r)

Katakana hito-tu-ni-wa Yamato-gana-to-mo i-eri. (As an alternative, katakana is also called Yamato-gana.)

Kaempfer's term appears to be in disagreement with both interpretations; we shall take this subtle difference as the starting point for our discourse. This paper will elucidate the use of the term *Yamato-gana* / *Imatto canna* around the 16th to 17th centuries, at both ends of Eurasia.

2. *Yamato-gana* used in Japan

In Japan, *Yamato-gana* has been used in the sense of either (a) hiragana or (b) katakana, the latter of which is attributable to a specific reference.

2.1. Hiragana interpretation

Most mentions of *Yamato-gana* refer to it in the hiragana sense (quotations given in chronological order):

- (4) 色ハ匂ヘド散スルヲ我世誰ゾ常ナラント諸行無常ノ始メ二句ニテ横尾山寺勤操ノ書給フタル四十八字ノ大和仮名 (Sakuden, 1630, [17r])³

Iro-wa nio-edo tir-in-ur-u-o waga-yo tare-zo tune nar-an-to, syogyō muzyō-no hazime ni-ku-nite Maki-no-o-san-zi Gonzō-no kak-itam-ō-tar-u sizyū-hati-zi-no Yamato-gana (The 48 Yamato-gana, of which Monk Gonzō of the Mt Makinoo Temple wrote the first two lines, 'Though gay in hue, [the blossoms] flutter down, alas! / Who then, in this world of ours, may continue forever?'⁴)

- (5) 撫子や送らば文も大和仮名 (ヤマトガナ) 宗朋 (Matsue, 1638, 218)

Nadesiko-ya, okur-aba humi-mo Yamato-gana *Sōhō* (O dianthus [Japanese girl], if you send it, the

3 This citation requires elaboration. Gonzō (754-827), a renowned monk of the Nara period, was once believed to have initiated Kūkai (774-835), one of the most prominent monks of that period, into the priesthood at the Temple of Mt Makinoo. Kūkai was widely attributed as the creator of the *Iroha* poem, but some anecdotes indicate that Gonzō rhymed the first two lines, with Kūkai providing the rest.

4 Chamberlain's translation appeared in *Things Japanese* 5th ed. (1905).

letter will be in Yamato-gana)

- (6) かきそめや塵のつもりて大和仮名（やまとかな）宗恵 (Kiun, 1667, 145)

Kaki-zome-ya, tiri-no tumor-ite Yamato-gana *Sōkei* (O first writing of the year, piled wastepaper looks like Yamato-gana)

(4) clearly shows that Yamato-gana is an equivalent to hiragana, or more precisely Iroha-gana. Iroha-gana is a term used in the Early Modern period to distinguish the specific 47 kana graphs that repeatedly appeared in the *Iroha* copybook from other cursive kana graphs, and (Yamauchi 2011) has clarified that hiragana was once a synonym of Iroha-gana.⁵ The association of Yamato-gana to the poem in (4) is evident.

The meaning of (6) is understandable when this term is associated with Iroha-gana. Because *Iroha* is a first primer for writing, the *Iroha* poem itself has long been considered to be appropriate for celebrating the first step of the new year. This poem depicts a scene in which a pile of failed drafts comes to resemble a letter from the *Iroha*, say, *I*. One can even imagine a student writing out *Iroha* over and over again for all he was worth.

In contrast, the meaning of (5) seems to be slightly different. It imagines that a girl, here compared to a lovely flower based on her appearance, would write in *Yamato-gana* to her sweetheart. By its very nature, *Iroha-gana* was associated with immaturity. It loses its playfulness when the letter is written in such a poor hand. We can recall that Siebold pointed out that typical writing involved a mixture of Yamato-gana with Iroha-gana: therefore, the letter would have been written in such a mixture; i.e. hiragana. Since this poem has neither context or description, there is no supportive evidence for this reading. However, we have another example that is not limited to the Iroha-gana association.

- (7) 一 たゝん紙 源氏にも此詞あり かたかな源氏になし 草の文字也 俗に大和仮名と云々 (Satomura, 1590, Vol. 1: 470)

Hitotu. tatan-gami: genzi-ni-mo ko-no kotoba ar-i. Katakana: genzi-ni na-si. Sō-no mozi-nari. Zoku-ni Yamato-gana-to unnun. (1. *Tatan-gami*: This word is found in *Genji*. *Katakana*: Not found in *Genji*. It refers to cursive characters. It is colloquially called *Yamato-kana*.)

(7) is the only known example that appears before the 17th century.⁶ This is excerpted from *Sagoromo Shitahimo*, a commentary on the Heian-period story *Sagoromo Monogatari*, commenting on the following part of the text:

5 Hereafter, to avoid confusion, hiragana refers to the modern conception of all kana graphs that are derived from Chinese cursive scripts, whilst Iroha-gana refers to the 47 graphs particular to the *Iroha* copybook. For details on Iroha-gana, see (Okada 2013).

6 This example was first reported by user “Murasaki” on The Circle for *Nikkoku* (*The Great Japanese Dictionary*) in <https://japanknowledge.com/tomonokai/card.html?id=160> (Retrieved 14 Dec 2018), without casting doubt on the dictionary definition of Yamato-gana as abbreviated *kana* in contrast to Chinese characters (*Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, 2nd ed., 2000-02).

- (8) 御隨身、そのわたりに筆求めて、参りたれば、経紙などにや、泥のつきたるぞありける、畳紙に、片仮名に、
「見も分かず過ぎにけるかなをしなべて軒の菖蒲のひましなければ
今わざと、参らん」と、いはせ給て、 (*Sagoromo* 39)

Mi-zuisin, so-no watari-ni hude motom-ete, mair-itar-eba, kyōsi-nado-ni-ya, dei-no tuk-itar-u-zo ar-iker-u, tatō-gami-ni, katakana-ni, / ‘m-i-mo wak-azu, sug-ini-ker-u kana, osinab-ete, noki-no ayame-no hima si na-ker-eba. / ima waza-to, mair-an’-to, iw-ase-tama-ite, (After the guard obtained the writing brush there and returned, on something like sutra paper painted with gold and silver, in *katakana*, [Sagoromo] wrote / ‘I have passed you by without finding you; / the irises hanging from each eave without a gap’ / informing her of his soon return,)

This text is of a certain variant of the manuscript in which Sagoromo, the protagonist, wrote a *tanka* poem in *katakana*. (7) is a comment on this unusual situation, and one that casts doubt on whether it was actually the same *katakana* that the commentator knew and used. This doubt naturally leads to an observation that defines *katakana* as a name for *kana* (although no modern scholars agree with this understanding). Here, we will turn attention to the fact that Yamato-gana is associated with cursiveness, viz. hiragana. That is to say, we find no reason to associate this example with Iroha-gana. This explanation coincides with that of (5).

As an unusual word, we find subtle differences in how the term Yamato-gana is used: one is strictly limited to Iroha-gana, and the other, loosely hiragana. In this discussion, however, it is sufficient to confirm that such variation exists.

2.2. Katakana interpretation

The earliest example of Yamato-gana being used in the *katakana* sense, to the best of my knowledge, is found in the latter half of the 17th century:

- (9) 亦以片仮字為大和仮字者以其吉備之作而起於大和国也 (*Matsushita*, [1671], f. 32v (n. p.))
Mata *katakana*-o mot-te Yamato-gana-to s-uru-wa, sore, Kibi-no saku-ni s-site, Yamato-no kuni-ni okor-u-o mot-te-nar-i (Besides, referring to *katakana* as ‘Yamato-gana’ is a result of its creation by Kibi and its occurrence in the province of Yamato)

Matsushita Kenrin (1637-1703) was a Confucianist doctor and Kokugaku scholar of the early Edo period. This hand-sized work, *Gakugen*, unfolds the origins of, and a number of things related to a variety of scholarly ventures in Japan. Among these, Matsushita discussed the origins of Japanese scripts. His explanations were disseminated via commentaries on this condensed work (10) or attributions to him by Kaibara Kōko, a friend of Matsushita and himself a prominent scholar of this period (11).

- (10) 吉備公大和ノ居処ハ、城上吉備村ニアリ、御厨子山妙法寺ハ吉備公ノ子善覚律師ノ建立也、大和仮字トハ旧来ノ俗伝ニ依テ書之、 (*Mano*, 1716, 518)
Kibi-kō Yamato-no kyosyo-wa, Siki-no-kami Kibi-mura-ni ar-i. Mizusi-san Myōhōzi-wa Kibi-kō-no ko Zenkaku rissi-no konryū-nar-i. Yamato-gana-to-wa kyūrai-no zokuden-ni yot-te kore-o kak-

u (‘Minister Kibi’s residence in Yamato was in Kibi village of Shiki-no-kami county.’⁷ The Myōhō temple of Mt Mizushi was established by Minister Kibi’s son, Discipline Master Zenkaku. As for Yamato-gana, it is based on folklore’)

- (11) 吉備公これを作れり。又これを大和仮名と云ものは、吉備公の作にして、大和国に起るを以て也 (西峰老人説) (Kaibara, 1697?, Vol. 4, 23r-24v)
Kibi-kō kore-o tsuk-ur-eri. Mata kore-o Yamato-gana-to i-u mono-wa, Kibi-kō-no saku-ni s-ite, Yamato-no kuni-ni okor-u-o mot-te-nar-i (Nisimine Rōzin-ga setu) (‘It was created by Minister Kibi. Also called *Yamato-kana*, named after the province of Yamato, the place in which he created them. (This is Nishimine Rōjin [= Matsushita Kenrin]’s theory)’)

The origin of this explanation is not clear. The false attribution of Minister Kibi, or Kibi no Makibi (695-775), as the creator of katakana, however, was a rather recent coinage. As (Yada 2005b, 597-98) investigated, this attribution dates back only to the late Muromachi Shintoist, Yoshida Kanetomo (1435-1511)’s short summary of the history of Japanese scripts:

- (12) カタカナハ、吉備大臣作之 (Yoshida, c. 1500, 4)
Katakana-wa, Kibi daizin kore-o tukur-u (‘Katakana was made by Minister Kibi’)

As such, there is a possibility that Yoshida’s view lead to the association of katakana with Yamato Province, as is commented on in (10). However, it is dubious how such an association could be established: first, Kibi’s birthplace is in Bitchū Province, and secondly, hiragana did not have such an alternative name.⁸ Several decades earlier, Yamazaki Anzai attributed the creation of katakana to Minister Kibi, without citing the name Yamato-gana (Yamazaki, Vol. 1, f. 7v). Rather, we can think of the origin of this being, if not Matsushita himself, then someone close to him. This accounts well for its sudden appearance in related literature, both in terms of time and relationship.

2.3. Summary

We have observed that Japanese usage of the term Yamato-gana falls into two categories. One is the sense of hiragana, in some cases restricted further to Iroha-gana. The other is the sense of katakana, but this is likely confined to a certain circle. Based on this observation, we will examine Kaempfer’s accounts of Yamato-gana and the Japanese writing system.

3. Kaempfer’s accounts

Kaempfer did not produce a single unified account of Yamato-gana or of the Japanese writing system

⁷ This description includes some confusion as to where Kibi village is located. Actually, Kibi village was in Toichi county.

⁸ To be precise, Yamato-gana was such an alternate name. In addition, in kana studies, the term *Izumo-gana* would be coined later. See, for example, the self-introduction to Saitō Hikomaro’s *Kana Jishō* (1848?) (doi: 10.20730/200015915). This association would emerge from the fact that Kūkai’s copy of *Iroha* was believed to have been stored in Kando Temple in Izumo Province.

as a whole. This is partly because his texts suffered as a result of unfortunate circumstances, and partly because he appears to have changed his views a number of times. After giving a sketch of Kaempfer's life, we will review his accounts one by one.

3.1. The life of Engelbert Kaempfer⁹

Engelbert Kaempfer was from Lemgo, now in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. He was born to a vicar of the town in 1651, whose uncles would die under the severe witch hunts that took place during that period. In spite of poor support from his family, and the country being ravaged by the Thirty Years' War, Kaempfer enjoyed good educational opportunities in a number of places, beginning in Hameln, and resulting in a degree in Kraków. Subsequently, whilst pursuing a degree in Medicine at Königsburg, he left for Sweden in hope of getting a job.

The job he obtained there, as a secretary to the Swedish king's delegation to the shah of Persia, let him set out on the unexpectedly long journey to the East. The delegation first left for Russia in 1683, and at this time he began to record his journey in words and sketches for future publication. His education, especially in natural history, made him aware of the differences between places in terms of their natural and cultural history. En route to Isfahan, the first destination, he made many interesting notes on things he found on the way, such as the discovery of petroleum in the Caspian Sea, and the eternal flame at Yanar Dag, Azerbaijan.

After finishing the mission to Iran, he began work as a physician for the Dutch East India Company. However, his work performance in Isfahan, Bandar Abbas, and Batavia, partly because of poor working conditions and partly because of his habit of skipping his duties for his own research, did not meet the Company's expectations. The Company eventually ordered him to serve in Japan. The then governor general of Batavia was Johannes Camphuis, who valued Kaempfer's observational abilities and shared his materials on Japan with him.

Kaempfer arrived in Japan in 1690. During his stay, he worked in Desima as a physician. He often gained both direct and indirect information from his patients. His Japanese assistant, believed to be Imamura Gen'emon (1671-1736), who later became a pioneer of Dutch studies, worked on his research as well.¹⁰ Kaempfer visited Edo twice, where he even met Shogun Iemitsu. Kaempfer left Japan in 1692.

Kaempfer soon returned to Europe in 1693 and was awarded a doctorate by dissertation in Medicine from Leiden University 1694 for part of which he described the Caspian Sea petroleum. Kaempfer returned to his hometown Lemgo in the same year, in order to devote himself to writing. His hopes, however, were never fulfilled by his occupation as a physician. Although he managed to publish his scholarly essays on the Orient, titled *Amoenitates Exoticae* in 1712, his other manuscripts, including the detailed description of Japan, were left unpublished in his storage.

When he died in 1716, his legacy was left to his nephew, including manuscripts and a collection from the journey. His nephew, Johann Hermann Kaempfer, finally sold those manuscripts and collection to Hans Sloane, who himself was a physician and naturalist. Sloane had his houseman edit and translate the

⁹ The main reference for this section is (Bodart-Bailey 1999).

¹⁰ With no exception for him, the collection of anything Japanese by Westerners would lead to punishment or deportation of both the Westerners and their assistants. Kaempfer himself acknowledges the strictly-confidential support of his assistant.

description of Japan and published it under the title of *the History of Japan* in 1727. The Sloane collection was bequeathed to the British government, and became part of the foundation of the British Museum, and consequently the British Library, where the manuscript in question is now located.

3.2. *Amoenitates Exoticae*

Amoenitates is the only work published in Kaempfer's lifetime that includes content concerning Japan.¹¹ It literally means 'exotic delights', meaning that this five-volume book just scraped the surface of his stories and observations. Its full explanatory title was 'Amoenitatum Exoticarum Politico-physico-medicarum Fasciculi v', or '5 fascicles of exotic delights in politics, natural sciences and medicines'. We can find another story concerning Yamato-gana in this book.

In the last volume, where he exhibits his sketches of Japanese flora, he also writes the names of specimens in Chinese characters. Giving a brief explanation for those characters,¹² he touched upon other scripts in Japan, saying:

- (13) Addidissem quoque signata nomina literis Alphabeti Japonici; (quò duplici populus utitur: uno *Firo Canna*, altero *Catta Canna* dictò, cujus utriusque figurae non simplices literas, exemplò nostratium, sed integras syllabas notant) verùm quòd à dextrâ incipiendo deorsum scribantur, inseri latino textui non poterant; secus ac ipsi characteres, qui, quamvis eodem ordine pingendi sint, patiuntur tamen à latere sociari. (Kaempfer *Amoenitas*, Fasc. 5: 768)

(I should have also added in engraved letters the names of the Japanese alphabets¹³ (of which the people use two: one is called *Firo Canna* and the other *Catta Canna*, both of which have no letters of simple shape, and unlike our examples, they denote entire syllables); however, the fact that it is written from the right downwards makes it impossible to put [them] in the Latin context; on the other hand, although they are generally depicted in the same direction, these characters [i.e., Chinese characters] are able to be joined together laterally side by side.)

He complained that, despite his wish to do so, he could not insert Japanese kana here, explaining that the vertical writing direction of kana prevents them from being inserted into Latin texts, whereas regular Chinese characters can be. From this glimpse, we can see that Kaempfer only mentioned hiragana and katakana, not Yamato-gana. It is not omitted here, as he described Japanese scripts 'quò duplici populus utitur' ('of which the people use two'): One is hiragana, and the other is of course, katakana.

This account illustrates that Kaempfer had a basic understanding of the Japanese script. However, it is not clear in what sense he used the term 'Firo Canna', which was basically associated with Iroha-gana. In the illustration of Japanese kana specimens (Fig. 2), Kaempfer seemed not to make a clear distinction between Iroha-gana graphs: the example on the right includes a non-Iroha-gana graph for 'ka'. Hence,

11 Kaempfer published three works during his lifetime: a treatise on political issues in 1673, his doctoral thesis in 1694, and *Amoenitas Exoticae* in 1712. For more on this compelling work, see (Neuhausen 2010).

12 For an examination of his general explanation of the Japanese writing system, see (Michel 1993, 211-15) and (Michel 1996, 38-41).

13 Kaempfer expressed regret just prior to this excerpt that, due to the capability of his engraver, he could not insert the cursive Chinese characters with xylographic type.

Fig. 2 Kaempfer *Amoenitas*, Fasc. 5, 768

Kaempfer would have used the term as a general term for cursive kana graphs as in the modern sense.

3.3. The History of Japan

The History of Japan was published after editing and translation by a Swiss, Johann Caspar Scheuchzer (1702-29).¹⁴ Scheuchzer was the son of a famous Swiss physician, Johann Jakob Scheuchzer, and himself a physician and naturalist (FRS, Member of the College of Physicians, London). He later worked for Hans Sloane as his personal cataloguer. As mentioned earlier, Kaempfer's *History of Japan* was published without the consent of the author. Moreover, whilst disagreement exists over the extent, it is unquestionable that some modifications to the original text were made, beyond simple errors in the editing (Bodart-Bailey 1999, 7-11). Considering that *Amoenitas* does not make mention of Yamatogana, is its appearance a result of some kind of modification to the original? To answer this, we must compare this description with that in Kaempfer's manuscript.

The points of comparison can be categorised under three topics: description, arrangement, and graphs. First, we will look at the description of Japanese kana in full:

- (14) Three several alphabets of the Japanese language, in explanation of which it must be previously observ'd, that the simple characters always denote whole syllables, and that consequently there cannot be, in this language, an alphabet compos'd of simple vowels and consonants, like the alphabets of our European languages. The *Firo Canna*, and *Catta Canna* characters, as they are call'd at the top of the several colum[n]s wherein they are plac'd, are common to the Japanese in general, and understood by the common people. The *Imatto Canna*, or rather *Jamatto Canna* characters are in use only at the court of the *Dairi*, or Ecclesiastical Hereditary Emperor, and are so call'd from the Province *Jamasijro*, in which lies *Miaco*, the residence of the *Dairi*. In every fourth column, beginning from the right hand, the sound of these characters hath been express'd in *Latin* Letters. In the two last columns, to the left, are some specimens of compound characters, taken out of a Dictionary printed in *Japan*. Those mark'd 1, are the *Ssin* characters, as they call them, being the characters of the significant or learned language of the Chinese and Japanese, express'd after the Chinese manner. 2, 3, 4, Are three different sorts of the *Common* characters, as the Japanese call them, which they, as well as the *Chinese*, make use of in their seals. The middle ones, (mark'd 3,) and also the most angular, are likewise call'd *Taf*. 5. Are the *Sso* characters, or the characters of

14 In full, it reads: 'The History of Japan, Giving an Account of the Ancient 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, Religions, 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'.

learned language, as express'd by the Japanese. (Kaempfer *History*, 2: Explanation of Tab. XLV, 1728, cf. (1))

In this passage, the major distinction of kana scripts was made between the pair of 'Firo Canna' and 'Catta Canna' on one hand, and 'Imatto Canna' on the other. The explanation of the latter, as mentioned before, is detailed at first glance, but also incoherent: How one can collect a script that is forbidden outside the Imperial Palace, especially as a foreigner? How did the forbidden script come to be called of Yamato Province, rather than Yamashiro?¹⁵ It contains apparently inadequate descriptions.

Turning to the illustration, we have 50 hiragana (H), 49 katakana (K) and 47 Yamato-gana (Y) in total. The graphs are arranged into a table by consonant and vowel, that is to say, following *gojūon-zu* or the table of fifty-sounds in Japanese. The leftmost two columns are inserted from *Gotai Senjimon* or *A Thousand of Characters in Five Styles*.¹⁶ Many errors are found in the arrangement of graphs, especially with the *a*, *j* (*y* in the Hepburn system), and *w* columns of the *gojūon-zu*. In addition, there are two duplicates both in *o* and *wo*, and in *u* and *wu* (K, Y), meaning we do not have *o* (H), and *wo* (Y).

We also find some curious graphs in the illustration. Among them, the graphs for *we* and *wi* (both H) are especially odd. They are the combination of two graphs: namely, *u* う + *je* 𪛗 for *we* and *u* う + *i* い for *wi*. Similar combinations were adopted among scholars for the *gojūon-zu*, but they used katakana rather than hiragana (Mabuchi 1993). Whilst completely indecipherable graphs are surprisingly few in number considering that the work was done without the ability to read the graphs, a few extra or missing strokes are observed in *ki* (K), *ta* (H, K, Y), *hu* (K, Y), and *mu* (H, Y). It may be noted that in the most cases, misinterpretations occur together in two or three rows, and involve both extra and missing strokes. Lastly, the most curious thing is that the collected Yamato-gana graphs are far from strange despite its description.

Were all of these errors, then, produced in the editing process?

3.4. Kaempfer's manuscript, Sloane MS 3060, British Library

The answer is of course not: They derived from the original manuscripts as well as the editing process. Publishing an unfinished manuscript means vast amounts of editorial work. Moreover, Kaempfer's manuscript is not a single tidily-composed whole. The major manuscripts which formed *The History of Japan* are now compiled into an album catalogued as Sloane MS 3060 in the British Library (Hereafter Sl. 3060). Although the composition of the current album is problematic (see Michel 2001), the materials that form the basis for our investigation can be found mounted on the pages within.

First, faults in the description come from deficiencies in the manuscript and questionable elaboration. The passage on which the description concerning kana syllabaries depends reads (Fig. 3):

- (15) Nota quae literis Canna aut Catta-canna conscripta sunt, legi Idiomate populari Japonico; quae vero characteribus Ssin et Sso, legi idiomate literato à populari Japonico aequè atque Sinensium diverso.

15 In terms of etymology, Yamato-gana is considered to be associated not with the Province, as Matsushita explained, but with the whole of Japan, meaning 'Japanese kana'. Therefore, the etymology itself has nothing to specify.

16 The British Library holds two copies from Kaempfer's library which do not show a publication date.

Nota quae literis Canna aut Catta-
 Canna conscripta sunt, legi Idio-
 mate populari Japonico;
 quae vero characteribus Ssin et Fo
 Sso, legi idiomate literato,
 à populari Japonico aequè atq; si-
 nensium diverſo. In cujus lec-
 tione tñ, tam Ssin quam Sso, ex Idio-
 mate omatis genio, non seriatim
 legunt, et interpolatim verba, Itz
 bula exprimere coguntz.

Jamatto Canna. est alprute-
 tum quoditq; Dairo it. meretrices
 Itz à provincia Jamatto, circa Miaco IV
 estq; scriptura genuina Japonum,
 quae literas liberaliter Firacan-
 nica scriptura immiscet (nunquā
 Catta Cannica). q. tyronem haud me-
 diocriter turbat.

Fig. 3 SL 3060, f. 529v, enlarged

In cujus lectione [...] ¹⁷, tam Ssin quam Sso, ex Idio[...]omatis ¹⁸ genio, non seriatim legunt, et
 interpolatim verba ¹⁹ exprimere coguntur.

17 Not legible, but should be deleted.

18 Some letters (g...e) are struck through.

19 Originally reads *vocabula*.

Iamatto Canna est alphabetum quo utitur Dairo it[em] meretrices [...] à provincia Jamatto, circa Miaco estque scriptura genuina Japonum, cujus literas liberaliter Firacannicae scripturae immiscent; (numquã Catta Cannicae). quod tyronem haud mediocriter turbat. (Sl. 3060, f. 529v)

(Note that those whose letters are written in *Canna* or *Catta canna*, [are] to be read in the language²¹ of the Japanese commoner; however, those, whose letters are *Ssin* and *Sso*, are to be read in the language of the learned people by Japanese commoner, just like far-distant Chinese.²² In their reading, both *Sso* and *Ssin*, from genius of the language (?), are not read one after another, and are understood by translating words independently. / *Imatto Canna* is alphabet that is used in the Dairo, as well as by courtesans near to *Jamatto* province, around *Miaco*, and is a genuine Japanese script, whose letters freely intermingle with *firacanna* script (never with *Catta canna*), which unsettles the beginner quite immoderately.)

In this very draft, Kaempfer clearly stated that the script is used in the Dairo; however, he did not limit it to the prohibited palace. Similarly, he discussed its use in the *Yamato* province and not *Yamashiro*, although he erred in any case. Knowledge about the province where the Dairo was located would make this an unnecessary alteration in editing the manuscript. However, Kaempfer described that it was used by courtesans of the Yamato province: the intention is not clear, but this reminds us of the use in (5), where a girl, likened to a flower, writes in Yamato-gana. It is possible that Kaempfer did not necessarily think of *courtesan* (*meretrix*) but just wanted to say *female* (*femina*). If this fantasy does not miss the point, we can surmise that Kaempfer referred to *onna-de* or the female script.²³ At any rate, not translating the last sentence cannot be overlooked: on this point von Siebold later criticised Kaempfer's description.

In arranging the graphs, the editors mainly relied on Kaempfer's *gojūon-zu* (Fig. 4), while changing vowel order to alphabetical (i.e. *a, i, u, e, o* to *a, e, i, o, u*). The most striking evidence of this is in the graphs, but the arrangement of this manuscript is convincing enough: they have in common the arrangement of the *a, y* and *w* columns. The additional *w* column in the original manuscript shows the inaccurate knowledge of the *gojūon-zu*, which was rather unfamiliar knowledge to general public, on the part of his informant. It also explains why the editors could not supply appropriate graphs for *o* and *wo*: namely, they would miss *o* (H) in Fig. 4. The differences in the number of Yamato-gana graphs between *History* and the manuscript (Fig. 5), however, show some distortion: In the manuscript, 62 Yamato-gana graphs are used, as opposed to 47 in *History*. None of the extra 15 graphs can fill the gaps, but just 15 variations are left out from the publication. These variations would have been removed in order to make it more alphabetic. This modification would have been carried out without thinking, but it would have an effect on later studies.

Anomalous graphs can be also accounted for by comparing those in *History* with Sl. 3060 (Fig. 4 and

20 Not legible, but an abbreviation for *utitur* 'to be used' (3.sg.)?

21 Kaempfer used this word in the broad sense of 'language' or 'vernacular' as in 'idioma' in modern Italian and Iberian Romance languages, cf. '[O]ptionem ei daturus, an illud Latino, an Germanico, an vero Belgico idiomate edidebeat' ('He will be given the choice of which language it is published in, be it Latin, German, or even Belgian [= Dutch]', Kaempfer *Amoenitas*, Fasc. 1, (b)3r). *edidebeat* seems to be a Mediaeval Latin word *edide-beat* ('to publish'-fut.3.sg.).

22 Due to the very rough nature of the draft, it appears that Kaempfer did not pay sufficient attention to syntax.

23 The use of the word *meretrix* to mean female is obviously too strange to overlook. It can be explained, however, if his informant told him that *onna-de* is attributed to some occupation such as that of courtesan.

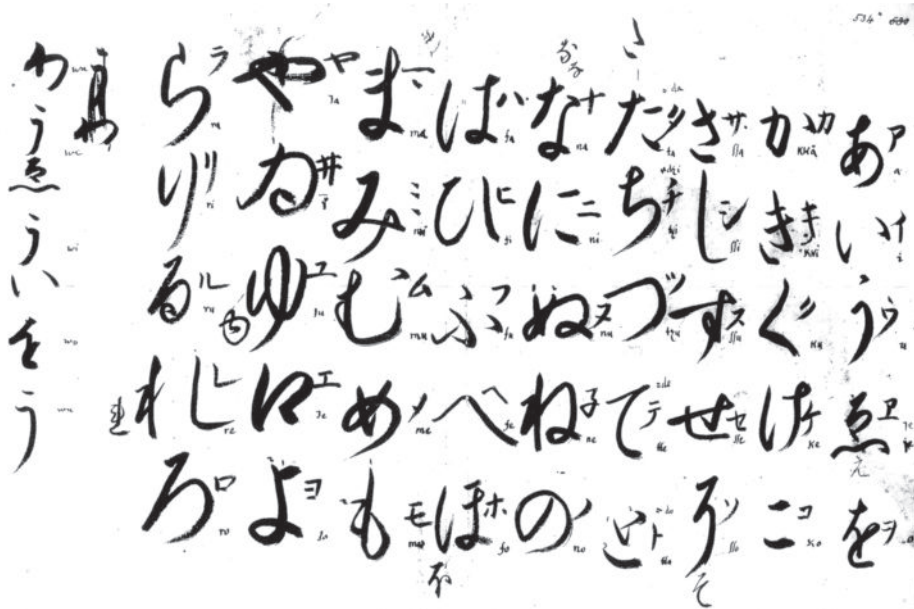


Fig. 4 SI. 3060, ff. 533v-534r 'fifty sounds of Japanese (tentative)'

5). As for composited graphs, Fig. 4 shows the same. Extra and missing strokes can be observed in the original manuscript. The most illustrative case is *ta*, where the third stroke in hiragana was misinterpreted as the fourth stroke in katakana and sixth in Yamato-gana.²⁴ It was not a coincidence that two or three misinterpretations occurred together. In terms of the graphs used, the writer seemed to have average knowledge of the writing system, as has been mentioned before. It is interesting in that it exhibits an average example of recallable graphs for a member of the educated class.

If we compare this reconstruction of Kaempfer's usage with the Japanese usage, we find that it resembles the sense of broader hiragana. This means that Yamato-gana was not Kaempfer's invention. The term was not used in *Amoenitates Exoticae* probably because it was held to be essentially of a company with hiragana. However, partly due to deficiencies in the original manuscripts, and partly due to the editing process, *History* ended up as something odd. Here, we have explored Kaempfer's original intention and some possible factors behind his misinterpretations.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have revealed anomalies in Kaempfer's *The History of Japan*. Kaempfer's use of the term Yamato-gana follows the hiragana sense in Japanese, and this intention was confused in the editing of *History*, a posthumous publication of unfinished work. The sense in which Japanese writers themselves used this term have also been investigated, and classified into either a hiragana sense or a katakana sense, the former of which was sometimes limited to signifying Iroha-gana.

²⁴ In the Yamato-gana graph for *ta*, the second stroke of the hiragana is also blended (cf. Fig. 5).

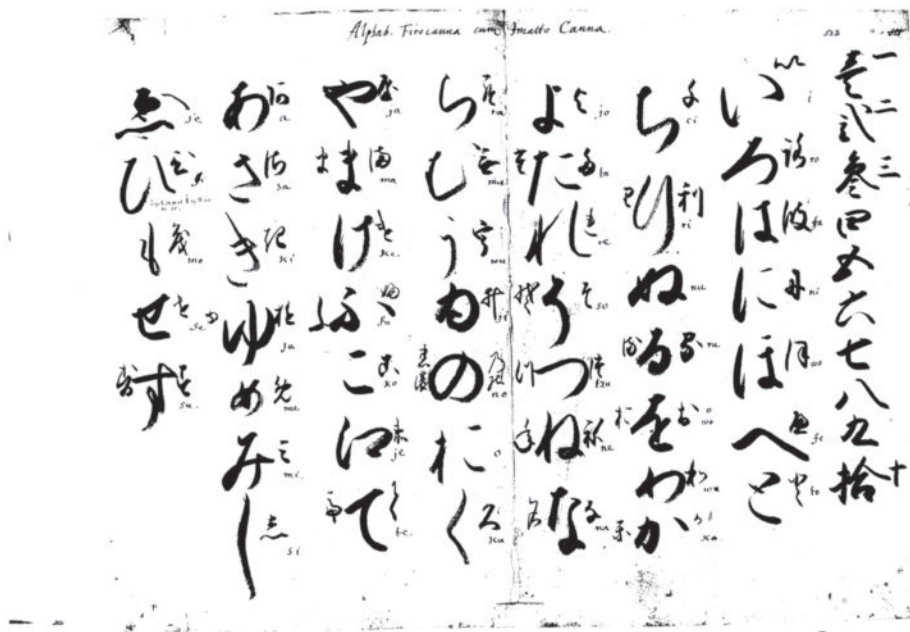


Fig. 5 Sl. 3060, ff. 531v-532r 'Alphab[etum] Firocanna cum Imatto Canna'

Arguing over the accuracy of Kaempfer's description, (Bodart-Bailey 1999, 20-21) concluded that 'even if Kaempfer's facts are sometimes incorrect in actual terms, they usually reflect the images that presented themselves to him and indicate the level of knowledge of his informants'. This is the case with Yamato-gana. In our exploration, we find that Kaempfer's manuscripts incorporated information from informants well. Even some inaccuracies appear to have some root in Japanese ideas. At the same time, it was found the odd-looking explanations and illustrations in *History* were not far removed from the original manuscripts.

Von Siebold's criticism of Kaempfer's description, which was touched on briefly in the introduction, indicates that European studies were about to depart from *History*'s sense of the term. This does not mean returning to its Japanese meaning, but rather somewhere else. The exploration of this subsequent direction demands further study.

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Acknowledgement

This work is partially supported by the Hokkaido University Clark Memorial Fund, the Graduate Grant Program of Graduate School of Letters, Hokkaido University and JSPS Grants-in-Aid for Research Activity Start-up (15H05981) and Young Scientists (B) (17K13462).

The author wishes to express gratitude to Prof Michel Wolfgang for bringing the author to Kaempfer's manuscripts. The initial idea was presented at the 2015 and 2016 Spring Meetings of the Society for Japanese Linguistics. Among the many insightful comments, the author is particularly grateful to those from Prof Sven Osterkamp. The author also enjoyed

the assistance of Dr Toda Satoshi in reading Kaempfer's manuscript. An earlier draft of this paper was edited by Dr Daniel Kobayashi-Better, and the final draft by Dr Thomas Dallyn. All remaining errors are my own.