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## THE ESPERANTO OF THE ORIENT

BY SARA MOFFAT SCHENCK

AMONG the strangest of the weird sounds that assail the bewildered ears of the newcomer from the Occident to the Far East is the outlandish jargon that he hears from the lips of his own people. It is not so much the singsong of the native of Canton or Peking, or the unaccented flow of syllables he hears in the streets of Tokyo that surprise him — these he expected to be outlandish — but the strange new words he hears in daily use by those who hail, perhaps, from his own home town.

His first impression is that these terms come from the new land he is exploring, and when he hears Charlie, from Keokuk, Iowa, speaking of his 'shroff and his compradore,' and May, from Trenton, New Jersey, referring to a 'chit' inviting her to 'tiffin,' he marvels at their cleverness at 'picking up the language.' Soon the 'griffin' is using these terms as glibly as the rest of the Orient-inhabiting Occidentals. Probably he continues to use them to the end of his sojourn in the Far East, without bothering to inquire as to their origin or derivation.

Certainly they are not, most of them, either Chinese or Japanese. As a matter of fact, they are proper terms in no language, unless the jargon of the foreigner in the Far East may be considered a language. From many tongues and from many lands they come, most of them by the very elementary process of corruption and mispronunciation. Many are but the result of the attempt of Western tongues to twist around

strange new sounds. Together they form a *lingua franca* of the Orient, a vocabulary in which men of widely varying cultures and tongues converse together. They make up an Esperanto common to the far flung ports from Kamchatka to Bombay that have been invaded by the foreign trader. Something of the outlandish romance of strange new places cling to these words, and coming to the ears of one unused to them, they seem a part of all the bizarre sights, the uncouth sounds and the wild smells that bewilder his senses when first he sets foot on the Bund of some Oriental treaty port.

Altogether, they form a very considerable vocabulary. Some have originated in Japan and traveled southward and westward to India, and many have come from India and spread to all the Orient, from Bombay to Hakodate, including Java and the settlements of the Malay Archipelago, gathering new additions at every stop.

Not always are these terms corruptions of native words pronounced by Occidentals. Very often a term in current use is a corruption of an European word as heard by the Oriental ear and rendered by the Oriental tongue. The Portuguese, Dutch, and French are all responsible for a certain amount of this hybrid vocabulary, but the Portuguese probably have more words to their count than any other, as they were the first Europeans to take an active part in Oriental trade. Especially is this true of many place names in the Orient.

These various terms, having once

become established, have persisted through many years, and through many changes in the fortunes of the nations which first made use of them. Not a few have become incorporated into the English language, and have found their way into English dictionaries.

The following is a partial list of the terms, with their meanings and derivations, that are understood by all Occidentals in the Orient, and by most natives who have any dealings with foreigners, from 'somewhere east of Suez' to Yokohama.

*Amah*: This word is applied throughout the Orient by foreigners to a maid-servant, especially to a nurse-maid. There is considerable discussion as to the origin of the word, some attributing it to the Hindustani word meaning nurse, some to the Chinese word with the same meaning, while others state that it is no more than the Portuguese term, *ama*, meaning nurse-maid, or maid, under certain conditions.

*Beri-beri*: This is a Malay word used commonly by foreigners as the name for a disease in the East, known in Japan as *kakke*, which has hitherto been an obscure mysterious complaint, manifesting itself by a great variety of symptoms, and claiming as its victims many of the inhabitants of the Malay and Eastern Archipelagoes, India, China, and Japan.

*Bonze*: This term is generally thought to be a corruption of the Japanese word *bozu*, meaning priest. It was brought from Japan by the Portuguese and has since been used to denote any priest, although in Cochin-China, China, and the neighboring countries, this term is applied to the priests of the *Fuh*.

Boy is the term first learned by all those who come to the Orient. It is used to denote the man-servant who waits on the table or performs other domestic service. When it was first used, or why, is not known.

*Bund* comes from the Hindustani word *band*, an artificial causeway or embankment. It is generally applied to the broad driveway along the water front, common to Oriental port cities. From this comes the word *bunder* used in Shanghai and other places to mean an untrue rumor, a canard.

Bungalow is now a good English word which came originally from the Hindustani word *banglah*, meaning a one-storied house.

Cash is derived from the word *cashee*, used by the Chuliahs or Klings of India for coin. It is now applied by foreigners to the copper coin with the square hole in the centre, current in China and Japan. The value in China of this coin is approximately one-tenth of a cent, and in Japan it is much less.

*Catty*: This term is used mostly in China, although it is understood pretty much throughout the East. It comes from the Malay word, *kati*, and stands for a measure of weight equal to one and one third pounds. In Chinese it is called *chin*, and in Japanese, *kin*.

*Chit*: This word is widely used, and with two different meanings. It may mean a bill or memorandum of an expenditure, in which case it is derived from the Hindustani word, *chittha*, which means the same thing. Or it may be used to indicate a note or letter, when it comes from the Hindustani word, *chitthi*, meaning a letter. The British are responsible for its use in the Orient.

*Compradore* comes from the Portuguese verb, *comprar*, to buy. It is used by foreigners to designate the Chinese, or other native agent, who does buying and selling for them. It is often used by foreign banks in the East to mean the native underwriter, the man between the bank and the customer. It is sometimes used in China to mean a storekeeper who handles foreign goods.

*Congee* is a word used all over India

and largely in China to mean the water in which rice has been boiled. It is derived from the Tamil word, *kanji*.

*Chop* is the word applied to the brand put on goods, and roughly corresponds to the word trademark. It is also applied to the business seal of firms doing business in China, Japan, Java, and other places. This word may be derived from the Canton pronunciation of the character meaning to puncture; or it may come from the Hindustani word, *chapna*, meaning to stamp or to print.

*Chop-chop* is a pure pidgin-English expression, meaning 'hurry up!' It comes from the Canton pronunciation of the ideograph meaning hurry, reduplicated.

*Chop-sticks*: This is an English word now, meaning the pair of bamboo, wood, or ivory sticks with which the Chinese or Japanese take up food. The word *chop* is the Cantonese pronunciation of the word hurry, the same as above, the name of the implements actually meaning 'hasteners.'

*Chow* is the corruption of the Chinese word meaning food. It is a slang expression in most cases, being a pidgin-English term. From this, comes the term Chow Dog as applied to a certain brand of dogs common in China. This name was first applied to the dogs under the common but fallacious impression that the dogs were used for food.

*Coolie*: There is considerable discussion as to the origin of this word, although all agree that it is a corruption of some Indian word. One writer on the subject says that the term comes from the Tamil word, *Kuli*, from South India, where it means hire or wages, and that it was applied by Europeans to the native laborers, many of these coming from the Tamil people of Madras. Others say it comes from the name of a tribe of hillmen from the

Deccan, called Kolas or Kules. Bishop Heber in his Indian journal speaks of Kholees as the name of a degenerate race of Rajpoots in Guzerat who, from the low occupations in which they are generally employed, gave a name, probably through the medium of the Portuguese, to the bearers of burdens all over India, whence all over the Orient.

*Jinriksha*, often abbreviated to riksha, is the light, two-wheeled vehicle drawn by a man used for one or two passengers. Its invention is attributed to an American missionary in Japan about 1870, and its use has spread all over the Orient, even to the Cape of Good Hope, where the roads are suitable, man-power throughout all these countries being still the cheapest locomotive force. The word comes from the Japanese word *jinrikisha*, meaning man-power-cart.

*Joss*: This is a term much used by foreigners, and has a slightly contemptuous shading. It comes from the Portuguese word, *Deos*, meaning God. Foreigners speak of incense offerings as joss-sticks; of temples as Joss-houses; of good joss and bad joss, and so forth.

*Junk* is the term now applied to all native sailing boats of a size exceeding the smallest boats. It comes from the Portuguese word, *Junco*, meaning boat, which was a corruption of the Malay word, *jong*, abbreviated from *ajong*. Some say it comes from the Japanese word, *Jung*, meaning a large boat.

*Lascar* is not a race, as is often thought, but a class of people in India. The term comes from the Persian word, *leskar*, meaning army, hence navy, and from that to sailor. An Indian sailor, a class largely employed by British and other boats trading in the Orient, is now known to the world as a Lascar.

*Loquat* comes from the Cantonese

pronunciation of *lu chu*, or rush orange, or medlar.

*Lorcha* is a word from the Portuguese given to a small vessel whose hull is of western build, but whose masts and sails are Chinese.

*Lowdah* is the term applied to the head boatman in China. It literally means old great one, and is used by the Chinese to mean the skipper of a junk.

*Mandarin*: Williams says this term comes from the Portuguese word, *mandar*, to rule. Professor Schott says: 'We first received the word mandarin through the Portuguese navigators. It is, however, no more Portuguese or Spanish than Chinese, but is the Sanskrit *mantrim*, counsellor, which, with a multitude of other Sanskrit words, passed over very early to the Malays, among whom even now it means a high dignity. Now, since those Portuguese discoverers became acquainted with Malaya earlier than with Chinese, it is easily explainable that they should choose a word in use among the Malays, in order to designate a Chinese official. All that they did was to make the word easy of pronunciation by the insertion of a new vowel, and softening t to d.'

Mandarin Duck is so called as being considered superior to other kinds. It is the emblem, among Chinese, of conjugal fidelity.

Mandarin Orange is so called for the same reason. More common kinds of this loose skinned orange are called coolie oranges.

*Maskee* comes from the Portuguese word, *masque*, meaning notwithstanding, nevertheless, but, in general use in pidgin-English, it now means 'never mind.'

Another Maskee comes from the Portuguese *mausim*, meaning season. It is applied to the trade wind in the East Indian Ocean blowing in one direction for six months, then in the opposite direction for the same period.

*Paddy* comes from the Malay *padi*, meaning rice in the ear, or unhusked. 'Paddy-fields' is the common expression among foreigners in the Orient to mean fields of rice, or the fields that are kept under water.

*Pagoda*: Here again there is a difference of opinion concerning the origin of the term. 'The word Pagoda is descended from the Sanskrit *Chagavati* through the Persian *bootkuda*, or the Hindustanee *pouthkoda* or *bootkhoda*, and means "the house of idols," "the abode of God," or "Holy House." According to the original use of the word in India, it is a name given to the various buildings where they worship idols, and it has been employed in the same indiscriminate way by some writers on China, but the majority of modern writers restrict the use of the term to the tower-like structure common in China,' is the verdict of Mr. J. Dyer Ball. Another authority says: 'The word probably comes from Persian or Hindustani words which mean the house of idols. The French use it correctly for a group of religious buildings, the English less correctly for a single tower, perhaps not connected with religion.'

*Picul* is the term used to denote a measure of weight, usually about one hundred and thirty-three pounds avoirdupois. The Chinese word is *tan* and the Japanese word is *hakkin*.

*Pidgin* is generally thought to be the Chinese attempt to pronounce the word business, although some maintain that the term originated in the Hindustani word, *pachna*, to take pains, to labor. The former seems the more reasonable explanation, as it came into use in the old Canton days when very few foreigners spoke Chinese and no Chinese knew English. It is 'an extraordinary jargon in use between native servants, shopmen, and so forth, on the one side, and foreigners who do

not speak Chinese on the other.' It consists of a limited number of English words, and a few other words, used more or less according to Chinese idiom, and also mispronounced. 'Good pidgin' means good business, and so forth.

*Porcelain*, a word long in good use in English, possibly does not properly belong in this list, but since its origin is due to the manufacture of this ware in China, it may not be uninteresting. The word is from the Portuguese *porcellana*, a cowrie shell, which was so called because its shape resembled the rounded back of a little pig. When the ware was first introduced into Europe from China, its resemblance to these shells was remarked, and the name *porcellana* was thereupon applied to it, which soon became porcelain.

*Punkah* is the 'Hindustani name of a large palm-leaf fan, the stalk of which is rested on the ground, while the leaf itself is waved behind the party to be fanned. The word is now applied throughout the East to the swinging frames, with cloth vallances, fitted in European houses.'

*Rattan* comes from the Malay, *rotan*. It is a species of Asiatic climbing palm that is split and used for making a variety of articles, seats of chairs, and so forth.

*Sampan* literally means in Chinese 'three planks,' but is generally applied to any small native boat, not a junk. The term originated in the construction of the boats in the rivers and canals of China, being actually made of three boards.

*Shroff* is said to come from the Arabian word, *sarraḥ*, banker. In the first use of it by foreigners, it was applied to a silver expert employed in banks, to examine dollars. Later it acquired a wider application and is now used to mean the employe who collects accounts for a firm.

*Squeeze* is a slang term in wide use meaning the commission taken by all servants buying for their masters, extortion or speculation. 'The first recorded use of the word in this sense is in a letter from Catchpole to the directors of the East India Company.'

*Sycee* comes from the Chinese terms *hsi ssu*, which means fine silk. It is usually applied to Chinese lump silver because this, when heated, can be drawn out into silk-like threads.

*Taipan* is a pure Chinese word meaning great manager. It is used to mean the manager of a foreign business firm, but at one time was applied to foreign consuls in China.

*Tiffin* is neither a Chinese word nor an Indian, coming from the Near East. It is the Arabic word, *taffanun*, and simply means the midday meal.

*Topee* comes from India, the land where sun-helmets are most needed. It is the Hindustani word, *topi*, and is used by Europeans to mean the special kind of pith hat, designed as protection from the deadly rays of the Indian sun.

*Typhoon*: There is probably more discussion about the etymology of this word than of any other word that has come out of the Orient. It might well be derived from the Chinese word, *tai feng* or *tai fung* meaning simply 'big wind.' The Japanese expression, *tai fu*, having the same meaning, also approximates the sound. Some authorities, however, think it comes from the Arabian word, *tufan*, meaning tempest, and that it was brought by the Arabs to the Indian Archipelago, where the Portuguese heard it from the Malays. Others again attribute it to the Greek word, *Typhus*, and quote Milton as proof. Again, others say that Pinto was the first foreign writer to use the word, in 1560, and he calls it a Chinese term.

This list is by no means complete, even of the words known to the whole Orient, while if it were enlarged by

words used in more restricted localities, the list would swell to large proportions. Wherever foreigners live among the native populations of the Orient, they adopt a certain number of the words of that particular place, many being the names of objects unknown in other parts of the world.

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## ON GIVING UP SMOKING

BY Y. Y.

I HAVE only one fault to find with giving up tobacco. It makes a man boastful. I have only one fault to find with his boastfulness. It is usually premature. This time, however, I have really given up smoking. It happened at the stroke of the New Year. Not exactly at twelve o'clock midnight, for I am no precisian. I had a friend with me till two in the morning, and it would not be polite to give up tobacco in the middle of a conversation. It would be gross and inopportune, like making a scene in church. Consequently, I post-dated the entrance of the New Year till eight o'clock in the morning.

On an ordinary morning, when a man wakes at eight, he is faced by a simple enough problem. 'Shall I get up,' he finds himself asking, 'or shall I have breakfast in bed?' It is a problem which a thoughtless man settles in five seconds, but over which a thoughtful man may well ponder for a couple of hours. On waking at eight, however, on a morning on which one has given up tobacco, one feels like a schoolboy confronted for the first time with the binomial theorem. 'If I get up,' you ask yourself, 'what am I to do? On the other hand, if I stay in bed, what am I to do?' You know that, whether you rise or stay in bed, you will not have

begun the second cup of coffee when your hand will reach out automatically in search of the cigarettes. It is as natural as blinking. Try to keep your eyelids open for twenty minutes and you will realize a part of the effort that is required to control the human hand as it reaches out for an after-breakfast cigarette. You will have to concentrate every faculty you possess on that miserable little purpose. You will not be able to read the paper without moving your eyelids. You will not be able to talk without it. You will not be able to work without it.

Seeing that it was useless for a man beginning a new life to attempt to do anything else at the same time, I remained in bed till luncheon, in the hope that I might solve my difficulties in sleep. But I could not sleep: I could only feel cross. Now, I had made a resolution not to be cross in the New Year. Neither the children nor the cat, neither the servants nor the government, were to know the rough edge of my tongue any more. Yet here I was, already fuming like a volcano, and the bell not yet gone for noon. Had I met my enemy in such a mood, I should have poured boiling lava down his neck. I am sure I should have. Here was I, an infinitely better man than I had been twenty-four hours previously, and yet in an infinitely worse temper than I had known since the last time I gave up tobacco — gave it up, I mean, genuinely.

I do not know how I could have got through the rest of the day if I had not left myself what moralists may regard as a loophole, but what I regard as a graceful concession to human nature. I am no believer in absolute virtue. That is for another world. Life is mainly a compromise, and there is a crucial difference between