

# The History of Rendaku Research

How Lyman's Law Has Been Received

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Benjamin Smith Lyman, a geologist, was hired by the Japanese government in the Meiji era to survey for coal and oil in Japan. His findings played a significant role in the development of Hokkaido. After returning to the United States, he presented a paper on Japanese rendaku in 1894. The main parts of the paper were translated by Shimpei Ogura, who introduced it to Japanese linguists. In his paper, Lyman pointed out a rule preventing rendaku. This rule prohibits voicing when the second morpheme of a compound word contains a voiced obstruent, and it later came to be known as "Lyman's Law". Today, the term "Lyman's Law" is used not only in Japanese linguistics but also in general linguistics. Although linguistic research on Japanese was just an avocation for Lyman and not his profession, his background and personal characteristics led him to do very sophisticated work. In the same insightful way that Lyman could intuit underground mineral deposits from surveys of the surface of the land, he was able to conduct effective research on Japanese rendaku. The publication of the second edition of Hepburn's Japanese-English dictionary (*Waei Gorin Shusei*) in 1872 undoubtedly was another factor that contributed to the high quality of Lyman's rendaku research. Rendaku is a problem that cannot be avoided when Japanese language is romanized. Japanese native speakers, who write in kanji and kana, pay little attention to whether or not rendaku occurs in a compound, but this problem is clearly apparent when one has to use completely different letters to represent a voiceless obstruent and the corresponding voiced obstruent. Consequently, it was almost inevitable that the pioneering research on rendaku would be done by a non-Japanese. For those of us who are continuing research on rendaku, we are fortunate to have Lyman's solid research on which to build.

The contents of my presentation are as follows.

1. Pre-history of *Rendaku* Research
2. Lyman's *Rendaku* Research
3. How Lyman's Law Has Been Received
4. *Rendaku* and the History of Voicing in Japanese Language

First, I will review the history of rendaku research. Next, I will look at how Lyman's Law has been received among linguists and how it has influenced rendaku research. Finally, I will consider the directions in which future research on rendaku should proceed.

## References:

- Suzuki, Yutaka. 2007. Raiman no Nihongo kenkyu. Bunkyo Gakuin Daigaku Gaikoku-go Gakubu, Bunkyo Gakuin Tanki Daigaku Kiyō 5. 225-239. Bunkyo Gakuin Daigaku Sogo Kenkyu-sho.
- Vance, Timothy J. 2008. Have we learned anything about rendaku that Lyman didn't already know? Current issues in the history and structure of Japanese, ed. by Bjarke Frelles-vig, Masayoshi Shibatani, and John Charles Smith, 153-170. Tokyo: Kurosio.