

# Re: Origin of 'hoomu'

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- *From:* "Paul Blay" <[ranma@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:ranma@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Tue, 12 Jul 2005 09:24:13 +0100
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"Ben Bullock" <[usenet@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:usenet@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote ...

"muchan" <[qqn@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:qqn@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote ...

[jwb@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:jwb@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx) wrote:

In the '80s I was subtitling a TV program in which one of the characters had a dog (I think that's what it was) named "UFO," but she called it æüü rather than the proper æüö her daughter always said.

A quarter of a century ago when we were briefly domiciled in ~, I received a telephone call from someone in Fujitsu. The call went to our landlady who called me to the phone. My wife was struck by the way she said "Hujitsu".

(well, I see you wrote this as a sarcasm, but...)

She's correct, since in Japanese it's /hu/. Mt.Fuji is /huji-san/... Using "fu" for /hu/ in Japanese is a spelling convention of Hepburn's system (and its derivatives)...

If u used the same /h/ sound as orx{ then surely uI would be the same as { and uA would be the same as o and uG would be the same as x and uC would be the same as r. I don't think it can be the same sound.

Your conclusion may be (mostly) correct but your reasoning is flawed.

<disclaimer>I'm no phonetics expert, even slightly</disclaimer>

Two separate, and somewhat contradictory, things to consider.

## Re: Origin of 'hoomu'

1. Kana, particularly katakana of sounds not represented in 'original' Japanese can be used to represent spellings which aren't differentiated in sound when spoken.

In other words just because  $\hat{o};\ddot{u},\acute{o}$  (4,510,000 goobits) is differently written to  $\hat{D}\ddot{u},\acute{o}$  (4,540,000 goobits) doesn't mean that someone listening to a random person on the street asked to read one or another from a clipboard\* can consistently tell which version is being read.

2.  $\hat{O}; \hat{O}\text{f} \hat{O}\text{s} \hat{O}\text{e}$ , and their rarer cousin  $\hat{O}\text{z}$ , exist specifically to distinguish the 'f' starting spelling/sound. Therefore there is necessarily a stronger link between 'f'nes and those combinations.

However I (mostly) agree with you in that /I/ also /think/ that the start of  $\hat{O}$  doesn't (usually) sound the same as the start of  $\hat{O}$  etc. This is, however, almost certainly a large part cultural background and not necessarily true in an absolute sense. I'm sure lots of Japanese people /think/ that 'la' and 'ra' sound the same but that doesn't mean that they are right in an absolute sense.

In fact there are probably two ways of saying  $\hat{O}$  one on the /hu/ side and one nearer the /fu/ side. Japanese would generally have not distinguished between the two of them but given the large exposure to English language it is more likely that they are distinguishing between them now.

\* Don't forget to double-blind test if you try this at home.

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