

# CAMELLIA HISTORY FROM PETIVER TO LINNAEUS

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SO FAR as known now, camellias made their first appearance in Occidental literature when James Petiver published a description of one of them, it happened to be *C. japonica*, in the "Philosophical Transactions" and made reference to this description accompanied by a drawing of a twig with leaves, buds and flowers in his "Gazophylacii Naturæ & Artis," Tab. XXXIII Fig. 4. The year was 1702. Petiver was an apothecary with his place of business on Aldersgate Street, London. That he was a man of prominence is indicated by his friends and connections. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society, friend of the eminent English botanist, John Ray, interested in the notable physic garden at Chelsea, and apothecary to Sir Hans Sloane, famous physician and botanist. A natural history museum, a large collection of woods, seeds, dried plants, stuffed animals and birds, insects, corals, and like materials was maintained by him. Contacts were made with seamen, travelers, traders, and physicians who might add to his collections, and it was in all probability as an aid in making such connections that the "Gazophylacii" was published from time to time. That his museum was an important one is attested by the fact that Sloane offered him £4000 for it and on Petiver's death acquired it to incorporate with his own, later to become part of the foundation materials with which the British Museum was established.

James Cunningham, a Scotch physician attached to the British East India Company, went out to Amoy, China, in the latter seventeenth century as a resident physician at a factory (trading post) the company maintained there. Being a physician, he was interested in plants, and prepared herbarium specimens, among them *Camellia japonica* as we now know it. This dried camellia material came into the hands of Petiver. From Cunningham's specimen or specimens and with additional information from some other source, Petiver wrote his description. He could not have learned what he wrote from dried material alone. To the camellia he applied the Latin phrase "Thea Chinensis Pimentæ Jamaicensis folio, flore Rosaceo simplici."

## KAEMPFER'S CAMELLIA DESCRIPTIONS

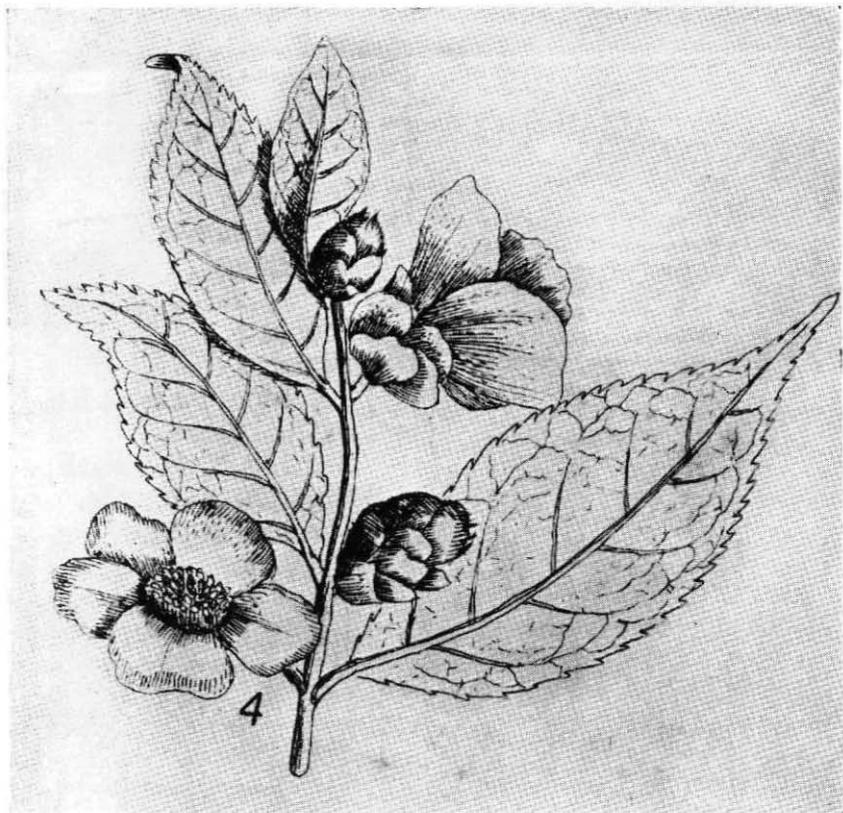
Ten years later, that is in 1712, Englebort Kæmpfer, who was attached to the Dutch East India Company as resident physician at a company factory on the Island of Deshima, in Nagasaki Bay, Japan, during the years 1690-1692, published at Lemgo his "Amœnitatum Exoticarum" in which considerable space was given to Japanese plants. Among these were *Camellia japonica*, *C. Sasanqua*, and *C. sinensis* (*Thea sinensis*, the tea plant) as we now know them. His descriptions of *C. japonica* and *C. sinensis* were accompanied by excellent illustrations. He used the Latin phrases "Tsubakki<sup>1</sup> montanus sive sylvestris, flore roseo simplici" (page 850) and "Tsubakki hortensis, flore pleno maximo, Rosæ hortensis," etc. (page 852) to designate the camellia. Tsubakki is still the Japanese name for camellia. His excellent illustration, together with his description of the species, leaves no doubt as to the identity of the plants about which he wrote. They were *Camellias* of which several varieties were listed by name and some were described. This article by Kæmpfer is so important that a translation from the Latin follows:<sup>2</sup>

"Sa and Sjun, commonly Tsubakki. Shrub with rosy flowers and 3-lobed, pyriform fruit. (It should be noted that this shrub resembles tea in its structure and appearance, wherefore it satisfies the Orient to borrow for it the character used for Tsubakki, since it lacks one of its own.) One form is a forest plant, flourishing everywhere in thickets and hedges; the other is a garden form, made tame by grafting or culture and adorned magnificently by double, more beautiful flowers. There are innumerable varieties of both, named for place of origin, condition of flower or shape of the parts. Among the most important and most often seen is:

"San Sa, generally Jamma Tsubakki, *i.e.* the mountain or forest Tsubakki, with simple rosy flowers. Shrub branching freely from a short trunk, reaching almost tree size; bark chestnut-brown, covered with gray bloom, smooth, fleshy, thin, difficultly separable from the wood, which is very hard. Petioles half an inch long, flattened on the back side. Leaves are produced singly with no definite location, similar to the somewhat larger leaves of the garden cherry, but somewhat more stiff, thicker, and glossy on both surfaces. From their axils arise in succession throughout the autumn single or twin buds, the size

<sup>1</sup> Kæmpfer also spelled this word with one K.

<sup>2</sup> Translation by Father Vincent C. Staebel and Dr. H. S. Wolfe.



Petiver's illustration of *C. japonica*. From "Gazophylacii Naturæ & Artis." XXXIII No. 4, 1702. The first camellia illustration to appear in western literature.



Kämpfer's illustration of *C. japonica*. From Kämpfer's "Amoenitatum Exoticarum," p. 851. 1712.



of musket balls, covered by imbricated herbaceous scales, concave, pubescent, about twenty in number. When these burgeon forth, six or seven petals emerge, the number indefinite, as from a perianth, arranged as in the so-called Rose-of-China tree, or if you prefer, the mallow, definitely red and connate at the base. The tunic occupies the middle, set apart in a ring, shaped like a crown, soft, fleshy, delicate, flesh-pink, an inch high, the lower half united, divided above into over 100 stamens, from pink to glistening white, adorned with golden yellow tips which are short, flattened and divided by a huge cleft. A slender style surmounts the umbilical knob, of the same color and length as the stamens, pointed at the apex, twisted and herbaceous. The seed vessel follows the flower, although very rarely, being 3-lobed, pyriform,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, marked lengthwise by three cushioned furrows, at maturity tawny, woody and dehiscent; a single kernel is in each utricle, almost the size and shape of a hazel nut, with rugose exterior, reddish brown, the meat white with oily taste.

"Another seed vessel was shown me of some wild Tsubakki (on the garden shrub which has double flowers, fruit is rarely or never seen) which differed strongly from the type, nor would I have believed it genuine if it had not been on a small twig with genuine Tsubakki leaves. However, it was similar to the above but single-lobed, with thick woody shell without any indication of depression or fissure; within were five little nuts provided with thin shells, which yielded on breaking open several seeds of uncertain number and of different sizes and shapes, some like seeds of anise.

"*Dsisj*. Tsubakki of gardens, with double flower like the largest garden rose, a hand-breadth across, wholly flesh-pink variegated with white splotches sparsely scattered; stamens intermixed, lying to some extent in a circle. *Dsisj* means the dog-star which we call the little Leo, if you will allow the word, the name arising from the lovely flower.

"*SASANQUA*. A small kind of *Tsubakki*, with single red flower, mostly 5-petaled with staminal disc or navel, the fruit pyriform with three nuts the size of pistachio nuts, the three kernels white and very round. The prepared leaves of this are added to tea to impart a pleasing odor. A decoction of leaves is used by women to wash the hair.

"The following names of definite varieties have been noted:

Tsubakki, Siratamma, Sjinkuri, Borri, Usirasji Borri, Jtokuri, Dsjurin, Benke, Nankin, Kommatz, Karai ito, Jedo momidsji, Fidsjirimin, Commakura sasanqua, Sökkobin, Kaisan, Kikjo, Jedo dairin, Saifu botan, Fino botan, Meokin, Osjam, *i.e.* great Siamese, Kosjam, *i.e.* little Siamese, Josttsjino donno; not to mention many more. Of these the most worthwhile ones given to me are:

“*Tsubakki*, tree with flower like a garden rose, double, flesh-pink to ruddy, stamens rarely apiculate, scattered among the petals.

“*Tsubakki*, flower always red, double, with 15 petals.

“*Tsubakki*, flower semi-double, blood-red with white spots.

“*Tsubakki*, flower semi-double, flesh-pink to whitish, with red spots.

“*Tsubakki*, flower semi-double, red, with 5 large outer petals, the inner ones quite short and folded; stamens numerous, degenerating at different places into small petals.

“*Tsubakki*, flower single, scarlet, the margin of the petal cordate, the stamens taking on successively the shape and substance of petals.”

#### LINNÆUS AND KAMEL

Carolus Linnæus was born at Rashult near Upsala, Sweden, in 1707, and became the world's most famous botanist. The date of his birth is important, as will be seen later. His greatest contribution to botany was the establishment of the binomial system whereby plants are named with two Latin words. He also worked out a classification of plants. In doing this he named and placed many plants described by others that he himself had never seen. He gave the generic name *Camellia* in his “*Systema Naturæ*” 1735 to two plants described by Kæmpfer. This new genus, with others, was placed in the Monadelphia Polyandria section of his classification. He followed his Latin name *Camellia* with “*Tsubaki*, Kp.,” leaving no doubt that he dealt with Kæmpfer's plants. Quite clearly too, his knowledge of camellias was gained from Kæmpfer's description.

In his “*Systema*,” Linnæus was not concerned with species, and it was not until 1753 in his “*Species Plantarum*” that he gave the binomial *Camellia japonica* to one of the plants Kæmpfer illustrated and described. He did not recognize the *Sasanqua* Tsubakki as being different, and it remained for C. P. Thunberg, a pupil of Linnæus, to give it the name *Camellia Sasanqua* in 1784. Whence came the word *Camellia* given these plants as a generic

name by Linnæus in 1735? Although Linnæus did not say so in his "Systema Naturæ," it is commonly accepted that he named Camellia in posthumous honor of George Joseph Kamel, whose surname in Latin was Camellus. Kamel was born at Brunn, Moravia, April 21, 1661. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia (1908), he entered the Society of Jesus in 1682 as a lay brother, and although sometimes referred to as "Father Camellus," it is not certain that he was ever ordained a priest. On the title page of the article written by him and published by John Ray as an appendix to "Historia Plantarum," his title and name are given thus: Rev<sup>do</sup> Patre Georgio Josepho Camello, S. J. Kamel became an apothecary of sorts and a botanist. He was interested in plants because many crude drugs of great or small value, used in those days in the treatment of human ills, were secured from plant sources. Kamel went out to the Marianas (Ladrones) in the Pacific in 1688 as a missionary, and later to Manila where he set up a clinic for the poor. He collected plant specimens that were sent to England, and these together with his writings contributed to the knowledge of natural history of the area. A paper entitled "Herbarium aliarumque stirpium in insula Luzone Philippinarum," written by Kamel, was published by John Ray in the appendix to the third volume of his "Historia Plantarum" in 1704. There were ninety-six pages in this paper, and large numbers of Philippine plants were listed. Kamel died in Manila, May 2, 1706. This date also is important.

Here and there in camellia literature the statement is made that Kamel brought the camellia to Europe. There is no evidence that he ever returned to Europe after he went out to the islands of the Pacific. Nor is there evidence that he ever visited China or Japan where camellias are native and where at that time they undoubtedly grew in gardens. Since camellias are not native in the Philippines and are not garden plants in Manila, it is likely that he never saw one. The statement also has been made that Kamel brought these plants to the attention of Linnæus and furnished him information about them. This clearly was an impossibility, since Kamel died in the year before Linnæus was born.

And so the interesting legend of Kamel's contact with camellias that has come down through camellia literature for more than a century has to be dismissed as an unsupported myth. The only connection is that Linnæus honored Kamel (Camellus)

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by naming the genus *Camellia* for him in 1735, twenty-nine years after his death in Manila.

### CAMELLIA SPORTS IN OLD LITERATURE

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**N**UMEROUS sports of current varieties are being named by growers at the present time. It may be questionable whether or not a graft from a self-colored variety that comes variegated afterward is a true sport, but that need not enter into the present discussion. According to the rules of horticultural nomenclature, it is permissible to name a fixed sport of a variety provided it is tested long enough to show that it will not revert to the original.

Since it may be of interest to know the identities of some of those produced in early days of camellia culture, they are discussed below.

In the "Nouvelle iconographie des camellias . . ." by Alexandre Verschaffelt, *et al.*, published 1848-60, there are at least fifteen varieties listed as sports or gains. In all cases but four they are given entirely new names, while the four exceptions are listed as varieties of the originals. They are as follows:

Variety	Sport of	L.	Pl.	Y.	T.P.
Adonidia	Press's Eclipse	3	3	1850	3
Comte de Flandre	Valerio	8	2	1858	68
Comte de Paris	Duchesse d'Orleans	6	3	1852	69
Duc de Chartres	Duchesse d'Orleans	{ 6	3	1852	69
		{ 1	4	1848	100
Comtesse du Hainaut	Il Cygno	12	2	1858	74
De la Reine var. Rosea	De la Reine	1	2	1856	89
Distinction	General Washington	5	3	1860	93
Duchesse de Brabant	Marquise Elise	1	2	1859	104
Grand Duc Constantin	Pirzio	2	3	1849	136
Grande Duchesse Helene	Comtesse Carini	12	1	1857	137
King Rosea	King	3	4	1849	159
Maculata Perfecta	Cruciata (de Pronay)	8	1	1849	174
Professeur Zannetti	Contessa Mocenigo	9	3	1860	242
Spineo var. Rosea	Spineo	9	3	1859	269
Teutonia var. Amabilis	Teutonia	3	3	1855	275

L.—livraison; Pl.—plate; Y.—year; T.P.—page in 1945 translation by E. A. McIlhenny.