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A MUCH TORTURED EXPRESSION: A NEW LOOK AT 'HOBSON-JOBSON'

James Lambert

Abstract

Since Yule and Burnell's first edition of their glossary of Anglo-Indian English in 1886, the term 'Hobson-Jobson' has been part of the English language. It was already an established Anglo-Indian English word, but was given a new life, and new meanings, by Yule and Burnell. Accounts of the word in both lexicography and popular works are still almost entirely based on an uncritical replication of the information provided by Yule and Burnell. That information was incomplete and involved some inaccuracies that warrant elucidation. This paper is based on a collection of citations of the term 'Hobson-Jobson' and related terms, and a detailed review of how the word has been recorded in dictionaries. This new evidence allows a detailed delineation of the meanings the term has had over time, and also reveals a more precise rendering of the etymology, one which illuminates a less positive side to this popular term.

1. Introduction

In 1886 Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell published a dictionary named *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Anglo-Indian Colloquial Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms; Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive*. It was well received and favourably reviewed and a second edition, edited by orientalist William Crooke, came out in 1903. The dictionary has long been known by the shorthand title *Hobson-Jobson*, and this expression is now an item of current English vocabulary. Most dictionaries can be referred to by using a distinguishing part of their title, for example, the *Longman's*, the *Macquarie*, the *Oxford*, and *Webster's* has become partially genericised. However, no other dictionary can lay claim to adding a new word to the language. *Hobson-Jobson* is a lengthy and complex text and has been enduringly popular. The dictionary is still an invaluable resource of information on British India and the early history of the contact between Europe and the East and has yet to be surpassed by any modern lexicographical work on Indian English (Lambert 2012). Reactions to the dictionary have been redoubtably favourable, and negative commentary,

where it exists at all, has been mild and couched within otherwise positive statements (see, for example, Burgess 1985, Lewis 1991: 4, Chaudhuri 1994).

This paper explores the origin and history of the term ‘Hobson-Jobson,’ covering its original signification and etymology, its use by Yule and Burnell as the title of their famous dictionary (1886/1903), its extended meanings in the field of popular linguistics and its rather poor treatment by lexicographers. In doing so, this paper makes a contribution to the history of lexicography and to the criticism of dictionaries, both primary metalexical concerns according to Weigand (1984) and Engelberg and Lemnitzer (2009, cited in Gouws 2012: 460). The common story of the origin of the term ‘Hobson-Jobson’ is derived from the account given by Yule and Burnell, partially in the Preface to the first edition of the dictionary, for the most part penned by Yule (1886: ix), and partially at the entry for that lexical item within the pages of the dictionary itself (1886: 319-320). The same information is repeated in the 1903 ‘new’ edition (1903: ix, 419-420), which, since 1968, has been frequently reprinted in facsimile and is the edition that most owners of the book are familiar with. The information supplied by Yule and Burnell in their definition and the explanation for why they chose Hobson-Jobson as ‘a concise alternative title’ has been widely repeated (e.g. *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 1886: 250, Birdwood 1887: 148, Morris 1898: xv, Burgess 1985: vi, Rushdie 1985: 82, Lewis 1991: 126, Chaudhuri 1994: vii, Silverberg 2001: 8, Mishra 2009: 387-388, Purcell 2009: 60). The account by Yule and Burnell appears to have been the sole source of information used by later lexicographers who have included the term in their dictionaries. More importantly, the rehearsing of this information has been almost completely uncritical. That Yule and Burnell’s information has largely been taken as gospel appears to indicate that most following commentators and lexicographers had no recourse to any other information about the term aside from the very information that Yule and Burnell provided. However, the research undertaken for this study indicates that the account given by Yule and Burnell is only part of the story.

The evidence upon which this paper is based is a collection of over 200 citations of the term Hobson-Jobson and related terms from the early seventeenth-century to present. Some of these had already been presented in Yule and Burnell (1886/1903) and in Burchfield’s supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *OED*) (1976: 111-112), but the bulk of the material has not previously been collated or published, lexicographically or otherwise. For the purposes of this paper, this citation collection will be called the ‘research data.’ The citations that make up the research data were collected by conducting targeted searches on a variety of electronically available historical texts. Especially useful were various large-scale

newspaper archives, such as the National Library of Australia's Trove database, the British Newspaper Archive, and the Library of Congress' Chronicling America newspaper database, as well as the wealth of printed material available on the Internet Archive, the Hathi Trust and Google Books. These amount to impressively large, fully searchable, and ever-increasing corpora of scanned and OCR'd historical newspapers, magazines and books (for the most part freely available). Google searches were also employed in order to find lexical evidence from webpages. In addition, the term Hobson-Jobson, and its derivatives, were examined in numerous dictionaries and reference works. This process resulted in a hitherto unprecedented collection of lexicographical evidence upon which analysis could be productively pursued. It also allowed the inspection and validation (and sometimes rectification) of the primary citational evidence provided in Yule and Burnell and other secondary sources.

This paper will first analyse the definition of Hobson-Jobson given by Yule and Burnell in their dictionary of 1886, followed by a discussion of the origin of the term and what the research data contributes to this story. It will then discuss the linguistic senses of the word, its derivative terms, and eclectic uses. Finally, a selection of the research data upon which the analysis is based is presented in the form of a mini-lexicon on historical principles (see Appendix). Extracts from Yule and Burnell are taken from the 1886 edition, but additional page references are given to the 1903 edition. The Romanisations *Hasan* for **حسن** and *Husayn* for **حُسين** are used throughout, except in quotations from primary sources where the original spellings are retained. To distinguish between the two, references to the term Hobson-Jobson will be in plain Roman font, with italic font reserved solely for references to the title of Yule and Burnell's dictionary.

2. *Hobson-Jobson* according to Yule and Burnell

2.1 *The discursive text*

As a starting point we will examine Yule and Burnell's entry for Hobson-Jobson in detail, adding explicatory commentary where necessary. The first part of their entry reads thus:

Hobson-Jobson, s. A native festal excitement; a *tamāsha* (see **tumasha**); but especially the Moharram ceremonies. This phrase may be taken as a typical one of

the most highly assimilated class of Anglo-Indian argot, and we have ventured to borrow from it a concise alternative title for our Glossary. It is peculiar to the British soldier and his surroundings, with whom it probably originated, and with whom it is by no means obsolete, as we once supposed.* It is in fact an Anglo-Saxon version of the wailings of the Mahommedans as they beat their breasts in the processions of the *Moharram* — “**Yā Hasan! Yā Hosain!**” (Yule and Burnell 1886: 319, 1903: 419)

The asterisked footnote, added by Yule, observes

* My friend Major John Trotter tells me he has repeatedly heard it used by British soldiers in the Punjab; and has heard it also from a regimental Moonshee.— [H. Y.] (Yule and Burnell 1886: 319, 1903: 419)

A recent writer for the *Guardian* newspaper called this an ‘entirely incomprehensible explanation’ (Karnad 2003), and undoubtedly the amount of unfamiliar Anglo-Indian era lexis involved may render this definition less than pellucid to many modern readers. There is a lot going on in this short piece of text: Yule and Burnell make comments about the meaning, origin, status, usage and history of the term Hobson-Jobson, as well as their own specific neologistic use. There are two key points that need to be made about Yule and Burnell’s definition. First, by defining the term ‘a native festal excitement, a *tamāsha*,’ Yule and Burnell are stating that it was not solely applied to the Muharram (Muslim religious practices connected with the death of Husayn), but rather to any Indian festival. This means that, according to Yule and Burnell, the term was also used to refer to Hindu festivals such as Holi or Durga Puja, and to Sikh and Buddhist festivals as well. Therefore, their basic definition is general, not specific. However, they also state that it is most commonly used to refer to Muharram. Second, they cross-refer the term *tamāsha* to their entry *tumasha* where it is defined as ‘[a]n entertainment, a *spectacle* (in the French sense), a popular excitement’ (1886: 717, 1903: 941, italics in original). Yule and Burnell do not specify which language their Romanisation ‘*tamāsha*’ is meant to represent, but it is referable to the Hindi तमाशा (*tamāśā*), the Urdu تماشا (*tamāśā*) and the Persian تماشا (*tamāśā*), which are all ultimately derived from the Arabic تماشي (*tamāśī*), ‘walking abroad for entertainment’ (see Johnson 1852: 378, Forbes 1857: 254, McGregor 1993: 439). Of importance here is the description of

the religious procession as a ‘festal excitement’ and a ‘*tamāsha*.’ The word *excitement* is not usually applied to religious ceremonies, and classifying the Muharram as a species of festivity, entertainment, or spectacle is contrary to the spiritual significance that the participants attach to it. The Muharram is a period of mourning and fasting, not a public festivity, nor a spectacular for audiences. The word *tamasha* carries a disparaging connotation implying vulgarity or self-serving ostentation, or else, triviality and silliness (Muthiah 1991: 150, Mahal 2006: 98). To apply it to a religious ceremony is a gross trivialisation of that ceremony. In contrast to this definition, Yule and Burnell provide a much more respectful account of the Muharram in their entry for that word:

Mohurram [...] properly the name of the 1st month of the Mahommedan lunar year. But in India the term is applied to the period of fasting and public mourning observed during that month in commemoration of the death of Hassan and of his brother Husain (A.D. 669 and 680) and which terminates in the ceremonies of the '*Ashūrā-a*, commonly however known in India as "*the Mohurram*". (Yule and Burnell 1886: 439, 1903: 574)

In Hindi the word is मुहर्रम (*muharram*), from the Arabic مُحَرَّم (*muḥarram*), the first month of the Muslim lunar calendar, literally, ‘forbidden,’ ‘prohibited,’ also, ‘sacred,’ ‘holy.’ Many Muslims observe a period of mourning for the martyrdom of Hasan and Husayn, grandsons of the Prophet, and of their father Ali, during the month of Muharram. The incident of the killing of Husayn and his male family members at Karbala, Iraq, is one of the most significant events in Islamic history (Ahmed 1988: 57), and the interpretation of it is one of the primary differences between Shia and Sunni Muslims. The particular observances that speakers of Anglo-Indian English referred to as Hobson-Jobson were the Shia observances held on the tenth day of the month, known as *Ashura* or *Ashoor*, in which, among other things, the names of the martyrs are rhythmically chanted *en masse* by men beating their chests. It is also during this time that some Shia men practice self-flagellation with steel-tipped chains or cut themselves with swords or knives to commemorate the suffering and death of Husayn. These ceremonies were known in Anglo-Indian English as *the Muharram* from as early as 1832 (Herklots: 172),¹ and the word still has that sense both in Indian English (Sengupta 1991: 1460; Hankin 2003: 329) and in Hindi (Bahri 2010: 519).

In the sentence following the definition, Yule and Burnell comment on the origin of the term and their own particular use of it as a title for their dictionary. Yule and Burnell are very specific when they describe Hobson-Jobson as ‘typical [...] of the most highly assimilated class of Anglo-Indian argot.’ That is, they do not equate Hobson-Jobson with all Anglo-Indian argot, nor with all assimilated borrowings, but specifically those expressions that have been ‘most highly assimilated,’ by which they mean far removed from the original form. The Indian vernaculars from which English took the bulk of its loanwords have various phonemes that do not occur as phonemes in English, such as aspirated consonants and retroflex plosives, and so there is always going to be some assimilation when borrowing occurs. Word stress is also another feature that will change in the process of Anglicisation, as Indian languages tend to place primary stress in places that English does not. Hence, all Indian loanwords will be assimilated to a certain extent. The borrowings Yule and Burnell specifically signified as similar to Hobson-Jobson are those where a great deal of assimilation has taken place.

This sentence also discusses register and domain. According to Yule and Burnell, Hobson-Jobson was a highly domain- and register-restricted term: a term of ‘the Anglo-Indian argot.’ The word ‘argot’ indicates that Hobson-Jobson was used only in informal or slang contexts, and by ‘Anglo-Indian’ they mean specifically the British residing in India. Finally, Yule and Burnell claim the word is ‘peculiar to the British soldier and his surroundings.’ In other words, it is army slang. The expression ‘and his surroundings’ means those people associated with the army that are not actual soldiers, such as military police, medical staff, and so on. The footnote attached to this information indicates that Yule and Burnell were not entirely familiar with the current status of the term in 1886. They had previously believed the term to have died out, but, were relieved of this misapprehension by Yule’s friend Major John Trotter. It is strange that this information was placed in a footnote and that Yule and Burnell admit in the text to having thought the term obsolete.² There are 249 footnotes in the 1886 edition of *Hobson-Jobson*, so clearly footnotes are a significant part of the textual design. Nevertheless, if they knew the term was not obsolete by the time the pages were ready for typesetting, why did they not merely state that in the discursive text? Perhaps they did not in an effort to distance themselves from the term by admitting their own unfamiliarity with its current usage. That Yule and Burnell needed such information from a third party argues for a lack of an up-to-date association with the army in India. This is understandable in Burnell’s case as he was a civil servant, and possibly also in Yule’s case, for although he had served in the army in India, he had retired from India in 1862 and had been living since then in Palermo, Italy (Buckland 1906: 464).

Next, Yule and Burnell return to the question of origin and state that Hobson-Jobson is an Anglicisation of the cry ‘Yā Hasan! Yā Hosain!’ Directly following this etymological information, Yule and Burnell begin a new paragraph explaining that in the India of their time the Muharram ceremonies were not exclusive to Shias, but also practised by Sunnis and Hindus, and give a lengthy, and undated, extract about this ‘from an unexceptional authority’ (1886: 319, 1903: 419). By ‘unexceptional’ they do not mean unremarkable, but rather that the authority is one which the reader cannot take exception to. The authority is the *Taqwiyat-ul Īmām* of the Islamic scholar Shāh Ismā‘īl Shāhīd, translated from the Urdu by the Mir Shahamat Ali in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1852. The *Taqwiyat-ul Īmām*, originally published 1826, is a significant Islamic text which has had ‘more than six million copies’ printed (Aftab 2008: 114). The object of its author was to show ‘the extent to which the doctrines of Muhammad had become perverted in India’ (Ali 1852: 316). This additional information about who took part in the Muharram in India is one of the many divagations in Yule and Burnell’s text, an aspect for which the book has been praised (Kipling 1886, Birdwood 1887, Burgess 1985).

After this digression, Yule and Burnell note that they had not been able to locate a ‘literary quotation to exemplify the phrase as it stands’ (1886: 319, 1903: 419). In other words, they could find no citations of the actual term Hobson-Jobson. This is an extraordinary admission. To include a term in one’s dictionary when one has no examples in the collection of lexical data amassed for the project (there are 9,782 citations in Yule and Burnell’s 1886 first edition) is, from a lexicographical point of view, bad practice. However, to make that term the name of one’s dictionary is simply audacious. On the title pages of both original editions of their dictionary (but not the facsimile reprints), Hobson-Jobson was highlighted in red ink, in contrast to the rest of the titlepage text. It is evident that Yule and Burnell must have been convinced that the term did exist in the form that they employed. In the 1903 edition the font size of Hobson-Jobson was enlarged for emphasis, indicating that the short title had become strongly associated with the book.

2.2 *The citations of Yule and Burnell, and Crooke*

Yule and Burnell included eleven citations in the 1886 edition and Crooke added five more citations in 1903. These citations, however, do not illustrate many of the claims made by Yule and Burnell in the discursive text. After admitting that they lacked quotations for

Hobson-Jobson, Yule and Burnell furnish eleven citations that they claim ‘show it in the process of evolution’ (1886: 319, 1903: 419). The word ‘evolution’ implies that the citations should demonstrate a phonological change over time from ‘Hasan, Husayn,’ or rather, ‘Ya Hasan, Ya Husayn, to ‘Hobson-Jobson.’ However, according to the citations, the case for such evolution is weak. Table 1 lists the citation dates and forms alongside their meaning and original language. Grey highlighting indicates that the form is deemed to have been unable to contribute to the evolution of the term Hobson-Jobson. The ‘Meaning’ column records whether the term in the quotation is a byname for the Muharram, or whether it is merely an example of the Arabic proper names (i.e. a Romanisation of *Hasan* and *Husayn*).

Table 1. Citations for *Hobson-Jobson* in Yule and Burnell 1886/1903.

Year	Form	Meaning	Language	YB	Crooke
1618	Hussein, Hussein	names	Italian	✓	
c.1630	Hussan, Hussan	names	English	✓	
1653	Hassan, Houssain	names	French	✓	
c.1665	Hussein	names	French	✓	
1673	Hosseen Gosseen	Muharram	English	✓	
1673	Hossy Gossy	Muharram	English	✓	
1710	Saucem Saucem	names	Portuguese		✓
1726	Jaksom Baksom	Muharram	Dutch	✓	
1763	Hassein Jassein	names	English	✓	
1773	Hassan Hassan	Muharram	English		✓
1829	Hobson Jobson	names	English		✓
1830	Husen Hasen	Muharram	English		✓
1832	Hussun Hosein	names	English	✓	
1861	Hossein Jossen	Muharram	English	✓	
1883	Houssein Hassan	names	English	✓	

1902	Hobson-Jobson	Muharram	English		✓
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As a result of Yule and Burnell’s lexicographical method, their citations require independent verification and some correction. The citation dated 1720 was not written in the eighteenth century, but is from a chapter about the years 1720-21 published in a later text, namely, Wheeler (1861). This citation should properly be dated 1861 (as in Table 1). Furthermore, not all the citations are English: one is in Italian, two more in French, one is from a silently translated Dutch source (for the original text, see Valentyn 1726: 107), and one is from a Portuguese source (also silently translated) showing the obviously unrelated form *Saucem Saucem* (for the original text, see Sousa 1710: 165). These non-English citations could not have contributed to the evolution of the term in English unless borrowing was involved. Of the eleven English-language citations, five (for the years c.1630, 1773, 1830, 1832, 1883) are merely Romanisations of *Hasan* and *Husayn* and thus show no phonetic alteration. This leaves only six citations that could potentially support Yule and Burnell’s claim of a phonetic development over time.

Of the six citations that are from English sources and that demonstrate phonetic alteration, two, from the same 1673 source, show alteration of the second /h/ to /g/: *Hosseen Gossen* and *Hossy Gossy*. However, there is no phonetic progression /h/ > /g/ > /dʒ/, and the latter of these also demonstrates loss of the final nasal, and so cannot have contributed to the final form. Another two citations, from 1763 and 1861 (corrected from 1720), are for *Hassein Jassein*, and *Hossein Jossen*. Here, Yule and Burnell are justified in seeing some similarity as both demonstrate the change of the initial phoneme of the second name from /h/ to /dʒ/. However, the 1861 citation post-dates the appearance of Hobson-Jobson by over three decades, so cannot be regarded as a precursor. Furthermore, the intromission of a medial /b/ is not explained by Yule and Burnell.

Two citations added by Croke actually illustrate the form Hobson-Jobson, one from 1829 and the other from 1902, more than fifteen years after Yule and Burnell’s first edition. The latter citation, from the April issue of the magazine *The Nineteenth Century and After*, is the only citation in the whole dictionary from 1902, and is the latest citation appearing in the 1903 edition. It must have been added at a very late date, as the text of the book would have been finalised and typeset in 1902: Croke’s ‘Preface to the second edition’ is dated 14th November 1902 (1903: xii). Croke’s addition of a citation demonstrating the use of the term

Hobson-Jobson in 1829 is a vindication of Yule and Burnell's assertion that such a form did indeed exist. However, the meaning does not match Yule and Burnell's definition as the names *Hobson* and *Jobson* are merely representations of chanted names of Hasan and Husayn.

Of the 16 citations in the 1903 edition, nine are merely representations of the names of Hasan and Husayn and so do not illustrate the definition provided by Yule and Burnell. Only seven citations show a transferal of sense from the proper names of Ali's sons to the name of the religious observances, a transferal that took place in English as far back as 1673. All citations refer specifically to the Muharram, and do not therefore support Yule and Burnell's generalised definition. None of the citations refer to British military slang usage. Also noteworthy is that none of the citations actually record the phrase 'Yā Hasan! Yā Hosain!' given by Yule and Burnell as the etymon.

2.3 Summary of Yule and Burnell's entry

To summarise the information presented by Yule and Burnell in 1886 and updated by Crooke in 1903, Hobson-Jobson was a somewhat uncommon slang term especially used in the British army in India to refer to any native Indian festival, and especially as the name for the Muharram as practised in India, ultimately derived from the chanting of *Ya Hasan, Ya Husayn* in those ceremonies through a process of phonetic evolution. Hobson-Jobson was then used by Yule and Burnell as the name of their dictionary, and as a typical example of a type of extreme linguistic assimilation that occurred in Anglo-Indian English. In the preface, Yule also noted that the term was 'rare and moribund' by 1886. It is this information that has essentially served as the sole source for virtually all subsequent commentary about the term Hobson-Jobson, and thence as the source of a number of subsequent derivative meanings and expressions. The next section explores that part of the original story missing from Yule and Burnell's account.

3. Why *Hobson* and *Jobson*? Mishearing versus agency

In his explanation of the title of the dictionary, Yule describes the term Hobson-Jobson as 'delightful' (1886: ix) and further notes that he selected the name with the 'expressed assent

of his collaborator' Burnell. The name of Yule and Burnell's dictionary has been primarily received in more or less positive terms: 'amusing' (*Geraldton Guardian* 1924: 1), a 'splendid blazon' (Burgess 1985: vi), 'esoteric' (Kachru 2008: 13), 'distinctive' (Baharloo 2009: 98), 'deliberately catchy' (Sailaja 2009: 72). In sharp contrast to this, Rudyard Kipling, in an otherwise complimentary review of the dictionary when it was first published, simply stated that it was a 'pity that the title is so uncouth' (1886: 159). But if Yule found it delightful, why did Kipling find it uncouth? The solution to this conundrum has been elucidated by Nagle (2010). Nagle reveals that Kipling was not alone and that a number of other late-nineteenth-century reviewers also expressed disapproval of the title. Additionally, Nagle shows that Yule had kept the name secret from his publisher John Murray right up until the eve of publication. Obviously there was something improper about the term, and this may account for why Yule was explicit about Burnell's consenting to its use as a title.

Nagle explains that the reason for the disapproval by contemporary critics, and for the cloak-and-dagger machinations between Yule and his publisher, are to be found in the multilayered pejoration inherent in the term Hobson-Jobson as used in colonial India. Her argument is threefold. First, in English, as opposed to Indian languages, rhyming reduplicatives are either infantilising, such as *Humpty-Dumpty*, or disparaging, as *namby-pamby* or *niminy-piminy*. Second, the name *Jobson* had long existed in English as a pejorative name for a yokel or country bumpkin, as had the name *Hob* (but not specifically *Hobson*), and that the paired names *Hobson* and *Jobson* were used in Victorian times as stock comic characters of little sense. Finally, Nagle points out that as examples of 'phonological assimilation or mis-hearing' (2010: 122) such forms as *Hosseen Gosseen*, *Hossein Jossen*, and *Husen Hasen* are more or less faithful renderings of the Arabic names, but the imposition of a medial -b- in Hobson-Jobson 'seems an unlikely pattern' (122) unless it involves a deliberate allusion to the pre-existing pejorative folk names. To Victorian ears, the names *Hobson* and *Jobson* were as comically sounding as Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Hence, rather than being simply the result of phonetic evolution, or mishearing and assimilation by British soldiers, the application of Hobson-Jobson to the Muharram was deliberately disparaging. There was a deliberate agency involved in selecting the names *Hobson* and *Jobson* to render the overheard chanting of the names *Hasan* and *Husayn* in the Muharram: there was a deliberate aspect of meaning involved, and that meaning was demeaning. Thus, the famous title of the dictionary is, at base, derogatory, and its selection by Yule and Burnell was less respectful than the much-repeated explanation they presented in the front matter of their dictionary suggests. This explains why Yule kept the title secret until the eleventh hour,

why some contemporary reviewers took exception to the name, why Yule highlights Burnell's approval of the title, and why the definition is not explicit about the connotation that the term carried. It also potentially explains why Yule and Burnell may have been trying to distance themselves from the term by foregrounding their erroneous suppositions about its currency in the main entry, while placing Major Trotter's more up-to-date corrective in a footnote.

4. Contributions of the research data

The above information represents what was known about the term Hobson-Jobson up until the present research. The research undertaken for this paper has resulted in an extensive amount of new evidence that strengthens certain parts of the above account, or else, enables a more correct version of the facts. Some of this new evidence is internal, that is, from within the pages of the *Hobson-Jobson* dictionary, though the larger part is based on the collection of literary citations of the term Hobson-Jobson.

4.1 *Contributions to the age, status and domain of the term*

The results of the present research allow for an updated understanding of the age, status and domain of the term Hobson-Jobson. Yule claimed it was 'rare and moribund' by 1886, however, there is now good citational evidence to the contrary. Citations proving the existence of the term independent of any influence from Yule and Burnell's dictionary are presented in the mini-lexicon for the years 1828, 1829, 1830, 1842, 1851 (twice), 1867, 1868, 1869, 1879, 1902 (twice), 1903, 1909, 1910 and 1931. There is an obvious hiatus in this citational record – from 1879 to 1902 – and this corresponds to a distinct change in the provenance of the Muharram ceremonies being described: the pre-twentieth-century citations all refer to the Muharram in India, the twentieth-century ones (excepting Cox 1909) describe Muharram ceremonies performed by Indian sailors in the employ of the British merchant navy. Although Cox (1909) describes the Muharram in India, he notes that the term Hobson-Jobson is used by 'British soldiers *and sailors*' (39; my emphasis). The earliest evidence of nautical usage is from 1830 (Ames: 167), with another early reference from 1851 referring to Indian sailors on a British Indiaman practicing the 'Obson Jobson' near Bombay

(*Chambers's Papers for the People* 1851: 15). In contrast, only two early citations relate to usage by British soldiers (Bellew 1842: 81, Raikes 1867: 74). The bulk of evidence therefore runs contrary to Yule and Burnell's statement that the term originated in the army, though we cannot rule this out. What the research data suggests is that Hobson-Jobson was used by both soldiers and sailors in the nineteenth-century, but the nautical usage outsurvived army usage. The latest citation which is a genuine use of the term in this sense (i.e. without reference to or influence from Yule and Burnell) is from 1931, and the absence of later evidence is a strong indication that the original uses of Hobson-Jobson are now obsolete, except in historical commentary.

The research data also provides an antedating of the earliest citation from 1829, however, by only a single year to 1828. This antedating had been previously reported by Partridge's (1970: 1198), where he notes that Hobson-Jobson 'occurs earlier in George R. Gleig, *Log-book* (I, 214), 1828'. Partridge does not give the text of the quotation, and appears not to have consulted the original text. Appended to Partridge's entry is the name 'Moe' which refers to 'Colonel Albert F. Moe, U.S.M.C., Ret., of Arlington, Virginia' who supplied 'entries and datings, some Naval, some general' for the 1966 supplement (1970: vi). Because this is a second-hand account, we cannot be sure what meaning Hobson-Jobson had in the original text, or how it was spelled, or even that it actually exists as claimed.³ The book Moe was referring to is the anonymous *The Subaltern's Log-book* published in two volumes in 1828 and in a revised single-volume edition in 1829. The belief that it was written by George Robert Gleig (1796-1888) is based on the fact that Gleig published a book entitled *The Subaltern* in 1825. I have not been able to consult the 1828 edition of this book, but have had access to the 1829 edition, which has the term Hobson-Jobson on page 142. There is good reason to believe that the same text was in the 1828 edition as all the other terms that Partridge cites from Gleig 1828 are also in the 1829 edition, with anywhere between 30 and 60 pages difference between editions for each individual term (it appears as if some text was excised from the original edition for the second). Importantly, in *The Subaltern's Log-book* the term Hobson-Jobson is used as a noun to refer to a Muslim ceremony, undoubtedly the Muharram: '[s]ometimes there was a Moorman's feast, called Hobson Jobson, at which there was a great uproar, and many natives dancing round a fire' ([Gleig] 1829: 142). This rather minimalist description is all the information the text has on the subject of the Muharram, and it is clear that to the author such activity, along with various other 'Hindoo ceremonies' and 'suttees' (142), was to be regarded as a tamasha, an outlandish ceremony of value to the foreign visitor only as a spectacle. The author was not particularly interested in Indian

culture, and describes as a curiosity and figure of fun his captain in the army who ‘was very fond of natives,’ ‘frequently dressed himself in their style,’ ‘studied their language [...] and employed himself also in taking plans of the country, and delineating their customs and occupations’ (143).⁴

Thus, in addition to antedating the term Hobson-Jobson to 1828, the research data very strongly suggests that all the senses discussed so far are now obsolete, except in the case of historical references to previous usage. The living senses of the term are now restricted to the domain of popular linguistics. Furthermore, the original sense was not restricted solely to the British Indian soldiers, but was also common in the merchant navy where it persisted up until the 1930s.

4.2 Contributions to the semantics of Hobson-Jobson

Yule and Burnell state that Hobson-Jobson was also applied in a general way to any Indian festival religious observance and the research data provides justification for this claim. Citations from 1860 and 1877 clearly demonstrate this sense, and both antedate the publication of Yule and Burnell’s 1886 definition. Further potential evidence for this meaning comes from the *London Illustrated News* (1870: 614) which states that Hobson-Jobson is ‘apparently the English nickname given at Colombo to a grotesque festival performance of the town sweeps, exhibited at the Cinghalese feast of the New Year, which falls on April 11’. By the word ‘apparently’, it is clear that the author is unsure of the precise application of the term Hobson-Jobson, and it is possible that he or she may have been confusing a general sense for a specific one, having come across the term in one instance only. In additions to these, another two citations suggest the word was also used outside of India for any festival, fete or carnival. These citations both come from the same newspaper published in rural Australia in the latter half of 1897, suggesting a high likelihood of having been written by the same author. The absence of corroborating evidence indicates that this meaning was never very common, or was perhaps peculiar to the author. Though, we cannot rule out the possibility that more evidence for this meaning will come to light in the future.

Apart from the generalised sense, there are only two other senses recorded by Yule and Burnell. The first is actually only the pairing of two proper nouns (*Hasan* and *Husayn* variously Romanised) and does not constitute a lexical item; the second is a single compound noun with the transferred sense, ‘the Indian Muharram’, also a proper noun (senses **1.** and **2.**

in the mini-lexicon). Yule and Burnell mixed these senses, and the citations for them, together in their entry, without making the semantic distinction explicit. As proper nouns, the Arabic names are encyclopaedic and not properly part of a dictionary. Some scholars are adamant about preserving the distinction between encyclopaedic and lexicographical information (e.g. Wierzbicka 1985: 40), while others note that ‘the difference is subtle and the boundaries fluid’ (Svensén 2009: 289). In the case of Yule and Burnell’s *Hobson-Jobson*, over 25% of the entries are encyclopaedic, and so the inclusion of the proper nouns presents no problem. It is up to the discretion of dictionary editors as to what and how much encyclopaedic material they put in their dictionaries. Dictionaries that do not include encyclopaedic material should technically omit both of these senses.

Of interest here also is the depiction of the Muharram as a ‘feast.’ This is consistent with other evidence provided in the mini-lexicon, with citations for 1698, 1773, 1861, 1870, but is quite erroneous as the Muharram is a time of fasting. Even more common has been to characterise the Muharram as a ‘festival’ (with citations from 1763, 1830, 1838, 1851, 1869, 1879, 1886, 1898 (twice), 1910, 1924 and 1931). As noted above, the Muharram is not a festival, nor, if given due respect, a spectacle or tamasha. These characterisations gave rise to the Muharram being called the *Hobson-Jobson feast* (1859, 1860) and the *Hobson-Jobson festival* (1851, 1859-60, 1902) (see Appendix).

4.3 Contributions to the etymology of *Hobson-Jobson*

4.3.1 *Reduplication in Yule and Burnell.* As Nagle (2010: 119) points out, rhyming reduplicatives in English these are nursery language or express ‘disparagement or dismissiveness’. Yule and Burnell also comment on the use of reduplication. At the entry for *looty* they mention that

[t]he people of Shiraz are noted for a fondness for jingling phrases, common enough among many Asiatics, including the people of India, where one constantly hears one’s servants speak of *chauki-auki* (for chairs and tables), *naukar-chākar* (where both are however real words), ‘servants,’ *lākṛī-akrī*, ‘sticks and staves,’ and so forth. (Yule and Burnell 1886: 397, 1903: 521)

And again, in the entry for *nokar* they state that

[N]*aukar-chakār*, ‘the servants,’ one of those jingling double-barrelled phrases in which Orientals delight even more than Englishmen. As regards Englishmen, compare hugger-mugger, hurdy-gurdy, tip-top, highty-tighty, higgledy-piggledy, hocus-pocus, tit for tat, topsy-turvy, harum-scarum, roly-poly, fiddle-faddle, rump and stump, slip-slop. (Yule and Burnell 1886: 481, 1903: 628-629)

Of interest here is their choice of the word ‘jingling’ rather than any of a number of other appropriate terms available at the time, such as *rhyming*, *doubled*, *reduplicative* or even *couplet* (the term *echo word* was not coined until the twentieth century). The *OED* notes that the word *jingle* is applied ‘depreciatively’ and is ‘chiefly contemptuous’. The English examples Yule and Burnell provide all fit into the categorisations that Nagle provides: none of them are serious, sober words. By characterising reduplicatives of this sort as ‘jingling,’ Yule and Burnell unwittingly critique their own choice of such a word for the title of their dictionary.

4.3.2 *Colonial attitudes towards the Muharram*. If the term *Hobson-Jobson* is pejorative, it follows that a similar negative attitude amongst Anglo-Indians towards the Muharram should be evident in the citation record. This is the case. At their lowest ebb, colonial attitudes were liable to be entirely negative, for example this scathing summation of Indian religious practices from the pen of a Christian minister:

The Muharram and Charkh Pu'ja'. These two noisy and disgraceful festivals are past. The din and insolence of the former, and the cruelty and abomination of the latter, have ceased for a year. Our eyes are no longer assailed by the tortured Hindu, nor our ears dinned by the wild shriek of Hassan Hussain. (*The Calcutta Christian Observer* 1838: 293)

However, the research data mostly reveals an attitude of disinterest and dismissiveness towards the Muharram among the British observers. One newspaper article on the Muharram

states that ‘to Tommy Atkins the whole business is “Hobson-Jobson”’ (*Argus* 1886: 4), while Raikes (1867: 74) comments ‘I remember once hearing an English soldier explain to a comrade: “It’s only them Moors at their Hobson and Jobson”’. This attitude is amply illustrated in the following extract:

I asked our ‘footman’ what the ‘garlands’ were for. He replied that it is the ‘Hobson Jobson festival, sir.’ This is a curious custom, which I may describe for the edification of curious people and the musical societies in the old town. To commemorate this festival with its strange name, it requires a man, or a number of men, who can imitate the ‘voices’ of various animals, and these men with some rude form of music – which here means the most horrid discord – go about like mummers in England, and this is their song:

Hobson Jobson, one, two, three,

Yah-yah – Yah-yah-yah;

Hobson Jobson, one, two, three. (J.W. ‘Eastward Ho!’ in *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* 1879: 8)

The contempt here is palpable. The music is simplistic and discordant, the cries of the devotees have been reduced to animal sounds, and with the addition of ‘one, two, three,’ the sacred chanting of the names of the grandsons of the Prophet has been reduced to nothing better than a sporting cheer. Another article, that gives a detailed and respectful account of the Muharram, along with a sympathetic description of the Shia perspective of Husayn’s death, begins by highlighting the ignorance displayed by many English observers with this exchange between an interested party and a ship’s captain whose Indian lascars were to take part in the Muharram the following day while in dock at London:

‘To-morrow is the day you ought to have been at the docks,’ said the Captain to our host. ‘You would have seen the Hobson-Jobson.’

‘And what is the Hobson-Jobson?’

‘Well, it’s some sort of a holiday that the Hindû sailors keep every year. (Goodrich-Freer 1902: 581)

The notion among the British that it was a Hindu ceremony or holiday was not uncommon (Ames 1830: 167, *St. Paul's Globe* 1902: 4, *Queanbeyan Age* 1910: 4), and is another example of the tendency among those who did not care to know any better to group all Indians together under one denomination. This lack of interest, both active and passive, by the coloniser towards the culture of the colonised is at the heart of the term Hobson-Jobson. The author later records that, when endeavouring to find an explanation of the ceremonies, ‘men who had been in India for years knew nothing except that “the people were always doing it”’ (Goodrich-Freer 1902: 585). This is in accord with the 1829 citation of the word added by Crooke to the 1903 edition, which is presented *in extensio* in the Appendix. The article is a faux letter-home from a fictitious uneducated Yorkshireman named John Dockery. It first appeared in *The Oriental Sporting Magazine* and was reprinted *The New Sporting Magazine* of 1835, and again in 1873 in a selection of *The Oriental Sporting Magazine*. It is one of a series of spoof letters making fun of ignorant Englishmen in India. The humour is often only accessible to those who already have a relatively good knowledge of Indian customs. For instance, the episode wherein a British gentleman tells the devotees to throw their processional goods into the river is only humorous when one knows that Hindu religious processions end in carrying the image of the deity (the *pratima*) into a river or other body of water. In the Muharram, effigies of the tombs of Hasan and Husayn are carried in processions, and in parts of Indian these were sometimes submersed or set adrift in rivers (Herklots 1863: 181, Cox 1909: 38), though submersion was not a universal practice. Most of the other humour in the 1829 excerpt is in the form of egregiously bad puns, including the coarse joke about foreskins (which was bowdlerised from the 1835 reprinting). Perspicaciously, Goodrich-Freer comments that ‘[i]t is perhaps inevitable that, when the unknown is not taken for the sublime, it should, on the contrary, be taken for the ridiculous’ (585). The evidence presented here seems to suggest just that. It appears that, because the practices that take place in the Muharram were viewed by a certain subsection of the British in India as worthy of ridicule, they accordingly bestowed a name that conveyed that very attitude.

4.3.3 *Victorian stock comic figures*. Next we turn to the research data for the paired English surnames *Hobson* and *Jobson* and their part in the story. Nagle notes that the *Hobson* and *Jobson* names denoted ‘at best, yokels and, at worst, idiots’ (2010: 122), and adduces an

example from the *OED* of the paired names dating from the very early date of 1594. However, the next earliest evidence she presents is from 1893, which not only entails an improbable gap in the evidence of 300 years, but is also some years after Yule and Burnell's first edition of 1886, and many years after the earliest citation of the term Hobson-Jobson in 1828. If these comic figures are the etymological source of the form Hobson-Jobson, then they should appear in the historical record prior to, or at least contemporaneously with, the earliest evidence of the word in question. The research data has numerous examples of *Hobson* and *Jobson* ranging from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth. The names *Hobson* and *Jobson* were also used as ad hoc names to attach to characters that were to be, for whatever reason, left unnamed: equivalent to modern English *John Doe*, *Bill Smith*, or *A. Citizen*, though still with a connotation of stupidity. Variations include *Mrs Hobson* and *Mrs Jobson* (dated 1889), and, when there were more than two people to be named, the addition of *Dobson* (1851, 1888), *Slobson* (1910) and even *Wobson* (1888). Importantly, one citation has the paired names from 1828.

[W]hat must the public have endured since the day you adopted your insipid motto, stuck up your banner like 'Hobson Jobson,' to humbug, instead of 'Advance Australia.' (*The Australian* 1828: 23 Dec 2)

It is difficult to determine exactly what is meant by this reference, and the greater context is no help, but at the very least it shows the paired names used in a clearly derogatory manner, in a purely English-language non-Indian context, and contemporaneous with the earliest use of Hobson-Jobson. Also of interest are two more nineteenth-century examples of the coupled names *Hobson* and *Jobson*, both in an Indian context, but neither referring to the Muharram. One refers to the 'office of Messrs. Hobson, Jobson and Co. Merchants and Agents' in India (Mawson 1844: 34), and the other to the firm of 'Hobson and Jobson [...] an old firm of East India merchants' (*Southern Argus* 1890: 31 July 5). In both these texts the names are used as jocular titles of fictitious businesses. These two citations suggest that the names *Hobson* and *Jobson*, as well as being current in England, existed in India unconnected with the Muharram ceremonies, thus providing the root stock from which British colonists were able to create their mocking slang term.

4.3.4 *The supposed phonetic evolution.* The research data provides some new items to add to the list of the various 'corruptions' of the chanted names of Hasan and Husayn. These are *Jacey Bocey* and *Joicey Boicy*, dating from 1682, from separate different copies of the same manuscript document. Temple, who discovered these terms, noted that '[e]ither gives us a

new form for this much tortured expression' (1917: 79). More significant is the fact that neither can have contributed phonetically to the form Hobson-Jobson, having, as they do, different initial consonants, different vowels, and lacking a final nasal. If anything, these two forms add weight to the view that instead of there being some process of development over time, each writer converted the Arabic names anew into whatever sounds best suited what he or she believed was being chanted. Thus, *Hosseen Gosseen* did not influence *Jacey Bocey*, which did not influence, *Hassein Jassein*, which did not influence Hobson-Jobson. Hobson-Jobson was created in isolation of the other forms utilising the English surnames prevalent in the popular culture of the day.

4.3.5 *Incorrect derivation from Yā Hasan! Yā Hosain!* Salman Rushdie, in rehearsing Yule and Burnell's etymology, commented that 'I don't quite see how the colonial British managed to hear this as *Hobson! Jobson!*, but this is clearly a failure of imagination on my part' (1985: 82). Rushdie is justified in querying this almost alchemical change of 'Yā Hasan! Yā Hosain!', an expression of six syllables, into Hobson-Jobson with only four. It is hard to account for the total loss, twice over, of the Arabic vocative exclamation *Yā*. The explanation for this lies in the fact that the six-syllable cry that Yule and Burnell provide is but only one of a number of cries that are given during the Muharram (for other laments see Herklots 1832: 173). Importantly, another very common exclamation is simply the chanting repetition, with increasing speed and zeal, of the two names Hasan and Husayn, in that order. This is attested to in Yule and Burnell's own citation set (the citations dated 1653 and 1883), but is also verified by numerous other sources (Herbert 1634: 167, Picart 1737: 130, Connolly 1834: I. 269, *Calcutta Christian Observer* 1838: 293, Wilson 1906: 38, Singh 1962: 24, Bachchan 1989: 77, Courtauld 1990: 128, Narayan 2009: 28). Here there is a direct match of four syllables with four syllables.

As we have noted there is more to the choice of Hobson-Jobson than mere mishearing. However, once the *yā*'s are removed from the equation, it does not require as much imagination as Rushdie claims is necessary to convert one phrase into the other. To one who does not know the names, or why they would be being chanted, 'Hobson Jobson' is not necessarily an unrealistic Anglicisation, at least in terms of phonology. It is difficult to precisely detect distinct phonemes when a large mass of people are chanting because various parts of the crowd are never completely in sync. Most people would have experience of hearing, even if only on television, large crowds of football supporters chanting or singing at

matches, and would be aware that of the difficulty in determining the words if they are unknown. One contemporary commentator noted that ‘it is but fair to allow, that “Hussain, Hosein,” when shouted forth in the manner described, sound exceedingly like “Hobson, Jobson” (Bellew 1842: 81). Footage with live sound of Muharram processions in various parts of the world is readily available on YouTube to those wishing to gauge the phonetic similarity or disparity for themselves. That Yule and Burnell tried to match Hobson-Jobson with ‘Yā Hasan! Yā Hosain!’ rather than with the phonetically closer Hasan! Husayn! indicates that they were not themselves very familiar with the Muharram in India. This etymological error has been uncritically copied down the ages (Birdwood 1887: 148, Wallace 1895: 133, Cox 1909: 39, Goldberg 1938: 282, Rao 1954: 16, Jacobs 1958: 130, Shah 1977: 219, Burgess 1985: vi, Paxton 1991: 231, Chaudhuri 1994: vi, Room 1996: 577, Mishra 2009: 388, Purcell 2009: 60, Sailaja 2009: 128, Zimmer 2009), indicating an enduring lack of further scholarly investigation and a sole reliance upon the information provided by Yule and Burnell.

5. The linguistic senses of *Hobson-Jobson*

Hobson-Jobson is widely recorded in dictionaries and other works as a term for the assimilation of loanwords. This is not a term used by academic linguists, but rather one that appears in popular works of a linguistic nature, for example, the works of Eric Partridge and Sidney J. Baker, and in magazine and newspaper articles about loanwords. Yule and Burnell were the first to use the term in this extended sense. However, the literature that discusses how Hobson-Jobson came to be applied to the linguistic phenomenon of assimilation does not give Yule and Burnell due credit for the coining of this sense. Also, it has rarely been pointed out that Yule and Burnell used the term Hobson-Jobson themselves in various definitions in their dictionary. Instead, it is suggested that either the title of the dictionary is the reason for the linguistic application of the term (e.g. Brown 1993: 1243), or, that the origin of the linguistic application is the term Hobson-Jobson itself, as an example of the phenomenon (Flexner and Hauck 1983: 909). Neither of these is wholly correct, and the origin of the linguistic application is partially, if not primarily, a result of Yule and Burnell’s own neologistic use.

5.1 The linguistic senses of Hobson-Jobson according to Yule and Burnell

Aside from at the entry for Hobson-Jobson itself, Yule and Burnell used the term Hobson-Jobson nine times in the discursive text of their dictionary to describe other examples of highly assimilated terms (for the entries *Balasore*, *cow-itch*, *dumbcow*, *Falaun*, *jackass copal*, *sirris*, *sombrero*, *upper roger*, and *urz*), and Crooke added another three examples (for *Mahratta*, *nacoda*, and *snow rupee*) in 1903. However, their own application of the term is very imprecise. For example, Yule and Burnell (1886: 732, 1903: 959) label the term *Upper Roger* as a ‘happy example of the Hobson-Jobson dialect’ stating that it is ‘a corruption of the Skt. *yuva-rāja*’ which means ‘young king’. The process of Anglicisation transmutes the original’s component parts into the English word *upper* and the forename *Roger*. Yule and Burnell have, however, been deceitfully selective here. The form of the expression in the original source is actually *Uper Roger* (Dalrymple 1793: 192), not ‘upper’, and the immediate etymon is not Sanskrit, but rather the Burmese form of the Sanskrit: ‘*Apporazah*, Brother of the *King of Pegu*’ (Dalrymple 1793: 163). In Dalrymple’s index other variant spellings are listed: *Upa Rajah*, *Upoo Rajah*, *Uppa Raja*, *Uppa Rajah*, and *Upper Rajah*. These variants were not of interest to Yule and Burnell, because they did not demonstrate their conceptualisation of the Hobson-Jobson class of assimilation, whereas *Upper Roger* did (though only after respelling *Uper* as *Upper*). The term is actually a hapax legomenon, from a single letter of 1755, and we must conclude that they only included it for its humour or novelty value.⁵

Another example of a term supposedly ‘modified in Hobson-Jobson fashion’ is the Hindustani *kewānch*, the plant *Mucuna pruriens*, which has stinging hairs on its seedpods. This was converted in Anglo-Indian English to *cow-itch* (Yule and Burnell 1886: 208, 1903: 268), the idea of the Anglicised form being that the stinging hairs would make cows itch if they brushed against it. The entry also notes that this modification was the result of ‘striving after meaning’ (1886: 208, 1903: 268). ‘Striving after meaning’ is an expression that Yule appears to have coined himself, as he cites a passage from an article he wrote for the *Oriental Quarterly* of 1883 in which he explains that an ‘acting’ officer in the Civil Service was called by ‘the natives’ the ‘ek-tang’ officer because in Hindustani *ek-tang* means ‘one-leg,’ as if ‘the temporary incumbent had but one leg in the official stirrup’ (1886: 794, 1903: 337). Yule explains that this is an example of ‘striving after meaning in syllables which leads to so many etymological fallacies’ (1886: 794, 1903: 337). Sixteen terms in the dictionary are described

with the expression ‘striving after meaning’. This raises the question, what are the exact relationships, if any, between Hobson-Jobson, striving after meaning and highly assimilated lexis? To strive after meaning suggests an attempt to link the phonetic and semantic content of an unfamiliar word or phrase to the phonetic and semantic content of a known word or phrase. For the phonetic aspect, there has to be a similarity, but for the semantic aspect, the separate senses in the two languages do not have to match. To ‘strive after meaning’ means to make an effort to overcome a lack of semantic knowledge. That is, there has to be a certain lack of understanding of the meaning of the original term. At the same time, the new ‘corrupted’ form must have some semantic logic. Yule’s example of Hindustani *ek-tang* (one leg) for English *acting* (holding a temporary office) involves both phonetic and semantic content: *ek-tang* sounds like *acting*, and the meaning ‘one leg’ makes sense in the context so far the Hindustani speakers were concerned, even though ‘one leg’ makes no sense in English. Yule and Burnell note another clear example of striving after meaning with the word *safflower*:

The name is a curious modification of words by the ‘striving after meaning.’ For it points, in the first half of the name, to the analogy with saffron, and in the second half to the object of trade being a flower. But neither one nor the other of these meanings forms any real element in the word. (Yule and Burnell 1886: 588, 1903: 779)

However, not all Yule and Burnell’s examples of Hobson-Jobson assimilation are clear-cut cases of striving after meaning, nor are they always close phonetically. In Bombay an umbrella was called a *summerhead* and Yule states ‘I make no doubt that it is a corruption (by ‘striving after meaning’) of *Sombreiro* [sic], and it is a capital example of Hobson-Jobson’ (1886: 857, 1903: 851). Here the semantics are clear: an umbrella is a protection for the *head* from the heat of *summer* (and rains of the summer monsoon), but the phonetics are considerably dissimilar, with only the first syllable being close. If *summerhead* is an alteration of *sombrero* (and we cannot take Yule’s word for it), then the striving after meaning has almost completely overridden any concern with phonetic similarity.

The term *jackass copal*, a type of gum resin used to make varnish, we are told by Yule and Burnell, is a ‘capital specimen of *Hobson-Jobson*’ (1886: 339, 1903: 444). Here *jackass* is apparently a corruption of the foreign word *chakāzi*.⁶ The phonetic similarity is close, but

there can be no semantic reason for using the word *jackass* as a classifier for a type of resin. Here the phonetic similarity is dominant, to the exclusion of any striving after meaning. Under the headword *urz*, a petition, we are told that the word is ‘used in a very barbarous form of Hobson-Jobson below’ (1886: 732, 1903: 959). Presumably Yule and Burnell are referring to the citation of 1606 which has the form *ars*, which is very close to the word *arse*, a word considered quite vulgar in Victorian times. However, here also there seems to be no semantic reason to refer to a petition as an arse, nor does the citation itself indicate that any indecent meaning is necessarily intended, and thus no striving after meaning is at play.

Yule and Burnell seem to want to link Hobson-Jobson (in their linguistic sense) and ‘striving after meaning’ together as part and parcel of the one phenomenon, yet, at the same time, they do not seem to strictly adhere to any particular meaning. Instead the terms seem to be applied loosely to a range of different borrowing and assimilation situations. This latitude of usage is commensurate with the various usages of other who took up the term Hobson-Jobson to refer to the linguistic process of assimilation.

5.2 *The linguistic senses of Hobson-Jobson as applied by others*

The application of the term Hobson-Jobson by Yule and Burnell to cases of assimilated loanwords was taken up by a number of following scholars (e.g. Morris 1892, Temple 1893, Crooke 1903). It has continued to be employed in this sense up to the present day, and has been defined in a number of important dictionaries such as *Webster’s Third* (1961), *The Random House Unabridged* (1983) and *The Macquarie Dictionary* (2009), but not the *OED* which only records the term the *law of Hobson-Jobson*. Eric Partridge was fond of the term, using it on 29 occasions in his first edition of *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (1937). He also used the term in his ever-expanding *Supplement*, and by the seventh edition (1970) a further 26 terms had been labelled as examples of Hobson-Jobson. Examples recorded in Partridge include: *Hell-fire Pass* for *Halfaya Pass* (1970: 1194); *marionette* for *minaret* (1268); *mercy bucket* for *merci beaucoup* (1271); and ‘*Arry’s gators* for Japanese *arigato* (985). For the word *psychiatrist* he records *sky-artist* (1408), explaining that it is ‘by “Hobson-Jobson” – and wit’ (1408). In other words, it is a deliberate corruption of the original. In fact, all the examples Partridge records are deliberate witticisms where the agency resides with the coiner of the term who actually knows full well the foreign word being corrupted.

Partridge also used the term Hobson-Jobson as a count noun to refer to an individual word that had been assimilated in the manner of Hobson-Jobson. This is a definition that, to my knowledge, has never been recorded in any English language dictionary. However, Partridge was not the first to use it. One person who seemed keen to promote the term Hobson-Jobson to refer to assimilated loanwords was Richard Carnac Temple, editor and proprietor of *The Indian Antiquary*. He used Hobson-Jobson as a count noun as early as 1899. Temple's application of the term was also quite varied. In one instance he equates Hobson-Jobson with 'corruptions of Hindustani names by Europeans'. In another instance, he cites the 'astounding error' of 'Musselwoman,' as an example of Hobson-Jobson (1893: 112). This is neither a phonetic corruption, nor a witticism. It was apparently a genuine mistake based on misunderstanding the term *Musselman*, a formerly common term for a Muslim (from the Persian *musulmān*), as being an English-language compound of *mussel* + *man*. Thus, while resulting from a striving after meaning, there was no mishearing involved as the term *Musselwoman* was an entirely new formation. Here, then, the term Hobson-Jobson merely means the alteration or corruption of lexis based on false analogy.

Crooke also used Hobson-Jobson as a count noun when he added a motto on the verso of the half-title:

"Wee have forbidden the severall Factoryes from wrighting words in this language and refrayned itt our selves, though in bookes of copies we feare there are many which by wante of tyme for perusall we cannot rectefie or expresse." —
Surat Factors to Court, Feb. 26, 1617: I.O. Records: O.C. No. 450.

To which he subjoined the note '[e]vidently the Court had complained of a growing use of "Hobson-Jobsons"' (1903: ii). Here, Hobson-Jobson refers simply to any loanword from native Indian languages, without any notion of assimilation, either phonetic or semantic. Hence, from very early on, the borrowing situations that Hobson-Jobson was applied to were very varied and reveal little consistency.

5.3 *The law of Hobson-Jobson*

Another linguistic application of Yule and Burnell's term Hobson-Jobson is the noun phrase *the law of Hobson-Jobson*. The evidence suggests very strongly that this was coined by the Australian lexicographer Edward E. Morris. Morris states that the term 'is an adaptation from the expression used by Col. Yule and Mr. Burnell as a name for their interesting Dictionary of Anglo-Indian words. The law is well recognised, though it has lacked the name, such as I now venture to give it' (1898: xv). It is possible that Morris had coined this term as early as 1891, as he gave a public lecture in that year entitled 'Hobson-Jobson: A Law of Language' (*Argus* 1891: 9). Morris employs his new coinage in his 1898 dictionary *Austral English* to describe a number of assimilated loanwords, such as *warrener*, the name of a type of seashell, from the 'Tasmanian aboriginal word, *Yawarrenah*' (1898: 499). As with others, Morris' usage is also inconsistent. For example, the fish *Gymnapistes marmoratus* was given the name *forty-skewer*, referring to its poisonous spines. Morris tells us this was altered to *Fortescue*, according to 'the law of Hobson-Jobson' (1898: 151), though here the adaptation happens within the English language, not with a loanword.

Describing such alterations as a 'law' implies that there is a certain inevitability and predictability involved, as with other scientific laws such as the law of thermodynamics. There is not. Nevertheless, it is a catchy title to attach to assimilated loanwords that have an ability to amuse and entertain audiences, and was picked up by writers of other popular works on language such as Mencken, who erroneously attributes the introduction of this phrase to Yule and Burnell, (1919: 41), Partridge (1937: 77) and Baker (1945: 129).

5.4 *Hobson-Jobson as Anglo-Indian English*

One final sense that the term Hobson-Jobson has acquired is to refer to Indian English, or rather, Anglo-Indian English of the colonial era. A newspaper columnist writing in 1893 states that Hobson-Jobson 'signifies a medley of Oriental and European words, used in especial by our soldiers' (*Morning Bulletin* 1893: 3). The research data suggests that this application of Hobson-Jobson has never been common, but it has been used in this sense by Rushdie (1995: 98), and entered a number of dictionaries, including a dictionary of linguistics where it is defined as 'a vernacular developed by British soldiers, officials and civilians stationed or residing in India' (Pei and Gaynor 1954: 14).

The origin of this usage is clearly the title of Yule and Burnell's dictionary, or more specifically, its subtitle 'A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases.' This

subtitle is actually not a very accurate summary of the contents of the dictionary, which has very little colloquial language within its pages. For example, the first ten words defined are: *abada* (rhinoceros), *abcaree* (a tax on liquor), *abihowa* (climate), *Abyssinia* (the country), *Achanock* (proper name of a certain station), *achar* (relish), *Acheen* (now *Aceh*, district in Sumatra), *Adam's apple* (a certain citrus fruit), *adati* (a type of cloth), and, *adawlut* (an Islamic court) (1903: 1-4). None of these can reasonably be described as colloquial terms, but many commentators, presumably misled by the subtitle, and have described Yule and Burnell's book as a dictionary of colloquial language (e.g. Shah 1998: 316, Lerer 2007: 259) as though it recorded some Anglo-Indian dialect that was a type of 'bastard, hybrid, colloquial English' (Joshi 2002: 255). Anglo-Indian English was recognised at the time as having unique features (see, for example, Allardyce 1877, Schuchardt 1891), but it was never called Hobson-Jobson in colonial times. This application of the term Hobson-Jobson is partially a result of reading the apposition of the title Hobson-Jobson and the descriptive subtitle of the dictionary as indicative of a type of synonymy, and partially based on a misunderstanding that Yule and Burnell's 'glossary' is a dictionary of colloquial language. Hence, this is really a ghost word, or, rather, a ghost meaning.

5.5 *Derivatives and eclectic uses*

The earliest derivatives of Hobson-Jobson are the verb *Hobson-Jobsonise* and the noun *Hobson-Jobsonism*, both of which were used by orientalist George Birdwood in 1908. Birdwood had written a long and favourable review of Yule and Burnell's dictionary in 1887. The verb does not seem to have been very common, but the noun *Hobson-Jobsonism* has more consistent documentary evidence with both count and uncount senses. Long-time editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*, John W. Campbell, Jr., wrote an editorial for the June 1950 issue of that magazine entitled 'Intellectual Hobson-Jobsonism.' Campbell used the term to refer to the mapping of one idea onto the pattern of a pre-existing idea, giving as an example the metaphor of a solar system used by subatomic physicists to describe the internal workings of an atom. Campbell also used Hobson-Jobson as a verb in his article (the earliest verb usage so far recorded). An absence of other evidence for this usage indicates that it was peculiar to Campbell's article (and there is no evidence that Campbell himself used the terms again).

Some uses of Hobson-Jobson are clearly erroneous applications. A few writers have made the mistake of assuming that the author of the dictionary was a person surnamed

Hobson-Jobson (Arata 1996: 221, Shah and Sinroja 2006: 119, Deefholts and Deefholts 2010: 228). Potentially similar in nature is the discussion of the etymology of the verb *dumbcow* in Barrère and Leland (1889) which states that ‘Mr. Hobson-Jobson converts this into a transitive verb’ (339). Barrère and Leland may have been deliberately personifying the linguistic process, or they may have made a blunder. Finally, one English newspaper egregiously stated that the Muharram was ‘a festival in honour of Hobson-Jobson, the grandson of the Prophet’ (Edwardes 1924: 12).

Several other uses have no supporting evidence: in Dingle (1924: 194) one of the characters avers ‘I’m going to dress and put an end to this Hobson-Jobson flummery!’ Here Hobson-Jobson seems to merely mean mixed up or confused. This is akin to a usage by essayist Pico Iyer who employs the term figuratively in the title of an essay on the western Indian city of Mumbai: *Bombay: Hobson-Jobson on the Streets* (1996). Within the text of the essay the term is never mentioned, nor are Yule and Burnell, nor are any linguistic concepts or examples. Instead, Iyer is relying on a familiarity with the term amongst his intended readers to render the title meaningful. Iyer’s essay celebrates the melting pot that is Mumbai, and his use of Hobson-Jobson carries the semantic weight of such terms as medley, miscellany or mosaic.

6. *Hobson-Jobson* as recorded in dictionaries

Lexicographical accounts of the word Hobson-Jobson demonstrate lack of original research and a consequent reliance on the account given by Yule and Burnell. In addition, a number of errors occur. In terms of the meaning, Yule and Burnell’s general sense was repeated in *Chambers’s Twentieth Century Dictionary* (Davidson 1901: 434-435), the *Century Dictionary* supplement (1910: 592), and in Partridge (1937: 394, and all subsequent editions). However, other dictionaries have defined Hobson-Jobson as only specifically referring to the Muharram (Morris 1898: xv, Crooke 1906: 397, *Funk and Wagnalls* 1912: 397), perhaps through a lack of close attention to the original definition, perhaps as a result of unfamiliarity with the term *tamasha*, and perhaps through the lack of support in the citations provided by Yule and Burnell. The original definition in the *Chambers’s Dictionary*, ‘a native festal excitement, esp. the Moharram ceremonies’ (Davidson 1901: 434-435), was later changed to ‘festal excitement, esp. at the Moharram ceremonies’ (Kirkpatrick 1983: 596). In Yule and Burnell’s definition the word *excitement* is used as a count noun: this usage is all but obsolete

in current English, and has caused the *Chambers's* editor, in the process of redacting the entry, to erroneously redefine the word to mean festive behaviour (uncount), rather than a festivity or ceremony (count). This error is repeated in the 2003 edition (Brookes: 703).

The colonialist assessment of the Muharram as a festival or festivity has been repeated in a number of dictionaries (Davidson 1901: 434-435, *Century Dictionary* 1910: 592, *Funk and Wagnalls* 1912: 397), including the *OED Supplement* (Burchfield 1976: 111-112) which describes the Muharram as a 'festal ceremony'. The term *festal* is defined in the *OED* as 'of or pertaining to a feast or festivity', and hence, Burchfield's definition could give the impression that feasting takes place at the Muharram, rather than fasting.

Yule and Burnell's erroneous derivation from 'Yā Hasan! Yā Hosain!' is the standard etymology in all dictionaries reviewed (Barrère and Leland 1889: I. 466, Davidson 1901: 435, Kirkpatrick 1983: 596, Lewis 1991: 126, *Macmillan Comprehensive Dictionary* 2006: 984), including such major dictionaries as *Webster's Third* (Gove 1961: 1076), the *Random House Unabridged* (Flexner and Hauck 1993: 909), the *OED Supplement* (Burchfield 1976: 111-112), and the *New Shorter OED* (Brown 1993: 1243), proving that their sole source of information was Yule and Burnell.

The only dictionary other than Yule and Burnell that supplies citations to illustrate its entry is Burchfield's *OED Supplement* (1976: 111-112), later subsumed into the second edition in 1989, and available on the web since 2000. As with Yule and Burnell, the citations lump together examples of the proper names Hasan and Husayn as called out in the Muharram, with the compound noun sense.

A number of dictionaries give the popular linguistics sense, including *Webster's Third* (Gove 1961: 1076), the *Random House Unabridged* (Flexner and Hauck 1993: 909), and the *New Shorter OED* (Brown 1993: 1243), though they do not indicate that the domain of this term is popular linguistics. No dictionary consulted records any count noun, adjective or verb definition. The verb *Hobson-Jobsonise* does not appear in any dictionary. *Hobson-Jobsonism* appears in the *OED* as an undefined derivative, and in Lewis (1991: 126) incorrectly defined as 'folk etymology'. The equating of Hobson-Jobson with folk etymology is also found in *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* (1983: 697).

Finally, the *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary* cross-refers Hobson-Jobson to the entry for *Anglo-Indian* which is defined as '[t]he vocabulary, consisting of Anglicized Hindi or other Indian words, developed by British subjects in civil and military service in India: also called *Hobson-Jobson*' (1975: 57). According to this definition there was a

vernacular used by Anglo-Indians consisting entirely of borrowed Indian lexis (that is, without any native English words). No such variety ever existed.

Overall, the lexicographical treatment of Hobson-Jobson is incomplete and characterised by a number of misapprehensions in terms of semantics and etymology. The lexicographical tradition of relying on the entries of previous dictionaries has in this instance perpetuated a number of inaccuracies.

7. Conclusion

Yule and Burnell's *Hobson-Jobson* dictionary has been enduringly popular. The new, albeit abridged, edition published by Oxford University Press in June 2013, edited by Kate Teltscher, is testimony to its continuing saleability. Nagle (2010) has provided a partial answer for the oft repeated question (e.g. Rushdie 1985: 82, *Virtual Linguist* 2012) of how the form Hobson-Jobson could have arisen from the names *Hasan* and *Husayn*, and in doing so brought to light the ultimately derogatory meaning of the original word, which appears not to have been as delightful as Yule wished his readers to believe. This information about the origin has now made its way into the Wikipedia page for *Hobson-Jobson*, and appears on a number of other popular websites (e.g. Zimmer 2009), and no doubt will become an addition to the almost obligatory explicatory story of the title that accompanies descriptions of the dictionary. That there is a detectable superior Western attitude towards Indians, either on the behalf of British soldiers, or Yule and Burnell themselves, should not come as a surprise to anyone even mildly aware of the power imbalance between the British and local populations that characterised the imperial era, or who understands the concept of imperialism itself. As a product of its age, it would instead be astounding if we could not detect such an attitude in the dictionary.

The original *Hobson* and *Jobson* stock comic characters have died out as a meme, as has the application in the English language of their names to the Muharram, no doubt in light of a more mature perspective on cultural and religious practices. However, the term Hobson-Jobson has been given an enduring life thanks to Yule and Burnell, first, because of their decision to use it for the byname of their glossary of Anglo-Indian English, and second, because of their application of the term within the pages of their dictionary as a type or model of the assimilation of borrowed lexis. From this twofold usage, the term has attained a position in popular linguistic nomenclature, with a number of different significations and uses

now in place. There is also evidence of extended and figurative uses suggesting that the history of the term is far from over.

The research data presented in this paper has allowed us to dispel some of the inaccuracies surrounding the origin of the term Hobson-Jobson, to highlight some of the erroneous uses and definitions, and to form a more finely honed explication of its place in English. We now have a clear picture that the term Hobson-Jobson was a deprecating Anglo-Indian slang term for the Muharram used particularly in the army and merchant navy but also more widely. That its origin is a deliberate alteration of the names of Hasan and Husayn repetitively chanted in during the Muharram to the names of two stock comic figures, Hobson and Jobson. As such, no process of phonetic evolution took place. Also, the widely-repeated derivation from Yā Hasan! Yā Hosain! is incorrect. The original sense is now obsolete. The application of Hobson-Jobson to the linguistic process of assimilation of loanwords was a coinage of Yule and Burnell's, though the term has always been used loosely to refer to a number of different assimilation scenarios. The related term *law of Hobson-Jobson* was coined by Morris. The equating of Hobson-Jobson with Anglo-Indian English is based on a misapprehension of the title and contents of Yule and Burnell's dictionary. Finally, in terms of lexicography, the treatment of Hobson-Jobson has omitted a number of senses and uses for which there is good citational evidence, and has relied almost exclusively on the account of Hobson-Jobson given by Yule and Burnell in 1886 without recourse to additional research, therefore perpetuating the inaccuracies of that original account.

This research shows that Yule and Burnell's classic lexicon is more than merely out of date, and that there is much to be gained from further research on the terms treated therein. The resources of the information age, both in terms of data and the access to data, enormously increase the potential productivity of such investigations. This will improve as more and more data becomes available. Finally, it is hoped that this research will allow for improved treatment of the much-tortured term Hobson-Jobson in future lexicographical works.

Notes

¹ *OED3* has *c.*1810 as their earliest citation, however, it is hard to see how they arrived at this date as the source cited was published in 1918, and according to the title page refers to the period 1775-1782 (Spencer 1918).

- ² Crooke (1903: 419) silently moved this footnote into the discursive text, but retained Yule and Burnell's admission of ignorance.
- ³ The danger of trusting second-hand sources can be evidenced by the entry for the slang sense of *cheese* meaning 'the right or correct thing' in the *OED*, which cites as its earliest evidence the *London Guide* of 1818 based on a reference in Hotton's *Slang Dictionary* of 1874. In fact, the *London Guide* does not contain that term, but instead has the French word *chose*: 'C'est toute autre chose, French, quite a different sort of thing' (1818: x). Also, *OED* erroneously has 1873 for the date of Hotten.
- ⁴ Gleig, who may or may not be the author, wrote a number of historical works about British India, such as *Lives of Clive, Hastings and Munro*. His literary output was concerned with the British in India rather than the indigenous population.
- ⁵ Yule and Burnell's fictitious *Upper Roger* has been copied into Barrère and Leland (1889: II. 390-391) and also Partridge's *Supplement* where it is presented as a real word, rather than just a peculiarity in a certain text, and gravely misdated 'mid-C.18-20' (1970: 1492).
- ⁶ Yule and Burnell do not state which language the word *chakāzi* comes from, though Burton (1872: 357) says that it is a local name in Zanzibar. It is presumably not from Swahili as this was one of the languages Burton could speak (Hastings 1978: 119).

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Appendix

This mini-lexicon presents the bulk of citational material collected by the author regarding the term Hobson-Jobson in all its senses and derivatives. It also presents material pertinent to the origin of the term: that is, English-language references to the names *Hasan* and *Husayn* as used in the Muharram, and as a byname for the Muharram, and the names *Hobson* and *Jobson* formerly used as cognomens of stock comic figures. The definitions avoid the use of the term *festival* or synonyms to describe the Muharram. Quotations have as much context as necessary to demonstrate not only the meaning of the term being defined, but also to reveal attitudes that went along with the term. For the linguistic senses, examples of terms that

constitute Hobson-Jobson, according to the ideas of the individual writers, have also been included in the quotations.

Hasan! Husayn! (and variants)

1. *proper nouns* representations of the Arabic names **حسن** (*Hasan*) and **حُسين** (*Husayn*) as cried out during the Muharram.

1634 T. Herbert *A Relation of Some Yeares Trauaile* 167 They celebrate the death of *Hussan* eldest sonne of *Hali*, yearely with many Ceremonies, I haue seene them nine seuerall dayes in great multitudes, in the streets all together crying out *Hussan, Hussan*, so long and fiercely, that many could cry no more hauing spent their voices, they ninth day they find him (whom they imagine lost in a Forrest) or one in his place, then in a huge hurly burly, men, girles and boyes, crying out *Hassan, Hassan* with Drummes, Fifes, and the like, they bring him to the Mosque, and so after some administration and thanksgiuing they put an end to that their *Orgee*.

1638 T. Herbert *Some Yeares Travels into Divers Parts of Asia and Afrique* II. 261 Nine dayes they wander up and downe (shaving all that while neither head nor beard, nor seeming joyfull), incessantly crying out *Hussan Hussan* in a melancholy note, so long so fiercely, that they can neither howle longer, nor for a moneths space recover their voyces.

1737 Bernard Picart *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World* VI. 130 The death of these *Mahometan* Prophets, or Heroes is still mourned for, as represented in this Print, where some are seen half naked, and dawbed over with Blood, in Memory of their tragical End, other black their Faces and loll out their Tongue, with convulsive Motions of the Body and rolling their Eyes; because these two Brothers, as the *Persian* Legend relates, suffered so much by Drought, that they became black, and their Tongues came out of their Mouths: In the Intervals of those pious Contortions, they call aloud with all their Might, *Hussein, Hassen, Hassen, Hussein*.

1763 [Robert Orme] *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan, from the Year MDCCLXV* iii. 197 It was the 14th of November, and the festival which commemorates the murder of the brothers *Hassen* and *Jassen* happen to fall out at this time.

1773 Edward Ives *A Voyage from England to India in the Year MDCCLXIV* I. ii. 28 The *Moors* likewise, or those native who are *Mahometans*, are not without their feasts and processions; and are extremely fond of them, as well as the *Gentoos*; particularly of their *Hassan Hassan*, in memory of the two sons of *Ali* by *Fatima* (*Mahomet's* daughter) being killed in one day fighting for the faith.

1790 William Francklin *Observations made on a Tour from Bengal to Persia, in the Years 1786-7* 247 At intervals the people strike their breasts with violence, weeping bitterly at the same time, and exclaiming, ah *Hossein!* ah *Hossein!* *Hief az Hossein!* Alas for *Hossein!*

1838 *The Calcutta Christian Observer* May 293 The Muharram and Charkh Pu'ja'. These two noisy and disgraceful festivals are past. The din and insolence of the former, and the cruelty and abomination of the latter, have ceased for a year. Our eyes are no longer assailed by the tortured Hindu, nor our ears dinned by the wild shriek of *Hassan Hussain*.

1876 *The Rockhampton Bulletin* 5 May 2/5 [T]he men in the crowd cried out the names of *Hassan* and *Hussien*, and beat their chests with such violence that the skin was in some instances broken.

1906 Samuel Graham Wilson *Mariam: A Romance of Persia* 38 The blood poured down on their faces, dyed with red their white robes, and made them a sight revolting and sickening, while their

wild, frenzied, unceasing cry of 'Shah Hussain!' 'Hasan Hussain,' like the shouts of the prophets of Baal, was deafening.

1962 Kushwant Singh *Ranjit Singh: Maharaja of the Punjab* 24 He also chose an appropriate day, the last of the month of Muharram. On this day Shia Muslims commemorate the martyrdom of the two grandsons of Prophet Mohammed by going out in procession through the streets and beating their breasts to the chant of 'Hassan, Hussain: Hassan, Hussain.'

2. *noun (count) Obsolete* the Muharram as practised in British India.

1682 in R.C. Temple ed. *The Indian Antiquary* (1917) Apr 79: 21 *December* 1682. Consultation in Masulipatam. The Governour of this towne Mauhmd: Alley Beague [Mahmûd 'Alî Bêg] haveing occasion for 4 Cases spiritts and two Cheeses for his master (being Jacey bocey time when they drinke much sherbett) and for him self two bales Sugar, sent to the Factory for same. The Councill therefore thinke it Convenient, and order that he be presented with the same being requesite to oblige him with such things at this season of the year, that our business may not meet with any inturruption and that in case an Interloper should come in he may not have any pretence to favour him or his business. [...] *Note.* - The copy of this Consultation now at Madras has 'Joicey boicy,' but that at the India Office has the spelling 'Jacey bocey.' Either gives us a new form for this much tortured expression.

1698 John Fryer *A New Account of East-India and Persia, in Eight Letters* iii. 108 About this time the *Moors* solemnize the Exequies of *Hosseen Gosseen*, a time of ten days Mourning for two Unfortunate Champions of theirs, who perished by Thirst in the Deserts, fight against the Christians: Wherefore every Corner of the Street is supplied with Jars of Water; and they run up and down like Furies in quest of these two Brethren, laying about with Swords, Clubs, and Staves, crying with that earnestness upon their Names, and dancing in such Antick Dances as resemble the *Pyrrhical* Saltation.

1698 John Fryer *A New Account of East-India and Persia, in Eight Letters* xii. 357 In *Shaw Abas* the Great's time, on the days of their Feasts and Jubilees, Gladiators were approved and licensed; but feeling afterwards the Evils that attended that Liberty, which was chiefly used in their *Hossy Gossy*, any private Grudge being then openly revenged; it never was forbid, but it passed into an Edict by the following King, That it should be lawful to kill any found with Naked Swords in that Solemnity.

1817 Thomas Stamford Raffles *The History of Java* II. 4 In the processions and rejoicings on religious festivals and other occasions, the Javans are free from that noisy clamour and uproar, which is usual with the Mahomedans of continental India. The ceremony of *hûsen hâsen*, which on the continent excites such a general noise throughout the country, here passes by almost without notice, and the processions of the Sepoys on this occasion, during the period of the British government in Java, excited the utmost astonishment among them[.]

1861 J. Talboys Wheeler *Madras in the Olden Time* II. 347 Under these promising circumstances the time came round for the Mussulman feast called 'Hossein Jossen,' and the 'Feast of Jamsee;' better known as the Mohurram. [incorrectly dated 1720 in Yule and Burnell (1886/1903)]

Hobson and Jobson

proper nouns Obsolete a pair of stock comic characters; the etymological inspiration of all lexical items presented below.

1828 *The Australian* (Sydney) 23 Dec 2 [W]hat must the public have endured since the day you adopted your insipid motto, stuck up your banner like 'Hobson Jobson,' to humbug, instead of 'Advance Australia.'

1844 J[ohn] M[awson] *A Few Local Sketches* 34 His first business on landing is to report himself at head-quarters, Bankshall. His next is to get into a *ticca palkee* and hasten to the office of Messrs. Hobson, Jobson and Co. Merchants and Agents.

1851 *The Daily News* 30 May (London) 6 The pauper hero, one *Sam Warren* (Mr. Rogers) is introduced in the capacity of shoeblack at an inn - bitterly complaining of the bad treatment of three cousins, *Hobson, Jobson, and Dobson*.

1855 Wesley Brooke *Julia: A Poem* The guests, who chiefly had invited been, / Were person whom he met ten times a day, / Friends from 'Change Alley - Hobson, Jobson, Green, / No better people, without much to say[.]

1855 [John K. Liefchild] *Cornwall: Its Mines and Miners* 244 A client, a friend of mine, whom I designate Hobson, invited his solicitor, Jobson, with his family, to a friendly visit at his country house.

1883 *Littell's Living Age* 604/1 This hope was fulfilled some days later, when Messrs. Hobson & Jobson wrote to say that, to the best of their belief, their late client had died a bachelor.

1888 *The Electrical Engineer* Mar 81/2 Thereupon the advertising, business notices, and correspondence columns of the trade journals resound with the clamors and contentions of Dobson, Hobson, Jobson and Wobson, and of their general agents, local agents, and advertising agents, until everybody is tired.

1889 *Waco Evening News* (Texas) 24 Jan 1/6 Mrs. Jobson: Why, my dear Mrs. Hobson, I am surprised to see you in this somber dress. I had not heard of any affliction in your family. / Mrs. Hobson: Oh, yes, indeed, Mr. Hobson died six weeks ago. / Mrs. Jobson: Why, how shocked I am. I never knew of it at all. I would have been so glad to attend his funeral, if I had known.

1890 'Great-uncle Decimus' *The Southern Argus* (Port Elliot, SA) 31 Jul 5/5 'A letter will always find me at Hobson and Jobson's, in Great Winchester street, you know,' he would say. Now Hobson and Jobson were an old firm of East India merchants, and Great-uncle Decimus had once been in their service in Bombay.

1893 *The Evening Herald* (Shenandoah, Pa.) 8 Jun 4/1 Primus: Jobson and Hobson are next door enemies. Yesterday Jobson's dog bit Hobson. / Secundus: What did Hobson do about it? / Primus: Went off to the Pasteur institute and found Jobson there having the dog inoculated.

1896 *The Morning Times* (Washington, DC) 26 Apr 1/3 Summer Comedy Season. [...] The cast is as follows: Doctor Flam...Charles T. Aldrich. Sam Scudder...Richard Quilter. Hobson...A. W. Mafflin. Jobson...Joe Dailey. Dobson...Edward Begely.

1897 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 28 Dec 4/8 Suffice it to say, that in the first scene we find two cooks under the names of Hobson and Jobson very cleverly - in make-up at least - personifying no less personages than Mr. Reid and Sir George Turner[.]

1901 *The St. Paul Globe* (Minnesota) 1 Apr 8/1 Hobson: I hear Jaggson is chasing around all over town with a new riddle. / Jobson: What is it? / Hobson: He says whisky is like the flowers that bloom in the spring because it makes the nose gay.

1910 *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate* (Parramatta, NSW) 2 Apr 2 'You travel for Jobson, Hobson, Slobson and Co., don't you?' said the K.C.

Hobson-Jobson

1. a. *proper nouns* *Obsolete* representations of the Arabic names **حسن** (*Hasan*) and **حُسين** (*Husayn*) as cried out during the Muharram. Also written as **Hobson Jobson**, and occasionally **Hobson and Jobson**.

1829 'John Dockery' *The Oriental Sporting Magazine From June 1828, to June 1833* (1873) I. 128/1 Well Roger, here we was at Soorat in the country called 'Hat of easy,' and it was just the time when the people was busy in junketting and rantipoling about with large paper boxes, all covered with gilding and painted paper like, in memory of two young gentlemen whose names was Hobson and Jobson, just as we do with Guy Fox. They were tiptop fishermen in their day, and dealt wholesale in mussuls, and so all of their friends are called Mussulmen; they lived a long while ago, and had a fite and was both killed, and because their Mother, who was called Mommid was a great profit to them all, they all agreed not to be Christians no more, and they prays different to us, and Muster Doolittle tould me that there was a natural difference beside betwixt us and them, for he sed as 'ow we white people had four skins and the blacks had not, which os what I never know'd afore, though to be sure when I've lost leather in riding, the new skin always came again, so I suppoze a YorkshIREmen has more than four.

1829 'John Dockery' *The Oriental Sporting Magazine From June 1828, to June 1833* (1873) I. 128/2 Them paper boxes are purty looking consarns, but then the folks makes sich a noise, firing and troompeting and shouting Hobson Jobson, Hobson Jobson, that when they brought 'em before the great gentleman's 'ouse where we put oop, he war quite angry, and ordered 'em to take 'em away, and *throw 'em into the water!* And very proper too, not to allow any such unchristian like doings.

[1835 *The New Sporting Magazine* May 168; repetition of preceding quotations]

1842 Francis Bellew *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australasia* xxxviii 81 As we approach the spot where the greatest concourse was assembled, my ears were saluted by alternate shouts of what I was subsequently informed were intended for the words 'Hussain, Hosein,' but uttered by the whole mass as sharply and completely as a well-delivered platoon fire, or the fitful escapes of steam from an engine. The English soldier, with the natural proneness of honest John Bull to effect a national assimilation wherever he can, calls these processions 'Hobson, Jobson;' and it is but fair to allow, that 'Hussain, Hosein,' when shouted forth in the manner described, sound exceedingly like 'Hobson, Jobson.'

1868 Shápurjí Edaljí *A Dictionary, Gujarátí and English* 2nd ed. 665 □□□□□□□□, m. A. An elegy, threnody, a funeral eulogium sung by Muhammadans during the Muharram in commemoration of the slaughtered Husn & Husyn. (Anglicè, Hobson-Jobson.)

1869 *The Mercury* (Hobart) 22 June 3/7 The Mahommedan festival of Hussein and Hussiem [sic] (Hobson and Jobson) is just over, and such strange sights I never saw - men dressed to represent all kinds of animals, and drinking arrack until they are dancing mad, is all I could make of it.

1879 J.W. 'Eastward Ho!' *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* 15 Apr 8/2 I asked our 'footman' what the 'garlands' were for. He replied that it is the 'Hobson Jobson festival, sir.' This is a curious custom, which I may describe for the edification of curious people and the musical societies in the old town. To commemorate this festival with its strange name, it requires a man, or a number of men, who can imitate the 'voices' of various animals, and these men with some rude form of music - which here means the most horrid discord - go about like mummers in England, and this is their song: / Hobson Jobson, one, two, three, / Yah-yah -- Yah-yah-yah; / Hobson Jobson, one, two, three.

1886 *The Argus* (Melbourne) 4 Sep 4 [T]he European soldiers in India, turning Hassan-Hossein into Hobson Jobson, have given that name to the festival itself, and to Tommy Atkins the whole business is ‘Hobson-Jobson.’

1889 Albert Barrère and Charles G. Leland *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant* I. 466/1 **Hobson-Jobson** (Anglo-Indian), a phrase peculiar to the British soldier, by whom it was invented. It is in fact an Anglo-Saxon version of the wailings of the Mahommedans, as they beat their breasts in the processions of the Moharram: *Ya Hasan, ya Hossain!* (Anglo-Indian Glossary).

1892 Edward E. Morris in *The Argus* (Melbourne) 2 Jan 5/3 Mr. Thomas Atkins, full private in one of Her (or His) Majesty’s regiments serving in India, when he heard the wailing of Mahommedans, as they beat their breasts and cried aloud, ‘Ya Hasan! Ya Hosein,’ not fully understanding the allusion, converted the names of Hosein and his brother into two truly British names for champions - Hobson Jobson.

1898 Edward E. Morris *Austral English* xv Amongst the Mohammedans in India there is a festival at which the names of ‘Hassan’ and ‘Hosein’ are frequently called out by devotees. Tommy Atkins, to whom the names were naught, converted them into ‘Hobson, Jobson.’

1898 *Literature* (New York) 19 Mar 314/2 The term ‘Hobson-Jobson’ itself may be called the classical instance of the law. In India there is a festival at which the sacred names of Hassan and Hosein are frequently uttered by Mahomedan devotees. The British soldier, wishing to increase the circle of his acquaintance without extending the limits of his vocabulary, called upon the sacred Hassan, Hosein under the familiar titles of ‘Hobson, Jobson.’

1909 Edmund C. Cox *My Thirty Years in India* 39 The crowds of Shiahhs continually shout, ‘Yah Hussan, Yah Hussein!’ at the top of their voices. Our predecessors in India, who never could get hold of the right end of the stick in vernacular terms, altered this religious cry to ‘Hobson-Jobson,’ and by this appellation the Mohurrum is familiarly known to British soldiers.

1976 Robert Burchfield *A Supplement to the OED, Vol. II*. 111-112 **Hobson-Jobson**, n. [...] **1**. Anglicized form of the repeated wailings and cries of Muslims as they beat their breasts in the *Muharram* procession; hence this festal ceremony. Also *transf.*

1977 Idries Shah *The Sufis* 219 The interminable religious chant in India, *Ya Hasan Ya Hussein* (O Hasan! O Hussein!) is accepted in English under the sound Hobson-Jobson, an attempt by British soldiers to reproduce the chant.

b. proper noun *Nonce* erroneously used as the name of ‘the grandson of the Prophet.’

1924 S.M. Edwardes *Crime in India* 12 People in England have no conception of the overwhelming religious antagonism which this festival can arouse, and are not much assisted to a better understanding by the London press. One of the leading newspapers in 1923 informed its readers that the *Bakri Id* was a festival in honour of ‘Bakri, a writer of devotional verse.’ A few weeks later an illustrated daily paper referred to the *Muharram* as ‘the Muhrami, a festival in honour of Hobson-Jobson, the grandson of the Prophet.

2. a. noun (count) (*chiefly British army in India and British merchant navy*) *Obsolete* specifically, the public processions and related religious activities practiced in India during the month of Muharram in honour of the Shia martyrs Hasan, Husayn and Ali; the Muharram as practised in India. These ceremonies were frequently described by English-speakers in very inaccurate terms, such as being as a feast (when, in fact, it is a time of fasting), as a festival, tamasha or public entertainment (when it is a religious ceremony), and as being part of the Hindu faith. Also called the **Hobson-Jobson feast** or **Hobson-Jobson festival** (which see).

1828 [? G.R. Gleig] *The Subaltern's Log-book* (1829) I. 142 Sometimes there was a Moorman's feast, called Hobson Jobson, at which there was a great uproar, and many natives dancing round a fire.

1830 [Nathaniel Ames] *A Mariner's Sketches* xix 167 Among the Lascars were a goodly number of Abdallahs, Abdoulrahmans, Mahmouds, Suleimans, &c. enough to furnish a dozen writers of oriental tales for their natural lifetimes. While the ship was lying in Callao, the Lascars celebrated that religious Hindoo festival, known by the name of 'Hobson-Jobson.'

1842 [see quotation at def. **1.a**]

1851 *Jamie Gordon; or, The Orphan* viii 85 'You must be moped to death in this dull place; and next week is Hobson Jobson. Can't you throw some dust any how, in the eyes of the cat, and meet me and Philip somewhere, and so get away to the Tamacha.'

1851 *Jamie Gordon; or, The Orphan* viii 85 'Well then, will you come if I can manage it for you - I mean to the Mohurrun. I will contrive to get somebody away for an hour or two; so you will be ready, won't you, when I come for you? you will know when to expect me. It will be when she is out of the way. The best time will be, on the last day of Hobson Jobson, about four or five o'clock, if I can manage it.'

1851 'Life in an Indiaman' *Chambers's Papers for the People* VII. 15 About a week before sighting our destined port, a holiday was allowed to the Lascars, in order that they might have an opportunity of duly celebrating a religious festival, known to us by the name *Obson Jobson*.

[repeated in **1855** *The Yankee Enterprise* 290; **1856** Moutlon Hampton *The Mirror of the World* 272; **1860** Henry E. Davenport *Rovings on Land and Sea* 272]

1867 Charles Raikes *The Englishman in India* 74 In celebrating the martyrdom of Hussun and Hossein, some of the Mahomedans of Hindostan (for there are two rival sects) urge themselves into fury. In their religious processions, they call frantically, yet with a sort of measured cadence, Hussun, Hossein - Hussun, Hossein! beating their breasts, and tearing their clothes. I remember once hearing an English soldier explain to a comrade: 'It's only them Moors at their Hobson and Jobson.'

1886 [see quotation at def. **1.a**]

1902 A. Goodrich-Freer *The Nineteenth Century and After* Apr 581 'To-morrow is the day you ought to have been at the docks,' said the Captain to our host. 'You would have seen the Hobson-Jobson.' 'And what is the Hobson-Jobson?' 'Well, it's some sort of a holiday that the Hindû sailors keep every year. This year it will be extra good, they say, because the *Jalunga* and the *Manora* and the *Mombassa* all being in docks at the same time, there'll be eight or nine hundred of them for the processions and dances, and so they are extra keen about it.'

1902 *The St. Paul's Globe* (Minnesota) 27 Apr 4/5 There is a day kept annually by Hindu sailors which is called Hobson Jobson. One of our sailors celebrated a Hobson Jobson day, and now it is a case of Hobson losing his Jobson.

1903 *Queensland Figaro* (Brisbane) 8 Apr 23/2 The dusky sons of Mohammed have been having a high old time down at the British India Company's wharves during the past few days. Beating of tom-toms, loud and shrill cries, and all the accompanying dances and antics of the sons of the Prophet. It was the great week of 'Hobson-Jobson,' as it is known out East, or the time of the Mohurram.

1906 William Crooke *Things Indian* 397 The Mohurram is almost entirely confined to the Shiah sect, but in some places Sunnis and even Hindus take part in it. The procession consists of *Tazeas* or representations of the tombs of the martyrs Hasan and Husain, the shouting of whose names in the course of the ceremony has given rise to the familiar phrase, 'Hobson-Jobson.'

1909 Edmund C. Cox *My Thirty Years in India* 39 The crowds of Shiahhs continually shout, 'Yah Hussan, Yah Hussein!' at the top of their voices. Our predecessors in India, who never could get hold of the right end of the stick in vernacular terms, altered this religious cry to 'Hobson-Jobson,' and by this appellation the Mohurrum is familiarly known to British soldiers.

1910 *Queanbeyan Age* (NSW) 9 Aug 4/5 During the past few days the Hindoo workers on the various vessels in the London docks have been celebrating their annual religious festival, commonly known in Western countries as 'Hobson-Jobson.'

1912 *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Encyclopedia* XIII. 397/1 **Hobson-Jobson**, a term given by English soldiers in India to the Moharram festival; being a corruption of the Shiite cry *Ya Hasan! Ya Hosain*. The name was adopted for the Anglo-Indian glossary by Yule and Burnell (1886); and Crooke prepared a new edition in 1903.

1931 *The Argus* (Melbourne) 7 Jul 5/1 [caption] A most unusual picture taken on the deck of the P. & O. liner Mooltan at Station Pier yesterday. Lascars with a drum rehearsing songs for a festival, known colloquially in the forecandle as that of 'Hobson Jobson.'

1976 [see quotation at def. **1.a**]

b. noun (count) *Obsolete* generally, any Indian religious ceremony or observance held in public.

1860 *The Leisure Hour* (London) 248/2 But our serang (boatswain) tells me that there is a 'hobsonjobson' (great merry-making) going on on shore this afternoon, when there is to be a 'tum-tum,' and a 'putelleh-nautch,' which I must witness, if possible, leaving the description of it till some future time.

1877 J.E. Muddock 'The Luck of Logie' *The Northern Warder and Bi-weekly Courier and Argus* (Scotland) 8 Jun 7/3 It was highly important to the success of his venture that he should win her favour and love. While he was puzzling his brains as to how he was to accomplish this a 'Hobson Jobson,' or religious festival came round, known as the 'Feast of Flowers.' It would last eight or nine days, and during the time a great deal of ordinary restrictions which surrounded ladies were thrown off, and the banks of the Ganges presented an extraordinary and animated scene, as old and young, males and females, flocked down in thousands to bathe in the sacred waters, and perform 'Poojah.'

1886 Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell *Hobson-Jobson* 319 **Hobson-Jobson**, *s.* A native festal excitement; a *tamāsha* (see **tumasha**); but especially the Moharram ceremonies.

1895 A. Wallace *Popular Sayings Dissected* 133 Again, we have the, at first sight, inexplicable expression **Hobson-Jobson** for a festal excitement but which is merely an Anglo-Saxon version of the words used by Mohammedans as they beat their breasts in the procession of the Moharram and cry, *Ya Hassan! Ya Hosain!*

1901 Thomas Davidson ed. *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary* 434-435 **Hobson-jobson**, hob'son-job'son, *n.* a native festal excitement, esp. the Moharram ceremonies. [A corr. of the wailing 'Yā Hasan! Yā Hosain!' a typical phrase of Anglo-Indian argot, hence adopted as a concise alternative title for Yule and Burnell's admirable *Glossary of Anglo-Indian Colloquial Words and Phrases* (Lond. 1886).]

1910 *The Century Dictionary And Cyclopeda* XI 592 **hobson-jobson** (hob'son-job'son), *n.* [An Anglo-Indian corruption of the cry *Ya Hasan! Ya Hosain!* of the "Mohammedans as they beat their breasts in the procession of the Moharram." *Yule and Burnell.*] In India, a native festal excitement; especially the Moharram ceremonies. *Yule and Burnell.*

[erroneously defined: **1983** E.M. Kirkpatrick ed. *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary* 596 **Hobson-jobson**, *hob'son-job'son*, *n.* festal excitement, esp. at the Moharram ceremonies.]

c. noun (count) Rare or Nonce, Obsolete specifically, a certain new year ceremony held in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

1870 *The London Illustrated News* 11 Jun 614/1 The subject of one Illustration seems to need rather more explanation than is afforded in our notes. 'Hobson Jobson' is apparently the English nickname given at Colombo to a grotesque festival performance of the town sweeps, exhibited at the Cinghalese feast of the New Year, which falls on April 11.

d. noun (count) Rare, Obsolete any festival, fete or carnival.

1897 *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* (Grafton, NSW) 21 Sept 4/6 The Charity Carnival is in full blast, but Sydney people - except, of course, those who take part in such affairs - seem to be getting a trifle tired of these Hobson Jobsons in the name of benevolence.

1897 *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* (Grafton, NSW) 21 Dec 4/4 The Premier, speaking at one of the Hobson-Jobsons of a Sydney school, has been, mentally glancing back down the dim vistas of time. He advised the children whom he addressed to lay hold of some noble ambition, and to work and live up to it.

3. a. proper noun used as the name of Yule and Burnell's dictionary; hence, the dictionary itself.

1886 Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell [title] *Hobson-Jobson: Being A Glossary of Anglo-Indian Colloquial Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms; Etymological, Historical, Geographical, and Discursive.*

1886 Rudyard Kipling in Thomas Pinney ed. *Kipling's India: Uncollected Sketches 1884-88* 160 Every one in the East - the book ranges from Constantinople to Japan - should possess himself of *Hobson-Jobson* and once possessed of it should apply himself diligently thereto.

1887 George Birdwood in *The Asiatic Quarterly Review* clxiv. 149 We do not say that even these comprehensive groups embrace every entry in the columns of 'Hobson-Jobson,' but they at least cover the bulk of them.

1892 Edward E. Morris in *The Argus* (Melbourne) 2 Jan 5/3 The *Slang Dictionary* says that 'the cheese' means 'anything good, first rate in quality, pleasant, advantageous,' but Hobson-Jobson tells us that it is Persian for 'the thing.'

1903 G.W. Forrest *Cities of India* 26 Sir Henry Yule, in that most delightful work *Hobson-Jobson*, writes as follows about the word Gymkhana[.]

1924 *Geraldton Guardian* (WA) 8 Nov 1/2 Few book buyers again would guess that 'Hobson Jobson' (by Dr. Burnell and Colonel Yule) was the amusing title of a very weighty and efficient glossary of Anglo-Indian words and phrases.

1933 Earnest Weekley *Words and Names* 10 Opening up that admirable book *Hobson-Jobson*, we find that *Dumdum*, famous for the expanding bullet, is the name of an arsenal near Calcutta[.]

1954 G. Subba Rao *Indian Words in English* 10 Commenting on these *Hobson-Jobson* remarks: 'Nothing is harder to find[.]'

1976 Robert Burchfield *A Supplement to the OED, Vol. II.* 111-112 **Hobson-Jobson**, *n.* [...] **2. a.** Used as the title of a famous collection of Anglo-Indian words.

1984 Bosworth et al. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* 937/2 Kulottunga III still ruled over the eastern Deccan, see *Hobson-Jobson*, 526[.]

1993 Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable *A History of the English Language* 4th ed. 343 The only dictionary of Indian English is now dated, Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, rev. William Crooke (London, 1903).

2001 Robert Silverberg in *Asimov's Science Fiction* Dec 4 He was wandering through mine one day some three or four decades ago when suddenly he cried out, 'By Jove! You have a *Hobson-Jobson!*'

2008 Sam Jordison *The Guardian: Culture > Books > Books Blog* 23 Sept The worst offence in this regard is an insistence on using dialogue culled from *Hobson-Jobson*. No doubt the vocabulary is authentic, but many passages such as the following smell too much of the lamp, and are baffling.

2009 Pingali Sailaja *Indian English* 80 Some examples from *Hobson-Jobson* are swamy house 'temple to an idol' and competition-wallah 'member of the civil service who entered it by the competitive system'.

2011 Mary Ellis Gibson *Anglophone Poetry in Colonial India, 1780-1913* 207 The Champá is a highly ornamental and sacred tree [...] a kind of magnolia, 'whose odorous yellow blossoms are much prized by Hindus, offered at shrines, and rubbed on the body at marriages,' according to *Hobson-Jobson*.

b. proper noun (with definite article).

1959 G.C. Jhala and N.A. Gore *Sārdha-Śatābdī Special Volume of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay* Jun 67 Bernier's reference (c.A.D. 1660) to *tāmbūla* may be added to the references from the *Hobson-Jobson*.

1960 D.C. Sircar *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India* 236 According to the *Hobson-Jobson* by Henry Yule[.]

1971 D.C. Sircar *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India* 2nd ed. 223 Yule and Burnell, in the *Hobson-Jobson*, s.v. *Saugor, Saugor Island*, observe, 'It is said once to have been populous[.]'

1998 Revathi Krishnaswamy *Effeminism: The Economy of Colonial Desire* 25 Sinha quotes *The Hobson-Jobson*, a glossary of words and phrases used by the British in India compiled in the 1880s, to show that in the popular imagination the word *babu* had come to designate a 'native clerk who writes in English[.]'

2006 Poonam Trivedi in Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Batholomeusz ed. *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance* 27 Thus, as the *Hobson Jobson* concedes, 'it is not easy ... to find a truly native name for the whole country which we call India[.]'

2011 Sunil Seth *The Big Bookshelf: Sunil Seth in Conversation with 30 Famous Writers* 110 Many of the characters speak a variety of tongues in *Sea of Poppies* - linguistically it is fascinating for the range of patois it employs. For instance, there is a veritable mining of Anglo-Indian dictionaries like the *Hobson-Jobson* for the Anglo-Indian speech of the British in nineteenth-century India.

c. proper noun erroneously used as the surname of the supposed writer of Yule and Burnell's dictionary.

1996 Stephen Arata *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Identity and Empire* 221 The growth of this sensibility was reflected in the publication of the first Anglo-Indian dictionaries (Hobson-Jobson's and G.C. Gilbert's) in 1886.

2006 Nila Shah and Ameer Sinroja *English in India: Issues and Approaches* 119 Hobson-Jobson's Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words is another major attempt in compiling words[.]

2010 Margaret Deefholts and Susan Deefholts *Women of Anglo-India: Tales and Memoirs* 228 Hobson-Jobson's Anglo-Indian Dictionary conjectures that this 'was a favourite dish at the table of the skippers of 'country' ships[.]'

4. a. *noun (uncount)* in popular linguistics, the assimilation of borrowed lexis, either partial or whole, to word forms of the borrowing language; hence, vocabulary that has been altered in this way. See definition **8**, and **11.b**.

1886 Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell *Hobson-Jobson* 254/2 **Dumbcow**, v., and **Dumbcowed**, participle. To brow-beat, to cow; and cowed, brow-beaten, set-down. This is a capital specimen of Anglo-Indian dialect. *Dam khānā*, 'to eat one's breath,' is a Hind. idiom for 'to be silent.' Hobson-Jobson converts this into a transitive verb, to *damkhāo*, and both spelling and meaning being affected by English suggestions of sound, this comes in Anglo-Indian use to imply *cowing* and *silencing*.

1886 Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell *Hobson-Jobson* 265/2 **Falaun**, s. [...] gradually, by a process of Hobson-Jobson, this was turned into **Forlorn**.

1886 Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell *Hobson-Jobson* 339/1 **Jackass Copal** [...] This is a trade name, and is a capital specimen of *Hobson-Jobson*. It is, according to Sir R. Burton, a corruption of *chakāzi*.

1886 Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell *Hobson-Jobson* 732/2 **Urz** [...] This is used in a very barbarous form of Hobson-Jobson below.

1892 Edward E. Morris in *The Argus* (Melbourne) 2 Jan 5/3 [I]t is not humorous like Sir Roger Dowlas, name [sic] borrowed by Foote from a sailor's corruption of Surajah Dolah, and here we are back in the land of Hobson-Jobson. In that land champagne is called simkin, being a native servant's attempt to pronounce the name of the king of wines.

1899 *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London) 29 Dec At the last meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society, Colonel Temple gave some amusing instances of what is called 'Hobson-Jobson,' or corruptions of Hindustani names by Europeans. Most of these were taken from the logs of master mariners of the last century, who Anglicized the vernacular with some startling results. Thus Calcutta was transmogrified into Golgotha, Jaganath or Juggernaut into Jon-Gurnet, Masulipatam into the comforting word Mesopotamia, and (strange to say!) Sonipur into 'Summerwarren.'

1909 *The Argus* (Melbourne) 20 Feb 6/4 Learned persons, especially those who know all about 'Volksetymologie,' whether under that imposing name, or more familiarly as 'Hobson-Jobson,' are advised to pass on to the next question.

1913 *Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record* (Victoria) 24 Jan 5 Then, I don't think that there is any heavy jocularly in 'sparrow grass' for 'asparagus,' or in 'Alfred David' for 'affidavit.' Both these forms are clear cases of 'Hobson-Jobson,' and Hobson-Jobson means turning syllables that you don't understand into syllables that you do understand.

1918 A.G. Ellis in *The Indian Antiquary* Sept 244/1 With reference to the words quoted by Sir Richard Temple (*ante*, p. 196) from Mr. Edmund Candler's article in the (London) *Observer* of

12th May 1918, I may give here some further examples of Hobson-Jobson from an article in the *Daily Telegraph* of 14th March 1916 by the same writer.

1937 Eric Partridge *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* 52/2 **Bill Harris**. Bilharziasis (or -osis): Australian military: late 1914-16. By 'Hobson-Jobson'.

1938 Isaac Goldberg *The Wonder of Words* 282 The unknown is explained by the known; it is made, in the case of sounds, to sound like the known. In the matter of foreign names and their transformation on the popular tongue, the habit has received a name that is itself evidence of the habit. It is called *Hobson-Jobson*. This is one of the numerous transcriptions for the verbal manner in which the British soldiers in India interpreted the ritual wailings of the Mahommedans, who at the procession of the Moharram beat their breasts and cried, 'Ya Hasan!'

1958 Noah Jonathan Jacobs *Naming-day in Eden* 130 The general interplay of sounds whereby unfamiliar words are rendered meaningful by being melted into familiar ones, even though they may offend our etymological sensibilities, is called Hobson-Jobson. This name is a mishearing of *Ja Hasan, Ja Hasan*, the cry of the Mohammedans in religious procession, as heard by the English ear, and although now only used in a technical sense, is itself a delightful example of many such words which have been assimilated to the English vocabulary.

1961 Philip Babcock Gove ed. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* **hob•son-job•son** \:häbsen:jäbseən\ *n* -s *usu cap H&J* [...] assimilation of the sounds of a word or words foreign to a language into the sounds of a word or words coined or already existent in the language (as Spanish *cucaracha* has become English *cockroach* or as English *riding coat* has become French *redingote*).

1970 Eric Partridge *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English: Supplement* 7th ed. 1058/1 **Cherry Ripe**. Centuripe, in Sicily: Army: 1944-5. By the process of 'Hobson-Jobson'.

1983 E.M. Kirkpatrick ed. *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary* 596 **Hobson-jobson**, *hob'son-job'son, n.* [...] the modification of names and words introduced from foreign languages, which the popular ear assimilates to already familiar sound, as in the case of the word Hobson-Jobson itself. [Ar 'Yā Hasan! Yā Hosain!'] a typical phrase of Anglo-Indian argot at the time adopted as an alternative title for Yule and Burnell's admirable *Glossary of Anglo-Indian Colloquial Words and Phrases* (1886).]

1977 Idries Shah *The Sufis* 219 The process by means of which a foreign word or phrase becomes adopted into another language is well established in literature and custom. There are numerous examples, and the system has even been named, being catalogued in dictionaries as Hobson-Jobson.

1983 Stuart Berg Flexner and Leonore Crary Hauck eds. *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* 2nd ed. 909 **Hobson-Jobson** [...] the alteration of a word or phrase borrowed from a foreign language to accord more closely with the phonological and lexical patterns of the borrowing language, as in English *hoosegow* from Spanish *juzgado*. [1625-35; Anglo-Indian rendering of Ar *yā Husan, yā Husayn* lament uttered during ta'ziyah; an example of such an alteration]

2003 Stewart Edelstein *Dubious Doublets* 49 'Chaise lounge' is an example of a type of borrowing from a foreign language known as Hobson-Jobson.

2009 Vijay Mishra 'Rushdie-Wushdie: Salman Rushdie's Hobson-Jobson' *New Literary History*, 40 390 I now need to theorize, as best I can in the limited space at my disposal, Rushdie's own *Hobson-Jobson* as *Rushdie-Wushdie* with a view to defining a nonbinary, a 'segmentary,' 'poetics' or 'grammar' of Rushdie's language use in which the self-other is constitutive of, and arises out of, continuities and interconnections with the colonial past and is not a simple matter of radical otherness or defiant difference.

- b. *noun (uncount)* Rare alteration or corruption of lexis; vocabulary altered by misunderstanding or misanalysis.

1893 R.C. Temple in *The Indian Antiquary* Apr 112/2 But a writer has at last been found, who can, in a publication professedly intended for Oriental readers, perpetrate, by what the late Sir Henry Yule has styled 'the process of Hobson-Jobson,' the astounding error of Musselwoman.

1923 Arthur Machen *The House of Souls* 119 'The 'word,' if I may so speak, is accidentally the same in each case, but the 'meaning' is utterly different. It is flagrant 'Hobson Jobson' to confuse the two, or rather, it is as if one supposed that Juggernaut and the Argonauts had something to do etymologically with one another.'

1983 *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* 697 **hobson-jobson** [...] *n.* FOLK ETYMOLOGY (transformation of words to produce more familiar forms)[.]

5. *noun (uncount)* Anglo-Indian English characterised by a great deal of loanwords from native languages; Anglo-Indian English of the type found in, or thought to be recorded in, *Hobson-Jobson*; Anglo-Indian loanwords. Also, a purported vernacular language based on Indian loanwords used by Anglo-Indians. See definition 9.

1893 *The Morning Bulletin* 7 Jul (Rockhampton, Qld) 3 It cannot be said that the prosaic 'Hobson-Jobson' is familiar to English readers; but most people know, since the publication of Colonel Yule's interesting book, that it signifies a medley of Oriental and European words, used in especial by our soldiers.

1924 Chase Salmon Osborne *Madagascar: Land of the Man-eating Tree* 39 There was for centuries a close touch between Madagascar and Zanzibar in slave trading. This gave occasion for Swahili to influence the tongues spoken as it has impressed the entire east coast of Africa, in some such manner as pidgin English has corrupted all of the China coast, hobson-jobson the Indian littoral and chinook the Great Lake, Hudson Bay and north and west regions of North America.

1954 Mario A. Pei and Frank Gaynor *A Dictionary of Linguistics* 14 **Anglo-Indian:** A vernacular developed by British soldiers, officials and civilians stationed or residing in India. (Also called *Hobson-Jobson*.)

1955 Mario A. Pei *The World's Chief Languages* (4th ed.) 80 **ANGLO-INDIAN (HOBSON-JOBSON).** In the course of their long occupation of British India, British soldiers, officials and residents have developed a series of words and expressions, mostly drawn from the native languages and dialects, a few of which have found their way into the English of other lands[.]

1957 'Myra Buttle' *The Sweeniad* 46 Neither liberal nor effete, / We're the cultural élite, / The issue of the Pulpit by the City. / 'Reintroduce the past' / Is the motto of our caste / That's a cross between the Brahmin and the Chitty.¹ | [Footnote: ¹ Hobson-Jobson for *Chettiar*, the Hindu money-lending caste.]

1965 Gary Jennings *Personalities of Language* 194 The English colonials in India developed a jargon called 'Hobson-Jobson.'

1967 Mario A. Pei *Talking Your Way Around the World* 233 Anglo-Indian Pidgin is also known as Hobson-Jobson.

1975 *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary* 57 **Anglo-Indian** [...] 3. The vocabulary, consisting of Anglicized Hindi or other Indian words, developed by British subjects in civil and military service in India: also called *Hobson-Jobson*.

2009 Vijay Mishra 'Rushdie-Wushdie: Salman Rushdie's Hobson-Jobson' *New Literary History*, 40 391 If, after Colonel Yule, we were to treat this as an instance of Rushdie's hobson-jobson (hereafter in regular font and as a common noun), what would its entry in the lexicon look like?

2009 Vijay Mishra 'Rushdie-Wushdie: Salman Rushdie's Hobson-Jobson' *New Literary History*, 40 393 As a social semiotic, all four glossed words demonstrate aspects of how hobson-jobson works its way into Rushdie's creative lexicon.

6. a. *noun (count)* in popular linguistics, a loanword assimilated in the manner of 'Hobson-Jobson'; a loanword that has been 'corrupted' in the borrowing language; a **Hobson-Jobsonism** (definition 1).

1899 R.C. Temple in *The Indian Antiquary* June 161/2 CARAFT. HERE is a delicious *Hobson-Jobson* from that veritable well of curious Anglo-Indianisms, the *Madras Manual of Administration*, Vol, III.

1918 R.C. Temple in *The Indian Antiquary* July 196/1 The war has naturally brought about a new crop of Hobson-Jobsons and corruptions of English and European languages which are beginning to be reported and are worth collecting from the commencement for the sake of future students of philology.

1925 R.C. Temple in *The Indian Antiquary* Nov 220/2 It is quite clear that the creation of 'Hobson-Jobsons' is an art still very much alive.

1929 H.G. Rawlinson ed. *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1698* 79 The derivation of Bombay from Port. *Bom-bahia*, 'Good Bay', is an excellent example of the 'Hobson-Jobsons' which have nowhere played such havoc as among place-names of this locality.

1959 Thomas Mabry Cranfill *Rich's Farewell to Military Profession, 1581* 285 It's original name was Ligorno, whence the Hobson-Jobson Leghorn.

1970 Eric Partridge *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English: Supplement* 7th ed. 1404/1 **silver plate!** Please: jocular: since ca. 1916. A 'Hobson-Jobson' of French *s'il vous plaît*.

1998 W. Cowan and J. Rakušan *Source Book for Linguistics* 179 A hobson-jobson is similar to a mondegreen, except that the earlier word or phrase is from a foreign language, and is taken into the accepting language not according to the meaning but according to the sound that it has in the foreign language.

b. *noun (count)* Rare any Indian loanword in Anglo-Indian English; an Anglo-Indianism.

1903 William Crooke ed. *Hobson-Jobson* ii. Evidently the court has complained of a growing use of 'Hobson-Jobsons.'

1991 Ivor Lewis *Sahibs, Nabobs and Boxwallahs* 2 [A]s log as a quick native wit and a feeling for the comedy always lurking below the surface of words are with us we will not lack a supply of 'Hobson-Jobsons' for our verbal 'brass knockers.'

2009 Vijay Mishra 'Rushdie-Wushdie: Salman Rushdie's Hobson-Jobson' *New Literary History*, 40 389 In this regard it may be said that built into these *hobson-jobsons* is a contemptuous attitude, an ironic belittling of the values contained in the original vernacular words.

7. *noun (uncount)* *Nonce* a medley. See definition 10.

1996 Pico Iyer *Tropical Classical: Essay from Several Directions* 194 [story title] Bombay: Hobson-Jobson on the streets.

8. *adjective* in popular linguistics, of or relating to the linguistic process of the assimilation of borrowed lexis. See definition 4, and 11.b.

1886 Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell *Hobson-Jobson* 732/2 **Upper Roger**. This happy example of the Hobson-Jobson dialect occurs in a letter dated 1755, from Capt. Jackson at Syrian in Burma, which is given in Dalrymple's *Oriental Repertory*, i. 192.

1886 Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell *Hobson-Jobson* 208/1 **Cow-itch**, n. [...] The name is doubtless the Hind. *kewānch* (Skt. *kapikachchhu*) modified in Hobson-Jobson fashion, by the 'striving after meaning.'

1903 William Crooke ed. *Hobson-Jobson* 849/2 **SNOW RUPEE**, s. A term in use in S. India, which is an excellent example of a corruption of the 'Hobson-Jobson' type. It is an Anglo-Indian corruption of the Tel. *tsanauvu*, 'authority, currency.'

1903 William Crooke ed. *Hobson-Jobson* 537/2 The following is in the true **Hobson-Jobson** manner: 1859.—"This term **Marhatta** or **Mârhutta**, is derived from the mode of warfare adopted by these men. *Mar* means to strike, and *hutna*, to get out of the way, i.e. those who struck a blow suddenly and at once retreated out of harm's way." —H. Dundas Robertson, *District Duties during the Revolt in 1857*, p. 104, note.

1937 Eric Partridge *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* 297/2 *Fortescue*, recorded in 1882 in the Rev. J.E. Tenison-Woods's *Fish of New South Wales*, is a Hobson-Jobson adaptation of *forty-skewer*.

1991 Indira Chowdhry Sengupta 'A supplement of Indian English' in *The Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary of Current English* 1451/1 **Hobson-Jobson** *adj* of the process by which Indian words were adopted in English by making considerable changes to their original form: *The word 'Blighty' is really a Hobson-Jobson version of the Hindi word 'vilayati'*.

2010 William Flesch *The Facts on File Companion to British Poetry: 19th Century* 62 Those participles announce their full blast after the two hobson-jobson words (as they are called), 'helter-skelter / hurry-scurry[.]'

9. *adjective* *Uncommon* of or relating to colloquial Anglo-Indian English with a great deal of borrowings from native languages. See definition 5.

1990 Ronald Hyam *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* 115 *Bibi* is a Hindustani word meaning 'high-class woman', which in Hobson-Jobson 'Anglo-Indian' parlance came to mean native mistress.

1995 Salman Rushdie *The Moor's Last Sigh* 98 'Those people don't belong here any more than we do, but at least we can go home. One day India will turn against them, too, and they'll have to sink or swim.' No, no, D'Aeth demurred, here in the South there was little communal trouble of that sort, but she rounded on him ferociously. They were *outcasts*, she shouted, these peculiar Christians with their unrecognisable hobson-jobson services, not to mention these dying-out Jews[.]

2008 *Outlook* (New Delhi) 26 May 71/2 A good portion of this novel is in a Hobson-Jobson type of English?

2011 *Quadrivial Quandary* 23 Aug When on leave one sultry afternoon I urged my captivating Mumbai masseuse, nubile 'Lady Mondegreen', to expedite the removal of her sheer silk sarong, she surprised me by refusing point blank, in fluent Hobson Jobson Billingsgate replying 'Not bloody likely - just bugger off back to dear old Blighty'.

10. *adjective Nonce* mixed up; confused. See definition 7.

1920 A.E. Dingle *Gold out of Celebes* 194 'I suppose it's the poison of those ants that made us imagine creepy things.' 'By Godfrey, I don't imagine anything!' cried Barry, and he tore down his curtains and leaped to the floor. 'I'm going to dress and put an end to this Hobson-Jobson flummery!'

11. a. *verb (transitive) Nonce* to alter (an idea) by assimilation to pre-existing patterns.

1950 John W. Campbell, Jr. in *Astounding Science Fiction* June 5/2 But the man who has previously worked in the field of the mind immediately hobson-jobson's the new ideas, however inappropriately, into his previous pattern of thought.

b. *verb (transitive) Uncommon* in popular linguistics, to alter (borrowed lexis) by assimilation to word patterns of the borrowing language. See definition 4.

1970 Eric Partridge *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English: Supplement* 7th ed. 1298/2 'Hobson-Jobsoned' by the Army in 1940-1.

1978 Willard R. Espy *O Thou Improper, Thou Uncommon Noun* 56 'The English simply hobson-jobsoned Greek to grig, a kind of cricket, because the two words sound alike.'

1982 Willard R. Espy *A Children's Almanac of Words at Play* 65 The expression first came into English as 'curry Favel,' and was soon hobson-jobsoned into 'curry favor.'

2002 *The Hindu* (Madras) 3 Nov Many words escaped being Hobson-Jobsoned and were assimilated in their original form.

2003 William S. Haubrich *Medical Meanings: A Glossary of Word Origins* 109/2 A common term for the disease is **shingles**, a term hobson-jobsoned from the Latin *cingulum*, 'a girdle.'

2011 *Quadrivial Quandary* 23 Aug The nubile young ticket clerk, wrapped in a traditional sarong, offered to expedite my journey to Beijing by booking a flight through Singapura; later, studying my ticket for the 'Singapore to Peking' red-eye, I realized I had been thoroughly hobson jobsoned.

Hobson-Jobsonise

verb (transitive) in popular linguistics, to alter (borrowed lexis) by assimilation to word patterns of the borrowing language. Hence, **Hobson-Jobsoning** and **Hobson-Jobsonisation**.

1908 George Birdwood 'The derivation of "London",' *The Anthanaeum* 14 Mar 322/2 The Roman transliteration of the contemporary British name of London is unquestionably correct. But it is evident from the writings of Xenophon and Ammianus Marcellinus that the Greeks and Romans of their respective heydeys lived among the Persians, and Syrians, and Egyptians very much as we have lived for now 300 years in India; and in Athenaeus alone there is proof enough that the Greeks, and in Pliny the Romans also, had already begun to Hobson-Jobsonize, as we have always done, the Oriental and other alien names of places, persons, and things, both "ad delectionem" and "ad nauseam"; only they had no Sir Henry Yule to collect all these etymological freaks into a comprehensive and systematic "Glossary."

1986 Eric Partridge *A Dictionary of Catch Phrases* 314 **mox nix**. It makes no difference; it doesn't matter; it's a trifle: US, orig. and mostly the post-WW2 Army in Germany, thence, c.

1950, not negligibly, among civilians. A Hobson-Jobsoning of Ger. *es macht nichts*, itself prob from Fr. *ça ne fait rien*.

1991 Ivor Lewis *Sahibs, Nabobs and Boxwallahs* 48/2 **Allahabad** [17C.] Place-name given in the time of Akbar to the ancient city of Prayag. Hobson-Jobsonized by English soldiers into *Isle o' Bats*.

1991 Ivor Lewis *Sahibs, Nabobs and Boxwallahs* 154/2 **Lilac** [...] in Scotland Hobson-Jobsonised as 'Lily-oak.'

1995 Nirad C. Chaudhuri 'A historical perspective' in Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell *Hobson-Jobson* ix. It is really the Hobson-Jobsonization of the common north Indian exclamation – Bāp-ré Bāp! (Oh father!) uttered by Bengalis and Hindustanis in dismay or distress.

Hobson-Jobsonism

1. *noun (count) Uncommon* in popular linguistics, an individual loanword assimilated in the manner of 'Hobson-Jobson'; (loosely) any loanword assimilated to English phonetic and orthographic patterns; also, any Indian loanword in Anglo-Indian English; an Anglo-Indianism; a **Hobson-Jobson** (definition 6).

1908 George Birdwood in *The Anthanaeum* 14 May 322/3 Up to my thirty-sixth year I lived half my life in the many-languaged city of Bombay, where I was able to observe the rise and fall of numberless Hobson-Jobsonisms that never became current in literature, and therefore found no place in Sir Henry Yule's glorious 'Glossary.'

1934 R.C. Goffin *S.P.E. Tract No. 41* 21 Secondly, there are words ('Hobson-Jobsonisms') where the original form has been more or less modified in the process of Anglicization. Examples: blighty, bungalow, chit, godown, gymkhana, nabob, tank. These, too, are generally recognised as English.

1991 Ivor Lewis *Sahibs, Nabobs and Boxwallahs* 70/2 **Brandy-coortee, -coatee** [18C. H/P. *bārān*, 'rain' + *kurtī*, 'jacket'.] *Hobson-Jobsonism*: a rain-coat.

2002 *The Hindu* (Madras) 3 Nov Hobson-Jobsonisms account for most of the lexical material borrowed into English from the languages of India.

2009 Susan Purcell *English Today* 25(1) 61/1 Thus, the expression 'Hobson-Jobson' is itself a Hobson-Jobsonism[.]

- b. *noun (uncount) Uncommon* in popular linguistics, the assimilation of borrowed lexis to word forms of the borrowing language.

1991 Ivor Lewis *Sahibs, Nabobs and Boxwallahs* 126/2 Hence Hobson-Jobsonism = folk etymology.

2009 Bryan A. Garner *Garner's Modern American Usage* 898/2 **Hobson-Jobsonism**. The modification of a foreign word or phrase to fit the sound-system of the borrowing language.

2009 Susan Purcell *English Today* 25(1) 62/2 'Hobson-Jobson' is one term for the process, or 'law.' Another is folk etymology, defined in the OED as 'usually the popular perversion of the form of words in order to render it apparently significant.'

2009 Susan Purcell *English Today* 25(1) 64/2 John W. Campbell, editor of the influential sci-fi magazine *Astounding Science Fiction*, wrote an editorial in 1950, claiming that the scientific world was rife with Hobson-Jobsonism[.]

2. *noun (uncount) Nonce* the mapping of one idea onto the pattern of another pre-existing idea.

1950 John W. Campbell, Jr. *Astounding Science Fiction* June 5/1 [title] Intellectual Hobson-Jobsonism.

1950 John W. Campbell, Jr. *Astounding Science Fiction* June 5/1 The realm of nuclear physics, in particular, is apt to be rife with hobson-Jobsonism; the electron-nucleus system is thought of like a miniature solar system although the idea is sheerest hobson-jobsonism.

1950 John W. Campbell, Jr. *Astounding Science Fiction* June 106/2 More important, the next time you are trying to explain your speciality to someone in another line, look for that intellectual hobson-jobsonism. You'll probably find it.

Hobson-Jobson feast / festival

1. *noun (count) Obsolete* the Muharram as practised in British India.

1851 'Life in an Indiaman' *Chambers's Papers for the People* VII. 15 I gathered from some of the Lascars afterwards that each man had to pass through some kind of sword ordeal, the exact nature of which I could not precisely comprehend; but it appeared to me that it was resorted to in order to discover whether any of them had proved unmindful of their religious duties since the last Obson Jobson festival.

1859-60 W.H. Bayley *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* Oct-Mar 243 The list should also contain the correct spelling of the Muhammadan and Hindú feast days. I have seen extraordinary renderings in some official orders as to Native Holidays, such as 'Sooberat' for 'Shab-i-barát,' 'Buckreed' for 'Bagr íd,' 'Audy Pundyga for 'Adi pandagai.' The Madras Constables know the Muharram as the 'Hobson Jobson Feast!' from Hasan and Husain, the martyrs celebrated therein.

1860 *The Church Missionary Juvenile Instructor* IX. 115 In the month of October the inhabitants of Moulmein celebrate a religious festival, which is known to English sailors by the strange name of the 'Hobson Jobson Feast.' The occasion is attended with great rejoicings.

1879 J.W. 'Eastward Ho!' *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* 15 Apr 8/2 I asked our 'footman' what the 'garlands' were for. He replied that it is the 'Hobson Jobson festival, sir.' This is a curious custom, which I may describe for the edification of curious people and the musical societies in the old town. To commemorate this festival with its strange name, it requires a man, or a number of men, who can imitate the 'voices' of various animals, and these men with some rude form of music - which here means the most horrid discord - go about like mummers in England, and this is their song: / Hobson Jobson, one, two, three, / Yah-yah -- Yah-yah-yah; / Hobson Jobson, one, two, three.

1902 A. Goodrich-Freer *The Nineteenth Century and After* Apr. 589 The further development which has led up to the 'Hobson-Jobson' festival is of such comparatively modern origin that Gibbon makes no mention of it, and it is in the pages of Count Gobinaeu that we find the story of the *tazyá* or Passion play already part of the life of the people.

law of Hobson-Jobson

noun (*uncount*) in popular linguistics, a purported linguistic ‘law’ in which borrowed lexis is assimilated to word patterns of the borrowing language.

[1891 *The Argus* (Melbourne) 15 Dec 9/5 During the afternoon will be given two more short lectures, one at 3 o’clock by Professor Morris, in the biological school, entitled ‘Hobson-Jobson: A Law of Language[.]’]

1898 Edward E. Morris *Austral English* xv In many places in the Dictionary, I find I have used the expression ‘the law of Hobson-Jobson.’ The name is an adaptation from the expression used by Col. Yule and Mr. Burnell as a name for their interesting Dictionary of Anglo-Indian words. The law is well recognised, though it has lacked a name, such as I now venture to give it.

1898 Edward E. Morris *Austral English* 151 All its names allude to the thorny spines of its fins. The name *Fortescue* is an adaptation of *Forty-skewer* by the law of Hobson-Jobson.

1898 *Literature* (New York) 19 Mar 314/2 Mr. Morris mentions ‘the law of Hobson-Jobson.’ This applies to cases where the sound of words has been imitated by one language from another without reference to sense.

1904 John S. Farmer and W.E. Henley *Slang and its Analogues* VII. 153/1 **TOMMY-AXE**, *subs. phr.* (Australian). — A corruption of TOMAHAWK (*q.v.*): an instance of the law of HOBSON-JOBSON (*q.v.*)[.]

1919 H.L. Mencken *The American Language* 41 Its [*sc.* the word *squash*] variations show a familiar effort to bring a new and strange word into harmony with the language, an effort arising from what philologists call the law of Hobson-Jobson. This name was given to it by Col. Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, compilers of a standard dictionary of Anglo-Indian terms.

1937 Eric Partridge *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* 77/1 **Bombay Duck**. That Indian fish which, alive, is called the *bummalo*, whence, by the Law of Hobson-Jobson, the present anomaly.

1945 Sidney J. Baker *The Australian Language* 129 Mishearing has probably been the cause of *poke borak at* being converted to *poke borax at*, an interesting example of the law of Hobson-Jobson or the displacing of unfamiliar by familiar words owing to similarity in sound.

1953 Sidney J. Baker *Australia Speaks* 226 All these examples properly belong to a well-known form of language which reveals the operation of what is known to philologists as the Law of Hobson-Jobson.

1970 Eric Partridge *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English: Supplement* 7th ed. 77/1 **Bombay Duck**. That Indian fish which, alive, is called the *bummalo*, whence, by the Law of Hobson-Jobson, the present anomaly.

2007 Seth Lerer *Inventing English: A Portable History of the Language* 262 Now, to my knowledge, there is no ‘law of Hobson Jobson’ in the philological code[.]

2009 Susan Purcell *English Today* 25(1) 63/1 Undoubtedly some Britons in colonial India were racist and patronising, but applying the law of Hobson-Jobson to difficult or foreign words is a universal phenomenon.

Mr Hobson-Jobson

1. *proper noun Nonce* (? erroneous) the purported person (or personification) of the following citation.

1889 Albert Barrère and Charles G. Leland *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant* I. 339/1 'Dam khāna, 'to eat one's breath,' is a Hindu idiom for 'to be silent.' Mr. Hobson-Jobson converts this into a transitive verb, to *dam-khās*, and both spelling and meaning being affected by English suggestions of sound, this comes in Anglo-Indian use to imply *cowing* and silencing' (Anglo-Indian Glossary).