The Transliteration of Korean Place Names in Colonial Times: Unveiling the Strategies of Japanese Imperialism

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This study analyzes the methods Imperial Japan employed in changing the names of Korean territories and examines how these changes related to the policies of the colonial power. The Japanese photo album *Hantō no kin'ei* depicts a variety of landscapes in colonial Korea. It also contains tables of contents in both Japanese and English, whose primary purpose was to Romanize Korean place names (generally written in Chinese characters) based on their Japanese pronunciation. This study argues that in order to superimpose its identity onto Korea, Japan transliterated Korean place names based on Japanese pronunciation rather than the original Korean. Through this strategy, Japan laid claim to such areas and made manifest its territorial expansion.

Keywords: place names, transliteration, Chinese characters, colony, Japanese Empire

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Introduction

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has recently captured global attention. One outcome of this has been an increasing awareness of the different spellings and pronunciations of the name of the capital city of Ukraine, Kiev or Kyiv. *Kiev*, a transliteration of the Russian Cyrillic Киев, was the internationally accepted name throughout the Soviet period and in recent decades. However, its usage in the West is now declining, quickly being replaced by *Kyiv*, a transliteration of the Ukrainian Київ. Most English-language media outlets have embraced the latter transliteration, and many non-English-language outlets worldwide have followed suit, highlighting the inherently political nature of the transliteration of a place name.

Azaryahu and Golan argue "naming is not a mere linguistic gesture but often evinces specific power relations,"[1] while Higman and Hudson claim that "the naming of places directly reflects power relations within a community."[2] According to Stolz and Warnke, place names "constitute linguistic signs, which have meaning beyond their purely referential function" and their main function is "laying claim to a place."[3] In other words, nomination is often concomitant to possession.[4] For these reasons, a major aim of the Ukrainian government has been the recognition of Ukrainian rather than Russian names for its territories.

This study investigates how Imperial Japan changed place names in Korea and how these changes were directly tied to its colonial policy. To illustrate this, it examines the Japanese photo album *Hantō no kin'ei* 半島の近影 and analyzes the Romanization of Korean place names within it.

Background to the Study

Place Names vis-à-vis Chinese Characters as the Common Writing System in East Asia

Imperial Japan used the example of the West as a blueprint for its colonization of East Asia, including Korea. It designed its policies with a view to annexing territories and replacing their cultural heritage. In Korea, it partially demolished Kyŏngbok Palace (the seat of Korean royal power) and built the Japanese General Government Building in its stead. Such acts were

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[1] Maoz Azaryahu and Arnon Golan, "(Re)naming the Landscape: The Formation of the Hebrew Map of Israel 1949–1960," *Journal of Historical Geography* 27, no. 2 (2001): 181.

[2] Barry W. Higman and Brian J. Hudson, *Jamaican Place Names* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2009), 18.

[3] Thomas Stolz and Ingo H. Warnke, "When Places Change Their Names and When They Do Not. Selected Aspects of Colonial and Postcolonial Toponymy in Former French and Spanish Colonies in West Africa – The Cases of Saint Louis (Senegal) and the Western Sahara," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 239 (2016): 33.

[4] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 27; David Robinson, "The Language and Significance of Place in Latin America," *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociologic Imaginations*, eds. John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 160.

designed to control Koreans through dominating the colonial space.[5]

Whereas the construction of buildings is a type of hard spatial domination, the changing of place names is an example of soft spatial domination.[6] In this way, "naming becomes a primary colonizing process because it appropriates, defines, and captures the place in language."[7] Naming is thus a "mechanism for naturalizing hegemonic power structures."[8] Japan made extensive use of this tactic in the process of extending its control over the Korean Peninsula.

The changing of place names involved the substitution of characters that reflected Japanese culture or suited its administrative system for the original Chinese characters. An example of this was changing the name of the administrative unit for a small urban district from *tong* (洞) to *machi* (町) or *chō* (町), a term commonly used in Japan.[9] As a result, *Myŏng tong* (明洞), one of Seoul's busiest areas, became *Meiji chō* (明治町).[10]

Given the Japanese tactics, it is perhaps surprising that some historical Korean place names in Seoul were retained. In fact, Seoul had a relatively high proportion of place names that had been in use before Japanese colonization, in comparison to Pyongyang and Taipei, both of which were also part of the Japanese Empire.[11] One potential reason for this is that Seoul had long been the center of political power on the Korean Peninsula, serving as the capital for approximately 500 years (1394–1910). Even after colonization, the Government-General of Korea remained located in Seoul. However, this factor alone does not account for the Japanese policy as regards place names in the country.

This study argues that it is important to factor in the use of Chinese characters as the common writing system in East Asia at the time. It raises questions about the prior research that judged whether the place names of East Asian colonies were changed based only on the changing patterns of place names' Chinese characters.

Chinese characters had long been used in East Asian languages including Korean and Japanese. In fact, most place names in colonial Korea were represented in Chinese characters. In most cases, this posed no problem, as it was possible to use Japanese pronunciation without changing the written Chinese characters. However, prior research has focused exclusively on whether the Japanese changed the Chinese characters of place names. This has led to the

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[5] Jeon Jaeho, "'Singminji kŏnch'uk yusan' e taehan insik pyŏnhwa wa panil minjok chuŭi: Ilche chanjae esŏ kŭndae munhway usan ŭro," *Han'guk kwa kukche chŏngch'i* 36, no. 3 (2020): 102–05.

[6] Goto Yasushi, "'Keijō' no gyōseikuikimei ni kansuru Heijō, Taihoku tono hikakukenkyū," *Toshi keikaku ronbun-shū* 27 (1992): 5.

[7] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, "Part XII Place. Introduction." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), 392.

[8] Reuben Rose-Redwood, Derek Alderman, and Maoz Azaryahu, "Geographies of Toponymic Inscription: New Directions in Critical Place-name Studies," *Progress in Human Geography* 34, no. 4 (2010): 457.

[9] Chung Ha-Mie, "Ilche kangjŏmgi Sŏul ŭi Ilbonsik chimyŏng e taehan koch'al," *Pigyo Ilbonhak* 42 (2018): 106.

[10] Lee Kyongchul and Yun Chihyŏn, "Ilche ŭi Chosŏn chimyŏng kaep'yŏn yuhyŏng e kwanhayŏ: Kyŏngsŏngbu Chunggu rŭl chungsim ŭro," *Ilbonŏhak yon'gu* 16 (2006): 116.

[11] Goto, "'Keijō' no gyōseikuikimei ni kansuru Heijō, Taihoku tono hikakukenkyū," 1-6.

conclusion that Seoul retained its old place names even under Japanese rule.[12]

After the Zhou Dynasty, the use of Chinese characters spread to neighboring East Asian countries, including Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, which began to use them to represent their languages. During this process, Chinese characters acquired distinctive sounds for each country.[13] Chinese characters soon became the common writing system in East Asia, as they could convey meaning regardless of their pronunciation in a particular country. Chinese characters are ideographs, which means that, while their letter forms are largely consistent across regions, their pronunciation varies. Furthermore, the pronunciations of Chinese characters used in Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese have changed sufficiently to pose challenges in mutual intelligibility through spoken language alone.[14] For example, although the Chinese character 寺 is pronounced *sa* in Korean and *ji* or *tera* in Japanese, it means "Buddhist temple" in both languages. The sociolinguist Tanaka Katsuhiko, citing Ferdinand de Saussure, explains this succinctly when he states, "The substance of a word appears when approaching the sound itself, not thinking of the word as letters."[15] Because Chinese characters were widely used in East Asia, it is necessary to analyze their phonetic realization in each country to uncover the political dynamics of place names in the region.

Colonial Korea's Bilingual Environment and the Pronunciation of Place Names

During the colonial period, Korea was a bilingual environment, with Japanese and Korean both used in everyday interactions.[16] On February 17, 1917, an episode occurred that provides a glimpse into this bilingual environment. As a tram approached its final stop, the conductor shouted, "Tōdaimon shūten, Tongdaemun olsida" (Tōdaimon, the final stop. It is Tongdaemun). The conductor was referring to Tongdaemun 東大門 (Great east gate), which was pronounced *Tōdaimon* in Japanese and *Tongdaemun* in Korean. Japanese was the official language at that time, so the tram conductor first used the Japanese *Tōdaimon*. However, as most of the passengers were Korean, the conductor also called out *Tongdaemun*, the Korean name, knowing that many of the passengers would not register the Japanese name. This episode underscores the language environment in colonial Korea, in which the same place name was phonetically realized in a different manner depending on the language.

An article by Yi Sunt'ak, a professor at Yŏnhŭi College, in the *Tonga ilbo* (East Asian news) illustrates the dual nature of society at the time.

[12] Lee and Yun, "Ilche ŭi Chosŏn chimyŏng kaep'yŏn yuhyŏng e kwanhayŏ: Kyŏngsŏngbu Chunggu rŭl chungsim ŭro," 107. Goto, "'Keijō' no gyōseikuikimei ni kansuru Heijō, Taihoku tono hikakukenkyū," 2.

[13] Kuzuya Noboru, "Kanji saikō: Onseigengo to syokigengo no hazama," *Genko to bunka* 40, no. 13 (2005): 175-184.

[14] Kin Bunkyo, "Higashiajia no kanji・kanbun bunka-ken," *Kanji o tsukatta bunka wa dō hirogatte ita no ka Higashiajia no kanji kanbun bunka-ken*, ed. Kin Bunkyo (Tokyo: Bungaku tsūshin, 2021), 14.

[15] Tanaka Katsuhiko, *Kotoba towa nanika: Gengogaku to iu bōken* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2009), 22–23.

[16] Chŏng Baeksu, *Han'guk kŭndae singminji ch'ehŏm kwa ijung ŏnŏ munhak* (Seoul: Asea Munhwasa, 2000), 16.

京城이라고하면 적드라도 李朝五百年동안 朝鮮의 經濟의中心이엿스며 文化의中心이엿
스며 人物의中心이엿스며 外交의中心임과同時에 消費의中心이엿스며 奢侈의中心이엿
스며 搾取의中心이엿스며 挾雜의中心이엿스며 罪惡의中心이엿다 要컨대 朝鮮의모든中
心이엿다[…]그러나京城은벌서朝鮮의中心이아니다 朝鮮人의中心이아니다 卽京城은『조
선』의中心이아니라『테우센』의 中心이며朝鮮人의京城이아니라 日本人의京城이다 經
濟方面으로보아서그러한즉 다른方面이야더말할것도업슬것이다 짜라서京城은『경성』이아
니라『케이지야우』라하는것이當然하다 이제經濟方面으로부터 京城의經濟狀態를一瞥하
려고한다[…]民有課稅地坪數三百三十四萬四千坪의土地價格中　朝鮮人의分은八百七
十九萬四千七百六十八圓이오 日本人의分은千五百六十六萬五千六百六十六圓이오[…]
(Verbatim quote from the *Tonga ilbo* article)

For at least 500 years of the Yi Dynasty, 京城 [Seoul] was the center of the economy, the
center of politics, the center of culture, the center of the elite, the center of diplomacy,
the center of consumption, the center of luxury, the center of exploitation, the center
of fraud, and the center of crime in 朝鮮 [Korea]. In short, it was the center of 朝
鮮 [Korea] in every way. […] However, 京城 [Seoul] is no longer the center of 朝鮮
[Korea]. It is not the center of the people of 朝鮮 [Korea]. In other words, 京城 [Seoul]
is the center of *Chōsen* (テウセン)[17] not *Chosŏn* (조선),[18] and is the city of the Japanese,
not of the people of 朝鮮 [Korea] from an economic perspective. Of course, it is the
same in other aspects. Therefore, it is natural that 京城 [Seoul] is not called *Kyŏngsŏng* (경
성)[19] but *Keijō* (ケイジャウ).[20] […] When 3,341,000 pyŏng[21] of land owned by civilians is
converted into cash, Koreans have 8,794,764 won,[22] while the Japanese have 15,665,666
won […].
(Emphasis added; translated by the authors)

The Chinese character 朝鮮 is the historic name for Korea, pronounced *Chosŏn* in Korean
and *Chōsen* in Japanese. 京城 is also the historic name for Seoul, the capital of Korea, and is
pronounced *Kyŏngsŏng* in Korean and *Keijō* in Japanese. Yi's article suggests that Seoul had
served as the economic, political, and cultural center of Korea for the previous 500 years, but
this was no longer the case. In addition, most of the best land in the capital was in the hands
of the Japanese. As such, it was no longer the center of *Chosŏn* but rather of *Chōsen*, meaning
that *Keijō* is a more appropriate name for the city. His argument emphasizes that the choice of
pronunciation, be it Korean or Japanese, plays a crucial role in defining one's regional identity.

Yi's article shows that it is not the Chinese characters themselves that are important
in providing names with an identity. This is revealed only through the pronunciation of

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[17] *Chōsen* is the Japanese pronunciation of 朝鮮 (Chosŏn, Korea), written as テウセン in the original text.

[18] *Chosŏn* is the Korean pronunciation of 朝鮮 (Chosŏn, Korea), written as 조선 in the original text.

[19] *Kyŏngsŏng* is the Korean pronunciation of 京城 (Kyŏngsŏng, Seoul), written as 경성 in the original text.

[20] *Keijō* is the Japanese pronunciation of 京城 (Kyŏngsŏng, Seoul), written as ケイジャウ in the original text.

[21] A Korean unit for area and floor space.

[22] The official currency of Korea.

the characters. It is also important to note that Korean people at the time recognized the relationship between the sound of the Chinese characters and the identity ascribed to place names. Considering people's perceptions and colonial Korea's language environment, the problem regarding Chinese character place names' pronunciation must be considered vis-à-vis Japanese colonial policy regarding place names.

Hantō no kin'ei: The Pronunciation of Chinese Characters

In analyzing the time and geographical space of the colonial era, conventional studies have focused on written texts. However, in recent years, visual data such as photographs and postcards have emerged as new objects of research.[23] In the process of colonizing Korea, Japan published many photo albums containing images of the country. These albums have attracted the attention of researchers as they were often organized according to particular themes and provide an insight into the intentions of the publishers, that is, the colonizers.[24]

Japan used photo albums to justify its actions and sway public opinion during conflicts such as the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.[25] A total of 66 photo albums are known to exist.[26] These albums and their tables of contents (written in English) provide firsthand evidence of the pronunciation of place names in colonial Korea. This study focuses on the photo album *Hantō no kin'ei* (Close-up of the peninsula), published by the Railway Bureau of the Japanese Government-General of Korea in 1937.[27] It introduces the attractions of the regions along the railway lines and provides an insight into the Japanese policy on place names in its colonies.

One notable feature of *Hantō no kin'ei* is its title. Other photo albums published by Japan, such as *Kankoku syashinchyō* (Photo album of Korea)[28] and *Chōsen: Syashinchyō* (Photo album of Korea),[29] used the words *Kankoku* or *Chōsen* in their titles.[30] However, *Hantō no kin'ei* used

[23] Chang Won-Suk and Jung Chi-Young, "Ilche ŭi sajinch'ŏp e t'uyŏngdoen singminji Chosŏn ŭi imiji," *Han'guk sajinjiri hakhoeji* 30, no. 2 (2020): 43.

[24] Chang and Jung, "Ilche ŭi sajinch'ŏp e t'uyŏngdoen singminji Chosŏn ŭi imiji," 44.

[25] Lee Yeonkyung, "Kyŏngsŏngbu chigwŏn oe sajinch'ŏp e chehyŏndoen Ilbonin kŏryuji ŭi tosi konggan ŭi sŏngkyŏk kwa kŭ t'ŭkching," *Han'guk konggan tijain hakhoe nonmunjip* 13, no. 3 (2018): 278.

[26] Chang and Jung, "Ilche ŭi sajinch'ŏp e t'uyŏngdoen singminji Chosŏn ŭi imiji," 44.

[27] Chōsensōtokufu tetsudōkyoku, *Hantō no kin'ei* (Osaka: Nihon hanga insatsu gōshigaisha, 1937).

[28] Kankokutōkanfu, *Kankoku syashinchyō* (Tokyo: Korean Government Office, 1910). https://opac.lib.takushoku-u.ac.jp/kyugaichi/htmls/views/2017_001.html.

[29] Chōsensōtokufu, *Chōsen: Syashinchyō* (Seoul: Chōsensōtokufu, 1925). https://www.nl.go.kr/NL/contents/search.do?srchTarget=total&pageNum=1&pageSize=10&insiteschStr=&schQuery=&mainSrchField=1&kwd=%EC%A1%B0%EC%84%A0+%EC%82%AC%EC%A7%84%EC%B2%A9#viewKey=CNTS-00047997644&vieWType=C&category=%EB%8F%84%EC%84%9C&pageIdx=2&jourId=.

[30] *Kankoku* is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese character 韓國 and *Chōsen* is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese character 朝鮮, which was a dynasty that existed on the Korean Peninsula from 1392 until it was occupied by Japan. At the end of this dynasty in 1897, the name was changed to The Korean Empire (大韓帝國) in order to upgrade its national prestige, and the abbreviation of this new name was *Kankoku*.

the term *hantō* (peninsula), a name the Japanese used specifically when talking about colonial Korea. The word *hantō* primarily refers to the Korean Peninsula. However, in colonial times, the term was somewhat loaded as it generally referred to marginal areas that were distinct from *naichi*, i.e., mainland Japan.[31] The title of the book thus reflects Japan's political intentions and reveals its perception of Korea at the time. This makes *Hantō no kin'ei* an important text for analyzing the relationship between place names and the colonial policies of Japan.

Hantō no kin'ei includes 139 photos and 8 drawings, and its major purpose was to attract tourists to Korea. It contained information on the major cities, landmarks, and traditional Korean culture, as well as information on the transportation system, including ferries and railroads.[32]
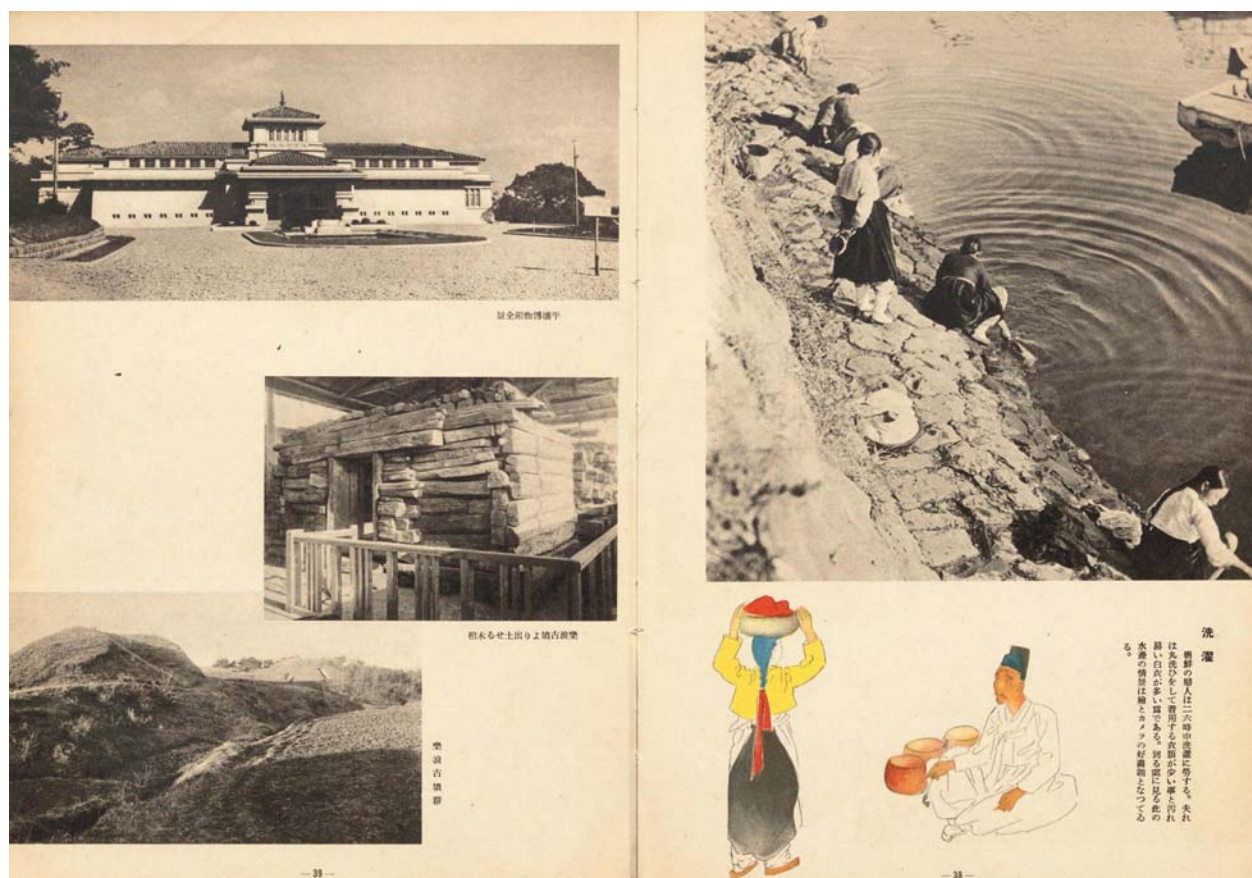
Figure 1. Photos and drawings in *Hantō no kin'ei*[33]

The captions in the book were in Japanese, but the tables of contents appeared in both English and Japanese.

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[31] Kim Nam-Seok, "Chosŏn ŭi hyŏsil ŭl panyŏnghan 'pando ŭi pom' kwa chibaeja ŭi hyŏngsang," *Hyŏndae munhak iron yŏn'gu* 72 (2018): 29–51.

[32] Chang and Jung, "Ilche ŭi sajinch'ŏp e t'uyŏngdoen singminji Chosŏn ŭi imiji," 64.

[33] National Diet Library Digital Collections. Available at https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1876254.

Figure 2. Japanese table of contents in *Hantō no kin'ei*

The Japanese table of contents made use of a variety of script types. 31 items (28.7%) are labeled with a mixture of Chinese characters and Japanese *hiragana* and *katakana*, for example, 明太魚の乾燥 (Drying Alaskan pollock). The remaining 77 items (71.3%) comprise only Chinese characters. Examples of these include 白羊寺 (White-sheep Buddhist temple) and 白頭山 (White-head mountain). Anyone with knowledge of Chinese characters can tell that 寺 means "Buddhist temple" and 山 means "mountain." However, it is impossible to judge whether the names are Japanese or Korean solely from the script.

CONTENTS OF PRESENT-DAY CHOSEN

Figure 3. English table of contents

The table of contents in English includes the same items as the Japanese, and it appears to have been directly translated from it. The most salient feature of the table is that the Chinese characters for colonial Korean place names are transliterated based solely on the Japanese pronunciation. This romanization based on the Japanese pronunciation is illustrative of the social and political environment in Japan at the time.

Controversy over the Adoption of Roman Script and Japanese Nationalism

In modern Japan, public opinion was in favor of abolishing the use of Chinese characters—which had been used for centuries to write Japanese—and the adoption of the Roman alphabet instead. This was fostered by Japan's rising modernization and nationalism. Under the influence of the West, Japan adopted a new system in relation to commerce, industry, law, and education. Language was key in this process. As a result, Japan attempted to establish a unified Japanese language called *kokugo* (national language) based on Western linguistics. This emphasized the spoken language and sounds as opposed to the written language and letters. This way, Japan sought to unify the country and its empire, distributing this language to its colonies.

A major motivating factor behind the new Japanese language policy was the decline of China. China had been the preeminent power in East Asia for centuries but had gone into decline due to Western invasions and its defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95). This was accompanied by a major decline in interest in the study of Chinese classics, which until then had been a major focus of humanities studies.[34] At the same time, a movement to abolish Chinese characters emerged among intellectuals. Nanbu Yoshikazu (1840–1917), a scholar of Chinese classics, submitted three proposals to the government between 1869 and 1872 advocating the use of the Roman alphabet. In his 1872 proposal, *Moji wo kaikan suru no gi* (On reforming the scripts), he argued that the unwieldy Chinese characters should be replaced with Western script—in line with popular belief that to be Westernized was to be civilized—which would make learning Japanese easier.[35] The movement gained popularity, and in 1885, the organization *Rōmajikwai* (The society for the Roman alphabet) was established to promote its use. At the same time, in 1886, James Curtis Hepburn completed his system of Romanization for Japanese, a system that is still the most commonly used today.[36]

Although the writing of Japanese in the Roman alphabet was not officially adopted, it became the subject of heated debates. In the 1930s, when *Hantō no kin'ei* was published, Japan's desire to enter the international stage intensified, and attention was focused on the spoken language after Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (Course in general linguistics) was translated into Japanese.[37] *Hantō no kin'ei* was published at a time when great importance was given to writing Japanese sounds in the Roman alphabet.

In modern Japan, writing Japanese in Roman script reflected Western-influenced modernization. Flourishing Japanese nationalism led to a movement against using Chinese characters and a focus on highlighting the indigenous Japanese language and its sounds. In

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[34] Shirane Haruo, "Sōzō sareta koten: Kanon keisei no paradaimu to hihyōteki tenbō," *Sōzō sareta koten: kanon keisei, kokumin kokka, nihon bungaku* eds. Shirane Haruo and Suzuki Tomi (Tokyo: Shin yōsha, 1999), 19.

[35] Nakagawa Kazuko, "Rōma ji to Nihon no kindaika: Hebonshiki ni itaru rōma ji kenkyū no rekishi," *Hokkaigakuendaigaku jinbun ronshū* 10 (1998): 159.

[36] Takeba Ryoiti, "Rōmaji nihongo no kanōsei," *Nihongo Hyōki no Shinchihei Kanji no Mirai Rōmaji no Kanosei*, ed. Kayasima Atsusi (Tokyo: Kuroshio Shuppan, 2012), 55.

[37] Watanabe Tetsuo, "'Kokugo' ni okeru koe to moji: 1930 nendai rōmaji ronsō wo Tegakari toshite," *Kindai kyō gyo iku fōramu* 14 (2005), 214.

this context, the English table of contents of *Hantō no kin'ei* was not merely the result of translation. It was directly influenced by the ideology and colonial policy of Imperial Japan. The sections that follow will provide an in-depth analysis of the transliteration of the place names in *Hantō no kin'ei*.

Research and Analysis

Transliteration of Place Names in *Hantō no kin'ei*

Transliteration is one of the most effective strategies for translating proper nouns.[38] However, transliterating Chinese characters into English can be a complicated process that requires the consideration of various factors. It presents additional challenges as Chinese characters were historically the common writing system in East Asia. Different countries thus used the same Chinese character for the same meaning but pronounced it differently.

The English table of contents in *Hantō no kin'ei* includes numerous items referring to different areas and landmarks, with the most common being mountains and temples (each appearing eight times). The following table (Table 1) lists the eight mountains.

Translation type		English table of contents	Japanese table of contents
‹A›	(1)	Hakutosan (Everwhite mountain), 2,744 meters, North Chosen	白頭山
	(2)	Kongosan (Diamond mountain)	金剛山
‹B›	(3)	Zokurisan, South Chosen	俗離山
	(4)	Chiisan, South Chosen	智異山
	(5)	Naizosan, Konan line	內藏山
	(6)	Kannasan, Saishuto (Quelpart island)	濟州島漢拏山
	(7)	Myokosan, North Heian Province	妙香山
‹C›	(8)	Chojusan, Kokaido	長壽山

Table 1. Mountains in *Hantō no kin'ei* [39]

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[38] Theo Hermans, "On Translating Proper Names, with Reference to De Witte and Max Havelaar," *Modern Dutch Studies. Essays in Honour of Peter King on the Occasion of His Retirement*, ed. Michael Wintle (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 11–13; Javier F. Aixelá, "Culture-Specific Items in Translation," *Translation, Power, Subversion*, eds. Román Alvarez and M. Carmen-Africa Vidal (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996), 59–60.

[39] The spelling, capitalization, and lowercase letters of the English expressions in Tables 1 and 2 are quoted exactly as they appear in the original text.

In Table 1, all the Chinese characters in the Japanese table of contents end with 山, which means "mountain," with the specific name of each mountain preceding it. 山 is pronounced *san* in Japanese, so *Hakutosan* and *Kongosan* in the English table of contents are transliterations based on the Japanese pronunciation of the names 白頭 and 金剛, followed by 山.

The mountain names in the English table of contents can be divided into three groups. Group A comprises items that are easily identifiable as mountains because they are followed by the English word *mountain* in parentheses. For instance, (1) *Hakutosan* is the transliteration of the Chinese characters 白頭山 based on the Japanese pronunciation. This is followed by its meaning "Everwhite mountain" in parentheses. Likewise, (2) *Kongosan* is the transliteration of the Chinese characters 金剛山, and is followed by its meaning "Diamond mountain" in parentheses. Both of these specify the word *mountain*.

Group B contains items that are more challenging to identify as mountains, even with additional English words such as *South Chosen* or *province*. One example of this is (3) *Zokurisan*, a transliteration of the Chinese characters 俗離山 based on the Japanese pronunciation. This is followed by the additional English words *South Chosen*, which indicate the location of the mountain. Similarly, (5) *Naizosan* is the transliteration of 內藏山. The accompanying *Konan Line* refers to the railway line near the mountain. However, none of these words clearly indicate that the items are mountains.

Finally, Group C item is difficult to identify as a mountain, even with additional information, because both the item and the additional information are transliterations. For example, (8) *Chojusan, Kokaido* provides almost no information to English-speaking readers. The term *Chojusan* is the transliteration of 長壽山 based on the Japanese pronunciation, while *Kokaido* is the transliteration of 黃海道, which refers to the midwestern part of the Korean Peninsula where Chojusan is located. Neither clearly indicates whether the item is a mountain or its exact location.

Although it is possible to assign all the mountain names in the English table of contents to one of these groups, it does not appear that any clear criteria were used in the representation of these names. However, one common thread links all the items: The Chinese characters have all been transliterated based on the Japanese pronunciation.

It is also worth noting that in the English table of contents, there is a tendency to include the names of the places where the mountains are located. For example, in (6) *Kannasan, Saishuto (Quelpart Island)*, *Saishuto* is the name of the island where Kanna Mountain is located. This information is also present in the Japanese table of contents as 濟州島漢挐山. However, the names (1) *Hakutosan*, (3) *Zokurisan*, (4) *Chiisan*, (5) *Naizosan*, (7) *Myokosan*, and (8) *Chojusan* appear on their own, with no further identifying information.

These patterns also apply to other items of which there are multiple examples. Table 2 illustrates these.

Category		English table of contents	Japanese table of contents	Translation type
Buddhist temple	(1)	Bongyoji, temple near Fusan	梵魚寺	‹A›
	(2)	Hakuyoji, temple, Konan line	白羊寺	‹A›
Buddha statue	(3)	Shimensekibutsu, Keishu	慶州四面石佛	‹C›
	(4)	Mirokubutsu, Ronzan	論山彌勒佛	‹C›
Gate	(5)	Choanmon, Suigen	水原長安門	‹C›
	(6)	Nandaimon, keijo	京城南大門	‹C›
Hot spring	(7)	Hakusen hot springs	白川溫泉	‹A›
	(8)	North Chosen Shuotsu hot springs	朱乙溫泉場	‹A›
Hotel	(9)	Uchikongo hotel	內金剛山莊	‹A›
	(10)	Sotokongo hotel, Outer Kongo	外金剛山莊	‹A›
Bridge	(11)	Zenchikukyo Kaijo	開城善竹橋	‹C›
	(12)	Railway bridge over Yalu	鴨綠江	‹A›
River	(13)	Hakubako, Huyo	扶餘	‹C›
	(14)	On Dido river, Heijo	大同江に浮ぶ畫舫	‹A›
Harbor	(15)	Jinsen harbor	仁川港	‹A›
	(16)	Coal loading, Chinnampo	鎭南浦港	‹B›
Beach	(17)	Daisen beach	大川軍入里海水浴場	‹A›
	(18)	Genzan beach	元山松濤園海水浴場	‹A›
Hill	(19)	Winter scenery of Botandai, Heijo	平壤雪の牧丹臺	‹B›
	(20)	Cherry blossoms at Botandai	平壤花の牧丹臺	‹B›

Table 2. Items that appear more than once in *Hantō no kin'ei*

Note. ⌇⌇⌇: Transliteration of the Chinese character based on Japanese pronunciation

☐: Transliteration of the place name where each landmark is located, based on Japanese pronunciation

▒: Place names included in the landmark names

Table 2 clearly reflects the pattern evident in Table 1. Group A items provide sufficient information in English, while Group B items are practically indecipherable even with additional English words. Just as with the mountain names, the items in Group C do not provide any identifying information.

It is also clear that in the English table of contents, there was a deliberate attempt to represent place names in colonial Korea using Japanese pronunciation. The underlined phrases in Table 2 are transliterations of the names of landmarks based on the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese characters. From a total of 20 examples, 19 exhibit this, the exception being (12). Similarly, the phrases marked with squares are the place names where each landmark is located. In the English table of contents, 12 items include place names. Seven of these—(3), (4), (5), (6), (11), (13), and (19)—appear to be transliterations of Chinese characters as they also appear in the Japanese table of contents. However, the other five items—(1), (2), (8), (10), and (14)—present the place names in Roman script based on Japanese pronunciation, despite them not being present in the Japanese table of contents. This suggests a deliberate effort to represent Korean place names based on the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese characters.

The remaining items in the English table of contents—(7), (9), (12), (15), (16), (17), (18), and (20)—are not followed by separate place names. However, most of these landmarks were named after the places where they were located. In (7), (9), (15), (16), (17), and (18), the shaded phrases indicate the name of the landmark, which also refers to its location. For example, in (7) *Hakusen hot springs*, *Hakusen* is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese characters 白川, which is also the name of the place. Since the landmark's name already indicates the location, it is unnecessary to add the place name. Similarly, in (15) *Jinsen harbor*, the name of a port situated in the midwestern part of the Korean Peninsula, *Jinsen* denotes the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese characters 仁川, which also corresponds to the region's name. When the name of an area was part of a landmark's name, there was clearly no need to add it. As a result, almost all the place names in Table 2 are written using the Roman alphabet based on Japanese pronunciation, except for items (12) and (20).

This analysis reveals three main points. First, many terms in the English table of contents do not contain identifying information in English as they are simply transliterations of Chinese characters. Second, the transliterations of place and landmark names are based on Japanese pronunciation.[40] Third, the intention to present Korean place names is more explicit in the English table of contents than in the Japanese table. "Place names can identify and reflect culture, heritage, and landscape"[41] and can also be used to "assert ownership, legitimize conquest, and flaunt control."[42] The English table of contents in *Hantō no kin'ei* suggests that its purpose was not to convey the meaning of Korean place names in English, but solely to present them in Roman script based on the Japanese pronunciation.

In a critical toponymies approach, "… place naming is seen as a social and political

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[40] In the photo album *Kangkoku syashinchyō* (韓國寫眞帖), published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications on July 1, 1910, just before the annexation of Korea by Japan, Korea's place name is, in principle, transliterated based on Korean pronunciation.

[41] United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), *Consistent Use of Place Names*, February 2001, https://unstats.un.org/UNSD/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/pubs/UNGEGNbrochure_en.pdf.

[42] Mark Monmonier, *From Squaw Tit to Whorehouse Meadow: How Maps Name, Claim, and Inflame* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 121.

practice and a form of place making."[43] Powerful individuals and groups appropriate an object by giving it a name that reflects their perception and identity.[44] As such, expressing Korean place names using Japanese pronunciation went beyond a simple linguistic activity. It was a means of proclaiming that the colonial Korean territories belonged to Japan and clearly representing the expansion of the Japanese empire.

Transliteration Based on Korean Pronunciation in *Hantō no kin'ei*

In the English table of contents in *Hantō no kin'ei*, there is one exception where an item is based on the Korean pronunciation, in stark contrast to the other items which are based on the Japanese pronunciation. This exception is the Chinese character 妓生, a term referring to a woman whose job is to entertain by singing, dancing, or playing music at a social event. It is rendered as *Keesangs, Korean dancing girls* in the English table of contents.

Figure 4. Keesangs, Korean dancing girls (妓生)

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[43] Přemysl Mácha, "The Symbolic Power of Place Names: The Case of the River Olše/Olza/Łolza in Northeastern Czechia," *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* 68, no. 3 (2020): 170.

[44] Choo Sungjae, *People, Places, and Place Names In'gan changso chimyŏng* (Paju: Hanŭl Ak'ademi, 2018), 156.

The Chinese characters 妓生 would be pronounced *gisei* or *gisyo* in Japanese, but the Korean pronunciation *keesang* is used instead. Furthermore, the phrase *Korean dancing girls* is added to make it understandable in English. The description in the lower right side of Figure 4 states that any tourist from Japan must experience keesang since they are a popular Korean attraction and have a unique air of innocence. However, *keesang* is not a proper noun, such as the name of a place or a landmark, but rather indicates an occupation or cultural feature. Therefore, there is no need to use the transliteration strategy, which is mainly employed for translating proper names.

In contrast to the case of *Keesang*, the English table of contents provides numerous examples of directly translating non-proper nouns into English. For example, the Chinese characters 將棋, which refer to a traditional Korean board game, are translated as *playing chess*, while the Chinese character 砧, which refers to the household chore of removing wrinkles from clothes using a club, is translated as *fulling cloth*. This suggests that there is another rationale for translating Chinese characters into English words which is distinct from the transliteration of Chinese characters into the Roman alphabet for place names.

The term *keesang* appears again in reference to the institution that trained them.
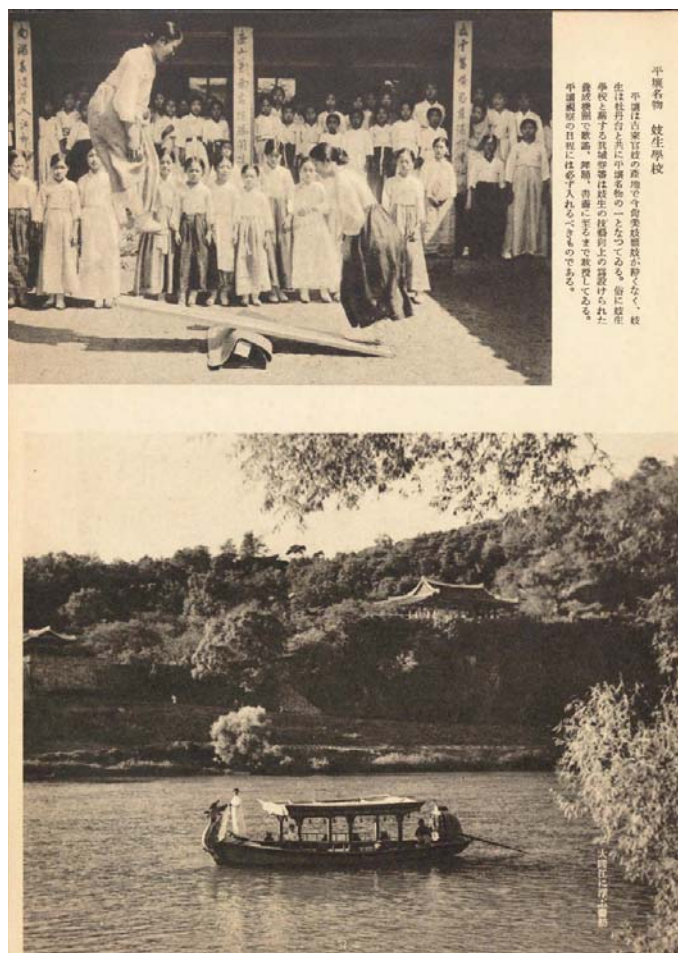

Figure 5. Keesang school, Heijo (妓生學校)

The Chinese characters 妓生學校, which refer to such an institute, are presented as *Keesang school, Heijo*. The term *keesang* is again repeated instead of describing or explaining it in English (i.e., dancing girls). However, the place name that follows, *Heijo*, is based on the Japanese pronunciation. *Heijo* refers to 平壤 (Kr. Pyongyang), a city in the north of the Korean Peninsula and the capital of both the ancient Koguryŏ Kingdom (37 BCE–686 CE) and the current Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The place name is transliterated as *Heijo*, based on the Japanese pronunciation, while 妓生 is transliterated as *keesang*, based on the Korean pronunciation. This raises the question of whether there is a double standard for transliterating some Chinese characters using the Japanese pronunciation and others using the Korean pronunciation.

During its modernization, Japan sought to demonstrate the extent of its civilization to the West. As part of this effort, in 1872, it issued an edict for the liberation of low-status social groups, effectively abolishing the system of licensed prostitution that had been permitted by the *bakuhu* (Shogunate government).[45] However, rather than disappearing entirely, this system was exported overseas, where it contributed to the spread of Japanese sexual customs and culture.[46] These also impacted the *kisaeng*[47] culture in Korea, and *kisaeng* ultimately became a symbol of Korean identity.[48]

The 5th *Naikoku Kangys Hakurankai* (National industrial exhibition) was held in Osaka, Japan, in 1903. At the exhibition, the Human Pavilion (an exhibition hall) was set up, and people from the areas Japan was attempting to colonize were put on display there. The exhibits included ethnic groups such as the Ryukyu people of Okinawa, the Ainu of Hokkaido, Koreans, Chinese, aboriginal Taiwanese, and Indians. Some *kisaeng* were hired for the Korean display. From this exhibition until the *Tōkyō Taisyo Hakurankai* (Tokyo taisyoh exhibition) in 1914, *kisaeng* was a fixture of exhibits representing people from an inferior country.[49] The term *kisaeng* also appeared in tourist guidebooks on Korea in the 1920s and 30s as both a national symbol and a sex icon that stimulated the curiosity of Japanese men.[50] It was in this context that *kisaeng* appeared in *Hantō no kin'ei*.

The commercialization of women, which had been outlawed during Japan's modernization, became a symbol of colonial Korea. The Japanese portrayed *kisaeng* as part of Korean culture and Korean identity. The term *keesang* (the transliteration based on Korean pronunciation) in *Hantō no kin'ei* is clear evidence of this.[51] This book presented the Japanese

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[45] Kurokawa Midori and Fujino Yutaka, *Sabetsu no nihon kingendaishi: Hōsetsu to haijo no hazama de* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2015), 9.

[46] Fujinaga Takeshi, "Shokuminchiki Chōsen ni okeru kōsyōseido no kakuritsu katei: 1910 nendai no sōru wo chūshin ni," *Nijusseiki kenkyū* 5 (2004): 13.

[47] *Hantō no kin'ei* used the romanization "Keesang" for the Chinese characters 妓生, whereas we have used "kisaeng" in this study following the McCune-Reischauer romanization, except when citing *Hantō no kin'ei*.

[48] Choi In-Tag, "Ilche ch'imnyakki sajin kurim yŏpsŏ rŭl t'onghaesŏ pon kisaeng kiŏk," *Ilbon munhwa yon'gu* 67 (2018): 66.

[49] Im Hye-jung, "Kŭndae Ilbon ŭi pangnamhoe wa kisaeng ŭi kamu hwaltong," *Kongyŏn munhwa yŏn'gu* 24 (2012): 342–345.

[50] Suh Ji-Young, "P'yosang, chendŏ, singminjuŭi: Cheguk namsŏng i pon Chosŏn kisaeng," *Asia yŏsŏng yŏn'gu* 48, no. 2 (2009): 68.

[51] In *Hanto no kin'ei*, in addition to *keesang*, one more item was written based on Korean pronunciation: 長栍.

pronunciation of the names of places they wished to claim as part of the Empire, whereas *keesang* denoted something that belonged to an inferior culture. In other words, that which belonged to Imperial Japan was written according to the Japanese pronunciation, while that which belonged to the colony was written according to the Korean pronunciation.

Conclusion

Place names express the identity of a region. When conflicts arise over the ownership of a region, individuals or groups may attempt to give it a name that reflects their worldview and propagates their message. In East Asia, Japan aimed to establish its hegemony and build an empire, and to achieve this, it tried to transplant its identity into its colonies by changing their place names. Japan sought to incorporate colonial Korea into the empire by changing its place names to reflect Japanese culture. As East Asian countries commonly used Chinese characters, their identities were unclear to readers unfamiliar with the regional pronunciation of the characters. To become the only empire in East Asia, Japan used the Roman alphabet to assign Japanese sounds to the place names of its colonies. In doing so, it transplanted its identity into the colonies as it expanded its empire.

The Roman alphabet was an important medium for Japan because it was recognizable to Westerners, allowing Japan to spread its message to Western countries. It sought to emulate the modernization processes of Western empires, translating literature that described and explained its worldview into the English language and distributing it in Western societies to obtain approval from these countries. Japan asserted the legitimacy of its colonial rule based on this approval.[52] The use of the Roman alphabet to encode Japanese pronunciation in *Hantō no kin'ei* was in line with Japan's strategy toward foreign countries. This was a political act designed to reinforce the idea that colonial Korea was part of the Japanese Empire.

The study of place names in East Asian colonies has focused almost exclusively on written Chinese characters. However, the identity of a country is revealed only when the Chinese characters are pronounced. As such, future research needs to focus more on sounds rather than letters in order to effectively demonstrate the symbolism contained in a place name. Such studies could elucidate the language strategies and policies employed by the Japanese Empire to govern colonial Korea and other East Asian colonies.

In the English table of contents, it was translated as *totem posts*, but in the Japanese table of contents, the Korean pronunciation was presented in *katakana*, which is one of the Japanese scripts, along with the Chinese characters. The descriptions attached to this totem pole photo criticize it as "an old thing with an uncertain origin" by stating that "As modernization has taken place recently, the government has worked to reduce the number in order to eradicate them" (p. 6). To the Japanese, 長栍 was considered part of the old, inferior, negative culture of colonial Korea. As such, they transliterated it based on the Korean pronunciation. Even though 長栍 is written using *katakana*, it can be understood in the same context as 妓生. This also serves as evidence that the Japanese intentionally transliterated 妓生 as *keesang* based on the Korean pronunciation.

52 Kim Hyo-sook, Kwak Eun-joo, Lee Byung-jin, and Tak Jin-young, "Chosŏn ch'ongdokpu kanhaeng 'Ilbonŏ Yŏngŏ taejo t'eksŭtŭ': Saryogun ŭi pogo mit yŏn'gu chŏnmang," *Ilbon kongan* 28 (2020), 158-159.

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