

(From Miller)

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE HANDLING OF PLACENAMES AND PLACENAME FILES  
FOR SIGNAL INTELLIGENCE PURPOSES

I. EXPERIENCE OF JATA PLACENAMES UNIT  
II. RECOMMENDATIONS

I. For the past three years the writer has been concerned daily with various problems involving the identification and location of placenames in the Pacific Theater. From the experience so gained, it is felt that several valuable lessons have been learned and that their presentation in the form of these recommendations is warranted. To a considerable extent their exposition can best be undertaken in terms of the history of the Japanese Army Traffic Analysis approach to the problem. It must be emphasized that these experiences are to a considerable extent unique because of the language problem involved and the peculiar nature of Japanese Army traffic. The prime importance of the identification of specific placenames and their connection or association with signal activities as an immediate source of intelligence is readily apparent. That the routing system used on Japanese Army traffic involved a simple code encipherment of the actual place of origin and place of destination of each message in a relatively low grade system greatly increased the scope of placename identification activity.

In the latter half of 1942, when significant progress in the reconstruction of these routing systems was first made, Traffic Analysis became interested in speedy identification of all placenames. Unfortunately no comprehensive study of the phonetics of Japanese spellings of foreign placenames were available nor were gazetteers or listings in English, in characters, or even in Kana, of Japanese spellings of placenames in the Pacific Theater available. As initial

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success in the solution of routing systems began to yield a steadily increasing volume of placenames for identification, the exact location of each placename became prerequisite. Such maps as were available at the time and such gazetteers as could be found were consulted and found to be inadequate. (The chief reference works available were commercial World Atlas (Rand McNally, London Times Gazetteer) and Navy Hydrographic Office "Pilots" for specific areas). As inquiry revealed that neither Army Map Service nor Navy Hydrographic Office expected to issue a general gazetteer of the Pacific Theater in the then near future (such a gazetteer has not appeared to date) or even soon to make available gazetteers of specific areas within the Theater, Captain Howard Martin and the writer decided to prepare, as a temporary expedient, a gazetteer of the entire area based on whatever maps were available. The "Gazetteer of Pacific Theater Placenames, Circular JE-3" was issued 8th December, 1943. Although this publication had recognized limitations due to the method of preparation, it has attracted widespread and gratifying popularity - over four hundred and fifty copies have been distributed throughout the world. Subsequently the placename unit collected all gazetteers, maps, placename listings, et cetera which could be found and a considerable file is available in addition to the chief index of placenames by Japanese spelling.

The primary problem faced by Traffic Analysis in connection with processing traffic was identification of the place of origin and destination of messages, the termini of circuits, etc. which could be determined chiefly from the operators' chatter and routing systems. The problem involved the various means available to the Japanese for writing their language, the phonetics of their

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language, plus the native name of the place concerned which would at best be known to us by an English Phonetic approximation of the native sounds. Although various listings of corresponding English and Japanese phonemes were available, it was found that placename spellings did not strictly conform to these rules and subsequent experience clearly indicates, in the belief of the writer, that placename identification is a separate problem from that of general translation and should be handled as such.

Knowledge of traffic movement, circuit information, sending and receiving relationships, all gained from handling a considerable volume of messages, assist in the selection of a probable identification. An example of a traffic analysis placename identification and that made by a translator may be seen in the following example: A message from an air unit, carried by Order of Battle in Southern Korea, contained textual reference to the presence of elements of its command at Taiden Airfield. In the message the characters can be read TAI DEN or OU TA. The translator arbitrarily took the reading OUTA and it was published in the bulletin. The routing line of the message carried a number correctly identified as Taiden from circuit evidence available through Traffic Analysis. The difficulty arose from the fact that the same characters, read OUTA, represent an important Central Honshu Airfield. Any number of similar examples can be adduced. A captured map of the Philippines showing radio stations by island was received shortly after the invasion of Leyte. Translator personnel attempted to identify the places with approximate fifty percent success. The writer, simply by consulting available gazetteers and comparing the captured map to a standard U.S. map of similar scale, identified better than ninety-five percent of the names in

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Japanese spelling with the actual place and furnished the coordinates. The translator's version had done little more than convert the kana script to Hepborn romaji.

As experience was acquired from the daily increasing number of spellers, the volume of identifications steadily increased and a considerable file was built up. By February, 1943 it was possible to publish a listing of identified speller combinations derived from the Oak and Pine DD Syllabaries which ran to some twenty-odd pages. By November, 1943, Circular JK-2 "Pacific Theater Placenames (Kana)" was issued, followed in July, 1944 by JK-4, 78 pages, with a 32 page supplement in January, 1945, and JK-5 of 202 pages in August of this year. A final historical listing of all placename identifications and materials is being prepared and will be incorporated in the I and L Geographic File.

In addition to the regular listings of identifications made in the above gazetteers, various other publications were made. In the first months of 1943 a special listing was prepared for B-2 Branch through the assistance of IBM. This was a syllable sort, on all syllables, of all placenames in kana spelling then available. Various listings of kana spellings of airfields, placenames occurring as assigned DD numbers (places assigned a single code number in any code system), lists of geographical terms in Asiatic dialects, equations of kana and Chinese readings of characters, etc. were also prepared.

Considerable difficulty was encountered from the start in making identifications. <sup>AVAILABLE</sup> Such rules for the phonetics of Japanese vis a vis English words were inadequate. As the material involved was placenames, for which a native pronunciation as interpreted in English, or Dutch, or French, or Chinese,

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had to be traced from the Japanese phonetic speller before the English equivalent could be determined, it became necessary to develop from experience our own rules and procedures. Often considerable variation for the same name would be found, apparently at the discretion (or, as it seemed, idiosyncrasy) of the individual Japanese operator writing the name. As the average Jap was often ignorant of the linguistic problem involved such discrepancies were considerable. Happily excellent cooperation between all centers working on the Japanese army problem has always existed and views and identifications were readily exchanged. Fortunately, too, circuit evidence made possible a limitation of the area in which any given identification could be sought. Besides the problem of native phonetics concerned in Southwest Asia and Indies Area identifications, Chinese, Manchurian and Korean placenames, being based in the Japanese reading (either ON or KUN) of the character also presented considerable problem. Excellent relations were steadily maintained with B-1 Branch and I and L. Both Lt. Bell and Captain Hotson have been most kind in assisting in correlating information available to all. Similar exchange of information with both Special Branch of MIS and with Lt. Larson of NCA have also assisted in identifications. At the beginning of 1944 the problem of Chinese characters and their identification became so great that a specialist was obtained for working with this material and given charge of placename identifications in general for Traffic Analysis. This specialist, Mr. Westley Bliss, has made an important contribution to the progress in placename identifications and has been responsible for the identifications published since that time. In January, 1944 the writer was appointed to the SSA Committee on Japanese Spelling by Col. Brown (of E Branch) and Col. Cooke. The chief problem of this Committee which concerned him was that of the

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Spelling of Japanese words in English and the standardization of placename spellings for identified spellers. The practice of indicating untranslated kana in bulletins by underlining was adopted from the previous use of this method by Traffic Analysis for placename spellers. A War Department directive required that the Hepburn system for Romanized Japanese be used. All concerned agreed that there were several disadvantages to this system but it was impossible to alter it. However, Nihonzeki could be used for technical purposes and the transcription to Hepburn made only for publication. Standard spellings for map names also created a considerable problem and agreement was reached for coordinating the form used in SSA publications. The 2nd Japanese Army Problem Conference recommended that all centers conform to the principles proposed and their acceptance was secured. According to the agreement reached here, this center acted as coordinating agency on placename spellings. By agreement reached at this time, "U" rather than "OE" and "Y" rather than "J" was to be used in spelling Indonesian names. Subsequently the spelling of Chinese names became an increased problem. The Army Map Service spellings, employing the modified Wade Giles System, was standard for all official publications but it was found, as had been the case with Indonesian names (where the Army Map Service spellings again did not exactly correspond to those used by Traffic Analysis and MIS) that the spelling called for by the Army Map Service often differed considerably with names already well established and familiar in every day use in our publications. After considerable discussion, it was agreed to continue already established placename spellings where change in the name to conform to AMS form would have seriously disrupted files and records. This agreement, concurred in

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by MIS, B-1 and B-2, was actually a reiteration of the decision of the 2nd Jap Army Conference. It should be pointed out that Lt. Larson of NCA encountered exactly similar difficulties in the use of Hepburn and in divergences with Army Map Service placename spellings.

It is readily apparent that considerable collateral material in the form of gazetteers, hydrographic office "Pilots", maps, both English and character in varying scale, captured documents with placename information, and similar sources of reference was prerequisite. The various centers were most cooperative in exchanging copies of such material; WEC, in particular, was most helpful.

Careful record should be kept of the level of any placename identification as to the source from which it was made. Thus "Thumb", "Secret" and "Ultra" placename identifications, while they should be kept together in one general file, should be distinguished. An example of the serviceability of such record is seen in the case of Api, the name used by the Japanese for Jesselton, Borneo. Equation of Api with Jesselton was made at an early time by Traffic Analysis. At the time of the planned allied invasion of North Borneo, Special Branch inquired if it were possible to "de-classify" Api to a "Confidential" level in order that the theater could be supplied with information about Api which was necessary in attacking Jesselton. Fortunately our records could cite a captured map, supplied by WEC, on which this equation would be made at the required "Confidential" level.

Somewhat similar problems in identification and record-keeping were found with such places as Shimen, speller SEKIMON, which actually was the same as Shihchi Chiang, speller SEKIKASO. SEKIMON-Shihmen was the speller commonly

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appearing in traffic, with the assistance of Lt. Col. Reischauer, this place was equated with Shihchiachiang, and the latter form was that used by everyone except the Japanese. Similarly, the speller TOUZAN or TOUSAN was used for Tangshan, normal speller TANZAN, as TOUSAN was the expected speller for Tangshan, an entirely different place from Tanshan, considerable difficulty was encountered in keeping the records straight. All of these identifications, however, could be supported by Traffic Analysis evidence and thus were facilitated.

II. Although the experience gained as detailed above was to a considerable extent unique through the nature of the Japanese Army problem, both as to scope, type of routing system used on traffic (from which the preponderance of identifications were drawn), and linguistic problem, certain techniques and principles are notable. The advantage of a central repository of all placename information is self-evident. (Such a Central File has existed in I and L Branch but to a considerable extent only as a recording unit). It is thought by the writer that the Geographic Section of I and L Branch should have the sole responsibility for identifying all placenames. Placename identifications, as made in this unit, are based on the following factors: linguistic, (equating the spelling found with the accepted English map spelling -- note that for any given name, any number of spellings are possible and should be cross-referenced by occurrence to the English standard, as Japanese, Russian, French, Chinese), geographic, (knowledge of the general importance of a place, its location, geographic and economic importance), traffic, (routings associated with a

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given place are the single source of information available to signal intelligence in locating a given place), collateral (this may be loosely interpreted to include any association as of persons, factories, movements, etc. which are associated with the placename. Obviously employment of these various tools requires some specialist on placenames alone and requires adequate reference material in the form of gazetteers, maps, etc.

The essential factor is to keep record of all names which have occurred, with whatever data may seem pertinent as to time of occurrence, place, etc. Such a file would not reproduce in master file form all available placenames from the Army Map Service gazetteers. The actual card should include: the spelling in which the name occurred, with reference to the standard English spelling if necessary. A card by standard English spelling, giving latitude and longitude coordinates, general area, relative size of place and indication of importance as: airfield, port, railroad junction, indication as to whether it appeared in the Topical Index or other files, with indication of where to look, and finally a record of the place in which it first appeared (bulletin number, if possible) and an indication of the classification of the information given. (Changes in such classification should, of course, be indicated).

Thomas A. Miller  
C.I.C. B-4-C-3  
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