

Reading Between the Lines

Translating Imperial Japan

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Introduction

During my sophomore year of college, I designed and conducted an independent research project as part of a Studio Lab internship. I chose to do a translation project using a picture book titled "Special Photographic Album of the China Incident: A Yomiuri Shimbun Publication Featuring Combat Photography by Staff Sent to the Front Lines" (特支那事變寫真帖派員決死影讀賣新聞社),¹ from the University of Colorado Boulder's Rare and Distinctive Collections. It was published in 1938, during the Second Sino-Japanese War, as part of a series of wartime publications produced by the Yomiuri Newspaper Company. As an Asian Studies major with a focus on East Asia, I was immediately drawn to this source, especially since I have never worked with a rare archival document. Beyond its rarity, the publication source itself also made the picture book especially compelling to me. The Yomiuri Newspaper Company, founded on November 2,

1874,² is one of Japan's five major newspapers³ and is credited with having the world's largest newspaper circulation as of 2019.⁴ I have seen The Yomiuri Newspaper countless times while traveling in Japan and used its publications in other research, so seeing its name attached to a wartime picture book immediately piqued my interest, as it offered an opportunity to examine how one of Japan's oldest and most influential newspapers presented the Second Sino-Japanese War and its expansionist campaign while it was unfolding. The picture book combined photographs taken from the front lines of the war with accompanying text that presents the Japanese soldiers and reporters as messianic heroes and courageous defenders of the nation. This is in stark opposition to the horrific violence and terror the Japanese soldiers inflicted upon Chinese civilians during this time (which the reporters would have witnessed), especially during the atrocities of the Nanjing Massacre. My translation and analysis of the source's

¹*Shina Jihen Shashinchō: Tokuhain Kesshi Satsuei* [Special Photographic Album of the China Incident: A Yomiuri Shimbun Publication Featuring Combat Photography by Staff Sent to the Front Lines], ed. Yomiuri Shinbunsha (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1938).

²"読売小史: 読売新聞の会社案内" [A Short History of the Yomiuri: Yomiuri Shimbun Corporate Guide], *読売新聞の会社案内* [Yomiuri Shimbun Corporate Guide], accessed July 2, 2026, <https://info.yomiuri.co.jp/group/history/>.

³"日本語新聞 (五大全国紙)" [Japanese Newspapers (Five Major National Papers)], *神戸大学附属図書館* [Kobe

University Library], last modified August 18, 2026, <https://lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/collections/newspapers/ja-national/>.

⁴Tetsuya Kuroyabu, "2019年度の世界新聞発行部数のランキング 日本、インド、中国が10位までを独占" [2019 World Newspaper Circulation Rankings: Japan, India, and China Monopolize the Top 10], *MEDIA KOKUSYO*, February 27, 2020, https://www.kokusyo.jp/oshigami_c/14771/.

introduction demonstrate how it functioned as a piece of wartime propaganda by employing glorifying language to portray the Japanese soldiers as heroic defenders of the nation while strategically omitting their violence against Chinese civilians. Through both what it celebrated and what it concealed, the picture book lent itself to the construction of a nationalistic fantasy used to further legitimize Japan's expansionist ambitions.

When I first read the picture book, its high level of inaccessibility to most Americans immediately stood out to me. There are several reasons for this, the first being that the text is written entirely in Japanese, more specifically in pre-WWII Japanese that differs from modern Japanese in its orthography, kanji usage, grammar, and writing conventions, and no official English translation exists. Secondly, engaging critically with the source requires more than a basic understanding of the Second Sino-Japanese War, a conflict that receives comparatively little attention in the American public education system relative to the European side of WWII. Finally, a complete, cover-to-cover digital copy of it does not exist publicly on the open web, and it is classified as a rare military antique outside of Japan; so, as an American, unless your local university or library has it, you can afford to pay upwards of \$500 for it on eBay or fly to Japan to buy it cheaper, it is completely inaccessible.

To address these issues, I decided to create a series of linguistic breakdowns using graphs,

rather than simply providing a Japanese-to-English translation, along with an accompanying essay to provide historical context and linguistic background so that more readers can fully engage with the text. Each component addresses a different accessibility barrier. The general English translation removes the linguistic obstacle that prevented most American readers from accessing the text; the historical background terminates the introduction's deliberate omission of atrocities, which reveals the picture book's true propagandistic nature; and the linguistic analysis demonstrates the ideological meaning embedded within each word of the text, providing a more in-depth look into how individual lexical and grammatical choices collectively reinforce the introduction's glorification of the Japanese Empire. The second and third elements specifically offer a level of nuance that would be lost in a conventional translation.

At the same time, several challenges remain. Translation is inherently interpretive; different translators often have diverse interpretations of the same text, and perfectly preserving the true meaning of a source into another language remains impossible because language permits multiple valid interpretations. This project is not a definitive rendering by any means because no translation can claim to perfectly preserve every nuance of the source. Furthermore, my work only focuses on the introduction of the picture book; the rest of the source remains in the same state of inaccessibility I found the entire document in

before my project. Hopefully, in the future, additional translations of the picture book will further expand the body of scholarship surrounding it and contribute additional perspectives to our understanding of the text. Despite these inherent issues, the three features of this project allow American readers to engage fully with the source, expanding public understanding of both the Second Sino-Japanese War and the role propaganda played in shaping historical memory during the conflict in ways that were previously inaccessible to an English-speaking audience.

Historical Context

The historical context of the picture book begins with the Meiji Restoration (starting in 1868), during which large-scale westernization and industrialization were adopted amid a complete restructuring of previous socio-political frameworks. During the Meiji Restoration, Japan realized that improving its economy and independence required rapid industrialization, but vital resources such as oil and steel had to be imported. This issue most directly contributed to Japan's aggressive imperialism, since the invasion of surrounding countries would give Japan access to and control over the required resources for industrialization and military growth while

decreasing its reliance on foreign nations. By the time the Yomiuri picture book was published in 1938, Japan had already spent decades pursuing its increasingly aggressive expansionist foreign policy. It acquired Taiwan as a colony after victory in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), annexed Korea in 1910, occupied Manchuria in 1931, and launched a full-scale invasion of China in 1937, beginning the Second Sino-Japanese War. One of the war's earliest events was the Battle of Shanghai, a months-long struggle lasting from August 13 to November 9, 1937,⁵ that ultimately ended with Japanese forces capturing the city. The battle marked the beginning of a campaign of extreme violence against the Chinese that intensified as the Japanese Imperial Army advanced inland. Following the fall of Shanghai, the Japanese troops fought retreating Chinese units westward up the Yangtze River valley until November 26, 1937, when the Xicheng line, China's last formal defensive line for Shanghai, was broken.⁶ On that day, Japan pivoted to advance toward China's capital of Nanjing, leaving widespread destruction in their wake. After entering the city on December 13, 1937,⁷ they carried out the Nanjing Massacre (also known as the Rape of

⁵Li, Xiaobing. *China at War: An Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA, Boston, Massachusetts: ABC-CLIO, Credo Reference, 2015, 297.

⁶While the start date of the Battle of Shanghai remains largely undisputed, the battle's final day is often documented as either November 9, 1937, the day Shanghai

was captured, or November 26, 1937, the day the final line of defense was broken, and the Japanese Army began to move toward Nanjing. I chose to adhere to the November 9th date in deference to Xiaobing Li's book for better continuity.

⁷Li, *China at War*, 297.

Nanjing), which was approximately five weeks⁸ of mass executions, extreme sexual violence, and torture against Chinese civilians, resulting in casualty estimates that range widely from 42,000 to as many as 300,000 victims.⁹ The Yomiuri picture book includes photos from the Battle of Shanghai and was published in May 1938, about three to four months after the Nanjing Massacre ended on January 22nd.¹⁰ The full extent of the picture book's propagandistic nature becomes apparent when read within this historical context, as the celebration and deification of the Japanese Imperial Army and its soldiers stands in striking contrast to the widespread violence and destruction they committed.

The picture book's introduction shapes readers' perception of war into a righteous and heroic endeavor, rife with themes of military heroism, glorification of sacrifice for the nation, and the legitimization of war. The Japanese soldiers are continuously characterized as loyal, brave, noble, and "truly worthy of respect" because they sacrificed their lives for Japan. This encourages readers to idolize and covet death for the nation so they can also be placed within a sanctified narrative of national virtue like the soldiers. This treatment is also extended to the reporters, whose deaths in the field are aestheticized as noble sacrifices, martyrs who died "gloriously" at the front. By elevating

reporters alongside soldiers, the text broadens the avenues of imperial service, informing readers, who might not be suited to militaristic endeavors, that other avenues to noble sacrifice exist. The Imperial Japanese Army is also assigned positive moral and symbolic descriptions like "bright" and "invincible" to make its conquests and expansion seem more admirable and natural. Every word in the picture book's introduction appears carefully selected to construct a unified ideological vision of Japan as a quasi-divine entity, whose imperial expansion is portrayed as both inevitable and cosmically ordained, with those who serve the nation presented as near-sacred figures whose loyalty and sacrifice should be revered. Yet, the text's propagandistic strength lies as much in its omissions as its rhetoric. Completely absent from the introduction is any acknowledgment of the violence suffered by Chinese civilians at the hands of the Japanese soldiers. Nowhere does the text reference in any way the widespread destruction, mass killings, or sexual violence inflicted upon hundreds of thousands of unarmed Chinese as Japan advanced inland. Understanding the historical context surrounding the source fundamentally alters its meaning. Building an unquestionably celebratory narrative around the courage, sacrifice, and noble military prowess of Japan and its citizens required a reader's complete ignorance of reality, which

⁸In *China at War: An Encyclopedia*, Li says the Rape of Nanjing lasted six weeks, however the dates used in the book actually amount to five weeks and five days. I elected to use the more technically accurate length in this paper.

⁹Li, *China at War*, 297.

¹⁰Li, *China at War*, 296.

could only be achieved through total erasure of the truth and the installation of a glorious and shining fantasy in its place. Once the historical truth is known, the introduction's mirage falls apart because the omission of the catastrophic amount of human suffering at the hands of the Japanese soldiers is a central feature of the text's propagandistic function. Without this deliberate silence, the picture book wouldn't have been able to sustain its portrayal of Japan's imperial expansion as wholly righteous and morally justified.

Methodology

Beyond the historical framing, a brief outline of the Japanese writing system for those unfamiliar with it further increases the accessibility of the text by giving context to the methodological and design choices behind my graphs. Japanese uses three different writing scripts called Katakana,¹¹ Kanji,¹² and Hiragana.¹³ Both Hiragana and Katakana are phonetic lettering systems where each symbol represents a sound. In contrast, Kanji are logographic characters taken from Chinese that represent meaning, not sounds. Hiragana serves many grammatical functions; it can be things like an auxiliary verb (助動詞, Jodōshi), a particle (助詞, Joshi), or a verb/adjective inflection (送り仮名, Okurigana). It is also used to indicate the pronunciation of Kanji as a reading aid (振り仮名,

Furigana). Japanese frequently forms compound words (熟語, Jukugo) by combining two or more kanji that have separate meanings. Knowing only the combined pronunciation and meaning of a compound word does not reveal the true intricacies behind how the word was formed. I wanted my graphs to break down each word in its entirety, which meant it had to include the pronunciations and meanings of each Kanji character within one compound word.

To do this, I separated each sentence into individual lexical units and put them into vertical columns. When a word contained a grammatical Hiragana attached to a Kanji character, I usually kept the Hiragana attached to its corresponding Kanji in the same column, like in the case of 渉る (Wataru), whose Kanji 渉 (Wata) exists in the same column with its Hiragana particle る (Ru), because the Hiragana changes the verb into the infinitive/plain structure and is an integral part of the word's conjugated form. This was unless the grammatical element substantially affected the meaning/translation of a phrase, in which case I separated it to explain its function more thoroughly. Standalone particles that function independently within the sentence, like を (O), に (Ni), は (Ha), and が (Ga), were generally put into their own column because they indicate grammatical relationships rather than contributing to the formation of a word. Particles

¹¹McGloin, Naomi Hanaoka, Mutsuko Endo Hudson, Fumiko Nazikian, and Tomomi Kakegawa. *Modern Japanese Grammar: A Practical Guide*. Routledge, 2014, 12.

¹²McGloin et al., *Modern Japanese Grammar*, 13.

¹³McGloin et al., *Modern Japanese Grammar*, 10.

that formed part of a fixed expression or lexical unit, like 我が (Waga, "our"), were kept together.

The first horizontal row of each graph, labeled "Original Text," simply contains the Japanese lexical units exactly as they appear in the picture book. The second row, "Hiragana," contains the Hiragana of the entire compound word, including attached grammatical function Hiragana if applicable. The third row, named "Split," separates the compound word into its individual Kanji components and provides the Hiragana for each character. If the lexical unit contains an attached grammatical Hiragana, it also comes down in its own section in the "Split" row. It remains in the same form throughout because Hiragana cannot be broken down further. The fourth row, "Romanized," converts all the Hiragana into the Latin alphabet, while still preserving the sections established in the "Split" row. The fifth row, labeled "Separate Characters Meaning," provides the reader with the separate definition of each individual Kanji and grammatical Hiragana (if applicable). The sixth row, named "Combined," shows the unified romanization of the entire lexical unit, getting rid of the sections made in the "Split" row. The next row, "Characters Into A Complete Word: Direct Translation", shows the full meaning of the lexical unit as a whole. If the lexical unit in the vertical column is more than one Hiragana character, the rows "Separate Characters Meaning" and

"Combined" will contain an "X" because they won't be applicable. If it's just one Hiragana character, the "Split" row will also have an X. The eighth and final horizontal row of each graph is detached from the vertical columns. It has the complete English translation of the paragraph containing the analyzed lexical units. Because I often split sentences into sections to fit into the tables, some of these sections do not make sense on their own in English due to differences in sentence structure between Japanese and English. Japanese follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV)¹⁴ pattern, while English prefers Subject-Verb-Object (SVO). To address this, the corresponding English words/phrases of the lexical units that have been analyzed in the graph are underlined and bolded in the eighth row.

Above each graph, I show which paragraph, sentence within that paragraph, and lexical units within that sentence are being analyzed. The entire paragraph, other than the sentence containing the lexical units being analyzed in the graph, is written in 7-point font. The analyzed sentence is written in 9-point font and underlined. The specific lexical units being analyzed in the graph are highlighted in yellow. Headers indicate the paragraph and sentence being translated (e.g., "First Paragraph, First Sentence" or "Second Paragraph, Third Sentence") for each section.

¹⁴Makino, Seiichi, and Michio Tsutsui. *A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar*. Japan Times, 1986.

Conclusion

The Yomiuri picture book demonstrates that propaganda is constructed as much through strategic omission as through persuasive rhetoric. By translating the introduction, situating it within its historical context, and analyzing its language at the lexical level, this project makes those mechanisms visible to an English-speaking audience. Increasing access to primary sources such as this one expands public understanding of a lesser-known conflict while encouraging critical examination of how language shapes historical memory. As propaganda continues to highly influence the way we remember and understand events, studying documents like this remains essential for recognizing how narratives are created and sustained.

Samples

Below are some of the graphs I made in my analysis. Since the actual document is around sixty-four pages long, I have picked the sixth “sentence” in the first paragraph, due to it highlighting the propagandistic nature most glaringly. More information about the graphs and the Japanese language can be found underneath the last graph.

Sixth Sentence

るに至りたるが、其の間僅に半歳、東亞の歴史を回轉せしめた此の偉業の蔭に忠勇武烈なる我が皇軍將兵が生死一如、猛暑酷暑に身を曝しつ、天嶮を越え、泥濘を踏み、又荒天の海空に挑んで屈せず、**或は¹⁵十字砲火を潜り¹⁶肉弾以て堅壘鐵塞を突破せる勞苦辛酸と其の崇高なる盡忠報國の皇軍精神とは、肅然、襟を正さむるものがある。**

Original Text	或は			十字砲火			を			潜りて						
Hiragana	あるいは			じゅうじほうか			を			くぐりて						
Split	或			は	十字			砲火			を	潜		り	て	
	あ	る	い		十		字	砲		火		く	ぐ			
					じ	ゆ	う	じ	は	う						か
Romanized	A	Ru	I	Wa (Ha)	Ji	Yu	U	Ji	Ha	U	Ka	O (Wo)	Ku	Gu	Ri	Te
	Arui				Jūji (Jiyuuji)			Hō (Hau)					Kugurite			
Separate Characters Meaning	To exist			Topic Particle	Cross Cross-shaped			Cannon		Fire	X	To evade			Te-form of verb	
Combined	Aruiha			Jūjihōka (Jiyuujihauka)						X			Kugurite			
Combined Characters Into A Complete Word: Direct Translation	Sometimes Or			Crossfire						Indicates the direct object of the verb			To evade			
English Translation	They evaded crossfire while using their bodies as human bullets to break through firm fortifications and iron strongholds; the Imperial Army’s hardships, suffering and noble spirit of devotion and loyalty to the country makes one solemnly straighten one’s collar in respect.															

¹⁵或は can also indicate that not all, but some soldiers faced these extreme conditions, highlighting individual acts of heroism, but in keeping with the picture book's glorification of the Imperial Army as a whole, I am opting to go with the translation that implies that the following action is one of several hardships the soldiers face.

¹⁶潜りて (Mogurite) means to "dive under" or "submerge," but depending on the context (such as in classical Japanese literature or older poetry) it becomes 潜りて (Kugurite), which means to evade or bypass.

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Original Text	肉彈				以て		堅壘				鐵塞				を	突破せる					
Hiragana	にくだん				もって		けんるい				てっさい				を	とっぱせる					
Split	肉		彈		以		て	堅		壘		鐵		塞		X	突		破	せ	る
	に	く	だ	ん	も	っ		け	ん	る	い	て	っ	さ	い		と	っ	は		
Romanized	Ni	Ku	Da	N	Mo	Tsu	Te	Ke	N	Ru	I	Te	Tsu	Sa	I	O (Wo)	To	Tsu	Ha	Se	Ru
	Niku		Dan		Motsu			Ken		Rui		Tetsu		Sai			Totsu				
Separate Characters Meaning	Flesh Meat		Bullet Projectile		To use		Te-form of verb	Hard Firm		Fort Fortification		Iron		Fortress Stronghold		X	Pierce Thrust		Break Destroy	Adds causative nuance to verb	
Combined	Nikudan				Motte (Motsute)			Kenrui				Tessai (Tetsusai)				X	Toppaseru (Totsuhaseru)				
Combined Characters Into A Complete Word: Direct Translation	Human bombs Human bullets Flesh and bullets				With By means of			Firm fortification				Iron stronghold				Indicates the direct object of the verb	To cause a breakthrough To break through something				
English Translation	They evaded crossfire <u>while using their bodies as human bullets to break through firm fortifications and iron strongholds</u> ; the Imperial Army’s hardships, suffering and noble spirit of devotion and loyalty to the country makes one solemnly straighten one’s collar in respect.																				

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¹⁷突破せる is an example of Sound Blending (Sokuon/促音): When you combine Totsu + Ha (とつ + は), the "Tsu" changes into a small "Tsu" (っ) and the "Ha" changes to "Pa" to make it easier to pronounce. 破 (Ha) becomes "Pa" because whenever a small Tsu (っ) is followed by an H-row sound, it almost always transforms that sound into a P-row sound. This is also outlined in the Language Appendix.

Original Text	労苦			辛酸				と	其の		崇高なる					
Hiragana	ろうく			しんさん				と	その		すいこいなる					
Split	労		苦	辛		酸		X	其	の	崇		高		な	る
	ろ	う	く	し	ん	さ	ん		そ		す	う	こ	い		
Romanized	Ro	U	Ku	Shi	N	Sa	N	To	So	No	Su	U	Ko	I	Na	Ru
	Rō (Rou)		Ku	Shin		San					Sū (Suu)		Kō (Koi)			
Separate Characters Meaning	Labor Toil		Hardship Suffering	Bitter Painful		Sour Acidic		X	That	Possessive particle	Reverence Lofty	High Noble		To be Become		
Combined	Rōku (Rouku)			Shinsan				X	Sono		Sūkōnaru (Suukoinaru)					
Combined Characters Into A Complete Word: Direct Translation	Toil, Hard work, Suffering			Bitterness and hardship Pain and suffering				Particle meaning with or and	That		Noble Lofty					
English Translation	They evaded crossfire while using their bodies as human bullets to break through firm fortifications and iron strongholds; the Imperial Army’s hardships, suffering and noble spirit of devotion and loyalty to the country makes one solemnly straighten															

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Original Text	盡忠					報國				の	皇軍				精神				とは、	
Hiragana	じんちゅう					ほうこく				の	こうぐん				せいしん				とは、	
Split	盡		忠			報		國		X	皇		軍		精		神		と	は
	じ	ん	ち	ゅ	う	ほ	う	こ	く		こ	う	ぐ	ん	せ	い	し	ん		
Romanized	Ji	N	Chi	Yu	U	Ho	U	Ko	Ku	No	Ko	U	Gu	N	Se	I	Shi	N	To	Wa (Ha)
	Jin		Chū (Chiyuu)			Hō (Hou)		Koku			Kō (Kou)		Gun		Sei		Shin			
Separate Characters Meaning	Exhaust Devote		Loyalty			Repay Report		Country		X	Imperial		Army Military		Spirit Essence		Spirit Mind		With And	Topic Particle
Combined	Jinchū (Jinchiyuu)					Hōkoku (Houkoku)				X	Kōgun (Kougun)				Seishin				X	
Combined Characters Into A Complete Word: Direct Translation	Unwavering loyalty Unwavering dedication					Repaying the country Service to the state				Possessive Particle	Imperial Army				Spirit				Is Means	
English Translation	They evaded crossfire while using their bodies as human bullets to break through firm fortifications and iron strongholds; the <u>Imperial Army’s hardships</u> , suffering and noble <u>spirit of devotion and loyalty to the country</u> makes one solemnly straighten one’s collar in respect.																			

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Original Text	肅然、					襟		を	正さむる					もの		が	ある。	
Hiragana	しゅくぜん					えり		を	たださむる					もの		が	ある	
Split	肅			然		襟		X	正		さ	む	る	も	の	X	あ	る
	し	ゅ	く	ぜ	ん	え	り		た	だ								
Romanized	Shi	Yu	Ku	Ze	N	E	Ri	O (Wo)	Ta	Da	Sa	Mu	Ru	Mo	No	Ga	A	Ru
	Shuku (Shiyuku)			Zen		Eri			Tada		Samu			Mono			Aru	
Separate Characters Meaning	Solemn Respectful			So Thus Can Indicate state or condition		X		X	Correct Straighten	Combination of the classical auxiliary verb む with an inflection that includes さ		Indicates the completion of an action or a state		X		X	X	
Combined	Sukuzen (Shiyukuzen)					X		X	Tadasamuru					X		X	X	
Combined Characters Into A Complete Word: Direct Translation	Solemnly Respectfully					Collar		Indicates the direct object of the verb	To straighten To correct					Thing Person		Subject Particle	To exist To be	
English Translation	They evaded crossfire while using their bodies as human bullets to break through firm fortifications and iron strongholds; the Imperial Army's hardships, suffering and noble spirit of devotion and loyalty to the country <u>makes one solemnly straighten one's collar in respect.</u>																	

Key Information

Translation:

There are words in the English translation that are not explicitly present in the original Japanese text but are implied by the context, such as “the,” “occurred,” or “an.” Japanese often relies on context and implied meanings, which can be understood without explicitly stating certain words. However, English typically requires these words, so there are necessary additions to maintain the integrity and readability of the translation while staying as true to the original Japanese sentence structure and meaning as possible.

Document layout:

This document uses the font Times New Roman for English and Arial for Japanese because the Times New Roman font renders Japanese characters in their cursive form, while Arial does not.

The graphs are structured as follows:

Original Text: The original text from the primary source.

Hiragana: The Hiragana form of the Kanji (if the word is originally in Hiragana, it is repeated here).

Split: The Kanji is broken down into its Hiragana form, aligned with the corresponding English letters.

Romanized: The Hiragana is translated into Roman letters (Romaji).

Separate Characters Meaning: The meaning of each Kanji character that makes up the word (not applicable for Hiragana).

Combined Kanji Into One Word: The meaning when the individual Kanji characters are combined.

Direct Translation: The direct translation of the Kanji word.

English Translation: The translation of the original Japanese text into English.

Language Appendix

Disclaimer: The information provided below, in the graphs, and throughout this paper do not in any way reflect the entirety of either modern Japanese or classical Japanese linguistics. Information is provided based on how efficient and helpful it is for those who are new to the Japanese language, rather than micro-accuracy. Attempting to explain the true breadth of both classical and modern Japanese would limit the effectiveness of this paper in enhancing access to the primary source.

Chōon 長音

In Japanese, long vowels are created by extending the vowel sound. This is often done by adding an extra vowel character or using a combination of characters.¹⁸ Long vowels are marked with a macron (e.g., Ō, Ū) to indicate an elongated sound.

For example, こ う (Kou): The long “ō” sound is created by combining こ (Ko) and う (U). This is why “Kou” becomes a long “ō” sound.

ゆ う (Yuu): The long “ū” sound is created by combining ゆ (Yu) and う (U). This is why “Yuu” becomes a long “ū” sound.

Commas

Commas in Japanese look like this “、” as opposed to “,”¹⁹

¹⁸The Library of Congress. “Japanese Romanization Table 2022 Version.” *The Library of Congress*, 2022.
<https://loc.gov/catdir/cpsa/romanization/japanese.pdf>.

¹⁹The Library of Congress. “Japanese Romanization Table 2022 Version.”

Hepburn Romanization Rules

Hepburn romanization is a system used to represent Japanese sounds using the Latin alphabet. It is widely adopted for its emphasis on reflecting Japanese pronunciation in a way that is intuitive for English speakers. Here are key features of the Hepburn Romanization Rules with examples:

Case Particles

Words that are “attached to nouns and indicate the grammatical role the nouns play with respect to the verb.”²⁰ They include Ga/が (subject), O/を (direct object), Ni/に (indirect object), and No/の (possessive).

Kanji Readings:

On'yomi/音読み represents “Japanese approximations of the Chinese pronunciations”²¹ of Chinese-origin words, which are called Kango/漢語,²² and are used for kanji compounds. Kun'yomi/訓読み represents native Japanese words,²³ called Wago/和語,²⁴ which are used for standalone kanji or certain contexts. Example: Isshi Hōkoku (一死報國) – いっしほうこく uses On'yomi readings for the kanji in a compound. Example: Yama (山) – やま uses the Kun'yomi reading when the kanji stands alone.

Old vs New Kanji

Several characters in this source use their traditional, pre-1946 forms.

- Traditional: 鐵 = Modern: 鉄
- Traditional: 國 = Modern: 国

Periods

Periods in Japanese look like this “。” as opposed to “.”²⁵

Quotation Marks

In Japanese, quotation marks are a pair of corner brackets that look like this: “ ” as opposed to “ ”.²⁶

Rendaku 連濁

A phenomenon in Japanese where the initial consonant of the second part of a compound word becomes voiced. This means that a voiceless consonant like “k” or “t” changes to a voiced consonant like “g” or “d.”²⁷ Here are some examples:

ひと + ひと → ひとびと (Hito + Hito → Hitobito): person + person = people

て + かみ → てがみ (Te + Kami → Tegami): hand + paper = letter

はな + ひ → はなび (Hana + Hi → Hanabi): flower + fire = fireworks

Botsu (勃) and Hatsu (發) become Boppatsu when put together.

²⁰McGloin et al., *Modern Japanese Grammar*, xxiii.

²¹Cavanaugh, Jillian R., and Shalini Shankar, eds. “Texts, Objects, Mediality.” Part. In *Language and Materiality: Ethnographic and Theoretical Explorations*, 41–102. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

²²McGloin et al., *Modern Japanese Grammar*, 14.

²³Cavanaugh and Shankar, “Texts, Objects, Mediality,” 41–102.

²⁴McGloin et al., *Modern Japanese Grammar*, 14.

²⁵The Library of Congress. “Japanese Romanization Table 2022 Version.”

²⁶The Library of Congress. “Japanese Romanization Table 2022 Version.”

²⁷McGloin et al., *Modern Japanese Grammar*, 10.

Sentences

Sentences in Japanese contain no spaces between words in a sentence, and commas and periods are followed by a larger space than in English.

Sokuon 促音

The small つ (Tsu) is used in Japanese to indicate a doubled consonant, creating a brief pause or “gemination” in pronunciation. This small “Tsu” is placed before the consonant to be doubled.²⁸ Here are some examples:

きって Kitte (Kitsute): postage stamp

ざっし Zasshi (Zatsushi): magazine

The は Particle

Ha/は is written as “Ha” but pronounced as “Wa,” and in accordance with the Library of Congress, I romanize the particle as “Ha,” but I chose to write (Wa) in a smaller font next to it to show its technical form.

The を Particle

O/を is written as “Wo” but pronounced as “O,” and in accordance with the Library of Congress, I romanize the particle as “O,” but I chose to write (Wo) in a smaller font next to it to show its technical form.

Yōon 拗音/Palatalized Consonants

In Japanese, smaller versions of certain hiragana characters (ゃ, ゅ, ょ) are used to create new sounds when combined with other characters. These smaller characters are known as yōon (拗音) or palatalized consonants and are used to form contracted sounds.²⁹ Here are some examples:

きゃ (Kya): A combination of き (Ki) and ゃ (small Ya)

しゅ (Shu): A combination of し (Shi) and ゅ (small Yu)

ちょ (Cho): A combination of ち (Chi) and ょ (small Yo)

These combinations change the pronunciation and meaning of words. For instance, じゅう (Jiyuu) means “freedom,” while じゅう (Jū) means “ten.”

²⁸Irwin, Mark. “The Onbin Sound Changes: The Frellesvigian Perspective.” *Journal of the Phonetic Society of Japan*, August 31, 2017. https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/onseikenkyu/8/2/8_KJ00007631409/article.

²⁹Kubozono, Haruo. *Handbook of Japanese Phonetics and Phonology*. Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2015.

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