A Study on Japanese and Foreign Place Names in Google Earth Satellite Images and GNS Database on South Korea*

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Abstract: With recent rapid globalization, accurate information for the foreign countries is increasingly important. Errors based on inaccurate information and unequal international relationships complicate the situations. In this article, authors analyzed the Japanese place names which appear on the Google Earth images and place name database of the NGA. Google Earth already becomes a tremendous soft power in internet society; therefore, accurate information on the satellite image is more necessary than ever.

This article finds that many types of errors exist in the place names in Google Earth image service. Also many place names are listed with Japanese pronunciation in GNS database as variants. The Japanese place names have not been used in toposchographic maps published since 1910s and 1930s. Japanese place names were widely used in US military maps published in 1946. 1:250,000 maps published in 1954, however, doesn’t seem to use Japanese pronunciation any more.

Key Words: Japanese place names, NGA, GNS database, Google Earth, Geonames DB, variant

요약: 세계화의 빠른 진행과 더불어 외국에 대한 정확한 인식과 더불어 한국에 대한 외국인의 정확한 인식은 매우 중요한 문제로 등장하였다. 지명과 관련하여 아직도 사실적 오류와 더불어 국제관계에서의 미묘한 역할관계로 인하여 많은 오류가 남아 있는 정도 사실이다. 그 가운데 미국의 위성영상서비스를 가운데 대표적인 구글사의 클릭서비스와 미국지리정보국의 지명데이터베이스에 관한 내용을 분석하면서 문제의 뿌리가 어디인지 밝히고자 하였다. 이미 구글에 관련된 논문은 Science Direct 검색결과 2008년 5월 현재 213건의 연구가 검색될 만큼 세계적으로 중요한 영향력을 가지고 있다. 또한 구글과 연구란 단어로 검색하면 무려 414건에 가까운 자료가 검색될 만큼 방대한 내용을 포함하고 있다. 따라서 구글 위성영상 서비스의 정확한 지명표기는 어느 때보다 중요하다.

본고에서는 전 세계의 지명을 영어로 서비스하고 있는 구글사의 구글서비스와 미국의 지명 DB내에 있는 오류사례를 찾아내어 그 유형을 분석하였다. 우리나라의 경우 이장이라는 형태로 일본식 발음을 가진 지명이 등재되어 있으며 그 숫자도 많다. 1946년에 발간된 미국의 지도에는 일본식 표기가 많으나, 1954년도에 발간된 1:250,000 축척의 지도에는 나타나지 않았다.

주요: 일본식지명, 국가지리정보국, 구글서비스, 지명DB, 이장

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1. Introduction

Place name is what land expresses itself, or geographical identity which is expressed on the land. Place-name is also an intrinsic component of political landscape, and its study should be an important part of political geography (Cohen and Kliot, 1992). Place name should be the one and only name which tells us geographical identity. Affixing names to places is inextricably linked with nation building and state formation in Israel (Azaryahu and Golan, 2001). As if each person has a personal name, each place has its own place name. One place should have one name, however, which is not always the case. Sometimes one place has two different names, or two or more place have the same name. Place names are being born, evolve and are extinguished, which is truer in case of places with longer tradition and history such as Korea. In case of Israel and Poland (Galasinski and Skowronek, 2001), place name plays a symbolic role as an expression of ideological values. The selection of place-names has become a powerful tool for reinforcing competing national Zionist ideologies. There are two competing place-name themes: the message of essentialism and continuity, and epochalism and change (Cohen and Kliot, 1992; Azaryahu and Golan, 2001).

The reasons for the research are as follows; there is an urgent research need for the study of Japanese place names and other types of foreign place names in Google images, because place names must be correct and contemporary to avoid mis-communication. Also place names are rapidly being made and changed due to the rapid economic growth of last few decades, therefore place names need systematic maintenance and also correct place names should be marked on the widely used internet-based maps.

However, many names of Japanese pronunciation still appear in the internet. The worst part of it is that more than 200 names with Japanese impacts and western countries still appear on the Google Earth images, which makes Korea a very unique compared with former Japanese colony countries such as Taiwan, which has longer colonial history than Korea.

Standardization of place names becomes necessary for an effective communication in the field of education, transportation, travel, and national security affairs (Choi, 2002). In terms of foreign affairs, standardization is necessary to maintain and claim the territory of a nation, symbolism, and communication among the countries. Standardization of place names is the process of unification of names, which establishes an official name to a specific place. In this respect, two names in one place as is shown in Google images may give incorrect idea of dual language or territorial dispute over that place. Standardization of place names has two aspects. One is domestic, which means establishing a place name to a specific place with official language of the nation. The other is international standardization, which means foreign countries adopt the standardized names from other countries.

This study is comprised of two parts, first part is the research projects on analysis of place names on the Google Earth images and the other is the statistical analysis of Korean place names in GNS database (NGA GEOnet Names Server) maintained by the NGA(National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency) of the USA.

Hypotheses for this research are as follows;

1) Japanese place names have been widely used since the first official topographic maps were printed in 1910s.
2) Most of English place names were introduced for the first time for the mapping purposes during the Korean War.