

GEOGRAPHY IN EAST ASIA

General

Most places in East Asia are named for the topography: Beijing 北京, Tōkyō 東京 and Seoul 京城 all have names that indicate their designation as a capital city. Hunan 湖南 Kita Kyūshū 北九州 and Yōngnam 嶺南 all have names that tell us their proximity to something. Changchun 長春, Aomori 青森 and Taegu 大邱 all have names that tell us something about the natural characteristic(s) of the place. Of course there are plenty of odd, inexplicable names too, but that could be said about most places in the world (why do we have a town called Delmar which is nowhere near the sea?).

China

The chapter in Wilkinson's *Manual on Geography* has much useful detail about the issues and transformation of Geography as a discipline in China. Here are some bare essentials:

Local Government Divisions--Historical

Even when China was divided, the different dynastic bureaucracies that ruled it were responsible for massive territories by contemporary European standards. Early on, China's rulers had to figure out how to extend imperial power into the regions beyond the capital. Here, as in the other aspects of administration that we have examined, there was much tinkering and adjustment, but gradually a standard system was developed.

Provinces: Although the Chinese provinces are the territorial unit that we discuss most frequently today, they were a relatively late development. It was not until the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) that China was divided into provinces (*shěng* 省) that actually had an administrative structure. Today, there are 24 provinces (not counting autonomous regions and special municipalities), but the number has varied since the Ming.



Circuits: Prior to the Ming, there were no official provinces. Instead officials were appointed who traveled through the prefectures of the empire inspecting the administration of a number of prefectures. These were the circuits (*dào* 道) of the empire. They were occasionally created with specific responsibilities such as tax collection within a province in later periods.

Prefectures: For most of Chinese history, these were the most important regional units. The number and nomenclature varied over time, but there were generally about 300 of them each headed by a Prefect. The prefectures were generally referred to as *zhōu* 州, but especially important ones were designated as *fǔ* 府. In some periods (especially early ones), it was common to use the term commandery (*jùn* 郡) to designate these units. The historical importance of these units is preserved today in many remaining place names.

Districts: The prefectures were divided into districts (*xiàn* 縣). This was the level of government that was most relevant to the lives of everyday Chinese throughout history. The Districts were headed by a magistrate (*lìng* 令), rank 7a, who theoretically had complete administrative, financial, and judicial authority over his jurisdiction. You will occasionally see references to counties in scholarly writing on Chinese local government. This is the unit that they are referring to. Although there was also great fluctuation in the number of districts, they generally numbered between 1300 and 1500.

Local Government Divisions--Contemporary¹

China's administrative units are currently based on a three-level system dividing the nation into provinces, counties, and townships:

- The country is divided into provinces 省, autonomous regions 自治区, and municipalities 市 directly under the Central Government;
- A province or an autonomous region is subdivided into autonomous prefectures 自治州, counties 縣, autonomous counties 自治縣, and/or cities 市;
- A county or an autonomous county is subdivided into townships 鄉, national minority townships 民族鄉, and/or towns 村.

Municipalities directly under the Central Government and large cities are subdivided into districts and counties; autonomous prefectures are subdivided into counties, autonomous counties, and cities. Autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures, and autonomous counties are all autonomous national minority areas.

Aliases and General Regions

There are regions and “aliases” in China, just as there are in the United States. For example, in the US we often refer to the “Midwest” and “New England”—these are designations one would never find on a map, but nonetheless we all know what they mean. We also refer to states and regions with nicknames or aliases. For example, when people refer to “Hoosiers,” we know they are referring to something associated with Indiana; references to “Buckeyes” are to Ohio (OK,

¹ Information is provided by “China in Brief” website <http://www.china.org.cn/e-china/administrative/administrative.htm>

I'm showing my Midwest roots here); cheese-heads are from Wisconsin. For natives, these sorts of names are internalized and simple to understand. For outsiders, they can be maddening. For good or bad, East Asians share our penchant for aliases. There is a chart in Wilkinson on page 137 that gives the alternative names of all the provinces. Here is a nice chart of provinces, cities, and various aliases. This chart was compiled by a Japanese, so the simplified characters may differ from those of the PRC.²

| 省 | 略称 | 都市 | 略称 | 別称 |
|--------|-------------|------|------|--------------------|
| 中国 | 華 | | | 神州· 赤縣· 九州· 華夏· 中華 |
| 黑龍江省 | 黑 | 哈尔滨 | 哈 | 冰城 |
| 吉林省 | 吉 | 長春 | | 汽車城· 電影城 |
| | | 吉林 | | 江城 |
| 遼寧省 | 遼 | 瀋陽 | 瀋 | 盛京 |
| | | 撫順 | | 煤城 |
| 內蒙古自治区 | 蒙· 内蒙 | 呼和浩特 | 呼 | 青城 |
| 河北省 | 冀· 燕趙· 畿輔 | 石家庄 | 石 | |
| | | 承德 | | 熱河 |
| 河南省 | 豫· 中原· 中州 | 鄭州 | 鄭 | |
| | | 開封 | 汴 | 菊城· 汴梁· 河城 |
| | | 洛陽 | | 牡丹城 |
| | | 平頂山 | | 鷹城 |
| 湖北省 | 鄂· 楚 | 武漢 | 漢 | 江城 |
| | | 襄樊 | 襄 | |
| 湖南省 | 湘 | 長沙 | 湘 | 潭州 |
| 四川省 | 川· 蜀· 巴· 巴蜀 | 成都 | 蓉 | 錦城· 芙蓉城 |
| | | 宜賓 | 賓 | |
| | | 自貢 | | 塩城 |
| 山東省 | 魯· 齊· 齊魯 | 濟南 | | 泉城 |
| | | 烟台 | 烟 | |
| 山西省 | 晋· 山右· 三晋 | 太原 | 并 | 并州 |
| | | 大同 | | 煤城 |
| 陝西省 | 陝· 陝秦 | 西安 | 秦· 陝 | 長安 |
| | | 延安 | | 抗大 |
| | | 宝鷄 | | 陳倉 |

² Chart source: <http://www.szroki.com/life/l-6.htm>

| | | | | |
|----------|-----------|------|-----|----------------|
| | | 蘭州 | 蘭 | 瓜果城 |
| 甘肅省 | 甘·隴·隴西·隴右 | 玉門 | | 油城 |
| 青海省 | 青 | 西寧 | 青 | 石堡城 |
| 寧夏回族自治区 | 寧 | 銀川 | 寧 | 鳳凰城 |
| | | 烏魯木齊 | 新·烏 | |
| 新疆維吾爾自治區 | 新 | 吐魯番 | | 火洲 |
| | | 合肥 | 皖 | 廬州 |
| 安徽省 | 皖 | 安慶 | | 宜城 |
| | | 南京 | 寧 | 石頭城·金陵 |
| | | 常州 | 常 | 龍城·延陵 |
| | | 蘇州 | 蘇 | 水城 |
| | | 無錫 | 錫 | |
| | | 揚州 | 楊 | 蕪城·維揚·竹西·準左·廣陵 |
| | | 徐州 | 徐 | 彭城 |
| 江蘇省 | 蘇 | 連進港 | 海 | |
| | | 南昌 | 昌 | 英雄城·火爐·洪都 |
| | | 九江 | 潯 | |
| | | 景德鎮 | | 磁都·瓷都 |
| | | 樟樹 | | 葯都 |
| 江西省 | 贛 | 贛 | 贛 | |
| | | 杭州 | 浙·杭 | 武林 |
| | | 寧波 | 甬 | |
| | | 義烏 | 義 | |
| 浙江省 | 浙 | 黃岩 | 岩 | |
| | | 福州 | 榕 | 三山 |
| | | 泉州 | 溫陵 | 鯉城·刺桐城 |
| | | 廈門 | | 鷺城·鷺島·鷺門 |
| | | 武夷山 | 夷 | |
| 福建省 | 閩·八閩 | 漳州 | | 果城 |
| | | 廣州 | 穗·羊 | 羊城·五羊城·穗城·花城 |
| | | 深セン | 鵬 | 鵬城 |
| | | 順德 | | 鳳城 |
| 廣東省 | 粵 | 河源 | | 水中城 |
| 廣西壯族自治區 | 桂·八桂 | 南寧 | 邕 | |

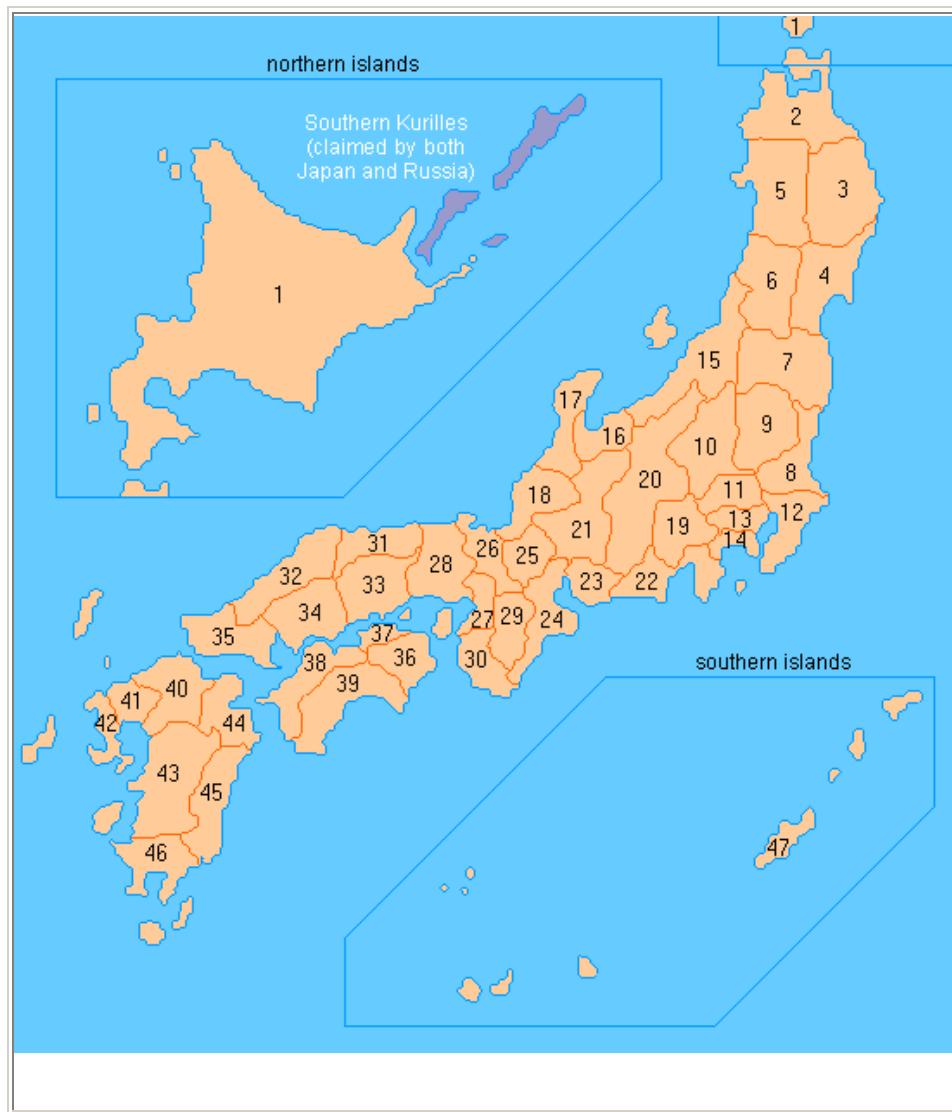
| | | | | |
|---------|-----|----|-----|------------------|
| | | 梧州 | 梧 | |
| | | 柳州 | | 龍城 |
| 貴州省 | 黔·貴 | 貴陽 | 築 | 第二春城 |
| | | 昆明 | 滇·雲 | 春城 |
| | | 大理 | | 榆城 |
| 雲南省 | 雲·滇 | 個旧 | | 錫都 |
| | | 海口 | 瓊 | 椰城 |
| 海南省 | 瓊 | 三業 | 崖 | |
| 西藏自治區 | 藏 | 拉薩 | | 日光城 |
| 香港特別行政區 | 港 | | | 香江 |
| | | | | |
| 澳門特別行政區 | 澳 | | | 濠江·濠鏡·海鏡·馬交·東方賭城 |
| 台灣省 | 台 | 台北 | | |
| 北京(直轄市) | | 北京 | 京 | 燕京 |
| 天津(直轄市) | | 天津 | 津 | 直隸·直衛 |
| 上海(直轄市) | | 上海 | 滬 | 申城·滬上 |
| 重慶(直轄市) | | 重慶 | 渝 | 山城·霧都·火炉 |

General regions are trickier, partly because they change over time and partly because they range in size from smaller than a province to inclusive of many provinces. Thankfully, most decent geographical dictionaries will tell you where an area is. An atlas won't have these places in its index, so you really do need to rely on the dictionary.

Other Subdivisions

Depending on your locale, you can expect a variety of official and unofficial subdivisions, especially in large cities. Common terms include city (*shì* 市), township/municipality (*xiāng* 鄉), town (*lǐ* 里), and hamlet (*zhuāng* 庄). In cities, there are usually districts 區, and roads 路/道. Roads are usually big; an “alley” is the next division. Depending on the city, this could be termed *hútòng* 胡同 or 巷 *xiàng* .

Prefectures (県): In modern Japan, the country mostly divided into prefectures. There is also a district (道), a municipality (都), and two urban prefectures (府). Japanese tend to lump all these together, though, and really don't focus on the difference much. An equivalent in the United States would be that we have states, one district (D.C.), and territories.

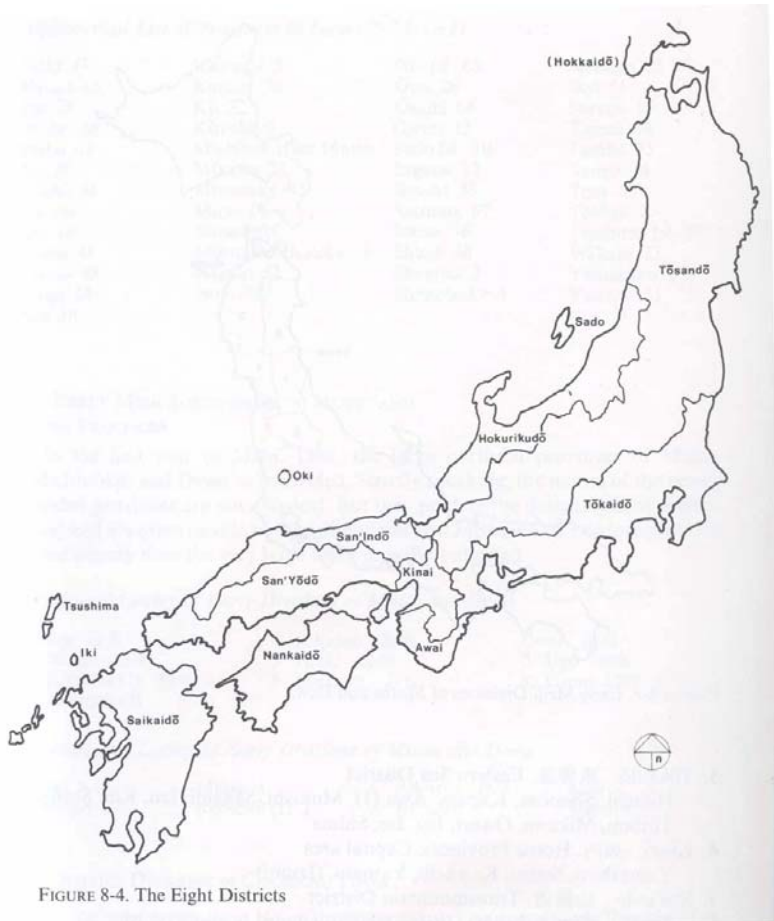


MAP OF JAPANESE PREFECTURES⁴

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Hokkaidō 北海道 | 13. Tōkyō 東京 | 25. Shiga 滋賀 | 37. Kagawa 香川 |
| 2. Aomori 青森 | 14. Kanagawa 神奈川 | 26. Kyōto 京都 | 38. Ehime 愛媛 |
| 3. Iwate 岩手 | 15. Niigata 新潟 | 27. Ōsaka 大阪 | 39. Kōchi 高知 |
| 4. Miyagi 宮城 | 16. Toyama 富山 | 28. Hyōgo 兵庫 | 40. Fukuoka 福岡 |
| 5. Akita 秋田 | 17. Ishikawa 石川 | 29. Nara 奈良 | 41. Saga 嵯峨 |

⁴ From <http://www.yu.emb-japan.go.jp/IMAGES/Japan%20PrefecturesMap.htm>

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 6. Yamagata 山県 | 18. Fukui 福井 | 30. Wakayama 和歌山 | 42. Nagasaki 長崎 |
| 7. Fukushima 福島 | 19. Yamanashi 山梨 | 31. Tottori 鳥取 | 43. Kumamoto 熊本 |
| 8. Ibaraki 茨城 | 20. Nagano 長野 | 32. Shimane 島根 | 44. Ōita 大分 |
| 9. Tochigi 栃木 | 21. Gifu 岐阜 | 33. Okayama 岡山 | 45. Miyazaki 宮崎 |
| 10. Gunma 群馬 | 22. Shizuoka 静岡 | 34. Hiroshima 広島 | 46. Kagoshima 鹿児島 |
| 11. Saitama 埼玉 | 23. Aichi 愛知 | 35. Yamaguchi 山口 | 47. Okinawa 沖縄 |
| 12. Chiba 千葉 | 24. Mie 三重 | 36. Tokushima 徳島 | |



District Divisions (道) and Regions (地方): In pre-modern Japan, the country was divided into eight district divisions: Tōsando 東山道, Hokurikudō 北陸道, Tōkaidō 東海道, Kinai 畿内, San'indō 山陰道, San'yōdō 山陽道, Nankaidō 南海道 and Saikaidō 西海道.

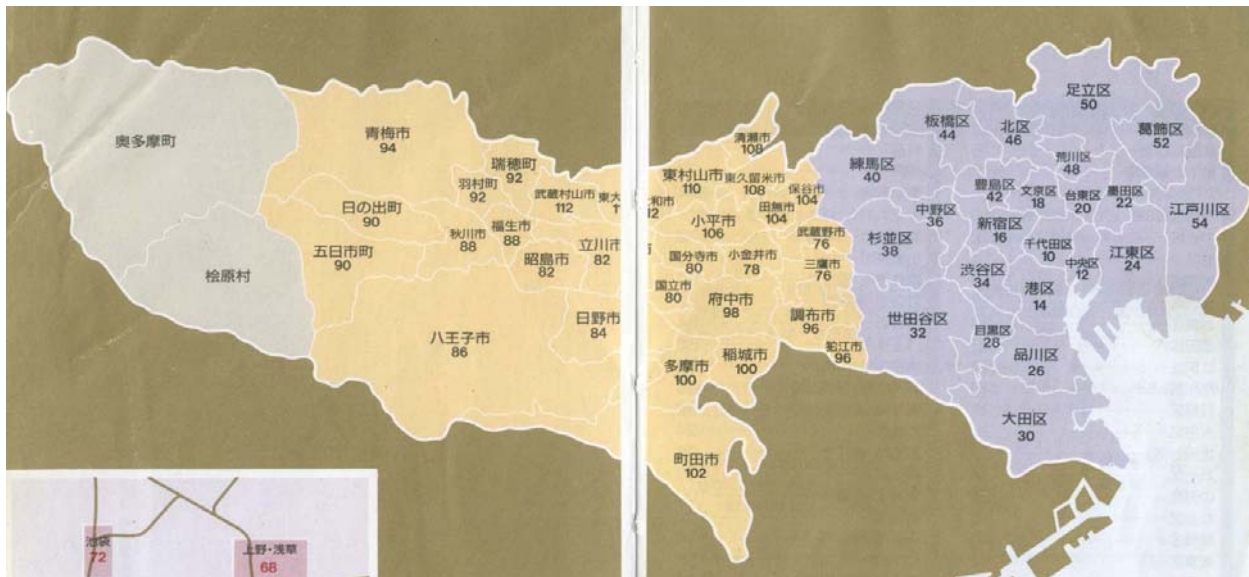
This is a map from the *Princeton Companion* showing the eight District Divisions.

In modern Japan, the country is often divided into similarly large regions: Hokkaidō 北海道, Tōhoku 東北, Kantō 関東, Chūbū 中部, Hokuriku 北陸, Kinki 近畿, Chūgoku 中国, Shikoku 四国, and Kyūshū 九州. When you look at a weather map or directories on the web, these are the divisions you will usually see:



Sub-prefectural divisions: As we have cities, towns, townships, villages, etc. in the United States, so do the Japanese divide up their land into similar political divisions. Common divisions are cities (市), towns (町), townships (郡), and villages (村).

Sub-city divisions: Within large cities or towns, there are often districts (区). In a city like Tōkyō, these districts have their own personalities and reputations, much like the different boroughs of New York. If I tell someone that I live in Shinagawa district 品川区, for example, it is like telling them that I live in Manhattan. Within the districts 区 are towns 町, which are then further divided into numbered blocks. This is important because the streets do not have names, so addresses are written with the city, district, town, and block number (no street numbers).



The above map is from 東京区分・都市図 (東京 : 昭文社、1987)

Aliases

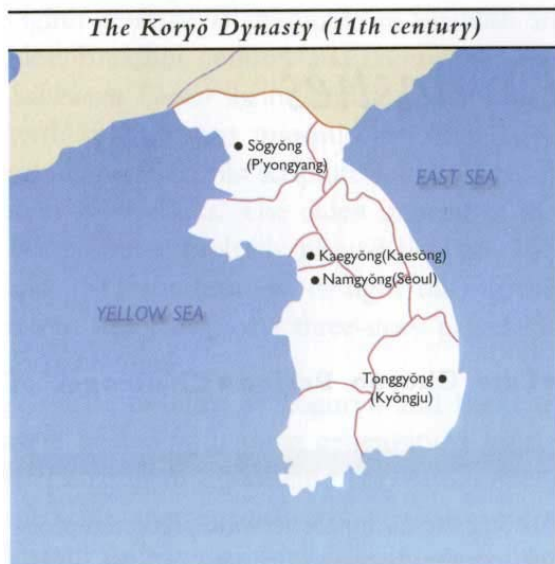
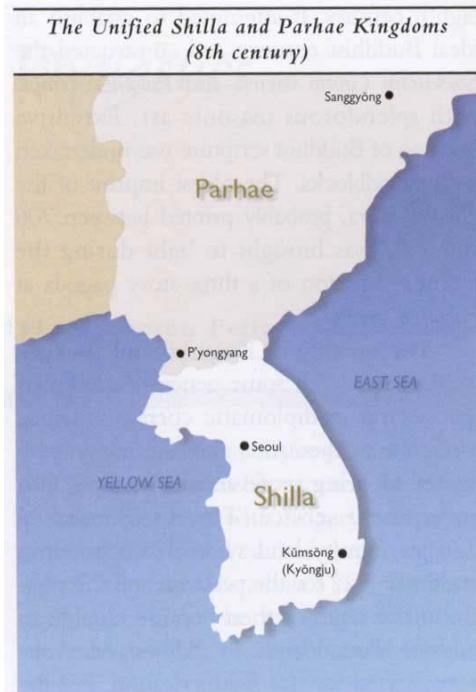
Like in China, there are places that have aliases. These names are often a twist on the reading of the characters in the place name itself. For example, the old province of Harima 播磨 (in the south west of modern-day Hyōgo 兵庫 prefecture) was also known as Banshū 播州, which was simply the first character 播 put together with the character for state 州 (the first character uses its Japanese reading is *Harima*, but its Sinic reading is *Banshū*). There is a good list of many standard aliases in the Princeton *Companion*.

There are also combination place names. These use a character from one place in combination with a character from another to create a new name indicating a combination of the two. For example, Hanshin 阪神 (as in the Hanshin Tigers baseball team) refers to the two cities of Ōsaka 大阪 and Kōbe 神戸. Keihan 京阪 (as in the train line) refers to the two cities of Kyōto 京都 and Ōsaka 大阪. Keihin 京浜 (also as in the train line) refers to the two cities of Tōkyō 東京 and Yokohama 横浜.

Korea

Local Government Divisions

Here is a series of historical maps of Korea that show different political divisions over the centuries:⁵



⁵ These maps are from *A Handbook of Korea*, editor in chief, Kim Young-Kwon, editor, Lee Soo-jung. Seoul : Korean Overseas Information Service, Ministry of Culture and Information, 1978.



*Modern Provinces:*⁶ The thirteen provinces 道 of the 20th century (if we disregard communist divisions in the north) were established in principle in 1402 when the Chosŏn kingdom created eight. Most of them had existed before in some form as political or administrative areas. Following the configuration of mountain ranges and other natural demarcations, they evoke strong loyalties in their inhabitants.

Today Korea has one special city (Seoul 京城), six metropolitan cities (Pusan 釜山, Taegu 大邱, Inch'ŏn 仁川, Kwangju 光州, Taejŏn 大田, and Ulsan 蔚山), nine provinces, 72 cities, 91 counties and 69 autonomous wards.



Major cities are divided into wards (*ku* 區) and precincts (*tong* 洞). A province is composed of counties (*gun* 郡) and cities (*si* 市) with a population of more than 50,000. A county consists of towns (*ŭp* 邑), townships (*myŏn* 面), and villages (*ri* 里).

Here is a map of Seoul that shows the different wards.

⁶ This section is largely from *Korea: a Historical and Cultural Dictionary* by Keith Pratt and Richard Rutt, with additional material by James Hoare, pp. 363-364.

In the list below, the provinces asterisked are those that were divided into North and South provinces in 1896, when the number was increased from eight to thirteen. The years when the present names were first used are shown in the second column. (Apart from Kyōnggi, each name is composed of the first syllables of two of the major towns.) In the 3rd column, W or N indicates that the northern or western part of the province was the *udo* 右道 in the five provinces that were divided into *chwado* 左道 and *udo* 右道, left and right provinces, from mid-Chosŏn times until 1896. The 4th column shows the single-syllable poetic names that were also applied to the provincial military commands, with the meaning of each in the 5th column. The last column shows the Chosŏn period provincial capitals.

| | | | | | |
|------------------|------|---|--------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Kyōnggi 京畿 | 1402 | N | Ki 畿 | ‘royal domain’ | Seoul 京城 |
| P’yōngan* 平安 | 1413 | - | Ki 箕 | ‘Kija’ (reputed founder) | P’yōngyang 平壤 |
| Hamgyōng* 咸鏡 | 1473 | - | Ham 咸 | ‘united’ | Hamhŭng 咸興 |
| Kangwŏn 江原 | 1311 | - | Wŏn 原 | ‘source’ | Wŏnju 原州 |
| Hwanghae 黃海 | 1407 | W | Hae 海 | ‘sea’ | Haeju 海州 |
| Ch’ungch’ōng* 忠清 | 1356 | W | Kŭm 錦 | ‘embroidered’ (river name) | Kongju 公州 |
| Chŏlla* 全羅 | 1018 | W | Wan 完 | ‘whole’ | Chŏnju 全州 |
| Kyōngsang* 慶尚 | 1314 | W | Yōng 嶺 | ‘mountain pass’ | Taegu 大邱 |

Alternative names, some of them ancient, are found in literary and popular use. Two refer to the Kŭm 錦 river, also known as the Ho 湖 River: Honam 湖南 for Chŏlla, Hosŏ 湖西 for Ch’ungch’ōng 忠清. The rest refer to mountain passes. Yōngnam 嶺南 or Kyonam 峰南 (‘south of the ridge’), for Kyōngsang 慶尚, means ‘south of the pass,’ referring to Choryōng 鳥嶺 or Saejae, the ‘Bird Pass’ that took the main road from Koesan 巨山 in Ch’ungch’ōng 忠清 to Mun’gyōng 聞慶 in Kyōngsang 慶尚. *Yōng* 嶺 for mountain pass is also used in Yōngsŏ 嶺西 and Yōngdong 嶺東, meaning the western mountains and eastern coastal strip of Kangwŏn 江原 province, the pass in question being Taegwallyōng near Kangnŭng.

Kwan 關, meaning a border post and hence often a pass, gives Kwannam 關南 and Kwanbuk 關北 (‘south or north of the pass’) in Hamgyōng, where the border is at Mach’ŏl-lyōng near Sōngjin; but the *kwan* in Kwandong 關東 and Kwansŏ 關西 (‘east or west of the pass’), meaning Kangwŏn 江原 and P’yōngan 平安, has not been identified.

Two new cities have become provincial capitals. Taejŏn, which replaced Kongju for South Ch’ungch’ōng in 1914, was before that date a hamlet called Hanbat. Pusan, the old harbour for Tongnae, became a treaty port in 1876 and the provincial capital of South Kyōngnam was moved there from Chinju in 1925.

Reference resources for Geography

Geographical dictionaries are wonderful sources of information about places. We have many in our library. Here is a select list:

Nihon rekishi chimei taikai 日本歴史地名大系. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1999.

There is one volume dedicated to each prefecture in this series. Our library does NOT have all the volumes, but we have most of the volumes from central Japan.

Zhongguo diminglu : Zhonghua renmin gongheguo dituji diming suoyin 中国地名录 : 中华人民共和国地图集地名索引| Beijing : Di tu chu ban she : Xin hua shu dian shanghai fa xing suo fa xing, 1983.

This has modern, Communist place names (as opposed to pre-modern or Nationalist place names).

Zoho dai Nihon chimei jisho 增補大日本地名辭書 Yoshida, Togo. Tokyo : Fuzambo, 1972.

This is an older work, so new places will not be listed. It is organized geographically, but also has an index that is organized by characters. Because it was originally compiled in the early 20th century, there is a volume for Taiwan (then a Japanese colony) and also for the Kurile Islands (still disputed territory with Russia).

Zhongguo gu jin di ming da ci dian 中國古今地名大辭典. Taibei: Taiwan shang wu yin shu guan, 1931.

This is not the best dictionary in the world, but it is not in the reference section which means that you can check it out if you want.

Examples of entries from geographical dictionaries:

Here is the entry for Shanghai in the 中國古今地名大辭典:

【上海縣】本華亭縣地。舊曰華亭海。後以入煙富庶。海舶輻輳。遂成大市。宋紹興中於及權貨場。曰上海。故名。元割華亭松江府。民國初設滬護軍使亦駐之。故簡稱滬。黃浦江一名春申江。亦簡稱申。地當吳淞江與黃浦江會流之點。東西兩洋之衝。清道光二十二年中英江寧議定條約。訂開商埠。設江海關。我國第一通商港也。舊有縣城已拆毀。改建廣道。設環城電車。城西南有上海製造局。相近之高昌廟。有江南船廠。京滬、滬杭甬、淞滬三鐵路交點於租界之北。江海汽船。均以此為起點。以黃浦江濱為停泊處。交通發達。工商業極盛。民國十二年江浙戰爭後。廢護軍使。劃城市至吳淞定為淞滬特別市區。十七年。國民政府就淞滬市區而擴大之。改建上海特別市。十九年改稱上海市。直隸於行政院。縣境所轄者。僅閔行、馬橋、顧橋、北橋、曹行、塘灣、三林、陳行八鄉。二十年移縣治北橋。

Here Shanghai becomes a city.

Old place name

Notice that this is not designated as a city, because historically Shanghai was NOT a city.

Administrative subdivisions

Shanghai is opened as a treaty port

Industrial Development with historical significance

Geographical information on rivers in the area

Historical names from the Yuan, Qing, and early Republican period.

This is the entry in the Concise Geographical Dictionary (コンサイス日本地名辞典) for Ichinotani. We don't have this dictionary in the library, but it is a good example of what a one-volume geographical dictionary should give you.

