

## A Study of the Transliterations of Honolulu Chinatown Street Names

This study investigates the transliterations and translation strategies of street names in Honolulu's Chinatown from 1900 to 1950, focusing on how Chinese immigrant communities negotiated dialectal diversity and linguistic ideology through written naming English and Hawaiian street name practices. According to Glick (1980), small groups of Chinese arrived in Hawai'i as early as the late eighteenth century, large-scale migration began with contract laborers from Fujian in 1852 and followed by much larger and more cohesive Yue dialect-speaking groups from the Siyi region and significant numbers of Yue dialect-speaking and Longdu (Zhongshan Min) dialect-speaking migrants from Zhongshan. By the late nineteenth century, Zhongshan immigrants had established influential district and village associations, shaping linguistic norms within the local Chinese community (Glick, 1980). The interaction of various dialect-speaking groups within communities throughout the history may have influenced the Chinese transliterations of Hawaiian and English street names. The resulting linguistic phenomena offer valuable insight into the language usage patterns of oversea Chinese communities.

Drawing on archival Chinese newspapers in Hawaii from 1900–1950, this study collects all documented Chinese street names and focuses on five streets which are central to Chinese social and commercial life: Hotel Street, Beretania Street, Kekaulike Street, Liliha Street, and Pauahi Street. Through comparative dialect phonology, the study identifies which Chinese characters encode features traceable to Cantonese, Zhongshan Yue, or Longdu (Zhongshan Min), thereby revealing the dialect and character preferences embedded in transliteration choices, exploring how Chinese immigrant community naming reflect their "Language ideology".

This study anticipates three major findings. First, the selection of Chinese characters is expected to reveal identifiable dialectal phonetic and phonology markers that point to influences from Cantonese, Zhongshan Yue, or Longdu (Zhongshan Min). Second, given demographic and organizational dominance, the analysis predicts that transliterations will show a strong preference for Zhongshan-based phonology. Third, building on translation research from other Chinese domain regions, the Honolulu dataset is expected to demonstrate localized adaptations for Hawaiian language of widely observed strategies such as sound-based transliteration, domestication with positively connoted characters, and functional equivalence oriented toward community navigation.

This study contributes to three domains. First, it enriches the study of street names translation by showing how street naming practices reflect linguistic ideologies. Second, it provides phonological evidence for language/dialect contact, change, and standardization within an overseas Chinese community. Third, the transliteration data offer a valuable direction for evaluating AI-assisted machine translation involving dialectal inputs. Together, this study demonstrates how historical street-name translations preserve the linguistic landscape of an immigrant community while also informing contemporary machine translation research in Chinese linguistics.