

What's in a (Japanese) Name?

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In many languages, proper nouns often consist of two parts that describe a local geographical feature, such as Portland, Springfield, and Hollywood. The same is true for Japanese.

Here are the
17 Japanese
proper nouns:

1. Ōta
2. Nakayama
3. Kigawa
4. Kazan
5. Murakami
6. Kagawa
7. Ono
8. Fujisan
9. Nomura
10. Tanaka
11. Sakuragi
12. Nihon
13. Osaka
14. Yamazaka
15. Kawakami
16. Honda
17. Yamamichi

And here are their literal
translations in English,
in random order:

- A. Big slope
- B. Tree river
- C. Slope of the mountain
- D. Field village
- E. Upper village
- F. Upper river
- G. Middle of the rice-field
- H. Little field
- I. Middle mountain
- J. Original rice-field
- K. Mountain road
- L. Cherry tree
- M. Fire mount (volcano)
- N. Big rice-field
- O. Mount Fuji
- P. Fire river
- Q. Origin of the sun (Japan)

Your Challenge:

Match the places to
their translations.

Note that the order of Japanese words and their English translations is not always the same. You may also notice that consonant sounds sometimes change slightly when two elements of a compound word combine: an “s” may become a “z,” or a “t” may become a “d.” A couple of hints: “mount” and “mountain” are different words in Japanese. So are “field” and “rice-field.” And if you know the Japanese word for “Japan,” you get that one for free.