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ROMANIZATION IN JAPAN

It is said that the practice of the Romanizing of Japanese originated in the last years of the 16th century.

Various methods for the Romanizing were devised, of which the two systems - Nihon Siki (system adopted under a Cabinet ordinance) and Syūsei Hebon Siki (Modified Hepburn System) - have been mostly used from the beginning of the Syōwa Era.

In response to the strong calls for standardization, the Government carried out surveys researches, for many years which resulted in the issuance in 1937 of a Cabinet Ordinance on a standard method of writing in Roman letters. This is the system presently known as Kunrei Siki.

Since the Second World War, Syūsei Hebon Siki gained increased popularity, causing confusion in the Romanization. Thus, in response to the increased demand for standardization, the Government issued a Cabinet Notification and Ordinance in 1954, on the basis of the results of the work for five years.

This Notification and Ordinance is based on the concept that Kunrei Siki is the best available system, and it might be said that there is a possibility that the existing Romanizing systems may be ultimately unified in this particular system.