



Harmony': Japan Releases Official Translation of 'Reiwa' After Mixed Reactions to New Era Name

On the day the government announced the name of the new imperial era on Monday, April 1, people all around Japan gathered in major spots like Tokyo's Shinjuku area, standing together in front of big screens to witness Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga announce "Reiwa."

People wrestled to get copies of the day's newspapers as memento and "proof of history." Some were seen happily clutching crumpled-up front pages of The Sankei Shimbun, for example, which released an extra 6,000 copies distributed in seven places around Tokyo.

There were businesses printing t-shirts, artists doing calligraphy, school children writing out the new characters of the new era. New era candy, cupcakes, and even Coca-Cola Japan suddenly produced with quickly-finished New Era labels. The 2,000 bottles produced for the occasion were distributed at Tokyo Shinbashi, and were gone in less than an hour.

At Yokohama Hakkeijima Sea Paradise, there was even a South American Sea lion by the name of Leo who, with the guidance of instructors, wrote out the calligraphy for the name. Some people — who were lucky enough to be born on that day — were able to receive calligraphy written by the Sea Lion!

The era of Reiwa is set to begin on May 1, when Crown Prince Naruhito will become Japan's new emperor.

The era's name was taken from a Japanese work of poetry for the first time, instead of from a Chinese one. Reiwa is formed by two characters which are translated roughly as "majestic harmony." Its historical roots are found in the Manyōshū, the first vernacular Japanese poetry collections which date back to the 8th century.

The name of the new era was greeted with particular anticipation because, in addition to being a practical method of counting the years, it holds cultural significance in the minds of the Japanese. Much in the same way appellations such as "the swinging sixties" immediately recall images of that time, when the name of an imperial era is mentioned in Japan, vivid historical and cultural images come to mind.

The announcement also was different this time because of the impending abdication of the current emperor, producing complex feelings of nostalgia and anticipation among Japanese. Many commentators at major events, such as the March Sumo tournament in Osaka, marked the occasion by saying this would be the "last of Heisei."

In a fitting fashion, people in Japan greeted the era name with different reactions.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike said of the new era name, "These are two characters where one feels the hope." She expressed anticipation for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, which will be held in the second year of Reiwa.

Communist Party leader Kazuo Shii commented that, although he doesn't oppose the Japanese tradition of using the era system, he opposed "the country's coercion of using the era naming."

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Abroad, the reactions were also mixed. In China, the fact that the Japan had a new era became a key word in the search engines. The headline of a newspaper there declared: "The traces of China can't be erased," arguing that there were still Chinese influences in the poem chosen as the basis for the era name. The Chinese Foreign Ministry refrained from making a comment, stating that it was a Japanese domestic affair.

In Korea, the left-wing online publication Hangul commented that "it appears as if the conservative colors of the Shinzo Abe administration can be seen in the birth of the new era." An article trending online from a different publication focused on the positive, saying it "hopes that relationships between Korea and Japan will improve with the Reiwa era."

The significance of the news also brought broader international coverage, with many outlets explaining the significance of the era change in Japanese culture, as well as the significance of the characters. Reuters, The Washington Post, and the BBC all pointed out that the character rei often means "command, order," but the overall era name was largely translated as "auspicious harmony."

CNN quoted Jeff Kingston, a longtime Japan critic who took the opportunity to bash the choice of era name. He said it reflects the political rightward tendency of the times, and that selecting the name from a Japanese text instead of a Chinese one "is clearly a dog whistle to his (Prime Minister Abe's) conservative constituency."

The Japanese Foreign Ministry, taking note of the varied and not always accurate foreign translations of the new era's name, released a statement to clear up the issue. It announced that the official translation would be "beautiful harmony."

Source: **'Beautiful Harmony': Japan Releases Official Translation of 'Reiwa' After Mixed Reactions to New Era Name**

<http://japan-forward.com/beautiful-harmony-japan-releases-official-translation-of-reiwa-after-mixed-reactions-to-new-era-name/>

英字メディアは「令和」をこう報じた

新元号「令和（れいわ）」のそれぞれの漢字には複数の意味があるため、欧米メディアは思い思いの英訳で報じた。「和」は「harmony」（調和）などと正しく伝えられたが、「令」については、複数の主要メディアが「命令」「指令」を意味すると解説。日本の外務省は2日、混乱收拾のため「beautiful harmony」（美しい調和）を意味するとの見解を示した。

英国のロイター通信は2日の記事で「最初の文字『令』は指令（command）、命令（order）の意味でよく使われ、権威主義的なニュアンスに不快を感じる人もいる」と報じる一方、安倍晋三首相は「良い」「美しい」の意味を好むと伝えた。BBCテレビ（電子版）は命令の意味があるとする一方、「幸先が良い（auspicious）」も加えた。

米国ではウォールストリート・ジャーナル紙（電子版）が「令」を「幸先の良い」、「和」を「平和」と正確に報じた。だが、CNNテレビ（同）は日本在住の米人大学教員の談話を引用し、昭和と同じ「和」を用いたのは、首相が第二次大戦を「より肯定的」に語る取り組みの一環だとし、「日本政治の右傾化を反映している」と評した。

外務省は1日、各国外交団に新元号を伝達したが、欧米メディアが「令」を命令、指令の意味で報じたため、誤解を一人歩きさせないよう「美しい調和」との見解を発表。元号の意味は「これから一つ一つ説明する」（同省）との立場で、他国や外国メディアの理解を得ることが急務となる。

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<https://www.sankei.com/life/news/190402/lif1904020045-n1.html>