First Name First

On the Order of Japanese Names in English

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I. WHY THIS SHORT ESSAY NOW

In a press conference on 21 May 2019, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Tarō Kōno,[1] stated that he hoped journalists writing in English and other foreign languages would refer to the names of Japanese persons according to the order commonly followed in the Japanese language, that is family name first and given name last.[2] Kōno's words were widely reported in the international media, sometimes with mildly concerned tones,[3] and sparked the Cabinet to take action.

On the occasion of two press conferences on 3 and 6 September, the Minister of Education, Masahiko Shibayama, stated that the administration, when

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All internet links were last visited on 7 January 2020.

1 At the time of writing, after the cabinet reshuffle of 11 September 2019, Tarō Kōno is Minister of Defense, while Toshimitsu Motegi serves as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

2 The minutes of the press conference are available at *https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/kaiken/kaiken4_000832.html*.

3 See for example in the Guardian J. MCCURRY, Last name first, first name last: Japan minister tells foreign media to get it right, Guardian, 22 May 2019, at *https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/22/last-name-first-first-name-last-japan-minister-tells-foreign-media-to-get-it-right* and in the New York Times M. RICH, Shinzo Abe? That's Not His Name, Says Japan's Foreign Minister, New York Times, 22 May 2019, at *https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/22/world/asia/japan-name-order.html*.

writing the names of Japanese nationals in Latin characters in official documents, would write the family name first and the given name last.[4] The Minister made reference to a report of December 2000 of the Japanese Language Council *(Kokugo shingi-kai)*[5] recommending that names of Japanese nationals be written according to the Japanese order also when written in Latin characters, to respect the diversity of languages. The report cites a public opinion poll conducted among Japanese nationals in 1999, in which 34.9% of the respondents favoured the family name – given name order, 30.6% favoured the given name – family name order, and 29.6% could not say.

This position was confirmed by Shibayama's successor, Kōichi Hagiuda. On 25 October 2019, Hagiuda stated that from 1 January 2020 all government bodies will follow the family name – given name order when writing the names of Japanese nationals in Latin characters.[6] As of 7 January 2020, all the Japanese government websites in English reviewed by the present author display the names of officials according to the Japanese order, with the family name first, written in all capital letters.

Prompted by these developments, this article assesses critically the advantages of adopting the Japanese naming order (i.e. family name – given name, hereinafter "JNO") in languages in which the established custom is to write[7] the given name first and the family name last, such as English or most European languages (English naming order, hereinafter "ENO")[8]. Who benefits from the adoption of this standard, and what problems does it solve? Are the alleged reasons solid? Finally, and above all, do the alleged advantages outweigh the potential disadvantages?

I believe that the drawbacks arising from using the JNO in languages in which it is not customary far outweigh the alleged advantages. This article will explain briefly the reasons supporting this opinion.

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4 The press conferences are available at *http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/daijin/detail/1420877.htm* and *http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/daijin/detail/1420998.htm.*

5 BUNKA-CHŌ [AGENCY FOR CULTURAL AFFAIRS], *Kokusai shakai ni taiō suru nihon-go no arikata* [How the Japanese language should cope with the international community], available at *https://www.bunka.go.jp/kokugo_nihongo/sisaku/joho/joho/kakuki/22/tosin04/index.html.*

6 The press conference is available at *http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/daijin/detail/1422199.htm.*

7 The analysis will take into consideration mainly the written language, but the arguments are valid also for the spoken language and reference to it will be made when necessary.

8 This article will make reference to the *English* name order because this article is written in English, and many of the sources make reference to the writing of Japanese names in English-language texts. However, the arguments made here may apply to most languages in which it is customary to mention the given name first and the family name last, such as French, Italian, German and Spanish.

II. THE SITUATION SO FAR

In virtually all contexts and situations when Japanese speakers mention their or other people's full name in Japanese, the family name is mentioned first and the given name last. When the full name is not used, it is standard and general practice to call people by their family name only, accompanied by the honorific dictated by the situation: *san, sama, sensei, shachō, giin*, etc. The use of the first name only in everyday, respectful speech is limited to very young children, or to informal and intimate contexts, such as within the family or between very close friends. The conventions followed in the spoken language are followed also in writing.

The established naming order in English and in many other European languages is the opposite: the given name is generally mentioned first and the family name last. In principle, it is in many contexts not disrespectful to call people by their first name only; this is often true also outside of the family or small circles of very close friends: it can happen among co-workers and acquaintances and even in semi-formal situations.

In particular contexts, in these languages the family name may come first as well: alphabetical lists, passports, bureaucratic forms and other documents are just some examples of cases in which the family name is written first. However, this does not change the fact that in common, everyday speech and writing, including academic contexts, given names are generally mentioned first and the family name last. It is no coincidence that in English *first name* is a synonym for given name, and *last name* is synonymous with the family name.[9]

These two established linguistic and social customs clash when one needs to refer to Japanese names in English.[10] The speaker, or the writer, has to choose between two solutions: preserve the original JNO, even if it is not consistent with the customary rules of the English language, or follow the standard English rules, switching the order of family and given name, and state the Japanese name according to the ENO.

At the moment there is no clear and widely recognized standard in the international press or in other international contexts,[11] but the ENO seems to be more common, hence Kōno's remarks. In academia, many influential style guides for English publications focusing on Japan require the use of the JNO, but not all follow this custom. Some explicitly require the English name order,[12] some refer to the Chicago Manual of Style[13] and some are

9 To avoid confusion, in this article I will use only the expressions given name and family name.

10 Or in other languages. See note 8.

11 For example, name tags and name cards at international meetings.

12 The Journal of Japanese Law is one of them.

silent on the issue.[14] In most cases, these style guides do not provide reasons why a certain order is followed. The popular website Nippon.com, in the days after Kōno's statement, published a short essay on why, in 1980, its predecessor Japan Echo decided to switch from the ENO to the JNO, including a concise summary of the most compelling reasons supporting their choice.[15]

III. Adopting the JNO in English

Who benefits from adopting the JNO in English and what are its advantages?

The advantage cited by Kōno in his press conference as one reason for the adoption of the JNO in English seems to be avoiding unequal treatment between the names of Chinese and Koreans nationals as compared to the names of Japanese. In fact, in referring to names of Chinese and Koreans, the situation seems to be more standardized not only in academia but also in the news and in other contexts: when written in Latin characters, Chinese and Korean names appear in the same order followed in the respective languages, i.e. family name first and given name last. In some of the statements in favour of the JNO in English, it is possible to spot a sort of envy of Chinese and Koreans for having been able to push through their name order even in languages other than Chinese and Korean, while the Japanese did not succeed.

Hence, at first glance, adopting the JNO in English seems to be a progressive solution: it puts Japanese on par with Chinese and Koreans, and it goes against what could be seen as one expression of English linguistic imperialism, i.e. the imposition of the English naming order. In sum, the JNO in English appears to promote a respect for cultural diversity and for everyone's personal identity.

My point, however, is that this is not the case. There are many reasons why the JNO in English is not a progressive solution but one that is impractical, stimulated by a vapid linguistic nationalism, and based on a dubious understanding of what a name is.

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13 For example, the Journal of Asian Studies. The Chicago Manual of Style provides at 8.16 that "In Japanese usage the family name precedes the given name. Japanese names are sometimes westernized, however, by authors writing in English or persons of Japanese origin living in the West."

14 Contemporary Japan makes references to the general guidelines of Taylor and Francis.

15 P. Durfee, Surname Supremacy? Writing Names in "Nippon.com", Nippon.com, 23 May 2019 at *https://www.nippon.com/en/blog/m00149/surname-supremacy-writing-names-in-nippon-com.html.*

First, using the JNO in English is an exceptional treatment based on the nationality of the person in question. Many who think of themselves as progressive and respectful of people's identities would be wary of policies in real life – especially in academia – aiming at treating people differently just on the basis of their nationality. In some respect, this is the textbook definition of racism, and it is curious that the JNO in English gets a free pass in this respect. Moreover, motivating the adoption of the JNO by mentioning the goal of clustering together Chinese, Japanese and Koreans smells of considering these people as a set group, a separate race. It is clear that also in this perspective, adopting the JNO in English is a discriminatory measure. If the arguments for the JNO are sound, it should be used also with names of non-Asian persons whose native language conventions put family name first and given name last, such as Hungarians. It is very rare, however, to read or hear of Polanyi Karl, Liszt Franz or Orbán Viktor.

It is true that using the ENO for Japanese names but not for Chinese and Korean names creates a rift in how the issue is addressed with persons of these three countries, but this article focuses only on Japan.[16] While consistency is desirable, achieving consistency through the adoption of a questionable standard such as the JNO in English is far from desirable.

One can argue that the name is the most intimate and personal expression of one's identity. Peter Durfee, in the Nippon.com article cited above, expresses this position well when he writes: "that minister's name is Kōno Tarō, not Tarō Kōno. His parents gave it to him in that order; it's listed that way on his birth certificate and every official document he's received in his country since then. He, and others who share his ideas about proper name order, have every right to ask that others talk about them with the names that they themselves use." However, there is a dubious assumption in this passage: that the parents "choose" to give a name to their children in a certain order. To begin with, Japanese parents choose just one half of the full name of their children: the given name. The family name of the child is by law the family name of the parents,[17] and the order in which it appears on official documents is fixed by law, or it simply follows deeply entrenched customs.

16 Logically, many of the arguments put forth here apply as well to the order of Chinese or Korean names in English. Ideally and in principle, consistency should be achieved by adopting the ENO also for the names of Chinese and Koreans written in English, but this article focuses only on Japanese names.

17 It is not necessary to remind the readers of this Journal of the thorny issue of the freedom denied to 50% of married Japanese spouses to legally keep their maiden name: according to the Japanese Civil Code (Art. 750), at the time of marriage both spouses shall adopt the surname of the husband or of the wife. Children born in wedlock shall take the surname of their parents (Art. 790).

It is also problematic to claim that one individual, or a government, has a right to make the rest of the world use a certain naming order. One can surely ask, but the others do not need to comply. In free speech matters, the obligation demanded of others is to let the speaker speak, not to comply with the speaker's demands. Everyone has every right to speak as they please and to use the naming order they prefer, unless it can be considered defamatory or violent speech, which is clearly not the case here.

Another problematic assumption is that every Japanese person agrees with the use the JNO in English. In fact, a few days after the Kōno press conference, in another briefing, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told journalists that in English his name should be referred to according to the ENO, that is Yoshihide Suga.[18]

One overlooked aspect making the adoption of the JNO in English impractical is that it requires that the nationality of the individuals mentioned is always unequivocally clear. The usual editorial note in works following the JNO in English – "In this work, Japanese names are given in traditional Japanese order, i.e. family name first, given name last" – is based on the premise that the reader already knows, or the text indicates beyond any doubt, the nationality of each and every person mentioned. If that is not the case, the editorial note is useless, as the reader who does not know the nationality of all persons mentioned can never be sure whether names are written according to the JNO or the ENO, and therefore which is the given name and which the family name. Of course, many readers of works on Japan may have a certain familiarity with Japanese names, even without having read the editorial note. But then, for those readers proficient in Japanese language, or sufficiently knowledgeable about Japanese society and history to distinguish a family name from a given name, the editorial note is unnecessary.

Besides being useless or unnecessary, the editorial note creates confusion and opens the way to inconsistencies. For example, the style sheet of the Journal of Japanese Studies provides that "Japanese names should be written with the family name first, unless the person usually uses Western name order in Western-language publications". What "usually" means is open to debate, especially considering that oftentimes it is not the authors themselves who decide how their name appears in print, but other style

18 Japan Grapples with Name Order Ahead of 2020 Tokyo Games, Nippon.com, 28 July 2019, at *https://www.nippon.com/en/news/yjj20190726009 01/japan-grapples-with-name-order-ahead-of-2020-tokyo-games.html*. Apparently, Suga later changed his mind and declared that "he looked forward to going by Suga Yoshihide, as he is known in Japan": M. YAMAGUCHI, Japan to put surname first for Japanese names in English, Associated Press, 6 September 2019, *https://apnews.com/c8cec6f9137e47158186dd509aaa72b4.*

sheets or editorial conventions. Also, there are cases of odd inconsistencies, such as when the name appearing on book covers follows the ENO even when the text adopts the JNO: the Penguin Book of Japanese Short Stories mentions "Haruki Murakami" on its cover, but it refers to "Murakami Haruki" in the content pages.

The Style Sheet of another prestigious academic journal, Monumenta Nipponica, reads: "In general, use traditional order for Japanese names. Use Western order, however, in the case of a non-Japanese national with a Japanese name or a Japanese national active chiefly overseas (or publishing primarily in English). When citing the Japanese author of an English-language work, use Western order if the cited work does so. Similarly, when citing a Japanese-language work by a non-Japanese national with a Japanese name, follow the usage adopted by the work in question (see also 4.10. Works in Japanese by Non-Japanese Authors)." The rules are quite complex, and questions may legitimately arise over how to define a Japanese national "active chiefly overseas". What are the standards and who decides? Furthermore, Japanese scholars' activity overseas and the proportion of publications in Western languages may well vary during their careers: it is conceivable then that the same author should be named using one name order in their early years but another in their later career.

IV. The Japanese Naming Order as a Signal

The paragraphs above show that adopting the JNO in English has little to do with consistency or with providing the reader with accurate information, and more with signalling to the reader what kind of persons the editors or the authors are. Editors and authors want to show that they care about and value diversity. It shows their intent of being courteous and considerate towards the culture they write about. Perhaps the JNO in English has also something to do with a sense of guilt for the hegemonic role of English in academia, and editors and authors follow and impose it as an act of atonement.

As pointed out above, the JNO in English requires that readers have some knowledge of the Japanese language or of the subject matter, or ideally of both. When readers have even a rudimentary knowledge of Japanese, the above-mentioned problems could be of limited practical importance. This is in fact the status quo. Publications in Japanese studies (whose readers are expected to possess some knowledge of the topics, of the names cited, and of the Japanese language) adopt the JNO in English, while generalist publications and the international press adopt the ENO. In this sense, the JNO functions as a coded signal, exchanged among the initiated, to corroborate that they are the true experts. It is a wink Japanologists exchange to distinguish

themselves from the general press or from other scholars outside of Japanese studies. In short, it is a subtle and refined way of showing off.

There is reason to think that this is done in good faith and without any intent to maliciously discriminate against Japanese, but the following paragraphs show that this can well be an unintended consequence.

V. Undecidable Cases

There are situations in which adopting the JNO in English leads to a logical dead end. These are cases that require a judgment by the writer about the identity of the person, possibly resulting in wrong and offensive assumptions, or in confusing inconsistencies.

The first case is that of individuals with more than one citizenship, of which one is Japanese. Currently, Japanese law does not admit multiple citizenships for Japanese adult nationals, but children of binational couples can have other citizenships besides Japanese until the age of 22. Adopting the JNO in English requires that the writer make a judgment on which of the citizenships is dominant for such individuals. The naming order adopted reveals this assumption: mentioning the binational person according to the JNO signals that the person is considered Japanese, or in any case more Japanese than everything else. Avoiding the JNO in a publication mandating the JNO for Japanese persons is on the contrary a sign that the Japanese citizenship is considered of lesser importance. This is a judgment made by the author that does not necessarily correspond to what individuals in question believe about their identity. Take the case of the tennis player Naomi Ōsaka before she declared in October 2019 that she decided to opt for Japanese citizenship. In publications mandating the JNO in English, calling her 'Ōsaka Naomi' revealed the assumption that her Japanese nationality prevailed over the American, while writing 'Naomi Ōsaka' implied that the Japanese was not considered as her primary nationality. For athletes and other public figures, public statements, membership in national teams, the country of residence and other facts may sometimes provide cues and inform the choice, but this is not the case for ordinary persons. A similar conundrum is that posed by the author guidelines of the Social Science Japan Journal, which provide that "personal names should be written in the customary order of the native language, unless otherwise requested". This requires that authors know the native language of the individual referred, but this also might pose problems: as Naomi Ōsaka's press conferences reveal, Japanese is not always the preferred language of all Japanese nationals.

Individuals who change their citizenship constitute the second example of problematic cases of applying the JNO in English. Should persons who naturalize as Japanese continue to be mentioned according to their previous

naming order, or should it change together with the change of citizenship? Consistency and fairness would require that there is no discrimination among Japanese nationals. Such discrimination would appear especially heinous for persons who willingly undertook the procedure to adopt Japanese citizenship, abandoning their previous one as Japanese law prescribes. Out of respect towards these persons, style guides should strictly require that the JNO in English be used for naturalized persons, but that is not always true. For example, the American born scholar known as Donald Keene, who naturalized Japanese in 2012 at 89, is still widely cited as Donald Keene, and not as Keene Donald (or, even more precisely, Romanizing his official Japanese name, as Kīn Donarudo) as the application of the JNO in English would mandate.

VI. *Reductio Ad Absurdum*

And finally, if the idea of following the JNO in English media gains traction, should this approach then be extended to other established Japanese linguistic or cultural customs?

For instance, should the deeply rooted Japanese custom of attaching honorifics after the family name be introduced, as it is, in the English language? Hence, instead of Mr Kōno (the Foreign Minister), Ms Ōsaka (the tennis player), Mr Ōe (the Nobel laureate) and an unspecified Ms Tanaka, should the press refer to Kōno-*daijin*, Ōsaka-*senshu*, Ōe-*sensei* and Tanaka-*san?* This mixing of English language and loaned Japanese honorifics is sometimes seen, or heard, in private communication, in contexts involving Japanese speakers. Should this practice be encouraged and adopted more widely?

Or the calendar system: should the international press refer to Japanese persons and events according to the Japanese era name? After all, the Japanese era system is also intimately connected with Japan and its culture. All official documents, including legislation, follow that system. Moreover, works in Japanese studies (in particular, works on Japanese history) already use, at times with gusto, Japanese era names. Should we mention birthdates of Japanese persons according to this system? "Murakami Haruki-*san* was born in Kyōto in *Shōwa* 24". Should the Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011 be renamed in English as the Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami of Heisei 23?

To me, and I hope to many readers, these proposals do not sound reasonable, but they are logically and ideologically not so distant from the adoption of the JNO in English.

VII. So What?

To conclude, the only clear advantage of the JNO in English is treating equally Chinese, Japanese and Koreans. It allegedly shows respect for the Japanese culture and for the individuals concerned. However, as I have shown in the paragraphs above, the actual situation is more complex, and the costs in terms of lack of clarity, room for misunderstandings and inconsistencies are not negligible. In addition, the JNO in English poses unsolvable problems in the case of individuals with binational backgrounds. Rather than its linguistic function, the raison d'être of the JNO in English might be its sociolinguistic function, when it serves as a sign of membership in the Japanese studies community.

It is undeniable that the JNO in English has a strong foothold, especially among historians. Japanese historical figures, when their name does have a family name, are usually referred to according to the JNO. For example, Oda Nobunaga, Tokugawa Ieyasu, Sugita Genpaku and Fukuzawa Yukichi are more common forms than those mentioning the given name first. This is an established custom, and consistency would require that it continue to be followed across the board. However, as pointed out before, the JNO is not an established custom for academic publications outside of Japanese or Asian studies, or for those focusing on modern and contemporary Japan. The gap between publications using the JNO and others using the ENO exists, and there are no easy and practical ways of solving this inconsistency. For instance, adopting the JNO for historical characters and the ENO for modern ones would require that the scholarly community agree upon, disseminate and adhere to a date demarcating the eras and the naming order to be used, not to mention the other associated rules that would prove necessary. Eventually, the resulting situation would be as unpractical and confusing as the current.

As pointed out by Peter Durfee, changing style guidelines is a major shift in the life of a publication, and editors tend to be conservative. So far, to the author's knowledge, after the Kōno interview only the American news website Vox changed its guidelines, on 28 May 2019, stating that "Vox's style guidelines on the Japanese prime minister's name have changed to better reflect Japanese naming conventions. From now on, the prime minister's name will be written as 'Abe Shinzo,' not 'Shinzo Abe'".[19] It is not yet clear whether the guidelines apply to all Japanese names or whether that is just a special treatment accorded to Abe, although from the

19 The original text does not display a macron in the long "o". See Editor's note below A. Ward, In Japan, Trump broke a cardinal rule of being America's president, Vox, 28 May 2019, *https://www.vox.com/2019/5/28/18642441/japan-trump-abe-biden-kim-missile*.

editor's note the latter seems more likely. This will result in an internal inconsistency with Japanese names based on a special treatment for famous persons, but that is a problem of Vox.

Despite this small victory for Kōno, following the established customs of every language governing how names are written is the most consistent, egalitarian, non-discriminatory, practical and informative solution. It is the most practical and informative solution, since all names follow the same rules and the reader can easily understand which is the given and which is the family name.[20] There is no need to verify the nationality of the persons mentioned and no need to make assumptions about the identity of binational persons. It is the most egalitarian and non-discriminatory solution, since it treats equally persons of different nationality, regardless of whether citizenship was obtained by birth or naturalization. The order is objective and equal for all. It is the most consistent since it does not require that publications change the way persons are cited if they change citizenship, or if for any reason they become more active in other countries or other languages.

For all these reasons, it seems that the advantages of the ENO in English outweigh the advantages of the JNO in English and avoid its disadvantages, with just the small and unavoidable drawback of the inconsistency in the naming order of historical and contemporary figures. It seems quite clear to me that following the customarily established rules of each language in the forum of communication and not the nationality, ethnicity or native language of the person bearing the name is a far better solution.

VIII. Last Thoughts: JNO for Non-Japanese names

The paragraphs above show that, notwithstanding few exceptions like official documents, roll calls and the like, following the customs of the language used in the communication and not the nationality or the ethnicity of the person in question is the best principle to follow when referring to proper names.

The same arguments offered above for the use of the ENO in English can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to support the use of the JNO for names of non-Japanese nationals when referred to in written or spoken Japanese.

Adopting the JNO in Japanese for non-Japanese nationals eliminates discrimination based on nationality or ethnicity and is a clear sign of inclusion, as it treats equally the names, and therefore the identities, of Japanese

20 As regards middle names and double family names, questions may arise on whether the second word is the middle name, i.e. part of the given name, or the first of two surnames. This problem, however, is not likely to appear with Japanese names, which typically do not include a middle name.

and non-Japanese persons alike. In addition, it helps avoiding awkward situations in which non-Japanese persons are called "Given-name-*san*", "Given-name-*sensei*" and the like, thus mixing the first name, which in Japanese is limited to family or intimate contexts, with honorifics like *–san*, *–sama* or *–sensei* that are rarely if at all used with first names. Mixing honorific prefixes with first names sounds odd ("Mr Andrea", "Prof. Andrea") also outside of Japan in many other languages.

Sadly, there is little consistency in the Japanese press, in academia or in everyday use on which order to follow for foreign names. The same mistaken reasons behind the JNO in English prompt the use – most of the times undoubtedly in good faith or as a sign of respect – of the ENO in Japanese for names of non-Japanese nationals, and their names are written in *katakana* with the given name first and the family name last, reflecting mechanically the order of the original language.

It is possible that the decision of the Japanese government to use the JNO in Latin characters will stimulate, for reasons of symmetry, the use of the ENO in Japanese for non-Japanese nationals. This would be another deleterious effect of the adoption of the JNO in English.

SUMMARY

In a press conference of 21 May 2019, the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that he hoped journalists writing in English and other foreign languages would refer to the names of Japanese persons according to the order commonly followed in the Japanese language, that is, family name first and given name last (Japanese naming order (JNO)). This was followed up by government bodies changing the order in English (internet) publications where they had previously resorted to English naming order (ENO).

This article critically assesses the reasons for as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the use of JNO and ENO in English texts. While acknowledging difficulties that arise with ENO, the author argues that the use of ENO for all names in an English text presents a number of advantages, including most importantly a noticeable increase in overall consistency.

(The Editors)

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In einer Pressekonferenz vom 21. Mai 2019 brachte der japanische Außenminister seinen Wunsch zum Ausdruck, dass Journalisten und Journalistinnen zukünftig in fremdsprachigen Texten für Namen von Japanern und Japanerin-

nen die auf Japanisch übliche Reihenfolge verwendeten, also zunächst den Familiennamen gefolgt vom Rufnamen. Regierungsbehörden begannen daraufhin damit, ihre englischsprachigen (Internet-)Publikationen entsprechend anzupassen und die bisher verwendete Reihenfolge zu ändern.

Der Beitrag setzt sich mit den Gründen sowie den Vor- und Nachteilen der Änderung auseinander und bewertet diese kritisch. Der Autor erkennt Nachteile der in englischen Texten üblichen Reihenfolge (also Ruf- gefolgt vom Familiennamen) an, argumentiert jedoch, dass ihre Vorteile gleichwohl überwögen und sie insbesondere zu einer größeren Einheitlichkeit führe.

(Die Redaktion)