

Dice-k Dictionary

Translating the sudden explosion of Japanese signs in the Fenway

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Not only did the Red Sox' signing of Daisuke Matsuzaka bolster Boston's starting rotation, it also spawned a burgeoning industry in Japanese signage around Fenway Park. Problem is, unless you're visiting from Osaka or spend way too much time reading manga, you probably have no idea what the signs say.

East-West transliterations have long led to cross-cultural hilarity. (If you haven't been to Engrish.com yet, go there — but not till you've finished reading this.) As such, we figured there was a good probability that Bostonians had mangled the Japanese language, too. So we enlisted the help of Momo Shinzawa, a fine-art photographer from Tokyo, to help us decode some of the signs near Yawkey Way.

Shinzawa, incidentally, is no novice when it comes to spotting mistranslations. "A long time ago, I went to Revere Beach and I saw this super white trashy guy with mullet," she reports. This man had a tattoo on his arm. It read "Brown Rice." Shinzawa suspects he meant it to say "American Troop" or "American Army Solider." She explains that, when the Japanese describe America or Americans, they use the Chinese character for rice: "If we see it right front of name or places, etc.," she writes in an e-mail, "we know that person or place is America related." But this guy's tattoo artist apparently didn't know the right word for "Army."

"He looked very tough and seemed really proud of what he got on his arm, but 'Brown Rice?' Maybe he is vegan or something, but I doubt it."

The following, via e-mail, are Shinzawa's translations — and her verdicts.



"'The Best Sausage Co.' Words in Japanese are technically correct. However, the font is very odd shape. I can tell non-Japanese speaker try to copy someone's writing to make it looks like Japanese. It is very non-native writing."



"This sign is actually just fine. Very official and nicely done. It says 'DICE-K Welcome to Boston. Mayor Thomas Menino, Boston Resident.'"



"It says 'Welcome' in Japanese. Yes, it pronounce like 'Yo Koso,' but the correct writing is 'Youkoso.'"



"This one is also okay. I feel like some ads agency created. Fonts are very good and grammar is also make sense to me. It says 'Welcome to Game on! Boston's first class sports bar.'"



"It says their restaurant name. That's it. I think this is fine. Just kind of boring."



"Oh, this is really good one! The first three letters says 'Red Sox' (literately means 'Red color sox') which is kind of okay, but everybody knows Red Sox as Red Sox. You know what I mean? We pronounce and used the name of the team just like Bostonian, so this is kind of funny. On top of it, I think they to say "Red Sox Fans" but, the last two letters literately means 'an army corps,' not 'fan.' I can see this sign was made by someone who speak Chinese, maybe? Who can not write [Japanese characters] Hiragana and katakana. When we use foreign words, we use Katakana. So the word 'Red Sox' or 'fan' should be all Katakana, not in Chinese letters. So this is my suspicious. Yeah, it is kind of No, No to call Japanese 'An Army corps of red color sox?!' Since [the Japanese were] Americans enemies long time ago!? I found this sign kind of funny! If Japanese see it, they can understand what they are trying to say. It is almost there, but not right Japanese."

On the Web

Mike Miliard's Sox Blog: <http://www.thephoenix.com/soxblog>