

# 'Kita' chosen as kanji character best marking mood in 2017

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Seihan Mori, chief priest of Kyoto's Kiyomizudera temple, on Dec. 12 writes a giant "kita" (north) kanji that defines this year. (Yoshiko Sato)

KYOTO--The kanji character chosen by the public as best representing 2017 is "kita" (north), symbolizing a year dominated by reports of North Korea's ballistic missile launches and an underground nuclear test.

In an annual ritual to mark the year-end, Seihan Mori, chief priest of the famed Kiyomizudera temple, painted a giant kita kanji with a calligraphy brush on a sheet of traditional washi paper on Dec. 12.

Kyoto-based organizer Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation said the winning kanji received 7,104, or 4.6 percent, of the 153,594 votes cast in the annual poll.

Of those who picked the winner, many cited North Korea's repeated military provocations as the reason for their choice.

Other factors that swung the vote in kita's favor include the damage caused by torrential rain in the northern Kyushu region in July, and summertime typhoons in Hokkaido that led to a shortage of potatoes and some packets of chips disappearing from store shelves.

Kita is one of the three characters for Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost main island, and so its selection as kanji of the year could also be an omen for some in Japanese professional baseball.

Star pitcher-hitter Shohei Ohtani decided to move from Sapporo-based Nippon-Ham Fighters to the Los Angeles Angels in the major leagues from next season.

As if to compensate for his departure, promising slugger Kotaro Kiyomiya, who launched 111 home runs at Tokyo's Waseda Jitsugyo High School, is to start his professional career at the Fighters.

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