Introduction

Our aim in this work has been to create an entirely new dictionary for the English-speaking student studying Japanese. A number of special features have been incorporated to make this dictionary easier to use and more helpful than any other.

1. The character entries are the 2,000 most frequently used and/or most important characters. Together, they cover over 98% of the characters in current common usage. These 2,000 characters are illustrated with 12,500 usage examples.

To make them easier to learn, these 2,000 *kanji* have been systematically arranged in order of usage frequency and/or importance and divided into ten levels of 200 characters each. The 1,200 characters found in the first six levels represent 95% of the characters in current modern usage. They have accordingly been treated in special detail.

Consideration has also been given to including character usage examples which, while not found in printed texts, are frequently encountered in everyday life. Examples include compounds used mainly in personal notes such as 前略 or compounds appearing on bulletin boards such as 営業.

2. Character meanings are shown in accordance with their meanings in actual usage. In cases where a character has several meanings, examples illustrate each separate meaning. Thus, for certain characters, meanings differ somewhat from those found in standard dictionaries. Meanings no longer relevant to modern Japanese have been omitted, and, conversely, new meanings have been added where appropriate. Wherever possible, entries have been grouped according to the entry *kanji*'s English-language meanings: Characters with only one meaning in Japanese have been given other supplementary meanings if such exist in English, and vice versa.

3. Characters do not always look the same brush-drawn as printed. In order to facilitate quick recognition and understanding of the distinctive features of each character, the first 1,200 characters are illustrated in several different forms.

4. Figuratively similar characters, for instance, 土 and 土, are contrasted in order to avoid any confusion in their identification.

5. Stroke order, an essential element in correct writing and stroke count, is explained clearly and simply for all of the first 1,200 characters.

6. Modern readings are fully detailed in all their complexity. Traditionally, the character 生, for instance, has been written "u(mareru)", but in modern usage this character can be read as "u" (生まれる), "uma" (生れる), or "umare" (生). This dictionary shows all readings, thus eliminating the confusion often caused when the student sees readings in real life which differ slightly from the dictionary reading. For characters with a number of different readings, the basic reading is indicated as are important variant readings.

7. Syntactic function is illustrated for all example entries. Here, the emphasis is on how a word functions within a sentence and in relation to other words.

8. Space permitting, synonyms are given and differences in nuance explained.

9. Character compounds are explained through analysis of the character meanings in combination. This is a new feature not found in any other *kanji* dictionary, and one which makes character usage and compound formation far clearer. This feature is an invaluable aid for the student seeking an enriched vocabulary.

10. The use of prefixes and suffixes as well as abbreviated forms of character compounds, largely ignored in other dictionaries, are clearly explained and illustrated with examples.

11. Expressions and word usages derived from classical quotations generally prove difficult to understand without extensive background in Japanese culture. The same is true of proper nouns. For this reason supplementary notes are provided for words expressing or alluding to complex cultural elements.

12. For easy reference, comprehensive indices have been compiled by readings, stroke counts, and English meanings, and any character can be looked up in any of these indices.

The reading index includes all modern reading variations. It is thus unnecessary to convert to a "standard" dictionary form to use the index. Reading is systematized by grouping together all characters used with each reading.

Using the stroke count index is made easier than ever with the inclusion of listings for errors commonly made in the calculation of character strokes.

The meaning index makes it possible to refer to characters by their English meanings. This index aids in understanding usage and meaning distinctions.

13. Finally, to promote greater understanding of the role characters play in the Japanese language, appendices have been included outlining information of general interest regarding the history of *kanji*, their readings, and the formation of compounds.

We hope that we have been successful in achieving all of our original aims and that this dictionary prove an aid, and even a friend, to all students of the Japanese language.

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