

How to use

The purpose of this publication is to provide a basic guide and reference for identifying Japanese cursive script. When you are facing a character written in cursive script – a brief introduction on this style of writing can be found in the next chapter – identification by the number of strokes cannot be applied any longer as the abbreviated writing style omits certain strokes. So the only effective way of identifying a cursive script is by its radical, a graphical component under which the character is traditionally listed in a dictionary. This component is often semantic, but may sometimes be a phonetic or even artificially extracted portion of the character. The radicals used here are the Japanese version of the 214 Chinese Kangxi radicals. Radicals may appear in any position in a character, for example on the left side, at the bottom, on top, on the right side, as an enclosure and so on. The first thing to do is to identify the radical under which the character is most likely to have been indexed. As a rule of thumb, components on the left or on top of the character, or elements which surround the rest of the character, are the ones most likely to be used as a radical. But it is also possible to find a single character indexed under multiple radicals.

What makes identifying cursive script so difficult is that the radicals of course are also written in an abbreviated manner and that several radicals look almost identical in their abbreviated form. That means identifying the radical of a cursive character can be difficult and might need a lot of comparing. To begin with, this dictionary offers a RADICAL OVERVIEW which lists, as the name suggests, an overview of all the aforementioned Kangxi radicals. Most important is the RADICAL SECTION which follows. This section namely provides in most of the cases several examples of how each radical appears in its cursive writing. If you think you

found a match with the supposed radical for the cursive character in question, then go to the page which lists the characters grouped under that radical. This dictionary contains approximately 5.300 characters, which means chances are high that the character you are looking for is listed somewhere. So if you are unable to find it in the CHARACTER SECTION pointed out by the RADICAL SECTION, try again with another, similar, or with a different radical as a starting point.

As mentioned, the purpose of this publication is to provide a basic guide and reference for identifying cursive characters. It is not meant as a comprehensive cursive script dictionary offering different handwritings of each cursive character. It is also not meant as a “cursive character look-up”, although a cursive character might be found with the print type character as starting point. For this, a list of all characters featured in this dictionary is provided at the end of the book, again sorted by radicals.

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β
kozato-ben
(left side)
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β
yū-bu
(= *kozato-ben* on the right side)
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3 STROKES

□
kō-bu
Page 117



□
i-bu
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4 STROKES

心

心 心 心 心

shinben

Page 181

心 心

戈

戈 戈 戈 戈

ka-bu

Page 184

戶

戶 戶 戶

ko-bu

Page 185

手

手 手 手

shu-bu

Page 186

口 囗 囗 囗 囗 囗

i-bu

enclosure

囚 四 囟 圖 圓 困 国 國

囙 囘 囙 囙 囙 囙 囙 囙

固 回 因 園 圀 圈 囿 圃

固 回 因 園 圀 圈 囿 圃

囿 圈 圍 團 嗇 園

囿 團 團 團 嗇 團

攴·攴

boku-bu

knock

攴 攴 攴 攴 攴 攴 攴

故 敬 教 救 敢 散 數 政

故 敬 教 救 敢 散 數 政

整 敵 敦 敗 敏 敷 放 收

整 敵 敦 敗 敏 敷 放 收

攸 效 敖 敘 敝 敝 敲 數

攸 效 敖 敘 敝 敝 敲 數