Dai Kan-Wa jiten 大漢和辭典 (Great Chinese-Japanese Dictionary)

Compiled by Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次.
Tōkyō: Taishūkan Shoten 大修館書店 1943 (Vol. 1); 1955-1960 (Vol. 1 revised & Vols. 2-13).

Total single-character and compound entries: estimated at 500,000.

This is unquestionably the biggest and best dictionary of the Chinese language ever compiled. It surpasses the Zhonghua da zidian 中華大字典 (approximately 42,800 single-character entries) in the number of different characters recorded, and it is the first such dictionary even to approach the Webster’s Unabridged or the O.E.D. in sound lexicographical procedure, completeness, accuracy, clarity, and detail. No one should ever claim to have a lexicographical problem—or a biographical, bibliographical, or geographical problem—unless he has already consulted “Morohashi” and found nothing there. Indeed, for maximum efficiency, one should begin not end his search with “Morohashi.”

The single-character entries include not only the standard forms of common and uncommon characters, but also Japanese kokuji 國字 and an extraordinary number of unusual and abbreviated forms. However slight the variation, the character will be given a separate entry with appropriate cross-references and will be included in the indices of Volume 13. The four-corner index 四角號碼索引 then makes it possible to locate with comparative ease those forms for which the radical or stroke count would be almost impossible to ascertain. The arrangement of the single characters is by radical and residual stroke count and for each single-character entry (excluding the words of unknown meaning and the variants which are merely cross-referenced) the following information is supplied:
A consecutive number for cross-reference purposes.

Japanese pronunciation in katakana according to historical kana spelling (kyū kanazukai 旧仮名遣い). If the character had more than one Chinese pronunciation, a Japanese version of each will be given, preceded by a small numbered square: □一, □二, □三, etc. If, in addition to the basic Japanese Kan'on 漢音 pronunciation, there is also a Go-on 呉音 reading, both will be given: the Kan'on on the right and the Go-on on the left. If, further, there is a “customary” Japanese reading or Kan'yō-on 慣用音, this will be given far to the left beneath another small square labeled □慣.

Immediately below the Japanese pronunciation is given the traditional fanqie 反切 (J. hansetsu) spelling of the word with the source of that spelling indicated in brackets. Morohashi’s sources include: Jiyun 集韻, Guangyun 廣韻, Zhonghua dazidian 中華大字典, and the Cihai 辭海. The fanqie 反切 system uses two characters to represent the reading/pronunciation of the character in question. For example, the character ding 丁 has a fanqie 反切 spelling as follows: 當 d[ang] + 經 [j]ing = 丁 ding.

Immediately below the fanqie spelling is a character enclosed in a square (e.g. 禹 here). This is the rhyme. But note that it is one of the 106 “modern” rhymes such as one finds in the Peiwen yunfu 佩文韻府, and not necessarily a rhyme contemporary with the fanqie spelling. The circles in the four corners of the squares indicate the tone of your given words. Reading clockwise from the lower-left corner, they indicate: 1. ping sheng 平聲; 2. shang sheng 上聲; 3. qu sheng 去聲; and 4. ru sheng 入聲. Neutral tones are not indicated, and this system is not the same as the one in the Guoyu zidian 國語字典 for marking the modern Mandarin tones. Here both first and second tones are subsumed under the ping sheng, while the shang sheng includes not only the third tone, but also some of the modern fourth tone words.

To the left of each fanqie spelling, Morohashi gives the modern Mandarin pronunciation in National Phonetic Letters (Zhuyin fuhao 注音符號) and Wade-Giles romanization.

Following the above phonological information and at the head of his definitions, Morohashi gives the character in one and sometimes more of the seal forms which it may be known to have. Each form given is identified as to its style—usually the “lesser seal” (xiaozhuan 小篆) of the Qin 秦 dynasty—but sources are not generally indicated.
1. Following the seal form of the character Morohashi begins the definitions. If the word has more than one pronunciation, there is first a number in a square to indicate the pronunciation (e.g. □) and then a series of numbered entries ○ ○ ○ (white numbers in black circles) giving all of the meanings appropriate to that pronunciation. Each definition begins with a Japanese equivalent in bold gothic face and is followed, when possible, by one or more citations from Chinese sources. In the event that under a single broad meaning there are several shades of meaning, each nuance will be represented by a separate entry. These sub-entries will be “numbered” according to the I-RO-HA series with each kana in a small white circle (e.g., ○伊 ○ロ ○ハ), and each sub-entry beginning with a Japanese definition before the citations of examples from Chinese. When further subdivisions are required they are marked by the ten cyclical characters of the tiangan 天干 series: 甲 乙 丙, etc.

I-RO-HA series:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Poem</th>
<th>Romanization</th>
<th>Kana Romanized</th>
<th>Kana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>色は匂へど</td>
<td>Iro wa nioedo</td>
<td>I-ro ha ni-ho-he-to</td>
<td>イロハニホヘト</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>散りぬるを</td>
<td>Chirinuru o</td>
<td>Chi-ri-nu-ru-(w)o</td>
<td>チリヌルヲ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我世誰ぞ</td>
<td>Waga yo tare zo</td>
<td>Wa-ka yo ta-re so</td>
<td>ワカヨタレソ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>常ならむ</td>
<td>Tsune naran</td>
<td>Tsu-ne na-ra-so</td>
<td>ツネナラム</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有為の奥山</td>
<td>Ui no okuyama</td>
<td>U-(w)i no o-ku-ya-ma</td>
<td>ウキノクヤマ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>今日越えて</td>
<td>Kyō koete</td>
<td>Ke-fu ko-e-te</td>
<td>ケフコエテ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>浅き夢みじ</td>
<td>Asaki yume miji</td>
<td>A-sa-ki yu-me mi-shi</td>
<td>アサキユメミシ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>醉もせず</td>
<td>Ei mo sezu</td>
<td>(W)e-hi mo se-su</td>
<td>エヒモセス</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. With regard to the sequential arrangement of the various definitions it is helpful to note that the basic, “classical Chinese” meanings are given first, followed by the later, more specialized, or purely Japanese meanings. Among the latter, one will find:

- Uses as a loan for another character (with cross reference)
- Uses as a family, clan, or geographical name (labeled xing 姓, guohao 國號, xianming 縣名, etc.)
- Uses in posthumous titles (labeled shi 謡 and followed by a list of the attributes which the word is supposed to imply).
Special modern usages (labeled 図) such as she 撮 in the sense of “to take a photograph.”
Special Buddhist usages (labeled 佛; see kong 空).
• Purely Japanese usages. These always form the last section of the definitions and are marked by the label □邦. Again the definitions run from the general to the specialized. There is usually a good representation of Japanese usage—indeed, for a word like gua (J. ka(ke)ru) the Japanese examples outnumber the Chinese. Japanologists, in particular, will want to note this feature, for—coupled with the fact that all words and phrases are defined in Japanese—it makes “Morohashi” one of the most important Japanese character dictionaries.

9. Morohashi concludes the section devoted to the single character with three easily overlooked but very useful entries (not occurring, of course, when there is no relevant information):

1. A section labeled na-nori 名乗 which gives special readings that the character may have when occurring in Japanese names.

2. A section labeled jiezi (J. kaiji) 解字 that discusses the origin and evolution of the character. An attempt is made to explain not only the origin of the graph, but—what is more important—the evolution and ramification of its meanings. However suspect this etymology, it often gives one insight into the traditional view of how the character got some special meaning and, thus, what its connotations may be. There are six classifications:
   • Pictographs (Ch. xiangxing; J. shōkei 象形): 車, 日, 鳥, etc.
   • Abstractions (Ch. zhishi; J. shiji 指事): 上, 下, 不, etc.
   • Ideographs (Ch. huiyi; J. kaii 會意): 好, 信, 明, etc.
• Extensions (Ch. zhuanzhù 轉注; J. tenchū 轉注): kao 考 and lao 老 both evolving from a single graph.
• Borrowings (Ch. jiajie; J. kashaku 假借): phonetic borrowings as with 后 for 後.
• Radical-phonetic compounds (Ch. xingsheng; J. keisei 形聲 or 諧聲): 河, 訪, 忘, etc.

It scarcely needs to be said that there is some confusion in the classification. Much depends on how one interprets the graph and what one assigns as its primary signification. Note that you sometimes get double classifications, as with wen (J. bun) 文, which is listed as a “pictograph- abstraction.” It might also be noted that “extensions,” “borrowings,” and “radical-phonetic compounds” are all secondary. That is to say they are all “reworkings” of graphs that have already been created according to one of the first three principles. This is why Morohashi rarely gives a jiezi 解字 entry for a graph belonging to the “radical-phonetic compound” classification, and why his notes on “extensions” and “borrowings” are given as part of the discussion of the graph rather than as classifying headings (c.f., ming 明 and xing 星 for two instances where “radical-phonetic compound” does get mentioned).

3. The final section labeled cankao (J. sankō) 參考 calls attention to related or variant characters, unrelated characters which are easily confused with the given character on graphic or phonetic grounds, and peculiarities in the historical lexicographical treatment of the word. It is not always possible to make nice distinctions between the content of this section and the jiezi 解字 section; the two tend to overlap and supplement each other.

As with single-character entries, the significant thing about the compound entries in this dictionary is the sheer number. In addition to compounds in the usual sense (zhidao 知道, dianhua 電話, etc.), one finds here: literary allusions, whole lines from prose and poetry, expressions from slang and dialekt, proverbs, botanical and zoological names, legal and economic terms, Buddhist terms (often with Sanskrit equivalents), transcriptions from Western languages (with original in Latin letters), names of persons and places (Chinese, Japanese, and Western), book titles, names of offices and official titles, names of famous libraries, reign titles, etc. Special notice should be taken of the wealth of information under some of these categories:

1. No other general dictionary is as rich in personal names, and one finds many here that probably do not appear in any other dictionary. Zi 字, hao 號, posthumous titles (shi 諡), studio names (shiming 室名), pen names, temple names (miaohao 廟號), nicknames, and miscellaneous honorific appellations are included in great numbers and precisely identified. A glance at the entries under bo 伯 will suggest the value of “Morohashi” in this area. For Westerners, the entries are confined to those of considerable importance and/or those who happen to have Chinese names, (see Boxihe (J. Perio) 伯希和 for one example).
For Japanese, Morohashi limits his entries to persons whose names are difficult to read and those who have some association with China or Chinese studies. For each biographical entry, Morohashi gives not only a short biography, but also relevant dates and, when appropriate, a list of the individual’s most important writings.

2. Inclusion of a large number of book titles in both their standard and variant forms, makes “Morohashi” particularly useful for the identification of an unfamiliar title. He has included—perhaps completely—the titles in the Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao 四庫全書總目提要 (without, however, always noting all of the relevant remarks on authorship, false attribution, etc.), and he analyzes the contents of many of the major congshu 叢書. Many works of popular and even modern fiction are also included as well as yuefu 樂府, ci 詞 and gupai 曲牌 titles. Often, for important works, Morohashi will list later critical studies or commentaries.

3. Falling under no single category, but of great usefulness, are Morohashi’s long, often illustrated encyclopedic entries providing much hard-to-get-at information in convenient, tabular form. If you want to write a particular style of poetry, you will find the complete rules under the name for that style. If you want to know who has written in the “sevens” (qi 七) genre, you will find under 七 a list of the major authors and their compositions from the Han to the Yuan dynasty. If the names of Confucius’ seventy-two disciples have slipped your mind, you will find them listed with their “style name” (zi 字) under 七十二弟子, and for good measure, under 孔子世系 you will find Confucius’ family line traced down to Mr. Kong Decheng 孔德成 in the 77th generation. There are things for the Japanologist, too. Under 三十六歌仙, for example, one finds not only the thirty-six immortals of antiquity, but also the “medieval” thirty-six, the “modern” thirty-six, the thirty-six lady immortals, and thirty-six Buddhist immortals—all neatly arranged with indication of who made the selection.

4. With respect to entries of almost all categories, Morohashi deserves praise for the wealth of information supplied, but this is especially true for words, phrases, and allusions out of the older “classical” language. If the entry is aptly illustrated by a quotation, Morohashi will give not only that quotation—noting the work, chapter, and/or section from which it is drawn—but also any relevant commentary (always punctuated with commas and periods, and supplied with kaeriten 返り点, but not okurigana 送り仮名). If the word or phrase is the name of an object or thing, Morohashi will frequently provide a picture—noting, as few works do, the source of his illustration. This sort of aid is especially useful for distinguishing one battle-axe or one type of ceremonial vessel from another, and nowhere can you so conveniently find a picture to prove that a fen 狼 really is a bird with six legs. (Regrettably, only one of its three eyes can be seen in the illustration.) One might also do
well to remember “Morohashi” as a source of very useful leads to other reference materials. Thus, for example, under the entry 度量衡 one finds a substantial list of Japanese studies dealing with the conversion of Chinese weights and measures.

Following the principles laid down by Arthur Rose-Innes, Andrew Nathaniel Nelson, and other specialists on the subject, Morohashi has contrived to arrange his entries to insure the maximum inconvenience for the user. As already noted, the single characters are arranged according to radical and residual stroke count. Morohashi has elected to arrange them according to the order in which they appear in the Kangxi zidian 康熙字典. Fortunately, one can find what he is looking for most of the time at the expense of only modest effort: Imagine each component of your compound read according to Kan’on 漢音 pronunciation and spelled according to historical kana spelling; then look for it at the appropriate point in the sequence of the Japanese syllabary. If one does this while bearing in mind that the syllables wi ウィ, we ウェ and wo ウォ have, “for convenience,” been mixed with the syllables i, e, and o, he will find what he is looking for ninety percent of the time.

Indices

At the beginning of each volume of the dictionary proper there are two indices:

1. An index to all characters in the volume arranged by radical and residual stroke count. This index should be unnecessary since it parallels the arrangement of the dictionary, but the small marginal characters of the dictionary proper and Morohashi’s inconvenient arrangement of characters with identical radical and stroke count make this one of the most useful indices. It is the only index printed in type that is easy on the eye, and it would be perfect had the headings for each radical not been printed small and inconspicuously.

2. An index to all characters in the volume arranged by total stroke count and subdivided by radical. Indices arranged by total stroke count are inconvenient at best.

The index volume itself provides the following indices and supplementary information:

1. An index to all characters in the dictionary arranged by total stroke count and subdivided by radical (the radicals appear as small characters written above the main line).

2. An index to all characters in the dictionary arranged according to the modern kana spelling of the on 音 pronunciation; subdivided first by stroke count (the small numbers above the main line) and then by radical. When the historical spelling differs from the modern, it is indicated in small katakana beneath the character.

3. An index to all characters in the dictionary arranged according to the modern kana spelling of the kun 訓 reading or interpretation; subdivided by stroke count (small numbers above the line) and then radical. Historical spelling, when different from the modern, is indicated by small hiragana at the side of the kun reading.
4. A four-corner 四角號碼 index to all characters in the dictionary. It would be almost impossible to locate many of the strange characters of obscure radical without the aid of this index. There is also an eight-page explanation of the four-corner system (in Japanese).

5. An addenda giving minutely variant and/or rare forms for 1062 characters.

6. A table of とよ けんji 当用漢字 arranged by the number of strokes of the simplified orthographies.

7. A table of the simplified characters promulgated by the Chinese Communist State Council on 28 June 1956. The table is arranged by stroke count and further subdivided according to the shape and/or direction of the first stroke.