

INTRODUCTION
TO THE STUDY ★
OF JAPANESE ★
WRITING ★ ★ ★

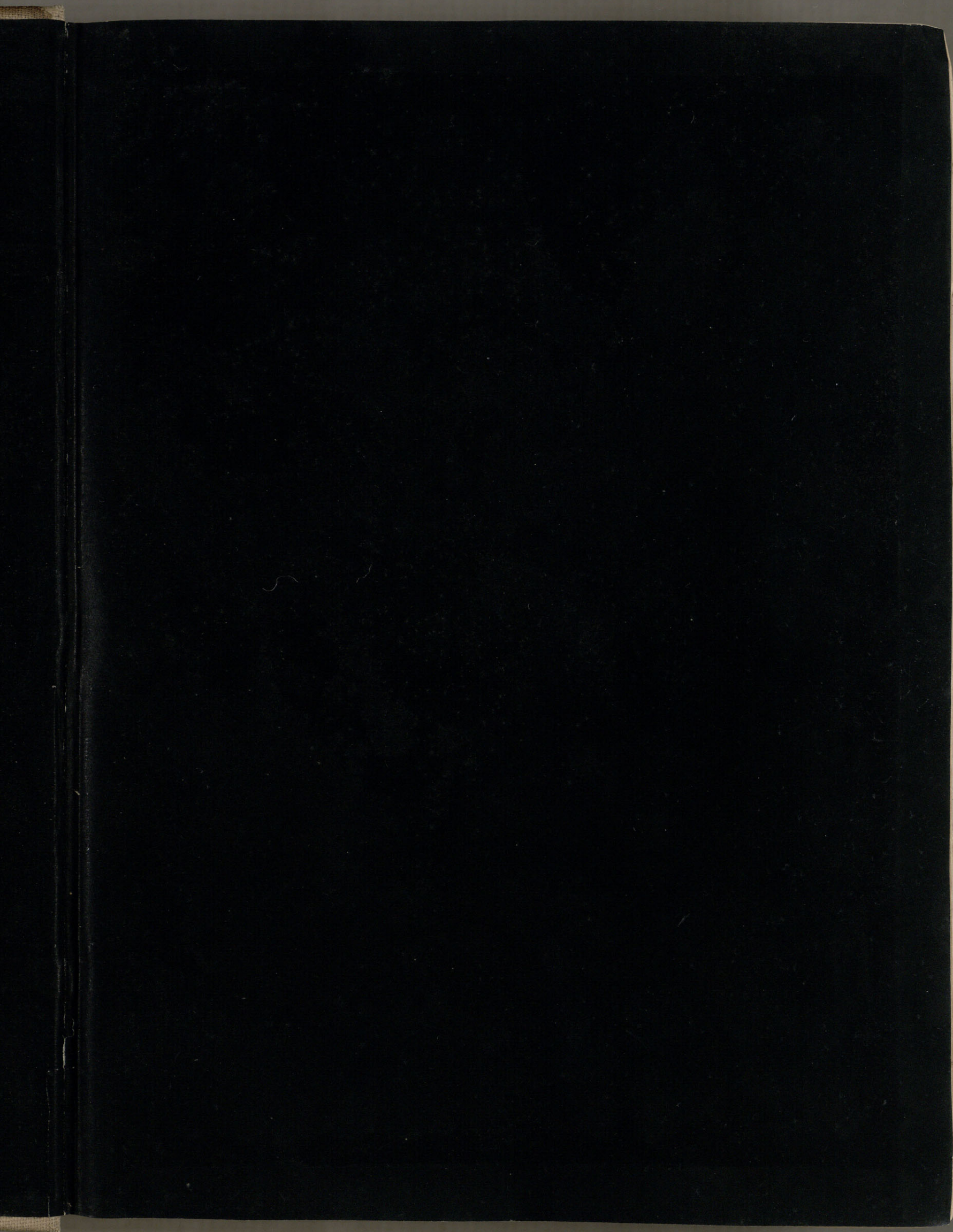
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JAPANESE WRITING



A PRACTICAL INTRODUCTION
TO THE
STUDY OF JAPANESE WRITING
(MOJI NO SHIRUBE)

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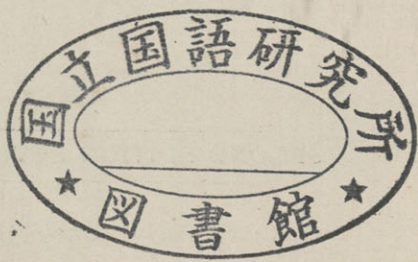
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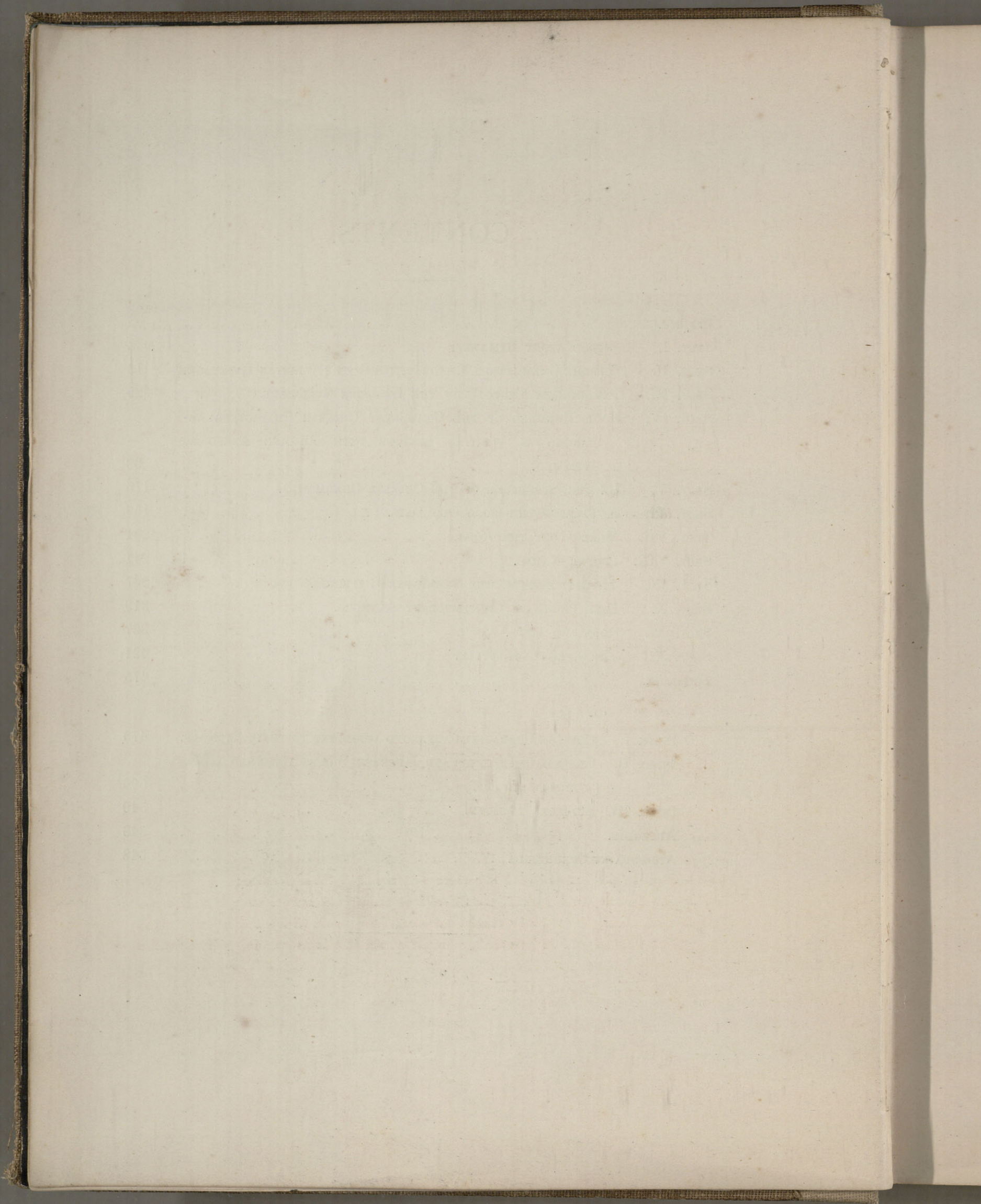
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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

Though dealing—or rather because dealing—with a subject usually considered extremely dry, the compiler of this *Introduction* has done his best to make it a “live book.” Japanese is no dead language; its crabbed symbols serve every purpose of daily life to one of the most vivacious of modern nations. The solemn leading article, the skittish feuilleton, the advertiser’s puff, the post-card, the cheap telegram,—all these have now as familiar a home in Japan as in any Western land. To them the learner must have recourse, be he missionary, merchant, or diplomat, if his study of the language is to bear fruit in practice, though it is also no doubt true that the literature of an earlier growth must not be altogether neglected; for in Japan, as in Europe, the old order of ideas crops out here and there through the new,—forms in fact the basis on which the new stands. The exercises and extracts given in the present volume have been selected in accordance with these views. Utility alone has been considered; nothing has been conceded to antiquarian erudition, except in so far as it may help to light the practical student on his way.

The compiler is under obligations to several Japanese authors and to the editors of leading periodicals, for permission to reprint pieces published by them. Their names are given in the notes attached to each piece. To Mr. W. G. Aston, C. M. G., his thanks are due for permission to make use of some of the paradigms in the latter’s admirable *Grammar of the Japanese Written Language*. The chief books consulted on the subject of the ideographs have been the Rev. Dr. Chalmers’s too little known work on *The Structure of Chinese Characters*, and an essay by the Rev. Dr. Faber entitled *Prehistoric China*, published in Vol. XXIV, No. 2, of the “Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society;” furthermore—indeed very specially—the late Dr. Wells William’s *Syllabic Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, which has been referred to for almost every character here given, and from which definitions and derivations have been frequently borrowed. Mr. Lay’s Chinese-Japanese-English Dictionary and Dr. Hepburn’s and Captain Brinkley’s Japanese-English Dictionaries have also frequently been consulted with profit. The consideration that all foreign students of Japanese are certain to have one or other of the above-mentioned dictionaries at their elbow has allowed the definitions to be reduced to a minimum. It is assumed throughout that the student is acquainted with the present writer’s *Handbook of Colloquial Japanese*, and possesses a fair working knowledge of the spoken speech which that Handbook serves to elucidate. His thanks are due to his Japanese assistant, Mr. Y. Ōno, without whose useful counsels and unremitting care the work could hardly have been carried to a successful issue.

Should any Chinese scholars—we mean Europeans versed in Chinese—honour the book with their notice, they will, it is trusted, remember that its object, so far as the Chinese characters are concerned, is to teach *the way in which these are used by the Japanese*. Otherwise, to whatever real shortcomings it may possess they will add sundry imaginary ones, as the signification given to a considerable number of characters varies in the two countries, just as many English words borrowed from the French no longer retain exactly their French meaning. Purists even in Japan may censure the treatment of certain other characters, with regard to whose orthography usage varies. Giles, in the preface to his great Chinese-English Lexicon, avows his inability to adhere consistently to the “correct” forms. The forms in Williams vary according to the font of type employed; and in such a favourite native Japanese dictionary as, for instance, the 會玉篇 KWAI GYOKU-HEN, forms “correct” and “incorrect” of the same character jostle each other on the same page. Usage thus vacillates, and we have doubtless vacillated with it. If there is error in this, it is an error to which Japanese writers and printers at large must plead guilty. In any case, the question is not one for beginners to plunge into. It is a curious detail, best left as a bone of contention to purists and lexicographers.

With these acknowledgments and explanations the compiler sends forth this *Introduction*,—the result of much thought and labour,—in the hope that it may safely lead honest and laborious students through the maze of the most intricate system of writing now extant upon our planet. Suggestions and corrections will be welcome at any time.

Miyanoshita, March, 1899.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The opportunity of a new edition has been taken advantage of to subject the whole work to careful scrutiny. While no change in essentials has been deemed necessary, it is hoped that the numerous small additions now made will help to smooth the learner's path. The author begs to express his thanks to Mr. Walter Denning, Mr. James Murdoch, Dr. J. N. Seymour, Mr. W. B. Mason, and the other friends who have favoured him with corrections and suggestions, as also to his Japanese assistant, Mr. E. Nagahara.

Yokohama, May, 1905.