

Re: Encounters with Katakana "YE"?

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang.japan/2004-09/0116.html>

From: Charles J. Lippert (cjlippert_at_hotmail.com)

Date: 09/01/04

Date: Tue, 31 Aug 2004 22:27:07 -0500

The context was easier than you may imagine. It was a drawn poster depicting the future of the nation with both boys and girls in a classroom setting, sitting on benches. Judging from the clothes, it seems to depict late Meiji period. The teacher was depicted as pointing to series of mathematical problems on the blackboard, students with their slates copying the problem down. However, off to the teacher's side was the Table of 50 in Katakana. There in the Y column was $\text{B}\%d\%\%f\%\%h$ (B and in the W column was the expected $\text{B}\%o\%p\%\%q\%r$ (B. It seems like the Table in that sketch had deliberately filled in that missing YE with that odd Katakana, my initial guess was due to the influx of all the non-Japanese words with the YE sound, such as YELLOW. However, since I have never seen that Katakana ever before, and I know there were Kanji characters also from that era for "Dram" and "Ounce" based on the Apothecarian shorthand, that are no longer in use, I thought maybe the fate of $\text{B}\%\%$ (B was the same.

"Bart Mathias" <bartmathias@verizon.net> wrote in message [news:pe9Zc.220\\$UR2.1@trnddc08...](mailto:news:pe9Zc.220$UR2.1@trnddc08...)

> *Charles J. Lippert wrote:*

> > [...]

> > *Recently, I came across a strange Katakana that I've never seen before.*

> > *However, from the context and shape, I recognized that the Katakana was YE.*

> > *Now, generally when I write YE, I write it as $\text{B}\%\%\%$ (B (Ie) and I have seen $\text{B}\%q$ (B*

> > *(WE) used as*

> > *YE. This strange Katakana I came across can be described as either $\text{B}\%($ (B (E)*

> > *with*

> > *the top-bar swashed like $\text{B}\%\%$ (B (I) or as an underlined $\text{B}\%\%$ (B (I). Have anyone*

> > *else come*

> > *across this version of YE? Was this part of a Meiji-era Katakana reform*

> > *that never took hold?*

>

>

> *It wouldn't likely have been any Meiji-era reconstruction of that lost*

> *sound that was probably never spelled in katakana.*

>

> *In recent years, the grass form of $\text{B}\%9$ (B has sometimes been used as a*

> *hiragana symbol for "ye." It's entirely possible that someone came up*

> *with a katakana device as well.*

>

> *Where did you see it? What was it about its shape, and its context,*

> *that told you it would be "ye"?*

>

> *Bart*

>