

KitakuwaDictionary

A New English-English Dictionary of Japanese Vocabulary by Kitakuwada SHS

STUDENT'S FOREWORD (生徒代表のことば)

Are you interested in Japanese culture? How much do you know about Japan? We are Kyoto Prefectural Kitakuwada Senior High School (京都府立北桑田高等学校) students who shoulder the next generation, and feel like young heroes and heroines! In our community we have town areas and countryside. So we spend our time happily and healthily.

We like Japan beyond description and everyone feels very proud of Japanese culture, I believe. At the same time, however, in our daily lives there is less and less time to do cultural things, and sometimes people seem to have lost interest in Japanese culture. Western lifestyle looks more and more popular in Japan.

While preparing this dictionary, *KitakuwaDictionary* (『キタクワディクショナリー』 or 『北桑英々辞典』), I started to wonder whether this tendency is a good thing. We have to be successors of these cultures and traditions. So, we need knowledge about Japan and we need to learn about its culture. We will be happy if many people come to know about Japanese culture and become interested in Japan.

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cha (茶、ちゃ)

There are many kinds of *cha*, or Japanese tea. For example, *hojicha*, or roasted tea, and *genmaicha*, or tea with roasted rice. The most famous is green tea. The Japanese call it *ryokucha* (緑茶). *Ryokucha* is a little bitter but it is pleasant to the taste.

Japan has the art of the tea



ceremony. The Japanese call it *sado* (茶道) or *Cha-no-yu* (茶の湯). Do you know *sado*? The person that started *sado* was Sen no Rikyu. *Sado* was developed as a synthesis art, not only concerning drinking tea but also living with purpose and religion. The most famous slogan of *sado* is the phrase “*Ichigo-Ichie* (一期一会),” or “one precious occasion in a lifetime.” At present, *sado* is popular with foreigners.

When I was in elementary school I belonged to the *sado* club for a little while. Tea ceremonies use a different green tea. This tea is very bitter. We drink this tea with Japanese cake. It’s very tasty. *Sado* is very fun.

hashi (箸、はし)

Hashi, or chopsticks, are the most common utensils for eating in Japan. They are not a weapon and the Japanese don’t chop with them. They are two slender sticks, narrower than pens and about 20 centimetres long, made of wood, bamboo, or plastic. We usually use them when we eat *tempura*, tofu and other Japanese food. We don’t use them when we eat sushi. We usually eat it with our hands. There are various manners concerned with chopsticks. For example, we should not pierce food with them. We should not point them at a person. We should not wave them.



judo (柔道、じゅうどう)

Have you ever heard the word *judo*? Probably you have heard it, since judo is popular as an Olympic event. Modern judo was established by Jigoro Kano.

In the age of Edo, Japan had “*jujutsu* (柔術)” which had many schools and was loved by samurai. Jigoro trained under several schools of *jujutsu*, and he integrated them under the name “*judo*” in the Meiji period. After the Second World War, Judo came to be popular as a sport.



Judo’s rules are easy. You wear a *dogi* and you throw the other person. Then, if the person falls on his back hard, you will win. Although the rules are easy, the sport is very hard.

kabuki (歌舞伎、かぶき)

I have never seen Kabuki, so I want to study it. It uses a lot of props, costumes, and concrete scenery. This is in contrast with *noh* (能) which is performed with very little on the stage. Kabuki can be enjoyed by many a wide audience.



The content of its programs can be divided into two groups. There are dramas describing the lives of samurai, or *jidaimono*, (時代物) and dramas describing the lives of common people, or *sewamono* (世話物).

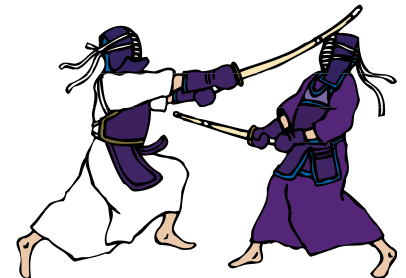
kayabuki no ie (かやぶきのいえ)

I will explain what *kayabuki no ie*, or a thatched roof house, is. It is a traditional private house from the old days in Japan. The roof of the house is made of cogon, sedge, and eulalia grass. It is superior in ventilation and insulation so it is cool in the summer, but it isn't so cold in winter. Recently these houses are decreasing in popularity because it costs the homeowner a lot of money to reroof them. In Gifu there is a village called Shirakawa-go (白川郷), where there are a lot of houses with thatched roofs. It is registered as a World Heritage site. Not only in Shirakawa-go, but also in Miyama-cho, Kyoto Prefecture, there is a village with many thatched houses, often called "Kayabuki no Sato (かやぶきの里)." We are proud of the village. If you are interested in thatched roof houses, you won't regret visiting this village.



kendo (剣道、けんどう)

Kendo is a Japanese sport like fencing and is famous in Japan. Kendo has many differences from fencing. For example, when you fence you use a metal sword, but you use a bamboo sword called *shinai* (竹刀) when you play kendo.



Kendo players have four target points which are called *men*, *kote*, *do*, and *tsuki*. *Men* is the top of the head. *Kote* is the wrists. *Do* is the abdomen. *Tsuki* is the throat. You hit those places using your bamboo sword. If you hit there exactly, you would get one point. If you get two points, you will be a winner.

There aren't professional players in kendo. Kendo has ranks which are called *Dan* (段). Kendo practice is very hard, but it is also mental practice. Kendo makes us very excited!

kimono (着物、きもの)

Kimono has long sleeves and its designs are sometimes very colourful. They are made of one long cloth. The present kimono was invented about 400 years ago during the Edo period in Japan.



The people then wore kimono as casual wear. Nowadays, because they are difficult to put on, young people wear kimono only on particular occasions. For example, on special occasions such as New Year's Day, Coming-of-Age Day and wedding receptions. *Maiko* (see *maiko*) wear *furisode*, a special kind of kimono worn only by unmarried girls. They look very beautiful in them.

koden (香典、こうでん)

When you attend someone's funeral, you will take a money offering with you in your coat or your bag. That is called "*koden*." It appears to be given in order to grieve the departed soul, but to tell the truth, it is given to the bereaved family. Holding a funeral ritual and constructing a grave cost a lot of money. So it is given to support them. It's from the spirit of mutual help.

kotatsu (こたつ)

Do you know *kotatsu*? It is a Japanese style leg heater shaped like a short square table. We put a Japanese quilt between the tabletop and the legs of the table. The electric heat source is under the table in the middle. We put our feet into the *kotatsu* on very cold days. We have a good time. We usually put oranges on the *kotatsu* and eat them while watching TV! The *kotatsu* makes us happy. Almost all Japanese people have *kotatsu*. We can't spend winter days without one. We love them.

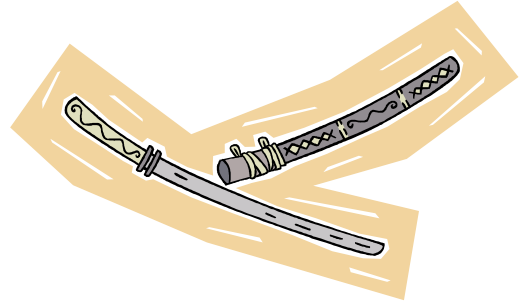
maiko (舞妓、まいこ)

I'll introduce *maiko*. *Maiko* are not as well known as geisha girls. A girl who is being trained to become a geisha is called a *maiko*, so we have to distinguish *maiko* and geisha (芸者、げいしゃ), or *geiko* (芸子、げいこ), the term used instead of geisha in Kyoto. A *maiko* is dressed in a special way and performs dances. A characteristic of a *maiko* is the sash hanging down on her back. A *maiko* is not married, much younger and dressed more colourfully than a geisha.



samurai (侍、さむらい)

A *samurai* was a military class man in old Japan. A samurai had a sword and wore traditional Japanese clothes. In addition, his hair was in a style called *mage*. A samurai belonged to a certain province. The top of the samurai class was called the *shogun*. He was the also the leader of the Japanese people in feudal times. Yoritomo Minamoto and Ieyasu Tokugawa are examples of well known *shogun*. Samurai had to follow the shogun's orders absolutely. For example, when the way happened they had to go and kill their enemies. Their rewards were often decided based on their bravery during the war. Now, there aren't samurai in Japan anywhere, but the word is still used sometimes. For example, during the World Baseball Classic, the Japanese baseball team was sometimes called "Samurai Japan." The players held their bats like swords, and they had great spirit. People usually use their countries traditional things as symbols.

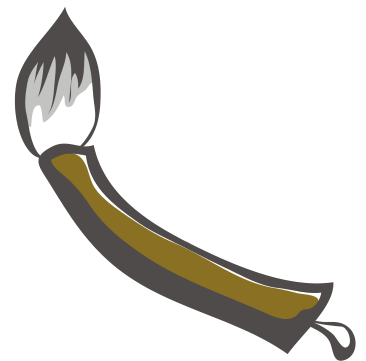


sekihan (赤飯、せきはん)

Let me introduce sekihan. *Sekihan* means "red rice." It's a rice dish made by steaming glutinous rice, *mochigome*, and boiled red beans, *azuki*, together. The latter turns the rice red. It's a dish eaten at holidays or special events in Japan, mainly because its red color and the *azuki* are appreciated on such occasions. For example, I've eaten it on my family's birthdays or when someone from my family passed an entrance exam. *Azuki* beans, next to soy beans, are one of the most beloved beans in Japanese cooking. They are very nutritious! *Sekihan* is usually served at room temperature, with a sprinkling of *gomashiro*, roasted sesame seeds mixed with salt. I like *sekihan* very much but not everybody in Japan likes it.

shodo (書道、しょどう)

Do you know what *shodo* is? Do you know how to do it? *Shodo* is, so to speak, writing some words beautifully on a paper, called *hanshi* (半紙), with a brush and blank ink, called *bokuju* (墨汁). The Japanese often write some messages in *shodo*, and these works are frequently displayed on the wall. The message is the writer's belief. When you learn *shodo*, you are given a level. You can advance to the next level if you pass an exam of *shodo*. Children learn *shodo* a bit during Japanese class in primary school. *Shodo* came from China in the remote past, but it has become a part of Japanese



culture.

sushi (すし)

O-sushi (おすし), a politer form of the word *sushi*, is often used by Japanese. In a combined form, the word turns into “...*zushi*” just like *nigiri-zushi* (にぎりずし), or hand-rolled sushi.

Originally, *sushi* meant a kind of fermented fish meat. In order to make *funa-zushi*” or fermented crucian carp, for example, people keep the fish and some rice together in a barrel placed in a cool place. It takes several months to process *funa-zushi*, and then the fish meat gives a very unique smell and taste.

Later in history, people invented a more convenient way to make sushi. They just poured some rice vinegar and certain seasonings on cooked rice, and ate it right away. This way became more and more popular until at last many people overseas adopted the custom to eat sushi in their countries. Today, we enjoy sushi with various ingredients, such as raw fish slices, vegetables, sea weeds, and plain omelettes.

In Japan, there are various good sushi restaurants where you might have to pay quite a lot. At one of such restaurants, you can say to the chef as follows; “*Yonsen-en de tekito-ni nigitte morae masen-ka?* (4,000 円で適当ににぎっても らえませんか。Can you serve nigiri-zushi for ¥ 4,000 per person?) *Maguro wa irete kudasai-ne.* (マグロは入れてくださ いね。Please don’t forget to include tuna.)”



tatami (畳、たたみ)

Tatami is a traditional type of Japanese flooring made of rush. Its size is approximately 0.9 m by 1.8 m. Many Japanese love its smell. We cover the floor of houses with *tatami*. We make ourselves at home on *tatami*. We use them as a measurement for the area of a house. Japanese have loved them for a long time, but recently many Japanese people build western-style houses.

ukiyo (浮世絵、うきよえ)

Although the word *ukiyo* is sometimes used to refer to a type of woodblock prints made during the Edo period (1603–1868), it actually means no more than “a genre painting.” Unlike some heavenly land you might see painted in a classical picture, *ukiyo* (うきよ) is “this weary world” and *e* (え) is “a picture.”

The *ukiyo* industry flourished chiefly in Edo, now Tokyo, and many of its subjects center around the social manners and customs.



In early *ukiyo-e*, we often see ladies in beautiful kimono, sumo wrestlers, and other contemporaries of theirs. Soon painters started to work with half figures of beauties, celebrities, and kabuki actors rather than their full-length portraits. The center of attention shifted from outward looking to mentalities and personalities. Later on, landscapes would become important subjects as the custom of travelling acquired popularity. Also people began to expect *ukiyo-e* for journalistic roles, so they started to issue publications somewhat resembling present newspapers with colored pictures.

Woodblock-print-style *ukiyo-e* was usually made not by one artist but by three separate craftsmen; first the painter, then the carver, and finally the printer. The artistic quality of *ukiyo-e* was very high, but it could be mass produced and appreciated at a reasonable price all over Japan. *Ukiyo-e* was a strong influence for French impressionists and British Victorian artists as well as modern illustrators.

umeboshi (梅干し、うめぼし)

Do you know *umeboshi*? *Umeboshi* is a very popular Japanese food. *Umeboshi* means pickled *ume*. That is to say Japanese apricot pickled in salt and dried in the sun. *Umeboshi* is very sour, but it's very tasty and good for your health. Some Japanese people eat it every day for good health. *Umeboshi* are often used in *onigiri*, or rice balls, and *bento*, or box lunches. I often eat cooked rice with one. My grandmother makes *umeboshi* at home every year. It is a Japanese thing. I love them.

zabuton (座布団、ざぶとん)

I am going to explain *zabuton* to you. We put it under us when we sit down. The *zabuton* has a square form and is made of various cloths. It is like a cushion, but is not as soft as a western one. We use them to sit on wooden floors or *tatami* mattresses, because it's more comfortable to sit on them than to sit directly on the floor. Although they are useful, nowadays many Japanese people don't use them.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (謝辞)

It was a pleasure to see the students here at Kitakuwada Senior High School put so much effort into this project; it is through their revisions and work that the *KitakuwaDictionary* has reached the level of quality we see today. I would like to thank them for all their hard work.

I hope that this dictionary will provide insight to its readers. The facts written here can be found

elsewhere, but here we see them through the lens of the young generation of Japan. Because of this, the Dictionary has a chance to provide additional information about what young people in Japan think of when they are asked about Japanese culture. And, of course, the feel of the writing can be a refreshing departure from that of other sources.

(Neil Murphy, the Assistant English Teacher, Kitakuwada SHS)

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT (編集後記)

Thursday, 18, June, 2009

There are already many works explaining Japanese things to people all over the world, and you might wonder if there is still any necessity to prepare for another. Our answer is yes!

Definitions of a dictionary, especially a dictionary published by and for the native speakers of other countries, such as an English-English dictionary, can often be frustrating. These days, more and more Japanese words are entering English dictionaries, and we can find not only *samurai*, *sushi*, or *ninja*, but also *tofu*, *futon*, and even *bento*, or a box-lunch! It is written, however, in some of such dictionaries that Japanese people can put *sashimi*, or slices of raw fish meat, in the *bento*. No Japanese dare to put raw meat in a lunchbox since Japan is such a hot and humid country at least during the half of the year. We, two teachers and several members of the 3-3 class students of Kitakuwada SHS, have wanted to wipe out such tragi-comical nonsense, and hopefully to give fresh pieces of information for those who want to learn about the real Japan.

Of course, the Japan we now live in is a modern Japan, where Occidental styles of life are becoming overwhelmingly popular in every aspect. At the same time, mental structures of the Japanese can possibly be shifting from those of decades ago. In order to write about traditional Japanese things, many of the students have had to study to some extent about the things they are to describe. Actually, some of them say that they have never experienced the things they are explaining themselves. Even such traces of their struggles can, we suppose, be precious information for people abroad, since the readers can have insights into actual popularity of the things mentioned here by understanding the distances between the objects and the students.

We hope you will enjoy reading this small attempt. Any kind of comment on it will be welcome. Constructive opinions will be reflected on the next opportunity of revision, we hope.

(Kazunari Takaya, a Japanese Teacher of English, Kitakuwada SHS)