

JAPANESE

The slow ‘opening-up’ of Japan to the West began in the 17th century. Almost all the loan-words are used to refer to aspects of Japanese life, with many first occurring in books of travel. One word only - *tycoon* (1857) - seems to have lost its Japanese connotations.

17th century

<i>Japanese</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>MnE</i>
sake, fermented liquor made from rice.	1687	saké
shogun, short for sei-i-tai shogun, ‘barbarian-subduing great general’; the hereditary commander-in-chief of the Japanese army, until 1867 the virtual ruler of Japan.	1615	shogun
soy, colloquial form of sho-yu, from Chinese shi ‘salted beans’ + yu ‘oil’; a sauce.	1696	soy

18th century

<i>Japanese</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>MnE</i>
Japanese ginkgo, from Chinese yinhsing, ‘silver apricot’; the maidenhair tree.	1727	ginkgo
kana, Japanese syllabic writing, the chief varieties of which are hiragana and katakana.	1727	kana
katakana, from kata ‘side’ + kana: one of the two varieties of the Japanese syllabic writing, the characters of which are more angular than the hiragana	1727	katakana
koi, a local name in Japan for the common carp	1727	koi
mikado, the title of the Emperor of Japan.	1727	Mikado
samurai, a member of the military caste in the former Japanese feudal system.	1727	samurai
shinto, from Chinese shin tao ‘way of the gods’; the native religious system of Japan	1727	Shinto
zen, ‘meditation’; a school of Buddhism that emphasizes meditation.	1727	zen

19th century

<i>Japanese</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>MnE</i>
banzai, ‘ten thousand years’; a shout used in greeting the emperor or in battle.	1893	banzai
bushido; in feudal Japan, the ethical code of the Samurai or military knighthood.	1898	bushido
futon; a Japanese bed-quilt.	1876	futon
geisha; a Japanese girl whose profession is to entertain men by dancing and singing	1891	geisha
haiku; form of Japanese verse consisting of 17 syllables.	1899	haiku
hara kiri, from hara ‘belly’ + kiri ‘cut’ (seppuku is said to be a more elegant expression); suicide by disembowelment, as formerly practised by the samurai of Japan, when in circumstances of disgrace, or under sentence of death.	1856	hara-kiri
hiragana, from hira ‘plain’ + kana ‘borrowed letter’; the cursive form of Japanese writing, intended for use by women.	1822	hiragana
jujutsu, a Japanese system of wrestling and physical training.	1875	ju-jitsu
judo, from ju ‘gentleness’, + do, ‘way’; a refined form of ju-jitsu introduced in 1882	1889	judo
kabuki, from ka ‘song’ + bu ‘dance’ + ki ‘art, skill’; a traditional form of Japanese drama.	1899	kabuki
kamikaze; ‘divine wind’, from kami ‘god’ + kaze ‘wind’.	1896	kamikaze
1 originally used for the divine wind which blew on a night in August 1281, destroying the navy of the invading Mongols. 2 Japanese airmen who in the war of 1939–45 made deliberate suicidal crashes into enemy targets.	1945	
kimono, a long Japanese robe with sleeves.	1886	kimono
netsuke, a small piece of carved ivory or wood worn by the Japanese on the cord by which articles are suspended from the girdle.	1883	netsuke
no, traditional Japanese masked drama.	1871	Noh
seppuku, Japanese colloquial pronunciation of setsu fuku, from Chinese qie ‘to cut’ + fu ‘belly’ = hara-kiri.	1871	seppuku
sumo, a ritual form of wrestling contest.	1880	sumo
sushi; a Japanese dish of cold boiled rice flavoured with vinegar garnished with fish or cooked egg.	1893	sushi
tofu, <i>fr.</i> Chinese; doufu, <i>fr.</i> dou ‘beans’ + fu ‘rotten’ a curd made from mashed soya beans.	1880	tofu
taikun ‘great lord’; it was originally the title by which the shogun of Japan was described to foreigners.	1857	tycoon

20th century

<i>Japanese</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>MnE</i>
bonsai; a Japanese potted plant or small tree, intentionally dwarfed.	1950	bonsai
dan; in Judo, a degree of proficiency	1941	dan
karate, 'empty hand'; a Japanese system of unarmed combat in which hands and feet are used as weapons.	1955	karate
origami, from ori 'fold' + kami 'paper'; the Japanese art of folding paper into intricate designs.	1956	origami
shiatsu 'finger pressure'; a kind of therapy in which pressure is applied with the thumbs and palms to points on the body.	1967	shiatsu
shu, 'vermilion' + bun 'portion' + kin 'gold'; a goldfish.	1917	shubunkin
yokozuna, from yoko 'across' + 'zuna' from tsuna 'rope, festoon', originally a sacred straw festoon presented to a champion wrestler; a grand champion sumo wrestler.	1966	yokozuna