

Site Quest: Creating a Guide to the “Foreigners”

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A Guide to Western Culture

In 1867, a Japanese scholar named Yukichi Fukuzawa published a three-volume guide on Western clothing, food, and customs to help his countrymen better understand Western cultures. Fukuzawa’s books provided detailed drawings of articles of Western clothing, utensils, tools, and furniture unfamiliar to the Japanese, with directions on how and where to wear the clothes, how and for what purpose to use eating utensils and furniture, and so on. In one of his books, Fukuzawa wrote as follows about Western-style eating customs:

“Westerners do not use chopsticks for eating. Meat is cut very carefully and then transferred to each individual’s plate. Set in front of each person are a knife which is held in the right hand in order to cut a small piece of the meat, and a fork which is held in the left hand in order to stick the piece of meat and bring it to the mouth. It is awfully bad manners to use a knife to carry food to your mouth.



“Soup is served in a plate, and is eaten with a spoon. It has to be remembered that slurping is bad manners, even when you drink tea.... At a banquet, twenty or even thirty guests sit at one big table.”

Source: Julia Meech-Pekarik. *The World of the Meiji Print: Impressions of a New Civilization*. New York: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1986: p.68.