

# **JAPANESE WOMEN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649026685

Japanese Women by The Japanese Woman 's Commission

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**THE JAPANESE WOMAN'S COMMISSION**

**JAPANESE  
WOMEN**



# JAPANESE WOMEN.

PRIVATELY PRINTED BY  
A. C. McCLURG & COMPANY,  
CHICAGO  
FOR

THE JAPANESE WOMAN'S COMMISSION

FOR THE  
WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION,  
CHICAGO, ILL., U. S. A.

1893.

## PREFACE.

---

In accordance with the invitation of the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Commission, for the grand scheme of exhibiting Woman's work in general, the Japanese Woman's Commission for this Exposition was organized under the co-operation of several noble ladies, and the works resulting from the hands of the Japanese Women have been exhibited. Taking advantage of this precious opportunity, the Commission desires and aims, in this work, to present to the world's public, however briefly, the true condition of the Japanese woman, ancient and modern.

This work has been written by several authoresses, each chapter being undertaken by a different lady who is especially interested in and perfectly informed of the subject assigned to her.

THE JAPANESE WOMAN'S COMMISSION

FOR THE

WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION,

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, U. S. A.

1893.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

---

- CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.
- CHAPTER II. JAPANESE WOMEN IN POLITICS.
- CHAPTER III. JAPANESE WOMEN IN LITERATURE.
- CHAPTER IV. JAPANESE WOMEN IN RELIGION.
- CHAPTER V. { NO. 1, JAPANESE WOMEN IN DOMESTIC LIFE.  
NOS. 2 AND 3 OF THE SAME.
- CHAPTER VI. { NO. 1, JAPANESE WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL  
OCCUPATIONS.  
NOS. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 OF THE SAME.
- CHAPTER VII. ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JAPANESE WOMEN.
- CHAPTER VIII. PRESENT OR MEIJI PERIOD, CHARITIES AND  
EDUCATION.



牙波堂原博





# Japanese Women.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

Japan, superficially, is now pretty well known to the world, but as regards her internal affairs she still remains quite a dark country to the Occident. Her women, for instance, are misunderstood to a great extent, for it is impossible that visitors who have hitherto written upon Japan could see them in their true light, without any acquaintance with their homes. We, therefore, publish this pamphlet to place them just as they are before the eyes of the world on this occasion of the World's Fair. It must be understood, however, that this small treatise cannot but leave many points untouched.

How do the Japanese women compare with their American or European sisters? This question it is our object to answer, not by means of argument or criticism, but by a series of facts, which will enable readers to judge for themselves.

Firstly, we shall speak of Japanese women in political affairs. Their interference in them was sometimes for good, and at other times for evil. Our politics were by no means free from certain well-known evils, produced by their interference, but we will pay more attention to the good results effected by their political acts. Women used to play an important part on the political stage in ancient times. This is, indeed, one of the reasons why women were in general highly esteemed in old Japan.

Secondly, of the contribution of women to literature, and their standing in the lettered community.

Thirdly, of what women have done in religion, as patrons and votaries.

Fourthly, of the domestic life of women, as daughters, wives and mothers.

Fifthly, of the industries of women.

Sixthly, of the accomplishments of women, such as music, tea-making (*tencha*), incense burning (*ko*), flower arranging (*ikebana*), painting, etc.

Seventhly and lastly, of their present educational and benevolent labors.

The first three chapters deal with historical facts and the rest with the present condition of things.

Rich as this country is in ancient records, those which pertain to women are very scarce, and it is no light work to make up their history. This is no doubt due, on one hand, to the secret nature of womanly interference, and on the other, to the delicate modesty of our women.

Before taking up the topics above mentioned let us trace the gradations through which Japanese women have come to be what they are, both as regards morality and social position. Little is, of course, known of our primitive mothers. It may, however, be proved almost beyond a doubt that women were highly esteemed in the days of old, until the introduction of Chinese manners and institutions and of Buddhism made it fashionable to depreciate them. But fashion could work only on the surface of things, and that only for a short space of time.

As time went on, scholars and artists appeared among them and their influence was felt, especially at all social gatherings. The court ladies were very influential and respected on account of their skill in poetry, which has been from time immemorial one of the most cherished accomplishments of the Imperial court. In the tenth and eleventh centuries court ladies were such excellent poetesses that they had no equals in our history. They stood, indeed, on an equality with men in the estimation of society.

From the *Genji-Monogatari*, a novel by Murasaki Shikibu, who lived when female culture was so high, we can gain considerable insight into the women of those times. We there see them described something like the following:

They were mistresses of feminine accomplishments, as music, literature, painting, chirography, incense burning, etc. In literature they paid by far the greatest attention to Japanese poems. It was held unwomanly to learn Chinese, and even those who had some knowledge of it tried assiduously to conceal it. But it was not rare among gentlewomen to read Buddhist sutras in Chinese, from which was drawn their moral codes. They strictly observed the rules of etiquette. They paid much attention to the toilet. They practiced sewing, dyeing and weaving as well as cooking, from the highest woman to the humblest girl. In every family it was their duty to decorate the rooms, especially on ceremonial occasions. It was their part to educate the girls. They freely mingled in society and were, in consequence, bright and charming, not like their descendants, whose shyness and reserve are almost proverbial. However, they held nothing so bad as to put on airs and to let their tongues glide too freely. They were severely warned against boasting of their learning. Murasaki Shikibu, herself, who was a profound scholar, is said to have looked like one ignorant of even the numerical figures.

Chastity was held their prime virtue. So much was it respected that no woman, however beautiful and accomplished, could find a husband, if her character was at all questionable.

Jealousy was considered the vilest of female vices. Murasaki Shikibu strongly writes against becoming its slave, while giving some very pointed remarks as to how wives should endeavor to please their husbands and make them love their homes.

It was the duty of wives not only to make pleasant homes, but to aid their husbands in public concerns by means of advice. Thus their standing was very high and they were looked up to as model women for many succeeding generations. We find a discipline laid down for women by Abutsuni, in her letter to her daughter, who was a court lady in the middle of the thirteenth century, nearly equal to that embodied by Murasaki Shikibu in her novel. This letter states in full what a woman should do and should be. Here follow some of the most important points of the letter: