

# **JAPANESE COLOUR- PRINTS AND THEIR DESIGNERS**

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Japanese Colour-Prints and Their Designers by Frederick William Gookin

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**FREDERICK WILLIAM GOOKIN**

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AND THEIR DESIGNERS**

BY  
**FREDERICK WILLIAM GOOKIN**

A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE  
THE JAPAN SOCIETY OF NEW YORK  
APRIL 19, 1911

TO WHICH IS APPENDED

**A C A T A L O G U E**

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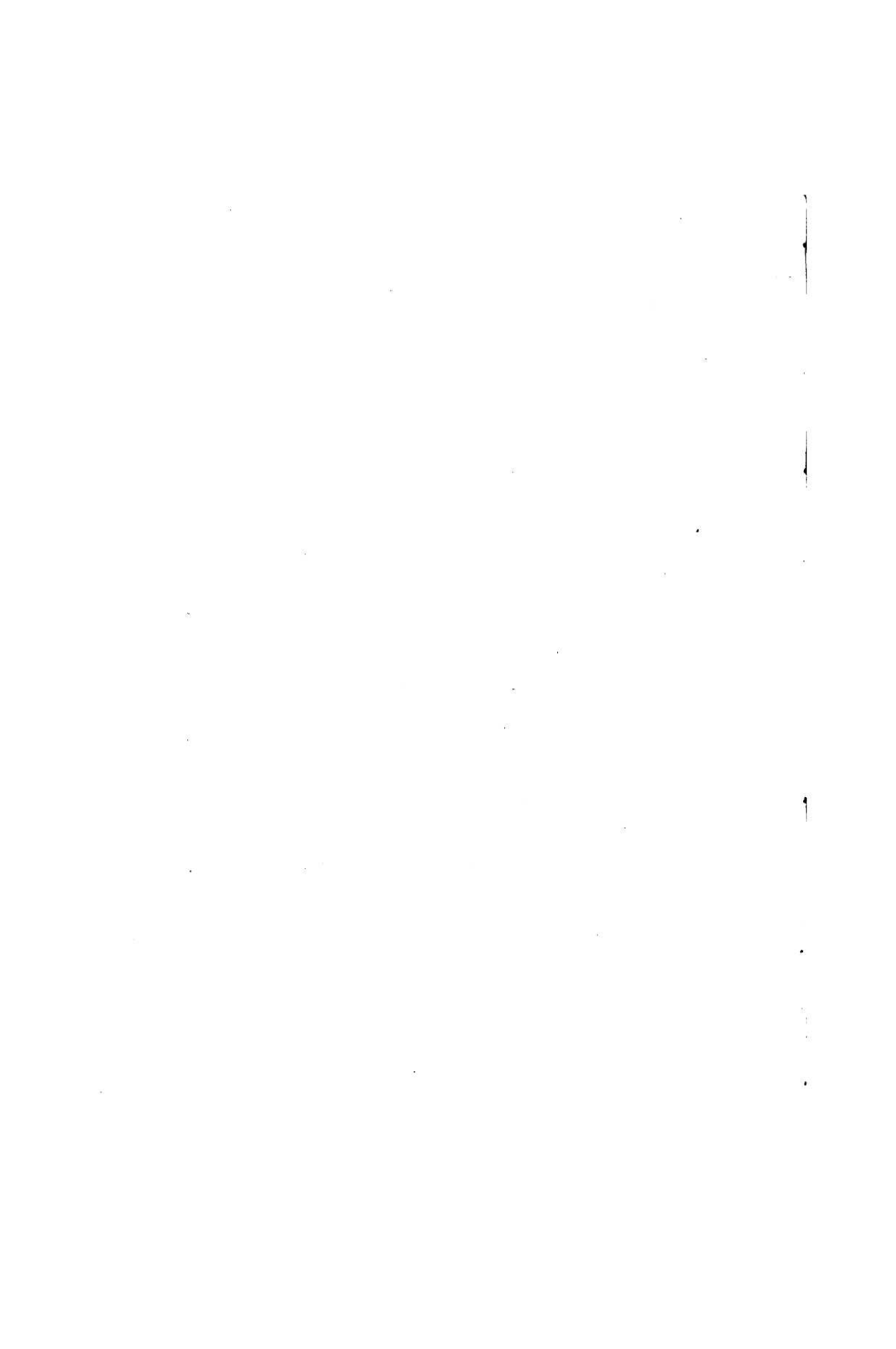
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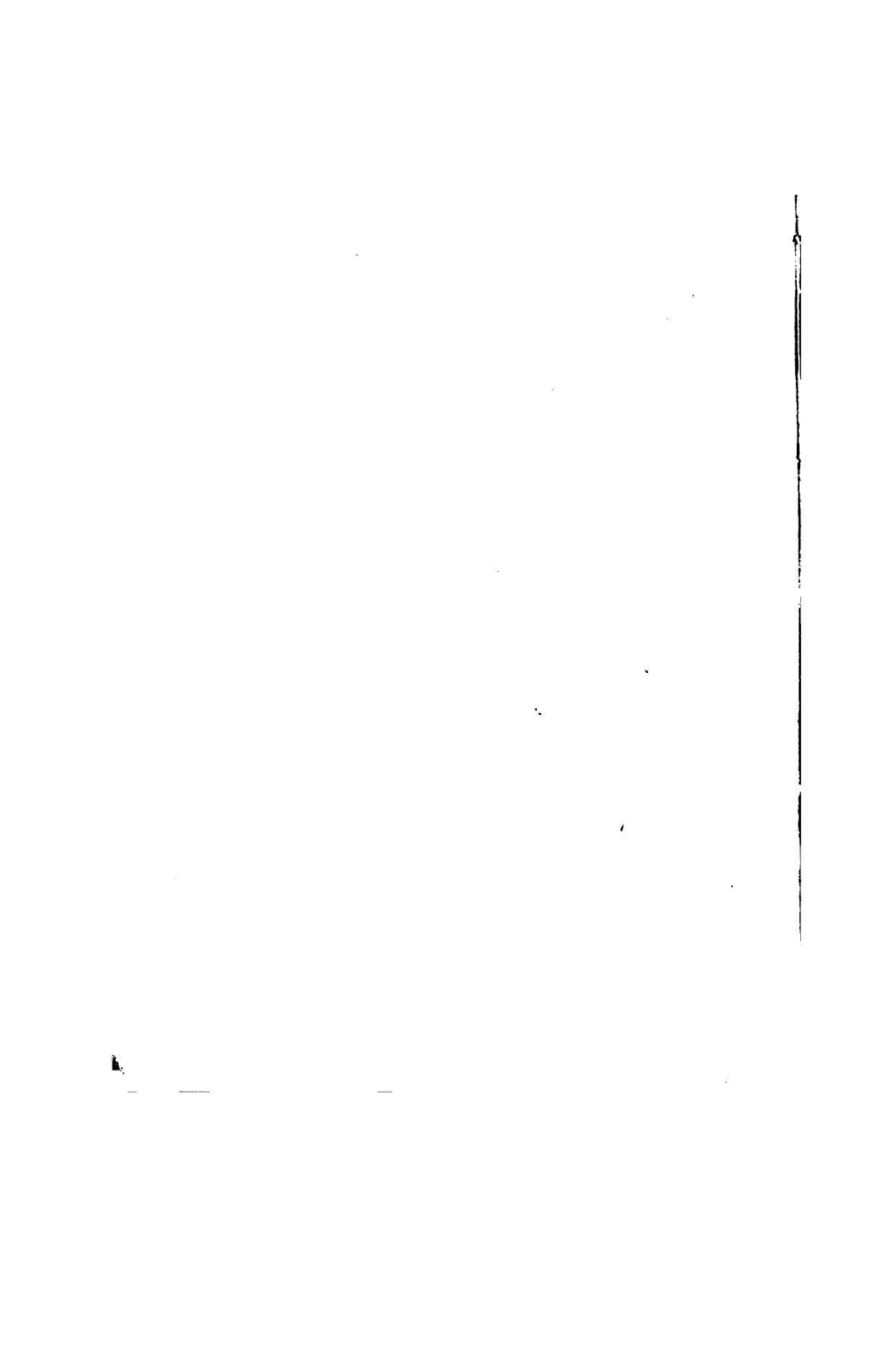
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## JAPANESE COLOUR-PRINTS AND THEIR DESIGNERS

**I**N the annals of art production the colour-prints designed by the master artists of the Ukiyoé school occupy a unique place. They represent a plebeian art which was not a spontaneous upgrowth from the soil, but, so to speak, a down-growth or offshoot from an old and highly developed art of aristocratic lineage.

This elder art had its fountain-head in ancient China. That country, during the Tang and the Sung dynasties (618-905, 960-1280), was the seat of an æsthetic movement during which painting and other arts reached an extraordinarily high development. To the works produced during this great flowering-time of art the Japanese painters of the classical schools turned for inspiration and enlightenment. These works were distinguished by singleness of purpose, rhythmic vitality, and synthetic coherence, and by a clear conception of the essential that goes far beyond anything elsewhere attained, and which, when fully apprehended, must inevitably force a revision of Western ideas and criteria.

The art of ancient China and of the earlier Japanese schools is an art refined, poetic, and intensive to the last degree. It is based upon profound understanding of æsthetic laws. The artists were carefully grounded in the fundamental principles that govern all art, whether Oriental or Occidental. The result of this training is apparent in the homogeneity of their works. In Europe very confused notions have prevailed as to what should be done and what is permissible in art. Not even the great artists have always seen clearly; had they done so, it cannot be doubted that Western achievement would have attained a much higher level than it has ever reached.

In the Japanese modifications of the ancient Chinese art its traditions