

## Western Women Tourists Write About Meiji Japan, Part I

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When Japan's system of enforced isolation ended in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Japan emerged as one of the last uncharted places on the earth for the Western traveler. The trickle of women who came to Japan in the 1860s to 1870s gradually became a constant wave of tourists, travelers and sojourners through the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although tens of thousands of women were passengers of the round-the-world cruises, diplomatic or businessman wives, missionaries or educators, a smaller fraction of these actually published the accounts they kept of their stays here. Most were journal entries recording places visited, customs observed, discomforts endured and souvenirs purchased. Some were originally letters written home to family members or sponsoring congregations. Most were published as an afterthought in response to encouragement from family and friends. These reports from the field were part of filling in details about the mysterious country that was making an impression in the art salons of Europe and fashion boutiques of New York. *Japonisme* of the 1880s inspired much of the motivation to visit the land of such fine craftsmanship. Murray Travel guides, Cook Tours and travel accounts like Isabella Bird's also peaked interest and made travel more convenient.

This paper is the initial result of a long-term project to identify, collect and annotate the more than 250 books published by women

during the Meiji Era. The works tend to break into several groups, whose inclusion was not always consistent, but serve as general categories of experiences. The first are the travelers, those women who came to Japan for a short time, usually a few weeks or months, and wrote about their impressions as part of a longer narrative of continued travels. The second group are the sojourners, those women who came for extended periods of time, usually years, often bearing children and raising families here. Among these the most numerous were the missionaries of all denominations. A second group of sojourners were diplomat wives and educators. A final group is women who wrote works of fiction set in Japan, usually but not always based on their personal experiences of local detail. The present article is the introduction and first half of the annotation of more than 30 works written by women travelers to Meiji Japan. The second half will appear in a subsequent volume of this journal.

Two orthographical notes: I have kept the spelling of the word “traveler” as the authors wrote it, either with one or two “l”s. Otherwise the American version with a single “l” is used. Likewise, the variant spellings of Japanese place names, such as “Yedo” or “Tokio” are as the original authors wrote them.

### **Victorian Women Travelers**

Perhaps in response to writers like Paul Fussell, who, in 1980, discounted travel writing as second-rate and women travel writers as “not sufficiently concerned either with travel or with writing itself” (Mills, 3), scholars, mostly women, took up the challenge and rediscovered travel writing by women. More recent studies and anthologies of women travel writers (Birkett, Hamalian, Middleton, Mills, Morin, Morris, Robinson,

Schriber, Sterry) have rightly restored women as equal participators and mediators of the travel experience, through their own gendered experience of both travel and writing.

Until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, women traveled on religious pilgrimages, but not for pleasure or entertainment. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was one of the first women to accompany her husband on his diplomatic posting to Constantinople in 1716, causing a stir among polite society. But as the Raj established hospitable conditions in its Asian and African postings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more women accompanied their husbands abroad as “diplomatic appendages” (Robinson, 201).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a golden age for travel among Westerners and the latter half especially so. “Victorian travelers” is an elastic term also applied to America women as well as stretching beyond the reign of Queen Victoria. The term also refers to a cultural mindset, where although “many women travelers did not begin their journeys until the end of Victorian era, they carried the cultural baggage of the earlier age in which they were reared” (Sterry 2003, 169). But there were worlds to discover and ways to get there. Victorian woman travelers were well-to-do, having time and money to extract themselves from the “stays” of Victorian dress and society, while staying within its moral vicinity.

Frances Trollope and Elizabeth Farnham traveled through the “new world” of America, Mary Kingsley canoed through West Africa, Lady Mary Anne Barker tended sheep in outback New Zealand, Kate Marsden tended lepers in Siberia, Anna Leonowens taught the Siamese King’s children, Gertrude Bell taught the British about Syria and Iraq, Alexandra David-Neel studied Buddhism in Sikkim and Tibet, Ethel Tweedie studied women in Iceland and Scandinavia, Fanny Workman

Bullock climbed the Karakoram mountains, and Mary French

Sheldon went around the world four times — just to name a few of these remarkable women.

Although all the women who traveled abroad during this time and since did not publish books about their experiences, Robinson claims that there are more than 1000 travel books written by women (xviii). That these women were doing something against the grain of feminine expectations is highlighted by the titles of the books, *Spinsters Abroad*, *Unsuitable for Ladies*, *Wayward Women*, *Ladies on the Loose*, which were all contemporary descriptions. However, these titles describe only a fraction of these Victorian women travelers, perhaps the more unconventional, rebellious or sensational:

...who conformed to the nineteenth-century lady traveler stereotype, that is, a woman who shocked her contemporaries by venturing into previous “unexplored” territory, or who travelled unchaperoned, or who put herself in dangerous and potentially life-threatening situations. (Foster and Mills, 2)

However, many women travelers were in fact married and traveled with their husbands. Many traveled in comfort and dressed modestly, and most went to places that were on a well-trodden path. By the turn of the century, women, traveling alone, accompanied or in groups, were less of an exception or sensation.

Sterry divides women travelers into two categories — “travelers-by-default” and “travelers-by-intent.” “Travelers-by-default” refer to those where “the act of travelling was not necessarily the result of a specific personal need or desire, but more the result of fulfilling a pre-determined duty” (Sterry, 59). Default reasons were diplomatic accompaniment,

missionary work or emigration. Sterry's second category, "travelers-by-intent," included those who traveled for pleasure or knowledge, usually on the beaten track, or like Margaret Fontaine in search of butterflies, Marie Stopes studying paleobiology or Marianne North to paint.

Robinson (1991) divides Sterry's categories more specifically. Among the duty-bound travelers, besides diplomat wives and missionaries, there were travel writers, "ornaments of Empire" (wives in Africa and India), war correspondents, emigrants and economic refugees (to Australia, New Zealand, Africa). Besides adventurers, voluntary travelers included sportswomen (game hunters, mountaineers, sailors, pilots), wanderers and tourists. The reason for travel was thus so varied that the "eccentric woman traveler must thus be seen as only one of a range of different roles which women travelers could and did adopt in very specific contexts, rather than as the dominant image" (Foster and Mills, 2).

### **Women Tourists to Japan**

Considering Robinson's categories of women travelers, when one discounts the sojourners and narrows the geographic focus to Japan, one must also narrow the reasons for the visit. Since Japan was not part of the British Empire, only a handful of women came as diplomatic or administration spouses, confined only to Tokyo. Japan was not a war zone, although some women did write about the Russo-Japanese war from the safety of Japan, where no fighting took place. Among the 3000 or so foreigners hired by the Meiji government as engineers, military specialists or teachers, women were rare. Except as a side trip, none came to Japan to scale mountains, canoe up rivers or hunt wildlife. And except for a rare few who did wander about (Bird, Scidmore, Todd), most stayed within a

very limited route. Hence, most women who came to Japan and wrote about it were tourists of the ordinary variety.

Interest in Japan was piqued in the West by the confluence of several factors, making it a desirable destination for the woman traveler. First, post-Perry accounts of Japan began to appear, including his own, written by his friend, Dr. Rev. Francis L. Hawks, in 1856. Sea captains, Osborne (1859), Cornwallis (1859) and Tronson (1859) wrote of their brief stays. Diplomats wrote their accounts, including British Admiral Stirling, who negotiated with Japan on behalf of England (1859), Laurence Oliphant, secretary to China's High Commissioner, Lord Elgin (1860), and Britain's Plenipotentiary to Japan, Rutherford Alcock (1863). Alcock's *The Capital of the Tycoon* (1863) was the first modern survey of Japan, written after nearly three years of residence. William Ellis Griffis' *The Mikado's Empire* (1876) was a two-volume collection of historical (volume one) and cultural (volume two) information. A. B. Mitford's *Tales of Old Japan* (1871) predated by 20 years Lafcadio Hearn's retelling of old stories and legends. Also influential was Percival Lowell's *The Soul of the Far East* (1888), which was the first to analyze the Japanese personality behind the behavior. Finally, Captain Frank Brinkley's government-sponsored, multi-volumed, heavily photographed *Japan: Its History, Arts and Literature* of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century became the first encyclopediac store of information. Almost all of these accounts created an image of an exotic paradise, filled with friendly men and childlike women, a stereotype that would endure until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The second factor was Japan's embrace of the West. Once Japan decided to end its *sakoku* isolation and open itself up to the outside world, the government sent samples of its arts and crafts to international exhibitions in Europe and America. Japanese artifacts were first publically

seen in 1853 at the Exhibition of Industrial Art in Dublin, probably the collection of a Dutch trader. The first complete Japanese exhibition was part of the 1862 International Exhibition in London, including clothes, swords, lacquerware, pottery and wooden crafts for everyday use. Japan's presence at international exhibitions continued throughout the 1860s and 1870s, including ones in Dublin (1865), Paris (1867), Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876) and Paris (1876, 1878), fanning the interest in things Japanese. In 1885, an entire Japanese village was assembled in Knightsbridge, London, with 100 Japanese making crafts and serving tea. Simultaneously, artists from Whistler to van Gogh adopted Japanese color, perspective and subject matter in their paintings. By the 1880s, the term *Japonisme* came to represent this craze in the arts and culture of Japan.

The third factor that propelled women tourists to Japan was the relative ease of travel. While the adventurers mentioned above were content to rough it in unknown lands, the more genteel Victorian lady was prepared to extend her horizons as long as it could be done comfortably. To accommodate this type of tourist, Thomas Cook began his group tour business in the 1840s, taking groups throughout England, eventually extending his network of guides, tours and accommodations to the European Grand Tour, the Mediterranean and the Holy Land. It was a natural extension of the Cook empire to create the first round-the-world tour in 1872. The steamship companies that had reduced the trans-Atlantic journey to less than a week set up the San Francisco-Yokohama or Vancouver-Yokohama route to create the trans-Pacific link. By the end of the 1870s there were four steamship companies coming to Yokohama, filling the foreigner quarters with a weekly influx of tourists. The Japanese itinerary usually began in Yokohama, included day trips to Tokyo or longer trips to Hakone or Nikko, before sailing to Kobe and through the

Inland Sea to Nagasaki. The inaugural Cook globetrotting tour took 222 days, but later tourists to Japan could spend longer at the fashionable resorts if they chose, availing themselves of Cook's "inclusive independent travel." Western style hotels and kitchens were available in all these stops along the way, and to leave the beaten tracks, as some did, required a visa, a guide and a willingness to do without Western comforts.

A fourth factor leading to the increase of women travelers was the change in respectability of women and travel. Schriber mentions three examples of how "the constricting definitions of 'woman's sphere' were challenged and the roles of women in the public arena were expanded" — women's work for abolition and temperance, their organizing for suffrage, and their entrance into college and jobs (Schribner 1995, xv). Elsewhere, she writes that "travelers set out in part because their culture sanctioned and encouraged it. Travel was a ritual, a "cultural performance" to which importance, respectability, and meaning attached. Itineraries and routes were not original" (Schriber 1997, 16). Hamalian adds:

For those women who aspired to become more than domestic drudges or commodities on the marriage market, travel offered... encounters with the exotic, with the exciting, the renewing, the inherently self-fulfilling. The woman within could emerge, at least temporarily. But the motive for going abroad was more than a quest for the extraordinary. Travel satisfied that well-known Victorian passion for improvement — of oneself and of others. (Hamalian, xi)

Related to this was the frequency of other more adventurous women travelers, who were breaking the stereotype of the Victorian homemaker. Accounts by Mary Kingsley, Isabella Bird, Fanny Bullock Workman,

Marianne North, Gertrude Bell, May French Sheldon, both British and American, set out an alternative to the “stifling gender-based restrictions of home” (Holcolm, 13).

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all these factors coincided to propel a generation of women travelers to the farthest corners of the globe, but more specifically to Japan. The image of Japan projected in travel books and seen in exhibitions, shops and paintings was inviting and accessible:

This ideal Japan, a picturesque country whose people were submissive and pliant, presented an attractive destination for Victorian women, who felt that their physical and moral safety would not be compromised in a gentle land made familiar through known images in the West. It was this version of Japan that Victorian women travelers sought, and in the main, were to find. (Sterry 2009, 53)

### **Guidebooks for Tourists**

Most women came to Japan as part of a longer tour, often around the world, with average stays of under two months. Guidebooks like Griffis’ of the 1870s, Keeling’s of the 1880s and Chamberlain’s of the 1890s provided them with background information about geography, history and helpful hints. They also provided copious information about the sights they would visit along the beaten tracks, since time constraints of the globetrotting tourist didn’t allow for much more.

William Ellis Griffis had been a resident in Japan for several years when he wrote *The Tokio Guide* and *The Yokohama Guide* (1873). He was living in Yokohama when the influx of tourists started to arrive on the weekly steamers, and his books were a welcome guide for the tourist in a

hurry to see as much as possible in as short a time as possible, for whom he coined the term, “globe-trotters.” His *Mikado’s Empire*, Mitford’s *Tales of Old Japan* and Alcock’s *Capital of the Tycoon* all provided useful background information about the customs and history for the tourist to read in leisure once he arrived at his destination.

In 1880, W. E. L. Keeling came out with the useful, popular and portable *Tourists’ Guide*, “to show the tourist, who has only a few days at his disposal, the best manner to visit the different places of celebrity in the short time allotted him” (Preface). Besides giving background information about climate, geology, history, and the sites it described, it was useful for its information about distances between sites, roads, hiring guides and *jinricksha* drivers, ordering food, pronunciation and money. Its 100 pages are sandwiched between other pages of advertisements for hotels, steamers, porcelain, lacquer, bronze, silk, tailors for shirts, hats and hose, shoemakers, printers, stables, cigars, insect powder and photo studios. Until the 1880s, visitors were still restricted to the Treaty Limits without a passport, but could readily obtain permits for other parts at their consulates. Thus the tourist had his routes quite clearly defined for him — Yokohama, Tokio, Hakone, Kamakura, Yokosuka, Kanozan, Narita, Nikko, Kioto, Lake Biwa, Osaka.

The last important work to be mentioned is Basil Hall Chamberlain’s *Things Japanese: Being Notes on Various Subjects Connected with Japan* (1889 and subsequent editions into the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Rather than a history or guidebook, *Things Japanese* was more of a handy reference book arranged by topics in alphabetical order from “Abacus,” “Abdication,” and “Acupuncture” to “Yezo,” “Yoshiwara” and “Zoology.”

Chamberlain also contributed to W. B. Mason’s *A Handbook for Travellers in Japan* (1891 and subsequent editions), written for John

Murray's collection of guidebooks to the world. In addition to information on ancient and middle age history, gods, celebrated people, shooting and fishing, shipment of goods, temples and foreign settlements, this nearly 700-page book was filled with 87 routes throughout Japan and its farther reaches, from the Saghalian (Sakhalin) Islands in the north to Formosa (Taiwan) in the south. Thus by the 1890s, Japan was thoroughly open, explored and accessible. However, most tourists did not have the time to stray too far off the track, and Hall's *Handbook* was more useful for the resident here for extended time.

### **Varieties of Women Tourists**

Although the round-the-world stopover in Japan wouldn't begin until the 1870s, the first few women came on specific missions. Mrs. C. Pemberton Hodgson was the wife of the first consul to Nagasaki and Anna d'Almeida come on a side trip from India. Other women who came in the 1870s include Alice M. Frere, Lilia Dunop Swainson, Margaretha Weppner and Fanny L. Rains. Alice Frere spent her time in Japan in the company of the British delegation in Nagasaki and Yokohama, attending parties or outings organized by consul general Sir Harry Parkes or his wife. Their longer-than-planned stay in Nagasaki was in part due to the civil unrest between the Shogun and Emperor's loyalist factions, which closed down the Inland Sea.

Another round-the-world traveler was Annie Brassey, who packed her family, friends and 50 servants onto her husband's "floating empire" and set off on several voyages around the world. In all, she made three trips on her *Sunbeam*, publishing her entertaining stories of each one through the 1880s. Lucy Bainbridge (1882), F. D. Bridges' (1883), Millicent Stafford

(1889), Harriet E. Clark (1895) maintained the tradition of the round-the-world traveler; however, with each passing year, the route became more familiar, almost recreating the Grand Tour of Europe in Asia.

Other women, with less time or money, came to Japan as part of a shorter voyage either from America, Australia or other ports of Asia. These included Katherine Bates (1889), Mrs. Lazenby Liberty (1889), Katharine Baxter (1895), Natalie Grinnell (1895), Catherine Bond (1898), Gertrude Fisher (1900), Marian George (1900), Ethel Colquhoun (1902) and Emma Trawick (1902).

By far the most famous traveler to come to Japan was the adventurer, Isabella Bird. Already renown as one of those “ladies on the loose” for her solo exploits in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) and the Rocky Mountains, she came to Japan in 1878 in search of a health cure but found that “its interest exceeded my largest expectations.” Unlike other travelers of that time, she traveled into the interior of the main island, making her way to Hokkaido, where she spent a month living among the Ainu. As she writes in her introduction, “I lived among the Japanese, and saw their mode of living, in regions unaffected by European contact....I am able to offer a fuller account of the aborigines of Yezo, obtained by actual acquaintance with them, than has hitherto been given” (ix-x). Written as letters to her stay-at-home sister, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* became a best-selling travel book and essential guide to the Japan not reported by others.

Some women came to Japan for scientific study. Having spent years painting plant life in America, Canada, Jamaica and Brazil, Marianne North came to Japan in 1875, as part of an around-the-world itinerary that would take her to Java, Borneo, India and Ceylon. In her travels, she “is not a discoverer: she traces the footsteps of other travelers, painting what others had overlooked....Her solitude is an escape into gardens and the edges of

wilderness. She frequently slips out at dawn to paint” (“Old Maids Travel Alone...”, 6). Although suffering from several illnesses during her stay, she was able to complete 20 paintings, now on exhibition at the Marianne North Gallery at Kew Gardens, London.

Mabel Loomis Todd accompanied her husband, David Todd, on his astronomical missions to observe the solar eclipse of the sun in 1887 and again in 1896. The latter journey aboard the schooner-yacht *Corona* carried the research team to their observation point in Hokkaido. While her husband set up their solar observation camp, Mrs. Todd explored the northern countryside with an interpreter, taking photos and collecting artifacts. Portions of *Coronet and Corona* (1898) were previously published in several magazines.

Paleobiologist Marie C. Stopes took time out of her laboratory work in 1910 to record her observations of daily life in Japan as well as write a book about Noh plays. Social scientist Beatrice Webb stopped by Japan with her husband in 1911 on a sabbatical from their work on labor relations in England.

Of all the women who passed through Japan as tourists, probably the most famous was also the briefest. Nellie Bly spent only five days in Japan on her race around the world, and only stayed that long because there was no steamer ready to leave Yokohama when she arrived. Bly was a plucky reporter for the *New York World* newspaper, who publisher Joseph Pulitzer chose to attempt to break Jules Verne’s fictional *Around the World in 80 Days* journey, announced to start November 14, 1889. Rival publisher, John Brisben Walker of the monthly *Cosmopolitan* magazine, decided to create a race by hastily sending his colleague, Elizabeth Bisland, to leave two hours later on the same day. Bly went east winding up in Japan on the second to last leg of her journey, while Bisland traveled west, arriving in

Yokohama after the predictable cross-continental railroad journey. In the end, bad seas on the Atlantic delayed Bisland's return, relegating her to relative anonymity, while Nellie Bly became a household name. Both Bly and Bisland published books of their journeys in 1890, but added little to the literature or lure of Japan. Not to be outdone, the young Lilian Leland set out on her tour around the world and her book, *Traveling Alone: A Woman's Journey Around the World* came out the same year by a rival newspaper.

Globetrotting travel seemed to be the sport of the rich. The Marchioness of Stafford wrote *How I spent My Twentieth Year: being a Short Record of a Tour Round the World 1886-87*, which included the obligatory photography of the marchioness posing in a jinrikisha. Lady Ethel Gwendoline Moffatt Vincent traveled in comfort on the steamship the *Empress of Japan* in 1892, staying at the Imperial Hotel during her stop in Tokyo, "the old Yedo of our schoolroom geography" (113). Constance Fredereka Gordon-Cumming passed through briefly in 1904.

By the 1890s, travel to Japan became far more commonplace. Gertrude Adams Fisher wrote *A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan* in 1900, but one must wonder how far or how alone it could have been. The missionary Amy Wilson-Carmichael stopped by Japan on a mission tour long enough to send back *Letters from Japan From Sunrise Land* in 1895. Tourists continued to come to Japan into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and like Julia Crouse Houser continued to write *Letters from Japan: Written by an American Girl Traveling in the Far East to her Friends at Home* (1910).

The end of the Meiji Era in Japan approximately coincided with the beginning of the European Great War of 1914. It was also an acknowledgement that most of the world had been "discovered" if not tamed, and what remained was best left to scientists and adventurers to

explore. As for Japan, the image of a peaceful paradise was being replaced with respect for the undisputed Asian power. Japan's modernized military had given it an advantage in its war with China and the European power, Russia, and although Japan did not participate in the First World War, it was invited to sit at the victors' table at the Versailles Peace Conference. The old Japan had long ago disappeared and interest in writing about Japan did not seem as interesting or urgent as before. Twentieth century women travelers were less of an anomaly as their Victorian sisters and had to find other boundaries to break.

### **Early Impressions — Tourists of the 1860s and 1870s**

Books that women tourists published were often in diary form or letters sent home on mail steamers, notes rewritten and rearranged upon the completion of their journeys. With so little time to absorb what they were seeing, many of these accounts are more impressions of the daily surprises that they encountered. Compared to men's travel accounts, Jane Robinson observes that a woman, "less troubled with preconceived ideas as to what is most important to observe, goes picking up materials much more indiscriminately, and where, as in travelling, little things are of great significance, frequently much more to the purpose....men's travel accounts are to do with the What and Where, and women's with How and Why" (Robinson 1995, xiii-xiv). As she admits, this is a gross generalization, as a closer examination of these 30+ examples shows. In both form, content and purpose, these accounts represent a wide variety of expression. Looking at eight early visits to Japan spanning 20 years, from 1863-1883, there are similarities as well as differences.

The first woman to write about Japan was **Mrs. C. Pemberton**

**Hodgson**, wife of the first consul to Nagasaki, who arrived from Shanghai with their small daughter on June 4, 1859. Mrs. Hodgson's account takes the form of two letters she wrote to her mother describing her first weeks in Nagasaki. The Hodgsons would only spend three months residing in a temple, before being transferred to Hakodate in Hokkaido, another of the three treaty ports open at that time. Mrs. Hodgson's two letters to her mother are embedded within her husband's more complete description of his two-year service in Japan, which he published in 1861. Mrs. Hodgson good-naturedly describes the discomforts of mosquitoes, centipedes, rats and snakes, as well as the more pleasant episodes of walks around the shops of Nagasaki. Being one of the first Western women seen in Nagasaki, both she and her daughter caused quite a stir on the streets when they ventured out and were accompanied by a Japanese military guard. Though not technically a tourist, her account reports only her first few weeks in Japan, and as such, the impressions are similar to other tourists.

By 1862, when **Anna D'Almeida** stopped off in Japan in 1863, with her husband and young daughter on unspecified business from their base in India, she was certainly not the first woman to visit or reside in Japan, but her account is considered the first book about Japan written for publication by a woman. In her introduction to *A Lady's Visit to Manilla and Japan (1863)* she claims that the purpose of her work is "to represent Japan and its people as they exist at the present moment...with characteristic sketches of the peculiar race inhabiting these distant island, and amusing anecdotes illustrative of their manners and customs" (Anna D'A, viii); however, only four of the twelve chapters of her book describe her visit to Japan. Her account begins on an opium cutter from Singapore bound for Hong Kong, before other ships carry them to Manila, Shanghai

and finally Nagasaki. Her account is chatty, filled with personal experience of people met and excursions made — by jinrikisha and horseback. She traveled comfortably, rode horses, stayed at good hotels, drank champagne on her excursions and commented on scenes she happened to encounter. Her understanding of what she observed was narrow, as in her explanation of the blackened teeth of all wives, how young girls are sold by their parents to “tea houses” and the strange “appendage at the back of the waist” (207) worn by ladies. She made a round-trip boat ride to Yokohama, where she took the recommended side trips, before returning to Nagasaki and back to Shanghai.

**Alice M. Frere** (Mrs. Godfrey Clerk) was the first in a long line of women who begin their prefaces by disclaiming their original intentions to publish their private notes, but was “persuaded to do so by the advice of friends, who finding interest themselves in the accounts of our wanderings — regularly and irregularly sent home for the amusement of two ‘old aunts’ — thought that others might likewise find pleasure in their perusal...” Alice Frere accompanied her father on his return to England in 1865, after 35 years in India including government service, culminating in *The Antipodes and Round the World: or Travels in Australia, New Zealand, Ceylon, China, Japan and California* (1870). In parts, entries are written in diary form with dates given, but in other parts, the narrative goes on for pages about sights seen. She reports that her intention to go to Yokohama through the Inland Sea was postponed because of the civil unrest between the Shogun and Emperor’s loyalist factions. Eventually, the sea-lane did open, and once in Yokohama, they were greeted at their hotel by Sir Harry Parkes, the consul general, and his wife, Lady Parkes, and taken to the British Legation there and in Yedo. She recounts her invitation by Sir Harry to view the collection of Japanese crafts that were about to be

shipped to the Paris Exhibition. The Freres carried on to San Francisco a little more than two months after they arrived in Japan.

German-born but thoroughly Anglicized, **Margaretha Weppner** boarded the *America* in San Francisco in November, 1869 and made the journey to Yokohama, in the company of General Tom Thumb and his troupe of 12 other dwarfs who entertained the passengers. She arrived in Yokohama armed with letters of introduction, which “were my hope, in which I was cruelly disappointed, and my bitter experience of my treatment at the hands of the Europeans of Japan far exceed all that I could possibly have imagined” (180). Indeed, her whole visit is filled with bitter disappointments, unextended hospitality, unwanted advances, misfortunes, misunderstandings and other travelers’ tribulations. Although not a missionary, she flirted with religious orders when young and her two-volume account is filled with moralistic overtones:

Every single woman is looked upon as a kind of white slave; they are brought by nearly every American steamer, and I too consequently lay in a measure under the ban of this opinion. The men of Yokohama do not ask for virtue in a woman, but its absence... the latter hated me in a very despotic fashion, simply because I had not gone there in order to fall in with their disgraceful views. (185-186)

Scarcely two months later, after only one day in Nagasaki, she gratefully left for the refinements of Shanghai, continuing on a journey that would take two years, two volumes, nearly 1000 pages to complete and more than a decade to publish, *The North Star and Southern Cross* (1884).

In early 1870, a young woman boarded a P & O steamer headed toward Egypt, hence onward to Hong Kong where her naval fiancé was

waiting to marry her. From there, **Lilias Dunlop Findlay Swainson** moved with her husband to the Imperial Arsenal up-river from Foo Chow, where she remained, experiencing “the sensations of a bird in a cage” (39). Quite literally, she made little effort to go beyond the confines of the local environs and often was left “a widow” when her husband went on assignments. Still there was a small foreign community, the French were in charge, and church in Foo Chow to keep her socially occupied. After two and a half years, they made their way back home via Japan. Mrs. Swainson’s short two-month visit was historical in that it coincided with the opening of the railway line from Yokohama to Yedo, which she subsequently used, the state visit of the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, who shared inspections of their respective ships with the Mikado, and the arrival of the first Cook excursionists, who put up at the same hotel. Besides the educated Japanese she met in Yokohama and Yedo, she was less than impressed by the common Japanese she saw:

They certainly are not a handsome race...they are as a rule short and ill-made, and if the Darwinian theory be correct, I should say they must be several generations nearer the parent monkey than we are, or even than their Chinese neighbours” (205-206).

Her book, *Letters from China and Japan* (1875), is written as a collection of letters home, with further refinements from notes and divested of personal matters.

After a distinguished career as New York governor, U.S. Senator and Secretary of State to Presidents Lincoln and Johnson, William H. Seward left public office in 1869 and embarked the following year on a leisurely trip around the world, which would take him two years. He was

accompanied by members of his family, including **Olive Risley Seward**, his newly-adopted daughter and her sister, the former to be his amanuensis. Their collaboration produced an extensive record, *William H. Seward's Travels Around the World*, published in 1873, a year after his death. It ran to more than 725 pages and included 200 illustrations, becoming a best-seller, due to its author's fame. Although much of the observations and descriptions are Seward's, Olive Risley Seward is credited as editor of the volume, and her third-person narrative refers to her father as "Mr. Seward" throughout. The Seward party arrived in Japan by a Pacific Mail Line steamer, carrying 60 cabin passengers, mostly diplomats and businessmen bound for the Orient, 15 missionary families, and 500 Chinese returning home. Treated as semi-royalty, the Swards were hosted by the American ambassador and received by the foreign minister. Toward the end of his visit in Yokohama, he was invited to an audience with the Mikado, "the first occasion in which the Mikado has completely unveiled himself to a visitor" (74). The Swards spent less than three weeks in Japan, but made some insightful observations: "The Japanese are less an imitative people than an inquiring one. They are not, however, excitable concerning the events of the day, but rather diligent in studying what is useful" (91) and finally a tacit admission, "If the tutorship of the United States in Japan is to be made successful, it must be based on deeper and broader principles of philanthropy than have heretofore been practiced in the intercourse of nations..." (93).

When the painter **Marianne North** left San Francisco in 1875, she traveled on the *Oceanic*, "one of the finest steamers afloat, fitted up in the most luxurious way, with an open fireplace in a corner of the great saloon" (212), arriving in Yokohama early November. Her first day she "took funny cups of yellow tea in a bamboo tea-house, with five pretty girls

rather over four feet high, in chignons with huge pines, blackened teeth, and no eyelashes, laughing at us all the while” (213-214). She is invited by Sir Harry and Lady Parkes to Kyoto, where she spends a good deal of time painting. She reports that after the Parkeses returned to Yedo, she was one of only six Europeans left in Kyoto. Before she departs for Hong Kong two months later she was able to make the observation that “[T]he Japanese are like little children, so merry and full of pretty ways, and very quick at taking in fresh ideas; but they don’t think or reason much, and have scarcely any natural affection towards one another” (225). Her observations are often pointed and acerbic, more to do with places than people or customs. She also suffered two bouts of illness, including rheumatic fever during her stay. North came to Japan to paint, and was able to finish more than a dozen paintings, mostly of Kyoto and environs.

Probably the youngest woman to write about Japan was **Ellen H. Walworth**, a teenaged student at a convent school in upstate New York, who accompanied her minister uncle on his yearlong sabbatical from parish duties, from June, 1873-June, 1874. Unbeknownst to her, while Miss Walworth was writing letters home to pass the time, her family was having them serially published in the local Albany newspaper. It took her two summer vacations to rework them into a publishable book, *An Old World, as Seen Through Young Eyes: Travels Around the World* (1877). Obviously a precocious young woman, her writing captures the stops along the way (as well as long shipboard voyages) in a fresh teenager way. “Japan is a funny place, though, there are a few very beautiful things....even we ourselves were funny, at least to the Japanese” (283). She spent two weeks in Japan, mostly in Yokohama, with only a daytrip to Yedo. “We would have stayed overnight, but there are no good European hotels in the city, and we did not like the idea of “putting up” at a Japanese house

for fear of being embarrassed with chopsticks and such things” (291). Her short descriptions are broken up with a letter written by her uncle to his ecclesiastical superior regarding the history of Christian martyrs in Japan and present missionary movements.

**Fanny L. Rains** sailed out of England in July, 1875 with a female companion bound for Adelaide, then proceeded by herself to New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Canton, and arriving in Yokohama a year later. Originally intending to stay in Japan only three days until the next steamer left, she was urged to spend more time, “as the country was so well worth seeing” (153) and passed a very agreeable month in the Yokohama and “Yeddo” area, armed with letters of introduction, which apparently was the second opening of Japan to foreigners. Like all other visitors, she comments on the blackening of teeth and plucking of eyebrows, but generally found the Japanese to be a “merry people, smiling or laughing at the slightest provocation” (176). On her visit to Edo, she describes an evening spent at a *kabuki* theatre where one actor committed “hari-gari,” which as she explains, happens when “a prisoner condemned to death, if he be of noble birth, is permitted to put an end to his existence by thrusting a sword into his heart” (166). In her short stay, she has tiffin with Lady Parkes and attends a ball given by a French officer, before catching a steamer to San Francisco a month after arriving.

*A Voyage in the Sunbeam, Our Home on the Ocean for Eleven Months* (1878) made **Annie Brassey** a best-selling travel writer, going into a sixth printing the same year and translated into several languages. Actually the *Sunbeam* was not just a yacht, but had an added steam engine, so that they could continue their course in calm seas and never be blown off course in foul winds. Although she wrote her books as “Mrs. Brassey,” she was in fact Lady Brassey, wife of Lord Thomas Brassey, M.P. and civil lord of the

Admiralty. The *Sunbeam* was commissioned by the British government for Lord Brassey to research colonial manufacture and labor relations. The Brasseys traveled in comfortable style with 43 people, including her four children, cooks, stewards, stewardess, nurse, maid, 23 crew members, two dogs, three birds and a kitten, who disappeared and was replaced. Sterry remarks on “the remarkable comfort of her exclusive mode of travel...Surrounded by luxury and supported by servants, Annie Brassey was rarely outside of her comfort zone, and was able to confidently embrace travel, secure in the knowledge that each day she would be returning ‘home,’” as well as the “necessarily superficial experiences that resulted from this highly organized style of travel within a limited time frame” (226). Unlike reluctant writers, Mrs. Brassey knew her trip would become a book and invited A. Y. Bingham to join them in order to provide the numerous illustrations for her book.

Mrs. Brassey’s writing style is brisk and direct, compared with other writers, which may account for her popularity. She regularly wrote in the morning before her day started and describes things she sees a firsthand account with little background information. Upon her arrival in Yokohama, she is struck by “the truthfulness of the representations of native artists, with which the fans, screens, and vases one sees in England are ornamented” (314). Traveling as a government official with letters of introduction not necessary, they were invited to the British Legation in Tokio, where Sir Harry and Lady Parkes mapped out their itinerary. They were invited to join the Parkeses for the opening of the Kobe-Kyoto railroad line and meet with the young emperor, whom Mrs. Brassey described as “a young, not very good-looking man, with rather a sullen expression, and legs that look as though they did not belong to him — I suppose from using them so little and sitting so much on his heels”

(335-336). But Yokohama was a foreigner enclave and it isn't until she sets off for Tokio that she sees the real Japan, where no foreigner lives except the legations' staff. While sleeping and taking meals on board ship, the Brasseys may not have experienced the same difficulties that other tourists faced, nor did they experience much of the culture. Their life was filled with social obligations of dinners on shore and receiving visitors on board. However, in her three weeks in Japan, Mrs. Brassey could realize that "the country is changing every day, and in three year more will be so Europeanised that little will be left worth seeing....they have learned nearly all they care to know from the foreigner" (368). The *Sunbeam* made three voyages in total, but unfortunately, on their last, Lady Brassey died of malaria and was buried at sea, at age 46.

Before **Lucy Seaman Bainbridge** embarked on a two-year round the world tour with her husband and nine-year-old son in 1879, she had made arrangements for her *Round the World Letters* (1882) to be published in newspapers in Providence, Rhode Island and Cincinnati, Ohio. The purpose of the journey was to accompany her minister husband, Rev. Robert Bainbridge, on a world tour of missions. This was their second world tour, but first to include Asia. Her account is very much a travelogue, consolidating daily diary entries into blocks of trips taken on specific days. Hence, we get little information about the family's daily life, but much about the sights they experienced. Her narrative is filled with background information gained from some of the books at her disposal, including Griffis', which she acknowledges. A letter of introduction to the American Secretary of the Home Department seems to open all doors at his disposal. They witness a Shinto funeral, visit the Emperor's garden, the Empress School and a prison. After three weeks in Tokyo and two in Yokohama, they set off overland by jinrikisha for the "interior,"

meaning Kyoto, on the Tokaido road, through Hakone, Shizuoka to Kyoto and Osaka. That trip and her impressions of Japanese life could be summarized by this very vibrant description:

Thus across rivers, through villages and town and cities, under the shade of venerable trees or along the water's edge, with views of Fuji Yama close at hand or more remote, passing pilgrims and merchants and beggars, men working in the muddy rice-fields or grouped about a tea-house, women at the loom, or tending baby in the open door — often greeting us with smiles, pleasant, save for the hideously blackened teeth—past children innumerable, each with a brother or sister strapped on to its back, entering a town with everybody was out for a holiday — streets hung with banners to the temple entrance — and again riding along behind some funeral procession, a stop now and then for the human horses to drink a cup of tea, or re-shoe themselves with coarse straw sandals, to be bought at nearly every other house on the route, and so we travelled along the Tokaido — a moving panorama of Japanese life and scenery, three hundred miles in length. (99)

The Bainbridges' two months in Japan is punctuated with visits with missionaries. Primary of these was Col. Davis, a former Civil War officer, "now enlisted in the battle against heathenism," at a training school for missionaries founded by Mr. Neesima, "one of the purest, noblest men in the world" (102-103) and also Mrs. Luther Halsey Gulick, the famous missionary wife from Hawaii. They take a steamer from Kobe to Nagasaki, where "thousands of Christians were put to death" but also "one of the finest harbors of the world" (105). The Bainbridges leave Nagasaki

just before the arrival of former U.S. president, Gen. Ulysses Grant, whom they would get to see in Shanghai. Mrs. Bainbridge made one more round-the-world tour in 1908, returning to Japan. In all she made three world tours, published four books, and spoke on medical work in foreign missions. Back home, she was Superintendent of the Woman's Branch of the New York City Mission Society for 17 years, bringing medical and spiritual services to the immigrant section of Lower Manhattan. Her life was the subject of a book, *Triumphant Christianity, the Life and Works of Lucy Seaman Bainbridge* (1932).

**Mrs. F. D. Bridges** and her husband left Greece in 1878 and continued traveling for three years. Her *Journal of a Lady's Travels Round the World* (1883) is a reworking of letters sent to her mother, which may explain why it begins abruptly with little introduction of herself or her husband, only referred to as "H". It was good enough to be published by John Murray, who built his publishing business on travel guides. There seems to be no fixed purpose or schedule other than "to read with our own eyes some of the marvels written in that great world-book...to learn something of its deeper meaning, and see not alone the things new and old, but the men and women who make up the story of life told in its wonderful pages" (1). Indeed, more than most other tourists, the Bridgeses seemed to delight in both the hospitality of the educated upper classes of the Empire as well as roughing it a bit in order to get an authentic experience. Her observations could be blunt, but she seems to be open to accepting different beliefs, religions and practices she encounters — Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist. After a stop in Egypt, they spent almost a year in India, hunting tigers with royalty and living in a Tibetan monastery in Leh, before carrying on to Burma, Java, Hong Kong and finally arriving in Yokohama in February, 1880. Taken to the curio

shops, she can observe that, “all of a sudden the official and court-dress was changed into a Methodist parson’s frock-coat and white tie; and we foreign barbarians now buy the gorgeous garments and beautiful swords as ‘curios.’” (273). She has done her background reading and quotes Marco Polo, Mitford and Chamberlain’s translation of the *Kojiki* and pronounces that “Rutherford Alcock’s account of Japan some twenty years ago is now ancient history” (277). Although more leisurely, the Bridgeses do the usual side trips to Ennoshima, Kamakura, and Tokio for a few weeks, then back to Yokohama, where they board a steamer for Kobe. In her three and a half months in Japan, she experienced one earthquake, several fires and the explosion of an American freighter. But the highlight of their visit is the three-week journey inland on the Nakasendo Road from Kyoto to Nikko, traveling the 330 miles by jinrikisha, kango and foot. Mrs. Bridges’ book is less a travelogue of her harrowing journeys than a straightforward account of what she did and saw. Having observed other people around the world, she can make comparative generalizations of the Japanese:

Sometimes we think these people resemble the Greeks in their extreme delight and delicate sense of beauty; their adaptiveness and love of change and progress, their speculative and inquiring turn of mind...; their failure to appreciate truth in the abstract, and their irreligiousness, combined with a tender nature, and instinctive love of virtue; lastly, their sociable and mirth-loving temperament, and keen sense of humour. (327)

And elsewhere:

...the Japanese (in a wide sense of the word) are a moral people, dishonesty and crimes of violence are rare, family affection and filial obedience strong, and, as far as we can see, the law of kindness prevails amongst these peaceful and industrious peasants. (331)

In the countryside more than the cities, Mrs. Bridges was able to find the Arcadian paradise that other writers had described 20-30 years earlier. Her stay in Japan seems to end in Nikko and picks up several weeks later on board a steamer bound for San Francisco.

One of the most famous of all Victorian woman travelers was **Isabella Bird**, who came only to Japan and with no fixed time limit. Much has been written about her paradoxical nature — semi-invalid at home but intrepid traveler abroad. Indeed, for the first 40 years of her life, she did little traveling, except for a brief trip to America and Canada in her 20s visiting relatives. After the death of her parents, “the constant backache, the insomnia and nervous fears to which she was a martyr, grew worse and worse, and a complete collapse seemed inevitable. In truth the frustrated egoism which is a part of all strong natures was struggling to be free and could not find release within the range of a Victorian woman” (Middleton, 21). She followed her doctor’s orders and in 1872 left Scotland for her first major trip, going first to Australia and then the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii). She returned to western America, where she stayed in Colorado over the winter of 1873, falling in love with the irascible, “Rocky Mountain Jim.” The result of this journey, *The Hawaiian Archipelago* (1875) and *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1879) sealed her popularity as a travel writer and provided income for future trips.

She disingenuously claims in her introduction to her two-volume *Unbeaten Paths in Japan* (1880) that she came to Japan in 1878 again

for health reasons, but this trip was another of her escapes from the narrowness of her domestic life in Scotland with her sister, Henrietta, to whom she addressed her 44 letters from the road. Her earlier trips, from Hawaiian volcanoes to Colorado mountains, had given her the confidence to risk hardships in return for the satisfaction of being where few had gone before. Also, the time was propitious for exploratory travel, and it was during this trip that Isabella Bird became more scientific in her observations. When she arrived in Yokohama, staying at the British Legation with Sir Harry and Lady Parkes, she immediately sought out the leading experts — Chamberlain, Hepburn, Dyer, Dickins, Satow. Undeterred by warnings of the difficulty of traveling alone in unexplored areas of Japan, she secured the services of an 18-year-old called Ito and a visa for unlimited travel from Sir Harry. A month after arriving in Japan, Miss Bird set out with one pony, one “servant interpreter” and 110 pounds of equipment and provisions. Only one night on her own, after leaving the comfort of Nikko, she wrote to her sister:

Already I can laugh at my fears and misfortunes, as I hope you will. A traveller must buy his own experience, and success or failure depends mainly on personal idiosyncrasies. Many acquire the habit of feeling secure; but lack of privacy, bad smells, and the torments of fleas and mosquitoes are, I fear, irremediable evils” (51).

Following the western spine of northern Honshu through Niigata, Akita, Odate and Aomori, it took her two months off the beaten track to get to Hakodate, the gateway to Yezo (Hokkaido), where she remarks, “You cannot imagine the delight of being in a room with a door that will lock, to be in a bed instead of on a stretcher, of finding twenty-three letters

containing good news, and of being able to read them in the warmth and quietness under the roof of an English home!” (239). But again, Hakodate with its comforts was only the departure point of her journey farther afield. Before she leaves, she is introduced to an Ainu chief, who arranges for her to stay in his village. From there she reports that “the most interesting of my travelling experiences has been the living for three days and two nights in an Aino hut, and seeing and sharing the daily life of complete savages, who go on with their ordinary occupations just as if I were not among them” (266-267). Her month in Ainu land is filled with more detailed information of their villages and customs than had been reported before, which added to her reputation as a serious explorer as well as a traveler. She returned to Tokio by steamer. Shizen Ozawa points out two important differences between her original two-volume account and subsequent popular and condensed editions. First is the deletion of the final two months she spent traveling in other parts of Honshu, ending her story and emphasizing her time with the Ainu. Second, subsequent editions delete most references to missionary work she critically commented on (Ozawa, 90).

Isabella Bird left Japan in December, 1879, spending a few months traveling in the Malay States, which became the topic of another book, *The Golden Cheronnee and the Way Thither* (1883). She arrived back home in mid-1879, in time to be with her sister as she succumbed to illness. Within the year, she married Dr. John Bishop, Henrietta’s physician and family friend, who had proposed to Isabella prior to her trips. Mrs. Bishop would remain at home, preparing her Japan and Malay notes for publication. During this time, she also became interested in missionary hospitals in the tradition of Dr. David Livingston. Her husband died five years after their marriage, and then, with no obligations to hold her back, at 60 years old,

Mrs. Bishop embarked on some of her most ambitious and adventurous of her travels. Her first stop was India, where she set up mission hospitals named for her sister and husband, then traveled thorough Kashmir up to Tibet. In India, she met Major Sawyer, who took her overland through Afghanistan and from Baghdad to Tehran. From there she formed her own caravan and continued through Kurdistan to Turkey's Black Sea. Another trip in 1893 brought her back to Korea and China for three years, from which she returned to Japan for rest and recuperation.

All these travels through territory unseen by western women travelers sealed her reputation as the intrepid woman Victorian traveler. It would be her reports of the Ainu of Japan, as well as her other explorations of the peoples of Persia, Tibet, China and Korea that would merit her being the first woman to address the Royal Geographical Society in 1887 and later the Prime Minister and the House of Commons in 1891. A founding Fellow of the Scottish Geographical Society in 1884, she was among the first group of women to become full Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society in 1892. Her last travel account, *Notes from Morocco*, was published in 1901, when she was 70. She died at home in 1904. Thomas Baty, who surveyed early books about Japan for *Monumenta Nipponica* in the 1950s, considers hers one of the best because:

... her own indefatigable industry, piercing acumen and keen powers of observation went far beyond official and semi-official platitudes. She saw Japan steadily and saw it whole. She did not blink unwelcome facts: neither did she look at facts through any distorting mist of prejudice. More than that: she wrote with such a friendly grace, that she carries the reader willingly along with her. (Baty1953, 77)

As she herself wrote early in her visit to Japan:

I write the truth as I see it, and if my accounts conflict with those of tourists who write of the Tokaido and Nakasendo, of Lake Biwa and Hakone, it does not follow that either is inaccurate. But truly this is a new Japan to me, of which no books have given me any idea, and it is not a fairyland.” (95)

The first biography about her, by Anna Stoddard, appeared shortly after her death published by her friend and longtime publisher, John Murray. A book for young readers, *Two Modern Travellers* (1906) combined her story with that of Sir Henry Morton Stanley. Isabella Bird Bishop embodied all the physical and social contradictions of the lady Victorian traveler and excelled in overcoming them. Of all women travelers, Robinson considers her “the best loved, most prolific and most ubiquitous of all. She is also one of the best documented of the species, with several biographies to her name and a proud position at the prow of all the anthologies: the archetypical Victorian Lady Traveller” (Robinson 1991, 83).

(to be continued)

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