

Preface

This multidisciplinary collection of studies based on original research by Japan specialists focuses on the definition of Japanese women's roles over the last three hundred and fifty years, from the Tokugawa era to the end of the Second World War. Contributors to the volume have drawn on a rich and varied body of primary source materials, including poetry, folklore, oral history, religious teachings, screenplays, government publications, newspapers, and popular magazines, to describe the various forces and agents of change in the construction of Japanese women and to explore the gap between the feminine ideal and the reality of women's lives in that country. Organized chronologically and centered specifically on the cultural construction of gender, the thirteen chapters constitute a history of the evolution of female roles and feminine identity in Japan.

Our book originated in a three-hour panel on Japanese women's history held at the annual meeting of the Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies in Park City, Utah, in the fall of 1986. The common themes that emerged from that panel encouraged us to expand and elaborate on our research at the following year's meeting in Tucson, Arizona. By the time we left Park City, we had already discussed putting out a book centered on changing definitions of Japanese womanhood, and we even had a tentative title: *Recreating Japanese Women*.

At the Tucson conference in 1987, the original group of panelists—Bernstein, Lebra, Molony, Rodd, Silverberg, Uno, and Walthall—were joined by Cornell, Hastings, Miyake, and Nagy. In an afternoon work-

shop following panel presentations, several other Japan scholars, women's history specialists, and advanced graduate students participated in an extensive critique of all the papers and worked to sharpen the thematic focus of the book. Although Robertson was unable to attend, she later sent her paper to the others for their comments.

We acquired two more contributors the following year when we invited William B. Hauser to share his work on women in wartime films and Patricia Fister to discuss one of the women artists represented in her exhibit "Japanese Women Artists, 1600–1900," which many of us had the good fortune of seeing at the University of Kansas Spencer Museum in April 1988 while attending the Rocky Mountain/Southwest Japan Regional Seminar meeting. The final contributor, European historian Jane Caplan, joined our project at the end of 1989, when she graciously agreed to provide an Afterword that would help integrate our research findings with theories developed in the study of women in the Western world.

Our common endeavor greatly benefited from the support of the University of Arizona. A grant from the Social and Behavioral Sciences Research Institute helped defray the considerable photocopying and postage costs. The Department of History's manuscript typist, Mary Sue Passé-Smith, applied her genius to the task of merging thirteen chapters typed on various disks into one unified manuscript, enhanced by her typing and editing skills. And Shizuko Radbill, the Japan librarian in the Oriental Collection, placed her expert research skills and the resources of the Collection at our disposal. As always, Michael Patrick Sullivan stood ready to provide practical, emotional, and intellectual support.

We owe a special word of thanks to Irwin Scheiner for his thoughtful, perceptive reading of the entire manuscript and his valuable recommendations for revision. The staff of the Press gave us the advantage of expert editing, helping pull together the style and substance of this book. In the end, of course, any errors are our responsibility.

We should also like to express our appreciation to the people who participated as discussants in the Tucson workshop: Robert J. Smith, Goldwin Smith Professor of Anthropology at Cornell University, and Stefan Tanaka, then Japan Staff Associate of the Social Science Research Council, offered many helpful suggestions. University of Arizona historians Tessie Liu and Karen Anderson lent a valuable comparative perspective. We benefited from criticisms made by Betty Brummal and Barbara Mori, and from the minutes prepared by rapporteur Pamela Gilbreath.

One other Japan specialist who had planned to join us for the workshop was Sharon Hamilton Nolte. She contributed a paper to our first conference in Utah, though at the last minute she was unable to attend. During the summer of 1987, shortly before the workshop, she died suddenly from an aneurism of the brain.

Sharon's husband, Reid Nolte, entrusted her academic papers to her friends and colleagues Ann Waltner, Anne Walthall, and Sally Hastings. The one unpublished manuscript that Sharon left was the chapter she intended to contribute to this volume. It was agreed that Sally Hastings should revise the manuscript for publication. The Midwest Japan Seminar, for which Sharon had been scheduled to write a paper, discussed the draft at its meeting on September 21, 1987. Sally Hastings presided at that meeting and attended our workshop in Sharon's place. In order to answer criticisms raised in those two discussions and to relate Sharon's manuscript to the others in the book, Sally added more material and rewrote the paper: essentially she recast and expanded the material to make Sharon's major points clearer and more convincing. Because Sally Hastings's contribution exceeded that usually encompassed by the term "editor," we thought it appropriate that she add her name as co-author of the paper.

Sharon Nolte's academic work was of very high quality, and it was central to her life. Had she lived, she undoubtedly would have produced a pioneering book on women and the state in modern Japan. It is altogether fitting that we honor her by dedicating this volume to her memory.

This page intentionally left blank