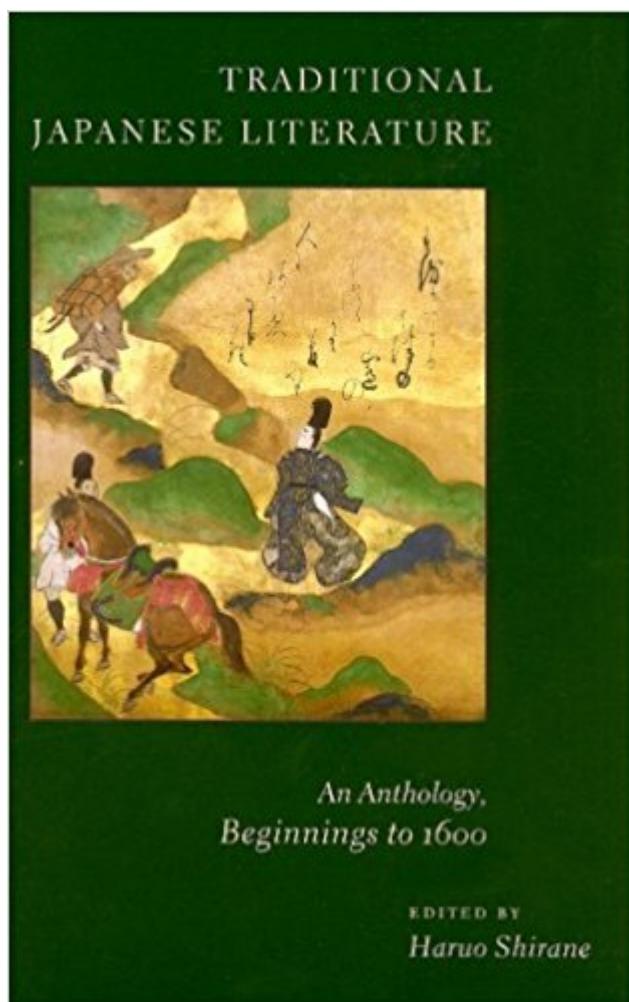


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# Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings To 1600 (Translations From The Asian Classics)



## Synopsis

Traditional Japanese Literature features a rich array of works dating from the very beginnings of the Japanese written language through the evolution of Japan's noted aristocratic court and warrior cultures. It contains stunning new translations of such canonical texts as *The Tales of the Heike* as well as works and genres previously ignored by scholars and unknown to general readers. This volume includes generous selections from *Man'yōshū*, *The Tale of Genji*, *The Pillow Book*, *Kokinshū*, and other classics of Japanese literature, as well as a stunning range of folk literature, epic tales of war, poetry, and no drama. The anthology offers an impressive representation of dramatic, poetic, and fictional works from both high and low culture, along with religious and secular anecdotes, literary criticism, and works written in Chinese by Japanese writers. The wealth of classical poetry, linked verse, and popular poetry is accompanied by extensive commentary. Traditional Japanese Literature is a companion volume to Columbia University Press's *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology, 1600-1900* and part of its four-volume history of Japanese literature. Arranged by chronology and genre, the readings are insightfully introduced and placed into their political, cultural, and literary context, and the extensive bibliographies offer further study for scholars and readers. Including a wide range of classic and popular works in poetry, prose, and drama, this anthology presents a definitive overview of traditional Japanese literature and deepens our understanding of classical and medieval Japanese culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It's one of those impressive, erudite must-have titles for anyone interested in Asian literature (Terry Hong The Bloomsbury Review) An anthology that comprises superb translations of an exceptionally wide range of texts, each with a pithy introduction... Highly recommended. (CHOICE) This volume provides a wealth of material. (Robert Huey *Monumenta Nipponica*)

Traditional Japanese Literature features a rich array of works dating from the very beginnings of the Japanese written language through the noted age of aristocratic court life into the period of warrior culture. The anthology contains new translations of such canonical texts as *The Tales of the Heike* and generous selections from *Man'yoshu*, *The Tale of Genji*, *The Pillow Book*, and *Kokinshu*. It includes a stunning range of folk literature, war epics, poetry, and nō drama, and an impressive collection of dramatic, poetic, and fictional works from both elite and popular cultures. Also represented are religious and secular anecdotes, literary criticism, essays, and works written in Chinese by Japanese writers. Arranged by chronology and genre, the readings are carefully introduced and placed into a larger political, cultural, and literary context, and the extensive bibliographies offer further study. Intended as a companion to Columbia University Press's *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology, 1600-1900*, *Traditional Japanese Literature* significantly deepens our understanding of Japanese literature as well as of ancient, classical, and medieval Japanese culture.

Delivery was timely and the book was in good condition (bought it used). It was a book I rented in university and I really wanted to own a copy. The poems and stories are great and the editors do a great job of explaining the vaguer aspects of the topics discussed. I'd recommend this book if you are trying to get more knowledge on Japanese culture and history.

Great quality!

A comprehensive selection of Japanese texts from the ancient, Heian and medieval periods, this book is a very valuable addition to the existing range of anthologies of classical Japanese writing available in English. It far exceeds any other anthology of its kind in terms of both the breadth of its selections and the depth of its secondary supporting material. A wide range of primary texts is included, with extensive excerpts not only from major classics such as *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*), *The Pillow Book* (*Makura no soshi*), or *The Tales of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari*), but

also passages from texts less commonly included in anthologies of Japanese literature, such as the Hitachi Province Gazetteer (Hitachi fudoki) or The Essentials of Salvation (Ojo yoshu). Other genres represented include poetry in Chinese, setsuwa, noh, kyogen, linked verse, and sermon-ballads (sekkyo-bushi). Some texts in this volume have been selected to complement each other: for instance, one can read the account of the death of Taira no Atsumori in The Tales of the Heike, read a dramatization of the event in the noh Atsumori, and also read a letter from Honen, the founder of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, to Kumagai, the man who killed Atsumori ("Reply to Kumagai Naozane, the Monk Rensei"). Likewise, the anthology includes both the famous essay An Account of a Ten-Foot-Square Hut (Hojoki) and part of the less widely read Record of a Pond Pavilion (Chiteiki), which addresses similar themes. Selections from poetry anthologies such as New Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems (Shinkokinshu) are accompanied by passages from critical works on poetry such as Essentials of Poetic Composition (Eiga no taigai); similarly, the anthology includes both noh plays and excerpts from noh treatises such as Teachings on Style and the Flower (Fushikaden). In addition to its careful selection of primary texts, the anthology also features well-written and informative introductions to the translations and, more generally, to the historical and cultural background of the texts included. The general introduction to the volume treats broad themes such as "Language and Writing", "Love and Eroticism", and "Performance and Narration", while there are separate introductory essays to each of the major historical periods covered and then more specific introductions to the texts and genres included. These introductions are invaluable in placing the works in their historical and social context within the almost one-thousand-year span of history covered by this anthology. These features--the selection of texts and the introductions--not only give the casual reader a more multidimensional view of the works included, but make the anthology a extremely useful teaching tool. This anthology should be of great interest to scholars and instructors in the field, and to students or to any reader wishing to gain a comprehensive understanding of early and medieval Japanese literature.

I love this book and its partner below. They give a wonderful selection of Japanese literature from earliest times up to the early modern period. These books have been an inexhaustible resource on their own, as well as an aid to finding more texts I am interested in. These would be Desert Island books for sure. While quite large there are abridged versions available, but hey, go the whole hog, they are a library in themselves! Can't recommend them strongly enough. Early Modern Japanese Literature Translations

This volume reflects the state of the art in translations of pre-modern (classical) Japanese literature. No interested reader or scholar can afford to be without it.

I am sure that in many respects this is an excellent work. But be forewarned that in at least one instance the story is bowdlerized. The myth I am referring to is the one about Yamato Takeru and his slaying of the Kumaso brothers. He accomplishes the feat while still a young boy. He dresses as a girl and enters the party where the Kumaso brothers are feasting, and they seat the beautiful "girl" between them and enjoy him tremendously (we can safely assume that they are not discussing the care of koi). When the two brothers are soused he stabs the elder through the chest, in warrior style. The younger however he stabs through the anus, presumably in revenge for an analogous and dishonorable act just done to him. But you would be hard pressed to divine that from this translation. Why do translators think that watering down strong wine is what modern audiences want???

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