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ARTISTS, AESTHETICS, AND ARTWORKS
FROM, AND IN CONVERSATION WITH, JAPAN
PART 2

MUTUAL IMAGES
ISSUE 9 – AUTUMN 2020

MUTUAL IMAGES

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ARTISTS, AESTHETICS, AND ARTWORKS
FROM, AND IN CONVERSATION WITH, JAPAN
PART 2

EDITED BY
MARCO PELLITTERI & JOSÉ ANDRÉS SANTIAGO IGLESIAS

Mutual
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MUTUAL IMAGES

A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

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Japanese Princesses in Chicago: Representations of Japanese Women in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Chicago Tribune* (1872)

Aurore YAMAGATA-MONTOYA | Independent Researcher, Spain

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ABSTRACT

In December 1871, the Iwakura Mission was sent by the Meiji government to the US and Europe. One of the aims of the mission was the observation of foreign practices and technologies. If Japan wanted to suppress the Unequal Treaties and be considered a “first rank nation”, it had to adopt the “civilized” manners and rules of North America and Europe (Nish, 1998). Five Japanese girls, aged six to sixteen accompanied the Mission to be educated in the US for a ten-year period. Their presence didn’t go unnoticed by the American Press, and the articles reporting on their stay provided an opportunity to bring up broader themes on Japanese women and Japan.

*The five girls were the first women to officially represent Japan in the US. Identified by the American media as “Japanese Princesses”, their reception was confronted with the American image and understanding of Japan. This article analyses the representations of the five girls, and of Japanese women in general, in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Chicago Tribune* during the two months that the Iwakura Mission travelled eastward from San Francisco to Washington, via Chicago. I identify and analyse the recurring tropes: the girls’ social position, the craze they created among the Americans, their beauty, the exoticism of their kimono, the education they will receive in America. The newspapers’ representation of the girls are full of inaccuracies and mistakes, myths and exoticism. Nonetheless, the representations are overwhelmingly positive and the girls – as well as the whole of the Mission’s members – are warmly welcomed by the American press.*

KEYWORDS

Iwakura Mission; Japanese women; Japanese in America; *San Francisco Chronicle*; *Chicago Tribune*; Meiji Japan.

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The Iwakura Mission was sent by the Meiji government, reaching first America in December 1871 before continuing to Europe in August 1872. It followed a tradition of diplomatic missions starting in the first half of the 19th century by the Bakufu government (1192-1868) and the feudal lords. These missions, among other reasons, responded to a growing need felt by the Japanese intellectuals to experience first-hand the Western knowledge they had been discovering through books. Named after the Minister of the Right and leader of the mission, Iwakura Tomomi (1825-1883), the Embassy was the first

mission sent by the Meiji government. Its official goal was to renegotiate the Unequal Treaties signed in 1858 (Nish, 1998). However, the main and somewhat unofficial aim of the mission was the observation of the practices of the West. Both goals were linked. If Japan wanted to suppress the Unequal Treaties and be considered a “first rank” nation, it had to adopt the “civilised” manners and rules of the West.

The arrival of the Iwakura Mission in San Francisco did not go unnoticed; several newspapers articles mentioned the impressions left by the ‘Japanese Embassy’, as the American media named the Iwakura Mission. They were celebrated across the country, as one newspaper noted: ‘Let us, at least, shell out the oysters, pop the Champagne, ride through the burnt district, visit the cells of the convicted Aldermen, and have a little speech from the Mayor’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 8th February). Another newspaper, two weeks after their arrival, even criticised the over-the-top receptions that each city organised, trying to outdo the previous one the Mission visited: ‘the ambassadors (sic) looked like demi-gods receiving the incense of their worshippers’ (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 3rd February). Large celebrations and enthusiasm at the arrival of the Embassy became a ritual in each city they stopped across the US, where the Mission stayed until August 1872, before leaving for Europe.

The mission travelled for nearly two years, one more year than initially planned, with forty-eight members and accompanied by sixty students, among them five girls: Yoshimasu Ryōko (1858-n/a), Ueda Teiko (1858-n/a), Yamakawa Suteyasu (1860-1919), Nagai Shigeko (1862-1928) and Tsuda Umeko (1864-1929). The latter turned seven years old onboard the ship that was taking her to America in order to pursue a Western education. During the nearly three months of travel across ocean and land, the girls were in the charge of Mrs. DeLong, wife of the American Ambassador Charles DeLong (1832-1876) who accompanied the Iwakura Mission from Japan across the US. The two oldest girls, Yoshimasu Ryōko and Ueda Teiko, returned to Japan due to poor health and home sickness after spending just six months in Washington, where all five girls lived together with a governess. The other three girls were then sent to live with host families and would complete their education in the US. Tsuda Umeko developed a strong, affectionate bond with her host family, Charles Lanman (1819-1895) and Adeline (1824-1914), who instead of sending her to boarding school as originally planned, kept her with them and registered her in a local school.

The girls' mission was not dissimilar to the more general aim of the Iwakura mission: learning Western habits. The initiative of sending them to America was inscribed in the rising consciousness of the need for women's education as part of the modernisation of Japan (Nish, 1998: 11). The Emperor Meiji, commenting upon the need to educate Japanese women as part of a larger vision of society, stated:

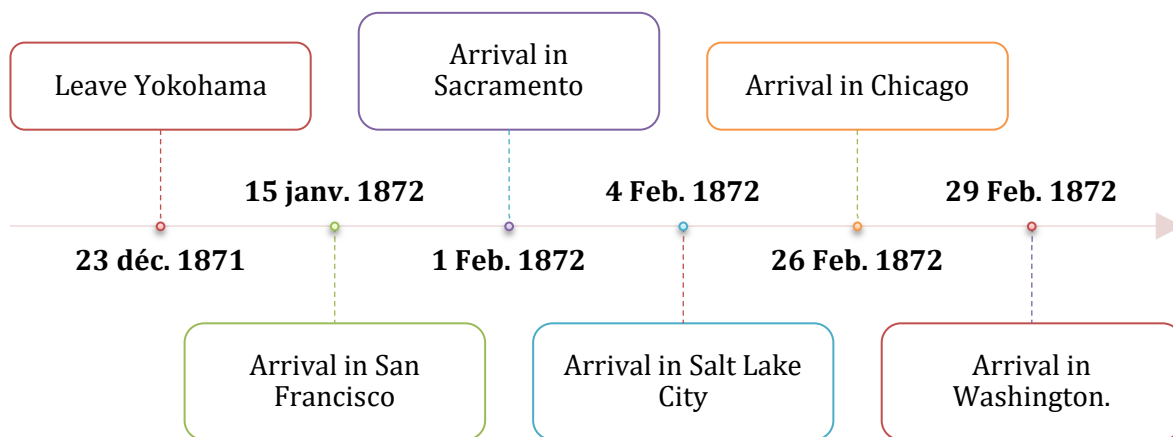
We lack superior institutions for high female culture. Our women should not be ignorant of those great principles on which the happiness of daily life frequently depends. How important the education of mothers, on whom future generations almost wholly rely for the early cultivation of those intellectual tastes which an enlightened system of training is designed to develop. (Quoted in Thomas, 1996: 193-4)

Tsuda's story remains the most widely known because of the diaries she wrote, in English, during her stay in America and her later involvement in the promotion of women's education in Japan¹. However, it was not Tsuda's but her older sister's candidature that had been put forward by their father, the agricultural reformer, Tsuda Sen (1837-1908). After her sister's refusal, Tsuda took her place in order to re-establish the status her family had lost with the Meiji Restoration. Indeed, all five girls were from families affiliated with the former Tokugawa government, and their mission was as much a personal one to restore the family status as a national one (Nimura, 2015: 48).

Tsuda and her companions can be considered the pioneers of what Mark Jones, in his study of modern childhood, calls the 'little citizen' or *shōkokumin* (2010: 4). The essence of the 'little citizen', conceptualised as an altruistic, educated and moral person, can be found in the 1890 Imperial Rescript for Education. This sense of duty toward the new nation can be found in Tsuda's when she writes in 1882, ten years after her arrival in America: 'I feel I must be of use, not because I know much, but because I am a Japanese woman with an education' (quoted in Rose, 1992: 35). Tsuda's sense of duty was shared by Nagai and Yamakawa. During her ten-year stay Tsuda met regularly with the other two girls who were enrolled in Vassar College, to discuss together their future in Japan. They wanted to contribute to Japan's modernisation by funding a school for girls based on the education they received in America (Rose, 1992: 35). However, soon after her

¹ In addition to scholarly publications and biographies aimed at a mainstream audience, Tsuda's life has been narrated in several formats, such as manga (*Tsuda Umeko*, written by Atsuo Sugaya and drawn by Ikuo Miyazoe. 1997. Tokyo: Shōgakukan), film documentary (*Dream surpass Time. Bonds spun by Tsuda Umeko* [Yume wa toki wo koete Tsuda Umeko ga tsumuida kizuna] by Tomoko Fujiwara 2000) and several TV series where she appears as secondary character.

return to Japan in 1881, Nagai got married, putting a halt to their original plans. They also faced a strong opposition in their home country. When the girls returned to Japan, in 1882 for Yamakawa and Tsuda, their knowledge of American customs was not wanted anymore and the girls waited in vain to be called at the service of the nation (Rose, 1992: 49-50). During the ten years their patriotic mission lasted, a wave of conservatism spread over Japan, and Western habits in general, including the American-style women's education they received, were in the 1880s regarded with concern.



Sources and methodology

Several extensive researches exist on the Iwakura Mission that come to complete the contemporary reports of the Embassy by Kumi Kunitake, secretary of Iwakura and chronicler of the Mission and Charles Lanman, tutor of Tsuda Umeko. The most noteworthy and extensive of the English-language research on the Iwakura Mission publications in the past decades has been the work edited by the British historian Ian Nish, *The Iwakura Mission in America and Europe - A New Assessment* (1998) which covers largely the goals, movements and members. It is divided into chapters each covering a country the Embassy visited. Alistair Swale's chapter on America focuses on the progress of the Mission regarding its three official objectives: securing recognition for the new government, investigating the social and economic structures of the countries they visited and examining the possibility to open the negotiations for the unequal treaties. Swale mentions a 'warm and enthusiastic' reception made to the Embassy, remarking briefly that the media took part in it and wrote about the Mission, sometimes inaccurately, sometimes more seriously (1998: 8).

If the articles revel in gossips and anecdotes, they leave out the more disturbing ones, the ones that reveal the difficult reality of the girls' life. The sea journey in winter was rough, they were seasick, crowded into a single cabin and struggling to communicate with Mrs DeLong, whose knowledge of the Japanese language was more than basic (Rose, 1992: 18; Nimura, 2015: 61-2). Aboard the ship, Yoshimasu Ryōko was sexually molested by a member of the mission. Upon the advice of an American officer, a trial was organised to show Japan as a civilised country. Barbara Rose describes it as a 'kangaroo court, only further humiliating Yoshimasu' (1992: 18). Another traumatic event for her was the snowblindness from which she suffered during the snowstorm in Salk Lake City (Nimura, 2015: 85). The snowblockade was largely reported in the newspapers specifying how annoyed the Japanese officials were at the delay (*Chicago Tribune*, 10th February), but no mention is made of the injury suffered by Yoshimasu. Whether sick, attacked or injured, the girls remained figures to admire and the mention of such "trivial events" was beneath women of their condition, especially in the context of a diplomatic Embassy. We see that if the Japanese had 'not been guilty of an unbecoming act since their arrival' (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February), their exemplarity is only an appearance and the sexual assault was either left as a side incident or not known by the American journalists. The girls' public image is much more glorious than the reality actually was.

The long period of travel, the many countries visited, the large number of members and the several goals of the Mission make it impossible for any one publication to cover all aspects. Most researchers have focused on major aspects of the Mission: their most distinguished members, the diplomatic side of the Embassy or the acquisition of technical knowledge in either one or several countries.

Two major publications have looked into the experience of the girls that accompanied the Embassy. Janice Nimura's book *Daughters of the Samurai – A Journey from East to West and Back* (2015) retraces the journey of the five young girls alongside the Iwakura Mission in 1872 and continues with their stay in the US and return to Japan. Nimura's book is the only account that focuses on all five girls, with more information on Yamakawa and Tsuda. Barbara Rose's biography of Tsuda Umeko (1992) provides valuable information on Tsuda's ten-year stay, although it represents only a small part of her publication, with a specific focus on Tsuda's life and accomplishments as an adult.

This article focuses on the girls' journey from the moment they land in San Francisco until they reach Washington, that is a two-month journey, mostly by train, through Sacramento, Salt Lake City and Chicago. At the difference of the works aforementioned, I do not adopt a historical perspective nor attempt to provide a detailed account of their whereabouts. This article is inscribed in the methodology of cultural studies and considers the girls through the prism of the American media.

This paper presents the current results of an ongoing research that aims to examine how Japanese women in general, and the five girls of the Iwakura mission in particular, were represented in the American newspapers in the first decades of the Meiji period, with a specific focus on the period of the girls' stay (1872-1882). I analysed the content of the articles, identified tropes and divergences to highlight what discourses of the five girls and of Japanese women in general, were represented in the American newspapers. At a time when Japan was attempting to re-define itself and establish his place in the world diplomatic relationships as a modern nation, the American press contributed to create an Orientalist discourse based on previous discourses of exoticism and new knowledges coming from direct contact with the Japanese, both through American visitors in Japan and the Japanese Embassy and students in the US. Here Edward W. Said's third definition of Orientalism, 'as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (1978: 3) can be applied if we replace for this more specific case study, "Western" by "American" and "Orient" by "Japanese".

For this paper, I focused on two daily newspapers: the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Chicago Tribune*. Both were widely read on the West Coast and Great Lake region, respectively. When the Iwakura Mission arrived in San Francisco, The *San Francisco Chronicle*, founded in 1865 with the name *Daily Dramatic Chronicle*, was growing steadily and about to become the most largely circulated newspaper west of the Mississippi River. The *Chicago Tribune*, founded in 1847, remains, even today, the most-read daily newspaper in the Chicago metropolitan area and Great Lake region. For the purpose of this article, I focused on the issues from December 1871 –when the steamboat *America* left Japan, carrying the members of the Japanese Embassy– to February 1872 –when the Mission reached Washington and the girls were sent to foster families.

I scanned all articles of both newspaper over the three-month period with the keywords: 'Japan', 'Iwakura', 'Japanese Embassy', 'Japanese women'. The *San Francisco Chronicle* contained 59 articles about Japan, whereas the *Chicago Tribune* doubled the

number to reach 121 articles. Among those, there was a total of 57 articles mentioning the Iwakura Mission; 37 for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and 20 for the *Chicago Tribune*. The difference of number of articles on the Iwakura Mission cannot be considered as revealing any kind of difference of interest between journalists of the two cities. The timeframe considered here creates this difference because the Embassy only reached Chicago on the 26th of February, so nearly at the end of the period I researched. This is interesting for the research as it provides two different visions of the Japanese: one based on first-hand encounters and one largely relying on the information published in other newspapers.

For this paper, I retained a total of 31 articles mentioning either the girls and/or Japanese women. The *San Francisco Chronicle* gathered sixteen articles about the girls and five on Japanese women, among which three belong to both categories. The *Chicago Tribune* published thirteen on the girls and none more broadly on Japanese women.

If this may seem little among the more than hundred articles on the Iwakura Mission or on Japanese culture and society², I have to note that the fifty-five male students who also accompanied the Mission were only mentioned four times in the two newspapers. Both newspapers introduced them for the first time alongside other members of the Embassy: ‘Thirty students, sons of noblemen, some quite young, accompany the Embassy and will be placed at some of our leading colleges’ (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 16th January). The journalist named two of those students, maybe the youngest ones, who are staying at the Grand Hotel alongside the Ambassadors and the five girls, whereas the other students are lodged at the Occidental.

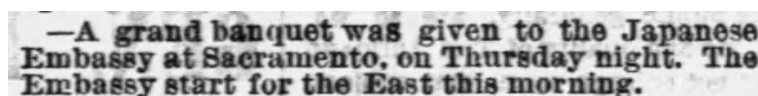
The *Chicago Tribune* provides a more detailed and vivid picture of the disembarking of the Embassy in San Francisco than its locally-based competitor did. It goes on with the longest mention, and only singularisation, of any of the male students: ‘Among the Japanese students coming Eastward with the Embassy is a lad of 9 years, who wears light-colored striped pants, a broad-brimmed felt hat, and a long-backed frock coat, with three huge brass buttons on each tail’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 5th February). This description was singled out from the whole article and reprinted the next day in the ‘Personal’ section of the newspaper, making it the fourth mention of the male students in the two newspapers during the eastward journey of the Embassy.

² I discarded from this research the articles that focused purely on Japanese economy, agriculture or political system, which amounted however to a small number.

The third mention – chronologically – dates from the 25th of January and alludes to two unnamed law students who attended a session in Court and were received by a judge (*San Francisco Chronicle*). This is the only mention of an activity done by the male students. Whereas the female students are said to being invited to parties (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 17th January, 9th February, 13th February, 14th February, *Chicago Tribune*, 9th February), to the theatre (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 21st January, *Chicago Tribune*, 26th February) and alongside official visits of the Embassy (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 22nd January), the male students are invisible in the media. We ignore, with that one exception of the two law students, what they did during the journey. The comparison clearly shows the interest the girls raised, and the lack of for their male fellows.

Despite the geographical and political differences of the journalists - who never signed the articles - and the readership between the two daily newspapers, many similar articles were found. Often, the *Chicago Tribune* copies, summarises, and comments on articles published by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, who at the beginning of the Mission's stay had first-hand information with the presence of the Japanese in the West Coast city. Later on, the roles were reversed, with the articles from the *Chicago Tribune* being re-used by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. This practice existed also in other cities and largely contributes to hegemonic discourses.

The length, and thus detail of the articles, vary greatly (see figures 1 - 3), from a few lines often to announce the movement of the members of the Mission or events organised for the Embassy, to half-page articles describing in detail some of the events and sometimes presenting the history and culture of Japan. However, the more usual were half or full column articles narrating the visits and meetings, announcing the program of the next day, sometimes adding some funny or surprising anecdotes about the members of the Embassy.



—A grand banquet was given to the Japanese Embassy at Sacramento, on Thursday night. The Embassy start for the East this morning.

Figure 1. Excerpt of the *Chicago Tribune*, 3rd February 1872.



Figures 2 & 3. On the left (Fig.2), the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24th January 1872; on the right (Fig. 3), excerpt of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14th February 1872.

The female members of the Embassy

An analysis of the depiction of the Iwakura Mission and of its more important male members, such as Iwakura himself shows that the Embassy was presented very favourably in the newspapers. They are described, among many other positive and elevated terms, as 'distinguished guests' (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 24th and 27th January). The articles show

the honour of receiving such important emissaries in addition to being the teachers of Japan in its modernisation attempts. The individual behaviour of all members of the Embassy had also contributed to the image of the Japanese as people of moral rectitude, with one journalist pointing out that: 'The conduct of the Japanese officials and their suite is described as having been dignified and appropriate on all occasions' (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February).

The girls were positively described as well. The five girls had the privilege of being mentioned by name, at the difference of the other male students. The only exceptions are Iwakura's sons, Tats (n/a), Asahi (n/a) and Minami (n/a), and their brother-in-law Toda (n/a) who were already in the US to study at Rutgers College and were interviewed by journalists (published in the *San Chicago Tribune*, 9th February and the *Francisco Chronicle*, 28th February) and 'Iwashibo and Matsukato' named in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on the 16th of January. No further details are given about those two boys. They are the only ones named individually among the 30 students (sic) that the newspapers announced were also there. The names usually mentioned were those of the Ambassadors: Iwakura Tomomi (1825-1883), Kido Takayoshi (1833-1877), Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830-1878), Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909), and some high-ranking officials, considered worthier of attention.

The naming and individualisation of the girls in the newspapers is thus an honour. However, the journalists struggled with the spelling of theirs names. Ueda Teiko is called 'Onyeda' (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 16th January) or 'Ouyeda' (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 22nd January). The most incorrect occurrence is from the *Chicago Tribune*, 27th February, where all five names have been misspelled (and some of their ages are also wrong³): "The names and ages are as follows: Miss Ouyeda, aged 16; Miss Yashiwashi, aged 15; Miss Yawagawa, aged 12; Miss Wagai, aged 10 and Miss Fezda, aged 8". Another article also gives erroneous ages, although different from the previously mentioned occurrence: "The youngest is about ten years of age, the next youngest is about twelve, and the three others are about sixteen' (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 17th January).

This lack of accuracy can be due to the fact that despite the newspapers' interest in the girls, they are not part of the official diplomatic Mission, just travelling alongside it

³ The difference in the calculation of the age between Japan and America at the time contributed to this confusion, especially in the case of Tsuda who, being born on the 31st of December, was according to the traditional Japanese system two years old a mere 24 hours after her birth.

until Washington and less, if any, information has been provided before their arrival. We could suggest that the Meiji government and officials in charge of the Mission were not expecting the Americans to be so besotted with the girls. They were said to be the first Japanese women abroad⁴: 'Hitherto females of noble blood have not been allowed to leave the country except under extraordinary circumstances' (*Chicago Tribune*, 5th February), '[the girls] visit America as the first of their sex who have ever visited foreign parts' (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). And this novelty and the extraordinary chance for the average American to be able to see Japanese women may be in large part the reason of that enticement.

Identification by name is however not the norm, and they are more often referred to using a qualificative that reflect their female condition. Many terms are used: 'the ladies', 'the Japanese ladies', 'the young ladies', 'the young Japanese ladies', 'young and beautiful ladies', 'the young ladies of the Embassy', 'the ladies of the Embassy', 'Japanese girls', 'the five young misses'. Other, more inventive expressions, allude to their beauty, a recurrent trope: 'the Fair ones' or 'bevy of Japanese beauties'. Whereas another category focuses on their social status: 'the Princesses', 'daughters of Princes', 'Japanese women of rank', 'misses of distinction'.

The term 'Princesses' to refer to those five girls is intriguing when we know their familial background. It is less when we analyse the global depiction of the girls in the newspapers and see that the San Franciscans and Chicagoans journalists created several myths that enhanced the interest for the girls, and probably increased the sales of their respective newspapers. They were first called 'Princesses' by the *Chicago Tribune* on the 16th of January – the day after their landing in America –, contributing to the girls' exoticism and placing them on an equal foot with Iwakura Tomomi (1825-1883), whom the newspapers also called 'Prince'. It was repeated by the same newspaper on the 17th January, 27th January and 8th February. The *San Francisco Chronicle* only alluded to it once, on the 17th January. The mistake was rectified quite promptly by the *San Francisco Chronicle* (21st January) who had direct access to the source of information. It took however, an additional month for the *Chicago Tribune* to follow. The rectification was published on the 26th February, the day of the Mission's

⁴ This is not entirely true, as six Japanese women had been sent in 1868 to Hawaii with 142 Japanese male immigrants. Around the same period, a group of samurai and peasants from Aizu, including women, left for California after their defeat at the Boshin war.

arrival in Chicago, probably thanks to first-hand information available from then on. Although this was quickly corrected, especially in the case of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, an aura of incertitude and grandness remained surrounding the girls. If they were not princesses, they were nonetheless women of high society: ‘The young ladies Misses Yoshimas, Onyeda, Kamagwa [sic], Tsuda, and Nagai, who came with the Embassy, are not Princesses, though daughters of high, wealthy officials and members of the Japanese "upper ten"’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). Their exact background was never established and many suppositions were made, all of them favourably describing them as part of the Japanese elite society: ‘misses of distinction’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February), ‘daughters of Princes’ (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 16th January), ‘belong to the noble families of Japan’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). Such ambiguity in the status of the girls probably comes from a journalist trick to increase sales, as much as from a misguided understanding of the structure of Japanese society in the aftermath of the Revolution. Their status as daughters of the losers of the civil war was never mentioned and such bloodied events as the ones faced by some of the girls, like Yamakawa (Nimura, 2015: 37-38) were better left forgotten.

In an interview conducted with one of Iwakura's son, Tats, a Rutgers College student, the journalist asked him about the girls: ‘-Who are the young ladies with your father's party?’ -‘I don't know who they are. I have seen their names in the paper, but I never heard of them before. I don't think they are Princesses. They may, perhaps, be daughters of Daimios’ (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 28th February, and *Chicago Tribune*, 9th February). However, the term ‘daughters of Daimios’, if transcribed literally in the interview, was never reused in any of the other articles, probably because a *damyo* refers to a strictly Japanese societal structure. In the terms generally used, and listed above, we can see how they are compared to Western equivalents: ‘misses’, ‘princesses’, ‘upper ten’. They are all terms that resonate in the minds of the readers. A similar association was made also for the male members of the Embassy, their titles and position being described in terms understandable to the American public.

Seeing the “Princesses”

In the newspapers I studied, the very few sketches printed are of Iwakura Tomomi. The girls remain described merely with words. There are two known photographs of all five girls, one taken in Japan before their audience with the Empress in November 1871,

and the other one taken in Chicago in Western-style clothes (see figure 4). Whether those photographs circulated among the American audience remains unknown at this stage of the research. However, two of the articles mention that ‘nearly every member of the Embassy’ (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 28th January) had their picture taken at the Bradley and Rulofson’s Gallery in San Francisco (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 25th January). The reader is not told specifically if the girls also had their photograph taken there.



Figure 1. The five girls in Chicago, America, 1872 © Tsuda College Archives

If they are not “seen” in print by the readers, seeing them is a trope across both newspapers. Before their arrival in San Francisco, the girls are largely invisible. In the articles sent by the correspondents in Yokohama and published in December 1871 and January 1872, only once are they mentioned and only briefly: ‘Six (sic) young Japanese women of rank go to America in care of Mrs. DeLong, to be sent to the same seminary of learning, at the expense of the Government’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 16th January). The articles from correspondents in Japan focus on the high dignitaries and the political mission of the Embassy⁵. An article published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* two days

⁵ Further research comparing reports in Japanese newspapers will contribute to show the importance and place of the girls within the Iwakura Mission and how they were seen from their home country.

before their arrival mentions the imminent landing of the Mission under the title 'The coming statesmen- Personnel of the Japanese Embassy'. But whereas all the high-ranking members of the Mission are listed, the girls are not even mentioned (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 13th January). Their presence appears as a surprise for the American public: 'Visitors were surprised to find several Japanese females on the steamer' (*Chicago Tribune*, 5th February). This absence from earlier articles could also be explained by the fact that, like the male students, they are exterior to the Embassy and only travelling alongside it. However, for the American press they are assimilated. This is probably due to the girls being under the care of Mrs DeLong⁶, and so often in close presence with the highest officials, including Iwakura Tomomi, staying at the same hotel or private residence and participating in the visits with the rest of the Mission (mostly the oldest two, Yoshimasu and Ueda). The male students do not seem to benefit from such treatment.

If the girls have a VIP treatment within the Mission, in the newspapers they reach a celebrity status. The description of the girls as exotic beauties attracted crowds in each new city, waiting for the "Princesses" to be seen:

The people of this quiet burg turned out last evening in large numbers to catch a glimpse of the princely representatives of the Empire beyond the seas. They crowded into the Orleans, anxious to gaze upon the strangers, and crowded forward to catch a glimpse of the ladies as they entered their carriages to be driven to the theatre. (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 2nd February)

If, in this case, it can be argued that the curiosity also comes from seeing them wander through town, their arrival in Chicago on the 26th of February 1872 is really revealing. Crowds started gathering, waiting for the Embassy train to arrive. People's expectation of seeing the "Japanese Princesses" is thus entirely due to the circulating representations and the attractiveness created by the newspapers: 'The car which contained the young ladies of the Embassy was the centre of observation. Around it flocked young men and maidens, and old men with heavy locks, and ancient matrons in their last quarter of a century' (*Chicago Tribune*, 27th February). The car of the 'young ladies' is actually the main car, the one transporting Iwakura and the main Ambassadors. This shows again, the ambiguous

⁶ At this stage of the research, it is still unclear whether the younger male students were also under somebody's custody.

place the girls occupy within the Mission, being both outside it and integrated to it. But it also highlights how they can upstage the officials. They have become the “celebrities” of the Embassy. Their status even obliged Mrs DeLong to keep them away from the crowds, as one newspaper mentions: “They still continue to take their meals in their room, as their presence at the table would cause too much of a *furor*” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 25th January). Such frenzy was enlivened by Mrs DeLong herself who, according to Rose, kept the girls dressed in their much admired and talked-about kimono (1992: 19).

The girls’ beauty

Their beauty is regularly mentioned, becoming another myth, this one longer lasting than that of the “Japanese Princesses”. They are described as ‘young and beautiful ladies’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February), ‘fair and quite good-looking’ (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 16th January), ‘good average representatives of ladies of the first class’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). The terms used are positive but not exhilarating; they are beautiful but not extraordinarily so.

Although the girls are rarely singled out, beauty is the one aspect that singularises one of them. The most beautiful girl – whoever she was – was made to stand out from the group. That girl, never mentioned by name, attracts everybody’s interest, and adverbs come to emphasise her beauty: ‘one in particular being really handsome’ (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 16th January), ‘One of them is very beautiful and was much admired by the gentlemen visitors who succeeded in catching a glimpse of them as they passed from one parlor to another’ (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 17th January), ‘One of the Japanese Princesses destined for Vassar College is exquisitely beautiful, and will make a sensation’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 17th January). We can only speculate whom they refer to. In her account of the girls’ journey, Nimura uses a similar expression ‘exquisitely pretty’ to refer to Tsuda (2015: 49), however without acknowledging that she could be the one mentioned by the American press.

Like the description of the other four girls, most of the descriptions of that outstanding beauty remain very vague. The readers know extensively about other aspects such as their dress, but their physical features are not often detailed. One of the exceptions reads: ‘The prettiest of the Princesses has beautiful black hair and dark, lustrous eyes, which she uses with considerable execution’ (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 17th January). Even here, black hair and dark eyes were common features of all five girls. So, the adjectives ‘beautiful’ and

'lustrous' are the only elements that, very subjectively, made her stand out from the others. Nonetheless, both adjectives are quite vague and do not provide an exact description of her features. Moreover, 'beautiful' has been used several times to describe not only that unnamed girl, but all of the women of the group. As a result, the girls remain imprecise figures, mythical beauties left to the imagination of the readers. Nevertheless, more political reasons could be put forward to explaining the lack of precision in the descriptions. Let us remember that the girls are in the US for educational reasons, but those emanate from a political decision that aims at modernising Japan following the Western models of society. Although the girls are exterior to the Embassy, they are closely related to it and assimilated to it by the American press. As a result, describing the girls' physical appearance in more explicit terms – both regarding their sensuality or racial differences – could be delicate in a moment of diplomatic negotiations, especially when the American media received in highly appreciative terms the Embassy, its mission of enlightenment and Japan's modernisation in general.

One article of the *Chicago Tribune*, titled 'Our Japanese visitors' and about half a column in length escapes this politically-correct attitude:

Of the quintette of Princesses of the Japanese Empire who come under the escort of the Embassy, at least one is described as very beautiful, and all are full of soul and intelligence, notwithstanding the almond eyes and snuff-colored complexions. We are not to confound these bright-eyed and wide-awake Japanese with their more stolid Chinese cousins. The young ladies, especially, of the Japanese deputation compare very favorably with any five American girls that might be selected. One writer declares that "about their mouths there plays a most ravishing smile, and their complexions are most lovely." Upon the same veracious authority we lean for the assurance that "these young ladies were made when Nature was in its best moods", which implies that some people are made when Nature is not in its best moods. (*Chicago Tribune*, 8th February)

The newspaper article was written about eighteen days before the Mission reached Chicago and the journalist clearly states that he has not seen in person the young ladies and that he is reporting other people's opinions, which however he does not discuss. The first sentence shows a strong racial prejudice toward Asian features: 'the almond eyes and snuff-colored complexions' (*Chicago Tribune*, 8th February). However, this does not compromise their beauty, as the preposition 'notwithstanding' implies. The journalist goes on describing the Japanese girls on a more positive light by differentiating them from Chinese women, which is part of a trope in the American press that distinguishes Japanese

and Chinese. He then continues by comparing them to average American women. Another article published toward the end of the month goes further by comparing them to ‘our own Chicago belles’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). From hearsay, the journalists spread the myth of the Japanese Princesses’ beauty.

The Chicago Tribune’s article from the 8th of February – quoted above – interestingly shows that the “Japanese Princesses” caught the attention of all members of society, not only journalists and that there was much written about them, even outside the more ephemeral newspapers. The reported words by the unnamed writer continues in a more embellished style the trope of their beauty outside the circle of journalism, further affirming a consensus, not only of the journalists, but of all male members of society, about their beauty.

If all opinions seem to agree on the girls’ beauty, it is because they overall match American ideals of beauty. The existing photographs, such as figure 4, show that all five of them disregarded the ancient Japanese beauty customs of teeth blackening and eyebrows shaving. The Meiji government encouraged all women to abandon those habits considered “backward” and “barbarians”. According to Ashikari Mikiko, it is only in 1873 that the Empress appeared for the first time without those ancient marks of beauty and with a more Westernised face, encouraging all Japanese women to follow her example (2003: 64). Considering that it took most of the Meiji era for this practice to stop in urban areas (Ashikari, 2003: 64), the “Japanese Princesses” were in advance in the modernisation and Westernisation of their bodies.

We should not consider the numerous references to the girls’ beauty purely in aesthetic terms. The mention of beauty entails a moral and social connotation. Indeed, as Anthony Synnott (1990) exposed beauty extends to disposition, posture and social standing. This notion of the ‘social power of beauty’ (Synnott, 1990: 72) was embedded in the mind of the 19th century American audience for whom their status as “Princesses” or at least women of high rank increases their beauty. It was also believed that status and beauty entailed morality. So, women of their rank and beauty must be honourable, intelligent and of good disposition (Synnott, 1990: 56). The few mentions of their personalities come to sustain that argument. They are described as ‘very curious’ (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 25th January) and ‘unusually intelligent, bright, and vivacious’

(*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). Both in mind and body, the princesses have charmed the American audience.

The girls' outfits: issues of exoticism and Westernisation

One journalist, less bewitched than his colleagues, notes interestingly and with sarcasm that their beauty is due to their exoticism, which he translates as their outfits:

'If we mistake not, the romance attached to these ladies will all wear off when their Oriental habiliments, are doffed for our more common attire, and the present interest felt will die out. No doubt they are the most beautiful Japanese ladies in the United States to-day – there are no others – but if they accept the garments of our fashionable belles, thousands can be found much more beautiful than they. (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 25th January)

The girls were supposed to have Western-style outfits, or *yofuku*, made for them when they landed in San Francisco, however, it is not until they reach Chicago in late February, that they receive them. According to Rose, this delay was probably due to Mrs DeLong who enjoyed parading them in their exotic outfits (1992: 19). Nimura mentions that new kimonos were made in Tokyo at the expense of the Japanese government prior to the girls' departure because unlike the Western-style clothes, they were faster to sew and did not need any fitting (2015: 50-1). This purely practical decision dictated by time restrictions would become in America the source of many laudatory, although Orientalist, comments.

For American audiences, the kimono of Japanese women was an immediately recognizable symbol and as thus, it remains in both Western-produced and Western-aimed visual imagery of Japan as an Orientalist element. Indeed, Brian McVeigh defines the kimono as 'a type of national identity uniform, especially for women' (2000: 105). In the 1870s, a single-mode kimono was already dominating Japanese fashion for women and became emblematic of Japaneseness (Goldstein-Gidoni, 1999: 353). Concerns even arose from certain groups in the late nineteenth century to stop the increasing adoption of Western female outfits. A group of American women led by Mrs. Garfield and Mrs. Cleveland, the wives of former presidents, wrote an open letter to Japanese women in the late 1880s urging them, in the 'interests' of Japan, not 'to abandon what is beautiful and suitable in their national costume, and to waste money on foreign fashion' (quoted in Lehmann, 1984: 764). They describe the beauty of the

'native' dress in a similar way the newspapers did a decade earlier about the girls' kimono. The girls' outfits were described sometimes in great details in the newspapers:

They wear the native dress, with the exception of shoes, which are of American make. The costume seems to be a sort of tunic, cut straight, as the principal garment, and over this a sort of sacque, with flowing sleeves. The apparel of Miss Ouyeda yesterday, consisted on this skirt of striped silk, with the sacque of light blue silk with large flowers. A sort of crimson under handkerchief concealed the upper part of the bust. The others wore dresses of the same style, but the different parts of the apparel were of other colors. No bonnets were worn, and the little brown hands were entirely guiltless of gloves. The hair was brought from all sides to the top of the head, and there fastened with tortoise shell pins handsomely variegated. (*Chicago Tribune*, 27th February)

This description was made for the American readers to visualise the outfit described. The terms relate to what the reader knows: 'a sort of tunic'. It also indirectly compares their outfit to the American customs and fashion, indicating that they wear 'no bonnet' and are 'guiltless of gloves'. Despite such variation to the Western etiquette, the description is not unfavourable. They are described as 'elegantly dressed' (*Chicago Tribune*, 5th February) and their outfits as 'rich, quaint costumes' (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 14th February), which match the portrayal of the girls as members of the Japanese high society.

The switch from Japanese clothes, or *wafuku*, to *yofuku* was documented by the newspapers. A short article in the *Chicago Tribune* notes, as its title, the order of 'A new outfit for the Princesses'. It develops: 'Twenty costly American outfits are being prepared for the Japanese Princesses, and they will not appear in their picturesque Oriental costumes of embroidered satin after leaving here for the East' (*Chicago Tribune*, 27th January). This change in outfit also marks the end of the travelling period for the girls, as once they reach Washington, they will be placed in host families and separated from the Embassy and from their chaperone, Mrs DeLong.

The girls' new clothing symbolises Westernisation and is a visual proof of the Mission's goal. In the photograph of the five girls dressed in Western clothes (figure 4), they have mastered some of the cultural aspects needed for the country to be recognised as a "first-rate" nation: clothing, social conventions and physical mannerisms. At least while the photograph was taken, they had disciplined their bodies to respond to the expectations of the American viewer. They (re)presented themselves as modern Japanese girls. It is interesting to note that this image was taken shortly after their arrival to America, when the girls were – and also their tutor, Mori Arinori (1847-1889)– still uncertain of what

would become of them (Rose, 1992: 19). At the time the photograph was taken, the girls' knowledge of English and American culture was nearly the same as what they had possessed at the time another group photograph was taken before they left Japan. The photograph, more than an achieved cultural reality, is a projection of the perfect 'modern ladies' they could become.

The newspapers – which did not reproduce any image of the girls or their costumes – provide us, through anecdotal details, with a less strict separation between both types of outfits. Although the girls wore kimono all the way to Chicago, they were given Western-style shoes (*Chicago Tribune*, 27th February). Rather than the *haori*, the traditional jacket worn over a kimono which women started wearing in the Meiji period, the girls 'had been provided with heavy woolen shawls, which they wore when out-of-doors' (*Chicago Tribune*, 27th February). It is most likely that Tsuda was wearing her own 'bright red woollen shawl' (Nimura, 2015: 57), a present from her father, Tsuda Sen which he bought when he visited the US in 1867. In any case, the young girls' style was a hybrid one, probably to fit to the exigencies of the weather and situations. The girls actual look probably diverged from the ideal image of a modern nation that the Meiji government wanted to create as well as of that of curious exoticism that Mrs DeLong prolonged by not providing them with Western dresses. Ideal and pragmatism conflicted; and pragmatism won as the journey was already long and uncomfortable in usual circumstances.

As was to be expected, the newspapers in Washington noted the adoption of *yofuku*:

Only one was dressed in any portion of the native costume. The eldest was dressed in black cloth, cut much like the present style in this city, but without the immense panier worn on the avenue, and wore a small black hat set on the front part of her head. The other princesses were dressed in dark stuff, and wore red plaid shawls. (*Evening Star*, 29th February)

The girls - still called 'princesses' in Washington in late February - tend not to be differentiated, except when the age difference makes it noticeable. So, we do not know which one is wearing 'a portion' of her Japanese outfit, nor why.

As expected, the interest they raised since San Francisco was greatly created by their exotic outfit, as the same journalist also noted: 'Leaving the cars as they did before the remainder of the party, they passed through the crowd attracting but little attention, the assemblage not knowing who they were' (*Evening Star*, 29th February). The princesses

were starting to lose their attractiveness as exotic women and started assuming their role as the Western-style modern women they were expected to become.

The article published in the *Chicago Tribune* on the 27th of February largely differs from the others and gives the girls a humanity lacking in the other descriptions. This article does not see them as exotic objects of admiration and it goes beyond the dichotomy between Japanese/American, modern/traditional and sees a more truthful view of the difficult reality of the girls. The author is the only one to see them as “little girls”, rather than women: “They seem to bear the isolation from the parental fireside, and the loss of fond mothers, with firmness. Even the smallest one, who is but 9 (sic), has no tears to shed for her family relatives which she left in Japan’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 27th February). The author insists repeatedly on their solitude, due also to their lack of knowledge of the English language, being the first mention to it: ‘The young mademoiselles occupied one corner of the car, saying little to anyone, but watching the flat, unlovely landscape through the car windows as the train sped towards Chicago. [...] Not having any means of communication with those about them, and having little to say even to the masculine friends from Japan, they seemed isolated and lonely’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 27th February).

In a scathing sentence, the article questions the usefulness of their future education: ‘Their mission is to be educated here, and to return to Japan to assist in rearing female wallflower to adorn the court of the Mikado’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 27th February 1872). This article is quite prophetic of the socio-political situation the girls would encounter once they go back to Japan in the 1880s. Tsuda and Yamakawa were expecting to be received again at the Imperial Court and wrote to the Ministry of Education to offer their services only to be ignored (Rose, 1992: 49).

Educating modern Japanese women

Most journalists depict the “Princesses” not only as exotic objects to be seen, but as modernising and educated women with a role to play in their country. Comments on the girls’ current level of education state that they have gone as far as they could, considering their age and the Japanese educational system (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). The girls’ goal of being educated in the US is repeated several times in the newspapers and the importance of their mission is clearly stated: ‘[they] will be left

here to pursue their studies at some of our educational institutions, and fit themselves to fill stations of usefulness and honor under the new order of things which the Emperor of Japan is inaugurating' (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). The article reminds the reader that the education the girls have come to acquire is not for personal fulfilment but emerges out of a patriotic duty, a fact that Tsuda (Rose, 1992: 35) and Yamakawa (Nimura, 2015: 142) would not forget during their ten-year stay in Japan. The societal changes that Japan was undergoing at the time were reported in the newspapers. The *San Francisco Chronicle* published articles on Japanese women, presenting their condition or specific aspects of Japanese life, such as weddings (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 28th January). The importance of women's education as part of the modernisation of the nation was highlighted and an article even reproduced a long quote from an edict of the Emperor regarding the need to be educated abroad for both boys and girls:

The following is from an edict of the Mikado, which shows that the Japanese are very respectful toward their fair ones: "My country is now undergoing a complete change from old to new ideas, which I sincerely desire, and therefore call upon all wise and strong-minded to appear and become good guides to the Government. During youth-time it is positively necessary to view foreign countries, so as to become enlightened as to the ideas of the world; and boys as well as girls, who will themselves soon become men and women, should be allowed to go abroad, and my country will benefit by their knowledge so acquired. Females heretofore have had no position socially, because it was considered they were without understanding; but if educated and intelligent they should have due respect. (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 17th January and *Chicago Tribune*, 5th February)

This self-criticism of the place of Japanese women in society was re-used by American journalists who briefly criticise Japan as backward because a woman lacked freedom and was 'the slave of her husband' (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). Nevertheless, this critic is quickly brushed aside thanks to Japan's will to modernise and educate its young women. Another article highlights, once again, the prevalence of the Japanese over other 'pagan' countries, stating that although considered of a lower rank, girls still received a basic education and were not disregarded by their parents (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). The newspapers carefully avoid any mention of the US's own situation regarding women's education which was still in its early stages, with only a handful of higher learning institutions for women existing and among whose, the oldest, Vassar,

which was attended by both Yamakawa and Nagai, was founded only in 1861 (Nimura, 2015: 128).

Being educated in the US would provide the girls with a possibility to gain respect and a valued place in society as one newspaper expounded: 'they will receive an excellent education, and then return to enlighten the weaker vessels in Japan in regard to the social equality and superior advantages of the ladies of America' (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). It appears clearly that the girls were not being educated to gain academic knowledge, but for societal reasons.

Although all articles applauded the initiative to educate the girls the American way, the journalists noted that not all is good for them to learn. Women's right to vote, Mormonism and silliness were evils to be avoided. The girls reached America in the year that saw the first vote by a woman at presidential elections, Susan B. Anthony, which led to her arrest. Although the girls – still quite young by then – have not shown support for the suffragettes (Nimura, 2015: 127), they received letters from the Woman's Suffrage Committee during their first weeks in their new country (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 26th January). One journalist noted with sarcastic relief: 'The Ambassadorial party did not stop long enough in Wyoming to become imbued with any female heresies, which should be a subject of congratulation to all right-minded persons' (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). Indeed, the Embassy's trip from San Francisco to Washington via Chicago, took them across Wyoming, the first State to legalize women's vote. Despite the journalist's – faked or real – concern about the corruption of the Japanese members of the Embassy and the girls, there were little chances of it happening. The girls were out of reach, closed to the outside world because of their lack of knowledge of the English language and carefully cared for by their chaperone, Mrs DeLong. Moreover, Iwakura Tomomi was careful about not displeasing the American president before he even got a chance to meet him and then risk endangering his own mission: renegotiating the Unequal Treaties. During their forced stay in Salt Lake City due to the snow tempest, he refused to meet with Brigham Young (1801-1877), the patriarch of the Mormon Church who was under house arrest for polygamy (Nimura, 2015: 84). The *Chicago Tribune* shares the fear of wrongful contacts 'it does not appear that they were injured morally by Mormon contact' (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). A third and much lesser danger the girls will encounter, continues the journalist, is silliness. He argues that the girls need to experience the private life of the American households and will have 'to discriminate between what is sensible and what is silly' (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February).

The Chicagoan journalist acknowledges that the girls' need for knowledge is within the gendered spaces, mostly domestic but also public such as tea-parties, soirees, musicals, the circulating library, shopping (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February). Another American journalist rightfully noted that the education the girls were seeking was not a purely academic one but a more wholly approach similar to the education of a finishing school:

The young ladies who arrived by the steamer will be forwarded to Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., there to receive a thorough education. It is proposed not only to teach the young ladies out of books, but also to instruct them in the manners and customs of the best young ladies in the land. (*Chicago Tribune*, 5th February)

Indeed, although Yamakawa, Nagai and Tsuda would spend ten years in America and graduate from American educational institutions⁷, they learnt many valuable lessons within the households they integrated. The Meiji government sent the five girls to access the gendered space of the home and learn about the role modern women had in it. The American press insisted on this importance of education outside of books, maybe due to the relative novelty of their own institutions for women's higher education. The *Chicago Tribune* even printed a dialogue between Iwakura Tomomi and Charles DeLong – most certainly fictitious – attributing to Iwakura's admiration of DeLong's house the merits of the promotion of women's education in Japan:

Struck with the elegant and orderly arrangement of the interior of the dwelling, and the numerous evidences of comfort, Iwakura became inquisitive and began a series of interrogations. «How is it that your house is so neat and pleasant?» «Because,» replied the Minister, «a lady manages the household. (*Chicago Tribune*, 26th February)

It is the common matters of the household and modern womanhood that the girls had been sent to learn. The goal of women's education in the 1870s was not to create a generation of brilliant academic women, but to inculcate women the values, manners and knowledge necessary to run an orderly, modern home. The girls learn, from observation and participation in their respective households, important aspects of being a modern (and high society) woman, such as private philanthropy (Nimura, 2015: 110).

⁷ Yamakawa graduated *summa cum laude* from Vassar College; Nagai studied music at the same institution while Tsuda was enrolled at the local Georgetown Collegiate School and later the Archer Institute. Tsuda went back to the US in 1889 to attend Bryn Mawr College.

Conclusion

The two newspapers considered for this article, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Chicago Tribune*, despite ideological divergences, print and spread a similar discourse of the Embassy and the five Japanese girls. The total or partial reproduction of the same material from one newspaper to the other contributes to this homogeneous discourse that creates a 'more realistic "Oriental" awareness', to put it in Edward Said's words (1978: 2). They both depict the girls as high society educated, with a curious mind and of great beauty, especially one of them, who is never named. However, whereas most accept the girls' beauty as an intrinsic quality, a San Franciscan journalist question it and attributes it to their exoticism which, he claims, is entirely due to their Japanese outfits (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 25th January). However, such claim is not reproduced in other articles.

The American newspapers' focus on issues such as the girls' beauty and social class contributes to the positive comparison of Japan with Western nations. Not only does Japan have a structured society, and one that can be understood and compared to the Western ones, using similar titles, such as "Princesses", but also those women of high rank fulfil the expectations of beauty and morality. Although they are not yet educated in the American way, they show the qualities needed to be modern women.

Even in the omissions (sickness, assault) and errors printed we can find a homogeneous discourse. The newspapers' representation of the girls is full of inaccuracies and mistakes, myths and exoticism. During the first days following their arrival, the newspapers printed a series of mistakes regarding the girls, all of them corrected subsequently. They were called "Princesses", their ages vary, as well as the writing of their names. In one instance, an article even mentions that there were six girls (*Chicago Tribune*, 5th February). During all the duration of the trip eastwards, the journalists remind the readers that the girls are aimed to be educated at Vassar (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 16th January, *Chicago Tribune*, 16th January, 5th February and 26th February). If this ended up being true for two of them, Yamakawa Sutemasu and Nagai Shigeko, it seems that their future was less certain at the time. Sending the girls to be educated was a noble, but abstract idea. The practical details were not straightened before their departure from Japan. Nimura boldly writes that 'the girls' recruitment [had been] a hasty afterthought' (2015: 50). Several practical issues arose when they reached Washington and it was time to start their American education. The youngest girls were still too young to attend Vassar College. Moreover, at the difference of the male

students accompanying the Embassy, the girls could not speak English. Nonetheless, the three younger girls fulfilled their mission, coming back to Japan ten years later with both a new academic knowledge and the practical know-how to manage a modern household.

The reading of *the San Francisco Chronicle* and *the Chicago Tribune* following the arrival of the Iwakura Mission and their journey eastward is highly informative of how the diplomatic mission, its members but also all Japanese people and Japan were perceived by the general opinion. This article presented only two examples of the media craze that the Embassy, and the girls in particular, created. Many more newspapers, from cities the Embassy visited or not, daily or weekly, morning or evening, rightist or leftist, reported on their stay in the US.

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