



A Social History of Literacy in Japan

Edited and translated by Richard Rubinger

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A translation of the first comprehensive scholarly treatment of the history of literacy in Japan from the Heian Period into modern times

"A welcome and important collection of Japanese scholarship on literacy in Japan, with case studies that range across society and through history, from Heian to early Meiji. The textured empirical evidence helps to clarify, and dispel, some of the common generalizations about who could read and write what in Japan before modern times." — Carol Gluck, George Sansom Professor of History, Columbia University, US

"A fascinating book on a historical subject of prime importance but hitherto forgotten in Japanese studies research. Richard Rubinger, in the continuity of his personal work on the history of literacy and illiteracy in Japan, offers here a set of contributions from the best Japanese specialists in this subject, covering a wide range of topics and periods. Brilliant and stimulating!" — Christian Galan, Professor, University Toulouse-Jean Jaurès & French Research Institute on East Asia (Inalco, Paris University, CNRS)

Despite the great interest in and the availability of enormous literature about education in Japan, this book is a translation of the first work written in Japanese on the history of literacy in Japan. The authors are each accomplished scholars of Japanese educational history, and each provides solid empirical evidence and original analyses of literacy in their own particular specialty, from Heian aristocrats, to religious sects in the medieval period, to Christian believers in the sixteenth century, to a variety of farmers and merchants in early modern times.

The book is unique in the sense that literacy in Japan is analysed with a high degree of methodological sophistication backed by empirical evidence in the form of "signatures" or personal marks on documents, on so many topics. The result is to show the often fallacious and easy generalizations made about literacy in Japan and to show that evidence exists to enable more robust empirical investigations to be undertaken. This book will make it possible for the Japanese case to be used more meaningfully worldwide and in comparative studies of literacy.

About the Editors

Richard Rubinger has a PhD in Japanese studies from Columbia University and is a full professor at Indiana University. He has published numerous articles and chapters in books on his specialty: the history of Japanese literacy and education. He is also an experienced translator having translated the work of Motoyama Yukihiro with Jurgis Elisonas and others and *Siebold's Daughter*, a translation of Yoshimura Akira's *Fuon Shūhoruto no musume*.

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