



Henry Finck's *Lotos-Time in Japan*

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Introduction

In 1890, American writer Henry Theophilus Finck left on a journey to Japan. He toured north and central Japan, including Hokkaido and the cities of Kyoto, Tokyo, and Fukushima. Finck used his travels as the basis for an 1895 book, a travelogue and cultural commentary he titled *Lotos-Time in Japan*.

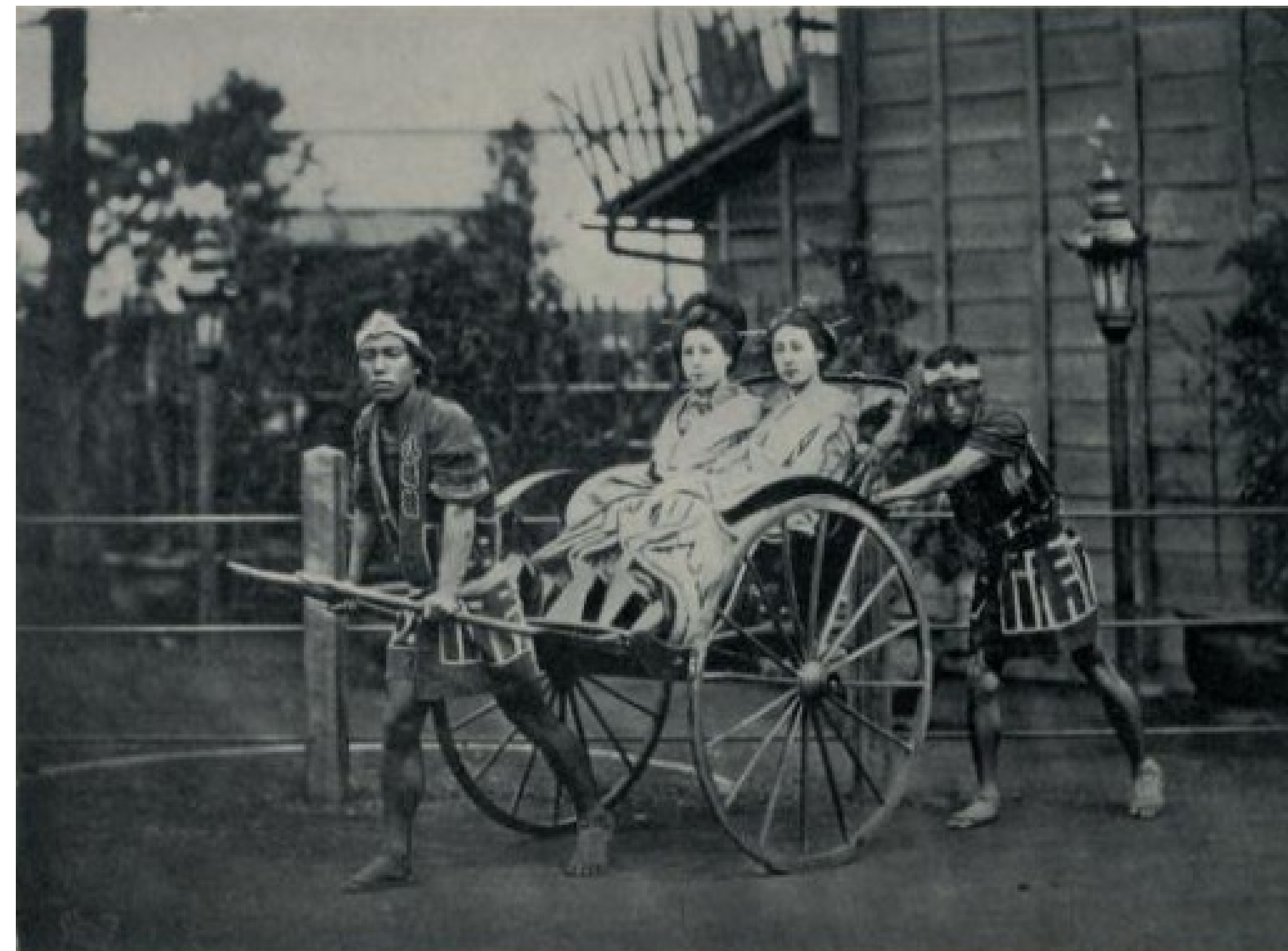
Lotos-Time in Japan

A travelogue and work of cultural criticism, *Lotos-Time* documents Finck's travels, observations, impressions, and interpretations of Japan. These qualities, along with numerous references to other English-language works about Japan, make *Lotos-Time* both a case study and intertextual nexus in its genre.

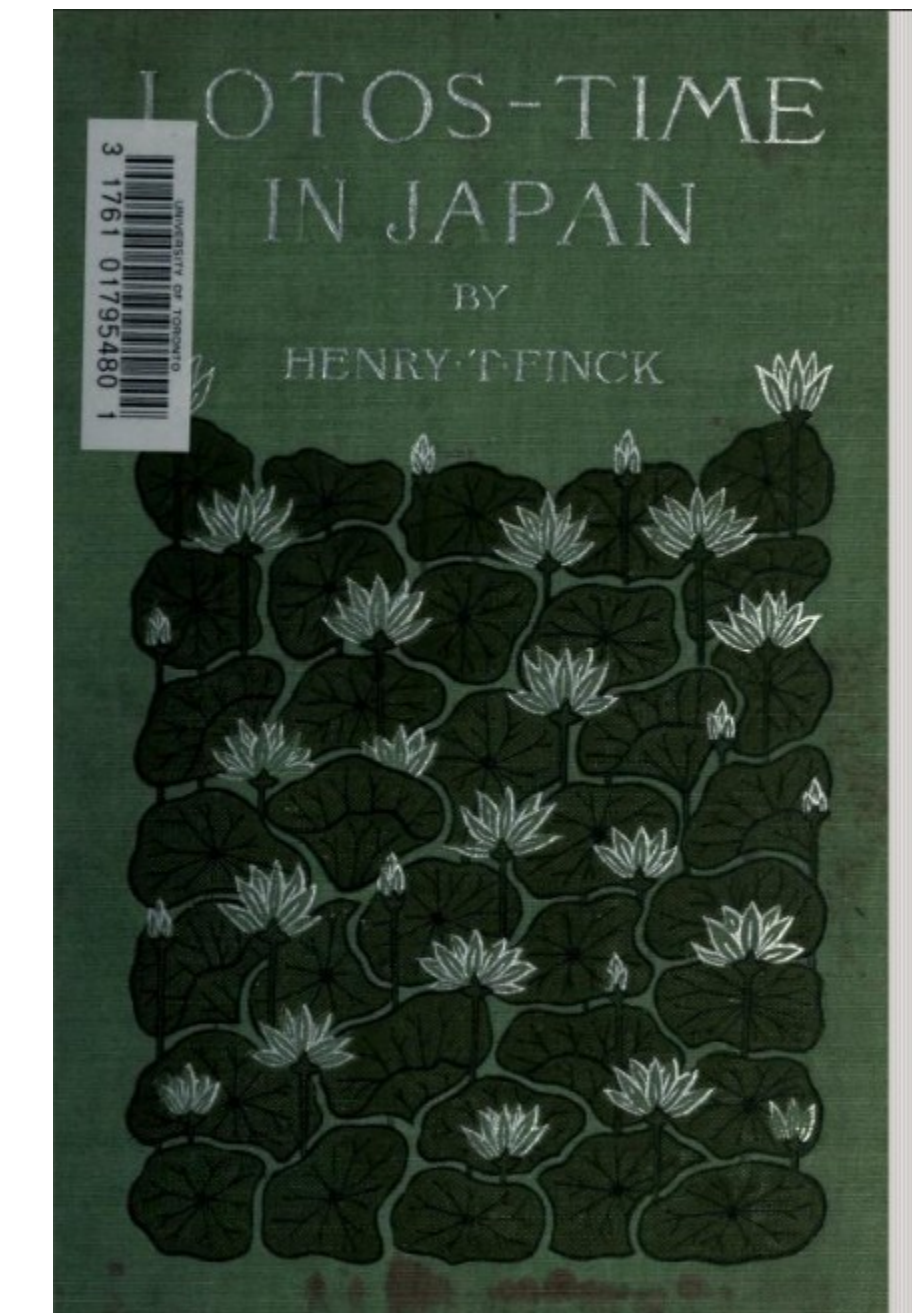
Henry Theophilus Finck

Author of over a dozen books, including *Lotos-Time*, Finck was a prolific music critic and author. Born in 1854 in Missouri, Finck spent much of his childhood in Oregon. There, he and his family lived adjacent to and maintained substantial tie to the utopian Christian community of Aurora, in Marion County.

Finck left Oregon to attend Harvard University, where he received a degree in philosophy. Finck spent much of his subsequent life in New York. There, he spent a four-decade career as a music critic at the *Evening Post*. In addition to his musical interests, Finck wrote about gastronomy, aesthetics, and other topics. Henry Finck died in Maine in 1926.



Kuruma, from *Lotos-Time in Japan*, p. 10



Cover of Finck's *Lotos-Time in Japan*

Connections and Influences

Without fluency in the Japanese language, Finck relied on a number of Japanese traveling companions, interpreters, and acquaintances, whose perspectives would shape his views of Japan. In *Lotos-Time*'s early chapters, Finck's primary Japanese contact is a "Mr. Shugio." Shugio later introduces Finck to a Japanese journalist, "Mr. Yabi," who becomes Finck's traveling companion during the rest of his journey. Finck's perspective is additionally informed by a great number of acquaintances he makes in Japan, including Japanese aristocrats and politicians, but also Japanese *kuruma* pullers and inn-keepers. These connections allow Finck to engage in frequent cultural dialogue, but also seems to have influenced his negative views on the Ainu, the indigenous people of Hokkaido (Yezo in Finck's text).

Finck references a large number of works and authors in *Lotos-Time in Japan*. The time period covered by these works span several decades, with most works specific to Japan covering the late 1850s up to the early 1890s, including some that post-date Finck's trip to Japan. Prominent among these works is Isabella Bird's 1880 travelogue *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, which appears to have influenced the course Finck takes in Japan, both in visiting certain places and in avoiding others in pursuit of originality. In *Lotos-Time*'s later chapters, Finck relies extensively on unnamed works by Lafcadio Hearn to support his cultural arguments. Finck also makes frequent references to English-language Japanese newspapers, such as the *Japan Weekly* and *Japan Mail*.

Conclusions

Lotos-Time in Japan provides an American view of Japan particular to Finck. Finck provides his perspective, shaped by his place as a highly-educated, American cultural and literary figure of the late 19th century. The book also allows us insight into Finck's individual views on culture generally, and how he uses his own interpretation of Japanese culture as a counterpoint and judgment of American and European cultures. The mix of cultural commentary and travelogue shows Finck as both travel writer and cultural critic.

Lotos-Time provides Finck's individual view on Japan and stands as a new contribution to the genre of English-language travel narratives about Japan. It also shows the influence of a general Anglo-American perspective of Japan, informed by decades of writing on the subject. With heavy influence from existing works, *Lotos-Time* serves as both intertextual reference and contribution to an ongoing cultural conversation.

References

Bird, Isabella. *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1881.

Finck, Henry T. *Lotos-Time in Japan*. New York: Scribner, 1895.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Dr. John Leisure and Richard Engeman. The printing of this poster was supported by UO Libraries and Lundquist School of Business