

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **Daughters of the Samurai: A Journey from East to West and Back.**

Nimura, Janice P. (Author)

May 2015. 352 p. Norton, hardcover, \$26.95. (9780393077995). 973.

In the years after Japan was forcibly opened to the world for trade, a group of five girls, ages 6 to 14, was chosen to travel to America, attend school, and return in 10 years to share their enlightened attitudes about western ways with their country's future leaders. This experiment was not only audacious and unprecedented, it also lacked planning and forethought. The two older girls returned home almost immediately, while the other three were taken in by kind New England families whose alien cultures and traditions slowly distanced them from their memories of home. When the girls returned, they were determined to be good Japanese women, but they were unable to truly fit back into their society. This makes their ultimate accomplishments, which led to nothing less than revolutionizing Japanese women's education, all the more staggering. With a solid record of letters, diaries, and news reports to draw from, Nimura brings the girls and their late nineteenth-century exploits to life in a narrative that feels like an international variation on Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, so very appealing and delightful are their historic stories.

— *Colleen Mondor*