

Europe and *A Thousand and One Nights*

A Twisted Reception?

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Abstract

Since their appearance in Europe, the tales of *A Thousand and One Nights* – also known as *Arabian Nights* – have fascinated readers around the world with visions of the exotic and mysterious Middle East. Today, not only has it become an international text representative of Eastern culture, but also an interesting field of study. The existing studies of *A Thousand and One Nights* come from all over the world with many interesting perspectives such as Orientalism, magic, fairy tale, and myth; most of those studies focus on the eroticized fantasy of the Middle East.

This report aspires to closely examine the feminism in the *Nights* so to attain a more modern way of looking at this ancient literature. Therefore, my chief question is: Is *A Thousand and One Nights* a story merely eroticizing and fantasizing women, or could it be a story that supports women's ability? To answer this, I have organized this report into four sections: First, the introduction of the *Nights* to the Western culture by Galland; second, the female characters in the tales of the *Nights*; third, the illustrations of the *Nights* and the portrayal of female characters; lastly, the theatrical adaptations of the *Nights* and the reception today.

Middle East has become one of the most concerned current issues. After 9.11, broadcast worldwide have been attentive to Middle East, but the Japanese public still views Middle East as a fantasyland. By analyzing and understanding this classic Arabian literature's twisted reception by the West, Japanese readers could establish and bring in a clear perspective of Middle East.