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| Kawakami Sadayakko (1871-1946) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Sadayakko (also sometimes transliterated Sada Yakko or Sada Yacco) was Japan’s first modern actress , a pioneer of western drama in Japan and one of the first Japanese to perform in the West, with her husband she was an innovator of intercultural theatre.  Born Sada Koyama in Tokyo to a large merchant family, she was sent to train as a geisha from the age of four, debuting at the age of twelve. In addition to training in the geisha arts, she learned to read and write, ride a horse, and other skills usually reserved for men, which was progressive and unusual for the time. She rapidly rose through the ranks to find patrons from the highest levels of society, including Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi. In 1893 she married impresario and shimpa pioneer Kawakami Otojirō, a shrewd self-promoter who transformed his wife into the first professional actress in Japan.  With the Kawakami Company, Sada Yakko undertook three tours of the West in 1899 to 1901, 1901 to 1902 and 1907 to 1908, performing in numerous venues throughout the United States and Europe, including Honolulu, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, New York and Wshington, D.C., including a performance for President McKinley. In Europe she performed in London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Moscow, Rome and many other cities. They performed at the World’s Fair and for Queen Victoria and Czar Nicholas II. |
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| Further reading:  (Downer)  (Kano)  (Salz) |