Book Reviews and Notes

Reviews

The White Plum: A Biography of Ume Tsuda, Pioneer in the Higher Education of Japanese Women

Furuki Yoshiko

New York: Weatherhill, 1991.

The Attic Letters: Ume Tsuda's Correspondence to her American Mother

Furuki Yoshiko, et al. eds.
New York: Weatherhill, 1991.

Reviewed by Helen Ballhatchet, Keiō University, Tokyo

TSUDA UME (1864–1929) is probably the most widely known female Japanese Christian of the Meiji period. The youngest of the five girls who accompanied the Iwakura Mission to America in 1872, she spent over ten years studying there under the sponsorship of the Meiji government. On her return, she became a pioneer in women's education in Japan and founded what is now Tsuda Juku Daigaku, a women's university that has a solid reputation in English-related studies. A full-length English-language biography is long overdue, and the fascinating letters to Adeline Lanman, who housed her during most of her stay in the United States, are fully worthy of publication.

The book is basically a chronological narrative of Tsuda's life. She arrived in America at the age of seven and spent most of her time in the care of the Lanmans. Charles Lanman, writer and artist, was a secretary with the Japanese Legation at the time, and the childless couple were clearly captivated by the precocious little girl. In late 1882, after becoming completely accustomed to the American way of life and graduating from high school with extremely good grades, she returned to Japan unable to speak, read or write Japanese properly. She experienced incredible reverse culture shock and intense frustration when she realized that government policy had changed and that there was no immediate official opening for her talents. (Of course Tsuda's difficulties with the Japanese language—which the government had probably not anticipated—cannot have enhanced her employment prospects, although Furuki says nothing about this.) She helped at home, did some English teaching in a mission school, acted as governess-cum-companion to the wife and daughter of Itō Hirobumi, and in 1885 finally obtained a government post teaching English in the newly established Peeresses' School. While this gave her a good salary and high status, she became dissatisfied with the school's goals, which were limited to the production of suitable wives and mothers for the new Meiji elite.

In 1900, after two further periods of study abroad, Tsuda started her own school in order to provide a high level education for a core group of women who would go out into society to improve the general position of their gender, and thus contribute to the development of society as a whole. With

careful planning and financial and other support from both within Japan and the United States, the school soon developed a good reputation, becoming the first institution for women's education to receive government recognition as a *senmon gakkō* (1904) and exemption for its' graduates from the need to take examinations for certification as teachers (1905).

While Furuki's biography must be welcomed, it would be difficult to call it the definitive work. The author is a graduate of Tsuda Juku who now teaches there. Although her close involvement with the university gives her valuable insights into Tsuda Ume's achievements and special access to all kinds of information, it also makes her too involved with her subject. The epilogue, an open letter to Tsuda that describes highlights of the college's history since her death, particularly struck this reader, a complete outsider, as embarrassingly self-indulgent, not because the information itself seemed irrelevant but because of the self-congratulatory tone.

The author's admiration for Tsuda unfortunately leads her to criticize other Japanese women of the time. For example, she supports Tsuda for not marrying and joins her in criticizing Ōyama Sutematsu, one of her fellow pioneers in the United States, for doing so. The Japanese-language biography of Tsuda by Yamazaki Takako (Yoshikawa Kō Bunkan, 1962) describes Ōyama's involvement as first adviser and then trustee of Tsuda's school and her role in searching for someone to take over after Tsuda's retirement, although she herself was unwell at the time and died soon after (pp. 258–60). Furuki, however, implies that the two women had little to do with each other during this period (p. 111).

Indeed her blanket assertions that work and marriage were "incompatible" (p. 53) and "mutually exclusive" (p. 56) for Japanese women at the time need some qualification, since this was clearly not so in the case of women less privileged than Tsuda and not necessarily so even of women in Tsuda's social class. (Hatoyama Haruko (1861–1938) would be one example of an elite female who was able to combine marriage with a career in women's education.) Only passing reference is made to women outside Tsuda's immediate circle who were active outside the home in the Meiji and Taishō periods.

Furuki refers to the "unusual step" taken by Tsuda in helping to form an anti-geisha society in 1887 but does not link this to the more general anti-prostitution activities of the Tokyo Women's Reform Society (Tokyo Fujin Kyōfukai) begun around the same time. Tsuda may have belonged to this (see Furuki p. 76; "The Attic Letters," p. 249), but even if not, the Christian affiliations of many of its members surely make it relevant to a consideration of the nature of Tsuda's life. In fact the book would have benefited from more sustained treatment of a number of issues, including the nature of Tsuda's relationship with the new social elite of Meiji Japan and her hostility to the early feminists. Furuki states that Tsuda has been criticized for helping "to liberate a very limited number of women" but is content to dismiss this criticism without giving it any real consideration (p. 138).

Tsuda's Christian faith is another aspect that might have been examined at greater length. Only a year after her arrival in the United States, Tsuda suddenly expressed the wish to be baptized, quite without any pressure from the doting Lanmans, who were committed Christians. The Lanmans obtained the approval of the Legation, and arranged for her to be baptized by a minister without denominational affiliations. He was greatly impressed by her commitment and general level of mental development. Furuki's analysis of the probable motives behind Tsuda's conversion is interesting, but there is no investigation of its effect on her life as a whole.

In particular, there is no reference to the difficulties experienced by Christian teachers and educational establishments from the 1890s, after the Uchimura *fukei jiken* and Inoue Tetsujirō's subsequent attack on Christianity as incompatible with the Imperial Rescript on Education. Tsuda was not in Japan during this period, but it is inconceivable that she was not affected by these events; indeed in an essay published soon after the Sino-Japanese War, which Furuki does not mention, she argued that patriotism took the place of religion for the Japanese, that if Japanese women became Christians, they would therefore be unequalled among Christians the world over in their spirit of self-sacrifice and endurance, and that Christianity would not extinguish Japanese patriotism but deepen it still further (see Yamazaki, pp. 148–9 and Yamazaki's analysis of Tsuda's Christianity, pp. 234–5). Furuki does cite the strength of Tsuda's patriotic feeling, but she should have mentioned its effect on her Christian faith.

Furuki repeats the common misunderstanding that "the ban against Christianity had been lifted in February 1873" (p. 6) and that it had been "legitimized" (p. 8), when only the public notices proclaiming the ban had been removed. There are also some structural problems with the book. For some reason, the analysis of Tsuda's handwriting (pp. 37–8, 51) and her interesting criticisms of missionaries for their luxurious Western style of life and distance from the Japanese are taken up twice (pp. 46, 52–3). Careless sub-editing means that on several occasions information is given more than once (p. 73 and footnote 20, p.161, for example).

The "attic letters" are so called because they were found quite by chance in 1984 in the attic of the main building of Tsuda College; Furuki suggests that they had been hidden there for safety during the Second World War. The letters to Adeline Lanman cover the period 1882 to 1911 and amount to thirteen hundred pages when transcribed into typescript. The editors have selected a third of this total for publication here. The letters provide all sorts of illuminating insights with regard to Tsuda herself, her social attitudes and Christian faith for example, and the complex interaction between the American values instilled by her upbringing and her instinctive identification with her own country. She is sensitive to both American criticisms of Japan and Japanese criticisms of America but also realizes the near impossibility of getting Americans and Japanese without her cross-cultural experience to appreciate each other's point of view.

The earliest letters are particularly fascinating, as they record Tsuda's first impressions of Japan on her return, her courageous efforts to readapt to Japanese life (table manners, bowing and especially speaking). The letters are also of great interest for the vivid picture which they give of the elite social circle in which Tsuda moved, particularly during the Rokumeikan period, which she both enjoyed and criticized as extravagant.

Unfortunately, the inadequate editing much reduces the value of the book. Footnotes rarely give more than a person's full name and it is not clear why some people are identified and not others. On p. 36 "General Saigō" is identified as "Takamori Saigō" (1828–1877), best known as leader of the unsuccessful Satsuma Rebellion, but it must be his brother Saigō Tsugumichi (1843–1902), or his ghost, since the letter is dated 1883. More serious than this is the lack of any index, even of names. Since there are nearly 500 pages of quite small print, this is really regrettable.

Women today, both in Japan and in the United States, are able to choose the sort of life which they pursue. Their decisions are not always easy, since so many paths are possible; but to have the opportunity, even

now, to make such a choice is to be extremely privileged. For a Japanese woman of her time, Tsuda Ume was even more privileged. She made her choices with courage and steadfastly carried them out. Furuki's admiration for her is fully understandable. But it is sad if admiration for one brave woman leads to detraction of those who trod other paths.

Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945

Gail Lee Bernstein, ed.

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. 340pp.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Gano, Tokyo

THIS VOLUME IS A compilation of multidisciplinary essays that strives to define the various roles of Japanese women from the Tokugawa era to the end of World War II. The book describes the various forces and agents of change that have influenced Japanese women and their lives through essays drawing on original source material as varied as poetry, folklore, religious teachings, government publications, screen plays, newspapers, and magazines.

In the general introduction, Bernstein states that Japanese women were never a monolithic, unchanging group. Rather, numerous forces affected the state of women (such as their position in the family, changes in society, prevailing social/religious values, and political, legal, and economic institutions). As these forces changed over time, so did the status and role of women in Japanese society. This premise is basic to any historical study, but the unique contribution of this book is its specific concern with the "creation" of the female "gender" for Japanese women. According to Bernstein, the study of "gender creation" assumes that gender, unlike sex, is a "socially constructed and culturally transmitted organization of our inner and outer worlds" (p. 2). This study distinguishes between sex roles, which are seen as biologically determined, and gender roles, which are seen as sociohistorical conventions that define masculine or feminine behavior. Going beyond description and analysis, this book sets out to actively "reconstruct" Japanese women's ideals of femininity. It attempts this through reexamining the processes by which women were trained to emulate feminine ideals and the ways in which the actual behavior of women diverged from these ideals.

This book describes the diversity that has characterized the lives of Japanese women since 1600. While the primary task assigned to Japanese women over the centuries has been the preservation of the family system, the means by which they were expected to perform this task has varied throughout history. The essays in this book define and focus this primary task and describe some of the many factors that influenced the lives of Japanese women. They illustrate how official ideology laid out by the state, scholars, the community, the media, society, and women themselves have defined traditional feminine virtues and thus the female "gender" in Japan.

The book is divided neatly into two sections. Part One covers the Tokugawa era (until 1868) and Part Two carries on from the Meiji Restoration until the end of World War II. Part One begins with three essays on the experiences of women within the family system and how this experience shaped gender construction during the Tokugawa period. The topics covered include the division of labor in the household (the productive and reproductive work of men, women, and children), the life-cycle of farm women (their roles of wife, daughter-in-law, and mother), and geronticide and the mortality rate of elderly women. The three remaining essays in this section examine the lives of