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Feminist Thought and Women's History in Japan: The Case of Takamure Itsue

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Introduction

In her famous essay *A Room of One's Own* in 1928, the novelist Virginia Woolf was already asking, if modestly, for a “supplement to history” (Woolf 1959: 68) that would include women as subjects of historical survey. Yet, as Woolf herself put it, this was a project “beyond [her] daring” as it would require the historian not simply to include women into an existing framework but to in fact “rewrite history” itself (ibid.). Around the same time, on the other side of the globe, a Japanese woman “dared” to undertake this ambitious project of rewriting history from “the standpoint of women.”¹ As early as 1931, Japanese women's history pioneer Takamure Itsue (1894–1964)² began her studies of the shifting social structures of Japanese family, household, and marriage patterns and their gendered implications. Like Woolf, she was known before as a poet and writer, but Takamure took part also in public feminist debate championing gynocentric feminism (Germer 1996a), and was editor of Japan's first feminist anarchist journal, *Fujin sensen* (“The Woman's Front”), from 1930 through 1931 (Nishikawa 1975, Germer 2000). Withdrawing from political activism in 1931 she entered into a life of seclusion and a daily ten-hour regimen of study and examining the ancient records of Japan. Her goal was nothing less than to set up a new theoretical framework for the social relations of the sexes from early Japanese history on. In her work she challenged the widely held ahistorical notion of the patriarchal *ie*-concept (of an unchanging and genuinely Japanese family). The list of Takamure's publications³ illustrates that she undertook studies in women's and family history (Nishimura 1976: 328), i.e., in gender and social history, thus opening up new fields of inquiry and a new perspective on Japanese history. Above all she called for a paradigm shift in historiography with her suggestion of the profoundly theoretical influence women's history would have on traditional historiography.

Seemingly contrary to her innovative and feminist work and thought, she took an increasingly culturalist and nationalist stance during the Asia-Pacific War. Basically, she perceived Japan's invasion of East Asia and the war itself as a Greater East Asian War of liberation from Western imperialism not only for Japan but for the whole of Asia. On the grounds of asserting an equal role for women in this national task she propagated a concept of the Japanese woman gifted with the warrior qualities described in ancient myth as well as essentialist and propagandist ideas on the “Japanese Mother.” Essays on these themes as well as her prewar anarchist writings were deliberately left out of the ten-volume *Takamure Itsue zenshū* (“Complete Works of Takamure Itsue,” 1965–67, hereafter TIZS) published after her death by her husband and research assistant Hashimoto Kenzō (1867–1976). Another challenge to Takamure's work has come from a scholar previously a fervent follower of hers: Kurihara Hiromu (1994, 1997) has challenged Takamure's thesis of uxoriocal marriage in mid-Heian

times and has gone so far as to accuse her of purposely misinterpreting exceptions to be the rule.⁴

In the postwar era Takamure continued her studies in women's history and was a supporter of the annual Mothers' Conventions held since 1955 as well as the peace and anti-nuclear movements. Her ideological shifts from anarchist to cultural nationalist to pacifist, and her democratic but also Marxist thought have often puzzled scholars and others who have dealt with her life and thought. Without going into deeper consideration of the circumstances of Takamure's kind of political conversion, one can state with Nishikawa (1990: 204) that the unchanging themes throughout her writing were the prevalence of "Woman" and of "Japan," and I would add the prevalence of her concept of (romantic/motherly) "Love."

A History of Woman: Main Themes

The main object here is her monumental study *A History of Woman* (*Josei no rekishi*) published in four volumes from 1954 through 1958.⁵ Analysis will focus mainly on some aspects of the underlying historiographical theory. Of all Takamure's voluminous work *Josei no rekishi* is her only general history book. In more than one thousand pages (1059 pages, vols. 4 and 5 of TIZS), it covers historical material from ancient Japan through to the postwar period, addressing not only particular problems such as marriage and kinship relations but general processes of change in women's status while providing abundant implicit and explicit references that highlight the social and political contextuality of the text. It can thus be also read as a document of contemporary and intellectual history of mid-twentieth-century Japan.

Within the book we can identify several prevalent themes that are scrutinized historically, such as marriage, the maternal, nature and culture, work, feminist consciousness and sexuality. According to her inquiry into changing marriage and family patterns and women's social position within them, Takamure proposed a new periodization of Japanese history, establishing the thesis of women's high social and political status from prehistory up to Heian times (794–1192). Discussing Engels' *Der Ursprung der Familie* (1884) she concluded that in contrast to continental societies, in Japan patriarchy and consequently antiquity were not completely developed until the Muromachi period (1333–1573). The following analysis focuses on questions such as what Takamure's theoretical premises are and what the pitfalls in her theory might be, especially in light of her nationalist inclinations. These conceptual questions are highlighted along two of the themes theoretically constituting her historical narrative, defined here as the "Deconstruction of Images" and the "Category of the Slave."

Deconstruction of Images

Takamure critically deconstructs what has been said and written on women from a male perspective, a necessary first step in feminist studies and in the scrutiny of male dominated historiography.⁶ Critique of male centered thought occurs in Takamure's book at several points and on two different levels: On a historiographical level she explicitly (e.g. 221) or implicitly (251 f., 265, 366) criticizes traditional historiography's male bias in authorship and writing and the resulting blind spots with relation to gender and family history. On a historical level she sharply points out male-centered bias in historical, cultural, and philosophical images of women and peasants.

The earliest sources for the latter are the Chinese moral teachings for women, which Takamure connects to social developments, the concurrent establishment of urban society and public prostitution during the Han Dynasty in the second century B.C.E. (263). She sees the social "enslavement" of women and the implementation of "slave morals" as completed around that time. Proof are the early Han text *Lie nü zhuan* ("Collection of Women's Biographies") of Liu Xiang (77–ca. 8 B.C.E.) and the *Nü jie* ("Women's Commandments") the most famous and oldest known moral teaching for women written after 106 by China's earliest female scholar, Ban Zhao (48–117) (Swann 1968). Hundreds of years later, the latter text became the foundation of Confucian girls' education in China (Fricker: 1988: 279) and its translations became the official models for moral teachings (*jokun*) for women published in Japan by the Tokugawa bakufu (van Gulik 1974: 98). Such texts had been imported to Japan since the Muromachi period and were published with annotations or as rough translations. By the Edo period there were many translations circulating that served also as models for new Japanese moral teachings, the most famous being *Onna daigaku takarabako* ("Treasure Box of Women's Higher Learning," Gössmann 1990), cited extensively by Takamure (437). These texts, she points out, carry the same image of females as existed in Chinese and Greek antiquity, namely that of woman as an intellectually and morally inferior being, weak, often mean and incapable of following the right way (247). Furthermore, in the Edo period (which she defines as half antique and half feudal) these ascriptions included also peasants who, Takamure concludes were to be enslaved in the same way (247). "State and family were established on the backs of peasants and women," she states (427), and their exploitation followed the very same mechanisms. She cites proverbs and moral teachings for peasants (*hyakushōkun*) that demand subordination and describe exploitation, and also perpetrate the signifiers of class distinction by controlling clothes, food and living.⁷

As another source of misogynist tradition she detects and discusses is the introduction of Buddhism to Japan, which marked the beginning of a process in which, notwithstanding the initial importance of Buddhist nuns' temples, women were gradually excluded from performing religious rites. According to Takamure, since around the seventh century Buddhist and Confucian scholars discussed female sinfulness and inferiority even though in the *ritsuryō* state women were only gradually understood as a group distinct from men. For this time she describes the gradual differentiation into classes to be prevalent. The social division along the lines of gender came about as a result of the later completed patriarchal stage, namely the Muromachi period, ideologically supported by Buddhist and Confucian moral teachings.⁸ A central point she makes is that oppressive thought and practice come from outside Japan, from the patriarchally advanced Continent. Kano Masanao (1983: 222) called Takamure a "scholar of the New National School" (*shin kokugakusha*). Indeed, her research into women's history began with the most famous scholar of the National School (*kokugaku*), Motoori Norinaga, and his 44-volume commentary on the oldest extant literary collection *Kojiki* (from 712), the *Kojikiden* as the central source.⁹ Thereby Norinaga aimed at reconstructing the essence of an autochthonous Japanese culture, in which contrary to the male dominated Chinese culture and religion female and maternal principles were supposed to be central.¹⁰ New research emphasizes the fact that native Shintoism, which initially held important ritual functions for women, also developed the idea of female impurity, which served to exclude women from the

rituals (Okano 1990: 50 ff.). Nevertheless, Takamure's account of Buddhist texts such as the Lotus sutra (*Hokkekyō*) containing the teachings of the "Five hindrances" (*goshō*)—as well as the accompanying promise of salvation via incarnation as a man¹¹—are sharply characterized to be Buddhist misogynist views on women conducive to the implementation of patriarchy since the Muromachi period (431).¹²

The Category of the Slave: Women and Peasants

Takamure repeatedly points to the various deeply entrenched dichotomizing and hierarchizing ascriptions and their connection to gendered, cultural, and social relations of power and exploitation. The metaphor of the slave is central in her historical theory. Kano Masanao wrote:

In Japanese history, the period from the 15th century to the first half of the 16th century called the Muromachi Period is generally considered the time at which the ancient system of slavery collapsed. . . . However, [Takamure] Itsue expressed a historical viewpoint: that this was precisely the period of slavery that involved women. After the Muromachi Period there were only two types of women: "virtuous women" who could be bought by marriage, and the resold "prostitutes." With this kind of criticism of civilization, *Josei no rekishi* surpasses a simple history book and becomes a book of thought. (Kano 1980: 68–69)

The French feminist philosopher Geneviève Fraisse, writing about the meaning of the slave, states that this metaphor allows us to think of difference in terms of social categories. It signifies a social group capable of changing social conditions and bring about its emancipation. The slave metaphor depicts the classical figure of the excluded "Other" and is employed to underscore one's own protest (Fraisse 1995: 171). John Stuart Mill in his classic *The Subjection of Women*, published in 1869, repeatedly criticized the institution of marriage as slavery, elaborating on abundant similarities between married women and slaves. As Mayhall (2001) has shown in her discussion of Mill's text and of another highly influential work for militant British suffragists around the turn of the twentieth century, Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini's *The Duties of Man* (1862), both employ the analogy of slavery and insist that woman's oppression is not embedded in the private realm but is a matter of public interest. Directly or by analogy, both called for resistance to illegitimate authority and connected family, state, and citizenship within the realm of the political.¹³

For Takamure, too, the slave serves to provide an understanding of the gender-defined group of women as a social group, but especially for the Edo period she includes the class-defined peasantry in the same category.¹⁴ She thus links the social position of women in general and of peasants to critical concepts of public power and citizenship. She identifies the image of ignorant and intellectually incapable women, peasants and slaves, be it in Japan or in Greek antiquity, as the central ideological means to keep these groups in their subordinate social position and justify their exploitation (617). Takamure emphasizes the historical configuration of class and gender and the interrelatedness of both categories by comparing overlapping aspects in the characteristics ascribed to their members. It is noteworthy that she acknowledges slavery, mentioned already in the *Wei zhi*,¹⁵ to exist at a time of women's

highest degree of freedom and status and that she uses the slave as a model for describing and interpreting women's and peasants' oppression only for later periods. The historical configuration of slavery and women's oppression comes as late as the Muromachi period. In contrast, Gerda Lerner, in her impressive study the *Creation of Patriarchy* (1986), defines slavery as the first institutionalized form of hierarchical dominance in history. The crucial experience men had before the introduction of slavery were sexual asymmetry and subordination of women within their own community.¹⁶ Lerner argues that women's oppression not only predated the institution of slavery, but was crucial for its invention.

A clue to the shortcomings—i.e., the lack of differentiation and its consequences—in Takamure's mention of the *Wei zhi* and in her use of the slave metaphor is provided by the classicist Denise McCoskey in her brilliant essay on the female slave and her mistress (in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, 1998). Referring to a literary text, Aeschylus' play *Agamemnon*, and its depiction of violent conflict between a free woman (Clytemnestra) and a slave (Cassandra), McCoskey discusses multiple structural tensions created by the system of ancient slavery.¹⁷ Takamure repeatedly points to the patriarchal division of women into honorable housewives and prostitutes within a system that enslaves them both, beginning with the Muromachi period. Yet she does not go into detail by asking how the system is maintained by women themselves and how certain female groups benefit, relatively speaking, from the division. Also referring to Aeschylus' trilogy *Oresteia*, of which *Agamemnon* forms the first part, she problematizes Orestes' slaughter of his mother Clytemnestra, which for Bachofen (1933: 144) and for Takamure signifies the overthrow of the matriarchal system (245). Yet she overlooks the fact that Clytemnestra killed her female slave Cassandra and mentions but fails to theorize Athena's justification of Orestes' deed, in terms of a woman profiting from and siding with patriarchy against other women. Within her broad understanding of an oppression theory that works on the principle of equation and analogy, the patriarchal division of gender by class as well as by ethnicity remained unclear.

Rather than in a theory of institutionalized slavery, Takamure was interested in a definition of women's social position as slave-like, i.e. a combination of productive as well as reproductive and sexual exploitation. The problem pointed to in the discussion of slavery, i.e., the neglect of class or ethnicity, has been addressed by Sonia Ryang (1998: 23), who writes that in Takamure's feminism there is "no space for class conflict, ethnic domination, or even sexual discrimination." I would argue that these categories do exist in Takamure's historical and theoretical framework, but are restricted by her simple model of oppressor and oppressed which does not allow for the simultaneity of both roles within one person or within the category of gender. Moreover, Ryang holds this to be a specific problem of general Japanese feminist discourse working tacitly on the principle of a homogeneous cultural unity called "Japanese women" (ibid. 25), and again, I would argue that this view overlooks the fact that in general, white feminists occupying privileged positions in race and class hierarchies have been criticized by Black feminism (notably Collins 1990, Hine 1992, Joseph 1993) for their failure to understand the complexity of identity and its combination with mechanisms of power and dominance. Further theoretical analysis has shown that the ethnic-conscious concept of the Black woman itself is totalizing as it blurs the existing differences of status, skin color and region between "black women" (Higginbotham 1992: 256). The lesson Takamure teaches

is not at all restricted to Japanese feminism but is a rather broad one concerning feminism across time and national borders. It is tantamount to McCoskey's conclusion that "we, as feminists, can realize fully that the decision to exercise power (either by consciously seizing new forms or subconsciously making use of 'advantages' conferred by class, race, or ethnicity) always has grave consequences for any formation of unity among women" (McCoskey 1998: 52–53).

History and Political Thought

From the perspective of a history of science, Takamure's studies, which she began in the early 1930s in order to actually show that kinship and marriage institutions and thus women do have a history, were a pioneering effort. As the first woman historian she theorized and introduced women's history as an original and independent approach. This stays valid, even when we take into account that there were predecessors in Marxist women's history¹⁸ who still did not recognize the full range of the field nor its theoretical implications for the discipline of history itself (Ienaga 1985). Takamure's work opened up the field in an overall sense: The range of her approach surpassed the social level of family history as well as the economic level of Marxist women-as-workers history and examined historical gender relations on ideological, cultural, sexual and state levels.

The most central aspect of Takamure's historical writing lies in her basic approach of writing history from "the standpoint of women" (*josei no tachiba kara*), clearly diverging from the understanding of adding women into a traditional historical framework. This "daring" approach led to her wide-ranging and detailed but nevertheless rough outline of a woman-centered periodization of Japanese history, clearly distinguished from the European case. Feminist historian Yamashita Etsuko comments:

In the case of Japan phenomena such as the existence of queens, divided ownership, divided graves of spouses, women's rights to inheritance, polyandry and polygamy as well as the thriving of women's literature [all dealt with by Takamure] emerge clearly the further you look back into ancient times, and one has to acknowledge the (fundamental) difference to European women's history with its strong patriarchal history under the influence of Christian culture. (Yamashita 1995: 225)

Takamure's assertion of the totality of women's repression since the Muromachi period has in the meantime been questioned by more detailed analyses considering women's agency in different classes of society (Wakita H. 1994, Wakita O. 1990, Miyashita 1990). Yet the general deterioration of women's status compared to earlier times is indisputable (Sekiguchi et al. 2000).

On a cultural and political level Takamure managed to place the questions of women's history in a wider social and national context. This is a Janus-faced ability of Takamure, which had several implications for the research and the theories she came up with. The wide range of Takamure's approach (also including arguments concerning town planning, architecture, modes of production with regard to gender relations) speaks to the insight that all social, hence historical phenomena have a gendered dimension. She theorizes the underlying connection between socioeconomic developments and gender relations, between the existence of

a prostitution system and the institution of marriage, of prostitution and its functions in the interests of a state, and the role certain images of women play in religious and other ideologies of hegemony. Her modified application of the historiographical thesis of the Marxist Kōzaha—that Japanese capitalism bears feudal traits¹⁹—is important; it leads to an understanding that the combination of a half-feudal capitalism and a half-feudal family-system accounts for the low status of daughters (-in-law) in the patriarchal family-system of the Meiji period, and also for the low-wage standard of female factory workers of that time (799 f.). The feminist view on history and contemporary times is crucial to her work.

Deniz Kandiyoti writes: “[Feminism] is not autonomous, but bound to a signifying network of the national context which produces it” (Kandiyoti 1991: 433). The national context within which Takamure's theoretical thinking evolves is the Japan of the immediate postwar and Occupation period, in a wider sense it is Japan as a non-Western country within Western hegemonial discourse, and further back in time it is Japan under the decisive cultural influence of China. During the Asia-Pacific War, the national context within which Takamure's theoretical thinking evolved was determined by Japan's aggressive expansionism into Asia. At that time Takamure also submitted historiographical and theoretical contributions from the perspective of gender (Takamure 1937, 1940, 1943, 1944), a subject still in need of closer theoretical analysis (TIRS, Katzoff 2000). Regarding *Josei no rekishi* written in the postwar period and the theories of a motherly or female culture expounded within, it is noteworthy that Takamure does not mention her support for and collaboration with the mother ideology of the ultra-nationalist regime. And in her conceptual use of the slave she did not consider questions of ethnicity and power *among* women. This phenomenon calls for an explanation, which goes beyond moral verdict, but conceptualizes women's contingent but indispensable social, economic and ideological contribution within a framework of citizenship.²⁰ Takamure's and other feminists' “decision to exercise power” (McCoskey 1998), i.e., to contribute their female share and live up to the expectations of their nation's call so as to pave the road for full citizenship had grave consequences for a concept of Asian women's unity. It meant to collaborate with a national project that exerted power over and inflicted immense suffering on other Asian women.

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NOTES

¹ All translations by the author. Takamure started her research in 1931, but it was in the first chapter of her first lengthy "Study of the Matrilineal System" (*Bokeisei no kenkyū*), published in 1938, that she defined women's history as "historical science from the standpoint of women" (*josei no tachiba ni yoru rekishi kenkyū no gakumon*) (TIZS 1: 4).

² There are many non-academic texts on Takamure's and her husband Hashimoto Kenzō's life. For an academic treatment of Takamure's life and thought see Nishikawa 1990, Kōno 1990, Kano and Horiba 1985, Tsurumi 1985. For a closer examination of Takamure's autobiography (TIZS 10) see Loftus 1996 and Monnet 1989.

³ The main resulting publications include the "Great Japan Dictionary of Women's Names" (*Dainihon*

josei jinmei jisho, 1936), the aforementioned “Study of the Matrilineal System” (*Bokeisei no kenkyū*, 1938), “Studies in Uxorilocal Marriage” (*Shōseikon no kenkyū*, 1953), and the four volumes of the universal history of Japanese women called *A History of Woman* (*Josei no rekishi*, 1954–58), which will be given close scrutiny here. One year before she died she published the “Concise History of Japanese Marriage” (*Nihon kon’in shi*, 1963). See TIZS (1965–67).

⁴ It is Kurihara’s overall condemnations that are met with doubt among historians of Japanese women’s history. Historical controversy evolved around ethnographer Yanagita Kunio’s earliest essay on marriage ceremonies in Japan, “Muko’irikō” (first published 1929). Yanagita proved with many examples that before the contemporary pattern of marriage ceremony where the wife enters the husband’s household (*yome’iri gishiki*) another ceremonial pattern had been prevalent where the husband enters the wife’s household for a certain time (*muko’iri gishiki*). Using folklorist material Yanagita revised a widely held historical thesis but he did not go so far as to speak of uxrilocal marriage (*mukoirikon*). Rather, he held the virilocal pattern of marriage (*yome’irikon*) for generally valid and suggested historical change only for ceremonial practices (Yanagita 1989: 207–277, Murakami 1977: 12–13). His thesis was later also defended by Aruga Kizaemon, Nakagawa Zennosuke and Nakayama Tarō, and nowadays by Kurihara Hiromu (1994, 1997). Takamura, in contrast, argued on the grounds of her explorations into diaries and literary sources of the Nara and Heian period (e.g. *Man’yōshū*, *Kagerō nikki*, diaries of the Fujiwara family) that from visiting (duolocal) marriage, uxrilocal marriage evolved as the dominant pattern, changing into the neolocal form where the couple moved temporarily or permanently into a new household and finally, by the end of the Kamakura period, turning into the virilocal marriage pattern of the wife living in the husband’s original household, a process completed with the beginning of the Muromachi period. McCullough’s examination based on literary sources of the Heian period also reaches the conclusion that residence patterns of Heian nobility were uxrilocal, duolocal or neolocal, but never virilocal (McCullough 1967: 104). Takamura as well as McCullough (1967), Mass (1983), Wakita (1984) and Sekiguchi et al. (2000) stress consanguinity rather than the marital bond as the primary factor up to Heian times. For a public discussion of Kurihara’s falsification thesis (*Takamura kyōkōsetsu*) see Tabata 1997.

⁵ The first western language treatment of this text is an article introducing the main historical thesis by Lenz 1978. See also Germer 2001

⁶ Theories on gender such as by Aristotle, Plutarch, Georg Simmel, Otto Weininger und Francis Bacon have been scrutinized by feminist scholars (Lerner 1993: chapter 7; Schröder 1986; Klinger 1988; Stopczyk 1980). On a Japanese historiographical topic, the gender biased treatment of Japanese ruling empresses see Tsurumi 1980. Takamura’s earliest feminist critique of various western philosophers is her book *Ren’ai sōsei* (“The Genesis of Love”) (1926). See Germer 1996a.

⁷ The proverb “Peasants are like sesame oil, the more you press the more you get” (427) was also applied to daughters in law (442). See also Neuss-Kaneko 1989. Tokugawa Ieyasu’s expression to “let the peasants neither live nor die” is also famous (462).

⁸ Based on Takamura’s *Josei no rekishi* Ingrid Getreuer-Kargl (1997) argues further that until the end of the Edo period social position was determined primarily by class and secondarily by the equally hierarchical division of gender. The category of gender only gained primary importance with the elimination of feudalism and with modernization in the Meiji period, as it replaced the earlier categorization by class.

⁹ TIZS 10: 244. Norinaga undertook an extensive philological and historical analysis of the *Kojiki*, the oldest extant collection of Japanese myth, legend and historical narrative compiled in 712. He worked 34 years at his study *Kojikiden* which is considered to be his life work.

¹⁰ Matsumoto 1970; *Kojiki* 1985. See Ueno (1997) for a critique of this principle.

¹¹ A listing of the five things foreclosed to a woman – for example becoming a Buddha. Takamura refers to Amida Buddha’s 35th Original Vow holding that only as a man can one leave the wheel of endless rebirth (*Amida dai sanjugogan nyonin ōjō*), as well as the legend of the eight year old daughter 260

of the dragon king Sāgara and her transformation into a man (*henjō nanshi*), described in chapter XII (Devadatta) of the Lotus sutra. See also chapter XIII, Buddha promising nuns would be transmuted into men and become great masters of the law as well as complete the way of the Buddha in coming eras. For an English translation see Suguro 1998, for a discussion of misogynist traditions and sexuality in Buddhism see Minamoto 1993.

¹² Yet she contends that Buddhism claims to be also a means for the salvation of woman while Confucianism has nothing to offer women but oppression. Even in the complementary principle *yin* and *yang* the male is associated with heaven and female with earth purporting the natural hierarchy of heaven above earth (10, 434).

¹³ Mayhall (2001: 491) writes: “Both texts then mapped slavery onto great liberal narratives of the nineteenth century, those of the rise of the middle class and the emergence of the nation.”

¹⁴ Neuss-Kaneko (1989: 417) also points to the fact that the rigid rules for peasants during the Edo period did not distinguish by gender. Takamure had already in the 1920s and early 30s likened the cultural struggle of women to that of peasants (Takamure 1926, 1930).

¹⁵ The first detailed description of Japan and its inhabitants is found in the *Wei zhi* (Jp. *Gishi*), the official history of the Chinese kingdom of Wei (220–65). The History of the Wei Dynasty (220–265) was compiled before the turn of the third century. It includes a passage on the Japanese people (*woren*, Jp. *wajin*) and mentions slavery. It is known as one of the most important sources for the political and social structure of 2nd and 3rd century Japan. For translations see Tsunoda and Goodrich 1951; Tsunoda et al. 1958: 6–9.

¹⁶ Lerner (1986) holds that intellectual constructs are derived from existing models and a recombination of their contents and experiences. She speaks of patriarchal tribes where women were exchanged for marriage, men had more rights concerning sexuality and procreation and women were perceived as a group with less autonomy.

¹⁷ McCoskey also takes up historical narratives written by slave women in the American south, thus broadening the “perspective on the positions of both women – slave and free – and on the construction of those positions by the interlocking systems of gender and slavery” (McCoskey 1998: 36).

¹⁸ Sakai Toshihiko's *Danjo kankei no shinka* (“The Evolution of the Male-Female Relationship”), first published in 1908 and reissued as the monograph *Danjo sôtōshi* (“History of the Struggle between Men and Women”) in 1920, is regarded as the earliest publication of an emancipated, non-biographical interpretation of women's history. This volume was pioneering in its awareness of the historical problem, but its significance as an original contribution to Japanese women's history research should, in Ienaga's opinion, be regarded as minor because Sakai did not go beyond a reworking of Engels' theory (Ienaga 1985: 44). Ienaga (1985: 44) and Wakita et al. (1999: 299) regard the special edition of the journal *Rekishi kyōiku* (“Historical Didactics”) published in 1937 on the subject of “Joseishi kenkyū” (“Research into Women's History”) as the first publication that can be called scientific research into women's history. However, according to Ienaga (1985: 44), the articles themselves reveal an underdeveloped awareness of the significance and scope of women's history necessitating a practical interest in women's liberation.

¹⁹ In Japanese intellectuals' debates over capitalism during the 1930s, the Kōzaha argued that the current emperor-system was absolutistic and they therefore championed an agrarian revolution. In contrast, the Rōnōha argued for the bourgeois character of the emperor-system (Hoston 1994: 221 ff.).

²⁰ Enlightening examples are Mackie 1995, Nishikawa 1997, Katzoff 2000.