

E. パトリシア ツルミ

『織維工女』

—明治期日本工業の女性像—

E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Factory Girls: Women in the Thread Mills of Meiji Japan*, Princeton, New Jersey; Princeton University Press, 1990, xi+215 pp.

E. Patricia Tsurumi has produced the first detailed monograph on Japanese female textile workers in the English language. Several articles relating to this group of workers have appeared in English, including two by Tsurumi herself, but there exists no comparably detailed study to the present work, which seeks to depict in its entirety the experiences of women workers in the silk and cotton thread industries in the period up to 1912*. As such Tsurumi's book is an important work, which substantially expands English language coverage of an important area of modern Japanese history, and, in the absence of any competitor, will remain the standard text on the subject. It has already been widely commended as an informative and vividly written text which will help to broaden the subject matter of 'women's studies' and women's history beyond the conventional US and European frameworks.

Tsurumi's account is based on Japanese sources, mostly personal records and reminiscences, official reports and the songs sung by Meiji workers—a device also used by Yamamoto Shigemitsu in *Aa Nomugi Tōge*, his study of Shinshū silk workers. As might be expected, the detailed accounts found in the Agriculture and Commerce Ministry's *Shokkō Jijō* (1903) figure prominently in the references, as do Yokoyama Gennosuke's *Nihon no Kasō Shakai* (1898) and Ishihara Osamu's *Jokō to Kekkaku* (1913, but based on research carried out a few years earlier). Extensive use is also made of Hosoi Wakizo's famous *Jokō Aishi* (1923), although the author was only fifteen when the Meiji period ended, and his first hand experience of cotton mill employment was largely during the

Taisho years. Given the undoubted continuity in many aspects of working conditions between late Meiji and Taishō there may be good arguments for using *Jokō Aishi* as a source on the Meiji years, but they are not explored by Tsurumi.

Tsurumi's volume has an added importance. As a forerunner of any other monographs in this field, it will inevitably set the lines for subsequent debate. It will not come as any surprise to those familiar with Tsurumi's article in *History Workshop* that the tone of the book is explicitly polemical. This is a study of the 'women and girls who produced the profits which built the Meiji miracle' (p. 3). The female silk reelers and cotton spinners whose lives are explored are seen as creators of profits for the factory owners and their class allies directing the Meiji state, whose earning enabled tenant-farming families to continue paying high taxes and high rents to exploitative rural landlords (p. 4). At the same time Tsurumi stresses the emergence of *kōjō* working class identity, the development among the workers of a shared consciousness based on their paramount concern for the needs and welfare of their families—not for the nation, as so often stressed in official propaganda. Though the familiar point of alienation of both male and female workers during the course of industrialization is dealt with here in a somewhat laboured way, Tsurumi makes the feminist point with an impassioned sense of sympathy and sisterhood which could usefully find imitators among more prosaic women scholars of Japanese history. There is little doubt that with the ongoing objectification of the female worker during the industrialization process, exploitation was made both easier and more acceptable by the fact that these women were at the bottom of the social pyramid. Such workers were often subject to socially negative images, but, argues Tsurumi, their earning power gave them some sense of pride. As an entity, then, the book is a graphic depiction of exploitation and deprivation, and ultimate spiritual triumph over the physical and emotional hardships which life presented.

Tsurumi's assertions that the female factory workers who figure in her study were 'pushed out' of the agricultural sector by

monstrously high rents and rural destitution, and that their low wages made them a class of cheap labour critical to the dominance of the Meiji ruling class, have long been core issues in debates on modern Japanese history. What the book is lacking, however, is any acknowledgement of the debates surrounding these assertions. For example, the simplified statement that rural poverty combined with demand for cheap labour resulted in a flow of female labour might be adequate in passing mention and would probably have been broadly acceptable to many historians in earlier years, but it hardly does justice to the complexities of a set of issues which relate to the core of this book. Employers are stated to have pursued a low wage policy for competitive reasons—a statement which appears, on the face of it, unobjectionable—, but again Tsurumi fails to analyse further this fundamental assumption. Wages, as Tsurumi herself acknowledges, are far from telling the whole story of labour cost, so labour was nothing like as cheap as often appeared. How significant, for example, were wage costs in total production? What was the impact of technological practice and technical change on the utilization and productivity of labour? How significant were the differences between cotton spinning and silk reeling in respects such as these? A range of similar questions not only remain unanswered, but are never even acknowledged to be issues at all. This book makes no claim to be economic history, and it would be totally inappropriate to demand that it become so, but its authority is undermined by its disappointing failure to acknowledge the relevance of the economics of the industries which employed female labour. The more so, perhaps, because this failing is not really compensated for by the substitution of any clear conceptual framework relying on, for example, gender perspectives.

The essential analytical weakness of this book, though, is that it is primarily a study of living and working conditions, a straightforward description of how factory girls were recruited, the environment within which they worked, and the effects which it had on them. Japanese factory life at this time is depicted as being brutal and hierarchical—more so, perhaps, than in some other industrializing

countries—, while being attended by the dehumanizing effects consequent on factory work everywhere. Tsurumi argues convincingly that other alternative forms of employment open to many of these girls, namely the weaving shop or the brothel, offered an equally grim lifestyle. To argue that some working conditions were more, or less, brutal than others, however, hardly marks a major leap in historiographical understanding. In Tsurumi's book the circumstances are reiterated, but rarely analysed. We are left with a set of competing pictures of awfulness, poverty and inhumanity, but little guide as to how to understand their causes and problems.

For non-Japanese readers, then, this is an important book, which, despite some analytical failings, provides new information on a hitherto uncovered subject. As such it fulfils one of the major tasks of Western historians of Japan, namely to bridge an information gap. Japanese scholars will find that it does little more than reiterate what is already largely familiar to historians of Meiji social and economic development. Its unquestioning acceptance of some of the unreconstructed assumptions of Marxist historiography, and failure to take account of more recent revisionist work, will also persuade many that it is caught in a time-warp. It thus falls short on the other major contribution which non-Japanese historians can make to the study of Japanese history, namely a fresh analytical approach.

* Y. Aoki Kidd, *Women Workers in the Japanese Cotton Mills, 1880-1920*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Papers no. 20, 1978; G. L. Bernstein, 'Women in the Silk Reeling Industry in Nineteenth Century Japan' in G. L. Bernstein & H. Fukui (eds.), *Japan and the World*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988, pp. 54-77; J. E. Hunter, 'Labour in the Japanese Silk Industry in the 1870s: the Tomioka Nikki of Wada Ei', in G. Daniels (ed.), *Europe Interprets Japan*, Tenterden, Kent: Paul Norbury Publications, 1984, pp. 20-25; J. E. Hunter, 'Recruitment in the Japanese Silk Reeling and Cotton Spinning Industries, 1870s-1930s', in *Proceedings of the British Association of Japanese Studies*, vol. 9, Sheffield, 1984, pp. 63-85; J. E. Hunter, 'Employer Resistance and Factory Legislation: the Abolition of Nightwork in the

Japanese Cotton Spinning Industry', in T. Yui & K. Nakagawa (eds.), *Japanese Management in Historical Perspective*, Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1989, pp. 243-272; B. Molony, 'Activism Among Women in the Taishō Cotton Textile Industry', in G. L. Bernstein (ed.), *Recreating Japanese Women*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 217-238; G. R. Saxonhouse, 'Country Girls and Communication Among Competitors in the Japanese Cotton Spinning Industry', in H. Patrick (ed.) *Japanese Industrialization and its*

Social Consequences, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976, pp. 97-125; E. P. Tsurumi, 'Female Textile Workers and the Failure of Early Trade Unionism in Japan', *History Workshop* 18, autumn 1984, pp. 3-28; E. P. Tsurumi, 'Problem Consciousness and Modern Japanese History: Female Textile Workers in Meiji and Taishō', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 18, 4, 1986, pp. 41-48.

[Janet Hunter]

The Economic Studies Quarterly Vol.43 No.2 (発売中)

季刊理論経済学

Articles :

- On the Public Good Provision Rule under a Nonlinear Income Tax
.....Hideo Konishi
- Multiple Output Measures of Returns to ScaleHirofumi Fukuyama
- Dual Decisions of Firms, Inventory Stock, and Quantity Expectations
.....Chen-Min Hsu
- The Simple Macroeconomic TIP Model: A World of Keynesian Unemployment
.....Masahiro Yabuta
- General Equilibrium in an Economy with Incomplete Stock Markets
.....Takaki Abe
- Direct System of Economies with Inverse System of Price Spaces
.....Ken Urai
- 動学的生産要素需要システムの推定——わが国鉄鋼業の場合——
.....北坂真一

Notes and Communications :

- The Production Responses of the Competitive Firm to Increases
in Output-Price Risk, and in Output-Price Downside Risk: A Synthesis
.....Robert A. Sproule
- A Price Adjustment Process for an Economy
with Increasing ReturnsKazuya Kamiya

Book Reviews :

- 西村清彦・三輪芳朗編『日本の株価・地価——価格形成のメカニズム』.....有賀 健
- 佐々波楊子・浦田秀次郎著『サービス貿易——理論・現状・課題』.....井川一宏

B5判・96頁・定価1400円 理論・計量経済学会編集/東洋経済新報社発売