



Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures
Polish Academy of Sciences

ACTA ASIATICA
VARSOVIENSIA

No. 29

Warszawa 2016

Editor-in-Chief

KRZYSZTOF TRZCIŃSKI

Subject Editor

OLGA BARBASIEWICZ

English Text Consultant

ANNA KOSTKA

French Text Consultant

NICOLAS LEVI

Secretary

AGNIESZKA PAWNIK

Board of Advisory Editors

NGUYEN QUANG THUAN

KENNETH OLENIK

ABDULRAHMAN AL-SALIMI

JOLANTA

SIERAKOWSKA-DYNDO

BOGDAN SKŁADANEK

LEE MING-HUEI

ZHANG HAIPENG

© Copyright by Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures,
Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2016
PL ISSN 0860-6102
eISSN 2449-8653
ISBN 978-83-7452-091-1

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA is abstracted in
The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Index Copernicus, ProQuest Database

Contents

ARTICLES:

- MAXIME DANESIN, L'aube des light novels en France 7
- MÁRIA ILDIKÓ FARKAS, Reconstructing Tradition. The Debate on “Invented Tradition” in the Japanese Modernization 31
- VERONICA GASPAR, Reassessing the Premises of the Western Musical Acculturation in Far-East Asia 47
- MARIA GRAJDIAN, Imaginary Nostalgia: The Poetics and Pragmatics of Escapism in Late Modernity as Represented by Satsuki & Mei's House on the EXPO 2005 Site 59
- MAYA KELIYAN, Japanese Local Community as Socio-Structural Resource for Ecological Lifestyle 85
- EKATERINA LEVCHENKO, Rhetorical Devices in Old Japanese Verse: Structural Analysis and Semantics..... 109
- MICHAŁ LUBINA, It's Complicated: United States, Aung San Suu Kyi and U.S.-Burma Relations..... 131
- EWA PAŁASZ-RUTKOWSKA, Difficult Beginnings: The Problem Concerning the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations between Poland and Japan after World War II.... 147
- LIDIA STEZHENSKAYA, The Late-Quing Illustrated Shujing from Sinology Library in Moscow..... 165

AUORE YAMAGATA - MONTAYA , Girls on a Mission
– Photographs of Japanese Girls in Late Nineteenth Century
America: The Example of the Iwakura Mission (1871).....177

BOOK REVIEW:

Claudia Derichs, Mark R. Thompson (eds.), *Dynasties and
Female Political Leaders in Asia. Gender, Power and
Pedigree* – rev. Olga Barbasiewicz.....199

REPORT:

KARINA ZALEWSKA , Memory in Poland of the Rescuers
and the Rescued from the Holocaust. On the 30th Anniversary
of Granting the Title of the Righteous Among The Nations to
Sugihara Chiune, Japanese Consul in Lithuania: Conference
Report.....203

Editorial principles207

Girls on a Mission – Photographs of Japanese Girls in Late Nineteenth Century America: The Example of the Iwakura Mission (1871)¹

Abstract

This article presents the changing image of Japanese women during the late nineteenth century in both Japan and America. It focuses on two photographs of the five girls who accompanied the Iwakura Mission to America in 1871 showing how the Japanese government encouraged a Westernised image of Japanese women for political reasons. However, I demonstrate that, despite the role the girls played in bringing a “modern” vision of Japanese women to America, exotic representations could not be erased so easily. Ten years after the images were taken, the Japanese government itself modified its position and reverted to more traditional discourses.

Key words: Japan, Iwakura mission, representation of women, national identity, Tsuda Umeko

*“There is a live Yankee element in the Oriental mind”
In the Georgetown Courier, 27 June 1874*

Introduction: two photographs of young Japanese women

The young Tsuda Umeko and her four travel companions were photographed twice respectively, in 1871 and 1872, once before leaving Japan with the Iwakura Mission and once when they were settled in Chicago. This article focuses on two photographs of the five girls who accompanied the Iwakura Mission to America in 1871, to show how the Japanese government encouraged a Westernized image of Japanese women for political reasons. Therefore, the aim of this article is to underline how the presence of the girls from the Iwakura mission in America contributed to creating a new representation of Japanese girls as “modern” and “civilized” women, which was more in agreement with

* Film and Media and Cultural Studies, University of the West of England, Bristol, England (aurore.montoya@googlemail.com).

¹ I would like to thank Jamie Tokuno for her careful reading and comments to this article.

the national image of modernisation that Japan was seeking to establish in the 1870s.

The inspiration behind this article owes much to Barbara Rose's book on Tsuda Umeko, one of the five young girls who accompanied the Iwakura mission, *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan*.² In her book, Rose inserted two photographs of the five Japanese girls sent to America alongside various photographs of the Tsuda family, the Lanman couple who welcomed Tsuda Umeko in their home during her ten-year stay in America, and Tsuda herself.³ The two images are purposefully presented chronologically, together on the same page. The first one was taken prior to the girls' visit to the Empress before their departure from Japan in December 1871. The second one was taken in America with outfits they bought there. Presented together, those two images show an immediate opposition, and can be categorized as representations of "traditional" and "modern". However, this dichotomist definition, so often considered in analysis of Japanese society and history, is over-simplistic in this case. The late 19th century was the period in which the contemporary concepts of "tradition" and "modernity" were being defined.⁴ Certain aspects that contemporary observers now qualify as "tradition" were then considered an innovation.⁵ The terms "Japanese" and "Western" already seem more appropriate to frame those images. But in 1871, the frontier between the two cultures was becoming increasingly blurred as Japan was quickly adopting the West as the norm to follow and the ideal to reach in terms of knowledge, but without abandoning the Japanese spirit.⁶ At the same time, the first wave of *Japonisme* spread through the West, popularising Japanese items: "Popular writers alerted readers to the newest modes in dress and interior décor, including Japanese goods among the desirable must-haves for the rising urban classes. Japan had become trendy".⁷ It

² See: Barbara Rose, *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

³ I would like to thank Nakada Yuki from the Tsuda College for allowing me to reproduce here the two photographs.

⁴ For a more general definition of the concept of tradition see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

⁵ Sand in, *At Home...* p. 192, gives the example of the Japanese home.

⁶ One of the Meiji government's slogan resume well this concept: 'Japanese spirit, Western Skills' (*Wakon Yōsai*).

⁷ Chris Reyns-Chikuma, *Images du Japon en France et ailleurs- Entre japonisme et multiculturalisme*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005; Helen Burnham, 'Introduction - The Allure

then became apparent that the two photographs were not to be considered in terms of opposition, but in terms of choice of representation. They are not antithetic, when considered in the larger socio-political frame of the time.

That leaves the question of the gaze. How to look at those photographs? From the American point of view, or from the Japanese one? The pictures were taken in different countries and it is doubtful that the first image was available in America. The parallel is then meaningful not for the contemporary of the Iwakura mission, but for the ulterior viewer. In this article, I attempt to consider the reception of the photographs by both audiences. However, I define both images as produced in Japan. This categorization might not seem obvious for the second image, which was taken in America, presumably by an American photographer. Nonetheless, this photograph illustrates the will of the Japanese government to produce a modern, Westernized image of the nation and its people.

Methodology: photographs as representation

Any analysis of photographic images needs to address the materiality of the photograph (its historical status) as well as the subject it represents through the application of visual analysis tools: both cultural (that is physical codes indexed in photographs through the mimetic ability of photography, e.g., body posture, garments, facial expression, etc.) and photographic conventions (e.g., frame, lighting, composition, viewing point, depth of field, scale, etc.). John Berger has highlighted the importance of indexical capacity of the photograph: “the language in which photography deals is the language of events. All its references are external to itself”.⁸ Images cannot then be considered merely for their artistic conventions and need of being placed within the contexts of production and/or consumption. Stuart Hall further affirms that:

“Representation can only be properly analysed in relation to the actual concrete forms which meaning assumes, in the concrete practices of signifying, ‘reading’, and interpretation; and these require analysis of the actual

of Japan’ in *Looking East – Western Artists and the Allure of Japan*, Helen Burnham (ed.), Boston: MFA Publication and Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 2014, p. 13.

⁸ John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph*, London: Penguin Books, 1967, p. 20.

signs, symbols, figures, images, narratives, words and sounds – the material forms – in which symbolic meaning is circulated”.⁹

In this article I consider photography as a “representational system”.¹⁰ The term “representation” refers to “an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture”.¹¹ Hall’s concept of representations is linked with national identity and regulation,¹² two ideas central to this article. Indeed, what is at stake with the Iwakura mission is the definition of Japanese identity as modern and – through the presence of the five girls – the inclusion of womanhood in the creation of a modern national identity.

I complement the visual imagery with a newspaper article from the 20th of February 1872 issue of the *New York Times*. This will enable me to consider the American audience’s perception of those girls, and analyse how the mental imagery corresponded to the visual imagery. Hence, because the commentaries of the time were mainly expressed in terms of gender, abstracting the age of the protagonists, it seemed irrelevant to treat this article within the framework of childhood. So I focus instead on the image of the woman.

Modernity and the issue of Japan’s self-representation

The year 1868 was a pivotal time in Japanese history. The Meiji Restoration (1868–1912) represented the “opening” (*haikoku*) to the world and Japan’s turning away from “tradition” and towards modernity. Although contemporary historians have re-evaluated the radicalism of this shift, it remains a symbolical period of change in which Japan had to (re)construct a national identity within the industrialised world.¹³ In this period of imperialism, Western powers

⁹ Stuart Hall, ‘The Work of Representation’ in *Representation – Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall (ed.), London: Sage; The Open University, p. 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp.1–5

¹³ Marius Jansen, ‘Japan in the early 19th century’ in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Hall John (ed.), Vol. 5, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988–1999, pp. 50–115 and ‘Rangaku and Westernization’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1984, p. 541–553 as well as C. R. Boxer, ‘When the Twain First Met: Europeans Conceptions and Misconceptions of Japan, 16th–18th centuries’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1984,

readily applied the colonial gaze with which they regarded other Asian countries to Japan's culture and society.¹⁴ However Japan, due to its particular situation as a non-colonised country, was able to refuse the image and the categorization that was projected upon her. The Meiji Government worked towards the creation of a different, Japan-produced image and diffused this self-representation for primarily economic reasons. For the government to be able to renegotiate the Unequal Treaties signed with the Western nations, the Japanese had to show they were "civilized", in other words, that they followed Western concepts of behaviour and well-being.¹⁵ The Meiji government encouraged the adoption of Western customs and the acquisition of Western knowledge with the slogan "Enlightenment and Civilisation" (*Bunmei Kaika*).¹⁶

One of the many aspects adopted by the Japanese was Western-style domesticity (*katei*). Jordan Sand analyses how the new domesticity was expressed in terms of architecture, nomenclature and social organization.¹⁷ In these three aspects, Western-style domesticity brought genderization of the living space, along with a new discourse on womanhood and family. The organization and rules of this new space and family order were disseminated by intellectuals and professionals to wives and mothers who became the new guardians of the home.¹⁸ New domestic manuals invaded the print market with their imported foreign knowledge. Jordan Sand mentions how those handbooks instructed

pp. 531–540, are only a few researches that show how the 'isolation' of Japan was relative and that relationships existed between Japan and the West prior to the Meiji Restoration-through Dutch merchants.

¹⁴ For a consideration of colonial photography in terms of spectacle, see Jane Lydon, 'Behold the Tears: Photography as Colonial Witness', *History of Photography*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2010, pp. 234–250.

¹⁵ The Unequal Treaties refer to commercial treaties signed by Western powers with Japan and other Asian countries. The treaties were signed with the United States in 1854, followed by England the same year and then France, Russia and the Netherlands in 1858. For more detail on the Unequal Treaties in Japan see, Michael Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

¹⁶ This slogan was launched by the Ministry of Education in 1871, the same year as the Iwakura Mission departed from Japan. Pierre-François Souyri, *Nouvelle Histoire du Japon*, Paris: Perrin, 2010, pp. 456–457.

¹⁷ Jordan Sand, 'At Home in the Meiji Period: Inventing Japanese Domesticity' in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, Steven Vlastos (ed.), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 191–207.

¹⁸ Jones Mark, *Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan*, Harvard: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010, p. 85.

women in all the details of domestic life.¹⁹ However, a few years earlier, Fukuzawa Yukichi, an intellectual devoted to the spread of Western knowledge in Japan, wrote about his trip to America in 1859,

“I did not care to study scientific or technological subjects while on this journey, because I could study them as well from books after I returned home. But I felt that I had to learn the more common matters of daily life directly from the people, because Europeans would not describe them in books as being too obvious. Yet to us those common matters were the most difficult to comprehend”.²⁰

In a few decades, those “common matters” had been made available for the benefit of Japanese women in particular, and Japanese society in general. One of the reasons for this change in the availability of Western practical knowledge can be found in the Meiji government’s scheme of sending students abroad.

Following the tradition of sending missions abroad, students were sent to be instructed in Western ways. To overcome the issues of accessing the gendered space of the home and learning about the role the woman has in it, the government sent five young girls who were to be educated in America. They were part of the Iwakura mission (1871–1873), which went to America and Europe headed by Iwakura Tomomi, the then Minister of the Right.²¹ They were the first Japanese girls to be

¹⁹ ‘Institute a conversation or [tea] gathering at home every evening for an hour or two after supper, bring the family together, and console one another with mutual love and kindness after the day’s labors. Tell one another amusing anecdotes of things you have seen and heard during the day, tell old tales of educational value, or read light and interesting passages from a newspaper or magazine; gaze at the baby’s endearing face and smile together, or listen to the innocent voices of the children recounting the subjects they studied or the moral lessons they learned at school.’ (1894), quoted in Sand, *At Home...*, p. 195.

²⁰ Quoted in Hirakawa Sukehiro, ‘Japan’s Turn to the West’ in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Hall John (ed.), Vol. 5, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988–1999, p. 461.

²¹ For a detailed account of the Iwakura mission, see Ian Nish (ed.), *The Iwakura Mission in America and Europe – A New Assessment*, Richmond: Japan Library, 1998; Kume Kunitake (ed.), *The Iwakura Embassy, 1871–1873: A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary’s Journey of Observation Through the United States of America and Europe*, Matudo: Japan Documents, 2002.

officially sent abroad by the government. Even though this mission was early in the Meiji period, it was already preceded by visual imagery representing the Japanese woman as a cultural Other,²² as I will later show.

Japanese girls in America: women's education for the good of the country

The Iwakura mission was sent by the Meiji government first to America in 1871 before going to Europe in 1872. It followed a tradition of diplomatic missions starting in the 7th century with emissaries sent to China by the Imperial Court and was further developed in the first half of the 19th century by the Bakufu government (1192–1868) and – illegally – by the feudal lords.²³ Those missions responded to a growing need felt by the Japanese intellectuals to experience firsthand the new knowledge they had been discovering through books. Dutch Studies (*Rangaku*) emerged late in the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), however during the last decades it began to develop rapidly.²⁴ Examples of scholars who attempted to illegally leave Japan to experience life abroad can be found as early as the Tokugawa period. All those intellectuals had the same will to acquire new knowledge that could be put to the service of their country or lord. With the fall of the Bakufu government, the double representation of Japan, by the official government on one side and the lords of the domains of Satsuma and Chōshū on the other, ended. Three years after the Restoration of 1868, the new government renewed this practice through a single, national voice.

The Iwakura mission was the first mission sent by the Meiji government. Its official goal was to renegotiate the Unequal Treaties signed in 1858.²⁵ However, the main and somewhat unofficial aim of the mission was the observation of the practices of the West. Both goals were linked. If Japan wanted to suppress the Unequal Treaties and be considered a “first rank” nation, it had to adopt the “civilized” manners and rules of the West. The mission – with forty-eight members and sixty

²² I refer to Edward Said's concept of the Other as a subject to continuous interpretation. Edward Said, *Orientalism – Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London: Penguin Books, 1978.

²³ For a detailed account of precedent missions during the Tokugawa period (1903–1867), see: Sukehiro, 'Japan's Turn...'

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 432–498.

²⁵ See: Nish, *The Iwakura Mission...*

students, among them five women – left Japan for nearly two years, one more year than was initially planned. My interest in this specific mission lies in the presence of the five young girls, among them the famous Tsuda Umeko, who upon her return to Japan in 1900 funded the Tsuda College for Women in Tokyo. Tsuda was seven years old at the time she was sent to America to pursue a Western education.

Nowadays, Tsuda's young age for such a mission might surprise, even shock. Let us note that it was not Tsuda but her older sister's candidature that had been put forward. However, after the refusal by her sister, Tsuda took her place in order to re-establish the status that her family had lost with the Meiji Restoration. All five girls are from families affiliated with the former Tokugawa government, and their mission was as much a personal one to restore the family status as a national one.²⁶

Of the five women who participated in the Iwakura mission, the story of Tsuda Umeko remains the most widely known because of the English-language diaries she wrote during her stay in America and her later involvement in the promotion of women's education in Japan. The other girls who accompanied her were: Nagai Shigeko (aged 10), Yamakawa Sutematsu (12), Ueda Teiko (16) and Yoshimasu Ryōko (16). Tsuda was the one who stayed the longest away from Japan, coming back more than ten years later, and was unable to adapt to her own country. She had become a stateless person, or rather, as Rose seems to suggest, outdated by the new developments in Japan.²⁷ Upon her return, Tsuda was not given the role her mission had prepared her for.

The girls' mission was not dissimilar to the more general aim of the Iwakura mission: learning Western habits. The initiative of sending them to America was inscribed in the rising consciousness of the need for women's education as part of the modernization of Japan.²⁸ The Emperor Meiji, commenting upon the need to educate Japanese women as part of a larger vision of society, stated:

²⁶ Ibid., p. 12; Sukehiro, "Japan's Turn...", p. 463.

²⁷ The Meiji government faced a wave of political rebellions, which led to a period of conservatism, criticising the influence of the West and women's education. For more details, see Rose, *Tsuda Umeko...*, pp. 49–50.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

“We lack superior institutions for high female culture. Our women should not be ignorant of those great principles on which the happiness of daily life frequently depends. How important the education of mothers, on whom future generations almost wholly rely for the early cultivation of those intellectual tastes which an enlightened system of training is designed to develop”.²⁹

Tsuda and the other four girls' involvement in their mission resulted from a Confucian sense of duty toward their parents and family name. However, the girls' submission can be seen not only as respect for family traditions, but also as the premise for the implication of individuals in the future of the nation that characterizes the Meiji period³⁰. Tsuda and her companions can be considered the pioneers of what Mark Jones, in his study of modern childhood since 1890, calls: the “little citizen” (*shōkokumin*).³¹ The essence of the “little citizen”, conceptualized as an altruistic, educated and moral person, can be found in the 1890 Imperial Rescript for Education. But it turned out that the patriotic mission was shaped more around the cultivation of future “good wives, wise mothers” of said “little citizens”, than shaping the girls into little citizen's themselves.³²

Discerning whether Tsuda and her compatriots became successful good wives, wise mothers through this mission is not however the main goal of this article.³³ What I will consider here is the role they played in the larger scope of the Iwakura mission: changing the perception Westerners had of the Japanese and building an image of a modern and “civilized” Japan.

²⁹ J. E. Thomas, *Modern Japan – A Social History since 1868*, London: Longman, 1996, p. 193–194.

³⁰ In 1882, Tsuda has interiorized the mission that was assigned to her: ‘I feel I must be of use, not because I know much, but because I am a *Japanese* woman with an *education*’ in Rose, *Tsuda Umeko...*, p. 35.

³¹ See Jones, *Children as Treasures...*, p. 4.

³² In 1902 the Minister of Education, Kikuchi Dairoku affirmed ‘In our country, the women’s job is to marry and become a good wife, wise mother’ quoted in Jones, *Children as Treasures...*, p. 12.

³³ See Rose, *Tsuda Umeko...*, for a full account on the experience of the five girls, and especially Tsuda, in America as well as her ulterior involvement in women’s education in Japan.

Japanese women and the Western craving for exoticism

After the isolation of Japan ended with the Tokugawa period, Japan had to face economic exchange based on unequal relations, from its forced “opening” to international trade up to the Unequal Treaties and the extraterritoriality law. Japan was confronted by Western imperialism, their relations and the way they were perceived being not unlike that of a colonised country. In the dichotomist nineteenth-century Western conceptualisation of the world, nations were either the colonised or the colonisers and societies “primitive” or “civilized”. Forced by Commodore Perry to take place in this binary perception of the world, Japan refused the first and immediate status of a “second-rate” nation. Rudyard Kipling already noted the ambiguity of Japan within the Western categorization of the world: “The Japanese isn’t a native, he isn’t a sahib either”.³⁴ Swanson qualified Japan’s relation to the West as “colonialism of the mind” applied through the “imperial gaze”, defined as the perception of a foreign reality through a Western perspective.³⁵

The “imperial gaze” creates a double tendency. First, it condemns as “uncivilized” those habits and behaviours uncharacteristic of the West. Second, it articulates those “uncivilized” aspects as native “traditions”, which are consumed to satisfy a craving for exoticism. The image of Japan is thus at the same time declaimed and promulgated. However, in contrast to other colonised countries, Japan’s ambiguous status in the coloniser/colonised dichotomy allowed for self-representation, which would manifest as counter-imagery to Western-produced and Western-consumed exoticism. The multiple missions sent by the Japanese government were part of this policy of re-creation of a Japanese image in the West. I speak of re-creation rather than creation because of the pre-Meiji period image of Japan based on exported arts and crafts, numerous travel accounts Westerners brought back from Japan and fictions built upon available information.

Toshio Watanabe and Oliver Impey identify the 1860s as a decade in which the West discovered Japanese Art. Prior to that period, porcelain and lacquer were the main products of exportation from Japan but, as

³⁴ Rudyard Kipling, *Kipling’s Japan: Collected Writings*, Hugh Cortazzi and George Webb (eds.), London: Athlone, 1988, p. 54.

³⁵ Darren Swanson, ‘Them and Us: Perceptions of the Japanese Among the Foreign Community – Race Theory and Race Relations in Post-Extraterritorial Japan’, *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1., 2012, n.p.

Watanabe points out, were often confused with Chinese or Indian art.³⁶ From the 1860s a craving for woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e*) swept through Europe and especially Paris. It came to constitute a larger movement of cultural importation that Lehmann calls “Old Japonisme” – as opposed to the “New Japonisme” of the post-war period. Japonisme developed mostly through *ukiyo-e* which captured the imagination of the Western audience. Japan was portrayed as a “pre-industrial paradise”, whose sense of beauty, nature and aesthetic was seen as the antithesis of economic and militaristic Western society.³⁷ Rudyard Kipling brings back a peaceful image from Japan: “A tea-girl in faun colored crepe under a cherry tree all blossom. Behind her, green pines, two babies, and a hog-backed bridge spanning a bottle green river running over blue boulders”.³⁸ The more specific representation of the Japanese woman was, however, less romantic. If the *ukiyo-e* contributed to the recognition of a Japanese sensibility and artistic capacity, it also firmly fixes in Western minds the image of the courtesan, which widely populated the “floating world” of woodblock prints along with the image of actors and landscapes, becoming one of the main themes of art. This image came to be juxtaposed with that of the Japanese woman.³⁹ This visual imagery was extended by fictional texts that became popular successes, like Pierre Loti’s *Madame Chrysanthème*. Lehmann even affirms that this positive image of Japanese women contributed to the favourable treatment of Japan by Western nations.⁴⁰

Women and young girls were also represented in photography. Since the early 1860s, photographers such as Baron Raimund von Stillfried and Felice Beato settled in Japan and opened photography studios where they sold albums to foreign tourists as well as the Japanese upper class. Two trends can be distinguished, depending on for whom they were intended, both by their exterior appearance and by the photographs they

³⁶ Toshio Watanabe, ‘The Western Image of Japanese Art in the Late Edo Period’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1984, pp. 667–684; Oliver Impey, ‘Japanese Export Art of the Edo Period and its Influence on European Art’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1984, pp. 685–697.

³⁷ Jean-Pierre Lehmann, ‘Old and New Japonisme: The Tokugawa Legacy and Modern European Images of Japan’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1984, p. 762.

³⁸ Quoted in Jean-Pierre Lehmann, *The Image of Japan- From Feudal Isolation to World Power, 1850–1905*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1978, p. 45.

³⁹ See: Jean-Pierre Lehmann, ‘Mutual Images’ in *Japan and Western Europe: Conflict and Cooperation*, Loukas Tsoukalis and Maureen While (eds.), London: Pinter, 1982.

⁴⁰ Lehmann, ‘Mutual Images’..., p. 46.

contained.⁴¹ The albums for Westerners were composed of emblematic views and sites the tourist might have visited, as well as “customs and costumes” photographs.⁴² It is the latter images that created an imagery of the exotic Other. In 1871, when the Iwakura mission arrived in Chicago, the five girls were preceded by this double imagery of the exotic and sensual “Other”.

Traditional Japanese girls?

In Rose’s perspective, the set opposition of the two images is not meaningless. Her research focuses on intercultural exchange in the creation of Japan’s domestic ideal from the specific biographical angle of Tsuda’s life. The Iwakura mission is Rose’s starting point because it represents a life-changing event for Tsuda, the one that will determine her future involvement in the public sphere. The two images represent this shift; they show the “before” and “after” of a life-changing event. In the scope of my article, they reveal a change in a nation’s self-representation.



Pic. 1: The five girls before their audience with the empress, December 1871 .

⁴¹ Anne Wilkes Tucker, ‘Introduction’ in *The History of Japanese Photography*, Anne Wilkes Tucker (ed.), New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, p. 7.

⁴² Ibidem.

The difference in clothing from one image to the other is the most striking feature. Perfect daughters of samurai, they await an audience with Empress Haruko, who will impress upon the girls the importance of their mission for the good of the country. This photograph viewed through foreign eyes is a manifestation of “Japaneseness”, with the girls’ beautiful kimono, their carefully arranged hair, and hands on their laps as expected from Japanese women. However, even in this image taken in December 1871, the traditional Japan is a myth and aspects of Meiji modernity and Westernization have slipped into the photograph. First, the girls are sitting on Western chairs. However, this is not an unusual prop in Japanese photography. Chairs had been used by Yokohama photographers for their portrait photographs in an attempt to copy European studios.⁴³ Second, the context in which this image was taken represents a social shift, as this was the first time the Empress had an audience with daughters of samurai.⁴⁴ Their non-aristocratic blood was not an impediment in meritocratic Meiji Japan, which promoted the concept of *risshinshusse* (rising in the world). Modern Japan constructed its modernity on capacities and not inheritance⁴⁵ as well as on the families that – all former followers of the Shogunate – volunteered their daughters in order to rise again in the new regime.⁴⁶

Becoming “civilized” American women

The arrival of the Iwakura mission did not go unnoticed; several articles mentioned the impressions left by the “Japanese Embassy”, as the American media named the mission. In a series of articles of the New York Times, one of them is of special interest: “Japanese Embassy – Gossips about the Young Ladies Accompanying Them – Impressions Made by the Men” was published on the 20th of February 1872. The article is as much a presentation of the girls as an exposition of Japanese culture and society. The unnamed author is well-informed on the current state of both Japan and of the Embassy itself, of their actions and

⁴³ Claude Estèbe mentions an 1866 photograph of Ueno Hikoma depicting two women sitting in the tatami floor in front of two chairs. See: ‘Les Premiers Ateliers de Photographie Japonais, 1859–1872’, *Etudes Photographiques*, Vol. 19, 2006.

⁴⁴ Rose, *Tsuda Umeko...*, p. 17

⁴⁵ The Meiji Restoration abolished the four class hereditary system to create a new meritocratic society. See Elise Tipton, *Modern Japan – A Social and Political History*, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 46; Jones, *Children as Treasures...*, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Rose, *Tsuda Umeko...*, p. 12.

conversations both in public places like the California theatre and in the more reclusive space of their hotel. He is also able to refute the common misconception that the five girls were Japanese princesses and introduces them as “daughters of high, wealthy officials and members of the Japanese ‘upper ten’”.⁴⁷ The writer clearly states the role of the girls as part of the Embassy and gives a simplified and striking narration of the emergence of women’s education in Japan,

Mr. DE LONG told IWAKURA that the women of America were allowed (sic) to visit places of public amusement with their husbands, had almost as much freedom as the men, and, in order that this freedom might be appreciated, these women were educated. In America, women commanded more respect than in Japan, and was not the slave of her husband. It was good that women should be educated and respected. IWAKURA remembered Mr. DE LONG’s words, and the demolition of one tradition about females is due in a great measure to their joint efforts.⁴⁸

This story acknowledges the efforts of two public figures – the American Minister De Long, and Iwakura Tomomi whose position in Japan was equivalent to that of Prime Minister – and emphasizes the good example America wanted to provide as acting tutor of Japan.

However, the writer recognizes the ambiguous status of Japan. He describes it as already conforming to some aspects of the Western ideal of civilisation, and hence on track to becoming a modernised country:

“The social position of the female sex among the Japanese appears to be more favorable than in most pagan countries. The daughters in a Japanese family receive an equal amount of parental care and attention with that bestowed on the male offspring. Nothing beyond the commonly prevalent pagan sentiment of the inferiority of the female operates to the disadvantage of women in the family circle. (...) Our Japanese lady visitors are good average representatives of ladies of the first class, and, of course are unmarried and disengaged. Their ladylike

⁴⁷ Anonymous, ‘Japanese Embassy – Gossips about the Young Ladies Accompanying Them – Impressions Made by the Men’, *New York Times*, 20 February 1872: <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9B05E7D8113EEE34BC4851DFB4668389669FDE> (accessed 15.07.2016).

⁴⁸ Anonymous, ‘Japanese Embassy...’.

demeanor has won them a host of friends among the American women, who declare they are perfectly charming”.⁴⁹

Even though the names of the five girls are mentioned in the newspaper article, they remain abstract and homogeneous incarnations of the Westernized Japanese woman. Their personality is briefly described as “vivacious yet self-reliant and dignified in manners” and nothing is said about their physical appearance.⁵⁰ According to Rose, the girls are still supposed to be wearing their kimonos due to Mrs. DeLong’s refusal to buy them Western outfits, in contrast to what was previously agreed in California, because of the sensation they caused when wearing their kimonos. The girls were paraded in them for two months.⁵¹

However, the second photograph in Rose’s book shows a different image. This photograph of the girls in Western clothing, could be one of any upper middle class American children, if it were not for their facial characteristics. They are wearing American garments and have replaced the complicated Japanese hair style with Western-style hats.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

⁵¹ Rose, *Tsuda Umeko...*, p. 19.



Pic. 2 – The five girls in Chicago, America, 1872⁵²

Despite the similar framing that focuses on the subjects, the girls have been directed into a different pose from the previous photograph. Their hands are arranged according to Western conventions, and two of them are standing, which is more reminiscent of a family photograph than of the more official-looking one taken before the audience with the Empress. In particular, the closeness between Tsuda and one of the other girls, probably Nagai Shigeiko, in the right corner of the image evokes the intimacy of sisters.

There is a noticeable difference in dress between Tsuda and her slightly older companions. She is the only one wearing a light-colour hat and dress, which seem to be simpler than that of the other four girls'. This variation marks their age difference. While Tsuda is – according to

⁵² Image made available by Tsuda College Archives.

Western standards – still a child, her companions have entered womanhood. Tsuda's white dress is representative of the Victorian imagery of the "innocent child",⁵³ whose purity is symbolically exhibited through the dress codes.

The girls' clothing not only symbolises Westernisation, but also refers to the Industrial Age through dresses made of two materials emblematic of industrialisation: metal and fabric. For the Meiji government, this image represents proof of the mission's success. The girls have mastered some of the cultural aspects needed for the country to be recognised as a "first-rate", Westernized nation: clothing, social conventions and physical mannerisms. At least during the time the photograph was taken, they had disciplined their bodies to respond to the expectations of the American viewer. They (re)presented themselves as modern Japanese girls.

The photograph of the five girls in America can be read in two different ways. For the Japanese audience, it was a proof of the nation's modernization and hence equality of status – in terms of "civilization" – with Western powers. I argue that the second view also shares a teleological notion of progress and modernity. From the American point of view, the image is validated by the paternalistic and imperialist behaviour of the Western nations.⁵⁴ The initial counter-image works – and, we could argue, could only work – because it is inscribed within the Western system of beliefs and values. Thus, this representation of Japanese identity, and especially Japanese women's identity, within modernity was possible because the meaning was inscribed within a larger production and consumption of modernization discourses.

It is interesting to note that the second image was taken shortly after their arrival to America, when the girls were – and also their tutor Mori Arinori – still uncertain of what would become of them.⁵⁵ At the time the photograph was taken, the girls' knowledge of English and American culture was nearly the same as what they had possessed at the time the previous photograph was taken in Japan. The photograph, more than an achieved cultural reality, is a projection of the perfect "modern ladies" they could become.

⁵³ Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence – The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1998.

⁵⁴ See Michael Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism – The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004.

⁵⁵ Rose, *Tsuda Umeko...*, p. 19.

The girls' return to Japan

The two oldest girls, Yoshimasu Ryōko and Ueda Teiko, returned to Japan due to poor health and home sickness after spending just six months in Washington, where all five girls lived together with a governess.⁵⁶ The other three girls were then sent to live with host families. Tsuda developed a strong, affectionate bond with her host family, Charles and Adeline Lanman, who instead of sending her to boarding school as originally planned, kept her with them and registered her in a local school. During her ten-year stay Tsuda met regularly with the other two girls, Nagai Shigeko and Yamakawa Sutematsu, who were enrolled in Vassar College, to discuss together their future in Japan. They wanted to contribute to Japan's modernisation by funding a school for girls based on the education they received in America.⁵⁷ However, soon after her return to Japan, Nagai got married, putting a halt to their original plans. Nonetheless, she continued to promote women's education in Japan, as did Yamakawa Sutematsu, although their impact was less – or at least less researched and remembered – than that of Tsuda's actions.

Unable to adapt to her own country, and incapable of speaking fluent Japanese anymore, Tsuda struggled to find her goal in life. After growing up with high expectations for her future and believing in her capacity to improve Japanese women's role in society through education, she was faced with a conservative reaction against the West from the Meiji government and growing criticism of girls' education. In 1889, she returned to America to study at Bryn Mawr College. There, she campaigned for Japanese women's education, created a scholarship fund for Japanese girls to study abroad, and collaborated with Alice Bacon creating the book *Japanese Girls and Women*.⁵⁸ In 1900, back in Japan, she opened her school *Joshi Eigaku Juku* to train female middle school graduates to become teachers. At the opening ceremony in her speech to her students, she outlined her view on womanhood: "I ask you not in any way to make yourselves conspicuous or to seem forward, but be always gentle, submissive and courteous as have always been our women in the past".⁵⁹ She had indeed internalized the Western concepts of domesticity and soft femininity that she was sent out to learn. Her

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

⁵⁸ Rose, *Tsuda Umeko...*, p. 89.

⁵⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 129.

ideas on womanhood and the role of women in the nation was challenged in the 1910s by emerging forms of feminism, led by Raichō Hiratsuka, who challenged the confinement of women to the domestic circle. Joshi Eigaku Juku nonetheless prospered and was renamed *Tsuda Juku* after her death in 1929, becoming a women's university after the Second World War.

Conclusion

If Tsuda felt that she had failed in the original mission that was bestowed upon her when she embarked with the Iwakura mission, she might find consolation in the fact that she and her companions brought to America a new image of Japanese women. Those “charming” girls represented a specific vision of their country – not only in the photograph but also through their prolonged presence in America. They symbolized the modern and Westernized Meiji Japan, the image that the government itself wanted to spread. This counter-image that emerged in the 1870s was first spread amongst the American intellectual elite by the Iwakura mission. We cannot however see clearly when- or even if- this Japanese-produced image of modern women had become the dominant imagery of Meiji Japan.⁶⁰ In 1909, a photograph like the one kept at the Museum of History and Industry of Seattle (MOHAI), represented ethnicities through “traditional” costumes.⁶¹ In this photograph of children from various cultures, three Japanese girls dressed like *mikosan* symbolise Japan.⁶² For Western audiences, the kimono of Japanese women was – and still is – an immediately recognisable symbol and as thus, it remains in both Western-produced and Western-aimed visual imagery of Japan. Indeed, Brian McVeigh defines the kimono as “a type of national identity uniform, especially for women”.⁶³ Concerns even arose from certain groups in the late nineteenth century to stop the increasing adoption of Western female outfits. A group of American women led by Mrs. Garfield and Mrs. Cleveland, the wives of former

⁶⁰ As defined by Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

⁶¹ The photograph *Children of Different Ethnicities – Alaska – Yukon – Pacific Exposition Seattle 1909* by Frank H. Nowell is available to view on the online archives of the MOHAI: <http://seattlehistory.org> (accessed on 06.09.2012).

⁶² Young girls working in Shinto shrines as maidens or supplementary priestesses.

⁶³ Brian McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000, p. 105.

presidents, wrote a petition to Japanese women urging them, in the “interests” of Japan, not “to abandon what is beautiful and suitable in their national costume, and to waste money on foreign fashion”.⁶⁴

Other voices arose from different groups, all concerned with the preservation of Japan as it first appeared to Western eyes in the mid-nineteenth century. Kipling claimed: “It would pay us to establish an international suzerainty over Japan: to take away any fear of invasion and annexation, and pay the country as much as it chose, on the condition that it simply sat still and went on making beautiful things while our learned men learned. It would pay us to put the whole empire in a glass case and mark it *Hors Concours*, ‘Exhibit A’”.⁶⁵ What Kipling voiced, was a wish to preserve Japan as a “lost paradise”, to stop industrial progress. Lehmann explains this tendency by defining the Meiji period as the first point of contact between Japan and the West: “images and the attitudes and stereotypes which they give rise to, tend to be formed at an early stage of encounter between two societies; in other words, initial impressions have a strong power of preservation. Following from this, it is clear that images rarely keep pace with reality”.⁶⁶ I would like to reconsider Lehmann’s initial postulate, defining the late nineteenth century not as the “early stage of encounter” but as the emergence of a popular consciousness of Japan, where Japan entered the Western imaginary on its own – not as part of the wider process of Orientalism.

Western powers did not manage to put Japan in a “glass case”, and the nation continued to industrialize and Westernize after the return of Tsuda Umeko. Nor were they able to fix the image of Japan, as representations are constantly changing and being reformulated by new exchange between cultures. However in its representation of Japan, the West kept the traces from their “first” encounter.⁶⁷ The post-Second World War period led to a revival of the nineteenth century imagery.⁶⁸ The older imagery was re-invented with the new reality of Japan. Lehmann highlights one of the more prominent symbols of Japan: the

⁶⁴ Quoted in Lehmann, ‘Old and New Japonisme...’, p. 764.

⁶⁵ Rudyard Kipling, *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches- Letters of Travel*, London: MacMillan, 1909, p. 335.

⁶⁶ Lehmann, ‘Old and New Japonisme...’, p. 757.

⁶⁷ I consider with Lehmann, the Meiji period as a time of increased contacts and the development of a Western popular image of Japan.

⁶⁸ Lehmann, ‘Old and New Japonisme...’, p. 765.

samurai, whose image has gone through different phases of rejection and acceptance, and was revived through a body of works of fiction – literature and cinema – before being melded together with that of the salaryman.⁶⁹ In the imagery of womanhood, we can argue that it is the image of the geisha that has captured the attention of the twentieth century Western audience through a profusion of fictions.⁷⁰

The presence of the five girls in the Iwakura mission is an often omitted historical fact. Alistair Swale, in his account of the American stay of the Iwakura mission, focuses on several records of the members, such as Mori Arinori or Kume Kunitake, but fails to mention the five girls' presence and role.⁷¹ The works of Barbara Rose⁷² and Shibahara Takeo⁷³ have defined Tsuda's experience abroad in the light of her later engagement with women's education. The names of the other girls tend to be forgotten, which might be explained by Tsuda's late-life accomplishment, her English-language diaries which have attracted Western scholars, as well as her young age and longer stay. All those points make Tsuda's life an enthralling narrative that captures, quite understandably, all the attention. Nonetheless, we should not limit the girls' participation in this state enterprise to the starting point of their interest in women's education. In this article, I highlighted the role of the Iwakura mission in the representation of Japanese culture and people, including Japanese women. It is my hope that this article is only the beginning of the reconsideration of these historical facts in light of considerations other than women's education, including – but not exclusively – representation studies.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 767–68. Lehmann refers to Kurosawa's movies, Mishima Yukio's novels and James Clavell's *Shōgun*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975.

⁷⁰ Among which we can quote but a few: *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden (London: Vintage, 1999), *Madame Sadayakko – The Geisha Who Seduced the West* by Lesley Downer (London: Review, 2003), *The Glass Geisha* by Susanna Quinn (London: Hodder, 2012).

⁷¹ Alistair Swale, 'America 15 January–6 August 1872 – The First Stage in the Quest for Enlightenment' in *The Iwakura Mission in Europe and America – A New Assessment*, Ian Nish (ed.), Richmond: Japan Library, 1998.

⁷² Rose, *Tsuda Umeko*....

⁷³ Shibahara Takeo, 'Through Americanized Japanese Woman's Eyes – Tsuda Umeko and the Women's Movement in Japan in the 1910s', *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2010, pp. 225–234.