Home Education in Rural Japan: Continuity and Change from Late Edo to the Early Postwar

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Source: *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, No. 41 (2011), pp. 25-51
Published by: University of Hawai'i Press on behalf of International Institute of Gender and Media
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/42772313
Accessed: 28-03-2020 20:37 UTC

Home Education in Rural Japan: Continuity and Change from Late Edo to the Early Postwar

Christina Ghanbarpour

As recent studies have begun to reexamine the nature and extent of education in Japan in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,[1] one of the questions that remains open to debate is the level of education that rural women were able to attain, as well as what barriers rural women faced and how, or whether, they were able to overcome them. The Meiji government's commitment to expanding education, which included legislation that required girls to attend school and obliged local governments to build girls' schools, certainly increased their educational options. Moreover, the fact that literacy rates appear to have increased over time suggests that efforts to improve women's education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were successful. As one 1948 survey showed, over 73 percent of the 756 adults who participated in the survey had received an education beyond elementary school, over 98 percent were at least partially literate, and 96 percent could write at least some Chinese characters.[2]

Yet the picture of educational achievement that emerges from these types of legal statutes and statistical data belies the persistent inequities that plagued rural education from 1868 to 1945. Despite legal changes that spread education, especially to girls, in the Meiji period (1868–1912), girls and boys in the poorest areas sometimes lacked even a place to study. Girls also appear to have been pulled out of school more often than their brothers, and tended to end their education earlier, usually to perform tasks

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such as raising younger siblings. In response to the paucity of educational resources in rural areas, well-off rural families often sent their children to schools in urban areas; but packing children off to urban centers to study presented its own risks, such as requiring a significant investment of the family's resources and putting a child's health and safety in jeopardy. These challenges draw attention to the fact that the education of rural women and girls was neither inevitable nor achieved solely through legislative guidance, but was a constantly negotiated process marked by the efforts that rural girls and women, as well as their families, made to promote their educational welfare.

What, then, were the primary barriers that rural women and girls faced in gaining an education, what circumstances helped them overcome them, and what, ultimately, were they able to achieve? Resolving these questions offers a way to address broader problems in the history of women's education, such as what the majority of Japanese women, who lived in rural areas, had been able to achieve before 1868, how rural men's and women's educations were constructed, and how rural women and girls reconciled the disjunction between their lack of opportunities and the acquisition of literacy and other skills. By showing that rural women sought out opportunities to educate themselves, my work responds to Mayuzumi Kimine's and others' call for scholars to represent rural women in ways that counter stereotypes of passivity and lack of agency.[3] This study also shows that long-standing methods of teaching and learning continued to shape women's education in the modern period, helped compensate for some of the deficiencies in the national educational system, and laid the groundwork for trends in education still evident today.

That the farmers who constituted the majority of Japan's population before 1945 differed from educators in their ideas of what and how to teach their children helps explain how rural women's education took shape, while challenging us to revise contemporary notions of what constitutes an education. As one early twentieth-century American study of Japanese women's education explained:

> The little girls in the cities often learned the elements of reading and writing, and sometimes spent much time on music and dancing. . . . In the country, however, life left little time for study of any kind, and even the most elementary education was unusual.[4]

What the writer calls "life" was not considered to be an education for rural girls in and of itself; rather, the acquisition of skills in an informal setting—whether literacy or

technical skills, such as learning how to tend crops, sew clothes, or manage silkworms—is described as an impediment to formal education in reading, writing, and the arts. Yet, if we are to define education to include the transmission of knowledge that was important to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century farmer—such as the skills needed to run a farm household, earn an income, and maintain the family's sense of identity and continuity over time—then the term "education" must reflect the fact that the type of learning that farmers needed did not always occur in an institutional setting, such as a school, nor was it contained within a single category of knowledge, such as academic or technical knowledge. The Japanese language acknowledges multiple forms of education through terms such as *gakumon*, which connotes a formal education in academic skills, and *kunren*, a training or drill that, along with the general term for education, *kyōiku*, is sometimes used to describe how a mother-in-law teaches her daughter-in-law; but these terms do not necessarily tell us where or how the education occurred. I therefore use the term *formal education* to describe the acquisition of abstract skills, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, in an institutional environment, and *informal education* to describe the acquisition of a wide range of skills in a casual or naturalized manner and in an informal setting, such as learning how to read or sew at home.

A final problem in defining rural women's and girls' education concerns the difference between "work," which often was little more than the exploitation of children's labor, and "education," which was meant to impart a skill. The line between these two categories was frequently blurred and determined by factors such as the status, wealth, and ambitions of the farm family in question. In the Meiji as in the Edo period (1603–1868), a farm woman's family background (e.g., past wealth or status, or an educated father, mother, or grandmother) appears to have helped rural girls advance beyond the educational limits of their peers—much as has been found true for women's education today.[5] However, as national reformulations of women's and men's roles in the household began to spread into rural areas, rural women were increasingly called upon to teach abstract skills to their children in addition to technical skills, replacing fathers to some extent in terms of being responsible for their children's education in reading, writing, and arithmetic. An analysis of how rural women's education developed in the modern period thus helps elucidate what factors have long contributed to Japanese women's educational achievement, as well as how women's roles in teaching and learning skills changed over time.

Women's and Girls' Education in the Edo and Early Meiji Periods

Earlier studies of education in the Edo period have suggested that, compared to men, women and girls enjoyed relatively fewer opportunities to gain a formal education. For example, schools, such as domain schools (*hankō* or *hangaku*) and private academies (*shijuku*), often only accepted boys, thus limiting the number of places where girls and women could learn. When girls were allowed to enter a school—usually a home school or a temple school (*terakoya*)—their families were often loath to allow them to do so because they would lose their labor and/or have to risk sending them far from home. As far as educational content was concerned, girls' education might consist of little more than sewing and copying out conservative tracts emphasizing ideal female comportment, such as the *Onna daigaku* (Greater learning for women); more complicated subjects, such as learning Chinese and studying the Confucian classics, were considered masculine spheres of knowledge inappropriate for women. As a result, estimates of literacy in this period were about 40 percent for men, as compared to only 10 to 15 percent for women.[6]

More recent studies have shown that a few women were able to gain a more rigorous education, and that both men's and women's literacy rates were likely to have been higher. For example, Martha Tocco highlights the nearly universal literacy rates of urban-dwelling samurai women, and notes the proliferation not only of women's moral texts but of textbooks that covered subjects such as geography, geometry, and arithmetic, and that in some cases exceeded the number of moral texts being produced.[7] Though some schools did not accept women, she notes that the number of settings where women and girls could obtain an education and sometimes teach had grown enormously by the end of the Edo period, and had begun to include educational institutions that had formerly only been open to men. Tocco argues that, though factors such as affluence, region, and class usually played a defining role in the level of education a woman could achieve, a few women of the commoner classes were able to receive an education of sufficient quality that they were able to open their own schools in castle towns and large cities in the early nineteenth century.[8]

Though many of these trends largely or only affected urban women, they reflect a more limited growth in opportunities for rural women to gain literacy and other abstract skills. P. F. Kornicki has shown that the number of girls' schools is likely to have been higher than has been recorded in official records, since recent research has uncovered many more schools than were previously thought to have existed. He also notes that a few farm women, such as the daughters of village headmen and wealthy peasants in Tosa, had

been learning writing and arithmetic as early as the mid-seventeenth century.[9] Richard Rubinger has shown the positive effect that commercialization appears to have had on rural women's education. In one case, a poor farmer's daughter sent to work in an inn in 1840 sent a letter petitioning for the cancelation of her contract to the local daimyo. The letter was three pages long, written in a mix of formal and informal language, and included some simple Chinese characters.[10] While such women were exceptional, they show that literacy was not limited to upper-class urban women but had become possible even for rural women of limited wealth and status.

Like urban women, farm women faced numerous barriers to gaining an education. These included not only the basic limitations of sex, class, and wealth that Tocco noted, but the fact that both male and female farmers' attempts to gain a formal education were restricted by their lack of access to schools, which were clustered in or near castle towns and in Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka. Their attempts to become literate were also often viewed by the samurai elite as both pretension and as dereliction of their true duties in the fields and at the loom. A typical encapsulation of the ideal farmers' life, as viewed from the perspective of the samurai elite, is as follows:

> [When farmers] wake in the morning, they should harvest the long grasses in the morning, cultivate the fields and paddies in the afternoon, weave rope and knit sacks at night, and in all things perform their work without negligence. . . . A man must earn his living by harvesting (*saku*), his wife by weaving hemp [cloth] and night work.[11]

Here, farmers' lives are entirely defined by their work, which is to occupy them day and night. As for education, not only is it not mentioned, but it is difficult to imagine where it would fit into a routine of unremitting work. In this sense, both ideological and practical barriers limited the amount of formal education that farmers could hope to gain.

Yet in spite of these barriers, scholars such as Takahashi Satoshi have argued that reading and writing had become an essential part of the rural landscape as early as the mid-eighteenth century. This was partly due to circumstances that encouraged the samurai to educate farmers despite their concerns that such an education was neither necessary nor desirable. For one, in order to spread the Confucian ideology that underpinned samurai rule, samurai encouraged the publication of Confucian moral texts, such as the *Rikuyu engi* (Amplification of the six maxims), for use as readers in local *terakoya*.[12] In addition, as the daimyo increasingly relied on the local landlord class to carry out the daimyos' responsibilities for managing land and tax payments, reading, writing, and math skills

became the bare necessities that wealthy farmers needed to carry out their administrative duties. For example, in 1713, the *bakufu* government ordered village headmen to affix their seals to and display ledgers recording yields during the collection of yearly and other taxes. In 1751, the government began requiring the public display of ledgers as needed, and had all farmers, rather than solely the village head, affix their seals to them as a way of preventing lawsuits.[13] Such laws would have forced village heads to keep better records, and may have encouraged small landowning farmers to acquire such skills themselves.[14]

The fact that such trends made learning more widely available in rural areas, as well as village elites' desire to establish an illustrious identity for themselves, helps explain why a small number of farm women were also able to gain literacy and other abstract skills. Anne Walthall has found that wives in two well-to-do farm families made entries in their husbands' diaries in their husbands' absence; another two farm women in what is now Fujisawa in Kanagawa Prefecture kept diaries; and the sister of Suzuki Bokushi (1770–1842), the famous writer of *Hokuetsu seppu* (Snow country tales), left over a thousand poems when she died.[15] Both the feminist politician Ichikawa Fusae and the celebrated novelist Hirabayashi Eiko's grandmothers were literate, and the well-to-do farm woman Matsuo Tase (1811–94) was an accomplished poet as well as a revolutionary from a family with a long line of educated women.[16] Other studies have found letters and official documents that appear to have been written and signed by farm women.[17] Thus, farm women in the upper echelons of village society appear not only to have been able to access educational opportunities, but in extraordinary cases to have become skilled writers and poets.

The decline of the Ichikawa family's fortunes exemplifies how close the association between status and female literacy had grown by the end of Edo period, and illustrates how female literacy remained relevant as a marker of status into the Meiji period. Ichikawa Fusae (1893–1981), writing of her early life growing up on a farmstead in Aichi Prefecture, wrote of her mother and grandmother:

> My grandmother had worked in a great house (*yashiki*) somewhere, and although she had learned to read and write a little, my mother was completely illiterate. As a result, she was bullied. When she [first] came as a bride, . . . it was an extremely painful experience [for her].[18]

Ichikawa's comments show that her family valued women's education, which in her grandmother's time consisted of basic literacy and the skills of etiquette and proper

comportment that the Ichikawas' social superiors would have taught her grandmother while she was working for them. However, bad investments wasted the family's fortunes, and though still landowners, they came to possess only a fraction of the land that they had once owned.[19] By the time Ichikawa's father, the family heir, had reached marriageable age, the family's fortunes had sunk to the point that the Ichikawas were forced to settle for an illiterate bride, whom they appear to have bullied for her lack of refinement.

With respect to how rural women gained the skills that often made up a formal education, such as literacy and moral instruction, Ronald Dore has shown that some domain officials encouraged itinerant lecturers to visit local villages, and these sometimes gave sermons specifically to farm women. Records of these events suggest that large numbers of women attended.[20] Bokushi personally taught his granddaughter how to read and write, and Matsuo Tase and Ichikawa Fusae's grandmother appear to have learned to read and write either as young children at home or while in service in other families' homes.[21] In the case both of Bokushi's grandchildren and of Matsuo Tase, male relatives assumed the responsibility of educating female children in reading, writing, and arithmetic.[22] The fact that rural girls and women learned reading and other abstract skills in their or in others' homes suggests that women's and girls' acquisition of these skills often took place outside of schools, which may account for the lower school attendance rate of girls compared to boys.

Literacy, of course, was not the only skill that rural boys and girls learned, but was one of the many types of knowledge that farmers thought appropriate to pass on to their children. Ichikawa Kiyoshi has argued that children learned a wide array of subjects, including basic medicine, herbal remedies, the customs of their households and villages, and farming techniques, through daily observation and lived experience (*taiken*). Women and girls also learned cooking, sewing, and etiquette—skills essential to the smooth running of a household—from their mothers and mothers-in-law, and parents sometimes sent their daughters off to their marriage beds with erotic guides that explained what they could expect to occur on their first night of marriage.[23] These forms of transmission were not necessarily limited to upper-class farmers, as even poor and middling farmers would have had access to village customs, herbal remedies, and at least basic farming techniques. They thus illustrate the types of knowledge that farmers as a whole likely sought to pass on to their children, and indicate the methods that they employed to impart them.

While these instances highlight the roles that occupation, status, and wealth played in shaping girls' education, regional differences and proximity to urban areas also affected

rural women's education in the Edo period. For example, Yakuwa Tomohiro has shown, through early Meiji-era surveys of signature rates (*jishōritsu chōsa*), that the degree of literacy that rural women in the late Edo period were able to attain most likely differed considerably depending on where they lived.[24] The surveys, which were carried out in Shiga, Gunma, Aomori, Kagoshima, and Okayama prefectures between 1877 and 1887, recorded how many people over the age of six years old could sign their own names (Table). An 1879 group of surveys also recorded signature rates in Kuga County, Yamaguchi Prefecture. The surveys show that the number of people who could sign their names ranged from an overall high of approximately 64 percent to a low of less than 20 percent, within which female literacy rates ranged from 42 to slightly less than 3 percent (see Table).

Table. Signature Rates as a Measure of Literacy in Japanese Prefectures

Year	Prefecture	Men	Women	Total	Female Literacy as a Percentage of Men's
1877	Shiga	89.23	39.31	64.13	44.1
1879	Kuga County, Yamaguchi*	54.96	16.48	36.31	30.0
1880	Gunma	79.13	23.41	52.00	29.6
1881	Aomori	37.39	2.71	19.94	7.2
1884	Kagoshima	33.43	4.00	18.33	12.0
1887	Okayama	65.64	42.05	54.38	64.1

* Partial survey.
Source: Adapted and translated from Yakuwa Tomohiro, "Kinsei shakai to shikiji" (Early modern society and literacy), *Kyōikugaku kenkyū*, 70, no. 4 (December 2003): 56–57.

Though the surveys do not distinguish between castle towns, small towns, and rural areas within the prefectures, the overall picture of literacy that they portray shows an often marked difference in partial literacy rates from prefecture to prefecture. This is particularly true with respect to gender differences in literacy rates. Though the recorded rates may have been affected by factors such as surveyors altering the test environment or women being reluctant to reveal extensive learning, they all show that women's literacy rates never reached more than a fraction of those achieved by men.[25] However, where men's literacy was high, women's literacy tended to be high as well; conversely, the two

overall lowest-scoring prefectures, Aomori and Kagoshima, not only have the lowest scores for women but also the widest gap between men's and women's basic literacy rates. The gender gap between literacy rates in the highest- and lowest-scoring prefectures is also notable. Though the male signature rate recorded in Shiga, the highest-scoring prefecture for men, is almost three times higher than the signature rate for men in Kagoshima, the lowest-scoring prefecture for men, the female signature rate in women's highest-scoring prefecture, Okayama, is about fourteen times the rate recorded in their lowest-scoring prefecture, Aomori.

Thus, whereas basic literacy would seem to have become fairly important for men, with no less than one third being able at least to sign their own names even in areas where literacy was generally low, there was no such consensus on female literacy, as signature rates could range from slightly over 40 percent to almost nothing. In regions where a degree of literacy was found to be particularly valuable, it appears to have been considered so for both sexes, while in prefectures with a low evaluation of literacy, men significantly outperformed women. A high regional literacy rate, which would reflect a local emphasis on and/or necessity for reading and writing skills, therefore appears to have had a positive effect on women's literacy, whereas a low prefectural literacy rate is correlated with a profoundly low literacy rate for women.[26] The data thus demonstrate an enormous range in women's educational achievement and suggest that this was closely linked to men's educational achievement.

If we examine the data in the context of broader regional differences, the figures suggest that women's literacy was probably highest relative to men's in western Honshū and lowest in northeastern Honshū. For example, female literacy relative to men's literacy in Gunma is significantly lower than in the two western prefectures, namely, Shiga and Okayama (see Table). In addition, the survey of Kuga County in Yamaguchi Prefecture, which is in western Honshū, places overall literacy there lower than in Shiga and Okayama but higher than in Kagoshima and Aomori (see Table), which are located in Kyushu and in the Tohoku (northeastern) area of Honshū, respectively. We would expect the Kuga County results to skew high in comparison to the prefectural surveys because there would have been relatively fewer agricultural areas included in this small-scale study compared to the large-scale prefectural surveys. However, if we examine only the farming population in Kuga County, the breakdown of literacy rates still shows a range of between 12 and 51 percent literacy among farmers, as compared to only 20 and 18 percent overall literacy, respectively, for Aomori and Kagoshima.[27]

The Kuga County study also provides data on basic literacy rates relative to proximity to urban areas and in relation to farm work. In terms of overall literacy, the most notable villages in Kuga County were Nishimi Village, which had a literacy rate of 66.9 percent for a population of which 73 percent was involved in agriculture, and Yokoyama Village, which had a literacy rate of 64.5 percent for a population of which 68 percent was involved in agriculture. Both are located close to the city of Iwakuni, then the regional capital and castle town of Iwakuni domain, which topped the list with an overall literacy rate of almost 68 percent.[28] With respect to gendered differences in literacy rates, men's signature rates ranged from a low of 19.3 percent in the school district that served the villages of Kamidatoko, Shimodatoko, Shibukuma, and Nishibata to a high of 98.3 percent in the area under the jurisdiction of the Kōjiro Village elementary school. Women's signature rates ranged from 0 percent in Hataki Village to 68.5 percent in Iwakuni.[29] Though Yakuwa does not provide a breakdown of men's and women's signature rates for each village, nor does he show what women's and men's signature rates in each town and village were relative to their proximity to urban areas, he does note that the data on Kuga County show a more pronounced correlation between illiteracy and farm work for women than for men, such that women who engaged in farm work were more likely to be illiterate than men engaged in farm work.[30]

Other studies of Edo- and Meiji-period literacy rates for western and eastern Honshū have identified a similar discrepancy. For example, Herbert Passin's study of education in the Edo period found a school attendance rate of only 5 percent for girls in the Tohoku area—a large area that would have included several cities and towns—while an isolated mountain village near Kyoto had a literacy rate of 56 percent for boys and 15 percent for girls.[31] Another study, which focused on surveys given to military recruits along with other information collected by the Ministry of War (Rikugunshō) in the late nineteenth century, found equally wide disparities that ranged from a low of 20 percent male literacy to a high of 80 percent, with the lowest literacy rates concentrated in Kyushu, Shikoku, Tohoku, and northern Hokkaido.[32] Given these data, Passin's assertion that literacy in the Edo period ranged from "almost 100%" among "village notables" to 20 percent among "peasants in the more isolated areas" seems rather high, unless we only take male literacy rates into account.[33] These studies therefore suggest that several factors, including status, region, wealth, and occupation, affected rural women's ability to acquire abstract skills such as reading and writing, and the degree to which they were able to master them.

Formal Education in the Meiji-Taishō Period

Though the ways that rural men and women taught girls in the Meiji period continued to reflect long-standing patterns, the transition to a modern, national school system affected rural women's education in numerous ways. New opportunities, fostered by the expansion of the school system and the growth of educational resources in urban areas, offered new life courses for ambitious farm girls, and some poor rural women were able to gain a basic education in skills such as reading and writing. However, it remained difficult for most farm women to continue their formal education beyond a year or two of elementary school, revealing how the uneven spread of educational opportunity in rural areas in the Meiji and Taishō (1912–26) periods affected the overall development of women's education.

The rise in attendance rates from approximately 45 percent (60.3 percent for boys, 28.3 for girls) in 1887 to over 98 percent (98.9 for boys, 97.3 for girls) by 1909 suggests that Meiji efforts to ensure that all children would gain at least a minimal education had largely succeeded.[34] However, anecdotal evidence suggests that efforts to improve education were not as successful as the attendance rates indicate. Several factors, such as a lack of appropriate facilities, the reluctance of parents to send their children to school, distance to educational facilities, and, in some cases, concerns for girls' safety, made it particularly difficult for rural girls to receive an education.

After 1868, formal education in rural areas was shaped by a series of laws that established the Meiji state's evolving approach to education, as well as its attempts to manage the financial burden that such an expansion imposed. The 1872 Gakusei (Education Law) was the first of these. In contrast to earlier practice, the Gakusei established a universal educational system in which, in theory, all Japanese subjects would have at least a minimal education. Over the next twenty years, compulsory education was increased from four to six years, tuition was abandoned, and various types of schools, such as *komori* (babysitter) and night schools, were established in order to expand educational opportunities. In 1899, each prefecture was required to build at least one girls' higher school.

Despite these efforts, anecdotal accounts suggest that it continued to be difficult for rural girls to gain an education, even in the early twentieth century. One problem was a lack of facilities, as well as the fact that girls appear to have been frequently pulled out of school to support their families. Kawamata Haya, a farm woman born in Ibaraki Prefecture in 1901 who failed to complete more than a year of schooling, stated:

> The branch school in Oshinobe [Village, in Ibaraki Prefecture] only went up to fourth grade, so you had to go to Masaki. But you had to cross fields, paddies, and mountains to get there. Robbers might jump out at you.[35]

Her story reflects the distance children traveled to reach school, as well as parents' concerns for their daughters' safety. Kawamata estimated that, out of ten female peers, the majority of whom were female, four quit after only one year, while another two quit somewhat later for various reasons, such as being the youngest child or being the daughter of a family in retirement (*inkyō musume*). She herself quit after only a year of school to help with the housework.[36]

Another woman, Kawamata Masa (no relation), who was born in 1907 in the nearby village of Nakano, started working as a *komori* (babysitter) at the age of eight, after the death of her mother. Though her younger sister, Mitsu, was able to go to school for two years, Masa was not able to go to school at all, nor was she educated by the family who hired her (though one of their daughters, who was the same age as Masa, was sent to school). Masa described a childhood of nearly constant toil, working at first only as a *komori* but later as a field hand whose labor included digging fields at night by moonlight (*yobatakehori*). When she was twelve, she returned to her family's home, and started working half for her family and half as a hired laborer for other families.[37] In these ways, girls' formal education appears to have continued to be hampered by a lack of facilities, limited safety, and families' reliance on girls' labor to run the household and earn an income.

As indicated by the difference between Masa's education and that of the daughter of the family she worked for, affluence continued to be a determining factor in farm girls' education. Even former wealth, which often coincided with a high social status, appears to have helped rural girls gain an education in the early twentieth century. Hirabayashi Eiko (1902–2001), for example, was born into a farming family that had once been well-to-do, with five houses bearing the Hirabayashi name in the small farming village in Nagano Prefecture where she was born, and the family itself having once owned a considerable amount of land. Eiko's mother, an only child, inherited the house in which she had been raised; her father, the son of a former samurai family (*shizoku*) of limited resources, had married into the Hirabayashi family as a *mukoyōshi* (adopted bridegroom). Eiko described her educational experience as follows:

> I didn't have what you would call a "real" education (*kyōiku rashii kyōiku ukete nai*). I had only gone to a higher elementary school. Then when I was sixteen, I wanted to study so much that I left the house. I boarded at a small private school (*juku*) in

> Osaka and helped out with the housework for the family who ran it. . . . The school's students were all sons of shop assistants in merchant households, so the textbooks were middle-school ones. They were so difficult that it was really hard for me.[38]

Hirabayashi's account is revealing in several respects. For one, it shows that both her family's background, which helped her go on to a higher elementary school, and her dogged personal commitment, which propelled her to complete her education despite numerous obstacles, were essential to achieving her educational goals. Her account also reveals that even farm girls who had attended higher elementary school did not have an education equal to that of boys in urban areas. Her integration into an urban private school thus put her at a disadvantage, as did having to work and living far from home in a distant city. Lastly, her sense that her education was not a "real" or "proper" education is striking in comparison to the inability of Kawamata Haya, Kawamata Masa, and their peers even to struggle through a year or two of elementary school. This suggests a large range in the opportunities open to rural women, as well as the significant difference in the paths their lives could ultimately take. Family background, combined with a strong personal commitment, were thus significant factors in helping rural girls and women attain a higher level of education.

Family support, such as an educated grandparent or dedicated parent, also appears to have helped rural girls gain an education. Hirabayashi Eiko has written about her parents' desire that she continue her education at a time when only one or two girls from her village would do so, while Ichikawa Fusae wrote that it was her father who urged all his children to gain an education.[39] Matsuura Isami of Yamashiraishi Village in Fukushima Prefecture arranged for all his sons and daughters to gain an education, personally traveling to Tokyo to examine schools and arrange for housing and care for his children there, while his wife, Kō, saved up the money her father-in-law gave her as birth money to help fund their children's education.[40]

In these instances, a combination of circumstances, such as a family member supportive of his or her daughter's education, sufficient wealth and status to aid in the achievement of such goals, and a strong personal commitment helped rural girls and women overcome barriers to gaining a education. Yet women educated under these circumstances were probably the exceptions. In many cases, families' continued reliance on their daughters' labor for support and income, the distance girls and women had to travel to gain an education, and the danger of traveling long distances to school appear to have prevented rural girls and women from continuing their education.

Nevertheless, some farm girls and women were able to gain an education outside of the national school system through long-standing methods of teaching and learning that were lifelong, that occurred in informal settings, and that were often learned from a variety of mentors, including parents, in-laws, and local notables. This means of gaining an education helped compensate for some of the deficiencies of the national school system, while imparting practical skills and enriching rural women's personal lives.

Informal Education in the Meiji-Taishō Periods

Two case studies of farm women's educational experiences, drawn from the small landowning classes in northeastern and central Japan, respectively, show the interplay of long-standing educational methods and the modern school system during this time. The first is the case of Inamura Hanshirō's mother (1880–1932).[41] Inamura's mother was born the eldest daughter of a small landowning family in Fujimi Village in Yamanashi Prefecture, and graduated from elementary school at a time when only a very small number of girls or boys attended school. According to the local school's records, 10 boys and no girls attended school in 1888; 25 boys and 4 girls attended in 1890; and 25 boys and 8 girls attended in 1892. Though the figures show a gradual increase in attendance, it remained remarkably low compared to the actual number of school-aged children living in the village, which in 1890 was 77 boys and 236 girls.[42] The fact that the Inamura family thought it prudent to educate Inamura's mother was likely due to the fact that, as the family's sole heir, the family depended on her to continue the household if they failed to find her a competent husband or could no longer manage the household themselves. To further ensure the family's survival, she was married at age twelve to Inamura's father, who had to prove his competence and dedication to the family by working for them for a few years, according to the local custom.[43]

Inamura's mother's education, however, did not end with elementary school, but included learning how to accomplish various tasks and then teaching these skills to other family members. For example, Inamura writes that his mother taught his younger sister how to cook certain types of local seasonal foods, and that this sister later taught these to his own wife. Inamura's mother also taught him how to farm, as well as the names of various weeds, how to dig them up, and how to prevent their spread—all of which she had somehow memorized.[44] In addition, she most likely learned skills such as managing the household and how to care for silkworms from her own mother, with whom she often worked. After Inamura's graduation from an agricultural school, however, she allowed

him to take over the silkworm breeding.[45] This illustrates both the various skills Inamura's mother had learned throughout her life and how one of these skill sets stopped being transmitted after her children had gained a formal education, which presumably trumped her own knowledge gained through experience.[46]

The second case is that of the Nakamura family. Nakamura Michi was born into a farming household in Saitama Prefecture in 1911. Like Inamura's mother, the variety of technical skills that she learned at home was clearly an important part of her lifelong education, yet she learned them in an informal way that meant her skills were unlikely to have been acknowledged as the result of any particular kind of learning:

> The *tedama* (juggling balls) we used to play with were of course homemade. . . . I believe my mother or older sisters taught me how to make them, but I don't really remember. In those days, it was common to make everything yourself, from toys to clothing, so without any memory of having been taught I became able naturally to do various things.[47]

Though Nakamura's mother and sisters acted as role models, modeling the skills Nakamura was to learn, the process of learning was so much a part of the fabric of life that she appears to have learned them without explicit instruction. This method of learning was a lifelong process; as technology and circumstances changed, Nakamura states that she and her peers learned to use a loom to make clothing. She became so skilled that she sometimes worked day and night on it to make the family's clothes.[48] When her in-laws decided to take up sericulture sometime after her marriage at age eighteen, she learned how to make thread and cloth out of the imperfect silk cocoons that could not be sold.[49] In these ways, she built upon the skills she had acquired in her youth and continued to learn new ones throughout her life.

Nor were such skills limited to domestic use. Though Nakamura herself sewed only the family's work clothes, her sister sewed for pay:

> My oldest sister was physically weak, so instead of going out to the fields she just sewed all day long (*saihō bakari*). She had a contract with a dry goods store to sew *hōmongi* (women's formal kimono) and *hakama* (men's formal divided skirt). I wanted to do that too, but there was always just [a lot of] field work, so I was never given more than the everyday clothes to sew. [50]

Though Nakamura Michi does not explain how her sister learned to sew the complicated patterns, it seems likely that she either learned them from her mother or from instructions

sent from the store. In either case, long years of sewing at home had helped her gain the fundamental skills needed to produce formal clothes for sale. In these ways, Nakamura's sister appears to have learned the technical skills she used to augment the family income informally, at home, and over a long period of time.

Other resources, such as agricultural associations (*nōkai*), women's associations, and locally organized culture societies, provided additional means through which rural women could gain an education. These were usually ad hoc and informal, and were often designed such that educated and older women taught younger and less educated (or uneducated) women various skills. In this sense, they mimicked the structure of learning established in the home, and indeed sometimes took place at someone's home. For example, Inada Kōichi writes that his father established a teacher's house in the 1920s where the teacher's wife taught young women *ikebana* (flower arrangement) and basic tailoring.[51] Larger organizations, a few of which had been active from as early as the 1880s, sponsored educational activities, such as lectures and workshops.[52] Thus, as in the Edo period, women continued to gain a number of the practical skills needed to run a household and earn an income in informal settings, and these tended to supplement their lack of formal education.

Magazines and Rural Women's Education in the Early Shōwa Period

By the 1920s, girls' elementary school attendance had reached a level virtually equivalent to that of boys. However, it was not until the 1930s and 1940s that a reading public of rural women had developed enough that we begin to see a range of periodicals being published that specifically targeted them. These magazines offered both entertainment and educational content, providing informative articles on topics such as health, hygiene, and nutrition, games and stories for children, and support for women's reading skills. In this way, women's magazines may be said to have become an additional source of informal education for rural women, both in developing their reading skills and in providing practical information.

One of the most popular rural magazines was *Ie no hikari* (Light of the home). Founded in 1925, the language and content of the magazine appear to have initially been aimed largely at educated men interested in women's issues, much like early editions of the first women's magazines published in the late nineteenth century.[53] Early copies of *Ie no hikari* featured articles by well-known educators such as Yokoi Tokio, and addressed questions such as how to improve rural women's access to education, raise rural women's

low status, and reform the family. As was common in mass-circulation magazines, *Ie no hikari* provided the Japanese readings of Chinese characters (*rubi*) alongside them in the text, which would have made the content more accessible to rural residents.

By the 1930s, however, the content of the magazine had shifted to a more popular format that included simpler, eye-catching articles on a range of female-friendly subjects, such as recipes, dress patterns, and entertainment, alongside discussions of ongoing rural concerns. Though the magazine tended to focus on local events, it also occasionally brought rural women news of the wider world, such as the fashions of Western movie stars and news about rural women in other countries. Subscriptions grew substantially from 1925 to 1946, suggesting that, in addition to the rural women whose families purchased subscriptions, rural women unable to purchase subscriptions became familiar with *Ie no hikari* through the sheer number of copies that circulated in rural areas.[54] The magazine reached 1.4 million subscriptions in 1937, maintaining a subscription volume of over 1.2 million from that point on until it dropped to under 400,000 in the last year of the war. The highest subscription volume achieved during this period was 1.5 million in 1944.[55]

Ie no hikari's educational content also changed. Rather than focusing on discussions of how best to improve women's education, the magazine created a children's section that did so directly. "Kodomo no *Ie no hikari*" (*Ie no hikari* for children) introduced stories that combined reading skill development and moral character-building, and offered games, puzzles, and cartoons. These included articles designed to cultivate good habits, such as keeping a journal, which depicted both sexes engaged in educational tasks.[56] Women would also have found educational content on topics such as child care in the pages that directly preceded the children's section, which shows how the magazine combined mothers' and children's education.[57] In this way, *Ie no hikari* provided informative content for rural women and girls, and created a means by which rural women could educate themselves and their children.

Mainstream women's magazines also began to include articles on rural women. *Fujin kōron* (Ladies' review), *Fujin no tomo* (Ladies' companion), and *Shūfu no tomo* (Housewife's companion) all ran articles on rural women in the 1930s, which sources, such as reader comments published in the magazines, show were read by some rural women.[58] *Hataraku fujin* (Working women), which was founded as a resource for both urban and rural working women in the 1930s, featured advice columns on topics ranging from health and hygiene to legal counsel, and reported extensively on village conditions. Though it is likely that periodicals such as these were beyond the reach of the majority of

rural women, particularly those who had grown up with little or no formal education in the Meiji and early Taishō periods, the increase in publications addressing them indicates that readership among farm women had increased substantially.

Informal Education in the Wartime and Early Postwar Periods

Because the family structure remained largely the same during and after the war, home education may be expected to have remained the same as well. This is true with respect to the role of mothers-in-law in training their daughters-in-law, the types of skills women were expected to master, and the continued importance of magazines as sources of information. However, a few key differences point to ongoing changes in the nature and structure of informal education. The first is the general breakdown of formal education during the war years and the decline in opportunities to gain an education, either formal or informal, during this time. The second is the significant change in the content of mass magazines during and after the war, which reflected both the reality of rural women's lives and their engagement with the shift in *zeitgeist*. A third difference is that rural women in the early postwar period appear to have adopted a more vocal and critical stance toward the older women who were expected to train them, in contrast to the virtual silence on such conflicts during the war.

Rural magazines continued to be a source of informal education for women during the war. Rural families purchased *Ie no hikari* throughout the war years, in spite of increased rationing and shortages and despite the fact that the magazine itself, which had grown in length to more than two hundred pages by the 1930s, significantly reduced its page length in the last years of the war. The content of the magazine also changed, both to reflect the needs of women on the home front and to promote government propaganda. For example, the March 1943 issue ran articles on topics such as how to make bandages, grow food crops quickly, and avoid malnutrition, in between militaristic articles on American aggression, Manchurian war brides, and soldiers' sacrifices in the field.[59] The July 1944 edition devoted about half of its forty-two pages to war stories, while the other half featured articles on how to make everything from compost to canvas shoes.[60] Here we might wonder what messages rural women would have read into the disjunction between the sections devoted to teaching them the skills they needed simply to survive and those that portrayed a highly idealized version of the war. Similarly, because all Japanese were expected to show exceptional unity and harmony during the war years, articles that explored topics such as the frictions between younger and older

women largely disappeared, though women undoubtedly still experienced such tensions. In this way, though magazines continued to act as a source of informal education, not all the lessons that they attempted to teach women appear to have been explicitly stated.

It was in part due to the responsibilities that women were forced to assume that women's and girls' education in other areas, such as reading and writing, appears to have declined. During the war years, rural women were called upon to fill a variety of positions left open by the shortage of men, such as repairing roads, delivering mail, and hauling charcoal.[61] While these occupations sometimes offered women the opportunity to learn new skills, as a whole they appear to have merely increased the time rural women spent on manual labor. Combined with disruptions in formal education in the last years of the war,[62] this suggests that women's opportunities to gain an education declined during these years.

After the war, *Ie no hikari* and other women's magazines changed their content again, printing dates and numerals in English and including articles and advertisements on topics such as patterns for Western-style dresses and English-language education.[63] In most of these cases, the English-language content was very limited, consisting almost entirely of *katakana* translations of English words paired with an explanatory illustration. When English words and letters were used, they most often appeared in abbreviations and in advertisements, suggesting that early English-language usage was largely decorative in the mass magazines that many rural women would have read. Yet their presence also illustrates how magazines continued to educate rural women by making foreign words and ideas familiar to readers who would otherwise have had few ways of gaining such knowledge.

With respect to learning from older women, however, rural women in the early postwar period appear to have become less willing to accept older women as mentors, and voiced their discontent with them increasingly through public forums. For example, Ōno Fumiko, a 45-year-old housewife in Akita Prefecture, wrote the following to the women's magazine *Fujin asahi* (Asahi magazine for women) in July 1950:

> My role [in the household] is teaching and raising the children and backup housekeeping, but having above all to ask grandmother's [her mother-in-law's] opinion on everything gives me a lot of grief. . . . Even with the scrubbing work, where I'd like to use several cloths at once to save time, Grandma won't allow me to use more than one cloth at a time.[64]

Here, Ōno describes how little she values the opinion of her mother-in-law, whom she elsewhere describes as "stubborn" and "superstitious."[65] Although the structure of the family requires that younger women learn from older women, and although Ōno herself teaches various skills to the younger women and children in the household, she feels considerable scorn for her own mentor. She describes her efforts to combat her mother-in-law's dictates as follows:

> At the last meeting of the weekly Village Housewives' Association, we were told that . . . we have to confront our grandmas, and there were even some people who said that getting into fights with them was inevitable. But for me such things are just impossible. I tried calmly reasoning with her, but Grandma is stubborn. Well, I think the only way to do it is to talk about my feelings with others and try to gain supporters—then as a group we can try to move her.[66]

Ōno explains how, though she finds that she is unable to follow all of the association's advice, she relies on it as a place to vent her frustrations and gather the supporters she feels could help her eventually change her mother-in-law's mind. Her story illustrates both the friction between older and younger generations and how women turned to public forums to rail against their home teachers and attempt to undermine them.

Similarly, Mizoue Yasuko, an ethnographer who focused on rural women and who was herself born in a farming village in Hiroshima, noted that mother-in-law/daughter-in-law conflicts topped the list of the complaints that young farm women from the Shimane prefectural women's association had submitted to the Third Annual Conference on Women in 1956. The women imagined how much better their lives would be if it were not for the older generation, and expressed the desire to live under their own roofs rather than continuing to live with their parents-in-law.[67] The fact that their average age was twenty-three—almost half Ōno's age—indicates that generational conflicts were not limited to farm women in any one age group. Rather, women in different age groups appear to have heeded the postwar era's call to embrace change by turning increasingly to their peer groups for support and guidance in public forums instead of to older women at home.

Conclusion

To return to the question of the primary barriers that prevented rural women and girls from gaining a formal education, Benjamin C. Duke has argued in his recent book on modern Japanese education that rural resistance to education in the Meiji period was based on several factors, such as high taxes, the lack of moral content in education, and

girls' inclusion in the same classrooms as boys. Whereas the temple schools (*terakoya*) that spread widely in the Edo period had reflected local values by largely excluding girls, who were thought to learn best by receiving training in housework and child care at home, the modern, national school system forced both sexes to attend and was focused on academic subjects such as science and math.[68] Duke argues that such changes were met with resistance not merely because of the educational content—which differed from what and how children learned at home and in temple schools, and may not have been seen as particularly useful to farm families—but simply by virtue of changing long-standing rural customs. Duke believes that farmers' resistance to changes in custom was the main reason parents stopped sending their children to school, thus actually increasing the gap between male and female education in the early years of the Meiji period.[69]

In contrast, Maeda Takashi has argued that resistance to education, and particularly to girls' education, was not directed at education per se but at the imposition of Confucian-based samurai values and a lack of practicality in the modern educational system. Maeda states that the older generation's negative attitude toward education in the early Meiji period extended to both sexes, and revolved around the fear that children would not learn the skills needed to continue the household.[70] Though women and girls traditionally learned the skills that they needed by memorizing and repeating what they saw and heard at home, such skills were not limited to raising children and doing housework, as Duke suggests, but included skills that touched upon everything from farming to cocoon production. Maeda notes that his own grandmother mentally kept track of the sums that more than a hundred clients owed the family, and could recall events that had occurred many years ago even when she was at an advanced age.[71]

My research suggests that rural girls' and women's difficulties in accessing a formal education were likely more along the lines of what Maeda has proposed than Duke. As the case of Inamura Hanshirō's mother shows, families adjusted their expectations of how much formal education to give their daughters depending on what would help the family survive, which for the Inamuras meant preparing Hanshirō's mother to take over the family headship in case it became necessary for her to do so. For other families, such as the Ichikawas, basic literacy, along with etiquette and other skills, were coveted markers of status. Later accounts, such as those of Kawamata Haya and Kawamata Masa, suggest that although farm girls were pulled out of school more often than boys were, one of the most compelling reasons for doing so was their families' reliance on their labor, which was needed both to keep a household running and to generate income. In these instances,

family survival, prestige, and income clearly carried more weight than did some of the factors that Duke proposes, such as schools' lack of moral education and mixed-sex classrooms. Other factors that influenced whether a girl could gain such an education include a lack of educational facilities, concerns over daughters' welfare, and the woman or girl's personal commitment to education—all of which could play significant roles in limiting or enhancing farm girls' opportunities to gain a formal education.

As for what helped them overcome these barriers, Duke's data on school attendance, which he draws on to conclude that the educational gap between the sexes may have widened, only shows that the number of girls who were attending either the new schools or the *terakoya* (which had been closed) was very low; they do not show how many girls continued to be educated either in their own homes or in someone else's. As I have shown here, informal education constituted an important part of rural girls' and women's education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and included a range of practical skills that taught them how to run a household, maintain local traditions, and in some cases produce goods for sale. Rather than resisting change, some rural women learned new skills and embraced new technology over the course of their lives. By the 1930s, mass-circulation magazines had begun contributing to this process, bringing women a wide range of information, helping them sharpen their reading skills, and inculcating the idea that women could not only learn from others but also teach themselves.

The benefits that rural women gained from informal education may be one reason that it persists as a contemporary method of teaching and learning. Kubota Ken'ichi has argued that some of the educational techniques whereby rural women learned skills at home, such as learning by observing behavior, which he believes dates to the Edo period, continue to influence educational practices.[72] James McLendon has found that lifelong learning—what he defines as self-cultivation—was a way for older women to find meaning in their lives and even, in one case, to improve a woman's performance at work.[73] The concept of lifelong learning also helped define Japanese educational reform in the late 1980s and has shaped some of the scholarship on rural men's and women's education.[74] Thus, the long-standing methods of teaching and learning that shaped rural women's informal education remain relevant in both men's and women's education, even as formal education has become universal.

What rural women were ultimately able to achieve thus ranged widely. Whereas poorer women spent most of their time working, and thus seem to have been unable to take advantage of either formal or informal educational opportunities, women such as

Nakamura Michi achieved a high level of skill at sewing and making clothes, and seem to have enjoyed the personal satisfaction of contributing to their family's welfare. Both Ichikawa Fusae and Hirabayashi Eiko's stories reflect experiences that are more typical of what contemporary readers might imagine when discussing women's educational achievement, but their educations were extraordinary in comparison to what other rural women were able to accomplish. In these ways, the education that rural women gained was remarkably diverse, and came from both formal and informal sources.

Notes

1. See, for example, P. F. Kornicki, Mara Patessio, and G. G. Rowley, eds., *The Female as Subject: Reading and Writing in Early Modern Japan* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 2010); Richard Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007); Martha Tocco, "Made in Japan: Meiji Women's Education," in Kathleen Uno and Barbara Molony, eds., *Gendering Modern Japanese History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 39–60.

2. The survey participants consisted of 352 women and 404 men aged 15 to 64. Those labeled "partially literate" could read and write numbers, *katakana*, and *hiragana*, but not Chinese characters (*kanji*). See Shibuta Takashi, "Yomikaki nōryoku chōsa nitsuite," (Regarding the survey on reading and writing ability) *Kyōiku* (Education), (April 1948): 62–75.

3. Mayuzumi Kimine, "Unfolding Possibilities through a Decolonizing Project: Indigenous Knowledges and Rural Japanese Women," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 22, no. 5 (2009): 507–26; Akitsu Motoki et al., eds., *Nōson gender: josei to chiiki he no atarashii manazashi* (Gender in farming villages: A new look at women and region), (Tokyo: Shōwadō, 2007).

4. Margaret E. Burton, *The Education of Women in Japan* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1914), 27.

5. Takie Sugiyama Lebra, "Japanese Women in Male Dominant Careers: Cultural Barriers and Accommodations for Role Transcendence," *Ethnology* 20, no. 4 (October 2006): 291–306.

6. Herbert Passin, *Society and Education in Japan* (New York: Kondansha International, 1983); Robert P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

7. Tocco, "Made in Japan," 39–60.

8. Tocco, "Made in Japan," 43.

9. P. F. Kornicki, "Women, Education, and Literacy," in Kornicki, Patessio, and Rowley, eds., *The Female as Subject*, 7–37.

10. Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan*. The case of the farmer's daughter is drawn from Yakuwa Tomohiro, "Kinsei Echigo no minshū to manabi," in Aoki Michi and Abe Tsunehisa, eds., *Bakumatsu ishin to minshū shakai* (The Meiji revolution and commoner society), (Tokyo: Kōshi shoin, 1998), 125–29.

11. *Tokugawa bakuhan ofuregaki* (Tokugawa edict, 1649), cited in Maruoka Hideko, *Nihon*

nōson fujin mondai (The woman problem in Japan's farming villages), (New York: Kōyō shoin, 1937), 79 (my translation). Night work (*yonabe*) usually consisted of needlework and other small tasks.

12. Takahashi Satoshi, *Minshū to gōnō* (The common people and wealthy farmers), (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1985), 14–15.

13. Takahashi, *Minshū to gōnō*, 15.

14. Rubinger points to a few examples where this may indeed have been the case. See Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan*, 33.

15. Anne Walthall, "The Family Ideology of the Rural Entrepreneurs in Nineteenth-century Japan," *Journal of Social History* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 463–83.

16. Ichikawa Fusae, *Ichikawa Fusae jiden* (Collected works of Ichikawa Fusae), (Tokyo: Shinjuku shobō, 1974), vol. 1 (Senzen hen): 4–5; Hirabayashi Eiko, interviewed and edited by Okada Takako in Okada, ed., *Kaze ni mukatta onnatachi* (Women against the wind), (Tokyo: Chūsekisha, 2001), 99.

17. Ogawa Sachiyo, "Asadake no joseitachi" (The Asada family women), in Kinsei Joseishi Kenkyūkai, ed., *Edojidai no onnatachi* (Women of the Edo period), (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1990), 79–117; Yabuta Yutaka, "Nishitani Saku and Her Mother: 'Writing' in the Lives of Edo Period Women," in Kornicki, Patessio, and Rowley, eds., *The Female as Subject*, 141–50.

18. Ichikawa, *Ichikawa Fusae jiden*, 4–5 (my translation).

19. According to Ichikawa, the family had become impoverished as a result of various undertakings and so, though still landowners, only farmed about 7 or 8 *tan* (1.72 to 1.96 acres) of land by the time she was growing up. According to the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture, families with 5 *tan* to 1 *chō* of land made up 32.5 percent of the farming population in 1910, with approximately one-third of the population owning less than that and one-third owning more. The wealthiest landowners, who owned 2 *chō* or more, composed the top one-tenth. See Nōrinshō Nōrin Keizaikyoku Tōkei Chōsabu, *Nōrinshō ruinen tōkeihyō* (Annual statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), (Tokyo: Nōrin tōkei kyōkai, 1955), 4.

20. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, 240–41.

21. In the case of Matsuo Tase, different accounts suggest different sources for her writing skills. For a discussion of these, see Anne Walthall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 21–23.

22. Walthall, "The Family Ideology of the Rural Entrepreneurs," 471; Walthall, *The Weak Body,* 21–23.

23. Ichikawa Kiyoshi, "Kinsei minshū no kazoku kyōiku" (The home education of commoners in the early modern period), in Igeta Ryōji et al., eds., *Ie to kyōiku* (Home and education), (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1996), 52–81.

24. Yakuwa Tomohiro, "Kinsei shakai to shikiji" (Early modern society and literacy), *Kyōikugaku kenkyū* 70, no. 4 (December 2003): 54–65.

25. Such factors would have tended to inflate the literacy rates of men to correspond to normative expectations of men's superiority in reading and writing. For this reason, we cannot know precisely how women's literacy compared to men's. Yakuwa discusses further issues regarding the survey material in "Kinsei shakai to shikiji," 55–57.

26. In the case of Okayama, the high literacy rates for both sexes may be a legacy of the policies of the local daimyo, who had placed a particular emphasis on education. See John W. Hall, *Government and Local Power in Japan, 500 to 1700* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

27. Yakuwa, "Kinsei shakai to shikiji," 58–59.

28. Yakuwa, "Kinsei shakai to shikiji," 58.

29. Yakuwa, "Kinsei shakai to shikiji," 58.

30. The rates are r = -0.47 for men and r = -0.68 for women, where *r* is the coefficient for the correlation between the ability to sign one's own name and the amount of farm work one did (the negative indicates that it is an inverse relationship). Yakuwa, "Kinsei shakai to shikiji," 58.

31. The low school attendance rate does not indicate whether, or how many, girls were home schooled. However, given that the figure is very low, it suggests that women's education was not highly valued, and thus literacy is unlikely to have been very high. Passin, *Society and Education in Japan*, 46, 47.

32. Kiyokawa Ikuko, "'Sōtei kyōiku chōsa' ni miru gimusei shūgaku no fukyū" (The spread of compulsory education as observed in the "Survey on Planned Education"), *Kyōiku shakaigaku kenkyū* 51 (October 1992): 111–35.

33. Passin, *Society and Education in Japan*, 56–57.

34. Monbushō, ed., "Gimu kyōiku nengen no enchō" (The lengthening of the number of years of compulsory education), in *Gakusei hyakunen shi* (One hundred years of the educational system), at http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/hpbz198101/hpbz198101_2_053.html, accessed 12/10/2010.

35. Kawamata Haya, interviewed and edited by Higashi Toshio in Higashi, ed., *Josei no shigoto to seikatsu no nōsonshi* (A history of farming villages through the work and daily lives of women), (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shōbō, 1989), 61 (my translation).

36. Kawamata Haya, in Higashi, ed., *Josei no shigoto to seikatsu no nōsonshi*, 61.

37. Kawamata Masa, in Higashi, ed., *Josei no shigoto to seikatsu no nōsonshi*, 78–79, 84–85.

38. Hirabayashi, in Okada, ed., *Kaze ni mukatta onnatachi*, 97 (my translation).

39. Ichikawa, *Ichikawa Fusae jiden*, 5; Hirabayashi, in Okada, ed., *Kaze ni mukatta onnatachi*, 98.

40. Gail Lee Bernstein, *Isami's House* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 83–96.

41. Interestingly, Inamura does not give his mother's name, but refers to her as "Mother" throughout the text. This reflects both the memoir style of the text, which was written in memoriam, and the somewhat old-fashioned custom of not referring to women by name (perhaps his mother would not have liked having her name publicized). Inamura Hanshirō, *Aru nōfu no isshō* (The life of a farm woman), (Tokyo: Nōsangyoson bunka kyōkai, 1980).

42. Inamura, *Aru nōfu no isshō*, 14–15.

43. Inamura's father was not allowed to stay at the house until he had performed about four years of labor for his mother's family. The marriage appears to have been consummated when his mother turned sixteen. Inamura, *Aru nōfu no isshō*, 22–23.

44. Inamura, *Aru nōfu no isshō*, 34–35, 83.

45. Inamura, *Aru nōfu no isshō*, 60–63.

46. Inamura himself had much less confidence in his skills, and describes his feelings of extreme anxiety when, as a recent graduate who had only done a few hands-on experiments under the close supervision of an expert at the agricultural school, he first experienced having the family's livelihood literally in his own hands. He credits his mother's assistance and confidence in him as the main reasons he was eventually able to come to manage the family's sericulture. Inamura, *Aru nōfu no isshō*, 60–63.

47. Nakamura Michi, "Nōson no daiku no musume toshite sodatsu" (Growing up the daughter of a rural carpenter), in Yuzawa Yasuhiko ed., *Sobo, Hahatachi no musume jidai* (When our grandmothers and mothers were young), recorded by Nagafuji Kiyoko (Tokyo: Cress shuppan, 1999), 32–33 (my translation).

48. Nakamura, "Nōson no daiku no musume toshite sodatsu," 34–35.

49. Nakamura, "Nōson no daiku no musume toshite sodatsu," 35.

50. Nakamura, "Nōson no daiku no musume toshite sodatsu," 34 (my translation).

51. Inaba Kōichi, *Gokuhin no mura no kurashi* (Life in a destitute village), (Kyoto: burakumondai kenkyūjo, 1995), 110–11.

52. Senichi Kōtarō, ed., *Nōson fujin no seikatsu wo miru* (A look at the daily lives of farm women), (Tokyo: sangyō kumiai chūokai, 1936).

53. Ulrike Wohr, "Discourses on Media and Modernity: Criticism of Japanese Women's Magazines" in Ulrike Wohr, Barbara Hamill Sato, and Sadami Suzuki, eds., *Gender and Modernity: Rereading Japanese Women's Magazines* (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese, 1998), 15–37.

54. Some rural women shared magazines with their friends. See, for example, Miyake Kiyoko, "Watashitachi no ichinichi" (A day in our lives), *Fujin asahi* (July 1950): 45.

55. Itagaki Kuniko, *Shōwa senzen, senchūki no nōson seikatsu: zasshi 'ie no hikari' ni miru* (A look at daily life in farming villages in the prewar and wartime periods through the magazine *Ie no hikari*), (Tokyo: Sanreishobō, 1992), vii.

56. See, for example, Kusuhara Shigeru, "Tsuzurikata no jyōzu ni naru hō" (How to become skilled at writing), *Ie no hikari* (February 1937): 224–45, reprinted in *Ie no hikari* (Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 1993), vol. 58.

57. Saiki Sachi, "Bibyō shinryōhō no kōhyō" (A report on how to cure nasal illnesses), *Ie no hikari* (December 1936): 190, reprinted in *Ie no hikari* (Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 1993), vol. 58. For father figures, see, for example, Yunoki Uma, "Enpitsu no monogatari" (The tale of the pencil), *Ie no hikari* (November 1932): 192–98, reprinted in *Ie no hikari* (Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 1993), vol. 34.

58. Kimura Tsuneyoshi, "Nihon zasshi hattatsu shi (2)" (A history of the development of Japanese magazines), in *Sōgō janarizumu kōza*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Naigai shuppan, 1992), 245. Mochizuki Yuriko, who was born in Yamanashi Prefecture in 1900, also claims to have bought the first edition of the feminist magazine *Seitō* (Bluestocking) when she was a child. See Mochizuki Yuriko, in Okada, ed., *Kaze ni mukatta onnatachi*, 33–34.

59. Akiyama Kunio, "Bōgyaku America no seitai to hataraku" (Working with the true nature of the American tyranny); Fujimatsu Seishiro, "Tairiku no hanayome wo tazunete" (Visiting the

brides of the continent); Egawa Ryō, "Imorui zōsan no kyūsho" (The secret to increasing the yield of tubers); Katō Takeo, "Wa ga chi, wa ga tsuchi" (Our blood, our soil); and Kageyama Kume, "Kyūkyū sankakukin" (Emergency triangle bandages), all in *Ie no hikari* (March 1943): 26–29, 58–66, 62–67, 68–71, 86–87, reprinted in *Ie no hikari* (Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 1993), vol. 91.

60. Various authors, *Ie no hikari* (July 1944): 1–23, 26–33, reprinted in *Ie no hikari* (Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 1993), vol. 20.

61. Itagaki Kuniko, "Sōryoku sentaisei to nichijō seikatsu: nōson" (Total war and everyday life: Farming villages), in Hayakawa Noriyo, ed., *Sensō, bōryoku to josei* (War, violence, and women), vol. 2: Gunkoku no onnatachi (Women of the wartime state), 144–72.

62. See, for example, Tanaka Tetsuko, "Making Balloon Bombs," in Haruko Taya and Theodore F. Cook, eds. and trans., *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1993), 187–92.

63. See, for example, Matsumaru Keiko et al., "Fujinyō sweater to cardigan" (Women's sweaters and cardigans); Koike Chieko, "Akikuchi ni kiru blouse to skirt" (Blouses and skirts to start off the fall season); Waseda University Press advertisement; and Tokyo School of Handicrafts, "Yōsō" (Western-style sewing) advertisement, all in *Ie no hikari* (September 1953): 212–17, 220–24, 127, 167.

64. Ōno Fumiko, *Watashitachi no ichinichi* (A day in our lives), *Fujin asahi* (July 1950), 40 (my translation).

65. Ōno, *Watashitachi no ichinichi*, 38.

66. Ōno, *Watashitachi no ichinichi*, 40 (my translation).

67. Mizoue Yasuko, *Nihon no teihen* (Japan's base), (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1958), 11.

68. Benjamin C. Duke, *The History of Modern Japanese Education* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 160–61.

69. Duke, *The History of Modern Japanese Education*, 162, 170.

70. Maeda Takashi, *Onna ga ie wo tsugu toki* (When women continued the family), (Suita: Kansai University Press, 1992), 5–6.

71. Maeda, *Onna ga ie wo tsugu toki*, 4–5.

72. Kubota Ken'ichi, "'Soaking' Model for Learning: Analyzing Japanese Learning/Teaching Process from a Socio-Historical Perspective," Kansai University publication, Education Resources Information Center (April 28, 2007): 1–6.

73. James McLendon, "The Office: Way Station or Blind Alley?" in David W. Plath, ed., *Work and Life Course in Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 156–82.

74. See, for example, Inaba, *Gokuhin no mura no kurashi*.