Suzanne Hall Vogel, with Steven K. Vogel

Suzanne Hall Vogel's book, *The Japanese Family in Transition: From the Professional Housewife Ideal to the Dilemmas of Choice*, is a humanly rendered and often poignant exploration of the place of the professional housewife (*sengyō* shufu) in Japanese over the past half-century. Vogel's study examines the still salient but rapidly waning influence of the post-War *sengyō* shufu ideal in Japanese society. Drawing on decades of professional and personal interactions with a group of Japanese women and their respective families, Vogel reveals the considerable variation in individual experiences and divergent household trajectories that are often elided under the label, 'middle class'.

Vogel's professional training and career as a mental health clinician at Harvard University's Health Services provides a 'psychosocial perspective' (p. 18) that runs throughout the book. Two years of research in Japan in the late 1950s followed by interactions with Japanese families in Cambridge, Massachusetts, short trips to Japan, and several longer, funded visits to Tokyo in the mid-1970s and late 1980s allowed Vogel to maintain her interest in and personal contact with key informants-turned-friends. From the time of her initial Tokyo visit until the mid-2000s, Vogel observes how these women negotiate their roles and adapt to the changes and challenges of later life. Vogel also becomes acquainted with the children of these women and witnesses how the generations that followed the 'new middle class' enter adulthood in a Japan very different from the one in which their parents found employment, married and started families. The result is an accessibly written monograph that resonates with contemporary studies of Japanese women and family life, while reflecting the rewards and challenges of long ethnographic engagement.

The bulk of the book is a detailed discussion and reflection on the lives of three women—Tanaka Hanae, Itou Taeko and Suzuki Mieko—housewives from three of the six original households to whom the author and her then husband, Ezra Vogel, were introduced to in 1958 at the start of his two-year study of white-collar households in 'Mamachi,' a 'bedburb' on Tokyo's expanding urban fringe. The Mamachi study was later published under the title, *Japan's New Middle Class* (1963). Alongside other post-War ethnographies of urban Japan—notably Dore's *City Life in Japan* (1958) and Plath's *The After Hours* (1964)—it described at an important historical juncture in which young white-collar professionals and their families were emerging amidst an older social matrix dominated by landowners, small businessmen and independent professionals.
In the decades that followed, this salaried middle class with their attendant lifestyles, family patterns, and consumption habits held important symbolic sway over how many Japanese evaluated their own lives. Moreover, this social segment influenced the international community's assessment of Japan and its post-War achievements.

The first chapter of *The Japanese Family in Transition* addresses Suzanne Vogel's sustained interest in Japanese family life and gender role, while lightly sketching the author's own personal life and career trajectory. Vogel reflects on the Mamachi fieldwork and the social dynamics within families that initially caught her attention as a researcher, wife and young mother living in Tokyo. For *sengyō shufu* like those profiled in that first study, marriage constituted a form of 'lifetime employment' (p. 9) that paralleled the husband's own positioning in the corporate world. Vogel was particularly attentive to the strong mother-child bonds she saw fostered in the families with whom she and her husband maintained contact. Early in her career, she joined other researchers in trying to better understand how, on the one hand, patriarchal legacies contributed to women's social subordination in Japan, while generating strengths and complementary responsibilities in separate gendered spheres on the other. This analytic orientation forced Vogel to weather critiques from Japanese feminists in the mid-1970s. Vogel credits Doi Takeo's work on the concept of *amae* for helping her to better appreciate the nature and nuances of dependence within the cultural context of Japan. Indeed, Vogel's debt to Doi is clearly felt through her numerous references to his research and findings throughout the text.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the book focus on the life stories of Tanaka, Itou and Suzuki, respectively. Mrs. Tanaka, mother of five, was the wife of a successful physician, who embraced the role of *sengyō shufu*. Respectful of her spouse and skilled in the domestic arts, she and her husband nevertheless lived 'separate lives' (p. 59). After her husband's unexpected death, she shows considerable fortitude and flexibility in adjusting to widowhood. She moves in with her son's family, brightens her wardrobe and gains public recognition with her creative efforts in dry flower arrangement. Of the three women Vogel profiles, Mrs. Tanaka most closely embodied the precepts of 'good wife, wise mother'. Mrs. Itou, whose life is discussed in Chapter 3, stands in sharp contrast to Mrs. Tanaka. Hailing from a fishing village and a merchant family, Mrs. Itou struggled with an unstable family life as a child. An only daughter, she took it upon herself to supplement her education and even 'arrange' her own marriage to Tokuzou, a college graduate who was subsequently adopted by her family as a son-in-law (*mukoyōshi*). Vogel speculates that this particular status may have contributed to Tokuzou's less assertive role in family affairs. Although aspects of Mrs. Itou's life set her apart from many of the women around her,