Interracial Intimacy in Japan: Western Men and Japanese Women, 1543–1900.

By Gary P. Leupp. Continuum, London and New York, 2003. ISBN 0-8264-6074-7. 313 pp. £85 (cloth).

This book is a historical analysis of intimate relations, and attitudes towards those relations, between European and American men and Japanese women during the period up to the early Meiji era. Anthropologists interested in mating behavior and in ideas about race and prejudice will find much of interest here. Any doubts as to the frivolous nature of the topic of Leupp's book are immediately removed by the apparent context of the very first intimate contact between a European man and a Japanese woman. In 1543, a Chinese ship with several Portuguese crew members landed at Tanegashima island off southern Kyushu. A later document records that, attempting to reproduce the muskets carried by the Portuguese, a swordsmith on the island gave his daughter to be married to the Portuguese captain.

The major difficulty with the topic of this book is the nature of the sources. Only in the 19th century do men begin to write in any detail about their relationships with Japanese women; and only one woman, Setsuko Koizumi, the wife of Lafcadio Hearn, left a published record of her marriage during the period considered by Leupp (p. 11). Furthermore, the nature of the subject matter means that few documentary records can be taken at face value. This last problem is well illustrated by the diary of the American teenager Clara Whitney who was in Japan in the early Meiji era. Clara could write with infatuation about a certain Japanese man being "the ideal beau of my fifteenth birthday" but at the same time claim of the marriage of a British woman to a Japanese man that "it disgusted me that a member of the Anglo-Saxon race should contrive such intimate relations with a Mongolian" (p. 162). The author attempts to circumvent these problems by providing extensive background on changing attitudes of Westerners and Japanese to 'race' and racial mixing in general. These sections are one of the major contributions of this volume which provides a useful history of ideas of 'race' prior to 1900.

In the Preface, Leupp (p. xi) informs us that he has attempted to avoid "the pompous jargon and pretentious citation of 'theory' that surround much fashionable ('post-modernist') scholarship." Reading this book, however, I soon found myself wishing for some theoretical framework with which to structure the long string of (Western) boy meets (Japanese) girl stories. The back cover of the book informs us that "Much has been written about the relationships between European men and local women in Asia, Africa, and Latin America during the heyday of western imperialism" but Leupp gives us little discussion of that literature and little indication of how such relationships differed from those in Japan.

Despite these problems, Leupp has done a great deal of reading in the Japanese and Western sources and this book is a scholarly and comprehensive account of its topic, although it is unfortunate that the *Japan Times* seems to be the main source of the author's information about prehistoric Japan. In a cheaper, paperback edition this work would deservedly find a wide audience yet in one way it makes for rather depressing reading. Most of the intimate relations discussed here ended in disappointment or even tragedy, which often continued until the children of the liaisons. As Leupp (pp. 166–167) notes, "The beauty, exoticism, and availability of Japanese women could not, in the case of many foreign men, compensate for the lack of emotional resonance that they expected to experience" Without relevant sources one can only speculate, but the same was perhaps true of many Japanese women. What further comparative research could tell us is how this tension between beauty and exoticism and emotional resonance differed between Japan and other more colonial contexts.

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