

# Yamada Waka and Her Place in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Feminism

Rika Saito (Western Michigan University)

Date: June 23rd, 2016 (Thu)

Time: 6:30-8:00PM

Place: Room 10-301, 3F, Building 10, Sophia University Yotsuya Campus



Yamada Waka (1879-1957) was a first-wave Japanese feminist who was active in the first half of the twentieth century. Waka is perhaps best known as a contributor to the Motherhood Protection Debate in 1918-1919 and as a popular social critic through her personal advice column “Josei sōdan” in the *Asahi Newspaper* and *Shufu no tomo* before and after WWII. She was also a founder of social welfare organizations for single mothers and their children. Despite this social activism on behalf of women, her patriotic and conservative maternalist views may raise questions about whether or not Waka should be considered a true feminist. I argue that Waka’s contribution to Japanese feminism in the early twentieth century can be seen by the formulation of new feministic frames called “transmissive feminism” and “transpacific feminism.” I also introduce her tragic life in the US and discuss the strength she showed in overcoming the hardships she experienced.

Rika Saito is Associate Professor of Japanese in the Department of World Languages and Literatures at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo Michigan. She earned her Ph.D. in Japanese studies and her graduate certificate in gender studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research interests include gender and feminist literary criticism in modern Japanese texts, language and gender, and language policy. Her publication on Yamada Waka includes “Transmissive Feminism: The Evolutive Mind As Displayed in the Overseas Letters of Yamada Kakichi to Yamada Waka” In *New perspectives on Japanese language learning, linguistics, and culture*. Chapter 8, University of Hawaii, National Foreign Language Resource Center Publications (NFLRCP), 2013; 「山田わか&嘉吉の協働と思想 その1~6」『ことば』第31(2010)~36(2015)号. “Taishō roman no unda feminisuto: Yamada Waka & Kakichi no kyōdo to shisō, sono 1~6 (“Feminists born in the period of Taishō romance: Collaborative thought and work of Yamada Waka & Kakichi,” series no. 1-6, *Kotoba*. Volume 31 (2010)-36 (2015).