

## **5. The Life of Estelle Lumpkin and Her Love of Japan**

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### **Introduction**

Over the past five years I have primarily investigated Western men, who have lived and/or visited the island of Shikoku or Tokushima prefecture during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and have described their activities, experiences, and observations in other papers. One example is Frederick Starr, an anthropologist professor from the University of Chicago who made the Shikoku pilgrimage in 1917 and 1921. Another is Henry Noel, who travelled with a friend to the four prefectures in Shikoku in 1933. Another is William Alexander Finnin, who lived in Tokushima city between 1949 and 1958 and wrote extensively about Japan and Tokushima for The Mainichi newspaper. I have also examined the Children's Peace Memorial Monument in Tokushima city, which could be constructed due to the cooperation and support of such foreign military staff as Edward E. Mueller, who was stationed in Tokushima after World War II. Other Western men such as Wenceslau de Moraes, the former Portuguese diplomat who lived in Tokushima city from 1913 to 1929, and the German prisoners, who were interned in Tokushima and Naruto city between 1914 and 1920, have been thoroughly researched and described by other people. However, there have also been numerous women from the United States and other countries around the world who have lived in and/or visited Shikoku or Tokushima prefecture during this same period. Yet why have their lives and contributions to the local society been generally overlooked and not examined? By using extremely limited materials in English collected from various sources in the United States and presenting recently discovered materials in Japanese, this paper will describe the life, character, and contributions of Estelle Lumpkin, an American Presbyterian missionary who lived in Tokushima city from 1912 to 1942.

### **The Beginnings of Christianity in Japan and Tokushima**

For hundreds of years all Christian activities were strictly forbidden in Japan, but the situation changed for the better in 1855 when Townsend Harris - a Christian himself - was assigned to be the first American diplomat to Japan. It is said that "he

made sure that no restrictions against Christianity would be included in the treaties” between the United States and Japan (Spearman 39). Gradually, Christianity obtained a footing in Japan, expanded throughout the country, and reached a pivotal year in 1872 when “meetings reached a high degree of intensity” and “a noteworthy meeting of missionaries took place in Yokohama” (Spearman 43). Then, when the Iwakura mission – a diplomatic trip to the United States and Europe between 1871 and 1873 of leading members of the Meiji government – returned to Japan they implemented new laws allowing for religious activities and Christianity experienced another surge in size and popularity. As a result, more missionaries were sent to Japan to engage in proselytizing work that led to churches and religious schools being created in not only urban areas, but also in rural places such as Shikoku.

The first Christian missionaries to Shikoku belonged to the Christian Missionary Society (CMS). For example, Reverend Henry Evington came to Tokushima in 1880 and started the first Protestant Church (Nihon 8). Then, in 1890, Rev. William Pengelly Buncombe, also of the CMS, was assigned to serve in Tokushima city. In 1899, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Tokushima began their activities with the arrival of Miss Florence D. Patton in 1897 and a church was built in 1900. Yet perhaps the most well-known Presbyterian missionary was Charles Alexander Logan who came to Tokushima with his wife Martha in 1902 and served in Tokushima until 1938. In the spring of 1913, W.W. Wheeler visited Tokushima and described the Christian missionaries in the city:

Tokushima is a pretty Japanese city of seventy thousand. There are only ten white people here, and they are men, women, and children belonging to the missionary families...The Presbyterian missionaries here are of excellent ability and enthused with their work. (Wheeler 91)

It was during this period of growth for Christianity during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that Estelle Lumpkin accepted a missionary assignment to come to Japan and eventually made Japan her home for approximately forty years.

## Life of Estelle Lumpkin

On September 12, 1879, Estelle Lumpkin - the youngest of six children - was born in Alabama but was raised at her father's farm in Texas. Little is known about her childhood, but it seems that "while teaching in a country school, [her] undaunted spirit urged her to give her life for mission service in the foreign field" (Kirtland 9). Then, in 1911, at the age of thirty-two, she was ordained to be a missionary overseas, and in August received her certificate appointing her as a missionary.



(right: photo - September 1911) On September 10<sup>th</sup> Lumpkin boarded the S.S. Monteagle and left the United States for Japan. She reached Tokushima where she lived temporarily before moving to Kochi city where she helped a fellow missionary Annie Dowd at a Japanese girl's school but went to Tokyo for some time leaving Dowd all the work (Minutes 32). Sometime later, Lumpkin returned to Shikoku, but instead of going back to Kochi she settled down in Tokushima city where she lived and participated actively in the community for the next thirty years only taking a couple of furloughs back to the United States during that period.<sup>1</sup> For example, on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1914, she sailed from Hong Kong on the S.S. Monteagle and arrived at the port of Vancouver. It is not clear when she returned to Japan or Tokushima, but she was living in Tokushima by the autumn of 1915. Two years later, a new hall was built in the center of the city where "Miss Florence Patton, Miss Annie Patton, Miss Estelle Lumpkin, and Miss Maria Atkinson with their Bible women conduct[ed] meetings for women, factory girls and children" as well as held the "Tokushima English Night School" (Iglehart 84). Then, in the spring of 1917, Lumpkin went to the U.S. again and while in Minnesota was "shunted from doctor to doctor for various examinations" and while in New York "never tired of walking up and down the famous thoroughfare" (Kirtland 15~16). On August 21, 1918, she returned to Tokushima and taught at a school for one year. In 1921, various people belonging to the Christian Women's Association were able to create the Tokushima branch of the Japan Christian Women's Organization (日本基督婦人橘風会徳

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<sup>1</sup> In "Awa Yōgaku shi no kenkyū (阿波洋学の研究, 2007) the author Sakō Shōji (佐光昭二), gives a description of Lumpkin, but incorrectly states that she came to Tokushima in Meiji 35 (1902). The correct year is 1912. (pp.680-681)

島支部), but were unable to get it up and running due a lack of funds. However, this dilemma was solved with money that was raised at a bazaar held by members in July 1921.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Reverend Scott was appointed to be Head of Family Life and Lumpkin became the Head of Public Morals (Nihon 19). During the following year, Lumpkin along with Ms. Imazu ran a group for children every day and ran a cooking class twice for the wives of military and teacher husbands (Sixty-first Annual Report 65). Then, in 1927, upon the request of Tokushima city a “Consultation Center for Women” was made within the branch and in 1930 this became the “Women’s Home” (婦人のホーム) where women and children could receive support in their daily lives.

### **Taking care of Shizu and going to the United States**

One encounter that would affect Lumpkin’s life forever was meeting Matsuoka (maiden name –Takechi) Shizu. In a biography about Lumpkin, there is a description of how Lumpkin, sometimes known as ‘Lumpy’ or in Japanese, ‘Rampukin sensei’, first met Shizu:

One day a high school girl came to ask ‘Rampukin Sensei’ to coach her in English. “Well,” said Lumpy, “you know I came to Japan to teach the Bible, so I can’t teach only English.” “That’s all right,” replied the girl, “I would be glad for you to honorably teach me the Bible, too.” Thus began a happy relationship developing that of teacher and pupil to one akin to mother and daughter. (Kirtland 19)

However, many months later Lumpkin heard that Shizu had tuberculosis and did not want her to be sent far away for treatment, so Lumpkin took her in and looked after her. Fortunately, Shizu overcame her illness and Lumpkin requested to Shizu’s father “that Shizu remain with her as a helper in the evangelistic work. So, it was arranged that her father would continue to give Shizu her monthly allowance while residing with Lumpy” (Kirtland 20). However, an even more dramatic change in Shizu’s life occurred when Lumpkin decided to take her to the United States. On June 19, 1928, they departed from the port in Kobe city on the Tenyo-maru and some weeks later arrived at the port of San Francisco. From there, they went to the Los Angeles World’s Sunday

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<sup>2</sup> A description and photograph of the bazaar is in the July 9<sup>th</sup> edition of Tokushima Nichi Nichi newspaper.

School convention (held from July 11~18) as delegates and for Lumpkin to use Shizu as an advertisement for Foreign Missions.<sup>3</sup> For one year they travelled around the United States and spoke at various events and since Shizu was such a rare site, what she said and wore was often described in the local newspapers. For example, the August 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Kerrville Mountain-Sun (Texas) newspaper states:

A demonstration of how Japanese receive guests into their homes was given Friday afternoon at a women`s meeting at Westminster by Miss Estelle Lumpkin, missionary to Japan, and Miss Shizu Takechi, Japanese girl visiting this country... [Shizu] told of her impressions of this country and described it as “so big” and having big-hearted people...

In the October 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Waco New-Tribune (Texas) there was an article entitled “Japanese Girl Features Presbyterian W.A Meet”, which states:

Talks by Miss Estelle Lumpkin, missionary to Japan, and her Japanese companion, Schiza [Shizu], were the features of the program at a meeting...Schiza, dressed in her native costume, flowered in oriental blue and wearing an obi or sash, designed in metalized gold and green, featuring the peacock design, sang “Jesus Loves Me” in her native language.

Then, on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1929, this article appeared in the Denton Record Chronicle (Texas):

“An evening in Japan” presented by Miss Estelle Lumpkin, a missionary in Japan for the past 17 years, and Miss Shizu Takechi, a native of Japan, was well received... After the service the speakers remained for talks with members...People were interested in Miss Takechi`s account of why she left the worship of idols and became a Christian 10 years ago. She, with Miss Lumpkin, will leave soon to study in White`s Bible School, New York, and from there return to Japan.

Several articles from April 1929 also describe events they spoke at. For example, one stated that Shizu used “perfect English” and was an “entertaining speaker” (Japanese Maiden). As well, “Shizu made a fine impression as she addressed various groups. Full of animation, she charmed the audiences by the forthright way in which she related

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<sup>3</sup> In Kirtland, “Lumpy” the author states that the convention was in 1927, but it was held in 1928.

incidents connected with her work...” (Kirtland 20). They returned to Japan and Tokushima the following year and Lumpkin continued her church activities and work in the community.

### **Working as a Teacher**

While Lumpkin lived in Tokushima city, she also spent many years teaching at schools in Tokushima and Kagawa prefecture. For example, she taught English conversation at Tokushima Middle School (徳島中学校), which was located by the present-day Tokushima Prefectural Government building between April 1919 and March 1920.<sup>4</sup> Then, according to school records, she was employed at Muya Girl's High School<sup>5</sup> (撫養女学高等学校) in Naruto city between December 28, 1935, and August 31, 1940. She would have most likely commuted by train from Tokushima to Muya station, however, the Tokushima Minpō newspaper claims that there were times when she made the fifteen-kilometer journey by foot (Nov 19, 1948). In 1983, a book was published commemorating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the high school and inside is a photograph of Lumpkin (see page 63 – left and center photo) as well as comments about Lumpkin from some of her former students. For example,

Ms. Estelle Lumpkin, a missionary from the United States, sometimes taught the second-year students with Mr. Kunitsugu Amano. Whenever I saw her on the train, she would call out to me as a student of Muya girl's high school. However, if we were not good with our intonation in class, she would tap the floor hard with her foot and correct our intonation. She was a very scary teacher but taught us diligently. (Uzushio 92)

Another person wrote,

I can't forget Ms. Lumpkin, who came from Tokushima to teach English conversation. For some reason, I have a strong memory of her wearing a *haori*<sup>6</sup> given to her by Mr. Kimura over her Western clothes, full of mischievousness and cheerfulness unique to foreigners. Even now, forty-two years later, I still remember the English conversation lessons taught by Ms. Lumpkin. (Uzushio

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<sup>4</sup> In 1933, the school was moved and is presently Tokushima Kenritsu Tokushima Jonan High School (徳島県立城南高等学校).

<sup>5</sup> This school is presently Tokushima Kenritsu Naruto Uzushio High School (徳島県立鳴門渦潮高等学校).

<sup>6</sup> A loose outer garment resembling a coat and extending to the knee.

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And another former student wrote, “We had an English class with Ms. Lumpkin, who was smartly dressed in a flowery dress with an imposing figure” (Uzushio 106).

She also worked at Takamatsu High School of Commerce<sup>7</sup> approximately seventy kilometers away from Tokushima, unfortunately there are no details of her employment here, just a photograph of her in a 1942 graduation album called “Souvenir.” (see below far right)



### House Arrest and Internment During World War II

Life for all foreigners in Japan drastically changed with the bombing of Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. Shortly after this event the police arrived at Lumpkin’s home, took her to the police station and “informed her that that as an internee she must keep within the bounds of her own dwelling. Radio, letters, newspapers and visitors were all taboo” (Kirtland 25). Then, the following day police ransacked her house, took all her photographs, and questioned her about the contents of old letters that she had received from overseas. Sometime afterward Lumpkin was asked by the Swiss legation in Kobe if she would like to be evacuated, but she replied “No”, which made her the last Westerner to be in Tokushima during World War II. However, for the next ten months she was confined to her home with an “old dear farmer woman living in the backyard who was to buy food and help in any way that was needed” and only frogs in the pond at her house to talk to (Kirtland 25). Lumpkin said, “I endured this aloneness, but I had time for Bible study, prayer, and communion with the Lord, and the reading of

<sup>7</sup> Presently, the Department of Economics, Kagawa University.

many books even so there were times when I longed to see and talk with someone with skin on” (Haverford).

Then, in October 1942 Lumpkin was escorted by the police to Yokohama and interned at Camp Sumire, which had been an orphanage under the direction of Roman Catholic nuns.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, “the detectives and policemen were kind to their charges, often allowing their Japanese friends to bring gifts of food” (Kirtland 34). Shizu, her husband and children lived near the camp, so they were able to see and give Lumpkin food. In one source it is claimed that an old friend of Lumpkin, who had been the former vice-governor of Tokushima, but was now the mayor of Tokyo “frequently came to her relief with presents of eggs and fruit” (Kirtland 34), but the identity of this person cannot be confirmed. During her internment Lumpkin never lost hope nor was discouraged and “it was mainly due to Lumpkin’s joyous, intrepid spirit that refused to be discouraged, that life in the camp was endurable” (Kirtland 35). Even Lumpkin says about herself that I have been “blessed with a cheerful disposition, and I was able to cheer those who were despondent. I made many new friends. I also found time to have a little fun” (Haverford 5).

On September 13, 1943, she boarded the Teia Maru to return to the United States. However, the boat was severely overcrowded with four times the regular capacity and the food was bad and scarce. As a result, this initial part of their trip home was not enjoyable and many of the passengers suffered from food poisoning, but at the port of Maputo, the capital city of Mozambique, the passengers changed to the exchange ship Grisholm and from there enjoyed a much better ride and meals. Finally, on December 1<sup>st</sup>, after almost three months of sea travel, Lumpkin arrived at the port of New York and made her way to her hometown of Dallas, Texas, but she did not rest for long and started to participate in various speaking engagements. For example, in May 1944 she spoke about her thirty years of experience in Japan at the Oak Cliff Presbyterian Church and in June spoke at the First Presbyterian Church. The Burlington Daily Times of

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<sup>8</sup> “The Sumire Camp was established on December 9, 1941, in Tokyo for men only. On September 16, 1942, another group of men and women who had not been interned previously were brought into the Sumire Camp. As a result, all the men at Sumire were transferred in October 1942 to the newly established internment camp at Saitama (Urawa)...After October 5, 1942, only women were interned in the Sumire Camp.” (National Archives Camp Reports: Japan: Sumire Internment Camp <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/893055>)



August 18 states that, “One of the outstanding missionary messages of the conference was that of Miss Estelle Lumpkin, who was in a concentration camp in Japan for ten months.” Other talks that she gave are described in newspaper articles in January 1945 and September 1947.

### **Post-war visit to Tokushima**

Despite being back to the United States where she was born and grew up, Lumpkin longed to return to Japan - the country that she loved - and so during the summer of 1948 began preparing to go back to Japan.<sup>9</sup> In a letter dated August 8 Shizu says to acquaintances in the United States that “Our dream has come true. Lumpy is on her way to Japan...I know Lumpy is so happy over her coming and so are we” (Kirtland 44). By September 3<sup>rd</sup>, Lumpkin was staying with Shizu and her children at her father’s house in Shizuoka prefecture. A few months later Lumpkin wrote about an upcoming trip to Shikoku. She said that on November 15th after spending a night in Osaka, she will go “to Takamatsu, Marugame, spend one night there – then over to Tokushima, and Shishikui, Kochi – Matsuyama and home in two weeks.” She continues the description of her trip to Shikoku and arrival at Tokushima train station in another letter:

We got to Takamatsu, saw some old friends...then over the mountains to Tokushima where the “gang” was at the station in the rain. The loudspeaker was calling for me. Five in the afternoon, you would have thought a movie star was landing at Grand Central. Candid cameras flashing, newspaper reporters interviewing me...for 16 days we scarcely slept nor ate in the same place.  
(Austin Seminary Archives)

She was greatly moved by this large welcome, which was so unexpected, and said to a local newspaper reporter, “We were separated by the war, but to see the old, healthy faces again after so many years is very moving. I hope to visit many places in the prefecture for about a week to renew old acquaintances and talk with each other” (Tokushima Minpō, Nov. 19, 1948, Atashi, 1948). According to her, those whose came to welcome her back were determined to wipe out all the shame of her having been

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<sup>9</sup> In “Awa Yōgaku shi no kenkyū” (阿波洋学の研究, 2007), (p.681) the author copies incorrect information from “Komatsushima Kyōkai Sōritsu Hachiju shunen shi” (小松島教会創立八十周年誌、1993. p.22) that states in 1946 Lumpkin came as a stowaway dressed as a man with the Allied Forces, but there is no evidence of this. She came to Japan and Tokushima in 1948.

taken away under guard in 1942 (Lumpy 52).

One week later, on November 22nd, a welcome party for her was held at the Tokushima city hall. It is estimated that approximately fifty people including the mayor of Tokushima, Hara Kikutaro attended the event. In fact, Hara gave Lumpkin some landscape paintings that he had done along with some other gifts (Lumpy 54, The Latest, 1949; Rajo, 1948). After Lumpkin's two-week visit to various places around Shikoku, she returned to Shizuoka prefecture and lived with Shizu, her husband and two daughters, Kazuko and Akiko, in a 700-year-old thatched roof farmhouse until 1954. Information regarding her life during this period is scarce, but in a letter dated January 1, 1949, she stated that Shizu was getting new tatami and making a bed for her to use. Then, about a month later Lumpkin wrote to friends in the U.S. saying how cold it is at the house but that it might be possible to get a small electric heater and boasting how great Shizu's daughters are. She wrote, "In this part of Nitta Kannami, Mishima and Numazu, there has never been a missionary before and think of poor old me – all by myself" (Lumpy 55). Regarding church work that she did in the area that of Shizuoka prefecture the "100-year history of the Mishima Church" states that on October 18, 1948, she attended the preschool mother's meeting and worship services to teach "infant discipline" and hymns in English and on February 3, 1950, she helped with Bible class. As well, she held meetings and led the Women's Association. Sometime in 1954 she returned to the United States, spent eight years at an old-age home in Florida, and then in 1962 moved the Presbyterian Home at High Point, North Carolina. She passed away at the age of eighty-six on April 21, 1965.

### **People's Opinions of Estelle Lumpkin**

While Lumpkin lived in Tokushima and other places in Japan, she was active in the community with her church work, Women's Association and was a teacher at various schools. Yet there were many other Western women who did the same while in Tokushima or Shikoku. What set Lumpkin apart from the others? What did people think of her? To the Japanese, anyone from outside Japan will have characteristics or habits that might be surprising, but it is said that "in Tokushima, 'Rampukin Sensei' was an outstanding personality whose oddities were overlooked because she was so *omoshiroi*

(interesting)” (Kirtland 14). Fellow missionaries were amazed at her never-ceasing compassion and said, “In the course of her long missionary life, she has taken in many of the ill and unfortunate and treated them as her brothers, her sisters, and her mother” (Erickson). One report describes her character by stating that “her merry face and sparkling eyes indicated the laughter that came so easily and the optimism that permeated all she said and did” (World 281). Even during the extremely difficult experience of being in the internment camp during World War II it is said that “In all the trying situations occasioned by restrictions to which Miss Lumpkin had not heretofore been subject, her good humour, keen wit, and penetration of the Japanese nature, saved the day, not only for herself but for her fellow internees. Nothing could down her buoyant spirit” (She Came Home 313). As well, Reverend Kosumi Masaru of the Komatsushima Church, part of the United Church of Christ in Japan, south of Tokushima city, said that although she was humorous, she had a sentimental side that made her susceptible to tears, and there were many times when she put a handkerchief to her face and cried himself to sleep and that despite being confined in her home, she was pro-Japanese and never said a single bad thing about the Japanese (Awa 1969).

## **Conclusion**

This paper has briefly presented the life and activities of the American Presbyterian missionary, Estelle Lumpkin, who lived in Japan for approximately forty years. Although there were many other female Christian missionaries who were stationed in Tokushima during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lumpkin seems to be the most prominent and remembered. For example, Charles Logan and his wife Martha stayed longer in Tokushima than Lumpkin, but Martha’s activities and contributions seem to be overshadowed by her husband. Another unique feature of Lumpkin is her personality and character. She was constantly full of cheer, had a great sense of humour, and was always willing to take care of others such as Shizu. It is due to these attributes that people were attracted to her and remember her. Lumpkin’s case is also fascinating because unlike many other Westerners who lived in Tokushima before World War II not only did she come back to Tokushima for a visit when the war was over, but she spent six years living in Japan before returning to the United States to retire. In academic

research regarding Westerners who visited or lived in Tokushima or Shikoku during the 20<sup>th</sup> century most of the focus thus far has been on men such as Wenceslau de Moraes, Frederick Starr, the German prisoners of war and William A. Finnin, but it is important to not overlook or ignore, the life and contributions of women like Estelle Lumpkin, who truly loved Japan and was loved by those who knew her.

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