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Hiratsuka Haruko (Raichō)

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KUMKUM ROY

HIRATSUKA HARUKO (1886–1971), pioneering Japanese feminist. Hiratsuka took the pen name “Raichō” (meaning “snow grouse”) when she founded the women's literary magazine *Seitō* (Bluestocking) in 1911. Her manifesto-like poem in *Seitō*—“In the beginning, Woman was the Sun”—symbolizes Japan's self-affirming feminism of the 1910s and 1920s, the era of the New Woman. Feminists in the 1970s claimed Hiratsuka as a foremother for this inspirational manifesto. At the center of feminist activities for a decade, Hiratsuka withdrew from leadership roles in 1921 but nevertheless contributed to the consumer, birth-control, and women's arts movements before World War II. After 1945 she devoted herself to peace organizations. Other feminists are better known for specific causes—Ichikawa Fusae for women's suffrage, Oku Mumeo for consumerism, Yamakawa Kikue for workers' rights, and Katō Shidzue for reproductive rights—but Hiratsuka, involved in each of these movements, inspired other women's activism.

The well-educated daughter of elite parents, Hiratsuka boycotted classes that stressed the official “good wife, wise mother” ideology taught in girls' high schools. After college she became involved with a married novelist and, for unclear reasons, acquiesced in a failed plan of double suicide, for which she was vilified in the press. Later she built on her notoriety to found *Seitō*. Hiratsuka again generated scandal when she, along with a devoted female friend (details of this relationship are unclear in her memoirs) and another woman, spent a night in Tokyo's brothel district. On other occasions they were observed drinking alcoholic beverages—primarily a male privilege at the time.

Criticized as a “Nora,” Hiratsuka countered that Henrik Ibsen's protagonist in *A Doll's House* (1879) was hardly a New Woman, because she failed to plan her future before leaving her marriage. Though Hiratsuka stressed self-assurance, she also emphasized women's agency through motherhood. In 1914 she abandoned her work as *Seitō* editor and moved in with the artist Okumura Hiroshi. Concerned about married women's loss of rights, she cohabited with Okumura as partners—though they married in 1941, lest

their son's illegitimacy cause him to be drafted as a foot soldier. The birth of two children focused her attention on issues of maternity, and from 1916 to 1919 she engaged in the “motherhood protection” debate among Japanese feminists, taking the view that motherhood, as women's service to the state, should receive monetary support.

In 1919 Hiratsuka recruited two young women, Ichikawa Fusae, an educator and journalist, and Oku Mumeo, a college woman who had worked as a textile laborer, to found the women's rights organization Shin Fujin Kyōkai (New Women's Association or NWA). The NWA lobbied for two pieces of feminist legislation: a law to allow betrothed women and wives to divorce men who tested positive for syphilis and a law to lift legal restrictions on women's participation in political meetings. Later the NWA added women's suffrage to its goals. Tensions between Hiratsuka and Ichikawa led to their resignation in 1921, but Oku struggled on, succeeding in changing the law prohibiting women's attendance at political meetings. Hiratsuka did not again take a leadership role in feminist movements until after World War II, but her inspiration of numerous other leaders and her iconoclastic rejection of the “good wife and wise mother” paradigm made her a pioneer of Japanese feminism.

[See also Ichikawa Fusae; Japan; and Kato Shizue.]

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BARBARA MOLONY

HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY. The growth in women's history and, more recently, in gender studies, and the prominence of women within the historical profession makes it easy to forget that for much of its own history, the discipline (or, in earlier periods, the practice) of history writing was largely framed in a way that excluded active participation from females. That being said, this exclusion was far from absolute, and recent research has illustrated various ways in which women both contributed to historical scholarship and proved attentive students of the past—albeit often in different ways than their male counterparts.

There are examples from very early times of women historians, as well as women memoir writers and biographers. Ban Zhao, a Chinese woman of the late first century C.E., undertook, with imperial approval, the completion of the