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# Women's Rights and the Japanese State, 1880 to 1925

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CHAPTER SEVEN

*Women's Rights and  
the Japanese State, 1880–1925*

Barbara Molony

Recent scholarship on the relationship between women and the state in Japan has approached this question from a variety of perspectives. Among other subjects, scholars have looked at women as targets of government policies;<sup>1</sup> agents of specific parts of the state;<sup>2</sup> participants in organized or institutionalized politics or move-

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1. For representative works in English, see Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women, 1890–1910," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 151–74; Janet Hunter, "Factory Legislation and Employer Resistance: The Abolition of Night Work in the Cotton-Spinning Industry," in *Japanese Management in Historical Perspective*, ed. T. Yui and K. Nakagawa (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1989), pp. 243–72; Yoshiko Miyake, "Doubling Expectations: Motherhood and Women's Factory Work Under State Management in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s," in *Recreating Japanese Women*; and Sharon L. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 267–95.

2. In English, see, e.g., Sumiko Otsubo, "Engendering Eugenics: Feminists and Marriage Restriction Legislation in the 1920s," in *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, ed. Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, forthcoming 2005); Barbara Molony and Kathleen Molony, *Ichikawa Fusae: A Political Biography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming); and Kathleen Uno, *Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth-Century Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999).

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ments;<sup>3</sup> members of groups that interacted with state power;<sup>4</sup> and objects of discourses about women and the state.<sup>5</sup> This chapter explores the relationship of women and the state by examining discourses on “women’s rights” in the late nineteenth century (especially the 1880s and 1890s) and the interwar era (especially the 1910s and 1920s). Rights were a frequent topic of discussion among Japanese intellectuals and political activists, including feminist advocates, throughout this period.<sup>6</sup> But the notion of rights underwent a change as the structure of the state, and Japanese people’s understanding of it, changed. Indeed, the discussion of rights in all their forms constituted a key element in the building of the modern Japanese nation.

Possession of rights assumes a degree of ownership of the state and thus the ability to influence it. The struggle for women’s rights,

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3. See, e.g., Vera Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labor, and Activism, 1900–1937* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Helen M. Hopper, *A New Woman of Japan: A Political Biography of Katō Shidzue* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996); and Yukiko Matsukawa and Kaoru Tachi, “Women’s Suffrage and Gender Politics in Japan,” in *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan (New York: New York University Press, 1994), pp. 171–84.

4. See, e.g., Sheldon Garon, “The World’s Oldest Debate? Prostitution and the State in Imperial Japan, 1900–1945,” *American Historical Review* 93, no. 3 (1993): 710–33; idem, “Women’s Groups and the Japanese State: Contending Approaches to Political Integration, 1890–1945,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993): 5–42; and Noriyo Hayakawa, “Feminism and Nationalism in Japan, 1868–1945,” *Journal of Women’s History* 7, no. 4 (1995): 108–20.

5. For some works in English, see, e.g., Barbara Molony, “The 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law and the Changing Discourse on Gender,” *SIGNS* 20, no. 2 (1995): 268–302; Kathleen Uno, “The Death of Good Wife, Wise Mother?” in *Postwar Japan as History*, ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 293–322; and Laurel Rasplica Rodd, “Yosano Akiko and the Tai-shō Debate over the ‘New Woman,’” in *Recreating Japanese Women*, pp. 175–98.

6. I also discuss some of the issues taken up in this chapter in Barbara Molony, “Women’s Rights, Feminism, and Suffragism in Japan, 1870–1925,” *Pacific Historical Review* 69, no. 4 (2000): 639–62. Although the term “feminism” (*feminizumu*) was introduced in Japan in a 1910 article in *Hōgaku kyōkai zasshi* (Journal of the Association of Legal Studies), I use the term to refer to a broad range of discourses that, beginning in the early Meiji period, supported women’s rights or the improvement of women’s condition or status. For more on the introduction of the term “feminism,” see Sōgō joseishi kenkyūkai, ed., *Nihon josei no rekishi* (History of Japanese women) (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1993), pp. 192–93.

overlooked by many historians in the past, has recently captured the imagination of historians as an instance of resistance against the state. The notion of resistance must, however, be understood in relation to its converse—resistance is always articulated in relationship to power.<sup>7</sup> Rights both embrace and resist power. A stress on resistance appears to offer points of view about women's relationship to the state vastly different from a stress on accommodation. Yet underlying the two emphases is an assumption that the state existed as an established entity that women might challenge or come to accept but could not change. Scholarship on women's rights tends to see the "state" as a separate and distinct entity with which women sought alliance to achieve shared goals, against which they struggled for justice, or in which they sought membership.<sup>8</sup> In fact, however, the contours of the modern Japanese state were not yet firmly established in the late nineteenth century. Accordingly, early discussions of "rights" in the 1880s and 1890s were based on a more imprecise definition of that term than they were in the 1920s and took place in a more fluid political situation. Indeed, nineteenth-century feminists hoped that their struggle for rights would help shape the very nature of the state.

As the central government apparatus grew stronger and its functions became more defined, the focus of women's rights discourse shifted. Beginning more as a demand for inclusion in the emerging state and civil society of late nineteenth-century Japan, feminist discourse at first centered on obtaining respect for women as human beings, an attitude that activists viewed as a prerequisite for women's participation in the public sphere. In the 1910s and 1920s, women's advocates intensified the call for political rights while advancing the notion of rights as state-enforced protections from institutionalized patriarchy (both state-supported patriarchy and the everyday version of domineering husbands) and safeguards against

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7. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), p. 95.

8. For representative works in each of these categories, see, respectively, Garon, "Women's Groups and the Japanese State" (on alliances); Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan* (on the struggle for justice); and Molony and Molony, *Ichikawa Fusae* (on campaigns for membership in the state).

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the economic exploitation of women and children. In the oppressive political climate of the two decades following the period discussed in this study, the suffragist cause collapsed, and discourse increasingly became confined to rights as state protection. The dual goals of full political rights and state aid and protection were not mutually exclusive in the eyes of most feminists, however. The relative emphasis on one or the other varied with changes in the political and social climate. Moreover, the meaning of inclusion itself was open to different interpretations, and feminists acknowledged various ways to achieve it. Both forms of rights discussions in the interwar era—resistance against exclusion from the political process and acceptance of the state’s power to protect—assumed an existing state structure.

### *Rights Discourse in the 1880s and 1890s*

In Japan, as elsewhere, “rights” had multiple meanings.<sup>9</sup> Talk of rights emerged in a variety of contexts and often blended aspects of Tokugawa antiauthoritarianism<sup>10</sup> and “Western” rights discourses.<sup>11</sup> Japanese conceptions of the state, nation, nationality, ethnicity, and gender were being constructed around the same time, and rights discourse was used selectively to resist the state’s definition of one or

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9. For a persuasive argument that “contemporary Western feminism may remain parochial in its insistence that its own *telos* of freedom and agency be at work in every record of women’s lives,” see Susan Mann, “The History of Chinese Women Before the Age of Orientalism,” *Journal of Women’s History* 8, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 174. In the case of Japanese discussions about rights, however, advocates were explicit about the quest for women’s rights; the historian need not project her own feminist hopes of finding calls for agency.

10. George M. Wilson, *Patriots and Redeemers in Japan: Motives in the Meiji Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) offers an insightful treatment of Tokugawa antiauthoritarianism. See also Matsumoto Sannosuke, “The Idea of Heaven: A Tokugawa Foundation for Natural Rights Theory,” in *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period, 1600–1868: Methods and Metaphors*, ed. Tetsuo Najita and Irvin Scheiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 181–99.

11. Mill’s *On Liberty* was translated very early—in 1868. This translation was followed in the 1870s and early 1880s by translations of works by other Western political theorists. Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, translated in 1882, was highly esteemed by Popular Rights advocates. See Masaaki Kosaka, ed., *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era*, vol. 8, *Thought* (Tokyo: Tōyō bunko, 1958), pp. 115, 146.

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another of these categories. Conversely, rights discourse could be employed to help define or support these categories or institutions. The Meiji-era neologisms for “rights” (*kenri*), “women’s rights” (*joken*), “male-female equality” (*danjo byōdō*), and “male-female equal rights” (*danjo dōken*) were, at times, used interchangeably in regard to women, although their meanings were actually distinct.

With such notable exceptions as Popular Rights advocate Ueki Emori (1857–92), who held that people had a right and a duty to resist unresponsive government and that men and women were entitled to equal rights, most Meiji-era advocates of improving women’s status did not call for feminist resistance to the state.<sup>12</sup> Until the rise of socialist feminism in the last decade of the Meiji period, proponents of women’s rights called for *inclusion* in the state and civil society, not *revolution*—and even most socialists sought inclusion in the absence of a revolution.<sup>13</sup> I suggest there were two reasons for feminists’ desire for inclusion: first, the fundamental nature of rights themselves; and second, their belief that rights should be the reward for education and self-cultivation.

Rights, fundamentally, have mutually contradictory qualities. One of the purposes of rights is protection from something—from harm caused by another public person or the state or from limitations on one’s expression or movement, and so on. Rights often conflict—one’s right to protection, for example, might limit another’s freedom of expression. Although a definition of rights as protection from or resistance to encroachment was part of Meiji-era discourse, the view of rights as protection from the state was a minor thread in discussions of women’s rights. Indeed, the notion

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12. Ueki Emori, cited in Roger W. Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan: A Study of Commoners in the Popular Rights Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 205. Suzuki Yūko (*Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, vol. 1, *Shisō, seiji: Josei kaibō shisō no tenkai to fujin sanseiken undō* [Collection of documents of the Japanese women’s movement: thought, politics: the development of women’s liberation thought and the women’s political rights movement] [Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 1996], p. 23) notes that other than Ueki, whose writings about women’s rights were inspired by the demand for voting rights by Kusunose Kita, few of the leading male Popular Rights advocates discussed women’s rights in their writings. Women like Fukuda Hideko and Kishida Toshiko (see below) were, therefore, particularly important. See also Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, pp. 28–29.

13. See Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women*.

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of protection was initially more closely connected to the idea of “liberation” (*kaihō*) than to rights. Liberation came to be associated with women’s political rights only in 1907 when socialists began using the term. Earlier, *kaihō* had been used in discussing the liberation of prostituted women and girls from contractual bondage and, by the end of the nineteenth century, the liberation of wives, through divorce, from oppressive marriages.<sup>14</sup> The view of rights as protection was less important to Meiji-era thinkers than was the focus on inclusion in the state and equality in both the private domain of the family and the public domain of civil society.<sup>15</sup>

Although nineteenth-century Western theorists saw civil society as existing in the public sphere and, therefore, as standing in opposition to the family (the private),<sup>16</sup> women’s rights advocates in turn-of-the-century Japan did not assume such an opposition.<sup>17</sup> They were of differing minds concerning the quality of Japanese family life. Some saw the family as a warm haven within a cold public world, whereas others believed the family itself oppressed women, but few viewed the family as separate from the public sphere. Indeed, many believed women deserved a public role not *despite* their family status but *because* of it. Thus, for instance, the mother who kept her family healthy received recognition during the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) for her public service to the

14. Sotozaki Mitsuhiro, *Nihon fujinronshi*, vol. 2, *Fujin kaihō ronsō* (History of discourse on Japanese women: the women’s liberation debate) (Tokyo: Domesu, 1989), pp. 22–24.

15. See also Hayakawa, “Feminism and Nationalism in Japan,” p. 111.

16. Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 151. As theorist Carole Pateman (*The Sexual Contract* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988], p. 11) and others have shown, the notion of “civil” has had shifting meanings in Western discourse. Before the creation of the social contract, “civil” was seen as the opposite of “natural”; thereafter, it was seen as the opposite of “private.”

17. “Civil society” was not named in the late nineteenth century, but by the 1920s, rights of civic and civil participation were understood to be related to *kōminken*. See, e.g., Molony and Molony, *Ichikawa Fusae*. The term “civil society” (*shimin shakai*) came to be used in Japan in the 1920s, but the Japanese translation’s urban implications (*shimin*) made it unpopular with rural folk; see Kevin M. Doak, “What Is a Nation and Who Belongs? National Narratives and the Ethnic Imagination in Twentieth-Century Japan,” *American Historical Review* 102, no. 2 (1997): 290.

nation.<sup>18</sup> The ideological opponents of women's rights advocates—gender conservatives who opposed any concept of inherent rights or even earned rights based on service in the public sphere—shared the belief that the family was the basis of the state.<sup>19</sup> But their idea of “family” was a patriarchy without rights for anyone except the family head, let alone equality among its members. Thus, any discussion of rights in the public sphere of state or civil society had to start with a close examination of the unequal relationships within the family as well as an understanding of who deserved those rights.

Although the earliest discussions of rights in the 1870s and 1880s often did not explicitly link rights and the male gender, Japanese discussants frequently employed the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose vision of the social contract was founded on the fraternal rights of all men.<sup>20</sup> Japanese advocates of rights in the 1870s viewed men's right to participate in politics through this Rousseauian lens. By 1890, following two decades of struggle, a small minority of men had been awarded the right to participate in the state and civil society, but all women were pointedly excluded.<sup>21</sup> After 1890, many male activists who had earlier demanded rights of fraternal inclusion joined parties and entered the government in some capac-

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18. Iwamoto Yoshiharu, in *Taiyō*, “Katei” (Household) column, cited in Muta Kazue, “Images of the Family in Meiji Periodicals: The Paradox Underlying the Emergence of the ‘Home,’” *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, English Supplement 7 (1994): 64.

19. See, e.g., Hozumi Yatsuka, quoted in Kosaka, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era*, pp. 381, 383. Conservatives and feminists saw “family” in a different light. For feminists, the family was made up of loving members whose sexually differentiated but complementary roles should be equally valued. Conservatives found that formulation of the family threatening and believed that it could undermine the foundation of the Japanese authoritarian state. That is, as the influential conservative legal scholar Hozumi Yatsuka wrote in 1896, “The obedience to . . . the headship of the family is, inferentially, what we confer on the Imperial House as the extant progenitor of the nation”; or, in 1898, “The family expanded becomes the country. . . . We cannot be indifferent to whether the family institution is maintained or abolished!”

20. For more on Rousseau's ideas, see, e.g., Pateman, *Sexual Contract*.

21. See, e.g. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, p. 52; and Yasukawa Junosuke and Yasukawa Etsuko, *Josei sabetsu no shakai shisōshi* (History of the social thought of discrimination against women) (Tokyo: Akaishi shobo, 1993), chap. 1.



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ity.<sup>22</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, many took the requirement of male gender for political participation for granted; the state itself was being constructed as a fraternity under a patriarchal emperor.<sup>23</sup>

Although holding various views about “women’s rights,” all nineteenth-century Japanese advocates for women started from the assumption that women did not enjoy such rights. To rectify this situation, some argued for a communitarian inclusiveness reminiscent of Rousseau.<sup>24</sup> Others, inspired by John Stuart Mill, stressed improved education as a way for women to gain the subjectivity (that is, full personhood with agency) that would make them eligible for rights. Others worked to eliminate patriarchal sexual privileges, such as those implied by patrilineality, polygamy, and prostitution, as a first step toward achieving women’s full inclusion in society and the state.<sup>25</sup>

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22. Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, p. 18.

23. On “fraternity,” see, e.g., Donald Roden, *Schooldays in Imperial Japan: A Study in the Culture of a Student Elite* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). Roden (pp. 139, 146) describes a fraternal communalism that violently resisted even the suggestion of a womanly presence in its hallowed halls. Male sex was a requirement for all government positions, including the emperorship. Many advocates of women’s rights were surprised and disheartened when male gender was made a requirement for occupying the throne; although there had been only a minuscule number of empresses who had ruled in their own right in the ancient and early modern periods, female gender had not been an absolute bar to the throne. See Noheji Kiyoe, *Josei kaibō shisō no genryū: Iwamoto Yoshiharu to “Jogaku zasshi”* (The origins of women’s liberation thought: Iwamoto Yoshiharu and *Jogaku zasshi*) (Tokyo: Azekura shobō, 1984), p. 14.

24. Although it seems ironic that advocates of women’s rights would adopt notions of rights based on masculine privilege, Japanese women were not alone in extrapolating Rousseauian ideas to justify women’s rights. As Carole Pateman points out throughout *The Sexual Contract*, Western feminist thought extended the notion of fraternity to women, despite that formulation’s original limits.

25. For an effective problematization of patrilineality, see Kathleen Uno, “Questioning Patrilineality: On Western Studies of the Japanese *Ie*,” *positions* 4, no. 3 (Winter 1996): 569–94. She argues convincingly that scholars have often distorted the historical roles of patrilineality. Meiji women’s rights advocates also strongly contested what they saw as continuing patterns of women’s subordination through patrilineality and its ties with the other “p’s” of patriarchy, prostitution, and polygamy.

In its formulation and its legal applications, the concept of rights separates the individual from his or her community. People struggle for rights on behalf of an oppressed identity group (a class, a gender, an ethnicity), but when rights are granted, they are applied to individuals.<sup>26</sup> Japanese commentators on Meiji civil law rightly argued that this concept of individual rights conflicted with the notion, codified in the Civil Code of 1898, that women, especially married women, were under the jurisdiction of the patriarchal family head and thus had neither individual rights within the community of the family nor the independent right to enter contracts that would permit rights in the larger society.<sup>27</sup> The Civil Code, therefore, explicitly excluded the idea of rights held equally by individuals within the household.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, Japanese seeking to improve the lot of women stressed rights as a means to elevate women's status. Mill and Rousseau and social contract theory were particularly important sources in the development of Japanese thinking about rights. Under the social contract, individuals voluntarily surrender some rights in return for the protection of civil law and inclusion in the fraternity of citizens.<sup>29</sup> Because women were assumed to be weak in strength and intellect, they were not entitled to self-ownership and were therefore not full persons or individuals. As a result, women could not even enter into the social contract. For Mill, women were thus not present in the public, or civil, sphere, and where they were—the home—was to be “private” or off-limits to the state and dominated by the home's own patriarch, who was himself part of the civil, egalitarian “fraternity.” Advocates of women's rights (including Mill) reckoned education as one key to making women worthy

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26. Brown, *States of Injury*, 98.

27. For an extended discussion of the Meiji Civil Code, see Ryōsuke Ishii, ed., *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era*, vol. 9, *Japanese Legislation in the Meiji Era* (Tokyo: Tōyō bunko, 1958), pp. 601–92.

28. Ironically, critics of the first draft of the Civil Code complained that the code smacked of “European” ideas on civil rights. Of course, universal political rights for individuals irrespective of gender or other markers of exclusion did not then exist in any European country.

29. Pateman, *Sexual Contract*, *passim*; Yasukawa and Yasukawa, *Josei sabetsu no shakai shisōshi*, chap. 1.

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of being “individuals” and thereby improving their status. Rousseau, male-centered though his writings often appear, did, in fact, suggest an important public role for women. Men could not be “brothers” unless they were ethical fathers and sons, and the mother was the key to nurturing the moral and ethical family. This idea resonated with women’s rights thinking in turn-of-the-century Japan, which linked moral and intellectual cultivation with social respect.

Commentators have at times raised concerns about “state intrusion in the family,” but patriarchal dominance may have felt just as confining to many women as state authoritarianism. (To be sure, the two were closely related, since one component of state authoritarianism was the codification of male dominance in family law.) Inclusion in the state, which must be preceded or accompanied by inclusion in the public sphere, has thus been a goal of many feminist political activists, whether Japanese or Western. The problems caused by patriarchy seemed so debilitating in Meiji Japan that marriage and sexuality became major concerns of the early advocates of women’s rights. Here we can see the precursors of later feminists’ emphases on “protection.” However, Meiji-era feminists argued principally for respect for women and their personhood rather than for protection of them as weak.

In the 1880s and 1890s, discussions of women’s rights, including rights in society and rights within the family, were closely related to discussions of women’s education, particularly education beyond the elementary level. Cultivating a moral, ethical, responsible character capable of manifesting agency—by being an example to others or even a leader—was a goal of Confucian education as well as the recently introduced Western-style learning. Intellectual and moral cultivation produced persons worthy of respect and, therefore, worthy of having a recognized subjectivity or personhood—a prerequisite for entering the social contract. The centrality of education, with its deep connections to notions of respect and ethical leadership, in late nineteenth-century rights discourse suggests that rights were closely connected to the reformers’ advocacy of respect for women’s subjectivity. In Meiji Japan, even educators who believed women did not need *political* rights hoped to mold ethical

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wives and mothers to lead the family and society by example. These women would not be active in electoral politics, but they would participate in public activities such as poor relief or more controversial reforms such as the regulation of sexuality.<sup>30</sup>

From early in the Meiji period, women's education, especially as it affected morality in the family and, by extension, the nation, was a lively topic in Japanese journals. Contributors to *Meiroku zasshi* (Journal of the Meiji Six Society; founded 1873, circulation 3,000) joined this discussion early on.<sup>31</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–90), perhaps the most famous early participant in the *fujin ronsō* (debate about women) and author of the influential *Nihon fujinron* (Discourse on Japanese womanhood; 1885), stressed monogamy as the basis of equality (*byōdō*).<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere, Fukuzawa linked “equality” closely to education.

Like Fukuzawa, female advocates of women's rights also linked education, monogamy, and respect. Kishida Toshiko (1861?–1901) and Fukuda Kageyama Hideko (1865–1927) took the feminist message to the public through political speeches. But they also imparted a more political edge to their advocacy by calling for women's inclusion in the state as well as the public sphere. The civic groups they and other advocates for women organized helped develop civil society in Meiji Japan by opening it to women. In numerous speeches between 1882 and 1884, Kishida Toshiko called for equal rights for men and women, denounced the equating of personhood with the male gender alone, decried the stultifying effects of repression of freedom of thought,<sup>33</sup> and, above all, called

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30. See, e.g., the discussion of the Women's Reform Society in Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, pp. 87–114.

31. Yamaguchi Miyoko, *Shiryō Meiji keimōki no fujin mondai ronsō no shūben* (Data on the environment of the debate on the woman problem in the Meiji enlightenment period) (Tokyo: Domesu, 1989), p. 186.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 199. For an extensive treatment of the philosophical basis for Fukuzawa's thought on equality and on education, see Yasukawa and Yasukawa, *Josei sabetsu no shakai shisōshi*, pp. 6–104.

33. Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, pp. 56–85, offers a wealth of information about Kishida and her public activities. The newspaper articles reprinted in Suzuki's collection show that Kishida had an extraordinarily busy schedule, rushing from city to city to speak out—with occasional censorship by the police—on women's rights.

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on women to develop the mental strength (*seishin ryoku*) to be confident public persons.<sup>34</sup> Kishida tied the development of women's subjectivity—their existence as persons in society—both to national strength and to Popular Rights politics. Because “equality, independence, respect, and a monogamous relationship are the hallmarks of relationships between men and women in a civilized society,” she stated, recognition of women's rights would elevate Japan in international esteem and thereby aid in its defense against a possible Western threat.<sup>35</sup> In a speech entitled “The Government Is the People's God; Man Is Woman's God” (“Seifu wa jinmin no ten otoko wa onna no ten”),<sup>36</sup> Kishida also denounced sexual inequality in terms familiar to her colleagues in the Popular Rights movement by equating male supremacy with the government's dominion over the people.

Kishida inspired women all over Japan.<sup>37</sup> Women's groups sprang up in cities and towns; many of them were formed to welcome speakers like Kishida. There were women's friendly societies (*joshi konshinkai*), women's freedom parties (*fujin jiyūtō*), women's rights associations (*jokenkai*), women's societies (*fujin kyōkai*), and at least one women's freedom hall (*joshi jiyūkan*).<sup>38</sup> Whether these groups continued to exist long after they sponsored Kishida and others is unclear. They helped set the stage, however, for the growth of larger feminist groups, such as the Japan Christian Women's Reform Society (Nihon Kirisutokyō fujin kyōfukai) and the Women's Morality Association (Fujin tokugikai) in the second half of the 1880s, and they created a readership for articles on women's rights in magazines and journals in the 1890s.<sup>39</sup> These

34. Kishida Toshiko, “Dōhō shimai ni tsugu” (To my brothers and sisters), reprinted in Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, pp. 74–85.

35. Kishida, “Dōhō,” quoted and translated by Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, p. 38. See also Hayakawa, “Feminism and Nationalism in Japan,” for an excellent discussion of the relationship of feminism and nationalism.

36. Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, p. 57.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

38. See *ibid.*, pp. 71–73, for articles describing the founding of several of these groups.

39. Hirota Masaki is not impressed with the Okayama Women's Friendly Society because its members were merely wives and daughters of men in the Popular Rights movement. He contrasts this group with those formed by women not re-

groups advocated monogamy and women's sexual dignity and fostered political discussion and collaborative feminist efforts to set up schools for girls and women.<sup>40</sup> In these groups *joseiron* (discourse on women) meant discussions about improving women's status by politicizing the private sphere by means of education and marital respect as well as the relationship of education and marital respect to women's public voice and self-cultivation.

Inspired by Kishida, educator Fukuda Hideko founded a community women's group that featured speakers on natural rights, equality, and freedom.<sup>41</sup> By 1890, Fukuda had petitioned the Diet to permit women to participate in politics.<sup>42</sup> The following year, Fukuda caught the attention of the mainstream media with her proposal to establish a newspaper for women run entirely by women.<sup>43</sup> Like Kishida, Fukuda linked women's rights and political involvement with strengthening the nation.<sup>44</sup>

The rhetoric of rights was further developed in new journals and magazines that appeared in the late nineteenth century. The most important of these new journals for women was *Jogaku zasshi* (Women's education journal), cofounded by Iwamoto Yoshiharu (1863–1942) in 1885 and edited by him for most of its eighteen-year run. At least eight women known in their day as advocates of rights, both women's rights and people's rights, wrote for *Jogaku zasshi*. The most famous of these were probably Kishida Toshiko, Shimizu Toyoko (1868–1933), and Wakamatsu Shizuko (1864–1896; she married Iwamoto in 1889).<sup>45</sup> These writers were influenced by

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lated to male activists. See Hirota Masaki, "Kindai erito josei no aidentiti to kokka" (Modern elite women's identity and the nation), in *Jendā no Nihonshi* (Gender history of Japan), vol. 1, ed. Wakita Haruko and S. B. Hanley (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1994), p. 203.

40. Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, p. 98.

41. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, p. 36; Mikiso Hane, *Reflections on the Way to the Gallows: Rebel Women in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 36.

42. Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, p. 127.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

44. Hirota, "Kindai erito josei no aidentiti to kokka," p. 202.

45. Fujita Yoshimi, *Meiji jogakkō no sekai* (The world of the Meiji girls' higher schools) (Tokyo: Shōeisha, 1984), pp. 35, 79; Noheji, *Josei kaihō shisō no genryū*,

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the readily accessible thought of the Popular Rights polemicists as well as lively commentary in other publications like the *Meiroku zasshi* of the previous decade and *Kokumin no tomo* (People's friend), a contemporary journal whose readership overlapped with that of *Jogaku zasshi*.<sup>46</sup>

Iwamoto Yoshiharu ardently supported the elevation of women's status. Although he rejected equal rights for men and women—*danjo dōken*—he argued for the fundamental equality of men and women—*danjo byōdō*.<sup>47</sup> He found the notion of *danson jobi* (respect the male, despise the female) particularly odious.<sup>48</sup> Christianity, which permeated Iwamoto's thinking, emphasized the equal humanity of men and women in the eyes of God.<sup>49</sup> Though Iwamoto believed in gender equality before God, however, he found social stratification by gender perfectly natural, as did many contemporary social contract theorists in the West, whose grounding was also in Christianity; servants may be humans, but they do not have the same rights as their employers.<sup>50</sup>

From the mid-1880s to the early 1890s, Iwamoto advocated that the content of women's education should differ from men's. Although he used the “good wife, wise mother” discourse, however, he called for a “modern” type of wife and mother.<sup>51</sup> Education should create mothers who were intelligent and wives who were good persons, not merely mothers who were wise educators of their children and wives who served their husbands well. But be-

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p. 24. The others were Tanabe Hanaho, Ogino Ginko, Yoshida Nobuko, Andō Tane, and Kojima Kiyo.

46. Noheji, *Josei kaihō shisō no genryū*, p. 68.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

49. Aoyama Nao, *Meiji jogakkō no kenkyū* (Research on Meiji girls' higher schools) (Tokyo: Keiō tsūshin, 1983), p. 7.

50. Noheji, *Josei kaihō shisō no genryū*, p. 129.

51. Noheji (*ibid.*, p. 155) notes that the four characters—*ryō, sai, ken,* and *bo*—were used throughout Iwamoto's famous collection of essays entitled *Waga tō no joshi kyōiku* (Women's education according to our side). This short collection, which first appeared as articles in *Jogaku zasshi* from 1890 to 1892, is cited in *ibid.*, pp. 82–83, 131–32, 139–58. Iwamoto's use of “good wife, wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*), Noheji notes, differed from that of his contemporaries in his stress on Christianity as the basis for that type of education.

fore 1889, Iwamoto did not argue that the end of this type of education was to prepare women to enjoy equal political rights with men.<sup>52</sup>

Iwamoto was bitterly disappointed in the 1889 Constitution and the Imperial House Code (*Kōshitsu tenpan*) promulgated at the same time, both of which stipulated that heirs to the imperial throne must be male.<sup>53</sup> Shocked, Iwamoto adopted a new approach to women's education and to women's rights. In a June 1889 article entitled "100-Year Chronic Disease" ("Hyakunen no koshitsu"), he presented a stinging criticism of sexism in education.<sup>54</sup> If Japanese opposed women's higher schools, objected to women voting, rejected monogamy, insulted the morality of female students, and failed to regard men and women as equally human, then Japan would never cure the disease that had troubled it for a century. The ruler would be separated from the people, the people from the officials, the slave from the master, the rich from the poor. Advocacy of the education of women, of Christian moralism, of religious egalitarianism, and of women's civil rights are here brought under one discursive umbrella. The article's rhetorical device of equating the disease with standard symbols of Tokugawa authoritarianism like the separation of the ruler and the ruled or the people and the officials was a powerful one.

*Jogaku zasshi* subsequently published a number of criticisms of the denial of women's right of inclusion in the state and civil society. An unsigned article called on women to take part in political discussions in order to promote "political harmony among men and women" (*seijijō danjo kyōwa*).<sup>55</sup> Shimizu Toyoko, writing in August 1890, condemned the recent passage of legislation barring women from political meetings. "If individual rights are to be protected, and the peace and order of society secured," she argued, "laws should not be discriminatory, granting advantage to men

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52. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

54. Iwamoto Yoshiharu, "Hyakunen no koshitsu," *Jogaku zasshi*, no. 167 (June 22, 1889), cited in Noheji, *Josei kaibō shisō no genryū*, p. 137.

55. Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, pp. 125–26.



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only, and misfortune only to women.”<sup>56</sup> In another article two months later, Shimizu proclaimed it irrational for “one part of humanity [to] arbitrarily control . . . the other part.”<sup>57</sup>

Respect for women’s personhood and recognition of women as subjects were central goals of rights advocates in the 1890s. Both goals were necessary preconditions for women’s entry into the public sphere and civil society. Both had to precede equal rights. There were other approaches to improving the status of women as well. Some advocates focused on sexuality issues. In the 1870s, writers for journals such as *Meiroku zasshi* argued that polygamy compromised Japanese ethical values and impaired its image in the West. Feminists expanded on these ideas. The Tokyo (later Japan) Christian Women’s Reform Society, founded by Yajima Kajiko (1833–1925) in 1886, stressed sexual reforms as a way of helping women develop as full, equal human beings.<sup>58</sup> Articles in *Shinonome shinbun* (Daybreak newspaper) and *Tōkyō fujin kyōfūkai zasshi* (Journal of the Tokyo Women’s Reform Society) from the late 1880s propounded the Reform Society’s view that monogamy was moral, good for Japan, and respectful of nature’s gender balance; monogamy would help move the country away from evil customs of the Confucian past.<sup>59</sup> An 1887 article by Iwamoto entitled “The Atmosphere of Adultery” (“Kan’in no kūki”) also stressed control of male sexuality through the prohibition of polygamy, but the issue of *Jogaku zasshi* in which it was to appear was banned by the government.<sup>60</sup>

Women’s advocates viewed polygamy as a denigration of women. *Tōkyō nichichi shinbun* (Tokyo daily news) reported that in November 1891 the Reform Society planned to petition the

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56. Shimizu, quoted in Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, pp. 52–53; Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, p. 127.

57. Shimizu, quoted in Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, p. 101.

58. “Fujin kyōfūkai” (Women’s Reform Society), in *Chōya shinbun*, Dec. 12, 1886, reprinted in Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, p. 85. See also Otsubo, “Engendering Eugenics.”

59. See Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, pp. 86–94, for citations of several articles from these journals.

60. Aoyama, *Meiji jogakkō no kenkyū*, p. 4.

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Diet for legislation banning polygamy.<sup>61</sup> Men's morality, linked to their sexuality, was the target of these legislative efforts as well as the subject of articles such as Shimizu Toyoko's "Discussing Japanese Males' Moral Character" ("Nihon danshi no hinkō o ronzu").<sup>62</sup> Discussions about controlling men's sexuality paralleled those concerning the control of some women's sexuality. Reform Society goals included the elimination of prostitution as well as concubinage.<sup>63</sup> The sex trade was seen as a women's rights issue because it humiliated legitimate wives by supporting their husbands' adultery. The Reform Society was often unsympathetic to women in the sex trades. Prostitution shamed Japan as a whole in foreigners' eyes, the *Tōkyō fujin kyōfūkai zasshi* noted, and may have contributed to anti-Japanese discrimination in the United States.<sup>64</sup> The journal called for shaming women into leaving sex work. The Reform Society's concern about prostitution appeared less related to saving fallen women—which was, in fact, a stated goal of the organization—than to supporting the human dignity and equal personhood of wives and improving Japan's foreign relations. This is a clear example of the intersection of (some) women's rights and nation-building.

Gaining respect as subjects was an important requirement for becoming eligible for rights. And morality was closely related to respect. This can be seen, for instance, in the journal *Joken* (Women's rights). Established in September 1891, *Joken* included articles by leading feminists such as Fukuda Hideko and reported extensively on the activities of branches of the Women's Morality Association throughout Japan.<sup>65</sup> The association called for freedom (*jiyū*), equality (*byōdō*), women's rights (*joken*), and morality (*toku-*

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61. "Ippu ippu no seigan" (Petition for monogamy), *Tōkyō nichichi shinbun*, Nov. 26, 1891, reprinted in Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, p. 92.

62. Shimizu Toyoko, article in *Shinonome shinbun*, May 8–10, 1889, reprinted in Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, pp. 111–14.

63. Muta Kazue, "Senryaku to shite no onna" (Women as strategy), *Shisō* (Feb. 1992): 220–27; Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, p. 95.

64. *Tōkyō fujin kyōfūkai zasshi*, Sept. 20, 1890, cited in Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, p. 214n.

65. Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, pp. 132–42, cites several articles about Women's Morality Association branches in various locations.

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*gi*),<sup>66</sup> and its goal was “the expansion of women’s rights and the elimination of the evil of ‘respect the male and despise the female.’”<sup>67</sup>

The activities of the Women’s Reform Society, the Women’s Morality Association, and other similar organizations suggest that their members believed women could change the state. Most significant, of course, was their view that the state would not be gendered “male”—which most feminists viewed as illogical—if women were included. Moreover, supporters of women’s rights deeply resented masculine sexual privileges and believed that granting women political rights would help reduce patriarchal privileges that humiliated women and degraded Japan’s international image. Women did not discuss all aspects of the Meiji state, but they did envision a state in which being female was not a barrier to participation. (Some of them, however, thought class and education should be taken into account.) Although later feminist thought called capitalism and its effects on families and women workers into question, these were not primary concerns of Meiji feminists. Attempting to push their agendas in the political arena, feminist groups had first to enlarge the boundaries of that arena. Even before the promulgation of the Law on Assembly and Political Association (*Shūkai oyobi seisha hō*) of 1890, which banned women from all political participation, including political speeches and assembly, the City Code and the Town and Village Code of 1888 had pointedly excluded women from participation.<sup>68</sup> Feminists’ petitions to the Diet to eliminate these restrictions failed.<sup>69</sup> Feminist Shimizu Toyoko could only ask

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66. At the same time, the Ministry of Education, in its compendium of regulations, stated that the goal of women’s education was “womanly morality” (*jotoku*). Womanly morality required that the focus of girls’ education be the fostering of “docility” (*wajun*) toward one’s husband and “chastity” (*teisō*). This morality theme, which contrasted with the goals of the Women’s Morality Association, was reiterated in another journal established in 1891, *Jokan* (Women’s mirror); cited in Sōgō joseishi kenkyūkai, ed., *Nihon josei no rekishi*, p. 197.

67. Women’s Morality Association goals, stated in “Fujin tokugikai kaisoku” (Women’s Morality Association regulations), *Joken*, Sept. 29, 1891, reprinted in Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, pp. 141–42. The organization limited membership to women.

68. Suzuki, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, p. 26.

69. Petitions and reactions, cited in *ibid.*, pp. 126–31.

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plaintively, in an article in *Jogaku zasshi*, "Why Are Women Not Permitted to Take Part in Political Meetings?" ("Naniyue ni joshi wa seidan shūkai ni sanchō suru to o yurusarezaru ka?").<sup>70</sup>

After failing at the end of the 1880s to gain a political voice for women, women's rights advocates intensified their focus on issues of sexuality, which after 1890 were redefined as "social" issues to avoid the ban on "political" activities by women. Shimizu and others connected the rights of citizen/subjects (*kokumin*) with social and moral issues.<sup>71</sup> Women needed to have the right of civic participation in order to educate their children as citizen/subjects and support their husbands in the exercise of their own citizenship. Thus, Shimizu posited that women's political rights arose from their relationship with those who had those rights (however limited). The Law on Assembly and Political Associations did not altogether silence advocacy of improving the situation of women; rather, by focusing on morality, the home, and economic conditions, women moved increasingly into civil society realms of advocacy. For late Meiji-era feminists, the state was still an entity in formation. Many hoped that women's involvement with the state through their quest for rights would alter it.

The political use of liberal notions of rights of participation and inclusion was not limited to "bourgeois" women in the late Meiji era. As Vera Mackie notes, socialist women led the earliest campaigns, from 1904 to 1909, to revise Article 5 (banning women's participation in political meetings and activities) of the 1900 Public Peace Police Law (*Chian keisatsuhō*), which superseded the 1890 Law on Assembly and Political Association.<sup>72</sup> Fukuda Hideko's socialist women's newspaper, *Sekai fujin* (Women of the world), labeled Article 5's inclusion of women in the same category as minors an insult.<sup>73</sup> The *Heimin shinbun* (Commoners' newspaper), blending class analysis, individual rights, and nationalism, reported

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70. Entire article reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 127–29; excerpted translations in Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, pp. 52–53.

71. "Citizenship" is a complicated term in this period. For insightful commentary on terms translated as "citizen," see Atsuko Hirai, "State and Ideology in Meiji Japan—A Review Article," *Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 1 (1987): 89–103.

72. Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan*, pp. 62–63.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

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that these campaigns by socialist women to revise Article 5 were unsuccessful because the House of Peers, “an organization made up of members of the male class (*danshi kaikyū no ichi dantai*) . . . do[es] not see women as human individuals (*ikko no jinrui*) or as citizens of the nation (*ikko no kokumin*).”<sup>74</sup> This, the paper argued, had to be rectified.

*Early Twentieth-Century Feminist  
Discourses and Actions*

By World War I, a new type of Japanese subject was emerging. Literate, exposed to a variety of domestic and internationally inspired cultural and ideological influences, and helping construct ideologies and discourses through speech (men only, if the context was political) and writing (men and women alike), the post-Meiji subject reflected decades of institution-building in Japan. These institutions were diverse. They included, in the realm of culture, the expanding system of public and private schools, the exponential growth of the press and publishing, and the internationalization of the arts, such as film and theater. In a more political context, Japan emerged from World War I an industrial capitalist state, with the consequent demographic, social, and economic changes; an empire; and a constitutional monarchy, albeit one that was continuing to evolve. These institutional developments opened the door for wider discussion of many issues, including women’s rights. Ironically, a narrowing of the approaches to the state accompanied the expansion of discussion. Viewing the state as a more established entity, women’s rights advocates focused not only on inclusion but also on protection. By the 1910s, education had given women a more public voice, and industrialization had given many a public (although controversial and often dangerous) role in the workplace. In some ways, women had gained the public placement their mothers had desired. But unlike many nineteenth-century feminists, Taishō-era advocates for women no longer considered that public role as a sufficient and necessary condition for equal rights of citizenship for women.

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74. “Fujin to kizoku” (Women and the aristocracy), *Nikkan heimin shinbun*, no. 62 (Mar. 30, 1907), quoted in *ibid.*, p. 65.

Discussions of women's rights grew increasingly common in the Taishō era. This section addresses a narrow but important segment of women's rights discourse—that engaged in by leading proponents of full civil rights, including the vote. Most rights advocates (including some socialist feminists) in the 1910s and 1920s conceived of the state as a relatively fixed entity with which they sought alignment or from which they sought protection from social or economic oppression. This view of the state is evident in the early Taishō “motherhood protection debate” (*bosei hogo ronsō*) in the pages of magazines that circulated nationwide.<sup>75</sup> The shift from the 1890s views of women's rights is clear in the all but unanimous belief among the four principal discussants—Yosano Akiko (1878–1942), Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971), Yamada Waka (1879–1957), and Yamakawa Kikue (1890–1980)—that the state owed mothers “protection.” Hiratsuka Raichō argued that women performed a service to the state by giving birth and, thus, deserved financial assistance. Socialist Yamakawa Kikue seemed to reject the arguments of the other three as bourgeois in stating that all members of society would be protected if the capitalist order were replaced by socialism; yet she, too, called for state support of maternity. Although Yamada Waka generally took an essentialist point of view of women's biological duties, she also called on both husbands and the state to support maternity. Only poet Yosano Akiko claimed that focusing on protection from the state was a reflection of “slave morality” (*dorei dōtoku*); yet, even she conceded the desirability of a system of insurance to compensate women for wages lost while recovering from childbirth. For all these feminists, then, the state had a role to play as protector of (gendered) rights of maternity. Feminists had come to accept the state as a fixed institution capable of protecting rights against societal or civil oppression as well as of

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75. For treatments of this subject in English, see, e.g., Rodd, “Yosano Akiko,” pp. 189–98; Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan*, pp. 86–91; and Barbara Molony, “Equality Versus Difference: The Japanese Debate over ‘Motherhood Protection,’” in *Japanese Women Working*, ed. Janet Hunter (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 122–48. For original documents, see Kouchi Nobuko, *Shiryō: bosei hogo ronsō* (Documents: motherhood protection debate) (Tokyo: Domesu, 1984).

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denying rights to groups or individuals, who then must either resist the state or struggle for inclusion in it.<sup>76</sup>

Demanding both equal rights and state protection of “women’s personal physical and psychological integrity, through changes in laws, regulations, and not least, in attitudes pertaining to sexuality and family life,” was common among the first wave of feminist movements in Europe, the United States, and Asia.<sup>77</sup> Japanese advocates of women’s rights were not unusual in making these demands simultaneously. What had become, perhaps, less common in Europe or the United States in the late nineteenth century was Japan’s focus on equal rights based on equal educational attainments and the relative insignificance of demands for protection of women. Japanese rights advocates in the 1910s saw women as taking part in nation-building; this paralleled feminist movements in nations under colonial rule.<sup>78</sup> As the Japanese state moved from being threatened by imperialism to being an imperialist threat itself and as its institutions became established in the early twentieth century, Japanese women increasingly made the same demands for full political rights and for protection by the state that European and American women were demanding.

The New Woman Association (Shin fujin kyōkai; hereafter NWA), founded in 1919, was grounded in the dual beliefs that the state consisted of individuals who had the right of membership and that the state should protect classes of individuals against societal exploitation. Hiratsuka Raichō, one of the group’s three founding mothers along with Ichikawa Fusae (1893–1981) and Oku Mumeo (1895–1997), noted that to achieve the rights of protection and inclusion, women had to identify as a class. In a November 1919 speech to the All-Kansai Federation of Women’s Organizations en-

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76. Mackie (*Creating Socialist Women in Japan*, p. 92), finds this stance highly problematic; she notes that these feminists “unwittingly reinforced the notion that the normal relationship between the state and individual women is one of ‘protector’ and ‘protected.’”

77. Ida Blom, “Feminism and Nationalism in the Early Twentieth Century: A Cross-Cultural Perspective,” *Journal of Women’s History* 7, no. 4 (1995): 82–83.

78. See, e.g., Yung-Hee Kim, “Under the Mandate of Nationalism: Development of Feminist Enterprises in Modern Korea, 1860–1910,” *Journal of Women’s History* 7, no. 4 (1995): 120–36.

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titled "Toward the Unification of Women,"<sup>79</sup> Hiratsuka identified women as a class who should articulate common concerns and demand power. Women no longer needed to prove their wisdom and talent, as they had in the late nineteenth century. Hiratsuka's vision of rights included different but complementary roles and identities for men and women. In addition, she articulated two types of feminist rights in her comments—women's rights (*joken*) and mothers' rights (*boken*).

Following Hiratsuka's speech, Ichikawa Fusae joined her in drafting the NWA's two central demands. The first repeated a long-standing feminist demand to revise the Public Peace Police Law of 1900. The second, inspired by recent developments in domestic legislation in Europe and the United States, demanded state control of men's sexuality by limiting the right to marry of men diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases, as well as assistance to wives who had been infected by their carrier husbands.<sup>80</sup> The NWA proposed reforms in the divorce laws so that women could reject husbands or fiancés infected with syphilis. The Civil Code of 1898 stipulated that a Japanese wife was subject to divorce and two years' imprisonment for committing adultery but did not allow her to file for divorce should she discover—and venereal disease was a strong indication—that her husband had engaged in extramarital sexual relations.<sup>81</sup> Thus, the NWA's demand directly challenged the patriarchal family system, which gave members other than the patriarch few rights.<sup>82</sup>

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79. Hiratsuka Raichō, *Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta: Hiratsuka Raichō jiden 3* (In the beginning, woman was the sun: autobiography of Hiratsuka Raichō, 3) (Tokyo: Ōtsuki shoten, 1973), p. 41; Hiratsuka Raichō, *Watakushi no aruita michi* (The road I walked) (Tokyo: Shin hyōronsha, 1955), p. 195.

80. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, p. 86. For a detailed analysis of Hiratsuka's focus on eugenics, see Otsubo, "Engendering Eugenics."

81. Rōdōshō, Fujin shōnen kyoku, ed., *Fujin no ayumi sanjūmen* (Thirty years of women's strides) (Tokyo: Rōdō hōrei kyōkai, 1975), pp. 28–29. Under the Civil Code, women enjoyed virtually no equal rights or privileges. Subject to strict supervision by the head of the "house" (*ie*), women were legally incompetent after marriage.

82. Ichikawa Fusae, *Ichikawa Fusae jiden* (Autobiography of Ichikawa Fusae) (Tokyo: Shinjuku shobō, 1974), p. 53. As Otsubo ("Engendering Eugenics") notes, Hiratsuka's advocacy of marriage restriction, influenced by the thinking of Ellen



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The women's demands were framed in two petitions drafted by Hiratsuka, Ichikawa, Oku, and other activists at Hiratsuka's home on January 6, 1920. These petitions, presented to the Diet, were printed in the opening pages of almost every issue of *Josei dōmei* (Women's league), the NWA organ that began publication later that year. The petitions read:

1. We, the undersigned, seek repeal of the word "women" from Clause I and the words "women and" from Clause II [of Article 5 of the Public Peace Police Law].
2. We, the undersigned, support enactment of a law protecting women who marry men with venereal disease, according to the following provisions: (a) men who have contracted the disease are to be prevented from marrying; (b) a man wishing to marry must present the results of a doctor's physical exam to his intended spouse, ascertaining his freedom from disease; (c) this proof of health should accompany the marriage certificate and be incorporated into the family register; (d) a marriage may be annulled if it is discovered that the husband concealed the presence of venereal disease; (e) a wife whose husband becomes infected after marriage or who is infected by her husband may file for divorce; (f) a wife infected by her husband may collect monetary compensation for medical expenses and other damages even after divorce.<sup>83</sup>

Petition 1 demanded the identical rights of citizenship and inclusion in the state enjoyed by men (until 1925, tax qualifications continued to deny full rights of citizenship to some categories of men, particularly the poor, as well). Petition 2 called for women's protection by the state against potentially deadly aspects of the family system.

In response to opposition, the NWA focused on women's family roles, framed increasingly in terms of full civil rights. To those who maintained that granting women political rights would destroy the Japanese family by changing the wife's role, the NWA argued that revision of the Police Law would help women become better wives and wiser mothers; a politically aware mother was able to rear better children. This conflation of wifedom and

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Key, was inspired as much by eugenics (albeit a gender-based variety of eugenics) as by women's rights thought.

83. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, pp. 71-73.

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motherhood sounded natural to contemporaries because the discourses on wifedom and motherhood were increasingly intertwined in the clichéd phrase “good wife, wise mother.” Supporters of “motherhood” ranged from conservatives to feminists; the latter stressed that by valuing motherhood society would value women. But the official interpretation of “wifedom” was not liberatory. Wives were, at worst, under patriarchal control and, at best, responsible for family-supporting productivity.<sup>84</sup> Arguably, political rights for wise mothers, who had an important role in molding the future, were necessary; political rights for wives, who had no property to protect and who had productive responsibilities to the state and family, may have been harder to justify. In downplaying the wife by focusing on the mother, the NWA appears to have abandoned the nineteenth-century feminists’ tack of linking women’s rights—in an era when the state was still viewed as being under construction—with respect for wives and encouragement of their education as a basis for developing the subjectivity necessary for equality.

To those who contended that enactment of a law protecting married women’s health would undermine the husband’s dominance in the family, the NWA answered that a husband’s venereal disease was even more debilitating to the family and especially its children.<sup>85</sup> This approach again shifted the discourse from wifedom to motherhood. Meiji-era feminists, who had identified

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84. Nolte and Hastings, “The Meiji State’s Policy Toward Women,” p. 156.

85. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, p. 82. This argument was not unique to Japan. In the United States, for example, venereal disease was viewed as destructive to the family, but it was also believed in the first decades of the twentieth century that a man’s infection should be kept secret by his physician, lest he lose his dominance in the family; see Allan Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 18–19. As in Japan, U.S. feminists were infuriated with “men for infecting women and destroying the lives of children”; see Lois Rudnick, “The Male Identified Woman and Other Anxieties: The Life of Mabel Dodge Luhan,” in *The Challenge of Feminist Biography*, ed. Sara Alpern et al., pp. 116–38 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992). Otsubo (“Engendering Eugenics”) notes that Hiratsuka, in justifying the petition’s focus on restricting only men’s access to marriage, emphasized the importance of eugenics to the Japanese race and nation as well as to wives and children (the latter being the feminist emphasis).

women's rights with respect for women's full personhood in a society free of patriarchy, polygamy, and prostitution, had attacked extramarital male sexuality. By the 1910s, male sexuality was identified with patriarchy, which was supported in civil law. To change male sexual privilege, feminists had to cast their arguments in terms of other state-sponsored discourses, particularly the ideology of "good wife, wise mother."<sup>86</sup> The NWA exempted prospective brides from syphilis screening since activists considered only prostitutes, among women, as morally dissolute.<sup>87</sup>

But marital sexuality fell under the legal construction of patriarchy. Because the Public Peace Police Law restricted women's political activity, the NWA found that it had to give priority to revising the Police Law. Yet advocating a change in the law could itself be a violation of that law. The NWA's movement to gain full civil rights for women, which began with the attempt to revise Article 5 of the Police Law, was intimately bound to the gendered demand for protecting women's health. Civil rights and gender-based protections were not alternative views of women's rights; rather, they were two sides of the same coin.

The NWA submitted a petition to the Diet to revise Article 5 early in 1920. Because Prime Minister Hara Takashi (1856–1921) dissolved the Diet session on February 26, the NWA's petition did not come up for debate in the Diet until July 19, 1920. In presenting the proposal for amending the Public Peace Police Law, Representative Tabuchi Toyokichi argued that women needed protection not only because they were weak but also because the standards of civilization called for women's rights.<sup>88</sup>

There has recently been much talk concerning freedom of speech, but because this freedom is not respected in this country, there is, even in the Diet, little respect for freedom of speech. . . . I have, therefore, decided . . .

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86. "Good wife, wise motherism" is treated by a number of scholars, most notably Kathleen Uno, whose numerous works on this topic cover the Meiji era through the present.

87. Hiratsuka Raichō, "Karyūbyō danshi kekkon seigenhō ni kansuru seigan undō" (The petition movement for the law limiting marriage by men with venereal disease), *Josei dōmei* 1 (Oct. 1920): 35.

88. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, p. 117; Ichikawa, *Jiden*, p. 75.

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to bring this problem to your attention . . . and to obtain your approval for changes in Japan's Police Law. . . . Specifically, [I support] elimination of the word "women" from Article 5 of the Public Peace Police Law. Gentlemen, one of the currents of our postwar world is socialism; a second current is feminism, [and these have] reached Japan. . . . I wonder if these momentous global changes will penetrate the Japanese Diet.

For Japan to be included among the postwar world's civilized democracies, Tabuchi emphasized, its leaders would have to expand the rights and freedoms of all subjects, including women.

Although I do not advocate giving women complete suffrage at this time . . . women are also human beings who have a right to free speech. . . . I believe we must exercise the basic premise of "democracy" which fosters concepts of equality and support for the weak. . . . I urge you not to derive pleasure from oppressing the weak, but to work for the thirty million [women] subjects of Japan.<sup>89</sup>

Shortly after Tabuchi's speech, however, the Diet was dissolved, and there was no opportunity for a vote.

A bill to revise Article 5 to permit women to attend political meetings and rallies, although not to join political parties, finally passed the House of Representatives in February 1921. It failed in the more conservative House of Peers, however, following its denunciation by Baron Fujimura Yoshirō, president of *Taishō nichichi shinbun*, who declared that "participation of women in political movements is extremely boring." Moreover, he continued,

it goes against natural laws in a physiological as well as psychological sense. It is not women's function to be active in political movements alongside men. The woman's place is in the home. Her role is a social and educational one. . . . Giving women the right to participate in political movements subverts the family system that is the basis of our social system. I think that the behavior of these new women—these groups of peculiar women trying to become politically active—is extremely shameful.

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89. Tabuchi Toyokichi, "Fujin no seijiteki jiyū o shuchō Tabuchi-shi no enzetsu" (Mr. Tabuchi's speech advocating women's political freedom), *Josei dōmei* 3 (Dec. 1920): 8–9, 16. *Josei dōmei* published Tabuchi's speech in its entirety.

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[The issue before us] concerns Japan's national polity. . . . I believe we should oppose [revision of the Police Law].<sup>90</sup>

Although NWA members were seeking political rights, they had to present their group as a social rather than a political organization, which women were prohibited from joining. Ichikawa Fusae, the best-known suffragist in the Taishō era, worked to dispel the idea that the NWA was interested only in "obtaining political rights for women."<sup>91</sup> She presented civil and political rights as a means to an end rather than as an end in themselves. The end advocated by the NWA was the improvement of women's lives through better health, elimination of poverty, better working conditions, and protection of motherhood; most of these goals required some form of state aid or protection. Hiratsuka wrote in the first issue of *Josei dōmei* that suffrage was not an end in itself but a means to inject feminine values into a masculine political system.<sup>92</sup> Feminists viewed the political system and state as institutionalized by the 1910s. Their campaign for civil rights, an attempt to become part of that state, was no more an attack on the state than was their working with the state to gain protections for women.

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90. "Fujimura Yoshirō-shi no chikei kaikin hantairon hihan" (Criticism of Mr. Fujimura Yoshirō's opposition to amendment of the Public Peace Police Law), *Josei dōmei* 8 (May 1921): 5. Fujimura's stress on the greater importance of women's role in the household is similar to that espoused by the Home Ministry fifteen years earlier; as Nolte and Hastings ("The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women," p. 156) put it, "The state's claim on the home preempted women's claims on the state."

91. Ichikawa Fusae, "Sōritsu yori *Josei dōmei* hakkan made (2)" (From the founding till the publication of *Josei dōmei*, 2) *Josei dōmei* 2 (Nov. 1920): 46. It appears that Ichikawa's initial fears about the NWA's image, at least as far as the government was concerned, were unfounded. Although the NWA and other women's groups formed in later years gave high priority to acquiring political rights for women, their existence was not considered a violation of Article 5, Clause I, prohibiting women's participation in political associations; a political association was usually considered one composed of individuals capable of exercising political power, which women were unable to do without the vote. Women were more likely to have been closely supervised for violation of Clause II, which prohibited attendance at political rallies and meetings.

92. Hiratsuka Raichō, "Shakai kaizō ni taisuru fujin no shimei" (The mission of women in social reconstruction), *Josei dōmei* 1 (Oct. 1920): 10.

Motherhood protection, health issues, and labor protection were seen as social reform issues, and although they intersected with politics by being debated and funded by the cabinet and parliament, public officials viewed women's involvement with them as nonpolitical. In 1920, those outside feminist circles considered the struggle for political rights to be selfish when cast as an end rather than as a means; in contrast, feminist social reform activism was received more positively. Although women acted in many ways as if they were contributors to the state when they worked for health reform or labor issues, their "citizenship," since they lacked specific and articulated rights, was always inferior to men's. NWA leaders recognized this and consequently expanded their demands for complete inclusion in the state, including the vote. The December 1920 and January 1921 issues of *Josei dōmei* carried, along with the organization's earlier petitions for revision of the Police Law and regulation of men's access to marriage, a new demand calling for revision of the House of Representatives Election Law.<sup>93</sup> Under this law, in 1921, the right to vote was limited to males 25 or older who paid a minimum direct tax of ¥3 per year and who had been listed on the electoral rolls for one full year. This appeared to be a major shift in tactics to embrace a position that contemporaries viewed as distinctly more "political."

Revising the concept and application of women's rights to include suffrage required a more nuanced view of the diverse strands of women's rights. Some feminists stressed one type of rights activism over another, but only some socialist feminists—and then only for a brief period—considered suffrage inconsistent with protection. The top leaders of the NWA offer a good example of the differing emphases among supporters of women's suffrage. During the 1920s, Hiratsuka's ideology, according to Ichikawa, was based on the "principle of mothers' rights" (*bokenshugi*), a concept she distinguished from her own "principle of women's rights" (*jokenshugi*).<sup>94</sup> Although protection for mothers was important to Ichikawa,

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93. This demand appears, along with the other two petitions, in the opening pages of several issues of the organization's bulletin; see, e.g., *Josei dōmei* 3 (Dec. 1920): 2.

94. Ichikawa, *Jiden*, p. 68.

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women's political empowerment, she wrote in 1920, was best achieved through recognition of male-female equality.<sup>95</sup>

Aren't we [women] treated as completely feeble-minded children? Why is it all right to know about science and literature and not all right to be familiar with politics and current events? Why is it acceptable to read and write but not to speak and listen? A man, no matter what his occupation or educational background, has political rights, but a woman, no matter how qualified, does not have the same rights. . . . If we do not understand the politics of the country we live in, we will not be able to understand conditions in our present society.<sup>96</sup>

For Ichikawa, cultivating oneself through education and thereby earning social respect was insufficient, particularly since that had failed to gain women the rights their Meiji-era sisters had assumed would be incorporated in the developing Meiji system.

The socialist feminist Yamakawa Kikue also believed it was the state's responsibility to protect women. But she differed from NWA leaders in envisioning a state without capitalism. Yamakawa helped organize Japan's first socialist women's association, the Red Wave Society (Sekirankai), in April 1921. The society's manifesto, written by Yamakawa, condemned capitalism for turning women into "slaves at home and oppress[ing] us as wage slaves outside the home. It turns many of our sisters into prostitutes."<sup>97</sup> She decried capitalism for engendering (in both senses of the word) imperialism, which deprived women of their male loved ones, and thereby defined the problems of capitalism in terms of women's losses rather than men's.<sup>98</sup>

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95. This changed in the following decade, when Ichikawa became a principal supporter of the Mother-Child Protection Law of 1937 (Molony, "Equality Versus Difference," p. 131).

96. Ichikawa Fusae, "Chian keisatsuhō daigojō shūsei no undō (i)" (Movement to revise Article 5 of the Public Peace Police Law, 1), *Josei dōmei* 1 (Oct. 1920): 24.

97. Yamakawa Kikue's May Day manifesto, cited in Hane, *Reflections on the Way to the Gallows*, pp. 126–27.

98. This seems a rather weak critique of imperialism, given all we know today about the gender oppression that characterized Japanese imperialism in the 1930s and 1940s. But the comfort women would appear after Yamakawa wrote these criticisms of imperialism. And the socialist feminist theorizing about imperialism

In a 1921 article in *Taiyō* (The sun) entitled “The New Woman’s Association and the Red Wave Society,” Yamakawa opined:

There is absolutely no way in a capitalist society to alleviate the misery of female workers. We believe it is a sin to waste the strength of women workers in a . . . time-consuming Diet movement—that is, in any movement that digresses from the only road to salvation for women, the destruction of capitalism. However, bourgeois gentlewomen, because they cannot trust or imagine a society beyond capitalism, concentrate their energies on alleviating the misery of women workers in a superficial and ineffective way.<sup>99</sup>

Membership in an established state was not a priority for Yamakawa in 1921. Soon after Yamakawa’s critical work appeared, however, Article 5, Clause II, of the Public Peace Police Law was amended.<sup>100</sup> Taking advantage of the newly won right to attend political rallies (women still were prohibited from joining political parties), women organized new groups to make additional demands. Women’s groups of all sorts flourished in the early 1920s: consumer groups with various political agendas, socialist feminist groups, middle-class descendents of the NWA, the venerable Women’s Reform Society and its suffragist arm, and so on. Socialist women began to give conditional support to full civil rights for women, even in a continuing capitalist state. Feminist reformism permeated Taishō liberal culture, but until mid-1923 it was not coordinated to focus on political rights for women as a class.

It was in response to a natural disaster that women across the spectrum organized for civil rights. Following the great Kantō earthquake of September 1, 1923, Kubushiro Ochimi (1882–1972) of the Women’s Reform Society and other women devoted themselves to relief work and finding food, clothing, and shelter for thousands of the victims. Christian churchwomen and others developed a sense of solidarity through shared compassion and con-

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widely available today would have seemed heretical in a 1920s context in which only class mattered.

99. Yamakawa Kikue, “Shin fujin kyōkai to Sekirankai,” *Taiyō* 27 (July 1927): 135–37.

100. Yoshimi Kaneko, *Fujin sanseiken* (Women’s suffrage) (Tokyo: Kajima shuppankai, 1971), p. 153.



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cern while they distributed milk to children. Relief workers came from all walks of life: housewives with little or no experience in organized cooperative activities, members of alumnae groups and women's auxiliary organizations, and socialists like Yamakawa Kikue.<sup>101</sup> By September 28, 1923, their spontaneous cooperative efforts were formalized when approximately a hundred leaders from 43 different organizations joined to form the Tokyo Federation of Women's Organizations (Tōkyō rengō fujinkai).<sup>102</sup>

Even after the emergency distribution of food, clothing, and shelter was no longer necessary, many members of the federation continued to meet.<sup>103</sup> In late 1923 or early 1924, the organization was divided into five sections: society, employment, labor, education, and government.<sup>104</sup> Within these sections, women discussed a variety of issues that had long been concerns of rights and protection advocates, including motherhood protection, licensed prostitution, the problems of working women, and political rights for women.

The federation's government section, focusing on issues of political rights, discussed means of using the state to earn inclusion. In November 1924, the director of that section, Kubushiro Ochimi, invited 60 to 70 women to a "women's suffrage movement workshop," and by December 13, 1924, the workshop had launched the League for the Realization of Women's Suffrage (Fujin sanseiken kakutoku kisei dōmei), the principal suffrage organization in the interwar years.<sup>105</sup> Political rights, declared the manifesto proclaim-

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101. Yamakawa defended her actions in the March 1928 issue of *Rōnō* (Labor-farmer); quoted in Ichikawa, *Jiden*, p. 147; and in Kaneko Shigeri, *Fujin mondai no chishiki* (Information about women's issues) (Tokyo: Hibonkaku, 1934; reprinted—Tokyo: Nihon zusho sentā 1982), p. 218.

102. Ide Fumiko and Esashi Akiko, *Taishō demokurashī to josei* (Taishō democracy and women) (Tokyo: Gōdō shuppan, 1977), pp. 257–60; see also Shidzue Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983; reissue of 1935 ed., with new introduction and afterword), p. 254.

103. Kaneko Shigeri, *Fujin mondai no chishiki*, p. 218.

104. Chino Yōichi, *Kindai Nihon fujin kyōikushi* (History of women's education in modern Japan) (Tokyo: Dōmesu, 1979), p. 242.

105. Kubushiro Ochimi, *Haishō hitosuji* (Focus on abolishing licensed prostitution) (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha, 1973), p. 169; Izuma Satoko, "Fusen jisshi no kekka o yososhite" (Imagining the results of implementing women's suffrage), in

ing the founding of the organization, were essential to improving the status of Japanese women:

1. It is our responsibility to destroy customs that have existed in this country for the past 2,600 years and to construct a new Japan that promotes the natural rights of men and women;
2. Because women have been attending public schools with men for half a century, since the beginning of the Meiji period, and our opportunities in higher education have continued to expand, it is unjust to exclude women from universal suffrage;
3. Political rights are necessary for the protection of the nearly four million working women in this country;
4. Women who work in the household must be recognized before the law to realize their full human potential;
5. Without political rights, we cannot achieve public recognition at either the national or the local level of government;
6. It is both necessary and possible to bring together women of different religions and occupations in a movement for women's suffrage.<sup>106</sup>

The suffragists' list is a succinct statement of what "rights" meant to middle-class feminists in the Taishō era. Article 1 contrasted the "natural rights of men and women" with venerable "customs" that must be destroyed. Japanese society had buried the rights of individual men and women under unnatural customs. In contrast to the Meiji-era belief that education would elevate the status of women, Article 2 rued the continuing denial of even educated women's rights, although it implicitly accepted the nineteenth-century feminists' linkage of education and rights. Article 3 tied together rights and protection for women. Article 4 called for recognition of all women's full humanity, and Article 5 connected rights and recognition in the public sphere, issues also central to nineteenth-century feminism. Article 6 focused on implementa-

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*Fujin mondai to fujin no yōkyū* (The woman problem and women's demands), ed. Ichijima Kenkichi (Tokyo: Bunmei kyōkai, 1929), p. 121.

106. Cited in Kirisutokyō fujin kyōfukai, ed., *Nihon Kirisutokyō fujin kyōfukai hyakunenshi* (100-year history of the Japan Christian Women's Reform Society) (Domesu, 1986), pp. 526-27; see also Ichikawa, *Jiden*, p. 144; and Kubushiro, *Hai-shō*, pp. 170-71.

tion rather than on fundamental principles and recognized the need for a movement. Thus, this manifesto recalled some Meiji-era discourse on rights in terms of respectability, but it also explicitly demanded that the state include women. Article 1 went even further and suggested that including women on equal footing with men might not be enough, since both men and women had natural rights that had been inadequately honored in Japan. It suggested, in fact, that the state should not be a fixed entity; rather, it should be subject to continuing renovation to eliminate past customs.

To achieve the goals of the manifesto, the league demanded several types of civil rights. Echoing feminists the world over, Kubushiro noted that with civil rights came civic responsibilities. Both were aspects of being a public citizen (*kōmin*). Speaking to the women gathered to celebrate the founding of the league, Kubushiro connected rights and responsibilities: "We demand that the revisions in the House of Representatives Election Law to be presented before the upcoming Fiftieth Diet include the equality of women and men, so that we, as half the population of the nation, may fully carry out our responsibilities."<sup>107</sup> Even if women and men had different responsibilities, both were equally entitled to citizenship.

Energized by the manifesto, the new group petitioned the Diet for civil rights. Three weeks earlier, in late February 1925, the House of Representatives had passed a universal manhood suffrage bill that eliminated the remaining economic restrictions on male suffrage. Although many liberals welcomed the expansion of the electorate, feminist suffragists criticized the new legislation because, as Ichikawa wrote, "giving the vote only to men and excluding women is not universal suffrage."<sup>108</sup> Despite the Diet's recent limitation of suffrage rights by gender and its passage of the Peace Preservation Law, which was designed to curb leftist political expression, women's rights activists were optimistic about their own

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107. Kubushiro, cited in Ichikawa, *Jiden*, p. 145.

108. Ichikawa, *Jiden*, p. 150.

chances for success.<sup>109</sup> In fact, they persuaded a small group of representatives to introduce several items for Diet discussion:

1. An amendment to the Public Peace Police Law of 1900 giving women the right to join political parties and associations;
2. A petition to encourage women's higher education;
3. A petition for women's suffrage in national elections;
4. A petition to make changes in the City Code (1888) and the Town and Village Code (1888), allowing women to vote and become candidates for office at the local level.<sup>110</sup>

Some 200 women filled the visitors' section in the balcony overlooking the Diet chambers to see these four items presented on March 10, a date designated by suffragists as Women's Diet Day (*Gikai fujin de*).<sup>111</sup> The women's optimism contrasted with the cynicism of newspaper accounts. Describing those they dubbed—not accurately—"veterans of women's suffrage," the *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* reported on March 10, 1925 that "they talk big in their shrill voices."<sup>112</sup> The following day's *Asahi* carried a cartoon depicting four Diet members with ribbons in their hair to signify their sympathy toward women.

Despite vocal opposition, all the proposals were, in the end, approved by the House of Representatives. Three of the items were only petitions, and thus the favorable vote did not make them law, and the Police Law amendment was killed in the House of Peers, but the surprising reception of these proposals for expanding women's rights sustained the hopes of women's rights

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109. The Peace Preservation Law, passed in 1925, was directed against groups and individuals who advocated a change in the "national polity" (*kokutai*) or who advocated the abolition of private property. Ambiguities in the law would later make it possible to increase the number of offenders and to increase government pressure on the women's movement; see Richard Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 63.

110. Ichikawa, *Jiden*, p. 150; Yoshimi, *Fujin sanseiken*, p. 155.

111. Kirisutokyō fujin kyōfūkai, *Nihon Kirisutokyō fujin kyōfūkai hyakunenshi*, p. 528.

112. *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* citations of March 10, 1925; quoted in Ichikawa, *Jiden*, p. 152.

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advocates.<sup>113</sup> Seizing an opportunity offered by the richness of the Japanese written language, suffragists shortened the name of their group to Women's Suffrage League (Fusen kakutoku dōmei; hereafter WSL) in order to make a public appeal for *fusen*. *Fusen*, depending on the character used to write "fu," can mean either "universal suffrage" or "women's suffrage." For years *fusen* had been virtually synonymous with "male suffrage"; the WSL appropriated the more acceptable discourse on male rights by taking advantage of the homonym.<sup>114</sup> The women emphatically declared that *fusen*, or universal suffrage, was incomplete without *fusen*, or women's suffrage:

The foundation for the construction of a new Japan has been laid and, as expected, the [male] suffrage bill was passed by the Fiftieth Diet session. However, along with men who are under 25 or who "receive public or private assistance," we women, who comprise half this country's population, have been left without political rights. . . . Therefore, women should put aside their emotional, religious, and ideological differences and cooperate as *women*. . . . We should concentrate our efforts on achieving the singular goal of political rights. We should work closely with the political parties but maintain a position of absolute neutrality [in partisan matters].<sup>115</sup>

By 1925, suffrage, the hallmark of citizenship, had emerged as a central feature of rights activism, fueling the rhetoric and actions not only of groups dedicated to winning the vote as a sine qua non of rights but also of groups with other primary goals.<sup>116</sup> Rights within the existing state system might be no more than a tempo-

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113. For more on the activities of Diet supporters, see Murata Shizuko, "Daigishi Yamaguchi Masaji to fujin sanseiken undō" (Diet member Yamaguchi Masaji and the women's suffrage movement), *Rekishi hyōron* 517 (May 1993): 83–99.

114. Ichikawa, *Jiden*, p. 155. It is believed that in 1924 legal expert Hozumi Shigetō became the first person to apply the word *fusen* to women; see his "Fusen mondai" (The problem of women's suffrage), *Fusen* 1 (Mar. 1927): 10.

115. Ide Fumiko, "Nihon ni okeru fujin sanseiken undō" (The women's suffrage movement in Japan), *Rekishigaku kenkyū* (Nov. 1956): 18–19.

116. Works on feminists' actions and discourse in the remainder of the interwar period abound. See, e.g., Garon, "Women's Groups and the Japanese State"; Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan*; Molony and Molony, *Ichikawa Fusae*; and Hopper, *A New Woman of Japan*.

rary means of improving women's lives until a revolutionary state could be created—as socialist women argued in the early 1920s<sup>117</sup>—or they might be framed in terms of inclusion in the existing civil society.<sup>118</sup> In either case, they were articulated within existing structures of power. In this regard, the rights discourses of the 1910s and 1920s differed from those of the 1880s and 1890s. Earlier feminist thought assumed a state in the process of formation; by the 1910s, that state was taken as an established entity, and activism had to address itself to the state. By that time, the line between action and rhetoric had eroded, as advocacy came to have political motives and, at times, political outcomes.

Feminists increasingly formulated rights as protections in the 1930s, when concepts of rights based on the “individual” were potentially subversive. But there was a long tradition, dating to the 1910s, of equating rights with protection by a powerful state. Moreover, protection by and inclusion in the state were not viewed as incompatible. Inclusion in the state and/or civil society, many feminists believed in the 1930s, when overt suffragism was risky, could be achieved in multiple ways, such as participation in consumer movements and “election purification” movements,<sup>119</sup> advocacy of protections for laborers, welfare assistance to single mothers and their children, and engagement in other public-sphere activities producing gendered social-welfare reforms.

Rights remained a central feature of these various activities. Current feminist scholarship has viewed the tactical shifts of the 1930s as deeply problematic for rights advocacy in Japan. Hayakawa Noriyo, a leading scholar of women's rights movements, notes that the suffragists' involvement in election purification, “which was initiated by the government and designed to weaken

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117. Molony, “Equality Versus Difference,” pp. 129–30.

118. See, e.g., Fujime Yuki, “Zen Kansai fujin rengōkai no kōzō to tokushitsu” (Structure and characteristics of the All-Kansai Women's Federation), *Shiron* 71, no. 6 (1988): 71–100; and Garon, “Women's Groups and the Japanese State.”

119. Election purification movements were political activities undertaken by women activists against politicians deemed corrupt as well as by conservative bureaucrats opposed to the power of the mainstream political parties. See Gordon Mark Berger, *Parties out of Power in Japan, 1932–1941* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

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the power of political parties, was a critical turning point for the suffrage movement.”<sup>120</sup> Complicity with the government in the 1930s, she writes, differed significantly from the pursuits of activists in the 1910s and 1920s, when “feminism stood against the power of the state.”<sup>121</sup> The WSL worked actively against fascism until 1932 and then shifted to cooperation with the increasingly militarist government. The suffragists’ support for the government in the 1930s is a point of great disappointment for many contemporary feminist writers. Yet, if the pursuit of rights is construed as a quest for inclusion in the state, feminism could never truly stand against the power of the state; the possibility of feminist support for heinous state policies was always embedded in the liberatory rhetoric of full civil rights. In the end, the permutations of rights discourses against shifting social and political backgrounds, especially as the state became increasingly established in the early twentieth century, both accompanied and drove changes in the relationship of women to the state.

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120. Hayakawa, “Feminism and Nationalism in Japan,” p. 116.

121. *Ibid.*, p. 113.