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Barbara Molony

Santa Clara University, bmolony@scu.edu

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State and Women in Modern Japan: Feminist Discourses in the Meiji and Taishō Eras

Barbara Molony

The relationship of women to the Japanese state has been the object of much discussion in Japanese studies in recent years. To be sure, there are as many ways to approach this topic as there are conceptions of 'the state' and of 'women.' Both of these terms are embedded in complicated and historically contingent discourse fields, making it impossible to posit just one or two types of relationships linking the two categories, as they are not fixed. Some scholars look at women as the target of government policies;¹ some examine women as agents of some part of the state;² some are interested in women in organized or institutionalized politics or movements;³ some study women in groups that articulate with state power;⁴ and others look at the discourses about women and the state.⁵

This study considers one aspect of this last approach, examining the relationship of women and the state through discourses on 'women's rights' from the mid-Meiji era through the Taishō era. Many scholars have grounded their work on the assumption that the 'state' was an entity distinct from women or women's groups, with which women sought alliance to achieve shared goals, against which they struggled for justice, or in which they sought membership.⁶ While a stress on resistance or on accommodation appears to be making vastly different points of view about women's relationship to the state, they do, in fact, share an assumption that the state had an *a priori* existence with which women could articulate, but not really change.

Bringing the question of **rights** into the picture, however, muddies the waters considerably, because possession of rights assumes a degree of ownership of the state and thus the ability to influence it. Women's rights discussions are particularly germane to an understanding of the ideology of the state in any society, and Japan is no exception. The struggle for women's rights, while overlooked by many historians in the past, has in more recent years captured the imagination of other historians as an

inspirational instance of resistance against the state. At the same time, however, the notion of resistance must be understood in relation to its converse--that is, resistance is always articulated in relationship to power.⁷ Rights both embrace and resist power.

'Rights' remained a central issue in a wide variety of Japanese intellectual and political discourses, including feminist discourses, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁸ But the notion of rights underwent change by the interwar period, as Japanese people's understanding of the 'state' changed. By then, the state had come to appear as a reified entity, essentially a bureaucracy with legislative and other appurtenances shaping it, under an abstraction (the emperor) theorized as defined by and defining the collective spirit of the *kokumin*. Ironically, the era of greater democracy and liberalism was also one in which the contours of the state were already more established, so women's struggles for the right of inclusion in the state would potentially produce more gradual change even if women gained an institutionalized political voice. In addition to struggling for the right to participate in the state, either in such formal ways as access to suffrage and political office or in less formal ways such as state recognition of the 'voice' of the 'kitchen', feminists also defined women's rights in the interwar period to include the notion of 'protection' by a state whose prior existence they acknowledged. That is, in addition to working to be included in the state in order to alter its constitution in ways beneficial to women and families, feminists sought the state's protection from certain aspects of public and private society which they viewed as oppressive. In the interwar period, these included, but were not restricted to, demands for protection from institutionalized patriarchy--both state supported patriarchy and the everyday version of domineering husbands; protection from the excesses of capitalism; and protection from miserable economic conditions that led to suffering and deaths of women and their children. Both forms of rights discussions in the interwar era--resistance against participatory exclusion and acceptance of the state's power to protect--assumed an existing state structure. Meiji-era discussions of rights assumed both a more fluid political situation and a less precise definition of rights.

Meiji-era rights discourse

In Japan as in many other societies, 'rights' had multiple meanings.⁹ Rights discourse

was lively and diverse, particularly because it originally surfaced in a variety of contexts, and blended notions of Tokugawa anti-authoritarianism¹⁰ with frequently conflated 'Western' rights discourses. In addition, the terms for 'rights' (*kenri*), 'women's rights' (*joken*), 'male-female equality' (*danjo byōdō*), 'male-female equal rights' (*danjo dōken*), and other concepts in the lexicon of rights were themselves neologisms. (These terms were, at times, used interchangeably, though their meanings were actually distinct.)¹¹ Moreover, state, nation, nationality, ethnicity, gender, and so on were all in the process of mutual construction around the same time, and in some cases, rights discourse was used selectively to resist the emerging structure of one or another of these categories. Conversely, rights discourse could also be employed to help reify any of these categories or institutions.

People's Rights advocate Ueki Emori notwithstanding, however--Ueki claimed that men and women were entitled to equal rights and that resistance to unresponsive government was a people's right and duty--most Meiji-era advocates for women did not call for resistance to the state or society leading to its overthrow and replacement by a rights-paradise for women.¹² 'Resistance' occurred within the regimes of power it called into question.¹³ To put it a bit more simply, until the rise of socialist feminism in the last decade of the Meiji period, women's rights called for *inclusion*, not *revolution*--and even most socialists sought inclusion in the absence of a revolution.¹⁴ I suggest two reasons for feminists' desire for inclusion: first, the fundamental nature of rights themselves; and second, the identification, for some Meiji-era women's advocates, of rights with recognition and rewarding of female self-cultivation as a marker of a woman's personhood.

Rights discussions in the late Meiji era, whether by advocates for men or women, developed in a context of iconoclastic rejection of past (Tokugawa) relations of power and of engagement with foreign ideas. That power (a state, social norms, laws, customs, and so on) would exist was not questioned; it was a given. One's relationship to power was under discussion. Feminisms have often been about--as feminist theorist Wendy Brown notes--'a longing to share in power rather than be protected from its excesses.'¹⁵

Any quest for rights, then, might seem rather ironic. One of the purposes of rights is protection from something--from encroachment by another public person, from encroachment by the state, from being limited in one's expression, and so on. (The various notions of rights are frequently in conflict--one's freedom of expression, for example, might conflict with another's right to protection.) These notions of rights as protection from encroachment were clearly shared by some Meiji rights advocates; but to what extent were they applied to women? I would argue that the idea of rights as protection *from* the state was a minor thread in women's rights talk--that the main focus was on inclusion *in* the state and equality in both the private domain of the family and the public domain of civil society.¹⁶ Admittedly, a 'public/private' dichotomy does not quite work here, where women sought to empower themselves in the family ('private') through means of the law ('public') and through public recognition of their intellectual accomplishments. The notion of protection was not absent from Meiji discourse but it arose more in connection with the idea of 'liberation' (*kaihō*) than with rights. Liberation was not used in discussing women's political rights until Socialists began using the term in 1907. *Kaihō* was first used to discuss the liberation of prostituted women and girls from contractual bondage and came to include, by the end of the century, liberation of wives, through divorce, from oppressive marriages.¹⁷ Protection, which came to occupy a central place in women's rights discussions in the twentieth century, was simply the fortunate outcome of women's struggle for respect, the dominant Meiji-era feminist focus.

As theorist Carole Pateman 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.'¹⁸ Thus, by the nineteenth century in the West, civil society came to be viewed as standing in opposition to the family (the private).¹⁹ But such an opposition was not assumed by women's rights advocates in turn-of-the-century Japan.²⁰ While many did assume the family was a warm (private) haven from a cold public world, many others in the early Meiji period believed women were dealt a raw deal in the stereotypical early modern Japanese family. Later Meiji images of the family may not have been so gloomy for

women, but again, the family was not seen as something 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 was seen, during the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), as serving her nation publicly.²¹ The ideological opponents of the women's rights advocates--gender conservatives who opposed any concept of inherent (natural) rights or even earned rights based on service in the public sphere--also argued that the family was the basis of the state.²² But their idea of 'family' was a patriarchy with no thought of rights or even equality among its members. So where did rights advocates start their quest for women's rights?

Although the earliest discussions of rights in the 1870s and 1880s often did not explicitly correlate rights with male gender, the Japanese discussants frequently employed the ideas of Rousseau, whose vision of a social contract was founded on the rights of men in fraternity.²³ Those men and (the smaller group of) women who clamored for rights in the 1870s demanded the rights of political participation or inclusion. By 1890, a tiny minority of men had been awarded the right of inclusion in the state and civil society, but women were pointedly excluded from political participation.²⁴ The dominant conservatives had gendered the state 'male' by 1890--maleness was required of all government officials, including the emperor. By the turn of the century, the requirement of male gender for political participation was taken for granted by many; the state itself was being constructed as a fraternity under a patriarchal emperor.²⁵ Indeed, when political rights were extended in 1890 to some of the men who had earlier demanded rights of fraternal inclusion, many of those activists followed up on their demands by joining parties and entering the government in some capacity.²⁶

Nineteenth-century Japanese advocates for women were, of course, of varying minds about the definition of 'women's rights', but all agreed that women did not have rights at that time. Some argued for a communitarian inclusiveness reminiscent of the Rousseauian ideas espoused in the 1870s, when neither men nor women had political rights. Others, inspired by Mill, stressed improved education as a way for women to gain the subjectivity that would make them eligible for rights. Others believed inclusion must follow the elimination of patriarchal sexual privileges, such as those implied by

polygamy, prostitution, and patrilineality.²⁷

In its formulation and its legal applications, the concept of rights is one which separates the individual from his or her community rather than embracing the notion of 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.²⁸ Japanese commentators on Meiji civil law, both before and after the implementation of the Civil Code of 1898, rightly argued that this concept of rights was at odds with the notion, codified in the Constitution of 1889, that women, and especially wives, were under the jurisdiction of the patriarchal family head, and thus had no individual rights within the community of the family nor the independent right of contract that would permit rights in the larger society.²⁹ The Civil Code, therefore, explicitly excluded the idea of rights held equally by separate individuals (irrespective of household membership).³⁰

Nevertheless, Japanese supporters of improving the lot of women brought rights in as a means to elevate women's status. Many saw rights in terms of inclusion in state and civil society rather than as a basis for continuing resistance and separation from power. In this regard, they had many parallels with Western notions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mill and Rousseau were particularly important sources in the development of Japanese thinking about rights. Under the social contract, which had come to be understood in the West as occurring after the defeat of the metaphorical father (the patriarchal king), individuals voluntarily gave up some rights in return for the protection of civil law and inclusion in the fraternity of citizens. Liberty, equality, and fraternity were the ideal of the civil, or public, sphere following the French Revolution.³¹

The problem with this construct was that its theorists supposed that only 'individuals' could enter into this contract; because of their putative weakness in strength and intellect, women were not entitled to ownership of property in the person, and were therefore not individuals. For Mill, women were thus not 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 part of the civil, egalitarian 'fraternity.' Not surprisingly, advocates of women's rights (including Mill) reckoned that education

was one key to making women deserving of being 'individuals' and therefore improving their status, but even Mill did not know what to do with a husband's right to dominance in marriage. Rousseau, male-centered though his writings often appear, did, in fact, have a publicly important role for women. Men could not be 'brothers' if they were not ethical fathers and sons, and the mother was the key to preserving the moral and ethical family. This idea resonated with women's rights thinking in turn-of-the-century Japan, one of whose key components was moral and intellectual cultivation and its connection with social respect.

Historians of Japan have traditionally raised concerns about 'state intrusion in the family', but that formulation ignores the fact that patriarchal dominance may have felt just as confining to many women as state authoritarianism. Indeed, one component of state authoritarianism was the reification 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 (though one fraught with problems as well) of many feminist political activists, whether Japanese or Western. Patriarchal problems in the 'private' sphere seemed so debilitating in Meiji Japan that issues surrounding marriage and sexuality became a major early concern of advocates of women's rights. Here we can see the precursors to later feminists' emphases on 'protection'; it should be kept in mind, however, that Meiji-era feminists principally argued for respect for women and their personhood rather than for protection of them as weak.

Though concepts of rights and participation in civil society as they developed in eighteenth and nineteenth century Western thought were central to the mid- to late-Meiji discourse on rights, the context was quite different. Most significantly, the metaphorical patriarch (the emperor) was not defeated in Japan but rather was theorized as the abstract centerpiece of a male-gendered (and upper-class centered) polity. Indeed, male sex was made a requirement for emperorship in 1890, which surprised and disheartened many women's rights advocates.³² Nevertheless, male though the emperor had to be, he co-existed with a slowly expanding participatory society, a scenario that led many advocates of rights, both civil and women's rights, to continue to look, in varying degrees, to Western discussions of rights as desirable and perhaps

even normative. Rights discourse was a big tent that accommodated a variety of opinions, and Japanese thinkers, male and female, radical or liberal, drew on different bits of this diverse discourse.

The issues raised by Meiji-era women's rights advocates developed in the context of men's political rights. The concept of male fraternity, so central to Rousseauian rights discourse, was deeply embedded in Japanese social culture, even in contexts in which rights were not at issue.³³ Some women who used notions of rights to advocate elevating the status of women would have agreed with the gender essentialism implied in the fraternity concept while rejecting the notion that it might imply male superiority; others leaned toward the notion of rights inherent in individuals irrespective of gender. But because women's rights implied women's inclusion in the state and civil society--which would erode a sense of fraternity of male citizens--and because most advocates for women recognized that equality first required the destruction of patriarchal family practices such as polygamy, prostitution, and patrilineality, women's rights talk eventually moved in divergent directions from (male) rights discourse after the 1890s, when some men became enfranchised citizens.

It is tempting to analyse women's rights primarily in terms of politics, but we would overlook a significant part of the discussion about women in Meiji-era Japan if we did so. At that time, discussions of women's rights were closely related to discussions of women's education, particularly education beyond the elementary level. Cultivating a good, moral, ethical, responsible character capable of manifesting agency--through being an exemplar or even a leader--was a goal of Confucian education as well as the recently introduced Western-style learning. Intellectual and moral cultivation produced a person worthy of respect, worthy of having a recognizable subjectivity. The centrality of education, with its deep connections to notions of respect and ethical leadership (which itself implies both agency and a relationship to regimes of power), in turn-of-the-century rights discourse suggests that rights at that time were closely connected to the yearning for respect for women's subjectivity. And that subjectivity was conceived within the frame of power of contemporary Japanese society. Talk of rights takes persons' subjectivity for granted; talk of education as self-cultivation advances the

cause of women's subjectivity. In Meiji Japan, even the type of education which claimed to train women who did not need *political* rights (narrowly defined as the vote) was to mould ethical wives and mothers who led by example in the family and in civil society. These women would be active not in electoral politics but, as individuals or as members of organizations, in public activities such as poor relief or more controversial reforms like those calling for regulation of sexuality.³⁴

Some scholars suggest that 1890s discourses on women, which focused more on educated women managing a warm, loving family and home (*katei*) or playing a leadership role in legal reification of moral reform (especially reform of the patriarchal family), was a shift away from 1880s discourses focusing on political rights.³⁵ But I would argue that there was no real gulf between the 1880s and the 1890s when viewed from the perspective of subjectivity. If, before 1890, 'male-female equality' (*danjo byōdō*) was much discussed, it was used both as the ground for *joken* and *dōken* (women's rights and equal rights) and as the justification for the attack on polygamy. Unlike *joken* advocates, advocates of monogamy did not necessarily wish women to be active in politics, but they did view women as fully realized individuals deserving equality and respect. Both types sought women's inclusion in society, one through political, civil, or civic participation on a par with men, the other through the use of law to improve familial relations, which would further the dissolving of barriers between public and private spheres. This approach to improving the status and conditions of women continued in the 1890s, supplemented by discussions of equal rights and, most noticeably, discourse on education. Ethical and well-trained women were worthy of respect and were, therefore, integrated with society, a necessary step toward inclusion in the state and possession of rights.

From the beginning of the Meiji period, what later came to be called *fujinron* (discourse on womanhood) occupied the attention of quite a few commentators, many of whom discussed education, especially in the context of morality in the family and, by extension, in the whole nation. *Mei roku zasshi* (founded 1873, circulation 3,000) was an early venue for these discussions.³⁶ Fukuzawa Yukichi, perhaps the most famous early participant in the "*fujin ronsō*," and author of the influential *Nihon fujinron* in 1885,

stressed monogamy as the basis of equality (*byōdō*).³⁷ Elsewhere, Fukuzawa linked 'equality' closely to education.

Like Fukuzawa, female advocates for women also linked education, monogamy, and respect. Going beyond the printed word alone, women advocates took the feminist message to the public through political speeches, like those of (Nakajima) Kishida Toshiko and Fukuda Kageyama Hideko. They also organized civic groups, thereby moving into and helping to develop civil society in Meiji Japan. Kishida Toshiko gave scores of speeches between 1882 and 1884. Her talks were pointedly political, calling for equal rights for men and women, decrying the stultifying effects of repression of freedom of thought, denouncing the equating of personhood with male gender alone³⁸ and, above all, calling on women to develop the mental strength (*seishin ryoku*) to be confident public persons.³⁹ Kishida rhetorically connected the development of women's subjectivity--their existence as persons in society--both to national strength and to People's Rights politics. Because '[e]quality, independence, respect, and a monogamous relationship are the hallmarks of relationships between men and women in a civilized society,' she stated, women's rights would elevate Japan in international esteem and thereby aid in its defense against a possible Western threat.⁴⁰ Kishida also gave sexual inequality a political twist her colleagues in the People's Rights movement would not fail to grasp when she equated male supremacy with the government's dominion over the people--as in her speech entitled 'The government is the people's god; man is woman's god' (*Seifū wa jinmin no ten; otoko wa onna no ten*).⁴¹

Kishida inspired women all over Japan.⁴² Women's groups sprang up in cities and towns, large and small--many of them 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*).⁴³ Whether these groups continued to exist long after they sponsored Kishida and others is unclear. Yet they did have specific goals, and they did participate in feminist discourses that continued in later decades. Their role in disseminating ideas of rights and reforms is as significant as their role in involving women in non-governmental advocacy groups outside the home. Moreover,

they helped set the stage for the growth of larger and more influential feminist groups, such as the Japan Christian Women's Reform Society (*Nihon Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfukai*) or the Women's Morality Associations (*Fujin Tokugikai*) in the next half decade, and they created a context for the expansion of women's rights discourses in magazines and journals in the 1890s.⁴⁴ These groups advocated monogamy and women's sexual dignity and fostered political discussion and collaborative feminist efforts to set up schools for girls and women.⁴⁵ 'Joseiron' in these groups meant discourses on ways to improve women's lot through politicizing the private by means of education, marital respect, and the relationship of these to public voice and self-cultivation.

Educator Fukuda Hideko followed in Kishida's footsteps.⁴⁶ Inspired by Kishida, the young Hideko founded a community women's group that brought in speakers on natural rights, equality, and freedom.⁴⁷ In 1890, Fukuda petitioned the Diet to permit women's political participation--a clear use of what she viewed as her right to address the government.⁴⁸ In 1891, Fukuda caught the attention of the mainstream media with her proposal to establish a newspaper for women run entirely by women.⁴⁹ Like Kishida, Fukuda tied women's rights and political involvement to strengthening the nation.⁵⁰ Though more famous than most of their contemporaries, Fukuda and Kishida were not alone among women and men who translated into notable political action their desire for women's right of inclusion, for education, and for the respect that came with personhood.

The rhetoric of rights was further developed in new journals and magazines that appeared in the late 19th century. The most important of these new journals for women was *Jogaku zasshi* (Women's education journal), co-founded by Iwamoto Yoshiharu (Zenji) in 1885, and edited by him for most of its eighteen years. *Jogaku zasshi* employed the talents of numerous writers, including at least eight women known in their day as advocates of rights, both women's rights and people's rights; the most famous of these were probably Shimizu Toyoko, Nakajima Kishida Toshiko, and Wakamatsu Shizu (who married Iwamoto in 1889).⁵¹ All were influenced by the readily accessible thought of the freedom and people's rights polemicists as well as lively intellectual

discourse in other publications like the *Meiroke zasshi* of the previous decade and *Kokumin no tomo*, a journal which shared a readership with *Jogaku zasshi*.⁵² From these sources, the writers were influenced by a diverse body of thought on rights.

Raising women's status had particular and shifting meanings to Iwamoto Yoshiharu. In 1885, Iwamoto stressed that women's human character must be recognized; like men, women were human.⁵³ He argued for the fundamental equality of men and women--*danjo byōdō*--although he rejected male/female equal rights--*danjo dōken*.⁵⁴ *Danson jōhi* (respect the male, despise the female) was particularly odious to Iwamoto.⁵⁵ Christianity, which permeated Iwamoto's thinking, emphasized the equal humanity of men and women in the eyes of God.⁵⁶ Women must not be seen as less than human, he wrote in 1885, but that did not imply that men and women must be granted equal rights; servants are human, too, but they do not have the same rights as their employers.⁵⁷ Though Iwamoto believed in gender equality before God, he took social stratification by gender as perfectly natural, as did many contemporary social contract theorists in the West, whose grounding was also in Christianity. From the mid-1880s to the early 1890s, when Iwamoto fervently espoused education for women, he also believed that the purpose of women's education should differ from men's. Women must be trained to be good wives and mothers--but he called for a 'modern' type of wife and mother.⁵⁸ Christian, modern (*kirisutokyōteki, kindaiteki*) thinking would respect men and women for the particular roles each fulfilled. It would elevate women's status. It would create mothers who were intelligent and wives who were good persons, and not merely mothers who were wise educators of their children and wives who served their husbands well. But it would not necessarily require political rights identical to those of men.⁵⁹ Such a concept of rights, which would set a woman apart from the community constituted by her family, was alien to Iwamoto's communitarian construction of rights at that time. To counter opponents' criticism that educated women made bad wives, *Jogaku zasshi* extolled the virtues of an educated wife.⁶⁰

Iwamoto was bitterly disappointed in the 1889 Constitution. His sense of betrayal when he read that gender determined imperial succession⁶¹ comes across as surprising naiveté to a late twentieth-century observer. But interestingly, it was after this shock

that Iwamoto adopted a new approach to women's education and to women's rights. In a June 1889 article entitled '100-Year Chronic Disease' (*Hyaku-nen no koshitsu*), Iwamoto presented a stinging criticism of sexism in education.⁶² If Japanese opposed women's high schools, objected to women voting, objected to monogamy, insulted the morality of female students, and failed to regard men and women as equally human, then Japan would never cure its century-long chronic disease. The ruler would be separated from the people, the people from the officials, the slave from the master, the rich from the poor. It is remarkable how advocacy of the education of women, of Christian moralism, of religious egalitarianism, and of women's civil rights are all brought under one discursive umbrella. Moreover, 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 is a powerful one.

Jogaku zasshi published a number of criticisms of the denial of women's right of political inclusion in 1890. In an unsigned article, *Jogaku zasshi* called for women to take part in political discussions in order to promote 'political harmony among men and women' (*seijijō danjo kyōwa*).⁶³ Shimizu Toyoko wrote in August 1890, condemning the recent passage of legislation barring women from political meetings, that 'if individual rights are to be protected, and the peace and order of society secured, laws should not be discriminatory, granting advantage to men only, and misfortune only to women.'⁶⁴ In another article two months later, Shimizu considered it irrational that 'one part of humanity arbitrarily control...the other part.'⁶⁵ These articles indicate Shimizu's individual rights-based concept of women's rights as well as her displeasure with the denial of women's agency.

Many advocates of women's rights focused on sexuality issues in their struggle for developing women's personhood and dignity. The heterosexual relationship was problematized early on in the discussions on womanhood (*fujinron*), as seen in the early discussions by *Meiroku zasshi* writers. These articles stressed the damage done by polygamy to Japanese ethical values and Japan's resulting weakness in the face of the West. Feminists expanded these ideas and discussed control of sexuality--that of men and of some women--as a way of improving women's conditions and helping their development as full, equal human beings, a necessary condition not only for

respectability but also for inclusion in the state and civil society.

Sexuality issues were increasingly politicized after the founding of the Tokyo (later Japan) Christian Women's Reform Society by Yajima Kajiko in 1886.⁶⁶ Articles discussing the Reform Society's views on monogamy as moral, as good for Japan, as respecting nature's gender balance, and as a move away from evil customs of the Confucian past emerged in articles by and about the Reform Society's political activities in *Tōun shinbun* and *Tōkyō Fujin Kyōfukai zasshi* in the late 1880s.⁶⁷ *Jogaku zasshi*, another source of information about the Reform Society, also stressed control of male sexuality through the banning of polygamy in an 1887 article by Iwamoto entitled 'The atmosphere of adultery' (*Kan'in no kūki*), for which the entire issue in which it was to appear was banned by the government.⁶⁸

Women's advocates' main view of polygamy was that it was a denigration of women's rights. For that reason, Yajima and others were passionate in their struggle against it--this was no abstraction to them. In 1889, Yajima delivered to government officials a petition with 800 signatures, demanding an end to concubinage. She took a dagger on this mission, prepared to commit suicide if she were unable to hand over her petition.⁶⁹ *Tokyo nichi nichi shinbun* reported that in November 1891, the Reform Society planned to submit a petition to the Diet for legislation banning polygamy. Thus, the Reform Society recognized the use of the power of the state in influencing equality in the marriage relationship.⁷⁰ Male morality was often at stake in these discussions; Shimizu Toyoko, for instance, wrote an article entitled 'Discussing Japanese Males' Moral Character' (*Nihon danshi no hinkō o ronzu*).⁷¹

Discussions about controlling male sexuality were accompanied by those concerning the control of some women's sexuality. Reform Society goals included the elimination of prostitution as well as concubinage as two sides of the same coin.⁷² The sex trade denigrated wives by supporting husbands' adultery, and thus was seen as a women's rights issue that focused on legitimate wives. As for women in the sex trades themselves, Reform Society attitudes were often unsympathetic. *Tōkyō Fujin Kyōfu zasshi* called for shaming women into leaving sex work: 'Succumbing to the easier life

of prostitution...they brazenly walk the streets in broad daylight....There is no way to stop them other than to shame them into reforming!' Overseas prostitution, moreover, shamed Japan as a whole, the journal noted, and may have contributed to anti-Japanese discrimination in the United States.⁷³ The Reform Society's concern about prostitution was, in these types of comments, less connected to saving fallen women--which was, in fact, another goal of the organization--than to supporting the human dignity and equal personhood of wives and improving Japan's foreign relations.

Gaining subjectivity was an important requirement for eligibility for rights; and rights discourse was a well-used way of discussing subjectivity. The two were often elided. The issue of 'morality' was essential to women's subjectivity. 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 Women's Morality Associations (*fujin tokugikai*) throughout Japan.⁷⁴ The goals of various branches of this association called for freedom (*jiyū*), equality (*byōdō*), women's rights (*joken*), and morality (*tokugi*).⁷⁵ The Women's Morality Association's stated goal was 'the expansion of women's rights and the elimination of the evil of "respect the male and despise the female."⁷⁶ Like *Jogaku zasshi*, *Joken*, in an 1891 article entitled 'People's Rights or Men's Rights?' (*Minken ka danken ka?*), strongly criticized the exclusion of women from the political world, arguing that 'rights' should not be gendered.⁷⁷

The Women's Reform Society and the Women's Morality Association attempted to push their agendas in the political arena. That venue was quite restricted, however. Even before the revisions of the Police Security Regulations of 1890, with its infamous 'Article 5' which banned women from all political participation, including political speaking and assembly, women had been pointedly excluded from participation in the City-Town-Village Regulations of 1889.⁷⁸ Feminists submitted petitions to the Diet to eliminate these restrictions, but failed.⁷⁹ In response, feminist Shimizu Toyoko contributed her important article in *Jogaku zasshi*, 'Why are women not permitted to take part in political meetings?' (*Naniyue ni joshi wa seiden shūkai ni sanchō suru no o yurusarezaru ka?*).⁸⁰ One response by the government, in turn, was a Diet member's assertion that women

should not have political rights because they should focus on their work in the home--the first such assertion in the Diet.⁸¹ Failing to gain a political voice, women's rights advocates did not abandon their cause, but turned even more attention to the issues of sexuality, which were now redefined as 'social' rather than the banned 'political'. Economic independence became yet another part of feminists' quest for sexuality-based marital respect as an element in social reforms.

Shimizu (and others) connected the rights of citizens (*kokumin*) with social and moral issues.⁸² Women needed to be citizens--to have the right of participation--because they should educate their children as citizens and support their husbands in the exercise of their citizenship. Thus, Shimizu posited that women's political rights arose from their relationship with those who had (some) rights. This resonated with Kishida Toshiko's 1884 article, 'Appeal to my sisters,' (*Dōhō shimai ni tsugu*).⁸³ Women's advocacy groups, then, restructured the political to be more like the social or moral. Advocacy of improving women's conditions did not end with Article 5; concerns about morality, the home, economic conditions, and other issues took center stage as women moved increasingly into public realms of advocacy (civil society). And women's education was essential to this ability to penetrate civil society by creating women's personhood or subjectivity. For late Meiji-era feminists, the state was still an entity in formation. Many believed that women's involvement with the state through their quest for rights was bound to alter it.

The political use of liberal notions of rights was not limited to 'bourgeois' women in the late Meiji era. As Vera Mackie notes in her recent study, socialist women led the earliest campaigns, from 1904 to 1909, to revise Article 5 of the Public Peace Police Law, which prohibited women from attendance at political meetings as well as membership in political parties.⁸⁴ Putting women in the same category as minors, an editorial in Fukuda Hideko's newspaper *Sekai fujin* stated, was insulting.⁸⁵ These campaigns by socialist women to revise Article 5 were unsuccessful, the socialist newspaper *Heimin shinbun* reported-- blending class analysis and feminism--, because the House of Peers, 'an organization made up of members of the male class (*danshi kaikyū no ichi dantai*). . .do not see women as human individuals (*ikko no jinrui*) or as

citizens of the nation (*ikko no kokumin*).⁸⁶

Taishō Feminisms

Discussions of women's rights were common in the Taishō era. Many women and men across the political spectrum engaged these issues through words and through political actions. This section addresses a narrow but important segment of that rights discourse--that engaged in by leading suffragists. In the Taishō era, the conception of the state held by most feminists (including some socialist feminists) was as a relatively fixed entity with which they sought alignment in some form or from which they sought protection from social or economic oppression. This notion of the state framed the 'motherhood protection debate' (*bosei hogo ronsō*) early in the Taishō era. This debate, carried out by a handful of activists and writers in the pages of national circulation magazines, has been treated in detail by numerous scholars,⁸⁷ so my discussion of it will be very brief here. What is salient in terms of women's relationship to the state is the recognition by all but one of the participants that the state owed mothers 'protection.' Hiratsuka Raichō argued that women performed a service to the state by giving birth and, thus, deserved financial payment. Socialist Yamakawa Kikue seemed to reject the arguments of the other three as bourgeois, 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, albeit in a completely reformed state. Yamada Waka took an essentialist point of view of women's biological duties, but in the end she called for both husbands and the state to support maternity. Only Yosano claimed that focussing on protection from the state was 'slave morality' (*dorei dōtoku*); even she conceded the desirability, however, of a system of insurance that would compensate women for wages lost while recovering from childbirth. For all of these 1910s feminists, then, the state had taken on a role as protector of (gendered) rights of maternity. I view this as a changing attitude based on feminists' thinking that the state had become a reified institution capable both of protecting rights against societal or civil oppression and of denying rights to groups or individuals who then must either resist the state or struggle for inclusion in it.⁸⁸

The notion that the state was an entity that should protect classes of individuals against

societal exploitation, and which consisted of individuals with the right of membership, is clearly evident in the founding of the New Woman Association (Shin Fujin Kyōkai) in 1919. To achieve the rights of protection and inclusion, women had to identify as a class, noted Hiratsuka Raichō, one of the group's three founding mothers (the other two were Ichikawa Fusae and Oku Mumeo). Invited to speak to the All-Kansai Federation of Women's Organizations in late November 1919, Hiratsuka delivered a talk entitled 'Toward the Unification of Women.'⁸⁹ Identifying women as a class, Hiratsuka called for women to unite to articulate common concerns and demand power. As possessors of rights, women would be part of the state that would determine 'the future.' Women were no longer in need of proving their wisdom and talent, as they had been in the late nineteenth century. Rights should be theirs--if only women would communicate to achieve those rights. Her vision of rights included different but complementary roles and identities for men and women. In addition, Hiratsuka articulated two types of feminist rights in her comments--women's rights (*joken*) and mothers' rights (*boken*). Women can be individuals, but motherhood requires at least one relationship, that of mother and child; mothers' rights are by definition relational.

Shortly after this speech, sometime in November or December, Ichikawa joined Hiratsuka to draft the New Woman Association's two central demands. The first of the two proposals demanded revision of the Public Peace Police Law (*Chian keisatsuhō*) of 1900. As we have seen, protest against Article 5 of that law was not new. The feminist fight against the Police Law of 1900 was also inspired by the increasing successes of women's rights movements outside Japan. In contrast to many women in the West, Ichikawa noted, '[Japanese women] could not even listen to political speeches. We greatly resented this.'⁹⁰

The second major program of the NWA also had foreign parallels. Inspired by recent developments in domestic legislation in Europe and the United States, Hiratsuka proposed that the NWA seek passage of legislation to protect women from marrying men with sexually transmitted disease and to assist wives who had been infected by their carrier husbands.⁹¹ Legal inequalities, she noted, created hardships for women victimized by the dreaded disease. The Revised Civil Code of 1898 stipulated that a

Japanese wife was subject to divorce and two years imprisonment for committing adultery but was unable to file for divorce should she discover--and venereal disease was a strong indication--that her husband engaged in extra-marital sexual relations.⁹²

The NWA's proposed reform of the divorce laws to permit women to reject syphilitic husbands or fiancés directly challenged the patriarchal family system, which gave few rights to members other than the patriarch. Although Ichikawa was not as committed at that time to the struggle for domestic rights as was her colleague, she agreed to work for the second program as she realized its importance in the fight for equality.⁹³

Hiratsuka, Ichikawa, and Oku met with other activists at Hiratsuka's home on 6 January 1920 and decided to present two petitions before the forty-second session of the Diet. These petitions 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--as a constant reminder to supporters of the centrality of these issues. The petitions read:

1. We, the undersigned, seek repeal of the word 'women' from Clause One and the words 'women and' from Clause Two [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. Wives whose husbands have become infected after marriage or who are infected by their husband may file for divorce; f. Wives infected by their husbands may collect monetary compensation for medical expenses and other damages even after divorce.⁹⁴

Petition 1 unambiguously demanded the identical rights of citizenship and inclusion in the state enjoyed by men. Petition 2 called for women's protection by the state against potentially deadly excesses inherent in the family system.

The supporters of these petitions adopted several strategies in response to opposition. To those who maintained that political rights for women would destroy the Japanese

family by changing the wife's role, Ichikawa argued that revision of the Police Law would not harm womanly virtues but would, in fact, help women become better wives and wiser mothers; a politically aware mother was better informed and, therefore, able to rear better children. Ichikawa's conflation of wifeness and motherhood sounded natural to her listeners because the discourses on wifeness and motherhood were becoming increasingly blended in the popular mind by the clichéd phrase, 'good wife, wise mother.' Supporters of 'motherhood' ranged from conservatives to feminists, the latter stressing that by valuing motherhood society would value women. But 'wifeness' in its official (state) interpretation was not liberatory. Wives were, at worst, under patriarchal control and, at best, responsible for family-supporting productivity.⁹⁵ For wise mothers, who carried out an important role in moulding the future, political rights could be arguably necessary; for wives, who had no property to protect and who had productive responsibilities to the state and family, political rights may have been harder to justify. In eviscerating the wife role by focussing on the mother role, Ichikawa, who was neither a wife nor a mother, appears to have abandoned the Meiji-era 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 dominant position within the family, the NWA answered that a husband's venereal disease, which would affect the well-being of the children, was even more debilitating to the family.⁹⁶ This approach also shifted the discourse from wifeness to motherhood, using the malleability of 'good wife, wise mother,' a phrase Ichikawa scorned but manipulated when necessary. By focussing on the groom's health and not the bride's, the petition ran into strong opposition. Meiji-era feminists had identified women's rights with respect for women's full personhood. Women gained subjectivity as respected and educated wives in a society free of patriarchy, polygamy and prostitution. Meiji women's rights discourses boldly attacked extramarital male sexuality. By the Taishō era, male sexuality was identified with patriarchy, which was supported by law and by the state. To change male sexual privilege, then, Taishō feminists had to cast their arguments in terms of other state-

sponsored discourses, particularly 'good wife, wise motherism.'⁹⁷ The petition justified exempting brides from VD screening by noting that men's sexual habits were dissolute and self indulgent. Among women, only prostitutes were so morally lax.⁹⁸

Because even sexuality had been politicized by the legal reification of patriarchy, the NWA found that they had to give priority to efforts to revise the Police Law. No political activity could be carried out without first revising the Police Law. Yet advocacy of change in the law could in itself be a violation of that law. For their first foray into politics, therefore, the NWA felt a petition, stamped with the family seals (*hanko*) of Japanese subjects and presented to the Diet, would be the most effective first step toward changing the law. In the event, the petition never made it out of Diet committee and to the full floor of the Diet, as Prime Minister Hara Takashi dissolved the forty-second Diet session on 26 February.

The dissolution of the Diet relieved Ichikawa, Hiratsuka, and Oku of their lobbying activities and gave them a chance to work on strengthening the organization of the NWA and to go to lectures. One lecture Ichikawa and Hiratsuka attended on 4 March 1920 had the interesting title, 'Current Events as Seen by Intellectuals.' But their enjoyment of the lecture was cut short when the two, highly visible in a sea of men, were arrested for attending a 'political' meeting.⁹⁹ Their arrests animated the activists all the more. Why, Ichikawa wrote in *Josei dōmei's* first issue in October, was it all right for women to read and write but not to speak and listen?¹⁰⁰

Although Ichikawa believed that it was illogical and irrational to distinguish the written and spoken word, the two are, in fact, quite different as forms of discourse. It is possible that the authorities figured that written words could inspire criticism but not a mob, as written words were more likely the possession of middle-class writers, not the working-class whom they feared. Spoken language has immediacy and irrepressibility. Spoken words must be heard, while written words can be more easily controlled through censorship or simply ignored. Moreover, women's voices, distinct from men's, have an effect on their listeners that is different from men's; written words can be attributed to a pseudonymous author and gender can be masked. An established state that fears unpredictable, spontaneous politics seeks means to contain the speech of those not

part of the state. Feminists recognized this, and in their attempt to join with and benefit from the existing state, they first sought to claim a political voice. Women would not be fully members of society until their participation in discourse was as unfettered as men's.

Hoping to claim that voice, Ichikawa announced the official principles of the NWA at its formal 'opening ceremony' on 25 March 1920:¹⁰¹

1. To demand equal opportunities for both men and women so that women might achieve their full potential;
2. To encourage cooperation between men and women who, although different, have equally important societal functions to perform;
3. To make clear to all the important role of the household in society;
4. To safeguard the rights of women as mothers and daughters by aiming to promote their best interests and by eliminating impediments to the exercise of their rights.¹⁰²

These principles stressed the desirability of women's rights based on gender differences and on the particular importance of the household and family relationships (motherhood, daughterhood).

The NWA's petitions eventually made it to the Diet on 19 July 1920. The agenda for that day's Diet session contained the long-awaited proposed amendment to the Public Peace Police Law. Independent Representative Tabuchi Toyokichi made an impassioned appeal for support of women's political rights.¹⁰³

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. . . In this sense, Japan is a police state. . . It is deplorable that we legislators have not become fully aware of this state of affairs. . . I have, therefore, decided. . . 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 Five of the Public Peace Police Law. Gentlemen, one of the currents of our postwar world is socialism; a second current is feminism, reaching Japan. . . I wonder if these momentous global changes will penetrate the Japanese Diet? . . . I firmly believe we must look for what

is valuable in feminism and socialism, adopting what is good and discarding what is bad. . .Gentlemen, manhood suffrage is widely discussed in Japan today. . .Political rights for women have spread to numerous countries, including England and France (*sic*) [yet] Japan still does not even recognize suffrage for men! This situation is unacceptable! . . .I believe some of you are unaware of conditions in the world today.

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 its subjects, including women.

Although I do not advocate giving women complete suffrage at this time, I do believe we must give all adult men (those over twenty) the right to vote. We must extend universal suffrage. . . However, at the same time, I realize 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.¹⁰⁴

Tabuchi explicitly differentiated men's and women's political rights. He also advocated revision of Article Five not only because he called for a new relationship between men and women (as involved subjects) and the state, but also because he wished the state to protect the 'weak.' Shortly thereafter, the Diet was dissolved, so there was no opportunity for a vote.

At a later Diet session, on 26 February 1921, a nearly unanimous House of Representatives recommended revising Article 5 to permit women to attend political meetings and rallies (the prohibition of their joining political parties was not yet lifted, however). Opposition to the bill, even in this compromised form, was greater in the House of Peers. The most vocal opponent was Baron Fujimura Yoshirō, president of *Taishō nichichi shinbun* and a powerful leader in the Upper House. 'The participation of women in political movements is extremely boring,' he remarked condescendingly. Furthermore, 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. . . Furthermore, women's going out into society and becoming active in political movements will result in a number of extremely bad consequences... Take the example of Queen Elizabeth's reign... What I am saying is supported by our particular traditions, customs, and history. Finally, 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. [The issue before us] concerns Japan's national polity. . . .I believe we should oppose [revision of the Police Law].¹⁰⁵

Fujimura's colleagues heeded his warnings and defeated the amendment in the closing minutes of the forty-fourth session.

While the bills were being debated in the Diet, the women of the NWA redefined their activities to permit them to participate in their own governance while steering clear of the government's restrictions on political activities. They turned to projects that were less likely to be identified with the demand for political rights. The NWA could, then, rightfully claim not to be purely a political association, something women were prohibited from joining. Ichikawa worked to dispel the idea that the NWA was only interested in 'obtaining political rights for women.'¹⁰⁶ Hiratsuka Raichō had stated earlier, in her Ōsaka speech, that women's status and lives could not be improved without removing impediments to women's rights--that is, women had to gain equality in the eyes of the law through political rights. But most advocates of women's rights presented civil and political rights as a means to an end rather than as an end in themselves. The end they called for was the improvement of women's lives through better health, elimination of poverty, better work conditions, protection of motherhood, and other feminist goals. Even Ichikawa, the feminist most noteworthy for her espousal of women's political rights, stated that civil rights, while beneficial in themselves, also were crucial for the improvement of women's lives. Hiratsuka wrote in the first issue of the NWA's journal *Josei dōmei* that suffrage was not an end in itself but a means to inject new feminine values into a male political system.¹⁰⁷ Non-socialist feminists viewed the political system and state as already institutionalized by the Taishō period. Their campaign for civil rights, an attempt to become part of that state, was no more an attack

on the state than was the feminists' working with the state to gain protections for women.

Improving women's lives may appear fundamentally political, but politics were more narrowly construed in 1920s Japan. Motherhood protection, or health issues, or labour protection were seen as social reformers' issues, and though they intersected with politics by being debated and funded by cabinet and parliament, women's involvement with them was often viewed as non-political. Ichikawa and other 'political' women politicized the 'kitchen' much later, in the 1930s. In 1920, the struggle for political rights as an end rather than as a means was viewed by non-feminists as selfish, though feminist social reform was not. Political rights implied the activist wanted something for herself--the right to assemble or the right to vote.

In the process of working on health issues or labour reform, women may have been acting as if they were members of the state, but without specific and articulated rights, their citizenship was always less than men's. In 1921, therefore, the leadership of the NWA decided to risk societal opprobrium and expand their demand for complete inclusion in the state. They were determined not only to seek revision of the Police Law but to raise the issue of women's suffrage. 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, which restricted the right to vote to males 25 or older who paid a minimum direct tax of three yen per year and who had been listed in the election directory for one full year.¹⁰⁸

Few women understood what revision of the Election Law would mean (and Ichikawa claimed that most progressive women were not yet attuned to suffrage at that time), but those who read about the NWA's new position on suffrage in *Josei dōmei* were increasingly comfortable with the idea of participation in national politics. Equal suffrage rights began to enter discourse as a significant component of women's rights.

During the 1920s, Ichikawa's ideas developed in directions different from Hiratsuka's.

According to Ichikawa, Hiratsuka's ideology was based on the "principle of mothers' rights" (*bokenshugi*), a concept which contrasted significantly with her own "principle of women's rights" (*jokenshugi*). Ichikawa later wrote:

Although Hiratsuka emphasized raising the position of women, obtaining their rights, and male-female equality, she attached a great deal of importance to the household and hoped very much to protect mothers and children.¹⁰⁹

Hiratsuka believed in improving women's status through protection of motherhood. For Ichikawa, the relational role was secondary; she wished to improve the status of all women, irrespective of their relationship to children. While motherhood protection in its own right was important to Ichikawa, she felt, in the 1920s, that women's political empowerment was not to be achieved through using the power of the state to protect mothers, but through recognition of male-female equality.¹¹⁰

In a 1920 article, Ichikawa articulated her beliefs in terms of the 'principle of women's rights' ideology.

Aren't we [women] treated completely as 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.¹¹¹

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

In December 1920, Ichikawa published an article entitled 'Absolute Equality between Men and Women?' in *Fujin kōron*, in which she discussed the differences in the United States between feminists demanding complete legal equality with men and those advocating special and distinctive treatment for women, especially workplace

protections.¹¹² She suggested that a similar debate was emerging among Japanese women. For Ichikawa, the central feminist debate was between special protections for women and identical treatment of both sexes. Both sides of this debate took an established state for granted.

Absolute equality between men and women? Which is right or wrong? I have outlined the problem here and have decided to wait for the comments of other intellectuals.¹¹³

One intellectual from whom Ichikawa may have wished to hear was socialist feminist Yamakawa Kikue. In April 1921, Yamakawa and others organized Japan's first socialist women's association, the Red Wave Society (Sekirankai). The Red Wave Society's manifesto, written by Yamakawa in 1921, 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.'¹¹⁴ She decried capitalism for engendering (in both senses of the word) imperialism, which deprived women of their male loved ones, thereby defining the problems of capitalism in terms of women's losses rather than men's.¹¹⁵ But like socialist women elsewhere, Yamakawa would find her feminism marginalized by socialist men and in contention with the positions of non-socialist feminists.

Yamakawa, as her bourgeois sisters, foregrounded protection of women as a function of the state. But unlike the NWA, she did not take the existing Japanese state for granted but rather envisioned a state that eschewed capitalism. Yamakawa Kikue's article, 'The New Woman's Association and the Red Wave Society,' appeared in the July 1921 issue of *Taiyō*.¹¹⁶ Criticizing the NWA, she wrote:

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 which 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.¹¹⁷

The months after Yamakawa's article saw a period of considerable activity by women

in Japan. Much of this activity was stimulated by the amendment of Article 5, Clause Two of the Public Peace Police Law.¹¹⁸ Taking advantage of their newly-won right to attend political rallies (they still could not join political parties), women began to organize new groups through which they could make additional demands. Some worked for women's political rights, others pushed for an end to licensed prostitution and other goals. Some groups of women, like those involved in housewives' campaigns to rationalize home life, might not have described themselves as women's rights activists, though their leaders often did embrace the demand for women's political rights. Their greater public involvement coincided with and was encouraged by other women's increased public visibility. In short, it was becoming unexceptional for women of a variety of political persuasions to take part in some types of political discourse. Women's groups of all sorts blossomed in the early 1920s: consumer groups of varied political persuasions, socialist feminist groups, bourgeois descendents of the NWA, the venerable Women's Reform Society and its suffragist arm, and so on. Feminist reformism permeated Taishō liberal culture, but in mid-1923 it was not coordinated to focus on political rights for women as a class. A jolt was needed to persuade activist women of the importance of joint activity.

That jolt was provided by the great earthquake that hit the Kantō Plain on 1 September 1923. In the aftermath of the quake, the Women's Reform Society's Kubushiro Ochimi and other women turned to relief work to supply thousands of Tokyo residents with food, clothing, and shelter. Women from Christian churches and other groups in the Tokyo area started distributing milk to children and developed a sense of solidarity through shared compassion and concern. Some were housewives with little or no experience in organized cooperative activities. Others were members of alumnae groups and women's auxiliary organizations. There were socialists like Yamakawa Kikue who disregarded ideological differences to participate in relief measures with middle-class Christians and housewives.¹¹⁹ On 28 September 1923, approximately 100 leaders from forty-three different organizations agreed to formalize their spontaneous cooperative efforts and joined forces in an organization named the Tokyo Federation of Women's Organizations (Tokyo Rengō Fujinkai).¹²⁰

The earthquake's destruction had created a situation that demanded effective cooperation. After the Tokyo Federation finished emergency distribution of food and clothing to the poor and finding shelter for the homeless, many members continued to meet.¹²¹ Sometime in late 1923 or early 1924, the organization was divided into five sections: society, employment, labour, education, and government.¹²² Within these sections, women discussed a variety of issues, including motherhood protection, licensed prostitution, the problems of working women, and political rights for women. Not only did women have the opportunity to resume discussion of problems attracting their attention before the earthquake, they also cooperated with women from organizations with different basic objectives.

The Tokyo Federation's government section focussed on issues of political rights, discussing means of using the state to earn inclusion. It also examined the character and direction of the Japanese women's movement. That fall, government section director Kubushiro Ochimi decided to call a meeting of women interested in working for women's political rights. Sixty to seventy women attended a 'women's suffrage movement workshop' on 13 and 14 November 1924 at the Reform Society's Women's Home in the Ōkubo section of Tokyo.¹²³ This meeting spawned the League for the Realization of Women's Suffrage (Fujin Sanseiken Kakutoku Kisei Dōmei) on 13 December 1924, the principal suffrage organization in the interwar years. As its name indicated, the League for the Realization of Women's Suffrage would concentrate on obtaining political rights for women. Political rights, declared the manifesto proclaiming 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 twenty-six hundred years and to construct a new Japan that promotes the natural rights of men and women;
2. As 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 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 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.¹²⁴

This list is a remarkably clear and succinct statement of the meaning of rights among middle-class feminists in the Taishō era. Article I unequivocally contrasted 'natural rights of men and women' with venerable 'customs' that must be destroyed. Japanese society, that is, buried the rights of individual men and women under unnatural customs. In contrast to the Meiji-era optimism about the ability of education to elevate the status of women, Article II of the 1924 manifesto rued the continuing denial of even educated women's rights, though it implied--as did Meiji-era feminism--that there should be a connection between education and rights. Article III tied together rights and protection for women, an important Taishō-era concern. Article IV called for recognition of all women's full humanity, and Article V connected rights and recognition in the public sphere, both issues raised in the Meiji era. Article VI, which focussed on implementation rather than on fundamental principles, recognized the need for a movement. Thus, this manifesto reiterated some of the Meiji-era discourse of rights in terms of respectability, but also explicitly called on the state to include women. Article I suggested, moreover, that including women as men were included might be insufficient, since both men and women had natural rights that had been inadequately promoted.

To achieve the goals of the manifesto, the proclamation announced three resolutions. First, the organization resolved to demand that the Fiftieth Diet session grant women civic rights on the municipal (city, town, village) level. The City Code and the Town and Village Code, promulgated in 1888 by Meiji leaders who 'saw the importance of cultivating in the people the modern ideas of public participation in processes of self-

government,' gave local governments 'the [autonomous] right to enact laws and ordinances effective within their own administrative boundaries.'¹²⁵ But the laws also defined very specifically the qualifications for achieving status as a *kōmin* (citizen) on the local level. Only men over twenty-five residing in their district for two years and either owning land or paying a minimum annual tax of two yen were eligible to vote in local elections and to serve on local governing bodies.¹²⁶ Kubushiro, in presenting the manifesto to the women assembled to mark the founding of the League for the Realization of Women's Suffrage, charged that the law, by preventing women from participating in government as responsible citizens, violated the civil rights of Japanese women. 'In order to obtain our local rights in cities, towns, and villages, the word `male' must be eliminated from the pertinent articles of this law.'¹²⁷

Second, the manifesto resolved that:

We demand that 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.

Here, Kubushiro analogized rights of participation in civil society with responsibilities. Even if women and men had different responsibilities, both were equally entitled to citizenship.

And third, the manifesto resolved that Article 5 of the Public Peace Police Law be completely revised, and the three characters "*go: joshi*" (five: women) be removed from clause two in order to permit women freedom of political association.

Based on these goals, the new group petitioned the Diet for civil rights. The suffragists' expectations were high right before the scheduled debate on amending political rights laws in the Fiftieth Diet session. Three weeks earlier, in late February 1925, the Kenseikai-dominated House of Representatives had passed the promised universal manhood suffrage bill. Under the provisions of this law, only male subjects over twenty-five were eligible to elect members of the House of Representatives, and only those over thirty were permitted to become candidates for elective office. Although many

liberals welcomed the expansion of the electorate, Ichikawa and her colleagues criticized the new legislation because 'giving the vote only to men and excluding women is not universal suffrage.'¹²⁸ Despite the Diet's recent limitation of suffrage rights by gender and its passage of a Peace Preservation Law designed to curb leftist political expression, feminists had not thrown in the towel.¹²⁹ They looked forward to Diet discussions of women's suffrage and welcomed the opportunity to resume lobbying in the Diet. The women succeeded in convincing a small group of representatives, most of them in their thirties, to introduce several items for 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 on the local level.¹³⁰

When these four items came up for discussion on 10 March, a date designated by suffragists as 'women's Diet day' (*gikai fujin dee*) because four of the 25 items scheduled for discussion concerned women's rights,¹³¹ some 200 women filled the visitors' section in the balcony overlooking the Diet chambers. Their optimism contrasted with the mocking tone of press reportage that day. Describing those they called 'veterans of women's suffrage,' the *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* reported on 10 March 1925 that 'They talk big in their shrill voices.'¹³² The following day, the *Asahi* printed a caricature of four Diet members with ribbons in their hair signifying sympathy toward women. Diet speeches in opposition to the proposed petitions and amendment were also full of vitriol, but in the end, the proposals were all approved by the Lower House. Three of the items voted on were only petitions and thus did not become law, and the Police Law amendment was killed in the Upper House, but it is noteworthy that these proposals for expanding women's rights fared as well as they did.¹³³ The partial success of 10 March gave suffragist women hope that they might achieve civil rights. Suffragists shortened the name of their group to Women's Suffrage League (*Fusen Kakutoku Dōmei*) and made a public appeal for *fusen*. This appeal was symbolically important.

The women were fortunate in that *fusen*, when written with different characters, meant either 'universal suffrage' or 'women's suffrage'. *Fusen* had been on the lips of activists for years but had been virtually synonymous with 'male suffrage'; the WSL made a tactical decision to buy into the acceptable discourse on male rights by taking advantage of the homonym.¹³⁴ They emphatically stated that *fusen*, or universal suffrage, was incomplete without *fusen*, or women's suffrage.

As with the decision to change their group's name, suffragists issued the following declaration defining the scope of their future activities:

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].¹³⁵

Women's rights discourses and activism did not die with the Taishō era but rather expanded and grew in diverse directions. Suffragism continued to be a central feature, fueling the rhetoric and actions of groups dedicated to suffrage as a *sine qua non* of rights as well as being supported by groups with other primary agendas.¹³⁶ These latter groups took for granted the desirability of rights, despite their differences concerning the meanings of rights other than the vote, which virtually all supported to some degree. Rights within the existing state system might be just a stop-gap till a revolutionary state could be created--as socialist women advocated in their feminist demands in the leftist labour movement in the late Taishō era,¹³⁷ or they might be framed in terms of inclusion in the existing civil society.¹³⁸ In both cases, they were articulated within existing regimes of power. Feminists increasingly expressed rights as protections in the 1930s, when concepts of rights based on the 'individual' were potentially subversive. Inclusion in the state and/or civil society, many feminists believed, could be achieved in multiple ways, including consumer movements, 'election purification' movements, protection of

labourers, welfare assistance to single mothers and their children, and other public-sphere activities producing gendered social-welfare reforms. Rights remained a central feature of these various activities. The permutations of rights discourses against shifting social and political backgrounds, especially as the state became increasingly reified in the early twentieth century, both accompanied and drove changes in the relationship of women to the state.

Endnotes

1. For representative works in English, see e.g., 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); 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 (University of Tokyo Press, 1989); Yoshiko Miyake, 'Doubling Expectations: Motherhood and Women's Factory Work under State Management in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s,' in *Recreating Japanese Women*; Sharon L. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983).
2. In English, see, e.g., Sumiko Otsubo, 'Engendering Eugenics: Feminists and Marriage Restriction Legislation in the 1920s,' in *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, eds. Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno (Cambridge, MA: Harvard CEAS Publications, forthcoming); Barbara Molony and Kathleen Molony, *Ichikawa Fusae: A Political Biography* (Stanford University Press, in progress); Kathleen Uno, *Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth-Century Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, forthcoming).
3. See, e.g., Vera Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour, and Activism, 1900-1937* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Helen M. Hopper, *A New Woman of Japan: A Political Biography of Katō Shidzue* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); 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).
4. See, e.g., Sheldon Garon, 'The World's Oldest Profession? Prostitution and the State in Imperial Japan, 1900-1945,' *American Historical Review* 93, no.3 (1993); 'Women's Groups and the Japanese State: Contending Approaches to Political Integration, 1890-1945,' *Journal of Japanese Studies* 19 vol. 1(1993).
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); Kathleen Uno, 'The Death of Good Wife, Wise Mother?,' in

Postwar Japan as History, ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Laurel Rasplica Rodd, 'Yosano Akiko and the Taishō Debate over the "New Woman"' in *Recreating Japanese Women*.

6. Representative works in each of these categories include, respectively, Garon (alliance); Mackie (struggle for justice); Molony and Molony (struggle for membership).
7. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. I, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 95.
8. Although the term 'feminism' (*feminizumu*) was introduced in Japan in a 1910 article in *Hōgaku Kyōkai Zasshi*, I shall use the term to refer to a broad range of discourses, beginning in the early Meiji period, that supported women's rights or the improvement of women's condition or status. See Sōgō Joseishi Kenkyūkai, ed., *Nihon josei no rekishi* (Kadokawa Shoten, 1993), 192-193, for more on the introduction of the term 'feminism.'
9. Susan Mann has written persuasively 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 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 discussions about rights, 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 anti-authoritarianism. See also Matsumoto Sannosuke, 'The Idea of Heaven: A Tokugawa Foundation for Natural Rights Theory,' in Tetsuo Najita and Irvin Scheiner, *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
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*, though translated later (1882) than Mill's work, was highly esteemed by People's Rights advocates. See Masaaki Kosaka, ed., *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era*, vol. VIII, *Thought* (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1958), 115, 146.
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), 205. Suzuki Yūko, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, vol 1, *Shisō, seiji: Josei kaihō shisō no tenkai to fujin sanseiken undō* (Fuji Shuppan, 1996), 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 people's rights advocates discussed women's rights in their

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- writings. Women like Fukuda and Kishida were, therefore, particularly important. See also Sharon Sievers, 28-29.
13. Foucault, 95.
 14. See Vera Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women*.
 15. Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 4.
 16. See also Noriyo Hayakawa, "Feminism and Nationalism in Japan, 1868-1945," *Journal of Women's History* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1995):111.
 17. Sotozaki Mitsuhiro, *Nihon fujinronshi*, vol. 2, *Fujin kaihō ronsō* (Domesu, 1989)22-24.,
 18. Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 11.
 19. Brown, 151.
 20. '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., Barbara Molony and Kathleen Molony, *Ichikawa Fusae: A Political Biography* (forthcoming). Kevin M. Doak notes that 'civil society' (*shimin shakai*) came to used in Japan in the 1920s, but the Japanese translation's urban implication (*shimin*) made it unpopular with rural folk. 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.
 21. Iwamoto Yoshiharu, in *Taiyō*, 'Katei' 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.
 22. See, e.g., Hozumi Yatsuka, quoted in Masaaki Kosaka, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era*, 381; 383. 'Family' was not seen in the same light by conservatives and by feminists. For feminists, the family was made up of loving members whose sexually-differentiated but complementary roles were to be equally valued. Conservatives found that formulation of the family threatening, believing 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!'
 23. For more on Rousseau's ideas, see e.g. Carole Patemen, *Sexual Contract*.
 24. See, e.g. Sievers, 52; Yasukawa Junosuke and Yasukawa Etsuko, *Josei*

sabetsu no shakai shisōshi (Akaishi Shobo, 1993), Chapter 1.

25. On 'fraternity' see e.g., Donald Roden, *Schooldays in Imperial Japan: A Study in the Culture of a Student Elite* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980).
26. Suzuki Yūko, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei* vol. 1, *Shisō, seiji* (Fuji shuppan, 1996), 18.
27. Patrilineality is effectively problematized by Kathleen Uno in 'Questioning Patrilineality: On Western Studies of the Japanese *ie*.' *positions* 4, no.3 (Winter 1996):569-594. 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.
28. Brown, 98.
29. For an extended discussion of Meiji Civil Code, see Ryosuke Ishii, ed., *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era*, vol. 9, *Japanese Legislation in the Meiji Era* (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 1958), 601-692.
30. Ironically, critics of the individual rights basis of the first draft of the Civil Code complained that the code smacked of 'European' civil rights ideas.
31. Pateman, *passim*; Yasukawa and Yasukawa, Ch. 1.
32. Noheji Kyōe, *Josei kaihō shisō no genryū* (Azekura Shobō, 1984), 14.
33. Donald Roden's study of elite male education in imperial Japan, for instance, describes a fraternal communalism which violently resisted even the suggestion of a womanly presence in its hallowed manly halls. Roden, 146; 139.
34. See, e.g., Sievers's discussion of the Women's Reform Society. Sievers, 87-114.
35. See, e.g., Muta, 'Images of the Family,' 62-63, who offers important evidence that articles on 'women's rights' peaked in 1886, to be replaced by those focussing on *katei*.
36. Yamaguchi Miyoko, *Meiji keimōki no fujin mondai ronsō no shūhen* (Domesu, 1989), 186.
37. Yamaguchi, 199. For an extensive treatment of the philosophical basis for Fukuzawa's thought on equality and on education, see Yasukawa and Yasukawa, 36-104.
38. Suzuki, 56-85, offers a wealth of information about Kishida and her public activities. Newspaper articles, reprinted here, 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.

39. Kishida Toshiko, 'Dōhō shimai ni tsugu,' reprinted in Suzuki, 74-85 .
40. Kishida, 'Dōhō,' quoted and translated by Sievers, 38.
41. Suzuki, 57.
42. Suzuki, 56.
43. Suzuki, 71-73, has articles describing the founding of several of these groups.
44. Hirota Masaki, 'Kindai eriito josei no aidentiti to kokka,' in *Jiendaa no Nihonshi* vol. 1, ed. Wakita Haruko and S.B. Hanley (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1994), 203, is not impressed with the Okayama Women's Friendly Society, noting that its members were merely wives and daughters of men in the People's Rights movement. He contrasts this group with those formed by women not related to male activists.
45. Suzuki, 98.
46. Sievers, 36.
47. Mikiso Hane, *Reflections on the Way to the Gallows: Rebel Women in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 36.
48. Suzuki, 127.
49. Suzuki, 98.
50. Hirota, 202.
51. Fujita Yoshimi, *Meiji Jogakkō no sekai* (Shōeisha, 1984), 35, 79; Noheji, 24. The others were Tanabe Hanaho, Ogino Ginko, Yoshida Nobuko, Andō Tane, and Kojima Kiyo.
52. Noheji, 68.
53. Noheji, 129.
54. Noheji, 128.
55. Noheji, p. 133.
56. Aoyama Nao, *Meiji Jogakkō no kenkyū* (Keiō Tsūshin, 1983), 7.
57. Noheji, 129.

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58. Noheji, 155, notes that the four characters--*ryō*, *sai*, *ken*, and *bo*--were used throughout Iwamoto's famous collection of essays entitled, *Gotō no joshi kyōiku*. This short collection, which first appeared as articles in *Jogaku zasshi* from 1890 to 1892, is cited in Noheji, 82-83; 131-32; 139-158. 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.
 59. Noheji, 131.
 60. Noheji, 112.
 61. Noheji, 14.
 62. Iwamoto Yoshiharu, 'Hyaku-nen no koshitsu,' *Jogaku zasshi* no. 167(22 June 1889), cited in Noheji, 137.
 63. Suzuki, 125-126.
 64. Shimizu, quoted in Sievers, 52-53; Suzuki, 127.
 65. Shimizu, quoted in Sievers, 101.
 66. 'Fujin Kyōfukai,' in *Asano shinbun* 12 December 1886, reprinted in Suzuki, 85. See also Sumiko Otsubo.
 67. See Suzuki, 86-94, who cites several articles from these journals.
 68. Aoyama, 4.
 69. Matsukawa and Tachi, 174.
 70. 'Ippu ippu no seigan,' *Tokyo nichichi shinbun*, 26 November 1891, reprinted in Suzuki, 92.
 71. Shimizu Toyoko, article in *Tōun shinbun* 8-10 May, 1889. Reprinted in Suzuki, 111-114.
 72. Muta Kazue, 'Senryaku to shite no onna,' *Shisō* (February 1992):220-227; Sievers, 95.
 73. *Tōkyō Fujin Kyōfu zasshi*, 20 September 1890, cited in Sievers, 214n.
 74. Suzuki, 132-142, cites several articles about Women's Morality Associations in various locations.
 75. 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

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- '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 *Nihon josei no rekishi*, 197.
76. Women's Morality Association goals, stated in 'Fujin tokugikai kaisoku,' *Joken* 29 September 1891, reprinted in Suzuki, 141-142. The organization limited membership to women.
 77. *Joken* 29 September 1891, reprinted in Suzuki, 141.
 78. Suzuki, 26.
 79. Petitions and reactions, cited in Suzuki, 126-131.
 80. Entire article reprinted in Suzuki, 127-129; excerpted translations in Sievers, 52-53.
 81. Suzuki, 26-27; Hayakawa, 111.
 82. 'Citizenship' is a complicated term in this period. See Atsuko Hirai's insightful commentary on terms translated as 'citizen' in 'State and Ideology in Meiji Japan-A Review Article,' *Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 1(1987):89-103.
 83. Hirota Masaki, 202.
 84. Mackie, 62-63.
 85. Mackie, 63.
 86. 'Fujin to kizoku,' *Nikkan heimin shinbun*, no. 62 30 March 1907, quoted in Mackie, 65.
 87. For treatment of this subject in English, see, e.g., Rodd, 189-198; Mackie, 86-91; Barbara Molony, 'Equality versus Difference: the Japanese Debate over "Motherhood Protection,"' in *Japanese Women Working*, ed. Janet Hunter (London: Routledge, 1993). For original documents see Kouchi Nobuko, *Shiryō: Bosei hogo ronsō* (Domesu, 1984).
 88. Mackie, 92, finds this stance highly problematic, noting that these feminists 'unwittingly reinforced the notion that the normal relationship between the State and individual women is one of "protector" and "protected."'
 89. Hiratsuka Raichō, *Hiratsuka Raichō jiden: Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta* 3 (Otsuki Shoten, 1973), 41; Hiratsuka, *Watakushi no aruita michi* (1955), 195.
 90. Ichikawa Fusae, *Ichikawa Fusae jiden: Senzen hen* (Shinjuku shobō, 1974), 53.
 91. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, 86. For a detailed analysis of Hiratsuka's focus on

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- eugenics, see Sumiko Otsubo.
92. Rōdōshō Fujinshōnenkyoku, *Fujin no ayumi sanjūnen* (Rōdō Hōrei Kyōkai, 1975), 28-29. Under the terms of the Civil Code, women enjoyed virtually no equal rights or privileges. Subject to strict supervision by the head of the 'house' (*ie*), women became legally incompetent after marriage.
 93. *Jiden*, 53. As Otsubo notes, Hiratsuka's advocacy of marriage restriction, influenced by the thinking of Ellen Key, was inspired as much by eugenics (albeit a gender-based variety of eugenics) as by women's rights thought. Because Ichikawa focussed more on rights, however, this study will emphasize the rights aspect of the NWA's work in the area of sexually transmitted disease.
 94. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, 71-73.
 95. Nolte and Hastings, 156.
 96. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, 82. This argument was not unique to Japan. In the United States, e.g., venereal disease was viewed as destructive to the family, but a man's secret infection should not be revealed to his relatives by his physician, it was believed in the first decades of the twentieth century, 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 and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 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. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992). Otsubo, in 'Engendering Eugenics,' notes that Hiratsuka, in justifying the legislative 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).
 97. '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.
 98. Hiratsuka Raichō, "Karyūbyō danshi kekkon seigenhō ni kansuru seigan undō," *Josei dōmei* 1 (October 1920): 35.
 99. Ichikawa Fusae, 'Chian keisatsuhō daigojō shūsei no undō (1),' *Josei dōmei* 1 (October 1920): 23-24.
 100. *Ibid.*, 24.
 101. *Jiden*, 63-64.
 102. These four objectives appear in virtually every account of the NWA. Also, they

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- appear in the opening pages of several issues of *Josei dōmei*. See *Jiden*, 66-67.
103. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, 117; Ichikawa, *Jiden*, 75.
 104. Tabuchi Toyokichi, 'Fujin no seijiteki jiyū o shuchō Tabuchi-shi no enzetsu,' *Josei dōmei* 3 (December 1920): 8-9, 16. *Josei dōmei* published Tabuchi's speech in its entirety.
 105. 'Fujimura Yoshirō-shi no chikei kaikin hantairon hihan,' *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, 156, put it, 'the state's claim on the home preempted women's claims on the state.'
 106. Ichikawa Fusae, 'Sōritsu yori josei dōmei hakkan made (2),' *Josei dōmei* 2 (November 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 One prohibiting women's participation in political associations; a political association was usually considered as 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 Two, which prohibited attendance at political rallies and meetings.
 107. Hiratsuka Raichō, 'Shakai kaizō ni taisuru fujin no shimei,' *Josei dōmei* 1 (October 1920):10.
 108. This demand appears, along with the other two petitions, in the opening pages of several issues of the organization's bulletin. See *Josei dōmei* 3 (December 1920): 2.
 109. *Jiden*, 68.
 110. This changed in the following decade, when Ichikawa became a principal supporter of the Mother-Child Protection Law of 1937. Molony, 'Equality versus Difference,' 131.
 111. Ichikawa, 'Chian keisatsuhō (1),' 24.
 112. Ichikawa Fusae, 'Zettaiteki danjo byōdō?' *Fujin kōron* 5 (December 1920): 28-36. Numerous treatments of US feminist movements exist. See, e.g., Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
 113. Ichikawa, 'Zettaiteki danjo byōdō?,' p. 36.
 114. Yamakawa Kikue's May Day manifesto, cited in Hane, 126-127.

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115. 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 widely available today would have seemed heretical in a 1920s context in which only class mattered.
 116. Yamakawa Kikue, 'Shin Fujin Kyōkai to Sekirankai,' *Taiyō* 27 (July 1927).
 117. Yamakawa, 'Shin Fujin Kyōkai,' 135-137.
 118. Yoshimi Kaneko, *Fujin sanseiken* (Kajima Shuppankai, 1971), 153.
 119. Yamakawa defended her actions in the March 1928 issue of *Rōnō*. Quoted in *Jiden*, 147, and in Kaneko Shigeri, *Fujin mondai no chishiki* (orig. publ. by Hibonkaku, 1934, republished by Nihon Zusho Sentā, 1982), 218.
 120. Ide Fumiko and Eisashi Akiko, *Taisho demokurashii to josei* (Gōdō Shuppan, 1977), 257-260; see also Shidzue Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), (reissue of 1935 edition, with new introduction and afterword), 254.
 121. Kaneko Shigeri, *Fujin mondai no chishiki*, 218.
 122. Yamataka (Kaneko) Shigeri, 'Watakushi no rirekisho,' *Nihon keizai* 20 November 1975; Chino Yōichi, *Kindai Nihon fujin kyōikushi* (Dōmesu, 1979), 242.
 123. Kubushiro Ochimi, *Haisho hitosuji* (Chūō Kōronsha, 1973), 169; Izuma Tsuko, 'Fusen jisshi no kekka o yososhite,' in *Fujin mondai to fujin no yōkyū* (Bunmei Kyōkai, 1929), 121.
 124. Cited in Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfukai, ed., *Nihon Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfukai hyakunenshi* (Domesu, 1986), 526-527; see also *Jiden*, 144; and Kubushiro, *Haisho*, 170-71.
 125. Takeo Yazaki, *Social Change and the City in Japan from the Earliest Times through the Industrial Revolution*, transl. David Swain (Tokyo: Japan Publications, 1968), 334; Kurt Steiner, 'Popular Political Participation and Political Development in Japan: The Rural Level,' in *Political Development in Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 236.
 126. Yamanaka Einosuke, *Nihon kindai kokka no keisei to kanryōsei* (Kobundō, 1974), 215.
 127. Kubushiro, cited in *Jiden*, 145.
 128. *Jiden*, 150.
 129. 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: Cornell University Press, 1976),63.

130. *Jiden*, 150; Yoshimi, 155.
131. Kyōfukai, 528.
132. *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* citations of 10 March 1925 quoted in *Jiden*, 152.
133. For more on the activities of Diet supporters, see Murata Shizuko, 'Daigishi Yamaguchi Masaji to fujin sanseiken undō,' *Rekishi hyōron* 517 (May 1993):83-99.
134. *Jiden*, 155. It is believed that legal expert Hozumi Shigeto was the first to use the word *fusen* to apply to women in 1924. See 'Fusen mondai,' *Fusen* 1 (March 1927):10.
135. Ide Fumiko, 'Nihon ni okeru fujin sanseiken undō,' *Rekishigaku kenkyū* (November 1956):18-19.
136. Works on feminists' actions and discourse in the remainder of the interwar period abound. See, e.g., Garon, Mackie, Molony and Molony, and Popper.
137. Molony, 'Equality versus Difference,' 129-130.
138. See, e.g., Fujime Yuki, 'Zen Kansai Fujin Rengōkai no kōzō to tokushitsu,' *Shiron* 71, no.6 (1988); Sheldon Garon, 'Women's Groups and the Japanese State'.

Barbara Molony, 'The State and Women in Modern Japan: Feminist Discourses in the Meiji and Taishō Eras'

COMMENT

by

Ann Waswo

There are two facets of this paper on which I'd like to comment, but first I'd like to make some observations about the emergence of women as a topic of inquiry in modern Japanese studies. Today we are helping to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines, and back when the Centres were established in the late 1970s [and before Dr Hunter got to work] I think it is fair to say not only that Japanese women hardly featured at all in the existing scholarly literature, but also that hardly anyone thought their absence at all strange. I certainly didn't, even though I was mildly interested in the then relatively new field of women's studies and in at least some of the issues then being debated by American feminists.

This was brought home to me recently when, for another purpose altogether, I made a crude content analysis of the first [1978] and second [1996] editions of Kenneth Pyle's generally excellent textbook, *The Making of Modern Japan*. In the process I discovered two references to Japanese women in the first edition [out of a very meagre number of references, I might add] that hadn't bothered me at all when I had encountered them back in the 1970s, but which I now reacted to with some distaste. The first was the statement that the 'women, primarily young peasant girls' who made up almost 60 percent of the industrial workforce in the Taishō era 'were hardly the stuff of which radical labor movements are made' [p. 125]. The second was a long anecdote taken from Douglas MacArthur's *Reminiscences*, which concerned the presence of an alleged prostitute among the 38 women elected to the Diet in 1946 and the General's opinion that, as the woman in question had received over 250,000 votes, she must have got support from many more people than her customers alone [p. 162]. Both of these

references have been deleted from the second edition of the book, and a large proportion of the one hundred or so newly written pages of text interspersed here and there among the original pages concern women – in the home, in the community, in the workplace, from *bakumatsu* to the present day. While there had been no mention of ‘women’ in the index of the first edition, now there is an extensive entry. In the sense that a textbook on any subject reflects a prevailing episteme and synthesizes the research findings of other scholars, it would appear that Japanese women have finally won their place in history.

But to what effect? Political correctness and/or beguiling glimpses into the minutiae of daily life aside, what real insights do we gain from their presence in the narrative of history? Here I return to Professor Molony's paper and to my comments proper.

The first of these relates to the methodology with which the paper is infused. So long as historians and scholars in other disciplines remained content within the ‘prison house of language’ they inhabited, they were constrained to schematize reality into syntactically manageable compartments - either into such binary opposites as ‘for’ or ‘against’, or ‘the elite’ and ‘the masses’, or into that mystical trinity of characterizations that somehow gave western readers the sense they were getting an appropriately nuanced explication.

The invention of the notion of ‘discourse’ about and around all facets of an issue has opened new frontiers of conceptualization and understanding on this front, and we see an example of it here, in Professor Molony's focus on ‘discourses on women's rights’ from mid-Meiji to the mid-1920s. From the very outset she takes us beyond simple dichotomies and mystically compelling trinities into the complex and shifting ground of argument and activity over decades. In so doing she creates space for men as well as women, for small victories as well as defeats and - most importantly - for contextual change in how the key issues were perceived by diverse participants over time. In case you didn't notice, that was a trinity of characterizations, and I expect most of you resonated mystically with its cadence. At any rate, I think this discourse-based approach

takes us a lot further into understanding the historical experiences of Japanese women than, say, the now rather familiar narrative descriptions of the hardships of life for young girls from Hida or the passionate arguments about motherhood protection among the most famous Japanese Bluestockings that crop up all the time in 'traditional' histories of women in the Meiji and Taishō eras. Instead of surrogates for a complex historical reality, we are getting closer to the reality itself. Professor Molony is also to be thanked for getting us there with only a modicum of the theory and jargon that often makes the going rough for ordinary mortals such as myself.

Turning now to the second issue, I think Professor Molony's paper contributes in a useful, albeit indirect, way to the on-going academic rehabilitation of the imperial Japanese state. Much demonized by postwar scholars of diverse nationalities and diverse ideological persuasions, that state is beginning to emerge as a rather less omnipotent and occasionally less oppressive entity than generally portrayed in the past fifty years. While it would be mindless to go to the other extreme and treat it [or any state] as totally benign, just getting beyond the monolithic 'it' and starting to delve into the entire range of state behavior and the gamut of actors performing state functions over time makes great sense.

In Professor Molony's paper, we encounter not only 'heroic' resistance to the state, but also demands for inclusion in it and for the securing of state aid in eliminating oppression from other sources such as the workplace and, perhaps most crucially, the patriarchal family. The patriotism of some of the women she mentions, who associated women's rights with the strengthening of Japan vis-à-vis the West, is striking. We could, of course, dismiss this as a rhetorical flourish or as false consciousness, but I think that would be unwarranted. However masculinist the Japanese state may have been and however futile the efforts of some women to gain full rights of participation within it, there were clearly areas in which interests coincided and in which useful alliances between women and the state were forged. Improvements in sanitation and healthcare come immediately to mind. To an extent, no doubt a much greater extent than the demonic image would allow, the imperial Japanese state responded to popular

concerns, including the concerns of women. We still have a lot to learn about this dynamic, and more studies such as this one will contribute to the learning process.