1997

Translation Of "Japan's Entry Into War And The Support Of Women" By N. Yûko

William O. Gardner
Swarthmore College, wgardne1@swarthmore.edu

B. De Bary

Follow this and additional works at: http://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-japanese

Part of the Japanese Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
http://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-japanese/18

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Japanese at Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Japanese Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Works. For more information, please contact kcarter2@swarthmore.edu.
Josai University Educational Corporation

Japan's Entry into War and the Support of Women
Author(s): Nishikawa Yuuko, William Gardner and Brett de Bary
Source: U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement, No. 12, Special Issue: Gender and Imperialism (1997), pp. 48-83
Published by: University of Hawai'i Press on behalf of Josai University Educational Corporation
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/42772108
Accessed: 04-04-2016 20:06 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://about.jstor.org/terms

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.
Japan's Entry into War and the Support of Women

Nishikawa Yūko

Translated by William Gardner and Brett de Bary

Foreword

Modern wars, for the most part, have involved the production of total war regimes based on large-scale mobilization of a nation's material and human resources. For this very reason, it is difficult to organize public movements of resistance once war breaks out. This was certainly true of the Japanese involvement in the Pacific War, during which the small number of people who attempted sustained resistance were executed, jailed, or intimidated into silence. For the remaining majority, daily life in and of itself inevitably came to constitute a form of support for the war.

Although similar dilemmas confront modern citizens on a daily basis in times of peace, in wartime such implicit support inevitably leads to tangible outcomes. Moreover, since total wars follow a strategy of complete annihilation until, through a grim process of subtraction, the power differential between the two sides becomes absolutely clear, those who seek to survive them need to exert a desperate effort, with no hope of completely eluding the dragnet of total mobilization. As Japan's movement toward war in the 1930s accelerated, it was not only soldiers but women, who at first had articulated their opposition to war from a woman's standpoint, who had to stifle the doubts that surged in their hearts and articulate their affirmation. After conceding to the government's declaration of a state of emergency, they eventually came to be absorbed into the Greater Japan Women's Association (Dainihon Fujinkai), that vast
organizational network that encompassed all Japanese women. They thus became participants in the war's support system. Just as they had initially opposed the war from their standpoint as the bearers and nurturers of children, they now developed a woman’s logic that supported it. But the process through which subjects persuade themselves to comply with the state can be more cruel than the experience of being broken by force.

In this short paper I hope to reconsider processes through which women throughout Japan, albeit following different paths and different ideologies, came to a consensus and cooperated with the system that maintained support for the war. In order to do this, I will examine developments in the women’s suffrage movement, led by Ichikawa Fusae, between 1930 and 1937, as well as the activities during this period of Yoshioka Yayoi, a gynecologist and pioneer in the field of women’s medical education, and Takamura Itsue, a scholar of Japanese women’s history whose political thought sought to affirm a principle of feminine difference. These three trajectories well represent the prewar liberal women’s movement in Japan, which—in relation to women’s issues—occupied a middle ground between the proletarian movement, on the one hand, and government-sponsored or patriotic organizations, on the other.

After 1937, the Japanese proletarian women’s movement had been forced into almost complete silence while a panoply of government-sponsored and semi-governmental women’s associations—including the Women’s Patriotic Association (Aikoku Fujinkai), the Women’s Association for National Defense (Kokubō Fujinkai), the Greater Japan Federation of Women’s Associations (Dainihon Rengō Fujinkai), and the Greater Japan Federation of Young Women’s Associations (Dainihon Sōgō Joshi Seinendan)—experienced untrammeled expansion as the war situation intensified.

Caught between these two trends, the course pursued by the liberal women’s movement was most contradictory. Tragedy befell those who sought to think and act as autonomous, individual citizens. It is easy to point out today that the reasoning these women used to persuade themselves was constructed from an extemporaneous and even preposterous logic. Yet must not those of us who truly wish to learn from history and construct a logic of opposition to war take another look at that “flimsy” logic of the past, trying to understand its appeal to subjects trapped, precisely as those in the war had been, in a situation from which there appeared to be virtually “no exit”?

All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms
The questions addressed in this paper grow out of earlier research on Takamure Itsue, a scholar of Japanese women’s history. While doing this work I discovered that, from 1937 on, notable representatives of liberal women’s associations worked together with Takamure Itsue, as well as with Yoshioka Yayoi, in an association established to promote the publication of Takamure’s works. I was intrigued for quite some time by the existence of this group, which brought together representatives of feminist groups of opposing ideological tendencies. What brought about this confluence of personalities at precisely this historical juncture? What could account for the support given by a suffragist like Ichikawa Fusae, or a pragmatic feminist like Yoshioka Yayoi, to Takamure, whose thinking was fundamentally opposed to theirs and who during this period had become a fanatical nationalist? These were the puzzles that initially stimulated my research for this paper.

The Rise and Fall of Liberal Women’s Movements:

The First through Seventh All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congresses

The women’s movement in Japan experienced a high tide just prior to the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident in September 1931. Common people had borne the brunt of successive waves of the Great Showa Panic, which had swept through Japanese society beginning with the financial panic of 1927 and produced an intensification of class consciousness. During the same period, both socialist and liberal women’s movements had become active. Moreover, after the first election with universal male suffrage was held in 1928, concern for winning the right to various forms of political participation (local suffrage, the right to vote in national elections, the rights to attendance at political meetings and membership in political organizations) for the women who had been left out of these elections came to the fore. Of the different rights that were at issue, women’s local suffrage was in the spotlight at this time.

Amid escalating demands for political freedom, the First All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress was held in 1930, symbolically timed to coincide with the Fifty-Eighth Special Session of the Diet. The Congress was sponsored by the Women’s Suffrage League (Fusen Kakutoku Dōmei) and had the backing of the Japan Women’s Suffrage Association (Nihon Fujin Sanseiken Kyōkai), the All-Kansai Women’s Federation (Zen Kansai Fujin Rengōkai), the Proletarian Women’s League (Musan Fujin Dōmei), the Buddhist Young Women’s Association (Bukkyō Joshi Seinendan), the Christian Girls’ Clubs Japan Association (Kirisutokyō Joshi Seinenkai Nihon Dōmei), and the All-Japan Federation of Female Elementary-School
Teachers (Zenkoku Shōgakkō Rengō Jokyōinkai). This first meeting set a precedent for annual congresses, which thereafter were convened once a year while the national Diet was in session. The number of women’s organizations involved increased each year. With representatives from the Proletarian Women’s League in attendance, the Congress provided the best venue for bringing autonomous women’s associations together to form a united front.

In the resolutions adopted each year by the All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress, from the first conference in 1930 to the last in 1937, traces of the profound impact on the women’s movement wrought by the drastic changes in Japanese society after the Manchurian Incident are clearly evident. In the resolutions from the first Congress, held on February 20, 1930, for example, after a string of congratulatory remarks pronounced by the Minister of Education and the heads of the different political parties, we find the following statement adopted by the Congress: “The All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress demands that women be simultaneously granted the rights to vote in local and national elections and the right to assemble.”

In May of the same year, volunteers from the Seiyūkai and Minseitō parties proposed a women’s local suffrage bill to the Diet. This bill was passed at a plenary session of the Lower House but failed to gain approval from the House of Peers. The May/June issue and the following issue of the Women’s Suffrage League’s official publication, Women’s Suffrage (Fusen), were entitled “The Women’s Suffrage Bill in the Fifty-Eighth Diet, Parts I and II,” and carried the full transcription of stenographer’s notes on the discussion in both houses in fine, single-spaced print.

The records reveal that what began as a deliberation on local suffrage rights for women expanded into a debate on the pros and cons of women’s participation in national politics, on the content of the “good wife, wise mother” ideal prevalent at the time, and even on the matter of women’s education. Despite the fact that the bill failed to attain approval in the House of Peers, one has a palpable sense, reading these documents, that the passage of a civil rights bill for women was imminent. It is perhaps noteworthy, however, that one explanation offered during these discussions for the fact that women had gained full rights to political participation in European and American nations was those countries’ awareness that “the labor of women had been crucial during the war” (as politician Yamazaki Dennosuke opined).

A year later, in 1931, a government-sponsored local suffrage bill for women that featured a number of restrictions (it recognized women’s right to full participation in municipal, town, and village, but not prefectural, bodies, and stipulated that women
could hold political office only with the approval of their husbands) was proposed and passed in the Lower House. The Second All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress, held in 1931, voiced its firm opposition to this restricted government-sponsored bill. Its resolution stated that it hoped for passage by both houses of the Diet of two bills: (1) one giving women full suffrage, and (2) another giving women the right to assemble.

In the end, however, even the government-sponsored bill failed to pass the House of Peers, where it was rejected after a hostile speech that linked giving women the vote in national elections to the destruction of the family. In fact, prior to this the government had already devised an offensive strategy in anticipation of passage of the women’s civil rights bill: the Ministry of Education had taken the lead in founding an organization dedicated to preserving the family system, called the Greater Japan Federated Women’s Association (Dainihon Rengō Fujinkai). The association’s official publication was called *The Household (Katei)*.

Against the background of these developments, the women’s suffrage movement was expectant that, by the next session of the Diet, a bill granting women full rights to political participation would surely be passed. But after the Manchurian Incident in September 1931, things took a turn for the worse. Fascist groups, which had taken advantage of the Manchurian Incident to rise to the fore on the Japanese political stage, not only took a reactionary stance toward the women’s movement but advocated the abolition of representative government. Ichikawa Fusae, in the pages of *Women’s Suffrage*, lamented that the women’s suffrage movement, “having reached almost the ninth station on Mt Fuji, had suddenly tumbled backward to the sixth” due to the influence of fascism.

Over the next few years, the third, fourth, and fifth congresses issued resolutions opposing war and fascism, and struggled to regain lost ground. The records of the Third Congress, convened in 1932, the year following the outbreak of hostilities in China, indicate discussion on the topic of “the link between women’s suffrage and finding a solution to the current crisis” and raise the question, “Would Chinese-Japanese relations have deteriorated to this extent if women had the right to vote?”

Still, there were those who argued strenuously that because Japan was a nation poor in natural resources, “Manchuria should be Japan’s life-line,” providing a way out of Japan’s depressed economic state. Moreover, during the Third Congress itself, some referred to the Manchurian Incident as inevitable, prompting Kaneko Shigeri of the Women’s Suffrage League to declare: “I would like to express my opposition,
from a woman’s standpoint, to the Manchurian and Shanghai Incidents.” But the majority of those who attended the 1932 Congress were in agreement in their condemnation of fascism and commitment to the preservation of constitutional government. A motion to declare the Congress’s opposition to fascism, proposed by Sakai Magara of the Proletarian Women’s League and passed unanimously as “Resolution Number Three” adopted by the Congress, read: “As women, we voice our firm opposition to the forces of fascism which are gaining momentum at the present time.”

Before 1932 was over, however, the assassination of Prime Minister Inukai had taken place, while white terror continued unabated on the domestic scene. Abroad, although the government had adopted an official policy of not letting the initial “incidents” expand, the military was enlarging the war. In March 1932, the puppet state of Manchuria was set up. The League of Nations dispatched the Lytton Commission to study the situation and by February 1933 had adopted the Lytton Report, bringing about the resignation of Japan’s Minister of Plenipotentiary, Yōsuke Matsuoka. In March 1933, Japan formally seceded from the League of Nations and became internationally isolated.

When the Fourth All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress was convened in 1933, a major concern was the fact that 40 percent of the government’s 1933 budget had been allocated for expanding the nation’s military capacity, with the shortfall to be made up by floating public bonds that would result in an acceleration of inflation. During the meetings, the Women’s Suffrage League’s delegate from Akita Prefecture declared that, while she might tolerate the rising taxes necessitated by new expenditures on arms, she could never tolerate the sacrifice to the war of a child brought into this world at the risk of her own life. This anti-militarist statement, formulated as a mother’s sentiment, drew a storm of applause from the delegates. In the official proceedings of the Fourth Congress, the fervor of the applause was attributed to the fact everyone who attended felt anxiety about “a certain matter”—a euphemism which referred to the escalation of the Manchurian and Shanghai Incidents into full-scale war.

The adoption of a resolution opposing military spending had been planned for this conference, but the meeting could not reach a consensus on the resolution due to the presence of some groups who had already become persuaded that such spending was demanded by the crisis situation. In the end the following compromise resolution, calling for arms limitation, was adopted:
The Fourth All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress finds it regrettable that Japan’s budget for the fiscal year 1933 includes funding for a massive expansion of the military. This development inspires fear that, at a time when nations around the world are starting to arm themselves, the current situation will become even more grave. We hope that the authorities concerned will work speedily to establish an international disarmament accord, for the sake of world peace.

The conflict of views that this statement reflected was not limited to liberal women’s organizations; socialist women’s groups were also divided. The Social Democratic Party, which had members scattered throughout the socialist movement, had recognized the legitimacy of Japan’s interests in Manchuria. Its affiliate, the Social Democratic Women’s League, took the same position.

Prior to the fifth meeting of the All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress, in 1934, the authorities sent a message forbidding the organization to adopt any resolution condemning the war. A sketch of the meeting site featured in the March 1934 issue of Women’s Suffrage reveals policemen seated in the second-floor gallery to the left of the speaker’s podium, while the room is ringed by guards wearing military caps and standing at attention. It was in this setting that Tabata Some, the league’s delegate from Akita, described how the Tohoku area had had the highest casualty rate in the Manchurian Incident and declared, in her thick northern accent, “As a mother, I am absolutely opposed to this war.” Among the thirteen items listed in the resolution it adopted that year, the Fifth Congress included the following six-point peace resolution:

- We demand that the state provide relief for the families of sick and injured soldiers.
- We oppose large-scale military spending that ignores the economic well-being of the nation.
- We demand strict regulation of the publication of materials that might have the effect of provoking war.
- Ideas that promote a love of peace and opposition to war should be disseminated among the population at large.
- We will seek ways to cooperate with women around the world for the cause of peace.
- We will send a message expressing our support for the conferences on disarmament to Secretary-General Henderson.

Following the adoption of anti-fascist resolutions at the Third Congress, resolutions in favor of disarmament at the Fourth, and peace resolutions at the Fifth, the Sixth All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress was convened in 1935, in the ominous months after Japan had withdrawn from participation in the Washington
Conference naval disarmament treaties and was proceeding to rearm itself. At this sixth meeting the Congress deliberated the question, “In a state of emergency, can we demand the vote for women?” In these discussions participants defined the concept of “emergency” not as a time when the existence of the state was at risk, but as a time when the nation’s population was experiencing extreme duress. It was concluded that women should be given the right to vote as quickly as possible as a way of safeguarding the standard of living of the population as a whole.

Nevertheless, we can see in the Sixth Congress a general retreat from the problems of women’s political participation and of peace that had preoccupied earlier meetings. Rather, emphasis was given to more practical issues, such as participation of the Tokyo municipal government in garbage removal, a matter brought up at the Fourth Congress; establishment of the Motherhood Protection Law (Bosei Hogohō) and Mother-Child Relief Law (Boshi Fujohō), which had been proposed at the Fifth Congress; and the women’s labor legislation introduced at the Sixth Congress. This was a strategy, in other words, that not only emphasized the actual involvement of women in government at the municipal, town, and village level—despite their formal lack of rights to political participation—but also tried to anticipate the kinds of policies that might be implemented in the event that women’s suffrage was won. This strategy is reflected in the following demand included in the Sixth Congress’s resolution:

We resolutely oppose state policies that overlook the situation of women. As a minimal demand to the Sixty-Eighth Session of the Diet, we demand speedy adoption not only of the women’s suffrage bill, but of the motherhood protection bill and women’s labor legislation.

Interestingly, the March 1935 issue of Women’s Suffrage contains a characterization of the early period of the suffrage movement as abstract and romantic, in contrast to the more finely tuned vision that had emerged out of several years’ experience. The statement suggests that there was a clear awareness of the change in strategy. In 1935 the government also began a movement to eliminate corruption in elections, and independent women’s associations participated in this. During this same period, however, parliamentary government itself began to become quite unstable.

Although the All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress had made it a point to convene every year while the Diet was in session, in the wake of the attempted coup d’état of February 26, 1936, the formation of a new Cabinet was delayed and the Diet did not hold its special session until May. Accordingly, the Women’s Suffrage Congress was scheduled for May 3, but the meeting was prohibited due to the
imposition of martial law, which put a ban on all political meetings. In the same year, the title of *Women's Suffrage* was changed to *Women's Outlook (Josei Tenbō)*, on the grounds that the former was inappropriate in times of national emergency.

The Seventh All-Japan Women's Suffrage Congress was held in May 1937, against the background of the extraordinary dissolution of the Diet that accompanied the resignation of the Hirota Cabinet. Fully half the 1937 budget had been allocated for military expenditures, and inflation was running rampant. The first resolution of the Seventh Congress called for “decisive action to raise wages and other compensations” to protect the livelihoods of the Japanese people. It also declared that “no matter who makes up the Cabinet or what its political orientation, we believe it absolutely necessary for women, who constitute half the nation’s population, to vote and to participate in both government and autonomous political organizations. These demands should be expedited without delay.” To this was added, “Although we deem it desirable to cooperate with the government authorities and groups who share their views, we must be vigilant in maintaining our own autonomy and not be lulled into a situation where we are manipulated by them.”

This period also saw the proliferation of numerous governmental and semigovernmental groups affiliated with the Women’s Patriotic Association (established after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, in 1910), the Women’s Alliance (*Sōgō Fujinkai*, 1931), and the Women’s National Defense Association (*Kokubō Fujinkai*, established with the backing of the Army in 1931). All these exerted pressure on autonomous women’s groups.

**Total Mobilization and the Federation of Japanese Women’s Organizations (Nihon Fujin Dantai Remmei)**

Six weeks after the meeting of the Seventh All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress, on July 7, 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident occurred. By referring to it as the “North China Incident,” the Japanese government initially articulated a policy of confining the incident to a regional matter. In August 1937, however, fighting again broke out in what has been called the Second Shanghai Incident, expanding into full-scale hostilities between Japan and China. Long-term war appeared likely. The November 1937 issue of *Women’s Outlook* interpreted the announcement that Imperial Headquarters had been established to coordinate actions of the Army and Navy as an indication that Japan was already engaged in all-out war, although a declaration of war had never been made. The “certain matter” that all Japanese had been fearing for some time had now become the reality of war.
In September 1937, the government announced its plans to undertake a total spiritual mobilization of the population. Beginning in 1938, it abandoned its official program for “building peace,” and in April of that year the National Mobilization Law (Kokka Sōdōin Hō) was promulgated. Once the government had embarked on its program of mobilization for national unity, the continued existence of any organization or political movement depended on cooperation with this program. Liberal women’s groups were faced with a stark choice: if they maintained their stance of opposition to war, they would be dissolved or their members would be arrested. Cooperation with the national mobilization was the price of an organization’s survival.

Aware of the danger they faced, those who had attended the Seventh Congress first sought to forge a new organization bringing all the cooperating women’s groups together. This was accomplished in September 1937, when the formation of the Federation of Japanese Women’s Organizations (Nihon Fujin Dantai Remmei) was announced. The Federation brought under its umbrella eight private women’s groups with national memberships: (1) the Christian Girls’ Clubs Japan Association, represented by Tsuji Matsuko; (2) the Japan Amity Association (Zenkoku Tomo no Kai), represented by Hata Motoko; (3) the Japanese Women’s Reform Society (Nihon Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfūkai), president Tsuneko Gauntlett; (4) the Association of Women Doctors (Nihon Joikai), president Yoshioka Yayoi; (5) the Women’s Consumers’ Association (Nihon Shōhi Kumiai Fujin Kyōkai), chaired by Mika Oshikawa; (6) the Women’s Alliance (Fujin Dōshikai), chaired by Yoshioka Yayoi; (7) the Women’s Suffrage League, secretary-general Ichikawa Fusae; and (8) the Women’s Union for Peace (Fujin Heiwa Kyōkai), chaired by Kawai Michiko.

Tsuneko Gauntlett was elected chair of this new federation. In its founding declaration, the group stated:

In this autumn of national mobilization, we members of women’s organizations, sincerely hoping to lend our cooperation to the cause of protecting those at home, have gathered here to establish an affiliation of those organizations. We are committed to maintaining the long-term existence of our organizations, and at the same time to demonstrating women’s true worth, as, in surmounting this crisis, the nation draws on the spiritual resources of its women.

These words could be construed as a promise of cooperation, both for the sake of the survival of the women’s organizations and for the protection of those women and children left behind by Japanese soldiers sent to the mainland.
In fact, if one examines 1937 issues of *Women's Outlook*, one finds expressions of grief and chagrin sharing space with descriptions of the vigor with which different women’s groups were rising to the challenge of the national emergency. The Federation of Japanese Women’s Groups not only participated in the national mobilization movement but played a role in reconciling the Women’s Patriotic Association and Women’s League for National Defense, long-term rivals because they had been sponsored by different government ministries.

An All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress was not convened in 1938. In March of that year, however, the eight participating organizations in the Federation of Japanese Women’s Groups brought together virtually the same twenty associations which had supported the 1937 Congress for a “Women’s National Emergency Congress.” A Japanese flag was displayed at the entrance to the hall, and banners inscribed in large letters were draped on either side of the stage with the slogans, “National Mobilization Autumn! Do Your Duty!” and “No Construction without Women.”

It is hard to imagine the women who had arranged to meet once each year since the First Suffrage Congress in 1930 looking at these banners without deep emotion. For the past five years, the resolutions of the Congress had repeatedly reflected the belief that women’s support and political participation were the only way out of what those same resolutions described as “the present state of society” (the Third Congress), “the tense situation” (the Fourth Congress), “a time of stringency in money markets at home and abroad” (the Fifth Congress), “the national emergency” (the Sixth Congress), and “the current turmoil” (the Seventh Congress). Moreover, it had been a shared assumption of those involved with the yearly meetings that winning women’s suffrage would mark the dawn of an era in which women would become involved in the national work of “construction” (*kensetsu*), and that by casting their votes in opposition to the war, they could bring about peace.

Now, however, “women’s cooperation” had come to mean support for a war regime that had already been put into place. This was a demonstration of the fact that modern wars could not be waged without mobilizing women. Surmounting crisis now signified winning victory in war, and the meeting concluded by adopting a resolution in support of the Imperial Army. The meaning of “construction” had undergone a complete reversal—from opposition to collaboration vis-à-vis the war.

A number of women’s journals published at this time gathered together collections of exemplary stories drawn from the First World War. *Women’s Outlook* itself
carried a number of these stories, preaching to its readers that the social advances and range of activities experienced during World War I by American and British women who had ventured out of the home—to work in hospitals, factories, government institutions, and even on the battlefields—had allowed them to achieve an expanded political role after the war. These articles conveyed a sense that modern wars, as wars of total mobilization, gave birth to national armies in which citizens were the soldiers and in which even women, as protectors of the home front, were elevated to the status of citizens. Expressions anticipating “our prize, the right to full political participation” and encouraging women to “use this opportunity to come to the fore” began to appear in the journal. Although Women’s Outlook presented collaboration as the price to be paid for ensuring the survival of autonomous women’s groups, it also stressed a resultant improvement in the social status of women.

As if to bolster women’s expectations at precisely this point, the government specifically solicited women’s political collaboration by having the Central League for National Spiritual Mobilization (Kokumin Seishin Sōdōin Chūō Remmei) officially decree that both “household head and wife” attend meetings of the neighborhood associations that represented its most basic organizational unit. For women, being recognized as participants on an equal footing with men in the neighborhood associations meant an elevation of status within the household, and it was expected that this form of local political activity presaged the assumption of full-fledged political rights.

The government also adopted a policy of aggressively recruiting leaders of autonomous women’s groups for positions in government organizations. The process began with the appointment of Yoshioka Yayoi to the Education Commission, where she was the first female to participate in its deliberations. Growing numbers of women were given posts in the national and regional government bureaucracy—to such an extent that the new term “lady national policy-maker” (fujin kokusaku iin) began to be used by journalists. The numbers of women recruited into government peaked in 1939. In addition to Takeuchi Shigeyo, who was named to the executive board of the Cabinet’s National Spiritual Mobilization Committee, and Ichikawa Fusae, who became its secretary, hundreds of other women were appointed to national spiritual mobilization committees established within various ministries. Never before had Japanese women attained visibility in public life in such numbers. Yoshioka Yayoi, whom I consider in the next section, became the sole woman on the Board of Directors of the Central League for National Spiritual Mobilization.
The Case of Yoshioka Yayoi:

Toward the Establishment of Women’s Rights

In 1929, just before the movement for women’s political participation reached its height, the magazine Women’s Pictorial (Fujin Gahō) published an article with the headline, “Extra! Extra! Forming a Female Cabinet.” In the hypothetical case that such an unrealistic state of affairs might come to pass, the magazine had assigned seven politicians and critics the task of choosing an all-female cabinet and female cabinet secretary. The article was not originally meant to be taken seriously, but with the exception of Nagai Ryūtarō of the Minseitō party, who responded that there were no suitable candidates, the other participants—Murobuse Takanobu, Okino Iwasaburō, Miwata Motomichi, Umeyama Ichirō, Katayama Tetsu, and Kiyozawa Kiyoshi—approached the task with enthusiasm and imagination. The very idea behind this article suggests the atmosphere of the times, which took a positive view of women’s advances in society.

Among the various names that the six participants suggested, the most right-wing were Shimoda Utako and Hatoyama Haruko. From the left wing, the names Akamatsu Tsuneko, Kamichika Ichiko, Yamakawa Kikue, and Chūjō Yuriko occurred often, while from the center Ichikawa Fusae, Kaneko Shigeri, and Takeda Shigeyo appeared frequently. When it came to the position of cabinet secretary or home minister, however, four of the six participants named Yoshioka Yayoi. Critic Umeyama Ichirō quipped:

Considering that it is the established practice of constitutional government to give the Imperial Cabinet Chief appointment to the head of what could be called the majority party, we could regard that party as the Tokyo Federation of Women’s Associations (Tokyo Rengō Fujinkai), with Yoshioka Yayoi as its head. One could cite her titles: Director of Tokyo Women’s Medical School, Director of Shisei Hospital, President of the Women Doctors’ Association, Chair of the Tokyo Federation of Women’s Associations, and Director of the Japan Young Women’s Association Concerned for the Reformation of Daily Living (Nihon Joshi Seinen Dômeikai), among others. What’s more, she has money and the extravagance to keep an automobile on hand, together with the amicableness and generosity to bring together the moderates and hard-liners of a debate. Like Hara Takeshi, who has been called “the common man’s prime minister,” Yoshioka should be able to take the lead as “the common woman’s prime minister.”

Miwata Motomichi said that Yoshioka Yayoi had skill, courage, and power, while Okino Iwasaburō suggested disparagingly that she had political ambitions. Kiyozawa
Kiyoshi held a high opinion of Yoshioka, citing her experience in hospital administration and her relatively progressive beliefs. Katayama Tetsu, however, did not choose Yoshioka Yayoi as a member of the cabinet. He fancied instead a women's cabinet for the purpose of “world peace,” saying that if women were in control one could imagine them abolishing armaments, preventing warfare, and planning the elimination of aggressive foreign policy.

These assessments are especially interesting insofar as we can see that the men who wrote them were slightly fearful of Yoshioka’s power. Ever since beginning her medical studies in the 1890s, Yoshioka Yayoi had been both practical and industrious. She was the rare woman who felt at ease with money and organization. In the field of medicine, there were pioneering women such as Ogino Ginko and Takahashi Mizuko, but only Yoshioka Yayoi opened a private practice and administered a hospital. Furthermore, she trained other women doctors as the founder and president of the campus that developed from Tokyo Women’s Medical School (Tokyo Joi Gakkō) into Tokyo Women’s Medicine Professional School (Tokyo Joshi Igaku Semmon Gakkō) and, finally, Tokyo Women’s Medical College (Tokyo Joshi Ika Daigaku). Over the course of the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods, Yoshioka sent roughly five thousand women doctors into the world. Upon the inauguration of her college, she recalled:

I founded Tokyo Women’s Medical School, the predecessor to Tokyo Women’s Medical College, in 1900. My motive for this was to raise the social position of women, which was quite low at the time. In order to raise the position of women, one must first give them economic power. I was myself a doctor, and I considered the task of imparting medical art and science to women to be a noble one. And so I thought to found an institution devoted especially to this type of education.2

It was Yoshioka Yayoi’s belief that only a person with the economic power to lead a self-sufficient life would be recognized as having an independent character. Hence she saw the need to elevate women’s position by fostering their practical skills. In her leadership role with her students, she stressed not only their preparation for passing the medical qualifying exams but also their development as future members of society.

From an early date, Yoshioka concerned herself with the question of how to organize and promote the influence of the independent women she had trained. During her own days as a student at Saisei Gakusha, a preparatory school for the medical board exams, she had had the experience of organizing a women’s medical
student association. The purpose of this group was to defend the position of women medical students, a minority often subject to harassment. At Tokyo Women’s Medical School, Yoshioka oversaw the founding of a student organization on campus and published the monthly newsletter, Women Doctors’ Association (Joikai), which continues to be published at present-day Tokyo Women’s Medical College. The association for graduates of Tokyo Women’s Medical School became the Shiseikai, which in turn became the founding organization of Shisei Hospital. The president of the organization and director of the hospital were none other than Yoshioka.

Although Yoshioka appears to have been quite progressive in the way she consolidated associations of independent individuals, she was at the same time a consistent advocate of the family system. In the administration of her hospitals and schools, she placed her husband, sons, brother-in-law, and students who boarded with her in strategic positions. Her method was to expand her base of operations by relying on their spirit of selfless dedication, and then to delegate to them both responsibilities and a share of the profits. She expanded into affiliated hospitals and alumni hospitals, nursing schools and schools for midwives, dispatching talent into these new operations.

After her school achieved greater recognition and its status was raised to that of Tokyo Women’s Medicine Professional School in 1913, Yoshioka Yayoi became involved with many different aspects of social work in her role as leader of the Women Doctors’ Association and the Shisei Association. She began to assume the duties of president, general director, and advisor for various other groups as well. The Women Doctors’ Association and Shisei Association were influential organizations formed by people with independent economic resources, and undoubtedly increased her authority as a spokesperson. Her public activities as college president also heightened the prestige and reputation of her school. After the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, the offices of the Tokyo Federated Women’s Association, an organization born out of the cooperation of women’s groups in rescue activities, were moved into those of the Shisei Association.

Besides seeking to advance the position of women through organization and economic power, Yoshioka Yayoi pursued a policy of leadership and cooperation in national affairs. Her many visits to the Education Ministry for a license to found her school, and later to promote its status to that of a professional school, were one type of political training. She was unstinting in her cooperation with the Education Ministry as an educator, with the Ministry of Health and Welfare as a doctor, and
with the Home Ministry as a representative leader of women’s organizations. In 1918, when the Education Ministry promoted the establishment of girls’ clubs in each prefecture, the core of these organizations was established under the guidance of the Home Ministry. Yoshioka served as the director of the various girls’ clubs, and when these clubs later joined forces to become the Greater Japan Combined Young Women’s Association (*Dainihon Rengō Joshi Seinen Dan*), she served as general director. She also became a councilor of the Women’s Patriotic Association, a group that supported Japan’s soldiers.

The private women’s groups and government-sponsored women’s groups in which Yoshioka Yayoi participated gradually increased, until they numbered well over thirty. As the scope of her activities steadily expanded, her skill at juggling many duties gave her the nickname “Thousand-Armed Buddha.” To pull off the feat of attending one, two, or even more meetings a day on top of her regular duties as school administrator, educator, physician, and surgeon, Yoshioka kept a private car and driver at the ready—the fact which had so attracted the attention of the magazine critic already quoted.

In 1930, when a women’s suffrage bill passed the Lower House for the first time, Yoshioka formed the Women’s Alliance (*Fujin Dōshikai*), thus creating a suffrage organization that was seen as more conservative than the Women’s Suffrage League. Furthermore, she served as the director of the Greater Japan Federated Women’s Association (*Dainihon Rengō Fujinkai*), an organization created by the Education Ministry to prepare for the implementation of women’s suffrage. The director-in-chief of this organization, a member of the imperial family, was no more than a token: it was Yoshioka who functioned as the true representative of the group and who chaired their general meetings. Yoshioka had quite enough ambition to stand as a candidate had women’s right to hold office been realized at the time, yet she didn’t see a contradiction in calling for the maintenance of the current family system. Her logical spirit, which inclined her to speak dismissively of the family system as a feudal “Way of Women” (*jūdō*), also made her take note of its unifying strength, which she put to positive use in her organizational activities.

**Women Doctors and the War**

In 1931 Yoshioka Yayoi celebrated her *kanreki*, or sixty-first birthday. Yet she certainly had no time for thoughts of retirement: her public activities only increased, and her days were busy in the extreme. After the Manchurian Incident in September of that year, she threw herself into her work with exceptional vigor. With the
longevity to live through the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods, she experienced all the modern wars of Japan, including the First Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, World War I, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the Pacific War. The development of her life’s work was constantly intertwined with warfare.

To begin with her motivation for founding a medical school for women, Yoshioka herself said that it was only after the First Sino-Japanese War that she saw the need for female physicians. Such doctors could pay calls on the Chinese (Manchu) wives of diplomatic personnel, who by custom never showed their faces to men. Yoshioka said she advised her students to fix their sights on the development of China and Korea as well as on preventive medicine neglected by male doctors. In fact, from the Taisho period on, her school accepted many students from the continent and opened hospitals in Burma and Thailand, dispatching to them female doctors and midwives. Thus Yoshioka demanded recognition of the value of her school’s existence by anticipating the turn of national policy.

Soon after the Russo-Japanese War the number of student applications increased by 30 or 40 percent, and the building of new classrooms was insufficient to meet this new demand. Yoshioka thought that this increase was due to the fact that women had seen the hardships of war widows and realized the need to learn a profession. She also suggested that it was due to the development of the postwar economy, which increased the number of working women and created a spiritual climate favorable to women’s independence and self-sufficiency. After World War I there was a similar increase in the number of student applications.

Although not due to a war per se, Yoshioka’s newly built hospital burned to the ground in the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. She recovered from the crisis quickly, expanding her operations well beyond their previous scale. With this speedy recovery, Yoshioka became known as someone capable of profiting from adversity. Aside from her natural vitality, which attracted good fortune, perhaps this “good luck” amidst adversity was due to the nature of the medical profession, which is particularly necessary in times of trouble. In addition, Yoshioka’s ability to sense the direction of the times and to act decisively helped open the way for success.

In an article written for the school newsletter Women Doctor’s Circle immediately following the Russo-Japanese War, Yoshioka stated that women’s higher education was a peacetime, not a wartime, enterprise, and that henceforth Japan should aim at world domination through industrial development rather than warfare. Most likely Yoshioka was not a fanatical militarist and this article represents the true voice of
Yoshioka the businesswoman. Nevertheless, as a businesswoman she was very much aware that the fates of her enterprises and her school were closely tied to the fate of the nation.

When the Manchurian Incident first occurred, Yoshioka stated that it had been unavoidable due to the Chinese movement to expel Japan and that it should be approached from the viewpoint of national unity (kyokoku-itchi), thus signaling from the outset her cooperative stance toward national policy. As Japan’s battle lines extended farther into Asia, male doctors were sent to the front and requests for the dispatch of female physicians to doctorless communities flooded into Yoshioka’s school, much as she had anticipated. She encouraged her graduates to assume posts of responsibility in response to this demand.

In the pivotal year of 1937, Yoshioka joined the Federation of Japanese Women’s Organizations, and in 1938 she served as chair of the Emergency Congress of Women (Jikyoku Fujin Taikai). The following year she was one of the founders of the Women’s Emergency Study Group (Fujin Jikyoku Kenkyukai). Rather than say that in this time of trouble Yoshioka poured all her strength into aiding the liberal women’s movement, it would perhaps be more apt to say that with the change in the times the center of gravity for the liberal women’s movement shifted in Yoshioka’s direction. Stressing unity and gaining a position of strength, she cooperated with national policy—or, anticipating national policy, pioneered the participation of women in society, for Yoshioka Yayoi had long been practicing the policies that the liberal women’s movement would follow after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War.

In 1939, when Yoshioka was chosen Director of the Central League for National Spiritual Mobilization (Kokumin Seishin Sōdōin no Chūō Remmei), she clearly stated her position that “no matter how brilliant the policy, if it is implemented on a national scale without the cooperation of women, it will be entirely worthless.” Moreover, as Japan’s top-ranking “lady policy-maker” and the only woman to serve on the deliberative council of the Ministry of Education, she stressed the importance of equal opportunities for men and women, and especially the necessity of young women having opportunities in higher education. Yoshioka’s personal ambition in her later years was to see the status of the Tokyo Women’s Medicine Professional School raised to that of a college. She anticipated that if women took a cooperative stance during the period of national crisis, tangible rewards would naturally result, and was fully confident of her ability to reform the system.
From an early point, Yoshioka stressed the necessity of the unification and centralization of the various women’s organizations. Her model for this process was the Nazi Women’s Association of Germany. In 1939, when she was almost seventy years old, Yoshioka embarked on a tour of Europe. One of the goals of this trip was to study the systematic organization of Nazi youth and women’s groups. It happened that Yoshioka was in Berlin at the outbreak of World War II, and she appears to have been especially impressed by the structure in place to enforce national unity in wartime. In her reports upon her return to Japan, she stated that the Nazi Women’s Association had become a mechanism for the execution of national policy, had true power to take action as an extension of the government, and was already producing dazzling results.

We are able to trace Yoshioka’s footsteps during the period of mobilization with some precision, thanks to her regular column, entitled “Random Notes on the Current Situation,” which appeared in every issue of the Tokyo Women’s Medicine Professional School’s monthly magazine, Women Doctors’ Circle, and which could almost be called her “public diary.” Looking through these articles, one is struck both by her superhuman energy and careless lack of hesitation. Her clear goals of women’s social participation and elevated status made possible a headlong rush toward her objectives.

In the May 1938 issue of Women Doctors’ Circle, Yoshioka wrote in her “Random Notes” column, “On the second [of April] I had a little free time, so I began a bit of writing I had been asked to do some time before: a preface to Takamure Itsue’s Women’s History of Greater Japan (Dainihon Joseishi), a preface to The Young Women’s Manual (Joshi Seinen Kyôten) published by the Greater Japan Federation of Young Women’s Organizations, and two or three other writing jobs that needed immediate attention.” It was in this way that Yoshioka Yayoi, who had no claim to being a specialist in history, came to write the preface to the first volume of Takamure Itsue’s Women’s History of Greater Japan, a book entitled Researches on the Matrilineal System (Bokeisei no kenkyū).

The Case of Takamure Itsue: The Refraction of Feminism

In the prewar period, Takamure Itsue was known not as a women’s historian but as poet of the Populist school who had made her literary debut in 1921 with the long autobiographical poem, “Above the Sun and Moon” (Jitsugetsu no ue ni). She also wrote the lengthy topical poem, “Tokyo Is Stricken with a Fever” (Tokyo wa
netsubyō ni kakatte iru), which captures the awakening of her social conscience, depicting the city’s condition just before the Great Kanto Earthquake. This work was written in 1923, five years after the end of World War I, and describes Tokyo’s jobless, whose ranks had swollen after the booming wartime economy passed into a recession. It also depicts the many incidents that occurred due to the government’s oppression of its colonial territories and suppression of internal dissent, capturing the corrupt world of back-room politics, the growing disorder in the mores of the upper classes, and the turbulent and explosive atmosphere of the times. The question of whether war would break through the current social impasse looms in the poem’s background. In the introduction to the work, the poet clearly expresses her opposition to militarization and colonialism:

I feel strongly that preparations for defense are really preparations for war, preparations for death. Hasn’t the past World War clearly testified to this fact? And yet preparations for a Second World War are already well on the way.

Whether in foreign affairs, in their policy toward America and China, or in domestic affairs, in dealing with farm and factory workers, even the most powerful and intelligent politicians have no answer but regulation and repression, thinking their only duty to be the maintenance of the current social system.

Foreign observers may take Japan’s modern thought to be the advocacy of its supremacy in the Pacific and its ambition to be the leader of the yellow races. Yet this interpretation is unwarranted. Even if one grants that Japan sometimes embraces such ideas, they are really no more than the idle fantasies of the militarists, and don’t even merit a second glance from people such as myself.³

In this poem, the poet is driven out of the countryside and wanders through the modern city. Without becoming a bourgeoise with property and education, nor even an organized laborer, she drifts toward the company of the vagrant proletariat and expresses her bitterness in poetry.

In 1925 Takamura wrote “A Poem on Leaving Home” (Iede no Shi) which was in the same vein as “Tokyo Is Stricken with a Fever,” and in 1926 she wrote “The Genesis of Love” (Ren’ai Sōsei), which could be considered a discourse on either love or women. With this work, Takamura first offered an argument for “feminism.” According to Takamura, “women’s rights” are an extension into the social sphere of women’s disadvantage as the child-bearing sex. Although women should make participation in productive activity as independent laborers their eventual goal, feminists should for the time being resist the social system that values production
above all else, and should, from their standpoint as the child-bearing sex, call for the reform of this system.

Toward the end of the Taisho and beginning of the Showa period (ca. 1924–1926), Takamure joined the agrarian anarchist movement (nôhonshugi undo) founded by Shimonaka Yasaburô. At the time, small-scale farmers under the landlord system and women under the family system were in a similar position: they were neither organized laborers nor members of the bourgeoisie. Shimonaka’s agrarianism and Takamure’s feminism shared an oppositional stance toward modernity, being anti-Western, anti-urban, anti-industry, anti-capitalist, and opposed to central authority. Both advocated a return to roots, a return to nature, to the agricultural village, and a “return to Japan”; together they sketched the vision of a utopian “village” that would be self-sufficient and self-governing.

From her position in the Women’s Section of the Farmers’ Council, Takamure engaged in polemic against the liberal women’s organizations and the Marxist proletarian movement. In “Forming a Female Cabinet,” the February 1929 article in Women’s Pictorial magazine mentioned above, Takamure Itsue’s name appears twice, although the comments are of the following tenor: “There must surely be anarchists such as Madame Takamure who are laughing from afar at women’s craze for politics. If, for example, the Shimoda Cabinet [a conservative women’s cabinet] collapsed and a ‘New Women’s [bourgeois feminist] Cabinet’ were put in its place, or even if a Yamakawa Kikue [proletarian] Cabinet were constituted, the anarchists would still respond with indifferent laughter.”4

Takamure’s feminism didn’t make its ultimate goal the elevation of women’s position through participation in male society; rather, it rejected the notion of seeking to become one more form of political authority. To this extent, it carried a banner of apoliticality. Nevertheless, in an era when universal male suffrage was realized and the attainment of women’s electoral rights seemed just around the corner, Takamure’s stance was a convoluted one. So that women would not be led by a political party, she organized a women’s independent anti-party alliance, modeled on the Anti-Party Alliance Movement espoused by Shimonaka Yasaburô. She suggested that, rather than be led by a political party, women should present their own demands and then back those candidates who would support them, regardless of party affiliation.5

At this time Takamure was criticized by the proletarian camp for overemphasizing women’s independence and giving the issue of feminism priority over that of class. She then conducted the so-called women’s vote debate with Kamichika Ichiko, who
supported the Proletarian Party exclusively. Kamichika attacked as “harlotism” both Takamure’s proposed anti-party alliance and the Women’s Suffrage League, since they would support any candidate who favored women’s suffrage. Yet perhaps Takamure’s meeting with Women’s Suffrage journal at this time foreshadowed their coming intimacy during the war years.

After the “Anarchist-Proletarian Debates,” including those concerning women’s suffrage, Takamure supervised the anarchist magazine entitled Women’s Front (Fujin Zensen, 1930–31). In 1931, however, she suddenly cut her ties with both the magazine and the movement, and retreated to a residence called the “House in the Woods” (Mori no Ie). There she resolved to research women’s history, in order to formulate the basis for women’s liberation and attack the oppressive family system. The Manchurian Incident broke out just after Takamure moved to the House in the Woods.

Even while in seclusion, Takamure contributed regular essays to Fukushima Shirō’s Women’s Newspaper (Fujo Shinbun). Well aware not only of the situation that developed after the Manchurian Incident but also of the peace resolution passed by the Seventh All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress and of the affirmation of Japanese interests in Manchuria and Mongolia expressed by the Social Democratic Women’s Alliance, she wrote this bewildering passage:

Political positions and justice adjust pragmatically according to the time and the circumstances. Hence one never knows when the opposition to the war of women in the proletarian movement, or of women as mothers in the bourgeois women’s movement, will change to support for the war. I for one believe the war is inevitable.7

Other articles in this series also document Takamure’s position. In the article “Fascism,” she shows an interest in the rise of fascism.7 After Japan withdrew from the League of Nations, she wrote in her essay “Concerning the ‘Japanese Spirit’”:

If one takes into consideration that Japan was a late starter in undertaking the same aggressive behavior other colonial nations engage in, and that the question of Japan’s life-line is also involved, it should come as no surprise that Japan has finally threatened the complacent facade of the League of Nations, which merely seeks to preserve the status quo. The voices extolling our Japanese spirit arose from a realization of these circumstances; it is only natural that the status quo finds them threatening.8

In 1938, Takamure commented on the works taken up by Inoue Tetsujirō in his research on Japanese spirituality—the Rikkokushi, Kojiki, Kyūjiki, Fūdoki and Norito texts:
What makes me most glad when I read these texts is that long ago in our country there was no special reverence for men and contempt for women; nor was there a reverence for women and contempt for men. In other words, we can see a world in which men and women lived a cooperative existence.

“In the reign of Emperor Jimmu,” she adds, “there were woman warriors.”9 As it happens, the same issue of the Women’s Newspaper contains a report on the Women’s Emergency Congress of March 13, 1934, in which the liberal women’s movement took a strong turn toward cooperation with the war effort. On the same page as Takamure’s essay on the “Japanese Spirit” is a photo of the Women’s Emergency Congress in which the chair, Yoshioka Yayoi, and secretary, Ichikawa Fusae, appear in front of two large banners reading “National Mobilization Autumn! Do Your Duty!” and “No Construction without Women.” In extolling women’s “cooperation” and even going so far as to raise the prospect of “women warriors,” Takamure’s essay is in close accord with the slogans of the Women’s Emergency Conference. Surely this is no coincidence.

Speaking out before the war as an agrarian anarchist, reverting to nationalism during the war, and welcoming the democratic Constitution after the war—it is possible to trace, in Takamure’s shifting positions, the common threads of a search for “Japaneseness” and a desire for women’s liberation.10 However, in this paper it is necessary to limit our observations to the fact that Takamure, who is often seen as a proud, solitary figure, was not so isolated after all. Especially during wartime, her words had the power to mobilize many people.

The Logic of Salvation

In 1936 Takamure Itsue published her Greater Japan Biographical Dictionary of Women (Dainihon josei jinbutsu jisho) through Köseikaku Publications. This was a supplement to her work on women’s history. In 1938 she brought out from the same publisher her Women's History of Greater Japan, Volume 1: Researches on the Matrilineal System. In the two intervening years, there was a speedy rapprochement between Takamure and liberal women’s organizations. By this time, the proletarian women’s movement had fallen into nearly complete silence, while the liberal women’s movement, which had gathered in the Women’s Suffrage Congress, was in the midst of an agonizing change of course.

As already mentioned, in 1936 the magazine Women’s Suffrage had changed its name to Women’s Outlook. In the March 1936 issue of Women’s Outlook, the following announcement appeared:
In admiration for the great achievements of Japanese women's history, Ichikawa Fusae, Imai Kuiko, Hasegawa Shigure, Kawasaki Natsu, Kaneko Shigeri, Kamichika Ichiko, Takenaka Shigeri, Fukao Sumako, Fukushima Sadako, Kitagawa Chiyo, Hiratsuka Haru, and fifty-four others have organized a "Committee to Support the Writings of Takamure Itsue," in order to help her work reach publication successfully. A donation of 3 yen is requested to support the committee; subscriptions to receive the works are 6 yen.

Also among the list of supporters were members of the feminist movement such as Tsuneko Gauntlett, Kubushiro Ochimi, Kiuchi Kyō, and Moriya Azuma. Hiratsuka Raichō (Haruko) and the Asahi Shinbun reporter Takenaka Shigeri had supported Takamure's plan to research women's history from an early stage, so it is likely that the two of them conceived of the Support Committee and brought together Takamure and Women's Outlook. The office for the committee was in Takenaka Shigeri's residence.

Writing for Women's Outlook became a sideline for Takamure Itsue. The magazine commissioned articles such as "About the Matrilineal System in Japan," "Maternity in Ancient Times," "Concerning Women's History," and "Japanese Spirit and Research on Women," which served advance notice or offered explanations of her primary work, the Women's History of Greater Japan. Women's Outlook thus offered fundamental support for her entire project.

The hint that inspired Takamure to embark upon her research into the matrilineal system was the phenomenon of one clan having a number of founding ancestors, which can often be observed in old genealogical documents. Takamure took this to reflect the practice of matrilineal clans, which would take in boys from another clan as son-in-law/husbands and raise the children from such a marriage in the mother's house. As clan members began to pursue patrilineal conceptions of genealogy, however, they would incorporate the father's ancestor into their genealogy if he were from a prominent clan, even as they continued to follow the matrilineal system with respect to their clan name itself.

Takamure concluded that the phenomenon of multiple ancestors arose from the women of a clan committing their grooms' ancestors to genealogical memory, and that it was a product of the period of dissolution of the matrilineal clans. In subsequent research, she took as her primary material a volume entitled Shinsen Seishiroku, which had been compiled to bolster both the patrilineal system in family genealogy and the reign of the emperor in politics. Carefully analyzing the contradictions and confusion suggested by the multiple ancestors, clans, and surnames hidden in these old genealogies, she suggested that these were due to
immaturity of the patriarchal system, which should have been able to take a patrilineal system of genealogy for granted. Her *Researches on the Matrilineal System*, then, suggested that patrilineal and matrilineal genealogies coexisted as overlapping systems, and thus overturned the idea of an eternal, unchanging patriarchal system.

In 1937, as Takamure was preparing her *Researches*, the Ministry of Education published *The Principles of the National Polity (Kokutai no hongi)*, which was intended to provide guidelines for the movement to clarify the fundamental nature of the Japanese state (*kokutai meichō undō*). The preamble of this work states that “the unbroken line of Emperors, receiving the Oracle of the Founder of the Nation, reign eternally over the Greater Japanese Empire, which is one great family nation.” Needless to say, the family system that was said to support the national polity was the patriarchal family. Family thus referred to the so-called *ie*, its ideology of loyalty and filial piety, and the submissive “Way of Women.” Other views of imperial history that appeared following publication of *The Principles of the National Polity* were equally unlikely to recognize the possibility of a matrilineal society.

The members of the Committee to Support the Writings of Takamure Itsue were concerned that her *Researches on the Matrilineal System* would be banned and developed a series of strategies to prevent this from happening. One such strategy was to request a prologue for the book from Tokutomi Sohō, who was from the same town as Takamure and a prominent figure as the chair of the Journalists’ Patriotic Society. The book’s preface was written by Yoshioka Yayoi, as already noted.

The names of prominent figures in the women’s movement were also employed to shield Takamure from attack. Ichikawa Fusae, Kaneko Shigeri, Takenaka Shigeri, and Hiratsuka Raichō all wrote a “word of introduction” to the book, forming a protective wall around this “women’s history, written by a woman from a woman’s position.” One can sense in these women’s zeal the desperate hope to defend at least this one book after the many retreats necessitated by the Sino-Japanese War.

However, it was due not only to the efforts of the Support Committee that *Researches on the Matrilineal System* was able to escape censorship, but also, surely, to the author’s own final chapter, “Our Harvest,” and especially the second section of that chapter, entitled “The Unity of Blood.” (Not surprisingly, this section was excised from the postwar edition and from Takamure’s *Complete Works*). In these passages Takamure presents her thesis on the existence of a matrilineal society in the archaic age, but she also claims that the change from a matrilineal to a patrilineal society was a natural one.
Takamure’s version of ancient history conformed to the general outlines of the *Kojiki*: she told of how a central nobility had traveled far and wide to seek unions with the female leaders of the powerful regional clans, and how the land was successfully unified when the many gods produced by these unions, and each with his own clan, then declared fealty to the father. This unification, she suggested, could not have been accomplished without the long-established practice of a matrilocal marriage and matrilineal households.

In this way Takamure proposed a theory that emphasized the blood relations of the entire state—a theory over and above the ideology of the national polity and its concept of the “family nation.” According to Takamure, the ancient Japanese nation was established not by the military subjugation of other clans but through peaceful marriage negotiations. Within this thesis, one can discern the outlines of an argument corresponding to the “cooperation of the five races” (*gozoku kyōwa*) in Manchukuo, and even the “all the world under one roof” (*hakko ichiu*) ideology of the Greater East Asia War. At the same time, her thesis skillfully urges the reading public to recognize the contributions of women to the ancient unification of the country.

During the period of total war, the state demanded the cooperation of women. When Takamure says that her *Researches on the Matrilineal System* is a labor of love dedicated to women and her native country, she leaves no reason for this state to reject her work.

It is possible that “The Unity of Blood” was mere camouflage designed to avoid censorship during the war—as Takamure claimed afterward, when she excised this section from later editions of her work. However, when one considers that Takamure continued to produce articles extending the logic of “The Unity of Blood” even after *Researches on the Matrilineal System* had been published, one can only conclude that she had convinced even herself of this thesis. Furthermore, the argument of “The Unity of Blood” can be seen as a life raft that Takamure threw out to members of the liberal women’s movement, who had made the pivotal change from the All-Japan Women’s Suffrage Congress to the Women’s Emergency Congress and who were desperately trying to convince themselves that cooperation with the war effort was a worthwhile form of social participation.

In her epilogue to *Researches on the Matrilineal System*, Kaneko Shigeri of the Women’s Suffrage League stressed that this was a book whose appearance was necessary, writing that, “since Japan’s unprecedented confrontation with the Allies, there are a lot of points for women to consider about their native country.”
The Greater Japan Women’s Association:

The Imperial Rule Assistance Association and women

Despite the appearance of the so-called Women’s National Policy Committee, by 1940 there were many conspicuous expressions of doubt and discontent in the pages of Women’s Outlook magazine. One article declared that any perceptive person could discern the true motives of “members of the suffrage movement who have rushed to do His Majesty’s bidding in national policy.” In the magazine’s “Symposium” section, a number of participants suggested that they had lost the will to cooperate because they felt the government was just using the women’s movement and not seeking its true cooperation. Some even questioned, “Could not one live more honestly in China?”

Doubtless, the self-criticism and chagrin expressed in these articles reflected a sense of disillusionment with the war held by the populace as a whole. After the Japanese Army took possession of the strategic cities of Nanking, Soochow, and Canton and gained a series of rapid victories on the North China front, it pushed into Central China and managed to hang onto Southern China. Nevertheless, when the Army was unable to achieve a decisive victory and Japan began to experience material shortages despite its plans to fight a “war for resources,” many Japanese felt the country was slipping into a quagmire. After the World War II began in Europe in 1939, the feelings of anxiety among the populace increased all the more.

The 1940 national ceremonies to celebrate “two thousand six hundred years of Imperial Reign” were designed to dispel this sense of war-weariness and encourage a more patriotic spirit. The same year these ceremonies were held, a book based on the official view of imperial history, The Imperial History of Two Thousand Six Hundred Years (Kōki Nisen Roppyaku Nen), was published in large quantities. Also that year, Takamure Itsue wrote “A Women’s History of Two Thousand Six Hundred Years” for the January 1940 issue of Women’s Asahi (Fujin Asahi) and, with the addition of a few essays, published it in book form. In contrast to The Imperial History of Two Thousand Six Hundred Years, Takamure’s work placed great emphasis on the fact that Japanese history should be seen as beginning with the female deity Amaterasu. An advertisement for her Women’s History of Two Thousand Six Hundred Years appeared in Women’s Outlook, and Kaneko Shigeri recommended the book to readers in her “New Publications” column.

Also in 1940, Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro announced his intention to sponsor the so-called new (governmental) structure movement (shin taisei undō) in
response to the state of emergency, and to establish a high-level national defense as well. These developments had their most significant impact on women when, at a special meeting convened in September 1940, the Women’s Suffrage League, which had been the chief organ of the liberal women’s movement, announced its decision to disband. The delegates decided to merge the Suffrage League with the Women’s Emergency Study Group, which had been established in February 1939 with the mission of gathering together the principal members of the women’s movement, “deepening women’s understanding of the state of emergency, and contributing to the study of national policy.” After the dissolution of the Suffrage League, Women’s Outlook magazine was administered by the Women’s Issues Research Institute (Ichikawa Fusae, representative). The Research Institute and the Women’s Emergency Study Group were listed as the magazine’s sponsors.

The “new structure movement” was given institutional form with the inauguration of an Imperial Rule Assistance Association. The December 1940 special session of the Central Cooperation Committee of this association included Kōra Tomiko, a professor at Japan Women’s College. Kōra proposed a women’s bureau and also expressed her wish to combine the existing women’s groups. Under the headline “Imperial Rule Assistance Association and Women,” the November 1940 Women’s Outlook had already called for the amalgamation of women’s organizations and the establishment of a women’s section. The authors of that article wrote:

We would like to serve the warning that if, regardless of our demands, the new Imperial Rule Assistance Association fails to pay heed to women and leaves things as they were in the old governmental structure, the “new structure” will never be achieved and the “high-level national defense” will crumble from its very foundation.

The idea of merging the various women’s groups moved toward realization in 1941, when it was presented as a bill to the Imperial Diet. In advance of the government’s proposal, however, the Women’s Emergency Study Group presented its own bill, “A Proposal Concerning the Unification of Women’s Organizations.” This bill was quite specific about organizational makeup, suggesting that the composite group be composed of housewives and that all executive positions be filled by women.13 By initiating the new group’s organization from below, the women of the Emergency Study Group tried to preserve their autonomy as much as possible. They also hoped to take advantage of a rift between the Patriotic Women’s Association and the Association of Women for National Defense, and thus make their voices heard. The Patriotic Women’s Association was overseen by the Home
Ministry and Ministry of Health, the Association of Women for National Defense was supervised by the Department of War, and the Greater Japan Federated Women’s Association was under the Department of Education. Due to behind-the-scenes power struggles among these three governmental or semi-governmental organizations, the question of amalgamation took some time to resolve.

On December 8, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and declared war on Britain and the United States. The Pacific War had begun. To prepare for the decisive battle, Tōjō Hideki left his post as an army general to serve as both prime minister and minister of war. On February 2, 1942, the Greater Japan Women’s Association was formed under the Tōjō Cabinet. Except for unmarried women under twenty, all females could become members for a fee of 60 sen. The central office was in Tokyo; there were headquarters in each of the prefectures, branch chapters in major cities, and local chapters in the various neighborhood associations. The whole was subsumed under the umbrella of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association.

The first sponsors of the Greater Japan Women’s Association were named by the government, with one person each from the Patriotic Women’s Association, the Association of Women for National Defense, and the Greater Japan Federated Women’s Association, in combination with ten others. Thus the resulting organization was an amalgamation of previously existing women’s groups. Among working women and members of the liberal women’s movement, Hani Setsuko, Kawasaki Natsu, Takeuchi Shigeyo, Muraoka Hanako, Yasui Tetsu, Yamataka (Kaneko) Shigeri, and Yoshioka Yayoi were named as sponsors, and became directors once the Association was operational. Yoshioka Yayoi served as an advisor. Ichikawa Fusae from the suffrage movement was not named a director but only a member of the deliberative council.

Although the Greater Japan Women’s Association was formed under the pretext of uniting all women—including the liberal women’s groups—into one organization, the results were quite different. The empress was made president, and the organization served primarily as a means of disseminating imperial orders to the common people. It seems the Association was unable to function efficiently with its giant membership of about twenty million; nevertheless, it did engage in activities such as circulating information, collecting membership fees, encouraging saving and frugality, providing support for the military, and training for national defense. With the establishment of the Greater Japan Women’s Association, the goal of total mobilization was close to being realized. The organization continued its activities until
1944, when it was dissolved and subsumed into the Citizens’ Patriotic Volunteer Corps.

In 1941 the government stepped in to control women’s magazines, and *Women’s Outlook* was forced to close down after publishing its August issue. After this the women’s movement struggled to survive through the Women’s Emergency Study Group and Women’s Issues Study Group, which published their *First Annual Bulletin: Trends in the Women’s Sphere* (*Fujin nenpō daiishū: Fujinkai no dōkō*) in 1944. This work recorded and analyzed in detail trends pertaining to women from the start of the Pacific War to the end of 1943, including statistical information and diaries. By adding a consideration of *Trends in the Women’s Sphere* to our analysis of the magazines *Women’s Suffrage* and *Women’s Outlook*, we can complete our tracing of the vicissitudes of the liberal women’s movement throughout the so-called Fifteen-Year War, which encompassed the Manchurian Incident, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the Pacific War.

One article in *Trends in the Women’s Sphere* notes that female representatives had been chosen for the Central Cooperation Committee of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, an inclusiveness not achieved in Diet politics. From this we can infer that the guiding logic of the movement remained cooperation—i.e., participation—in national policy. These faithful records, however, gradually reveal contradictions in the government’s leadership policy. Although the government promoted both mobilization of women in the factories and the strengthening of labor, it also preached the importance of the family system and feudal morality. In the meantime, women were forced out of the home to work on the “home front,” and the communalization of housework and child-rearing progressed apace. The government demanded greater production, frugality, and savings and thus, with its slogan to “work for the country and put your earnings in savings,” forced its citizens to carry a double burden.

While the compilers of *Trends in the Women’s Sphere* adhered to the principle of cooperation in national policy, they also showed concern about the loosening of women’s labor laws and opposition to the curtailing of women’s higher education. Furthermore, they pointed out the anachronism of the feudal morality of the “Way of Women” and emphasized the need to reform the inefficient system of citizens’ organizations. It almost seems that the true aim of their stubborn documentation was to show the contradictions of national policy and the bankruptcy of their own principle of cooperation.
As a member of the Education Council, Yoshioka Yayoi managed to propose that women’s colleges be provided for in the imperial edict on the establishment of universities, but this was a period when women’s high schools and vocational schools were already seeing their courses of study cut short and their graduations accelerated—this was no time to talk about establishing women’s colleges.

The Imperial Rule Assistance Association brought under its aegis not only the various women’s groups but the young men’s and young women’s associations as well; retired bureaucrats were made its officers. Yoshioka, who had achieved the position of chief director of the Association, argued that its officers should be private citizens, not government officials. Nevertheless, the Youth Chapter and Women’s Chapter of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association both evolved into governmental organizations with citizens’ participation in name only.

Yoshioka’s practical spirit led her to oppose the banning of English departments from women’s schools. She also publicly proclaimed that women were engaged in active social participation in Nazi Germany, and labeled the claim that the Nazis had told women to return to the home a “big lie.” It is as though she foresaw Japan’s defeat and, even while cooperating with the war structure, was preparing for her own evacuation.

The Greater Japan Women’s Association’s Official Magazine, Japanese Woman (Nihon Fujin)

Japanese Woman was originally the official magazine of the Association of Women for National Defense, but after the formation of the Greater Japan Women’s Association, it became affiliated with that organization. Originally eighty pages long, its size was reduced and the number of pages cut in half in response to the wartime paper shortage. Most other women’s magazines were forced to shut down after the government asserted its control over publishing in 1941, but Japanese Woman was distributed, one copy apiece, to each of the local branch organizations of the Greater Japan Women’s Association. For women across the country, it was the only source of information during this period.

Takamure Itsue wrote two or three serialized pieces for this magazine, with installments sometimes up to eight pages long. These were the central reading material in this magazine of ideological education. According to Takamure’s autobiography, Diary of a Woman from the Land of Fire (Hi no kuni no onna no nikki), members of the Greater Japan Women’s Association visited her to request her contributions; the remuneration of 150 yen per installment was enough to cover her living expenses for
a month. Since members of the Committee to Support the Writings of Takamure Itsue were now directors and advisors to the Greater Japan Women’s Association, it is likely that the exceptionally high remuneration was a part of their efforts to support this self-exiled researcher.

The Greater Japan Women’s Association proclaimed that “our ultimate goal is to offer our service to the public good as women, in accordance with the traditional Way of Women.” According to one article in Japanese Woman, Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki addressed the first general assembly of the Association as follows:

As of this autumn, I feel all the more deeply the need to strengthen our prosecution of the war based on Japan’s greatest strength, that of the family. And the center of our families is, above all, the women who are ceaselessly working to protect the home. At present I keenly sense the gravity of women’s obligations in this time of war.

Actually, the traditional “Way of Women,” according to which women would simply protect the home, did not adequately address the circumstances of the war. Thus Tōjō added the following:

In times of war, it is said that one will even “ask for help from the housecat.” In such a situation, our expectations from working women are truly great. The occasions are ever more frequent when we must ask women to fill in where there is insufficient manpower, when we must ask them to assist the work of men.

In the articles that Takamure Itsue serialized for Japanese Woman, she attacked the hypocrisy of the government’s treatment of women. One can see her determination to make the government recognize women not as helpers but as equal participants on an equal footing. Among her serializations there are twelve installments of biographies from her History of Japanese Women. These include articles such as “The Wife of Kusunoki Masashige,” “The Women of the Shinpūren,” and “Okumura Ihoko,” which tell about women who served on the home front or who lost their husbands and sons in the war. But she also depicted women who took up weapons themselves, in articles such as “Hōjō Masako, a Martial Woman,” “Fierce Women of the Warring States,” and “The Exalted Empress Jingu.” In “Historical Essays: A Record of the Way of Women,” she chose more examples of women warriors from the classics and mentioned that Japan, unlike other countries in the war, had no female battle corps. Noting that this disparity had been attributed to “differences in national character,” she silently cast doubt on such an idea.
The internal contradictions in the state’s attempt to mobilize women were not limited to the fact that it called for national defense training and public service through labor at the same time it told women to defend the purity of the family system. Although the state told women to defend the family, it would not let them stop their husbands and sons from going to war, even though few could be expected to return as the war situation worsened.

The reason Takamure Itsue urged women to play an even more active role in the war effort lay in her belief in “the protection of blood kin” (ketsuzoku shugo). “Within the family, women’s love of their kinfolk is the strongest,” she writes. “This feeling of familial love extends as a matter of course to a love of their home country and the ancestors.”16 For Takamure, maternal love, as an extension of self-love, was to be expanded farther and become a love for the ancestral country. Out of this grew her concept of a divine nation (shinkoku) that constituted a transcendent form of the self—and, by 1944, her fanatical call for “Defense of Our Divine Nation.”17

The result is that, in Takamure’s writings of this period, the logic that supports the notion of fighting for the survival of blood kin is in turn supported by an intense sense of death as a form of solidarity—as that which seduces the individual person through a notion of dying with others. Takamure quotes Yosano Akiko’s pacifist poem “Don’t Let Them Kill You, Brother,” written during the Russo-Japanese War, and writes, “In times of peace, a certain amount of this type of foolishness can be forgiven. But when the country is in crisis, foolishness like this does not comprise Japanese womanhood.”18 In “The Women of Shinpüren,” she praises women who commit ritual suicide to follow their husbands.

The feudal “Way of Women,” which would shut women away in the home, was unsuited to the realities of modern war and eventually collapsed. Yet the Pacific War was not a citizens’ war undertaken to defend the country but a war fought by “national subjects” (kokumin) to defend the emperor, so that the collapsed feudal morality could not be readily replaced by mere civic virtue. Takamure Itsue, who had a rich knowledge of history, wrote that “Patriotism was an important aspect of the old Way of Women.” With her deep historical consciousness, she gave new life to a contradictory and bankrupt notion of this “Way of Women.”

The idea that cooperation in the war effort would advance the position of women was insufficient for the majority of women living on the brink of death every day. Such women needed the image of a shared “community of blood”—with its hymn in praise of death—as a kind of salvation. In responding to this demand, Takamure
progressed beyond the ideology of a liberal women's movement such as that espoused by Yoshioka Yayoi.

Takamure's series of articles for *Japanese Woman* ended with the January 1945 issue. She excused herself by saying she had become too busy with her research activities. In the beginning, Kaneko Shigeri and Takenaka Shigeyo had contributed practical articles as directors of the headquarters of the Greater Japan Women's Association. Yet by the third or fourth year of publication, they had discontinued their efforts. By the time Takamure herself stopped writing, the magazine was buried in articles written by people connected with the military. Perhaps she realized she had gone too far.

**In Conclusion**

On August 15, 1945, the defeat of Japan in the Pacific War was announced. How did those who had been leaders in the women's movement accept and react to this event? Did news of the defeat cause any change in their thinking and ideas? Diaries and articles they wrote in the immediate postwar period do not suggest that they really regretted the actions they took during the wartime.

In her *Autobiography*, Ichikawa Fusae writes of her "tears for the loss of the war" on August 15. Yet only ten days later she had already formed the Women's Committee for Postwar Policy. In the postwar era, however, she would be purged from public service.

According to Yoshioka Yayoi's diary, she had been feeling that there was no hope for Japan to win the war, and hoping that Japan would begin peace negotiations. When she heard the news of defeat, she felt relieved and wrote that she could now sleep soundly. Yoshioka immediately returned to Tokyo from her evacuation site in order to revive her women's medical colleges, but she, too, was barred from public and educational service during the Occupation.

Takamure Itsue writes in her diary that she could "do nothing but weep and moan" when she heard the emperor's radio broadcast. Almost immediately, however, she set about reconstructing the bankrupt ideology of Japanese cultural nationalism (*nihon shugi*). In the "Voices" column of the *Asahi Shinbun* 's New Year's Day issue, she contributed a short article entitled "The Good Things about Japan." The main point was that the communities of blood relations in ancient Japan were based on the principle of maternal love, and that this principle could now become a Japanese basis for peace and democracy. From then on, Takamure devoted herself to the projected
second volume of her *Researches in Women's History: Studies on the System of Matrilocal Marriage* (*Shōseikon no kenkyū*).

The Committee to Support the Writings of Takamure Itsue, which had been based in the Women's Issues Research Group, continued its support well into the postwar period. Since Takamure had never had any connections to public office or public education, she was not purged by the Occupation authorities, nor was there any sign of criticism of her wartime rhetoric from the Support Committee. At the third Women's General Assembly in 1950, there was a resolution to express gratitude for Takamure's work in women's history. Could it be that, at the historical turning point of 1945, just as in the crisis of 1937, women were still clinging to the "logic of salvation" offered by Takamure? This is a possibility we must confront and address today.

Since Japanese women during the war were neither soldiers nor full citizens, the question of their wartime responsibility has not been examined. But history teaches us that the feminism which sought to obtain civil rights for women also took a positive stance toward wartime cooperation, and that the matriarchal ideal posed at this time also called for women to follow their husbands in death. Modern warfare is a battle for the nation for its own profit; it is based on the principle that the modern nation is also a supposedly homogeneous people. However, the anti-war movement will only be effective if it transcends nationalism and ethnocentrism. Neither the women's rights movement that sought the right of political participation for women nor the feminism that emphasized blood relations was able to reject the demands of nation and race. If we examine the course of the war, in which women played a vital role, we can see that the war was not merely a tragedy that caused tremendous destruction and loss of life but also an event during which many individual free wills were, in the end, absorbed by the gigantic will of the state.

**Notes**

1. See, for example, the reports on the conferences carried in the official publication of the Women's Suffrage League, *Fusen* (*Women's Suffrage*), later renamed *Josei Tenbō* (*Woman's Outlook*). In the text of the present essay and in notes 2–18 below, the dates of publication of cited passages are given, rather than page numbers.
7. The article was published on April, 10, 1932 in *Fujo Shinbun*.
12. Published by Kōseikaku.
17. “Shinkoku Goji,” *Nihon Fujin*, 4/44.