

Second Class People:

**A case study on the political and cultural
rights of Japanese women throughout the
19th and 20th centuries**

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Introduction:

Modern Japanese women in Japan have equal rights but are expected to be subservient to their male counterparts as a matter of culture. This thesis tackles the evolution and progression of Japanese women's rights through the 19th and 20th centuries. While the history of gender biases and the resulting restriction of rights prior to the 19th century are important to address, this paper begins with the Meiji Era when women's roles first settled into law. The Meiji ideals were carried from the gender ideology that had continually evolved through Japanese society.

In the earliest known years of Japan's history, scholars suspect ancient society to have been a matriarchal or at least a matrilineal system. Polygamy was prevalent as was intermingling between closely related people. The original founding deity of the imperial clan was the Sun Goddess and its ruler was a woman named Pimiku. This practice changed in the Heian period, 794-1192, where men and women lived separately even after marriage and the woman's family took responsibility for their children. Women were the head of the family while the husband was treated as an occasional visitor.¹ By the Kamakura Era, 1192-1333, the influence of Chinese Confucianism and teaching of Buddhism eventually placed men at the head of the family with women regarded as inferior beings. With the rise of militarism and Samurai families, these notions eroded women's social position.² However, these new codes of acceptable conduct were still confined to the upper class Samurai families. The people of the lower classes still retained the option to ignore the social standards and responsibilities of the upper classes.

¹ Mikiso Hane. "Japan: A Short History." Oxford: Oneworld. 2000 p.14

² Ibid. p.27

In the Edo period, 1603-1867, men had control over their households, the family's social status, and the residence, though there was no official government mandate promulgating that standard throughout the entire country. While it is true that legal precedents failed to grant women explicit general rights, the documents issued by shogunate authorities of the Edo period never actively prohibited women from having certain rights.³

The situation changed by the Meiji Era with the institutionalization of men's and women's social statuses. The Meiji government integrated the political and cultural rights of its citizens into a single government controlled system of enforced favoritism. The nation's citizens were then expected to adhere to the traditionally accepted and now legalized functions of men and women in society. Socially, legally and politically, women were categorized as inferior beings. By politically sanctioning the cultural bias, the Meiji government assigned set 'roles' dictated by gender. These 'Gender Roles' were created and implanted into Japanese society, teaching every generation the set political and cultural standards. The Meiji period targeted all people regardless of class, and assigned women a tradition of inferiority.⁴

This system persisted into the 1940s when Japan was defeated at the end of World War II. The Postwar Era marked the end of government endorsed Gender Roles with the birth of the 1947 Japanese Constitution. However, the constitution itself was almost inadequate in changing the minds of those that held onto the tradition of male and female Gender Roles. The greater problem was that even without the enforcement of the

³ Harald Fuess. "Divorce in Japan: Family, Gender and the State 1600-2000." California: Stanford University Press. 2004. p. 44

⁴ Fujiwara Tomoko. Documentary Film Director, interviewed by the author, MD recording, Tokyo, Japan. December 25. 2004

government, Gender Roles had become an entirely cultural issue, where ‘assigned’ had been replaced by ‘appropriate’ as a matter of tradition and identity.

In the 19th century, Japanese women became defined as second class citizens by law in the Meiji era society. Without political or cultural rights, they were restricted to their assigned Gender Roles. In the 20th century, after the end of World War II, Japanese women received full political rights under the result of American influence. The rise of liberalism that came in the Postwar Era and the current conservative backlash in Japan are all a part of a continuing series of interchanging ideas in politics and culture. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Japan has been influenced by these switching waves of thought which have been continually alternating between liberal westernization and conservative preservation.

I plan on analyzing the 19th century first, starting with the Meiji Restoration and going on until World War II as I follow the interchanging system of conservatism and liberalism. I also intend to focus on the life of Tsuda Umeko as recorded in her diaries and personal letters. A series of Japanese women’s diaries of the Meiji Era will offer the perspectives of the people that lived under the rule of the assigned Gender Roles while Tsuda Umeko’s diaries and letters⁵ will chronicle her story as one of Japan’s first true feminists. I then intend to examine the 20th century, starting with the words and memoir of Beate Sirota Gordon, the woman who was to become the author of women’s equality in the 1947 Japanese Constitution. Recorded in their diaries, letters and memoirs, the lives of the women who lived through 19th and 20th century Japan will be my primary concentration. As is the case with most primary source material, the diaries, letters and

⁵ Tsuda Umeko’s life was recorded in English and is thus not subject to the translation errors as the other Japanese women’s diaries of the Meiji Era.

memoirs cannot be taken as the complete truth, but rather must be recognized as materials and sources with which to understand the era. These diaries are not merely historical records but are also outlets of their thoughts, emotions and art.⁶ They can be trusted to portray without pretense. As Donald Keene phrased it, “The telling of truth, however unflattering to the writer, has been characteristic of diaries by Japanese women ever since the time of Kagero Nikki (The Gossamer Years).”^{7 8}

Starting with the U.S. Occupation of Japan up to the present day, the section covering the 20th century will come from personal interviews, autobiographies and secondary sources that analyze the evolution of the Japanese women’s social status. The evolution is particularly important to chart as, without the political backing of enforced Gender Roles, Japanese women remained in their cultural placement in society. To analyze the 20th century Japanese woman is to unearth the derivation and evolution of the Gender Role mindset and to understand how and why she became, not a second class citizen by law, but a second class person by tradition.

Section I: The Meiji Case Study

The end of the Tokugawa government brought the complete restoration of the Japanese government under new rule, thus beginning the Meiji Era in 1868. The Meiji Restoration was followed by the Meiji Constitution or Kenpo in 1889 and then by the Meiji Civil Code or Mimpo in 1898. Originally in 1868, the Meiji government was a firm

⁶ Donald Keene, Historian and Scholar of Japanese History, interviewed by author. MD recording, New York, NY, January 22, 2005

⁷ Kagero Nikki was a tale written by another Japanese woman writer named Michitsuna no Haha. Michitsuna no Haha’s intention in writing Kagero Nikki was to give her readers an alternate and thus more realistic view of the life of a lady of the Heian court.

⁸ Donald Keene. “Modern Japanese Diaries: The Japanese at Home and Abroad as Revealed Through Their Diaries.” New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995, p. 282.

believer in modernization through westernization. By 1889, however, the Meiji Kenpo was drafted, symbolizing that the changing ideology would instead focus on preserving the Japanese sense of national identity. The Meiji Kenpo was the first manifestation of the desire for national independence and was followed by the Meiji Mimpo which personified the conservative preservationist tendencies inherent in Japanese culture and traditions. The Meiji Kenpo officially created the Empire of Japan and established the political rights of its citizens while the Meiji Mimpo established what would become the socially acceptable codes of conduct for generations to come.

The Meiji Restoration and the Kenpo and Mimpo began the interchanging liberal/conservative waves of thought that swept over Japan in the 19th century. The decades between the beginning of the Meiji Restoration and the drafting of the Meiji Kenpo were years of liberal modernization by westernization. This desire to democratize, and capitalize in Japan began from the people's admiration of the foreigners from the west. The forced landing of Commodore Perry⁹ brought new cultures and ideas, which began absorbing into the Japanese way of life. These ideas and concepts started westernizing the political and cultural standards and values of Japan with a promise of power.

The drive for modernization and competition with foreign powers led to the birth of a government sponsored universal education system. Following a western model, the Japanese government began to educate its citizens regardless of gender or class. While

⁹ In March of 1852, President Fillmore placed Commodore Perry in charge of the expedition to induce the Japanese government to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. The Japanese government initially refused to meet with him and ordered him out of the country, however their defenses were inadequate to force him to leave. On July 14, 1853, after several days of sparing back and forth, the Japanese finally accepted the formal letter requesting a treaty. Perry, after promising to return the following spring then departed Japanese territorial waters. Commodore Perry returned to Japan; entering Tokyo Bay in February, 1854 with 9 ships and on March 31 the treaty between the United States and Japan was signed.

there were limitations at the higher levels of learning, the steps taken to insure basic education were unprecedented in Japanese history.

Promulgated years later and amidst an ample amount of economic and social reforms, the Meiji Kenpo established a reassertion of the Japanese identity. It established the political codes of the nation, abolishing the rigid class system and equating the peasantry with the Samurai. It also instituted a number of reforms that restructured the entire economy away from agrarianism and into industrialization. The ban on religious freedom was lifted and a national army and police were established. In many ways, the Meiji Kenpo was a great step forward in the modernization of Japan, reestablishing the political standards and institutionalizing Japanese tradition as a means of modernization. However, this was a complete reversal of the liberal modernist ideals that had existed for nearly two decades after the end of Tokugawa because it left the important issue of civil rights to the Meiji Mimpo which led to the institutionalizing of politically assigned Gender Roles.

The Meiji Mimpo was written to institutionalize ‘acceptable’ behavior amongst the Japanese people in society. It created nationally defined Gender Roles which were direct corollaries of ancient Japanese tradition. In the Meiji years “the men who held power...as cabinet ministers and senior bureaucrats believed in tradition as an antidote to revolution.”¹⁰ Gender Roles assigned specific functions and responsibilities to the people as members of society, constructing the cultural foundation of society and affecting the lives of Japanese women throughout the 19th century.¹¹

¹⁰ W.G. Beasley. “The Rise of Modern Japan.” London: St. Martin’s Press. 2000. p.127

¹¹ Prof. Inoue Teruko. Wako University Professor of Gender Studies, interviewed by author, MD recording, Tokyo, Japan. December 20. 2004.

The end of the two hundred years of isolation and the subsequent shifts between liberal and conservative ideologies affected the lives of the Japanese people who faced the rapidly disappearing/reappearing Japanese culture. While many political changes took place, the times influenced all aspects of the average citizen's life. Without an official government record regarding the people's personal lives, to learn about the average citizen means using the documented records they individually chronicled throughout their lifetimes. For the specific gender roles of women of that period, we look to their dairies for information.

Kawai Koume, a Japanese woman, lived from 1804-1889 and died before the drafting of the Meiji Kenpo. Her family came from a wealthy background and managed to maintain its cultural standards throughout the changing times. The less wealthy class of Samurai however, was forced to change alongside the rest of society. Higuchi Ichiyo was one such woman of Samurai descent who came from a poor family. She lived from 1872 to 1896 in the midst of the westernizing Japanese society. The juxtaposition between Kawai's and Higuchi's lives as represented in their dairies is defined by the difference in wealth.

Kawai's diary was written from 1849 through 1885 in which she described her daily life, broken down into a series of routines. Her tasks included meal preparation, heating baths, and other mundane tasks customarily performed by Japanese women of the elite Samurai families. She lived in Wakayama, far from the modernizing cities of Japanese society. She was also a well-educated and honored woman who lived by the accepted standards of responsibility. Kawai's wealthy Samurai status established her life in the assigned Gender Roles of higher society. Servitude was a representation "of the life

of an educated, artistically talented woman;” an embodiment of the rich elite during the first wave of westernization.¹² Kawai represents the elite women who lived by the codes of conduct before the Meiji Mimpo politically enforced them on a national level. Kawai died years before the code’s drafting and promulgation.

Higuchi came from an honored Samurai family albeit a poverty stricken one. Her diary focused on the personal aspects of her childhood and her rise to fame through her written fiction. From a young age, she endured a great deal, forgoing her education and supporting her family after her father’s death. As a means of survival, her family opened a shop which was an act unsavory to all Samurai families in pre-modern Japan, operating it next to a red-light district. Her capitalistic life centered on the acquisition and accumulation of wealth as an ideology. Higuchi’s short life represents the generation of people who were raised on the first wave of liberalism in which they were expected to learn about the foreign model and reshape their society accordingly. Her entire ideology was taken from the west.

Due to the differences in wealth between their families, Kawai’s family retained the luxuries of the rich while Higuchi’s family discarded them and had to accept western ideals. Tradition was for the rich only. This can be inferred to be the state of affairs in Japan during this short period within the Meiji Era. In the brief wave of liberalism in the Meiji Era, wealth was the defining element in society, deciding whether time-honored Japanese traditions of honor and pride were expendable in the face of necessity.

The importance of wealth was not dictated by government mandate but rather resulted from a major cultural shift. Blood lost its paramount status along with upbringing and reputation. Wealth, education and earning power became the primary signs of

¹²Ibid, p. 270.

respect. In light of Social Darwinism, it became suspect that Japan was lower on the evolutionary chain than the western powers so retaining national security for many Japanese people involved learning about western philosophy, law, behavior, customs, science and industry. To this end, the government sponsored a number of its people to be sent abroad for education. It was their initial hope that these students and children would return to Japan as experts who would redefine the government and society in a western fashion.¹³

This wrought a number of concerns from the conservative element of society who believed that Japan's culture was being undermined by the influx of western life. Political leaders took complaints of this nature seriously, fearing a loss of their reputation. Their answer was "political unity require[s] a dash of cultural conservatism."¹⁴ The cultural conservatism expressed in the Meiji Kenpo "was also reflected in legal and educational reforms" by the end of the 19th century with the first major conservative backlash since the first wave of liberalism.

Education, originally an inspiration from the west, became a universally enforced compulsion by the Meiji Mimpo's decree. The system became a tool to educate the young on Japanese mannerisms, ethics, values, and etiquette. Culture and tradition was taught to be a national identity. A new sophistication was created in a traditional image, denouncing foreign ideas and ideologies in favor of state sponsored ideology and conservative government control. The people's daily lives reverted to a pre-westernization archetype under the Meiji Kenpo and Mimpo.¹⁵

¹³ W.G. Beasley 2000 p.84-85

¹⁴ Ibid. p.85

¹⁵ Donald Keene, interviewed by author. January 22, 2005

The Meiji Kenpo and Mimpo instated Gender Roles in schools nationwide as a single nationwide ideology. The reverted state of gender placement assigned women with the cultural role of being Japan's good wives and wise mothers from a young age. Gender Roles became the pride of society, institutionalizing roles that men and women were to identify as being 'Japanese.'¹⁶

The Meiji Mimpo classified women as legally inferior, placing into law the already accepted cultural mindset. Under this unifying civil code, the head of the household, always a male, was given complete control over all family affairs. Married women, though given authority over the domestic sphere, were classified as 'incapacitated' people alongside the handicapped and mentally ill. One provision of the Meiji Mimpo stated specifically that "cripples and disabled persons, and wives cannot undertake any legal action."

Divorce was also a large issue included in the Meiji Mimpo as establishing a system of divorce conflicted with the interpretations of modernity and Japanese traditions. The act of divorce was included but the Mimpo neglected the consequences and mutual obligation of the peoples involved. Lacking regulations on property division and alimony, the system implicitly handed over responsibility of the division over to the husband. This institution of formal inequality further incapacitated women, making them entirely dependent and placing them under the absolute authority of the family head and husband.¹⁷

This was not, however, an alteration of practice. As stated before, the Japanese culture had originally been rooted in similar patriarchal traditions, evolving since the

¹⁶ Prof. Inoue Teruko, interviewed by author. December 20. 2004.

¹⁷ Mikiso Hane 2000 p.102

Heian period. The Meiji Mimpo was, however, the first instance in which any action to the contrary was forbidden by punishment of law and dictated by the government. Institutionalizing the culture as a whole incriminated anyone acting counter to the nation's new image.

The influx of 'enlightenment thought' and the 'development of capitalistic means of production' had introduced the idea of women's liberation in society¹⁸ such that a number of people resisted the Meiji Mimpo and its cultural prejudice. Among them was Fukuzama Yukichi, a man who called for formal equality between sexes. He believed in equal rights between men and women and advocated for equal partnership in the household and marriage. He recruited support mostly from Samurai, merchant and wealthy farmer classes. One notable supporter was a man named Mori Arinori, an influential leader in the Meiji government.

Women vied for freedom on their own, influenced by aspects of the original Meiji modernization through westernization. They created the People's Rights Movement, advocating for a redefinition of the relationship between women's citizenship and the existing national government. However, "granting rights to women was the farthest thing from the minds of the Meiji leaders."¹⁹ The central government saw the women's activities as a threat to national unification and the state-building process and thus swiftly imprisoned a number of them to quell possible uprisings.²⁰

Resistors were suppressed by a series of laws that targeted all women throughout the first wave of conservatism. Beginning suppression tactics in 1882, the government

¹⁸ Sharlie Conroy Ushioda. "Peace and Change: A Journal of Peace Research." Presented at the American Historical Association Conference, Dec. 1976. Volume IV, Number 3. p. 9

¹⁹ Mikiso Hane 2000 p.102

²⁰ Hayakawa Noriyo. "Journal of Women's History." Bloomington: Winter 1995. Vol. 7, Iss. 4; p. 108

prohibited women from making political speeches. Following up with this law only five years later the government passed “the Peace Preservation Law of 1887 [which] barred women from any participation in political activities, even from attending political meetings or public rallies.”²¹ By 1890, the government had officially banned women from all forms of political activity, disallowing the latter to even listen to political speeches. The Law on Assembly forbade women’s congregation while the Political Association forbade them from joining existing political organizations. The last suppressive law, the Police Security Regulations was passed in 1900, prohibiting women from forming any of their own political organizations.²²

After the Mimpo’s institution, there was little to no discussion of women’s legal rights however a few women engaged in international politics regardless. One such woman was Kageyama Hideko, who ignored her Gender Role of political noninvolvement and became a prominent figure in the political realm. Born in 1865, on the eve of the Meiji Restoration, she was raised in a lower class Samurai family. She was given an early education by her mother, a teacher in the education system and raised in the Meiji period preceding the Meiji Kenpo. Kageyama was part of the initial wave of liberalism, exposed to the westernized education system and its values. Several decades later, her husband died of an illness in 1899 and left her to support and manage her family independently despite the laws against female independence. The necessity for economic self-sufficiency triggered Kageyama’s disregard for the imposed Gender Roles and led her into the world of political discourse.²³

²¹ Ibid p. 440

²² Mikiso Hane 2000 p.102

²³ Donald Keene, 1995, p. 12

While women like Kageyama resisted their Gender Roles, the majority of them did not. Mori Mineko is an example of the ‘good’ Japanese mother who lived by her politically assigned Gender Role as a quiet member of society. Born in 1848, she died in 1916 having written a diary for her son, General Mori Ogai of the Japanese Military. She wrote primarily on her daily routine in the style of Kawai Koume. However, unlike Kawai, Mori’s distinct embellishment was on foreign books, art, theater, and western tastes. According to the civil code, Mori’s diary was distant, factual and cold in its impartial objectivity of events in classic Samurai fashion. Her journal was a record for her son to read, written without emotions. As she explained it, “I imagine he (Ogai) knows about the things I have told him, but just to be safe, I have decided also to keep a diary.”²⁴

Her diary, however, was recorded in traditional Japanese and was poorly written, lacking the finesse of a proper education. Mori had been a part of the generation schooled in western values so that her education had revolved around foreign pieces rather than Japanese literary works. It was her Gender Role, as assigned by the Meiji Mimpo, to write a summation of the family for her son’s perusal so she was forced to forgo her western education and record events in traditional Japanese.²⁵

Mori’s western affiliations confirmed the fears that began the conservative backlash in Japan. Her life recorded in her diary after the Meiji Mimpo’s promulgation is evidence of the civil code’s effects on her and the population in general. Her identity as a Japanese citizen had first been eroded by her assimilation of imported culture but was then forcibly placed into the life of a ‘good wife’ and ‘wise mother.’ Her opinion on

²⁴ Donald Keene, 1995 p. 314.

²⁵ Donald Keene, 1995 p. 316

Gender Roles was never recorded in her diary nor was it allowed to be in any medium or capacity at the time.

Mori's emotionless diary limits the understanding that anyone can obtain of Mori herself as a person, which itself expresses a great deal about the system she lived in. In the backlash, not only were all women censored from expressing themselves, but a number of them had been raised in a western fashion and became restricted in society. These women were the founding generation of women in the new Meiji society, the majority of which obeyed their assigned Gender Roles throughout the Meiji's promulgation and continued to obey even as the international stage continued to change.

Shinomura Toku epitomized women who continued to retain their imposed Gender Roles even when they were no longer bound by law. Born in 1888, she died in 1963 in the United States, having migrated in 1912. The diary she left behind was written about her entire life: from her birth in the Saitama Prefecture, her nursing career on a hospital ship in the Russo-Japanese War, and her subsequent migration to Seattle. Her journey was planned as a part of an arranged marriage between her family and the groom's. Accepting her role without question, Shinomura visited her future in-laws before departing for the U.S. She spent her time worshipping and praying to a picture of her mystery of a husband.²⁶

Shinomaru integrated into American society where she lived her life as a traditional Japanese woman, bound to her Gender Role. Her marriage was traditional in every respect despite its relocation to America. Throughout World War I, the industrial revolution, foreign influences and international modernizations, Shinomaru retained her traditional mindset, unaffected by the political atmosphere around her.

²⁶ Donald Keene, 1995, p. 325

The cultural progression of Japan continued with the interchanging conservative/liberal waves of thought. The Eras changed as Emperor Taisho succeeded Meiji, ending the Meiji Era. By that time, the older oligarchs no longer involved themselves in managing the affairs of the state and instead, political parties became an integral part of the political process. Democracy and Communism was introduced after World War I, becoming a part of the emerging party government with the Progressive and Liberal parties in a new short wave of liberalism. The Taisho Period furthered the spread of democratic ideals with the passing of universal male suffrage in 1925.

However, in continuing the trend set by the nation's politically oppressive precedent, General Tanaka Giichi, the 1927 elected prime minister, supported the right-wing militant nationalist and triggered a national conservative backlash. Tanaka adopted an aggressive governmental policy on suppressing 'dangerous thoughts,' just as the Meiji Era had previously done with its series of censorship laws against women. Even though the party government was technically in power up until 1932, "the Tanaka government signified the beginning of Showa 'fascism' rather than the continuation of 'Taisho Democracy.'"²⁷

The Showa Period marked the next militaristic backlash that reoriented society onto traditional Japanese ethics and mannerisms. The liberal ideals pressed by the Taisho Era were undone, mirroring the reversion of the Meiji Era's initial westernization policies as the changing waves of liberalism and conservatism of the 19th century continued into the 20th century.

In this new era, the construction of the family unit was held in high esteem in building a tradition oriented Japan. The Showa period mindset came out of the family

²⁷ Mikiso Hane, 2000 p. 121

consciousness where “the desire to help preserve and perpetuate the family traditions” had become a governing force in politics.²⁸ Traditionally, the family provided its members with its own firm belief in the absolute oneness of their traditions such that it naturally lent itself towards a culture of preservation. The family was the basic social unit, defining the conceptual family unit upon interdependent bonds of tradition between blood relations.

These familial traditions were personified in the story of Noguchi Shika, her life story becoming the preserving and perpetuating element throughout the beginning of the 20th century. She initially became famous for having raised her son, a famous scientist, with a profound emphasis on scholastic achievements. A textbook model of morality and ethical behavior for all Japanese women, Noguchi was portrayed in schools as the persistently hardworking, resourceful and resilient woman. From the early 1930s on, government used her image to orient families to their assigned Gender Roles, featuring her to both men and women as an example of a Japanese woman’s proper place.²⁹

Her life story was first published in 1932 and continued on until 1942 in two different prints. In the Japanese multi-track system of education, children were given different educations based upon their genders as advocated by the government, thus the prints were tailored for their intended audiences. The male version of Noguchi’s texts were void of the detailed relationship between Noguchi and her son while the female version contained an additional six page chapter titled ‘Reflections on mother and my country.’ The added section was an abundant resource of personal information detailing what Noguchi considered to be the essence of a mother’s love and loyalty. She was

²⁸ H.V. Straelen. “The Japanese Women Looking Forward.” Tokyo: Kyo Bun Kwan. 1940. p.124-126

²⁹ Kweku Ampiah. “Noguchi Shika: the eternal mother of modern Japan.” Japan Forum, 2000: 77-78

presented in that added section as a manifestation of the ideal moral compass. The government's views of women's education were stigmatized by the orthodox view that remained from the Meiji era.³⁰

The fact that Noguchi was only presented to girls and throughout all levels of their educations, confirms that they were the intended center of morality in Japanese society. Noguchi exhibited endurance, devotion, self-sacrifice and maternal affection however she was also the symbol of a 'good wife' and a 'good mother.'³¹ An icon of women's Gender Role, she was the 'loving,' the 'wise,' and the 'efficient' in all things regarding the raising of her son and her greatest rewards were his accomplishments. While living without any means of financial independence, she was the ideal 'mother' of her husband's house and her life was taught as the role model for all girls.

In controlling the civil authority of women's social position as the head of the household, the Japanese government vied to have the female portion of the population indebted to them for domestic power.³² Promoting Noguchi and the ideology of the 'good wife, wise mother,' was their attempt to rally the Japanese women within their Gender Roles. Tsuchiya Toyo, a female educator in 1892, characterized women's education by saying:

"To preserve the gracefulness and composure that are incumbent upon a good wife and wise mother; to enrich the beauty of domestic affairs by supporting the husband with thrift and diligence; to revere the parents-in-law and heed their every wish: these are the central purpose of women's education."³³

³⁰ Kweku Ampiah. 2000. p. 79

³¹ Ibid, p. 80

³² Prof. Inoue Teruko, interviewed by author. December 20. 2004.

³³ Quoted in Yoshia Noburu, "Meiji irai ni okeru joshi kyoiku no henshen." (Tokyo, 1947); p. 154.

The 19th century and the fluctuations in education and culture between liberal and conservative notions created an estranged portion of Japanese citizens. These people were born and raised in one ideology only to be separated from their own country during the subsequent shift. Beginning with the first wave of liberal thinking after the Meiji Restoration, Japan began to assimilate western culture as it sponsored multiple students to travel abroad. Even though the liberal ideology fell apart, it was in that highly charged atmosphere that Tsuda Umeko, a Samurai girl, still only six years old, went abroad to the United States. Traveling with five other girls, she was sponsored by a liberal Japanese government to learn about American values and ideals.

Section II: Tsuda Umeko

Tsuda Umeko was born in 1864 at the beginning of the Meiji Restoration. Her father was a Samurai of the Sakura clan whose domain lay east of Edo. Together with two other prominent figures in the Meiji government, her father actively molded Tsuda's entire life for her. The two other men were Mori Arinori, mentioned earlier as a prominent advocate for gender equality, and Kuroda Kiyotaka. Both of them were leaders in the Meiji government. Kuroda had been influenced by the British's assault on the Kagoshima Prefecture, modern-day Kyushu. Impressed by the western technology, he had traveled to Washington D.C. in 1871 being further influenced by American women. A pair of liberal-minded modernists, they pushed for the advancement of Japan through women's study of the west. The two of them were part of the first wave of liberal

westernization that influenced Japan and the period, pushing for young women to be sent abroad.³⁴

Tsuda was selected for their program at the insistence of her father. Having spent time in the U.S. as a translator for the Tokugawa shogunate, Tsuda's father had been heavily impressed by the west and its educational system for women. Due to the small list of applicants for the program, only five girls were chosen to go abroad. They ranged in age and upbringing but all originated from a similar background, Umeko being no exception. There were all daughters of Samurai descent, their families having served under the Tokugawa shogunate. Since the Meiji Restoration, the Samurais had been reallocated into low-level positions within the government. Scholars believe that these Samurai families sent their daughters to be westernized in the hopes that they would redefine Japanese culture and society and would effectively undo the Japanese tradition. It was their revenge against the existing Meiji order.³⁵

Packed with an English primer, a small dictionary, a red shawl and a limited knowledge of the English language restricted to the words 'no,' 'yes,' and 'thank you,' Tsuda left Japan aboard an overcrowded steamer destined for America. She recounted years later that "it seem(ed) strange to think how our hitherto obscure lives came into contact with those great officials, whose names then rising, have now become famous as the makers of modern Japan."³⁶

Tsuda's initial journey mirrored the students who left Japan during this period. These students studied foreign cultures under the expectation that they would return to Japan with information on various subjects ranging from military science, navigation,

³⁴ "A Dream Across Time and Place: The Legacy of Tsuda Umeko," Documentary. 2003. p.13-16

³⁵ Ibid p. 11-15

³⁶ Furuki Yoshiko. "The White Plum: A biography of Ume Tsuda." New York: Weatherhill. 1991 p. 17

ship-building, law, medication, education, and other topics deemed useful by the government. By the time of Tsuda's voyage, the range of concentrations had been extended to the understanding of cultures rather than simply acquiring skills. Roughly nine hundred other students traveled to the United States between 1868 and 1900 studying humanities and social sciences as well as 'useful' subjects approved by the Meiji government.³⁷ Umeko's role differed in the sense that she was sent abroad to be raised entirely in a foreign culture. Her father hoped that she would obtain a grasp of western values and ideals superior to any other member of Japanese society.

During her stay in the United States, Tsuda was placed in the care of an American family named the Lansman family. They welcomingly undertook the responsibility of teaching the young foreigner the English language and about America's culture. Charles Lanman explained to the officials at the time, "my wife had become interested in the child and felt that she was then too young to be sent to boarding school, it was decided that she should come and spend at least one year in our family and she came to us from the temporary home in Washington on the first of November, 1872."³⁸ Though her stay was originally only temporary, Tsuda remained in the Lanman family's care for an entire decade.

Though a child, Tsuda grasped the importance of her role for Japan. She recounted years later that her father had told her "the money spent on me... would have been enough in Japan to support a family more than comfortably... the nation paid it for

³⁷ W.G. Beasley, 2000. p. 87-88

³⁸ Furuki Yoshiko. 1991. p.19

me and I must work hard to repay the obligation.”³⁹ She understood “the meaning of her position which had been instilled by her parents and the empress herself.”⁴⁰

Tsuda’s stay was devoted to study while she established a close relationship with Mrs. Lanman. Mrs. Lanman moderated Tsuda’s devotion to studying, citing in letters to the latter’s parents that their daughter was extremely intelligent and that “her natural gifts (would be) exploited by an American education.”⁴¹ Studying English composition writing with Mr. Lanman, Tsuda composed a short book chronicling her trip from Japan to the States as a birthday present to Mrs. Lanman. The book she composed was written only nine months after her landing in America. Mr. Lanman wanted to give Tsuda a “complete education – intellectual, physical, religious, moral and polite”⁴² so that she could devote herself to the cultivation and elevation of her gender and race.

After a decade of education with the Lanmans, Tsuda left their care at the age of sixteen. She and Mrs. Lanman remained in touch, corresponding through written letters for the rest of their lives. By Tsuda’s diary’s accounts and letters, it’s apparent that she had a closer familial relationship with the Lanman family than with her own parents in Japan, having spent more time with them throughout her entire childhood:

I am very glad Mrs. Lanman that you say you do not show my letters to but a very, very few. You know I write for you and Mr. Lanman alone and there are few or none of my letters but what there is something for your ears alone.⁴³

In her frequent letters to the Lanmans, Tsuda expressed doubts and personal feelings absent from her letters to her Japanese family. After studying American ideology and culture, Tsuda ultimately decided to return to Japan as scheduled. “We ought to be

³⁹ Tsuda Umeko’s translated letters. November 23, 1882

⁴⁰ Furuki Yoshiko. 1991 p.21

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 26

⁴² Furuki Yoshiko. 1991. p.21

⁴³ Tsuda Umeko’s Translated Letters, P. 10-12

with our own people,” she said, “...the hardest part of leaving friends and associations is near and prominent, (but) the interest in the new work, the new friends and our beautiful country is yet unknown.”⁴⁴ With her thoughts on her obligations to her home country, Tsuda left the U.S. from San Francisco onboard the *Arabic*, a ship bound for Japan on October 31 1882.

For all of her insurances, Tsuda admitted her reservations with regard to returning to Japan to Mrs. Lanman. The day before she landed in Japan, she wrote a letter, expressing her current state as “wild with joy (and then the) next moment...filled strange misgivings.”⁴⁵ Having grown up abroad while the Japanese government and society had begun a conservative reversion, Tsuda had only an idea of the difficulties that she was to endure. Unprepared for the gender inequality she was going to have to tolerate, she was first introduced to her assigned Gender Roles upon her return.

Expecting to receive a government position upon her return, as was the practice with returning students, Tsuda was disappointed to discover that women were being ousted from government works. The government, in the midst of its tradition-oriented conservative backlash, had forgotten about her. Despite her education and rare bilingual skills, she returned home only to find herself writing letters for her father.⁴⁶ The talents and skills she had fostered in the United States went unused in the new Japanese society. Tsuda witnessed the institutionalization of the Meiji Mimpo and of her assigned Gender Role. Her experience coincided with the assassination of Mori Arinori.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Furuki Yoshiko. 1991 p. 41

⁴⁵ Ibid p. 12

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 45

⁴⁷ “A Dream Across Time and Place: The Legacy of Tsuda Umeko,” 2003. p. 63

Under the Meiji Mimpo, Tsuda quickly came to realize that women were being placed as resources, supplements to support men in state-building. The assigned Japanese Gender Roles were being taught to all children of the next generation, continuing the cultural and political rights of all women in Japan. Like Kageyama Hideko and the women that came before her, Tsuda broke away from her assigned role. She understood the dangers of nationally sanctioned Gender Roles and wanted to give women the opportunity to obtain a sense of independence. Knowing not to directly rival an enforced political and cultural institution, Tsuda wrote to the Lanman family:

Do not show any of my letters to Japanese, please, for they might ridicule my criticisms of Japanese things. Even here (Japan) in my half foreign home, they think many American ways and notions strange, especially the deference to ladies...oh women have the hardest part of life to bear...Poor, poor women, how I long to do something to better your position!⁴⁸

Tsuda was motivated to revolutionize and improve the lives of Japanese women but without an idea of how to apply herself, she could have been trapped by the Meiji Mimpo like Mori Mineko and the majority of the female population. The mass majority of women feared challenging the conservative government and its growing military sentiment that was consigning the country to its Gender Roles. These people had no recourse but to accept and follow government policy. Tsuda was a rare exception, not because of her upbringing but because of her established contacts and network of friends extending outside of Japan. When Mrs. Lanman initially suggested that Tsuda return to America to resume the latter's studies in a U.S. college, Tsuda replied with a letter so insistent on her current state of happiness and the imposition of her return to America that it is subject to question given her circumstances at home.

You must not think from anything I say in my letters, when I speak of manners and customs, that I am not content here and happy. I should not come back to America, even if I could,

⁴⁸ Ibid p. 23

because this is my country and home, and duty keeps me here...only be sure that I am happy and will be more so when I get to work.⁴⁹

She wrote that letter in February of 1888, three months after her return to Japan.

Three months later, on May 18th, she sent another letter to Mrs. Lanman finally admitting that she found the idea appealing.

I want to study a year or two in America but I see no chance unless I can go cheaply and economize a great deal, for the government will not, I am sure, allow me to go again.⁵⁰

About a month after her previous letter, on July 10th, she wrote:

As to coming to America for study, I hope you will think about this. I think if I came again, I should enter some institution in the North for special branches, such as a normal school, to make the science of teaching a specialty and see for it is done in some of the larger schools...⁵¹

With the support of her friends overseas, Tsuda was given the opportunity to further her education even though it meant leaving Japan once again.

Tsuda idealized how to change Japanese women and improve their status. As stated in her letter above, she contemplated the study of teaching. Education, she considered, was a method for correcting the mistakes within the social stature in general.

A few months later, October 5th, 1888, she wrote Mrs. Lanman, explaining that Bryn Mawr College had been suggested to her by Mrs. Morris, an influential woman in Philadelphia and a member of the Society of Friends in the United States.⁵²

She (Mrs. Morris)...wrote me and urged me to come right off to Bryn Mar College. Of course I wrote her that I could not do anything so suddenly, anyhow, just now...there are many obstacles that I sometimes think I had better give up the idea and not try and yet I would enjoy it so much and it would do me so much good that I feel I should make the effort...⁵³

⁴⁹ Furuki Yoshiko. 1991 p. 44

⁵⁰ Ibid p. 312

⁵¹ Ibid p. 314

⁵² "A Dream Across Time and Place: The Legacy of Tsuda Umeko," 2003. p.73

⁵³ Tsuda Umeko's Translated Letters, p. 318

Becoming a student at Bryn Mawr, Tsuda received her college degree after a few years and decided then to further the education of women in Japan by creating an establishment dedicated to college-level learning and the independence of Japanese women. This project became her life's work. An educated yet politically powerless woman, Tsuda wanted to improve women's cultural mindset, giving them the opportunity to become politically aware and financially independent. Fortunately, the Meiji government's mandatory education program had spawned a large number of educated yet unemployed women who were available as teachers and students.⁵⁴

In 1889, with the support of her college alumni and friends in the United States, Tsuda gathered the necessary funds to open her college, the first women's only establishment for higher education in Japan. She modeled her institution after her alma mater, teaching a growing collection of women from all over the country. The college was first established in Tokyo and later was moved to the countryside. Tsuda moved her institution away from the city to create "a residential system for all of the girls which could then be used to form and enrich their characters."⁵⁵ Tsuda's college became the sole source of cultural and political awareness for women, going against tradition and establishing a new generation of educated and independent women.

Tsuda's purpose in raising self-awareness, independence and the social status of women was to change the existing gender bias in the Japanese culture by creating active members of society. Despite her upbringing abroad and being an avid supporter of Christianity, westernization and modernization, Tsuda still felt a tremendous loyalty to Japan and did not want to go against the government directly.

⁵⁴ Donald Keene, interviewed by author. January 22, 2005

⁵⁵ Tsuda Umeko's Translated Letters. p. 115

In 1917, in the midst of World War I, she expressed her faithfulness to Japan and her desire to help the Japanese people as a whole in her diary:

One might easily have expected and asked for ten or fifteen years more of life, but when one thinks of the young men going to war, noble brilliant young men, the flower of their country, and of the awful suffering and death to which they go, and it seems so cruel and useless, then why, because to me, my own life has not seemed to be for selfish or useless purposes, should I expect, ask or pray for long life?⁵⁶

I should not linger too long on myself. I must learn how little I and my work counts in the eternal scheme of things, - that one little seed must be crushed and ground down that the new plant may come out.⁵⁷

Throughout her career, Tsuda raised the social status of women though she never actively protested against women's political rights. Her works went beyond Kageyama's, concerning itself directly with women in Japan, spreading cultural awareness and believing that educational reform could "develop their [women's] potential talents and take an active part in the society." Tsuda wished to create more independent women who would influence Japanese society and further its development. In the broadest sense of the word, she was the very first true Japanese feminist if the terminology should be applied to her at all.⁵⁸

Tsuda Umeko passed away in 1929, her cremated remains buried on the college campus. The college was renamed Tsuda Eigaku Juku in her honor, a rare occurrence in Japan, and has continued to educate women throughout the last century. Umeko's grave is in the northeastern corner of the campus, buried under a simple headstone adjacent to an orchard of plum or ume trees which have grown to over a hundred feet tall.⁵⁹ In recent years, Tsuda College has become a slightly elitist institution, unable to retain its image in

⁵⁶ Donald Keene, 1995, p. 311

⁵⁷ Furuki Yoshiko, 1991 p. 134

⁵⁸ "A Dream Across Time and Place: The Legacy of Tsuda Umeko," 2003. p. 113

⁵⁹ Furuki Yoshiko, 1991 p. 134

the face of common equal education, but at the time of its founder's passing, the college was heralded as a great privilege for women in Japan.⁶⁰

Part III: Beate Sirota Gordon:

World War II and the defeat of the Empire of Japan ended the Showa period as a group of American New Dealers arrived to rework the entire political and cultural framework of the country. Jumpstarting the next wave of liberal thought in Japan, the Americans wanted to create a democratic nation out of the conservative and tradition oriented society. Amongst the Occupational forces was a woman named Beate Sirota Gordon, a civilian officer who was appointed to draft sections of the new Japanese Constitution. The section she was asked to draft was the women's rights section. Gordon's unique past shaped the civil section of the new Constitution and thus influenced Japanese women's pursuit of cultural rights and acceptance for the next several decades.

Beate Sirota Gordon was born in 1923 to Augustine and Leo Sirota in Vienna, capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Her father was a famous pianist, traveling the international circuit throughout Asia. His musical work earned him a teaching position in Japan so the family moved in 1929, leaving Vienna's unstable economy and rampant inflation left in the wake of World War I. They departed for Asia less than two months before the beginning of the Great Depression.

Gordon and her family settled into a new life, residing at the foot of Akasaka's Nogizaka Hill in Tokyo. For the next ten years, she was taught Japanese and music from her parents. Her education was provided for by a German educational program until 1933 when her Jewish heritage ousted her from the institution. She transferred to the American

⁶⁰ Yoko Idia, interviewed by author, MD recording, Tokyo, Japan. December 26. 2004.

School in Naka-Meguro where she graduated in 1939. At the time of her graduation, the 1936 Anti-Comintern Pact had been concluded and hostility towards Jews had already begun to rise in Japan.⁶¹

With the imminent war in Europe and the deteriorating relationship between the United States and Japan, the Sirota family used their connections to send Gordon to America where she was to receive the rest of her education and U.S. citizenship. Though they initially traveled together, Gordon's parents parted ways with her on the docks of San Francisco. Her parents caught one of the last ships back to Japan before the Pacific War broke out and all communications between the two countries ceased.⁶²

Gordon attended Mills College in 1940, a women's college outside of San Francisco. The president of the college, Aurelia Henry Reinhardt advocated that "women of the future will participate in society, not only in the home." Her motto was that "it's important to get married...if you can have a career and run a household as well, that would be ideal." Though the concept of working women was still novel in the U.S. at the time, the president's ideas of careers filtered into the faculty who came to believe that their students would all be employed after graduation. The education Gordon received at Mills College influenced her views on women's equality and independence as evident by her liberal views of women expressed in the Japanese Constitution.⁶³

World War II isolated Gordon from her parents such that by the end of the conflict in 1945, she was unaware of her parent's well being. With the conclusion of the armed conflict, Gordon began looking for a position in the government that she hoped

⁶¹ Beate Sirota Gordon. "The Only Woman in the Room: A Memoir." Tokyo: Kodansha International.1997. p.48, 65-69

⁶² Fujiwara Tomoko. "Gift of Beate," Documentary

⁶³ Beate Sirota Gordon. 1997. p. 77

would allow her to travel back to Japan.⁶⁴ What she found was a position in the Foreign Economic Administration that was organizing what would be the Japanese occupation forces under General MacArthur. Speaking Japanese fluently, she was hired as a civilian officer almost immediately. Having spent five years in the United States and learning western ideals and values, Gordon left America and returned to Japan as a member of the Occupational forces.⁶⁵

Gordon was immediately put to work on a top secret project upon her arrival. She managed to locate her parents but had discovered that the Japanese government had sent her father to Auschwitz; luckily he had survived and returned. Having to distance herself from her parents as she worked, Gordon was placed into a large committee responsible for drafting the new Japanese Constitution. She was then further shuffled into a group with two other American civilian officers, Col. Roest and Dr. Wildes. With only a week to draft a finished copy of the new constitution, her section of the committee was committed to drafting Japan's new civil rights.⁶⁶

Upon her induction into the group, Gordon was given her portion of the Constitution:

“You’re a women; why don’t you write the women’s rights section?” Col. Roest asked her.⁶⁷ “I’d also like to write about academic freedom,” she responded at the time.⁶⁸

With the responsibility of placing both women’s rights and educational rights into the new Japanese Constitution, Gordon was in a position to shape the political and

⁶⁴ Fujiwara Tomoko. “Gift of Beate”. Documentary

⁶⁵ Beate Sirota Gordon. 1997. p. 94

⁶⁶ Ibid p. 106

⁶⁷ Ibid p. 106

⁶⁸ Ibid p. 106

cultural rights of Japanese women for the rest of the 20th century. Her work began with a pilgrimage to a series of libraries in search of available constitutions. After several hours of library hopping, she secured the constitutions of the Weimar Republic, France, the Scandinavian countries and the Soviet Union, as well as the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Studying them, she began formulating her own written works, wary of the linguistic pitfalls that had in the past allowed many to violate another's civil rights in Japan. The first piece she drafted was the first of her women's rights articles, Article 17.⁶⁹

Article 17: The family is the basis of human society and its traditions for good or ill permeate the nation. Hence marriage and the family are protected by law, and it is hereby ordained that they shall rest upon the undisputed legal and social equality of both sexes, upon mutual consent instead of parental coercion, and upon cooperation instead of male domination. Laws contrary to these principles shall be abolished, and replaced by others viewing choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.⁷⁰

Gordon detailed her section of the Japanese Constitution after the 1919 Weimar Constitution which she recognized as a progressive document that had established marriage as based on the equal rights of both genders. Gordon felt that it was the duty of the state to promote and provide social welfare policies supportive of the family, so it was the government's responsibility to guarantee support for mothers. She believed that her "participation in drafting the new Japanese Constitution would be meaningless" unless she was able to "get women's equality articulated and guaranteed with similar precision" to the Weimar Constitution.⁷¹ Though it was suggested to her that she should refer back to the Meiji Constitution, she emphasized the existence of the Meiji Kenpo and Mimpo as

⁶⁹ Ibid p. 108

⁷⁰ Ibid p. 109

⁷¹ Ibid p. 110

an example for the desperate necessity for change in Japanese society.⁷² Her final version of the Constitution's women's rights section mapped out a total of nine articles, articulating rights from the illegitimate to the poor.

On February 8th 1946, Gordon submitted her finished portion of the Japanese Constitution and accompanied her group to a meeting with the Steering Committee. Primarily composed of more moderate liberals and conservatives, the Steering Committee was a group of Americans responsible for editing and finalizing the constitution for Japanese government approval. Their purpose was to tone down and shorten the texts into a concise and more moderate constitution. Their initial response to Gordon's work was favorable, the premise of gender equality and marriage laws being accepted and reassigned as Article Fourteen and Article Twenty-Nine.

The finalized version of Article Fourteen states:

All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin.

Peers and peerage shall not be recognized.

No privilege shall accompany any award of honor, decoration or any distinction, nor shall any such award be valid beyond the lifetime of the individual who now holds or hereafter may receive it.⁷³

However the other seven articles relating to the rights of children and nursing mothers were removed. Gordon expressed her dissatisfaction over the Steering Committee's decision though her grievances were ignored. However, even with only two of her articles present, the resulting Constitution was incredibly liberal and can still be

⁷² Beate Sirota Gordon, interviewed by the author. New York, NY. January 10. 2005

⁷³ A translated copy of the Japanese Constitution: <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/1947con.html>

considered one of the most revolutionary constitutions ever written.⁷⁴ Article Fourteen is the only one of its kind even today.

Gordon remained in Japan after her obligation to the Occupational forces had been completed for a while longer, meeting women who had been and were to become women's rights activists in Japan. After leaving to return to the United States, she went on to become a member of the Japan Society and watched as the subsequent forty years of Japanese development and the slow employment of equality directly resulted from her articles.

Part IV: The Postwar Era:

Women in Japan before World War II lived at a disadvantage in both the political and cultural realm. Legally, their limitations and restrictions were outlined in detail while their education was limited to what would be categorized in the U.S. as 'home economics.' In the culture, they sought security in conforming to the domestic ideals of the 'good wife' and 'wise mother.' Underlying the government and society, men viewed women as limited beings: dumb, over-emotional, irrational, potentially dangerous if not disciplined, and even silly. They held these views concurrent with the acknowledgment that they needed women to be 'good wives' to their husbands and 'wise mothers,' to their children.⁷⁵ World War II forced an alteration in the traditional Gender Role patterns assigned by the government. Through the Occupation and new constitution, the entire Postwar Era further shaped the development of Japanese women's political and cultural rights.

⁷⁴ Beate Sirota Gordon. 1997. p. 113-115

⁷⁵ Robert J. Smith. "Gender Equality in Contemporary Japan." 'Journal of Japanese Studies.' Vol. 13, No. 1 (Winter, 1987) p. 9

As was the case in most European countries and the U.S. during World War II, women worked industry and commerce in the absence of the nation's men. The break at that time from Japanese tradition was a matter of necessity but ironically spawned a cultural backlash from the women who felt their place in the domestic environment only. Roughly seven to eight hundred thousand members of separate organizations throughout Japan came together under a single banner throughout the war. The banner became an institution called Kokubo Fujinkai.

Originally, the Kokubo Fujinkai had been established after the Manchurian incident in 1931.⁷⁶ Its purpose was to preserve the nationally defined Gender Roles of both men and women. They followed the motto that "Our organization...has for its purpose the manifestation of the true Japanese womanhood, fulfillment of the great duty of national defense and the support of the soldiers from behind the lines."⁷⁷ Kokubo Fujinkai lasted through the war advocating against the changes to Gender Roles and continued their works under the U.S. Occupation, revealing the conservative element of women in the society.

Those conservative elements manifested in resistance to altering academic material in the education system. After the war, the Occupational forces began remodeling the entire academic structure however the only one significant change in Gender Role texts like Noguchi's story was the inclusion of men. In Noguchi Shika's story, the Postwar Era triggered the inclusion of her until then absent husband, Noguchi

⁷⁶ The Manchurian Incident or the Mukden Incident: After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan replaced Russia as the dominant foreign power in South Manchuria. By the late 1920s the Japanese feared that unification of China under the Kuomintang party would imperil Japanese interests in Manchuria. In 1931 a bomb went off, blowing up the Japanese railway near Shenyang (then Mukden). The Japanese army guarding the railway used the incident as a reason to occupy South Manchuria.

⁷⁷ H.V. Straelen, 1940. 159-160

Sayosuke. Her husband was a drunken gambler and a perpetual leech upon the family. Noguchi's father was also mentioned during this period, described as an idler and a crux on the entire household. This continued and expanded in the subsequent written texts on Noguchi's family for three generations straight; "In the Noguchi household, not one man (was) treated positively."⁷⁸

The official policy of promoting the authoritative position of mothers emphasized the negative influence of men in the home environment.⁷⁹ The portrayal of all male members of Noguchi's family in postwar texts demonstrated the determination of the Japanese government to continue the mother-centered policy even during the American Occupation. When liberal thoughts and ideas were being introduced into the society from abroad and the political rights of women were being established, the cultural restrictions were being re-enforced, targeting men as much as women with what was an 'acceptable' Gender Role.

The U.S. forces occupying Japan, led by General Douglas MacArthur, began a series of reforms that established the foundation for a politically democratic Japan. Forcibly starting the next great wave of liberal thought, the American presence also encouraged active participation of liberal-minded individuals in Japanese society to speak out. Educated women from Tsuda College formed the very first Japanese Women's Rights organization, the New Women's Organization. The two substantial liberal forces, the U.S. Occupational forces and the New Women's Organization, both strove to further the emancipation of Japanese women. Under MacArthur, the U.S. established a complete reorientation of the status of women summarized in the nation's new constitution while

⁷⁸ Kweku Ampiah. 2000 p. 83

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 83

the New Women's Organization advocated for suffrage rights, government-insured higher education, improved working conditions and politically-sanctioned cultural equality.

It is difficult to tabulate the effect of MacArthur's reforms and the New Women's Organization's activities in Japanese society. While the political changes were instituted and retained, the cultural role of Japanese women remained a conservative mirror image of prewar Japan. This is not to say that women did not enjoy a rise in status, only that they remained within the confines of their Gender role.⁸⁰

Political opinion towards women's suffrage was horribly biased, with the simultaneous passing of universal male suffrage and the suppressing of women's right to vote. Culturally, Gender Roles had become institutionalized in the family unit where women were given power over the house but restrained from all forms of legal authority. Given this extensive precedence of political and cultural opposition to women's voting, without the intervention of the U.S. and the Occupation, Japanese women may not have been granted universal suffrage or have gained any significant position in politics. Ichikawa Fusae, a Japanese journalist and active member of the women's movement admitted that "without the Occupation or the defeat of Japan, the realization of the Japanese women's constitutional rights would not have been achieved so quickly."⁸¹

MacArthur claimed that "the women's vote changed the whole complexion of Japanese political life" and the political landscape in general.⁸² Though women's

⁸⁰ Margaret Geddes. "The Status of Women in Post-war Japan: A critical examination of the contribution of the Occupation authorities towards raising the status of women in Japan." Sydney: Australian Institute of International Affairs. Vol. 31, 1977, p. 439

⁸¹ Vavich D.A. "The Japanese Woman's Movement: Ichikawa Fusae – A Pioneer in Women's Suffrage." 'Monumenta Nipponica.' Vol.XXII, No. 3 1967, p. 411

⁸² Margaret Geddes. 1977, p. 443

numbers in high political offices were low in comparison to men, women took an active role in local government, educational boards and Domestic Courts. At the beginning of the Postwar Era, the political status of women rose with their participation in public bodies. MacArthur himself claimed that “of all the reforms accomplished by the Occupation in Japan, none was more heartwarming to me than this change in the status of women.”⁸³

With Article Fourteen and thus equal rights written into the Japanese Constitution, the opportunities for the cultural advancement of Japanese women during the Occupation took shape in academia. The U.S., departing from the original Japanese schooling system where men and women were provided with completely different educations, advocated for nationwide restructuring. Motivated by their conviction that the Japanese school system was in need an overhaul for Japan to become a democratic nation, the Occupation forces insisted that women be provided with the exact same academic opportunities as men and schooled in the same material.⁸⁴

The direction of the educational reforms was outlined in a report written by the U.S. Education Mission. The Mission’s report, written by twenty-seven liberal educators from America, was a small manifesto detailing the need for a new ‘progressive education’ that would inspire ‘personal development, citizenship, and community life.’ The Mission’s report called for the complete transformation of the Japanese multi-track

⁸³ “Reminiscences” by Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Time Inc, 1964, reprinted in D.J. Lu, “Sources of Japanese History,” Vol. II New York, 1974, p. 204

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.444

educational system into a single-track model of primary, secondary and higher education establishments based on the American system.⁸⁵

The Fundamental Laws of Education that the Mission mapped out were eventually passed as three Articles in the new Japanese Constitution, providing higher-educational prospects for women.⁸⁶ With the promulgation of the Japanese Constitution, the Occupation army enforced the educational reforms and by 1948, the majority of the Japanese schools and universities had begun coeducation programs. With the reforms installed, the political sanctions of a gender bias quickly dissipated from the field of academia. Though children were still taught to a degree about Gender Roles, they were no longer taught about discrepancies between men and women. Proper mannerisms, etiquettes and other ‘female only’ classes were removed as well.

For the remainder of the 1940s through the 1950s, the Women’s and Minor’s Bureau was founded in response to the political rights afforded to Japanese women. Led by a woman named Yamakawa Kikue, the organization targeted women’s political consciousness, rallying the female population behind their new rights. The Bureau’s works during the Occupation consisted of spreading the official news of Article Fourteen and cultural awareness.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Donald Roden. “From “Old Miss” to New Professional: A Portrait of Women Educators under the American Occupation of Japan, 1945-52.” *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Winter 1983). p. 473

⁸⁶ **Article Three:** Equal Opportunity in Education. The people shall all be given equal opportunity of receiving education according to their ability, and they shall not be subject to educational discrimination on account of race, creed, sex, social status, economic position, or family origin.

Article Four: Compulsory Education: The people shall be obliged to have boys and girls under their protection receive nine years general education. No tuition fee shall be charged for compulsory education in schools established by the state and local public corporations.

Article Five: Co-education. Men and women shall esteem and cooperate with each other. Coeducation, therefore, shall be recognized in education.

⁸⁷ Fujiwara Tomoko. “Gift of Beate.” Documentary

However, not all of the laws passed in the Japanese Constitution had a profound effect on Japanese society. A great number of the other Articles that targeted reorientation were neglected or rivaled. The liberal minded men and women in Japan spread political and cultural awareness through the population while men and women in organizations like Kokubo Fujinkai openly opposed them. Article Twenty-Four, promulgated alongside Article Fourteen, reinvented the institution of marriage and abolished the traditional pattern of the family unit. The traditional family unit had been originally institutionalized in the Meiji Mimpo, and its loss was contested by the conservative element of the population.

Groups like the Kokubo Fujinkai gained support throughout the Postwar Era as conservative factions refused to accept many of the foreign changes to politics and tradition. While suffrage, education and marriage had been secured under the new Japanese Constitution, the rest of MacArthur's reforms were temporary, fading after the peace treaty of 1952 and the U.S. withdrawal from Japanese soil. The political shift and new legal rights during this wave of liberalism were not enough to create a shift in cultural attitude. Instead, the political reforms solidified two distinct categories of women in society: those in favor of changing the Gender Roles and those in favor of preserving them, the New Women's Organization and the Kokubo Fujinkai.

This divide in Japanese society was primarily the result of dismantling the extended Japanese family and the upheaval of women's control of the household. The women in the Kokubo Fujinkai advocated against what they considered to be unfavorable reforms with a newfound political power. Educated and armed with the vote, these conservatives represented the cultural attitude that took precedence in society over

political law in the 50s. Though the government was remodeled into a liberal and democratic system, society retained its traditional Gender Roles with women reasserting their control over the domestic sphere. The general pattern of the 20th century Japanese family had women concentrating “all of their energies on being full-time housewives and mothers.”⁸⁸

The Postwar Era improved the legal and social status of women however their position in society remained the same. For the next thirty years, the 1950s to the 1980s brought social power and status to women but did so within the confines of their Gender Roles. The greatest cultural change was a shift of dependence. While women remained financially dependent upon their husbands, they were the mother and manager of the household which was no longer legally their husband's. In fact, men became dependent upon their wives, relying upon them to manage the domestic affairs while they worked for a living.⁸⁹ A common Japanese expression in this period was “A good husband is healthy and absent,” harkening back to Shika Noguchi.⁹⁰ Though Gender Roles had been abolished by the new constitution, for decades, men and women lived in this new manifestation of it.

Part of the persistence of Gender Roles in Japan was their initial usefulness in the division of labor in the 1950s. Oriented towards growth and development, industries like steel, heavy chemicals and construction used the notion of ‘masculinity’ that had been cultivated in a generation of men stuck in the Meiji Mimpo mindset. During the economic boom it was economical for men to do the productive labor and earn for the

⁸⁸ Ueda Atsushi. “The Electric Geisha: Exploring Japan’s Popular Culture.” Tokyo: Kodansha International. 1994. p.197-198

⁸⁹ Kenneth A. Grossberg. “Japan Today.” Philadelphia: The Institute for the Study of Human Issues. 1981. p. 20-22

⁹⁰ Ibid p. 24-26

entire family while women managed the household and raised children. Even after the political laws had given women full political rights, the culture reverted to a system in which “a good woman citizen was one who contributed to the national effort by taking complete charge of the home front, freeing her husband to concentrate all his time and energy on his job.”⁹¹

Women of the 1960s enjoyed an improved status within their Gender Roles, obeying their cultural traditions and ignoring their rights as individuals. Equality was far from implicit; it was not economically necessary. Despite the constitution, the Japanese Diet passed a series of tax laws that were based on divided Gender Roles, marriages given excessive tax breaks and single women receiving heavy penalties. In this way the government openly supported the continuance of a patriarchal society.⁹² However, women were the heads of the household and finances, no longer belonging to their husband or husband’s family by law. Women became the dominating and unrivaled center of the Japanese family unit.

The disadvantage with this reassertion of cultural Gender Roles was that women were trapped with only a single outlet of identity, their children. It was the fate of most of these women to eventually face the question ‘What is the real purpose of my life?’ Even in cases in which they succeeded in establishing their children’s academic futures, there were no other outlets to fill emotional voids. This continued for an entire generation through the 60s and 70s.⁹³

However, Japanese women of the 80s were raised on the rights given to them by Article Fourteen and started searching out a new form of identity. The sense Japanese

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 198

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Kenneth A. Grossberg, 1981. p. 25-26

identity they developed was a mix of western thinking and the Japanese concept of happiness and fulfillment. It was this next generation of women that began gaining a heightened sense of political awareness and began to advocate for certain cultural changes.

By 1979, the U.N. Assembly created the CEDAW, the Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women and issued declaration against all forms of discrimination.⁹⁴ At that time Japanese women had begun to assemble, combating the three remaining vestiges of gender discrimination in their country's political system: gender bias in nationality rights, wage difference discrimination in the workplace and remnants of Gender Role teachings in the academic curriculum.

In the 1990s, the cultural Gender Roles were finally advocated against in court with a victory for the women who spoke out against unfair treatment in the workplace. These victories inspired subsequent cases in which more women spoke against the culturally repressive conditions. The new social trend was voicing dissatisfaction. The Japanese Constitution had been passed in the 40s, but evidence of its anticipated effects was directly evident in the 90s.

Today, the liberal wave of thought has ended and a new conservative backlash has spread throughout the Japanese political and cultural system. The increased feminist activity and the U.S. government's new international stand since the year 2001 have generated a backlash of conservative Japanese ideology. One of the latest projects of that

⁹⁴ The Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the UN General Assembly. It is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The CEDAW defined discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

conservative backlash has been a number of changes made to children's education and support for the reintroduction of mannerism and ethics for girls in schools, undoing many of the accomplishments of the wave of liberalism. The support for rewriting portions of the Japanese Constitution manifests the recent changes in general opinion. The average Japanese man today holds the opinion that mannerisms and etiquettes need to be reintroduced with Gender Roles into Japanese society to "bring back what made Japan great."⁹⁵ The new generation of Japanese women, raised without designated Gender Roles, advocate against changing the Japanese Constitution however are fighting a losing battle.

The Japanese women's movement today doesn't have a single mission, nor is it united in any capacity. The sporadically placed members have their own projects and goals for furthering the cultural movement for equality in Japan. Without a national appeal to a single set of issues, the movements generally focus on influencing the institutions and weeding out established prejudice which has been present since the Meiji Era.⁹⁶ The fluctuating political and cultural rights of the 19th and 20th centuries have continued into the 21st century, as the few continue to work for complete political and cultural upheaval in the face of a powerful will to retain the status quo.

Conclusion:

The 1947 Japanese Constitution that institutionalized women's rights can be considered the most advanced constitution in the modern world. However, the nation today continually suffers from an ancient cultural prejudice that has survived the

⁹⁵ Fukaya Motohiro, interviewed by the author. Kyoto, Japan. December 24, 2004.

⁹⁶ Motoyama Hisoka, "The Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center," interview by author, MD recording, Tokyo, Japan. December 22, 2004.

revolutions and waves. Japanese women today face that harsh reality, restricted to their culturally biased roles. Japan cannot take full advantage of its liberal jurisprudence due to its persisting conservative preservationist ideology.

The argument between the Steering Committee and Beate Gordon's group exemplifies the struggle for rights that has plagued the political and cultural spheres. Gordon's team argued that the bureaucrats who would write statutes for the new Civil Code would undoubtedly be conservative men and thus not adequately provide women with civil rights. Her team believed that the only adequate safeguard was to specify women's rights in detail within the constitution itself; however, the Steering Committee insisted on a simplified version. Their debate over the presence of civil liberties in the Japanese Constitution summarizes the powerful controversy of political and cultural rights and revolutions.

"Concrete measures of this sort may be valid," the head of the Committee, Col. Kades said, "but they are too detailed to put into a constitution. Just write down the principles. The details should be written in the statutes. This type of thing is not constitutional material."

"Social guarantees are common in constitutions of many European countries," Beate responded, "it's particularly important to include this sort of stipulation here because up [until] now they [the Japanese people] had no such thing as civil rights." Her peers supported her by adding to her statement, "Legally, women and children are the equivalent of chattel in today's Japan. At a father's whim, preference may be given to an illegitimate child over a legitimate child. When rice crops go bad, some farmers actually sell off their daughters."

"But even if we [the American Occupation forces] do put in rights for expectant and nursing mothers and adopted children conditions won't improve unless the Diet enacts the laws that will implement them."

"That's true. But we can make certain that the Japanese government is committed to doing that. It's absolutely necessary. Infringement of civil rights is an everyday affair in Japan. There's a word for 'people's rights' in Japanese but 'civil rights' doesn't exist."

"It isn't the [American] Government Section's job to establish a perfect system of guarantees," the Steering Committee replied, "If we push hard for things like this, we could well encounter strong opposition. In fact, I think there's a danger the Japanese government might reject our draft entirely."

"We have the responsibility to affect a social revolution in Japan, and the most expedient way of doing that is to force through a reversal of social patterns by means of the constitution."

"You cannot impose a new model of social thought on a country by law."⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Kenneth Grossberg. 1981. p. 116

Though it was apparent that the Occupational forces and their reforms in the new constitution were changing many aspects of Japanese culture and tradition, in truth, there was no way to undo the cultural mindset by virtue of political or constitutional changes alone. The political and constitutional changes made in the 19th century were in line with the current cultural mindset and participated only in shaping its gradual evolution. Twentieth century politics in the Postwar Era were in contradiction to the accepted 20th century Japanese cultural mindset.

America's initial call to constitute individual rights was a foreign concept that did not reflect the nature of Japanese society. Twenty-first century Japanese women are still second-class people, regardless of the political development of legal freedoms. As was the case then and still is today, political rights cannot change human culture and ideology. While laws can legalize full citizenship for any group of people, they alone cannot change the minds of a people shaped by a long history of oppression.

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