Introduction

> In the beginning, Woman was truly the Sun. An authentic person.
>
> Now, Woman is the Moon. A sickly, pale-face moon, living off another, reflecting another's brilliance. We must now recapture our hidden Sun.[1]
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> Hiratsuka Raichô, "In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun"

This book is a study of the development of distinctive forms of feminist consciousness among Japanese middle-class women in Tokyo from 1871 to 1941 and their exchanges with mainly white, middle-class, American feminists. These Japanese women had the means to travel and also the inclination to combine idealism with activism and an engagement with the modernization process in Japan.[2] Their awakening was forged, despite ever-increasing pressure from nationalism and militarism, with the help of a feminist movement that originated in the West.

Encompassing the discourses of women's rights movements in Japan, the United States, and to a lesser extent Europe, and looking in more detail at the issues of peace, birth control, and suffrage, I explore the complex ways that middle-class Japanese feminists negotiated a humanitarian space within Japan's expansion as a nationalist, militarist, imperialist, and patriarchal power. They were able to do this because Japan aspired to engage in the discourse of modern Western nations that was increasingly adopting the elevation of women's status as one of the premises of "civilization." Although women of American or European origin (hereafter, Western women) were actually socially and legally subordinate, they had promoted the feminist movement by taking advantage of the pretensions of this contemporary discourse to higher civilization, arguing that women's full citizenship was necessary in any civilized society. Japanese women in parallel attempted to turn their own state's drive to "modernize" and to "civilize" itself to their advantage. Thus, the contradiction of women's unliberated status existing

in an emerging modern nation created a basis for Japanese feminist movements, which adapted and localized Western feminists' approaches, to argue for sociopolitical and economic equality between the sexes.[3]

Recent historical studies on international women's organizations have shown significant links between domestic and international feminist movements. For example, Leila J. Rupp's study shows "the creation of a collective identity in international women's organizations" between 1888 and 1945.[4] Ian Tyrrell's study explores Christian women's transnational feminist movement promoted by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in America between 1880 and 1930.[5] These studies highlight collaborative international relationships, and yet they also suggest that behind such women's activism was a belief in the superiority of Western civilization: Western women regarded themselves as civilizing agents when they promoted the notion of women's rights in other, non-Western nations.

With the beginning of modernization in 1868, Japan became one such arena for the international women's rights movement. Yasutake Rumi's work has shown the vital early links between the WCTU and the Japanese WCTU (JWCTU; Nihon Fujin Kirisutokyô Kyôfûkai) up to 1920.[6] Christian missionaries visited Japan and promoted women's education, paving the way to organize the JWCTU in 1886. The Japanese branch supported the "Americanization" and "Westernizing" of Japan by assuming the white, middle-class American cultural values of the era, particularly the "purity and sanctity of home."[7] In adopting American values to promote social reform in Japan—including aiming to establish monogamy, to abolish licensed prostitution, and to restrict and abolish Japanese prostitution overseas, in addition to promoting temperance—the JWCTU participated in the discourse of the "civilizing mission" led by the WCTU.[8]

Analyzing this kind of international activism by Western social reformers, many historians argue that these reformers adopted an ideology that has been called "feminist Orientalism."[9] Their analysis is that whatever activism was being promoted by the reformers, their underlying motivation was a sense of their moral superiority to "other" women and a sense of responsibility to uplift what they saw as "weaker" sisters in "less-civilized" racial groups and cultures. They argue that Western women's international activism embodied the hierarchical power relations between the West and the rest under the prevailing discourse of civilization.[10]

Aside from these historical studies and analysis of the international feminist movements up to the early twentieth century, other historians have regarded the transnational feminist movement more as an aspect of the "third wave" feminism that began in the late twentieth century and have seen it as

a distinct concept that is different in nature from earlier efforts. Based on their analyses of third world feminism, historians such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres assert that "women of all colors (including white women) can align themselves with and participate in these imagined communities."[11] They see that such "imagined communities" can be formed as political alliances across lines of gender, race, and class. These historians suggest that, unlike the earlier version of the transnational feminist movement, the third wave is a new humanitarian movement that bridges differences in gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality to promote the welfare and justice of humanity. But did these equal international partnerships really only begin in the latter half of the twentieth century? Following up on these studies, to examine whether this is indeed the case, this book's additional exploration of middle-class Japanese women's secular social activism in cooperation with their Western counterparts gives us a window through which to view the women's rights movement with a broader perspective and over a long timescale.

When Western middle-class feminists promoted women's rights and social justice on the grounds of the equality of the sexes and began in the early twentieth century to expand the scope of their activism beyond national borders to pursue women's interests internationally,[12] some Japanese feminists were in sympathy. Most of the Western women were in fact Christians, but unlike WCTU reformers, they promoted international activism through secular organizations. Although many of the Japanese women participants were likewise Christians, or at least influenced by the ideas of Christian social activism to some degree, they were also liberal social reformers and mostly from the urban middle class, and it is this secular international activity that is covered here. They strove for the equality of the sexes and challenged Japan's modern patriarchy.[13] Within these specific historical conditions, Japanese feminists dynamically negotiated and renegotiated their position in both the national and international realms.[14] This book shows how they engaged in, responded to, and localized the discourse of civilization.[15]

Because of its focus on middle-class women, the book does not detail the activities of more radical feminists, including socialists and anarchists, who also had their international connections but were severely repressed and pushed to the margins of Japanese society. Their important stories have been covered elsewhere, notably by Vera Mackie and Mikiso Hane.[16] My aim is to further expand and complicate the story of women's history, in this case by examining to what degree middle-class Japanese feminists found specifically Japanese solutions. Along with previous studies I hope to aid in sustaining multiple viewpoints on this period.

By focusing in turn on the peace, birth control, and suffrage movements before 1941, we can understand the intricate nature of the feminist movement in Japan, a nature that cannot be fully accounted for by the dichotomous views of feminist Orientalism. Japanese women recognized and valued the specific expertise and experience of Western feminist movements, gained mostly through communication with American middle-class feminists, but they did not accept these templates uncritically. Rather, reinterpreting them and applying them selectively within the Japanese context, they promoted civilizing strategies in Japanese modern patriarchy that were distinct from both Japanese nationalism and Western international feminism. Many of the Japanese women in this book supported nationalism to some degree—specifically the political movement beginning in the early Meiji era, which aimed to transform a closed, feudal Japan into a modern, independent state, while preserving what were seen as key Japanese traditions. But I argue that their support did not originate in what Raymond Williams calls "nationalist feeling (bad if it is another's country, making claims against one's own)." Rather, it was "national feeling (good)," which allowed them to embrace international sensibilities, too. They had both national and international feelings.[17]

In looking at this period it is legitimate to explore to what degree it is appropriate to associate feminism with a fixed set of Western enlightenment ideas and to examine how feminism can coexist with nationalism, internationalism, and social constructs relating to the government, the family, and society based on non-Western traditions.

The relationship of gender to the modern Japanese nation-state has been a focus of interest for scholars. Historians of the women's rights movement in particular have observed the ways in which Japanese women struggled to gain the political, social, and economic rights that were denied to them by the state. It has been seen that the women found their agency mired in struggles and negotiations in a misogynist society within national constraints. For example, Sharon L. Sievers's *Flowers in Salt: The Beginning of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan*, Vera Mackie's *Creating Socialist Women in Japan*, and Kumari Jayawardena's *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* explore how Japanese feminists struggled at this time. Research on the feminist and suffrage movements after the Manchurian Incident in 1931 has further highlighted the complexities of the gender-state relationship in the Japanese context. The historian Yoshimi Kaneko's work shows that Japanese suffragists fell victim to domestic political and ideological pressure: they were forced to reduce their activism and became subsumed into government war policies.[18] Research by many other scholars, including the

historian Suzuki Yûko, shows that even though the government curbed their agency, the feminists were nevertheless often "perpetrators" in that they actively helped to create the war state. The feminists cooperated with the war regime to empower Japanese women but in doing so sacrificed the interests of other Asian women, including Chinese and Korean women. The historian Barbara Molony's research shows that suffrage leader Ichikawa Fusae (whose activities are described in Chapter 5) cooperated with the government during the war to allow women to gain entry into the sociopolitical realm of Japanese society. This cooperation was Ichikawa's choice.[19] In the history of feminism this is not the only time others have paid the price for compromise under the tension between national and feminist identity. In such cases it is useful to understand reasons, rationales, and precedents for such choices and to make a cost-benefit analysis, rather than to oversimplify with hindsight; there is always something to be learned. In the historian Dee Ann Vavich's research, for example, even though Japanese suffragists were forced to shift the focus of the movement away from political rights to social issues, such activism laid the groundwork to enfranchise women in 1945.[20]

Feminists in Europe, Britain, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, while also active in their respective domestic women's rights movements on issues including peace, birth control, and suffrage, had begun to expand their scope beyond national borders. How did Japanese feminists deal simultaneously with all their mutual concerns—including peace, birth control, and suffrage—in a time of enormous and highly pressured change? Why and how did feminists in the world, including in Japan, begin at this time to interact across national and cultural borders to promote the women's rights movement?[21] This book allows the connections among these multiple strands that stretched across national borders to be seen more clearly.

Hence, Chapter 1 lays out the necessary historical and sociopolitical conditions that, coming together, led to international feminism between Japan and the West becoming an effective force. It introduces the key terms and concepts used in this book, many of which have a culturally specific meaning important to understand in a Japanese context. It discusses the impact on women of the discourse of civilization, Japan's modernization, the Meiji government's policies for women, and the impact of Christian social activism on the women's rights movement, and it touches on socialist women.

Chapter 2 details the first contacts between Western middle-class reformers and their counterparts in Japan, the development of the internationalist feminist movement, and its role as a catalyst for the feminist movement among this cohort of Japanese women in the period leading up to 1941. I argue that these Japanese feminists, while acknowledging the benefits of

the ideals of Western feminism encountered through face-to-face contacts with and writings from their Western sisters, went on to apply and interpret them to create new positions in the movement, in a way that would suit their domestic context.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 provide case studies of the women's rights movement in Japan, focusing respectively on the specific issues of peace, birth control, and suffrage. These chapters explore in detail the crucial outside (mainly American) contact with Japan regarding each issue and how, through what they saw as nonhierarchical and mutually beneficial relationships, Japanese middle-class feminists articulated and localized international feminist causes; how they located and identified themselves as actors for the internationalist feminist movement while promoting local reform; and how in so doing they demonstrated feminists' ability to create an imagined space that allows women to bridge differences and to coexist with both nationalism and internationalism.