

Special Series : Her-Story No.1

A Women's Place: Social Change in Wartime and Postwar Japan and the United States

Faith Nobuko Barcus

The year 1945 marked a transformation in the place of women in society in Japan and in the United States. In Japan the catalyst was its catastrophic defeat in World War II, and in the United States its victory in the same war. Taking a historical perspective, I would like to explore how this transformation occurred. Let me begin with a brief overview of the cultural background and the place of women in Japan and in the United States before and during World War II.

Women's Culture in Japan Before the War: Historical Perspective

In the beginning, Japan was a matriarchal society. According to Japanese mythology, the prime indigenous deity was Amaterasu Omikami, the sun goddess. A woman named Himiko is believed to have ruled in the southern island of Kyushu and the southwestern part of Honshu in the 2nd century A.D. Later, in the heyday of court culture in the Heian era (10th through 12th centuries), there arose an unsurpassed body of literature written by women, and women in the upper classes enjoyed high status. Property was inherited by daughters as well as sons. It was only when the samurai culture of the Kamakura era (13th century) spread and Confucian doctrine from China inculcated the idea of *ryosai kenbo* (obedient wife, wise mother) that the place of women in Japan deteriorated.

Compared to other societies, however, in Japan "the role of woman in the home is valued and her self-esteem is high because the management of the family has always been considered central to stability and prosperity in Japanese society."⁽¹⁾ In Japan, the importance of carrying on the family name supercedes that of gender equality. The Japanese have devised a system in which a family without a male heir can legally adopt a non-inheriting child, called "yoshi," from another family, usually a second or third son, who marries the daughter of the adopting family. In such cases, the adopted man assumes his wife's family name

and becomes the legal heir. This system may be unique to Japan and reveals a sturdy adaptability to social needs. Until recently an agrarian country poor in natural resources, Japan's farmers' daughters and wives for millennia worked alongside their men in the fields as well as keeping house and caring for the young. Literally, a woman's work was never done.

Meiji and Taisho Years (1868-1925)

A nascent women's rights movement spread in Europe and England after the French Revolution. In the early 20th century, women in England carried the banner for the right to vote for women and created a powerful militant suffragette organization. Its impact reached the shores of Japan in the Meiji period, and in 1911 the feminist journal *Seito* [Bluestocking] started publication. It was modeled after an 18th-century women's literary group in England, whose members wore blue stockings. *Seito*, with its tenet of using male culture as the model for women, had a stormy and controversial life under the editorship of Raicho Hiratsuka.

"Letter" (the story of a love letter from a married woman to her lover), written by my aunt Ikuko Araki, a member of the *Seito* literary society, was published in *Seito* in April 1912 and caused a public outcry. It was considered too licentious, and the issue was banned by the government. The magazine finally folded in 1916.

The concept of the New Woman in Japan was not a mere copy of ideas behind the women's movement in Europe, however. Japan instituted sweeping reforms in education and other areas in 1871 that helped transform the country from a feudal system of government to a new and more centralized government under the young Meiji emperor. The literacy level at that time was 45 percent for men and 15 percent for women, higher than in other countries. Around the end of 1900, the women's literacy rate had risen to more than 90 percent. In 1871, the new government sent five girls between the ages of 8 and 15 to study in the United States. In 1872, the first men's teachers' college (Shihan Gakko) was created, followed by a women's teachers' college (Joshi Shihan Gakko). In 1885, the first cabinet was formed and Arinori Mori was appointed minister of education. He firmly believed in the importance of women's education, as attested by his well-known declaration, "A nation's rise and fall is a function of its women's

education."⁽²⁾

Following *Seito*, two major periodicals, *Chuo Koron* and *Taiyo* carried special women's issues. It may be said that 1913 was the year when the role of women was first taken up as a serious social issue by both women and men in pre-World War II Japan. Even after *Seito* ceased publication in 1916, women's magazines flooded the market, taking up the banner with less contentious tones, but bringing women's issues to the fore. This was part of an emerging cultural trend toward a more open and democratic society, commonly known as "Taisho democracy." In 1920 Fusae Ichikawa and Raicho Hiratsuka created the Shin Fujin Kyokai (New Women's Organization), and in 1924, an organization to promote women's voting rights was formed. This fledgling attempt at democracy was short lived, however, curtailed as the nation moved toward military expansion, beginning with the Manchurian Incident in 1931. Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933, and by then it was on the road ultimately leading to the Pearl Harbor incident in 1941.

My mother and father were atypical Japanese parents. My mother, who grew up during the period of Taisho Democracy, was a so-called *bungaku shojo*, a "literary woman." She loved writing poetry and short stories, and since we had servants, she was free to pursue her many interests. It was my mother who introduced us to the world of arts, literature, and music. For a Japanese couple of the 1920s, my parents had an enlightened belief in individual freedom of choice, and they never told us not to do something because it would bring shame to the family name. My mother never walked the customary three steps behind my father. My parents didn't even pay much attention to our report cards, although my father did help me with algebra. My father believed in "learning by doing."

One summer, when I was five years old, mother, my eight-year old sister and I traveled to Manchuria to visit my father who was working as a consultant to the Manchurian Railway. He took his family to an opium den as a "field trip." The scene of a smoke-filled room and its pungent odor, pale and thin opium-smoking men lying on tiered wooden beds, remains vivid in my memory. My father was a devoted father. He never went out drinking after work, as most Japanese men did. My parents introduced us to the world of western classic arts and music, opera and ballet, and also to kabuki, the bunraku puppet theatre, and the other Japanese arts. My father, in particular, wanted to make sure that we understood the common culture of Japan and often

took us to yose (a vaudevillian-type of comedy theatre), although my mother was not too keen on the idea.

After dinner, Father would often gather his three daughters around the piano and teach us songs in English, such as "Row, row, row your boat." He was an excellent ballroom dancer, a skill he learned in his student days in America, and he taught his wife and three daughters. We used to roll up the carpet in the parlor and remove the sliding doors between the parlor and dining room and dance to record music played on a big wind-up Victorola. Ballroom dancing became an important element in the bond I shared with my American husband.

World War II and Tightening Strictures

By 1940, Japanese military successes in China and the Pacific created a national mood of invincibility, although many Japanese, including my parents, privately questioned the wisdom and morality of Japan's war policies. On December 8, 1941, what we had feared became a reality. Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and entered into war with the United States.

A postcard arrived from my father, who was on a business trip. In his large, flamboyant handwriting, he wrote: "Miss Keiko, Miss Nobuko, Miss Aiko, What a foolish situation Japan has got herself into! We'll lose. Brace yourselves and be prepared!" In subsequent years such communication would have been confiscated by the government. My father continued to speak out publicly against the war, in spite of admonitions from family, friends, and office staff, and he received many visits from the military police.

In 1933, Shiro Fukushima, a male writer, wrote in *Fujo shinbun* (Women's Newspaper): "Men oppressed women and did not allow women to develop freely, which resulted in the flourishing of self-centered male culture. ...A society where women's culture is allowed to flourish is more moral and spiritual."⁽³⁾

In the 1930s, Japan's militaristic posturing began to infect the nation, and with it the budding Taisho Democracy and women's freedom movement were squelched within the Japanese social consciousness. Once war with the United States began in 1941, patriotism trumped feminism and all other "-isms."

As men were sent to the battlefield, women became the heads of their households and replaced men on the farm, in factories, and other areas traditionally dominated by men. To send young sons to war without shedding tears was considered a sign of supreme patriotism and high character in womanhood. At first, the war seemed remote to most of us Japanese citizens, the main reminders

being food rations, the daily sendoff of young men to the front, and oppressive military control over our daily lives.

I was studying ballet, my passion. One summer day, a military policeman barged into our school without even taking off his shoes and yelled at my teacher, "You are traitors to our country to be engaged in such decadent Western pursuits!" We all huddled around our teacher, trembling. After that, even on the hottest days, we practiced with our windows closed so that no music would be heard outside.

News of one victory after another in the Pacific theatre sent the nation into a state of euphoria, but even so, my father refused to stop his public opposition to the war. He spoke at Rotary Club meetings and Chamber of Commerce gatherings, predicting dire consequences.

In 1944, I was a freshman at Tsuda Juku College studying English, the "enemy language." We were cautioned by our teachers not to open our English books on the train or use English words in public. It had been my lifelong dream to study in America as my father had done in 1918. Tsuda Juku, the sister college of Bryn Mawr in the United States, was known for its rigorous English education, but the wartime Tojo government demanded that Tsuda reduce its English class requirements. After much soul searching, consultation with faculty, and negotiations with government officials, Miss Ai Hoshino, the president, came up with a plan to add science and mathematics to our regular curriculum, thus satisfying the government's demands.

Like all high school and college students, we were required to work in ammunition factories to take the places of the young men who were sent to the battlefield. While scrutiny of Tsuda College by the government continued, Hoshino visited factories where other students were working, and decided to convert our gymnasium into a factory so that students could continue to study when not engaged in factory work. It seemed that Tsuda was deliberately assigned to do especially difficult and demanding factory work from Hitachi Aircraft because we were studying the "enemy language." Between classes I remember standing for hours in front of a machine with my hair tied in a bandana, making nuts and bolts as my stomach growled with hunger. As the war intensified and the bombing of Tokyo and the Tachikawa Air Base near my school became more frequent, we lived each day with the fear that it might be our last. One day my father gathered us around and declared, "We may die tomorrow. You may go to our summer home in Karuizawa or stay in Tokyo. The choice

is yours."

My mother said she would stay in the city to care for our elder sister, who was pregnant and whose husband was at the war. I said I would remain and continue my education. Aiko, my younger sister, still in high school and the baby of the family, sat quietly for a long time, and then she blurted out, "I'm going to Karuizawa! I'm too young to die!" My father was taken aback. He said "You may be the only member of the family to survive. Do you understand?" Aiko was resolute. She traveled to our summer home by train, lived there alone, attending a country school with the local children for several months.

Bombing of Japanese Cities and the Impact on Women

In the spring of 1945, air raids over Tokyo intensified. The food shortage worsened. People grew pumpkins in their back yards and made periodic trips to the country to buy vegetables from farmers. As the bombing became more frequent and concentrated, everyone was directed to cover windows with blackout cloth at night, and the city restricted the use of gas and electricity to only a few hours a day.

On March 9, one day after my eighteenth birthday, 334 American bombers--B-29s--made a major attack on Tokyo. We who lived in the suburbs were spared, but from our second floor windows we watched the red sky over downtown Tokyo as it burned. The next day on my way to school I saw from the train the burnt-out skeletons of what had been concrete buildings and the remains of scorched, stubby trees without leaves. Thousands of homes and 84,000 lives were lost. On May 20, we were not so lucky. That night began with the familiar wail of the air-raid sirens followed by the low rumbling of B-29 bombers, then the whistling shriek of the falling bombs, the earth shaking, and the fireballs.

That night the bombing went deeper and deeper into the suburbs. From the front of our house I saw a sea of people coming up the road shouting, "Go to the field at the Taiiku Gakko!" (a nearby physical education college). Most of them were women, children, and old people running from their burning homes and the spreading conflagration. "Go to the field before the fire overtakes us!" they shouted. Pandemonium ensued, everyone shouting and pushing. Lost children cried for their mothers, frantic mothers searched for their children. The road to Taiiku Gakko passed right in front of our house. We could see the fire advancing toward us. My father gathered as

many able-bodied neighbors as he could find and formed a bucket brigade from our well to the road. We took turns pumping the well and heaving water on our houses. As sparks flew, we pumped and pumped until we felt as if our arms were going to drop out of their sockets. The house across the road began to burn. We braced ourselves for the worst.

Suddenly the wind shifted. The fire that was advancing toward us began to move sideways. As the fire receded, we slumped down on the road, bedraggled and exhausted. Helplessly we watched the voracious fire devour houses one after another. Some of us cried, and others just sat there, numb. As the sun began to appear over the horizon, the B-29s retreated, and the city lay quietly burning as far as the eye could see. I remember experiencing an intense appreciation of life as I felt the rays of the sun on my face. With the immediate danger past, my father instructed us to cook all the rice we had and make rice balls for the neighborhood. Then he had us fill the bathtub, heat it with a wood fire, and invite all the neighbors to take a hot bath. Forty-six people came to take a bath in our wooden tub. My father told me to get on my bicycle and check on our grandparents' house a few miles away.

There were no trains, no buses, no electricity, no gas, no phone, no water. The city had stopped. I found my grandparents unharmed, but a neighborhood in pain. One friend who loved to play the piano and I cried in each other's arms by her charred grand piano. I ran into another friend who had set up a makeshift lean-to with some scraps found among the ruins and was trying to build a fire to cook some rice gruel. They had escaped literally with only their clothes on their backs. I saw a woman with vacant eyes mumbling to herself, wandering in the street in tattered clothes, holding a silent baby in her arms. Maybe her house was destroyed. Maybe her baby was dead. I didn't stop to ask or help. I was overwhelmed by so much death and destruction.

About a week later, a group of plainclothes military police came to our house and took my father away for questioning. We had expected such a visit, as my father had continued to criticize Tojo in public, and our house had been under surveillance for some time. He had warned us not to make a scene if anything should happen, as we were the daughters of samurai. My sisters and I gathered around our mother and watched the whole proceedings in stoic silence. My father's parting words to us were, "Do not worry. I have done nothing wrong. I shall return soon." He was placed in prison without any specific charges and stayed there until the end of the war.

The war had an unintended effect on Japanese women. As it progressed, more and more men were called to serve the country and left their farms and businesses. The severe shortage of workers forced women to fill the roles previously held by men.

Historically, Japanese farm women and wives of small business owners worked side by side with their husbands. However, in prewar Japan, women who worked outside of the home were called "shokugyo fujin" (working women.), a term with negative connotations. It was thought that such a woman lacked the desirable feminine qualities and no man would want to marry her, or else her husband was not a good provider. It was decades before the words "career woman" became fashionable.

Women's Culture in the United States: Historical Perspective

The Pilgrims who came from England to Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620 experienced an unimaginably harsh and difficult life. In Britain, King George III (1760-1820) exercised undue control over the newly established colonies leading to the American War of Independence (1775), which ultimately led to the Declaration of Independence in 1776. In 1783 peace was reached and in 1788 the U.S. Constitution was ratified, uniting the thirteen colonies into a sovereign state called the United States of America.

Women played a critical role in the success of the revolution and nation-making even though they did not have equal rights with men. Women not only ran farms and family businesses while the men were at war, but because of their empathy and compassion, they also played a vital role in creating good relationships among the diverse population. They helped those in need and delivered babies, which in those times was often a matter of life and death. Their social and interpersonal activities were indispensable in the process of community formation.⁽⁴⁾

The coming of the steamship and railway in the 19th century helped to expand communication networks and connect the increasingly diverse and dispersed population as it spread further through the vast continent. The pioneer

spirit of survival under the most challenging conditions that the early settlers demonstrated is deeply ingrained in Americans. In the fifty-plus years I have lived in the United States, I continue to be amazed at the American "can-do" spirit of never giving up.

Birth of the Women's Movement

The first organized American women's movement was begun by Susan B. Anthony in 1872. She began as a vocal advocate of help for women and children who suffered from abuse by alcoholic husbands and fathers, and in 1849 she founded the Women's Temperance Society. She also devoted herself to the anti-slavery movement. When she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton, another activist, they joined forces and published the liberal weekly, *Revolution* (1868-70), calling for equal pay for women and men. They tirelessly campaigned for women's civil and political rights through the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Anthony did not live to see the August 18, 1920 ratification of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote.

The United States in 1900 was going through major sociological and cultural changes from a loosely organized agrarian nation to an increasingly integrated industrial nation. As industrialization spurred economic growth, the pace of technological progress picked up and living standards rose, leading to a stock market boom. To discourage stock speculation, the Federal Reserve Bank raised interest rates in 1928 and 1929. That ultimately led to Black Tuesday, the stock market crash of October 29, 1929. The crash had results more calamitous than anyone could have imagined, and the economy plummeted. Producers stopped producing, banks stopped lending, and consumers stopped buying, putting millions of people out of work. Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 introduced the New Deal, government-sponsored work to stem the tide of what is called the Great Depression. However, it was World War II, which started in Europe in 1939, that helped to turn the economy around with war production.

As in wartime Japan, women in the United States took over the jobs left by men called to war. "Rosie the Riveter," a poster showing a red-cheeked young woman in a red bandana and overalls wielding a wrench in her hand, became the pinup of the day. As more and more women began to take on men's work, women felt empowered and demanded that they be allowed to work in the armed

forces. In 1942, against objections from many legislators (who were mostly men), Congress authorized the enlistment of women to free able-bodied men from desk, service, and mechanical jobs. Within a year 100,000 women were in uniform serving the country in non-combatant roles in the U.S. armed forces.

More blacks also served in the military during World War II. Although most were in infantry and given more menial jobs, the color barrier slowly began to break down.

Women in Postwar Japan

On August 15, 1945, nine days after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and six days after Nagasaki was bombed, Japan surrendered. Most Japanese were exhausted from four years of deprivation, death, and destruction and accepted defeat and occupation with a sigh of relief. I think most Japanese were glad to be free of strict and harsh military governance. Although shortages of food and other goods continued, and the humiliation was painful, the transition from making war to making peace was remarkably smooth and uneventful among civilians. They faced postwar hardship with a spirit of "shikataganai" (it can't be helped). There were no food riots or uprisings by militant factions of the kind that sometimes occur under such circumstances.

For us young women, being freed from the ugly wartime attire of black shirts and baggy Mompeh trousers was a truly liberating experience. We began to pay attention to our hair and attire, even daring to put on a little lipstick without fear of the military police yelling at us as traitors to the Japanese spirit. We could read books in English in public without penalty. The black market began to flourish—much of it stocked with goods stolen from the occupation forces. Mysteriously, the Toraya confection shop had their delicious yokan (a sweet bean confection) to sell, and we got up at dawn to stand in line for that long-forgotten taste. When I saw fresh bananas for the first time in years, I jumped with joy. Bananas had been imported from Formosa (Taiwan), but during the war, the ocean was a minefield and no commercial ships could travel. We had electricity and gas for longer hours. Each day, each week, little by little, we saw the debris of destroyed homes disappear. In my personal experience, after four years of rigid military rule, I felt like a bird freed from cage. Whatever we had been taught was a big lie. We, the young, lost our moorings and wanted to play

and have a good time.

One day, I saw on the school bulletin board a notice recruiting female singers for a U.S.-Japan joint Messiah chorus. I was told that it was General MacArthur's idea to lower the barrier between the victor and the vanquished. The occupying forces were mostly men and needing female voices, they tapped the women's colleges in Tokyo. Several classmates and I signed up thinking it would give us a chance to hear native speakers and practice English. Two hundred-fifty American and Japanese men and women practiced for several months at Tokyo University. On Christmas night, accompanied by the 75-piece Tokyo Philharmonic orchestra, we performed at Hibiya Public Hall, one of the few buildings that had not been destroyed by the bombing. There I met my future husband, who was in the bass section, and the Messiah became one of the most significant events in our life.

Postwar Japan poured its energies into reconstructing the broken nation. With typically Japanese precision and quickness, the burnt-out ruins disappeared and new houses were built. By Article 9 of the new Constitution, created in 1947 by a joint effort of the newly formed Japanese government and the U.S. occupation forces, Japan committed itself never again to wage war. Thanks to the efforts of Beate Sirota Gordon, the lone woman on the American team, Japanese women gained equal rights for the first time in the nation's history. The transformation from a military regime to a democratic society, with the emperor as the titular head, moved remarkably smoothly. This was made possible by many factors, including the presence of people in decision-making roles who were active participants in the Taisho Democracy movement in the late 1920s, Japanese homogeneity, strong self-identity as a nation, a general willingness to learn from abroad, and a relatively high literacy rate.⁽⁵⁾

Women in Postwar America

In the summer of 1945, the war was over and GIs were returning home. The wartime economy was booming, but there was a problem. All the jobs the men left behind were now filled by women. The horrific memory of the Great Depression was still fresh in the minds of most adults. Men needed work, and government and industry worked together to create jobs for them. A strong consumer culture enticed women with various labor-saving devices for ideal homemaking,

appliances that they had never dreamed of before. Rising rates of television ownership helped to spread the gospel of "home sweet home" with the latest in shiny refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, radios, TVs, and other modern conveniences. Perfectly coiffed with a twenty-inch waist and a bouffant skirt and high heels, the lovely Mrs. Cleaver of the popular TV program "Leave It to Beaver" became the symbol of the perfect American housewife with a happy family--what women aspired to. Wartime production of arms was switched to peacetime production of consumer goods.

What followed was something no one expected. Michael Barone says, "The year 1947 was a hinge in American history, a time in which the country changed quite remarkably from one thing into another...what is striking is how much change did converge on this one moment in history... In the twenty years following 1948, the American GNP, adjusted for inflation, grew at an average rate of 4.0% annually. This was the most awesome economic growth ever seen in human history."⁽⁶⁾

The unprecedented economic boom reached even to the bottom of the social ladder and created a huge American middle class. The growing automobile industry helped spur the United States into becoming the most mobile population in the world. Another byproduct of the postwar prosperity was a baby boom and home ownership. The men and women who had lived through the depression and the war did not take life for granted. The government set up legislation, a federally funded G.I. Bill of Rights, to encourage G.I.s to go to college. Thousands of working class men went to college as the first generation in their families to do so.

The color bar in the military was partially broken down during the war. In 1947 major league baseball recruited Jackie Robinson, the first Negro player. In 1948, legislation was passed to ban discrimination in the armed forces, giving impetus to the future Civil Rights movement. In 1954 a Supreme Court decision officially ended school segregation. This historic moment awakened women's consciousness of unequal treatment in some segments of society. Many women felt that they, too, were Americans working hard to keep families together and build communities, so why shouldn't they have equal rights with men? Women banded together to promote equal opportunities in education and in the workplace.

Unexpected American Wife, My Story

I came to the United States in the fall of 1948, after an eleven-day journey by ship crossing the Pacific Ocean, three days by train from Seattle to Chicago, and another train ride from Chicago to Champaign, Illinois, home of the University of Illinois. Commercial air travel was still in its infancy. My American husband returned to the university to continue his studies, which had been interrupted by the war. In order to save money, we lived with his family in a big three-storey house. The family consisted of his 80-year-old grandfather, who lived in the basement, his parents, his older brother and his wife, and his three sisters ages 24, 18, and 10. I discovered that living with a three-generation family is the quickest and most profound way to learn about the culture of another country.

Small-town America in the 1950s was truly Norman Rockwell land. Early in the morning, we heard the clip-clop on the street as the horse-drawn milk wagon went by. The sound would stop, and you'd hear the cling-clang of the glass milk bottles as the milkman in white uniform deposited our milk into its wooden box by the front door. The Jewel coffee man paid us a visit regularly, as my mother-in-law was partial to Jewel coffee. The egg man from a nearby farm came door-to-door selling eggs and vegetables. On summer evenings, you'd hear the clanging of horseshoe games in the backyard. The pace was slow, relaxed, and friendly.

What surprised me most was how vastly different American women were from what I had imagined them to be from Hollywood movies, at least in my adopted family. Although the house was centrally heated by a big furnace in the basement, a luxury that was not available in Japanese homes then, someone had to shovel the coal into the furnace. To my astonishment, my mother-in-law, who was no more than 5 feet 3 inches tall and 110 pounds, not only shoveled the coal into the furnace, but also mowed the lawn with a push mower (this was before the age of electric mowers). During the Great Depression, the family had to move to a farm to feed the family of seven. Although my mother-in-law was a city girl, she learned to milk the cow, make butter, raise chickens, and sell eggs. She did the family laundry by hand in a big tub. They had electricity but no running water. They had an outhouse for toilet. My husband told me how, when he was a little boy on the farm, he hated to get up in the middle of the night in winter to go to the outhouse. I was surprised to find that I had lived a more civilized life in Japan than my American husband had in the 1920s.

My mother had not taught me the art of homemaking. In my new country I was at a loss as to what I should do. So I followed my mother-in-law around like a puppy dog and watched and learned from her. It was my father-in-law's custom to have two strips of bacon and an egg every morning and my mother-in-law saved the grease in a mason jar. She taught me how to make laundry soap from this bacon grease. She would mix the grease with lye in a large tub and stir it with a big wooden stick until it was well mixed, and after a few days, it would harden. Then we would loosen it around the edges, turn the tub over on a large table, and a huge wheel of brown soap would drop out of the tub. Then we would take a large cleaver and cut it into smaller pieces and use them for laundry!

My parents-in-law were from the old school of American pioneers. My father-in-law did not open the door for his wife or wait on her as I had seen in Hollywood movies. Yet, he deferred to her on most major decisions concerning the family, such as education of their children or how to spend money. I had a feeling that my mother-in-law was the decisive force in allowing her son to marry a Japanese, as we were underage (20) and needed parental consent. I never saw my mother-in-law wear lipstick or nail polish. She went to a Methodist church every Sunday, while my father-in-law did not belong to any church. My sisters in-law went to different churches. In this family, the motto seemed to be: "To Each His Own." The only thing my mother-in-law insisted on was not to bring any hard liquor in the house, but beer was allowed. I sensed that this gentle and diminutive mom was the pillar of the family and was deeply loved and respected by all.

On the surface, the America of the 1950s seemed idyllic. Surviving the Great Depression and the war, Americans watching postwar economic growth were compelled to pause and reflect on their transformation from a simple agrarian nation to an economic and military power and a world leader. It was the heyday of Hollywood movie culture. In 1949, "Gone with the Wind" captured the imagination of Americans. Sweet and cheerful Doris Day and Debbie Reynolds presented happy domestic images of the "perfect woman." The fashion industry followed suit with the new feminine ideal of small waistlines and full skirts. Putting women back in the home and creating jobs for men was working well. "By the end of the 50s, the average marriage age of women in America dropped to 20. The proportion of women attending college in comparison with men dropped

from 47 percent in 1920 to 35 percent in 1958. By the mid-fifties, 60 percent dropped out of college to marry, or because they were afraid too much education would be a marriage bar."⁽⁷⁾

The women's movement was not dead. In 1949, Harvard Law School began admitting women, and there were other developments. But overall, postwar America was focused on its unprecedented economic boom, and the trend toward putting women back-in-the-home gained steam. In the 1950s women held less than 40 percent of professional positions in the U.S., and job opportunities for women were mostly in the clerical and service related fields with wages significantly lower than that of men.

For fifteen years women stayed home and raised families. The intoxicating new consumer society slowly eroded the wartime feeling of equal partners working side-by-side with men. With the help of Hollywood and Madison Avenue, that feeling was replaced with an image of women as decorative sex objects more than equal professional colleagues. In the 1950s, women were caught in a state of contradictory impulses and ambiguity in terms of gender roles.

The Women's Movement, Japanese Style

Throughout their history, Japanese have had a knack for welcoming foreign ideas and innovations and homogenizing them to suit their culture and national character. The women's movement from America was absorbed in the same way. In 1975, the U.S. bestseller *The Managerial Woman*, written by Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim, was translated into Japanese under the title "Career Woman." This term, "career woman," became the popular expression of the day legitimizing working women and forever banishing "shokugyo fujin" from the Japanese vocabulary. In 1997, Japan followed the U.S. in adopting sexual harassment rules and applying them to the workplace, but age discrimination is still practiced in employment for both genders. Equal pay for equal work has not yet been realized.

Even with the newly established voting rights, the Japanese women's movement moved slowly. A small number of women were inspired by the women's movement in the U.S., but ordinary Japanese women's thinking was deeply rooted in the traditional division of labor that made men the breadwinners and women the homemakers. Dr. Sumiko Iwao says that this is "...based on the belief

that even though men and women are different in disposition, behavior, and biology, they can be equal as humans, although that equality consists of a balance of advantage, opportunity, and responsibility achieved *over time...* in Japan equality is not sought on principle, and part-time working women and full-time housewives in particular consider themselves equal to their professionally or vocationally employed husbands, at least as far as their status in the household is concerned. Not only do women see themselves as equal to their husbands but their husbands willingly admit their dependence on women (in a sense, their inferiority). ...surveys show that 40 percent of full-time housewives think of themselves as economically independent..⁽⁸⁾ In Japan, typically the husband turns over his paycheck to his wife, and she doles out his allowance. In the Christian and Islamic world, divine power is usually thought of as male, whereas in Japan, "women were considered from ancient times to have a special supernatural power, with which men were not endowed, to communicate with the divine."⁽⁹⁾

The Women's Movement, American Style

The Feminine Mystique, written by Betty Friedan in 1963, took the country and the world by storm. Friedan legitimized women's yearning for fulfillment and presented grounds for their dissatisfaction, arguing that society tried to make women conform to the housewife model and not to seek careers. She became the spokesperson for women's rights not only in the U.S. but in the world. In 1966, Friedan helped to found the National Organization for Women (NOW) to fight for the equal rights of women. She led a nationwide protest called the Women's Strike for Equality on Aug. 26, 1970. Ironically, this date was the 50th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment (women's voting rights) in the United States. Eleanor Roosevelt pressured John F. Kennedy to appoint more women to government office and was herself appointed chairperson of the Commission of Woman, which Kennedy created in 1960.

Congress passed the Equal Pay Act in 1963. In 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibited all discrimination on the basis of sex as well as on the basis of race. The House and the Senate finally passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) after 55 years of women's efforts.

With the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, the women's movement

picked up momentum rapidly. In the 1970s, the long-held discontent, now legitimized, found an outlet for expression. The movement Friedan helped to create grew beyond her wildest dreams and changed not only women's lives but men's lives as well. In the late 1970s, however, it began to fracture into factionalism, male-bashing, and preoccupation with sexual and identity politics, which invited male backlash. Friedan tried to galvanize men and women into removing the political and economic inequality between genders, but the movement raced forward beyond her control into a sexual politics she later found troubling. Another negative side-effect was "full-time homemaker bashing." Women who chose to become full-time homemakers were scorned. Many women tried to be "super-women" who could excel both in a career and at home, often at the cost of their own and their families' physical and mental health.

In the 1970s there was a flurry of publications by women about women, including *The Managerial Woman*. The authors, Hennig and Jardim, were graduates of Harvard Business School, and in 1973 they founded the Graduate Program in Management at Simmons College, a women's college in Boston. They became two of the most sought-after speakers in the United States. Their book marked another milestone for the women's movement and was translated into many languages. In the same year, the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, an organization of like-minded women who wanted to take their health matters into their own hands, published *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. It was the most comprehensive book on women's physical and mental health to date and became a bible for women's health around the world. Japan was one of the first countries to translate and publish it in another language.

In 1960, in the U.S. 35 percent of women were in the workforce. By 1987 that figure had grown to 65 percent. "Dressing for success" followed, and business suits for women aiming for or in managerial positions were the order of the day. But there was a dark side to the advancement of women in the workplace. Many of them delayed or relinquished marriage and motherhood. Divorce rates soared. If the 1980s was the watershed decade in the American career women's movement, the 1990s was the age of self-reflection and enlightenment for both genders. Slowly there were efforts to come together to honor homemaking by women and men. A small return-to-the-home movement was begun by 1980s super-moms who wanted to concentrate on raising children and family building.

The main difference between these mothers and the housewife of the 1950s was that women of the 1980s were more likely to have a college education and were homemakers by choice.

Hennig and Jardim say in *The Managerial Woman* that women's work experience with volunteer organizations in managing large budgets, making policies, and supervising personnel can be valuable assets when they are ready to enter the job market. Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic leader, is a perfect example of this. She raised five children while doing volunteer work in politics, and in 1987, at the age of 47, ran for the first time for an elected office. Dr. Susan Roosevelt Weld, a direct descendant of the 26th president of the U.S., Theodore Roosevelt, is a noted scholar of ancient Chinese civilization and law, and mother of five children. At a women's symposium, Dr. Weld strongly encouraged volunteer work for homemakers while the children are growing up as an ideal career building road for young mothers.

As the number of women pursuing careers increased, the number of daycare facilities multiplied to accommodate them. Flexible working hours were incorporated more widely into corporate culture. Fifty-six percent of mothers with young children worked full time in 1991, and 44 percent were full-time homemakers. More and more women were earning an MBA, considered at the time a ticket to climbing the corporate ladder. After several years of saber-rattling, name-calling, soul-searching, and sometimes contentious dialogue between men and women, the gender barrier gradually began to break down.

Conclusion

In the foregoing sections, I have examined changes in women's culture in two distinctly different societies, Japan and the United States, set in motion by the same life-altering event — war. Japan, a small, ancient island nation with poor natural resources, and the United States, a young, robust nation of enormous wealth, were forever altered by the war that pitted them against each other.

The postwar strategies of Japan and the United States were understandably different. Japan began from the ground up to rebuild the nation along democratic lines with the creation of a new Constitution and strong support by the U.S.

Besides dealing with the normal consequences of war, losing their fathers, husbands and sons, lack of food and other daily necessities, Japan's city-dwelling women experienced calamitous firebombing during the latter part of the war. These experiences forced them into new roles, new responsibilities, and gave them an impetus for new thinking, stirring new ambitions that would question established norms regarding the place of women in a society steeped in its centuries-old differential treatment of women. To a nation that had never, in historical memory, been attacked by an outside power, the bombing of Tokyo and other cities and the defeat and occupation by foreign forces were something unthinkable. Yet, in retrospect, they led to greater freedom for women.

In the United States, the women's equality movement started brewing in the 1870s, but the country was still young. Later, the Great Depression of 1929 -1933 nearly destroyed the economy of this young nation. It is probably not an overstatement to say that World War II "saved" America. It is also not a coincidence that the Civil Rights movement for African-Americans picked up momentum after the war and ran parallel to the women's movement, helping its growth and progress.

American women have made enormous progress in securing equal rights with men and continue to set an example for the world to follow. There are now a woman secretary of state, women governors, women university presidents, and CEOs of large corporations. Legislation has been passed to make the workplace more friendly to women. American women continue to strive for complete equality, meaning "the same" as men, and many women are offended if they are thought of differently; witness the recent uproar over remarks made at a public forum by the president of Harvard University that men and women might have different inborn aptitudes.

"The Japanese do not feel that equality is part of the Natural Order of things... Therefore, they can readily accept certain stations in the Japanese social hierarchy without a great deal of jealousy and resentment..."⁽¹⁰⁾ Another important aspect of Japanese culture is the high status of motherhood and the way in which it is considered a full-time occupation. Also, a "longing for harmony and their abhorrence of an open clash of opinions..." and their preference for "more subtle ways of adjusting conflicts and achieving consensus..."⁽¹¹⁾ slow the process

of seeking explicit equality. From the standpoint of the Japanese woman, "seeking equality on a scale where the mean is determined by male behavior hardly seems likely to offer women what they really want."⁽¹²⁾

The robust roots of democracy in Japan do not run as deep as in America, and there is not the same feeling about it, as freedom was not something Japanese women had to fight for. They do not have the passion for it that Americans do, nor do they feel it is their sacred heritage. The Japanese concept of individualism and equality has different meanings from what Americans believe. The Japanese have done with democracy what they have done for millennia: take in a good idea from another culture, adapt and improve it to suit their national character and tradition. Edwin Reischauer says of Japanese democracy: "...it appears to measure up quite well as an effective system of democratic rule, not notably inferior to those of the West and perhaps stronger in some respects..."⁽¹³⁾

I have no doubt that Japanese women will continue to learn from the women's movement in America and adapt it to suit their culture and temperament to make it work for Japan.



写真1 American family, 1944



写真2 Tokyo, 1945

Notes:

1. Iwao, Sumiko, *The Japanese Woman*. Harvard University Press, 1993, p.4.
2. *Tokyo Jogakkan hyakunenshi*. Tokyo Jogakkan, 1988, p.1.
3. Itoh, Setsu, et. al. *Josei Bunka to Jendaa*, p.12, 2002. Ochanomizu Shobo.
4. Reischauer, Edwin O., *The Japanese*. Charles E. Tuttle, 1978, p.85.
5. Barone, Michael, *Our Country: The Shaping of America*. The Free Press, 1990, p.197.
6. *Modern Times: 1950-Present Day*. www.angel.com/ca/historygals/elisa.html
7. Iwao, p.4.
8. Ibid., p.4.
9. Reischauer, p.329.
10. Iwao, p.3.
11. Nakane, Chie, *Japanese Society*. University of California Press, 1970, p.150.
12. Iwao, p.3.
13. Reischauer, p.327.

Bibliography (in alphabetical order by author)

- 荒木愛子 (1991) 『ネバー・ギブアップ』経営士サービスセンター, 東京.
 荒木東一郎 (1971) 『能率一代記』日本能率協会, 東京.
 坂東真理子 (2005) 「アメリカの戦後統治と日本の女性政策」『昭和女子大学女性文化研究所紀要』No.32
- Barone, Michael (1990) *Our country: Shaping of America*, The Free Press, New York.
 DeLong, J. Bradford (1997) *The Great Crash and the Great Slump*, University of California, Berkeley.
 Dower, John W. (1999) *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York.
 Friedan, Betty (1963) *The Feminine Mystique*, The Harvard University Press.
 Gibney, Frank ed. (1995) *Senso*, An East Gate Book, New York.
 ゴードン・ベアテ・シロタ (1995) 『1945年のクリスマス: 日本国憲法に「男女平等」を書いた女性の自伝』柏書房, 東京.
 Hennig, Margaret and Jardim, Anne (1976) *The Managerial Woman*, Anchor Press/Doubleday.
 井出文子 (1975) 『「青鞥」の女たち』海燕書房, 東京.
 飯野正子, 亀田帛子, 高橋裕子編 (2000) 『津田梅子を支えた人びと』津田塾大学 (販売: 有斐閣), 東京.
 Iwao, Sumiko (1993) *The Japanese Woman*, Harvard University Press.
 Nakane, Chie (1970) *Japanese Society*, University of California Press.
 中尾富枝 (2003) 『「青鞥」の火の娘: 荒木郁子と九州ゆかりの女たち』, 熊本日日新聞社, 熊本.
 Nash, Gerald D (1979) *The Great Depression and World War II*, St. Martin's Press.
 Phillips, Cabell. (1975) *The 1940: The Decade of Triumph and Trouble*, Macmillan.
 Reischauer, Edwin O. (1978) *The Japanese*, Charles E. Tuttle.
 菅原真理子 (1980) 『女性は消費者のみにあらず』サイマル出版会, 東京.

要旨

特別寄稿：女性史としての彼女の物語シリーズ 第1回

第二次世界大戦が日本とアメリカの女性たちの発展に与えた影響

第二次世界大戦が日米両国の女性の発展につながった事は、否定できない。いや、戦争がカタリスト（触媒）になって「天命」をもたらしたともいえよう。マイケル・バローニ氏は、*Our Country, Shaping of America* に言う。「The year 1947 was a hinge in American history, a time in which the country changed quite markedly from one thing into another.」(c.1990, p.197) 彼の言葉は、日本にも当てはまるのではないか。1947年の日本は敗戦後の焼け野原から立ち上がり、男女同権、女性参政権、デモクラシーなど目の回るように新しい思想が次々とアメリカから入ってきた。日本も「...changed quite markedly from one thing into another」と言えるのではないか。

寄稿するにあたり、戦争が女性たちに与えた影響、戦後のハプニングがどういう道をたどって女性の発展に貢献したか、日本とアメリカの違ったアプローチを、この時代を歩んだ著者自身の体験も含めて調べてみた。今日の女性は私どもが若いころには夢にも見ない自由、権利を持っているが、その自由、権利に対する姿勢は、良し悪しは別として、日本とアメリカとは根本的に違うと思う。2千年以上の歴史を持つ島国、和を大事にする国日本、戦争で始まって三百年にもならない若い国、個人の権利を大事にする大国アメリカ、お互いに学ぶことは多い。