1 Introduction

In the 1970s, a group of women called themselves '*Tatakau Onnatachi*' – 'Women who Fight', or 'Fighting Women'. They were part of a movement of women's liberationists, disillusioned with the sexism of their male comrades in the 'New Left' and vigilant about threats to their bodily autonomy through proposals to tighten Japan's relatively liberal postwar abortion laws.[1] Their movement had much in common with women's liberationists in the other capitalist democracies and they received inspiration from their sisters in other countries. They were also, however, responding to the dilemmas of their own situation in an increasingly prosperous capitalist nation.

Some of these 1970s feminists also went on to explore the history of women in their own country, and came to discover a history of feminism in Japan which stretched back at least to the 1870s. In every decade of Japan's modern history, men and women had been addressed in gender-specific ways in government policies and political statements and through cultural products. In every decade, some women (and a few men) had challenged accepted ways of thinking about women, men and society. This book is the story of those women who fought to create new visions of society and new kinds of relationships between women and men, from the nineteenth century to the present day.

Feminists in the 1970s developed various strategies of understanding and changing their situation. Some engaged in consciousness-raising in an attempt to understand the politics of everyday life and everyday relationships. Others became activists and addressed demands for reform to the government, private companies and the institutions of the mass media. Some were led to develop the academic discipline of women's studies, and to challenge the ways in which scholars from pre-existing academic disciplines had described – or failed to describe – women's experiences. Some scholars and activists were interested in the spatial dimensions of power relations – the ways in which their situation as women in Japan was linked with that of men and women in other parts of the world.[2] Others were more interested in the temporal dimensions of their situation. They

explored the links between their own situation and that of women of earlier generations.[3]

In exploring their own history, feminists in Japan found that there were certain concepts which were important to understanding their situation. In Japan, as in other capitalist countries, modernity involved the development of new relationships based on class and gender, unlike the status-based relationships of feudal and pre-modern societies. Individuals in modern societies understand their place in society through discourses of citizenship. In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japan, individuals aspired to active citizenship, despite official structures which positioned them as subjects of the Emperor. After the revised Constitution became effective in 1947, the gendered nature of citizenship became all the more apparent. As I argue in more detail below, the history of feminist movements demonstrates that embodiment is another concept which is essential to understanding the gendered politics of citizenship. This is not a case of reviving the association of woman with 'the body' and men with 'the mind'. Rather, the kinds of issues that have been highlighted by feminist activists draw attention to the fact that we are all 'embodied citizens'.

Modernity and postmodernity

Feminist consciousness in Japan was forged as part of the development of a specific form of modernity. Modernity has been described as a set of economic and social conditions, including 'capitalism, bureaucracy, technological development', accompanied by specific 'experiences of temporality and historical consciousness'.[4] It is a feature of modernity that contemporary society is understood in terms of a series of oppositions between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. In the Japanese case, the 'tradition' against which modernity was defined was that of a feudal economy, hierarchical relationships, and the military rule of the Shōguns. The process whereby societies are transformed from feudal to capitalist is known as 'modernisation', and it involves 'scientific and technological innovation, the industrialization of production, rapid urbanization, an ever-expanding capitalist market [and] the development of the nation-state'.[5] Specific cultural forms accompanying these developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are known under the label of 'modernism'.[6] There was another dimension to these debates in the Japanese case, for the understanding of modernity and modernisation was overlaid with theories of cultural difference. Japan, like other Asian countries, was the subject of Orientalist projections of an essential difference from European forms of modernity. Japanese intellectuals resisted

these projections of their own country but also developed ideas about Japan's own difference from neighbouring Asian countries.[7]

The formation of the modern nation-state also involves the constitution of individuals as national subjects and the development of new forms of governance. Although discourses of nationalism appear to be based on universalism, on principles of treating all citizens as equivalent, there are in fact various exclusions built into the practices of modern nation-states. Such exclusions, however, have been naturalised in various ways. Women and men, working class and bourgeoisie, and members of ethnic groups from outside the mainstream are constructed as different from each other, and these differences are often presented as being based on natural attributes. A major part of the history of modern political systems has been the attempts by members of marginalised groups to have their claims for inclusion in the national community recognised, along with the right to participate in the governance of the nation. These two aspects of citizenship have been referred to as 'national belonging' (being seen as part of the national community) and 'governmental belonging' (being seen to have a 'natural' role in the management of the nation).[8] Men and women in Japan were interpellated by state discourses in gender-specific ways. Feminism was one response to the development of these gendered nationalist identities.

Japanese modernity was also, however, a specific form of colonial modernity.[9] Japanese culture was imbued with the features of a colonial and imperial power, and the identity of Japanese people was the identity of imperial subjects: 'imperial' in the twin senses of serving an emperor and of being expected to provide support for an imperialist state. Japanese colonialism and imperialism also developed as a response to the threat of European imperialism in the late nineteenth century. Projections of Japan's difference from other Asian countries were linked with notions of a hierarchy of nations.

In the creation of a modern industrialised nation-state, women were ascribed the role of 'good wives and wise mothers' whose primary role was in the reproduction and socialisation of children, and as passive supporters of a 'wealthy country and strong army' (*fukoky kyōhei*). A particular ideology of familialism was fostered, whereby the family formed a crucial link in the chain of loyalty from subject to emperor. The late nineteenth century also, however, saw the dissemination of liberal ideas and made possible the first theorisation of feminism. Several prominent feminist activists were nurtured in the movement for 'freedom and popular rights' (*Jiyū Minken Undō*) of the 1870s and 1880s, while some middle-class women engaged in philanthropic activities as a form of quasi-political activity which did not challenge feminine stereotypes.

Other women were interested in exploring the meanings of individualism for women, and exploring the active expression of women's sexuality. These 'new women', in their experiments in the first decades of the twentieth century, came up against the dilemmas which faced heterosexually active women, and debated issues of reproductive control. They considered the forms of social policy necessary for women to achieve independence without sacrificing their reproductive roles, and some moved on to campaign for women's suffrage.

In the 1970s, the women's liberation movement developed out of a critique of modern Japanese capitalism, a dissatisfaction with the sexism of the New Left, and the need of women in Japan to theorise their place in East Asia. In the 1980s, debates around so-called 'protective' legislation highlighted class differences between women, while more recent discussions have considered the relationships between women and men in Japan and the people of other Asian countries. This has involved a consideration of the relationship between gender inequality and other systems of inequality based on class, 'race' and ethnicity.

Political discussions in the latter decades of the twentieth century focused on placing Japan in debates on postmodernity.[10] These discussions focused on the concepts of postmodernity, denoting a state or condition of society, and postmodernism, a constellation of cultural phenomena, characterised by parody, irony, pastiche and deconstructive forms of critique. One element of postmodernity is postindustrialism as a particular stage of capitalist development, characterised by the dominance of transnational capital, the growth of a service economy, and the development of new technologies of information and communication.[11] The most recent developments include a consciousness of the processes of globalisation, including the globalisation of labour markets, the rapid transformation of communications technology, and the circulation of signs, symbols, people and finance. These developments mean that it is difficult to contain the narrative of feminism as a political movement within the boundaries of one nation-state.

Citizenship

The changing relationships between women, men and the state can be brought into focus effectively by considering the concept of 'citizenship', a concept which has received increasing attention from political scientists in recent years. Citizenship is generally discussed in the context of the legal and institutional structures which determine who has the legal right to participate in the political systems of voting and elected governments.

From this point of view, the criteria for citizenship vary from country to country. We can also identify striking differences between Imperial Japan and postwar Japan.[12] Citizenship also implies the duties which are linked with these rights: these duties involve liability for taxation and, in some systems, the performance of military service. Under the Meiji system, which required military service of adult males, women's claims to citizenship could be devalued.[13]

These legal structures do not, however, exhaust the discourse on citizenship. More recent ways of looking at citizenship have considered less tangible aspects of political participation. The relationships between individual and state are also mediated through familial structures. This may take the form of ideologies which relegate women to the domestic sphere, a sphere seen to be divorced from the public world of politics. The sexual division of labour in the home also determines the different ways in which women and men participate in waged labour, another aspect of the relationship between individual and state. Those who engage in full-time employment are often seen to have the legitimacy to approach the state as citizens with demands. Those who are engaged in part-time work or domestic labour do not share such legitimacy.

Citizenship in this broader sense also involves the possibility of participating in public discourse on political issues. In addition to restrictions on women's participation in the electoral system, many governments have restricted women's freedom of speech. Japanese governments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century prevented women from attending or speaking at public meetings. Even after such formal restrictions were relaxed, notions of suitable feminine behaviour sometimes resulted in ridicule of women who attempted to address political issues in public forums. Women who venture into public space may be seen to be transgressing a conceptual boundary.

All of these legal, institutional and ideological barriers to women's political participation were present in Imperial Japan. According to the political system under the Meiji Constitution of 1890, the Japanese people were positioned as subjects rather than as citizens, subjects whose duties and limited rights were granted by the Emperor. Subjecthood was explicitly gendered under this system. Women were not included in the very limited franchise of 1890, and, even after the removal of property qualifications for voting for adult males in 1925, women continued to be excluded on the grounds of sex alone. In addition, Article 5 of the Public Peace Police Law (*Chian Keisatsu Hō*) of 1900 prevented them from convening a political meeting, speaking on political matters in public or joining political organisations. These provisions were modified in 1922

to allow them to attend and speak at political meetings, but they could not vote or join political parties until revision of the Electoral Law in December 1945.

In the Meiji system, women were doubly subject: subject to the Emperor, and subject to the authority of the father in the patriarchal family. The patriarchal family was the basis of authority relations in this system and was the site where individuals learned the gendered nature of subjecthood. This was backed up by the provisions of the Meiji Civil Code, promulgated in 1898. The structure of constitutional, civil and commercial law implemented in the Meiji period was effective until after the Second World War.

These legal and institutional structures were supported by ideological attention to the duties of subjects and the gendered nature of subjecthood. Men were required to fulfil the duty of military service, which was connected to their political rights. Women, who were not required to do military service, thus had a different relationship to the state, one that was mediated through the patriarchal family system. They were explicitly excluded from most of the rights of citizenship, while their duties were set out in gendered terms. Despite ideologies which relegated women to the domestic sphere, many women were engaged in waged work. Official views of women as workers, however, did not link this service with claims to citizenship. Rather, women as workers became the objects of state 'protection' in the form of factory legislation, designed to ensure that they would be able to produce healthy subjects.

These legal, institutional and ideological restrictions, however, did not prevent women from aspiring to be citizens. They first of all addressed the state in demands in the 1900s for the right to participate in political meetings. In the 1910s, the magazine *Seitō* (Bluestocking) provided a forum for the discussion of such hitherto taboo subjects as sexuality, reproductive control and prostitution in the context of a celebration of women's creativity. The poetic imagery of Hiratsuka Raichō[14] and Yosano Akiko continues to inspire modern feminists. Various strands of feminist thought – maternalist, anarchist, liberal individualist, socialist – were represented in *Seitō*, and former 'Bluestockings' graduated to feminist activism on various fronts: suffragism, labour activism, and anarchism.

The contradictions engendered by performing waged labour in a context where women were only visible as 'good wives and wise mothers' were addressed by socialist women's groups (some of which predated the better-known *Seitō* group), and many women moved into labour activism. Debates on so-called protective legislation for women workers, and on state assistance for supporting mothers, focused attention on the relationship between class and gender in political theory and practice. Feminists

needed to convince their male colleagues in the labour movement that women were not only 'workers' but also potential unionists. Although socialist women's activism and liberal feminism are often presented as being antagonistic to each other, there was some co-operation between suffragists and centre-left women's organisations in the 1920s and 1930s.

Women engaged in campaigns for women's suffrage in the 1920s and 1930s. Female activists also addressed the state with demands specifically related to their positions as women: in campaigns for the enactment of improved labour legislation for women workers, and in the birth control movement. Women were also keen to participate in public discourse on political issues and contributed to a range of publications.

The years leading up to and including the Second World War provide a useful focus for considering the gendering of state institutions, as women's groups framed their responses to imperialism, and women were addressed in various forms of official and unofficial discourse which sought to enlist their support for national policy. While many women's magazines affirmed the subordination of women's demands to an increasingly militarist and imperialist state, feminists and other reformers used liberal discourse in attempts to promote the issue of birth control. Birth control was seen, however, to threaten the national policy of pro-natalism.

Although feminism in Japan was often implicitly pacifist, the theorisation of a coherent feminist alternative to nationalism and militarism was to prove difficult. In the 1930s, conservative women and some progressive women felt it necessary to provide support for the war effort. The contradictions of the 1930s are highlighted by the campaigns for state assistance for supporting mothers and by the repressive state attitudes towards birth control. The late 1920s and early 1930s, however, also saw a late flowering of anarchist feminism, and significant strike activity as women workers suffered most severely under economic depression.

There was extensive restructuring of the Japanese Constitution and legal system during the period of Allied Occupation from 1945 to 1952. Under the postwar Japanese system, as outlined in the Constitution of 1947, the people are now positioned as citizens with inalienable rights, and 'freedom from discrimination' is enshrined as one of these rights. Women were finally granted the citizenship rights which they had been campaigning for since the 1920s. On paper at least, the postwar system enshrines the principles of liberal democracy. However, in considering the place of women in this system, we can see the very limits of such liberal democracy. The barriers to their political participation lie not in political structures and the legal system, but in the familial structures and employment practices which shape their activities in the public sphere. While there were sweeping changes in the legal position of Japanese women on

paper, in the postwar period it was still difficult for women to construct an alternative identity which did not equate femininity with maternity.

In the immediate postwar period, a number of women were able to carry out political activity without challenging received notions of femininity. Pacifist activity echoed the pre-1945 linkage of pacifism and maternalism; consumerist groups moved from kitchens and supermarkets to consumer testing laboratories; and environmentalists attempted to 'clean up' the environment. As the boundaries of the home were stretched to the limits, 'traditional' feminine identity also showed severe signs of strain. However, these groups tended to work as pressure groups and lobbyists, rather than attempting to participate directly in parliamentary politics.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the involvement of some women with the student left, and a questioning of military and strategic issues through the crisis surrounding the renewal of the Japan–US Security Treaty in 1960, radicalised intellectual women. One notable group, as we have seen, called themselves 'Fighting Women' and challenged feminine stereotypes by this defiant act of naming. Meanwhile, the expansion of women's participation in paid (part-time) labour revived pre-1945 debates on the compatibility of reproduction, childcare and paid labour. Issues of sexuality and reproductive control were also re-examined in this period, often with a background of theoretical works translated into Japanese from European languages. Other writers showed an interest in Japan's own feminist tradition, with one journal calling itself 'The New *Seitō*', referring back to the 'Bluestockings' of the 1910s.[15]

In the 1970s and early 1980s, demands for equal opportunity legislation revived discussion on protective legislation. Business required the removal of 'protective' provisions, while feminists focused on the sexual division of labour in the home which made such 'protection' necessary. It was argued that the conditions of male workers made it impossible for them to engage in reproductive labour, while it was impossible for women with domestic responsibilities to engage in waged labour on the same terms as men. Although some aspects of this discussion echoed the 'motherhood protection' debate of the late 1910s, the political and discursive context was quite different, as it was carried out under a new constitutional system, with the development of different employment patterns.

It became apparent that the vulnerable position of women in the labour market could not be corrected by legislation alone, particularly when the union movement had failed to support the large numbers of temporary, casual and part-time workers who often happened to be female. Discussion of equal opportunity highlighted the necessity of women's reproductive labour. Women were responsible not only for the physical reproduction of the population but also for the reproductive labour

involved in raising children, supporting the educational system, providing the domestic labour which allowed men to fulfil roles as workers and citizens, and looking after children, the sick, the handicapped and the aged.

The taxation system and employment practices in the current system make it disadvantageous for married women to engage in full-time employment, thus conditioning their 'choice' to engage in part-time work. This very choice, however, affects women's legitimacy to engage in public, political activities. Their activities as 'part-timers' and in domestic labour are not accorded the same respect as those of full-time permanent male employees. In postwar Japan, the ability of women to engage in full-time waged labour is still determined by the sexual division of labour in most homes.

In postwar Japan, too, ideologies of suitable feminine behaviour affect the ability of women to function effectively in the public sphere as political agents. Some responded by engaging in political activities which are consonant with the ideology of maternalism. Others developed a more explicitly feminist position. Gender, however, also interacts with other systems of inequality in determining the individual's relationship to the state. Citizens are not only gendered but also constructed according to classed, racialised and ethnicised groupings.

Any consideration of women's and men's relationship with the state must consider not only legal and institutional structures but also the ideologies which interact with these structures in various ways. In Imperial Japan, women were positioned as gendered subjects whose ability to engage in public, political behaviour was restricted by legal, institutional and ideological structures. The contradictions of capitalist development also, however, provided the conditions for the mobilisation of political groups on the basis of class and gender, and women, too, aspired to be citizens. In postwar Japan, most of these legal and institutional restrictions have been removed, but the conditions of waged work and the sexual division of labour in the home ensure that men and women enter the public sphere from different social locations, and this conditions their legitimacy as actors in the political process. Feminist activists have attempted to gain legitimacy as political activists, while speaking from a position which recognises the different social locations of men and women under present-day society and which places gender difference in the context of other kinds of 'difference'.

Recent developments include a critique of the gendered relationships between women and men in Japan and other Asian men and women; attempts to form new structures of union activity which can mobilise temporary and part-time workers; consideration of the effects of technological change; attention to problems of cultural representation;

discussion of sexuality; and attempts by feminist activists to change the conventions of Japanese political activity from inside and outside the established political parties. In the 1970s, campaigns around prostitution and tourism in Southeast Asia focused feminist attention on the interaction between systems of gender, class, 'race', ethnicity and sexuality.[16] In recent years, the understanding of such systems has been historicised through a focus on the gendered, classed, racialised and ethnicised dimensions of sexual practices revealed through an exploration of the wartime military prostitution system and the contemporary entertainment districts surrounding military installations in Okinawa and mainland Japan.

The earliest feminists responded to a political system which allowed only one creative role for women – as mothers – and rendered them invisible as workers. One response of early Japanese feminism was a reclamation of women's artistic creativity, but a further task has been the creation of a new identity, a new political subjectivity which would position women as creators of political change. As we shall see, this was an embodied subjectivity: women also had to deal with the specificities of gendered and sexed bodies, and with state policies which attempted to control their sexuality and their reproductive capacity.

Embodiment

In a recent collection of essays on Japanese modernity, Dipesh Chakrabarty has challenged historians to write a history of 'embodied practices of subjectivity'.[17] The history of feminism in Japan provides an opportunity to consider the gendered dimensions of embodied practices, and the struggles over these practices, allowing us to explore some of the questions raised by Chakrabarty:

> (a) what is the history of the embodied subject?, (b) how does it connect to the history of state-formation?, and (c) what are the moments where one history exceeds the other (for it is in these moments of excess that we glimpse the possibilities of other and alternative developments)?[18]

The question of embodiment is also intimately linked with concepts of citizenship. In recent discussions of citizenship and social policy, it has been argued that the workings of social policy can only be fully understood if we recognise that apparently impartial policies may impact differently on those in different social locations, and may impact differently according to the embodied differences which are given social meaning. It has often been feminist activists who have been engaged in a critique of the ways in which embodied differences are given social meaning. Moira Gatens has commented: