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**JAPANESE WOMEN IN BUSINESS:  
YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW**

By

Yoko Takeuchi

B.A., Meijigakuin University (Tokyo, Japan), 1977

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Business Administration

University of Montana

1987

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Japan recovered rapidly after World War II. Her amazing postwar economic growth caught the world's attention. In the relatively brief forty-year period since the war, Japan greatly expanded her position as a trade center with Western nations, and her economy became fully industrialized. As a result, for many years the world's business community has focused on Japan's economy and business style. The Japanese management system is a popular topic on college campuses and in boardrooms worldwide.

Despite Japan's economic success, Japanese society still excludes its women from full participation in the business mainstream. Japanese women lag far behind their American peers, for example. Why have Japanese women been unable to expand their position? What are the barriers to their advancement? This paper's objective is to clarify this issue and identify some of those barriers. To accomplish this, the chapters examine: the historical and cultural roots of Japanese business practices and how they affect women; past and present data describing women's participation in the work force; and the current situation and some forces that may bring about future changes.

First, this study outlines three phases of Japanese history, starting with the seventeenth century. These include a period of deliberate isolation from the outside world, and the subsequent modernization after the Meiji Restoration. The last period is the postwar occupation, which precipitated enormous social and economic changes for Japanese women.

The discussion moves next to Japanese women's actual working conditions. Included is a look at chronological data and an examination of women's position in business. Other chapters review women's general role in society and describe centuries-old practices that have limited women's advancement. Remnants of these feudalistic practices still cling to contemporary business practices.

The final chapter looks at Japanese working women's current situation. Industrial changes, technological advancements, and an evolving social climate, caused in part by the baby-boom generation, have helped Japanese women to expand their role in the work place. This expansion has challenged the traditional Japanese management system. The study concludes with some thoughts on how Japanese women might fulfil their desire to be fully equal to men in the work place.



## Chapter 2

### **HISTORICAL REVIEW**

This chapter looks at the three historical periods that comprise Japan's history from the early seventeenth century to the present. The discussion centers on how each era's cultural and social developments affected and how the lingering effects of those impacts influence women's place in today's business environment.

The discussion looks first at the Edo era. Developments concerning this era's social structure strongly impacted women's roles. Also, some business customs still followed today originated in this period. Next is the Meiji Restoration, which helped reopen Japan to the West and make it a modern nation yet did not completely reform feudalistic practices. In fact, women's second-class citizenship became a legal reality during this period. The post-World War II (WW II) American occupation brought radical social and economic reforms as women entered the work force to assist Japan's reconstruction. As a result, women's position was substantially upgraded.

#### **The Role Of The Edo Era (1603-1867)**

Tokugawa Ieyasu succeeded in centralizing Japan and

establishing a strong, feudal society. Thereafter, the Tokugawa family dominated Japan by establishing a class system, adopting Confucianism as a moral code, and setting up a social structure that emphasized the family system. This period demanded men's loyalty to lord and women's chastity based on the Confucian moral code. The class system created a power hierarchy. Head and subordinate relationships became deep-rooted in society. In particular, society dictated that only men could be a family head, and that women obey men on every occasion. Thus, this period imposed gender-norm roles of women and men, and women were bound to the household.

Another significant event was the closing of the Japanese door to the outside world. As a result, Japanese society became more strongly homogenous and earlier customs became rock-solid social norms. Additionally, the closed door policy contributed to national commercial development, and wealthy merchants established traditional customs still exercised in today's business environment.

### **The Role Of Meiji Era (1867-1912)**

Japan's modernization began in this period with an external threat, arrival of U.S. Commodore Perry's military fleet. The Meiji government recognized Japan's deteriorated position in the world and her need for the advanced technology of Western society. Under the new slogan, "rich country; strong

military," industries developed rapidly; however, real social reforms did not follow. The family system was reinforced in order to strengthen social stability. Thus, the new civil code legally imposed an old social order: family headship was only for men and women were second place to men.<sup>1</sup> The education system was also reformed, yet higher education remained exclusively for men. Women were still educated to be "a good wife; wise mother." A top national university, Tokyo Imperial University (now Tokyo University) was established, and exclusively educated men as national leaders. These graduates formed a special group called "Gakubatsu"--the university clique.<sup>2</sup> This equivalent of an "old boy's network" remains a strong social group and still maintains its elite role with its members filling national leadership positions in present day Japan.

Modernization of industry began in the 1870s, and new Meiji entrepreneurs emerged. They organized family-held companies with strong links to the government and formed financial oligarchies called "Zaibatsu."<sup>3</sup> The Zaibatsu established a group-oriented business style and became a dominant power in business. They were the origin of Japan's current business

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WORLD WAR II AND THE JAPANESE ECONOMY

<sup>1</sup> Jon Livingston (Ed.), PostWar Japan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), PP. 163.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 392-93.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. PP. 412-64.

structure. The Zaibatsu's overexpansion, with military cooperation, pushed Japan into war.

### American Occupation Post WW II

American occupation began in 1945, immediately after Japan's surrender. Its goal was Japan's demilitarization and democratization. Thus, it precipitated radical social change and particularly affected women's position in the society. The new Japanese constitution was established. Major changes from the old Meiji constitution included limits on the emperor's power, renunciation of the military, protective of human rights, and a revision of women's position.<sup>4</sup>

Individual equal rights were guaranteed and covered freedoms such as freedom of thought, assembly, speech, press, religion, occupation, education and marriage. Women's position was substantially improved in general.<sup>5</sup> Authority over women--the authority of parents, family head, and the husband's authority over his wife--was abolished and all were guaranteed freedom of marriage, divorce, and equality of husband and wife. The new Election Law granted women's suffrage; in the first general election held in 1946, thirty-

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<sup>4</sup> David Lu, Sources Of Japanese History Vol. II (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), PP. 193-201.

<sup>5</sup> Shio Sakanishi, "Women's Position And The Family System" Annals Of The American Academy Of Political & Social Science, Nov. 1956, PP. 130-32.

nine women were elected as Diet members.<sup>6</sup> This election encouraged women in their occupational expansion as well. Overall, women's position was substantially and officially advanced beyond anything in Japan's past history.

Another drastic reform was made in business--the dissolution of the Zaibatsu. These Zaibatsu transformed into another form, enterprise groups called "Keiretsu."<sup>7</sup> A Keiretsu is close to a conglomerate in the American sense. This new form began a strong group-oriented business style, and group leadership posts were occupied by former Zaibatsu. Thus, new Keiretsu still adhere to the strong historical heritage of family system influence. Therefore, family background became a very important qualification for leadership in Keiretsu enterprises. This new oligarchy became a dominant power in business. Thus, because of the feudalistic trappings, women's occupational expansion in these businesses was only on the surface; in depth, nothing changed. This situation of women will be fully explained in the following chapter.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. P. 131.

<sup>7</sup> Jon Livingston (Ed.), Postwar Japan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), PP. 399-400.

## Chapter 3

### JAPANESE WOMEN IN WORK FORCE

Statistical surveys that reflect obvious structural changes in Japanese industry show the historical development of woman's occupational expansion.

In the Edo era (1603-1867), women were bound to the household so that actual working opportunities were non-existent.

After the Meiji Restoration and until WW I, women were still left behind men because, despite the modernization of the nation, established tradition regarding women's roles remained unchanged. Thus, women could not expand their work place outside the home.

After WW I, the overseas women's movement strongly influenced Japanese women. Particularly in Europe and America, women rapidly expanded their involvement in commercial activities. These trends encouraged Japanese women and pushed them out from under their parents' or husbands' umbrellas; yet the variety of occupations was still limited.

In the 1930s, the first structural change of Japanese industries occurred because of Japan's growing military influence. The territorial expansion into China and Korea

spurred industrial change from the primary industries to the secondary industries. Still, women's opportunities to work lagged behind, and women's occupational expansion had to wait until after WW II. American occupation encouraged women's advancement and occupational expansion as well. After WW II, Japanese capitalism was remarkably advanced; this also accelerated women's occupational expansion in business. This situation--after WW II until the present--will be discussed later in this chapter.

**Survey In 1913**

Table 1

A Breakdown of Numbers of Working Women  
in the Industries in 1913.

Industry Total	Numbers of working (in thousand of persons)	Proportion of ( % )
Agriculture	860	71.4
Manufacturing	125	10.4
Commerce and Transportation	120	10.0
Public Servant and Profession	30	2.4
Others (maid)	70	5.8
Total :	1,205	100.0

Source: Yoshiko Akamatsu (Ed.), A Compilation Of The Problems Of Japanese Women (Tokyo: Domes Publishing Co., 1977), PP. 36-39, 516-19.

In 1919, at the 12th Academic Conference of Social Policy Study, two Imperial University professors presented their research on women's working conditions.<sup>6</sup> (see Table 1). They were Professor Morito of Tokyo Imperial University and Professor Kawada of Kyoto Imperial University. In this period, women's population was around 2.5 million so that 50 percent of all women were working. Yet the majority of working women worked in agriculture. This study pointed out the reason for the remarkably high number of women in agriculture.<sup>7</sup> After the Meiji Restoration, Japan spurred modernization of the industries according to the regular worldwide pattern which moves first from the primary industries to the secondary and the tertiary industries. However, in this period, Japanese industries were still infant and Japanese economy was widely supported by small-scaled agriculture. Also, agriculture could not outgrow its household industry's stage. Farmers' income was very limited and they could not hire outside wage workers. Labor for farming was supplied from within the family--grand parents, husband, wife and their children. Thus, women were a very important source of labor for agriculture.

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<sup>6</sup> Yoshiko Akamatsu (Ed.), A Compilation Of The Problems Of Japanese Women (Tokyo: Domes Publishing Co., 1977), P. 517.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. PP. 520-27.



The study also briefly explained details of each industry. It classified manufacturing as the heavy industries such as shipbuilding, steel, mining and construction. Here, almost no working women were reported. Women worked mainly for the light industries such as textile, sewing, silk reeling, fire works and tobacco factories. In 80 percent of light industry, women workers were concentrated in the textile industries such as silk reeling, spinning and textile manufacture. In the commerce and transportation area, an increasing number of office workers (clerks) was reported, yet the majority were bus girls and sales girls. Major office jobs were categorized as typist, telephone operator, receptionist, bookkeeper, and office girl; yet numbers were very limited. Public servant and professionals were listed as one group. Teachers made up the largest part of the public servant category; hair dressers, writers, painters, musicians, actresses, bar hostesses and geisha girls were categorized as the professions. The maid category included nurse maids, kitchen maids, and lady's maids.

After WW I, Japan substantially elevated her position among the industrial countries. However, industries were still in the development stage and working conditions were poor. This can be seen in the textile industries. After the Meiji Restoration, small scale textile factories were mushrooming due to the Meiji government's encouragement. Still the

facilities and working conditions were poor--old machines, no ventilation, no heating, long working hours (at least 12 hours a day), minimum wage and close surveillance. The poor conditions remained after WW I.

Factory girls were all peasants' daughters. They were put into a dormitory and worked under the close watch of a supervisor. A large number of girls suffered from tuberculosis. They were all exploited workers. Until WW II, almost all working women worked for the economic needs of their families; thus, women working outside the home became synonymous with poverty. Therefore, despite increasing liberation of women in the cities, pathfinding in the work place was still difficult because the social climate that belittled working women was deep-rooted. This situation remained until WW II.

#### Survey In 1985-Series 1

In the decade of the 1960s, Japan had the highest economic growth period ever and enjoyed her economic prosperity, known as "miraculous" in the world.<sup>10</sup> Japan's postwar political stability and considerable American aid contributed greatly to Japan's economic development. When the U.S. government forecasted Japan's occupational success, they altered their

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<sup>10</sup> Hugh Borton, Japan's Modern Century (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1970), pp. 514-38.

policies to encourage industrial recovery. The Korean war(1951) aided Japan's industrial expansion as well, because of increasing military goods procured by the United States. Also, postwar land reform spurred modernization and mechanization of agriculture. Thus, surplus labor in agriculture moved to the manufacturing industries, particularly the heavy industries of shipbuilding, steel, petrochemical, and electronics which were still labor intensive industries. This advancement of heavy industries substantially elevated Japan's economy as a whole. This trend can be seen in Table 2.

Labor in Agriculture decreased 76 percent from 1955 to 1970. (see Table 2). On the contrary, manufacturing increased 82 percent in the same period. By 1984, declining agriculture reached one-third (1/3) of its 1955 level. Also, labor decreased not only in agriculture but also in fisheries and mining. By 1984, mining was at only one-fifth (1/5) of its 1955 level and fisheries declined 30 percent from its 1955 level. Thus, industry structure apparently shifted from the primary industries to the secondary industries.

By comparing female and male workers in Table 2, we see that more male workers moved into manufacturing than female workers. This caused a worsening of the agriculture problems--a shortage of labor, a heavy load for women and

declining productions. Small scale farmers were left behind by mechanization which forced them to desert farming and move to cities as industrial laborers. This situation was called "San-Chan-Nogyo" meaning that labor in agriculture was left to grand father(Jii-chan), grand mother(Ba-chan), and mother(Ka-chan).<sup>11</sup> In the country-side, women supported Japanese agriculture and bore up under a heavy load-- farming, household, and bringing up children. However, advancement of the manufacturing and developing service industries expedited labor's movement from household workers to employees.(See Table 3) Particularly, women became more involved in commercial activities away from the household business. From 1955 to 1970, the number of female employees doubled.

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<sup>11</sup> George Allen, The Japanese Economy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), P. 73.

Table 2

Population 15 years old and over, Employed Persons by Industry (1955-1984)  
(in 10 thousand of persons)

Years	Total	Agricul- ture	Fish- eries	Min- ing	Const- ruc- tion	Manu- factu- ring	Whole- sale & Retail	Fin- ance	Trans- porta- tion	Utili- ty	Servi- ces	govern- ment
						Total						
1955	4090	1478	58	45	195	757	761		193		472	131
1965	4730	1046	67	29	328	1150	1008		294		649	158
1975	5223	618	43	16	479	1346	1127	170	332	32	855	196
1984	5766	468	44	8	527	1438	1319	216	341	35	1154	195
						Male						
1955	2390	729	45	38	172	466	426		169		233	112
1965	2852	493	47	26	283	730	561		260		318	133
1975	3270	295	35	15	420	871	619	94	291	28	430	165
1984	3485	232	33	7	450	869	697	119	298	30	572	163
						Female						
1955	1700	749	13	7	23	291	335		24		239	19
1965	1878	553	20	3	45	420	447		34		331	25
1975	1953	323	8	1	59	475	508	76	40	4	425	31
1984	2282	235	11	1	77	569	622	98	42	5	582	33

Source: 1985 Japan Statistical Yearbook (Tokyo: Bureau of Statistics, 1985), P. 72.

Table 3

Population 15 years old and over, Employed Persons  
by Employment Status (1955 - 84)  
(in 10 thousand in persons)

Years	Total	Self- employed	Family workers	Employees
		Total		
1955	4090	1028	1284	1778
1965	4730	939	915	2876
1975	5223	939	628	3646
1984	5766	919	565	4265
		Male		
1955	2390	761	382	1247
1965	2852	666	223	1963
1975	3270	658	127	2479
1984	3485	623	102	2747
		Female		
1955	1700	267	902	531
1965	1878	273	692	913
1975	1953	280	501	1167
1984	2282	296	463	1518

Source: 1985 Japan Statistical Yearbook (Tokyo: Bureau of Statistics, 1985), pp. 72-73.

**Survey In 1985, Series 2**

Table 4

Population 15 years old and over Employed Persons by Occupation (1955-84)  
(in 10 thousands of persons)

Years	Profes- sions & Technical Workers	Manage- ment	Clerk	Sales	Farmer & Fisher- men	Mining	Trans- Portation & Communi- cation	Craftsmen & Process workers	Labor- er	Protic- tive Service
					Total					
1955	190	90	370	543	1503	30	71	1074		219
1965	238	131	636	615	1094	19	177	1236	229	354
1975	364	206	820	738	654	9	237	1580	146	457
1984	528	213	1021	870	504	3	228	1666	220	492
					Male					
1955	121	84	233	292	767	22	65	712		94
1965	142	125	372	345	532	17	157	855	146	160
1975	207	195	405	457	326	9	219	1142	95	207
1984	287	200	460	544	261	3	216	1154	123	222
					Female					
1955	69	6	137	251	736	8	6	362		125
1965	96	6	264	270	562	2	20	381	83	194
1975	156	11	415	282	329	0	17	437	52	250
1984	240	13	561	326	244	0	12	512	97	270

Source: 1985 Japan Statistical Yearbook (Tokyo: Bureau of Statistics, 1985), P. 72.

As seen in Table 4, the number of female employees increased over the thirty year period. In 1955, major women's working places were in agriculture followed by sales, production worker and laborer. In 1970, the number of office workers had increased 2.5 times as compared to the level in 1955. Working for agriculture still remained the major occupation for women but numbers were steadily declining.

By the 1980's, this situation substantially changed. Technical workers and office workers surpassed agriculture workers.(see Table 4). However, women were still left behind in advancement in the work place. This can be seen by comparing the number of female managers and officials to that of males. In 1984, managers's positions were totally dominated by male workers which accounted for 94 percent of the total; thus, women managers were only 6 percent of the whole. (see Table 4). As compared to American women, it very clear that Japanese women were still a few steps behind their American peers.(see Table 5).

This situation applies not only to employees but also to other fields such as teaching and public service. For example, in 1983, 56 percent of elementary school teachers were women, whereas only 2.1 percent of these women were principals. And while 14.1 percent of national civil servants were female, only 0.5 percent of managerial posts in



the service were occupied by women in 1983.<sup>12</sup> Why can Japanese women still not break into managerial positions despite their significantly increasing numbers in business? There are many reasons for this in terms of social and cultural barriers to women's advancement.

Table 5  
Occupations of Female Workers in 1982.  
( in percent )

Occupations	Japanese	American
Professional and Technical work	13	17
<b>Management</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
Clerical workers	32	34
Sales workers	11	6
Service workers	12	20
Agriculture and Fishery workers	1	1
Others	28	16
Total :	100%	100%

Source: Mariko Bando, About Japan Series-5 (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, 1986), P. 18.

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<sup>12</sup> Mariko Bando, About Japan Series-5 (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, 1986), P. 18

In this chapter, the changing women's working situation was discussed. The structural changes in Japanese industry apparently reflected on women's occupational expansion. After the Meiji Restoration (1867) until WW II, women's major working places were in agriculture and the textile industries. Growing military power spurred heavy industry's development. Consequently, male farm workers moved to the cities as industrial labors leaving behind a heavy load for women. In the textile industries, young peasant's daughters were exploited under poor working conditions. After WW II, American occupation brought radical reform regarding women's positions. As a result, women had substantial occupational expansion in many areas of business. Particularly, women could become office workers, once exclusively the domain of men. Women's occupational expansion is still under way in contemporary business. However, in spite of this expansion, the rock-solid traditional practices in business still make management positions a far reach for women. This situation will be fully explained in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4

### ROLES OF WOMEN

Japan was originally a matriarchal society and women had strong influential power in all national affairs--literature, war, politics and so on. In The Kojiki--a compilation of Japanese documents and ancient Japanese myths--women held first place in the myths of creation, and Japan was once ruled by the Sun-goddess called "Amaterasu-Omikami."<sup>13</sup> The Meiji government taught that this goddess, "Amaterasu" is the mother of the Japanese people and all the emperors of Japan have descended from her in an unbroken line.

Other examples of powerful women were Murasaki Shikibu in the eleventh century, Tomoe Gozen in the twelfth century, and Masako in the thirteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Murasaki Shikibu was a lady-in-waiting in the court who wrote the first Japanese novel The Tales of Genji. This novel has been considered the model for the later Japanese novels and Murasaki-Shikibu was said to be the Japanese Shakespeare. Tomoe Gozen appeared with her husband as commander of a squadron in the battlefield. Masako, also called "Nun Shogun," whose husband

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<sup>13</sup> Raymond Weaver, "Japanese Women" Columbia University Quarterly, Apr. 1919, P. 155.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. P. 158

was a great military ruler of Medieval Japan, took over the ruler's position after her husband's death and attempted to organize her country. However, after Masako's period, Japan went into the Age of Civil Wars. The rising warrior's power (samurai) and extended power of Confucian morals in the society caused a gradual lowering of women's position. In the seventeenth century, Tokugawa Ieyasu succeeded in bringing the war to an end and established a centralized nation. The policy of Ieyasu further deteriorated women's position and literally set them far behind men. This feudal era set up a strong philosophy--men are superior to women. The matriarchal society became patriarchal--male dominant society. Women were asked three types of obedience: obedience to parents when young, obedience to husband when married, and obedience to children when aged.<sup>15</sup> Even after the Meiji Restoration, women were still educated to be "a good wife and wise mother."

After WW II--despite radical social reform by the American occupation which guaranteed equal opportunities for men and women regarding education, occupation, wages and marriage--actual practices were unchanged. Established Tokugawa tradition in the society was rock-solid.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. P. 160.

### Social Tendency Toward Women

What established Tokugawa tradition is man's predominance over woman. In the society in general, men are considered capable unless proven otherwise; women are considered incompetent unless proven otherwise. If a man fails, he will be called a personal failure. However, if a woman fails, she will not be accused personally; women as a whole will be said to be failures. Given this background, a source of pride for men is working for the family. If a man allows his wife to work outside the home, he is said to be a poor provider. This social tendency comes from Confucianism, particularly that of the Tokugawa era. This period set up the hierarchy based on sex norms. Within this framework, men are absolutely superior to women, and the family head (only men) holds the predominant position over the rest of the family; and in any group, the group head has absolute authority and the rest of the members are totally subordinate to him. This rigid hierarchy system created distinctive deep-rooted sex roles in the society—"men at work and women in the home."

Recent opinion surveys conducted by the Prime Minister's Office in 1982 indicated that this tendency is still supported, and not viewed as a feudalistic tradition at all.<sup>16</sup> In 1982, 71 percent polled felt that a man should

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<sup>16</sup> Mariko Bando, About Japan Series-5 (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, 1986), pp. 44-46.

work and a woman keep house. This declined from 83 percent in 1972 but is still very high as compared to the other three industrially advanced nations mentioned in the same survey: the U.S.A.(34%), West Germany (33%), and Britain(26%). Consequently, this social tendency affects women's advancement to management positions in business. No matter how hard she works or how bright and talented she is, promotion always passes over her and goes to her peer--a man. So, modern business is still bound to the old-fashioned, feudalistic remnant family system. In other words, men are still not comfortable in a subordinate position under a woman's command.

Another reason for working women's lower position is the establishment of prostitution as an occupation for women. This can be traced back to the feudal era. Under the warrior dominated society, women had no place to work outside the home. In this period, a woman could work only as a hair dresser, live-in maid, teacher of singing and dancing and as a geisha girl. Under the legitimate class system, a peasant was second to samurai; however, they were exploited by the samurai class. They produced white rice, but they never ate such rice themselves. Peasant families suffered from extreme poverty. Therefore, it was imperative that someone among the family would be a victim for their survival. Their daughter was sold to the official institution of prostitution. If a

daughter was sold to a geisha house rather than to these institutions, she would be lucky.

After the Meiji Restoration, prostitution was recognized officially as a business and supervised by officials.<sup>17</sup> This official recognition of prostitution encouraged its expansion. Even after WW II, it grew into a huge industry and gave an incentive to young women to become prostitutes. This official support and growing number of women participants largely affected society's attitude toward all working women and they came to be belittled in the work place. Of course, there was a strong opposition to prostitution by concerned members of society. After WW II, women political leaders urged public awareness and public help to rehabilitate these prostitutes. This movement finally succeeded with the passage of a law which prohibited any kind of prostitution in 1958.<sup>18</sup> However, the well established institution served to reaffirm a feudalistic remnant--marriage is superior to working.

### **Business Expectation Of Women**

Business has also adopted the social concept of sex roles. Thus, men are always superior and are family heads; women are

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<sup>17</sup> Takashi Koyama, The Changing Social Position Of Women In Japan (Anna Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1982), PP. 13-14.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. P. 13.

always inferior and subordinates. In business, a woman is expected to play the wife's role in the office, to act as a maid ("Office Flower") to the men working there. She serves tea to men usually three times a day; makes copies for them, runs for men's tobacco, dusts their desks, welcomes the guests and again serves tea, and so on. She does not share responsibility with men. She starts as an office girl for errands and stays in that position until she marries, usually within three to six years. When a woman enters the work place after her education, only errands are waiting for her. With a boring daily routine and no responsibility or advancement, she will soon lose motivation to work. Under such circumstances, who can blame her?

Underneath all this is a strong ethic that marriage and bringing up children is superior to economic independence for women. Thus, working women could not break with their conventional status known as "Koshikake" meaning "work for the office during the transition period after graduation from high school or college until marriage." This tendency created an "early retirement" system for women.<sup>19</sup> That is, the employer does not expect women to remain more than a few years in the work force. Thus, there is no on-the-job training provided to woman and therefore no way to get

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<sup>19</sup> Alice Cook and Hiroko Hayashi, Working Women In Japan (New York: New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, 1980), P. 9.



management training. Furthermore, if a woman wants to build her career and wishes to work longer than expected, she could bear considerable pressure internally and externally. Parents may want to provide an "Omiai," an arranged marriage, and force her to marry. The boss may imply that she is mature enough to marry and suggest that she should leave. However, this tradition is gradually changing in the contemporary society in Japan. Business could not ignore the increase in actual number of working women. A Government survey on working women shows 13.76 million women working in 1950, 19.66 million in 1975, and 22.82 million by 1984.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, changes in the industrial structure also help women's expansion and progression in business--slowly but surely. Yet, there are still other barriers to advancement in business. In Chapter 3, statistics showed that the percentage of Japanese women in management is lower than in the United States. In this chapter, traditional expectations regarding women's roles as a barrier for advancement have been clarified. In the following chapter, additional barriers to women's advancement are fully explained.

PAGES 18 AND 19 CORRECTED. 1/18/87

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<sup>20</sup> Mariko Bando, About Japan Series-5 (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, 1986), P. 16.

## Chapter 5

### **CULTURAL HERITAGE AS IT RELATES TO BUSINESS-BARRIERS FOR WOMEN**

In Japan, century-old conventional customs still exist and are widely practiced in contemporary business, regardless of the changing industrial structure and increasing globalization of business. This is because a few big businesses dominate all of Japanese business and their practices are very conservative. These business leaders do not respond quickly to recent occurrences in business. Thus, these cultural habits in business are particular barriers for women's advancement. This chapter will discuss the impact of three major barriers to women's advancement: family system, language and Japanese management style.

#### **Family System - "Ie"**

What is the Japanese family system? Chie Nakane, a social anthropologist at Tokyo university, described this social structure in her book.<sup>21</sup>

The "ie" is a community in daily life... It constitutes clear-cut social units. In short, it is a social grouping within the framework of a residential or managerial body... Japanese business enterprise, too, are characterized by "family-like" interpersonal relationship.

Business organizations are family-oriented. Why is this a

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<sup>21</sup> Murakami Hyoe (Ed.), Guide To Japanese Culture (Tokyo: The Japan Culture Institute, 1977), PP. 80-81.

problem for women? Because under the family system, women are allowed to play only secondary roles. The previous chapter mentioned historical heritages regarding women's position in the society. Women are always asked to have chastity, obedience and inferior positions to men. This unfair treatment comes from the origin of the family system in the Tokugawa period. Family is a social group forming a homogeneous unit in the society. In a group, all members share the same values. However, this distinctive homogeneity, in turn, creates strong alienation against other groups. This reverse relationship is called the internal (uchi) versus external (soto) relationship. For example, my family vs. your family; my company vs. your company; division A vs. division B in a firm; manufacturing vs. service industries; Japan vs. Foreign; and so on. In these cases, when one group is set against another group, women will hold equal position with men. Yet this does not mean that women are always treated as equal to men; they are treated somewhat better occasionally to heighten insider's solidarity against outsiders. Still, there is always a legitimate hierarchy or rank-consciousness among the group. So, women cannot be peers with men but often they are used as tools for networking among the groups.

In Chapter 2, we discussed new groupings in the society following WW II such as a university-clique (gakubatsu) and a

business-clique (Keiretsu). Particularly, this business-clique holds strong family system influence. Family background became very important to advancement in business. If you graduate from the prestigious Tokyo University without a qualified family background, you can still climb the corporate ladder by marrying into the right family. Forming a network on the basis of this marriage is called a marriage-clique (keibatsu).<sup>22</sup> For influential business leaders, their daughters are always a good source of strength for business in that they create a network among the business groups. Usually, these daughters are not allowed to work in the firm. Thus, women who do work in these organizations are belittled as unqualified tools for networking. Almost all management posts go to adopted-sons gained from these network marriages or to members of university-clique (gakubatsu)—rather than to women.

Postwar educational reform opened the door of Tokyo University (also called Todai) to women. However, Todai graduates had already set up their super alumnus network, for men only of course. Business was no exception at all. Almost all leaders in top business today are Todai graduates. For example, this university-clique works as a kind of strong network in the following way: a Todai-graduate chairman of a

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<sup>22</sup> Jon Livingston (Ed.), PostWar Japan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), pp. 392-93.

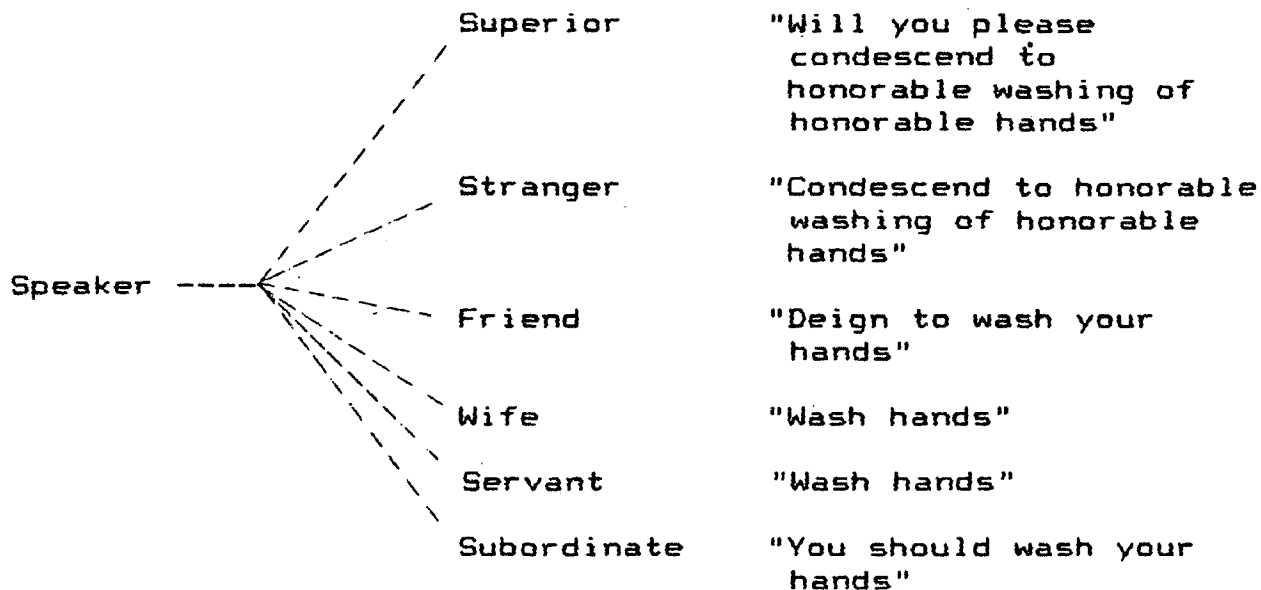
firm will nominate another Todai-graduate as his successor among executive officers. An executive officer will nominate as his successor the Todai graduate among the junior officers. This goes down the line of management. The chairman of the firm just ignores women in the organization, even Todai graduates, because they do not belong to this university clique. Management position is granted according to the clique one belongs to, not based on merit or capability. Put in another way, this intensive group network based on the family system is still exclusively for men and women are still discriminated against.

### The Language

Japanese speech requires degrees of politeness which depend on power or the hierarchy relationship between a speaker and a listener. Thus, the speech shows clearly the higher-lower distinction in the communication. For example, this variation is explained by Francis Wickware in his article "The Japanese Language."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Francis Wickware, "The Japanese Language" Life, Sep. 1942, P. 58.



Mr. Wickware's article did not include the final variation-subordinate. So, in this case, speaker's speech varies six ways depending on social standing of the person he is addressing. In his speech, he addresses with "honorable" washing or "honorable" hands when he speaks to the superior and the stranger. This "honorable" is a translation of the Japanese affix "O" into the English sense by Mr. Wickware, and it shows the speaker's very polite attitude toward the listener.<sup>24</sup> However, this affix "O" only occasionally appears in men's speech but is significantly used by women. The usage of this affix "O" (honorable) is as follow: the affix "O" is joined with common nouns such as...

- |          |   |                    |
|----------|---|--------------------|
| "O" cha  | = | "honorable" tea    |
| "O" furo | = | "honorable" bath   |
| "O" soba | = | "honorable" noodle |

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. P. 60

If men speak simply, without "O," they are not considered impolite. However, women are always required to speak in more polite terms than men.

Men's speech	Women's speech
I want to have "Cha." (tea)	I want to have "Ocha." (honorable tea)
I want to eat "Soba." (noodles)	I want to eat "Osoba." (honorable noodles)
I want to take "Furo" (bath)	I want to take "Ofuro." (honorable bath)

This unfair degree of speech again carries a feudalistic trapping--women's inferiority in everything, particularly to men. Thus, women already have a disadvantage with their speech. If women join a discussion among men, they must consciously choose the words and expressions before speaking. When a woman becomes a manager, she and her male subordinates feel very uncomfortable until they familiarize themselves with her masculine speech. In men's minds, the notion of superiority to women is always present. Therefore, they have difficulty accepting that women can speak with the male-like speech. Recently, this degree of speech has gradually relaxed in society as a whole because of increasingly neutral sex-orientation in the young. Young Japanese tend to speak reverse speech: boys speak girls' words and girls speak boys' words. However, business is more conservative and this difference in speech requirement is still rock-solid and will not be changed as quickly as society's new phenomenon.

Another peculiar habit concerning barriers for women in business communication is called "Haragei." Mr. Robert Christopher, in his book, calls this indirect communication visceral communication.<sup>25</sup> Japanese traditionally trust a reticent person over a talkative person. So, people tend to avoid speaking clearly and concisely; rather they communicate with a few words or by reading eyes and facial expressions. For example, a business leader needs to make an important decision which will affect the entire Japanese economy. If he is asked by a press member when he will make that decision, he could imply the time by talking about his favorite fruit. Because each fruit has its own season, the press member therefore can determine when the decision will come. This comes from Japanese homogeneity and also the agrarian background. The village people led daily life strictly on routine. Therefore, they could communicate through a few words which implied things sufficiently. The important point of this mind reading is the routine; when things remain static, one can understand "haragei" through a few words of communication, reading eyes and facial expressions.

However, in business women are not involved in various routines of the business, and receive little on-the-job

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Christopher, The Japanese Mind (New York: Linden Press, 1983), PP. 43-44.



training, let alone management training. Therefore, women have a very limited range of implication, and as a result, women are automatically excluded from joining "haragei," particularly when management involves numerous bargaining and negotiation. In that case, Japanese often make a contract without a written document but by oral agreement. And "haragei" is intentionally used to reach agreement by both parties. Thus, as a manager, one should know how to deal with it precisely; otherwise, the negotiation does not carry on smoothly. Consequently, corporate headquarters avoid nominating women as their managers. Furthermore, these negotiations usually take place outside the office setting, which often presents another barrier for women.

### Japanese Management Style

Nearly all negotiations take place in social or recreational settings before the signing of documents by the parties. This can be traced back to the Tokugawa era when the Tokugawa merchants began to combine negotiation and entertainment. In this situation, terms and conditions are negotiated at a restaurant or drinking place several times before documents are signed. In these negotiations, both participants speak their real intentions and there is no inconsistency between what they say and what they think. Through this negotiation, both parties reach full agreement about the contract. Thus, the written contract is signed as a ritual and is not

considered as important as it is in American business.

This drinking together is used not only for negotiation but is also quite common among businessmen's daily lives. After work, the division boss takes his subordinates for a drink before going home. Colleagues also drink together. This is a routine, and is considered part of office work. This drinking is also used for "nemawashi," which means this drinking helps to bind relationships and get easy consensus about business affairs.<sup>24</sup> If a boss comes up with a new idea, he takes subordinates or other related people to a drinking place and explains it before the official announcement. Then he can avoid rejection from those people. Thus, this is also called "laying the ground-work." Expenses for this are even paid from the company's account. This "nemawashi" can be attributed to Japanese group-oriented characteristics. As a division head, the boss has the responsibility to supervise subordinates' work as well as their private lives like a family head. The well accepted Japanese management type is a boss who demands a job done well, but also takes care of subordinates' private matters, rather than one who is non-demanding, but less-involving in his subordinates' private lives.

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<sup>24</sup> William Graves, "Tokyo A Profile of Success" National Geographic, Nov. 1986, P. 619.

Certainly, the family system has seeped into business. Therefore, a manager is family head and, of course, family head is traditionally a man's job. Thus, here again, women have several disadvantages to joining this practice. Young female workers are excluded or ignored as not important enough to consider new proposals because of their "office flower" status. On the other hand, married and experienced female workers cannot join the nightly drinking because of their duties at home. As long as this practice is considered part of the management job, women are still discriminated from management positions.

Another well-known Japanese management style, the life-time employment system, is also a barrier for women's advancement. A male college graduate enters a firm and is expected to serve for 30 years at least. A female high school or college graduate also enters a firm and is expected to serve a firm for three to six years at most. This is quite a big disadvantage for female workers. Because the Japanese structure of business--training, promotion, rewards, salary and so on--is based on the seniority system, the length of continuous service to the company is given more importance than capability. The seniority system requires this continuous service. Women have a cyclical life style--marriage, caring for babies, and bringing up children. Therefore, under life-time employment, women's cyclical life

style does not meet the firm's requirements. This creates a vicious circle of expectation from the employers regarding female workers: a firm expects a woman to serve for three to six years; thus, a firm does not give any on-the-job training because of its long-run basis; as a result, female workers are excluded from promotion because the norms are based on in-house training and length of service.

An additional barrier for women in this lifetime employment system is the transfer system. Japanese business requires a worker to be a "generalist" not a "specialist" as in America. A firm trains a newly hired college graduate as a generalist, through a transfer system. As a generalist, he has to know all operations of the firm. Thus, transfer is routinely used to familiarize a worker with various aspects of the company's business. During this transfer process, he will climb the corporate ladder step by step. If he refuses to go, of course, he has to expect that no promotion will be given afterward. If he accepts, he has to move by himself leaving his family behind to take advantage of the high concentration of good education facilities in Tokyo. He often remains in the other place for three to six years, visiting his family once a month at most. As a result, a new type of social problem emerges--high juvenile delinquency and sometimes divorce as well. This transfer hurts female workers more than male workers. Male workers can move to another place

leaving their families behind. On the contrary, for female married workers it is absolutely impossible to leave family behind them because of their legitimate household duties. Usually, when middle aged, experienced female workers reach the time for promotion, a company uses this transfer system to eliminate such female workers. A firm implies that if she does not accept this, she should leave the company, or stay with no promotion afterward. This unfair practice is still common in Japanese business and is a barrier for women's advancement.

In this chapter, deep-rooted customs in business such as the family system, language and the Japanese management style were clarified. Group-oriented business practice derived from the family system. Facial expression and indirect speech are used for negotiation. In the Japanese management style, negotiation takes place outside the office setting, lifetime employment is exercised based on the seniority system, and the transfer system is a passport for a manager's position. These are all barriers for women's advancement in business.

## Chapter 6

### CURRENT WOMEN'S POSITION IN BUSINESS

Chapter 2 through chapter 5, reviewed historical and cultural heritages as well as statistical data as barriers for women's occupational expansion and their advancement in business. In this chapter, a variety of effects of social, industrial and demographic change will be discussed.

In 1950, 60 percent of working women were engaged in agriculture.<sup>27</sup> A miraculous economic growth in the 1960's was attributed to the migration of labor from farming to the big cities. Also, the move from the primary industries to secondary and tertiary industries shifted women's working places--from the textile industries to the heavy and chemical industries. These heavy industries once employed only men. Keeping in mind this changing structure in society and industry, this chapter will discuss various aspects of the current situation as well as new occurrences for women in the work place.

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<sup>27</sup> Tatsuo Yamada(Ed.), Japan 1986 (Tokyo: Keizai Koho Canter, 1986), P. 7.

## The Globalization Of The Japanese Economy And Service Industry's Expansion

The globalization of the Japanese economy has affected women's roles in the work place in various ways. The historical export-oriented industrial structure caused trade friction between Japan and other countries due to a deluge of Japanese goods in the foreign markets.

Recently the United States complained that Japan had created a huge trade imbalance. This external pressure spurred the Japanese industrial structure to change from manufacturing to service industries. In reality, in the past few years, Japanese industry had already begun to shift from manufacturing to the service industry, lagging 20 years behind American change.

In the mid 1970's, the tertiary industries became the largest segment of Japan's industries because of the service industry's expansion. By 1983, tertiary industry reached 60.4 percent of GNP and it is still strengthening the contemporary Japanese economy.<sup>22</sup> This service industry's expansion particularly contributed to opening up new working places for women. As previously discussed, the manufacturing-oriented economy of the past established a

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<sup>22</sup> Hiroshi Takeuchi and Yoshio Matsunaga (Ed.), Japanese Economy Scenarios For The Twenty-first Century (Tokyo: KK Yuhikaku, 1986), PP. 146-48.

strong men-centered structure in business.

However, the external pressure and the speed of Japanese economic development is pushing aside manufacturing, and the new service industry is taking over the position as a basic industry. In particular, wholesale, retail and service industries are growing amazingly fast among tertiary industries. Also, a new phenomenon can be seen in this situation: the more advanced service industrialization becomes, the more likely new types of service business will be created. For example, advancing computerization, creates data processing services, data base services, telecommunication services, and so on. Also, the fast-foods industry's expansion creates various kinds of catering services. Other remarkable expansions are manpower service, security service, educational service and finance service. New service business can be seen all over Japan.<sup>27</sup>

A recent Business Week article mentioned Japanese manufacturing's transformation into the more service-oriented businesses.<sup>28</sup> For example, a leading automaker, Nissan, expanded into the restaurant business by opening a U.S.-based Mexican food chain. The former National Railways, now a

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<sup>27</sup> Hiroko Hard and Akiko Sugiyama (Ed.), Working Women's Age (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1986), pp. 48-49

<sup>28</sup> Special Report "Remaking Japan" Business Week, Jul. 1987, pp. 53-54.



private railway company, also opened fast-foods shops and bookstores. In the same Business Week article, Yataka Endo said "An estimated one million out of the current 14.4 million manufacturing jobs will disappear by 1990... Burgeoning service and related industries, however, could expand the work force by about five million by then."<sup>21</sup>

The service industries depend on public relations and various design innovations rather than the product itself. Thus, these industries require more flexible and more inspired management rather than structured and team work management. Male workers have been fully trained to fit the traditional structured and team-oriented management system. Therefore, women can find the new working places more suitable to their flexible and adaptable characteristics and their cyclical life style. This occupational expansion will be explained later.

### Change In Personnel Management With Technological Advancement

In addition to the service industrialization, technological advancement also strengthens women's work places.<sup>22</sup> During the process of shifting to the service industry, manufacturers have invested in various technological

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. P. 53. Mr. Yutaka Endo is a senior economist for Industrial Bank of Japan.

<sup>22</sup> Hiroko Hara and Akiko Sugiyama(Ed.), Working Women's Age, (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1986), PP. 49050.

experiments. As a result, micro-electronics and office-automation are remarkably advanced. These advanced systems require fewer skills and less physical strength, which thereby opens new opportunities for women. Particularly, woman's manual dexterity and sensitivity are ideally suited to this new innovation in business.

Additionally, an aging work force and the recent hot issue of extension of retirement age urges reform of the traditional practice of lifetime employment. All industries are now facing less availability of young workers and more aged workers. As a result, the availability of management positions is decreased in proportion to the increasing numbers of middle aged workers. Therefore, promotion can no longer be based exclusively on a seniority system. Thus, establishing a new management system based on professional qualification is inevitable. Needless to say, renovation of personnel management would greatly benefit women's advancement.

Women are also changing their life styles and attitudes toward work. More women are entering four year colleges and showing more desire to work. Increasing household service helps to extend women's years of service in a firm. Thus, enterprises cannot ignore growing women's power. One business leader's speech clearly illustrates this change.

Yoshine Koga is president of a leading toiletry products company and he said:<sup>33</sup>

In a house, the place for family gathering has changed from the living room to the dining room in recent Japan. Therefore, kitchen and bathroom become major focal points for the house. Additionally, women are major players at these places. Thus, the power of the product's selection has shifted from men to women. We cannot ignore these emerging new consumers and their needs. As a result, in our company, importance of female worker's ideas has remarkably increased, because they are closer to these new consumers. So, regardless of their age, women workers are becoming more involved in new product development... We may be creating a new culture. Thus, we have great expectation of women's activities in the future.

### Change In Social Structure And Its Influence

As well as industrial change, several social structure changes have affected women's current situation. Japan's high growth period of the 1960's was ended by the first oil crisis in 1973 and the second oil crisis in 1975. Before these oil crises, despite the growth of the economy, numbers of female workers declined-45.7 percent in 1975 as compared to 56.7 percent in 1955.<sup>34</sup> The shift of population from country side to the big cities effected this phenomenon. The shifting industrial structure created a new family style called a "nuclear family"--parents and one or two children without the grandparents. Family heads were all employees

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<sup>33</sup> Yoshine Koga, "Women's sense creates new fashion in their house" Asahi Shinbun, Aug. 1987, P. 11.

<sup>34</sup> 1983 Japan Statistical Yearbook (Tokyo: Bureau of Statistics, 1983), P. 26.

and their income was considerably increased. As a result, the number of high school students increased and teenager labor substantially declined. In 1982, 96 percent of all teenage girls went to high school, up from 45 percent in 1950.<sup>35</sup> In the 1970's young female high school graduates worked for the electrical products, foods and the tobacco industries. These industries found a new source of cheap labor for their business expansion.

Numbers of female workers also increased drastically as the enterprises expanded. Once this office work was exclusively for men; however, female office workers reached 4.5 million in 1975 which accounted for 50 percent of all office workers.<sup>36</sup> These new young female workers were called "B.G" meaning "business girl" in the 1950's and up graded to "O.L" meaning "office lady" in 1960's.<sup>37</sup> This new work force, O.L., aspired to be wives of well known company employees and they attended cultural schools after work to learn flower arrangement, tea ceremony, sewing, cooking and so on. They worked for the company for a very short period--usually three to five years. Thereafter, this working style became common among the young female workers. Thus, in turn, this new

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 26

<sup>36</sup> 1975 Japan Statistical Yearbook (Tokyo: Bureau of Statistics, 1975), pp. 28-29.

<sup>37</sup> Miyoko Shionozuka, Lecture Series - Women Vol.5 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1978), P. 33.

style created a vicious circle--employers' lower expectation of working women.(refer to Pg. 26, chapter 5). However, these increasing numbers of young female workers helped substantially to wipe out the traditional stigma attached to working women--a working woman is from a poor family.

### New Wave "Dankai Sedai."

After WW II, a new wave of workers entered the work place and also helped to wipe out the biased social climate toward working women. Called the "Dankai Sedai," they are the baby-boom generation who were born from 1946 through 1950.<sup>98</sup>

This generation does not know world war. They were educated under the new constitution with the new norm, democracy, and grew up in a new family--nuclear family. While Japan had a remarkable economic growth, they were growing up. They enjoyed increasing family income, urbanization, motorization, durable consumer goods and social change. They also faced the irony of the reverse side of an affluent industrial society--pollution, inflation, and the alienation of man. Their typical life styles involve equal opportunity for men and women; they pursue a pleasant life instead of hard work, live practically, and share everything with family. They are also called "Sneaker Middle" because of their clothing of T-shirts, jeans and sneakers. They seem like American young

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<sup>98</sup> Basic Knowledge For The Contemporary Words (Tokyo: Jiyuu Kokuminsha, 1986), P. 961.

people, but they are Japanese. This new generation is widely different from their parents' generation which was characterized by loyalty to the company, obedience to parents and men, and overall hard work. So, the parent's generation of this "Dankai Sedai" calls them "Shin-Jinrui" meaning "new human being." This generation is now from 37 years to 41 years old.

When they started families, they were also called "New Family," because they created totally new life styles and mass-consumption. Consequently, this mass-consumption contributed to new types of businesses--fast-food shops, sport and leisure, overseas travel, audio and computer and even installment purchasing. A particularly remarkable phenomenon is that women are opinion leaders among this generation. Mass-consumption is supported by wives from the new family. These wives are no longer a silent majority; rather they are becoming a noisy majority. A recent survey on working married women from this generation was conducted by the Life Insurance Culture Center and Nomura General Research Center.<sup>39</sup> According to this survey, they tend to have one or two children and their working needs are career building, self-realization, better living achieved through double income, leisure and sports, increased free time; and

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<sup>39</sup> The 1980's Women's Lives (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1980). PP. 163-67.

peripheral needs are child education, taxes and saving for the future. Additionally, they strongly demand better working conditions in the community and organizations. Thus, this survey also recommended response of community and organization to their request: open more working opportunity for returning women after bringing up children, establish specialist system and licence system, develop flexible time and an in-home working system, and finally improve part-time working conditions. Now, these wives are eager to work outside the home and that is getting very common in contemporary society.

In a recent article, the Japan Economic Journal presented a more recent picture of this baby-boom generation.<sup>40</sup> They are called "DINKs" meaning a double income couple with no kids. They have enough income to spend on their self-enrichment and entertainment, yet they are throwing away the traditional custom of savings. In the article, one couple was introduced; they are wife, 38, magazine editor and husband, 40, a university professor. Their income together is \$100,000 and they spend about one-third of their income on time saving services such as home cleaning, laundry, and phone-answering. They also have fairly high leisure time expenditures. In the article, a senior expert at the

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<sup>40</sup> Katsuro Kitamatsu, "Free-Spending DINKs Pace New National Consumerism" The Japan Economic Journal, Oct. 1987, PP. 1 & 4.

Institute of Population Problems forecasts that the numbers of DINKs will certainly increase with the rapid rise of working women.

### Growing Numbers Of Single Women

Another phenomenon of this baby-boom generation is the increasing number of single women. Throughout Japanese history, women have had to choose between marriage and work. A national census in 1982 shows the recent single women's profile.<sup>41</sup> According to the census, around 5.6 million women (over 20 years old) are unmarried and 73 percent of 5.6 million are under 30 years old. Only 1 out of 10 is single and over 30 years old, but this number is increasing as compared to the previous period in 1970. Behind this, a changing climate toward single women can be seen. Also, women are changing their way of life and attitudes toward working.

There is one case study conducted by the International Women's Academic Study regarding women's changing attitudes.<sup>42</sup> This case study involved interviews and limited experiments; thus, it may not reflect general patterns but it is still appropriate to show an idea about single women's

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<sup>41</sup> Hiroko Hara and Akiko Sugiyama (Ed.), Working Women's Age, (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1986), pp. 64-65.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. pp. 65-67



lives and consciousness. This study divided single women into three types: 1. indecisive type; 2. work-oriented type; 3. miscellaneous type.

1. Indecisive type: an example of this type is "A," 33, a junior college graduate who entered a leading manufacturing company as an office girl and stayed there for two years. Her motivation for work was not specific but killed time until marriage. After two years' service, she retired to study being a good wife at a so called "future bride training school." Afterward, she returned to work as an auxiliary worker for five different companies for eight years. She lives with her parents. She describes her current situation as "very easy, but very boring; has no confidence being single, but has no boy-friend to marry; has had many possibilities for "omiai"-arranged marriage-but could not decide to marry." There are many women categorized as this type. The common profile of this type is: no desire for the quality of work, no long-range life planning, and strong aspiration for marriage. Consequently, they don't plan their future and job hopping is based on emotional reasons. As a result, there is no career building.

2. Work-oriented type: "B," 37, an example of this category, is from the country-side and has been living in Tokyo by herself since entering the university. She is

working for the National Research Institution and her work is related to her master's degree. Thus, she doesn't want to quit her job if she marries and she does not have "A"'s strong aspiration for marriage. Rather she thinks marriage is a barrier for her study in the Institution. She also said when she heard a young female colleague had quit study for marriage, she always felt regret for loss of good talent rather than envy. This type of woman has strong self-reliance and tends to work for one place longer than any other type. However, this type has the highest divorce rate among the three types.

3. Miscellaneous types: there are various types which exist among them and two types are specified--"C" and "D." "C" is in process of transferring from this type to indecisive or work-oriented types. She could move to the work-oriented type if she does not find a man to marry until a certain age. Another type, "D" is exemplified by a woman who is 32 years old, has been working as a bookkeeper at a relatively big company for 12 years and lives alone. She has some female friends but no male friends. She tends to wear dark colored clothes, and no make-up. This type particularly shows a strong distrust of men. However, her attitude toward work is very similar to the indecisive type's, so she does not have the strong commitment to the job that B has.

In all the abovementioned three types, these common attitudes exist: (1) when married, women should follow the husband's life style; (2) household and bringing-up children are a wife's responsibility, and thus continuous working is a heavy load for a wife. Therefore, the indecisive type thinks that women should quit their jobs after marriage. On the contrary, the work-oriented type thinks that they should not choose to marry. It is interesting to note this survey concluded that the number of indecisive and work-oriented types is increasing. The reason behind the increase of the indecisive type is the relaxing social climate regarding single women. On the other hand, the reason behind the increase of the work-oriented type is the expansion of women's working position without reforming traditional sex roles. Thus, marriage is a barrier for a career. These deep-rooted attitudes regarding sex-roles can hardly be wiped out; however, the situation is slowly changing and there is no doubt that women are beginning to stretch their powers in various ways in business.

### New Occupations For Women

Overall, women's opportunities in contemporary business have improved. The changing Japanese economy is opening a new door to women, and the baby-boom generation has largely contributed to extending the work place. As a result, new

types of occupations emerged after the oil crisis, these are called "Katakana" title occupations, meaning "foreign name title" occupations. Example includes fashion designer, graphic designer, stylist, copy writer, art director, T.V. newscaster, reporter, editor, and so on. Of course, some of them have already existed, but until now have not been women's jobs.

Baby-boom women were pioneers in these fields and now young women are rushing to various kinds of training schools to get skills for these occupations. For example, stylist training school is very popular and it is exclusively for women. A stylist needs to prepare bags, shoes, accessories, clothes and so on for the fashion models or other properties for filming location. She has to carry heavy properties and work on location. It is hard work and also requires physical strength. Then, why it is not a man's job. Men's responsibilities (working for the family) or conservatism might have prevented them from jumping into these newly created jobs. Thus, there was no competitor for women or perhaps women's cooperative nature and attention to detail better fit these new types of occupational needs.

Another example is a copy writer. The majority of these are also women. In particular, copy writing for consumer goods such as foods, fashion, interior goods and baby goods are

almost exclusively women's jobs. Because consumers are also women, women can write copy to appeal to these consumers. These "Katakana" title occupations are a totally new area, therefore, the traditional men's systematization does not reach them. However, among the "Katakana" occupations which requires strong leadership such as art director and coordinator, women are still behind men. For example, only two out of 71 members of the Art Director Association are women. Management training in any area is still a narrow gate for women.

In addition to the Katakana title occupations, women's numbers in the specialist field are also increasing. Examples are case worker, social worker, architect, software developer, information technologist, electronics technologist, chemical technologist, veterinarian, sculptor and so on.<sup>43</sup> The Japan Economic Journal noted this phenomenon in an article.<sup>44</sup> "Mitsubishi Chemical Industries Ltd's Research Center now has 320 specialists engaged in bio-related studies. Of this entire research staff, as many as 122 are female." This women's expansion into special areas is a result of four year college education which is now getting popular for women.

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<sup>43</sup> Hiroko Hara and Akiko Sugiyama (Ed.) Working Women's Age, (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1986), P.32.

<sup>44</sup> "Women Breach Barriers to Male-only Jobs" The Japan Economic Journal, Mar. 1987, P. 8.

Another article in Re-inventing The Corporation describes a phenomenal occurrence among these specialists--promotion to management.<sup>45</sup> Although this article reported a management case, this is not indicative of a general trend in any areas of business.

The first woman was promoted as a manager of the Software Development Department at NEC Japan in 1984. She was Mitsuyo Yoshimura who graduated from a women's four-year college in 1962 and began working in developing software for computers. She has traveled up the corporate ladder successfully. Because software development is work of the brain, gender simply does not matter, her former chief said.

So, his words can be understood this way: if this software development required other characteristics traditionally associated with men--Japanese management style--she would not be successful. In fact, most management positions are still beyond women's reach.

### The Management Position

In 1979, Ichiko Ishihara was promoted as an executive officer of Takashimaya Department Store, a leading company in the retail industry.<sup>46</sup> At this time, her promotion was sensational news because she was the first woman to climb the big corporate ladder from the bottom to the top. In 1979, there were only 12 women executives among the members of the

<sup>45</sup> John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, Re-inventing The Corporation, (New York: Warner Books, 1986), pp. 286-287.

<sup>46</sup> Jane Condo, A Half Step Behind (Tokyo: Shufuno-Tomo Sha, 1986), p. 313.

Tokyo Stock Exchange, yet 10 out of 12 were all family-held companies. These 12 women executives were only 0.05 percent among all listed members of the Tokyo Stock Exchange.

In 1979, a survey conducted by the Prime Minister's Office recorded the number of women managers in major listing members of the Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya Stock Exchanges.<sup>47</sup> According to the survey, women counted for 25.6 percent among all employees; however, in management above division chief they were only 0.1 percent. Even though over half of the employees in finance and Insurance industries were women, women managers were only 0.02 percent. Furthermore, in retail and other service industries the majority of employees, 87.6 percent, were women, but only 0.9 percent were managers. Of these management jobs, 80 percent were chief clerk, and executive accounted for only 1 percent. In this time, all of them had a long service (average 24.1 years) in the organization and the average age was 48 years old. Additionally, 70 percent of them were unmarried women.

The reason women have been prevented from advancement is rooted in the Japanese management style. In chapter 5, the Japanese management system was discussed as a barrier for women's advancement. Additionally, degree of education, age

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<sup>47</sup> Hiroko Hara and Akiko Sugiyama (Ed.), Working Women's Age, (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1986), PP. 43-45.

discrimination and other various unfair treatments constrain women's advancement. Typical Japanese organizations train their new college graduates step by step over 20 or 30 years and employees are promoted according to the stage and the result of training. Also, these managerial posts are used as an incentive to the worker because of the post's considerable advantages such as salary, rewards, prestige and other various fringe benefits. Thus, there is a fierce competition even among men. They use "nemawashi" to get the support of their subordinates, yet women rarely join this nightly drinking.(refer to chapter 5).

An article in National Geographic illustrated the thick wall to the managerial post for women.<sup>48</sup> Kiyomi Saito is now working as an international bond broker at Morgan Stanley & Co., Tokyo, after returning from Harvard Business School with an MBA degree in 1981. She is 34, and of course she is well qualified in the American sense for the management posts because of her Harvard MBA degree. However, even with this degree in hand she could not find a job in Japanese corporations. Why? She said to the National Geographic's interviewer:

" If you are a young man in Tokyo and want to be successful, you go to a good university, then you join a big company and get on the corporate escalator. But if you're a woman, you can't even find the escalator... When I applied

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<sup>48</sup> William Graves, "Tokyo A profile Of Success" National Geographic, Nov. 1986, PP. 628-629.



for my first job here after Harvard, the interviewer asked, 'can you play 18 holes of golf, are you any good at mah-jongg, can you drink right along with the men?'. "

The interview aptly illustrates Japanese society and business which apparently holds to century-old norms on sex roles. Therefore, women's occupational expansion is still limited to areas such as the service industries. Dealing with this discrimination based on sex role will be a key factor for women's future.

### Sex Discrimination

In business, various discrepancies based on sex are found in salary, entering qualification, promotion, awards, and other fringe benefits. Salary gaps are particularly conspicuous between female and male wages. The Ministry of Labor surveyed salary differences between female and male employees in 1982.<sup>49</sup> If men's salary is said to be 100 percent, women were 42.8 percent in 1960 and 55.8 percent in 1975. The salary gap gradually narrowed from the high growth period until the oil crisis.(see Table 6). However, after the oil crisis, this gap again became larger, and today a woman's salary is little more than half that of a man's.

The gap between male and female salaries is caused by the seniority-based wage system. Women's service in the firm is

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<sup>49</sup> Hiroko Hara and Akiko Sugiyama(Ed.), Working Women's Age, (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1986), pp. 43-45.

relatively short; that keeps them with a low-paid status. And also, women's lower proportion of four year college education as compared to men also affects their lower wages. Additionally, regardless of the size of the business, Japanese business does not take women's working experiences into account. When an experienced woman changes her job, she is offered a lower salary than another of the same age who has continuously worked in the company, while a man's experience is considered regardless of the place he has served. So, for women, job hopping means a lower salary with every change.

Table 6

Changes in Salary Differences Between Male and Female  
 Size of enterprise is over 30 employees  
 Male = 100

Years	Total salary	Fixed salary	Bonus
1960	42.8	43.5	39.9
1965	47.8	48.7	44.8
1970	50.9	51.7	48.7
1975	55.8	56.5	54.1
1980	53.8	54.6	51.7
1982	52.8	53.8	49.9

Source: Ministry of Labor "Monthly Labor Sensus Report" in 1982.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. P. 43

Industry and scale of enterprise also affect the salary gap. The Japanese economy is known as a dual economy because of fewer large businesses and many small-to-medium-sized businesses (generally called smaller business). Between these two scales of business, many differences exist in salary, working hours, promotion, fringe benefits, welfare and so on. The 1982 survey reported salary gaps between large and smaller scale businesses.<sup>51</sup> According to the survey, 40 percent of all female employees were working in smaller businesses with fewer than 29 employees. Of women over 30 years old, more than 40 percent worked for the smaller businesses, as did 46.7 percent of the 55 to 59 year-old age group. On the contrary, young females under 24-years-old were working in the larger businesses with over 500 employees while less than 10 percent of these over 30-years-old were working in the same scale businesses. On the other hand, male workers, under 19 years and over 55 years old were working in the smaller businesses, while almost all other male workers were working in the large businesses. In a nutshell; in large businesses, the majority of male workers are in the high salary age bracket whereas the majority of female workers are in the low salary age bracket. Almost all middle aged, experienced women work in the smaller businesses with lower salary as compare to the large businesses. Thus, women already have disadvantages in salary.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., PP. 112-114.

Additionally, increasing female part-time workers has a big impact on lowering women's salary standard. The Ministry of Labor categorizes part-time labor as working for fewer than 35 hours a week. However, those part-timers are often required to put in as much time as full-timers, yet wages are far below those of full-time workers. The same survey of 1982 also reported the numbers of part-time laborers as 4.2 million total and women occupied 68 percent of that total. Again, more women work in the low wage bracket than men. And these female part-time employees surged to 3.2 million (which accounted for 22.1% of all female employees) in 1984, up from only 0.57 million in 1960.

This increasing number of part-time women is compressing full-time women's jobs. After the oil crisis, Japanese business began to shift their work-force from full-time to part-time because of declining profits. Regardless of the overhead, Japanese business cannot lay off their regular employees who are hired based on the lifetime employment system. Thus, part-time workers are a newly emerging source of cheap labor for business. Almost all of them are married, middle age women who need additional income for child education, loan payment, or to supplement their husbands' salary. Their working conditions are far below full-time workers'--no job security, lower wage, no fringe benefit and so on. If these part-time working conditions do not improve,

this will be a big problem in the near future.

Regarding sex discrimination, the Ministry of Labor surveyed all businesses in terms of female employment conditions in 1982.<sup>52</sup> According to the survey, women were already discriminated against at the door to the enterprises. Companies which claimed to employ both female and male college graduates numbered 24.1 percent; yet 75.8 percent of those companies actually employed only male college graduates. In the companies that did employ female college graduates, hiring qualifications were different from those for male graduates. For example, male graduates were employed for the headquarters while female graduates were employed for the branch offices. Male graduates were employed for nationwide transfer while female graduates were employed for area transfer only. Thus, male graduates could apply for positions in any area nationwide.

Also, these companies required additional qualifications for female graduates, such as good recommendations, only living with parents not living alone, junior college and four-year college qualified one for the same rank, and so on.

Companies which provided on-the-job-training to female employees were only 40 percent, whereas male employees were 100 percent trained. This is particularly harmful

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. PP. 39-42.

discrimination because promotion is based largely on the result of on-the-job-training. The 1982 survey showed opening management positions for women at 54.9 percent, yet women who reached chief management were only 14 percent and the majority of the posts were chief clerk which accounted for 35.6 percent. Furthermore, 45.1 percent of all enterprises officially declared that women had no opportunities for promotion. This situation clearly describes women's difficulty struggling in the male-dominant society.

However, women themselves also have partial responsibility because of mothers' child rearing attitudes. After having a baby, Japanese women tend to forget themselves and concentrate only on their roles as mother. They are called "mama-gon" or "kyoiku mama" meaning "over protective mother" and "education mother." The mother always says to her son "as a man, you should do this" or "as a man, you should not be second to woman." On the contrary, to her daughter she always insists "as a woman, you should not do this" or "as a woman, you should not be superior to man." She educates her children with the conventional customs she got from her parents. Also, these mothers push their sons to pass prestigious grammar school entrance exams and so on up to Tokyo University. Tokyo University graduation means getting a licence for a bright future in any field. This social

climate and mother's attitude have created the well known Japanese examination hell.

However, these mothers educate their daughters only through high school or junior college but not for four years of college. They feel a college education means that their daughters will have a narrow selection of marriage partners because women should be one step behind men as a qualification regarding marriage. Unconsciously, these mothers insult themselves with this attitude. They forget social responsibilities as community members and concentrate only on their mother's role for their family. Consequently, this mother's attitude supports sex discrimination. Now these mothers should be aware of their responsibilities to raise children who would create an equal society for men and women in the future.

However, in spite of these various discriminations, the social climate is pushing businesses to improve their attitudes and working conditions for women. Recent passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was expected to help women's expansion as a whole.

### The Equal Employment Opportunity Law

In 1985, the Japanese Diet passed the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in order to guarantee women equal

opportunities in employment. In About Japan Series-5, the details of this law are described:<sup>53</sup>

The Law obliges employees to strive toward equal treatment for men and women in recruiting, hiring, placement, & promotion. It also prohibits discrimination on the basis of the sex in employee education and training, welfare benefits, the mandatory retirement age, resignation (such as the unspoken agreement that a woman will resign from her job upon getting married or giving birth), and dismissal. However, no "penalties" are imposed for violation of any of these prohibitions.

This law surely had some influence upon business; in 1986, for the first time after WW II, numbers of female college graduates hired as employees reached 70 percent of all female graduates.<sup>54</sup> However, this number is deceptive because the law contains some unsolved problems which were passed over to expedite its passage. An article "Equal Employment and Women and Men" published by Iwanami Book Store pointed out these passed-over matters.<sup>55</sup> According to the article, this law has the following problems: It is onesided because it excludes men; it emphasized duty only; there are no penalties for breach of the law; appeal is by local arbitration without authority; and its application is narrow.

Impact of the passage of the law was smaller than

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<sup>53</sup> Mariko Bando, About Japan Series-5 (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, 1986), PP. 22-23.

<sup>54</sup> Hiroko Hara and Akiko sugiyama (Ed.), Working Women's Age (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1986), P. 86.

<sup>55</sup> "Equal Employment and Women and Men" Iwanami Booklet No.29, Nov. 1986, PP. 30-33.



anticipated, and most enterprises have done nothing regarding the reform of their employment conditions. This situation can be seen in the Nippon Keizai Shinbun(Japan Economic Newspaper) in 1987.<sup>56</sup> Most enterprises ostensibly altered their hiring conditions, yet nothing changed. For example, a business that advertised for 20 male employees and 5 female, prior to passage of law, reformed to recruit 25 people without gender specification. Still, they hired 20 males and 5 females. Then, businesses created new hiring systems called "Different Track Selection Systems." For example, two new tracks were created--the management goal track and general employee track. If you apply for management goal track, you have to accept any kind of transfer. If you want to choose a place to work, you must give up a promotion. This new hiring system added a new type of discrimination not only against women but among women. For example, all male college graduates could choose the management track without taking an examination, but this examination was required of women. So, this exam stopped women from choosing the management track. However, women high school and junior college graduates are excluded from choosing a management track. Although the number of women graduating from four-year colleges is increasing, almost all of them are from wealthy families. With high education costs, men's education

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<sup>56</sup> Eiko Shinozuka "Equal Employment Opportunity Law" Nippon Keizai Shinbun, Apr. 1987, P. 9.

comes first and the majority of women are still left behind. Thus, after passage of the law, women themselves discriminate against each other.

Next, enterprises skillfully created other barriers to advancement. They created a "specialist" post in between the management and general employees with the ambiguous slogan of "harmony between work and family life." However, if a woman chooses this post, she must give up any kind of management post, yet this specialist definition is not clear enough. This law also has the potential to change working condition for the worse. For example, women were previously restricted from late night work by the Labor Standard Law.<sup>57</sup> However, the new law relaxed this provision, so that business may replace their high salary male workers with low salary female workers. The businesses tend not to up-grade female salary even if they take the same work men did. Thus, this law is a double edged sword: female problems, in turn, will affect males too.

What is women's reaction? Before the passage in 1984, Japan Recruit Center conducted a survey regarding women's consciousness toward this law.<sup>58</sup> According to the survey,

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<sup>57</sup> Mariko Bando, About Japan Series-5 (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, 1986), pp. 22-23.

<sup>58</sup> Hiroko Hara and Akiko Sugiyama (Ed.) Working Women's Age (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1986), p. 85.

almost all the responding women knew about this law; however, out of 1900 women, only 22 percent knew the text of the law and only 9 percent knew the details of the law. This law is surely aimed at helping women's employment status, yet women's reaction was very cool. Women knew that they always heard beautiful words, yet they were without truth. So, they felt the law should not only give them a chance to do something a little more than before, but should be good enough to deliver results. Still, women have now gained legal support to claim their right to be equal with men in employment. Thus, women should not hesitate to use this law for making the working place better. Such women's awareness will help to actualize a better life for both women and men.

### **Humanization Of The Industrial Society--"From Fierce To Beautiful"**

After WW II, the Japanese economy passed several turning points--high growth of the 1960's, oil crisis of the 1970's, the regression of manufacturing and expansion of service industries of the 1980's. Now Japan is entering the second stage of the regression of manufacturing and maturing service industries. These changing social conditions greatly affected women's situation in business. There is an interesting book titled Glossary Of Seasonal Terms For Economics which illustrates social conditions and their

influence upon women through various business advertisements period by period.<sup>59</sup>

Advertisement of the early 1960's touted the product's functionality and handiness: "small, but store more" for a refrigerator and "light and smallest" for a transistor T.V. set. In the late 1960's when Japan reached a GNP second to the United States in the Western world we heard; "larger is better" for a chocolate and "oh! fierce" by Maruzen Oil Company. During this high growth of the 1960's, the number of working women was amazingly increased due to more married women's involvement in commercial activities.

Afterward, Japan encounter the worldwide recession caused by the oil crisis, and during the mid 1970's, awareness of the environment hit the society: "from fierce to beautiful" for a copy machine. This catch-phrase became very popular and encouraged people to shift to a slower pace and take a break. The slogans after the mid 1970's obviously indicated the trend of the industrial regression instead of the supreme order-high productivity for high growth.

In the high growth period, the slogan "Fierce" represented Japan's value for functional, handy products. It also

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<sup>59</sup> Tatsuya Nakamura, Glossary Of Seasonal Terms For Economics, (Tokyo: Iwanami Book Store, 1986), PP. 70-72.

illustrates the Japanese offensive economic strategy was "catch up and get ahead." Also, the increasing numbers of married women working outside the home ignited the introduction of new products--frozen foods and instant foods. On the contrary, "from fierce to beautiful," after the oil crisis, indicated the changing Japanese value system and also illustrates the current social conditions.

Through these slogans one can suggest that women's position is meshed into the social structure and the value system which are changing period by period according to industrial transformation. And, the trend of the change--quantity to quality; competition to corporation; homogeneity to variety; system-oriented to people-oriented; and additionally, for women, "from discrimination to equality of men and women," is clearly in favor of women. Still, this industrial regression widened the salary gap between male and female workers. So, it is not enough that women wait until social value is favorably changed for them. Now women should take advantage of this burgeoning new value system for enhancing their position in the work place.

## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSION

This paper reviewed Japanese historical and cultural customs which are national assets for Japan. However, in reality these customs are a barrier to women who wish to advance in business today. Women's current situation was clarified.

An overwhelming liberation of women occurred after WW II. During the postwar period, women amazingly expanded their working places outside the home and this trend is still under way in contemporary business. Changes in industrial structure and social climate greatly contributed to these progressions. However, this expansion still contains problems because it is limited to certain areas such as service industries and late comer businesses. Furthermore, this expansion overlooked the quality of the work. Women's salary is little more than half that of men. The majority of women in the office are still "office flowers." The number of women in management is increasing, yet quality of management posts is overlooked. Almost all women managers are still chief clerks and an executive post is rare for women; thus, it is still a sensational news topic. In a nutshell, women's current working conditions illustrate

existing contradictions.

The passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law has long been awaited by women. However, does this law ameliorate the problems? The answer is negative. It is said by women to be "toothless," lacking legal force. Because of strong business opposition, the law was watered down. Japanese business, particularly manufacturing, still wants to be proud of its high productivity in the Western world and fears that greater involvement by women will take away this edge.

Behind these onesided business exercises, there is men's misinterpretation of cultural heritage regarding business. The legitimate sex-roles in society were carried into business by men. However, these roles were established in the warrior period when duties were determined based on physical strength, and women were protected to give birth. Thus, men's biased cultural position in business has created an impact which is an asset for men but a barrier for women.

Then, how can women begin to make the situation better under such circumstances? It is not an easy matter to answer this question. However, some proposals can be suggested, not only to women but also to business as a whole. Business leaders should emphasize the human aspects of industry over pursuit of its high productivity. This will bring about that

harmonization of industry and people, men and women, which is necessary to reform the current male dominated business situation. Men should stop belittling women and their household duties. Marriage should be an equal partnership. Women should not resignedly accept their current situation but should train themselves to resist deep-rooted social prejudices. This reformation of business should be made by making better use of cultural heritages existing in business, not by sweeping them out. Only then can women release themselves from feudalistic trappings and step ahead to extend their position in any field in business. Overall, the elevation of women's position would contribute to Japanese business advancement.



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