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Women's Status and Roles in Contemporary Japanese Society

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CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE SOCIETY

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Preface

Japan was a defeated and devastated country at the conclusion of World War II. The entire economy had collapsed and life was at a virtual standstill when the Occupation Forces, under General MacArthur, took control in 1945. MacArthur's forces gradually refurbished Japanese industry and instituted a series of democratic reforms. In 1946 the New Constitution of Japan was promulgated, becoming one of the most democratic and egalitarian constitutions in existence.

Rapid economic growth ensued and, combined with imposed democratic reforms, created a unique society characterized by both rapid social change and traditionalism. The changes following Japan's defeat in World War II have had a profound effect on the status and roles of women over the past thirty-five years. Traditionalism, however, has served to complicate this process, creating a situation of "social lag" in the status and roles of women.

The combination of modernization and industrialization and the persistence of traditional attitudes serves to create a unique set of tensions and strains within the Japanese social system. The position of women is one such area in which the conflicting demands of this system are especially evident. Women in contemporary Japanese society are still expected to be "good wives and mothers" yet they are also often required to participate in the workforce in an economy beset by spiraling inflation. Even those women who are not forced to work by necessity have found that the importance of their wife/mother role has been significantly reduced by demographic and technological changes.

The tension affecting women's status and roles within contemporary Japanese society is the focus of this paper. I will use Wilbert Moore's theory of social change, concentrating on the concomitants and consequences of industrialization[1] and modernization[2] to analyze the processes and effects of social change on women's roles and status, and to construct a hypothesis concerning the future roles of women.

In the past ten years there have been a multitude of articles and books written on the subjects of both women and Japan. The number of tomes dealing with Japanese women, however, has been surprisingly few. My purpose is to help fill this gap with not only a description of contemporary women's roles and status, but by providing an analysis using the framework of social change. It is my hope that this approach will not only aid the understanding of Japanese women and Japanese society, but will in addition provide a testing ground for Moore's theory of social change.

Using social change as the framework, I have utilized an interdisciplinary approach to the choice of materials presented in the paper. For those with little or no direct personal experience of Japanese society it seems a relatively simple matter to evaluate women's status and roles in terms of prior knowledge in a particular discipline, such as sociology, combined with a general understanding of the status of women cross-culturally. Not only the evaluation of existing conditions, but even a prediction of the future of women's roles and status can be made. However, although this method is the most popular, it tends to lead to an unfortunate oversimplification and misunderstanding of the situation. An interdisciplinary approach is essential, and first-hand knowledge conducive, to an accurate treatment of the topic. In the absence of an interdisciplinary approach the researcher will miss important

variables affecting women's roles and status. Without direct and in-depth
exposure to Japanese society, the researcher often fails either to comprehend
fully, or misinterprets the data he/she gathers or evaluates. Japanese
psychology is especially difficult for the untrained Western observer to com-
prehend because it differs fundamentally from our own ways of thinking and,
therefore, behaving. For these reasons I am utilizing both an interdisciplinary
approach, using concepts from sociology, psychology, anthropology and economics,
and primary source material, including both unstructured informal conversations
with numerous respondents and structured, in-depth interviews.

As is the case with most other researchers, I was introduced to my topic
through written works dealing with women in Japan. In order to evaluate and
criticize those works, however, direct personal experience with Japanese society
proved invaluable. I would like to offer an anecdote to illustrate my point.

After my arrival in Japan, I can recall reading a book devoted entirely
to the topic of women's roles and status in Japan and feverishly copying down
pages and pages of notes to use in my thesis. After re-reading the book six
months and literally thousands of contacts and impressions later, I realized
that the book was worthless. Although it included interviews with numerous
Japanese women, the interviewing had been conducted by a foreign woman, without
any facility in the Japanese language, using a Japanese interpreter. I
realized after in-depth exposure to Japanese culture that the author had
not only asked the wrong questions from the viewpoint of a Japanese res-
pondent, but she had manipulated the answers to these questions to come up
with totally erroneous conclusions. It proved to me that although an outsider's
insights can sometimes be valuable, ethnocentric data collection can be deadly.

Throughout this paper I have attempted to illustrate points and con-
clusions with insights gained from living in Japan for two years[3] and with
direct quotes and examples from interviews. The interview questions and
responses may be found in the Appendix at the end of this paper. Also
included therein is a description of the methodology used in collecting
those interviews.

The paper is organized into four major sections. The first chapter
describes and analyzes women's roles and status in the home. Chapter Two
concentrates on women's roles and status in the workforce and Chapter Three
is devoted to women's roles and status in the public sphere. The final
section of the paper consists of concluding remarks concerning woman's over-
all roles and status in contemporary Japanese society. Again using Wilbert
Moore's theory of social change I will evaluate the factors contributing
toward, and acting against, the equality of women in Japan.

Notes

1. ·Wilbert Moore's definition of industrialization is:

> Industrialization means the extensive use of inanimate
> sources of power for economic production, and all that
> that entails by way of organization, transportation, com-
> munication, and so on. Industrialization ... includes
> mechanization of agriculture, and of the ancillary services
> of transportation and communication which are essential to
> the operation of a specialized and therefore interdependent
> economy.

(Wilbert Moore, pp. 96-97) I will use this definition of industrialization

throughout this paper.

2. Moore states that:

> What is involved in modernization is a "total" transformation
> of a traditional or pre-modern society into the types of
> technology and associated social organization that characterize
> the "advanced", economically prosperous, and relatively politically
> stable nations of the Western World.

(Wilbert Moore, p. 94)   I will use this definition of modernization

throughout this paper.

3. I resided in Sapporo, Japan from August 1976 to July 1977 and in Tokyo,

Japan from June 1979 to July 1981.

INTRODUCTION

I. <u>Historical Perspective</u>

In analyzing women's roles and status in contemporary Japanese society, the main body of this paper is divided into three sections. The focus of Chapter One is women's roles in the home. Chapter Two is concerned with their roles in the workforce and Chapter Three is devoted to women's roles in the public sphere.

In order to understand contemporary women's roles in these three areas, it is first necessary to examine the historical factors which influenced and shaped the contemporary society. In the following section, therefore, I have presented a brief descriptive summary of women's roles and status extended from the prefeudal era through the end of World War II, in order to give the reader the background necessary to evaluate changes and trends today.

<u>Prefeudal Era (earliest times to 1185)</u>

There are no Japanese written records dating from before the early sixth century when the Chinese written character system was introduced to Japan. It is therefore very difficult to determine the true nature of the status of women before that time. Historians have relied primarily upon a Chinese document written before 297 A.D. in presuming that Japan was a country ruled by many kings and queens.[1] Anthropologists have interpreted the rich mythology found in *Shinto*, the native religion of Japan, as evidence that women did indeed hold high status positions in Japan. The central figure in *Shinto* mythology is *Amaterasu*, the strong-willed sun-goddess, from whom the Japanese Imperial family claims direct descent and, therefore, legitimacy to power.

Although these two sources of "evidence" point to a high status of women, it may be wise to heed the warning of Evelyne Sullerot, especially in evaluating

the reliability of mythology as a depiction of history:

> Such stories of female rule are always relegated
> to the distant past and one way wonder whether
> they are not used to counterbalance the pattern
> of patriarchy. However, it is unclear if these
> legends have been invented after the event to
> provide a parallel to what exists now and thus
> to satisfy the tendency of the human mind to
> think in binary terms, by imagining an opposing
> reign succeeding another.[2]

Putting aside this issue, there is evidence from the two earliest Japanese written records-- the *Kokiji* (compiled in 712) and the *Nihongi* (720)-- that women's status was lower in this period than in pre-history. These records do not represent accurate historical facts, however, for they were written utilizing facts selected for political purposes. Even at this early date, some Japanese had been exposed to Chinese ideas in philosophy and government, making it impossible to determine exactly what the nature of women's roles were before any outside influence.

China, one of the most advanced cultures during this period, had been in infrequent contact with Japan throughout early historical times. In the seventh and eighth centuries, Japan, eager to learn from China, began to dispatch cultural missions to China.[3] The increased contact resulted in a growing influence of Chinese thought and policies which were to have a devastating effect on the status of women.

The *Taihō Code* of 702 and its revision, the *Yōrō Code*, 718, were instituted by the Imperial family to strengthen its rule. These codes, based on Chinese methods of government, set up a patrilineal system. Embodying the Confucian concept of the necessary subjugation of women, the Code discriminated against them in property rights, marriage and divorce.[4] These codes represented ideal principles, however, and were differentially and incompletely accepted by Japanese society.[5]

During the Heian Period (794-1183) there were major differences in the status and treatment of women according to class divisions. Aristocratic women, about whom we have the most historical information,[6] were often used as pawns in the political maneuvers of power-seeking families. Although they were central to "marriage politics", they had little real power of their own.[7] Their movements were limited by both social custom and layers of kimono, weighing up to one hundred pounds. Women outside the court seem to have had more freedom and overt power, although there is little written evidence of this. Farming women, especially, were needed for their labor and thus played an important role in the economic sphere. However, as primogeniture began to spread in the Heian Period, the male family head became the seat of power and authority in the family.

Although early Confucian ideas concerning the subjugation of women had little effect on the attitudes of Japanese outside of the court aristocracy, another Chinese influence was undermining women's status in a more universal fashion. Buddhism, coming to Japan through China, endorsed antifeminist ideas. Buddhism taught that woman's nature was inherently evil and labelled her as a temptress to be feared by men. Although Buddhism did not replace *Shinto*, *Shinto* had little to say about the inherent qualities of women, and Buddhist ideas stressing woman's inferior nature were gradually accepted.

Feudal Period (1185-1867)

In the first one hundred and fifty years of the feudal era, political conditions favored a higher status for women. The central government and with its Chinese-influenced institutions had lost much of its power to local authority and Japan fell into a prolonged period of civil wars. These conditions

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created a fluid society ensuring a degree of personal freedom for women as well as for men.[8] This period of protracted civil wars, however, eventually had a detrimental affect on women's status. Four hundred years of warfare from the twelfth to the early seventeenth century put power in the hands of the warrior class and "In contrast to the peaceful 'marriage politics' of earlier centuries which had made daughters important, the military politics of the feudal period made it essential to have a son who could fight."[9]

The military classes, formally influenced by Confucian thought, subsequently used it to legitimize a feudal organization of society. In this organization, if retainers were loyal to their lords, children filial to their parents, and wives obedient to their husbands "...the tranquility of society will be assured."[10] Bushidō, the code of the warriors, provided a solid ideological backing for the feudal system, and at the same time undermined the status of women. Warriors were to guard the interests of their lords at all times.[11] No relationship was to be placed above that between a vassal and his lord, all other relationships becoming insignificant in view of this greater life purpose of the warriors:

> A man's feudal obligations took precedence over any
> other responsibilities and loyalties in his life, such
> as those to his wife and offspring. The wife came to
> occupy the lowest rung on the entire social ladder; she
> was subordinated within the feudal hierarchy and within
> the family hierarchy as well.[12]

The beginning of the Tokugawa Period (1600-1868) marked the end of an era of civil wars, and Japan settled into two hundred years of peaceful feudalism. The country was unified under the powerful military shōgun Tokugawa Ieyasu who established a ranked system to fix a social order perpetuating the status quo. The social order was divided into four rigid classes: the samurai ruling military elite; peasant class; the artisans; and the merchants who formed the

lowest class, considered parasitic according to Confucian concepts.

Religious influences on women's status became particularly important during the Tokugawa Period when society turned away from warfare and began concentrating on scholarly pursuits and other normal activities which had long been neglected.[13] The growth of Neo-Confucian philosophy dealt a severe blow to the status of women. The influential *Tendai* and *Shigon* Buddhist sects held that women could not hope to attain the five states of spiritual existence to which men could aspire.[14] Many Neo-Confucian scholars began to expound on this anti-feminist Confucian and Buddhist ideology.

The most notable of these scholars was undoubtedly Kaibara Ekken. Kaibara, 1631-1714, was a famous Japanese moralist whose ideas were formed along lines of Chinese thought.[15] His *Onna Daigaku* (Greater Learning for Women) written in the popular style, was widely read by members of all classes of society; "...for nearly two centuries after its publication it was looked upon throughout the country as one of the indespensable articles of a bride's trousseau box."[16]

Kaibara Ekken had a profound effect on Japanese beliefs concerning female morality, giving the masses "...an infallible belief in the truth of his teaching."[17] Confucious had established the first principles of the innate negativeness of women in 500 B.C. Kaibara did not establish a new morality for women but merely codified and popularized Confucian concepts. According to Kaibara's *Onna Daigaku*, the only acceptable condition for a woman was marriage. The purpose of her education, therefore, was to teach her to be a proper wife and please her husband and parents-in-law. A woman's duties toward her husband and parents-in-law were clearly spelled out:

> A woman has no particular lord. She must look to her husband
> with all worship and reverence, not despising or thinking
> lightly of him. The great lifelong duty of a woman is obed-
> ience....A woman should look on her husband as if he were
> Heaven itself...[18]

> ...after marriage her duty is to honour her father-in-law and
> mother-in-law, to honour them beyond her father and mother,
> to love and reverence them with all ardour, and tend them
> with practice of every filial piety....On every point she
> must inquire of her father-in-law and mother-in-law, and
> abandon herself to their direction. Even if thy father-
> in-law and mother-in-law be pleased to hate and vilify
> thee, be not angry with them and murmer not.[19]

Women were treated as children all their lives since they were believed
to be afflicted with the five infirmities of indocility, discontent, slander,
jealousy, and silliness.[20] According to Kaibara, there was no cure for
a woman's silliness for it was an ineradicable failing due to the nature of
woman's sex.[21] According to *Onna Daigaku* women could be divorced by their
husbands for seven reasons; disobedience to parents-in-law, barrenness,
lewdness, jealousy, gossiping, and stealing.[22] Since Japan had no offical
divorce law or divorce court, it was an easy matter for a man to change his
wife.

Women's conduct toward their parents-in-law was particularly stressed
because of the residence patterns common to this period. Patriarchy, a
Confucian practice, had been institutionalized in the 700's but did not
extend down to all ranks of society until the Tokugawa era when the *samurai*
had firm control of society, and government policy nearly closed the country
completely to foreign influence.[23] It was at this time that the *ie* was
recognized as the basic unit in society.

The *ie* or ideal traditional Japanese family pattern, had its origin
in Chinese Confucianism: "It was one of the basic assumptions of Chinese
political theory that the good State would automatically result if each indi-
vidual punctiliously cultivated the garden of his family duties."[24] According

to Chinese political thought, stable families meant a stable society and filial piety was not merely a private, but also a civic duty.[25] The *ie* consisted of a man, his wife, his unmarried brothers and sisters, his eldest son, his eldest son's wife, his eldest son's children and his unmarried sons and daughters. Sometimes the domiciliary unit also included the wife and children of one or more of the younger sons or brothers, but this was regarded as a temporary situation with these younger sons expected to establish a separate house, a "branch family," which for the first generation would be a single nuclear conjugal family, but thereafter would continue as a normal stem family.[26] Daughters left their natal families and were taken into another family as the bride of a son in a system of patrilocal residence. Marriages in the ideal family system were arranged by family heads. Financial arrangements, such as the size of the gift from the groom's family to the bride, the size of the return gift, the contents of the bride's trousseau, and the nature of the wedding feasts were decided by a go-between (*nakōdo-san*).[27]

When a bride entered her husband's family, she lost her former status in her natal family and was ranked as an outsider. She received training from her mother-in-law in the "ways of the family", adopting a submissive, pious attitude. Conflict and ill-feeling between the new wife and the mother-in-law, considered normal, arose in this relationship of superior-inferior because the bride was seen as a competitor for her son's affection by the mother-in-law.[28] In order for a bride to achieve proper status in her new family she had to bear and raise a child, typically a male, who would perpetuate the family line. Marriage gave the husband exclusive sexual rights over his wife, but not vice versa. Children fathered by him but not borne

by the wife could be legally adopted into his family and treated equally with his legitimate offspring.

The emphasis placed on the family as a continuing entity served to make its continuation a moral duty. Adoption of heirs in cases where there were no children or the adoption of a husband for a daughter, successfully perpetuated family lines. Within the family there was more emphasis placed on the parent-child relationship than on the one between husband and wife. A strong sexual relationship between husband and wife was considered potentially harmful to the corporate unity of the family and any open display of affection was discouraged.[29]

The "family" included not only the present generation but those in the past and future as well.[30] Ancestors were important because they served to strengthen the continuity of the family group and emphasize the group over the individual: "Neither occupation, property, home, tradition nor ancestors belong to the individual but to the family as a whole."[31] Succession of the househead usually fell to the eldest male descendant but there were many exceptions where younger sons, widows, or daughters became househeads, though the women were usually replaced by their male children upon maturity, or by their husbands. The househead's authority over the other members of the family was great. Although he was restricted by the institutional demands of the *ie*, the patriarch had the final decision in such matters as marriage and choice of occupation.

To function smoothly as a corporate group, each member of the household had a different status and role determined by sex and age. Considerable stress was therefore laid on the relative age and sex distinctions within the family:

"Without this stress on relative age and male superiority... the assumption of the headship by an elder brother could hardly be expected to proceed smoothly, given the powers which are vested in that position."[32]

There were some differences in family organization among the different classes in Tokugawa society, but the basic elements of the ideal traditional family system were shared in common.[33] The *samurai* class families, where Confucian ideals had been adopted most thoroughly, represented the closest approximation to the ideal *ie* and where women, therefore, had the lowest actual status. Merchant women enjoyed greater mobility and contact with society than did women of the samurai class in the beginning of the Tokugawa Period. By the 1800's increased contact of the merchant and *samurai* classes brought merchant women into increased contact with *samurai* values, subsequently having a detrimental effect on their status.[34] Peasants gradually came into contact with *samurai* moral values through moral codes instituted by *samurai* officials, reflecting the Confucian ideas of the military class.[35] Peasant women, however, still had a degree of freedom not enjoyed by the women in the other classes. Women in all classes of society did achieve some degree of status as mothers but "...this was not in recognition of their rights as women, but rather out of respect for their social function of bearing and raising the successor to the headship of the family."[36] Women were given full responsibility for the family and the household. They were encouraged to remain in the home and were usually kept out of schools. Only ten percent of the girls, compared with forty percent of the boys in the later Tokugawa Period, were being educated outside of their homes.[37] The majority of girls were tutored at home, using such texts as *Onna Daigaku*.

In conclusion, during the feudal period women had virtually no education, no legal rights, and their only recognized role and status was that of bearer of male patriarchs. Their status was the lowest within the family and the feudal hierarchy.

Meiji Period (1868-1912) to Taishō Period (1912-1926):

Admiral Perry and his threatening black ships cracked through Japan's
wall of isolation when they sailed into Tokyo Bay in 1853. The Tokugawa
government, which had already lost much of its power, signed its own death
warrant in two unprecedented acts. First, it called the feudal lords together
for advice, and then deferred the responsibility for handling "the barbarians"
to the Emperor, who had been merely a figurehead for hundreds of years.

Outraged by these events, a young group of conservative, lower-class
samurai took power in the Restoration of 1868 and founded the reactionary
Meiji government. Following four centuries of isolation, Japan began to
actively modernize and industrialize, using technical knowledge from the
West.

The Meiji government abolished the Tokugawa feudal class system but
through early legislation extending *samurai* family patterns to all levels of
society, they created an intensification of the hierarchy and strengthened
family controls over the individual, especially in rural areas. This
samurization process was effective in bringing the ideology of the former
ruling class to all levels of Japanese society because many ex-*samurai* were
put in the authoritative positions of policemen and school teachers. Peasants
readily adopted the ideology because of the continuing belief that the customs
of the former ruling elite were more prestigious than those existing in the
rural community.

Some political leaders and educationalists blamed the many developing
societal problems associated with rapid industrialization and modernization on
the drifting away from tradition. Their one answer to all of these societal
ills was to advocate the strengthening of the family and its institutionalized
values.

The Meiji Civil Code of 1898 was designed to protect and strengthen the *ie* system:

> When the first draft was criticized because it
> did not support the Japanese custom regarding the
> ie, the sections on family and succession were
> rewritten. The revised version of the code, rather
> than proving the status of women, simply codified
> existing customs, providing additional sanctions to
> the family system.... The code upheld the family
> on the basis of the "Japanese morality of loyalty
> and filial piety and the national polity."[38]

Under the Civil Code, marriage was still a transaction between two families, rather than between two individuals. A woman under the age of twenty-five and a man under the age of thirty could not marry without the consent of the family head. The Code also forbade any presumptive heir to the headship of a family from leaving the family and entering another for the purpose of adoption or marriage.[39] Continuation of the family as a moral obligation became a legal obligation as well.

Under the Civil Code, the head of the family was given the power to determine the place of residence of the members of his family and assumed full legal responsibility for all family members. Even when married, a woman could not participate in legal matters without the approval of her husband's family. As in Tokugawa Japan, marriage was not legally binding until it was registered, and a groom's family often did not register a marriage until the wife had proven that she could adjust to the family or until she had borne an heir.[40]

The husband now had to get his wife's consent for divorce unless she was guilty of ill-treatment of his lineal descendents, of adultery, or other serious misconduct. However;

> The requirement of consent was moot in the case of non-
> registration of the marriage. Also, it was easy for the
> husband's family to bring pressure on the wife to give
> her consent.[41]

Meiji Civil law gave women the right to divorce on the grounds of cruelty,
desertion, or serious misconduct, but did not give them legal grounds in
the case of infidelity.[42] The husband was given the custody of the children,
regardless of who was at fault in the divorce. Because divorced women were
subject to severe social disapproval, women seldom exercised their newly
acquired right to divorce. Women were also given the right to become the
head of a household, to inherit, to own and manage property, and to act as
a guardian to children under the Civil Code.
However;

> ...these rights were...subject to major qualifications.
> A wife was not a juristic person in the same sense that
> her husband was; she had to have his consent to transact
> business. Without it, her contracts were voidable....
> Succession to property and succession to headship were
> separated under Meiji law. A daughter could succeed to
> property but her claim to the family headship came after
> that of all male heirs including a recognized illegitimate
> son. Thus, although "owning" the property, she was subject
> to the family head, whose authority was recognized by
> Meiji law.[43]

The authority of the family head was backed by the old samurai institution
of *kandō*, or expulsion from the family, also legitimized in the 1898 Civil
Code: "Expulsion is a formal act which, in modern times, took the form of
removal of the offender's name from the family register (e.g., for marriage
without the househead's approval)....The family preserved its honour by
cutting off the offending member."[44] The "rights" granted to women under
the Meiji Civil Code kept women's status at the same low level it had been
during the feudal period.

The deficiency of education for women during the feudal period was
corrected with a new Meiji school system which provided public education
for women.[45]

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However;

> The elite academic track in the new educational system
> established in 1886 was reserved for males. After the
> third year of elementary school, girls moved into their
> separate girls' track. After six years of elementary
> schooling girls who wanted to go further could attend
> separate four- or five-year secondary schools.[46]

For both boys and girls, education emphasized moral training in the

Confucian virtues of filial piety and loyalty. Although girls were given

public education facilities, the purpose of their education had not changed

since the feudal period and motherhood became not only a family duty but a

national one as well:

> With the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript for
> Education in 1890, the previous policy on family educa-
> tion, which showed a progressive phase just after the
> restoration of 1868, changed its direction to the edu-
> cation of women to be "a good wife and wise mother" for
> the sake of the nation. Thus the government enforced
> the bondage of women to the family system by spreading
> the ideology that to obey her husband and take care of
> her family was the proper way for a woman to serve her
> country.[47]

Education, rather than being a liberating force in women's lives, became

oppressive with the ideology of "a good wife and mother" which made most women

obedient and "locked them behind the doors of the family system."[48]

Although education did not significantly affect the roles and status of

women, capitalist developments within the economic sector did so in both rural

and urban areas. Japan had been an agricultural country since ancient times,

rooted in a system in which most of the farming units were extremely small and

worked by hand. In the first years of the Meiji Period, over eighty percent

of the total population was engaged in agriculture and the urban population

was less than ten percent.[49]

Meiji government policies promoting industrialization and greater production
caused the capitalist economy, to grow at a remarkable rate.[50] The development
of modern industry gradually attracted more and more people to the cities,
drawing for its labor force upon younger sons of farm families without stimu-
lating entire families to leave agriculture.[51] With male members in families
often working in nearby industrial centers to supplement the farming family's
income, women and the older members of the household were often left to take
care of the farm chores which had previously been performed by men. These
tasks were now taken over by women, in addition to their traditional duties.
Although rural women were forced to take on more responsibilities, their
status did not rise accordingly since their efforts, although more labor-intensive,
did not have nearly the economic returns that industrial jobs provided.

Industrialization and modernization had a much greater effect on the
status of women in urban areas. The development of the capitalist economy
and new lifestyles associated with capitalism, often clashed with traditional
conceptions of women's roles. Before the Meiji era, women involved in economic
production outside of the home were mainly entertainers, servants, music
teachers, hairdressers and midwives.[52] After 1880 however, many women were
employed in textile mills, and between seventy and eighty percent of all
textile jobs were held by women.[53] Women also worked in other kinds of
factories, in mines, fisheries, and the newly developing communications industry.[54]
Although job opportunities were increasing for women, working conditions were
deplorable in most cases:

> Undoubtedly it was a step forward for women to find
> their way into the productive life of the country during
> the early stages of modernization. But it should be noted
> that this entry into almost every sphere was met with
> discriminatory practices, and in many cases exploitation
> of the worst kind.[55]

The worst forms of exploitation were in the textile mills. It was not

uncommon for worker recruiters for textile mills to come to impoverished

farming villages with promises of good working conditions, high salaries, and

even an advance "good-will" payment. The offers were attractive for those

farmers who could barely feed their families because of the rising inflation

rate brought about by the new capitalist system. After signing a contract,

young girls were led off to the mills where they often worked fourteen hours

a day for meager wages, received inadequate nutrition and were often forced

to remain in the mill confines against their will. The wages of the workers

were often sent directly to their parents. Economic independence was therefore

virtually impossible. Women in the labor force worked not for the pride of

being independent, but out of the necessity to help with family finances,[56]

and were looked down on by non-working women, male employers, and co-workers.

Traditional attitudes continued to prevail in relation to the status

of women. Although the Japanese were very self-conscious about how other

industrialized countries were viewing them, and made superficial attempts

to "modernize" women, women's real status did not change significantly during

this period.

Early Shōwa Period (1926-present) until 1945:

Few changes occurred in women's roles in Japanese society between 1926

and the end of World War II. They were still expected to be "good wives and

wise mothers" although their labor was increasingly needed in industry to

help fuel the fires of Japanese expansionism. In the early 1930's women

were encouraged to stay in the home and produce more children. These slogans

disappeared by the early 1940's, however, when the need for laborers in Japan's expanding industries became more acute. Economic growth was the primary goal of the government, which used Confucian codes to elicit full cooperation from the Japanese population during the war effort.[57]

Education opportunities did not improve significantly for women during this period. A few women were admitted to universities, but they were denied admission to the most prestigious imperial universities in Tokyo and Kyoto.[58] By World War II only forty women were enrolled in imperial universities compared with 29,600 men.[59] Most women attended girls' schools which stressed the social inferiority of women and perpetuated the feudal ideal of womanhood.[60]

As well as being denied equal education opportunities, women were totally excluded from the political process. Universal suffrage was declared in 1925 but it applied only to males over twenty-five. Women's groups supporting social and political equality were banned by an increasingly totalitarian government and all women were required instead to join the Women's National Defense Association. In this association women prepared supplies for soldiers, tended the wounded, and helped the families of soldiers.[61]

Most women were involved in the war effort in some way. Many worked as volunteers and those who were working for wages received, on the average, only one-third the salary of men. In the absence of a large percentage of the male population during the war it was often an economic necessity for women to work. Traditional attitudes concerning female roles predominated during the war, however, with women being regarded as temporary help by both big industry and the government. Although Japan underwent a wide range of political, social, and economic changes between the end of Tokugawa feudalism and the end of World War II, the social position of women changed very little during this time.[62] The industrialization process, which usually is concomitant

with modernization in all sectors of society, was hindered by the traditional

attitudes, perpetuated by both law and practice, toward women.

II. Theoretical Perspective

Describing women's roles and status is helpful in understanding a given

situation at a given period of time. It does not, however, afford a means by

which to analyze changes in those roles and statuses through history, nor does

it allow prediction of future patterns of change. In order to both analyze

social change and make valid assumptions concerning the future, I have utilized

Wilbert Moore's theory of social change [63] as the primary theoretical framework

for this paper. The following is a brief outline of Moore's theory, presented

to acquaint the reader with concepts which will be used throughout the paper.

Theory of Social Change

Moore states that all societies are constantly undergoing change,[64]

and that no feature of life is exempt from the normality of change.[65] The

direction of change, however, is difficult to predict because of its inherent

complexities:

> ...there are complexities in social change that are likely
> to manifest themselves as tensions and strains. Persistent
> patterns in one field of action may eventually collide with
> trends in another... Slow simple changes may intersect with
> rapid and complex transformations... Strains thus arise from
> lack of synchronization of types and rates of change. Un-
> certainty and lack of precise predictability arise from the
> complexity of dynamic patterns -- that is, from a rather large
> 'error' factor owing to the number and interplay of uncontrolled
> variables. The difficulty is in some measure intrinsic to the
> kinds of actions and events, of patterns and their alterations,
> with which we are dealing, for all science deals with standardized
> inter-relations, with recurrent sequences, and has only a limited
> capacity to predict unique combinations and events.... [66]

Moore, in contrast to functional theorists, recognizes that social systems

contain inconsistent and discordant elements.[67] An element does not neces-
sarily contribute to the continuity of the system as a whole, indeed it may
even disrupt it. It may also simultaneously contribute to one part of the
system and yet be disfunctional for the system as a whole.[68] Also in contrast
to the functionalists, Moore rejects the model of society as an equilibrium.[69]
He instead views it as a "tension-management system" where tensions are in-
trinsic to the system itself, not simply accidental accompaniments or the result
of changes impinging on the system from external sources.[70] Change, occuring
at points of strain in the system, is not necessarily tension-reducing, and
is often tension-producing.[71] Furthermore, regarding a society as a tension-
management system does not presume that the society is "successful."[72]

It is very difficult to accurately predict the direction of social change
due to the complexity and sheer number of strains and tensions in a system.
Many tensions and strains are unique to a particular social system, yet Moore
identifies some universal sources and forms of change which occur in all
societies. One important universal source of change results from the imperfect
socialization of individuals.[73] In addition, the roles which individuals are
expected to fill usually constitute a range of permissible behavior rather than
having strict behavioral limitations, allowing for some flexibility in the
system.[74]

Change also often occurs because of non-conformity and the failure to
achieve ideal values.[75] This nonconformity to the social moral order occurs
in all societies and therefore necessitates the institution of prescriptions
governing behavior.[76] These prescriptions are never consistent and they,
in turn, cause strains and are therefore potential sites of change.[77] This
is one of the two aspects of the "...lack of close correspondence between the
'ideal' and the 'actual' in many pervasive contexts of social behavior."[78]

The second aspect of the relation between the "ideal" and the "actual"

is what Moore terms the "environmental challenge."[79] "Culture" and the "setting" are never in perfect harmony due to man's inability to totally control either human biology or the non-human environment.[80] This situation is strain-producing and thus, again, a possible site of change.

The sources of tension and strain within the Japanese social order will be systematically presented and evaluated with regard to their potential consequences for cumulative change [81] in the overall status and roles of women. By examining a society's responses to inherent flexibilities in the social system, social challenges, and the "environmental challenge," one may predict cumulative change within the system,[82] according to Moore. It is this ability to predict cumulative change which allows evaluation of the respective strains and tensions within the Japanese society and some assessment of their implications for the future roles and status of women.

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Chapter 1

WOMEN IN THE FAMILY

"All societies have a family system, but few are as
consciously aware of their family system as the Japanese."

(Dore, 1958:p.91)

The family tree

All Japanese people were guaranteed quality under the law in Article
fourteen of the New Constitution of Japan, promulgated on November 3, 1946.
Article twenty-four implied that the conjugal family, centering on the rela-
tionship between husband and wife, would replace the partiarchal family on
which society had rested since feudal times.   It also guaranteed equality
between the sexes regarding kinship inheritance rights, making primogeniture
illegal.

Democratic reforms in the legal sphere such as the New Constitution, were
imposed by outside forces almost immediately after the termination of World
War II.   Yet these have failed to be totally accepted by members of Japanese
society.   This situation is an example of "lead" and "lag".[1]   Evidence of this
"lead" and "lag" between the legal definition of the family and its social
reality is most evident in rural areas where modernization and industrialization
have had the least effect.

In addition to Article twenty-four of the New Constitution, the *ie*
(ideal traditional Japanese family) was made illegal with the revision of the
Civil Code in 1947.   Women were assured equal property rights, freedom of
marriage, and equal grounds for divorce.   A husband no longer had the right to
manage property belonging to his wife and the choice of domicile was to be
made jointly by husband and wife.   A wife was made a juristic person who could
transact business without her husband's consent.

Economic conditions and the persistence of traditional attitudes have resulted
in the perpetuation of the system of primogeniture, regardless of its legality.
Families managing small farms usually hold their property in the name of

the household head, although it lawfully belongs to the household as a whole. Division of small land holdings among all descendants would threaten the family business and undermine its economic foundation. Waivers to the rights of inheritance have therefore been used to maintain traditional forms of succession, with the inheritor of the property usually agreeing to care for his parents in their old age. Although women today sometimes inherit their families' property, the son, often the eldest but not necessarily so is often preferred because he has greater physical capabilities. A 1957 public opinion poll conducted by the Prime Minister's office indicated that many people wanted to reestablish the traditional family system with the father as the powerful head and his authority passing on to his eldest son. This opinion was most prevalent among the less educated, and people in rural areas.

The movement of the population to urban areas, away from the influence of the stem family and patriarchal practices during the early years of modernization, spurred an increase in the number of nuclear families for both economic and practical reasons. Both of these factors will be discussed in this chapter, the primary focus of which the urban nuclear family and the changes it has brought about in women's roles.

Individualism or "The nail that sticks out gets hit."

Wilbert Moore states that modernization fosters individualism, "...even in societies with a collective ideology."[2] In Japan, however;

> ...individualism as a creed has never taken root...
> Actually, individualism has had a negative connotation
> in Japan; it had connoted such undesireable traits as
> nihilism, selfish egotism, and anti-social behavior.
> Even today, most Japanese do not wish to be individualistic.
> Rather they prefer to be a member of one group or another...
> Of these groups, the family comprising the household group
> is important...[3]

To understand why Japanese, although living in a modern society prefer to be members of groups and view individualism as undesireable, it is first necessary to examine the social and psychological bases for these attitudes which stem from the process of socialization within the family.

In traditional Japanese society, the assertion of one's individual will was considered harmful to the group.[4] According to Confucian concepts, the individual was expected to suppress his/her own desires for the good of the state. This philosophy was kept alive throughout Japanese history. It was used to compel men and women alike to contribute to the war effort for the sake of the nation, and even after defeat in World War II, when Japanese were urged to work for low wages and for long hours to rebuild their country economically. Japan's remarkable economic growth attests to the strength of this "collective identity" over individualism.

Individualism was thought to be destructive to society as a whole, but more importantly, to one's parents.[5] In the traditional *ie* it was the househead who not only had control over all other family members, but who took responsibility for their actions. If someone in the family "lost face", the entire family suffered shame. Furthermore, because the *ie* was considered a continuous link between past, present, and future generations in the family, all ancestors and descendants were *stigmatized* by the misdeed.

These same feelings of collective responsibility exist today within the Japanese family. In the family it is usually the mother who raises the children. If they misbehave or fail in some way, it reflects on the mother and her upbringing of them.[6] In the family with which I lived for approximately seven months, the mother felt total responsibility for her son's delinquent behavior while the father, who had not been involved in the son's upbringing, felt almost no responsibility. The mother was even ashamed to go out in public for fear of ostracism by her neighbors.

Childrens behavior is equally affected by collective responsibility:

> Children know intuitively that they can ease their parents'
> pain through their sharp sense of responsibility. Such
> knowledge often leads on conciously explicit terms to the
> inhibition of improper behavior outside the family that
> could cause pain by shaming its members.[7]

The socialization of children to be conscious of shame begins early. Japanese

mothers, rather than scolding a crying child, often say; "Look, everyone is

watching you," thus inculcating the feeling of embarrassment and shame in

the public eye.

Individualism is not only discouraged by shame and collective responsibility,

but also through child-raising practices which promote dependency of the child

on the parents, and especially on the mother. Unlike American society where

self-reliance is encouraged at an early age, Japanese mothers encourage their

children to be dependent by nurturing them much longer than is customary in this

country. This process impedes aggressive independence as the child is not

encouraged to separate him/herself from the mother and is encouraged to be

obedient.[8] Japanese mothers must satisfy the feelings of dependency which they

foster within this intense mother-child relationship which, in return, makes

it imperative that the child accept the heavy responsibilities and obligations

which are placed on him/her later in both school and the home.[9] George DeVos

states that there is a direct link between contentment and compliance.[10] A

child develops a basic trust in authority, originally based in his/her mother,

because of the nurturance and gratification of needs he/she receives as a child.

Throughout his/her life, the child believes that if he/she follows the

directives of others, he/she will be taken care of in times of need.[11] The child

learns to suppress his/her individual desires in exchange for security. If an

individual desired to forego security, reject his cultural training, and be
independent, it would be difficult for him/her to function in Japanese society
which is based on reciprocal obligations reminscent of those found between lords
and their retainers in feudal times.[12]

> (The)...interdependent network makes it difficult for Japanese
> to behave individualistically unless they are exceptional artists
> or individuals who for other reasons do not have to give any
> form of symbolic allegiance and avowal of cooperation to a
> particular group or competitive segment of society.[13]

It is evident from the above discussion that the family, the primary agent
of socialization in any society, is responsible for instilling dependence, trust
and submissiveness to authority, and a feeling of security and well-being in
its members. This process of emotional and social training has profound effects
on the nature of their personalities and the roles which women fill in society.

The feminine ideal

The Confucian concept of "good wife and wise mother", dating back to pre-
feudal times, was the basis for women's roles, not only in the home, but also
in all of Japanese society. The wife/mother role in Japan was similar to the
role women had in other countries, yet it took on an added importance in Japanese
society. As mentioned earlier, the perpetuation of the family was, and still
is, an important duty of all Japanese. The *ie* in feudal times did not represent
the blissful union of a male and female, but was a corporate entity which began
before, and continued long after the lives of any of its individual members.
Bearing and raising a male heir was an important *rite de passage* for a new wife, for
it was in bearing this heir that she perpetuated, and thus contributed to the
family.

According to Confucian concepts, a stable society was based on stable
families and stable families were based on women and their fulfillment of the
wife/mother role. In assuming the responsibilities connected with children,
women assumed the role of perpetuator and stabilizing force within the family
units. In early times, women were assigned these roles purely on the basis
of biology. In contemporary Japanese society, however, the wife/mother role
is at once strengthened and weakened by contemporary economic and cultural
factors.

The absentee husband

Specialization of roles is concomitant with the process of modernization,
according to Wilbert Moore [14]:

> A number of processes associated with advanced societies
> seem never to reverse direction. Outstanding among these
> is specialization in all its manifestations. Specialization
> takes the form of both individual role differentiation and
> the organization of collectivities around highly particul-
> arized functions. [15]

Women have always been the ones responsible for children and the "inside domain".
Yet in early times they also participated in the "outside domain", alongside
men in the agrarian economy. As a capitalist society developed in Japan, as
in other countries, farming and cottage industries were replaced with improved
technology and women lost their roles in the economy to men. The very nature
of the female life-cycle makes women's lives discontinuous, and although a pre-
capitalist society was flexible enough to accommodate this discontinuity,
the capitalist one is not.

In pre-capitalist Japanese society, most of the population was agrarian,
living in traditional extended families. Although the traditional family was
degrading to women's status, it did afford women more freedom of movement than
is the case in many urban nuclear families today. The extended family provided

an immediate source of child care in the form of other relatives, usually parents or parents-in-law. This system allowed women a certain degree of freedom even after they had borne children. As capitalism developed, however, an increasing number of the population moved to urban areas and away from the extended family, and this source of child care, with its relative freedom for mothers, disappeared.

In modern Japan there is no system of babysitting similar to that found in the United States. Women must either stay at home with their children or strap them to their backs when they go out. Keiko Satō,[16] a young mother, is an example of a woman tied to the home by the birth of a child. Before marriage Keiko had dreams of married life but soon found it to be very lonely and boring. Keiko's husband is a computer engineer who is gone from their tiny apartment from 7:00 am. until 7:00 pm. Keiko stays at home all day with her three-year-old son, never going out except to shop or run errands. She is not happy with her lifestyle and would like to leave her son with someone and get out and do some of the things which she used to do as a single woman, but she feels that she can't because "...women are not supposed to go running around all the time, they're supposed to stay at home and take care of their children."

Keiko believes very strongly in the feminine ideal, that women's role in society is to raise their children properly and be good wives. She feels that women "...should dedicate themselves totally to their role." However, Keiko hasn't gone out with her husband since they got married and resents the isolation the sharp distinction between their two roles creates.

There are child care centers throughout Japan but the current number cannot meet the demand. Many women like Keiko, who would like to utilize these services, often cannot afford to put their children in child care center or, feel a psychological barrier against entrusting their children to strangers. It has

always been an acceptable and common practice for women to leave their children with relatives or friends, but there has been a long-standing social detterent against leaving children with strangers. Putting children in a child care facility is considered to be both dangerous and harmful to the child and a neglect of the mother's responsibilities and failure of moral purpose. As previously mentioned, children are important to the perpetuation of the family and total responsibility is taken by the mother for her child's behavior. If a child were to misbehave or be hurt in some way while in the care of a stranger, the fault would rest solely upon the shoulders of the mother, thus causing her both guilt and shame. Considering how powerful this threat of shame and guilt is to the Japanese, it is little wonder that most women remain with their children, personally supervising their upbringing.

The primary reason why women are soley responsible for their children's upbringing in contemporary Japan is the structure of the economy and the characteristics of the workforce. These characteristics will be fully discussed in the following chapter, but the main point to be made here is that because of intense loyalty and dedication to a particular company, the husband's world revolves around work.

Immediately following World War II men began working long hours, six days a week in a national effort to rebuild the economy, and husbands and wives consequently saw little of each other. Those who must commute to work spend an average of ninety minutes each way on the trains and subways and often do not arrive home until late at night. Husbands and wives do not usually spend an evening out together. Even in cases where child care does not present

a barrier, husbands usually spend evenings out with their colleagues from
work at a local bar or club. This is a common way in which good relations
are maintained with business associates and important business conducted.
In urban and rural areas alike, women are rarely seen with their husbands
at social functions unless it is the wedding or funeral of a relative or
friend. On the weekends, men usually play golf or pursue other interests
with their business associates.

Noriko Watanabe[17] is another young housewife living in Tokyo whose
husband is rarely home. She has no children yet and holds a full-time job.
Her husband is an engineer, working on the weekdays and practicing with a
jazz group on the weekends. He is typical of many Japanese businessmen,
leaving the apartment at 7:45 am, and returning home between 9:00 and 10:00 pm.
Noriko, although she holds responsibilities outside the home, feels that she
has the additional role of housekeeper because her husband is never home:
"When he comes home he just eats dinner and goes to sleep. I have to come
home from work, fix the meal and have it waiting for him when he gets home."
Noriko does not believe that her responsibilities at home reflect her innate
abilities to cook and clean: "It's not a difference in male and female
nature, it's a difference in upbringing." Although Noriko is not happy
with her present situation, she accepts it because it reflects societal norms.

Yumiko Itō[18] is another woman whose life is strongly affected by the
specialization in male and female roles. Yumiko's husband has no role what-
soever in the home: "...He won't even pull out his own *futon* (bedding) at
night." He is an executive in a small company located near their home and

can usually go into work when he likes. Because he is a senior executive, he

usually gets home earlier than most husbands and doesn't have to work on

the weekends. He doesn't spend his free time in the home with his wife,

however, but usually plays golf or goes hunting for a few days at a time with

his colleagues.

Having absentee husbands, Yumiko and many women like her have total control

over the household, the children, and their education. Yumiko, like most

other Japanese women, controls the family finances, consulting with her hus-

band only when she wants to make a major purchase. Many women even dole out

their husbands' pocket money for the week or month, although Yumiko's husband

has a private bank account which he uses to pay for his extra expenses. Al-

though women's roles are narrowly defined, they have almost total authority

within their sphere:

> In these conditions, a woman has a new role, and her
> problems are different from those of the past. The
> increasing number of husbands working for a salary are
> in general doomed to exhaust their spirits in today's
> huge, tumultuous economic society. Husbands feel that
> by handing over their pay to their wives they are ful-
> filling their responsibilities and, beyond that, do
> not want to participate in home affairs. A study of
> authority in marriage showed clearly that in Japan
> the husband's authority is not as large as it was
> thought to be, and that, in fact, the number of
> independent couples was large. The investigators
> explain this phenominon as a result of a strict divi-
> sion of labor between husband and wife. [19]

Role satisfaction for the wife depends heavily on how well she manages

her sphere, and she usually doesn't ask, or expect, her husband to help.[20]

White-collar workers are more likely than farmers or manual laborers to help

their wives with housework. Recently there has been an increase in the number

of women like Noriko and Yumiko who say that they want husbands to help them

with the housework,[21] yet long hours spent in the working world make this diffi-

cult in practice.

The distinct segregation of the male and female spheres due to the specialization of roles in contemporary society has had a detrimental effect on the husband-wife relationship. In traditional Japanese family, marriage was not romanticized, but was based on an economically-based agreement between two families. In contemporary Japan, however, an ideal has been imported from the West, that of a marriage characterized by a romantic relationship between husband and wife. Many factors, however, serve to make the attainment of this ideal almost impossible. The result is both strain in the system and frustration for its young people.

Courtship and marriage

Despite the acceptance of the love marriage ideal, there are no established patterns of courtship. In rural areas especially, the opportunities for meeting and getting to know a prospective mate are very limited.

The large burden of farmwork falls on the shoulders of the inheriting son and the mother. When a new daughter-in-law comes into the family she is expected to relieve her mother-in-law of some of her burden. Because the farm wife is expected to help perform chores on the farm and tend the household, she has an especially harsh life. Most wives who remain in rural areas move directly into their husbands' homes and are therefore subject to a mother-in-law who supervises their actions. These conditions have created a "bride famine" in rural areas as many women move away to urban areas to escape the influence of a mother-in-law and lead a more comfortable life. The mature women still living in rural areas are usually the eldest daughters in families without any sons. They will inherit their fathers' farms, and therefore cannot marry the eldest sons from other families who also have the responsibility of tending their families' farms.

In the farm family with which I stayed during the summer of 1979,[22] the eldest son often complained that all of the women he knew were either married, engaged, or were the inheritors of family farms, making them ineligible as marriage partners. Most of the younger women had left the rural area for the cities, especially Tokyo, to find a "salaryman"[23] for a husband. This son is twenty-nine years old and still unmarried. I questioned him about this state of affairs, especially after noticing that many of his older, as well as younger friends were either married or engaged to be married within the next year. He replied:

> It's true that all the men my age are already married
> and my parents have been pressuring me for quite a while
> to find a wife. But you see, all the marriages around
> here are arranged. There are very few love marriages.
> I really hope that I will be able to marry someone that
> I love....But it is very difficult, here in the country,
> to meet women. I go to the folk dancing meetings just
> about every week and participate in functions at the
> farm coop, but there are very few unmarried women here
> who are not inheritors....I'm going to wait for a few
> more years, but if I don't find a wife by then, I will
> have to get an arranged marriage with someone from another
> town. My parents are both getting old and we'll need
> someone who can help out with the farm pretty soon.

The scarcity of women, combined with traditional attitudes which still prevail, often make the ideal love marriage an impossibility. In the 1950's eighty-six percent of all marriages in farming communities were arranged, as were seventy-three per cent of those in cities. In 1971, over sixty-four percent of farm marriages were still arranged while the percentage had dropped to less than forty in cities.[24]

In a love marriage (*ren-ai*), the initiative is taken by the couple themselves, and their feelings for each other are a prime condition for the match.[25]

A go-between, whose presence is essential for the social recognition of the marriage, is still appointed by agreement to settle financial questions. In an arranged marriage (*omiai*), the two parties are brought together expressly for the purpose of marriage through the initiative of the parents, a friend of the family, or a go-between. Physical appearance, health, intelligence, education, family pedigree, and the bride's domestic abilities and accomplishments, as well as horoscopic and geomantic considerations, are taken into account by the prospective mate and the mate's family. Although the negotiations may be broken off after the mutual "viewing meeting", the individual "...requires some strength of mind to resist the pressure of parents and go-between who are convinced of the appropriateness of the match and would find extrication from the negotiations embarrassing -- a strength of mind not often to be found in Japanese women."[26] In the traditional arranged marriage, many couples never even met until the day of their wedding. Today, however, these customs have been modified. After the *miai* (mutual "viewing meeting"), couples are often encouraged to get to know each other during a period of weeks or months before the marriage plans are finalized.

For men and women who move away from rural areas, chances for meeting a prospective spouse are much greater than if they had remained on the farms. "Dating", although not in the American defintion of the term, has become popular among people in urban areas. Among high school students, group mixing is accepted but unchaperoned pairing off is not. Sumiko Yamamoto,[27] currently a student, said:

> "In my high school days there was one boy that I liked. We would have liked to have gone out alone together, to get to know each other outside the context of a large group, but it would have been looked down upon if we had been seen together alone by any of our classmates, teachers, or parents."

Among high school students like Sumiko, groups or cliques are almost exclusively

comprised of same-sex friends. Two groups, one comprised of girls and the other of boys, may jointly participate in social activities. Even in the cases where their peers are aware of a romantic relationship, however, a couple will not normally single itself out from the group, but rather continue to see each other in the context of the group.

Among college students, the situation is somewhat less formalized and strict. Dating does occur to a limited extent, although the majority of activities is still performed in groups of four persons or more. A woman who is dating someone is expected not to date or ever be seen with another male. Concurrent dating of two persons or more is frowned upon and such a woman often gets a reputation for being promiscuous, of being a "playgirl".

Even if students meet someone whom they wish to marry, most college students don't have the financial resources to get married. Girls and their parents consider students a risk because they are not yet securely employed. Marriage for women, in particular, is important because it is often a means of livelihood.[28] All of the respondents whom I interviewed stressed the importance of finding a husband who was financially stable and well-established in a company or occupaton. A "salaryman" was the overwhelming choice for a husband because of the security of lifetime employment and the benefits of the "seniority wage system".

Women prefer to marry a working man but once both men and women enter a place of employment after school, their opportunities for meeting members of the opposite sex are severely limited to prospective mates in the work place. A young woman with whom I spoke[29] had recently graduated from a two-year women's college and was looking for a temporary job in a firm which might

house a prospective husband for her. Her sole motivation for seeking employment was to meet a "salaryman". Singles who do not have a social connection find it extremely difficult to meet and make friends with anyone because the Japanese are extremely group-conscious. Even if there are opportunities to meet new people through social interactions, Befu notes that there is a psychological barrier involved:

> ...there is a tendency for Japanese to feel particularly comfortable in a situation in which they are interacting with people with whom they have a relatively deep emotional commitment. The other side of this coin is that they feel inhibited from approaching a stranger or casual acquaintance of the opposite sex with a potentially serious intent such as marriage. [30]

For these reasons, young people still tend to rely on their parents, friends, or other intermediaries, at least for the initial introduction. [31] Eriko Ichikawa, [32] currently twenty-three years old, has just graduated from a women's college, and is looking for a husband. She had hoped to marry her high school sweetheart but her father would not consider letting her marry someone with a lower status than his own: "My father was alarmed when he found out that I was dating a boy whose father was 'just a businessman'" (Eriko's father is a doctor).

"He felt that it would be a disgrace to the family if I married someone who had a lower status than our family. He really hopes that I will marry a young doctor so he can go into the practice with my father and eventually take over the family practice once my father retires." Eriko's father is taking an active interest in her marriage plans: "He shows me photographs of prospective husbands, all of whom are either doctors or in medical school. It would really

break his heart if I married someone who wasn't a doctor." I asked her if

she married one of the men in the photographs whether it would be considered

an arranged or a love marriage. She replied that: "It would be a love marriage,

of course, because I always have the opportunity to say no." This answer

surprised me and also made me wonder how many other "love marriages" were

arranged in this manner.

Although over eighty-two percent of all urban women under the age of

twenty would *prefer* a love marriage,[33] there are reasons, in addition to the

practical considerations above, why many of them accept an arranged or "modified"

arranged marriage:

> ...modified versions of the arranged marriage are still
> popular among parents as well as young people themselves,
> because it is commonly believed that marriage partners
> chosen by one's parents in consultation with respected,
> experienced go-betweens, have greater chance of success.[34]

Asking for the advice of one's parents and a go-between is important for

another psychologically-based reason. Marriage for modern day Japanese still

involves a great deal of responsibility to one's parents. As noted earlier, many

Japanese remain emotionally dependent on their parents, even as adults. There is

a general unwillingness among Japanese to assume individual responsibility for

decision-making:[35]

> Making one's own marriage decision is a frightening prospect;
> it implies the necessity to affirm symbolically one's inde-
> pendence from parents and relatives, an independence that means
> one can no longer turn to them for assistance or succor in time
> of need.[36]

Wilbert Moore asserts that arranged marriage practices will disappear as

a society modernizes and kinship bonds outside of the immediate conjugal family

are consequently weakened:

> Marriage by arrangement between kin groups is virtually
> certain to disappear -- this being one of the kinship
> bonds that is weakened or severed -- and voluntary mate
> selection to appear in its stead.[37]

It is apparent that voluntary mate selection has become the *ideal* in Japanese society, yet it is doubtful, given both the economic and deeply ingrained psychological variables perpetuating the arranged marriage system, that modernization will indeed have the effects which Moore postulates.

Moore assumes, in stating that arranged marriage arrangements will be replaced by voluntary mate selection, that the sole basis for the existence of arranged marriage lies in kinship bonds. In Japanese society, as elsewhere, modernization and industrialization have weakened kinship bonds. In Japanese society, however, there are additional reasons lying outside of kin-group relationships which affect marriage patterns. Moore's erroneous generalization stems from his fundamental error of assuming that the development of an individualistic ideology is concomitant with modernization. As has been shown, the unique Japanese societal structure, based largely on interdependence and group-identification, does not fit this pattern.

If Moore was confronted with this evidence he might argue that collective ideology and capitalism are in direct competition with each other, and that Japan is in a state of transition to relieve the tensions produced by this conflict. I could not agree with this line of reasoning, however. Of foremost importance is the fact that collective ideology has survived over two thousand years of changes in the Japanese society. Capitalism developed alongside an increasing emphasis on collective ideology between the Meiji Resotration and World War II. Even the democratization process which took place after World War II did not undermine the emphasis placed on the group; in fact, rapid economic growth following the war encouraged it. A propensity *away* from individualistic behavior is as much an intrinsic part of Japanese culture as is the propensity *toward* individualism in American society.

It must be stressed at this point that the relative absence of indivi-
dualistic behavior in Japanese society does not indicate that the Japanese
have a submissive personality structure. It merely shows that Japanese
have for the most part, learned to suppress these individualistic tendencies.

"The weaker sex"

George DeVos found in a sample of eight-hundred persons in both rural
and urban communities that there was no basic, significant, consistent structur-
al difference between the personalities of Japanese men and women.[38] Person-
ality traits did not correspond to sex-role behavior,[39] consequently shattering
the myth that women are inherently submissive while men are inherently dominant.
The female role, however, is much more constricting than the male role:

> Thus, while a dominant man could assert himself directly
> within the behavioral prerogatives of the male role, a
> potentially dominant woman had to find some indirect
> means of expressing dominance within the narrow structures
> confining female role behavior.[40]

Women are often torn by a conflict between their true aspirations and the
desires they are expected to have. Their role requirements are rigid and specific;
women are "supposed" to be wives and mothers. They are not expected to be
competitive, want a career, or in any other way depart from the normative expec-
tations associated with their role. If girls show leadership ability they are
thought to be unfeminine: "Quiet but cheerful, submissive, obedient girls make
better wives and mothers, it is thought. Since becoming wives and mothers is
their goal, the girls take care to create a favorable impression."[41] Becoming
wives and mothers is not only their goal, it is often their only choice. In
practically every country in the world, including the United States, the over-
whelming majority of women opt for marriage. But in the United States, for example,

choosing marriage does not preclude having roles in addition to that of wife and mother. In Japan, on the other hand, a woman does not have this latitude of choice and is expected to choose to be a wife and mother, and to be fulfilled and satisfied with this choice.

The aforementioned importance of the role of mother and perpetuation of the family and the family's status is a major factor differentiating woman's roles in Japan and other modernized countries. All Japanese are expected to marry, women by the age of thirty and men shortly thereafter. There is a common phrase in Japanese which translates as "Unmarried women over thirty are left-overs" (ie. undesirable). Keiko Satō expressed this societal pressure for women to marry in their mid-twenties in saying:

> I felt that I shouldn't get married until I was twenty-eight when my youngest sister was out of high school. I had a big responsibility to help my mother with the restaurant. But I also felt that twenty-eight would be too old. I wanted to marry a 'salaryman' so I decided that twenty-six would be a good age because then my younger sister would at least be out of junior high school and I could also find a good husband.

After marriage, couples are expected, and even pressured directly by parents and other relatives, to have children. Noriko Watanabe, another respondent, is currently working full-time at a job she really enjoys but: "My mother nags me all the time about having children. She tells me that I'm getting too old to have children (Noriko is twenty-eight) and that if I wait much longer my children will probably have birth defects." Although Noriko does not want to quit her job, the pressure her mother has put on her to fulfill her mother role has made her decide to quit her job within the next two years to have a child.

During an English class I was teaching, I suggested a topic of conversation to the group of adult men and women. I had recently interviewed an avid feminist

in her forties, Chikako Tanaka,[42] who had decided to remain childless and
pursue her own career and interests. I asked the group their feelings on
the subject. Without exception, everyone felt that not only was Chikako
leading an unfulfilled life, she was being selfish. I asked why they felt
that she was being selfish and one young woman replied:

> Chikako is thinking only of herself. What of her
> parents, how do you think they feel? She has probably
> disappointed her parents and friends tremendously.
> If she *couldn't* have children, then it would be
> different, it couldn't be helped. But *choosing* not
> to have them, that is wrong. You are an American, so
> maybe you don't understand, but for us Japanese, it
> is selfish.

Everyone in the room nodded their heads in agreement. Chikako had broken a
fundamental moral rule in her society by making a choice that was never really
hers to make.

An increasing number of women choose to work or even pursue a career, but
this is almost always done after they have filled their wife/mother role ob-
ligations to their families to society. Conditions make it extremely difficult
for women who do want to pursue a career or who must work for financial reasons.
These will be discussed in the following chapter on women in the workforce.

Although there may be conflicts within women who, due to their role limi-
tations, cannot actualize their desires, an intense, almost fanatical dedication
to roles is a unique characteristic of the Japanese.[43] The dedication of
modern Japanese to their roles has its basis in Confucian philosophy which
governed the lives of the *samurai* elite in the 1800's.[44] Dedication to one's
role at that time was a necessity and is still thought of in those terms today.
The "self" becomes inseparable from the role. Individualism, or separation
of the "self" from the role, indicates a conflict between individual passion
and role responsibility.[45] It therefore indicates disloyalty and represents a

major moral failing:

> According to any ethical traditional Japanese, a
> person could not actualize himself, that is to say,
> accomplish his destiny as a human being, without
> playing his proper social role.[46]

Role dedication indicates loyalty to one's superiors, is the result of a

child's never-ending repayments to his/her parents for love and care, and

binds together the networks of obligation which are crucial to Japanese

society.

A child learns that in order to receive warmth and security she must

follow her mother's example of total dedication to the wife/mother role.

Boys, on the other hand, learn dedication to the economic and public roles

of their fathers. Dedication to one's role, male or female, is necessary to

achieve in the society. The need to sense personal achievement, a sense of

personal accomplishment, is a strong motivation for the dedication to established

roles.[47] In order to justify herself to society, a woman must excell in her

prescribed role as a wife and mother. Doing well in other roles, if they

exclude the wife/mother role, does not carry with it the status that bearing

and raising a child who achieves eminence does. In the latter case, because

the mother is given responsibility for the successes or failures of her child,

the child's success reflects on her efforts, as well as the efforts of the

child. Many mothers are actively involved with every aspect of their children's

lives, especially their sons', to assure success for not only their children,

but for themselves, and thus their justification to society.

The myth of the "Happy Housewife"

Many women are satisfied with this type of vicarious fulfillment through

their children but, not surprisingly, many are not. Yumiko Itō has spent most

accomplish things which one person cannot do alone. I've been married for a little over a year now, but both my husband and I are so busy with everyday life that we haven't been able to accomplish anything yet."

The image Keiko Satō had of married life and the reality of the situation were also totally different. She had idealistic dreams but soon found that married life was very lonely. She thinks that most other Japanese women feel the same way: "I think it would be better sometimes if I hadn't gotten married. I think about it a lot. Because of my child, I guess married life is a little bit better than being single."

In informal discussions I conducted with groups of educated men ranging in ages from twenty-five to sixty, there was general consensus that women are happy with the roles they play and that they are the ones who choose them. I brought up the point that many women I had interviewed seemed to be dissatisfied with their positions. The men rejected this, saying that either I had misunderstood what the women were saying or that I had taken a misrepresentative sample.

In my first interview with an unmarried woman of twenty-four, I asked Eriko Ichikawa what her image of married life was and she said that she thought that it would be "rewarding and exciting." I asked her what she thought she would do during the day when her husband was at work and she replied: "Oh, I'll stay home and play with my children, and I'll be able to catch up on little things like writing letters and sewing clothes." She hasn't thought much about life after her children grow up and leave home but "after all, that's so far in the future."

It is obvious by looking at these examples that there is a discrepancy
between what married women think of married life and what others view it to
be.

Divorce

Although women are often disappointed when they uncover the "myth of
the happy housewife", from the outset they hold expectations of their relation-
ships with their husbands which are quite different from our own. It is true
that a love marriage has become the ideal for Japanese and increased importance
has been placed on the relationship between husband and wife. This is in
contrast to the traditional family system, where a strong husband-wife rela-
tionship was not only frowned upon but thought to be detrimental to the
stability of the family. Although many *hope* for a romantic marriage, few
women *expect* it.

Economic conditions, especially in rural areas, necessitate that women
be independent of their husbands both physically and emotionally. Even in
urban areas, younger men especially devote long hours and even weekends to
their companies, leaving little time to cultivate an emotional relationship
with their wives. Noriko Watanabe describes the conditions of her marriage:
"He (her husband) doesn't think about me, he has a 'going-my-way' attitude...
He leaves the apartment at about 7:45 every morning and returns home between
nine and ten in the evening. I do all of the housework after I get home from
work or on the weekends. He has probably never done any housework in his
life since his father was a very traditional man who never entered the kitchen."
Noriko remarked that she is jealous of American women whose husbands help them

in the home. Within the household, Noriko feels that she has the full respon-
sibilities because her husband is never home: "When he comes home from work
he just eats dinner and goes to sleep. I have to come home from work, fix the
meal, and have it waiting for him when he gets home. I don't like this situation
but it can't be helped (*shikata ga nai*)....

Yumiko Itō describes a similar situation: "My husband came from an un-
cultured farm background. He lords it over his wife and doesn't believe that
any man should ever have to pick up a broom....He has no role in the home, he
won't even pull out his own '*futon*' (bedding) at night." She thinks that
he should help out a little more around the house, "...at least pour his own
cup of tea." He usually takes his bath first and she usually takes hers last
because "I'd just get dirty again. I have a lot of housework to do. Even
when I'm busy making dinner or something, he yells, 'hey fill the bath', and
I just answer, '*hai*', but I don't do it very fast and I don't do it happily....
But it can't be helped (*shikata ga nai*). He grew up in a traditional environ-
ment, with a mother who did everything. There's no use trying to change him."
She says that she envies women whose husbands help them around the house but
says that those kinds of men are usually younger: "Men fifty and over like
my husband are just no good."

When asked how she felt about divorce, Yumiko said that if the situation
was really bad a couple should get a divorce, regardless of whether children
were involved. In her own case, however, and in the cases of women of her
generation, she feels that she should just endure. She feels that her children,
however, should never have to put up with a husband like her own. She is
jealous of today's young women who can support themselves and can therefore
get divorced and not have to worry about financial survival. In her own case,
she doesn't feel that she has that option.

The divorce rate of the Japanese is extremely low in comparison with other industrialized countries such as the United States, which has a divorce rate five times that of Japan's. It has been demonstrated through interview responses that this is not due to total satisfaction of most women with marriage. Many women may be unhappy in their present marriage but do not seek divorce. There is a strong cultural stigma attached to once-married females, especially those with children, making it difficult for them to remarry. In addition, because many women like Yumiko are neither trained, nor have the opportunity to enter high-income occupations, they tend to take low-paying jobs after divorce which reduces their status to the lowest social level.[48] Respondents often reported when questioned about divorce, that women should endure for the sake of their children, but that if the situation was severe, a woman should get a divorce regardless of whether she had children. These women were quick to add, however, that they didn't think that they personally would get a divorce, regardless of the situation.

Divorce rates rose sharply after World War II but then declined steadily until 1963 when the rate was at its lowest.[49] They have since slowly risen and, according to a 1979 newspaper article in the Japan Times, 1.15 persons per thousand were divorced in Japan in 1978 with fifty-six percent of these divorces initiated by women.[50] Improved education and divorce laws have helped women to survive economically after a divorce. In 1978, for example, approximately fifty-one percent of the women divorced received money and other assets from their husbands, compared with only 38.9 percent of such women in 1963.[51] Improved divorce laws also give women a better chance of receiving custody of their children. Forty-eight percent of the female respondents divorced in 1978 said that they had custody of their children, representing a fourteen percent increase over the figure for 1968.[52]

It is apparent that industrialization has created strains within the family. The demands of companies, specialization and lack of communication between the roles of husbands and wives, and the rise in the status of women have all contributed to an increase in the rate of divorce since World War II. Economic modernization has not, however, caused "...extensive family disorganization..." which Moore predicts will accompany industrialization and the consequent breakdown of traditional patterns with the incomplete establishment of new institutions.[53] Perhaps Japan has not yet reached this stage of "transitional disorganization".[54] There are presently too many traditional attitudes and institutions preventing this kind of breakdown.

I hypothesize that changes will occur, and indeed are already beginning to occur, in the economic sector which will at least partially relieve the current strains on the family. After the war, Japan's sole intent was in building and rebuilding, with a great national effort directed toward that goal. Now, with a prosperous economic system which equals or excells over those in other industrialized countries, the Japanese are re-evaluating their priorities. Self-sacrifice is still considered necessary, but not to the degree which was evident immediately after the war. Personal satisfaction is taking on new importance, and therefore, families and time with wives and children, are becoming values with higher priorities. The legitimization for sustaining the feverish economic pitch is rapidly disappearing. This is evident in recent demands by workers for a work week limited to five or even four days, and a demand for a reduction in mandatory over-time work.

For the present, however, men remain dedicated to their roles and in most cases have little involvement with their families. The role of wife and

mother thus remains an important one in Japanese society. Women are not criticized for being "just housewives". Women's role is not thought of as inferior to economic vocational achievement, but is instead thought of as the specialized counterpart of the adult male role.[55] This attitude differs from the one in our own country where the role of housewife is seen as less important than the economically productive, and therefore powerful, role of men. It is precisely this difference in the perceived importance of men's and women's roles which prevents women in Japan from strictly following patterns evident in other modernized countries.

Giving birth to, caring for, and overseeing children's development is a full-time, crucial role to be performed by one parent. Accruing the financial resources in order to survive in a capitalist society is the other primary, full-time role which must be performed by the other marriage partner.

According to the nature of the present Japanese economy and values regarding children, neither of these roles can be eliminated. They could conceivably be combined in a manner similar to recent role changes in the United States. There are, however, stronger deterrents, both structural and ideological, against this combination of roles and a movement toward asexual roles in Japan. Many of these deterrents have been discussed in this chapter. Others, such as education practices and the nature of the Japanese economy, are to be discussed in Chapters Two and Three. Underlying and perpetuating all of these factors is the fundamental belief of most men and women that the natures of the sexes are different. Women's inherent qualities make her best suited for the wife/mother role. In the same way, men's inherent qualities make

them "natural" for the economic and public roles. Crossing over into the sphere of the other sex results in "unnatural" and inferior performance.

In the United States, the myth of women's inferiority to men was used to perpetuate the division and inequalities between the sexes. In Japan the situation becomes more complicated. Women are not necessarily thought of as inferior to men; women are different from men. In the words of a respondent, Keiko Satō: "I don't think that men and women are the same. Women are different in nature than men. Women are emotional thinkers and men are rational....Men have a profound sense which women don't have." Women should not try to compete with men because, according to Keiko, "...women can't do the same jobs as men." Women's role in society is to raise their children; men's role is their job. She feels that this is both right and natural.

Like Keiko, most Japanese women feel that their most important obligation and contribution to society is to be a good wife and raise good children: "In Japan tradition has made the domestic role the feminine ideal."[56]

Women in the Family

NOTES

1. Moore, p. 74.

2. Ibid., p. 108

3. Nobutaka Ike, Japanese Politics, Alfred A. Knopf- Inc., NY. 1972, p. 10.

4. DeVos, p. 32.

5. Ibid.

6. This occurs in groups other than the family as well. A boss or a chairman
    will usually take public responsibility for a mistake made by one of his
    subordinates. In one instance I personally knew of first-hand, some
    extrance examinations had been stolen and sold by one of the professors
    in the Commerce department of a prestigious Tokyo university. When this
    was discovered, the chairman of the department, although he was in no way
    connected with the scandal, took full responsibility for the incident and
    committed suicide.

7. George DeVos, p. 32. Socialization for Achievement, University of California
    Press, Berkeley, 1973.

8. Ibid., p. 47.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 48.

11. Ibid.

12. Frank Langdon, Politics in Japan, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1967, p. 73.

13. DeVos, p. 35.

14. Moore, p. 113.

15. Ibid.

16. See appendix for complete interview.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Okamura, p. 25.

20. Pharr, p. 240.

21. Lebra, p. 117.

22. I lived and worked on a small farm in Tochigi Prefecture during the summer
    of 1979 as part of an education program.

23. A "salaryman" is Japanese-English for a salaried worker. It corresponds
    closely to the English term of white-collar worker.

24. Pharr, p. 239.

25. Dore, p. 165.

26. Ibid., p. 168.

27. See appendex for complete interview.

28. Dore, p. 170.

29. A personal friend of the author.

30. Harumi Befu, _Japan: An Anthropological Introduction_, Chandler Publishing Company, N.Y., 1971, p. 57.

31. Ibid.

32. See appendix for complete interview.

33. Pharr, p. 312.

34. Lebra, p. 46.

35. DeVos, p. 55.

36. Ibid.

37. Moore, p. 108.

38. DeVos, pp. 38-39.

39. Ibid., p. 39.

40. Ibid.

41. Lebra, p. 71.

42. See appendix for complete interview.

43. DeVos, p. 12.

44. Ibid., p. 11.

45. Ibid., p. 12.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., p. 23.

48. Befu, p. 143.

49. _Japan Times_, November 1, 1979.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Moore, p. 105 .

54. Ibid. p. 107.

55. DeVos, p. 24.

56. Lebra, p. 108.

Chapter 2

WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

Japanese women are expected to be "good wives and mothers". Their primary role and responsibilities revolve around the domestic sphere. These responsibilities have decreased, however, with economic and demographic changes characteristic of most industrialized societies. Today, over one-third of the total Japanese labor force consists of women working in full-time and part-time positions, despite the limitations and inequalities which are imposed upon them. In this chapter I will describe and explain the processes and character-istics within the economic sphere which liberate women from the singularity of their wife/mother roles, but which at the same time, prevents them from attaining power, prestige, and higher status in society.

Rural women in the economy

Wilbert Moore identifies some major changes which accompany industrialization in societies.[1] The first of these transformations in the economic organization involves the incorporation of the subsistence sector into the commercialized market system of the economy. With industrialization there is a substantial reduction in the population involved in agriculture, as the application of modern methods to agriculture reduces the direct labor demand for production while manufacturing and service industries require an increasing number of laborers.[2]

In early Meiji Japan, as in other industrializing societies, the number of persons involved in agriculture dropped substantially as modernization proceeded. This was partially due to the large number of young men in farming families who migrated to urban areas to fill manufacturing and service industry jobs. Because of the nature of the Japanese farms, however, there was little application of

modern methods to agriculture, in opposition to what Moore suggests. Mechaniza-
tion of rice cultivation, the chief crop, is possible only where there is large-
scale farming.   With the numerous small plots which are characteristic of
Japanese farms, farming must be done in the traditional, labor-intensive manner.
Machinery was used more extensively after World War II with the introduction of
small models of cultivators. Mechanization, however, still entailed a substantial
capital investment by families. The increased cost of consumer goods and
agricultural chemicals, also contributed to farm income remaining low despite
higher yields.[3]

Until recent years, agricultural production has risen steadily, but not
more than three or four percent annually, while the gross national product has
been rising at an annual rate of ten percent or more.[4] The gap between agriculture
and other industries has been widening in both economy and productivity. The result
has been that fewer and fewer people can make their livings from agriculture.
In fact, the movement away from agriculture has been drastic: in 1950, the
farm population exceeded eighteen million persons whereas by 1970 it had dropped
to 8.1 million.[5] Despite the sharp drop in the farm population, the number of
farm *households* remains at over 5.2 million, close to the pre-war level of 5.5
million: this is because farming is now carried on mainly by the aged and by women,
while large numbers of the young adult male population have left agriculture:

> When farmers became wage earners they dropped onto the shoulders
> of the farming wife the weighty insecurities that burden women
> of working class families in the city; low wages, unemployment,
> supplementary full- or part-time work, sacrifices of housework
> and child-rearing.[6]

Women now make up fifty-two percent of the agrarian workforce but remain
unpaid laborers before and after marriage.[7] Because of the small size of farm
holdings and the continuing traditional ideology in rural areas, farmers still
usually hand down their land from father to son. Thus women, although they are
the principal workers, are unable to secure any monetary assets of their own.

Mechanization has still not significantly affected farming techniques in Japan because of the small size of farms and the prohibitive cost of machinery. Even where farming is mechanized, a great deal of manual labor is involved. Most of the vegetables grown for families' consumption, for example, are harvested almost exclusively by female manual labor. Within the home, however, technological innovations have lightened the burden of the housewife. Responding to the reduction in the time needed to perform housework, many farm wives are taking part-time jobs during the least busy seasons of winter and summer in order to supplement their families' agrarian income.

In the rural Japanese farming household where I spent one month during the summer of 1979, the wife worked part-time as a maid in a hotel in a nearby resort town. A typical day for her entailed getting up at 6:00 a.m., preparing breakfast for the family and leaving the house by 7:30. When she returned from her hotel job at 8:00 p.m., she helped her daughter prepare dinner for the family and then went to bed at about 10:00. The days that she didn't work, she picked vegetables from the garden, helped in the fields and with the milking, bought food, cleaned the house, and did other jobs around the farm.

In the busy months, especially early spring and early fall when the rice must be planted and then harvested, she is a full-time laborer on the farm. Her husband, however, does not work on the farm, but rather on a construction job at a nearby town, six days a week. Her eldest son (28) has taken over the farm responsibilities from his father and performs the major chores connected with planting and harvesting, as well as with the dairy cows.

The woman described above is not atypical of contemporary farm wives. Today, forty percent of all farmers' wives work at some kind of outside employment, a

fifteen percent increase since 1965.[8] Women in rural areas have always held

an important role in agriculture, working with their husbands in performing

various tasks on the farm as well as having the responsibilities of the home

and childcare.[9] The additional responsibilities of taking on additional farming

tasks and outside work, however, have imposed both a psychological and physical

drain on the energies of farm women.[10] They often worry that outside jobs,

which take them away from the home most of the day, have an adverse effect on

their children and on their relationships with their husbands:

> Embracing as she does the housewife ideal, the farm
> woman wants what she feels she has been deprived of
> --the chance to stay at home. Farm wives would pre-
> fer only domestic chores, such as learning new recipes
> or knitting....The farm wife's dream is to be 'just a
> housewife.'[11]

The farm wife has been "liberated" from the singular role of wife/mother but

has not accrued the benefits of a higher status. She is an unpaid family laborer

who is in an isolated sphere of farm work, while her husband's sphere revolves

around his non-farm job: "Farm women make up the working class that is the

least democratic, the least modern; and, it is fair to say, the one of which

the status of women is lowest."[12]

Urban women in the dual economy

In the period following World War II, the discriminatory policies which had

been perpetuated by industry and government were terminated, at least in written

form. The Occupation forces, under the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers,

General MacArthur, instituted a process of democratization which brought about

sweeping changes in all phases of Japanese life, including the roles and status

of women in the workforce.[13] The New Constitution of Japan guaranteed quality

under the law for all Japanese citizens, and the Labor Standards Law of 1947

established the basis for fair treatment of women workers. Article four declared that employers should not discriminate between men and women in regard to wages. Other provisions of the law include pregnancy and child-birth rights, and prohibitions against working at night or under "dangerous"[14] conditions; "protections" which often perpetuate discrimination in hiring and promotion rather than eradicate it. Women were also given the right to organize and strike without being discriminated against under the Labor Union Law and the Relations Adjustment Law of 1949.[15]

Despite post-war legislation guaranteeing equality of the sexes in employment, equality is still far from being established in reality:

> ...there are many reported violations of the provisions for working mothers, and a growing discrepancy between the wages of men and women, despite the principle of equal renumeration. The difficulty appears to be due to the fact that although advocates of women's rights in the 1950's had made some headway with the concept of equal pay for men and women, the concept of 'work of equal value' was not familiar to Japanese society, where the man's lifelong commitment to a firm and the 'senior wage system' prevail even today.[16]

The patriarchal nature of large companies, their policy of lifelong employment and the "senior wage system", have had negative effects on the status of women in the workforce which are not found in other countries:

> Many norms that are used to describe the nature and scope of women's work in the national economies of the industrial nations, however, do not apply to Japan. Whereas in many countries women work after leaving school and until the birth of their first or second child, then remain at home for a few years caring for children and return to work either part or full-time, the Japanese employment system makes such a pattern very difficult to follow without great loss both in status and income.[17]

In the large companies, workers are recruited upon graduation and are usually expected to work in that particular company for the duration of their

working lives. Upon entry into a firm, workers receive a base salary, according

to their level of education, which increases with seniority. In addition to

this base pay, firms provide benefits such as housing in company dormitories

or apartments, transportation costs, family allowances, insurance, subsidized

lunches, recreational and athletic facilities, uniforms worn on the job,

medical services, and annual or semi-annual bonuses which may equal the base

pay. The employees, in return, are expected to give their employers total

loyalty, be willing to work overtime, and do as the company demands.[18]

These customs are characteristic of the larger firms which employ approxi-

mately thirty percent of the wage and salary earners in Japan. Approximately

eighty percent of the women in the workforce, however, are employed in medium-

sized and small firms.[19] The coexistance of a small number of large, influential

companies and many small and medium-sized companies which employ over seventy

percent[20] of all workers, yet control less than one-half of the total capital,[21]

is a distinctive feature of the dual economy in Japan. Jones maintains that the

anomalies in the employment of women are based on this type of dual economy.[22]

From the nineteenth century, the lower socio-economic class provided a flexible

labor pool that worked for low wages in accordance with market demands.[23] The

small and medium-sized enterprises "...provided a margin of flexibility for the

development of large-scale amalgamated enterprises in market and labor fluctuations."[24]

In the 1930's the labor situation stabilized as heavy industry developed and the

number of men came to exceed those of women in the permanent labor force.[25]

The dual economy is based upon three types of employment; full-time employment

in the large firms, full-time employment in the small enterprises, and "part-time"

or "temporary" employment. Larger firms often meet their needs for seasonal or

other temporary expansions by hiring part-time labor to supplement the work of

their full-time employees. In 1970, 5.7 percent of males in the labor force

were temporary workers while 15.1 percent of female workers were classified as temporary.[26] Most women, regardless of their employment status are considered "temporary" by their employers. The average length of service in 1978 was 6.1 years for women and 11.1 years for men.[27] This difference is used to justify disparities in wages, promotions, and retirement.[28] Because many women do retire upon marriage, after three or four years of employment, employers do not view them as a good investment.

In small and medium-sized firms, women are often given simple, repetitive tasks and are not trained so that they can advance. On-the-job training is usually not offered to women because employers assume that in three or four years, when most women marry, their main interest will no longer be their work but their homes and children.[29] Because employers expect all women to follow the pattern of getting married in their mid-twenties and starting a family, they often force women to "retire" upon marriage, the birth of their first child, or when they reach the age of thirty.

In large companies utilizing the lifetime employment system, women are not hired for the same jobs as men. Women usually cannot cash in on the benefits of the lifetime employment and "seniority wage" systems available to men, fore the women are usually hired as "Office Ladies" and are expected to retire in their late twenties. Their duties are best described in the words of an informant, Noriko Watanabe, who worked as an "O.L." for one and a half years after graduating from a top university in Tokyo:

> I did the same job every day and I hated it. I couldn't use anything that I had learned in college. We did things like run errands, get tea and coffee for the men in the office. I realized that I had no future there and quit as soon as I found another job.

Women's wages start out at nearly the same rate as men's, but with time the gap widens. In 1978 the starting wages of women university graduates were 93.9 percent those of men's.[30] The differential between men and women's

regular cash earnings (1978) between the ages of forty and forty-four, however, were wide, with women earning only 48.1 percent of the wages earned by men.[31] Lower wages and other discriminatory treatment, although illegal, is practiced by companies:

> At eighteen I got a job as an 'O.L.'. I ran errands, bought lunch for the men in the office and did other petty things. All through school I was with boys on an equal level. I never thought that they were better than me. I hated my job because I was put on an inferior level compared with my male colleagues. I wrote a letter to my boss saying that I didn't join his company to serve tea and coffee to men. I asked why it was that women only served tea, why women got a lower salary, and why women couldn't advance like men. I fought with my superiors, but it didn't get me anywhere, so I quit.[32]

Companies justify this discriminatory treatment on a number of grounds. In addition to not wanting to invest the time and money in workers who will leave the company in a short while, most employers feel that women have both physical power and intelligence inferior to that of men. Married women have the responsibilities of housework and child-rearing and therefore have less time and energy to devote to their jobs. Unmarried women, on the other hand, since they are not trained by companies, are not worth the higher levels of the seniority wage. They are seen as temporary or supplementary workers, and are therefore not deserving of the same renumeration as full-time male employees:[33]

> As a consequence of this circular reasoning, women are not placed on promotion ladders. Of the companies surveyed by the Labor Standards Law Research Society, 47.7 percent offered chances of promotion for women while 52.3 percent did not, 60.1 percent explained that 'because women do supplementary work, it would be impossible,' and 47.3 percent said 'because women's overall employment time is so short.' Women are expected to remain in their original jobs as long as they work, receiving slightly higher increments each year of employment but fairly quickly reaching a ceiling above which it is not worth retaining them.[34]

The dual-track employment system in Japan accurately reflects the socially determined role-sets for men and women:[35] men are expected to work throughout their lives and women are expected to devote themselves to their families after marriage. However, economic and social changes have dramatically affected married women's participation in the labor force. As recently as ten years ago, most women who "retired" in their twenties did not return to the labor force unless they were widowed of their husbands could not work. Keiko Satō's mother, for example, ran a small restaurant to support her family only because her husband could not find work. According to Keiko, this caused severe hardship for both her mother and herself. Presently, however, over fifty percent of the women between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine, and sixty-four percent of those between forty and forty-nine, go back to the work force after raising their families.[36] The percentage of married women in the labor force has risen from 32.7 percent in 1962 to 55.4 percent in 1979.[37]

Some older women are re-entering the labor market to supplement their husbands' incomes. Other women, however, are merely searching for ways to fill their free time. Women now stay in school longer, marry younger, have fewer children, and are therefore younger when their last child enters school. The retirement age for men has been extended and women are therefore older when their husbands retire. Women's projected lifespan has increased to seventy-six years, currently the longest in the world, and modernized conveniences have reduced the time spent doing housework. The responsibilities associated with their traditional roles as wife and mother have therefore decreased drastically in the past twenty-five years, giving them the opportunity to explore the world outside of the domestic domain. Unfortunately, there are many inequalities and limitations for those women who decide to re-enter the dual economy.

Most older women work part-time, officially defined as working less than thirty-five hours per week. In actuality, part-time workers may work full-time weeks and overtime since part-time status is defined as outside the regular labor force, not by actual hours worked.[38] Most of these part-time employees do not receive the benefits received by full-time employees, such as health insurance coverage and social security (only thirty-two percent of part-time workers are covered),[39] paid vacations,[40] and unemployment compensation.[41]

By "retiring" at marriage or the birth of a child, most women have given up all claims of returning to their former places of employment. Because large firms are virtually closed to adult job-seekers, most women reentering the labor force work in small companies. In addition to low wages and status, workers in small firms are subject to the insecurities resulting from unstable market conditions. Productively, however; "Women in smaller organizations are less likely to be placed in positions where they simply serve tea or coffee to male fellow employees, as is the case with workers in large offices. Their skills are functionally more important to the organizations which employ them."[42] Women are forced by the dual nature of the economy to forsake the status and security in a large company job for a perhaps more rewarding, yet nonetheless insecure, low-status position in a small or medium-sized company.

It is becoming more socially acceptable for women who have raised families to enter the work force so long as it does not interfere with their household duties. Women with young children, however, still face societal disapproval and additional obstacles if they choose to pursue a career or are forced to work for financial reasons.

Spiraling inflation has been a concomitant of industrialization in Japan, a situation which Wilbert Moore states is characteristic of modernizing societies.[43]

According to Moore, industrialization requires the universal extension and commercialization of markets for consumer goods. With rising per-capita incomes, the consumption of "necessities" first rises, followed by various comforts and luxuries. These developments are intricating associated with the high rates of inflation which beset almost every industrialized economy. More and more young mothers, whose husbands are still low on the seniority wage ladder, must take jobs to supplement their husbands' incomes. This economic strain conflicts with the traditional wife/mother role and its emphasis on staying at home with children, personally supervising their upbringing and education, and taking care of all the duties associated with the household. Presently, society is not providing women in this situation with the means by which to resolve the conflicts brought about by their new economic role.

It is often very difficult for women to fulfill the three roles of wife, mother, and company worker. Even husbands who support this dual lifestyle do not help significantly in household tasks. Most working women must do all of their own housework since maids are rare in Japan except among the very wealthy. Working mothers may take part-time jobs which allow them to come home an hour earlier than full-time workers so they may perform their household chores, welcome their children home from school, and prepare dinner for their families. They are faced with the same discrimination, lack of benefits, and low wages which older women face as part-time workers. Where there is financial necessity for a wife to work, however, there is little recourse other than to accept these low-status, low-paying jobs.

Although women may have to work in order to help support their families, they are not expected to forego their wife/mother role. Of those married women who work, the majority wait until their children are grown or at least in school. For those who must work while their children are still young, the social and practical barriers are even greater.

Childcare

The most acute problem for working mothers with pre-school children is childcare. Most working wives either rely on relatives, where that is possible, or look to public or private daycare facilities.

Since World War II, public daycare centers have been set up throughout the nation. These facilities give preference to working-class mothers and divorced or widowed women who are the heads of households. However, the demand for these facilities far outnumbers the spaces available. According to a recent survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the number of nurseries had not increased significantly between 1960 and 1974 although the demand for them had risen considerably.[44] As demand exceeds supply, many mothers are forced to put their children in private facilities which are often unlicensed, inadequate, and expensive. A working woman in Tokyo informed me that private daycare facilities for her only child consumed over seventy-five percent of her monthly earnings.

In addition to the low availability and high costs of day care, general public opinion, including the media, views women's use of these facilties to be a neglect of maternal responsibilities:

> The media, especially in the last few years, frequently
> report cases of children being injured or even killed
> at nursuries, often implying that this would not have
> happened if the child had been at home getting properly
> cared for by its mother. This situation certainly puts
> the working mother in a conflict. She is told, at times,
> that the economy really needs her contribution, or she
> works out of economic necessity. Then, in the absence
> of adequate daycare facilities, she is told that her place
> is really at home with her children.[45]

Public opinion, as pointed out in the previous chapter, is an important factor affecting Japanese behavior. No mother wants to risk having her child hurt or possibly killed in a daycare center for it reflects in public, her failure in her prescribed role as a wife and mother. Failing in one's role is tantamount to failing in life as a human being, causing rejection and loss of security, two values which are of utmost importance to the Japanese.

Both the Japanese economy and the social system have unique structures which not only accommodate, but perpetuate, the group. Individualism is associated with insecurity and low status whereas strong group collectivity brings lifelong security and prestige. The rewards which the economic system offer to the Japanese counteract the tensions Moore would suggest should appear in industrialized societies characterized by a collective idealogy. In Japanese society both individualists and women are kept out of positions of prestige, and are relegated to the backstage positions at home and in industry.

Education

The Japanese education system also serves to keep women out of high-status and prestigious positions. Moore states that one source of differential power in societies is derived from the differential distribution of relevant knowledge. Women have been deprived of equal opportunities in schooling for most of Japanese history.

Prior to the Meiji Restoration of 1868, girls received little education other than how to become "good wives and mothers." The Meiji government did institute a new school system which provided women with public education. How-

ever, they were relegated to an inferior "girls' track" which perpetuated the

ideals of motherhood and subservience. Males, on the other hand, were given

the opportunity to follow the "elite academic track" which trained them for

their future roles in the public sphere.

Yumiko Itō, one of the six respondents, was educated under the pre-war

system. She went to a co-educational elementary school where boys and girls

were taught separately:

> The boys even entered the school by a different gate
> than the girls. It seems funny now, but at that time
> I didn't think anything of it. We had home economics
> class from fourth grade on, and of course, 'morals'
> class (which taught traditional values). After elemen-
> tary school I entered a *jōgakkō* (girls' school). There
> I took regular courses....I don't know what boys took
> in their schools, but I assumed they had the same
> courses...and I took cooking, sewing, and knitting
> as well.

After graduating from *jōgakkō*, Yumiko went to a sewing school in Tokyo. She

had wanted to go to college and become a teacher, but her parents objected,

saying that there was no need for a woman to go to college, that her place was

in the home.

The Occupation authorities changed the pre-war multitrack education system

which had relegated women to their inferior girls' track, to one in which co-

education was mandatory through the lower secondary level. "Morals" courses

were abolished and a major effort was made to democratize the system.

Since the reforms, women's enrollment has increased at a remarkable rate

at all levels of education. In 1955, 47.4 percent of female students advanced

beyond compulsory education to enter upper secondary schools, compared to

55.5 percent for males.[46] In 1970, the percentage had risen to 82.7 percent

for females and 81.6 percent for males.[47] For female students going on to

higher education, the percentage rose from 14.9 percent in 1955 to 23.5 percent in 1970.[48]

Although in percentages, women are advancing beyond compulsory education at close to the same rate as men, they are not receiving the same education. Girls in high school, although the options are available to them, often elect the general education course without special plans to go beyond a high school education. Boys, on the other hand, choose the general education course with further education in mind, or choose a special vocational course so they will have a marketable skill when they leave high school.[49] Although home economics and courses in flower arranging and tea ceremony have been made electives, many girls take these courses while boys choose an additional shop or science course. All the respondents I interviewed said that they had taken home economics courses: in junior and senior high school, Keiko Satō feels that she got an education equivalent to a boy's, although she did have to take cooking and sewing courses throughout those years. Sumiko Yamamoto had to take home economics in junior high school, and in high school she had to choose between cooking, tea ceremony, and flower arranging. Boys, on the other hand, had to choose between an additional science course, art course, or gym course.

During the year I spent attending one of the top high schools on the island of Hokkaido, most of the girls I knew chose the home economics course because they felt it would be their only chance to learn how to cook and sew, both important skills for marriage. Many of these girls, regardless of their high school academic achievements, entered two-year junior colleges, where women currently make up 82.7 percent of the total enrollment.[49]

One of my interview respondents, Eriko Ichikawa, attended a coeducational

elementary school, junior high and high school, and then entered a junior

college for two years. Her father had hoped that she would go on to medical

school and take up his practice since she was the eldest daughter, but Eriko

was not very fond of studying and chose to go the women's college instead and

take courses in home economics and child rearing in preparation for her future

role as wife and mother.

In four-year collegs and universities, women make up only eighteen percent

of the total enrollment,[50] with even fewer women enrolled in prestigious national

universities. Of the small percentage of women which does attend four-year

institutions, literature and home economics majors constitute over fifty percent

of the students.[51] Women tend to gravitate to "women's majors" in the humanities

and literature, as opposed to economics, engineering, or the hard sciences which

lead more directly to a career. Thus higher education for women is not being

used to educate and prepare them for careers; in most cases it is being used to

prepare them for their roles as wives and mothers, the role that their parents

and society at large see as most appropriate. A college degree has become a

new kind of marriage credential to attract a suitable husband. However, a woman

who graduates from a top university is fearful of hurting her marriage chances

by being "overeducated:"

> ...most of the female graduates of top-ranked Tokyo Univer-
> sity do indeed marry Tokyo University graduates. However,
> a young woman must keep in mind that many Tokyo University
> graduates would not want to marry a classmate, as they
> consider such women too competitive, insufficiently feminine,
> and possibly too interested in their studies to give their
> primary profession of wife/mother clear priority. Most men
> prefer to be slightly superior to their wives in terms
> of academic achievement, which is the man's sphere by
> definition.[52]

Societal norms are very effective in preventing women from attaining

an education on a par with males. In addition to these deterrents, the

features associated with the dual economy system deter women even further

from getting a college education:

> In most countries a close, positive correlation exists
> between a woman's level of education and uninterrupted
> or only briefly interrupted work life. In Japan, again
> because of the employment system, women college graduates
> have the greatest difficulty finding and keeping employ-
> ment and in receiving wages commensurate with their
> education. Like many other industrial countries, Japan
> has established the principle in its law of equal pay
> of the sexes. Like other countries, the discrepancies
> between men's and women's earnings are wide, but in
> Japan they grow wider with the length of employment.[53]

Unions

Unions, like education, are usually a positive force for equality of

women in the workforce in most industrialized countries. In Japan, however,

they have little effect on the majority of employed women. Temporary workers

in both large and small firms are not supported by unions. Unions do not

welcome temporary workers and rarely seek to organize them, usually excluding

them from membership on the basis of their employment status. Women employed

as "regular" workers are characteristically not strong unionists. Their

participation rate is low and there are almost no women in union leadership

positions. This is a product of women's short work lives and of low status

in the workforce. Union leaders largely share the societal views that women

are, and should be, only transitorily in the labor market, and that as part-time

or temporary workers their concerns are of secondary importance to those of the

life-long employed male.[54]

Unions have been organized in most large enterprises but are relatively

ineffectual in instituting any changes beneficial to women. Unions in large

companies are organized of individual enterprise, fitting the paternalistic

idea of enterprise as one big family.[55] "To the extent that individual unions

are formed on an enterprise basis, their members and leaders are accustomed to looking at issues from a corporate point of view, and they are extremely conservative in regard to their own vested interests."[56] There is a built-in limitation to the effectiveness of these unions which actively support the life-long employment and "seniority wage" systems.

Although there are organized unions in most of Japan's large firms, very few employees in smaller companies, especially in the commerce and service industries, are union members:

> These organized workers may be assumed to be completely under paternalistic management, and because their level of social security is so low they are all the more dependent on management. Efforts to bridge this gap between organized and unorganized labor are difficult to assess, but the difficulty is certainly compounded by a feeling of superiority on the part of workers securely employed in large corporations in regard to the unorganized workers of medium and small enterprises. They seem to have no desire for the unity and solidarity of labor as a whole.... As long as the present situation persists wherein each enterprise union gives priority to its own vested interests, organized labor will not become the principal factor in Japanese politics.[57]

Therefore, even if women did not have to combat discriminatory male union leadership and more women were unionized, their efforts would be relatively ineffectual in changing the discriminatory practices against women workers on the national level.

Litigation

Recent litigation aimed at improving the status and conditions of female workers, although unsupported by unions, has been successful, owing to the efforts of a small number of women lawyers and journalists.[58] Equal opportunities for women in the labor force were first encoded with the New Constitution of 1947 which guaranteed equality for all Japanese under the law. The Labor Standards

Law of 1947, especially Article four, states that employers should not dis-
criminate between men and women in terms of wages. This law also prevents
women from working between 10:00 pm and 5:00 am (Article sixty-two), regulates
the maximum amount of overtime allowed per day (two hours) and per week (six
hours), prohibits women from doing "dangerous" work, allows women to request
time off during menstruation when it interferes with their ability to work
(Article sixty-seven), gives a specified maternity leave of six weeks before
and after childbirth, during which time an employee cannot be dismissed, and
gives women the right to nurse an infant under one year of age at least thirty
minutes, twice a day during working hours (Article sixty-six).

In 1972, the Diet adopted the Working Women's Welfare Law which aimed at
taking "appropriate actions to help them [working women] reconcile their dual
responsibilities of work and home or enable them to develop and make use of
their abilities."[59] This law, however, did not specify any mandatory measures
which companies were required to take. Instead, it was left to the women's
bureau of the Ministry of Labor to persuade employers to comply with its
suggestions voluntarily. The Women's Welfare Law is perceived to be of
major importance in enabling women to maintain their place within the lifelong
employment and "seniority wage system" by guaranteeing re-entry to it after
maternity and child care leave.[60] Additional legislation passed in 1975
guarantees one year of child care leave without pay to specified women employees.[61]

The bulk of the court cases involving women workers have not been aimed
at changing these laws, but at enforcing them in the work place. According
to the Women's and Minors' Bureau, eighteen percent of all companies have
discriminatory regulations concerning women while an additional undetermined
percentage adhere to such practices by custom.[62]

One area of widespread discriminatory treatment is retirement policies.
Many countries have laws requiring women to retire five years earlier than men.

In Japan, however, women are often required by company policy to retire between five and twenty-five years earlier than men, putting them at a severe economic disadvantage. Employment contracts or companies' agreements with unions often call for retirement at marriage, childbirth, or not later than thirty years of age.[63] Even when companies set older retirement ages for women, these ages are usually five to ten years earlier than the age limit for men.[64] According to the report of the Labor Standards Law Research Society, of the companies surveyed which had different retirement ages for men, in ninety-nine percent of the cases men retired at ages above fifty-five and 3.5 percent of the women retired under forty, 54.9 percent between the ages of forty and fifty-five, and 41.6 percent above fifty-five.[65] Special retirement conditions for women were reported in 7.4 percent of the companies with 88.1 percent of these requiring retirement at marriage, 35.3 percent at pregnancy or childbirth and ten percent when a woman married someone in the same company.[66] These systems of early retirement are usually enforced through work rules, collective agreement, by individual contracts or, most commonly, by customary practice. If a woman reaches the age where it is customary for her to "retire," employers often hint that she is no longer wanted. This disapproval is often supported by male and female fellow workers "with the result that a protesting woman in the end cannot tolerate the loss of face involved in appearing unwanted every day for work and she agrees to early retirement."[67] It was emphasized in Chapter One that "loss of face" is a strong form of social control. The male and female "specialization of roles", in the terms of Moore, is thus maintained not only by the processes of modernization in the economy, but also by the processes of tradition in the social realm. In 1978 this social pressure obviously influenced the three-fifths of the women who retired earlier than men although they had the right to the same retirement age.[68]

The legality of the pressure tactics now practiced is being questioned
in the courts. In 1966, the Tokyo District Court judged unlawful a practice
of compelling female employees to resign at marriage on the grounds that such
action constitutes discriminatory treatment against women and is contrary
to the guarantee of freedom of marriage.[69] The court also found that the
requirement of retirement upon marriage constitutes discrimination by sex,
which is explicitly forbidden under Articles fourteen and twenty-four of the
Constitution: "Although the Labor Standards Law does not explicitly forbid
discrimination by sex and allows reasonable distinction by sex in working
conditions through the prescribed protective legislation, its basic principles
forbid discrimination."[70] Collective agreements, work rules, or individual
labor contracts which include unreasonable discrimination by sex, the court
said, are also null and void under Article ninety of the Civil Code which
provides for the annulment of any act aimed at affecting matters in a way
contrary to public policy and good morals.[71] Althouth the court denied that
women's efficiency necessarily declines after marriage, the decision has
no further precedential power.

In a famous case on retirement policy, Mrs. Nakamoto Miyo brought suit
against the Nissan Motor Company for discharging her in 1969 at age fifty.
In 1971, the Tokyo District Court ruled against the plaintiff and in 1973 the
Tokyo High Court ruled against her on the basis of a study published by the
government which purported to show that women's ability at age fifty-five
is comparable to a men's at seventy. Eleven days later, however, the Tokyo
District Court ruled that the five year difference in retirement age between
men and women was opposed to the Civil Code requirement for "good public order."

When tested on legal grounds, discriminatory retirement practices are
often proved unlawful, yet they still remain in effect. This is due primarily
to the "lag" in social attitudes concerning women and their role. In a
number of cases originating from dismissal because of childbirth, companies

have justified their position on the grounds that women are not permanent

employees but part-time employees under limited contract. The outcomes of

these cases have been mixed.

In addition to dismissal, there are other ways of pressuring pregnant

women into retiring. A woman who takes a childbirth leave may be transferred

to a less desirable job when she returns. Women are also psychologically

pressured by being told that substitutes for them are rarely available and

their absence is creating an additional burden on their fellow workers. In

a 1978 study by the Ministry of Labor, it was found that 36.7 percent of

pregnant women or women who had given birth to a child retired.[72] The per-

centage was highest in large companies with over five-hundred employees,

in which 40.9 percent of pregnant women retired.

Women are guaranteed equal pay for equal work under the Labor Standards

Law. They rarely perform the same tasks as men, however, and there is no

basis for comparison of wage rates. The Japanese Labor Law mentions sex

only in respect to equal wages for equal value:

> The section of the law affecting conditions of work
> (Art. 3) speaks also of equality but limits it to
> creed, national origin, and social status, omitting
> sex. No mention is made anywhere in the law of equal
> opportunity in hiring, in training, in access to
> work or promotion, although Article 14 of the consti-
> tution calls for equal rights of men and women before
> the law.[73]

A subtle form of unequal pay results from payment in accordance with "ability".

Women have suffered under this system because both their inherent abilities and

the perceived importance of their jobs receive low evaluations.[74]

These low evaluations are indicative of the basic societal attitudes

which have been held since feudal times. Although women are participaing in

the labor force at a higher rate than ever before in Japanese history, they are

still regarded as "temporary" workers whose primary role is to be "good wives

and mothers."

NOTES

1. Moore, pp. 162-163.

2. Ibid., p. 105.

3. Tadashi Fukutake, Japanese Society Today; University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo, 1974, p. 48.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Okamura, p. 69.

7. Lebra, p. 40.

8. Ibid.

9. Okamura, p. 68.

10. Lebra, p. 44.

11. Ibid., p. 45.

12. Okamura, p. 68.

13. Koyama, p. 110.

14. "Dangerous" is defined as working over 5 meters off the ground or lifting specified weights.

15. Koyama, p. 110.

16. Margaret Geddes, "The Status of Women in Post-War Japan", in Australian Outlook, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1977, pp. 450-451.

17. Alice Cook, Working Women in Japan, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1980, pp. 1-2.

18. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

19. Ibid., p. 5.

20. Ibid., p. 6.

21. Fukutake, p. 27.

22. H. T. Jones, "Japanese Women and the Dual-track Employment System", in Pacific Affairs, Vol. 44, No. 4, Winter 76-77, pp. 589-606.

23. Ibid., p. 59.

24. Ibid., p. 591.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Cook, table 9, p. 112.

28. Jones, p. 591.

29. Cook, p. 9 .

30. Ibid., table 12, p. 115.

31. Ibid., table 13, p. 116.

32. See Chikako Tanako interview in appendix.

33. Cook, pp. 28-29.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid. p. 10.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p. 111.

38. Ibid., p. 11.

39. Ibid., study was conducted by the Tokyo District Labor Department
     in August, 1974.

40. Ibid., the figure is 27%.

41. Ibid., the figure is 34%.

42. Lebra, p. 121.

43. Moore, p. 105.

44. Lebra, p. 84.

45. Ibid.

46. Pharr, p. 242.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., The percentages for males were 20.9% in 1955 and 25% in 1970.

49. Ibid., p. 243, figures are for 1970.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., p. 244.

52. Suzanne Vogel, "Professional Housewife: The Career of Urban Middle Class Japanese Women", in The Japan Interpreter, Vol XII, Winter 1978, p. 20.

53. Cook, pp. 1-2.

54. Ibid., p. 84.

55. Fukutake, p. 87.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., p. 88.

58. Cook, p. 83.

59. Ibid., p. 15.

60. Ibid., p. 16.

61. For example women teachers in compulsory education schools, nurses in medical and social welfare facilities, etc.

62. Jones, p. 60.

63. Cook, p. 25.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., p. 26.

67. Ibid., p. 27.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., p. 46. The case was filed by Setsuku Suzuki against the Sumitomo Cement Co.

70. Ibid., p. 47.

71. Ibid., p. 48.

72. Ibid., p. 71.

73. Ibid., p. 21.

74. Ibid., p. 42.

Chapter 3

WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Although the domestic role is the primary and ideal role for women in Japanese society, they also have a role, if a limited one, in the public sphere. In December 1945 a suffrage bill was passed by the government, giving men and women the right to vote at the age of twenty and allowing them to run for political office at the age of twenty-five. Twenty million women went to the polls for the first time on April 10, 1946, electing thirty-nine women out of a total of 467 seats to the House of Representatives. This number is still a record and there are currently only seven women in the lower, more powerful House of Representatives, elected in 1972. Presently, in the upper house, the House of Councillors, there are eighteen women holding offices out of a total of 252 seats.

Female voting rates have increased gradually since 1946, and since the election in July 1968, their voting rate has slightly exceeded that for men in every national election. Younger women in urban areas are primarily responsible for the increase while men still outvote women in the more traditional rural areas and in the over-fifty age group.[1]

A 1972 Public Survey of the Women's Vote in the Thirty-third General Election found that fifty-nine percent of women voters selected party over candidate in contrast to the current trend among men to vote across party lines.[2] Like the male voters, however, the overwhelming reason for choosing a particular candidate was practical ability rather than appearance and personality, as the media claims.[3] The policies stressed by the candidates which were considered most important by female voters in this survey were rising prices, social welfare, pollution, housing, and education.[4] The primary concerns of most women are, without question, livelihood issues. Several studies have also indicated that women tend to be more conservative than men in party choice and ideology, a common phenomena in most countries today.[5]

Political socialization

Women, locked behind the doors of the home, are often closed off from

political socialization. The family is usually considered the primary unit

of socialization for all members of society but in Japan, the family is often

an isolated unit, especially in urban areas. Women are excluded from the

lifetime employment system and the social and political socialization which

this system affords to males.

As we have seen in the examples of the respondents, men are seldom in

the home in the urban family arrangement, a situation which often prohibits

husbands from having much of an impact on their wives' political ideology.

Tsurumi Kazuko asserts that women's socialization in these cases is carried

out by their children, primarily their sons.

> If a woman invests her love and interests more intensely
> and enduringly in her relationship with her husband than in
> any other relationships, then her husband is likely to
> become the strategic agent of her ideological socializa-
> tion. Under such circumstances her role as a wife is the
> strategic role for her ideological socialization. If she
> invests her love and interests more intensely and enduring-
> ly in her relationship with her children than in any other
> relationships, then her children are likely to become the
> most effective agents of her ideological specialiation.[6]

Although children's attitudes do have an affect on their mothers' ideology,

the home is typically apolitical and women's politicization occurs primarily

in the myriad of women's clubs and organizations in which an estimated sixty-

four percent of all adult Japanese women participate,[7] with membership increasing

every year.

Women's organizations

Wilbert Moore states that modernization brings in its wake a proliferation

of interest groups and associations.[8] These groups represent not only economic

interests and divisions, but also various common interests in hobbies, apprecia-

tion of the arts, and other specialized social functions.[9] Women's organizations

are popular in Japan because of the increasing amount of leisure time enjoyed
by non-working urban housewives today who spend less time raising their children
and performing housework than their mothers did.

Women's organizations are not new in Japan, however, but date back to
shortly after the Meiji Restoration.[10]

Women's groups existing before the war were consolidated into the National
Defense Women's Society during World War II. This organization was consequent-
ly abolished at the conclusion of the war because of its nationalistic nature.
The democratic reforms which followed prompted women to organize with the
objectives of raising women's consciousness and improving their position in
society. In 1952 the National Liason Council of Local Women's Organizations
(*Zenkoku Chiiki Fujin Dantai Renraku Kyogikai*) was established to take the
place of the former nation-wide women's organization in maintaining contact
with various local activities undertaken by women for the betterment of their
life in local communities.[11] The general goal of this organization was to
advance the culture of women and their position while opposing the revival
of the old family system, which was proposed by some reactionary leaders.
In rural areas, the Agricultural Cooperative Union was set up after
World War II as a nation-wide organization for the improvement of the economic
and social position of farmers and is currently gradually establishing local
unions which comprise women's sections, the National Women's Organization
Council of the Agricultural Cooperative Union (*Zenkoku Nokyo Fujin Soshiki
Kyokai*).[12]

Women in rural and urban areas alike are primarily concerned with issues
affecting their family lives. In addition to the above organizations, women
have established organizations aimed at serving their special interests such
as the Widow's Association, the Association of Housewives of the Labor Union, etc.

There are also organizations based on religious affiliations such as the Japan Women's Christian Temperance Union *(Nihon Kiristokyo Fujin Kyofukai)*, the Young Women's Christian Association of Japan *(Nihon Kiristokyo Joshi Seinenkai)*, and the National Friendship Association *(Zenkoku Tomonokai)*, which were all established in pre-war days and still continue activities for the advancement of women and the improvement of their lives.[13] These organizations tend to be oriented toward specific goals and are loosely organized.

The Federation of Local Housewives' Associations *(Shufuren)* is one example of a handful of groups which, although they are also oriented toward specific goals, use national pressure tactics such as boycotts and demonstrations to attain their goals.[14] Organizations such as *Shufuren* and *Chifuren* (The National Organization of Local Associations) wield a large bloc of voting power which politicians are consciously aware of.

Almost sixty-four percent of all Japanese women belong to one or more of these organizations for various reasons.[15] The memberships are largely made up by housewives since working women and men rarely have the time to participate in them. Many women join because of personal interest but many others join because their friends are members.[16] These groups are interested in problems of daily life, such as the control of the price of rice, the costs of transport and electricity, and social problems such as prostitution. However, for many members, these groups are nothing more than a social outlet in a world often limited to the home.

All five major political parties in Japan have women's groups attached to them. The Liberal Democratic Party, the ruling party in Japan since 1955, sponsors the National Womens' League as its female auxiliary. In 1963 this women's organization campaigned in support of reviving the national holiday

commemorating the legendary founding of Japan, a rather traditional objective.[17]
The other four parties, the Socialists, the Democratic Socialists, the Communists,
and the Clean Government Party also support female auxilliaries but they are
little more than token attachments with very little political power other than
their ability to draw votes.

Women's political associations not connected to particular parties include
the left-wing Women's Democratic Club and the League of Japanese Womens' Organiza-
tions. The Japan League of Women Voters provides women with intelligent
guidance in politics and actively promotes clean election campaings, and the
Housewives' Federation (Shufu Rengoku) is the best known women's association and
is primarily concerned with consumer interests. The League's longtime president
is Ichikawa Fusai, and eighty-year-old political veteran and a pioneer of
political suffrage for men as well as women.[18] Ichikawa Fusai is a non-affiliated
member of the House of Councillors and is one of only a few female politicians
who have been praised by the press.[19] Women in the Diet are usually referred
to as "Diet Flowers", beautiful decorations similar to their counterparts in
large firms, the "Office Ladies", whose only useful function is serving tea.[20]

Although voter participation and membership in voluntary associations is
high for women in Japan, these numbers do not accurately depict their influence
in politics. Societal attitudes, which consider women in the Diet to be decora-
tive rather than functional, successfully keep most women out of the public
sphere.

Political activism

Immediately following their acquisition of political rights, women's active
participation in politics underwent a sudden increase but has recently stabilized
in some areas and decreased significantly in others. In 1958, for example,
women made up fifteen percent of prefectural assemblies.[21] By 1971 that per-
centage had dropped to a mere one percent.[22] In rural areas, where traditional

attitudes are most prevalent, women held 7.9 percent of the total number of seats in town and village assemblies in 1958[23] but held only 0.4 percent of the seats in 1971.[24] Most other industrialized countries such as the United States and Great Britain have experienced rising rates in the number of women elected to public offices. A possible explanation for this uncharacteristic decrease in the number of women elected to positions in Japan may be that the novelty of having women in public office has worn off and consequently fewer women are elected. This trend draws a negative picture of the future for women in the public sphere.

It is more difficult for a woman to run for national office than it is for a man in Japan. The election campaigns require a great deal of money which most often comes from private business sources rather than political parties. Women are seen as poor political risks and therefore find it difficult to solicit funds.[25] Public visibility is a vital asset to these women because they do not have strong organizational backing. This leads to "talent candidates", political candidates who get elected solely on the basis of their exposure on television programs and through other forms of media. These "talent candidates" contribute to the politically naive image of female politicians.[26]

Compared with elective positions, women fare better in appointive offices. However, they are largely concentrated in bureaus and commissions bearing directly on "women's concerns".[27] Women are primarily responsible for their children's education and are therefore regarded as suitable for the position of member of the Board of Education, whose duties include the establishment of new schools, the provision of school facilities, the selection of textbooks, appointments and dismissals of faculty, and other matters relating to education.[28]

In Domestic Court, which deals with family relationships, the participation of women is considered important. Many women are therefore appointed to the post of mediator and consultant. In 1957 the number of women working as public and child welfare commissioners equalled 21.5 percent of the total,[29] and by 1972 it had risen to thirty-two percent.[30] Women's experience and skills in family life are considered to be excellent qualifications for this type of job.

In the higher appointive positions in government, women have not fared nearly so well. As of 1972 only two women had served in the cabinet; one as the Health and Welfare Minister in 1960 and one as the Director of the Science and Technology Agency in 1962-63. Both of these were token, short-term appointments.[31]

The scarcity of women in higher appointive and elective positions in Japan is partially a reflection of the educational system currently in effect. Higher education provides training for the professionals, administrators, and bureaucrats. The first government-supported universities were initially set up to train male bureaucrats and administrators for high government positions. Currently the central bureaucracy and legislature draw heavily on men who have attended leading universities. The highest political posts are in turn filled by experienced members in the bureaucracy who have been recruited from universities such as Tokyo University, the top-ranking university in Japan. Elective posts also often go to university graduates; currently two-thirds of all Diet members are university trained.[32]

The traditional system of taking national university graduates, appointing them to the bureaucracy, promoting a few talented men to Cabinet positions when they have achieved the necessary experience, and then ultimately to the office of Prime Minister, is virtually closed to women at the initial university level. As mentioned in the previous chapter, education practices and societal attitudes

keep women out of the more prestigious, more competitive, career-oriented four-year universities. Families do not encourage women to try for top level positions. Careers are not considered conducive to marriage which is expected to take priority.[33] Women and men alike think of politics as a male activity. Men have traditionally led, made decisions, and provided for the basic unit of society -- the family.[34] Women's focus on the family has kept them out of active roles in public life. Almost all Japanese women get married; only 1.3 percent of the women over the age of fifty have never been married according to the census of 1965,[35] societal attitudes hold that conflicts arise between social and political activities and housewifely duties. Women are educated not for future roles in the public sphere but for their future roles as wives and mothers.

For the tiny minority of women who do enter prestigious four-year national universities in pursuit of careers, their chances of being appointed to a ministry within the governmental hierarchy are poor. An initial written examination is required for all applicants. After this exam there is an oral examination in which Tokyo University graduates and men have better chances of passing.[36]

If a woman does succeed in gaining entry to a ministry, she is faced with additional unofficial discrimination. Women advance more slowly than men within the ministry where all employees enter at the bottom and a successful career is dependent on moving up through the ministry. Men are also given assistance in finding consulting or business manager positions outside of the ministry whereas women are denied those opportunities.[37]

Media

The media has a negative affect on women's participation in politics, and indeed, all areas of public life:

> Emphasis is put on the bad things which women do. The wife
> who kills herself when her husband leaves her is blamed, not
> the husband who leaves. What women are allowed to read about
> other women perpetuates the 'weak and emotional' self-image.
> Women are denied news about other women which would encourage
> a good self-image. [38]

Negative images of women are perpetuated by men who remain in the positions

of authority in the communications industry. Most of the images portrayed in

magazines, newspapers, and television emphasize the marriage role and the women's

task as "...strict behavior—obey, be a nice girl, and a good wife."[39]

There are very few women in the media and the current trend in newspapers,

where the number of women employed has decreased by one-third from 1957 to 1964,

reflects the policy of not hiring women.[40] Women in the media often work in

sections of six to ten workers under a male section chief. All of thier ideas

and suggestions are subject to approval by this section chief, giving women very

little imput into changing their own images:

> It seems clear that while the possibilities for the media
> effecting a change in the status and image of women are
> limitless, the prospect of the media doing so is limited
> so long as the number of women employed remains low and
> women are kept out of decision-making positions.[41]

Discrimination against hiring women in media is compounded because of the

"protective legislation" guaranteed to women under law. In many cases these

laws are ineffective and actually used to perpetuate discriminatory practices

in hiring and promotion. Women are limited by the law to two hours of overtime

per day, six days per week and are forbidden to work between the hours of ten

o'clock pm and five o'clock am. These limitations restrict the hiring and

promotion of women especially in this field where reporters and workers are

needed around the clock.[42]

Due to the fact that there are very few women in positions of authority

in the media, the biases against them continue in the office as well as in

publications. These biases are especially evident in the views of women in

politics expressed by daily newspapers and weekly magazines:

> ...in daily newspapers and weekly magazines in which only
> occasional women's political protests have been heard,
> there have been myriad items expressing male chagrin over
> the vicissitudes of women voters and women politicians.
> Women voters are intuitive, non-rational, incapable of
> independent thought, too idealistic, hyper-moral, lacking
> in socialization and political finesse, and enchanted by
> personalities. These are not random epithets. In 1000
> newspaper and magazine articles perused from 1970 to
> 1974, each has appeared 100 times. The theme of these items
> asserts women have the right to vote and politicians must
> dissipate their energies wooing that vote. As phrased in
> a title of a recent nationally circulated article, 'women's
> political franchise is leading the country to ruin.'[43]

It is true that women are generally more conservative than men and have a lower

level of political interest. They do not, however, come close to resembling

the negative stereotypes which are portrayed in the media. Unfortunately the

media has strong effects on people's attitudes, women's as well as men's.

Low self-confidence, inexperience, and lack of familiarity with politics

lead many women to feel insecure even about how to cast their own ballots.

Koyama found that in 1961 the vast majority of men relied on their own judgment

when choosing a candidate, compared with only one-third of the women interviewed.[44]

In an interview I personally conducted with a young Japanese housewife, Keiko

Satō admitted that she not only asked her husband who to vote for but also relied

on him for news since she doesn't normally read newspapers. In describing

Japanese women she also said that most of them are not interested in issues

outside of the home, such as politics. According to a 1972 survey, there is

a tendency for housewives with no outside employment to vote in the same way

as their husbands, the highest political consciousness being in women who work

outside of the home.[45] Most women in the survey were largely ignorant of

campaign laws and the mechanics of the election process.[46] Although the

majority of women in the survey experienced dissatisfaction with present poli-

tics, none had the goal of political campaigning; "overwhelmingly, expressions

of life purpose was child-rearing, family, home--'my homeism'."[47]

There is a small number of women, however, whose life purpose is not "...
child-rearing, family, home...". They make up the tiny minority of women
who classify themselves as feminists.

The feminists

"Women's Lib', as it is used in Japan has a narrow meaning. It refers
to a very small number of groups that appeared in the early 1970's and that
make sexual liberation a primary objective.[48] The actual membership of these
groups is fairly low, estimated at several hundred.[49] They actively promote
the distribution of information about contraceptive devices and one of their
political goals is the legalization of the pill, currently illegal in Japan
because of its possible relation to cancer. These groups also oppose the
revision of a law that would deprive women of the freedom to have abortions,
one of the primary birth control methods currently used in Japan. They also
hold conventions, translate literature for distribution abroad, and publish
phamphlets and books to raise the consciousness of other Japanese women.[50]

Unfortunately there is relatively little published information concerning
these feminist groups. The media has purposefully ignored them and their
activites, making them virtually unknown to the general public. Of all the
Japanese men and women I spoke with during the duration of my stay in Japan,
only those who were friends of active feminists were aware of a feminist
movement in Japan, although most of them had heard of the American movement.
Fortunately, after many inquiries and phone calls, I was able to locate and
interview an active participant in the feminist movement in Japan, Chikako Tanaka.

Chikako's father, a naval officer before and during World War II, was a
very traditional man. According to Chikako, her mother was very kind and
gentle, always taking orders from and being teased by her husband. Chikako

went to public elementary, junior, and senior high schools in Tokyo. As for the other women interviewed, home economics was required in the earlier years of her education and then made an elective when she got into high school. Although her parents were traditional and Chikako's education was similar to those women who have more conservative attitudes, Chikako had an independent spirit from a young age and made most of her own decisions.

She did not want to go to college after graduating from high school at eighteen so she got a job as an "Office Lady" in a major corporation, running errands, buying lunch for her male co-workers, and cleaning up after them:

> All through school I was with boys on an equal level; I
> never thought that they were better than me. I hated
> my job. I wrote a letter to my boss saying that I did
> not join his company to serve tea and coffee to men.
> I asked why it was that women only served tea, why women
> got a lower salary, and why women could not advance like
> men. I fought with my superiors but it didn't get me
> anywhere, so I quit.

Between the ages of eighteen and twenty Chikako attended a dressmaking school and worked at a library. She wasn't satisfied with those jobs and decided to go to night classes at a college while working during the day. At twenty-four she took her examination and became certified as a high school English teacher.

Unlike all of the other women interviewed, Chikako had always wanted a career and was not worried about marriage. She fell in love with a college classmate at twenty-five and got married. She soon uncovered the "myth of the happy housewife", however, and rather than "enduring", she divorced him after three years:

> He was advancing in a company and had to go on business
> trips all over Japan. He was probably gone twenty days
> out of every month. I told him to quit his job because
> there was no sense in living together only ten days a month.
> He wouldn't quit, though, because he wanted to advance. That
> was his choice. The reason for being married disappeared.
> He felt that even if we were married it didn't matter if
> we communicated or not. I couldn't bear it though; I asked
> him for a divorce.

Chikako feels that she, and other divorced women, are stigmatized in Japan. However, she refused to let societal norms make the rest of her life miserable. Currently she has no regrets about the divorce although she doubts that she will remarry because of the possible legal complications of another divorce.

Chikako currently works full-time as a high school English teacher and is involved in a variety of feminist activities. It was very difficult to set up an interview with her because she is constantly travelling throughout the *Kanto* region, meeting with different groups. One group is a discrimination action group, working on such activities as reviewing school textbooks and having discriminatory passages removed, complaining to major television stations about their lack of female newscasters, etc.

Chikako Tanaka and other women like her are working to bring about social reforms, using the methods of consciousness-raising to develop clear self-identities. Through consciousness-raising, they intend to hack their way through the conservative views which confine women in the conventional sex-roles which are still spread widely through the Japanese communications media. The Movement's members feel that society's attitudes become ingrained very deeply in women and consequently, unconsciously help to further propagate sexual discrimination. Chikako admits, however, that there are very few active women working toward this goal. The vast majority of women, taken in by the stereotyped "information" spread by the mass media, still regard *Ūman-ribu* (the Women's Lib Movement) as a passing fad and don't think of it as having anything to do with their problems.

Yumiko Itō, for example, is very dissatisfied with her role and her relationship with her husband. Yet she holds the firm belief that she must "endure", that she has no alternatives. She has never heard of a feminist movement in Japan.

After having spent one year in the United States and being in constant contact with Americans through her job, Noriko Watanabe is well aware of both the American and Japanese feminist movements. A colleague of hers was formerly a member of a feminist group but quit after marriage. Noriko did not offer much information on her feelings about the Japanese feminist movement and appeared to feel slightly guilty about the matter. Unfortunately, she knew of my ideological orientation before the interview and may have felt uncomfortable in expressing her less than positive feelings about the feminist movement, although she strongly felt that women should actively try to raise their status in society.

Noriko, like Yumiko, is not satisfied with her lifestyle but does not see it as a problem which she has in common with most other women. She accepts her fate with a sigh of regret.

Sumiko Yamamoto is a young energetic woman planning for a career in the near future. She is vaguely reminiscent of Chikako in her youth, yet Sumiko is striving for personal happiness, not to change society:

> "I can live my own life but I really don't feel that there
> is anything that I can do to help change and improve the
> lives of other women. I really just want to be happy myself,
> and that is going to be hard enough."

Women like Chikako and Sumiko are unusual in their society. They both have rejected the societal norms which keep most women in the home, and have opted instead for meaningful careers. From examining my small sample it appears that although the majority of women are dissatisfied with their lifestyles, which is the first step toward change, they have neither the independence nor the strength to reject the norms which restrict them to their limited roles.

Other researchers have found in more extensive studies[52] that there is
in fact a more conservative trend in younger women today. A children's book
editor who has been involved for many years in trying to reverse female stereo-
types said in a recent interview that women's liberation publicity in Japan
was overrated and that there was a strong conservative trend among young women
to think of "household happiness" as their highest aspiration.[53] In my own
interview with Chikako, she agreed with this view. According to Chikako,
women think only about marriage. They are not individualistic but conservative
and group-oriented: "They should think about their own opinions and evaluate
their own personal values instead of worrying about what society thinks."

Many young women, it seems, have attitudes similar to those of Keiko Satō
and Eriko Ichikawa. Neither of these women knew anything of the feminist move-
ment, nor did they support equality between the sexes. Keiko and Eriko approve
of the existing role differentiations between the sexes, support the cultural
norm that all women should marry, and believe strongly in the feminine ideal:

> Women are different in nature than men. Women are emotional
> thinkers and men are rational. Men are definitely on a higher
> level than women...Women have no sense of independence, they
> need their husbands. Men have a profound sense which women
> don't have....Women's role in society is to raise their children.
> Men's role is to perform their jobs. This is both right and
> natural. (Keiko Satō)

> I'ts obvious that men are superior to women. Women just can't do
> a lot of the things which men can do. A woman would be no good
> in a company in a decision-making position, for example. Women
> are emotional thinkers but men are logical. A woman just wouldn't
> be able to perform as well as a man....Women and men are different.
> Men don't try to do women's jobs and women shouldn't try to do
> men's. Of course there are differences in employment, but these
> reflect the differences in men and women, it is not discrimination....
> It's become unpopular to say that a woman's place is in the
> home, but that's what I really believe, and I think that most
> of my friends really, deep-down, believe it, too. I will be
> satisfied if I am a good wife and my husband is happy and my
> children are successful. That is really my dream for the
> future. (Eriko Ichikawa)

This prevailing societal attitude among both men and women that women are only suited for the wife/mother role, and the absence of women in high political office, combined with a unsympathetic mass communications media, isolation of women in the home, and the lack of cohesion and cooperation between various women's groups toward a universal cause, serve to keep women subordinated in the public sphere.

NOTES

1. Pharr, p. 247.

2. H. L. Jones, "Japanese Women and the Dual-Track Employment System," in Pacific Affairs, Vol. 49, No. 4, Winter 1976-77, p. 710.

3. Ibid., p. 711.

4. Ibid., p. 712.

5. Ibid., p. 718.

6. Tsurumi, p. 255.

7. Jones, p. 719.

8. Moore, p. 109.

9. Ibid.

10. The origin of women's organizations dates back to soon after World War I. Although liberal and democratic ideas were introduced prior to the Meiji Restoration, these attitudes did not gain widespread acceptance and women who had been long-accustomed to submission found them difficult to accept. Later, a few small groups of women made unsuccessful attempts to gain rights for women but these were quelled by a conservative, reactionary government which issued the Anti-Assembly and Political Association Law and the Police Anti-Sedition Law which made it a criminal offense to form a society with the objective of altering the national policy of the form of government.

    World War I brought prosperity to capitalistic industries in Japan and the ideas of democracy and socialism spread rapidly. Under these influences the New Women's Association (Shinfujin Kyokai) came into being and promoted a movement for the emancipation of women. This association soon closed down however due to illness of senior officers, discord among them and the lack of funds.

    A nation-wide organization had also been established under the guidance of the administrative officials of the Japanese government to improve the culture of women and to educate them in household management. It also served as a pro-government organization, supporting nationalistic activities. Along these lines the Women's Patriotic Society (Aikoku Fujin Kai) was organized in 1901 and the National Defense Women's Society (Dai-nihon Rengo Fujin was established with the object of bringing all Japanese women together to reinforce the national defense.

11. Koyama, p. 136.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., pp. 136-137.

14. Lebra, p. 238.

15. Koyama, p. 137.

16. According to a survey, 42% of the respondents participate actively in organizations of their own free will and 34% regard their membership as means of associating with their neighbors. See Koyama, p. 139.

17. Langdon, p. 116.

18. Jones, p. 709.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

2o. Koyama, p. 142.

22. Pharr, p. 247.

23. Koyama, p. 142.

24. Pharr, p. 247.

25. Lebra, p. 238.

26. Ibid., pp. 237-238.

27. Pharr, p. 247.

28. Koyama, p. 143.

29. Ibid.

30. Pharr, p. 247.

31. Ibid.

32. Langdon, p. 227.

33. Lebra, p. 239.

34. Susan Pharr, "The Japanese Women: Evolving Views of Life and Roles," in The Paradox of Progress, ed. Lewis Austin, Yale University Press. New Haven, 1976, p. 305.

35. Tsurumi, p. 250.

36. Lebra, p. 239.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., pp. 214-215.

39. Ibid., p. 216.

40. Ibid., p. 217.

41. Ibid., p. 213.

42. Ibid., p. 218.

43. Jones, p. 709.

44. Koyama, p. 141.

45. Public Opinion Survey of the Women Vote in the 33rd General Election 1972, See H. J. Jones, "Japanese Women in the Politics of the 70's," in Asian Survey, August 1975, Vol. XV, #8.

46. Jones, p. 714.

47. Ibid., p. 715.

48. Pharr, The Paradox of Progress, p. 320.

49. Ibid.

50. Kazuko Tanaka, A Short History of the Women's Movement in Modern Japan, Japan, 1977, p. 47.

51. Ibid., pp. 47-48.

52. e.g., Michael Berger, "Japanese Women -- Old Images and New Realities", in Japan Interpreter, Vol. XI, No. 1, Spring 1976, pp. 56-67.

53. Ibid., p. 66.

CONCLUSIONS

"Modernity is victorious in the
struggle with tradition only at
the cost of creating its own dis-
contents..." (Pharr, 1976: p. 302)

Industrialization and modernization have affected Japanese society in many of the same ways as they have affected other industrialized countries. In the first stages of industrialization, labor was drawn from the agrarian population which decreased drastically during the first years of the Meiji Restoration. Young men and women flocked to urban areas which consequently grew in size and number. Movement away from rural areas had the concomitant effect of weakening traditional kinship ties and sponsoring the urban nuclear family.

Women were gradually accepted into the labor force as job opportunities expanded and inflation rates rose. Educational opportunities were offered to them; demographic changes gave them more leisure time and freedom from the household domain. Women's groups sprang up, women were granted suffrage and egalitarian laws were enacted.

Reviewing these changes, wrought by modernization and industrialization, it seems that women should be well on their way to equality with men. They are not.

In Japan, modernity has not been victorious in the struggle with tradition. The reasons stem from the very factors which make Japan Japanese.

It is evident from examining the information presented thus far in this paper that Japanese society is characterized by strains and tensions, "lead" and "lag". Women are caught in the web of a unique tangle of traditional and modern forces pulling in opposite directions.

Japan is unusual in that it underwent what Moore terms "sponsored" modernization.[1] Japan was _forced_ by the arrival of Commander Perry to open its doors to the rest of the world and the forces of modernization. It was

again _forced_ to democratize after defeat in World War II. In cases of

"sponsored" modernization, Moore states that "...no single change-model is

either possible on scientific grounds of likely to be followed by practical

men of affairs."[2] Taking the cue from Moore, then, it is impossible to

evaluate the changes in Japanese society, and more specifically, women's

roles and status, by comparing them to the model provided by the industrialized

Western nations. This, in fact, is precisely what most sociologists have done.

Without taking into consideration the fundamental differences between the

cultures, they have predicted that Japan will follow in the footsteps of the

United States. Moore warns of the fallicy inherent in this oversimplification:

> The common structural features of industrial societies
> are undeniable and extensive. They form the solid
> factual basis for the generalizations we presented
> earlier concerning the conditions, concomitants, and
> consequences of industrialization. Yet short of a single
> world society -- and even that would seem to require
> many federalistic elements and variations -- it would
> be unsound to predict that social structures among
> industrial societies, present and future, will converge
> to the point of homogeneity.[3]

According to Moore, one principle source of differences between industrial-

ized societies deals with the uniqueness of societies and the nature of indus-

trialization:

> The common structural requirements of industrialism
> mean that some antecedent structures cannot persist,
> and until they are changed they constitute barriers
> or impediments. But they are quite unlikley to be
> destroyed totally and without a trace. In particular,
> the manner of their removal, the way the problem was
> solved, will almost certainly have enduring consequences.[4]

Economic growth requires a fairly high degree of individual mobility and a

placement system based on merit in performance, according to Moore.[5] That

requirement is likely to come into conflict with strongly supported values

relating to the primacy of kinship position and obligations as a moral virtue.[6] The Japanese economy is currently based strongly on merit, as Moore would suggest, yet kinship position and obligations have not been "destroyed totally and without a trace" and still play a major role.

Moore asserts that individuality and merit in performance go hand-in-hand with the process of industrialization, but in Japanese society we have seen this to be untrue (see Chapter One). Group behavior continues to be emphasized in Japanese society with the whole structure of the economy and the family dependent upon interdependent networks of groups. An individual cannot function in Japanese society outside the context of this explicit interdependency. The identity of the individual is deeply merged in the group to which he/she belongs.[7] Men and women are raised from infancy in a manner which creates a need for belonging, for membership in a group, and stresses importance of the "generalized other", to borrow from Herbert Mead. In return, the group provides constant care and security.

The emotional bond fostered in the mother/child relationship also inculcates a strong sense of lifelong loyalty by the child to the parent in partial repayment for the nurturance he/she received as a child. This intense loyalty and sense of debt discourages deviance from parental expectations and serves to sustain group collectivity. This is especially powerful in women who have limited and carefully prescribed role requirements.

Objecting openly to the "good wife and wise mother" role is seen as defying the authority of, and also shaming, one's parents:

> ...parental suffering tends to be interpreted by the child
> as a result of his failure, and because the child does not
> like to see his parents -- the sources of his emotional grati-
> fication -- suffer, he tries to relieve parental suffering by
> conforming to parental wishes. To the extent that parents
> wish for their children's success and achievement in his world,
> these parental wishes serve as a powerful source of motivation
> to achieve success.[8]

"Success" for women is still defined in terms of marriage, their primary

role requirement. Moore explores this topic in stating:

> Role requirements are...likely to constitute ranges of
> tolerable behavior rather than highly precise behavioral
> limitations. Extremes will normally be subject to
> negative sanctions, with considerable latitude in between
> ....Any enduring system, then, must have some degree of
> flexibility in exacting compliance from its members, and
> this flexibility in turn provides the possibility and
> indeed the probability of innovation, however modest that
> may be.[9]

Japanese women are permitted a range of tolerable behavior although it is often

much narrower than the range permissable in other countries. In the United

States, for example, a wide range of roles have come to be accepted. We value

independence and latitude in men and women and therefore encourage individuals

to expand their roles. In Japan, on the other hand, interdependence and comple-

mentary roles are stressed.

Modernization and industrialization have produced an economy where men are

segregated from women, where the economic and domestic spheres are distinct.

In this way, industrialization has supported sex-role specialization. Japanese

men participating in the demanding lifetime employment system have no choice

other than to direct all their energy into that system. Women, in turn, must

keep almost exclusively to the home since their husbands have little residual time and

energy for domestic involvement. Industrialization has therefore served to

heighten role specialization but the origin of wife/mother roles are found in

Confucian philosophy and several hundred years of feudal organization has caused

extreme suseptibility to group pressure toward conformity in contemporary

Japanese society:

> Living in accordance with one's prescribed role within
> the family and within a political and social hierarchy
> was the ultimate basis of moral values, subjectively
> sanctioned by one's own conscience and objectively
> reinforced by the informal sanctions of the community
> and the legal codes of the state.[10]

The primacy of the group and the differentiation of roles among group

members is characteristic not only between men and women, but throughout

Japanese society. The collective ideology inherent in the society was

modified by industrialization but was not eradicated. Individualism, a con-

commitant of industrialization, never took root in Japan. Instead, the family

and the economic structures evolved to accomodate the traditional ideology.

But, as Moore would suggest, the persistence of this group ideology creates

strains and tensions within the society. In his second principal source of

differences between societies, he states:

> Various aspects of what may be called the 'trajectory' of
> change also produce differences in enduring social tensions.
> These include differences in sequence and timing of struc-
> tural changes, the rate of industrialization, in the historical
> era in which 'modernization' begins.[11]

Japan underwent industrialization at an almost miraculous rate. This

resulted in a classic example of "lead" and "lag". The economic and legal

developments surged far ahead of societal attitudes and practices:

> ...Japanese society as a whole has not necessarily
> absorbed Western institutions along with industrializa-
> tion; rather, traditional Japanese institutions have been
> changing, but not disappearing to adapt to modernization.
> The fundamental psychological forces of a society and its
> family life and personal relationships change more slowly
> than its economic and political institutions.[12]

The Occupation authorities instituted democratic reforms that granted equality

to women in almost every sphere of life. As illustrated in the first three

chapters, however, they were not sufficient to change the basic societal attitudes

toward the roles and status of women.

Acculturation, in Moore's words, is "...the transfer of 'cultural' or

social elements from one society to another....[13] Modernization in all its

ramifications is the major form of acculturation in the contemporary world."[14] The transfer of cultural items is correlated with their simplicity, their consistency with existing values, an already changing situation in the receiving culture, prestige of the bearers of novelty, and the lack of close "integration" of the receiving system.[15]

At the end of World War II, Japan was in ruins both physically and socially. The "bearers of novelty", the Americans, the conquerers of the Great Japanese Empire, were looked upon with reverence and awe. The cultural and social elements they brought with them, however, were neither simplistic nor in correspondence with existing values. Superficially, Japan changed to resemble its American model, but underneath the facade remained uniquely Japanese.

Tradition has always played an important role in thinking and cultural norms, and continues to do so in Japan today. Moore states that "...until challenged, 'the way it has always been done' is the right way, and no degree of emphasis on rationality is likely to prevent conflict between tradition and its upholders and rational innovation and its partisans."[16] This is not to say that change does not occur in Japan; indeed, Moore states that all societies exhibit steady change.[17] The difference lies in the magnitude of the rate of change between societies, and their respective sites of change.

As has been emphasized previously, the magnitude and rate of change in the Japanese economy has been breathtaking. In the social sphere, however, the rate of change has been much slower.

Moore describes a third source of difference between societies:

> Although the older industrial economies by no means developed
> completely independently, contemporary developing areas can in
> a sense avail themselves of combinations of technology and
> social forms from a single world system, politically disordered
> though that system is.[18]

Japan has been able to import Western technology and use it to boost their economy, yet they have been unable, or perhaps unwilling, to adopt the social forms which were imposed upon them by their "sponsors" of modernization. The "lead" and "lag" that have consequently developed have a major impact on the lives of women.

It was noted in Chapter Two that women receive better education, marry younger, have fewer children, spend less time in housework, and live longer -- all accrued through the processes of modernization and industrialization. These same processes, however, have restricted them to the wife/mother roles, secluded them in anomic urban environments with only distant kinship ties, leveled discrimination against them in the dual economy system, drastically reduced their socially-assigned and legitimated roles, and given them free time which they don't know how to fill -- this is the present situation.

The most complex yet intriguing questions for scholars studying the roles and status of women in contemporary Japanese society concerns the future develop- ments and directions which those roles will take. Neither Wilbert Moore nor I believe that industrialized societies will converge to the point of homogeneity. For Moore this statement concerns societies in general and is all-encompassing; for myself, I believe that it applies to both Japanese society as a whole and women's roles in particular.

Moore states that status ascription is intermixed with status achievement: "Societies such as our own that emphasize achievement always retain elements of ascription."[19] It is women's ascriptive status in Japanese society which provides the most formidable barrier to equality. Moore goes on to say that "...one source of tension, and therefore of potential change, in societies rests on the disbelief in the existing rationales for evident inequality and the substitution of others."[20]

In Japan there is still the wide-spread belief in the existing rationales
for evident inequality. Even in the event that the economic situation changes
enough to allow crossing-over between male and female roles, the current
ideology that women are suited only for wife/mother roles will perpetuate
women's inequality indefinitely.

The assumptions that women are considered infereior in most areas of
endeavor are not unique to Japan, but operate in most countries evolving from
a patriarchal tradition. What is unusual in Japan is the persistence of these
views into the twentieth century.[21] It is my contention, following the thoughts
of Moore, that these attitudes persist, even in the face of modernization,
because of the inherent cultural differences between Japanese society and
those in the West. To reiterate, these include a strong Confucian ideology
relegating women to an inferior position in society since feudal times, the
stress placed on the stable family as the basic unit for a stable society --
both resting on the wife, the escalator system of employment and public partici-
pation -- initially closed off to women by legal means and currently closed
off to them by social sanctions and discrimination, and a fear of acting
individualistically in a group-oriented society.

It is evident by looking at the feminist movement, however, that not all
members of Japanese society accept their given roles and status:

> ...the rules governing assignments to positions and their
> unequal rewards, and the values that 'justify' these rules,
> will not be accepted as totally valid by those who are
> thereby excluded....Stratification systems may in fact
> endure for considerable periods without causing rebellion
> or revolt, but because of the differential distribution of
> power (including knowledge), this is neither surprising nor
> quite to the point. The critical question must be, how
> will the poor, the powerless, the denigrated members of
> the system react to possible alternatives.[22]

Unfortunately, the rebellion against the existing stratification system is still localized and relatively unknown. The key proponent for change seems to be in consciousness-raising of the many women who are dissatisfied with their present status. Dissatisfaction is, according to most sociologists, the principal basis for change. Unfortunately, there are no reliable statistics identifying the number of women who are discontented with their traditional roles.

Until it is known how deeply the feelings of discontent run in Japanese women, it is impossible to predict the degree to which women's status and roles will be affected. "Modernity" has not been victorious in the struggle with tradition in Japan. It is not merely the processes of modernization, but the concomitant modification of tradition, which is required to bring about a change in women's roles. Ironically, women are bound to the home by both tradition and modernization. At present they seem passive victims caught in this crossfire of change.

Conclusion

NOTES

1.   Moore, p. 95.

2.   Ibid.

3.   Ibid., p. 117.

4.   Ibid.

5.   Ibid., p. 98.

6.   Ibid.

7.   Dore, p. 155.

8.   Befu, p. 162.

9.   Moore, p. 13.

10. DeVos, p. 12.

11. Moore, p. 117.

12. Vogel, pp. 36-37.

13. Moore, p. 90.

14. Ibid., p. 93.

15. Ibid., p. 21.

16. Moore, p. 71.

17. Ibid., p. 77.

18. Ibid., p. 117.

19. Ibid., p. 69.

20. Ibid., p. 89.

21. Pharr, Paradox of Progress, pp. 305-306.

22. Moore, p. 88.

APPENDIX

The following section consists of interviews with six Japanese women, a list of the questions asked during the interviews, and an explanation of the purpose and methodology used in collecting the interviews.

Purpose:

My purpose for collecting these interviews was not to present a full picture of the current situation in Japan regarding women's statuses, roles, feelings and attitudes, but instead, to provide an in-depth look at the lives of a small number of women. The reason for choosing this approach was twofold; 1) I had neither the financial nor the time resources to carry out a statistically significant random sample of the population, and 2) my aim was not the collection and interpretation of new data but to use these cases as illustrations of points about women which are made in the body of this paper. I do not claim that the information contained within these interviews represents "typical Japanese women" or "typical Japanese attitudes." I do, however, feel that they are an important tool in understanding the nature and the diversity of feelings, attitudes, and lifestyles among women in contemporary Japanese society, and are therefore useful in illustrating conclusions which are drawn about Japanese women as a whole.

Methodology:

I chose six respondents, representing women of different age groups, levels of educational attainment, and presence or absence of children. My purpose of choosing these criteria was to determine if there was a descernible pattern regarding attitudes and lifestyles in my data which corresponded to patterns in data collected by other researchers using similar criteria.

The first interview was with a student in junior college, Eriko Ichikawa. She is from a wealthy family living in an urban area and has rather traditional attitudes regarding the roles and status of women.

The second interview was with another student enrolled in a top university where the ratio of males to females is approximately ten to one. It is one of the most difficult universities to enter and the majority of its graduates receive high level, well-paying job offers from large corporations. I chose to interview Sumiko Yamamoto because she represented an exception to the norm where most women enter low-level universities or two-year colleges. As expected, Sumiko holds less traditional attitudes than her counterpart in a junior college.

The third interview was held with Noriko Watanabe, a twenty-eight year old married working woman who had graduated from a prestigious university. Her feelings reflect the fact that she would like to continue to work but she is pressured by societal norms to quit and have children. This interview vividly depicts the conflict between personal desires and societal norms.

The fourth interview was conducted with Keiko Satō, a woman married for only three years and presently caring for her son twenty-four hours a day. Her comments reflect the difference between the ideal of marriage and the realistic situation. It is interesting to note that this younger woman is much more conservative than some of her older counterparts.

An older housewife whose children are almost all grown up was the fifth interview subject. Yumiko Itō was educated before World War II but holds liberal attitudes toward the roles and status of women in Japan. She is an example of a woman who was forced by societal pressures to "endure" but who is bitter about her life.

The final interview was with an avid feminist, Chikako Tanaka. I chose Chikako for two reasons. First, she was the only middle-aged woman of whom I knew who was working and who did not have any children. Second, and perhaps more importantly, I decided to interview her to discover first-hand what the feminist movement in Japan was like and how widely its ideas were being disseminated and accepted. It is obvious that Chikako is in no way representative of most women her age and I hope that the reader will not associate all working, childless women with a stereotype similar to Chikako. Her interview is included to expose the reader to a person who has a set of beliefs and attitudes radically different than those usually associated with a "typical Japanese."

Before interviewing the six women I knew none of them personally. I was introduced to all of them through various contacts and assured them complete anonymity. Names of the respondents, some place names, and minor details have therefore been changed to protect the rights of these women.

All interviews were conducted in a private setting, usually the respondent's home, in a room where the only persons present were the respondent and myself to assure confidentiality. The interviews lasted approximately two hours on the average and the conversations were tape recorded with the permission of the respondent. In one instance, the interview with Keiko Satō, her husband was present in the room. When setting up the interview I requested that no one else be present, but in this case the situation was unavoidable. The presence

of her husband did not seem to make Keiko uncomfortable in answering questions, yet should be taken into account when judging the reliability of the interview.

All respondents seemed to be interested in the questions being asked, and although they were free to decline to answer any question which they felt was too personal or inappropriate, none of them exercised this option.

As is the usual Japanese custom, I brought a small gift with me to the interview to show my appreciation. Often, quite unexpectedly, this gesture was reciprocated. Approximately one week after the interview I telephoned each respondent and thanked her again for her cooperation and asked her if she had any questions or additional comments to make.

All of the interviews were conducted in the Japanese language and all questions were checked for their accuracy and nuance by a professor of sociology at Jōshi University in Tokyo before the initial interview. All respondents were encouraged to elaborate on any of the questions and to add comments of their own which they felt were relevant to the interview.

I did not share my personal feelings concerning the status and roles of women in Japan until after the interviews were completed. In most of the cases the respondents were inquisitive and fascinated by the nature of my research and my conclusions regarding Japanese women.

In the following section is a list of the questions asked of each respondent. All questions were asked in the same order, using the same wording each time. There were three questions which I modified after the initial interview because of their lack of clarity. There were no additional modifications made.

Following the list of questions are the abstracts of the six interviews, arranged in the order in which I conducted the interviews.

Questions asked of respondents in interviews

Background:

1. When were you born?

2. Where were you born?

3. What were the ages of your parents when you were born?

4. What were your parents' occupations at that time?

5. How many people, and who, lived in your house at that time?

6. Describe your mother and father. What kind of people were they?

7. How did your parents meet?

8. When did your parents get married?

9. What kind of marriage was it?

    What it a love marriage or an arranged marriage?

10. What values did your parents teach you were important?

11. What was your biggest goal as a child?

12. What kind of person did you want to become when you grew up?

13. How did your parents react to your dreams for the future?

    Did they support or oppose your ideas?

14. Who had the biggest influence on you when you were growing up?

    In what ways?

    Why?

15. Who did the housework in your family?

16. Describe what elementary school was like.

    Where was it located?

    How large was it?

    What classes were taught?

17. Describe what junior high school was like.

Where was it located?

How large was it?

What classes were taught?

18. Describe what high school was like.

Where was it located?

How large was it?

What classes were taught?

Did all students take the same courses? (Were there any differences

between males and females?)

19. Did you live at home during your high school days?

(If no) Where did you live?

20. What extracurricular activities did you participate in during high school?

21. What were your hopes for the future when you were a student?

22. How did your parents react to your plans?

23. Did you go to college?

Why?

(The following questions were asked of respondents who attended college only)

24. What kind of college did you attend?

Was it a two-year or a four-year college?

Was it coeducational?

25. What was your major?

26. Why did you pick that major?

27. How did your parents feel about your going to college?

28. Where did you live while going to college?

What was your curfew? (if any)

Were there any particular rules you had to adhere to?

Marriage and Family:

(The following questions were asked of all respondents)

29. Are you presently, or have you ever been married?

30. (If yes to Q. 29)   Did you always want to get married?

    (If no to Q. 29)   Have you always wanted to get married?

31. (If yes to Q. 29)   At what age did you want to get married?

    (If no to Q. 29)   At what age do you want to get married?

32. What kind of man did (do) you dream of marrying?

    Can you describe the characteristics you were (are) looking for?

33. (If yes to Q. 29)   Before you got married did you ever think of not

    having children?

    (If no to Q. 29)   Have you ever thought of not having children?

34. (If yes to Q. 29)   Before you got married how many children did you

    think you wanted?

    (If no to Q. 29)   How many children do you think you want?

    Why?

    If you had a choice, did (do) you prefer boys or girls?

35. What did (do) you expect married life to be like?

36. (If yes to Q. 29)   Did you work before marriage?

    (If no to Q. 29)   Have you ever worked?

    How long?

    Why did you work?

    What type of job was (is) it?

37. (If yes to Q. 36)   Did (do) you like your job?

38. (If not presently working)   When and why did you stop working?

39. When did you start dating boys?

(The following questions were asked of married respondents only)

40. When and how did you meet your present husband?

41. What kind of marriage was it? (love or arranged)

42. When did you get married?

43. How long had you known your husband before you got married?

44. What kind of man is your husband?

45. Is he like the man you dreamed of marrying?

    What are the differences?

    What adjectives would you use to describe him?

46. Do you have any children?

    How many?

47. (If yes to Q. 46) Who decided how many children you would have?

48. (If yes to Q. 46) How old are your children?

49. (If no to Q. 46) Do you plan to have children?

    When?

    How many?

50. How is married life different than you expected it to be, if at all?

51. Are you happy that you're married?

    Why/why not?

52. What kind of work does your husband do?

53. What are his working hours like?

54. What does he do in his free time?

55. Does he help you around the house?

56. Does he have many friends?

57. Do you know most of his friends?

58. Do you and your husband go out together?

    On what occasions?

    How often do you go out?

59. Who goes out more often, you or your husband?

60. Do you go on vacations together?

61. Who makes the important decisions in your family?

62. Who controls the finances in your family?

63. Do your/his parents or other relatives affect the decisions you make?

    How?

64. (If yes to Q. 46) Who makes the decisions concerning the children?

65. In the home, what are both your and your husband's roles?

66. How do you feel about your role?

    Is it too large or too small? (elaborate)

67. If you could change anything about your marriage, what would you change?

68. Do you and your husband usually agree or disagree about things? (describe)

69. What do you argue the most about?

    Who usually wins the argument?

(The following questions were asked of all respondents)

70. How do you feel about divorce?

71. What are the roles and duties of the family?

72. Which is better, nuclear or traditional families?

    Why?

73. How important are relatives in your daily life?

    Do they affect your decisions? How?

    Do they affect your actions? How?

74. Do you presently work?

(The following questions were asked of working respondents only)

75. Where do you work?

76. What is your salary?

77. What is your position where you work?

78. Do you feel any discrimination in the workplace?

79. What kind of benefits do you receive?

80. What are your possibilities for advancement?

81. Whose decision was it for you to work?

82. Why did you start working?

83. How does your husband (parents, children) feel about you working?

84. How long do you expect to continue working?

(The following questions were asked of all respondents)

85. What is the best age for women to marry?

    Why?

86. What is the best age for men to marry?

    Why?

87. Do you feel that everyone should get married?

88. Is it good or bad for a woman to work after marriage?

    Why?

89. Should men or women be responsible for household tasks?

    Are there any conditions under which this would change?

90. Do you have a lot of free time?

    About how much per day?

91. What do you do in your free time?

92. Do you belong to any social organizations? (describe)

93. How many good friends would you say you have?

94. How important are your friends to you?

95. How often do you visit with friends?

96. What do you usually do together?

97. What do you usually talk about?

98. (If married) Does your husband know most of your friends?

99. (If married) How does your husband feel about your friends?

100. How often do you see your relatives?

101. (If married) Do your, or your husband's parents live with you?

102. What will happen when your parents get older?

    Will you live with them?

Attitudes:

103. Are you satisfied with your present lifestyle?

    (If not) What would you change?

    Why are you (aren't you) satisfied?

104. Who is the most important person (people) in your life right now?

105. What is currently your biggest goal in life?

106. Is there any conflict between what you would like to do, what other

    people expect you to do, and what you do do? (describe fully)

107. What do you feel are the characteristics of a typical Japanese?

108. What adjectives would you use to describe a typical Japanese woman?

109. What adjectives would you use to describe a typical Japanese man?

110. Do you feel that men and women are naturally equal in all ways? (explain)

111. (If no to Q. 110) In what areas are men better than women?

112. (If no to Q. 110) In what areas are women better than men?

113. Should men and women be treated equally?

114. Do you feel that there is discrimination against women in Japan?

115. Have you ever experienced discrimination because you were a woman?

116. Should there be anything done about discrimination if it exists?

    What?

117. What adjectives would you use to describe yourself?

118. Would you say that you are a typical Japanese woman?

     Why/why not?

119. How should Japanese women behave?

120. How should Japanese men behave?

121. What is women's main contribution to society?

122. What is men's main contribution to society?

123. Are women/men smarter than the other sex?

124. Is tradition important?

     Why?

     What is its role in society today?

     What is its strength today?

     Is this good or bad?

125. Do you think that most men and women are happy?

     Why?

     How could they be happier?

126. What values are important to teach to children?

127. How would you characterize today's youth?

     How are they different from people in your generation?

128. What kind of people do you envy?

129. What do you worry the most about?

130. What social problems are you most concerned about?

     Why?

131. Are there things that men/women can do that the other sex cannot do?

     What are they?

     Why?

132. Do you think there is (will be) a feminist movement in Japan?

     Is this good or bad?

     Why?

133. What kind of people do you think are (would be) in the feminist movement?

134. How do you feel about "career-women"?

135. What do you think of the feminist movement in the United States?

136. Is personal satisfaction important to you?

137. (If no to Q. 136), What is important to you?

    (If yes to Q. 136) How do you achieve personal satisfaction?

The Future:

138. What do you look forward to the most in the future?

139. Looking back, what, if anything, would you change in your past, if you could?

140. If you could be anything or do anything, what would you like to do?

    Why?

141. What are your plans for the future?

142. What are your plans for when your children grow up?

143. What are your plans for when you reach old age?

144. What is the future role of women in society, as you see it?

145. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Eriko Ichikawa:

Eriko was born in 1955 to parents living in a small town outside of

Tokyo. Her father, a doctor, was much like other Japanese fathers that she

knew. He was rarely at home during the week before 10:00 at night and

spent his free time playing golf with his friends or attending seminars and

conventions in other cities throughout Japan. Eriko's mother was a housewife

who had full responsibility for all household matters, including the children

and their education. She was very quiet and submissive around her husband but

often loud and demanding with her two daughters.

Eriko attended a coeducational elementary school, junior high and high

school and then entered a junior college for two years. Her father had hoped

that she would go to medical school and take up his practice since she was

the eldest daughter, but Eriko was not very fond of study and chose to go to

women's college instead and take courses in home economics as training for her

future role as a wife.

In high school Eriko had a boyfriend who wanted to marry her eventually,

but all their hopes were dashed when Eriko's father announced that he would

not consider letting Eriko marry anyone whose status was lower than his own:

"My father was alarmed when he found out that I was dating a boy whose father

was 'just a businessman'. He felt that it would be a disgrace to the

family if I married someone who had a lower status than our family. He

really hopes that I will marry a young doctor so he can go into the practice

with my father and eventually take over the family practice once my father

has retired. Right now he shows me photographs of prospective husbands, all

of whom are either doctors or in medical school. It would really break his heart if I married someone who wasn't a doctor." I asked her how she felt about this situation and she replied that she didn't mind it. She didn't have a boyfriend now, and she didn't think it would be so bad to be married to a doctor, "at least we would never have to worry about money."

Currently Eriko is working as a receptionist in her father's office but "only until I can find a husband." Eriko has no desire to hold a job after she marries, or to pursue a long-term career. She really wants to become a housewife and raise children: "I think it is good for a girl to work for a couple of years before she gets married because then she learns something of the outside world and can talk with her husband about something other than finances and the children. It's important to be a good conversationalist so your husband does not get bored with you. I don't want to work after I get married, though. My husband should be able to support his family and it will be my duty to take care of the children."

Asking her what her image of married life was, she said that she thought that it would be "rewarding and exciting." I asked her what she thought she would do during the day when her husband was at work and she replied; "Oh, I'll stay home and play with my children, and I'll be able to catch up on little things like writing letters and sewing clothes."

She hasn't thought much about her life after her children have grown up and left the household, "after all, it's so far in the future."

Eriko thinks that everyone should get married and women should get married before the age of thirty if they want to get a good husband. She doesn't think that women should work after marriage, although as previously mentioned, she does think it is good to work for a couple of years before marriage.

In describing Japanese women Eriko says that they are usually "quiet, obedient, and willing to serve their husbands." Of men she said that they are "strong, hard-workers and responsible." She doesn't feel that men and women are inherently equal, nor does she think that they should be treated equally: "It's obvious that men are superior to women. Women just can't do a lot of the things which men can. A woman would be no good in a company in a decision-making position, for example. Women are emotional thinkers where men are logical. A woman just wouldn't be able to perform as well as a man." She also doesn't feel that women are discriminated against in Japan: "Women and men are different. Men don't try to do women's jobs and women shouldn't do men's. Of course there are differences in employment, but these reflect the differences in men and women, it is not discrimination."

Asking about the future of Japanese women's roles in general, Eriko said that she thought women were even more traditional today than they were a few years ago. Most of her friends are satisfied with just becoming house-wives and not getting a career. She thinks that many women who are now working will realize that they can't hold a job and be good housewives and mothers at the same time, and that they will quit their jobs and go back to the home: "It's become unpopular to say that a woman's place is in the home, but that's what I really believe, and I think most of my friends, really, deep-down, believe it, too. I will be satisfied if I am a good wife and my husband is happy and my children are successful. That is really my dream for the future."

Sumuki Yamamoto:

Sumiko is a twenty-two year old student at a well-known and respected university in Tokyo. Her father is a businessman in a large company and her mother is a housewife. Both of her parents are typical Japanese, although Sumiko feels that they are a little more lenient than some of her friends' parents.

Sumiko attended coeducational public schools from elementary school through high school and feels that she got an education which was on a par with the males in her school. She did have to take home economics in junior high school, however, and in high school she had to choose between cooking, tea ceremony, and flower arranging. Boys, on the other hand, had to choose between an additional science course, art course, or gym course.

During her high school days she did not date anyone in particular, although groups of boys and girls often got together outside of school. Sumiko says that there was a boy whom she liked but they never went out together alone: "It would have been looked down upon if we had been seen together alone by any of our classmates, teachers, or parents. Besides, I was shy, and so was he, and we were both too embarrassed to let anyone know how we felt."

Sumiko is currently majoring in English. She plans to go to Taiwan next year and teach Japanese to foreigners. She says that she enjoys English and she wants to teach as a career.

Sumiko thinks that she would like to wait until she is about thirty or so before she gets married. Even after marriage, she hopes to continue working.

She has seriously thought about never having children but feels that eventually she'll end up having some anyway: "I guess I'm a little unusual for a Japanese woman. I really want to have my own career, not just sit home and welcome my husband home every night. I think it will be easier for me to have a career in another country than it would be here in Japan.... Of course my parents are upset about my plans. They are worried that if I go to Taiwan and work and don't get married until I am thirty, I'll never get a decent husband and my whole life will be ruined. I don't want to disappoint my parents, but I also want to do what is right for me, it's a very difficult situation for me. I suppose that someday I'll get married and have children so I won't disappoint them."

Sumiko thinks that it will be very difficult to find a Japanese husband who will be agreeable to her desired lifestyle: "Most Japanese men want their wives to quit their jobs, have babies and stay at home all day, doing the housework and just waiting for their husbands to come home. Japanese men like to be pampered and taken care of after a long day at the office, and I don't think that I will be able to perform that role if I'm at the office all day, too."

Sumiko has never worked before and has never lived away from home, although she looks forward to doing both in the next year. She thinks that distance will help her become more independent from her parents and the pressures they put on her.

Sumiko feels that nuclear families are better than extended ones: "In an extended family it is much more difficult to assert yourself as an individual. There are so many other people to think about that you can't even

decide what you really want to do. I'm sure if my grandparents lived with us I would never have the chance to go to Taiwan, or even to pursue a career. Of course the extended family is good for older people because it gives them people to talk with and a sense of belonging, but if I have children, I will never live with them when I'm old because I know what a burden I would be on them."

I asked Sumiko at what age she felt it was best for people to get married and she said that she thought that both men and women should get married when they felt they were ready, when they could take on the additional responsibility, not when they reached a certain age. She also said this was difficult, however, because of societal pressure for women to get married before thirty and men to get married by about age thirty-five.

Describing the characteristics of a typical Japanese woman Sumiko said that they are "shy, not assertive enough, hard workers, and martyrs." About men she said that they are "hard workers, old-fashioned, ignorant of women's true needs and feelings, and worried only about money and security."

She feels that there is no inherent difference between men and women and that they should be treated equally. She does feel that there is discrimination in Japan against women, however, and is not very positive about the outlook for the future: "Japan has always been a country where women have been subordinate to men. There are many reasons for this and they are very complicated but I don't think that these attitudes and feelings are going to change overnight. Men are the ones in power and women don't even try to fight that. If they don't fight it, they will never improve their situation."

Sumiko wishes to make a contribution in her field but holds no desire to try to change the status of women in general: "I can live my own life but I really don't feel that there is anything that I could do to help change and improve the lives of other women. I really just want to be happy myself, and that is going to be hard enough."

Noriko Watanabe:

Noriko is a twenty-eight year old woman who graduated from a well-known
university in Tokyo. Her father is a professor of American literature at the
same university and, according to Noriko, is very Westernized. He has been
to the United States a number of times and is therefore not as strict as most
Japanese fathers. Noriko's mother is stricter than her father but is still more
liberal than a typical Japanese mother in the eyes of Noriko.

Noriko's parents had a love, rather than an arranged marriage. Noriko's
maternal grandmother objected to the wedding and consequently disowned Noriko's
mother. Being independent themselves, Noriko's parents stressed the importance
of doing what was right for her at all times and also of completing something
which she had started.

Noriko entered a coeducational public elementary school in Tokyo. Her most
vivid memory from this period was of a particular teacher she had who was very
strict with the boys in the class; making them stand up if they couldn't
answer a question and often putting them in tears. He was nice to all of the
girls, however, continually favoring them over the boys. Noriko remembers
feeling that this was unfair and wrong and she disliked the teacher.

She attended both coeducational junior and senior high schools in Tokyo.
She says that she didn't study very hard during high school days but instead spent
most of her time playing flute in the high school band. During her junior year
in high school she went to the United States as an international exchange
student. The one year spent at a private all-girls' Catholic high school was
a valuable experience, according to Noriko: "Before I went I wasn't much of
a talker but in the United States, everyone is expected to talk, so I learned
not to be shy."

After high school she entered a university where she studied English literature. I asked her why she wanted to go to college and she said that she didn't feel she was ready to go out into society immediately after high school. She admitted that she didn't really like to study, but she liked the lifestyle of students; a kind of carefree, leisurely existence. She decided to major in English because she had experience with the language while in the United States and she hoped to use her capabilities in a future job. Her parents expected her to go to college and supported her in her decisions.

During college, Noriko thought that she would like to wait until she was thirty or so before getting married, giving her time to do some of the things she wanted to do first. When asked why she got married before thirty she replied that she met someone she liked and decided that she had better take advantage of the opportunity and get married, which she did, at age twenty-seven.

Before marriage Noriko had dreams of married life: "Before marriage I thought that two people could accomplish things which one person cannot do alone. I've been married for a little over a year now, but both my husband and I are so busy with everyday life that we haven't been able to accomplish anything yet."

After graduating from college Noriko became an "Office Lady" in a large company for one and a half years: "I did the same job every day. I couldn't use my English, I just poured tea and coffee, ran errands...I hated it!"

She found her current job as a liaison between Japanese and Americans at an international division of a renowned university in Tokyo through the want-ads of the newspaper. She really likes her current job but thinks that she will quit in about three years when she has a child. She doesn't want a

child now because there are too many things she wants to do and a child would tie her down. She says that she would really like to wait longer than three years but her mother keeps "nagging" her to have one as soon as possible, citing all the statistics about increased chances of birth defects in children of older women. Noriko likes children and has always thought she would eventually have some of her own. If possible, she would like to have one boy and one girl.

Noriko met her husband three and a half years before their marriage, at school. He is an engineer, working on the weekdays and practicing with a jazz group on the weekends: "He doesn't think about me, he has a going-my-way attitude, but he lets me do what I want, which is very important to me." He leaves the apartment at 7:45 am and returns home between 9 and 10:00 pm. Noriko does all of the housework, in addition to working at her full-time job. She says that her husband has probably never done any housework in his life since his father was very traditional and "never entered the kitchen."

Noriko remarked that she is jealous of American women whose husbands help them in the home. Within the household, Noriko feels that she has the role of housekeeper, while her husband is never home: "When he comes home he just eats dinner and goes to sleep. I have to come home from work, fix the meal, and have it waiting for him when he gets home. I don't like this situation but it can't be helped (*shigata ga nai*)... Right now I don't feel that my role is too "heavy"; but when I have a child, it will be too heavy if I have to care for the baby and do all the housework as well. I'll make him (her husband) help me then." The one thing that she said she would like to change about her married life if she could was; "...I wish he'd help me more...for instance, cook on the weekends. That would be great!"

Noriko prefers a nuclear to an extended family. When she was growing up her grandmother lived with her family and she thinks that this may be the reason why she doesn't want to live with her parents or her husband's parents when they get older. She is afraid that she will lose her freedom. When her parents do get older her younger brother will look after them and when her husband's parents get older, his older brother will care for them.

I asked Noriko what age was best for people to get married and she replied that she felt that any age was fine, it all depended on the individual. She feels that it is natural to get married and thinks that everyone should, but she also thinks that a woman should have a job after she marries: "In Japan, working when you have a child is difficult. But if a woman can, I think she should. I think that society has got to change, there should be more day care centers for children, so more women can work if they want to." She also feels that men can do the housework just as well as women, but that women are brought up and socialized thinking that it is their duty and responsibility: "It's not a difference in male and female nature, it's a difference in upbringing."

Describing the characteristics of typical Japanese women, Noriko says that they have "a low status, poor opportunities for jobs, they're tied to the home after the birth of a child, and they're still traditional in their hearts." About men she says; "There are many men who use women, they can't even take off their own socks. These men are still numerous today."

She feels that there is no innate difference between men and women, and that they should be treated equally. In reality, however, she thinks that there is discrimination against women in Japan today. She feels that women's status should be raised, but men's status should not be lowered in the process: "Women should make more efforts, men should understand women better and women should stop depending on men so much." I asked her what women should do, specifically, to raise their status and Noriko replied; "Women should widen their scope, they should look for things to do outside of the home."

Today's world is a man's world, according to Noriko. Women have made very little contribution to society, but "it's time they started." She feels that in the future women will not be satisfied with just being housewives, but will add something to their society more than just giving birth to the future male leaders of society: "I do think that things will get much better for women in Japan in the future, at least I hope that they do."