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CHAPTER 1



Women's Rights as Proletarian Rights

*Yamakawa Kikue, Suffrage, and
the "Dawn of Liberation"*

ELYSSA FAISON

IN THE FIRST POSTWAR ISSUE of the newly resuscitated journal *Fujin kōron* (Women's forum), the essayist and socialist feminist Yamakawa Kikue offered her assessment of newly granted women's suffrage rights for postwar Japan. In "Standing at the Dawn of Liberation: An Historic General Election and Women's Suffrage," Yamakawa anticipated with great hopefulness the upcoming general election of 1946, which was to be the first in which women would be allowed to vote and stand for office.¹ In this essay Yamakawa, who would soon be named the first director of the Women's and Minors' Bureau of the newly created Labor Ministry, celebrated women's suffrage and the general election, saying that "equal political rights will translate into social and economic equality for women. Inequality in education, work, and the family system will be abolished."²

On the face of it, such an optimistic statement might seem to contradict the prewar position of the socialist and communist left in which Yamakawa had been active since the 1910s. That is, the prewar left (and Yamakawa working within it) had argued that only through the abolition of the capitalist system could full human rights for all peoples be achieved, while her 1946 statement expressed hope that political rights for men and women would translate into social and economic equality. How, then, could Yamakawa now celebrate not the abolition of capitalism, but

the extension of political rights even if, as she noted in her essay, most women would probably end up voting for conservative parties that did not advocate for women's interests?

Understanding this apparent tension in Yamakawa's prewar and postwar positions with regard to the possibilities of true liberation for women through the granting of women's suffrage becomes possible by considering her holistic and historicist theory of the state and of human rights—a theory in which she refused to trade off considerations of class for those of gender, or vice versa. Her contemporaries in the women's suffrage movement typically eschewed class analysis, and were dedicated to a program of expanding rights within the existing framework set by the Meiji Constitution and its associated laws. While proponents of women's suffrage like Hiratsuka Raichō, Oku Mumeo, and Ichikawa Fusae lobbied for revision of the Civil Code, which subordinated married women to male heads of household, and against laws that prevented women from attending political meetings, they did not identify deeper structural problems in the character of the state. By examining Yamakawa's work alongside that of women's suffrage leaders like Ichikawa and the policies and proposals of the Women's Suffrage League (Fusen Kakutoku Dōmei) that Ichikawa co-founded and helped lead, it becomes clear that Yamakawa's pre- and postwar assessments of the importance of women's suffrage are largely consistent with her overall view of the prewar state as fundamentally authoritarian and anti-democratic in both its legal and economic nature. For Yamakawa, the collapse of the authoritarian state—even though it took place as a result of defeat in war rather than through class struggle—allowed for the possibility that human rights could be attained. Additionally, I argue that Yamakawa—usually described as a theorist rather than an activist—needs to be placed back into discussions of women's and workers' rights activism. While she was a prolific writer and a gifted theoretician, she was also an activist in both women's and socialist organizations from the time she finished her higher education through her service to the state bureaucracy.

The Reluctant Suffragist

Leaders of Japan's women's suffrage movement worked successfully to overturn a legal ban on women's right to political assembly in the 1920s,

and continued through the end of the war to push for changes to Japan's Civil Code, which dictated the legal rights and responsibilities of women and men within a highly patriarchal family structure. Such efforts represented the interests of an almost exclusively middle-class suffragist movement with the specific goal of a particular type of political enfranchisement—namely, the addition of women to the category of Japanese imperial subjects who would hold the rights to vote and stand for office in a political system defined by the Meiji Constitution. Yamakawa challenged the very foundations of that political system, while maintaining throughout her life a pragmatism that kept her from charges of ideological extremism, and which always took the actual material conditions of Japanese women into consideration.³

The basic outlines of Yamakawa Kikue's contributions to the development of feminism in prewar Japan have been amply noted in historical literature.⁴ As a founding member of the Red Wave Society (*Sekirankai*), Japan's first socialist women's organization, and as one of the most visible socialist women in prewar Japan, Yamakawa is among the most heavily cited socialist women of the early twentieth century, in part because she was also one of the most prolific. She is perhaps better known for her engagement with liberal women's rights activists, who she debated in a range of women's magazines throughout the 1910s and 1920s, since those debates took place in the newly emergent popular press. But her participation in male-dominated socialist organizations and her interventionist writings on behalf of women within those organizations directed toward her male socialist peers were equally substantial. She argued continually and passionately with her male colleagues, trying to force them to recognize that the concerns of proletarian women could not be separated from those of proletarian men. And while she did not always succeed in convincing them to adopt her proposals, she shifted socialist discourse in significant ways that forced a consideration of women and their relation to class. Additionally, Yamakawa's popular nonfiction writings, including an important study commissioned by the famous ethnologist Yanagita Kunio on the nature of Tokugawa-era samurai families and women's position within them, found a substantial audience throughout the prewar and wartime years.⁵

Yamakawa's postwar life and activities have been largely ignored, despite the important role she played as the first director of the Labor

Ministry's Women's and Minors' Bureau, and her ongoing engagement with women's and workers' rights activism. She was especially active in the years immediately following the end of the war. In March 1946, she joined with other women's rights activists from across the political spectrum to form the Women's Democratic Club (Fujin Minshu Kurabu) "to promote the participation of women in politics" in this crucial time before women would be allowed to cast their first votes in Japan the following month.⁶ A year later she founded the Democratic Women's Association (Minshu Fujin Kyōkai), an organization affiliated with the short-lived Democratic People's Federation (Minshu Jinmin Renmei) formed and led by her husband, the prominent leftist intellectual Yamakawa Hitoshi. She held the position of founding director of the Women's and Minors' Bureau from 1947 to 1951, beginning under socialist prime minister Katayama Tetsu. That she stayed in this position after Katayama stepped down in 1948 and served under two prime ministers from the conservative Liberal Democratic Party suggests how effective she was. The historian Takemae Eiji claims that due to her strong leadership of the Bureau, "women subsequently were appointed to head other Ministry bureaux as well."⁷ She also continued publishing, with *Japanese Democratization and Women* (*Nihon no minshuka to josei*) and *For the Women of Tomorrow* (*Ashita no josei no tame ni*) appearing in 1947, a new journal called *Women's Voice* (*Fujin no koe*, affiliated with the Women's Division of the Socialist Party) founded in 1951, and an autobiography titled *A Record of Two Generations of Women* (*Onna nidai no ki*) published in 1956.⁸

Yamakawa was born only one generation after the abolition of the samurai class, as the daughter of a scholarly and progressive-minded samurai family. She attended Tsuda Women's College starting in 1908 and early in her life expressed an interest in working for the betterment of women.⁹ In 1916 she married the communist activist and theoretician Yamakawa Hitoshi, founder in 1922 of the short-lived prewar Japan Communist Party, and a leader of the Labor-Farmer faction within the Japanese communist movement. She is best known for her position in debates on prostitution and motherhood, in which she consistently challenged liberal feminists (who she termed "bourgeois feminists") on the possibility of women achieving full rights within a capitalist system.¹⁰ While Yamakawa never actively advocated for suffrage rights, understanding her position with regard to the issue of formal political rights

for women is crucial to understanding the continuity of her pre- and postwar writings.

An examination of two key moments in the movement for expanded suffrage rights in Japan allows us to better understand Yamakawa's historicist critique of liberal efforts to expand civic rights within the framework of what Andrew Gordon has referred to as Japan's prewar system of "imperial democracy."¹¹ These were the passage of a Universal Manhood Suffrage Law in 1925 and the acquisition of women's suffrage that came with the promulgation of the postwar Constitution in 1946. Although Yamakawa generally supported expanded civic rights for women including suffrage, she never believed that suffrage rights in and of themselves would create class or gender equality. For this reason, and to better comprehend the scope of her arguments about women's rights as proletarian rights and proletarian rights as women's rights, we must often rely on her broader arguments on topics that do not always address the issue of suffrage directly.

Suffrage and Proletarian Rights

The Universal Manhood Suffrage Law, passed in 1925, abolished tax requirements and allowed males over twenty-five years old to vote and run for office in local and national elections. The first elections held after this significant expansion of voting rights took place in 1928, and included colonial peoples, especially the large proportion from Korea, as new voters and as candidates in local elections. By 1932 a Korean named Pak Chungum, with close connections to the Japanese police regime, became the first Korean elected to the Japanese House of Commons, marking the emergence of Koreans resident in Japan as a visible constituency in national politics. As the historian Matsuda Toshihiko has argued, Koreans had been legally able to vote in local elections since at least the passage of the Common Law of 1918. Yet, politicians who debated the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law seemed unaware of the existing legal status of Koreans with regard to suffrage, and similarly unaware of any impact the bill for expanded suffrage would have on the resident Korean population.¹² The law regarding eligibility to vote in local elections before the passage of the 1925 Universal Manhood Suffrage Law, in addition to fairly substantial tax requirements, stated only that eligibility was restricted to male imperial subjects living in Japan (*danshi taru*

shinmin) and said nothing about ethnicity or nationality. Thus, when the tax requirements were lifted after 1925, the number of eligible Korean voters increased significantly.¹³

For reasons that demand further attention by scholars, there do not seem to have been debates in Japan centering around what U.S. historian Allison Sneider has called “suffrage imperialism.” Sneider argues that in the late nineteenth century, American suffragists increasingly pointed to the real or potential extension of voting rights to non-white men and other minorities (such as men from new American territories such as Hawai‘i and Santo Domingo, and Mormons in Utah) as a threat to the continued hegemony of white political power. She further notes that they used white fears about the enfranchisement of men of color as part of urgent appeals to grant suffrage to white American women, which would thus bolster white political supremacy.¹⁴ Despite a similarly expanding imperium in early twentieth-century Japan made up of the newly incorporated prefectures of Hokkaido and Okinawa, formal colonies including Taiwan and Korea, and a number of protectorates, I have not found evidence in their writings to suggest that Japanese women’s suffrage advocates concerned themselves with arguments about the (non-)desirability of allowing non-ethnically Japanese men to vote before Japanese women could do so. Perhaps this was due to the fairly small numbers of non-Japanese men who were actually eligible to vote, or the even smaller number of those who successfully stood for office in local or national elections.

Yamakawa articulated her position on the 1925 Universal Manhood Suffrage Law and the issue of civic rights for Japan’s colonized peoples within the context of political organizing efforts taking place within the proletarian and communist left. “Special Demands of Women,” published in the *Hōchi shinbun* newspaper in October 1925, formed one of Yamakawa’s most important and visible interventions in male-dominated socialist political organizing, and it came as part of a larger socialist response to the 1925 expanded male suffrage law. Leftist organizations united to plan for the creation of a mass proletarian party in anticipation of the first election to take place after the law’s promulgation, scheduled for February 1928.¹⁵ Unions and proletarian organizations, including the leadership of the recently disbanded Japan Communist Party and its successor group the Japan Labor Union Council (Nihon Rōdō Kumiai Hyōgikai, known simply as Hyōgikai) met to discuss draft proposals for

such a mass party at the Proletarian Party Preparatory Council held in September 1925.¹⁶

Responding to these platforms in a document that elicited debate among proletarian movement leaders, Yamakawa first expressed great satisfaction that the various party platforms under consideration seemed to be largely in agreement on significant practical and ideological points, and delighted at the prospect that a mass proletarian political party might soon be formed. But in her "Special Demands of Women," she identified only three items out of the party platform proposals submitted that directly related to women. These included demands that all men and women over the age of eighteen be granted voting rights; that overtime, night work, and dangerous work for women and children be prohibited; and that women be granted paid maternity leave before and after childbirth.¹⁷

The suffrage plank in these platforms proposed a substantial reduction of the age of eligibility for voting rights from the current twenty-five years down to eighteen; and, equally as significant, they proposed that women as well as men have voting rights, a proposal that may possibly have reflected Yamakawa's influence within the movement to that point. Yamakawa agreed strongly with this promotion of civil political rights for men and women, which after all formed the basis of the desire among leftist organizations to create a mass political party in the first place; that is, in expanding the franchise to men and women, and to younger men and women than could currently vote, the movement hoped to mobilize mass support for proletarian rights and sustain a mass movement that had not as yet materialized within Japan.

Suffrage and Women's Rights

The expansion of suffrage after 1925 had in fact been the impetus for the original party platforms to which Yamakawa found herself responding. But instead of engaging at length with the issue of suffrage, Yamakawa used the dearth of additional provisions that spoke to women's concerns as an opportunity to not only offer additional demands for women, but also to use those demands as a vehicle for theorizing women within Japanese Marxism. Quoting the draft platform of the Political Studies Association, she said:

If we are to go beyond the statement “Completely removing feudal remnants and completing the bourgeoisification of society are necessary in order to follow the path of socialism,” we must also recognize that demands for democracy that are closely bound up with the daily lives of women are also “necessary in order to follow the path of socialism.”¹⁸

The additional demands proposed by Yamakawa and the Women’s Division of the Political Studies Association (an organization headed by prominent communists like Sano Manabu and affiliated with the Labor Union Council) that she believed were necessary for any new mass proletarian party “in order to follow the path of socialism,” included the following:

1. The abolition of the head-of-household system.
2. The abolition of all laws relating to the [political] incapacity of women regardless of marital status; equal rights of men and women in marriage and divorce.
3. Equal opportunities of education and employment for women and peoples of the colonies with that of Japanese (*naichi*) men.
4. The implementation of a standard living wage without regard to ethnicity or sex.
5. The implementation of equal wages or salary without regard to occupation for people of the colonies and for men and women.
6. The provision of break rooms for women with nursing infants, and the allowance of at least thirty minutes every three hours for nursing.
7. The prohibition of the practice of firing women for reasons of marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth.
8. The complete abolition of licensed prostitution.¹⁹

In the first two points Yamakawa shared much with her women’s suffrage colleagues. Both Yamakawa and the leadership of the Women’s Suffrage League argued throughout the prewar period that Japan’s legally codified family system, which designated a usually male head-of-household and excluded other family members (including wives) from owning property, denied women legal decision-making capacity. These provisions of the Civil Code and its related laws became even more a target for

Ichikawa Fusae and other suffrage leaders in 1931, when a limited suffrage bill that would have allowed women to vote and, with the permission of their husbands, stand for election in local offices passed the lower house of the Diet. This gave hope to suffrage proponents that a full suffrage law might be enacted in the following Diet session.

In points three, four, and five, Yamakawa differed substantially from her Suffrage League colleagues, for whom issues of equality and inclusion for Japan's colonized peoples had no bearing in consideration of suffrage or other rights for Japanese women.²⁰ Her final three demands represent the heart of her concern for women's rights as workers' rights. By pointing to the most basic issues affecting working-class women—their access to continued employment even during and immediately after pregnancy, and their susceptibility to the unfree conditions placed upon women in the licensed prostitution system—she emphasized the importance of waged and other paid work for proletarian women.

In the same year Yamakawa presented her arguments for the special demands of women, she also authored a manifesto arguing for the creation of a women's bureau within the Labor Union Council (Hyōgikai). Arguing in her "Thesis on a Women's Bureau" (1925) that female factory workers "are the key to Japan's labor movement," she suggested a direction for the labor movement that would alleviate their poor working conditions.²¹ This focus on female factory labor as the basis for much of her theorizing on women's issues as well as her critique of Japan's specific manifestation of capitalist development distinguished Yamakawa from her liberal feminist colleagues. While by no means monolithic in their own views, women's suffrage activists focused their attention on those features of Japan's political system such as the Civil Code that prevented women from exercising political rights.

Yamakawa focused on female factory labor and its relation to the recently codified family system to argue that capitalist leaders were entangled in a feudal "master/slave" relationship. That is, industrialists took the feudal family system of the agrarian countryside and extended it to their own factory dormitories, thus controlling female factory workers by restricting their bodily movements (*jinshin kōsokuteki ni shihai suru*).²² This relationship also controlled female factory workers internally, having transferred the custom of familial servitude to the factory and depriving them of the consciousness that their labor was being sold cheaply. As a result of this lack of human self-consciousness,

their awareness was not that of a “modern working class.” However, Yamakawa argued that men also suffered this lack of self-consciousness. Men extended to their social consciousness their own feudal view of the family and of women that constructed women as things they could possess, rather than as people whose life experiences had a similar class basis. Men in the socialist movement, she argued, needed to recognize that women’s issues, like men’s, were fundamentally class-based, and must be thought of as important issues related to the labor movement as a whole. Thus, creating class consciousness among female factory workers would destroy the feudal family relationship and the feudal relationships obtaining between the sexes. In short, her “Thesis” argued that men who did not realize or accept that women were the comrades of men fighting on the front lines of the class war were themselves “class traitors.”

Women’s Rights and Wartime Mobilization

Scholars working in the field of Japanese women’s history have undergone several shifts in how they view the wartime actions and writings of Japanese women’s rights activists. By “wartime” I mean the period beginning with the Manchurian Incident of September 1931, which prompted a significant expansion of Japanese military presence on the continent, and after which it became increasingly difficult for women, and indeed anyone, to openly criticize the state. The first postwar generation of women’s historians gave little attention to women in wartime. Instead, scholarly attention went toward excavating an early history of women’s activism, beginning with the Popular Rights Movement of the 1880s and ending with the failure of the women’s suffrage movement after the Manchurian Incident pre-empted further attempts to press the Diet for full women’s suffrage. By the time women’s historians began examining the wartime period—marked as it was by the consolidation of women’s organizations and the mass appeal of state-sponsored groups such as the Patriotic Women’s Association (Aikoku Fujinkai) and the Women’s National Defense Association (Kokubō Fujinkai)—they found that the most prominent women’s rights groups and their leaders seemed to have been coopted by the state during the country’s period of mass mobilization. By the 1980s, several of the most vaunted figures in twentieth-century women’s history, including the most prominent leader of the women’s suffrage movement, Ichikawa Fusae, became the targets of

scholarly critiques that they had willingly and knowingly supported the wartime state and its policies of imperialism and militarism.²³

These critiques were part of a broader postwar analysis of *tenkō*, or “conversion.” The term *tenkō* was originally applied to Japanese communists who, under the duress of imprisonment and often torture, had abandoned the party and its ideals in favor of a pro-state nationalism for the duration of the war. Eventually the term came to be applied more generally to a wide variety of social groupings and even to “the masses” to describe how teachers and students, workers, union members, members of political parties, and even women’s rights activists appeared to abandon their oppositional stance and embrace nationalism and state-directed goals during wartime.²⁴

The theory of *tenkō*, however, has never adequately explained what appeared to be a sudden and complete reversal of ideological commitments among those, like promoters of women’s suffrage, who had throughout the 1920s been the most vocal opponents of the state. Recently historians have offered a more complex analysis of what had previously appeared to be a “conversion” among women’s rights advocates. Narita Ryūichi has argued compellingly that in the case of Oku Mumeo, the prewar colleague of Ichikawa Fusae and co-founder of consumer rights-focused women’s rights organizations, it is not so much that Oku changed her position from one of state opposition to state support, but rather that the wartime state came to adopt a number of positions she had held all along. Narita demonstrates that Oku’s primary concern before 1930 had been with women as mothers and family managers, and that she promoted forms of cooperativism among women and families. Therefore, when the state began to promote such cooperativism and to valorize motherhood and the position of the housewife as part of its wartime mobilization policies, it should not come as a surprise that Oku quickly became a backer of state policies that now appeared to support the very policies toward women she had championed all along.²⁵ Barbara Molony has made a slightly different argument, but one that performs the similar operation of rendering visible an internal logic and consistency of thought and action in what has been interpreted by others as an abandonment of principle by women activists who supported the militarist state. Molony suggests that a suffrage movement based on the demand for more institutionalized recognition of national belonging and state-based rights inevitably aligned suffragists with state interests. Or as she

has put it, “the possibility of feminist support for heinous state policies was always embedded in the liberatory rhetoric of full civil rights.”²⁶

Such analyses of women’s complicity with the wartime state and willingness to embrace its goals have helped us better understand the nature of the women’s suffrage movement and women’s reform movements in the years before military mobilization. While people like Ichikawa never abandoned their hope for full women’s suffrage, the creation by the state of nationalist women’s organizations, cooperative associations, and increased protections for women during wartime gave many women’s rights activists enough of a sense of full subjecthood within the imperial state that they were willing to defer other goals for the duration of the national crisis.

Yamakawa was one of the few prewar women’s rights activists who did not support state actions or the state mobilization of women during the war. Despite increasingly harsh censorship and the threat of police persecution, she published when she could during the late 1930s and early 1940s, and what she published was frequently of an apolitical nature.²⁷ Her participation in a roundtable discussion published by the conservative-leaning journal *Bungei shunjū* in 1937 illustrates the way she negotiated the need to appear in print to support herself economically, and the constraints put upon what she could say publicly in a political environment increasingly hostile to criticism of the state. In “A Roundtable Discussion on the Problem of Women During Wartime,” Yamakawa appeared with other prominent women and men long involved in advocating for women’s rights, including Hiratsuka Raichō, Tatewaki Sadayo, Okada Junko, and Katayama Tetsu. Published only months after the China Incident of July 1937 that launched Japan’s all-out war on the continent, and only months before Yamakawa’s own husband, Hitoshi, was arrested for his involvement in the Popular Front Movement that sought to create a united front within Japan against fascism, the roundtable revolved around the perception of drastic (and presumably positive) changes for women as a result of national mobilization by the state. While never explicitly criticizing the war, time and again throughout the roundtable Yamakawa challenged her colleagues’ assertions to point out that women had been working in these capacities long before state mobilization. Only now with the intensification of new forms of nationalist ideology, she argued, did many women possess a consciousness of the kinds of changes that had been taking place for women in Japanese

society for some time.²⁸ While some scholars have pointed to her participation in this roundtable as evidence of wartime complicity, my own reading suggests more of what Ienaga Saburō has referred to as a form of “passive resistance,” wherein a number of writers and leftists kept from being prosecuted under the provisions of the Peace Preservation Act by not criticizing the war, but nonetheless refused to actively or explicitly support it.²⁹

The Dawn of Liberation

After the war, one of the first essays Yamakawa published was the 1946 piece cited at the beginning of this chapter, titled “Standing at the Dawn of Liberation: An Historic General Election and Women’s Suffrage.”³⁰ A brief introduction of its contents here will help demonstrate the consistency of Yamakawa’s thought from her early works such as “About the Special Demands of Women” and “Thesis on a Women’s Bureau” from 1925, through the period of the Occupation. Even in 1946, Yamakawa continued to debate her fellow women’s rights activists like Ichikawa Fusae, who she mentions by name.

In “Standing at the Dawn of Liberation,” Yamakawa reiterates her long-standing criticisms of Japan’s prewar and wartime state that was to her characterized most significantly by authoritarianism and militarism. And in keeping also with her assessment that women’s issues are always also men’s issues, she stressed that,

This is a general election that has historic significance not only for women, but for men too. This is because men too are now able to express their political will for the first time without heavy-handed interference from the government. What does it mean to have voting rights in a country with no freedom of speech, where there does not exist the power of the will of the people to be expressed through government, and where a deliberative assembly is no more than window dressing (*keishiki*)?³¹

Her critique of the wartime state would have resonated with readers experiencing the first years of foreign occupation after a devastating defeat, and suffering through food shortages, starvation, and massive loss of housing that resulted from Allied fire and atomic bombings.

Referring obliquely to the foreign-imposed postwar Constitution that granted women full political equality with men, including suffrage, Yamakawa points out, “Women’s suffrage did not come about by coincidence, but was mixed with the blood of our husbands and sons who died in foreign lands. With their blood, the military dictatorship fell from its self-imposed wounds. Japan’s democracy is a result of this, and women’s suffrage is one part of that democracy.”³²

Engaging yet again with Ichikawa and leaders of the suffrage movement, she insisted that the high rates of abstention among women voters about which Ichikawa had expressed concern in the lead-up to the general election were more an indication of the penetration of democratic ideals than, as Ichikawa argued, a fundamental problem of a lack of civic education among women. That is, Yamakawa saw abstention from voting itself as an act of volition and an exercise of an individual’s political rights. Political education, she argued, is a very personal process. It would be in the process of participating in a democracy that a sense of political autonomy would be created among women. Further, because women now have political rights, men, she said, were beginning to see women as full human beings.³³

Conclusion

Yamakawa is famous for having worked relentlessly to critique Japan’s prewar socialist movement for its lack of attention to women’s issues. Her impassioned argument for the creation of a Women’s Bureau within the leadership organization of the proletarian political organizing committee, the Labor Union Council (Hyōgikai), reminded her male colleagues that women’s rights were also proletarian rights that male workers would do well to engage with for their own sakes. The “Special Demands of Women” of the late 1920s inspired an impassioned debate and put women’s issues once again before the eyes of a largely male socialist leadership that often seemed ready to abandon working women as irrelevant to the cause of socialist revolution. No other single woman in prewar Japan was able to put women’s issues on a national socialist agenda as Yamakawa did.

In addition to her continual presence in person and in print as an oppositional figure operating simultaneously at the margins and the center of Japanese socialist political and organizational activities, during

the same decades she offered similarly relentless critiques of what she considered “bourgeois” women’s groups and their pursuit of liberal political rights like suffrage that would benefit primarily elite women. Her 1946 essay extolling the “dawn of liberation” that she believed would follow women’s newly acquired suffrage rights notwithstanding, she was highly ambivalent during the prewar period regarding the importance of advocating for women’s suffrage. But with the end of the war, and thus the end of the authoritarian and militarist state against which she had fought her entire adult life, Yamakawa could embrace the cause and the reality of suffrage without hesitation. This also marked the start of her willingness to try to effect change from within the political system as a bureaucrat, even as she continued to agitate for women’s and workers’ rights. What other Japanese women would do with their new political rights was up to them. For Yamakawa, this was truly the “dawn of liberation.”

Notes

- 1 For more on the 1946 election, which doubled the eligible electorate from what it had been before the end of the war thanks to the new enfranchisement of women and the lowering of the voting age, see Takemae Eiji, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, trans. Robert Ricketts and Sebastian Swan (New York: Continuum, 2003), 263–266.
- 2 Yamakawa Kikue, “Kaihō no reimei ni tachite: Rekishiteki sōsenkyo to fujin sanseiken,” in Suzuki Yūko, ed. *Yamakawa Kikue hyōronshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko, 1990), 220. This essay originally appeared in *Fujin kōron* in April 1946.
- 3 Jennifer Shapcott has noted that in her contributions to the 1918 “motherhood protection” debates that took place in the pages of the journal *Seitō*: “[Yamakawa] pointed out that both the women’s suffrage movement and the motherhood protection debate had originated in Western society and criticized the artificial transplantation of western feminism to the different social conditions of Japan.” See Jennifer Shapcott, “The Red Chrysanthemum: Yamakawa Kikue and the Socialist Women’s Movement in Prewar Japan,” *Papers on Far Eastern History* 35 (1987): 8.
- 4 In English, see for example, Shapcott, “The Red Chrysanthemum”; E. Patricia Tsurumi, “The Accidental Historian, Yamakawa Kikue,” in *Gender & History* 8, no. 2 (August 1996); Vera Mackie, *Creating Socialist*

- Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Indra Levy, “Against Essentialist Identity Politics: The Status of Difference in the Critical Writings of Yamakawa Kikue,” in *Across Time and Genre: Reading and Writing Women’s Texts: Conference Proceedings*, ed. Janice Brown (Alberta: University of Alberta, 2002). In Japanese, see Sugaya Naoko, *Fukutsu no josei: Yamakawa Kikue no kōhansei* (Tokyo: Kaien Shobō, 1988); Hayashi Yōko, “Seikatsu to rekishi o musubu mono: Yamakawa Kikue ron,” *Dōshisha hōgaku* 50, no. 4 (February 1999); and Yamakawa Kikue Kinenkai, *Ima josei ga hataraku koto to feminizumu: Yamakawa Kikue no gendaiteki igi* (Tokyo: Rōdōsha Undō Shiryōshitsu, 2011).
- 5 Yamakawa Kikue, *Buke no josei* (1943; Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983), published in English as Yamakawa Kikue, *Women of the Mito Domain: Recollections of Samurai Family Life*, trans. Kate Wildman Nakai (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). This ethnological study of samurai life is based largely on interviews with people Yamakawa knew from her own childhood and from the reminiscences of family members.
 - 6 Takemae, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 265.
 - 7 Ibid., 329.
 - 8 Yamakawa Kikue, *Ashita no josei no tame ni* (Tokyo: Masu Shobō, 1947); Yamakawa Kikue, *Nihon no minshuka to josei* (Tokyo: Sankō Shorin, 1947); Yamakawa Kikue, *Onna nidai no ki* (1956; Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2001).
 - 9 E. Patricia Tsurumi, “The Accidental Historian,” 260.
 - 10 On these debates, see Barbara Molony, “Equality Versus Difference: The Japanese Debate Over Motherhood Protection, 1915–1950,” in *Japanese Women Working*, ed. Janet Hunter (New York: Routledge, 1995); E. Patricia Tsurumi, “Visions of Women and the New Society in Conflict: Yamakawa Kikue Versus Takamura Itsue,” in *Japan’s Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900–1930*, ed. Sharon A. Minichiello (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1998), 336–340; and Sarah Frederick, *Turning Pages: Reading and Writing Women’s Magazines in Interwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006), 47–55.
 - 11 Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
 - 12 This law was meant to consolidate the different legal spheres that had developed in colonial Korea and Taiwan since the Meiji Constitution was put in place and permit them to work more smoothly. See Matsuda Toshihiko, *Senzenki no Zainichi Chōsenjin to sanseiken* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1995), 15.
 - 13 Even so, residency requirements of at least one year at the same address continued to limit the number of proletarian men, both Korean and

Japanese, who were eligible to vote. Matsuda Toshihiko estimates that only about 10 percent of the resident Korean population was actually eligible to vote after 1925. See Matsuda, *Senzenki no Zainichi Chōsenjin to sanseiken*, 36. For this same reason, the true “universality” of male suffrage rights even among Japanese men has tended to be overstated among historians.

- 14 Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870–1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- 15 George M. Beckmann and Okubo Genji, *Japan Communist Party, 1922–1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), 149.
- 16 Beckmann and Okubo describe the three proletarian parties that were created from this process and their respective characteristics: the Japan Labor-Farmer Party (Nihon Rōnōtō), a centrist organization that claimed independence from the Comintern; the Social Democratic Party (Shakai Minshutō), an anti-communist organization on the right; and the Labor-Farmer Party (Rōnōtō) on the left. See Beckmann and Okubo, *Japan Communist Party*, 98–99.
- 17 Yamakawa Kikue, “Fujin no tokushu yōkyū’ ni tsuite,” in *Yamakawa Kikue hyōronshū*, ed. Suzuki Yūko (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko, 1990), 127. Ellen Carol DuBois notes that by the 1907 meeting of the Second International, women’s suffrage had been accepted as “a non-contingent, fundamental demand that socialist parties must pursue ‘strenuously.’” Protective labor legislation also became a classic socialist demand during the time of the Second International, but often it served to “keep women in a separate and unequal sector of the labor force.” See Ellen Carol DuBois, “Woman Suffrage and the Left: An International Socialist Perspective,” *New Left Review*, no. 186 (March–April 1991): 31–32.
- 18 Yamakawa, “Fujin no tokushu yōkyū’ ni tsuite,” 126. The draft statement cited by Yamakawa refers to the Marxist theory of history, in which a full socialist revolution can only happen after the completion of a bourgeois revolution that does away with the feudal system.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 128.
- 20 As Vera Mackie has noted, however, “while Japanese people have a gender and a class, colonised people are featureless, without gender or class in [Yamakawa’s] writings.” See Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 88. The scholar Song Youn-ok has also pointed out that while Yamakawa supported colonized peoples and in particular Korean women in their efforts to gain rights, she was never able to adequately grasp the ways and degree to which Japanese feminists benefited from Japan’s colonial policies. See Song Youn-ok, “Shokuminchi

- Chōsen ni okeru josei kaihō no kokoromi,” in Yamakawa Kikue Kinenkai, ed., *Yamakawa Kikue no gendaiteki igi: Ima josei ga hataraku koto to feminizumu* (Tokyo: Rōdōsha Undō Shiryōshitsu, 2011), 47–52.
- 21 Yamakawa Kikue, “Fujinbu tēze,” in *Yamakawa Kikue hyōronshū*, ed. Suzuki Yūko (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko, 1990). For an excellent analysis of Yamakawa’s “Fujinbu tēze,” which has influenced my own reading of that essay, see Itō Akira, *Nihon Rōdō Kumiai Hyōgikai no kenkyū: 1920-nendai rōdō kumiai no kōbō* (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 2001), 290–293.
 - 22 This is not unlike arguments made by historian Tōjō Yukihiko, although he uses the terms “modern” and “contemporary” (*kindaiteki* and *gendaiteki*) to describe characteristics of the labor market that Yamakawa defines as “feudal” and “modern.” Tōjō juxtaposes what he calls the restrictive “modern” wage labor market system in which female textile labor operates without free individual agency and is instead restricted by families and by companies (what Yamakawa refers to as the feudal elements), with a “contemporary” (*gendaiteki*) labor market that operates on the basis of individual worker agency. See Tōjō Yukihiko, *Seishi dōmei no jokō tōroku seido: Nihon kindai no hen’yō to jokō no “jinkaku”* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppansha, 1990).
 - 23 See Tsurumi, “The Accidental Historian”; and Barbara Molony, “From ‘Mothers of Humanity’ to ‘Assisting the Emperor’: Gendered Belonging in the Wartime Rhetoric of Japanese Feminist Ichikawa Fusae,” in *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 1 (February 2011): 6–10, for discussions of these historiographical trends.
 - 24 For some of the foundational treatments of the concept of “conversion,” see Fujita Shōzō, *Tenkō no shisōshiteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975); and Tsurumi Shunsuke, *Tenkō kenkyū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1976). See also Patricia G. Steinhoff, “Tenkō and Thought Control,” in *Japan and the World: Essays on Japanese History and Politics in Honour of Ishida Takeshi*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein and Haruhiro Fukui (London: MacMillan Press, 1988); Germaine A. Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Prewar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); and chapter five in Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*.
 - 25 Narita Ryūichi, “Women in the Motherland: Oku Mumeo Through Wartime and Postwar,” in *Total War and “Modernization,”* ed. Yasushi Yamanouchi, J. Victor Koschmann, and Ryūichi Narita (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1998), 147.
 - 26 Barbara Molony, “Women’s Rights and the Japanese State, 1880–1925,” in *Public Spheres, Private Lives in Modern Japan, 1600–1950: Essays in Honor of Albert M. Craig*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein, Andrew Gordon, and Kate

- Wildman Nakai (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 258.
- 27 A good example of this is Yamakawa, *Onna nidai no ki*.
- 28 Maruoka Hideko, ed., *Nihon fujin mondai shiryō shūsei*, vol. 8: *Shichō 1* (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1976), 646, 653. Yamakawa Hitoshi was arrested in December 1937 and held in jail until his trial in 1941, at which time he was sentenced to five years in prison for violation of the Peace Preservation Law. See Richard H. Mitchell, *Janus-Faced Justice: Political Criminals in Imperial Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 147.
- 29 Saburō Ienaga, *The Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979). Ueno Chizuko has pointed to this roundtable as evidence of Yamakawa's wartime complicity in her *Nationalism and Gender* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2002), 39–40.
- 30 Yamakawa, "Kaihō no reimei ni tachite."
- 31 *Ibid.*, 212.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 221.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 223–224. Sugaya Naoko suggests that Ichikawa's insistence on the importance of vigorously mobilizing women's votes and preventing voter abstention and Yamakawa's equally strong appeal to the importance of fostering women's free will and critical powers regardless of whether this resulted in women's votes, animated political debates between these two important women's rights activists throughout the postwar period. See Sugaya Naoko, *Fukutsu no josei: Yamakawa Kikue no kōhansei* (Tokyo: Kaien Shobō, 1988), 13–14.