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The Women's Liberation Movement in 1970s Japan: A Critical Analysis of
Transnational Feminist Debates between Japan and the United States

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Abstract

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die japanische Frauenbefreiungsbewegung der 1970er Jahre, auch genannt *uman ribu*, im breiteren Rahmen internationaler feministischer Debatten, mit besonderem Fokus auf ihre Verbindung und Distanz zum US-amerikanischen Feminismus. Als Studie wird eine kritische historische Textanalyse auf Vorlage von Achim Landwehr verwendet, um Beiträge von fünf repräsentativen Aktivist*innen – Fusae Ichikawa, Sumiko Tanaka, Mitsu Tanaka, Misako Enoki und Michimi Amano – zur Entwicklung der Bewegung zu untersuchen. Die Analyse zielt darauf hinzu beantworten, wie Fragen des Geschlechts, des Körpers, der politischen Strategie und des transnationalen Engagements zur Entwicklung der Bewegung beigetragen haben.

Die Analyse zeigt, dass der Einfluss der USA, insbesondere während der Besetzungszeit nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg und durch die Verbreitung feministischer Literatur, zwar unbestreitbar bedeutend war, japanische Feministinnen jedoch nicht einfach ausländische Modelle übernahmen. Stattdessen wurde sich mit einer kritischen Neuinterpretation und Anpassung internationale Konzepte beschäftigt, welche an die eigenen kulturellen, politischen und sozialen Kontexte angepasst wurden. Mehrere Aktivist*innen, darunter Ichikawa und Sumiko Tanaka, verfolgten die Strategie, sich direkt in globale Netzwerke einzubringen. Gleichzeitig betonten radikalere Feminist*innen Amano und Mitsu Tanaka die Unabhängigkeit und lokal verwurzelte Formen des Widerstands.

Die Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass die japanische Frauenfreiheitsbewegung weder vollständig abgeleitet noch völlig autonom war, sondern vielmehr eine hybride Formation darstellte: global vernetzt und doch eindeutig einzigartig japanisch. Die Bewegung ist ein wichtiger Meilenstein in der Geschichte der japanischen Frauen und veranschaulicht die Ungleichmäßigkeit feministischer Kämpfe, die Vielfalt feministischer Stimmen und die fortwährende Auseinandersetzung zwischen internationalem Einfluss und lokaler Handlungsfähigkeit.

This thesis investigates the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s, *uman ribu*, within the broader framework of international feminist debates, with a particular focus on its entanglement with and distance from US feminism. This study utilizes a critical historical text analysis to examine the contributions of five representative activists – Fusae Ichikawa, Sumiko Tanaka, Mitsu Tanaka, Misako Enoki, and Michimi Amano – to the development of the movement. The analysis explores how questions of gender, the body, political strategy, and transnational engagement contributed to the movement's evolution.

The analysis demonstrates that while US influence, especially during the postwar occupation and through the circulation of feminist literature, was undeniably significant, Japanese feminists did not simply adopt foreign models. Instead, they engaged in a critical reinterpretation and adaptation of international concepts, aligning them with their own cultural, political, and social contexts. Several activists, including Ichikawa and Sumiko Tanaka, have adopted a strategy of establishing direct involvement within the context of global networks. Concurrently, more radical feminists, including Amano and Mitsu Tanaka, emphasized independence and locally rooted forms of resistance.

The findings suggest that the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement was neither fully derivative nor entirely autonomous but rather a hybrid formation: globally connected yet distinctly Japanese. The movement stands as a crucial marker in Japanese women's history, illustrating the unevenness of feminist struggles, the multiplicity of feminist voices, and the ongoing negotiation between international influence and local agency.

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1. Introduction

„Originally woman was the sun.” These words by Raicho Hiratsuka appear on the 1977 cover of the publication “A Short History of Women’s Movement in Modern Japan” by Tanaka Kazuko. With these words, Hiratsuka references the goddess Amaterasu, the first and most important deity of Shintoism, and from whom all other deities are said to descend.¹



Figure 7.1 Cover of Tanaka Kazuko's *A Short History of the Women's Movement in Modern Japan* (Tokyo: Femintern Press, 3rd edn, 1997, artist unknown)

Figure 1 Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 153.

In the said cover pictured above, a raised fist is visible in the middle of the rising sun, Japan's old national flag. The fist sits in the middle of the biological symbol for female embedded within the flag, signifying the rising influential power of women in Japan and women's liberation.

The history of feminist activism in Japan is extensive, with a rich tradition of activism that dates back many years. However, the rate has remained at a relatively low level. Subsequent to the 2017 #MeToo movement, a renewed discourse on feminism and women's rights emerged in Japan, triggered by the international media coverage of the Shiori Ito case. Shiori Ito is a journalist and author who, encouraged by the #MeToo movement, has decided to step forward

¹ Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan. Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality* (Cambridge 2003) 153.

and accuse famous Japanese TV journalist Yoriyuki Yamaguchi of sexual harassment and misconduct. While such stories are not unheard of in countries like the United States, in Japan, such a situation occurs rarely. Legal action against sexual abuse is infrequently taken, and few accusations are discussed in public. In Japan's legal system, a person can only be indicted for sexual abuse if there is proof of abuse or threatened violence. In Shiori Ito's case, as is frequently the situation, the victim was drunk and therefore not able to consent or defend herself. Additionally, she accused an incredibly famous person in Japan, which makes Ito's coming forward even more remarkable. Her civil fight has caused discussions about changes in the legal system so offenders can be indicted more efficiently.²

Shiori Ito was born in 1989 to a manual labor working father and a housewife mother in the countryside, an image not untypical for Japanese society. While in high school, she went overseas for an exchange to rural Kansas, U.S.A., where she was inspired by her need to learn about the world outside of Japan and the quenching of her thirst for information.³ Later, she went to university in Germany and Spain before returning to Marymount Manhattan College to major in photography and journalism. Her pro-American mother, as Ito describes her, had always encouraged her to explore more than other children.⁴ It was during her first internship back in Japan, she was sexually abused by Japanese journalist Noriyuki Yamaguchi. When she came forward with her sexual abuse case, Ito did what many Japanese women have been discouraged from doing: she fought for her voice to be heard. In her book "Black Box", Ito expounds on the arduous efforts she undertook to initiate an investigation into the case and the subsequent events that ensued. Following the dismissal of her case by the police and the resulting termination of legal proceedings, she offers insights into the internal struggle she had faced for two years following the incident.⁵ *"Why was I raped? There is no definite answer to this question. I have blamed myself, over and over. It's simply something that happened to me. And unfortunately, no one can change what happened,"*⁶ she writes on the first pages of her memoir. Reflecting the thoughts of many Japanese women who have experienced similar occurrences where nothing resulted from voicing the matter, Ito determines it as something that just had to be endured.

² Shiori Ito, *Black Box*. The Memoir that Sparked Japan's #MeToo Movement (New York 2021).

³ Ito, *Black Box*, 20.

⁴ Ito, *Black Box*, 12.

⁵ Ito, *Black Box*.

⁶ Ito, *Black Box*, 4.

A question prompted by Ito's book served as the impetus for my decision to draft my master's thesis about feminism in Japan: How is feminism represented and reflected by Japanese society?

I realized that these initial questions come from a very Eurocentric perspective and that these questions cannot be seen, nor can they be answered under Eurocentric pre-assumptions. Nevertheless, as the #MeToo movement in the US sparked activity in Japan, my extensive studies of Japan, and Global History and Global Studies have demonstrated that, particularly, Japan is a country that shows more influences from other countries than is often assumed. For instance, the writing system was imported from China. Concurrently, numerous elements of Japan's legal framework have been derived from the United Kingdom.⁷ This also includes the initial feminist movement, which emerged from the European suffrage activism of the late 19th century, that has since evolved into a global movement.

My initial questions turned into something bigger: Within all the different branches of Feminist Movements, which exist in Japan? And could they exist separated from the influence of the United States?

For a start, I went to the pages that are often looked down upon in the academic field but offer a great first start to explore a new research topic: Wikipedia. Comparing the Japanese and the English pages for "Feminism", I found that while the definitions are the same and the overall article overlaps, the Japanese page focuses a lot more on the Second Wave of Feminism⁸ than the English Page.⁹ I would soon come to find how influential the time of the 1960s and 1970s would become for Japanese feminism.

My research has led me to find significance in the relationship between the United States and Japan. Regarding feminist ideas, many were borrowed or brought in from America. I would come to intensify my understanding of terms such as *feminism*, *suffrage*, *feminist movement*, *women's movement*, and *women's liberation*, which are constantly intertwined and used as concepts in many aspects, but at the same time are uniquely defined. Especially when comparing the works from the two countries, I would often find the meanings used synonymously. The Japanese definitions would also be accompanied by a special syllable writing form reserved for foreign languages, called *katakana*. The 1970s Women's Liberation

⁷ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 180.

⁸ *Wikipedia Contributors*, フェミニズム. In: Wikipedia (June 3, 2025) <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/フェミニズム> (last accessed 21.08.2025).

⁹ *Wikipedia Contributors*, Feminism. In: Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia (August 18, 2025) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism> (last accessed 21.08.2025).

Movement in Japan, also called *uman ribu*, is one example. That they are written in this form suggests that the words were imported to be integrated into the Japanese language because of their growing importance. With ideas and words being transferred from the United States, this has led to another question in my head, which would come to finally lead this paper altogether: Would a Women's Liberation Movement in Japan exist without the US-occupation and Japan's geopolitical situation during the Cold War and its role in the Western hemisphere?

At this point, it is imperative to acknowledge that problematic terms cannot be avoided in this paper, as their past usage is part of historical fame. The issues associated with the terms "*the West*", "*Modern World*", "*First World*", and "*Third World*", which are frequently employed, are often not thoroughly examined or articulated in academic publications. These terms stem from a Eurocentric perspective, a subject that this work deliberately engages with, exploring its implications and offering critical insights. Nevertheless, there are instances in which these elements find their way into this thesis, as their pervasiveness in numerous contexts surrounding their utilization in sources renders this occurrence inevitable. Therefore, the utilization of the term "West" should always resonate with its Eurocentric connotations.

The paper will be organized as follows: First, it will examine the relevance and issues of the presented ideas, along with reasoning for why the 1970s are a significant and unique period for research on my topic. In chapter 1.2, the research questions will be outlined along with the expected outcomes of the analysis. Chapter two reviews existing research on the influence of the United States on the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement during the 1970s. Concluding this review, the research approach will be defined. The sources and planned analytical process are described in chapters 2.1 and 2.2. Chapter three discusses Japanese Women's Liberation efforts in six subchapters, covering history from the early Meiji era (1868-1912) through the 1970s. Chapter four analyses the appearance of feminist terms in the Japanese database *CiNii* through a frequency analysis. Chapter five presents the core of the paper, featuring a critical historical text analysis, with the findings summarized in chapter six.

1.1. Relevance and problems

Before deepening the topic on women's movements specifically, I am posing for definitions of the following terms: *feminist movement*, *women's movement* in general, and *women's liberation movement* in Europe/the U.S.A. and Japan.

A *Feminist Movement* describes a social movement that calls for equal rights and dignity between men and women. It has given rise to several different forms in practice and theoretical

thought, which is why the term *feminisms* is often favored. Embracing many feminist currents, *feminist movement* is an umbrella term for sub-movements.¹⁰

The *Women's Movement*, as described in the Encyclopedia of Global Studies, refers to “any form of organizing, mainly by women, for the purpose of bringing about social change in which gender justice constitutes a crucial part either as a goal in and of itself.”¹¹ This could for example be emancipation. As a sub-category of feminist movements, it is often used synonymously with *women's rights movement*, and a sub-form of feminist movements.¹²

The *Women's Rights Movement* plays a special role in US history, as it was an influential part of the Second Wave of Feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. It describes diverse social movements, largely in the United States, seeking equal rights, opportunities, and greater personal freedom for women. As it touched on every area of women's experience, it was considered a mainstream of the Second Wave.¹³

For *Women's Liberation*, Sara M. Evans proposes the following definition:

***Women's Liberation** (in the USA) was a radical, multiracial movement that grew directly out of the New Left, civil rights, antiwar, and related freedom movements of the 1960s. Its insight that “the personal is political,” its intentionally decentralized structure, and its consciousness raising method allowed it to grow so fast and with such intensity that it swept up liberal feminist organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) in a wildfire of change. After 1970 “women's liberation” was a label appropriated by a very wide variety of groups of women who may have had little or no connection to its originators.*¹⁴

For Japan, Chizuko Ueno provides a similar definition, describing *Women's Liberation*, in Japan also called *uman ribu*, as follows:

The Japanese Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), which heralded the second wave of feminism, was born on 21 October 1970 on the international anti-war day. [...] Born out of the ashes of the student power movements, which peaked in 1969, the first

¹⁰ Dale Southerton, Feminist Movement. In: Dale Southerton (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture 3 (Thousand Oaks, 2011) <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412994248.n225> (last accessed 02.08.2025) 602.

¹¹ Helmut K. Anheier, Mark Juergensmeyer, Women's Movement. In: Helmut K. Anheier, Mark Juergensmeyer (Eds.), Encyclopedia of Global Studies 4, (London 2012) <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452218557.n565> (last accessed 02.08.2025) 1793.

¹² The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, Women's Movement Summary. In: The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (Eds.), Encyclopedia Britannica, (Chicago 2003) <https://www.britannica.com/summary/womens-movement> (last accessed 02.08.2025).

¹³ Elinor Burkett, Women's Rights Movement. In: The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica, (Chicago 2025) <https://www.britannica.com/event/womens-movement> (last accessed 02.08.2025).

¹⁴ Sara M. Evans, Women's Liberation. Seeing the Revolution Clearly. In: Feminist Studies 41(1) (College Park 2015) 139.

*women's liberation activists emerged from the new left, led by women who were deeply disappointed with their male colleagues, who unfairly applied the sexual double standard where sexually active girls were called, and despised as "a public toilet."*¹⁵

A great difference in the Women's Liberation of the US and Japan lies in the centralization of the movement. While the US had national organizations, such as NOW, the same cannot be said about Japan. Chujo and Aizawa note that while, yes, for Japan, certain representatives such as Tanaka Mitsu can be extricated, leadership was "*diverse and less centralized.*"¹⁶ Moreover, *uman ribu* was comprised not only by radical women's movements, but also "*included various feminist movements that were quite widespread throughout Japanese society.*"¹⁷

As *uman ribu* paralleled many events in other countries, transnational linkages among radical feminist organizations were reestablished.¹⁸

Comparing these definitions, it can be concluded that the understandings of *feminism* up to *women's liberation* are somewhat similar. However, this creates a challenge for Japanese activists because their interpretation of the terms does not align with that of American feminisms. Japanese activists must continuously distance themselves from the "Western" ideas that are often viewed as the "correct form" or "the only existing form" and redefine their own identity to validate their movements and goals. If a common goal of "Western" feminism could be identified, it would involve moving away from the dominant patriarchy toward a society where both genders are equally represented, while also engaging and raising awareness among men about women's issues. From both non-Japanese activists' and Japanese individuals' perspectives, Japan is already seen as more feminine than other societies. To give an insight into this estimation: A notable difference in Japanese history is the prominent role women have played compared to their representation in European and American history. A large part of Japan's cultural heritage is rooted in women's contributions, exemplified by the "Tale of Genji", regarded as the earliest surviving psychological novel. Shintoism, the main religion of Japan, features the worship of a central female deity and promotes a doctrine advocating greater autonomy and self-determination for women regarding their bodies — a principle that contrasts with societal norms in Western societies. Men in Japan are also encouraged to participate in

¹⁵ Chizuko Ueno, *Feminisms in Japan since the Second Wave to the Present. Its History and Achievement*. In: Chizuko Ueno (Eds.), Jieyu Li, Junko Yamashita (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of East Asian Studies* 1 (Abingdon/ New York 2019) 75.

¹⁶ Chiharu Chujo, Nobuyo Aizawa, *Women's Movements in 1970s Japan. Transgression and Rejection*. In: Eileen Boris, Sandra Trudgen Dawson, Barbara Molony (Eds.), *Engendering Transnational Transgressions. From the Intimate to the Global* (Milton Park 2020). 134.

¹⁷ Chujo, Aizawa, *Women's Movements*, 134.

¹⁸ Molony, *Feminism in Japan*, 15.

traditionally feminine arts and ceremonies. The goal of this is to foster a societal culture that does not ostracize men for not meeting conventional standards of masculinity. Considering these interpretations, the focus on women's rights and societal visibility may be seen as less urgent than in other parts of the world. In Japan, many men and women do not see a pressing need for feminism, as the perception of Japan as a feminine society is enough to link it to equality or a fair societal relationship between the sexes. This issue has concerned Japanese activists since the 1980s.¹⁹ In Japan, feminism, understood as "equality in all aspects" is usually not defined as the ultimate goal. While there are similarities, it's important to recognize the differences.

During the first wave of women's movements in the 1910s and 1920s, the goal was suffrage and to better and more visibly include women in society, as well as achieve more protection for mothers. Equality in the understanding of Europe and the US was demanded in politics, alias the right to vote.²⁰ In the 1970s, more similarities can be drawn in the activity of the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement to represent international feminist ideas of the time. However, some organizations within the movement suggest deviation, commending the traditional and patriarchal character ingrained in Japanese women's demands. One thought called Household feminism, *sengyo-shufu*, encouraged Japanese housewives to be proud of their status as the managers of the household, welcoming traditional ideas of women staying in the house rather than working alongside men.²¹

The significance of the 1970s as the most influential years in Japanese women's history is again reflected in the way women's rights are being endorsed in Japanese society. The second week of April marks Women's Week in Japan, promoted by the Ministry of Labor. When Women's Week was first celebrated in 1946, following the launch of women's right to vote, the slogan was: "*From the home, from the workplace, abolish feudalism. Know our rights and responsibilities!*" The slogan changed in 1967 to "*Make good use of women's abilities.*" From 1975, the International Year of the Woman, to 1980, it was "*Promote equality between men and women and women's participation in society.*"²²

¹⁹ Chizuko Ueno, Are the Japanese Feminine?. In: Sandra Buckley, Broken Silence. Voices of Japanese Feminism (Berkeley 1997) 293-298.

²⁰ Sharon H. Nolte, Women's Rights and Society's Needs. Japan's 1931 Suffrage Bill. In: Comparative Studies in Society and History 28(4) (Cambridge 1986) 690-706.

²¹ Polina Lukyantseva, Feminism in Modern Japan. A Historical Review of Japanese Women's Issues on Gender. In: Journal of International Women's Studies 25(2) (Kyoto 2023) 9-10.

²² Yasuko Yamashita, Elisabeth A. Leicester, The International Movement Toward Gender Equality and Its Impact on Japan. In: U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement 5 (Honolulu 1993) 69.

From wanting women to be seen and included in society to seeking social equality and actively participating in society in a decade, a lot changed in the 1970s.

The changes reflect not only where the course of the Women's Liberation Movement was led in Japan, but it was also on par with international activism. The UN-decades, for example, also reflect the same approach and timeline. While the 1950s and 1960s concentrated on modernization and industrialization, the 1960s were declared the decade for (economic) development, and the 1970s focused on equality in many aspects. Here, the decade is again being declared as the decade of growth. But, this time, it is on human rights – 1973 to 1983 marks the decade against racism²³, and from 1976 until 1985, the decade of women.²⁴ When 1975 was declared the International Year of the Woman²⁵, this also intensified the Women's Liberation Movement in Japan, as more women began to participate in the movement. Globalization and outside influences, therefore, present a necessary aspect and must be considered when looking at the topic of this thesis.

1.2. Research Questions

The previous exploration of the subject has shown that similarities between Japan and especially the US exist, and that Japan has taken on inspiration from the US as well. The struggle lies in the redefinition of Japanese feminism and the legitimization of a genuine Japanese feminist movement, where *uman ribu* serves as a prime example of the dilemma. A discrepancy exists not only among international academics but also among Japanese activists. The question prevails on how much influence the United States can be allotted to have impacted the issue.

The Women's Liberation Movement, the Women's Movement, and the Feminist Movement are extremely entangled in both 1970s U.S.A. and Japan. For both, the Feminist Movement

²³ *The General Assembly of the United Nations*, (XXVII). Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. In: *The General Assembly of the United Nations*, General Assembly. Twenty-seventh Session (2085th plenary meeting, 15.11.1972) [https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/2919\(XXVII\)?_gl=1*20rzlb*_ga*OTM3NjEyNjcZLjE3NTU3ODcwMzA.*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*czE3NTU3ODcwMjkkbzEkZzEkdDE3NTU3ODc2NDkajYwJGwwJGgw](https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/2919(XXVII)?_gl=1*20rzlb*_ga*OTM3NjEyNjcZLjE3NTU3ODcwMzA.*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*czE3NTU3ODcwMjkkbzEkZzEkdDE3NTU3ODc2NDkajYwJGwwJGgw) (last accessed 21.08.2025) 62.

²⁴ *The General Assembly of the United Nations*, (XXX). Women's Participation in the Strengthening of International Peace and Security and in the struggle against Colonialism, Racism, Racial Discrimination, Foreign Aggression and Occupation in all Forms of Foreign Domination. In: *The General Assembly of the United Nations*, General Assembly. Thirtieth Session (2441st plenary meeting, 15.12.1975) [https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/3520\(XXX\)?_gl=1*1sjyi0v*_ga*OTM3NjEyNjcZLjE3NTU3ODcwMzA.*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*czE3NTU3ODcwMjkkbzEkZzEkdDE3NTU3ODgxMDlkajU2JGwwJGgw](https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/3520(XXX)?_gl=1*1sjyi0v*_ga*OTM3NjEyNjcZLjE3NTU3ODcwMzA.*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*czE3NTU3ODcwMjkkbzEkZzEkdDE3NTU3ODgxMDlkajU2JGwwJGgw) (last accessed 21.08.2025) 94.

²⁵ Hans G. Petersmann, Hildegard Wolfrum, Das Internationale Frauenjahr der Vereinten Nationen. In: Vereinte Nationen 3 (Koblenz 01.04.1975) <https://zeitschrift-vereinte-nationen.de/suche/zvn/artikel/das-internationale-frauenjahr-der-vereinten-nationen> (last accessed 21.08.2025) 68-73.

encompasses all women's rights efforts, differentiating between the more liberal Women's Movements and the more radical Women's Liberation Movement. What is different for Japan is the need to distance itself from the prevailing global understanding of feminism to legitimize the *uman ribu* movement as necessary.

The relevance of these problems has led to the following research questions:

1. Does a genuine Japanese Women's Liberation Movement exist without the influence of the U.S.A.?
2. To what extent is the Movement linked to the international debate, and how not?

The present study proposes the hypothesis that prominent figures in the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement have frequently drawn inspiration from the US Women's Liberation Movement, thereby contributing to the shaping of the Japanese movement in a corresponding manner. The aforementioned factors encompassed enhanced access to international sources and research opportunities, consequently facilitating a more seamless integration into the global context. Moreover, the individuals frequently utilized English, aiding the dissemination of ideas to Japan and ensuring their accessibility. This, in turn, again enabled a profound reflection on their individual feminist positions. In comparison, this paper hypothesizes that feminist representatives residing exclusively in Japan hold views that differ from those of the movement's travelers. This is due to the limited exposure of the individuals to international sources.

2. State of research and research method

This topic presents itself to be quite new in academic analysis. Hence, useful reference works in the specific timeframe of the paper are rare but appreciated. Secondary literature cited in this thesis is consequently situated after 1979. Especially since the 2000s, overall interest in the topic in and outside of Japan has increased due to Japan's growing challenge with globalization, and thus, Japanese scholars have also been more likely to intervene in internationally discussed academic topics. Discussions on equality and women's rights faced tied and contested approaches within the feminist debate. That allowed the discourse to intensify. In 1990, Judith Butler first introduced her concept of the performativity of gender due to societal norms and a hidden agenda. She questioned why women are seen as more submissive, gentle, and emotional while men are viewed as strong, protective, and aggressive. The conclusion was that these traits were not internally present, but it was society that reaffirmed the traits continually up to the point that they were considered "normal" and were no longer questioned. Gender, so Butler

argues, is being performed.²⁶ This revolutionary finding serves as an inspiration for the thesis at hand. In a group-centered society characterized by heightened pressure to perform, Japanese women face an exacerbated degree of this pressure due to the cultural emphasis on performativity. This could be a contributing factor to the delayed introduction of feminist concepts. The term “group-centered” refers to a collectivist culture that prioritizes the collective needs and objectives of the group over those of individuals. In comparison to the individualistic identity formation of the United States, Japanese identity is characterized by a greater emphasis on interconnectedness and acceptance within the group.

On the specific topic of this paper, multiple people have been studying the connection of the Women’s Liberation Movement to the influence of the U.S.A. and the possibility of a transferred movement.

The debate starts with the exploration of the popularized name *uman ribu*, signifying the turbulent and impactful 1970s in Japan. Shigematsu argues that there were existing Japanese terms for the movement, such as *josei kaiho* and *fujin kaiho*, but that leading Japanese figures adopted the name from the American term as a marker of solidarity with other liberation movements. Additionally, coining the English term meant showing the “*desire to be a part of a broader range of liberation movements that extended beyond Japan.*”²⁷ Shigematsu further adds that *uman ribu* represents a field of praxis for *critical transnational feminism*. *Uman ribu* and *Japanese feminism*, two subjects that must be separated in this conversation, can be argued to be placed within *transnational feminism*. This is a critical response to Western cultural imperialism and represents feminist ideas of women of color, third-world feminism, and postcolonial feminism. For example, Shigematsu presents the argument of *uman ribu* figure Tanaka Mitsu, who criticized the universalization of liberal feminism, the prevalent form in the United States of the 1960s and 1970s, as feminism. Shigematsu sees a clear difference in power dynamics among feminists that puts Japanese feminism under Euro-American feminism. She places this hierarchy into relation with already existing debates about white and queer/ feminism of color. She also cites her book “Scream from the Shadows. The Women’s Liberation Movement in Japan”, where she criticizes the frequent positioning of women as victims of the patriarchy, rather than viewing them from a different point as self-determined actors.²⁸

²⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York/ London 1999).

²⁷ Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows*, 206.

²⁸ Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows*, 207-220.

In her thesis “The American Impact on the Evolution of the Japanese Women’s Rights Movement” Caitlin Tripp writes about the Japanese Feminist Movement before and after the Second World War to gain information about US-American influence. As a source, she uses stories, articles, and theses from Japanese activists from the 20th century until 2018. Tripp explains in detail the American influence before the war based on travels to the United States, which Japanese suffragettes like Ichikawa Fusae continued. Through this, the possibility of building a new environment for forming connections between activists of both countries was made available, which also meant building and following the same goals. Following the U.S.-American example, goals were brought to Japan, and a network of activists who were active in the same current of feminism was formed. Tripp situates this as “indirect influence”. She only sees “direct influence” in the events following 1945 when the American occupation took on to change the lives and rights of Japanese women. Article 24 of the Douglas MacArthur Constitution gave women the right to freedom in marriage.²⁹ MacArthur (1880-1964), the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers and effective ruler of Japan, saw the American ideology as superior and wanted to bring Japan, which he saw as his student, into the “modern times”, which he defined as those of the US. Japanese women were not “*fully realized people*”³⁰ and needed to be saved in the eyes of the American occupation. In this instance, Tripp sees a clear example of the widely popularized image of “Western superiority and non-Western inferiority.” She does not clearly define what she means by *Western*. The efforts of Japanese women in the pre-1945 are seen as non-existent by the American occupation, so Tripp.³¹ Akin to the paper at hand, Tripp sees the 1970s as a crucial time in the advances of the Japanese Feminist Movement. The “New Movement”, also called and popularized “Women’s Lib” (*uman libu*), while in the beginning first wanted to consolidate itself with other liberation movements, soon found the need to distance itself from the American movement not only in perspective but also in language. This was following the negative media attention and social perception the American occupation got in Japan. Names like Matsui Yayori and Chizuko Ueno tried continuously to legitimize and implement a Japanese movement.³² Ueno, who is a popular Japanese sociologist and feminist activist of the 1980s, summarizes the history of the

²⁹ Caitlin Tripp, *The American Impact on the Evolution of the Japanese Women’s Rights Movement* (Undergraduate Honors Theses East Tennessee State University 2018) 1-15.

³⁰ Tripp, *The American Impact*, 15.

³¹ Tripp, *The American Impact*, 15-16.

³² Tripp, *The American Impact*, 15-21.

Japanese Feminist Movement in the following words: “*Feminism did exist, has existed, and will exist in Japan.*”³³

Abe explores the change of Japanese women’s language thoroughly through a sociolinguistic approach, where he identifies how Japanese women’s speech is constructed and when and how often it is used in comparison to men. The first and one of the strongest examples of the building of women’s speech is the Japanese word for husband. *Shujin* directly translates to “*master*”, linguistically already establishing a hierarchy between men and women. While in recent times Japanese feminists have been rebuilding their language by avoiding degrading language and reclaiming words previously used in a negative sense, Japanese women’s language serves as one of the most important indicators for identifying their status. While the exploration of “women’s speech” has existed in Japan since 1200, only recently has it become a major concern in women’s studies and the women’s liberation movement, starting to flourish in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁴ An example of reclaiming words can be found in the literature regarding the women’s liberation movement, where the previously negatively connotated word *onna* meaning “*woman*” was reclaimed by feminists and encouraged to use.³⁵ Yoko Tawada also explores this subject in great detail, listing several studies on Japanese women’s speech.³⁶ One example is Hijiya-Kirschner, who argued in the 1980s that Japanese was a language “*where every male speaker and every female speaker is always aware of the gender-specific differences in language use.*” (*in der jeder Sprecher und jede Sprecherin sich der geschlechtsabhängigen Unterschiede im Sprachgebrauch jederzeit bewusst sind.*)³⁷ Ueno Chizuko claims that she has mastered two different Japanese languages: women’s speech, which she uses with women, and men’s speech when talking to men. In this regard, she understands herself as a coordinator of two distinct cultures.³⁸ The lower status of women can thus still be felt in the everyday language of the 1970s and 1980s. Hijiya-Kirschner argues that many Japanese women feel that they are not being taken seriously, but that they only defend themselves indirectly.³⁹

³³ Chizuko Ueno, *The Making of a History of Feminism in Japan*. In: *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 2 (Seoul 1996) 172. Cit. by: Tripp, *The American Impact*, 22.

³⁴ Hideko Nornes Abe, *From Stereotype to Context. The Study of Japanese Women’s Speech*. In: *Feminist Studies* 21(3) (College Park 1995) 647-653.

³⁵ Watanabe, *Japanese Women’s Studies*, 76.

³⁶ Yoko Tawada, *Das „Ende der Exotik“ – Fortsetzung der Mißverständnisse*. In: *Feministische Studien* 9(2) (Stuttgart 1991).

³⁷ Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner, *Das Ende der Exotik* (Frankfurt 1998) 29. Cit. by: Tawada, *Das „Ende der Exotik“*, 98.

³⁸ Chizuko Ueno, Chizuru Miyasako, *Polymorphous Perversion. Dialogue* (Tsurutsuru-taisan. Takei-tosaku) (Tokyo 1985) 91. Cit. by: Tawada, *Das „Ende der Exotik“*, 100.

³⁹ Hijiya-Kirschner, *Das Ende der Exotik*, 115. Cit. by: Tawada, *Das „Ende der Exotik“*, 102.

In her book *Feminism in Modern Japan*, Vera Mackie discusses another important factor: Japan in the context of colonialism. Mackie writes about the feminist consciousness in Japan, which strongly comes from the background of a country on the road to modernization. In this instance, she speaks about a special case of colonial modernity, which comes from the Japanese identity as an imperial subject.⁴⁰

Shigematsu continues this thought with the conclusion that Japanese imperialism came to be the answer to “Western” imperialism and therefore can be seen as a hybrid form of modernity in the global context in which “racialized national-imperialisms”⁴¹ fight against each other. *Race*, in this case, is allotted as a global component in a hierarchical structure. This element of race can be viewed and interpreted in two ways: On one hand, as a question of optical view, for instance, skin color, and on the other hand, as a question of explanation of national power and world status. Japan, as a global economic power established in the 1960s, reached the status of a “first-world nation”, which put it on the same pedestal as the “West.” Similar to *White Feminism*⁴², a direction of feminism that focuses on women of the main island, can be observed to be given more attention than those that also regard the rights of minorities, smaller islands, and colonies. Since the 1970s, there have been efforts to also show solidarity to the former colonies and to establish a *Pan-Asian Feminism*.⁴³

The importance of debates has not gone unnoticed. First and foremost, it must be stated that Japan, while ranking very high in the international *Human Development Rank*, finds itself close to the bottom in the *Gender Equality Index*. This discrepancy is very unusual for modern democratic countries. Ayako Kano gives debates a crucial role in this incident. Japan is not a country where one publicly disagrees with an opinion. Its society is still very conservative, private, and patriarchal. The meaning of debate in Japanese is *ronso* (論争), put together from the two words *discussion* and *confrontation*. *Ronso* is not a word frequently encountered in common parlance; rather, it is a word that persists in written form and is almost exclusively employed in academic writing. In the context of feminist debates, the 1960s and 1970s were essential because in this era of mass communication, the focus shifted towards so-called *mini communications*, which entailed the circulation of smaller publications within more exclusive

⁴⁰ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 2-3.

⁴¹ Setsu Shigematsu, *Rethinking Japanese Feminism and the Lessons of Uman ribu. Toward a Praxis of Critical Transnational Feminism*. In: Julia C. Bullock, Ayako Kano, James Welker (Eds.), *Rethinking Japanese Feminism* (Honolulu 2017) 213.

⁴² Meaning intersectionality in feminism, which still prefers rights to white feminists, as opposing to feminism of all colours. Another stream of feminism of colour was made, which focuses on the differences between white and women of colour and the discrepancies.

⁴³ Shigematsu, *Rethinking Japanese Feminism*, 213-219.

audiences. This period was particularly significant to the development of female consciousness, as it facilitated access to a community of female authors and readers who discussed themes in a more private and familiar context. The majority of extant journals come from this period of the 1970s. Due to the restricted circulation of these media, bubbles of activists emerged, who fostered interaction and collaboration among each other.⁴⁴

Japanese activists saw many similarities with the U.S.A. and wanted to contact American activist groups. Many of the small communities used mass media to talk to one another, as was the case with the Japanese anti-Vietnam War student movement, where an organization published an article in the New York Times in 1965.⁴⁵ As the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement gained a lot of influence from the movements of the U.S.A., the first publications in the movement were collections of translated documents from the US-American movement. Continuing over the years, direct translations of English texts were not a rarity in Japanese feminist activism. Conversing over media acquired not only the purpose of bringing European and US-American ideas to Japan. It also served the global dialogue in which Japanese feminists wished to be included. The press "Femintern" for example, set their goal on dismantling misinformation and aiming to bring knowledge about Japan, which was already exponentially exposed to the global world, to the West.⁴⁶

Chizuko Ueno offers an insight into the way Japan's women's history can be included in the discourse about the global First and Second Waves of feminism and the definition of feminism:

I define feminism by the following two criteria: first it should be a women's autonomous movement and second it needs to challenge gender roles. According to these definitions the categorisation of first- and second-wave feminism makes sense, because women-only movements are not necessarily feminist. For example, during the time between the first and second waves of feminism, Japan saw the largest women's movement in its history, organising ten million women to mobilise them for the total war. Women were mobilised in the name of mothers and wives of the imperial soldiers and were required to fight on the home front as soldiers in the population war.⁴⁷

Ehara Yumiko specifically defines the 1970s in Japan as an era of change, not only in social, but academic contexts as well. Ehara explains that for Japan, the 1970s meant the Women's

⁴⁴ Ayako Kano, *Japanese Feminist Debates, A Century of Contention on Sex, Love, and Labor* (Honolulu 2017) 5-18.

⁴⁵ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 147-149.

⁴⁶ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 152-153.

⁴⁷ Ueno, *Feminisms in Japan*, 76.

Liberation Movement, and the discussions circulating became institutionalized. What in the beginning started as a movement gradually shifted to institutions, from activists to scholars, and from a limited circle of debates in the form of newsletters to mainstream journalism in mass media. Until 1972, only a few articles were published about women's efforts, and mostly translations from American and European works on feminism occupied the published materials. Ehara marks 1978 as⁴⁸ *"the beginning of a large-scale women's studies in Japan, with its foundations lying in the International Year of the Woman."*⁴⁹ Laws were evaluated, women active in politics and administration increased and scholars became involved. What is interesting in the findings of Ehara is a re-evaluation of the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement itself. Japanese women's studies were influenced by the movement in the sense that the negative impact it had on women's issues was explored. The earlier movement of the 1920s was therefore rejected and replaced with ideas that related to the way of living. This step was important, as the rejected movement was replaced by ideas coming from US-American and European movements, as Ehara argues.⁵⁰ In this sense, as Ehara explains, *"The use of the feminist ideas of other developed countries to restructure Japanese feminism can explain the emergence of women's studies in Japan."*⁵¹

Khor, for example, shares the view of many scholars that the International Women's Year of 1975 marked a turning point for feminist activity in Japan.⁵² She also sees some influences in the many translations of American literature, particularly the Boston Women's Health Book Collective's *"Our Bodies, Our Selves"*, which has sparked ideas in the movement to argue for a better understanding of women's bodies.⁵³ Matsui goes as far as giving the translation of this book abundantly the reason for opening Japanese women's eyes to their oppression and expanding the movements in urban areas throughout Japan: *"Women's right to control their bodies was now a prerequisite for their self-determination."*⁵⁴ Matsui argues with the words of

⁴⁸ Yumiko Ehara (Au.), Yanagida Eino, Paula Long (Trs.), Japanese Feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. In: U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement 4 (Honolulu 1993) 49-51.

⁴⁹ Takako Shirai, Scholarly Trends of Women's Studies (*Joseigaku no Kenkyuu Dōkō*). In: Atsushi Shirai, Takako Shirai (Eds.), Papers on Women's Liberation (*Josei Kaihōron Shuu*) (Tokyo 1981) 117-128. Cit. by: Ehara, Japanese Feminism, 51.

⁵⁰ Ehara, Eino, Long, Japanese Feminism, 51-53.

⁵¹ Ehara, Eino, Long, Japanese Feminism, 53.

⁵² Diana Khor, Organizing for Change. Women's Grassroots Activism in Japan. In: Feminist Studies 25(3) (College Park 1999) 643; See also: Tomomi Yamaguchi, "Gender Free" Feminism in Japan. A Story of Mainstreaming and Backlash. In: Feminist Studies 49(3) (College Park 2014) 543-544; Yamashita, Leicester, The International Movement, 73.

⁵³ Khor, Organizing for Change, 643.

⁵⁴ Machiko Matsui, Evolution of the Feminist Movement in Japan. In: NWSA Journal 2(3) (Baltimore 1990) 438.

popular *uman ribu* figure Mitsu Tanaka, who stated: “*Women’s Liberation should be fought as liberation of our own eros.*”⁵⁵ In this respect, Matsui positions the Japanese Women’s Liberation Movement as the daughter of the first movement in the 1910s and 1920s rather than that of an American Movement, as the issues of women’s expression and sexuality once again surfaced.⁵⁶ Another American idea that has found its way into the Japanese movement is *feminist criticism*, which emphasizes the rediscovery of reevaluation of women’s literature. Kitada and Lippit highlight the rapid translations of US-American feminist criticism publications in Japan and the following interest in developing Japanese feminist criticism. This happened in the 1970s and early 1980s when the basic framework was presented by Mizuta Noriko and Komashaku Kimi. Kitada and Lippit further argue the distinct ideology the Japanese feminist criticism shows. It is a response to European and American criticism, participating in the spread of the international feminist movement.⁵⁷ Watanabe argues that 1978 was another influential year with the Conference on International Women’s Studies held in Tokyo. At this event, 100 Japanese were exposed to and stimulated by women’s studies by guests from the United States, Australia, Canada, and India. As the focus of the conference was to draw a line between women’s liberation activism and women’s studies, a wall between women who decided on one side began to grow in Japan. In the 1990s, interestingly, one topic of research became the 1970s Japanese Women’s Liberation Movement. It became an example of trying to theorize radical feminism by tracing its history and linking it to contemporary feminism. This allowed researchers to view the 1970s *uman ribu* groups as a prototype of *Indigenous Feminism* that was born in Japan before the influences from the U.S.A.⁵⁸ Yamashita and Leicester argue about international influences in general, saying that Japan was pressured to meet global standards and thus enforced a larger focus on women.⁵⁹ Starting from the UN-decade for women, Yamashita states that the goal of the United Nations was “*to develop a principle of international equality that incorporates a vision of gender equality into the international subjugation of poverty.*”⁶⁰

Khor adds that, in general, while some international ideas have been incorporated into the Japanese Women’s Liberation Movement, it cannot be argued that the movement itself

⁵⁵ Matsui, *Evolution of the Feminist Movement*, 436.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Sachie Kitada, Miya E.M. Lippit, *Contemporary Japanese Feminist Literary Criticism*. In: U.S.-Japan Women’s Journal. English Supplement 7 (Honolulu 1994) 78-86.

⁵⁸ Kazuko Watanabe, *Japanese Women’s Studies*. In: *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 22(3/4) (New York 1994) 76-77.

⁵⁹ Yamashita, Leicester, *The International Movement*, 77-80.

⁶⁰ Yamashita, Leicester, *The International Movement*, 77.

originates from the influence of another country.⁶¹ Sandra Buckley also adds in the conclusion of her interview with many Japanese feminists that the Japanese and US-American movements “*happened at the same time, but without direct contact with the beginnings of American feminism.*”⁶² In an interview with Japanese feminist Aoki Yayoi, Yayoi adds, that:

*This all (initial Anti-Vietnam and Anti-Child Prostitution movement that turned into suffrage movement) happened quite independently of the English or American movements of the same period. Over the ensuing years I think Japanese feminists have learned a lot from Western feminists, but I don't think they have imitated them. Even the second wave [...], although it took on the name of 'women's liberation' and was accused in the mass media of copying American women, in fact had its own quite distinct origins in Japan.*⁶³

Saitô Chiyo argues the unfairness of claiming the influence of foreign movements on the movement in general, saying: “*Information about feminism can [...] both be exported and imported, and this trade may influence the various local feminisms. However, it is not so simple for a foreign feminism to take root as the basic ideology of a movement in another country.*”⁶⁴

Chizuko Ueno argues differently, stating that the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement had more in common with European counterparts than those of the United States, as the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement rose out of student protests with the influence of New Left thinking. In the beginning, activists had even tried to distance themselves from the US movement with characterizations by the mass media. Still, after only a year, the name *uman ribu* was also claimed for the Japanese movement.⁶⁵ Betty Friedan's work “The Feminine Mystique” had been translated into Japanese right after the book's release. Friedan argued that women lacked opportunities to gain power in society, focusing on their dissatisfaction with traditional roles. Her work highlighted the need for women to seek independence and fulfillment beyond motherhood and homemaking. Ueno argues that ten years after the book's release, Japanese women reached a similar situation to American women and understood Friedan's claims. Nevertheless, matching the verdicts of previously named scholars, Ueno argues that the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement was not a Western import as it had its own cause, context, and debates.⁶⁶ On the argument of adaptation, Ueno states that “*the*

⁶¹ Khor, *Organizing for Change*, 643.

⁶² Saitô Chiyo, What is Japanese Feminism? In: *Buckley, Broken Silence*, 257.

⁶³ Aoki Yayoi, Sandra Buckley, Interview. In: *Buckley, Broken Silence*, 11.

⁶⁴ Chiyo, What is Japanese Feminism? In: *Buckley, Broken Silence*, 257.

⁶⁵ Ueno, *Feminisms in Japan*, 75.

⁶⁶ Ueno, *Feminisms in Japan*, 77.

*second wave of feminism was a common product of industrialization in most advanced societies”.*⁶⁷

In her paper about grassroots activism in Japan, Khor argues that the value of learning about Japanese feminism lies in the realization that research is not to show that feminism in non-Euro-American countries *also* exists outside and compare it. Rather, we must look at the different forms of feminism not as superior or inferior but as a chance to broaden our perspective on feminism and global cooperation.⁶⁸

Ueno cites Jun Eto, who argues that:

*Women’s desire to “catch up” with modernization is epitomized by Tokiko’s hidden desire to catch up with her husband, the cause of her frustration. [...] Since the United States symbolize this “modern world”, Tokiko will never be truly able to tolerate her husband, for when he had a chance to study abroad he went there by himself, leaving her and the children at home.*⁶⁹

In the 1970s, according to Ueno, Japanese women began questioning the dilemma of wanting to catch up with the modern world’s lifestyle versus fulfilling duties as assigned to an idealized Japanese womanhood. Japanese feminism rejects this predicament, but not by putting the focus on women’s emotions, the subjects of the dilemma, but on patriarchy that had set the base for creating the predicament in the first place.⁷⁰

In search of the relevance of comparing the U.S.A. and Japan in women’s liberation aspects, other studies have explored a different niche. Sugihara and Katsuda, for example, have looked at the gender roles developed in Japanese culture, comparing the gender values of Japan in feudal times and the United States in the 1970s. Their results have shown that, against popular opinion, the countries believed to be modern, like in Europe or North America, also show limitations or even present a variety of gender ideals throughout history. Feudal European women for example were seen as weak and powerless, whereas Japanese women, while still subordinate to men, had rights to inherit property and were expected to show the same bravery and loyalty to their country as men. Japanese men on the other hand were also deemed to be taught in cultural arts elsewhere reserved for women. In the 1970s, Sugihara and Katsuda noted

⁶⁷ Ueno, *Feminisms in Japan*, 77.

⁶⁸ Khor, *Organizing for Change*, 656.

⁶⁹ Jun Eto, *Maturity and Loss. Collapse of “Mothers” (Seijuku to Soshitu. Haha no Hokai)* (Tokyo 1993) 64. Cit. by: Chizuko Ueno, *Collapse of “Japanese Mothers”*. In: *U.S.-Japan Women’s Journal. English Supplement* 10 (Honolulu 1996) 10.

⁷⁰ Ueno, *Collapse*, 10-15.

that in terms of occupations, gender differences began to fade throughout the decade, coming to a halt in the late 1970s and 1980s, further showing how influential this period was.⁷¹

One crucial point in which the movements of the US and Japan differ strongly is abortion rights. In the 1970s U.S.A., two fractions had formed: that of *pro-choice* and that of *pro-life*. *Choice*, so Ueno, translated in both North America and France to *abortion rights*. In Japan, on the other hand, *choice* meant both the *right to give birth* and the *right not to give birth*. Motherhood had never been rejected in Japan. The difference, on one hand, lies in religion and, on the other, in the cultural context of Japanese Eugenic Laws. In this regard, Ueno also returns to the argument of Japan's similarities to European movements, including the glorification of motherhood.⁷² This also influenced feelings about the contraceptives, which were not approved in Japan in the 1970s. As early as the 1960s, members of the Osaka Women's Group already claimed that while the pill was used in the United States for women to enjoy sex and avoid unwanted pregnancy, in Japan, women feared it would be used to pressure them into satisfying male desires. Coupled with the distrust of the Japanese pharmaceutical industry due to past scandals, Japanese women's activists took a clear stance against the pill.⁷³

In conclusion, many papers claim full influence from the American movement, some involvement in the development of ideas, and there are also papers that see no correlation at all. The goal here is to contribute to the discourse by delving into answers from Japanese representative figures.

2.1. Method

In a first step, a frequency analysis will help to introduce the different vocabularies and underline how they are used and when they first appeared in Japan. This will be done by narrowing down the timeline from 1700 to 1979, reflecting the period researched in the paper at hand. Using a frequency analysis in addition to the main analysis will offer an insight into the general appearance of feminist vocabulary in the Japanese academic context. It will help to show when and if translations exist, and show when the exploration of the different feminist words was at a high and low in Japan. The findings of this analysis will be bound to the historical context and emphasize it accordingly.

⁷¹ Yoko Sugihara, Emiko Katsurada, Gender Role Development in Japanese Culture. Diminishing Gender Role Differences in a Contemporary Society. In: Sex Roles 47(9/19) (New York 2002) 443-444.

⁷² Chizuko Ueno, Angela Turzynski, "Reproductive Rights/Health" and Japanese Feminism. In: Review of Japanese Culture and Society 9 (Honolulu 1997) 80-84.

⁷³ Analía Vitale, The Unpopular Contraceptive Pill. Birth Control and Gender in the Japanese Press. In: U.S.-Japan Women's Journal 29 (Honolulu 2005) 66-68.

As a method, the critical historical text analysis has been chosen for the main analysis. Achim Landwehr offered in his book the necessary introduction to the method, where the necessity of crafting a corpus of materials and later categorical division of said materials is highlighted. In this thesis, the division will follow two parts: In the first part, the individuals will be divided by thematic grouping of their feminist current. Here, the profiles of the women will be highlighted, which is a necessary step for the second part. The second part is a comparative analysis across the key dimensions “political strategies and relationship to power”, “gender and the body”, “engagement with international feminism/ US-feminism”, and “view of the women’s liberation movement in Japan.” Within these subchapters, the women will be explored in the same order as their thematic grouping, ensuring a direct correlation of their feminist thought to the key dimensions. A more detailed explanation of the framework will be offered in Chapter five.

2.2. Sources

For sources, I will use both internet sources for the frequency analysis, as well as primary and secondary sources in the main text analysis. The materials will include texts in English as well as Japanese. Because of the scarcity of materials, research in this niche has led to exploring multiple databases and archives.

Applied keywords were “feminist movement”, “women’s movement”, “feminism”, “women’s liberation”, “suffrage”, “uman ribu”, and “woman”, together with the timeframe of 1970 to 1979. Data banks like *JSTOR*, *Proquest*, *Cinii*, feminist libraries, archives, and newspaper archives have been sourced.

For the frequency analysis, I base my research and findings solely on the Japanese database *CiNii*, the biggest database used for academic publications in Japan. Further reasoning for choosing *CiNii* is explained in Chapter four.

After researching and reading materials by numerous people from the United States and Japan, that could be used to craft a material corpus for the text analysis, I had to limit those to five individuals from Japan. The reasoning behind this was the limit of possibilities for an analysis, considering the insufficiency of materials some individuals offer, which would not be informative enough. The five women chosen are representatives of specific feminist currents, sufficiently crucial in and outside of Japan to have enough texts, interviews, and other writings published from and about them.

As materials are still scarce, I had to use both primary and secondary sources to ensure a quality analysis. I have acquired autobiographies from three women as well as interviews for primary sources.

For Fusae Ichikawa, her autobiography “The Autobiography of Fusae Ichikawa. The Pre-War Period (*Ichikawa Fusae Jiden-senzen hen*)” is included. Additionally, two interviews by Yoko Nuita and DeAnn Vavich conclude the sources on Ichikawa.

Sumiko Tanaka has published two books useful for this analysis. One is called “Images of Women in Modern Japan. To Live for Tomorrow (*Kindai Nihon no Jiseizo. Asu o Ikiru tame ni*)”, and the other is called “Women’s Liberation Thoughts and Actions (*Josei Kaiho no Shiso to Kodo*).” A Speech by her on the formation of the *Woman Action Group* concludes these sources.

For Mitsu Tanaka, the books “For my Spiritual Sisters (*Inochi no Onnatachi e*)” and “Liberation from the Toilet” have been analyzed. Setsu Shigematsu translated three important texts and speeches by Tanaka in her dissertation, called “Declaration of the Liberation of Eros”, “Why Sexual Liberation” and “Part Five: The New Left and Ribu: ‘Hara-Kiri and Junshi’ from ‘Towards a Living Womanhood: A Disorderly Theory of Woman’s Liberation’ (*Inochi no Onna-tachi e: Torimidashi Uman Ribu-ron*).”

Michimi Amano has been interviewed by Lucy Leu and Bill Moyers. She has also published the article “Lesbianism in Japan” in the journal “Lesbian Connection.”

Misako Enoki also offers an interview with Andrew M. Malcolm and with the Japanese women’s journal “Agora Mini.” Part of her works have also been included in the work “Endgendering Transnational Transgressions. From the Intimate to the Global” by Eileen Boris, Sandra Trudgen, and Barbara Molony.

Further secondary sources that comment on the lives of the women and direct experiences with them are used to round up the analysis.

3. Historical and International Context of Japanese Women’s Liberation

This chapter situates the Japanese Women’s Liberation Movement of the 1970s within its historical and international context. Japanese feminism developed out of earlier struggles for rights in the prewar era, was reshaped by the American Occupation’s legal reforms, and adapted to the challenges of postwar modernization. At the same time, it was influenced by

global currents, U.S. suffragist models, the democratizing agenda of the occupation, and the circulation of Western feminist texts in the 1960s and 1970s.

The chapter traces this trajectory from prewar activism and wartime suppression, through postwar reforms and social movements, to the international debates that influenced modern Japanese feminist thought. By combining domestic history with transnational influences, this chapter highlights the hybrid conditions from which *uman ribu* emerged. These conditions are essential for understanding the diverse feminist perspectives analyzed in the chapters that follow.

3.1. Women in the Prewar Period and Early Feminist Activism

The status of women in Japan can be understood through the lens of the state's recognition of women's rights within the family unit. A close examination of the evolving family structure reveals three distinct phases. The initial phase, spanning from the *pre-Meiji* era to the *Meiji* period, is characterized by an ultra-patriarchal system. The subsequent phase, extending from the Meiji period to the *Showa* era, is marked by the *ie*-system. The final phase, beginning in 1946, is typified by the rise of the "modern" nuclear family.⁷⁴

Before the Meiji restoration in 1868, women in Japan were not regarded as fundamentally important and were solely considered the bearers of future family heirs.⁷⁵ It was only under the Meiji regime that the state began to demonstrate a notable interest in elevating the status of women within the family structure. The *Meiji Six Society*, an institution founded in 1873 and regarded as an "academy", recognized the necessity to establish a position of equality with Western societies that advocated independence and rationality. Their argument centered on the preeminence of Western technology and political institutions, inquiring about the means to attain a similar stature. Several members of the group believed that a shift to modern society "*must come through younger generations reared by women who held greater respect and power in the family.*"⁷⁶ Hence, the state, on the ideas of the Meiji Six society, introduced the *ie*-system or household system, where every family member was assigned a role to contribute to a functioning society. With the proclamation of the Meiji constitution in 1889, a constitutional monarchy system was established, whereby an emperor served as the sovereign head of state. The institution of an Imperial Rescript on Education, grounded in Confucian

⁷⁴ Kazuko Sato, Mitsuyo Suzuki, Michi, Kawamura, The Changing Status of Women in Japan. In: International Journal of Sociology of the Family 17(1) (Tokyo 1987) 99.

⁷⁵ Sharon L. Sievers, Feminist Criticism in Japanese Politics in the 1880s. The Experience of Kishida Toshiko. In: Signs 6(4) (Chicago 1981) 604.

⁷⁶ Sievers, Feminist Criticism in Japanese Politics, 603.

principles, served to further solidify a novel family-state ideology, with the emperor as the paramount figure within the Japanese family unit.⁷⁷

Assigning women innovative roles can be attributed to the newly found interest in European and American societal ideas, including aspects of clothing, food, and even gender identity. Following the opening of its borders, Japan found itself compelled to “catch up” with a world that was becoming increasingly interconnected through global networks. Concurrently, the concept of human rights, predominantly as influenced by European and North American thought, began to circulate within Japan. Conversely, feminist ideas, which had existed in Japan for a considerable period, experienced a period of significant proliferation on a global scale, especially in the United States, and were thus conceptualized in Japan into the understandings of „feminism”, “women’s/ feminist movement”, and “gender equality.”⁷⁸

While the contact between the United States and Japan intensified after the opening of the Japanese borders, this was not the first instance of outside influence. The initial phase of interaction between the two regions commenced in the 16th century, marking the inception of European trading relationships with Japan. This period was characterized by the arrival of European travelers, primarily Christian missionaries, who initially arrived with the objective of spreading their religious beliefs. The *Sakoku* edict of 1635 resulted in the closure of the Japanese borders to foreigners, with only a few minor exceptions. The first real contact with America would only come in 1853 when U.S.-American Commodore Matthew Perry sought to re-establish relationships between Japan and the rest of the world. The U.S.A. had just annexed California, creating a chance to set up a port on the Pacific Ocean. Raging to set up maritime trade between the U.S.A. and East Asia, the involvement of Japan as a partner was a critical element of the strategy, as it guaranteed the practicability of halting and refueling boats en route to and from China.⁷⁹ Already before Perry arrived in Japan, many Japanese had sought to increase their knowledge of the West and set out on expeditions. The period between 1853 and 1868, therefore, became an influential race between Westerners trying to enter Japan and Japanese Elites who had to respond.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Sachiko Kaneko, *The Struggle for Legal Rights and Reforms. A Historical View*. In: Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow (Ed.), *Transforming Japan. How Feminism and Diversity are Making a Difference* (New York 2011) 38-40.

⁷⁸ Lukyantseva, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 3.

⁷⁹ *U.S. Department of State*, *The United States and the Opening to Japan. 1853*. In: Office of the Historian, *Milestones. 1830-1860* <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/opening-to-japan#:~:text=On%20July%208%2C%201853%2C%20American,Japan%20and%20the%20western%20world> (last accessed 17.10.2024).

⁸⁰ Peer Vries, *Averting a Great Divergence. State and Economy in Japan, 1868-1937* (London/ New York 2020) 38.

Japan's ambition to establish global connections coincided with the strategic perspective of Christian missionaries, who identified significant opportunities to advance their missionary endeavors. The missionaries' initial venture into Japan occurred through the deployment of male missionaries, who were frequently accompanied by their spouses. It is evident that the women's participation extended beyond mere support for their husbands; it also involved active contribution to the spread of Christianity among Japanese women through oral propaganda. Women missionaries had an additional reason for heading to Japan: they supported and promoted women's active participation in society. The WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union), led by Mary Clement Lavitt, is one example of such groups.⁸¹ The groups opened missionary schools that were attended by both boys and girls. Girls were taught that it was their duty to become good Christian mothers and wives. However, the schools also imparted the notion to girls that their work was equally significant as that of men and that they were capable of being self-sufficient and did not require the support of their husbands. The initial missionary presence in Japan thus encountered resistance due to its unfamiliarity and perceived incompatibility with local cultural norms. The female students faced criticism from multiple perspectives: On the one hand, their decision to pursue studies at all was met with scrutiny. On the other hand, their choice to study alongside and from Westerners was also met with criticism. Many Japanese women who tried to challenge Japanese society specifically turned to Western women, who had a new perception of power and freedom that they could seek. During the 1880s of the Meiji Period, a student wrote an article in the magazine "Jogaku Zasshi No. 41" on the "Progress of Women" about the U.S.A., a country that in Japan was known as the "land of liberty." In Japanese, the US ideology is called "wealthy country and strong men (*fukoku kyouhei*)", which became a weaver for Japanese women looking for ways to advance their demands.⁸²

Although many ideas were introduced from abroad and were mainly spread through mass media, feminist activity in Japan cannot be called a direct import. While suffrage movements were being embraced in the modern world, Japan had only just begun to explore these new concepts of feminism, suffrage and women's rights, and to begin to historize their progress.⁸³ Karlin argues that with the new closer interaction with other countries, gender identity quickly became a representation of national identity and was further associated with national consolidation and mobilization. Karlin further adds that leveling with Western societies

⁸¹ Tripp, *The American Impact*, 5.

⁸² Patessio, *Women and Public Life*, 71-76.

⁸³ Kaneko, *Transforming Japan*, 38.

became important to compete with them and that without initiating the new system, where women are regarded as active members of society, Japan would be regarded as “backward” and “uncivilized”.⁸⁴ When Japan became modernized, the country sent scholars of all backgrounds abroad to learn from European and North American colleagues. Hara and Fujimura-Fanselow cite an account of a female student who went to the U.S.A. at the beginning of Meiji, which shows the launch of support for Japanese women:

*It is said that when Count Kuroda was in America he was struck with the position and influence of women in the country and found that it was because the American women as well as the men receive education. The desire to have Japanese women equally enlightened made him take the step that led to our being sent abroad. It therefore was decided by the Government, through his advice, to send over several girl students [...].*⁸⁵

While women were supposed to comply with their assigned role, their unequal status did not improve. Rather, it strengthened the belief that motherhood was an essential part of a woman's life if they wanted to contribute to the benefit of Japanese society. The introduction of the *koseki*, the Japanese family registration system, made the father of the family officially the “head” whose name led the *koseki*. The power within the family was given to men as the sole possessors, leaving women in a subordinate role.⁸⁶ Nakamura Masanao, one of the leading figures in the Meiji era, coined the term *ryosai kenbo*, translating to “good wife, wise mother.” Nakamura's argument suggests that the family represents the proper and natural sphere of women. It was expected of women that they demonstrate fidelity to their husbands and assume responsibility for the education of the children. This social dynamic served to reinforce the perception of women as useful members of their husbands' families.⁸⁷ The aspect of the “wise mother” demonstrates a new role being given to women during Meiji, that of the educator. Koyama Shizuko has shown that the concept of the “educating/wise mother” did not exist prior to Meiji. Before, women were assumed to be too undereducated. The Confucian ideology was therefore in itself “modernized” with the “modernization of Japan”: the “wise mother” added to fight nationalist reactionaries and an approximation to European and American ideas.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Jason G. Karlin, *The Gender of Nationalism. Competing Masculinities in Meiji Japan*. In: Sabine Frühstück, Morgan Pitelka (Eds.), *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 28(1) (Seattle 2002) 43-46.

⁸⁵ Kimi Hara and Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow, *Educational Challenges Past and Present*. In: *Fujimura-Fanselow, Transforming Japan*, 136.

⁸⁶ Sabine Frühstück, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan (New Approaches to Asian History, Cambridge/ New York 2022)* 3-4.

⁸⁷ Sievers, *Feminist Criticism in Japanese Politics*, 603-604.

⁸⁸ Ueno, *Collapse*, 7-10.

“[...] *Women were restricted by the ie system and Neo-Confucian theories [...].*”⁸⁹ Sato, Suzuki, and Kawamura, therefore, give the ie-system the status of not only societal but also political importance. They see it as the “*last stronghold of Confucian Japan*” and the “*building block of the unique Japanese ‘national polity’.*”⁹⁰ Sato et al. use this wording in comparison to the later nuclear family model, where they find a drop in women’s dependency on their husbands and family due to a revision of the Civil Code in 1947.⁹¹

Ueno’s analysis draws attention to an argument put forward by Eto regarding the pursuit of education among women, highlighting their aspiration to both educate their children and enhance their own educational accomplishment. In pre-modern times, the concept of shame and frustration towards husbands was nonexistent. This was due to the societal expectation of women raising their sons to copy their fathers. However, with the advent of modernization and the dissolution of the feudal class structure, education has emerged to potentially ascend the social hierarchy. Failing to climb the social ladder thus created a sense of shame.⁹² Of course, it cannot be forgotten that not all women can be argued to have lived under these gender stereotypes. Every historical concept of the “Japanese woman” and “Japanese mother” varies according to their social class. While Japanese women of the upper class could devote themselves to being mothers, this was not the case for lower-class women whose labor in agriculture was needed. In these cases, the mothering role often fell on the grandparents, who were less productive on the field and therefore more likely to have time for childcare.⁹³

Despite the assertions of the Meiji Six Society that the West was superior, the government moved away from these ideas in 1874. The Popular Rights Movement was established, and the population began to demand the establishment of a national assembly. The political sphere was not exclusively occupied by male figures – female participation was also observed. Indeed, the first women began to demand the right to vote.⁹⁴ Kishida Toshiko for example used lecturing as a vehicle of communication, which was a new form from the U.S.A. shown to her by the Meiji Six Academy. Nevertheless, endeavors of this nature were rare, and the demands were met with indifference. The media, when reporting on Kishida’s speeches, preferred to talk

⁸⁹ Hiroko Tomida, Gordon Daniels (Eds.), *Japanese Women. Emerging from Subservience, 1868-1945* (Leiden 2005) 1-2.

⁹⁰ Sato, Suzuki, Kawamura, *The Changing Status*, 98.

⁹¹ Sato, Suzuki, Kawamura, *The Changing Status*, 99-108.

⁹² Eto, *Maturity and Loss*. Cit. by: Ueno, *Collapse*, 6.

⁹³ Ueno, *Collapse*, 6-7.

⁹⁴ Kaneko, *Transforming Japan*, 38.

about her clothing rather than the contents of her speeches.⁹⁵ It would take until the first half of the 20th century for Japan to see the first influential feminist activist groups.⁹⁶

3.2. Feminist Activism during and after World War I

While the first wave of feminism was washing over Europe and North America in the 1910s, in Japan, a similar movement, led by Raicho Hiratsuka, was also underway. In 1911, she launched *Seito* (Bluestocking), the name of both her organization and magazine. The phrase introduced at the beginning of this paper: “*In the beginning, woman was the sun*”, appeared as part of her “Feminist Manifesto” in the first issue of “*Seito*”. The *New Women* stood for a new era of self-awareness and self-expression. From 1911 until 1916, “*Seito*” reported on the themes of chastity, abortion, and prostitution, critically debating Japanese societal thoughts.⁹⁷ In 1919, the “New Women’s Organization” was founded by Raicho Hiratsuka, accompanied by Ichikawa Fusae, Oku Mumeo, and Yaeko Nogami. Compared to the evolution of other global women’s movements, the Japanese one found its feet incredibly fast. Nolte attributed this to the fact that Japanese suffragists used their knowledge of Western countries, particularly the U.S.A., to their advantage. They offered essential organizational and intellectual tools for Japanese feminists.⁹⁸

Their objectives encompassed a range of social reforms concerned with protecting mothers, including provisions such as maternity leave, economic independence, and the right to vote. The final aspect drew inspiration from global trends, as evidenced by the emergence of similar demands in the United States for example, where the demand was eventually met in 1920. In Japan, the enforcement of this right did not occur until 1946.⁹⁹

The decline of the Meiji leadership, combined with the end of World War I, instigated an era of democracy and greater individual freedom.¹⁰⁰ The pioneering women of this time were inspired by the global initiatives and activists: Hiratsuka, for instance, followed the example of Swedish activist Ellen Key and probably U.S. American Jane Addams.¹⁰¹ Ichikawa Fusae drew inspiration from US activists Alice Paul and Carrie Chapman, whom she met regularly during

⁹⁵ Sievers, *Feminist Criticism in Japanese Politics*, 608.

⁹⁶ Ueno, *Feminisms in Japan*, 75-76.

⁹⁷ Molony, *Feminism in Japan*, 3.

⁹⁸ Nolte, *Women’s Rights and Society’s Needs*, 691-692.

⁹⁹ Lukyantseva, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Dee Ann Vavich, *The Japanese Woman’s Movement*. Ichikawa Fusae, *A Pioneer in Woman’s Suffrage*. In: *Monumenta Nipponica* 22(3/4) (Tokyo 1967) 410.

¹⁰¹ Sayoko Yoneda (Au.), Hiroko Tomida (Tr.), *Hiratsuka Raicho’s Idea of Society*. *Nature, Cooperation and Self-Government*. In: *Tomida, Daniels, Japanese Women*, 26-33.

her travels to the U.S.A.¹⁰² Thus, an analytical network already existed between the US and Japan at that time, and the goals of the First Wave revolved around change for mothers and political relevance for women. The efforts even went so far as to include discussions in favor of voting rights for women in 1920s Japan. The Hamaguchi Bill of 1925 would have presented this right, but with many restrictive limitations, so that the bill was again dismissed altogether.¹⁰³ For instance, the voting age was established at 25, while men were permitted to vote at 20 years of age. It was also required that the husband permit his wife to vote, which also authorized him to manage his wife's property. This shift in the state's position to reflect on women's demands prompted skepticism from numerous women's organizations. Paired with the restrictions, the organizations unanimously declared their opposition to partial suffrage.¹⁰⁴ Within the group of pioneering activists, other problems also occurred. Ichikawa Fusae left the group in 1921 to leave for the U.S.A. for study purposes. It is highly speculated that she and Hiratsuka had a falling out due to their different goals for the direction of the women's movement. While Hiratsuka wanted more social rights, for mothers especially, Ichikawa focused more on the political aspects, believing that the movement had to focus on equal rights of women with men first.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Yamakawa Kikue, a member of Hiratsuka's organization and proletarian women's leader, resigned and accused Hiratsuka of "*self-serving and anachronistic individualism, lack of coherent social theory, bourgeois sentimentalism, vague references to the rights of mothers and children, and philanthropic frivolity.*"¹⁰⁶ From this point on, Hiratsuka went on to identify two different women's movements in Japan, one bourgeois and the other proletarian.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, by the mid-1920s, the women's movement in Japan had reached a low. As the initial wave of feminist efforts gave way to different currents, those began to criticize each other regarding the same objectives.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, the public opinion remained conservative, opposing women's suffrage and continuing to believe in the family, the *ie system*, and the *ryosai kenbo* discourse.

3.3. Women under Wartime and Postwar Occupation

The efforts of the New Women's Association were abruptly halted in the aftermath of the Manchurian incident in 1931, marking the emergence of the issue of national support in the

¹⁰² Tripp, *The American Impact*, 6-12.

¹⁰³ Tripp, *The American Impact*, 13.

¹⁰⁴ Nolte, *Women's Rights and Society's Needs*, 690-691.

¹⁰⁵ Vavich, *The Japanese Woman's Movement*, 413-15.

¹⁰⁶ Nolte, *Women's Rights and Society's Needs*, 701.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Vavich, *The Japanese Woman's Movement*, 415-417.

discourse.¹⁰⁹ The military gained sovereign control over the civil government, and by 1936, Japan was under authoritarian rule with the right of free expression suspended. During this period, the very existence of the Women's Movement was imperiled and on the brink of imminent ending.¹¹⁰ Women's activists faced a critical decision: to align with Japan's foreign policy and expansionist agenda or to prioritize the maintenance of international connections and the advancement of women's rights. The collaboration with the government was believed by many to ultimately result in the subsequent endorsement of women's rights by the government. For instance, Fusae Ichikawa subscribed to the verdict that women would "assist the emperor" if they were to partake in the quest.¹¹¹

The Second World War proved to be another event that highlighted the impact the geographical closeness of the U.S.A. and Japan had on their relationship. After the American missiles were dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese capitulated and officially lost the war, as well as failed their Asian expansion mission. The U.S.A. occupied Japan in 1945, set up military bases on the Southern Islands of Okinawa, and ensured democracy was realized in Japan. This also included freeing the Japanese women within their marriage in Article 24 of the MacArthur Constitution and giving them the right to vote in 1946.¹¹²

Ichikawa said on this aspect: "*Without the occupation or the defeat of Japan, the realization of the Japanese women's constitutional rights would not have been achieved so quickly.*"¹¹³

Douglas MacArthur, who realized the MacArthur constitution, saw himself as the savior of Japan in a racial and social context. Arguing about the status of Japanese society, MacArthur also saw the U.S.A. and himself as the sole reason for the advancement of Japan and Japanese women. However, despite the efforts made to ensure the rights of Japanese women, he dismissed them as indifferent.¹¹⁴ In Japanese society, too, the arrival of new rights did not guarantee an equal response. It was not until the 1960s that the government began to place greater emphasis on women, when it was determined that the nuclear family should be elevated to a central position, superseding the prevailing *ie*-system. However, the *koseki* maintained its dominance, perpetuating a societal structure that reduced women to the roles of mother and wife, with limited opportunities for deviation. If women decided to leave behind the preached family system, society shamed them for not contributing to typical ideals. The

¹⁰⁹ Molony, *Feminism in Japan*, 5-6.

¹¹⁰ Vavich, *The Japanese Woman's Movement*, 420.

¹¹¹ Molony, *Feminism in Japan*, 5-9.

¹¹² Tripp, *The American Impact*, 14.

¹¹³ Tripp, *The American Impact*, 17.

¹¹⁴ Tripp, *The American Impact*, 13-15.

“democratization from above” could not be forced upon society. For the reality of women to change, empowerment from within was needed.

3.4. Postwar Japanese Feminism and Social Change

The time from 1946 to the 1970s can be characterized as a time of fundamental change in Japan. The Cold War ideology also took hold in Japan, and consumer culture increased to a national level in the 1950s.¹¹⁵ Mass media and media discourse also affected the “expression of individualism”¹¹⁶ and consumption became an integral aspect of personal freedom, individuality, and subjectivity. The expansion of mass media also helped to link economic prosperity and living standards, expressed through the consumption of consumer goods. This period of individuality and material wealth was connected by the media to peace and democracy. For housewives, the promotion of goods was a strategy aimed at achieving greater leisure time and an elevated social status. During the 1960s, young working women left their family homes to work in the cities, seeking autonomy and democratic subjectivity. Magazines, in their capacity as cultural influencers, played a pivotal role in the social and psychological development of a generation of young people who were raised during a period of sustained peace and democratic governance.¹¹⁷ For example, the creator of “Heibon Punch” set out on an expedition to the United States in 1962, where he was inspired by the Magazine “Seventeen”, which included the display of “*large, visual magazines with entertaining, attractive and informative advertising pages that would ensure a low shelf price.*”¹¹⁸

While Japan and large parts of the world were in a period of peace, other regions did not enjoy this luxury. The Vietnam War broke out in 1955 and involved not only the countries in conflict, but also their supporters, whereby the U.S.A. supported the South of Vietnam and the Soviet Union supported the North, making it a proxy war.¹¹⁹ In 1965, America became fully involved in the war, and Japan sought to function as a neutral mediator to negotiate a settlement. In 1967, Japan's neutrality was questioned when diplomacy started to shift from a neutral to a pro-U.S. stance. As Pressello writes, one of the reasons for the engagement of Japan in the war and the shift to the US could be negotiation talks between the U.S.A. and Japan to discuss the reversion

¹¹⁵ Martyn David Smith, ‘A MAD Age’. Heibon Punch, Student Protests, the Media and Consumer Society in Cold War Japan. In: Japan Forum 28(3) (London 2015) <https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2015.1102162> (last accessed 04.02.2025) 337.

¹¹⁶ Penelope Franks, Inconspicuous Consumption. Sake, Beer and the Birth of the Consumer in Japan. In: The Journal of Asian Studies 68(1) (Cambridge 2009) 140.

¹¹⁷ Smith, ‘A MAD Age’, 338-340.

¹¹⁸ Yoichi Akagi, Heibon Panchi (Tokyo 2004) 38-40.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Myers, Walking Point. American Narratives of Vietnam (Oxford 1988) 22-26.

of Okinawa to Japan, where the US had stationed military bases and administrative rights since 1951. A further reason for Japan's engagement is its aspiration to enhance its influence in Asia, both politically and economically.¹²⁰ In the United States and Japan, anti-imperialism among young leftists broke out, creating an anti-imperial alliance between Japanese and American activists that crossed the respective Pacific borders in the 1960s. In Japan, the Movement *Beheiren* was organized, after US bombing campaigns in North Vietnam, by men and women, mostly in their 30s and 40s. Among the activists were also public figures, prompting the movements to become widely present in the public and the Japanese and US media.¹²¹

The introduction of democracy and the comprehensive rethinking of the electoral system were not the only developments of note. Women were also beginning to assert their voices again. Moreover, the movement was experiencing a notable influx of new and young participants. The occupation facilitated the establishment of new women's organizations and the mobilization of groups that were not exclusively comprised of elite women, such as housewives.¹²² However, the women's movement remained a minority movement in Japan. Another reason in this regard was the media and the lack of text production. Back in the 19th century, the only people dealing with topics on women's issues were elite women. It was a subject reserved for those who had access to the newly developed print media, and it could only be discussed within this bubble of people who also had access to various media and individuals representing them. These individuals had connections to scholars and journalists from Europe and North America, where they pursued their studies and brought progressive ideas back to Japan. Patessio's research indicates a positive correlation between Western exposure and recorded female public activity.¹²³ That the Women's Liberation Movement gained activity in the 1970s after such a long break in women's action, even under US-occupation, is argued by both Fujitani and Sumiko, cited by Ehara Yumiko, with the rejection of the earlier movement in the First Wave. They claim that, once again, Japan's Women's Studies was influenced by the US-American movement, where many feminists introduced American Feminism in their texts as well as their thought. Because of new mass media and globalization, where communication and academic research grasped a new era, the issue of

¹²⁰ Andrea *Pressello*, Japan's Peace Diplomacy on the Vietnam War and the 1968-1969 Shift in the United States' Asia Policy. In: *Japanese Studies* 43(1) (Seattle 2023) 91-97.

¹²¹ Naoko *Koda*, Challenging the Empires from Within. The Transpacific Anti-Vietnam War Movement in Japan. In: *The Sixties. A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* 10(2) (Osaka 2017) 182-189.

¹²² *Mackie*, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 120-123.

¹²³ Mara *Patessio*, *Women and Public Life in Early Meiji Japan. The Development of the Feminist Movement* (Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies 71, Ann Arbor 2020) 18-72.

Japanese feminism became richer in the quantity and quality of texts. Ehara argues on the basis of these findings that in the late 1970s, feminism in Japan became institutionalized.¹²⁴

In the 1960s and early 1970s, universities became the centers of many social movements. They included the criticism of the security treaty between Japan and the U.S.A. and the anti-Vietnam War movement. Other movements were regarding pollution, minority discrimination, and questioning the rapid economic development of the 1960s. A student movement that resulted from the Vietnamese War developed into new voices of feminist activity.¹²⁵ It is imperative to consider Japan's economic situation when assessing the developments in the pursuit of equality. The situation can be linked to the role of women in the anti-racist movements in the United States, where they occupied a central position in the struggle for equality. Similarly, the student movements against the Vietnam War in Japan, which were characterized by the active involvement of women, contributed to the emergence of the women's liberation movement. Machiko Matsui argues that the women of the 1970s *uman ribu* movement were in the position of US women many years before them.¹²⁶

Matsui also notes another factor that helped develop a new era of Japanese Feminism, the unhappiness within the New Left. Japanese society was being led by a strong Marxist influence in the New Left politics. This did not give women a voice to articulate the sexism within the New Left.¹²⁷ New Left organizations focused on the opposition to global capitalism and criticized America's participation in the Vietnam War. Many of the leaders of the groups were male and often sexist. "Consciousness-raising" activities let many women to redefine feminism in new terms, questioning sexuality, motherhood, and oppression. Earlier housewife feminism, which had seen motherhood as a source of strength, came to be redefined as a source of inequality. Many women of the New Left left the organizations to form separate, women's issues-focused groups.¹²⁸

3.5. International Influences and Global Feminist Debates

*"Transnational feminism, conceived as a critical response to Western cultural imperialism, builds on a genealogy of women of color, third world feminism, and postcolonial feminism."*¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Ehara, Eino, Long, Japanese Feminism, 53.

¹²⁵ Matsui, Evolution of the Feminist Movement, 436-437.

¹²⁶ Matsui, Evolution of the Feminist Movement, 448-449.

¹²⁷ Matsui, Evolution of the Feminist Movement, 435-438.

¹²⁸ Molony, Feminism in Japan, 15.

¹²⁹ Shigematsu, Rethinking Japanese Feminism, 206.

The topic of Japanese feminism is often associated with discussions of Third World feminism.¹³⁰ This suggests a period of underdevelopment in Japan, which, at the time, was experiencing significant industrialization. The phrase “catch up to the West” was popularly used during this era, reflecting the desire to emulate the advanced industrialized countries of Europe and North America. Shigematsu also discusses the usage of the term “Third World”, realizing its problematic nature but choosing to adopt it from her literature into the text, highlighting the “*political significance about the legacy and ongoing conditions of colonialism*” it holds.¹³¹ Ehara Yumiko further explores this topic, concluding that Japan is only ever discussed in comparison to the “West”, or within the *category of modern Western societies*, which leads to confusion, as Japan can be argued to be on either side. In her eyes, it would be required to analyze Japan on the whole spectrum of comparison with the West, Asia and the Third World to achieve a clear meaning of Japan’s unique status.¹³²

A further discrepancy can be explored when looking at the *concept of Orientalism* by Edward Said. In Said’s theory, he refers to a specific gaze of *Orientalism*, viewing the East as exotic and underdeveloped. This gaze is a part of the self-consciousness of the West, which tries to hold up its supremacy by applying “otherness” to the East. Chizuko Ueno furthers this thought into the gender discourse, arguing that the East is to the West as a woman is to a man.¹³³ Some extremists straight up view Japan as a “poor woman raped by the West” after their loss in the Second World War. The fields of gender politics and linguistics have played a significant role in shaping perceptions of Asia, particularly Japan, as inferior to Western countries. This notion was not merely adopted by Japanese men; it was also embraced by Japanese women. The issue of feminism was therefore raised not only in isolation but also in relation to the concept of national identity. Developing the country meant not only resulting in a modern and democratic society, but also in liberated women.¹³⁴

3.6. Differences between the women’s movements in the U.S.A. and Japan

The analysis closely studies the understanding and usage of the different terms. The most important one that cannot be left out of the discussion is, of course, *feminism*. We have explored Ueno’s definition from 2019, but what about the beginnings of feminism in Japan and its

¹³⁰ E.g. Shigematsu, *Rethinking Japanese Feminism*, 208.

¹³¹ Shigematsu, *Rethinking Japanese Feminism*, 223-224.

¹³² Ehara, Eino, Long, *Japanese Feminism*, 66-67.

¹³³ Chizuko Ueno, “Why is the Media Coverage on Japan so Biased?”. In: *Zipangu* (Ed.), *Japan Made in the U.S.A.* (New York 1998) 71, *Cit. by*: Aya Kitamura, *Subverting from Within. Images and Identities of Japanese Women*. In: *U.S.-Japan Women’s Journal* 29 (Honolulu 2005) 37-38.

¹³⁴ Ueno, *Are the Japanese Feminine?* In: *Buckley, Broken Silence*, 294-295.

impact in the 1970s? Setsu Shigematsu introduces the chapter “Lessons of Uman Ribu”, found in “Rethinking Japanese Feminism” by Bullock, Kano, and Welker, with a reflection on the 1970s Japanese Women’s Movement in its relation to transnational feminism. She sets limits on Japanese feminism, putting it into comparison with *White Feminism* in the U.S.A., a theory that explores the polarization between what is being supposedly followed and the actual reality.¹³⁵ The theory of *White Feminism* is built on the theory of intersectionality by Crenshaw, which argues that a hierarchy of minorities exists in society, putting people who belong to more than one minority lower on the scale. In the U.S.A. one minority would be female, while another one defines Women of Colour, hence *White Feminism*. White women constitute most feminists, thereby elevating their status subconsciously above women of colour, not putting their living situations and needs under the same consideration as those of White women. In Japan, this phenomenon also exists. The hierarchy creates a discrepancy between Japanese women and minority women, for example, Okinawan Women or women of Korean heritage.¹³⁶

Furthermore, among the different living branches of feminism in the 20th century, one followed in the U.S.A.¹³⁷, and considerably also the most popular one of 1940s Japan is *liberal feminism*, which for example figures like Ichikawa Fusae believe in. Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser put liberal feminism in a direct relationship with intersectionality. They view the synonymous use of feminism with liberal feminism as highly problematic, as it does not serve as an active solution to the overall problem of women’s rights. Mainly aiming for political equality leaves out socioeconomic hindrances and rewards only women who are already successful. They argue that the goal of liberal feminism is therefore not equality, but meritocracy. Women and men of the same class, thus, are put on the same pedestal. This has positive consequences for those women who have already been part of the main beneficiary and now get to act alongside men, but this also leaves women of lower classes with few possibilities to achieve true equality with those women and even less with men.¹³⁸ Ichikawa has followed liberal feminism with the main goal of increasing Japanese women’s political rights, but she also did so with the compromise of supporting the state. Prioritizing political equality led her to accept and support the government in military matters, hoping this would advance her goal.¹³⁹ Real feminism, in the eyes of some historians and followers of *social feminism*, must automatically eliminate the

¹³⁵ Shigematsu, *Rethinking Japanese Feminism*, 205-218.

¹³⁶ Shigematsu, *Rethinking Japanese Feminism*, 217.

¹³⁷ Shigematsu, *Rethinking Japanese Feminism*, 210.

¹³⁸ Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, Nancy Fraser, *Feminism for the 99%. A Manifesto* (Berlin 2019) 8.

¹³⁹ Barbara Molony, Ichikawa Fusae and Japan’s Pre-War Women’s Suffrage Movement. In: Tomida, Daniels, *Japanese Women*, 58.

possibility of militarism, as this is derived from the patriarchy. *Social feminism* puts a lot more importance on linking gender equality to the elimination of class inequality under capitalism¹⁴⁰, a direction more popular in the U.S.A., as the emergence of the feminist movement emerged there from the anti-slavery protests and went hand in hand under the pretext of achieving equality for all.¹⁴¹

Historians argue the popularity of liberal feminism in Japan and its compliance with the military strategy of Japan as a necessity for “movement survival.” The reality is that in the beginning of feminist activism in Japan, Ichikawa also followed a more social path, arguing that the preservation of peace “*was a major justification for granting full civil rights to women.*”¹⁴² In other words, the word “feminism” in the U.S.A., which used to mean “feminist expansionism”, has come to mean “humanism by women” in a broader sense in the course of the movement.¹⁴³

Sara M. Evans explores a whole other term, that of “*Women’s Liberation.*” While the 1970s in Japan are seen as the peak of *uman ribu*, in the U.S.A. *Women’s Liberation*, the name where *uman ribu* stems from, has almost completely disappeared. Instead, *radical feminist*, *social feminist*, *lesbian feminist*, and *feminist* filled the space.¹⁴⁴ What was in Japan only starting to become institutionalized¹⁴⁵ was being critically discussed on its *raison d’être* in the U.S.A. Discussions were initiated concerning the inclusivity of women from all backgrounds and various strains of feminism, as well as the actors involved in the movement. Additionally, there was an examination of the movement’s global impact and its outward manifestations.¹⁴⁶

Reflecting on the different demands held in the U.S.A. and Japanese Liberation Movements, the demands for bodily autonomy in the U.S.A. are one of the most highlighted matters. While the call for decriminalization of abortion was certainly the case in the U.S.A., in Japan, the exact opposite was happening. Abortion was already decriminalized in 1948 in Japan, and abortion was allowed up until the twenty-second week. The Eugenic Protection and the

¹⁴⁰ Molony, Ichikawa Fusae. In: *Tomida, Daniels*, Japanese Women, 58-59.

¹⁴¹ Maren Lockwood Carden, *The New Feminist Movement* (New York 1974) 156-158.

¹⁴² Molony, Ichikawa Fusae. In: *Tomida, Daniels*, Japanese Women, 59.

¹⁴³ Fukuko Kobayashi, *The Changing Images of Women in American History and the Significance of New Feminism*. In: *The Waseda Commercial Review* 278(23-46) (Tokyo 1979)
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://waseda.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/12641/files/92297_278.pdf&ved=2ahUKewj4xa-j3p6PAxVdhf0HHR27DXcQFnoECBEQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3GfPuzMSq55bB323hNa4QZ (last accessed 21.08.2025) 174.

¹⁴⁴ Evans, *Women’s Liberation*, 140.

¹⁴⁵ Ehara, Eino, Long, *Japanese Feminism*, 53.

¹⁴⁶ Evans, *Women’s Liberation*, 140-149.

Maternal Protection Law allowed this. The only approval women needed for abortion was the meeting of criteria that could affect either the baby's or the mother's physical and economic health, a mental illness of a parent, or the pregnancy resulting from rape. Especially, the point of "economic health" allowed a loophole for granting an abortion.¹⁴⁷ Taeuber explains this acceptance of abortion with cultural differences, as religious beliefs that shape the thought about abortion in Christianity do not prevail in Japanese non-Christian society. Moreover, he writes that the Japanese did not differentiate between abortion and contraception.¹⁴⁸ LaFleur adds to this point, saying that abortions and infanticide in Japan have been commonly practiced in Japan. He also adds the argument of Buddhist views on the fluidity of life, death, and reincarnation.¹⁴⁹

To further differentiate the 1970s Japanese Women's Liberation movement, the differences between the Women's Movement, the Women's Liberation Movement, and the Feminist Movement of the 1970s in both Japan and the U.S.A. are highlighted. As thoroughly examined in the preliminary chapters, the movements present disparate definitions that must be considered when discussing the discrepancy between the United States and Japan. In both cases, the observed movements manifest differences, yet remain to a considerable extent interconnected.

In both the U.S.A. and Japan, the *Feminist Movement* presents the umbrella term for all feminist activisms. It focuses on gender equality in all areas.¹⁵⁰ The *Women's Movement* encompasses a broad movement of both liberal and radical standards, focusing more specifically on legal rights and equal pay.¹⁵¹ The *Women's Liberation Movement* is the most niche and radical, encompassing an anti-patriarchy ideology. Here, personal and cultural transformation, such as sexual liberation and criticising gender roles, play the focus points.¹⁵²

Speaking of the Feminist Movement, while the movement was starting to develop into an era of self-reflection in the United States, prompted by intersectionality, in Japan, the movement was only starting to become established.¹⁵³ For the Women's Movement, in both cases, it is rooted in the First Wave of Feminism in the U.S.A. and the First Women's Movement led by

¹⁴⁷ Tiana Norgren, Abortion before Birth Control. The Interest Group Politics Behind Postwar Japanese Reproduction Policy. In: The Journal of Japanese Studies 24(1) (Seattle 1998) 60-62.

¹⁴⁸ Irene B. Taeuber, The Population of Japan. In: Ronald Freedman (Ed.), Population Growth. The Vital Revolution (Milton Park 2008) 272-283.

¹⁴⁹ William LaFleur, Liquid Life. Abortion and Buddhism in Japan (Princeton 1994) 26-29.

¹⁵⁰ Southerton, Feminist Movement, 502.

¹⁵¹ The Editors of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Women's Movement Summary.

¹⁵² Evans, Women's Liberation, 139.

¹⁵³ Ehara, Japanese Feminism, 50-51.

Raicho Hiratsuka in Japan.¹⁵⁴ The Women's Liberation Movement in the U.S.A. grew out of radical women fighting for black civil rights and a resurgence of socialist and Marxist movements, known as the New Left. Bouchier argues that the phrase "women's liberation" was created in 1964 and stems from an American civil rights group called the *Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee* (SNCC). He dates the first public appearance of a women's liberation group on January 15, 1968, when women were invited to stage a "burial of traditional womanhood" during a peace march in Washington.¹⁵⁵ Betty Friedan founded the group *National Organisation for Women* (NOW), whose main goal was to "*take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society [...] thereof in truly equal partnership with men.*"¹⁵⁶ In Japan, it was also the New Left and various student movements that prompted women to come together to form a separate movement. Matsui describes the first public appearance of *uman ribu* in the form of the first women's Liberation Conference in 1971, led by Mitsu Tanaka. Tanaka argued that the main argument of *uman ribu* was a recognition of self and female sexuality. Other issues, such as the protection of reproductive rights and the protection of mothers, were among the top subjects discussed by *uman ribu* activists.¹⁵⁷

The main difference lies in the impact of the Women's Liberation Movement. While in the U.S.A. the Women's Liberation Movement developed into a mainstream discourse, in Japan the branch was often seen as too radical and conflicted with other movements and women's organizations, even within *uman ribu*.¹⁵⁸ Feminism did indeed become part of the mainstream; the movement of *uman ribu*, however, was ridiculed by mass media, leading to low publicity and discourse.¹⁵⁹ Japanese organizations, too, in comparison to the national NOW of the US, struggled to find common ground in the fight for their rights.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ David Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge. The Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the USA* (London 1983) 42-43; Lukyantseva, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 2-4.

¹⁵⁵ Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge*, 48-53.

¹⁵⁶ Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge*, 45.

¹⁵⁷ Matsui, *Evolution of the Feminist Movement*, 436-440.

¹⁵⁸ Matsui, *Evolution of the Feminist Movement*, 438.

¹⁵⁹ Ehara, *Japanese Feminism*, 51.

¹⁶⁰ Matsui, *Evolution of the Feminist Movement*, 438.

4. Frequency Analysis of keywords in Japanese databases

For the present section of the analysis, the Japanese database CiNii will be utilized. CiNii is a Japanese bibliographic database that contains information regarding academic publications in Japan. The database contains not only works directly uploaded into the database, but also material released on J.Stage, an electronic academic publication platform, the National Diet Library, and other organizations. The substantial collection has led to CiNii becoming the most extensive database in Japan for academic works in the social science domain.

The timeline for the search was narrowed down from 1700 to 1979, to indicate not only when the terms first appeared, but also when they got popularized and, additionally, how much they were used in the 1970s.

The first keyword to be looked at will be “feminism” or フェミニズム (feminizumu) in Japanese:

This search results in 18 cases found in the database. The first use of the term goes back to 1930, when Goro Matsumoto and Isota Isha translated the popular work “Women’s Disaster: The Collapse of Modern Feminism”, originally released by Swedish author K.A. Wieth-Knudsen in 1878. The English work “The Freewoman: A Weekly Feminist Review” by Dora Marsden and Mary Gawthrop, released in 1911, can also be found within this search.

The first original Japanese work was released in 1951 by Hajime Tamaki “History of Feminism”, which is the first broad history book on the topic of its time. Out of the 18 cases found, 13 were released in the 1970s, marking the time when the term “feminism” found its establishment in Japanese academic papers and journals.¹⁶¹

The nature of the word フェミニズム gives an explanation as to why this is the case. To break it down, the Japanese language consists of three different written language systems: Kanji, Hiragana, and Katakana. Kanji is the writing system adopted from China and can be explained as an ideographic language, where each character represents a whole word or idea. Hiragana and Katakana, on the other hand, are syllable writing systems, where each character represents a syllable. Katakana is special in this regard, as it is only reserved for foreign words, differentiating Katakana from the other two “Japanese” writing systems. The fact that “feminism” is only used in its “foreign” nature explains why the use of the word only occurs in the second half of the 20th century. It must have been adapted from another language, where

¹⁶¹ National Institute of Information (NII), CiNii Research “フェミニズム”, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/all?q=フェミニズム&from=1700&until=1979&count=20&sortorder=1&lang=en>. (last accessed 03.10.2024).

it already has significant meaning and high usage. There must also have been demand for a similar word in Japanese and significant contact with the language, allowing the Japanese to easily include it in their repertoire. This correlates with the frequency of feminism jumping up so high in the 1970s, as this is the time when women's movements not only were at a high in Europe and North America, but also grabbed hold in Japan.¹⁶²

The second keyword will be “Women’s Liberation” or ウーマンリブ (uman ribu) in Japanese: This search results in 26 finds, all of which are dated from 1970 onwards to 1979. This means that *uman ribu* is a term that was only coined in Japan in 1970. Interestingly, 22 of the results are dated between 1970 and 1975, noticing a fall of the term in the eyes of the academic fields, at least inside the CiNii database.¹⁶³ The high concentration of “uman ribu” in the first half of the 70s is due to the emergence of the movement in society and the organization of several groups within the movement. Most notably, Tanaka Mitsu, who organized the first meeting and demonstration with her group “Fighting Women” in Tokyo in November 1970. Many mark this occurrence as the beginning of the Japanese Women’s Liberation Movement. Due to Tanaka’s radical mindset and nature of speech, using vulgar language to gain traction, the media quickly picked up on the movement and reported on it. However, mass media, which were male dominated, took to slander the movement in favor of supporting it, giving the movement an overall bad reputation in Japan. Because of the bad reputation, support of Japanese women was also little, resulting in the movement losing relevance by the mid-1970s.¹⁶⁴ Similar to “feminism”, the concentration can also be explained by influence from other countries and their papers, which brought attention to Japanese academics who adopted the term.

Uman ribu comes from the English term *Women’s Liberation* and is placed specifically in the 1970s, the height of the Second Wave of Women’s Liberation efforts in Japan. Inspired by the Second Wave in Europe and North America, the term was adopted in a wish to achieve the same goals as liberation movements in other countries and to signal solidarity.¹⁶⁵ Through connections to the U.S.A., the term was brought to Japan and included in translations and

¹⁶² Watanabe, *Japanese Women’s Studies*, 75-76.

¹⁶³ National Institute of Information (NII), CiNii Research “ウーマンリブ”, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/all?q=ウーマンリブ&from=1700&until=1979&sortorder=1&page=1> (last accessed 03.10.2024).

¹⁶⁴ Watanabe, *Japanese Women’s Studies*, 75-76.

¹⁶⁵ Shigematsu, *Rethinking Japanese Feminism*, 206.

Japanese writing, highlighting the expression in newly established feminist media. This contributed greatly to the spread of *uman ribu*.¹⁶⁶

The third keyword will also be “Women’s Liberation” but in the original Japanese wording 女性解放 (josei kaihou):

Resulting in 133 finds, this term has enjoyed the most attention in Japan’s scientific papers. The first time it appears in the CiNii database is in 1948 in the book “New Women’s Literature Reading Book” by Fujisawa Kanfu. Its first appearance in a title is also in 1948, when Shuji Yamamoto and John Stuart Mill cooperated on the book “For the Liberation of Women”. Out of the 133 cases, 107 were released in the 1970s, again suggesting a surge in the use and interest of the term and the Women’s Liberation Movement, not only in Japan but also internationally.¹⁶⁷

The appearance in 1948 is not surprising, as this was a time of change in Japan. Just a few years before, WWII had officially ended, and new rights were being put into place for the Japanese population. In 1945, Japan had lost the war and U.S. American military units occupied Japanese land and implemented the Douglas MacArthur Constitution.¹⁶⁸

The fourth keyword will be “Women’s Rights” or 女性の権利 (josei no kenri):

Interestingly, this search resulted in only 5 cases. Moreover, all 5 were released between 1971 and 1976.¹⁶⁹

For the fifth keyword, “America Woman”, アメリカ女性 (amerika josei) will be searched, to give a clue as to how frequently the United States is being referenced:

21 results turned up when searching with this keyword. While not all material discusses the issue of the Women’s Liberation Movement and Feminism, it is still interesting to see when this combination of words first began to appear in Japanese databases. The first one goes back to 1947, when Goro Nakano wrote the book “American Women’s Outlook: Spirit and Life.” Once more, the majority of the works, 15 to be exact, are concentrated in the 1970s, where “America Woman” often appears in combination with the word “Liberation”. The last work of the search turns out to be a translation into Japanese by Ikuko Atsumi of a work by Betty

¹⁶⁶ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 148-162.

¹⁶⁷ National Institute of Information (NII), CiNii Research “女性解放”, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/all?q=女性解放+&sortorder=1&from=1700&until=1979> (last accessed 03.10.2024).

¹⁶⁸ Tripp, *The American Impact*, 5.

¹⁶⁹ National Institute of Information (NII), CiNii Research “女性の権利”, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/all?q=女性の権利+&from=1700&until=1979&count=20&sortorder=1> (last accessed 02.09.2025).

Friedan: “Towards the New Century of Women: A Record of the American Women’s Movement.”¹⁷⁰

The sixth and seventh keywords will be “England Woman” and “France Woman”. This search serves as a contrast to the American influence referenced in the Japanese academic field, as some Japanese feminists, such as Chizuko Ueno, claim more similarities to European movements and more influence, rather than giving credit to the US.¹⁷¹ This search also aims to explore if European papers appear earlier than American ones, as feminist movements originated in Europe before spreading to the US.

For “England Woman” or in Japanese 英国女性 (egoku josei) 11 cases were reported. Out of all the results, none deal with the subject of Feminism or the Women’s Liberation Movement.¹⁷² Also, when using another term for “England”, イギリス (igirisu), only 4 results show up, with 2 of them dealing with the History of the British Women’s Liberation Thought. Both of the relevant works were written by the same author, Tamae Ichison Mizuta in the late 1960s.¹⁷³ Resulting in only 2 cases with the search “France Woman”, フランス女性 (furansu josei), the same can be said about this keyword, as none of the 2 works deal with the topic at hand.¹⁷⁴

This does come as a surprise, as with previous keywords, many authors and feminist activists from Europe have been referenced in Japanese works. This includes the names Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir. Searching for their names separately from the keywords in the database had led to the following results: ウルストンクラフト (Wollstonecraft) on its own has put out of 13 results. Interestingly, the first appearance dates to 1952 with the work “Pioneer of Women’s Liberation: Wollstonecraft” (婦人解放論の先駆者-- ウルストンクラフト) by Kinnoosuke Otsuka, while three more hits are found within

¹⁷⁰ National Institute of Information (NII), CiNii Research “アメリカ女性”, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/all?q=アメリカ女性&from=1700&until=1979&count=20&sortorder=1> (last accessed 02.09.2025).

¹⁷¹ Ueno, Turzynski, “Reproductive Rights/Health”, 84.

¹⁷² National Institute of Information, CiNii Research “英国女性”, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/all?q=英国+女性&from=1700&until=1979&count=20&sortorder=1> (last accessed 04.10.2024).

¹⁷³ National Institute of Information (NII), CiNii Research “イギリス女性”, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/all?q=イギリス女性&from=1700&until=1979&count=20&sortorder=1> (last accessed 04.10.2024).

¹⁷⁴ National Institute of Information (NII), CiNii Research “フランス女性”, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/all?q=フランス女性&from=1700&until=1979&count=20&sortorder=1> (last accessed 04.10.2024).

the 1960s.¹⁷⁵ Searching for ボーヴォワール (Beauvoir) results in a surprise. This search turned up 101 hits, out of which 75 are situated before 1970. The results mainly include translations of works by Simone de Beauvoir as the author.¹⁷⁶

5. Text Analysis

5.1. Introduction to the Analytical Framework

The analysis aims to answer the research questions: 1. Does a genuine Japanese Women's Liberation Movement exist without the influence of the U.S.A.? and 2. To what extent is the movement linked to the international debate, and how not?

The complexity of the subject and the low number of materials available demand a method that allows for an inductive approach towards answering these questions. Choosing key figures within the 1970s Japanese movement, a comparative approach of these persons, set within a critical historical discourse analysis, has been chosen to be the best possible way of going about the analysis. The critical historical discourse analysis, as explained by Achim Landwehr, has a central criterion of building a corpus of similarities out of the materials. These similarities offer a character of diachronic order and synchronic quantity of connected arguments, allowing an empirical explanation of the analysis. Just as important, Landwehr notes, is the implantation of context in the next part. This encompasses situative, medial, institutional, and historical context.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, it is imperative to identify the texts within the discourse they follow and the various themes they address. These themes can then be isolated for further analysis. This facilitates the identification of connections, both within a single text and across multiple texts, when the material adheres to a consistent theme, as is the case with this thesis.

After carefully reading and crafting my corpus of materials, I have concentrated them to encompass five Japanese women active in the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement: Ichikawa Fusae, Tanaka Sumiko, Tanaka Mitsu, Michimi Amano and Enoki Misako. These women, all well-known in the movement, belong to different streams of feminism and serve as representatives of said streams. Their status as representatives allows a close assimilation to an

¹⁷⁵ National Institute of Information (NII), CiNii Research “ウルストンクラフト”, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/all?q=ウルストンクラフト&from=1700&until=1979&count=20&sortorder=1> (last accessed 02.09.2025).

¹⁷⁶ National Institute of Information (NII), CiNii Research „ボーヴォワール”, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/all?q=ボーヴォワール&from=1700&until=1979&sortorder=1&page=4> (last accessed 02.09.2025).

¹⁷⁷ Landwehr, Historische Diskursanalyse, 102-108.

inductive approach, coupled with materials that were available in a good amount to allow for a detailed, qualitative section of each person.

In a first step, profiles of the figures within a thematic grouping of the women have been compiled, where each ideological category will be explored. A definition of the respective feminist stream will be given here. Further, a brief biography, core beliefs, international links, and activist achievements will be listed. The accompanying biographical contextualization will highlight the points of education, travel, ties to the US in formal and informal contexts, encounters with Western feminists, if they exist, and their life in the historical-political context. In the next step, a comparative historical discourse analysis across key dimensions will follow. I have chosen to organize the analysis by theme rather than individuals, as this allows a more direct comparison of the persons: 1. Political Strategies and Relationship to Power, 2. Gender and the Body, 3. Engagement with International/ US-Feminism, and 4. View of the Women's Liberation Movement in Japan.

The materials have been retrieved from primary and secondary academic literature, historical records, newspaper archives, and (auto-)biographies, if available. Additionally, speeches, manifestos, essays, and interviews in both Japanese and English have been found. These materials have been collected from physical libraries instituted by the University of Vienna, archival databases, feminist periodicals, and digital archives.

5.2. Profiles of the Main Figures (Thematic Grouping)

Regarding feminism, four main streams are identified: liberal, social, Marxist, and radical feminism. Even though Japan is known to have followed many Marxist ideas¹⁷⁸, and some of our subjects have been introduced to Marxism¹⁷⁹ and were even a part of Marxist organizations for a considerable amount of time¹⁸⁰, in the 1970s, none of the five individuals could be recognized as Marxist followers. Rather, there is a clear distinction between liberal/ social feminism and radical feminism.

¹⁷⁸ Amy Borovoy, Not a "Doll's House". Public Use of Domesticity in Japan. In: U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement 20/21 (Honolulu 2001) 95-96.

¹⁷⁹ Further reading: Sumiko Tanaka, Women's Liberation Thoughts and Actions (*Josei kaiho no shiso to kodo*) (Tokyo 1979) 259-260; Mitsu Tanaka, For My Spiritual Sisters (*Inochi no onnatachi e*) (Tokyo 1972), 151.

¹⁸⁰ Tanaka, Women's Liberation Thoughts and Actions, 260.

5.2.1. Liberal Feminism – Fusae Ichikawa

*“Liberal Feminism embraces a wide range of political commitments, from single-issue campaigns (women in politics, education, media, equal pay) to more comprehensive demands for the equalisation of sex roles.”*¹⁸¹

Additionally, Bouchier argues:

*The essential distinction between liberal feminists and the rest is that liberals believe progressive reforms can lead to real and substantial equality for women as individuals without the need for revolutionary changes in the economic, political or cultural realm. Indeed, as liberals, they must argue that existing democratic structures constitute the essential **condition** for successful reform, and that radical change could only diminish the availability of freedom and justice to both men and women.*¹⁸²

In this definition that David Bouchier provides, it may be noted that Liberal Feminism generally ignores issues that are sexual and family related.

The materials encompassing Ichikawa will be “The Autobiography of Fusae Ichikawa. The Prewar Period (*Ichikawa Fusae jiden-senzen hen*)” by Ichikawa herself. Moreover, the article “Fusae Ichikawa: Japanese Women Suffragist”, published in the journal “Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies” in 1978, will be utilized. The article, originally in Japanese, contains an interview with Ichikawa by Yoko Nuita, who was a former News Commentator of the Japanese Broadcasting Station and was the director of the National Women’s Education Center in the suburbs of Tokyo.¹⁸³ The interview contains all details needed to place Ichikawa’s argumentation into the presented categories and identify where she places the Women’s Liberation Movement in 1970s Japan. Additionally, DeAnn Vavich conducted an interview for the article “The Japanese Woman’s Movement. Ichikawa Fusae, A Pioneer in Woman’s Suffrage” in 1967, which will be used.

Ichikawa was born in Aichi prefecture in 1881 to a farmer father and a housewife mother. She first got into contact with women’s issues when she had to witness her mother’s abuse by her father at a young age. Although strict, her father valued education for both his sons and daughters, going against traditional views of his peers that women do not need education. In 1910, she attended Tokyo’s Women’s Academy for a short time, where she first got exposed to women’s rights advocates as one of her teachers preached the issue. Returning to Aichi to

¹⁸¹ Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge*, 65.

¹⁸² Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge*, 65.

¹⁸³ Yoko Nuita, *Fusae Ichikawa, Fusae Ichikawa. Japanese Women Suffragist*. In: Haruko K. Watanabe, Yoko Nuita, *Japanese Women Pioneers*. In: Wanda S. Pillow, Darius Bost, Debjani Chakravarty (Eds.), *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 3(3) (Lincoln 1978) 58-62.

continue her studies, Ichikawa originally studied to be a preschool teacher, a profession which she pursued during the First World War. In 1917, she worked for a year as a newspaper reporter in Nagoya, but left for Tokyo in 1918, where she wanted to extend her studies into English teaching.¹⁸⁴ In 1919, she was appointed to a position in the women's section of the labor organization *Yuuwaikai*, where she met Raicho Hiratsuka. After three months and ending her work in the organization, Hiratsuka asked her to join her in the creation of a New Woman's Organization, the *Shin Fujin Kyokai*. She, Hiratsuka, and Oku Mumeo became founders of the organization with the goal of lifting Japanese women's social position through¹⁸⁵ "*obtaining woman's suffrage, establishing equality with men, increasing the spread of higher education for women, improving the position of women within the family and by providing welfare for working women.*"¹⁸⁶

Furthermore, Ichikawa's position was that the possibility of women's political participation must be realized before the issue of women's emancipation could be addressed.¹⁸⁷

In 1921, Ichikawa departed for the United States, intending to acquire further knowledge regarding the advancements of the American women's movements. However, it is hypothesized that her departure was precipitated, at least in part, by a rift in her relationship with Hiratsuka. During her three-year-long trip, she had the privilege of meeting prominent figures such as Carrie Chapman Catt and Alice Paul. These encounters provided her with numerous insights, contributing to her personal and professional growth. The connection between women's rights and women's political autonomy was intensified, and teaching women about the tie and the importance of political independence became Ichikawa's main objective.¹⁸⁸ According to Ichikawa's autobiography, Alice Paul was the catalyst who prompted her to relinquish her involvement in the labor movement and focus on one women's issues: "*Leave the labor movement business to men. Women's issues are something that only women can take up. You cannot do (two) different things at one time.*"¹⁸⁹ She also traveled to Hawai'i in 1928 for the First Pan-Pacific Women's Conference. While Ichikawa engaged herself in women's suffrage, in Japan, these efforts of hers and other activists were not received.¹⁹⁰ In 1931, the Manchurian Incident broke out, and the tensions between China and

¹⁸⁴ Fusae Ichikawa, *The Autobiography of Fusae Ichikawa. The Pre-War Period (Ichikawa Fusae jiden-senzen hen)* (Tokyo 1974) 24-38.

¹⁸⁵ *Vavich*, *The Japanese Woman's Movement*, 411.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Vavich*, *The Japanese Woman's Movement*, 414.

¹⁸⁹ *Ichikawa*, *The Autobiography of Fusae Ichikawa*, 466.

¹⁹⁰ *Vavich*, *The Japanese Woman's Movement*, 422.

Japan intensified even further when Japan began to invade China in 1937, making all other issues lose focus. In her autobiography, Ichikawa writes concerning the happenings:

*I felt deeply depressed when I saw the incident develop into a total war [...] Now we are forced to choose one of three alternatives. The choices are: to go to prison by publicly opposing the war, to withdraw completely from the (women's) movement, or to cooperate with the state to a certain extent by acknowledging things as they are.*¹⁹¹

In 1937, she became secretary of the Japan Women's Alliance, feeling she had to start working within the system as her efforts had few successes to report.¹⁹² She hoped the war would present a new stage to offer a chance to strengthen women's status.¹⁹³ She propagated for the mobilization of women, for example, with the slogan "No rebuilding without women!" (*josei no kyouryoku nakushite kensetsu nashi*).¹⁹⁴ In 1945, after Japan had been defeated, Ichikawa again began on her mission to achieve suffrage, even visiting Prime Minister Higashikuni and the founder of the new Liberal Party, Hatoyama Ichiro, to discuss the issue.¹⁹⁵ In 1952, she was invited to the U.S.A. as a cultural representative of the Rockefeller Foundation, which she accepted. In 1953, while travelling Europe following her trip to America, she was requested to return to Japan and run for the House of Councillors, to which she was elected.¹⁹⁶ Her political involvement in the fight for women's suffrage, her political career and activism for political consciousness positively argument a liberal view on feminism, which she also continued in the 1970s, notably with the foundation of the *International Women's Year Action Group* in 1975, together with Sumiko Tanaka.¹⁹⁷

5.2.2. Social Feminism – Sumiko Tanaka

Socialist feminism embraces as wide a range of ideas as does liberalism. Fabians, Trotskyists, revolutionary communists, Labour Party activists and humanistic Marxists all fall within the range [...]. Women are exploited within the context of capitalism, and in this sense men are merely the agents of an exploitative system and are oppressed in their turn. The equality with men which liberals demand makes no sense to socialists, since it

¹⁹¹ Ichikawa, The Autobiography of Fusae Ichikawa. Cit. by: Mioko Fujieda, Japan's First Phase of Feminism. In: Fujimura-Fanselow, Transforming Japan, 459.

¹⁹² Vavich, The Japanese Woman's Movement, 422.

¹⁹³ Frühstück, Gender and Sexuality, 131.

¹⁹⁴ Yuko Nishikawa, Die Entwicklung zum Krieg und die Frauen der Unterstützungskomitees (*Senso e no keika to yokusan no fujin*). In: Joseishi Sogo Kenkyukai (Eds.), Frauengeschichte in Japan (*Nihon joseishi*) 5 (Tokyo 1990) 236. Cit. By: Andrea Germer, Staat Nation und Familie. Zum Verhältnis von Feminismus und Nationalstaat in Japan, 1918-1945. In: Japanstudien 19(1) (London 2008) 32.

¹⁹⁵ Vavich, The Japanese Woman's Movement, 423-425.

¹⁹⁶ Vavich, The Japanese Woman's Movement, 428.

¹⁹⁷ Tanaka, Women's Liberation Thoughts and Actions, 213.

*would mean equality with an already oppressed group within a corrupt system. [...] The main pillars of the socialist feminist analysis may be summed up under three headings: wage labour, the family and ideology.*¹⁹⁸

The sources utilized for the analysis of Tanaka Sumiko will be her book “Ideas and Actions for Women’s Liberation (*Josei kaiho no shiso to kodo*)”, released in 1979, as well as another book by her: “Images of Women in Modern Japan. To Live for Tomorrow (*Kindai Nihon no joseizo: asu o ikiru tame ni*)”, released in 1977. A speech by her from 1974 on the formation of the *Woman Action Group*, reproduced in “Kodo Suru Onnatachi ga Hiraita Michi” in 1999, will pose an additional source to further deepen the analysis.

Sumiko Tanaka was born in 1909 in Kobe, located on the main island of Japan near Osaka. She was born to a Chinese language scholar father and a Christian mother. Tanaka recalls having been raised independently from the beginning, receiving the same treatment as her brothers and not feeling any weight from the traditional family system. Early on, she already knew she was different from the average Japanese girl, wanting to live independently and aiming to become something big. At thirteen, her family moved to Tokyo following her father’s death, and Tanaka and her siblings worked to support their mother financially. It was during this period that Tanaka came to understand the significance of financial autonomy, and her brothers played a pivotal role in encouraging her to pursue higher education. She graduated from Tsuda Eigaku Juku University in 1931. During her university years, she initiated her professional journey as an English teacher at a girls’ school. However, she found the role to be monotonous and underwhelming, primarily due to the modest compensation offered to female English teachers at the time. Following her graduation, she was invited to work at the Tokyo Institute of Political and Economic Research as a research assistant. At this juncture, she encountered Marxism and found it appealing. She came to believe that unless the capitalist society was overthrown and a socialist revolution was carried out, there would be no revolution for the working class and no liberation of women. This realization made Tanaka eager to participate in a revolutionary movement. In 1948, Tanaka went to visit long-time women’s activist and fellow revolutionist Yamakawa Kikue, director of the Women’s and Juvenile Bureau of the Ministry of Labour. Tanaka was asked to join the Ministry of Labour in the Women’s and Juvenile Bureau, as there were few female bureaucrats. Tanaka accepted the proposal in light of her long-standing respect for Yamakawa and the fact that the work

¹⁹⁸ Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge*, 66-69.

represented a continuation of the initial women's liberation movement.¹⁹⁹ She was appointed as the second head of the Women's section of the BWM in the 1950s.²⁰⁰ During her time in the Ministry of Labour, Tanaka engaged in international travel and pursued further academic studies. She attended the Summer Institute at Harvard University and subsequently took a year-long leave in 1954 from her profession to pursue her studies in human relations at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. Her research focused on the dynamics between men and women.²⁰¹ In 1955, she retired and joined the Socialist Political Party in Japan, where she met and later married Minoru Tanaka, a high-ranking member of the party. In 1965, she was elected for the first time and was reelected three times.²⁰² In collaboration with Fusae Ichikawa, she established the *International Women's Year Action Group* at the onset of 1975, in anticipation of the UN-Women's Conference in Mexico City. Following the conference, the group persisted in the coordination and organization of the activities of several groups. Tanaka's actions also contributed to a shift in the prevailing negative discourse surrounding the Women's Liberation Movement, thereby transforming it into a more positive narrative.²⁰³ Their organization never aimed for an ideological appeal but urged all women's groups on the significance of women's solidarity.²⁰⁴

Apart from her political work and feminist activities, Tanaka was also an acknowledged author and translator. Due to her academic record, Tanaka could speak perfect English, translating "Women. This Excellent Thing" by Ashley Montague in 1954, "Men and Women. A Study of Both Sexes in a Changing World" by Margaret Mead in 1961 and "American Women's History" by Edith Hishino Altback in 1976. Some of her books include the titles "History of World Women's Liberation", released in 1957, and "To a Woman Who Stands on Their Own. From My Life", released in 1979.

5.2.3. Radical Feminism – Mitsu Tanaka, Michimi Amano, and Misako Enoki

When radical feminism first appeared, its distinguishing feature was the way in which it located the origins of women's oppression. Liberals blamed the system of learned sex roles,

¹⁹⁹ Tanaka, Women's Liberation Thoughts and Actions, 258-260.

²⁰⁰ Yoshie Kobayashi, A Path Toward Gender Equality (Milton Park 2004) 85, 105.

²⁰¹ Eleanor Roosevelt, My Day. September 18, 1954. In: Eleanor Roosevelt, The Eleanor Roosevelt Digital Edition (Washington 2017) https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydocedits.cfm?_y=1954&_f=md002965 (last accessed 27.05.2025).

²⁰² Inoue Teruko, Sumiko Tanaka. A Feminist who led the 20th Century. In: Inoue Teruko, Gender and Law (15.10.2014) <https://web.archive.org/web/20221006225351/http://genderlaw.jp/otomo/inoue101514.html> (last accessed 03.09.2025).

²⁰³ Molony, Feminism in Japan, 16.

²⁰⁴ Kobayashi, A Path Toward Gender Equality, 85.

*socialists blamed the economic and cultural exploitation of capitalism, radicals blamed men. For radicals, the socialist revolution was not nearly revolutionary enough. One of the first and still one of the best arguments for radical feminism appeared in the Shulamith Firestone's book "The Dialectic of Sex", in which the author claimed both to encompass and enlarge socialism by grounding Marxist theory more deeply in objective biological conditions. The theory of the class system became the theory of the sex/class system, in which the economic oppression of women was only a secondary result of their biological and psychological oppression by men.*²⁰⁵

The texts that will be analyzed for the part of Mitsu Tanaka include her famous books "Liberation from the Toilet", and "For My Spiritual Sisters", as well as her texts "Declaration of the Liberation of Eros", "Why Sexual Liberation", and "Part Five: The New Left and Ribū: 'Hara-kiri and Junshi' from 'Towards a Living Womanhood: a Disorderly Theory of Woman's Liberation' (*Inochi no Onna-tachi e: Torimidashi Uman Ribū-ron*)."

Including secondary literature, transcriptions of the three texts by her will be used, which Setsu Shigematsu included in her Philosophy Dissertation in 2003.²⁰⁶ The following commentaries on Mitsu Tanaka have been identified as potentially relevant to the analysis: one by Aoki Yayoi, found in the book "Broken Silence" by Sandra Buckley; and another supplementary to her life, found in the works of "Japanese Postwar Studies 2", by Iwanami Shoten, James Welker, Watanabe, Tokuhiko Yoko, Bumiller Elisabeth, and Machiko Matsui. These commentaries have also been found to contain useful information that could help round off the analysis.

Mitsu Tanaka was born in Tokyo in 1943 to a fisherman father and a mother employed in the family business. At the time of her birth, she experienced a lack of oxygen, which resulted in health complications, including a weak physique. This condition frequently resulted in her later absences from school. At the age of eight, she was the victim of sexual abuse at the hands of an employee of her family's business. This event marked her initial exposure to the pervasive issue of gender discrimination. She asserts that she was compelled to determine the source of her perceived "inferior" value as a woman from an early age, and her parents regarded her as being "tainted." Moreover, the man stayed employed in the business after the relationship was uncovered.²⁰⁷ After, her parents decided to turn their business into a restaurant, which accelerated their income and allowed Tanaka to finish high school. When a Vietnamese

²⁰⁵ Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge*, 74.

²⁰⁶ Setsu Shigematsu, *Tanaka Mitsu and the Women's Liberation Movement in Japan. Towards a Radical Feminist Ontology* (Dissertation Cornell University 2003) 289-318.

²⁰⁷ Tanaka, *For My Spiritual Sisters*, 93-96.

neighbor visited them, asking for donations in the context of the Vietnam War, Tanaka decided to join a relief activity for orphans stricken by the war, leading to the formation of the civic group *Anti-War Aknabe*.²⁰⁸ She also joined other organizations related to the student protests against the war.²⁰⁹ In the early 1970s, Tanaka found her purpose in the Women's Liberation Movement *uman ribu*, where she became a leading activist for radical feminism.²¹⁰ She founded the group *Fighting Women* and organized the first march and meeting in Tokyo aimed at promoting women's liberation in November 1970.²¹¹ She proceeded to organize additional public protests and rallies, which transpired in 1971 and 1972, respectively, garnering widespread support from the female demographic. Furthermore, she collaborated with numerous Japanese feminist activists, with whom she established the first women's center.²¹² Tanaka understood herself as a critic of liberal feminism. In her original pamphlet of "Liberation from the Toilet", she warns about the dangers of becoming "*nothing more than the American Movement*"²¹³, whose goals she puts on par with the Japanese First Wave. She argues that the goal of *ribu* is not equality with men²¹⁴, but a "*total revolution of cultural values that would enable a different kind of relationality which it saw as the goal of human liberation.*"²¹⁵ She did not think of women's rights as a separate issue, but as part of the universal and global struggle against authority. Doing so would put women's issues against other fights of oppressed people, which would lead to the exclusivism she views in the American women's liberation movement.²¹⁶

Even if Tanaka's impact was short, it was intense and left an impression on Japanese women. Machiko Matsui, an activist of the time, shared in 1990:

Her traumatic experiences of rape at the age of eight, a broken family, her encounter with sexism in the workplace, her involvement in the anti-Vietnam War movement, and deep disappointment with male radical politicals were shared by many other women of her generation. Tanaka's emphasis on women as individuals with strong souls and

²⁰⁸ Minoru Iwasaki, Chizuko Ueno, Kyodai Kitada, Yoichi Komori, Ryuichi Narita (Eds.), *Japanese Postwar Studies 2. The 60s and 70s (戦後日本スタディーズ 2 60・70年代)* (Tokyo 2008) 284.

²⁰⁹ Toshiya Yoshimi (Ed.), *The People's Spiritual History. Part 5 (ひとびとの精神史 5)* (Tokyo 2015) 211.

²¹⁰ Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows*, 103-104.

²¹¹ Watanabe, *Japanese Women's Studies*, 75.

²¹² Yoko Tokuhiro, *Marriage in Contemporary Japan* (Milton Park 2009) 33-34.

²¹³ Shigematsu, Tanaka Mitsu, 175.

²¹⁴ Shigematsu, Tanaka Mitsu, 174.

²¹⁵ Shigematsu, Tanaka Mitsu, 174-175.

²¹⁶ Shigematsu, Tanaka Mitsu, 175.

*spirits, rather than as devoted wives and self-sacrificing mothers inspired me the most.*²¹⁷

Regarding the analysis of Michimi Amano, notably the interview done by Lucy Leu in the magazine “The Second Wave” published in 1974 will serve as a crucial source²¹⁸, as well as an interview inside the Documentary “Bill Moyers Journal: International Report, Episode 121: The Very Remarkable Yamato Family-Part-2”, done by Bill Moyers in 1975. Additionally, an article released in the magazine “Lesbian Connection” in 1975, which resulted from a conversation between Amano and Connie Allen, who works for the magazine “Femintern Press”, will also be used.

Michimi Amano was born in 1947 into a working-class family in Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan. Her upbringing was characterized by a predominantly paternal environment, with her father and two older brothers playing a significant role in her development. Her mother’s departure from the family home occurred at a relatively early age, triggered by a significant difficult time within the family environment. Nonetheless, Amano’s gaze towards her mother is instilled with a profound sense of romantic longing, as she describes. She elaborated on the manner in which her mother wrote many love letters to Amano, gestures that nurtured and cultivated Amano’s affection for her. Influenced by this rationale, Amano became an “optimistic feminist.”²¹⁹ Her mother became Amano’s idol, whom she finally got to meet at age 18, and from whom she says she learned what a real woman was.²²⁰ From a young age, Amano aspired to attend college in Tokyo, to achieve personal autonomy and become integrated in the city’s vibrant “cultural and bohemian milieu”, as she herself characterizes it. However, her parents refused to comply with her request, insisting that she remain at home. Undeterred, Amano embarked on a four-year endeavor, working diligently every evening in secret to accumulate the necessary funds. Her perseverance and determination culminated in her attaining more than she had initially sought, enabling her to embark on a journey beyond the confines of Japan. For a period of one year, she resided in Paris, and the subsequent year was spent in Copenhagen. Following her stay in Europe in 1972, Amano made the decision to return to Japan, motivated by the prevailing social issues and the ongoing Vietnam War, which profoundly concerned her. There, in May 1972, Amano took part in a three-day conference on

²¹⁷ Matsui, *Evolution of the Feminist Movement*, 435.

²¹⁸ Lucy Leu, *Michimi Amano*, *Women in Japan*. Lucy Leu Interviews Michimi. In: *The Second Wave*. A Magazine of the New Feminism 3(4) (Toronto 1974) 37-43.

²¹⁹ Michimi Amano, *Lesbianism in Japan*. In: *Ambitious Amazons*, *Lesbian Connection* 1(8) (East Lansing 1975) 6.

²²⁰ Amano, *Lesbianism in Japan*, 7.

women's issues, which was her first contact with the women's movement. Subsequently, she joined Mitsu Tanaka's group *Fighting Women*, but left after realizing she wanted to focus on other issues, therefore joining *Red June*. Red June was only a small organization of four people who cooperated with other groups if needed, and with whom she published the newsletter²²¹ "Onna Eros". Amano felt more comfortable in a small group, as she states, in terms of the movement, she preferred to stay alone. Her focus on women's issues stems from a commitment to enhance not her life, but those of her mothers and grandmothers, who she perceives as having endured profound hardships and societal oppression. Two years later, Amano flew to the United States and stayed in New York for six months,²²² meeting up with friends within the American movement. The underlying factor in her decision was the fact that her social circle in New York, comprised exclusively of lesbian feminists, offered a conducive environment for engaging in activities that aligned with her identified interests.²²³ Even though Amano is university-educated and worked as an author, in the US and in Japan, she preferred to work in restaurants, bars, and arcades, declaring: "*Personally I like such a frank atmosphere. I hate office work.*"²²⁴

For the analysis of Misako Enoki, an interview published in the New York Times, "Support Waning, Women's Movement Knuckles Under in Japan", held with Andrew R. Malcolm in 1977, will be used. Additionally, an interview included in the Japanese journal "Agora Mini: 6" released in 1977 will be utilized, as well as secondary literature containing parts of Enoki's works in "Women's Movements in 1970s Japan" by Chujo and Aizawa, released in 2020.²²⁵ Misako Enoki was born in 1945 in Shimobun, in the prefecture of Kamiyama on Shikoku Island. She was born into a wealthy family of lumber merchants and later went to study pharmacy at Kyoto University. After graduation, she was offered a position at Tomoda Pharmaceutical and married physician Natsuo Kiuchi, whom she was compelled to marry by her elderly parents.²²⁶ As a pharmacist, Enoki had a unique insight into the Japanese pharmaceutical industry. This perspective enabled her to obtain the abortion pill, which had been banned in Japan due to numerous reported side effects in other countries. Following a period of experimentation, numerous women affiliated with the Women's Liberation Movement, with whom Enoki was

²²¹ Leu, *Amano*, Women in Japan, 38-40.

²²² Bill Moyers, The Very Remarkable Yamato Family. Part II. In: Bill Moyers, Bill Moyers' Journal. International Report 121 (New York 1975) <https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-07e6a61402f> (last accessed 17.08.2025).

²²³ Leu, *Amano*, Women in Japan, 41.

²²⁴ Moyers, The Very Remarkable Yamato Family.

²²⁵ Chujo, Aizawa, Women's Movements, 133-146.

²²⁶ Anonymous, Japanese "Libbers" Fold. In: The Ottawa Journal (Ottawa 1977) 27.

amicable, also expressed opposition to the pill, citing similar concerns regarding its perceived risks. The parties involved also expressed a reluctance to depend on a system that the state could easily regulate.²²⁷ Moreover, the Japanese pharma industry was plagued by scandals concerning the mistreatment of victims of the Itai-Itai and Minamata disease, further fueling the distrust of society.²²⁸ Enoki, however, carried a different opinion, that abortion pills should be approved and that it was up to the women to decide if they wanted to take them or not. In 1967, she became a member of a women's translation group known as "Wolf Group", which concerned itself with translating English essays from the United States titled "Women's Liberation: Notes from the Second Year."²²⁹ Wolf Group would later become the vehicle through which she disseminated pamphlets advocating for the release of the pill. Her group, however, which had affiliated itself with the recently established Women's Liberation Movement, was unaware of her actions, expressed resentment regarding her perspective, and demonstrated a reluctance to align itself with her pamphlet.²³⁰

In May of 1972, Enoki too was one of the women attending the Women's Liberation Conference by Tanaka Mitsu, where she recruited women to form her own group *Chupiren*. Chupiren was concerned with themes such as approval of the abortion pill, which strayed from the norm of issues that the Women's Liberation Movement was concerned with. Enoki and Chupiren were also concerned with empathizing discourse on women's rights and protested husbands who tried to divorce. Women of other ribu groups interpreted these demands as enforcement of the Japanese marriage system, which was questioned. Like *Fighting Women*, Chupiren pulled many scandalous stunts for the purpose of gaining media attention. Well-known for wearing pink helmets at these protests, *Pink Helmets* soon became an alias for the group.²³¹ Consequently, Chupiren's credibility within the movement was severely compromised. It is hypothesized that, considering Enoki's professional background, Chupiren may have functioned as a front for the pharmaceutical industry, intending to secure regulatory approval for the pill. The attention-seeking stunts employed by Enoki have been contributing to the unfavorable reputation of the feminist movement overall.²³² Mitsu Tanaka even declared

²²⁷ Ueno, Turzynski, "Reproductive Rights/Health", 88.

²²⁸ Michael Dylan Foster, The Question of the Slit-Mouthed Woman. Contemporary Legend, the Beauty Industry, and Women's Weekly Magazines in Japan. In: Catherine R. Stimpson (Ed.), Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society 32(3) (Chicago 2007) 708.

²²⁹ Mackie, Feminism in Modern Japan, 152.

²³⁰ Yoko Akiyama, Enoki Misako and Chupiren (*Enoki Misako to Chupiren*). In: Yoko Akiyama, Ribu's Personal History Notes. From the Age of Women (*Ribu Shishi Noto. Onnatachi no Jidai kara*) (Tokyo 1993) 125-138. Cit. by: Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows*, 226.

²³¹ Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows*, 226.

²³² Norgren, *Abortion before Birth Control*, 87.

Misako Enoki and Chupiren in its entirety not part of the Women's Liberation Movement, as their arguments strayed too far from other organizations' goals that did align.²³³ Starting in 1974, Chupiren began to lose members who were unhappy with the way Enoki led the group. When Enoki decided to run for a place in the Diet, using her husband's money for the campaign, the group disbanded as a result of her loss in 1977.²³⁴ Enoki had formed the political party called "Japanese Women's Party",²³⁵ receiving only 0.4 percent of the public vote in the election.²³⁶ After the failure, Misako Enoki is said to have disappeared completely from the public scene and the movement.²³⁷ It is suspected that Misako Enoki was only a pen name.²³⁸

5.3. Comparative Analysis Across Key Dimensions

5.3.1. Political Strategies and Relationship to Power

Fusae Ichikawa's political engagement is indicative of her liberal feminist leanings. During World War II, she participated in the political arena, where she thought it was futile to engage in the struggle for the advancement of women's issues. She believed that the most effective way to address women's demands would be through her collaboration with the government, as a woman. This led to her subsequent exclusion from general elections for a period of three and a half years following the war. The objective of the government was to eliminate all individuals who could potentially hinder the process of democratization in Japan.²³⁹ As an independent after the purge, she was voted into the House of Councilors in 1953 and has continued to be elected to the Diet well into the 1970s. Within the Diet, she joined the *Dai-Niin Club*, a group that focused on cleaning up politics and improving women's status.²⁴⁰ Her primary focus stayed on the promotion of women's political rights, a cause she had been championing since the start of the First Wave. Her engagement in this cause increased exponentially throughout her years of political activism. She also argues that, reflecting on the efforts that women made

²³³ *Shigematsu*, *Scream from the Shadows*, 225-226.

²³⁴ Barbara *Molony*, *Rice Paddles and Pink Helmets*. *Framing Gendered Resistance in 20th Century Japan*. In: *Internationales Asien Forum. International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 53(1) (Munich 2022) 116.

²³⁵ Dorothea *Erxleben*, *Enoki, Miswo*. In: Jennifer S. *Uglow*, Frances *Hinton*, Maggy *Hendry* (Eds.), *The Northeastern Dictionary of Women's Biography* (Boston 1991) 191.

²³⁶ *Anonymous*, *Japanese "Libbers" Fold*, 27.

²³⁷ *Ueno, Turzynski*, "Reproductive Rights/Health", 88.

²³⁸ *Mackie*, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 173.

²³⁹ *Nuita, Ichikawa*, *Fusae Ichikawa*, 60.

²⁴⁰ *National Diet Library Japan*, *Portraits of Modern Japanese Historical Figures*. Ichikawa Fusae (Tokyo 2004) <https://www.ndl.go.jp/portrait/e/datas/506/> (last accessed 17.08.2025).

for the right to vote in Japan, women had four reasons why they desired the right to vote, with the fourth reason embodying the preservation of the peace of the world.²⁴¹

Sumiko Tanaka was also politically active as a recognized member of the Socialist Party. In 1965, she was elected to the House of Councilors for the first time. She was later reelected on three occasions and served as the director of the Women's Bureau.²⁴² For Tanaka, it is the goal of economic independence for women she strives for. In an article released in "Fujin Koron" in 1958, according to her assertions, the American government has implemented policies that appear to be in opposition to the innovative trend of working women, opting to promote stay-at-home concepts. Japan, observing the United States for potential points of adaptation, would cause a misstep with this approach in Japan, as articulated by Tanaka:

*"Just because American Women have changed their past mistakes in entering the workplace and are now staying at home, it is a mistake to think that Japanese women should follow suit. Economic independence is the foundation of true human freedom."*²⁴³

Tanaka's relationship to politics has undergone a significant transformation over the course of her life. During her university years, she encountered Marxism and left-wing movements, motivated by the prospect of overthrowing capitalist society to initiate a social revolution. More than anything, she wanted the liberation of the working class and of women. Upon her employment at the Ministry of Labor in 1948, she seamlessly transitioned into the government sector despite a lifelong anti-establishment stance. Tanaka voices that she had to reflect on many things and had to reexamine her subjectivity, concluding that there were more socially oriented ideologies to explore other than Marxism. Consequently, she became closely involved in *uman ribu* as a politician and critic.²⁴⁴

For Mitsu Tanaka, it is evident that she did not engage in active politics. However, it can be argued that she is the most deserving of the title "activist" among the women concerned with in this analysis. Rhetoric was her weapon of choice, a fact that was evident from her first rally in 1970 and her widely circulated speeches, including "Liberation from the Toilet."²⁴⁵ Similar to Sumiko Tanaka, she was part of student movements in university, motivated by the war in Vietnam. However, in contrast to Sumiko Tanaka, she maintained an anti-establishment stance,

²⁴¹ Nuita, Ichikawa, Fusae Ichikawa, 61.

²⁴² Teruko, Sumiko Tanaka, <https://web.archive.org/web/20221006225351/http://genderlaw.jp/otomo/inoue101514.html> (last accessed 03.09.2025).

²⁴³ Sumiko Tanaka, *Images (Kindai Nihon no Joseizo. Asu o Ikiru tame ni)* (Tokyo 1977) 231-232.

²⁴⁴ Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 259-261.

²⁴⁵ Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows*, 18.

aligning herself with the New Left before embarking on her *ribu* journey at the age of 26.²⁴⁶ Her fight against the Immigration Control Bill connected her to liberation. In her book “To by Spiritual Sisters”, she details the way she learned how much power she, as a Japanese person, and the government held. During a demonstration, a Vietnamese acquaintance of hers was deported, which prompted Tanaka to reflect on the division of her nation:

*The Immigration Control Bill and the proposed law blatantly show that Japan is a divided nation [...], with a strict tolerance towards Westerners among foreigners living in Japan [...], but with the power to decide about life or death over Asians. [...] even unconsciously ‘power’ had become a part of me.*²⁴⁷

She herself realized that she was not only oppressed as a woman, but also an oppressor and aggressor towards other women. She calls this sentiment in her book “*The Woman Here*.”²⁴⁸ Michimi Amano, akin to Mitsu Tanaka, began her activism through participation in anti-Vietnam War protests in the 60s before delving into women’s issues. Additionally, she was part of Mitsu Tanaka’s group *Fighting Women* in 1972, though only for a brief period. Upon recognizing a discrepancy between her objectives and those of the group, she proceeded to affiliate herself with a more modest organization known as *Red June*, which was also responsible for the distribution of the newsletter titled “Onna Eros.” The issues with which she was concerned encompass the topic of oppression, a subject that had been influenced by the lives of her mother and grandmother, whom she found to be miserable and oppressed.²⁴⁹ Her strategy, therefore, can be described as empowerment of ordinary women through shared experiences in small, consciousness-raising circles. She rejected vocal stunts and big organizations, preferring to believe in the power of small and quiet engagement, where she could even reach people not active in *uman ribu* and change society without direct confrontation. She did not seek to seize power, but to withdraw from and subvert its structures. In terms of power relations, Amano is vocal about her own role as an oppressor. She argues that while she is a minority, she still belongs to a group that, in turn, oppresses others as well, like Mitsu Tanaka. Amano expresses that her personal experience with discrimination has been exclusively tied to her gender. In contrast, women from other nationalities, such as those from South Korea, have faced heightened forms of oppression that are compounded by intersectionality.

²⁴⁶ Tanaka, *For My Spiritual Sisters*, 72-144.

²⁴⁷ Tanaka, *For My Spiritual Sisters*, 135

²⁴⁸ Tanaka, *For My Spiritual Sisters*, 246.

²⁴⁹ Moyers, *The Very Remarkable Yamato Family*.

An important thing to note is that Amano does not view her sexuality as a target of discrimination, as she states that lesbianism is not a topic of concern for Japanese men.²⁵⁰ While she does not perceive her sexuality as a concern, her public outing serves as a political statement. This endeavor transcends the conventional roles of motherhood, thereby challenging prevailing norms within Japanese society concerning the family structure and the reproductive role assigned to women.

Her approach can be defined as *prefigurative politics*, where the goal is not to work with masses or work within existing systems, but to build the future by living out desired values and social structures in the present.²⁵¹

Misako Enoki was politically active through her “Women’s Party” and was a candidate in Japanese elections. Career-wise, she was a pharmacist and stood for bodily autonomy through the demand for the legalization of the contraceptive pill and the visibility of women in politics.²⁵² Enoki strategically leveraged the media’s interest in *uman ribu* to garner attention for her own activism. In her dealings with *Chipuren*, she employed highly visible and controversial tactics, including the wearing of pink helmets and the orchestration of provocative protests. Her objective was to provoke a strong reaction from the public and attract media attention to her and her cause.²⁵³

Misako Enoki poses a special case for radical feminists, as she did not reject power but rather sought to influence institutional structures. This sets her apart from Tanaka Mitsu and Amano Michimi, who believe that the state actively contributes to patriarchal structures. This and the fact that her actions were perceived as detrimental to the reputation of *uman ribu* led to many members in the movement rejecting Enoki’s participation.²⁵⁴ Her position as a pharmacist also allowed her to use her power in the medical field to influence public opinion. In a scandal, it was supposed that Enoki worked with big pharmaceutical companies and politicians who would benefit financially from the release of the pill.²⁵⁵ The distrust that many women’s groups held of large scientific institutions led to an even bigger disbelief in Enoki.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁰ Leu, *Amano*, Women in Japan, 40.

²⁵¹ Gilherme Fians, *Prefigurative Politics*. In: Felix Stein (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. Fascimile of the first edition in: *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (St Andrews 2022) <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/prefigurative-politics> (last accessed 10.10.2025).

²⁵² Andrew R. Malcolm, *Support Waning. Women’s Movement Knuckles Under in Japan*. In: *The New York Times* (July 23, New York 1977) <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/07/23/archives/support-waning-womens-movement-knuckles-under-in-japan.html> (last accessed 18.08.2025).

²⁵³ *Nogren*, *Abortion before Birth Control*, 87.

²⁵⁴ *Chujo*, *Aizawa*, *Women’s Movements*, 137.

²⁵⁵ *Nogren*, *Abortion before Birth Control*, 87.

²⁵⁶ *Molony*, *Rice Paddles and Pink Helmets*, 114.

5.3.2. Gender and the Body

Fusae Ichikawa, a liberal feminist, prioritized the political rights of women. She ranked suffrage and political inclusion over sexual liberation, as she believed that only the former could lay the foundation for equality in all aspects. Ichikawa's conception of gender was centered on its role as a political status rather than an identity.²⁵⁷

One big issue for Ichikawa that can be argued to be put within demands for bodily autonomy was the suicides of mothers with their children. Ichikawa's establishment of a distinct group aimed to advocate for the rights of mothers and to express the profound demands placed on them, which are contributing to the challenges. Her concerns became a primary reason for the elevated status of mothers' protection as a significant agenda item within women's movements.²⁵⁸

Sumiko Tanaka recognizes sexual liberation as a big argument of *uman ribu*.²⁵⁹ She herself, however, puts a vocal point on the protection of mothers. Tanaka argues that society should take a more serious approach to protect the burdens of motherhood.²⁶⁰

In the roundtable discussion included at the end of her book "Women's Liberation", Tanaka points out an interesting phenomenon: The discussion is comprised of three women from the pre-war generation, two from the war generation (including Tanaka), and one from the post-war generation. She emphasizes the intricate tie between gender discrimination and the "family" or "*ie*", highlighting the observable decline of the feudal family system as a crucial point of analysis. Only the three women from the pre-war generation felt a strong pressure from the "family" in matters of education, marriage, and motherhood. The two women from the war generation only felt discrimination as women in the workplace. These ties have both completely vanished for the women of the post-war generation. Concluding, Tanaka states, only the pre- and war generations have a strong anti-discrimination consciousness. This is perceived as a problem by Tanaka, as this also means that the post-war generation is more prone to accept a male-dominated society and not question the "feminine consciousness" as much, as there is less reason to.²⁶¹

For Mitsu Tanaka, gender and society are also deeply connected. It is the patriarchal *ie*, based on the principle of authoritarianism, that reproduces the social order through this structure of

²⁵⁷ Nuiita, Ichikawa, Fusae Ichikawa, 58.

²⁵⁸ Nuiita, Ichikawa, Fusae Ichikawa, 59-60.

²⁵⁹ Tanaka, Women's Liberation, 220.

²⁶⁰ Tanaka, Images, 269.

²⁶¹ Tanaka, Women's Liberation, 278-279.

consciousness and ideology.²⁶² She puts forward the *horserace theory*, where she argues that women direct their femininity towards men, while men direct their masculinity towards society.²⁶³ Therefore, she does not perceive liberation as a matter that exclusively affects women. Rather, she asserts that men must become involved in the movement as well. In order for history to change, women and men must both engage in a dialogue that encompasses both perspectives. Men additionally need to engage in critical discourse about male consciousness, as well as the societal expectations that are imposed upon them, which ultimately affect the way women are treated.²⁶⁴

Talking about body politics, Mitsu Tanaka stands for sexual liberation above all. Her personal history, where she had to learn her value at eight years old, where the fault for her sexual abuse was put on her, and the realization that even in her time at the New Left women were objectified, led her to stand up for sexual liberation.²⁶⁵ In her speech “Why Sexual Liberation”, Tanaka states:

*We define women’s liberation as a liberation of sex. [...] We do not consider this to be a liberation or freeing of our sexual organs, meaning free sex. This is nothing more than a dirty form of expression which is based on men’s biased consciousness towards women [...] Women’s liberation of sex is actually a kind of self-liberation from the structure of consciousness that denies sex.*²⁶⁶

She again talks about this topic in her book “For My Spiritual Sisters”, where she argues:

*The fact that women who have relationships with multiple men are despised as ‘unclean women’, while the same is seen as a man’s worth, is simply because the taboo against sex has primarily targeted women. [...] It was necessary for a woman’s sexuality to be the property of one man and to be enclosed deep within the “home.”*²⁶⁷

Michimi Amano empathizes a redefinition of “*our own sexual politics.*”²⁶⁸ Within her translation group, bodily autonomy, birth control, pregnancy, and childbirth were amongst the topics they felt were of utmost priority to Japanese women.²⁶⁹ In addition, she contributed to

²⁶² Mitsu Tanaka, Why “Sex Liberation”. Raising the Problem of Women’s Liberation (*Naze “Sei no Kaiho” ka. Josei Kaihou e no mondai teiki*) (Tokyo 1970). Cit. by: Shigematsu, Tanaka Mitsu, 297-298.

²⁶³ Tanaka, For my Spiritual Sisters, 29 & 74.

²⁶⁴ Tanaka, For my Spiritual Sisters, 158.

²⁶⁵ Tanaka, For My Spiritual Sisters, 93-105 & 144.

²⁶⁶ Tanaka, Why “Sex Liberation”. Cit. by: Shigematsu, Tanaka Mitsu, 298.

²⁶⁷ Tanaka, For My Spiritual Sisters, 266.

²⁶⁸ Moyers, The Very Remarkable Yamato Family.

²⁶⁹ James Welker, From Women’s Liberation to Lesbian Feminism in Japan. Rezubian Feminizumi within and beyond the Uman Ribu Movement in the 1970s and 1980s. In: Bullock, Kano, Welker (Eds.), Rethinking Japanese Feminism, 53-54.

the first translations of lesbian texts in Japanese literature in the newsletter “Onna Eros.” Her sexuality offers a new, embodied, and queer feminist perspective on the Japanese Women’s Liberation Movement, thereby disrupting the heteronormative gender binary. In the aftermath of her public outing, she became a prominent figure in the media due to the widespread interest in the subject matter in the United States. Amano voices that she never encountered discrimination in Japanese society based on her sexual orientation. Rather, she has experienced bias only due to her gender.²⁷⁰ While reporting no direct discrimination, her existence and activism still challenged the societal boundaries of Japan.

Misako Enoki speaks up for bodily autonomy and sexual liberation in the form of access to the contraceptive pill. Enoki believed that bodily autonomy was needed as a foundation of gender equality. Without control over their own reproduction, women could not gain economic independence. She sought to break the societal expectation that women must become mothers and sought to separate sex from reproduction.²⁷¹ In contrast to radical feminists, such as Mitsu Tanaka, who regarded the pill as a method of imposing further responsibility on women for contraception as a means of aggravating women’s stress levels to satisfy men’s sexual needs, she viewed the pill as a tool of control.²⁷²

Enoki’s approach to gender and sexuality was also less emotionally loaded than the feminism of, for example, Michimi Amano. Where Amano used lesbianism to challenge heteronormative gender roles, Enoki used contraception to fight heterosexual expectations.

5.3.3. Engagement with International Feminism/ US-Feminism

Ichikawa Fusae states on the connection of *uman ribu* to the United States, that her initial reason for going to the US in 1921 was for inspiration, as women there had just gained the right to vote: “*I wanted to see firsthand what direction the women’s movement was going to take.*”²⁷³ She was profoundly influenced by the movement, and she collected materials and literature to bring back to Japan to further the movement there. Her main inspirations were Alice Paul and Carrie Chapman Catt, who inspired her to focus solely on women’s issues.²⁷⁴ When suffrage was achieved in Japan in 1946, Ichikawa put a big part of the reason on the American occupation under MacArthur, stating: “*Without the Occupation or the defeat of Japan, the realization of the Japanese women’s constitutional rights would not have been achieved so*

²⁷⁰Leu, Amano, Women in Japan, 40-41.

²⁷¹ Misako Enoki, The Pill Book. You Can Get Your Pill Right Away! (*Piru no hon anata no piru wa sugu kaeru!*) (Tokyo 1976). Cit. by: Chujo, Aizawa, Women’s Movements, 136-137.

²⁷² Enoki, The Pill Book, 137.

²⁷³ Nuita, Ichikawa, Fusae Ichikawa, 58.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

quickly.”²⁷⁵ Importantly noted, in her autobiography, Ichikawa argues that, for her, Women’s Liberation began in the United States.²⁷⁶

Ichikawa learned English during her stay in the U.S.A. Notably, during her political purge, she used the time to make use of her English by selling manuscripts to a newspaper.²⁷⁷ Her engagement with US feminists and her fluency in English significantly expanded her access to international debates. For instance, as early as the 1920s, she had visited numerous women’s organizations and cultivated friendships with prominent figures Alice Paul and Carrie Chapman Catt.²⁷⁸ Internationally, Ichikawa Fusae became well known and regularly engaged in global discussions, one example being in the 1975 UN-Women’s Congress in Mexico City, where, together with Sumiko Tanaka, she founded the organization *International Women’s Year Action Group*.²⁷⁹

Sumiko Tanaka dedicates a whole chapter in her book “Images” to the Christian Missionary of the 19th century. Through the Meiji Restoration, as explained in detail in chapter 3.1, not only did the Japanese leave the country to gain experience from outside, but Americans also came to Japan to learn and spread their message. They were often accompanied by their wives, who were shocked by the low status of Japanese women and established Missionary Schools where education was offered. Tanaka’s research indicates that Christianity was instrumental in introducing the concept of monogamy to Japan and popularizing it, thereby concurrently elevating the status of Japanese women. Christianity posits the connection between man and woman as a unit at the center of society, thereby assigning women a comparable status to that of men for the purpose of maintaining a functional society. She ends her chapter by saying that at this time, the introduction of Christianity went hand in hand with the introduction of feminism and the first steps of women’s liberation.²⁸⁰

Tanaka acknowledges that suffrage, one of the key points in the history of Japanese feminism, was achieved not by the efforts of Japanese Women but by instructions of the occupying American forces led by MacArthur after World War II. However, Tanaka puts into perspective that American and English women had also struggled to achieve this step before, and the fact that they came so far as to have men on their side to argue for suffrage in Japan speaks for their

²⁷⁵ Vavich, *The Japanese Woman’s Movement*, 426.

²⁷⁶ Ichikawa, *The Autobiography of Fusae Ichikawa*, 120.

²⁷⁷ Nuiita, *Ichikawa*, Fusae Ichikawa, 60.

²⁷⁸ Nuiita, *Ichikawa*, Fusae Ichikawa, 58; Ichikawa, *The Autobiography of Fusae Ichikawa*, 116-117.

²⁷⁹ Molony, *Feminism in Japan*, 16.

²⁸⁰ Tanaka, *Images*, 52-70.

efforts. Therefore, from a global perspective, it can be concluded that the attainment of women's suffrage in Japan was the result of collective efforts by women.²⁸¹

Specifying the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement, Tanaka argues that it was inspired by the American Movement and spread to Japan. She argues that the popularity of the movement and the radical gain of media attention was because it was vastly different from the "traditional" Japanese women's liberation of the First Wave. In this instance, the objective was not merely to modify the living reality of women. Rather, it was to effect a transformation on the inner "woman" consciousness of the activists themselves.²⁸² Nonetheless, Tanaka also takes a critical stance on the assumption of a direct American import:

*Although it is said that it started as an imported American movement, the Japanese Liberation Movement is not merely a translation or import of the American movement, but it has taken on a unique indigenous color, which is not unrelated to the terminology of the Liberation Movement. And it goes without saying that this contains criticism of the 'translated language character'.*²⁸³

In the last part, Tanaka is critiquing the idea of feminism as something merely translated from the West, particularly the US, to Japan. By assuming a Western terminology to be applied to *uman ribu*, this can distort or flatten Japan's own experiences and needs. Culture is an entity that cannot be translated. Therefore, cultural connotation in speech must be regarded and cannot be ignored, regardless of the similarity of origin of the movement.

Mitsu Tanaka left her group in 1974 and traveled to the US with other *ribu* activists in 1975 for the first time to visit the first UN-Women's conference. This opportunity was used to network globally and, through the close approximation, to learn about the American Women's Liberation Movement.²⁸⁴ As this was Tanaka's first journey to the US, being already a prominent figure in the movement, it can be argued that she established her thought without American influence. In an interview between Barbara Sandra Buckley and Aoki Yayoi, another feminist of the time, Yayoi recalls having a conversation with Tanaka about the topic. She recalls that Tanaka "*can still remember her own sense of amazement when she discovered the existence of women's liberation in America. She had already found her own identical ground before this.*"²⁸⁵ However, Tanaka finds inspiration from the US movement to establish some of her arguments. She recalls the beginnings of liberation, which led to the liberation thought

²⁸¹ Tanaka, *Images*, 176.

²⁸² Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 216.

²⁸³ Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 228.

²⁸⁴ Welker, *From Women's Liberation to Lesbian Feminism*, 64.

²⁸⁵ Buckley, *Broken Silence*, 11.

of women. Black people in the U.S.A. started to form their own identity by commencing to call white policemen “pigs”, which confirmed their distance from the white centered society in daily life. Tanaka draws parallels between this incident and the early days of the *ribu* movement, posing the question of who the “pigs” for women are and who robbed them of their language, concept, and identity. For Tanaka, she catalyzed the men who possess thoughts of “*We are fighting side by side, we are of the same mind*”, who are unaware of the privilege they have and the reality for women.²⁸⁶ Tanaka argues that these men lack the ability to consciously perceive women as integrated individuals capable of expressing both emotional and physical aspects.²⁸⁷ According to Tanaka, it is the actions of these so-called “male-revolutionaries” she seeks to desensitize to their own privilege and status as oppressors..²⁸⁸ While Tanaka’s beliefs were not influenced directly by feminist movements in the United States, an unconscious connection to her becoming involved with women’s issues does exist. One of Tanaka’s first vocal points was, among other subjects, an end to military prostitution. The United States’ military presence on the islands of Okinawa was significant, with military troops being stationed there after World War II and continuing to be present even into the 1970s. It was during this period that the conditions on US bases in Okinawa came to light. The exploration revealed a correlation between the bases’ activities in Vietnam with the subsequent impact on the local economy and the sex industry, as well as the occurrence of sexual violence against local women. Tanaka’s manifesto “Liberation from the Toilet” and her observation of male thought served future feminist activists in the 1990s to reanalyze and understand how it was even possible for military sexual exploitation to happen.²⁸⁹ Japan’s military alliance with the United States also included Japan’s involvement in US military activities in Vietnam, which Tanaka objected to as well.²⁹⁰ Ultimately, it can be posited that the United States’ involvement in the war and Japan’s growing proximity to the United States may have exerted a subconscious influence on Tanaka’s prioritization of women’s issues.

Michimi Amano argues that the Japanese women’s movements got their initial impetus from the United States. Likewise, in the 1970s, Amano observed a significant increase in the number of *uman ribu* women who drew inspiration from the United States. Amano’s six-month

²⁸⁶ Shigematsu, Tanaka Mitsu, 302.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ While Tanaka Mitsu may not speak about a specific ethnic group of men in particular, this expression does remind of the Japanese troops who marched into Japan after the Second World War, achieving women’s right to vote. MacArthur also possessed the same mind-set, fighting for women, but not in their interest, but in his own interests, still viewing Japanese women as lesser and submissive.

²⁸⁹ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 216-219.

²⁹⁰ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 158-159.

residency in the US was coupled with her exclusive social circle of fellow feminists. The rising discourse surrounding lesbianism in the United States, coupled with Amano's overseas experiences, may have contributed to her decision to establish connections with like-minded women from the USA. While the movement was inspired by the US and exhibits numerous similarities, according to Amano, there are also exceptions. She brings up the issue of homosexuality as an example, a theme that is very strongly regarded in 1970s America, but in Japan has little to no importance in the movement.²⁹¹ The United States, in her opinion, views homosexuality as a political issue, while in Japan, women do not feel oppression because of their sexuality: "*Japanese men are not threatened by Lesbianism. Women are regarded as being so unimportant and powerless that nothing they do is seen as constituting a serious threat to men.*"²⁹² Although one thing Japan has learned from the US in this regard is the trend of discussing homosexuality. Japanese media has adopted the issue and created a Japanese feature of dealing with Japanese lesbianism, for which they had asked Amano to come on the program.²⁹³ Amano also noticed an influx of inspiration from the American Lesbian Movement in Japan. During an encounter with two Japanese lesbians en route to the United States, a discussion emerged regarding the subject of the lesbian movement. The two women had informed her of their intention to establish a Japanese lesbian movement, a concept which Amano perceived as a direct copy of the American model. From her perspective, the establishment of a lesbian movement in Japan would be a questionable attempt, as evidenced by her arguments. She further elaborates:

*"I am bored talking all the time about lesbianism in Japan. It is not an important issue. We have so many other things to share."*²⁹⁴

Amano speaks highly of the US, but at the same time sees Japanese women attempting to be like the US in topics where there are no actual points of connection. Amano warns that these issues prompt concerns among other feminists regarding the Japanese women's movements as mere replicas of their American counterparts, despite the distinct nature of these movements. Amano exemplifies the necessity for Japanese feminists to articulate their positions and actively disassociate themselves from the United States to validate distinct Japanese movements.²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ Leu, *Amano*, Women in Japan, 40.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Leu, *Amano*, Women in Japan, 40-41.

²⁹⁴ Amano, *Lesbianism in Japan*, 8.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

Enoki Misako, as far as the sources are concerned, has never travelled abroad from the time of her birth to the end of the 1970s. The only connection that can be drawn is her interview with Malcolm, where she also mentions the important role the US has played in the realization of voting rights for Japanese women,²⁹⁶ and her previous work as a translator of “Wolf group”, whose works include translations of essays from the US titled “Women’s Liberation. Notes from the Second Year.”²⁹⁷ Nonetheless, as Enoki only worked within Japanese society and argued strictly for societal change there, the possibility of US influence in her case can be discarded.

5.3.4. View of the Women’s Liberation Movement in Japan

Fusae Ichikawa’s perception of the movement is a division between feminists of the 1910s and 1920s and those of the 1970s. She employs the term “libbers”, a reference to the term *uman ribu*, and characterizes the activists of the First Wave as “old libbers” and those of the Second Wave as “new libbers.” Overall, she is impressed with the *uman ribu* movement and sees many parallels to the U.S.A. For her, the movement in the United States also encompasses the two groups of “libbers”, whereby “old libbers” represent an anti-establishment movement, while “new libbers” work within the establishment. In her opinion, 1970s Japan is characterized by a significant presence of young libbers and perceives an urgent need for individuals with an anti-establishment orientation to join to achieve substantive change in the status of women. She also views a need for more women in higher education to join the movement, such as university professors and journalists.²⁹⁸

Sumiko Tanaka argues that the formation of the *Woman Action Group* was necessary, as not much had changed in the past thirty years since the principle of sexual equality was stated in the Constitution.²⁹⁹ In general, Tanaka argues that *uman ribu* does not have a clearly defined organizational structure or leader group. The primary approach in the movement is the formation of smaller groups, within which individuals either confess or denounce the prevalence of gender discrimination and their own *female consciousness*. According to Tanaka, the movement is centered on the life histories of the activists themselves.³⁰⁰ This is the reason

²⁹⁶ *Malcolm*, Support Waning.

²⁹⁷ *Mackie*, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 152.

²⁹⁸ *Nuita*, *Ichikawa*, Fusae Ichikawa, 61.

²⁹⁹ Kodo Suru Kai Kiroku Shu Henshu Iinkai (Eds.), *A Path Paved by Women of Action* (Kodo Suru Onnatachi ga Hiraita Michi) (Tokyo 1999) 13. Cit. by: *Mackie*, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 176-177.

³⁰⁰ *Tanaka*, *Women’s Liberation*, 218.

why *uman ribu*, by its nature, so Tanaka, will have to be replaced sooner or later by a movement with various concrete goals and organizations.³⁰¹

She further believes that even if a woman begins with self-liberation, she cannot complete it alone. It is an established fact that individuals are influenced by their surroundings, which may include their family, place of work, religion, residence, and global conditions. Hence, for Tanaka, it is necessary to build solidarity and theories among women not only for a domestic, but, moreover, for a global women's liberation movement.³⁰²

Tanaka senses a desire among women towards a global social revolution. For instance, in Japan, the cries against gender discrimination in the workplace are high, and point towards a social revolution in the same way Mexican women cry for a liberation out of poverty, illiteracy, hunger, and ethnic oppression.³⁰³ A significant aspect of her philosophy pertains to the mentioned *feminine consciousness*, which involves a deliberate awareness of oneself as a woman and the role one plays in systemic oppression. This matter can be considered a double-edged sword, as on one hand, heightened awareness can lead to acceptance, particularly in the context of the high demands Japanese society places on women and the reluctance to disappoint. On the other hand, awareness means resistance, as grasping discrimination can indicate a growing want to fight and contest.³⁰⁴ In this statement, Tanaka makes a clear replication of the main argument of social feminism, which posits that gender and class influence each other mutually, thereby reinforcing the prevailing social system.³⁰⁵ Tanaka believes that:

*The current women's liberation movement cannot progress unless women themselves become aware of their own issues, and in order for that to happen, conditions must be established. I think both (sides) are necessary, but without awareness, there will be no struggle to change the conditions. The first thing to do is change people's attitudes.*³⁰⁶

Mitsu Tanaka very clearly states that the Women's Liberation Movement overall is missing an essential fact: that it needs a liberation of sex, of *eros*, to truly achieve women's liberation. Tanaka argues that women tend to allocate their energy towards issues that are merely superficial aspects of the overall problem. She demands a "*reform of our stream of consciousness that denies our sex.*"³⁰⁷ Japanese women, in her opinion, seek protection of men and society, based on the consciousness and ideology of the Japanese state and culture, where

³⁰¹ Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 232.

³⁰² Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 258.

³⁰³ Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 279.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge*, 71.

³⁰⁶ Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 295.

³⁰⁷ Tanaka, Declaration of the Liberation of Eros. In: Shigematsu, Tanaka Mitsu, 291-292.

the patriarchal *ie* system prevails. Social orders are therefore reproduced. Sharing an opinion with Sumiko Tanaka, women must acknowledge this fundamental problem if they are to break free from the system in which they are currently trapped. She also cites Wilhelm Reich: “*As long as people do not recognize their most intimate problem, which is at the core of their existence, and are left to unconsciously struggle with despair, the State can do whatever it wishes.*”³⁰⁸

For Michimi Amano, the Women’s Liberation Movement is still only starting to gain traction in Japan, mostly in urban areas. She also identifies the diversity of goals and groups as a challenge, feeling a necessity for greater centralization and organization among the activists, as the issues often appear to be multifaceted and ambiguous: “*I believe that a lot of women in the movement are against a highly centralized structure, and feel that women in different communities should be organizing around immediate problems which they confront in their own lives.*”³⁰⁹ Amano also compares this thought to those prevalent in the United States, where she declares: “*When women (in the US) feel oppressed, they will stand up and say, NO!, and organize. In Japan [...] we avoid the idea of personal or individual rights in our struggle the way it is advocated here (in the US).*”³¹⁰

Misako Enoki views the failure of her party in the 1977 elections as a direct correlation to the visibility of the Women’s Liberation Movement in Japanese society. In an interview, she states that she anticipates the pending end of the Women’s Liberation Movement in Japan. The poor result of the election serves as an indication for her that Japan has not yet reached a point of readiness to engage in discourse on the matter and that, in the context of politics, the contributions of women remain largely unnoticed.³¹¹

In terms of the women in the movement themselves, she shares:

*There are many women’s groups, but there needs to be more competition. I believe if they stimulate each other through competition, and each group becomes a strong one, then they come together strategically or tactically. But if women gather together, without any power, just because they are women, I think that will hinder development. First, you need to improve your own abilities. I think this will lead to greater success and progress in the Women’s Movement.*³¹²

³⁰⁸ Tanaka, *For My Spiritual Sisters*, 282.

³⁰⁹ Leu, *Amano, Women in Japan*, 39.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Malcolm, *Support Waning*.

³¹² Misako Enoki, *A New Society Dominated by Women* (Josei Yui no Atarashi Shakai o) In: *Agora Editorial Department (Eds.), Agora Mini 6* (Tokyo 1977) 3.

Enoki relays this monologue in relation to her own experience in the movement. As mentioned above, some women within *ribu*, including Mitsu Tanaka, did not think of Enoki and her group as part of the Women's Liberation Movement.³¹³ Nonetheless, even if some goals did not align with *uman ribu*, some others did. Enoki aspired to facilitate an open dialogue among Japanese women within the movement, emphasizing the importance of peer-to-peer communication, rather than persuading or convincing others of their distinct beliefs and goals. However, it is important to recognize that women's issues are not universally applicable, and even if some women hold divergent views on certain subjects, this does not lead to the exclusion of the movement. Where conversation can lead is the identification of big equal goals that can be pursued together, resulting in more power.

5.4. Summarizing the key differences

Altogether, similarities and differences between the five women can be drawn.

Liberal Fusae Ichikawa operated within institutional politics, focusing on legal equality and female participation in politics, aligning closely with postwar liberal reforms and US democratic ideals.³¹⁴

Sumiko Tanaka was a former anti-institution turned social democrat who bridged activism and institutional politics, aiming for social reform and women's labor rights through state engagement.³¹⁵

The radical feminists either rejected institutions altogether or aligned with them according to the proximity of interests. Mitsu Tanaka and Michimi Amano advocated for the complete dismantling of patriarchal structures. Tanaka sought to garner public attention through provocative actions,³¹⁶ while Amano engaged in modest, anti-hierarchical activism by collaborating with other women's groups and publishing newsletters.³¹⁷

Enoki Misako presents a special case, as in the eyes of other radical feminists, she aligned too closely with institutional interests. However, like Mitsu Tanaka, she engaged in shocking public protests lobbying for reproductive rights³¹⁸ and even tried to enter the Diet, which resulted in even more shock value.³¹⁹ Her questionable tactics, the scandal of her deal with

³¹³ *Shigematsu*, *Scream from the Shadows*, 225-226.

³¹⁴ *Nuita*, *Ichikawa*, Fusae Ichikawa.

³¹⁵ *Tanaka*, *Women's Liberation*, 259-261.

³¹⁶ *Shigematsu*, *Scream from the Shadows*, 18.

³¹⁷ *Leu*, *Amano*, *Women in Japan*, 38.

³¹⁸ *Nogren*, *Abortion before Birth Control*, 87.

³¹⁹ *Malcolm*, *Support Waning. Women's Movement Knuckles Under in Japan*.

pharmaceutical companies, and the reveal that Enoki Misako was only a pen name³²⁰ were paired with a sudden disappearance of her person that left a lasting impression. These indicators suggest that Enoki Misako may have been recruited by pharmaceutical companies and the government to enter the Women's Liberation Movement in an attempt to stimulate acceptance among the distrustful women for the contraceptive pill by gaining trust from a radical posing as an ally.

At their core, all women were political actors in one way or another, as they all challenged existing norms and expectations set for women. The difference lies in the willingness and trust they put into working with and within the institutional setting.

Regarding gender and the body, Ichikawa generally abstracted from the matter, rather focusing on suffrage and civil rights than on sexuality or gender norms.³²¹

All other women see the key problem in patriarchal structures. Sumiko Tanaka sees a clear connection between gender and constant societal reaffirmation, where gender is performative, enforced by the state and society. For her, this poses a problem, especially in the question of the labour of women.³²²

Mitsu Tanaka puts sexual liberation at the center of her activism, arguing to dismantle sexual and bodily expectations set on women and the discrepancy that exists in the "accepted" performance of sexuality between men and women.³²³

Michimi Amano also emphasizes sexual liberation and eroticism. She also preached the lived identity, straying away from trying to change the masses, focusing on living your own truth in the present. While not actively, she challenged heteronormativity through her public queer outing and embracing it.³²⁴

Enoki Misako similarly preached pragmatic bodily autonomy, arguing that reproductive freedom in the form of the contraceptive pill would positively affect the sexuality of women through control of their own bodies.³²⁵

Speaking for all women, all of them addressed gendered experience in some way. Where Ichikawa and Sumiko Tanaka emphasized legal and economic matters, radical feminists focused more specifically on sexuality.

³²⁰ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 173.

³²¹ Naita, *Ichikawa*, Fusae Ichikawa, 58.

³²² Tanaka, *Images*, 269.

³²³ Tanaka, *For my Spiritual Sisters*, 158.

³²⁴ Moyers, *The Very Remarkable Yamato Family*; *Leu, Amano*, *Women in Japan*, 40-41.

³²⁵ Misako Enoki, *The Pill Book*. Cit. by: *Chujo, Aizawa*, *Women's Movements*, 136-137.

With respect to the third subpoint of influence from international and US feminism, Ichikawa is the individual who engaged the most with the US. Not only did she travel to the United States in the 1920s to gain insight into the advancements of the Women's Movement overseas,³²⁶ but she also credits the US occupation for forwarding women's demands.³²⁷

Sumiko Tanaka also travelled to the US to study human relations at university and credits US influence for the introduction of feminism, which, she argues, went hand in hand with the introduction of Christianity.³²⁸ She also acknowledged the efforts of the US occupation in 1946, except that she considers it a collective global effort of women.³²⁹

Mitsu Tanaka's engagement with international feminism is limited. Prior to 1975, she had never traveled to the United States, and it was not until then that she became acquainted with the dimension of the Women's Liberation Movement in America.³³⁰ However, it can be argued that it was partly due to US participation in the Vietnam War that led to her focus on women's issues.

Michimi Amano had travelled to Europe before she was introduced to women's issues in Japan. After joining the Women's Liberation Movement and establishing herself, she made international friends and again travelled the United States to meet up with those who were part of the American movement. Her previous experience with global cultures and interest in those relations may have influenced her proximity to the US. Additionally, she notes that the United States influenced Japan's initial impetus to prioritize women's issues.³³¹

Misako Enoki had never travelled abroad, as far as the sources are concerned. However, she too mentions the role of the US in the advancement of Japanese women's rights³³² and had profound knowledge of English, as she worked as a translator before becoming an activist.³³³

Concluding, in terms of initial impact from the US, most of the women have mentioned and credited the US for opening the doors to Japanese feminism and activism. It is notable to mention at this point that a clear correlation between travel and crediting the US for initial impetus can be drawn.

In terms of the Women's Liberation Movement, Fusae Ichikawa is the only individual who was active in both the women's movement of the 1910s and 20s and the liberation movement

³²⁶ *Nuita*, Ichikawa, Fusae Ichikawa, 58.

³²⁷ *Vavich*, The Japanese Woman's Movement, 426.

³²⁸ *Tanaka*, Images, 52-70.

³²⁹ *Tanaka*, Images, 176.

³³⁰ *Buckley*, Broken Silence, 11.

³³¹ *Leu*, Amano, Women in Japan, 40.

³³² *Malcolm*, Support Waning.

³³³ *Mackie*, Feminism in Modern Japan, 152.

of the 1970s. Ichikawa is vocal about her connection to the USA, where she was inspired by Alice Paul and Carrie Chapman Catt. She posits that the inception of women's liberation as a global movement occurred in the United States. However, she does not mention that the 1970s movement is a direct copy of the US but rather draws parallels between the two countries.³³⁴ Sumiko Tanaka argues that the movement started in the US and spread to Japan. She reasons this by the difference from the first Japanese movement of the 1920s due to the similarities to the US. Still, she calls for conscious interaction with the terms "direct import" and "translated language character". Tanaka argues that assuming a direct import is wrong, because, while yes, the movement spread to Japan, it has developed its own characteristics and adapted to Japanese society and Japanese women's demands.³³⁵

Mitsu Tanaka assumes the position of an individual development of the Women's Liberation thought in Japan. For her, the introduction to women's issues is the result of a long road of fighting for equality and frustration.³³⁶

Michimi Amano also observes that the Women's Liberation Movement draws inspiration from the USA. Interestingly, she notes that it is not only women in the movement who are influenced; she also recognizes that the media imitates the US by discussing trending topics. This results in a direct import, which Amano considers highly problematic. By assuming Japan faces the same issues and focusing on nonexistent problems, Amano argues that the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement loses its credibility. This leads to the media publicizing issues that do not need attention, leading to neglecting those that genuinely concern Japanese women.³³⁷ Consequently, the media diminishes *uman ribu* and further reinforces the idea of a direct import to international activists, who may then form incorrect assumptions about the Japanese movement.

Misako Enoki has not spoken publicly about the influence the USA had on the Japanese movement in the 1970s. However, she has drawn inspiration herself, as she contributed to translating American works on the topic.³³⁸ She made these texts accessible to Japanese women, helping spread information about the US movement and, consequently, inspiring others.

In conclusion, the women who have spoken on the subject agree that the Japanese 1970s movement was inspired by American influences. Interestingly, it is the same women who have traveled abroad and to the USA who concur on initial US inspiration. The important point here

³³⁴ Naita, *Ichikawa*, Fusae Ichikawa, 61.

³³⁵ Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 228.

³³⁶ Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 292.

³³⁷ Leu, *Amano*, *Women in Japan*, 40-41.

³³⁸ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 152.

is the word *inspiration*, as none of the women suggests a direct copy. Sumiko Tanaka and Amano openly discuss the issues related to assuming such influence³³⁹, while Ichikawa talks about parallels.³⁴⁰ Overall, the women agree that Japanese characteristics can be identified when discussing the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement, which is distinct from the US and specific to Japan.

The realization of the movement in Japan is deemed only partly successful by all the women. Ichikawa sees a stark difference between the generation of "libbers" in the 1920s and 1970s. In the 1920s, women were more anti-establishment than now, which is missing in the 1970s, in her opinion, to again bring a real change to the demands of 1970s women. The movement is also missing educated women.³⁴¹

Sumiko Tanaka concurs with the assertion that the prevailing circumstances have remained relatively static since 1946 and that the 1970s movement lacks a discernible direction. The many different groups, she states, are most often smaller groups without much impact. Creating the *Women's Action Group*, therefore, was necessary for her to bring conversation between the many groups and additionally outside of the Japanese borders towards a global movement. Women themselves, so Tanaka argues, are also missing *feminine consciousness* necessary to become aware of the issues and start a larger conversation.³⁴²

Mitsu Tanaka also agrees, stating that women are too ingrained in Japanese culture and the patriarchy that they become unaware of their problems. This unawareness leads to the societal system prevailing. For her, the Women's Liberation Movement also does not focus enough on the matter of sexual liberation, which for her describes the core issue.³⁴³

Amano sees the movement still in its beginning stages, only starting to develop in urban spaces. Same as Sumiko Tanaka, she feels more centralization between the many groups is needed.³⁴⁴ Enoki feels that the Movement is not visible at all in Japan, reflected by her feminist party losing in the electoral votes. She also believes that the many groups do not converse with each other enough to figure out similar goals and characteristics beyond being a woman.³⁴⁵

Sumiko Tanaka and Misako Enoki go as far as postulating that the Movement, in its current state, will not endure.³⁴⁶ Michimi Amano, for example, explains the "failure" of the movement

³³⁹ Amano, *Lesbianism in Japan*, 8; Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 228.

³⁴⁰ Naita, Ichikawa, Fusae Ichikawa, 61.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 218.

³⁴³ Tanaka, *Declaration of the Liberation of Eros*. In: Shigematsu, Tanaka Mitsu, 291-292.

³⁴⁴ Leu, Amano, *Women in Japan*, 39.

³⁴⁵ Enoki, *A New Society Dominated by Women*, 3.

³⁴⁶ Ibid; Tanaka, *Women's Liberation*, 295.

with the Japanese thought. In the US, on the one hand, women could organize easily and stand up together. Conversely, while in Japan, on the other hand, she argues that individuals tend to avoid addressing discrete issues with others, as the collective supersedes the individual.³⁴⁷ This assertion encapsulates Enoki's argument that being a woman alone is insufficient. Most Japanese women can identify with this; however, articulating additional issues and addressing them is an essential step for the advancement of the movement.³⁴⁸

6. Conclusion

This thesis has examined the complex, multifaceted nature of the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s through the analysis of five representative figures: Fusae Ichikawa, Sumiko Tanaka, Mitsu Tanaka, Misako Enoki, and Michimi Amano. By focusing on their ideologies, political strategies, importance put on gender and the body, and engagement with international, particularly US, influence, this study has highlighted both the common threads and stark divergences that shaped the movement. It has also given answers to the question of how much international influence has played a part in the development and understanding of a unique Japanese movement and participation in the international debate.

Japanese feminism does not exhibit uniformity, a characteristic that is also evident in the global feminist movement. The Women's Liberation Movement proves to be a prominent marker in Japanese women's history against the backdrop of its short-lived nature, internal fragmentation marked by ideological division, generational and interpersonal tension, and contrasting strategies towards the state, the body, and international influence.

As differentiated as the movement was in Japan compared to other countries, the goal to bring change and awareness towards women's issues was constant, and the demands for improvement were present on all levels. Japanese women discovered problems unique to their society and developed different methods with the goal of fighting discrimination against women, plus protecting women and their rights at the same time. This fight started back in the 1920s with the demand for suffrage³⁴⁹ and has expanded into the 1970s to cover multiple issues specific to Japanese women. It cannot be denied that historical engagement with the global world influenced the development of Japanese society and the kinds of change women were demanding. Especially the US influence, based on the geographical closeness to Japan and interfaces during and after WWII, has been shown to have greatly affected the way Japanese

³⁴⁷ *Leu, Amano, Women in Japan*, 39.

³⁴⁸ *Enoki, A New Society Dominated by Women*, 3.

³⁴⁹ *Lukyantseva, Feminism in Modern Japan*, 3.

society and the state wanted to head. Still, it can be concluded that the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement can be viewed as a stand-alone movement, though only to a certain extent. Regarding goals, internal heterogeneity, and cultural distinctiveness, it can be regarded in isolation. However, it cannot be wholly disassociated from the influence of the United States, particularly in terms of shared history, vocabulary, and inspiration.

In terms of feminist engagement, the engagement with the United States and international feminism varied among Japanese feminists. US feminist ideas influenced some activists directly, but they ranged from emulation to adaptation to rejection, reflecting the individual, diverse goals, ideologies, and sociopolitical contexts. The Women's Liberation Movement highlights the hybrid and contested nature of transnational feminist exchange in the 1970s.

All women analyzed in this thesis had at least some awareness of international feminism and were exposed to translated texts, conferences, or foreign feminist networks. Some were even very aware of international feminist debates, and with the problems that arise with an assumed transnational character of feminism.³⁵⁰ All feminists developed Japan-specific responses to gender oppression, even when drawing from international concepts. The analysis shows in this aspect that the Japanese movement was both locally rooted and globally connected.

To answer question two, some claims argue that the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement cannot be linked to the international debate.

One point that can disconnect the Japanese movement from the global context is the language and accessibility barrier. Even though many Japanese feminists have taken on the task of translating important texts from North America and Europe, many Japanese feminists did not have access to the international feminist theory and relied heavily on translated texts, if they were available. Second, the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement was not centralized and took on the form of many separate grassroots organizations, with only a few big organizations where representatives can be identified. A national women's organization, like in the US, did not exist in 1970s Japan. One argument that Fusae Ichikawa brought up is also the absence of educated people in the movement³⁵¹ who would have fueled the academic discourse. This conversation would only begin in the 1980s, where the wave of *uman ribu had* already ended.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ Shigematsu, *Rethinking Japanese Feminism*, 206.

³⁵¹ Naita, *Ichikawa*, Fusae Ichikawa, 61.

³⁵² Ehara, *Eino, Long*, *Japanese Feminism*, 51.

A second claim that would argue Japan's movement to be separated is the indigenous feminist movement. As Chizuko Ueno said, Japanese Feminism has existed for a long time.³⁵³ Japan also had a First Wave of Feminism in the form of *Bluestocking*. Moreover, Japanese feminists have drawn from Buddhist, Marxist, and national legacies, creating a hybrid form of feminism not easily classified as *Western* or *Eastern*.

The last argument of the analysis points to Mitsu Tanaka, the only person in the analysis who cannot be linked to the international debate in a grand context. Like many other radical feminists in Japan, Tanaka rejects Western frameworks, as in her opinion, they cannot be applied to Japanese society.³⁵⁴ The feminist issues in Japan are not analogous to those in other countries. Similar to the situation with lesbianism, which is not a contentious issue in Japan but is a significant component in the movement of the United States, other themes, such as abortion access, which was already legal in Japan, do not garner the same level of support.³⁵⁵

The last sentence serves as an introduction to the opposite claim, that the Japanese movement CAN and should be linked to the international debate. Firstly, precisely because of the differences. Michimi Amano engages in the more specific debate of lesbian feminism. Her situation creates a special case, as she developed an intentionally independent, culturally specific practice in Japan. She had lesbian feminist friends in New York, therefore was familiar with the force of lesbian feminism in the climate of 1970s USA. At the same time, she could observe Japan's media landscape, which took inspiration from themes popular to be reported on in the US. As Amano was in the public eye as an outed lesbian, Japanese media took an interest in her. However, other than in the USA, lesbianism did not encounter the same seriousness in Japan, as it was not seen as problematic, but rather, just different. While Amano herself did not want to see herself as an activist of lesbian feminism,³⁵⁶ in a transnational context, she contributed largely to the debate of the problematics of the character of "transnational feminism", a term Shigematsu explored in great detail.³⁵⁷ The difference between Japan and the US served as an example of how important it is to distinguish special contexts and discuss those. The analysis of Amano proved that an issue cannot be universal and therefore copied and pasted beyond the border. Cultural nuances must always be considered.

³⁵³ Ueno, *The Making of a History*, 172. Cit. by: Tripp, *The American Impact*, 22.

³⁵⁴ Shigematsu, Tanaka Mitsu, 175.

³⁵⁵ Amano, *Lesbianism in Japan*; Ueno, Turzynski, "Reproductive Rights/Health".

³⁵⁶ Amano, *Lesbianism in Japan*, 8.

³⁵⁷ Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows*, 207-220.

Secondly, the movement can be linked to the international debate through strong conceptual influence, especially from US feminism. Translations of texts such as “*Our Bodies, Ourselves*” or Betty Friedan’s “*The Feminine Mystique*”³⁵⁸ have contributed to the adaptation of key concepts and terminology, mainly *sexual autonomy* and *liberation* in the context of *uman ribu*. Fusae Ichikawa, Michimi Amano, and Misako Enoki fall into this category of women who have worked to translate such texts. Moreover, *uman ribu* itself is a transliteration of the term *women’s liberation*, which Japanese activists have used not only to give a name to their new movement, but also to show solidarity and connection with similar movements internationally.³⁵⁹ *Uman ribu*, therefore, signals (socio-)linguistic and ideological borrowing. This claim can be supported by the frequency analysis, which has shown that the occurrence of terms explored in Japan correlates with the beginnings of the Women’s Movements and the Women’s Liberation Movement, respectively. It also highlights the proximity to the US, as results show far more texts regarding the United States than European countries.

Conceptual influence is additionally historically rooted. In the post-war years, Japan’s economy rose rapidly and quickly adapted to capitalism since it wanted to catch up with the leading First World countries. Japan’s society also shifted into a constitutional democracy, which guaranteed more rights for women and a state shift from traditional Japanese family values to the nuclear family thought.³⁶⁰ The Second Wave of US Feminism coincided with Japan’s postwar societal shifts, helping ignite domestic feminist activism in Japan and reaching a high in the 1970s.

Thirdly, it can be linked to the international debate through transnational engagement by some activists. As was stated in chapter two. State of Research, Caitlin Tripp argues both direct and indirect influences from the United States Women’s Liberation Movement on Japan. She argues indirect influence in the form of international travels, especially before WWII, which made like-minded connections available, which in turn again catalyzed the formation of similar goals.³⁶¹ In this thesis, this was the case for Fusae Ichikawa, Sumiko Tanaka, and Michimi Amano. Ichikawa and Amano remarkably built friendships within their respective circles in the US.³⁶² Later, Ichikawa and Tanaka further strengthened their engagement in global feminism with their participation in the first UN Women’s conference. The understanding of the importance of solidarity between different women’s groups influenced the formation of their

³⁵⁸ Ueno, *Feminisms in Japan*, 77.

³⁵⁹ Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows*, 206.

³⁶⁰ Sato, Suzuki, Kawamura, *The Changing Status*, 99-108.

³⁶¹ Tripp, *The American Impact*, 1-15.

³⁶² Vavich, *The Japanese Woman’s Movement*, 411-414; Leu, Amano, *Women in Japan*, 41.

organization.³⁶³ Japan shows a big imbalance within the women's and feminist movement during the 1970s. Sumiko Tanaka, Amano, and Enoki agree that the movement needs more centralization and communication between the different groups, as at their core, all groups are fighting for the same cause.³⁶⁴ All women also agree that the movement needs more conversation overall, as no clear leader exists. Sumiko Tanaka and Ichikawa's engagement with the issue shows their embrace of local and global feminist solidarity.³⁶⁵

Ultimately, the Women's Liberation Movement in Japan catalyzed new forms of feminist thought, language, and practice. Its significance lies not in its unity but in its diversity, its capacity to articulate multiple feminist possibilities, and its enduring challenge to gender norms, identity, and transnational discourse. By tracing these divergent yet intersecting paths, this thesis contributed to a more nuanced understanding of both Japanese and global feminist perceptions on the matter.

³⁶³ *Kobayashi*, *A Path Toward Gender Equality*, 85.

³⁶⁴ *Tanaka*, *Women's Liberation*, 218; *Leu, Amano*, *Women in Japan*, 39; *Enoki*, *A New Society Dominated by Women*, 3.

³⁶⁵ *Kobayashi*, *A Path Toward Gender Equality*, 85.

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