

The life and achievements of Hiratsuka Raichō, a Japanese ‘new woman’

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Introduction

The year 2021 saw the celebration of the 110th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese Bluestocking Society known as the Seitōsha (the Seitō Society) and the inauguration of the society’s magazine *Seitō* (*Bluestocking*). 2021 also witnessed the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Hiratsuka Raichō’s death. To mark these anniversaries, an on-line symposium was organized by the nonprofit organization Hiratsuka Raichō no Kai (Hiratsuka Raichō’s Society) on 20 November.¹ Between September and December 2021, *Shinano Mainichi Newspaper* also published a series of articles on Hiratsuka Raichō and Yoneda Sayoko.² The latter is a retired academic, who has been doing research on Hiratsuka for half a century, and has been the president of Hiratsuka Raichō’s Society and the director of Hiratsuka Raichō’s memorial hall in Ueda, Nagano Prefecture.³ She has contributed much to make Hiratsuka’s achievements known to the general public.

Hiratsuka’s life, especially her involvement with the Seitō Society and *Seitō*, have been well-researched not only in Japan but also overseas. A wide range of Japanese sources on her are available. Her four-volume autobiography, her eight-volume

1 The title of the on-line symposium was ‘Raichō botsugo 50-nen *Seitō* sōkan 110-shūnen kinen no tsudoi: Ima ikasō Raichō no oshie’. On the symposium, see Hiratsuka Raichō no Kai’s website which is <http://raichou.c.ooco.jp>.

2 ‘Ikitsuku tokoro made ittemiru: Yoneda Sayoko ga kataru jinsei to Raichō’, *Shinano Mainichi Shinbun*, 1-12 (20 September, 2021-27 December, 2021).

3 On Hiratsuka Raichō’s memorial hall (Raichō no Ie) in Ueda, Nagano Prefecture, see <http://raichou.c.ooco.jp>.

collected writings, and the reprinted edition of *Seitō* have been published.⁴ These publications helped to promote research on Hiratsuka, and led to many biographies, academic books and research papers on her. On the other hand works on her in English were very limited until 2004, when a comprehensive book on Hiratsuka in English was first published.⁵ It was followed by a partial English translation of her autobiography in 2006 and a couple of English books on *Seitō* in 2007.⁶ These books significantly expanded English language studies on Hiratsuka's life from her birth to the *Seitō* Society. A few academic articles about Hiratsuka's participation in the 'bosei hogo ronsō' (controversy over the protection of motherhood) of 1918 have been written in English as well.⁷ However, her other activities are still under-researched outside Japan. One of the objectives of this article is to explore her involvement with the Japanese women's political movement after 1918, investigating the reasons why she drew attention to this cause, and discussing her contributions. This article will also consider when and how her radicalism and feminism developed.

Hiratsuka's early life and developing radicalism

Hiratsuka Raichō had a very privileged family background. She was born into an upper-middle class family as the third daughter of Hiratsuka Sadajirō and Tsuya on 10 February 1886. Her birth was 18 years after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, when the new Meiji government was established after the collapse of the Tokugawa regime. The government took various measures to modernize the country, and considerable new legislation was promulgated. The Meiji Constitution, the Electoral Law to choose members of the House of Representatives, the House of Peers' Act, the

4 Hiratsuka Raichō, *Genshi Josei wa Taiyō de Atta: Hiratsuka Raichō Jiden*, 4 vols (1971-1973, Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 1992 edn); Hiratsuka Raichō (ed. by Hiratsuka Raichō Chosaku Henshū Iinkai), *Hiratsuka Raichō Chosakushū*, 8 vols (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 1983-1984); *Seitō*, 52 vols (September 1911-February 1916, Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 1986 edn).

5 Hiroko Tomida, *Hiratsuka Raichō and Early Japanese Feminism* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

6 Raichō Hiratsuka (trans. by Teruko Craig), *In the Beginning, Woman was the Sun: The Autobiography of Hiratsuka Raichō, Japanese Feminist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Jan Bardsley, *The Bluestockings of Japan: New Woman Essays and Fiction from Seitō, 1911-16* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2007); Dina B. Lowy, *The Japanese "New Woman": Images of Gender and Modernity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

7 Laurel Rasplica Rodd, 'Yosano Akiko and the Taishō debate over the "New Women"', in Gail Lee Bernstein (ed.), *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 189-198; Barbara Molony, 'Equality versus difference: The Japanese debate over "motherhood protection", 1915-50', in Janet Hunter (ed.), *Japanese Women Working* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 122-148; Vera Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan, Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 86-94; Hiroko Tomida, 'Controversy over the protection of motherhood and its impact upon the Japanese women's movement', *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, 3:2 (October 2004), pp. 243-271.

Diet Law, and the Public Accounts Law were all implemented in 1889.⁸

Hiratsuka's father contributed to the enactment of the Public Accounts Law since he was a government official working for the Ministry of Finance, and was sent to Europe and the United States to research accountancy law, preparing to draft the Public Accounts Law.⁹

As most of the newly issued legislation failed to improve women's social position and some legislation even downgraded it, Japanese women remained dispossessed of legal, political, economic and marital entitlements. The legislation which was the most detrimental to Japanese women was believed to be the Meiji Civil Code enacted in 1898.¹⁰ It stemmed from the samurai family system in the Edo period when women's status was at a low ebb, and its main objective was to codify family lineage and a patriarchal family system. The ideal woman then was considered to be one who had strong loyalty, patriotism and womanly virtues based on Confucian teaching and who served as a dutiful servant to husband and head of family.

Among these legal measures, the most significant for women was educational reform. The Gakusei (the Fundamental Education Law) in 1872, which introduced compulsory elementary education regardless of sex, reduced the illiteracy rates for women.¹¹ Later on, the availability of expanded higher education for girls helped marginally to broaden job prospects for them.

Hiratsuka's father, who had been educated at a German-language school called Gaikokugo Gakkō (Foreign Language School), certainly benefitted from his foreign language skill and his overseas experiences. He encouraged his daughters to get a good education, sending them to Ochanomizu Kōtō Jogakkō (Ochanomizu Girls' High School), one of the top educational institutions for girls, founded and run directly by the central government.¹² Considering that most of Hiratsuka Raichō's female contemporaries completed their education with elementary school, and few girls went on to high school, she was most fortunate to study at an elite girls' high school.

Although she had an outstandingly good academic record and was top of her year

8 Emura Eiichi, *Meiji no Kenpō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1992), p. 34.

9 Hiratsuka, Genshi, vol. 1, pp. 40-41.

10 'Meiji sanjū-ichi-nen Minpō, Shinzokuhen, Sōzokuhen' (June 1898), in Yuzawa Yasuhiko (ed.), *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryō Shūsei*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1976), pp. 239-276.

11 Monbushō, 'Gakusei', *Monbushō Futatsu*, 13 Bessatsu (2 August, 1872), reprinted in Mitsui Reiko (ed.), *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryō Shūsei*, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1977), pp. 147-148.

12 Hiratsuka Raichō, 'Mukashi no jogakusei to ima no jogakusei', *Josei Kaizō* (January 1950), reprinted in *Hiratsuka, Hiratsuka Raichō Chosakushū*, vol. 7, pp. 76-77.

at Ochanomizu Girls' High School, this school was a big disappointment to her in many regards. First, teachers had absolute authority over pupils there. Secondly, she also felt that the studies were monotonous and lacking in intellectual stimulation. Most importantly, the school policy was to provide students with 'ryōsai kenbo kyōiku' (the education to recruit a good wife and wise mother), which the government urged the school to adopt.¹³

In spite of her dissatisfaction, she had tolerated the situation over the first two years. However, in her third year she became increasingly disillusioned with the school's education to recruit 'a good wife and wise mother' and took the rebellious action of boycotting classes for the compulsory 'shūshin' (morals) course, which was the core of the education to recruit 'a good wife and wise mother'.¹⁴ She was the only student who boycotted the course, and such an action required courage. Although her absence from 'shūshin' classes appeared to challenge school policy, she was not reprimanded, mainly because of her outstanding marks in other subjects. Her behavior demonstrated her independent mind and a potential that later became more publicly evident. Her reaction against this conventional female education later developed into her feminism and opposition to the *ie* (family) system, which was completely dominated by men and ignored women's rights entirely.

Hiratsuka's studies at the Japan Women's College

After graduating from Ochanomizu Girls' High School, in 1903 Hiratsuka entered the Nihon Joshi Daigakkō (the Japan Women's College) although it was extremely rare for women in the Meiji period to study at a higher education level. The number of educational institutions which could offer women higher education was very limited, and no national and private universities admitted women as degree students. Before 1900, Tokyo Joshi Kōtō Shihangakkō (Tokyo Women's Teachers' Training College) was the only higher education institution available to women. In 1900 three more women's higher education institutions were established. These were Joshi Eigaku Juku (the Women's Institute of English Studies), Tokyo Joi Gakkō (Tokyo Women's Medical College), and Joshi Bijutsu Gakkō (the Women's Art College).¹⁵ In 1901 the Japan Women's College was founded by Naruse Jinzō, a leading educationalist who played a pioneering part in the promotion of women's higher

13 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 1, p. 117.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

15 Shibukawa Hisako, *Kindai Nihon Joseishi: Kyōiku* (Tokyo: Kashima Kenkyūjo Shuppankai, 1970), p. 47; Yamazaki Takako (ed.), *Tsuda Juku 60-nen-shi* (Tokyo: Tsudajuku Daigaku, 1960), p. 57.

education.¹⁶ However, none of these colleges was given university status, mainly because the government continued to adopt a negative attitude towards women's higher education. Apart from the Japan Women's College, these colleges had a specific objective and provided students with a narrow specialized education. On the other hand, the Japan Women's College with its three departments - English, Japanese Literature and Domestic Science - was the largest in scale among these colleges and aimed to offer a comprehensive integrated education.¹⁷

Hiratsuka took education seriously from an early age, was well-motivated and hard-working, and achieved excellent results. Despite her academic attainment, the educational institutions she attended never satisfied her intellectual expectations and left her feeling starved of an education equal to that of men. She chose the Japan Women's College because she read the founder Naruse Jinzō's *Joshi Kyōiku*, and was impressed by his goal of educating female students 'firstly as human beings, secondly as women and thirdly as Japanese citizens'.¹⁸ Naruse's educational policy was very different from the one adopted at Ochanomizu Girls' High School, which she abhorred. The Japan Women's College did not have an entrance examination then, and the entry requirement amounted to any motivated women who graduated from a girls' high school with a good school record. Although Hiratsuka easily met such a criterion, she had difficulty in obtaining permission from her father to enter, which she did not anticipate.¹⁹ He was keen to give his daughters the best education available up to high school level, but he strongly opposed her admission to the college. He believed that giving a daughter extra academic education would do her more harm than good. His view was widely shared among the upper and upper-middle classes. There were common prejudices against female higher education among the general public as well, which can be summarized as follows: women's higher education makes women impertinent, conceited, insolent or big-headed; that it makes them cold-hearted; it renders them ignorant of the world; and it has a bad influence on their children's education.

Although Hiratsuka wanted to enter the English department, her mother persuaded her husband to give way, on condition that she enrolled to study domestic science instead of English (since studying domestic science would be useful to become a

16 On Naruse Jinzō, see Nakajima Kuni, *Naruse Jinzō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2002).

17 On Nihon Joshi Daigaku, see Nihon Joshi Daigaku (ed.), *Nihon Joshi Daigaku no 80-nen* (Tokyo: Nihon Joshi Daigaku, 1981).

18 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 1, pp. 152-153.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

better wife and mother).²⁰ She duly entered the department of domestic science; but the college allowed students who were registered with one department to attend courses in other departments.²¹ This enabled Hiratsuka to attend classes on Japanese literature, Western history, art history and many other subjects. The course which had the greatest impact on her was Naruse's 'jissen rinri' (practical ethics), a compulsory course for all students.²² This opened a new world for her, and she became his admirer.

Naruse covered topics such as the principles of women's higher education, the objectives of the college, and introductions to religion, philosophy and ethics. His teaching was based on his experiences as a teacher in Japan, of working as a missionary, and of studying theology and education at American universities, where he was interested in American women's universities and their educational policies.

Naruse disliked the traditional method of cramming knowledge into students, and discouraged students' passive ways of learning. Instead, he stressed high motivation, skills of self-study, and he aimed to develop creativity.²³ Hiratsuka benefitted from his educational attitude, and the college gave her a broad education and confidence to articulate her views. She was disappointed with her fellow students' lack of enthusiasm for study, and their pretence at understanding Naruse's lectures.²⁴ She was also disturbed by their merely repeating Naruse's words mechanically, and their excessive pride in being under the influence of such an educationalist.

Hiratsuka's participation in the Keishū Literary Society and the Shiobara Incident

After graduating from the college in 1906, she studied at Seibi Joshi Eigo Gakkō (Seibi Women's English School) to improve her English reading skills. She also joined the Keishū Bungakukai (the Keishū Literary Society), a literary circle in the school founded by Ikuta Chōkō, who was a lecturer there.²⁵ Ikuta, a literary critic, who read Western literature extensively, and was particularly impressed with

20 Ibid., pp. 156-158.

21 Nihon Joshi Daigaku (ed.), *Nihon Joshi Daigaku no 80-nen*, p. 30.

22 Hiratsuka Raichō, 'Mejiro no omoide', *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* (1-3 December, 1939), reprinted in Hiratsuka, *Hiratsuka Raichō Chosakushū*, vol. 6, p. 313.

23 Ōhashi Hiro, 'Naruse Jinzō sensei to hongaku no kyōiku rinen', in Nihon Joshi Daigaku (ed.), *Joshidai Tsūshin*, 1 (January 1949), p. 1.

24 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 1, pp. 169-171.

25 On Ikuta Chōkō, see Odagiri Susumu (ed.), *Nihon Kindai Bungaku Daijiten* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1984), pp. 77-79. On Keishū Bungakukai, see Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 1, pp. 225-226; Yamakawa Kikue, *20-seiki o Ayumu: Aru Onna no Ashiato* (Tokyo: Yamato Shobō, 1978), pp. 65-66.

Western women's writing, wanted to produce outstanding female writers in Japan, and so formed the Keishū Literary Society. Apart from Yosano Akiko, who had already established a literary career through her contributions to *Myōjō* (*Morning Star*), the teaching staff were talented young literary men with advanced academic backgrounds. Many of them later established prominent literary careers. The society provided lecture-based classes on Japanese and Western literature. They also had opportunities to study Henrik Ibsen's plays such as *A Doll's House*, whose heroine was an exemplar of 'a new woman'. The society also launched a magazine, which gave Hiratsuka an opportunity to publish her first novel, *Ai no Matsujitsu* (*The Last Day of Love*).²⁶ In the novel Hiratsuka created a completely new type of heroine, a young well-educated intellectual woman with a strong personality, who graduated from a women's college, refused her boyfriend's marriage proposal and deserted him, taking up a teaching post in a provincial area since she prided herself on her own economic independence. The heroine's conduct of unilaterally deserting her boyfriend was considered radical and unwomanly because only men at that time had the right to choose their partners and to terminate their relationships. Her decision to give her career priority over marriage was highly unconventional. Hiratsuka's heroine, a product of women's higher education, questioned society's low expectations of women and attempted to demonstrate women's capabilities. Her heroine bears noticeable similarities to the heroines in the so-called 'New Woman Fiction' in Britain in the 1890s, such as George Gissing's *The Odd Women*.²⁷ Whether Hiratsuka had read *The Odd Women* is uncertain, but her heroine resembled the book's heroine, Rhoda Nunn, a product of women's higher education and 'a new woman', who turned down her boyfriend's marriage proposal and devoted herself to running a school for girls. Hiratsuka's creation of this new type of heroine was an early sign of her feminism.

Hiratsuka's radicalism and feminism developed even further via an attempted double suicide known as the Shiobara Incident in 1908. This involved Hiratsuka and Morita Sōhei, a lecturer of the Keishū Literary Society, who taught Ibsen's plays. Morita, a married man with a child, who had read her novel *The Last Day of Love* and was impressed with it, initially sent her a long letter commenting on her novel,

26 Yamakawa Kikue, *Onna Nidai no Ki* (1972, Tokyo: Nihon Hyōron Shinsha, 1987 edn), pp. 130-131; Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 1, p. 236.

27 George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (1893, London: Virago, 1984 edn). On 'New Woman Fiction' in Britain, see Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1978); Juliet Gardiner (ed.), *The New Woman* (London: Collins & Brown, 1993).

full of excessive praise, which led to a regular correspondence between them.²⁸ Hiratsuka was absorbed in literature and eager to expand her knowledge of Western literature, and Morita seemed suited to help her. As a result, she became attracted to him, though their relationship was platonic. Unmarried daughters from respectable families such as Hiratsuka were expected to obey their fathers and were discouraged to have contacts with men outside their family. However, she ran away from home with Morita to Shiobara, where they attempted a double suicide.²⁹ Her conduct was certainly her challenge to the established family system. Family ties and commitment must have weighed heavily on her. She wanted to have her own way, but she could not because she was trapped by restrictions imposed on women. Therefore she decided to choose death as the only way to emancipate herself from the male regulation of women under the *ie* (family) system.

Although her suicide attempt was not successful, the press made concentrated attacks on her, and depicted her as an immoral, selfish and dangerous woman who could have a harmful influence on other women and the family system.³⁰ Many educationalists saw her conduct as a social threat capable of poisoning the minds of innocent young women.³¹ Until the incident, Hiratsuka had led a relatively uneventful life, and was considered to be a well-brought-up, highly educated daughter from a respectable family, with good marital prospects. This incident destroyed her family name, and also disgraced the Japan Women's College, which she had graduated from. As the college had an excellent reputation for being an ideal educational institution to produce well-educated women who could become fine examples to other women, her name was removed from the list of its alumni.³² For several months she was harassed by journalists and even ordinary people who disapproved of her immoral behavior, contrary to the established family system. Many people felt that Hiratsuka's life was ruined because of the incident. However, she never surrendered to the criticism and faced up to it in a dignified way.³³ The criticism strengthened her capacity to resist traditional forces in Japanese society, and helped develop her feminism. Moreover Hiratsuka's behavior exerted much

28 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 1, pp. 237-252.

29 On the Shiobara Incident, see Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 1, pp. 237-252; Morita Sōhei, 'Baian', *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* (1 January, 1909-16 May, 1909), reprinted in Chikuma Shobō (ed.), *Gendai Nihon Bungaku Taikei*, vol. 29 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1971).

30 *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* (28 March, 1908); *Jiji Shinpō* (29 March, 1908).

31 'Bekarazukun', *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* (30 September, 1908).

32 Aoki Takako, *Kindaishi o Hiraita Joseitachi: Nihon Joshi Daigaku ni Mananda Hitotachi* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1990), pp. 57, 64.

33 Yamakawa, *20-seiki o Ayumu*, pp. 67-68.

influence on young women.³⁴ Indeed they showed sympathy for her and praised her conduct. Their support made her realize that she was not the only woman unhappy with the *ie* (family) system and its conventions.

Hiratsuka launches the Seitō Society and *Seitō*

Ikuta's Keishū Literary Society, which had potential to develop into a successful women's literary society, had come to an abrupt end because of the scandal of the Shiobara Incident. However, he could not abandon his hope of recruiting and educating women of literary talent. He became more convinced of the need for a women's literary magazine, as the mouthpiece of a women's literary society, which could unite female writers. Moreover Ikuta, who appreciated Hiratsuka's literary talent, wanted to give her a chance to regain her reputation and make a fresh start using her literary skills. He recommended her to found a women's literary society and inaugurate a magazine written solely by women, which would provide female writers with opportunities to publish their work, exchange ideas and appraise each other's writing.³⁵ Although she initially refused to accept the task, she eventually agreed to establish the Seitōsha (the Seitō Society) - which was named after the eighteenth-century British women's literary circle, the Bluestocking Society.³⁶ It launched its magazine *Seitō* (*Bluestocking*) in 1911. Ikuta adopted the term 'bluestocking', thus making links between its Japanese female writers and earlier English ones.³⁷ He believed that this new venture, excluding men, would be path-breaking and raise standards of women's writing, while it would inevitably be seen as a challenge to existing male literary circles. He wanted Hiratsuka to face up to the unavoidable criticism she would receive when it became known that her new society was controlled only by women.

The inaugural issue of *Seitō* was published in September 1911, and Hiratsuka's manifesto 'In the beginning woman was the sun' ('Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta') had much influence upon women.³⁸ Hiratsuka, who believed in women's potentiality and wanted to encourage their talent and capability, celebrated an image of future womankind as full of praise and aspiration with her sun symbolism. *Seitō* became popular especially among young women with literary interests, and Hiratsuka

34 Horiba Kiyoko, *Seitō no Jidai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988), pp. 41-42.

35 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 1, pp. 317-318.

36 On the Bluestocking Society, see Dale Spender, *Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them: From Aphra Behn to Adrienne Rich* (1982, London: ARK Paperbacks, 1983 edn), pp. 101-102.

37 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 1, pp. 316-318.

38 Hiratsuka Raichō, 'Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta', *Seitō*, 1:1 (September 1911), pp. 37-51.

received many enthusiastic letters.³⁹ She succeeded in recruiting many new members, who realized that the only field open to them was literature.

Seitō developed smoothly in its first year, not receiving any damaging criticism. The works appearing in the early stage of *Seitō* were predominantly short stories, translations, review articles, Western-style poems and *tanka* poems. *Seitō* bore a resemblance to contemporary literary magazines such as *Subaru (Pleiades)* and *Shirakaba (White Birch)* in terms of format, content, literary topics and translated work from Western publications. Unlike most other literary magazines whose contributors were mainly prominent writers, the contributors to *Seitō* were women who were hardly known to the general public apart from Yosano Akiko. Another distinctive character that *Seitō* had was that its works manifested women's feelings of unhappiness resulting from social conventions.⁴⁰ Many of their short stories seem to be autobiographical, concerned with problems in everyday life, such as childbirth, childcare, male adultery, marital quarrels, disagreement with mothers-in-law, unrequited love and difficulty in finding employment. This characteristic pervaded all issues of *Seitō*.

As Hiratsuka wanted *Seitō* to deal with the most up-to-date literary topics, she published a special issue to discuss *A Doll's House*, which was first performed in Japan by the Bungei Kyōkai (the Literary Association) in September 1911. The performance drew a large audience and provoked considerable literary and public response.⁴¹ The special issue provided the *Seitō* Society's members with the first opportunity to discuss women's causes, as the main theme of the play is the predicament of women and the necessity for their self-liberation. The special issue on the play – whose heroine Nora was an exemplar of the 'atarashii onna' ('the new woman') – led to the *Seitō* Society's members being identified as 'atarashii onnatachi' ('new women'). The *Seitō* Society started to be called 'wasei Nora yōsei' ('a training school designed to recruit Japanese versions of Nora').⁴²

Although *Seitō* sold well in its first year, the literary reputation and favorable responses it received were damaged by two seemingly trivial scandals, which involved Hiratsuka and a few other members of the *Seitō* Society. The first scandal, known as the Goshiki no Sake Jiken (the five-colored liquor incident), was caused

39 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 1, pp. 369-370.

40 Ide Fumiko, *Seitō no Onnatachi* (Tokyo: Kaien Shobō, 1975), p. 64.

41 Ōmura Hiroyoshi, *Tsubouchi Shōyō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1958), pp. 194-195.

42 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 2, pp. 33-34.

by Otake Kōkichi, a new member of the Seitō Society.⁴³ In a column in *Seitō*, she wrote about an exotic cocktail with five colors in it as if she had actually drunk it, although in reality she had never tasted it.⁴⁴ On another occasion she wrote about a drinking party of some members of the Seitō Society including Hiratsuka. Only a handful of the members drank alcohol, but her columns gave readers the impression that all Seitō Society's members were heavy-drinking women. As drinking was considered to be a male privilege at that time, most Japanese people disapproved of such drinking by Seitō Society women, since they were well-educated and from good family backgrounds.

There was another incident, known as the Yoshiwara Hōmon Jiken, following the visit of Hiratsuka and other members of the Seitō Society to the Yoshiwara (the large-scale licensed red-light district near Tokyo).⁴⁵ Their visit was arranged by Otake Kōkichi's uncle. He felt that members of the Seitō Society could not fully discuss women's issues without understanding the plight of the most unfortunate women who were sold to brothels to work as prostitutes, so he recommended this visit. Hiratsuka, Otake Kōkichi and Nakano Hatsuko went to a high-class brothel and spent an evening with a courtesan, talking to her and finding out about the lives of women in the Yoshiwara. Although this visit was designed for an educational aim and should have best been kept secret, Otake Kōkichi talked openly about it to a journalist, which led to the publications of newspaper articles criticizing their conduct.⁴⁶ The Yoshiwara was a male pleasure domain and was not thought suitable for young women from respectable families to visit.⁴⁷ After the newspaper coverage of the Yoshiwara Incident, public criticism of all women of the Seitō Society intensified, although only a handful of them were involved with these incidents. All of them came under attack, with Hiratsuka as the main target. Stones were thrown at her house, and she received many threatening letters.⁴⁸

This was similar to what she had experienced after the Shiobara Incident. She kept silent for a while because she felt that the best way to deal with the public criticism was to avoid contact with journalists and allow the issue to die away. However, the

43 Otake Kōkichi, see Orii Miyako & Takai Yō, *Azami no Hana: Tomimoto Kazue Shōden* (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1985). On the Goshiki no Sake Jiken, see Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 2, p. 37.

44 Seitōsha, 'Henshūshitsu yori', *Seitō*, 2:6 (June 1912), pp. 121-125.

45 The account of this incident is given in Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 2, pp. 37-38.

46 'Iwayuru atarashii onna', *Kokumin Shinbun* (12-14 July, 1912); 'Onna bunshi no Yoshiwara asobi', *Yorozu Chōhō* (10 July, 1912).

47 On the Yoshiwara, see Cecilia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993).

48 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 2, p. 40.

two incidents created disunity inside the Seitō Society, and many members left. To overcome the crisis facing the society, she wrote an essay for the prestigious magazine *Chūō Kōron* (*Central Review*).⁴⁹ In it she announced herself as ‘a new woman’ for the first time, and defended women of the Seitō Society from public criticism, justified their activities, and aimed to repair their reputations. The essay revealed Hiratsuka’s vitality and determination to fight against male-dominated society, and to transform it into a better place for women.

After the publication of the essay, *Seitō* published two special issues on ‘new women’.⁵⁰ Hiratsuka wanted the Seitō Society’s members to discuss their own ideas about ‘new women’, and to correct the distorted images of Society members and the derogatory understanding of ‘new women’. These special issues failed to measure up to Hiratsuka’s expectations, but they marked a significant change in direction for *Seitō*, from a women’s literary magazine to a women’s magazine with a feminist direction, tackling serious women’s causes and problems. The special issues provoked controversy among writers and educationalists, but also triggered a journalistic boom on ‘new women’ in 1913.⁵¹

Furthermore, Hiratsuka had become more critical of the ways in which women were suppressed under the Meiji Civil Code. In her *Seitō* article ‘Yo no fujintachi e’ (‘Addressed to women in the world’), she disapproved of ordinary female forms of living dominated by marriage, and described the existence of many wives as ‘being their husbands’ slaves during the daytime and their prostitutes at night’.⁵² She also criticized the unreasonable nature of the existing marriage system, in particular the provisions of the Meiji Civil Code (which were inequitable to married women) as follows:

I know that wives are treated as no more than minorities or disabled people.
Wives have no rights to own property and no legal rights over their children.
Although their adulteries are punished, their husbands are forgiven.⁵³

She suggested that women should open their eyes to the limitations of the legal system and alter their lifestyles.

49 Hiratsuka Raichō, ‘Atarashii onna’, *Chūō Kōron* (January 1913), reprinted in Hiratsuka, *Hiratsuka Raichō Chosakushū*, vol. 1, pp. 257–259.

50 The first special issue entitled ‘Atarashii onna sonota fujin mondai ni tsuite’ (‘New women and other women’s issues’) appeared as a supplement to the January 1913 issue. The second special issue on ‘new women’ appeared as a supplement to the February 1913 issue.

51 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 2, pp. 132–136.

52 Hiratsuka Raichō, ‘Yo no fujintachi e’, *Seitō*, 3:4 (April 1913), reprinted in Kobayashi Tomie & Yoneda Sayoko (eds.), *Hiratsuka Raichō Hyōronshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987), p. 30.

53 *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.

As she disapproved of the family system under which a man was always head of the family, she chose to have ‘marriage’ without registration and began to cohabit with Okumura Hiroshi, a young painter.⁵⁴ She wrote a letter to her parents, explaining her decision not to marry Okumura legally:

I have a good reason to decline legal marriage since marriage law is full of provisions about women’s obligations which are extremely disadvantageous to women. Moreover, convention and morality, as they exist in our society, impose unreasonable restrictions upon married women. For example, they have to respect their parents-in-law, are compelled to obey their husbands and parents-in-law, and are expected to fulfil forced duties and make all the sacrifices. There are too many burdens in married women’s lives. I do not want to put myself into such a handicapped position. As Hiroshi understands my reasons and point of view, he does not expect me to marry him legally.⁵⁵

The letter revealed the extent of her criticism of the *ie* system as legalized by the Meiji Civil Code, and she published the letter in *Seitō* under the title of ‘Dokuritsu suru ni tsuite ryōshin e’ (‘Addressed to my parents with regard to my becoming independent’).

Although Hiratsuka had devoted herself to *Seitō* for five years, she gave up the editorship because of ill health after the publication of the October 1914 issue. She initially asked Itō Noe to edit two issues during her absence, but Itō completely took over the editorship and other responsibilities of *Seitō* in January 1915.⁵⁶ Hiratsuka needed to recuperate, and by the time her health began to improve in September 1915, her partner Okumura contracted tuberculosis. She had to look after him, and also needed to earn money by writing articles to support them. In addition she became pregnant and gave birth to her daughter Akemi in December 1915. Although Hiratsuka was concerned about the future of *Seitō*, she could no longer play any part in it after January 1915 since she was preoccupied with her own domestic problems. *Seitō* survived another 13 months under Itō Noe’s editorship, coming to an abrupt end in February 1916 due to Itō’s adultery with Ōsugi Sakae, an anarchist leader, and leaving her husband.⁵⁷

54 On Okumura Hiroshi, see Hiratsuka Raichō, *Watakushi no Aruita Michi* (1955, Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1994 edn), pp. 138-139.

55 Hiratsuka Raichō, ‘Dokuritsu suru ni tsuite ryōshin e’, *Seitō* 4:2 (February 1914), reprinted in Kobayashi & Yoneda (eds.), *Hiratsuka Raichō Hyōronshū*, p. 56.

56 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 2, pp. 227-228; Itō Noe, ‘Seitō no hikitsugi ni tsuite’, *Seitō*, 5:1 (January 1915), reprinted in Itō Noe, *Itō Noe Zenshū*, 4 vols (Tokyo: Gakugei Shorin, 1970), vol. 2, pp. 114-115.

57 Hiratsuka, *Watakushi*, p. 163.

Hiratsuka's participation in the controversy over the protection of motherhood

After the demise of *Seitō*, Hiratsuka gave birth to her son Atsushi in September 1917. She registered her children as illegitimate. As she did not want to enter her children in Okumura's family register, she established her own family register in which she was head of the family, and had her children entered in her register.⁵⁸ This extraordinarily bold conduct manifested her hostility to the *ie* (family) system.

Because of her restricted financial circumstances, she had to combine child-rearing with her writing career to support her family, which she found difficult. Such personal experience made her realize the significance of the protection of motherhood. Influenced by the Swedish feminist Ellen Key's theme of 'the glorification of motherhood', she advocated state provision of family allowances to protect motherhood during pregnancy, childbirth and early child-rearing.⁵⁹ Between 1918 and 1919 she developed a heated debate over this with Yosano Akiko, who stressed women's economic independence and rejected state financial protection of motherhood.⁶⁰ This debate became known as the 'bosei hogo ronsō' (the controversy over the protection of motherhood).⁶¹ The controversy was an ideological or theoretical dispute in print, lacking practical dimensions. Even so, it made the public more aware of issues relating to the protection of motherhood.

The foundation of the Association of New Women and Hiratsuka's political activities

Hiratsuka finally came to the view that without political rights, women would achieve nothing, so she founded another women's organization, the Shin Fujin Kyōkai (the Association of New Women) with Ichikawa Fusae and Oku Mumeo in the autumn of 1919.⁶² Virtually all legislation enacted after the Meiji Restoration hindered women's political entitlements. The Meiji Constitution conferred no national political rights or voice to women. Under the Electoral Law to choose

58 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 2, pp. 260-261.

59 Hiratsuka Raichō, 'Bosei hogo no shuchō wa iraishugika', *Fujin Kōron*, 3:5 (May 1918), reprinted in Kōuchi Nobuko (ed.), *Shiryō: Bosei Hogo Ronsō* (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1984), p. 89.

60 Yosano Akiko, 'Joshi no tetteishita dokuritsu', *Fujin Kōron*, 3:3 (March 1918), reprinted in Kōuchi (ed.), *Shiryō*, pp. 85-86.

61 Kōuchi Nobuko, 'Kaidai', in Kōuchi (ed.), *Shiryō*, pp. 289-290.

62 On the Shin Fujin Kyōkai (the Association of New Women), see Akiko Tokuzo, *The Rise of the Feminist Movement in Japan* (Tokyo: Keiō University Press, 1999); Barbara Molony, 'Ichikawa Fusae and Japan's pre-war women's suffrage movement', in Hiroko Tomida & Gordon Daniels (eds.), *Japanese Women: Emerging from Subsistence, 1868-1945* (Kent: Global Oriental, 2005), pp. 57-92.

members of the House of Representatives, votes for such members and eligibility for election were given only to men.⁶³ Women were dispossessed of freedom to participate in political activities by Shūkai Oyobi Seisha Hō (the Assembly and Political Organization Law) promulgated in July 1890, which enabled the government to suppress women's involvement in all political affairs. Articles 4 and 25 of the law were incorporated into Article 5 of the Chian Keisatsu Hō (the Peace Police Law) of March 1900.⁶⁴ Clause 1 of Article 5 forbade women from joining political organizations. Clause 2 of Article 5 stopped women from organizing or attending political assemblies. Under this law, women were deprived of political rights and excluded from almost all politics.

The Association of New Women had three political goals: to amend Article 5 of the Peace Police Law; to enact a new law restricting marriage by men with venereal disease; and to reform electoral law to enfranchise women.⁶⁵

Regarding the Association's first goal, socialist women of the Heiminsha (Commoners' Society), such as Imai Utako and Nishikawa Fumiko, had already conducted an early campaign, submitting a petition, which requested the amendment of Article 5, to the House of Representatives in 1905.⁶⁶ Although their campaign lasted until 1910, they failed to amend the law. The Association of New Women revived that earlier campaign.

The second goal was Hiratsuka's idea, because she wanted to protect mothers and children from venereal disease brought home by their husbands, which had resulted in crippling illness for women and the birth of deformed children.⁶⁷ Dr. Tashiro Yoshinori, a member of the Meiji Medical Association, who had witnessed many cases of married women suffering mentally and physically from venereal disease caught from husbands, had already submitted a petition to the Diet demanding the monitoring and regulated control of men with venereal disease, but this was unsuccessful.⁶⁸ He helped Hiratsuka draft a petition on venereal disease and

63 'Shūgiin Senkyo Hō', *Hōritsu*, 3 (11 February, 1889), reprinted in Ichikawa Fusae (ed.), *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryō Shūsei*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1977), pp. 105-125.

64 Itoya Toshio, *Josei Kaihō no Senkusha: Nakajima Toshiko to Fukuda Hideko* (Tokyo: Shimizu Shoin, 1984), p. 169.

65 Ichikawa Fusae, 'Chian Keisatsu Hō daigojō shūsei no undō, part 1', *Josei Dōmei*, 1 (October 1920), p. 26; Hiratsuka Raichō, 'Karyūbyō danshi kekkon seigenhō seitei ni kansuru seigan undō', *Josei Dōmei*, 1 (October 1920), pp. 30-31; Shin Fujin Kyōkai, 'Shūgiin Giin Senkyo Hō Kaisei ni kansuru seigansho', *Josei Dōmei*, 3 (December 1920), p. 2.

66 Ichikawa, 'Chian Keisatsu Hō daigojō shūsei no undō, part 1', pp. 25-26.

67 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 3, pp. 99-100.

68 Hiratsuka, 'Karyūbyō danshi kekkon seigenhō seitei ni kansuru seigan undō', pp. 30-36.

encouraged her to submit it to the Diet.

Relating to the third goal, the Association was the first organization to submit a petition requesting women's suffrage to the Diet. In her *Seitō* days Hiratsuka was advised to tackle women's suffrage by a group of progressive men.⁶⁹ She refused then on the grounds that Japanese women had not made fundamental preparations to launch a women's suffrage movement. Her priorities in her *Seitō* days were to help women disregard 'feudalistic' ideas in their minds, find new identities and emancipate themselves. Nevertheless by 1919 she was convinced that the time was ripe to undertake a women's suffrage campaign.

The Association used law-abiding methods, conducting political lobbying and petitioning. Hiratsuka, Ichikawa and Oku, the key members, took the initiative in visiting Diet members and trying to persuade them to present bills to amend the Peace Police Law and to enact a law to enfranchise women.⁷⁰

They organized public lectures and meetings to promote their political campaigns. In October 1920 they inaugurated the Association's journal *Josei Dōmei* (*The Women's League*) with strong political content.⁷¹ It published detailed reports on the Association's parliamentary campaigns, and politicians' speeches at the Diet about the three political goals. In addition, it published international news related to women's suffrage movements in Western countries. Yabe Hatsuko's article 'Ōbei ni okeru fujin sanseiken undō shōshi' ('A brief history of women's suffrage campaigns in Europe and North America') gave an accurate account of the history of the women's suffrage movement in Britain, and introduced two major British women's suffrage organizations: the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) led by Millicent Garrett Fawcett, and the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) led by Emmeline Pankhurst.⁷² The latter took militant action, so its members were known as 'suffragettes', in contrast to the law-abiding 'suffragists' of the former cause.⁷³ This article made members of the Association of New Women aware of the militant strategy of the WSPU. Some members of the Association were envious of the WSPU's hardline attitudes towards their goal, but in Japan the Association's

69 Hiratsuka Raichō, 'Waga kuni ni okeru fujin mondai no sekaiteki ichi', Hiratsuka, *Hiratsuka Raichō Chosakushū*, vol. 1, pp. 409-410.

70 Ichikawa Fusae, 'Chian Keisatsu Hō daigojō shūsei no undō, part 2', *Josei Dōmei*, 2 (November 1920), p. 23.

71 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 3, p. 144.

72 Yabe Hatsuko, 'Ōbei ni okeru fujin sanseiken undō shōshi, 1', *Josei Dōmei*, 6 (March 1921), pp. 22-28.

73 Diane Atkinson, *Votes for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 10-19.

members never took militant action.⁷⁴

The Association brought about passage of the bill to amend Clause 2, Article 5 of the Peace Police Law in the 45th Diet Session.⁷⁵ The amended Act came into effect on 10 May 1922, enabling women to organize and attend political assemblies, although they were still unable to be members of political parties. This amendment was the first legal change ever achieved by women for Japanese women. Nonetheless, the Association's other two petitions regarding venereal disease and women's suffrage failed. In spite of that, the Association's campaign for marital restrictions on men with venereal disease had wider educational import. It educated unmarried women, many of whom had probably never heard of venereal disease. The Association played an important part in advocating women's suffrage publicly and submitting the first women's suffrage petition to the Diet.

The Association had a promising future and looked as though it might develop into a larger feminist movement. Even so, it ended in December 1922 after Ichikawa left the Association to go to America and Hiratsuka withdrew because of illness.⁷⁶ The Association's political campaigns still had much impact on other women's organizations, and provided precedent for the women's political movement, notably for female suffrage. The Association failed to transmute into a mass movement, in contrast to its Western counterparts. Nevertheless, the Japanese women's movement was enlivened by the Association, and many independent women's political organizations were founded on its coat-tails throughout Japan.

Conclusion

After the dissolution of the Association of New Women, the women's suffrage movement escalated. In spite of this, Hiratsuka never returned to the movement and remained only a background observer of subsequent events and campaigns. Ichikawa became the figurehead of the Japanese women's suffrage movement after returning from America. There she met Alice Paul, an American women's suffrage leader, who advised Ichikawa that women's suffrage was the key to solving women's problems.⁷⁷ After her return to Japan, Ichikawa followed this view, joining the Fusen Kakutoku Dōmei (the League for the Realization of Women's Suffrage). She continued in active petitioning and lobbying campaigns until the outbreak of the Second World War,

74 Ichikawa Fusae, 'Fujimura Danshaku wa honki dewa arumai', *Josei Dōmei*, 8 (May 1921), p. 8.

75 Sakamoto Makoto, 'Chikei daigojō shūsei undō no gairyaku', *Josei Dōmei*, 14 (June 1922), p. 11.

76 Oku Mumeo, *Nobi Akaakato* (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1988), p. 72.

77 Ichikawa Fusae, *Ichikawa Fusae Jiden: Senzen Hen* (Tokyo: Shinjuku Shobō, 1974), pp. 117-118.

which discontinued the League.⁷⁸

After Japan lost the war, the country experienced many legal changes under Allied Occupation.⁷⁹ In November 1945 the Peace Police Law came to an end, and women were able to join political parties. On 17 December 1945 Japanese women were enfranchised, and able to stand for the Diet. The new constitution promulgated in 1946, especially Articles 14 and 24, largely ended legal discrimination against women, and opened the way to solving many female problems related to marriage, property rights, and divorce. The enactment of the new civil code in 1947, especially the family and inheritance sections, brought in drastic and major changes affecting women, and completely overthrew the earlier family system.

Hiratsuka was delighted with these legal changes.⁸⁰ Many leading feminists including Ichikawa and Oku Mumeo, who had played significant parts in the women's movement before the Second World War, became Diet members, aiming to further promote women's rights. Hiratsuka, who was content with the postwar legal reforms for women, did not consider going into politics. Instead she established the Nihon Fujin Dantai Rengōkai (the Federation of Japanese Women's Groups) in April 1953, becoming a leader of the women's peace movement.⁸¹ She devoted the rest of her life to the peace movement until her death on 24 May 1971.

Hiratsuka's 85-year-life was atypical and dynamic because of a series of fights against the government, the educational authorities, and male-prioritized conventions and legal systems. Because of her progressive views, she became the focus of public criticism. She handled this in a dignified manner. Among her major activities, Hiratsuka's involvement with the Seitō Society and *Seitō* has been best remembered by Japanese people. *Seitō* provided a literary voice for women, served as a vehicle to promote female talent and self-awareness, and offered a venue to discuss women's problems. Translations of feminist books written by Ellen Key, Olive Schreiner and Emma Goldman, which appeared in *Seitō*, informed Seitō Society's members about Western feminist theories and women's emancipation. These discussions introduced important ideas to later feminists. *Seitō* thus laid the groundwork for the Japanese women's movement.

In spite of this, the Association of New Women, which Hiratsuka founded, had the

78 Suzuki Yūko, *Joseishi o Hiraku*, 2 vols (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 121-122.

79 Nagahara Kazuko & Yoneda Sayoko, *Onna no Shōwashi* (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1986), p. 150.

80 Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, vol. 4, pp. 54-57; Hiratsuka Raichō, 'Watashi no yume wa jitsugen shitaka', in Hiratsuka, *Hiratsuka Raichō Chosakushū*, vol. 7, pp. 32-33.

81 Kushida Fuki, 'Josei kaihō eno jōnetsu', in Maruoka Hideko *et al*, *Hiratsuka Raichō to Nihon no Kindai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1986), pp. 39-40.

greatest influence on Japanese women's history. While the Seito Society's members only developed theoretical disputes in print (in *Seitō*) and never embarked on political campaigns, those of the Association conducted nationwide petitioning and lobbying campaigns under the leadership of Hiratsuka. For the Association, Hiratsuka also recruited Ichikawa and Oku, who later became leading feminists and were active as politicians after the Pacific War, working towards further improvement in women's status. Judging from this, the most distinguished role Hiratsuka rendered as a feminist was as an initiator. She instigated many ideas and objectives, and commenced her feminist activity before any of her Japanese feminist contemporaries, although Ichikawa and Oku brought Hiratsuka's political goals to fruition. Hiratsuka inspired feminist debate, and launched campaigns which became central to the Japanese women's movement. Furthermore, she exerted a strong influence upon many contemporary women, and even affected people's vocabularies, leading to linguistic changes, and 'Hiratsuka Raichō' became a synonym for 'atarashii onna' ('a new woman'). For all these reasons, she is rightly regarded as the leading pioneer of the women's emancipation movement in Japan.

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