

# Political Women in Japan

The Search for a Place  
in Political Life

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## Preface

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The success of a book such as this one depends almost entirely on the goodwill and cooperation of those sought as informants. It is they who command rich data, and it is they who have the choice of whether or not they will make it available to a foreign researcher. In a way, this book is the direct yield of one hundred political women making a decision to talk to me candidly about their lives. They met me in coffee shops, political party headquarters, the meeting room of their political group, or in their own homes, sometimes with babies in their laps. They took me in tow to meetings, rallies, and demonstrations. They introduced me to their parents, their husbands or other male friends, their children, and to fellow members of their political groups. They revealed to me, in addition to the specific data I sought, endless insights into the nature of contemporary Japanese society and into the problems and struggles of women throughout the world who are attempting to make a place for themselves in political life.

The one hundred political women who were informants for this study have made it possible. Their anonymity is preserved throughout, and the debt to them is beyond measure.

In addition to the informants themselves, a great many Japanese both in and outside the political world added greatly to my understanding of political women and woman's role in general in the total social environment. I should like to express my appreciation to Takahashi Akira and Doi Takeo,<sup>1</sup> both of Tokyo University, to Takenaka Kazurō, then of Doshisha University and now of Tsukuba University, and to Inoue Teruko of Wako University, for their help in shedding light on the data and for assisting me with introductions. I owe thanks to many officials in all of Japan's major political parties for introducing me to political women, but special thanks must go to Murakawa Ichirō and Watanabe Kazuko of the Liberal Democratic Party and Takenaka Ichirō of the Japan Socialist Party for their time and assistance. I am grateful to Akamatsu Ryōko, then of the Ministry of Labor and now one of Japan's delegates to the United Nations, for her contribution to my understanding of women's changing roles and status, and to her husband, Hanami Tadashi, Professor of Law at Sophia University, for his help as an authority on laws affecting women workers. To both I owe a debt of friendship as well as of gratitude for aid rendered. Many political women older than the age range set for this study shared with me their experiences and reminiscences about the prewar world and prewar suffrage movement, as well as their views of women's place in the political world today. Of these I owe particular thanks to Ichikawa Fusae, a member of the upper house of the parliament and a long-time advocate of women's rights, Mizusawa Yōko of the Women's Democratic Club, and Inoue Fumiko, a participant in the prewar Christian movement for women's rights. I must also express thanks to Matsuoka Yōko, Higuchi Keiko, Kobayashi Tomiko, Terada Meisei, and numerous other well-known political women and men in contemporary Japan who gave me their time and help.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to four women who at vari-

1. Throughout this book, personal names are given in Japanese fashion, that is, with the family name appearing first.

ous stages of my research assisted in the interviewing and who became personal friends as well. Masuzawa Fumiko aided me throughout the interviewing stage. Her friendly, exuberant manner, her tact and diplomacy in the face of many a tight situation, greatly aided my attempts to secure the cooperation of numerous informants who were at first unsure about me and about being interviewed. Sakagishi Setsuko, political woman, mother, and feminist, not only helped me with the interviewing, but greatly enriched my understanding of the lives of Japanese women. Ōno Yasuko and Satō Ikuko provided invaluable help and companionship as well as gracious introductions to their families.

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To many colleagues in this country I owe much appreciation. My work has greatly benefited from discussions with Walter Slote, a clinical psychologist in New York with extensive field experience in Asia. I am indebted to Gerald Curtis for his help in the original design and conception of this project. His advice—that researchers owe it to themselves to

study those topics that they find personally interesting as well as intellectually engaging—led me to the topic of this book. To Herbert Passin I owe much of my initial interest in Japan. Discussions with him over the years have given me access to an endless flow of perceptions about an extraordinarily complex social system. Stanley Heginbotham deserves many thanks for his help with methodology and organization at many stages of the research and write-up. To James Morley I express appreciation, not only for the understanding he has given me of the Japanese political system, but for his personal help and encouragement over the years. In addition to the above, Ezra Vogel, David Plath, Patricia Steinhoff, Ellis Krauss, Scott Flanagan, and Lewis Austin read all or parts of the manuscript and offered invaluable comments and criticism. I should like to thank Carol Lohry Cartwright and Shari Graney for typing various drafts of the book, Gladys Castor for her skilled editorial work, and Philip Lilienthal and Phyllis Killen of University of California Press for their help and guidance. To Stephen Butts, who read the manuscript at many stages and who was there through both the darkest and the finest moments, I express my deepest gratitude and thanks.

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None of the above, of course, bear responsibility for my findings, but to all I owe my sincerest appreciation.

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