

Feminisms Beyond the Nation-State in East Asia

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Acknowledgment of Country

- I acknowledge the indigenous custodians of the land where I live and work. I am speaking to you today from the land of the Wadi Wadi people of Dharawal Country.

Feminism

- Feminism as a social movement develops in modern societies at the point where gender becomes a salient social category. Once women – and sympathetic men – feel dissatisfaction with the different treatment of men and women in laws, social customs and cultural representation, they respond with political movements to seek more equitable gender relations.
- Contemporary conceptualisations of feminism are informed by theories of intersectionality – the positioning of individuals and groups in structured relationships based on gender, class, racialised positioning, ability and disability, sexual orientation, religion and citizenship status.

Approaches to Thinking about Border-Crossing

- Comparative approach: takes two examples of nations and compares them as independent units
- International: relations between nation-states
- Transnational: flows of communication and influence which cross national borders
- Global approach: sensitive to global processes

Feminism

- Feminism may be practised in a range of arenas:
 - A social movement
 - Labour movements
 - Cultural analysis
 - Cultural production
 - Academia
 - Galleries, libraries, art galleries and museums (GLAM)
 - Supranational organisations
 - ...

Issues of Transnational Feminist Concern

- Communication between feminist groups with similar concerns
- Labour relations
- Exploitative relations in tourism
- Exploitative transnational histories: imperialism and colonialism
- Migrant labour
- Militarised sexual violence
- Circulation of commodities between differently positioned nations and economies
- Histories of feminisms
- Academia
- ...

East Asia

- For the purposes of this discussion I will focus on Japan and its connections with neighbouring countries in the region, but transnational connections and flows extend beyond this region.

The Logics of Transnational Collaboration

- Identification
- Perceived similarity of situation
- A sense of connectedness
- Recognition of mutual imbrication in structures of inequality
- Recognition of shared histories

Directionality and the Global Order of Difference

- While we may talk about multidirectional flows, these flows do not always happen in conditions of equality, but may be shaped by power differentials, access to technology, access to resources to travel, access to 'powerful' languages, and imbrication in complicated histories.

Women's International Democratic Federation

- Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) established in 1945 with a meeting in Paris
- 1955: First Mothers' Congress held by the WIDF in Lausanne.
- Japan's *Hahaoya Taikai* is affiliated with the international organisation
- Japan continues to use the name *Hahaoya Taikai*
- The WIDF continued to hold conferences, but under the name of 'Women's Congress' rather than 'Mothers' Congress'.

Asian Women's Conference

- Committee of Asian Women who Fight Discrimination = Aggression (Asian Women's Conference) established in 1970.
- Matsuoka Yôko (1916–1979) and Iijima Aiko (1932–2005) are leading figures
- Carries out conference with international students and *zainichi* Koreans and Chinese.

Women's Liberation (*Ūman Ribu*)

- Femintern Press
 - Translates from Japanese to English and English to Japanese
 - Akiyama Yōko (b. 1942) also translates from Chinese to Japanese

Feminist

- Magazine founded by poet and academic Atsumi Ikuko (b. 1940)
- Publishes in both English and Japanese
- Translates between English and Japanese

Asian Women's Association (Ajia no Onnatachi no Kai)

- Founded on 1 March 1977 (anniversary of Korean uprising in the colonial period)
- Led by Matsui Yayori (1934–2002) Takasato Suzuyo (b. 1940), Tomiyama Taeko (b. 1921) and others
- *Asian Women's Liberation (Ajia to Josei Kaihō)*
- Concerned with:
 - gender and nationalism
 - economic structures which link Japan with neighboring countries
 - feminist movements in Asia
- Changes journal name to *Women's Asia 21 (Onnatachi no Nijūisseiki)*

Women's Christian Temperance Union

- **HELP: shelter and other support activities for migrant workers**

International Feminists of Japan

- Meetings and newsletters (*Feminist Forum*) in English but women from several nationalities participated in 1970s and 1980s.

Women Questioning the Present (Onnatachi no Ima o Tou Kai)

- *Jûgôshi Nôto* (Notes for a History of the Homefront) (1977–1985)
- Explored gendered dimensions of the history of Japan's imperialism and colonialism and their own imbrication in these structures

VAWW-Net Japan: Women's International Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery

- Brings together activists and researchers from across the Asian region
- Women's International Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery in 2000 and reports judgment in 2001
- Massive project of historical research, collecting testimonies, interpreting testimonies and translating key documents

Conclusions

- Transnational feminism may have a longer history than has been recognized.
- Transnational flows move in multiple directions, but always embedded in complex structures of inequality .
- Some feminists looked to Europe and North America, while others engaged with neighbouring countries in East Asia.
- Others engaged with international communities within Japan.
- Transnational connections are dependent on the linguistic work of translating and interpreting.
- Logics of transnational collaboration include: Identification, perceived similarity of situation, a sense of connectedness, a recognition of mutual imbrication in structures of inequality, a recognition of shared histories.

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Thank you!

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