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Recommended Citation
DOI: 10.58837/CHULA.ARV.13.1.5
Available at: https://digital.car.chula.ac.th/arv/vol13/iss1/6

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Progressive Women in Japan and Thailand during the Modernization Period: A Comparative Study

Pipada Yongcharoens

Abstract

The Meiji Restoration and the reforms of King Rama V during the mid-nineteenth century produced great changes in the societies of both Japan and Thailand. One of the outstanding changes was the attempt to utilize aspects of western culture in order to modernize the respective countries. It is clear that some Japanese and Thai intellectuals were influenced by western thought in analyzing problems in their societies. The problem concerning the status of women in the two societies was one of the issues which interested Japanese and Thai intellectuals. Fukuzawa Yukichi and Thienwan were examples of intellectuals who discourses at great length about women and the status of women in their societies. Their attitudes towards women clearly showed western influence.

It could be said that the reforms in the two societies, and the openness of both countries to western ideas, especially ideas about women, created groups of progressive women in both societies who eventually decided to tackle the problems of inequality between men and women. Those progressive Japanese and Thai women, and their views in the modernization period until the eve of World War II constitute a topic which may be studied on a comparative basis.

This paper will therefore attempt to examine which group or class of Japanese and Thai these women came from. The question of why
they decided to fight for their rights will also be studied. In addition, this paper will also compare issues discussed by Japanese and Thai progressive women in order to convince their societies to accept their ideas about the inequality of the sexes. Finally, whether the voice of these women had any impact upon the two societies will be assessed.

From the author’s research, it is found that the progressive women in Japan and Thailand came from different groups in society. While Thai progressive women were mostly from the upper class, the Japanese ones were from the lower class. However, their problems seem to have been quite similar. It is noticeable that progressive Japanese women were interested in the rights of women in politics and wished to play a role in politics, while progressive Thai women seemed to be passive on this issue. The activities of progressive Japanese and Thai women reflected the alertness of those women in trying to raise women’s status in their respective societies. It was unfortunate that the result of their fight had so little effect on Japanese and Thai women as a whole.
Progressive Women in Japan and Thailand during the Modernization Period: A Comparative Study

Introduction

The Meiji Restoration and the Reforms of King Chulalongkorn during the mid-nineteenth century produced great changes in the societies of both Japan and Thailand. One of the outstanding changes was the attempt to utilize aspects of western culture in order to modernize the respective countries. It is clear that some Japanese and Thai intellectuals were influenced by western thought in analyzing problems in their societies. The problem concerning the status of women in the two societies was one of the issues which interested Japanese and Thai intellectuals. Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) and Thienwan (1842-1915) were examples of intellectuals who discourses at great length about women and the status of women in their societies.

The reforms in the two societies, and the openness of both countries to western ideas, especially ideas about women, created groups of progressive women in both societies who eventually decided to tackle the problem of inequality between men and women. From the end of the nineteenth century up until the eve of the Second World War, there were many types of activities from these progressive Japanese and Thai women expressing their attitude of dissatisfaction with the accepted notion in their societies of male dominance and female subordination.

The women’s rights movement based on the feminist position had halted in Japan and Thailand during the “dark age” in politics just before the Second World War. The leader of the Thai government had propagated a “housewife ideology” among Thai women, especially among the middle and upper-middle class women who used to be pioneers in disseminating the idea of women’s rights. In Japan, totalitarianism and military control also ended the women’s movement.
Therefore, in this paper the modernization period refers to the period from the middle of the nineteenth century up to the eve of the Second World War. It was during this period that progressive Japanese and Thai women launched campaigns of women's emancipation. Those progressive women in the two countries and their progressive ideas during this period constitute a topic which may be studied on a comparative basis.

As much more research needs to be done before any real understanding of those progressive Japanese and Thai women and their attitudes concerning women, this paper will, therefore, attempt to conduct only preliminary research on this topic in order to be able to further study it in depth in the future. It will examine the group or class from which these progressive Japanese and Thai women came. This paper will study only those who were classified as "bourgeois feminist". In addition, it will study issues discussed by them in order to convince their societies to accept their ideas about the inequality of the sexes.

Japanese and Thai Women in the Reform Society

From 1851, Thailand was gradually being reformed in order to pave the way for modernization and westernization during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, which began in 1868. In this year, Emperor Meiji of Japan declared the Meiji Restoration dedicated to the modernization of his country by abiding by the "Charter Oath of Five Articles" as the policy for developing the country. Due to the "Charter Oath of Five Articles", women of upper and lower class had equal opportunities to receive education in school. The Fundamental Code of Education issued in 1872 declared: "There shall, in the future, be no community with an illiterate family, nor a family with an illiterate person".1 When Japanese girls finished their compulsory education, they also had opportunities to further their studies in junior high schools whose curriculum contained modern western science.2 Furthermore, western teachers were hired to teach in these schools. Moreover, some girls were sent to study in the west. There were also many Christian schools for girls. Contact with foreign teachers provided an opportunity for some Japanese girl students to meet and observe western people and to be exposed to western ideas.
In Thailand, Christian missionaries also established public schools for both boys and girls. These schools opened opportunities for girls to study Thai, English, history, geography and home economics. Modern education also had gained the support of the Thai elite during the modernization period. Schools for boys increased in number in Bangkok for children of the upper class as well as for commoners. The first school, named “Sunanthalai School”, for the daughters of upper class families was founded in 1890 by Queen Saowapha, King Chulalongkorn’s wife. It offered the same curriculum as the missionary schools. However, schools for girls in general were established in 1901.

Therefore, Japanese and Thai women, especially those from the middle and upper-middle classes, during the modernization period had opportunities to become aware of broader world-views by studying in the school system. Some Japanese and Thai intellectuals also had an influence on forming “new” Japanese and Thai women whose duties and responsibilities were different from the traditional ones. Fukuzawa Yukichi and Thienwan were examples of such intellectuals. Fukuzawa Yukichi wanted his “new” Japanese women to be active, educated, self-dependent and self-determined while still preserving their feminine characteristics. Thienwan, also expected his “new” Thai women to be educated enough to be efficient wives which meant they could be assistants to their husbands and be able to entertain their guests impressively. He urged women to realize the priceless value of education and argued for equal education for men and women.

Certainly, modern education and the introduction of western ideas about women from the intellectuals in the respective societies might have encouraged some Japanese and Thai women to reconsider the status and responsibility of women.

However, even though there were many modernizing changes in the reformative societies of the two countries, the traditional notion of male dominance and female subordination still persisted in the beliefs of Japanese and Thai. Due to this accepted value, a number of laws were designed to keep women in their traditional place: The Meiji Constitution of 1889 and the Law of Election in which no females were given political rights. The Meiji Civil Code of 1898 spelled out
women’s legal inferiority in numerous ways including classifying married women as “incapacitated persons”. The Thai Civil Code was the same as the Meiji Civil Code, ensuring that women were kept under men’s control.

The idea of male superiority over women also affected women’s education. Although Japanese and Thai women had a chance to study, the standard of education for boys was not similar to girls. The curriculum of schools for Japanese and Thai boys aimed to provide boys with occupational skills, while the one for girls aimed to equip women more adequately for the task of being efficient wives and mothers suitable for the new modern societies. The purpose was not to produce an independent and a self-sufficient woman.

Therefore, there were consequently contradictions between the atmosphere of a hoped for liberated-society and the general acceptance in the two societies of traditional values of male superiority and female inferiority.

The Emergence of Progressive Women during the Modernization Period

The opportunities for Japanese and Thai women to be exposed to western ideas concerning women and western etiquette roused the desire of some Japanese and Thai women to taste such women’s privileges, but unfortunately they were impeded by laws and social prejudices against women. This situation encouraged some Japanese and Thai women to become eager to fight in order to emancipate women from traditional unjust values. This type of women will be called “progressive women” in this paper.

Progressive Japanese women openly revealed themselves to the public. Their attitudes and stands on problems of women were quite forthright. It was known that Tsuda Umeko fought for educating girls to develop their individual personalities and to become financially emancipated and independent working women. Fukuda Hideko possessed much the same ideas as Tsuda Umeko. Hiratsuka (Haruko) Raichō urged Japanese women to liberate themselves from traditional women’s morality; she, together with Ichikawa Fusae, campaigned for
women's rights in politics. Katō (Ishimoto) Shidzue propagated a new way to emancipate women by emphasizing the use of birth control.

To the contrary, progressive Thai women mostly hid themselves behind the scenes. Nevertheless, most of them realized that there was inequality between men and women in Thai society. They liked to discuss women's problems in order to encourage Thai women to fight against prejudice and to appeal to the government elite to improve women's position in society. Therefore, most of them expressed their ideas by writing articles which were published in progressive women's magazines. Unfortunately, they usually concealed their real names and used pen-names instead when writing articles concerning women's issues.

It is noteworthy to mention some progressive Thai women's magazines in order to prove how active progressive Thai women were in campaigning for equality between the sexes. During the early twentieth century, there were nine progressive women's magazines: Kulasatri (1906-1907), Satri Niphon (1914), Satrisap (1922), Sattrithai (1925-1926), NariNithet (1926), Sayam Yupphadi (1928), Narinat (1930-1932), Suphapnari (1930) and Yingthai (1932). These magazines aimed to be vehicles for women's voices, to prove that women were as capable as men, to benefit women, to unite them and do their best to protect the reputation of Thai women, to provide female readers with knowledge suitable for "modern" women and to improve the status of women. Most of the women's magazines hardly lasted longer than one year due to financial difficulties which stemmed from their lack of general popularity. However, new magazines were issued one after another by other groups of educated women with quite similar aims.

Therefore, progressive Thai women and their ideas about women's problems can be studies through articles published in these magazines.

The owners and editors of these magazines were six females, one male and two unknown. It can be assumed that they were upper and middle class educated and wealthy. Since this kind of business needed a significant investment and was uncertain of its popularity, the owners and the editors needed to be wealthy enough to take a risk.
Importantly, they would have been strongly motivated to produce this type of intellectual publication. It seems that the readers of these magazines were from the same group as the owners and the editors.

Interestingly, progressive Japanese women came from both lower and upper middle class families. Ichikawa Fusae was from a poor peasant family. Her negative impression of the inequality between sexes resulted from bearing witness to the cruel treatment her illiterate mother received from her father. When she finished her studies, she worked as a primary school’s teacher. Later, she became the first female reporter for a Nagoya newspaper. She was baptized as a Christian which was her first step to acquire western knowledge, including information on women’s problems and women’s liberation. Itō Noe shared the same experience of poverty as Ichikawa Fusae. After her compulsory education, she had to work at the post office. Because she was a book-worm, she possessed a wider world-view than her friends; this information became the foundation for her to acquire more and more knowledge. She became interested in women’s emancipation when she had a chance to read a liberated’s women magazine.

Kató (Ishimoto) Shidzue and Hiratsuka Raichō differed from the two progressive women mentioned above. They came from well-to-do families and received both traditional and modern education.

Ichikawa, Itō, Katō and Hiratsuka were the examples of those progressive Japanese women who came from both the lower and upper classes. Interestingly enough, they openly revealed themselves in fighting for the emancipation of Japanese women. Meanwhile, progressive Thai women of almost the same period did not dare to reveal their true identities. There were certain reasons to explain why progressive Japanese women were ready to expose themselves to the public.

Preliminary research indicates as follows:

First, the open atmosphere among Japanese people during the Meiji period up to the beginning of the twentieth century towards learning western knowledge seemed to rouse some Japanese women to acquire more information from the West, especially knowledge concerning women. John Stuart Mill’s *Subjection of Women* when
introduced into the Japanese society had a profound influence. Also, with the growth of capitalism and the advancement of bourgeois liberalism, feminist theories were widely debated and of interest to both men and women in the society. There were a number of works on women written by Japanese men and women: *Women's Rights in the Western Countries* by Hokichi Yumoto (1882); Naiki Fukama's *On Mill's Equality* (1884); Yukichi Fukuzawa's *On Women* (1885) and *On Social Intercourse of Man and Woman* (1886); Miss Nao Inoue’s *Japanese Women* (1886); Kajirō Tatsumi’s *History of Women’s Rights in the West and in Japan* (1887); Ko Yada’s *Monogamy* (1887); and Seiu Nakayama’s *Japanese Women of Tomorrow* (1888). The well-known progressive Japanese women became activists in the feminism cause because of the opportunity to become familiar with the western theories. Hiratsuka Raichō was introduced to German Nietzschean philosophy when she joined a literary group led by Ikuto Chōkō, a writer and a student of German philosophy. From that point, she developed her own ideas and viewpoints and went on to publish a women’s magazine named *Seitō* to disseminate new ideas. Itō Noe was awakened to a new feminist perception by reading *Seitō*. In addition to these intellectual works, there were also other activities to propagandize the new concepts about women, for example, by giving lectures in various meetings. Fukuda Hideko was strongly influenced by the speech of Kishida Toshiko on attacking the “evil practice” of subjugation of women. Later, Fukuda Hideko eventually became a well-known progressive woman.

It can be said that this atmosphere of awareness seemed to influence women interested in women’s rights to dare, without any fear, to join together with other Japanese intellectuals to debate and to analyze problems relating to women. They could consider themselves as being modern and civilized women. Therefore, there were no reason to hide and not disclose their identities.

Secondly, in spite of democracy, the Meiji constitution of 1889 restricted political rights only to males. The Peace Preservation Law of 1887, explicitly excluded Japanese women from the right to join political parties and attend political gatherings, even lecture meetings.
These unjust Laws likely inspired some progressive Japanese women to fight for political rights equal to men. They openly came before the public in order to assure that their campaigns were forceful and also trustworthy.

Thirdly, progressive Japanese women came from both lower and upper class families as discussed above. Apparently, those from the lower class, like Ichikawa Fusae and Itō Noe, had experience of poverty and some education which made them independent enough to choose their own way of life. They had no family reputation to care for. Therefore, when they became feminists fighting for women’s rights, they were proud of themselves and felt no pressure to conceal themselves behind the scene.

In contrast, those from the upper class families were restricted by the family system, the reputation of the family and the traditional morality of women. At any rate, they were courageous enough choosing to play a role which Japanese people in general perceived as an “evil performance”. The motivation for their actions was the strong support they received from influential persons in their lives. Katō Shidzue and Hiratsuka Raichō would be good representatives of progressive Japanese women from upper class families in this period. Shidzue was born into a noble and wealthy family. She was educated with western knowledge as well as traditional Japanese science and morality.\textsuperscript{19} When she married Ishimoto Keikichi, she was ready to be a traditional wife according to Kaibara Ekken’s teachings.\textsuperscript{20} She would not have been a feminist except that her beloved husband had strongly encouraged her. Shidzue confessed that her husband insisted on her changing her attitude towards him form a meek feudal wife to an alive, liberal and understanding companion. His expectation of his wife was: “I am not hoping that my wife, Shidzue, will be a baroness of the sort depicted in fiction or drama, leading an elaborate life amid luxurious surroundings; what I really hope for her future is that she will concern herself with the great problems of her countrywomen”.\textsuperscript{21}

Hiratsuka Raichō, also, came from a well-to-do family. Her father represented a contemporary upper class Japanese who admired
western culture, while, at the same time, one who could not neglect traditional Japanese thought and world-views. His daughter, Raichō, was brought up in an intellectual and westernized but conservative home. It was, Tsuya, her mother who strongly influenced and supported Raichō to develop awareness of herself and a dissatisfaction at finding obstacles in a women’s life.\(^\text{22}\)

Thus, it can be said that, with support from influential persons, upper class progressive Japanese women were brave enough to break the social rules impressed on women and to perform willingly a role normally unaccepted by the society. When they decided to take a new path in spite of social pressures, they felt free to play a new role without having to conceal themselves.

Coming to the question why progressive Thai women did not have courage to reveal themselves and to openly disclose their remarkable ideas for which they were dedicated, it could be surmised as follows:

Although there had been efforts to reform Thai society since 1851, King Chulalongkorn did not pay much attention to modern education for girls compared with his enthusiasm about boy’s education.\(^\text{23}\) One of the reasons seems to be that the King was afraid that modern education would lead to immoral behavior among Thai girls, as they might totally imitate western culture and neglect some of the favorable characteristics of Thai women.

Krommameun Chainatnarenthorn who had responsibility for educational affairs expressed his own idea that girls should have a chance to study as equally as boys. However, they should not study professional courses, especially political science, since it was a subject appropriate for males only. Girls should recognize that they were female and so they should not step into the male domain.\(^\text{24}\)

In addition, the Thai people, in general, seemed not to accept the concept of equality between the sexes. Moreover, the atmosphere of encouraging women to study and to fight for women’s rights was not as vigorous as in Japan as discussed above. Importantly, Thailand during
this period was still under the absolute monarchy. Freedom to express any idea probably was more limited than in Japan.

Therefore, in these circumstances, the upper middle class progressive Thai women who realized the existence of inequality between the sexes, might not dare to disclose themselves and openly declare their viewpoints. They might be afraid that their stand would adversely affect the reputation of their families.

**Women’s Issues in the Perception of Progressive Japanese and Thai Women**

Progressive Japanese and Thai women perceived women’s problems in a quite similar fashion on the points. First, they considered that males and females were physically and intellectually equal. However, females were inferior to males because they had no chance to utilize their capabilities. This was due to lack of education and the prejudices of the law relating to females. Therefore, progressive Japanese and Thai women attempted to tackle these problems by convincing women in the two societies to realize the value of education and also write petitions to their governments to offer the same standard of education to boys and girls. Also, they attempted to pressure the government’s elite of both countries in order to revise the bias in the laws against women.

Secondly, some progressive Japanese and Thai women discerned the differences between males and females. They seemed to accept the social division of labor of men and women. However, they firmly insisted that women should be self-determined and independent.

It can be concluded that there were two main points debated by progressive women in the two countries: on the inequality of the sexes and on independence for women; one additional point made by progressive Japanese women was on women’s political rights.

**I. On Inequality of Sexes**

**On the Problem of Lack of Education**

Many articles published in Thai women’s magazines during the early twentieth century seemed to agree that women were equal to men
physically and intellectually. One article pointed out that female farmers could work in the field side by side with male farmers, while, at the same time they could also fulfill their duties as wives and mothers. At any rate, women could not reach their fullest potentialities due to lack of education. Papers by progressive Thai women published in women’s magazines of this period from beginning to the end paid much attention to this problem. Kulasatri (1906), the first intellectual magazine for women, stressed that men and women were relatively important to each other. If men neglected women and allowed them to be ignorant, men would certainly be unfavorably affected. Thus, men should support woman to have a good education so that women could perform their duties of wifehood and motherhood perfectly. Satri Niphon (1914) agreed with the perception of women’s education as expressed in Kulasatri and also proposed the slogan that women with education were more valuable than those with beauty. It can be said that the early progressive Thai women realized the necessity of education as beneficial to men and relevant to society’s expectations for women to be active companions of their husbands and good teachers of their children. Satrisap (1922) changed its campaign. One article critically stated that as women and men were equal, women should be offered the same standard of education as men. The author asked the male elite “why do educated men suspect that giving an equal standard of education to boys and girls will cause damage to Thai society?”. On the contrary, the author insisted that if women had good education, they could have produced numerous benefits for the country, not less than men had done. Satrithai (1925) emphasized the point that women as well we men were the strength of the country. Women should receive as good an education as men for the prosperity of the country. Besides, one progressive woman wrote an article asking for opportunity for women to study in the Law School.

Yingthai (1932), a women’s newspaper, argued that women should study courses like those offered to men, consisting of knowledge in arts and sciences, so that woman could have the opportunity to advance themselves and the country.
In summary, progressive Thai women campaigned on the problem of women’s education by urging both the female and male elite to accept the necessity of education, at an early stage for the benefit of men, and then developing their argument for the benefit of the country and for women themselves.

The debate on this topic by progressive Japanese women appeared at the end of the nineteenth century. Kishida Toshiko (1863-1901) was one of the progressive women interested in this problem. She emphasized consistently the necessity of education for women. However, strongly opposed the idea that women should receive an education to fulfill their duties of wifehood and motherhood. She argued that kind of education made women little more than apprentice geishas.34 Kishida believed in women’s intelligence and potentialities. She explained that women’s capabilities were not utilized due to lack of stimulus from suitable education. She compared giving unsuitable education to women as growing flowers in salt; they would eventually wither.35 Women should have an opportunity to advance themselves for the benefit of themselves and the country. Kishida also tried to encourage women’s parents to support their daughters education to as high a level as possible.

On the Problem of Prejudicial Laws

Progressive Japanese and Thai women were of the same opinion that the bias in the laws against women was one of the obstacles to modernize women in the two countries. Those laws were concerned with the acceptance of polygamy, the administration of matrimonial property and the distribution of women’s property. Both the Thai and Japanese civil codes recognized polygamy which was perceived by these progressive women as an important cause of inequality of the sexes. Therefore, polygamy was one of the topics discussed consistently by progressive women of the two countries.

Progressive Thai women started criticizing polygamy by pointing out the unfavorable consequences to men who practiced it. Polygamy caused men to be preoccupied with sexuality, and led them to lose time at their work.36 In 1914, an article in Satri Niphon referred to
the male accusation that Thai women were very jealous compared with their European counterparts. Jealousy, the article argued, was the result of polygamy. The solution was, therefore, simply to eliminate polygamy and replace it with the European practice of monogamy.\textsuperscript{37} Besides, polygamy was the main factor which caused young women to turn to prostitution as one of progressive Thai women argued in her article in \textit{Satrisap}. Having been born in a large family of polygamous fathers, many young women did not receive enough financial support from their fathers and were forced by economic necessity to enter this undesirable career.\textsuperscript{38} Progressive Thai women in later times argued that women were considered as objects giving sexual happiness to men because of polygamy.\textsuperscript{39} Therefore, they were controlled and taken advantage of by men. One progressive woman insisted that a man should think about his wife’s happiness as well as his own, and that he ought to realize that while polygamy brought him sexual happiness, his wife suffered as a result of the practice.\textsuperscript{40} The articles of these progressive women attempted to petition to the government to revise the Civil Code on this point and to introduce monogamy instead.

Polygamy was also a point discussed among Japanese progressive women at the end of the nineteenth century. Yajima Kajiko, a well-known progressive Japanese woman interested in polygamy, pointed out that the concubine system in Japanese society was huge problem involving the sexual abuse of women within the family structure.\textsuperscript{41} Kotō Shidzue strongly opposed geisha and prostitution in Japanese society on two aspects. First, these two professions caused women to be regarded by men as commercial articles, who were manufactured accordingly, each with a price mark, tagged on the neck, somewhat differentiated, each with reference to age, art and talent.\textsuperscript{42} Besides, they led to the problem of polygamy which was considered by Shidzue as sexual abuse which caused suffering for men’s wives, geisha and prostitutes, as well. Shidzue believed that,

\begin{quote}
It is our society that not only tolerates but, in fact, sponsors the existence of such a profession. Men should be ashamed of taking advantage of it.
\end{quote}
Awakened women cannot but feel it their duty to work toward the removal of this horrible disgrace imposed on their sex.\textsuperscript{43}

It is noticeable that progressive Thai women did not discuss much about problems relating to prostitutes. It might be because they wanted to discuss only problems of upper and middle class women with whom they were concerned and knew well, since such problems were issues of their own interest.\textsuperscript{44}

It can be said that polygamy as recognized by Japanese and Thai laws, caused women to be disdained. Women had no dignity at all. Therefore, they would like to fight to abolish polygamy and replace it with monogamy instead.

The other issues with which progressive Thai women were particularly concerned regarding the bias in the laws were the existing inequality in the administration of matrimonial property and the inequality in the distribution of common property.\textsuperscript{45} One progressive Thai woman forcefully argued: “In the distribution of common property after a divorce, the man has in every way an advantage over the women. As a matter of fact, men and women enhance each other’s knowledge and competence, which, in turn, benefits the nation. Therefore, there should not be any law which is in the man’s favor, as has been the case since ancient times”.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{On the Problem of Unequal Rights}

Progressive Japanese and Thai women held almost the same opinion that women should have the same chance to reach their fullest potentialities as men did. Hiratsuka Raichō wrote in one of her articles,

The time has come for women to unite for the sake of all women to fulfill our natural obligations and attain our natural rights…. We must cooperate with men and participate in the actual movement of postwar social reconstruction. If women do not stand fast at this time, the future will be no different. Women will again be
excluded from society which will remain the monopoly of men. If this occurs, it will be a great catastrophe for the world, for mankind.\textsuperscript{47}

For some progressive Japanese women, the major unequal rights issue between men and women was the exclusion of Japanese women from politics according to the Peace Preservation Laws of 1887. Ichigawa Fusae believed that women should have certain political privileges and then took a step towards women’s suffrage which would bring about the general emancipation of Japanese women on all levels of life.\textsuperscript{48} She hoped that women could elect those who were willing to resolve women’s problems to the parliament to be the voice of women. The thought of Hiratsuka Raichō might reflect the attitude of this group of women; she said, “The new women does not merely destroy the old morality and laws constructed out of male selfishness, but day by day attempts to create a new kingdom, where a new religion, a new morality and new laws are carried out...”\textsuperscript{49}

Therefore, from 1887-1922, these progressive women who considered that equal rights in politics would be an important ladder for women to obtain equal rights, strongly fought for revising Article five of the Peace Preservation Laws. At last, their struggle was successful when their petition was finally approved on February 25, 1922.\textsuperscript{50} Women had won legal freedom to organize and take part in political meetings. After that they moved on to campaign for women’s suffrage but this was not attained until 1945 when the Occupation authorities promulgated a new Election Law.

In Thailand, due to the absolute monarchy, there was no campaign for a chance to participate in politics among Thai progressive women. However, some of them appealed to the elite requesting that women should be able to work as government officials, a profession restricted to males. In 1926, a progressive Thai woman wrote an article published in \textit{Satrithai}, “It needs those who are knowledgeable, intelligent and unselfish to finish the work of the government successfully within a short time. Women possess those qualities. Thus, the government should allow women to work in governmental service as
men do”. In 1930 Suphapnari also emphasized that females could work as hard as males. Females and males should have the same opportunity and the Thai government should also hire women to work in the offices of government.

In summary, both progressive Thai and Japanese women held the common idea that females were intelligent and hard-working, no less so than males. Therefore, females needed to liberate themselves from all outside forces. To do so required a good education, determination and a will to work. Those progressive women attempted to awaken all females to realize their own innate potentialities and to be courageous to step into other roles which broke out of the traditional stereotype.

II. On Women’s Self-Determination

Some progressive Japanese women might agree that females were different from males. Women had their own duties and responsibilities. They possessed some privileges which did not belong to men. That was the duty of motherhood. It can be seen that surprisingly most of the progressive Japanese women accepted this duty. Shidzue gave birth to a daughter to her second husband when she was 48 years old. Fukuda Hideko had four children for whom she had to take all responsibility. Itō Noe had seven children. Nevertheless, these progressive women insisted firmly that though they were willing to take responsibility for these women’s privileges, they insisted on preserving their self-determination and independence, especially economic independence. They believed that self-determination and economic independence would lead women out from under the control of men.

These progressive Japanese women also accepted marriage and wifehood. The reason for getting married was love. If they could not get along with their husband or their independence was destroyed, these progressive women were ready to divorce and be remarried with someone they loved and who understood them. The biographies of Hiratsuka, Shidzue, Fukuda, Itō could prove the above thesis.

There were numerous ways women could maintain their self-determination as proposed by progressive Japanese women. However, two ways will be discussed in this paper.
Katō Shidzue became the leader of the birth control movement in Japan in the decade of the 1920s. She was influenced by Margaret Sanger, the leading exponent of birth control in the United States. Shidzue argued that, though being a mother was the privilege of women, women should preserve their right to decide whether they were ready to be mothers or not, and how many children they should have. Birth control would, therefore, help women to be relieved of the traditional social obligations. Shidzue emphasized, “I regard the birth control movement as the polestar guiding women from slavery and unceasing poverty to personality and culture”.

However, it was a pity that her proposal was not widely accepted among Japanese women, even among some progressive women.

Kishida Toshiko, Tsuda Umeko and Fukuda Hideko attempted to emancipate Japanese women by indoctrinating them to believe in economic independence. They insisted that women should be educated in order not to be helplessly economically dependent on men. In 1900, Tsuda Umeko opened the first private college for girls in Japan, the Tsuda College. The objective of this college was to educate girls to develop their individual personalities and to become financially emancipated and independent working women.

Some progressive Thai women agreed with these ideas. In 1930, a progressive Thai woman discussed in Narinat that women should be equipped with knowledge in order that they would be able to take care of themselves independently. Even though they got married, they should continue working to help their husbands and to prevent themselves from being controlled by their husbands. Husbands would no longer demand gratitude for their wives for being the person who earned a living for the family. Thus, being able to take care of themselves financially, women would, consequently, be independent and self-determined. The progressive Thai women emphasized that the objective in life of modern women should be to work for themselves, not to get married as was the intention of women in the past.
Conclusion

Progressive Japanese and Thai women were of the same opinion on fighting for equality between the sexes. They wanted to encourage women in general to develop themselves in every aspect by realizing the value of education and acquiring knowledge. Additionally, they attempted to campaign among men and women in the two societies to accept the potentialities of women and to provide opportunities for women to study, to work, and to participate in society side by side to men.

However, progressive Japanese women seemed to be a step ahead of progressive Thai ones on two points. First, all the liberal ideas shared by progressive Japanese and Thai women, were campaigned for by progressive Japanese women since 1870 which was years ahead of their Thai counterparts who started in the decade of 1900s. Secondly, progressive Japanese women were remarkably interested in fighting for women’s rights in politics. They spent a long period of time from the end of the nineteenth century to the decade of 1930 to achieve these rights, but, unfortunately, they failed to be granted the right of women’s suffrage. Moreover, there were some radical women who perceived that Socialism would truly emancipate women. But this topic has not been mentioned in this paper since it is beyond the scope of the present research.

Based on this study, the movement of progressive Japanese women in general seemed to be strong and forceful. They had fought for women’s emancipation vigorously and with endurance. Progressive Thai women, in the meantime, concealed themselves behind the scenes. Their campaigns on women’s problems were limited to expressing their ideas in their articles published in women’s magazines. However, after the Second World War up until the present time, Thai women have begun to participate in many roles in the society. They work outside of their homes in various kinds of professions side by side with men. Many of them hold important positions in the offices of both government and the private sector. This accomplishment reflects that there is relatively little prejudice against women in Thai society. In
contrast, Japanese women who work fulltime outside of the home seem to be fewer in quantity than Thai women. Besides, there is still prejudice among women’s employers in Japanese society.

Thus, there is a contradiction between the strong movements of progressive women before the Second World War and the actual phenomenon which happened after the War. Thailand went in different directions from Japan. This should be an interesting topic which should be further studies on a comparative basis.
Notes


5 Ibid.


7 Satri Niphon, 15 October 1914.

8 Satrisap, 14 September 1922, Satrithai, 5 April 1925.

9 Satrisap, 14 September 1922; Sayam Yupphadi, 6 October 1928.

10 Ying thai, 1 August 1932.

11 Name of the progressive women’s magazines’ owners and editors. Strisap - Miss Phaob Pongsrichan, Satrithai - Miss Chalam Jirasook, Nari Nithet - Miss Sivalee Suthongsen, Sayam Yupphadi-Miss Tangkui Limmongol, Suphapnari - Mr. Chan Asakij.


14 Robins Ishimoto, **Facing Two Ways**..., pp. 91-93.


15 Shidzue Ishimoto, **Ibid**, pp. 359-360.


17 Ken Miyamoto, “Ito Noe and...”, p. 191.


19 Shidzue Ishimoto, **Facing Two Ways**..., pp. 53-54.

20 Ibid., p. 147.

21 Ibid., pp. 297-298.

22 Sharon L. Sievers, **Flowers in Salt**, p. 165.


24 **Kulasatri**, April 1903.

25 **Satrithai**, 29 March 1925.

26 Sangwanpeth (pseudonym), **Kulasatri** April 1906.

27 **Satri Niphon**, 15 October 1914.

28 Editor, **Satrisap**, 14 September 1922.

29 Ibid.

30 Kosol (pseudonym), **Satrithai**, 17 January 1926.

31 Krupeuk (pseudonym), **Satrithai**, 14 February 1926.

32 Akkasatri (pseudonym), **Satrithai**, 4 October 1926.

33 Young Lady (pseudonym), **Yingthai**, 22 August 1932.

34 Sharon L. Sievers, **Flowers in Salt**, p. 41.

35 Ibid.

36 **Satrisap**, 21 October 1922.

37 **Satri Niphon**, 15 October 1914.

38 **Satrisap**, 22 September 1922.
Bussabong (pseudonym), *Sayam Yupphadi*, 6 October 1928.

Aw. Phankaw (pseudonym), *Satrithai*, 27 December 1926.


bid., p. 296.


*Satrithai*, 1 March 1925.

*Satrisap*, 21 October 1922.


Ibid., p. 68.

Kosol (pseudonym), *Satrithai*, 17 January 1926.

*Suphapnari*, 1930.


Sanamchan (pseudonym), *Narinat*, 1 February 1930.

Ibid.

Ibid.