

外国語要旨

Feminism in a “Benighted Land”:

A Study on the Thoughts and Activities of the *Urarasha* Reading Group in Iwate, Tohoku, Japan

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The purpose of this Ph.D. thesis is to illustrate some features of the thoughts and activities of the feminist movement in post-war Iwate Prefecture of Tohoku region, and to place it in the history of the women’s movement in Japan.

Japanese feminism has been considered a movement that occurs only in “advanced” metropolitan areas, and many studies on this movement have primarily dealt with activities in and around cities, particularly Tokyo. Despite the fact that feminist activities are present all over Japan, little is known about feminism in Tohoku, which is considered a “feudal” and “benighted” area. Therefore, a study of feminism in Tohoku is required as a step to clarify the whole picture of the Japanese feminist movement.

To realize the goal stated above, the thesis focuses on the lives and thoughts of Reiko Obara (1935–) and Junko Ishikawa (1942–2008) who had and have acted from a feminist perspective in Iwate, and the activities of the female members of the *Urarasha* Reading Group founded by Obara. Furthermore, the thesis attempts to reveal the characteristics of ideas and activities of the feminist movement of this area based on analyses of writings and life stories of the respective group members as well as on the information obtained from participant observations of the group.

In history of Japan, Tohoku had been called as *Kegai* or the land beyond the state’s rule. It means that Tohoku had been recognized as “benighted land” subordinated to the centralized government. However, in opposition to these “common” discourses, new paradigm of alternative and counteractive Tohoku-centered history has been advocated since the 1960s from the viewpoint of “people’s history.” Responding to this trend of historical re-cognition, quite a few poets in Iwate have attempted to deconstruct and invert the concept of *Kegai* as a place of source of power which signifies counter-discourses against the established center. Taking these historical and cultural milieus into consideration, the thesis proposes that Iwate as *Kegai* has transformed its stigma into a method of resistance against the hegemonic discourse which regards women’s lives there as those uncivilized and subordinated.

This study considers feminism in Iwate as a movement embodying women’s thought and activism, and one that questions modern Japanese society from the perspective of *Kegai*. This movement can be properly called the feminism of *Kegai*. Obara, Ishikawa, and other members of the reading group, beginning from their shared consciousness as women, raised serious questions about modern understandings of the gender structure in Japan. The feminism of *Kegai* shared a common awareness of gender issues with the second-wave feminism movement called *Uuman ribu (Ribu)* in the 1970s; however, the origin was different

from that of the feminist movement in urban areas. It emerged in the social and cultural movements that flourished in the context of the regional issues of Iwate in the 1950s and 1960s and developed spontaneously, confronting local problems.

The feminists of *Kegai* use the term *Onago* which means “woman” in the Tohoku dialect with overtones of discrimination, but not a *Ribu*'s common expression of *Onna* which means “woman” in standardized Japanese language. *Onago* was chosen because it is a representation of subjectivity that includes gender and locality, and is an expression of the feminists' aim to reform the modern gender structure in/from *Kegai*. Their ideas and activities can be seen as feminism challenging Japan's modernity confronting *Onago* living in Iwate, which is different from that of women living in urban areas, from the standpoint of *Kegai*, a place that has been historically constructed as a peripheral region of modern Japan.

Nevertheless, the feminism of *Kegai* has been developed within the networking of women who shared a feminist consciousness in and out of Japan and not only in the local community but also in the surrounding area. Obara and other women of the *Urarasha* Reading Group play the role of intermediaries of culture and the intellect of the area called “the center” and *Kegai*. Their marginality as local women intellectuals can transcend the framework where the two terms “the center” and *Kegai* conflict