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Rebecca Tompkins

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“Uncovering the Waste of the World”: Women and the State in Japanese Wartime Waste Campaigns, 1937-1945

Rebecca Tompkins

Starting in the morning of July 22, 1938, under the blazing sun, hundreds of women set out into the streets of Tokyo, searching for instances of “waste” (*muda*). The women—members of women’s groups, such as the League for Women’s Suffrage (Fusen kakutoku dōmei), the Young Women’s Christian Association, and the Women’s Peace Association (Fujin heiwa kyōkai), that together constituted the Japan Federation of Women’s Organizations (Nihon fujin dantai renmei)¹—walked through amusement quarters, parks, offices, markets, and eateries, recording on cards any waste they observed. The 883 women who participated in the event discovered 1,257 cases of waste, ranging from uneaten food to unnecessary use of electricity by streetlights (Asahi shinbun 1938e, 2).

The occasion was a one-day event called “Finding Waste in the Streets” (*Gaitō ni muda o hirou*), initiated by the Federation of Women’s Organizations. The women organized the event in support of the government’s official “Week for Emphasis on the Economic Battle” (*Keizaisen kyōchō shūkan*), a campaign organized by the Central League of the Spiritual Mobilization Movement (*Kokumin seishin sōdōin chūō renmei*)

Rebecca Tompkins is a lecturer in the Department of Commerce at Senshu University and will receive her Ph.D. in Modern East Asian Studies from Leiden University in 2019. Her dissertation focuses on discourses and behaviors related to waste in Japan, examining both the history and current practices of Japanese waste management, with a particular focus on gender. Her research interests include Japanese women’s history, the history of waste and waste management, and the relationship between gender and citizenship. She is the author of “Our Mission as Women’: Cooperation between Women’s Groups and City Authorities in the Garbage Campaign of Prewar Tokyo,” *Yearbook of Women’s History* 36 (2017).

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to encourage thrift and frugality for the wartime economy. The week's activities were carried out nationwide, and, according to the posting for the event in the *Asahi shinbun* newspaper (1938d, 2), "In Tokyo for one week from July 21, frugal consumption and practical use of materials, scrap collection, promoting savings, and the like are to be implemented in every direction." Women were expected to play a large role because, as the *Asahi* reported, "Following the China Incident, national subjects [*kokumin*] are all soldiers in the economic battle" (2). The newspaper article concluded by describing these events as examples of "the great efforts of women's participation in the economic battle" (*keizaisen fujin sanka ni ōwarawa de aru*) (2).

As exemplified by this event and how it was reported in newspapers, during the Asia-Pacific War, Japanese women on the home front were mobilized primarily as "warriors in the economic war" and as reproducers of the nation through their roles as mothers (Ueno 2004, 44); official state rhetoric associated with various wartime mobilization campaigns emphasized the primacy of women's domestic roles, even as it promoted their participation in mobilization activities outside the home (Ueno 2004; Miyake 1991). Sandra Wilson (2006, 210) considers this tension one of the "basic contradictions" of the state's wartime rhetoric on women's duties: a clash between the state's "strong focus" on "home and motherhood" and its "need for women to be active outside the home." In this sense, wartime mobilization challenged prevailing conceptions of the relationship between women and the state. One arena in which this contradiction was evident was in the mass mobilization of women in wartime waste collection campaigns: while certain state-sponsored campaigns, especially in the earlier years of the war, loudly proclaimed the importance of "men outside, women inside" (*otoko wa soto, onna wa uchi*), other campaigns organized and run entirely by women were acknowledged as successful expressions of patriotism (*Asahi shinbun* 1938b, 6; *Asahi shinbun* 1939b, 11).

Waste campaigns were a major component of women's home-front mobilization during the Asia-Pacific War but have received relatively little attention from historians. A close examination of these campaigns offers numerous examples of the complexities of women's national belonging during the war years. The various examples of waste campaigns discussed in this article, organized by different groups with potentially divergent goals, reveal wartime waste-related mobilization to be a site of rhetorical contention regarding the role of women in the nation-state. Importantly, these campaigns show that women's groups and individual women were not merely the objects of this discourse but instead were active participants in shaping and contesting the processes of women's integration into the nation-state.

In this article, I use waste-related wartime mobilization activities as a lens through which to examine women's shifting relationship with and role within the Japanese state,

with a particular focus on the agency and initiative of women's groups. Through analysis of newspaper and magazine sources that provide insight into both mainstream views and the outlook of women's organizations like the League for Women's Suffrage, I examine wartime waste campaigns as sites of women's home-front mobilization in the context of historical processes of women's integration into the modern nation-state. I argue that these cases demonstrate the extent of women's agency and initiative as participants in discourses about women's national belonging. In order to contextualize these waste campaigns within the broader arena of women's mobilization, I will first briefly outline the history of women's mobilization and its relation to women's national belonging. Waste collection campaigns are particularly instructive in this context because they established a direct connection between the mundane realities of daily life, such as kitchen garbage or worn-out clothing, and the progress of the war. For many mobilized women, waste campaigns represented a pathway from the domestic sphere to a fuller sense of belonging to the nation-state.

Mobilization of Women in Peace and War

The ability of an individual to contribute to the state through employment or military service has frequently been linked with citizenship in modern nation-states (Marshall 1950; Pateman 1987; Germer et al. 2014). In Meiji Japan, men's national belonging was typically predicated on their productive service as workers or soldiers. As stated by Shizuko Koyama (2014, 85), "The *fukoku kyōhei* (wealthy nation, strong army) slogan... envisaged male citizens who engaged in productive activities in order to make the nation prosperous and who defended the nation as soldiers." According to Sabine Frühstück (2014, 165), "The physiological male body became a central organizing principle of the nation-state." For women, however, national belonging in the new Japanese nation-state was less straightforward (Koyama 2014).

During the Meiji period, women as national subjects were connected to the state indirectly: their ascribed ideal role in the nation-state was dependent on their familial relationships and was reflected in the widespread ideology of the "good wife, wise mother" (*ryōsai kenbo*) (Muta 1994; Koyama 1991). But like all social norms, these ideals changed over time, and changes in the "good wife, wise mother" ideology and the type of femininity it promoted following the First World War reflect the processes of women's incorporation into the nation-state (Koyama 2014).

Just as men's status as citizens or national subjects (*kokumin*) was dependent, at least in part, on their capacity for military service, wartime activities and home-front mobilization played a role in the incorporation of women into the nation-state. Narita Ryūichi (1998, 142) contends that it was women's mobilization in the 1930s, from the

1931 Manchurian Incident that began the hostilities that eventually erupted into full-scale war in 1937, that enabled the “conversion of women into national subjects.” Similarly, Frühstück (2014, 168) argues that after 1937, with the express mobilization of women on the “home front,” women finally became national subjects through their efforts to support the war.² However, while war may have been the catalyst for the integration of women into the nation-state, it was not the total war of the 1930s and 1940s that initiated the change but rather the Japanese government’s observation of the home-front activities of the Western nations involved in the First World War.

During the First World War, despite Japan’s limited direct military involvement, both the Ministry of Education (Monbushō) and the Ministry of the Army (Rikugunshō) investigated and reported on the home-front activities of women in European countries. Through these observations, Koyama (1994, 38-39) argues, “The government realized the necessity of developing the latent power of women away from the home, in activities other than housework and child rearing.” This shift, which necessitated changes to the “good wife, wise mother” ideal, sparked increasing interest in the household as a source of national economic strength (Koyama 2014). As a result, beginning in the late 1910s, the social policies of government ministries began specifically targeting women as the central figures of the household. Sheldon Garon (1997, 11) explains that these “Daily Life Improvement Campaigns” (Seikatsu kaizen undō), particularly those beginning in the early 1920s, were aimed at bolstering the national economy through rationalized home economics. In campaigns, such as the Campaign to Encourage Diligence and Thrift (Kinken shōrei undō), the Public and Private Economic Austerity Campaign (Kōshi keizai kinshuku undō), and the Moral Suasion Mobilization Campaign (Kyōka dōin undō), women were encouraged to comply with state goals for improvement and rationalization of various aspects of the home and daily life: cleanliness and hygiene, child-rearing and childhood education, thrift and frugality, nutrition, and the like. This new discourse invited women to see their role as mothers and housewives as contributing directly to the strength of the nation and thus created more space for women to enter the public sphere, if in narrow and prescribed ways. As a result, women’s participation in public spaces and public discourse increased throughout the 1920s and 1930s (Koyama 1991, 2014). These prewar social policies were successful in mobilizing women to achieve state aims and were a direct precursor to the wartime mobilization of women on a larger scale.

In fact, the initial mobilization of Japanese women on the home front in the Asia-Pacific War was largely voluntary and in many respects indistinguishable from prewar mobilization in social campaigns (Garon 1997; Mathias 1999). Wartime mobilization of women in Japan was implemented, similarly to the mobilization of women in the

state campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s, with the mindset that women's social role was primarily as the center of the home and family, and activities outside the home, even when undertaken in support of state goals, should not interfere with women's domestic duties. Vera Mackie (2003, 104) notes that the wartime efforts of women's patriotic associations often emphasized the connection between such activities and the home, even when women had to leave the home to perform them. This tension between a rhetorical focus on the primacy of women's domestic role and the mobilization activities that in practice took place outside the home exemplifies what Wilson (2006, 210-211) terms the "basic contradictions" of the state's wartime policies towards women's mobilization. In this sense, wartime mobilization of women challenged prevailing conceptions of the proper relationship between women and the state. Examining these wartime waste campaigns in more detail can illuminate the contradictions—the state's desire to maintain the family system versus the necessity of deploying women's labor outside the home—and complexities—different groups of women with different motivations and aims influencing their decisions to cooperate with the state's wartime policies as well as the ways they chose to effect this cooperation—of both the wartime state's policies toward women and women's relationship with the nation-state.

Wartime Waste Collection Campaigns

During the war, waste collection, which newspapers and neighborhood bulletins had previously reported as largely an issue of municipal administration, quickly became a matter of patriotic duty (Mizoiri 2010). Before the war, newspaper articles about garbage were mainly related to garbage collection, focusing on issues that would be of interest to citizens, such as changes in the garbage collection rules, water pollution caused by garbage on collection days, and littering problems. However, once the war began, articles started to focus on waste, particularly waste material like scrap metal that could potentially be valuable to war production, as raw material "resources" (*shigen*) for the wartime economy, and many newspapers ran special features on material conservation campaigns and how to transform various types of waste into resources (Mizoiri 2010, 151).

Reuse movements (*sairiyō undō*) grew in popularity during the war years, and group collection of waste items by organizations like neighborhood associations and women's associations were characteristic of waste management in wartime (Mizoiri 2010, 148). The principles of resource conservation that motivated these voluntary resource collection campaigns were codified into law with the revision of the Waste Cleaning Law Regulations (*Obutsu sōji hō kisoku*) in May 1941. The revision changed the waste disposal requirements from "waste must be incinerated" to "waste must be managed" and mandated that valuable materials be proactively collected from garbage (151).

In November 1939, the Asahi Newspaper Corporation, in collaboration with the city of Tokyo, organized a waste collection campaign called the “Anti-Aircraft Gun Donation Campaign” (Kōshahō kiken’*nō* undō), in which the money raised from selling the donated scrap was given to the military for the purpose of funding anti-aircraft guns. The *Tokyo nichichi* newspaper also carried out a similar scrap collection campaign in 1939, called the “Gold Donation Campaign” (Kin no kennō undō) (Mizoiri 2010, 148). Newspapers and other private companies, hoping to demonstrate their patriotism and dedication to the war effort, frequently held scrap collection campaigns like these at the local level, while large-scale waste-related mobilization campaigns at the national level were organized by governmental agencies.

The National Spiritual Mobilization Council (Kokumin seishin sōdōin iinkai), formed through the consolidation of dozens of nationalist groups in 1937 under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Education, was the most prominent government organization involved in scrap collection campaigns in the early years of the war. After the establishment of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (Taisei yokusankai, referred to here as IRAA) in 1940, the IRAA took over the organization of most forms of civilian home-front mobilization. The National Spiritual Mobilization Council and the IRAA were responsible for managing several large-scale waste collection campaigns at both the national and local levels throughout the war years.

One of the earliest efforts in terms of national scrap collection campaigns was the “One House, One Item Donation Campaign” (Ikko ippin kennō undō) in July 1938. On July 7 and 8, 1938, donations of worn out or unwanted goods were collected door to door by men—neighborhood association members, former soldiers, and members of young men’s associations—and brought to the offices of local neighborhood associations across the country. Women, in particular members of the National Defense Women’s Association (Kokubō fujinkai) and the Patriotic Women’s Association (Aikoku fujinkai), were to stay inside and find the waste in the home to be handed over to the collecting volunteers. In Tokyo, most of the donations were comprised of items like scraps of iron goods like buckets, washtubs, water pipes (*toi*) or empty cans; aluminum goods and scraps were also found in great number. The *Asahi shinbun* (1938b, 6) estimated that the value of donations within the city of Tokyo alone during the two-day event totaled about 150,000 yen.

The campaign took place on the anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.³ The purpose was not only to collect valuable materials, particularly metal, for the war effort but also to “effect the training of national subjects toward a consensus of resource protection” (*shigen aigo no sōi o fukumeta kokumin kunren to nasu*) (*Asahi shinbun* 1938a, 11). In Tokyo, scrap collected from 1,407,626 households was sold for a total of over 200,000 yen, which was donated to a hospital for wounded soldiers (*Asahi shinbun*

1938f, 2). A statement by Tokyo Mayor Kobashi Ichita (1870-1939) and Tokyo Prefectural Governor Okada Shūzō (1886-1983) highlighted the efforts of the citizens' groups that had made the campaign a success: "In Tokyo, primarily the neighborhood associations (*chōkai*), as well as the former soldiers' association, the young men's association, the National Defense Women's Association, the Patriotic Women's Association, and others mobilized and gathered up [everything] from even a single old nail to a dirty tube" (Asahi shinbun 1938f, 2). A September 1938 interim report on the campaign stated that, with twenty prefectures reporting, the total amount raised nationwide had reached 541,753 yen (Asahi shinbun 1938g, 11).

The government-initiated campaign was coordinated at the national level by the Central League of the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement (Kokumin seishin sōdōin chūō renmei) and carried out at the local level by members of the various organizations listed above. According to the *Asahi* newspaper, the success of the campaign could be attributed to each individual and group playing their assigned roles—in particular, conforming to prescribed gender roles. In the concluding section of one article published just after the campaign, under the sub-heading "The Efficacy of Men Outside, Women Inside" (*Otoko wa soto, onna wa uchi no kōka*), the reporter praised the participants for performing their gender-bifurcated duties and included a quote from the head of the Tokyo City General Mobilization Department indicating that this interpretation of the reasons for the campaign's success was endorsed by the authorities:

In this "One House, One Item Donation Campaign," thousands of neighborhood association members, former soldiers, members of youth associations, and others went around to collect donations, while women, including members of the Patriotic Women's Association, the Women's National Defense League, and other women's associations, were in the home (*katei*) to search for and hand out donations. For this reason, this campaign was able to achieve great results.

To date, in this kind of campaign, because people went out into the streets in a disorderly fashion, it was not uncommon that the expected results were not achieved, but, this time, we have had the valuable experience of observing that each individual serving at the appropriate post is far more effective." (Commentary from Tokyo City General Mobilization Department Head) (Asahi shinbun 1938b, 6).

The inclusion of this commentary about the role of gender norms in the success of waste campaigns, and perhaps by extension other forms of wartime mobilization, is striking. The criticism of past campaigns seems to imply that it was specifically the campaigns in which women went outside that were disorderly and ineffective. Although the official

did not explicitly state that women should remain in the home while men did the work outside in order for campaigns to be successful, this gloss was certainly provided by the newspaper editors in their choice of sub-heading. This view of “proper” gender roles was also present in how the *Asahi* newspaper reported on the “Finding Waste in the Streets” campaign organized by the Greater Japan Alliance of Women’s Organizations less than two weeks after the national “One House, One Item” campaign.

Women’s Associations and Waste Campaigns

Mass-membership women’s organizations, such as the Patriotic Women’s Association and the National Defense Women’s Association, were also major organizers of and contributors to waste reduction and collection movements. These organizations were often called upon by government bodies like the National Spiritual Mobilization Council to rally their members in support of official, national campaigns like the 1938 “One House, One Item” campaign, while they also frequently organized their own waste collection campaigns, usually to raise money for specific goals.

One example was the “Gold Waste Collection Campaign” (*Kin fuchaku haihin kaishū undō*), organized by the Patriotic Women’s Association in Tokyo in September 1939. Members went door to door, collecting the “buried gold waste” (*uzumoreteiru haihin no kin*) which they said could be found in every household. Their goal was to reach about 260,000 homes, or 20 percent of households in Tokyo (*Asahi shinbun* 1939a, 10). The collected items were then transported to an extraction facility, where gold and other valuable metals were removed, melted down, and remade into bars or nuggets (*kinkai*). On September 22, 1939, several members of the Patriotic Women’s Association visited the facility to learn about the gold extraction process and to help the workers. The money raised from the sale of the precious metals collected in the campaign was donated to the army widows and orphans support office (*gunjin ikazoku jusansho*). The women’s visit to the factory, as well as their dedication in continuing to collect gold waste from households, was praised by the *Asahi shinbun* (1939b, 11) as a laudable expression of patriotism: “By helping the workers in the high-temperature scrap melting room..., they demonstrated the zeal of women of the home front.” This praise presents an interesting contrast to the same newspaper’s treatment of the “One House, One Item” campaign only a year earlier, which stressed the importance of women staying inside the home. This contrast may be indicative of changing perceptions of women’s proper role on the home front as the war progressed, but a more likely explanation is that it is simply an example of the contradictions of the state’s wartime gender ideology: the tension between the importance of women’s household duties and the necessity of women’s mobilization activities outside the home (Wilson 2006, 210).

The roles that women and women's organizations played in organizing and participating in waste collection campaigns and other forms of wartime patriotic activities demonstrate the complexities of the relationship between women and the state during the war. While some women opposed the state and its wartime policies, often at great personal cost, most women complied with state mobilization goals, and some even developed their own independent and creative means of contributing to the war effort. These diverse efforts show that while wartime mobilization helped to redefine the relationship between women and the state, many women proved to be active agents capable of defining their own goals in their interactions with the state.

Wartime Mobilization and Women's Initiative

While examining wartime mobilization policies provides insight into the official gender ideology of the Japanese state, analyzing the ideas and actions of the mobilized women themselves helps to account for the agency and contributions of autonomous individuals. While some women, especially socialists (Mackie 2003), opposed state policies, most women, even liberal feminists, cooperated with the state both in the prewar social campaigns and during the war. Indeed, prominent women leaders had been recruited to positions of authority in government committees and campaigns since the 1920s; their continued collaboration with the state during the war should not be seen as anomalous (Koyama 2014; Suzuki 1986; Garon 1997; Nishikawa 1997; Katzoff 2000).

By the early 1930s, Ichikawa Fusae (1893-1981), one of the most prominent Japanese feminists and the founder of the League for Women's Suffrage (*Fusen kakutoku dōmei*), had come to believe that cooperation with the authorities was essential for women's advancement. In a 1933 article in *Fusen* (Women's Suffrage), the monthly publication of the League for Women's Suffrage, she advocated cooperation with the Tokyo government to resolve the city's garbage crisis: "By progressively taking on more responsibility, we will demonstrate the importance of the cooperation of women both in municipal governance and in general society and additionally raise awareness among the female population of the connection between municipal governance and home life" (Ichikawa 1933, 4). Her prominent role in the state's wartime mobilization of women can be seen in the same light. Yoshiko Miyake (1991, 273-274) points out that "the state's emphasis on women as the subjects of family-state ideology appeared to Ichikawa and other women as a step forward in their fight for sexual equality" and that wartime mobilization activities gave women new outlets to express themselves and engage with society.

For many women in Japan, as in other combatant nations during the war, wartime mobilization was experienced as a type of liberation (Miyake 1991; Molony 2011). Chizuko Ueno, referencing Kanō Mikiyo (1995), observes that "women's participation

in the public sphere, made possible by war, was both exhilarating and brought with it a new identity for women, and this is remembered as a feeling of spiritual uplift” (Ueno 2004, 38). Ichikawa and other women activists advocated strongly for the mobilization of ordinary women during the war in order to demonstrate women’s abilities (Miyake 1991, 275). In other words, many women, particularly leaders of women’s organizations, hoped to use their cooperation with state mobilization efforts to redefine their prescribed roles in the nation-state and advance the status of women. To illustrate this dynamic, I will examine one event organized by women in support of the war effort, the “Finding Waste in the Streets” campaign of 1938.

The “Finding Waste in the Streets” Campaign

In June 1938, the Central League of the Spiritual Mobilization Movement announced that a national “Week for Emphasis on the Economic Battle” (Keizaisen kyōchō shūkan) would be held from the end of July to the beginning of August. The purpose, as described in an official statement published in both the *Yomiuri* and *Asahi* newspapers in late June, was “to deepen the understanding of citizens (*kokumin*) regarding the actual circumstances of the current economic battle, and to harden citizens’ resolve toward a general mobilization of materials that should gradually intensify from now on” (Yomiuri shinbun 1938a, 2).

Women were explicitly encouraged to participate in the campaign, the goals of which were focused on consumption and daily life, and many women’s groups organized events in support of the week’s official goals. In Tokyo, a coalition of three women’s groups—the Association of Women’s Organizations (Fujin dantai rengō), the Tokyo General Women’s Group (Tōkyō sōgō fujinkai), and the Association of Women who Love the City (Fujin aishi kyōkai)—on July 21 held a “Conference on Hoarding Prevention” (Kaidame bōshi no kyōgikai), designed to “purge the bad name of the ‘Hoarding Madam’” through presentations and discussions of “the current state of hoarding, why hoarding occurs, and measures to prevent hoarding, among others” (Asahi shinbun 1938d, 2). (*Kaidame*, translated here as “hoarding,” refers to the practice of buying up and stockpiling excess consumer goods, typically food products.) The *Asahi shinbun* presented this women’s anti-hoarding event together with the “Finding Waste in the Streets” event organized by the Federation of Women’s Organizations as examples of “the great efforts of women’s participation in the economic battle” (Asahi shinbun 1938d, 2).

Both the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* newspapers announced the women’s “Finding Waste in the Streets” event in advance, presenting it in a positive light and printing statements from the organizers. The *Yomiuri* attributed its quote to League for Women’s Suffrage leader Kaneko Shigeri (1899-1977), while the *Asahi* printed a very similar quote with no attribution (Asahi shinbun 1938c, 11; Yomiuri shinbun 1938b, 9). The *Yomiuri* article gave

only a brief introduction to the event, followed by the statement from Kaneko. The *Asahi* article was slightly longer and included commentary both before and after the quoted statement; it concluded on the positive note that the event “should display the spirit to participate in the war of the ladies of the home front, who are the basis of the long-term economic battle” (*Asahi shinbun* 1938c, 11).

The purpose of the “Finding Waste in the Streets” event was described similarly in a report on the event published in *Josei tenbō* (Women’s Outlook):⁴ The goal was for women to discover waste in public spaces that may have been overlooked by men. Women, normally secluded in the home and “with different sensibilities than men,” might be able to notice wastefulness that men regarded as normal (*Josei tenbō* 1938, 12). This sentiment was conveyed both in the newspapers and in *Josei tenbō* through “the eyes of women,” applying the same frugality they used in the home onto the streets and in the town. The statement from Kaneko Shigeri published in the *Yomiuri* newspaper provides a succinct example of the rhetoric used by the women organizers to explain the event:

It goes without saying that ladies must first and foremost think of the home (*katei*), eliminate waste in the home, and rationalize home life. However, given the state of affairs today, we must take the attitude (*kokorogamae*) that all of society is the same as the home and conduct our lives without waste. And so we decided why not take a look at the streets through the eyes of ladies, who have for so long conducted a frugal life within the home and dedicated themselves to not wasting? (*Yomiuri shinbun* 1938b, 9)

This framing positions women as experts in frugality because of their experience as homemakers and implies, by suggesting that women in the streets would uncover overlooked forms of wastefulness, that women are better suited than men to reduce waste. This rhetoric is similar to that employed by Kaneko and other members of the League for Women’s Suffrage in their earlier campaigns to resolve the garbage problem in Tokyo and against corruption in local politics, in which they suggested that women, being more “pure” (*jōka*) than men, were well qualified to clean up both the city’s garbage problem and its dirty politics (Tamanoi 2009). This framework, which employs women’s prescribed role as homemaker as the basis for claiming an expanded role for women in the public sphere, is typical of the approach of the League for Women’s Suffrage and their allies in the Federation of Women’s Organizations toward cooperation with the state during the war years.

In contrast to the “Garbage Campaign” (*Gomi undō*) organized by the League for Women’s Suffrage in 1933 that focused on material waste or garbage (*gomi*), especially in the household, the target of the “Finding Waste in the Streets” event was “*muda*,”

“waste” in a more abstract sense. The “waste” discovered through this campaign included both tangible waste like food, clothing, and paper and intangible waste of energy, land, and even time. Abstract waste was treated in the same way as more “typical” waste in the *Josei tenbō* accounts of the results of the event and included in the eleven categories of the itemized tally of the waste discovered during the event. Table 1 shows the results as listed in the July 22, 1938 issue.

Table 1. List of “Waste” discovered in the “Finding Waste in the Streets” event, July 22, 1938

Category	Number of cases	Detailed list
1. Electricity	201	Government agencies 104; Shops 25 Individuals 28; Transportation 12; Electric fans, radios 16; Neon 16
2. Garbage (<i>Gomi</i>)	186	Vegetables, food waste 52; Incomplete 58; Wood 27; [Illegible] 16; Glass 8; Rubber 4; Rags (<i>boro</i>) 10; Various 11
3. Water	176	Public use 81; Private use 40; Shops 26; Drinking fountains 29
4. Steel	174	Public 25; Private 39; Waste 110
5. Paper	98	Public (streets, trains) 36; [Illegible] 7; Garbage bin 20; Packaging paper 15; Tickets 6; Governmental, printed 3; Other 11
6. Advertisements (<i>Kōkoku</i>)	79	Posters, fliers 53; Standing sign boards 9; In trains 2; [Illegible] 2; Flags 2; Various 2
7. Clothing	76	Women’s 41; Men’s 17; Common (<i>kyōtsū</i>) 10; Various 8
8. Fuel (<i>Nenryō</i>)	37	Gasoline 14; Coal 13; Matches 7; Gas 3
9. Time (<i>Jikan</i>)	29	
10. Vacant Land	23	
11. Various (<i>Zatsu</i>)	159	Tobacco 28; Saké 4; Buying sweets (<i>kaigui</i>) 6; Restaurants (<i>inshokuten</i>) 10; Public transportation 6; Offices 3; Lost property 11; Eatery samples (<i>bentō</i> , groceries) 16; [Illegible] 6; Packaging 4; Wreaths 10; Life improvement (<i>seikatsu kaizen</i>) 8; Buildings 6; Various 41

(*Josei tenbō* 1938, 12)

Josei tenbō described the event participants' most common observations of waste and offered commentary as to their causes and suggested solutions. The most commonly reported wastes were of public utilities—electricity and water—and of physical objects categorized as “garbage” (*gomi*). Waste of electricity at government agencies was the single most commonly reported category (104 instances) and waste of water for public use was the second highest (eighty-one instances) (*Josei tenbō* 1938, 12). The relatively large amount of waste found at public institutions may be the reason that the author of the anonymous report directed criticism not towards individual but toward systems and standards that tolerated wastefulness.⁵ For example, the article deemed the many instances of reusable waste being put into garbage cans as a problem with the waste collection system rather than the fault of those throwing things away:

Among the second category, garbage (*gomi*), an extremely large number of cases pointed out valuable materials that were thrown into garbage bins as is. Specifically, among materials that should be conserved in line with national policy, if things that should be effectively recovered (*saisei no kiku hazu no mono*) are thrown into the garbage can as waste and then incinerated, that's the end of it. Therefore, rather than saying the people throwing things out are bad, the question that should be settled first is how garbage collection method is being devised (*Josei tenbō* 1938, 12).

In other words, the author suggests that there should be a system in place to divert useful materials out of the waste stream, rather than relying on citizens to know how such things could be reused. The article deals similarly with food waste from cafeterias, blaming not the customers but the practices of the establishments: “Similarly, for food waste (*zanpan*), if something is not done about the food-serving doctrines (*moritsuke shugi*) of eateries and the like, as a rule we must not blame those leaving food on their plates” (*Josei tenbō* 1938, 12).

Although both the *Yomiuri* and *Asahi* newspapers had published articles announcing the “Finding Waste in the Streets” event in advance, only the *Asahi* reported the results after. The *Asahi* described the event's purpose similarly to the *Josei tenbō*, presumably quoting the organizers: “The women's group, in twos and threes, went looking for ‘the waste of the world as seen through women's eyes’ (*onna no me de mita yo no naka no muda*)” (*Asahi shinbun* 1938e, 2). However, after listing the organizations involved and some leaders present, the newspaper described the activities in a somewhat condescending manner, characterizing the women as faintly ridiculous: “Although the women slightly confused the townsfolk (*shimin*) with their show of zeal (*nesshinburi*), ‘unexpectedly there seems to be no waste’ was the conclusion, the targeted department store managing to escape the interrogation due to being closed that day” (2).

At the end of the article, the *Asahi shinbun* (1938e) described another event held on the same day, also as part of the “Week for Emphasis on the Economic Battle:” a colloquium (*kondankai*) on “Women and Economics” (*Fujin to keizai*), jointly sponsored by the Tokyo prefectural governor, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (*Kōseishō*), and the Saving Promotions Department (*Chochiku Shōreikyoku*). The panel, which began at 11:30 on July 22 at the Hibiya Matsumoto Tower, featured speakers from several government ministries, including the Ministry of Commerce (*Shōkōshō*) and Ministry of Finance (*Ōgurashō*), as well as more than ten women commentators (*fujin hyōronka*). Although the article did not describe the content of the colloquium in detail, it concluded with a positive appraisal: “They agreed upon aiming for and striving toward victory in the battle of household economics through women’s initiative” (2).

The *Asahi* article’s juxtaposition of the women’s waste-finding event with the officially sponsored colloquium is telling. The latter event, attended by high-ranking male bureaucrats, was characterized as a fruitful discussion, while the description of the women’s waste finding event was filled with examples that made it seem less than serious. In addition to the anecdote about the department store that was free of waste because it happened to be closed, the examples of the waste recorded by the women on cards given by the newspaper included only “flower garlands for funerals” and “a man’s Western-style overcoat” (*Asahi shinbun* 1938e, 2). The major findings of the campaign—such as electricity being the most common form of waste, the many instances of water leaking from pipes and faucets, the role of restaurants’ plating customs in the amount of food waste, and the prevalence of printed documents from government offices among paper waste, which were discussed in the *Josei tenbō* report of the event—were mentioned in the *Asahi* article either briefly or not at all. The newspaper’s somewhat condescending treatment of the women’s event—which, while created in response to the government’s official “Week for Emphasis on the Economic Battle,” was organized and carried out entirely by the women’s groups themselves, with no sponsorship from government agencies—may have been a reaction to the novelty of women quite literally stepping outside their prescribed place in the home and entering the domain of men.

Conclusion: The Significance of the Campaign

While the “Finding Waste in the Streets” event represents just one example of women’s active involvement in wartime mobilization efforts and may not have accomplished much in terms of actually reducing wastefulness, it is significant as a demonstration of women’s agency in shaping their relationship with the state. Most wartime mobilization of women was indeed top-down and directed by the state; while women participated, often with great enthusiasm, the activities themselves were usually determined by the state. The “Finding

Waste in the Streets” campaign, however, was carried out entirely through the women’s own initiative, and in fact directly conflicted with a state-sponsored event, the colloquium on women and economics that was held the same day. The event, involving women leaving the home and directing a critical gaze toward society, also subtly challenged the prevailing ideology that women’s role should primarily be domestic in nature.

Shizuko Koyama’s (1999) analysis of the process of the integration of women into the nation-state (*josei no kokuminka*) emphasizes the role of the state in shaping the home (*katei*), which defined the role of women in the nation-state. Because women were positioned as the central figures of the household, their cooperation became necessary when the state began implementing policies related to “daily life,” and these state campaigns resulted in a direct relationship between women and the modern nation-state. Koyama (1999, 188) notes that the state actively sought the contributions of women to its social policies, by, for example, appointing women as commissioners and members of various policy survey committees or inviting them to be speakers at government-sponsored educational lectures. Women, in turn, were active and enthusiastic participants in these endeavors. From June 22 to August 31, 1918, for example, the Ministry of Education held an exhibition on “using waste” (*haibutsu riyō tenrankai*) that demonstrated ways to reuse materials that would otherwise go waste (for example, the cloth from an old umbrella could be made into a cushion or a shawl). Several lectures on the reuse of waste were also delivered during the exhibition period. The exhibition, which was scheduled to end on July 22, was extended an extra month due to its popularity and attracted about 67,000 total viewers, or approximately 944 people per day (Koyama 1999, 78-79). This event exhorted women to comply with state policy by reducing waste in their everyday lives, and while women participated gladly, neither the goal nor the methods were determined by them.⁶

While this conception of women’s evolving relationship with the state acknowledges women’s active participation, it nevertheless frames the *kokuminka* process as fundamentally directed by the state in service of state goals. However, events like the 1933 garbage campaign led by Kaneko Shigeri and other members of the League for Women’s Suffrage and the 1938 “Finding Waste in the Streets” campaign show that women not only embraced their new relationship with the state but also attempted to actively influence it by devising and implementing social campaigns of their own.

With the “Finding Waste in the Streets” event, the women’s groups pushed the boundaries of their prescribed role, not only by leaving the home and roaming the streets but also by taking the initiative to address a social problem with their methods (however unconventional). Additionally, the women’s initiative, while ostensibly held to further the goals of the government’s “Week for Emphasis on the Economic Battle,” actually took the

form of a critique of existing systems. Rather than criticize households or individuals for the waste the women found, the *Josei tenbō* article instead blamed systems—the garbage collection system, restaurant plating customs, government bureaucracies—that created waste either directly or indirectly. This event shows that even those women who embraced cooperation with the state and actively worked to support state goals did not accept this relationship uncritically. Rather, they acted as full, if not equal, participants in their relationship with the state, contributing their own ideas, initiatives, and even criticism to wartime mobilization efforts. By asserting that women could be of benefit to the war effort in a manner that had not been expressly condoned by the state and that subtly questioned the primacy of women’s domestic role, women’s groups demonstrated their autonomy as national subjects.

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Notes

1. The Japan Federation of Women’s Organizations (Nihon fujin dantai renmei) was formed in 1937 following the outbreak of war with China. It was composed of eight autonomous women’s organizations: the League for Women’s Suffrage, the Young Women’s Christian Association, the Japan Amity Association (Zenkoku tomo no kai), the Japanese Women’s Christian Temperance Union (Nihon kirisutokyō fujin kyōfukai), the Association of Women Doctors (Nihon joikai), the Women’s Consumers’ Association (Nihon shōhi kumiai fujin kyōkai), the Women’s Alliance (Fujin dōshikai), and the Women’s Union for Peace. Gauntlett Tsuneko (1873-1953), the outspoken leader of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, was elected president of the new federation (Nishikawa 1997, 57). These eight organizations chose to band together in light of the government’s “increased efforts to mobilize society spiritually, materially, and militarily” (Molony 2011, 19).
2. Although this article is focused on women’s role on the Japanese “home front,” it is important to remember that women were also mobilized, in gendered ways, on the battle front (see Frühstück 2014, 170-176).
3. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident, also known as the China Incident (Shina jihen) or the July Seventh Incident (Shichigatsu nanoka jihen), was the skirmish between Japanese and Chinese forces on July 7-8, 1937 near the town of Wanping that marked the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War.
4. *Josei tenbō* was the continuation of *Fusen* (Women’s Suffrage), the official publication of the League for Women’s Suffrage; the name of the journal was changed in 1936 “when that name [*Fusen*] became too controversial” in light of the nation’s increasing militarism and nationalism (Molony 2011, 21).
5. I suspect Kaneko Shigeri was the author of this piece because of similarities in writing style to other articles published under Kaneko’s name in *Fusen* and *Josei tenbō*, in part because Kaneko was the League for Women’s Suffrage leader most likely to write about waste-related issues and more significantly because Kaneko’s name was not included in the article’s list of women leaders present for the event. (The article mentioned Gauntlett Tsuneko, Ichikawa, Kawasaki, and Matsuoka). The *Asahi* newspaper reported her to be among the first women leaders present for the event, listing her name second after Gauntlett, and the article featured a photograph of Kaneko and Gauntlett at the event. The most likely explanation for the omission of her name in the *Josei tenbō* article is that she was its author, and humbly chose not to mention herself among the prominent women leaders.

6. The event was popular among women but was also criticized in women's magazines for failing to take into account the time such "reuse" would take; the usefulness of some of the re-made objects to the average housewife was also questioned (Koyama 1999, 80).