

Mapping Genders in Post-War Japan



Talk by Professor Vera Mackie

The University of Wollongong

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There has recently been a burgeoning worldwide interest in re-examining the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s as historical events. Much of this work has focused on the student left, new left, women's liberation and counterculture movements in Europe, North America, Britain and Australia. In Japan, too, there has been a recent flourishing of writings on this period, particularly on the year of 1968, perhaps prompted by the recent fortieth anniversary. I would like to contribute to this discussion with a consideration of the student left and the women's liberation movement from the standpoint of gender. I argue that these movements can be better understood through the prism of gender. In this paper, I will attempt two things. First of all, I want to place gender in a diachronic rather than simply synchronic context. That is, rather than simply presenting a static picture of the opposition between masculinity and femininity in 1960s Japan, I want to present a more complex and dynamic picture. This involves an acknowledgment that there are multiple forms of masculinity and femininity existing at any one time, but it also means that the relationship between various forms of dominant and subordinate masculinities and femininities changes over time. This is what I refer to here as a diachronic approach. Secondly, I would like to link this discussion of masculinities and femininities to the deployment of particular political strategies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in particular the deployment or eschewal of violence.

Vera Mackie is Australian Research Council Future Fellow and Professor of Asian Studies in the Institute of Social Transformation Research in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Wollongong. Publications include *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900-1937* (Cambridge, 1997) and *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality* (Cambridge, 2003).

All are welcome.

For enquiries, please contact Ms. Cice Chan (cice@hku.hk / 2219 4403)



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MODERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
FACULTY OF ARTS, THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG