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The special issue of *positions: asia critique* on Cold War feminisms in East Asia, edited by Suzy Kim, engages a variety of places, times, and themes to offer novel interpretations of Communist and non-Communist feminisms, and to provide close readings of texts and sources that are both newly excavated and already widely known. According to Kim, the special issue had its origins in a 2012 conference organized by Tani Barlow on "Communist Feminism(s): A Transnational Perspective," and took clearer form with an Association for Asian Studies panel in 2018. Tani Barlow, who edits *positions: asia critique*, also provided an epilogue for the current collection.

This collection of essays asks us to challenge our understanding of each of the terms—Cold War, feminism, and East Asia—so that we might bring them back into conversation with each other in new ways. As Kim suggests in her introduction to the collection, "the Cold War's binary frame served to reinforce the gendered binary, so that neither the Cold War nor feminism can be divorced from one another in their historical unfolding" (502).[1] The Cold War, as Kim and many of the contributors point out, has not ended in East Asia.

Indeed, the special issue's inclusion of John Knight's discussion of China's proletarian women's movement (1925-1927) signals to readers that not only assumptions about the end of the Cold War, but also its beginnings will be challenged here.[2] "The 'Modern Girl' Is a Communist: March 8 and China's Proletarian Women's Movement, 1925-27," draws from and builds on earlier work on the modern girl in China, pioneered by Tani Barlow and others.[3] In this chapter, Knight provides a close reading of the May 8, 1927 inaugural (and only) issue of *Red Women Magazine*, including several women's United Front manifestos and an account of a textile strike, to demonstrate how both "modern girls driven by May Fourth pursuits of love and autonomy, as well as working women driven to seek a just existence" found a home within China's proletarian women's movement (519). The proletarian women's movement was one of the mass organizations affiliated with the United Front that "played a central role in the protests and social critique of the era" (518). This blending of Marxism and May Fourth humanism, he argues, gave rise to the CCP (formed in 1921), which, during this brief period of cooperation

[1] Suzy Kim, "Cold War Feminisms in East Asia: Introduction," *positions: east asia critique* 28: 3 (August 2020): [hereafter *positions*], 501-516.

[2] John M. Knight, "The 'Modern Girl'" Is a Communist: March 8 and China's Proletarian Women's Movement, 1925-27," *positions*, 517-546.

[3] See for example, The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, ed., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

with Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party, demonstrated an openness to notions of women's liberation as embodied by the modern girl's desires for self-actualization.

Released on International Women's Day by the Chinese Communist Party, *Red Women Magazine* included an introductory essay by CCP chairman Chen Duxiu, who shared his thoughts on women's liberation and what he saw as the under-recognized importance of March 8 as International Women's Day. For Chen, women's liberation and National Revolution, while not synonymous, needed to go hand in hand. That sentiment would be upended a month later with Chiang Kai-shek's seizure of power and the end of the United Front in April 1927, and the dispersal of the CCP to the countryside. After this brief moment, the CCP took a harder stance on the primacy of Communist revolution over women's liberation.

While Knight's article may appear temporally out of place in a special issue that focuses on Cold War feminisms, it provides an early history of East Asian Communist feminism that resonates with later Cold War expressions of women's representation and women's movement in East Asia. Like many of the other contributors in this issue, Knight argues that his textual analysis reveals an "intersectional approach to class struggle and gender emancipation" within the proletarian women's movement that existed long before the conditions for such an approach are generally assumed to have existed (542).

Wendy Matsumura's contribution, "'Isahama Women farmers' against Enclosure: A Rejection of the Property Relation in US-Occupied Okinawa," retells the story of the U.S. military's Okinawan land confiscation in 1954 by focusing on women farmers who were part of the movement to oppose the seizures that unfolded the following year.[4] Women in Isahama shared a number of prewar and wartime experiences that laid the conditions for their involvement in the land enclosure protests. Prewar familial and social relations throughout Okinawa had been reconstituted in different ways after the war. This allowed women to coalesce as a group with shared experiences and newfound autonomy in order to reject the colonizing power's newly imposed, wholly unfamiliar, and by their reckoning completely unworkable rules about property rights and land use (554). These rules would remove over 70% of the region's land from cultivation, leaving nearly 65% of households with no land to farm at all (555).

While the Ryukyu Legislature and male community leaders seemed willing to negotiate with the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) over monetary compensation for the land, women rejected the idea that the confiscation should in any way be accepted by the community. The "Women's Appeal" presented at the Ryukyu Legislature's special land committee in February 1955 included testimonies from women farmers who objected to the land seizures based on their recognition that giving up their land would lead to the destruction of communal ways of life and put undue burden on women. But these testimonies were interpreted by the local press and the authorities as appeals by mothers who "just wanted to protect the land for their children" (559). Matsumura argues compellingly that this characterization masks the much more radical demands of the women. Unlike their male counterparts, many of whom were willing to settle for monetary compensation from the U.S. military, the women of Isahama recognized the importance of maintaining the possibilities of reproduction of their lives and livelihoods, which could only be accomplished through continued access to land for cultivation.

Without the land, women and men would be forced into the local wage labor economy. And given the growth of the sex service industry around U.S. military bases, Okinawan women in particular would be subject to some of the same sexual abuses they had experienced during the war. In this sense the characterization of Isahama women as mothers who "just wanted to protect the land for their children" (559) takes the radical political position—the refusal to accept the policy of land confiscation because it would have both an immediate and a generational impact on local people's ability to sustain themselves and their families—and transforms it into a largely benign and naive attempt by women to insert themselves into a political realm to which they did not belong. These stereotyped ideas about women's motivations and abilities were

[4] Wendy Matsumura, "'Isahama Women Farmers' Against Enclosure: A Rejection of the Property Relation in US-Occupied Okinawa," *positions*, 547-574.

reinforced in subsequent narrativizations of the struggle against the land seizures by literary figures such as Kishiba Jun, who wrote Isahama farm women into the narrative of the land struggle as "the symbol of purity, kindness, and a maternalistic desire for preservation of life" (552).

The evidence Matsumura provides suggests that much like the Suginami "housewives" who organized in the wake of the Lucky Dragon incident in 1954 to collect petition signatures opposing nuclear testing, the Isahama women also deftly deployed their status as wives and mothers to press their case.[5] The Isahama "Women's Appeal," a statement accompanied by signatures, was submitted to the Ryukyu Legislature in 1955, while the "Suginami Appeal" (not mentioned by Matsumura) included twenty million signatures by the end of 1954, and had by that time garnered worldwide attention. The timing and parallel nature of the two women's political resistance movements raise fascinating questions about whether the Isahama women consciously borrowed from what they saw happening in Tokyo with the Suginami petition.

In her essay "From Seoul to Paris: Transnational Character in the Work of the Korean National Council of Women in Authoritarian South Korea," Katri Kauhanen introduces us to the work of the Council to discuss the Cold War context of transnational women's activism.[6] Founded in 1959 and still active today, the Korean National Council of Women (KNCW) acted as an umbrella organization for a host of women's groups in South Korea. Because of its anti-Communist and right-of-center political orientation, it became the main driver of state-sanctioned women's activism during the authoritarian Park Chung-hee regime (1961-1979). The KNCW had been organized as part of regional recruitment efforts by members of the International Council of Women (ICW). Founded by American women's rights leaders Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1888 as an international expression of their national women's suffrage organizing in the United States, the ICW adopted a decidedly anti-Communist position during the Cold War. The Cold War Communist/anti-Communist struggle at the national level was replicated in transnational women's organizing. In fact, one of the motivations for the ICW's support for the formation of like-minded affiliate groups in countries like South Korea where there had been none before was the emergence of broad-based international leftist feminist organizations, particularly the Women's International Democratic Federation. Founded in 1945 to represent the anti-imperialist, peace, and human rights agenda of left-wing feminism, the WIDF forged relationships with socialist and Communist women who eventually founded the Korean Democratic Women's League (KDWL), which became the dominant women's organization in North Korea after the Korean War.

Kauhanen argues that the KNCW, despite being a conservative, government-aligned organization, was also, "through the language of women's economic, social, and mental liberation and maternalism…able to support nation building and women's rights" (585). By examining the KNCW English-language publication *The Woman* and other KNCW reports, Kauhanen demonstrates that the KNCW took part in government-sponsored family planning campaigns (586), advocated for revisions to the Family Law and the abolition of son preference (587), and for consumer protection regulations (589). While Kauhanen notes that in consumer protection and environmental regulation the KNCW sometimes engaged in a critique of government policies, for the most part the organization supported government programs and in turn received

[5] The Lucky Dragon Incident, also known as the Bikini Incident or the Bravo Incident, involved the first test of a thermonuclear bomb by the United States military at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands in a test shot code-named "Bravo". The test sent radioactive ash into the air, contaminating the catch and crew of a Japanese fishing boat (the Lucky Dragon No. 5) operating outside the designated danger zone. One of the crewmen died several months later, and the Japanese population experienced the fear of nuclear contamination on a national level as a result of contaminated tuna entering the market for distribution. See forthcoming work on the Suginami petition by Akiko Takenaka. "Housewives Petitioning for World Peace: The Lucky Dragon No. 5 Incident and Ban-theBomb Activism in Cold War Japan," in Elyssa Faison and Alison Fields, eds., *Resisting the Nuclear: Art and Activism Across the Pacific* (under contract with University of Washington Press).

[6] Katri Kauhanen, "From Seoul to Paris: Transnational Character in the Work of the Korean National council of Women in Authoritarian South Korea," *positions*, 575-602.

official sanction; for a time, it even operated a women's center that was jointly sponsored with the Ministry of Social and Health Affairs (588).

Anti-Communism formed the basis of the KNCW's alignment with the interests of the state. This was expressed through the organization's support for South Korean participation in the Vietnam War, and for its tacit approval of constitutional measures, laws, and regulations that prohibited criticism of the Park Chung-hee regime in the name of national security. And in its support of KNCW positions, the ICW made clear that it "tolerated authoritarian regimes as long as they were part of the 'free world' and therefore not communist" (592).

While highlighting the significance of transnational feminist connections and the important role the KNCW played in Cold War South Korea, the essay also prompts us to think about the precise ways the KNCW might have differed from its left-leaning counterpart, the KDWL. Kauhanen makes clear that the leadership of the KNCW was made up of "educated, professional women," many of whom had English language skills and the resources to travel and to "infiltrate the international field of feminist activism" (578). How did the KDWL's vision of "gender equality" differ from that of the KNCW? Kauhanen discusses the support of the KNCW for the Park Chung-hee regime's emphasis on economic development, but how then did they view the female factory workers who became a nearly ubiquitous cultural presence in 1970s South Korea? It appears that the KNCW did not have much to say about issues related to class, nor about problems facing working women.

Tina Mai Chen's fascinating contribution to this special issue examines representations of female bodies in China as evidence of a gendered globality that she argues was central to Maoism in the 1960s (604).[7] In "Gendered Globality as a Cold War Framework: International Dimensions of Chinese Female Bodies in the 1960s," Chen looks at film and other cultural artifacts that indicate ways female bodies evoked internationalism and global socialism, thus offering a counterpoint to the more commonplace reading of Communist representations of women as always standing in for the nation. Anti-imperialism was central to this internationalism, which manifest as lived practice as well as association with the symbols and artifacts of the global (such as globes, maps, and the socialist anthem "The Internationale") to create what Chen calls "everyday internationalism" (606). She first takes up the Soviet film *The Fall of Berlin* (1950), which remained widely popular until the 1970s in China, even though it had fallen out of favor in the Soviet Union after Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's death. While not a Chinese film, it became indigenized through gendered readings of globality that juxtaposed the paranoid German Führer Adolf Hitler raving about the "Asiatic" Russians, with the calm, steady, and rational socialist strength of Stalin and the Soviet Union. The film turns orientalist notions about "Asiatics" (as prone to despotism, and "existing outside time and historical progress") on their head, painting Hitler himself with the stain of Asiatic excess and deficiency. This allows the film's Chinese audience to see the People's Republic of China (PRC) and themselves in a global context as advanced and powerful. The female protagonist of the film, Natasha, represents the "foundation of the future" as an empowered woman who works for herself, the nation, and socialism (611).

Other popular socialist films distributed in China in the 1950s and 1960s "featured recurring shots of the globe or maps, often placed in close proximity to female protagonists" (613). And in the Chinese film *Red Detachment of Women* (1961), "the movement from Maoism to 'the Internationale' mobilizes a narrative arc that makes international socialism contingent on Maoism" (623).

Suzy Kim similarly analyzes works of popular cultural production, this time in order to discuss Communist feminisms in North Korea and China. In "From Violated Girl to Revolutionary Woman: The Politics of Sexual Difference from China to North Korea," Kim follows Chen in advancing an argument for a new kind of reading of female representation in

[7] Tina Mai Chen, "Gendered Globaility as a Cold war Framework: International Dimensions of Chinese Female Bodies in the 1960s," *positions*, 603-630.

Communist film and popular theater.[8] But where Chen is interested in emphasizing the centrality of internationalism to Maoist ideology and its gendered representations, Kim challenges the accepted view that Communist representations of female figures demanded the removal of all aspects of femininity and sexuality in favor of a subjectivity that embodied a strict class consciousness. The reading she offers is of a new kind of Communist feminism, in which what had previously been read as gender-neutral and desexualized was actually a form of feminine and feminist representation that rejected sexual and other forms of violence against women as part of its socialist agenda.

The Flower Girl appeared in North Korea as a feature film, a stage opera, and a novel in the 1970s. And in China, *The White-Haired Girl* was first produced as an opera in the 1940s, but then recast as a film (1950), and later staged as a revolutionary ballet during the Cultural Revolution (633). Both works have been read by scholars as examples of Communist narratives that subsume the gender and sexuality of their female protagonists beneath ostensibly more important class identifications. In contrast, Kim argues that "instead of a mythical and therefore inauthentic figure of liberation, the proliferation of strong female characters heralds the emergence of a new feminine ideal that is not tied to sexuality" (639). That is, the standard reading that understands Communist women heroes as sublimating their sexuality and their femininity/femaleness in the name of class-based revolutionary ardor misses the point. This is not, in fact, sublimated sex/gender, she argues, but rather "a new feminine ideal" based on a recognition, rather than an eradication, of sexual difference, and one that has room for gender to be disentangled from sex. Kim re-reads various versions of *The White-Haired Girl*, the earliest of which feature instances of sexual and other forms of violence against Xi-er, its protagonist. Later versions appearing during the Cultural Revolution feature story lines in which Xi-er is seemingly transformed from a victim of gender- and class-based violence into a militant revolutionary heroine.

Kim argues that these narratives are not an erasure of sexual difference, but instead are affirmations of sexual difference. Communist feminism, which she defines as "the pro-woman agenda adopted in state socialist countries as a way to underscore their common struggle against inequalities" (633) used a strategy of "the desexualization of female subjects to counter their representation as sex objects in order to re-gender the trope of the violated girl into a revolutionary woman" (634). That is, these works do not represent a simplistic evacuation of gender and sublimation of sexuality in favor of class-based revolutionary politics; instead, they demonstrate how the shared history of Japanese colonization in China and Korea carried forward into a Cold War era marked by geopolitical rivalries, creating the context for the emergence of such Communist representations as the "revolutionary woman" who embodied sexual difference by overcoming sexual violence and engaging in labor on her own terms.

Kazue Akibayashi's commentary, "Cold War Shadows of Japan's Imperial Legacies for Comfort Women in East Asia" offers perhaps the clearest articulation of linkages between the concepts "Cold War" and "feminism" in this special issue.[9] She begins with the ill-fated 2015 agreement between Japan and South Korea that was meant to settle—once and for all—the comfort woman issue, but which instead dissolved within three years due in large part to the agreement's lack of attention to the needs and demands of surviving victims of the system of military sexual slavery. Why, she asks, had the agreement been arranged so hastily, and why was it applauded by the U.S. Secretary of State immediately upon its announcement? The answers have to do with the legacies of the Cold War and the way it shaped Japanese and international feminist movements.

A former president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and current Professor of Feminist Peace Studies at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Akibayashi has spent much of her life as an activist attending to the effects of "everyday militarism" in Japan and throughout East Asia. This everyday militarism has been shaped by a Cold War that continues into the present in the form of Japan's military build-up and the ongoing U.S. military presence in Okinawa. It has also created the conditions for the persistence of anti-Korean (Zainichi) discrimination. The American-led

[8] Suzy Kim, "From Violated Girl to Revolutionary Woman: The Politics of Sexual Difference from China to North Korea," *positions*, 631-658.

[9] Kazue Akibayashi, "Cold War Shadows of Japan's Imperial Legacies for Women in East Asia," *positions*, 659-676.

occupation's policies with regard to former colonial subjects made them stateless people, and the outbreak of the Korean War and the political division on the peninsula created hostility towards Zainichi Koreans due to their real and supposed connections with Communist North Korea (667).

It is in these contexts in which feminisms and feminist movements push back against the everyday militarism that is a manifestation of the continuation of the Cold War, and which disproportionately impacts women. Akibayashi focuses on three organizations: the Japan-based Asian Women's Association (AWA, founded in 1977), Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence (OWAAMV, founded in 1995), and WILPF. The AWA's founding statement made clear that the Cold War context in which the organization was established could not be easily disentangled from the legacies of Japan's imperial past: "We declare the establishment of a new women's movement on March first. This day when Korean women risked their lives for national independence from Japanese colonial rule marks the start of our determined efforts" (669). The AWA cultivated leaders in Japan's women's movement such as Yayori Matsui and Suzuyo Takazato, who went on to found other organizations such as Violence Against Women in War Net Japan (VAWW-Net Japan) and the OWAAMV. Both of these organizations have been central to "challenging Cold War militarism in Japan by bringing alternative justice to the victims of the 'comfort station' system" (671), as well as fighting contemporary violence against women as perpetuated through ongoing militarism. While WILPF participated in organizing the Tokyo Tribunal of 2000, Akibayashi argues that as a historically Euro-American women's peace organization it suffers from an incomplete understanding of the colonial and Cold War legacies in East Asia. As she succinctly puts it, (post) Cold War feminism must include in its critique of militarism "the intersection of sexism, militarism, *and* colonialism" (674).

Reading these essays together highlights the profound differences in talking about "Cold War feminism" in Communist versus non-Communist national contexts. In Japan and South Korea, alignment with U.S. interests on the part of the state meant that any feminist action or politics that promoted decolonization, pushed against U.S. political and military dominance in the region, or sought to challenge patriarchy (in other words, *any* feminism), necessarily left its adherents vulnerable to charges of socialist or Communist sympathy or affiliation. Feminism and women's movements always had to be situated along a Communist/non-Communist axis. The feminist possibilities of the anti-Communist Korean National Council of Women discussed by Kauhanen were completely conditioned by the group's need to maintain state support in authoritarian South Korea. Likewise, production and reception of journalism, film, and other cultural artifacts in the PRC and North Korea that are discussed by Knight, Kim, and Chen were contingent on the demand for an explicitly revolutionary frame.

But even as the Communist/non-Communist state apparatus divide created differences in the expressions of Cold War feminisms, the contestation of long-held Marxist interpretations creates a commonality among these articles and their arguments. This is part of what Tani Barlow in her epilogue refers to when she notes that the historical evidence brought to bear in this collection reminds us that "huge tracts of history lie immanent in Marxism" (681).[10] That is, conventional Marxist readings do not account for the interplay between revolutionary woman and modern girl in the pages of *Red Women Magazine* discussed by Knight; nor do they adequately explain the actions of the Isahara farm women of Matsumura's article, nor the cinematic portrayals of revolutionary women analyzed by Kim and by Chen. And as Akibayashi suggests in her commentary, the most effective women's organizations forged in the heat of Cold War politics have been those willing and able to acknowledge the entirety of twentieth century history—including Japanese and western imperialism, as well as prewar, wartime, and postwar occupations and militarism—as key to understanding the various forms of violence experienced by contemporary women.

At the end of the day, what "Cold War Feminism in East Asia" shows us is that feminism has always been international, and it has always been in East Asia. As Barlow puts it, "The record shows that the United States was one player among many. Its

[10] Tani Barlow, "Epilogues," *positions*, 677-688.

history of women and feminism during the Cold War is fascinating, or course, but it is not the only story" (680). Just as Akibayashi in her work with WILPF—the oldest women's peace organization in the world that was founded in the Hague in 1915—has sought to decenter Europe and America in her work with international women's organizations and the movements they support, this special issue does the same for our discussions of Cold War feminism. East Asia, as a critical site for Cold War politics and militarism, is through these articles also made a critical site for scholarly analysis and interventions regarding the histories of feminism.

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