# Fukushima Shirō and the Cause of the Protection of Mothers' Rights

**Yuko (Yokotsuka) Kimura**

The development of advocacy for the protection of motherhood was an international phenomenon in the early twentieth century. Japanese reformers interested in women's issues and child welfare reacted to it, and they began to grapple with the question of whether it would be desirable to adopt a measure to provide financial protection for mothers in their country. Political action occurred, and eventually, the Mother-Child Protection Law (*Boshi Hogo Hō*) was passed in 1937. This paper examines how this question of protecting mothers was addressed in Japan, focusing on the perspective of Fukushima Shirō, the male founder of *Fujo shinbun*, the weekly newspaper specializing in women's issues.

Fukushima's journalistic activity can be described as a notable phase in the trajectory that culminated in the passage of the 1937 law. Social welfare scholar Imai Konomi explores how Fukushima was involved in the process in which the debate on the protection of motherhood among four leading women was translated into the movement for Aid to Mothers and Children. Her study is designed to trace the "continuity" from the women's debate in 1918 to the movement that later rose, and Fukushima's activism started in 1926 is discussed in this context.[1]

Fukushima himself organized a campaign, through the Association for Promoting the Enactment of the Aid to Mothers and Children Law (Boshi Fujo Hō Seitei Sokushinkai) that he formed in 1926 in his newspaper company, but this initiative did not produce tangible results. Instead of looking at the impact that his journalism had on the extended process that would lead to the Mother-Child Protection Law, this paper examines the evolution of Fukushima's ideas

themselves, delving into how he became convinced of the importance of this cause. The first section of the paper will show what prompted him to take up the issue of mothers' rights and what shaped his approach to it in relation to his broader vision of reform. The second section will discuss how he explained the necessity and urgency of dealing with the question of mothers as a national one.[2]

## 1. Calls for the Protection of Mothers' Rights, Improved Gender Relations and Economic Independence for Mothers

In April 1926, Fukushima Shirō launched the movement for the enactment of Aid to Mothers and Children, announcing the formation of the association for that purpose in *Fujo shinbun*.[3] When he initially agitated for the protection of "mothers' rights" in 1917, however, he positioned himself neither as the campaign organizer nor as an expert on this issue. Instead of elaborating on how to protect mothers' rights, he encouraged "trailblazers in the women's world," as well as those who had long been "concerned about the future of society and the State," to begin to do research on it.[4] He particularly expected women's leaders to take up this cause. "A movement for the protection of mothers' rights must happen in our women's world, and [they] must make [it] happen," he asserted.[5]

This did not mean, however, that he saw himself as an outsider commenting on a problem for women. For one thing, he presented the protection of mothers' rights as "a matter of great social and national importance,"[6] not a concern for women alone.[7] For another, his interest in the harsh circumstances that surrounded Japanese women was shaped by his personal experience. What contributed to the shaping of his perception of the problem of unprotected motherhood, and how did he define the problem? The goal of the Association for Promoting the Enactment of the Aid to Mothers and Children Law (hereafter, the Association for Aid to Mothers and Children) organized in 1926 was limited: to push for quick enactment of a law that provides government aid for widows with small children suffering from poverty and for "mothers in similar circumstances."[8] As proof of the need for immediate legislative action, Fukushima cited painful cases

of impoverished mothers who killed their children and themselves, commonly called "mother-child suicide" cases.[9] Despite the narrowly defined purpose of his campaign, and the emphasis placed on the tragic results of poor motherhood, however, Fukushima had a far-reaching vision of reform that he believed could be advanced by promoting the cause of mothers. He aspired to improve unequal gender relations in Japan, and to provide a way for mothers to achieve economic independence. The following section of the paper explores the high hopes Fukushima embraced, discussing them in the context of his efforts to change how mothers were treated.

For Fukushima, his personal motive for launching *Fujo shinbun* was so important that a good place to start to approach his reform vision is to address how he, "despite being a male, came to publish the women's newspaper"[10] in 1900. His repeated accounts of the same story are slightly different from one another, but the protagonist was always his elder sister Maki, and her tragic marriage that ended with her death was identified as the direct cause of his later decision to start *Fujo shinbun*.[11]

Born in 1874, Shirō was the sixth child among eight siblings, and Maki, who was an affectionate sister,[12] was the first child of the family.[13] When she died at the age of 21, Shirō was "thirteen or fourteen."[14] His 1915 reminiscences started with a vivid depiction of Maki's terrible married life. In addition to the presence of the father-in-law who was "unethical and immoral," her husband lost in speculation. In the 1935 speech, Fukushima described how her in-laws "dared to violate the personhood and human rights" of Maki. Having suffered from mental agony and financial deprivation, Maki became very sick. Her father implicitly suggested she could come home, but she insisted that she stay with her in-laws, subscribing to the conventional notion that married women could not return to their parents' home. Fukushima commented in 1915 that she was in an indirect sense "killed by her in-laws." As an adult Fukushima remembered how he had begun to harbor enmity for her in-laws in his boyhood, vowing to "retaliate" against them someday. Maki's death also prompted the young brother to question "why women cannot

come back to their home again once they married."[15]

The question he began to ask in his early teens was answered many years later when Fukushima, who had by that time started a career in teaching, happened to read part of "Onna daigaku hyōron" (A commentary on greater learning for women) written by Fukuzawa Yukich. Fukushima was very much impressed by Fukuzawa's criticism of traditional teachings imposed on Japanese women, and of age-old customs that upheld the violation of women's human rights. Fukuzawa wrote about what he had wanted to know, including the ideal of equality between men and women in personhood, and the need to "correct" the old Eastern (as opposed to the Western) ways of requiring women's "extreme submissiveness" while allowing men to do as they like. Fukushima felt as if he finally found the answer he had long sought, regretting that he could not help his sister and wishing to use what he learned from Fukuzawa to help women who were still suffering. He thus made up his mind to publish *Fujo shinbun*, in order to enlighten the public, to "side with" these miserable women, and to "fight against the conventional morality." Highlighting the great sense of mission he had as a young man, Fukushima in his reminiscences also remarked that there was another factor playing in his decision to change careers: as a teacher, for some time, he had been experiencing a hearing problem. Starting "a newspaper for women" also served the purpose of pursuing a career which would not be hampered by his hearing disability, and he became convinced that it was his "mission and calling."[16]

The protection of motherhood was one of the major issues Fukushima discussed extensively in *Fujo shinbun* during its over forty-year history, and it was the theme deeply relevant to the question of how he could rescue ill-fated married women—the question that had motivated him to start the newspaper. His opposition to submissive womanhood strongly informed his advocacy for the cause of mothers. In the final analysis, he saw motherhood as the basis on which women could demand more respect and better treatment.

Fukushima used the phrase "the protection of mothers' rights" as he began to address the question of suffering mothers. Soon the debate on "the protection

of motherhood" and economic independence of women was launched by Yosano Akiko and Hiratsuka Raichō, the two women whom Yamada Waka, joining their debate, called "the heads of our women's world."[17] After the emergence of the women's debate, Fukushima adopted the phrase they used, but his initial choice of the phrase "mothers' rights" deserves attention, considering that it captured his aspirations.

Mothers' rights were typically contrasted with women's rights in the discourse about women's issues. In 1918, Yamakawa Kikue, who also participated in the debate started by Yosano and Hiratsuka, contrasted the movement for women's rights with that for mothers' rights, describing them as "the two directions of the women's movement." She regarded Yosano, who argued for individualism for women and women's economic independence through paid work as well as women's suffrage, as a representative for the women's rights movement; in contrast, Hiratsuka, who emphasized women's sex-specific conditions, represented the movement for mothers' rights that arose later, challenging the earlier movement for women's rights.[18] Starting to advocate mothers' rights in the year before the development of the women's debate, Fukushima was also conscious about this binary. In his 1917 editorial entitled "Protect Mothers' Rights," he advanced the view that: "…it is more urgent to appeal to society and the State for the protection of mothers' rights than asking men for the extension of women's rights." In Europe, he remarked, the movement for the protection of mothers' rights had already occurred "along with the women's suffrage movement."[19]

Despite his assertion in 1917 that Japanese women should prioritize the fight for mothers' rights, however, Fukushima had just recently endorsed the idea that women, including mothers, should have the ability to achieve self-support through employment. In 1916, *Fujo shinbun* carried a series of articles on various occupations for women, designed to provide information for those interested in how they could support themselves. In an editorial in 1916, Fukushima expanded on the question of women's employment, recommending that women acquire some skills that they could use to support themselves when necessary. "Without

an occupation, it is impossible to be economically independent," he maintained, and "without being able to be economically independent," women had to hurry to marry for the sake of economic security. And "once they get married," women without the ability to achieve self-support had to remain married "no matter how coldly and cruelly they are treated," because otherwise "they will have to fall into starvation." Furthermore, even happily married women could face economic hardships if their husbands became ill or died and they were left with several dependent children. Fukushima also implied that the ability to be financially independent might help any married woman given the current economic difficulties experienced by society in general.[20]

Discussing the desirability of vocational preparedness for women and girls, Fukushima stated that the question of women's employment was, in a sense, that of "the protection of women's rights," and, in another sense, the question of how to survive.[21] Unlike Yosano, a staunch champion of married women's economic independence,[22] he did not challenge the concept of the division of labor between husbands and wives. What he proposed was married women's preparedness for employment, not immediate economic independence for everyone. Still, he upheld the idea that economic independence, or preparedness for it, was integral to protecting women's rights. The important message here was that with the ability to achieve financial independence women could avoid enduring a miserable married life, and it strongly reflected his long-held wish to help women suffering from the kind of tragedy experienced by his late sister.

From the perspective of how his view of how to deal with the problem of women's subjugated status evolved, it is worth noticing that in 1916 Fukushima suggested that for widowed mothers as well as for women whose marriage proved to be a failure, the ability to earn their living was key to their resilience. In 1917, he modified this view when he advocated mothers' rights and the State-provided protection of poor mothers, challenging, not supporting, the idea that widowed mothers should be able to make use of the skills they had learned before marriage and become financially independent. He turned it down because he now found it

unrealistic for "many unfortunate mothers" to do so after having kept themselves busy with their children for more than a decade.[23] He called for the protection of these mothers, however, not simply because he thought it was impossible for them to be gainfully employed and become the breadwinners. His advocacy for mothers' rights was, more than anything, based on the recognition of the importance of maternal functions. Drawing attention to "the fact" that mothers were "contributing to society and the State" by raising the next generation of the nation, he certainly appealed to the nationalist sentiment of the time. Still, accentuating his nationalist motive too much can be misleading: by defining mothering as a "profession," and drawing a parallel between the profession of teaching and that of mothering, Fukushima intended to make it clear that mothers deserved better social treatment and their status needed to be improved.[24]

There could be more than one factor involved in the shift, at this particular time, in his view of how the fate of "unfortunate mothers" could be changed. International affairs and nationalism had a considerable impact on his discourse about the significance of mothers' roles, as discussed further later. It should be pointed out here that he mentioned the need to protect mothers' rights in February 1917, probably for the first time in *Fujo shinbun*, following the severance of the diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Germany during World War I, and he did so in the context of discussing the postwar world and Japan's "postwar management."[25] More directly, Fukushima's knowledge of recent Western trends in the field of women's issues helped shape his vision. Given his criticism of traditional Japanese ways of treating women, as well as his sense of need for Japan's international competitiveness, it is no surprise that his reference point was the West. In May 1917, he remarked that the movement for the protection of mothers' rights had already begun in Europe before the outbreak of the then still ongoing war.[26] In 1918, he paid attention to "mothers' insurance" adopted in European nations, providing some detailed information on the unique system in Italy established by its mothers' insurance law.[27] In 1926 those interested in the activities of the Association for Aid to Mothers and Children were given opportunities to

learn about examples of legislation enacted in various Western countries, including the U.S., where "widows' pension" laws had been passed in most states by then.[28]

*Fujo shinbun* offered a wide range of precedents from abroad, but it was the works of Ellen Key, a Swedish thinker and writer, that had an especially strong appeal to Fukushima. Key also had a great influence on the Japanese women's debate on the protection of motherhood, and in Japan her name was strongly associated with the mothers' rights movement and the concept of the protection of motherhood. In 1918, parts of Key's influential book *The Century of the Child* were published in *Fujo shinbun* in serial form.[29] Opposing women's pursuit of careers at the cost of their motherhood, which had been urged by women's rights advocates,[30] Key argued for the protection of "the whole functions of the mother." Importantly, she did not believe in mothers' "dependence" on their husbands. For "the married woman" who was once employed to live happily as a mother, "she must have an income that would make her independent of her husband." The "solution" that Key proposed was: "…every mother under fixed conditions, subject to certain control, during a certain period, and for a certain number of children, will obtain from society an allowance for education." Key embraced the need for the protection of motherhood beyond the period of parturition and lactation: "She will receive this [allowance] during the time in which her children require all her care, while she herself is freed from work outside the home."[31]

Fukushima did not campaign for the protection of "every mother," but his and Key's views overlapped significantly. Most importantly, he endorsed Key's perception of mothers' allowance as the means for being independent. In 1917, as discussed above, he departed from his own previous view that married women, mothers included, should be prepared to achieve self-support through employment; what was unchanged was his commitment to bringing economic independence to mothers. In 1918, Fukushima was most probably referring to Key when he pronounced his agreement with "one recent advocate for the protection of mothers' rights in Europe," who argued that mothers' "economic independence should be secured by the State."[32]

It should also be noted that Fukushima was convinced that this recent advocacy rested on the notion of the greater responsibility over their children borne by women than by men.[33] For him, who had been deeply troubled by unequitable gender relations in Japan, the question of mothers' rights had to be discussed not only in terms of mothers' rights vis-à-vis women's rights. Recognizing the value of mothers' rights vis-à-vis fathers' rights could literally empower married women. Fukushima found it "obvious" that mothers had a greater impact on how children were raised than fathers, and pointed out that the importance of mothers' influence had not been adequately recognized.[34] Contrasting the legal position of fathers with that of mothers, he strongly criticized the weakness of mothers' rights over their children defined in Japan's kinship law. It was his contention in 1918 that mothers' "innate responsibility" for their children was far greater than fathers', and the greater responsibility had to come with the greater rights as parents. What is more, for mothers to be able to carry out their responsibility for their children, they needed to "have [their] economic independence secured," as well as to be given opportunities to gain the knowledge to do so.[35]

The discussion above shows that, by advocating mothers' rights, Fukushima intended to provide the basis on which women could demand more respect, equal relations with men, and economic independence. By arguing that the State should provide the protection that mothers needed, therefore, he called for a significant shift in societal and official attitudes toward women, mothers in particular, and declared that women as mothers had a right to economic security.

## 2. The Urgency of the Cause: Appealing to Sympathy and Nationalism

The preceding section of the paper examined how Fukushima's sense of mission for unfortunate women, which had led him to establish his newspaper in 1900, informed his advocacy for the protection of mothers' rights and motherhood. He had a strong interest in changing the Japanese conventional ways of thinking, and his deep concern for the well-being of mothers no doubt shaped his vision of reform. As he called for urgent action on their behalf, however, he needed

more reasons. The following section of the paper examines how Fukushima as a journalist made the cause of mothers appealing to the readers of the newspaper, especially how he explained its urgency. Two distinct themes ran through the *Fujo shinbun* editorials on the subject, conveying its urgency. First, the focus was placed on painful stories in which impoverished lone mothers became desperate to such an extent that they killed their children and themselves. Second, Fukushima stressed how "the prosperity of the State" was at risk if the question of mothers' welfare was not dealt with. It is often not easy to tell how truthful someone's stated reason for their action is, and it is difficult to ascertain how genuine he was when Fukushima bluntly declared that the question of the protection of mothers' rights was significant not because of the importance of "the well-being of mothers themselves," but because of "the well-being of their children" who would be "the people of the nation in the future." In other words, the subject of the protection of mothers' rights was about "the well-being of the State itself."[36] What can be said for certain is that in Fukushima's arguments for the protection of mothers' rights and motherhood, mother-child suicide episodes as proof that urgent action was necessary, and the nationalist language that subordinated the welfare of mothers to that of the State, coexisted with and interacted with the advocacy for progressive change in social customs and gender relations in Japan.

Fukushima was far from alone in highlighting the tragedy of mother-child suicide. Rather it became a staple in Japanese advocacy for the protection of motherhood. When women activists organized their movement for the enactment of Aid to Mothers and Children in the mid-1930s, they framed their petition campaign as a fight against mother-child suicide.[37] In "The Statement of Reasons for [Proposing] the Aid to Mothers and Children Bill" that accompanied the bill submitted to the Minister of the Home Ministry, the spotlight was on the plight of mothers who lost their breadwinning husbands and "the frequent occurrence of mother-child suicides" in recent years, "no comparable examples of which can be seen in other countries."[38]

"The Statement of the Reasons" cited recent statistics on the number of cases

of parent-child suicide (most of which were those of mother-child suicide, the document added),[39] but this focus on the special plight of unsupported mothers was not new at all. As early as 1913, the *Fujo shinbun* editor elaborated on a case of mother-child suicide that involved a mother and four children. The father absconded after the small business he ran went bad, and he fell deeply in debt. It is noteworthy that Fukushima blamed the mother, as well as the father, in the 1913 case. Although her desperate action was understandable and deserved sympathy, Fukushima admitted, from the moral point of view she had to be called "a felon." A case in which some were really starved or froze to death was "unheard of," he pointed out, and he was not convinced that there was no way to survive for such a mother and children. It was regrettable that the mother of four was not courageous enough to send her children to work as live-in servants or consider some other arrangements such as foster care. Also, in the view of the editor, she was blameworthy for failing to be "a good wife" who would help her husband summon up the courage and strength to do whatever it took to cope with the difficulties. She also failed to be "a woman of toughness" who would have the determination and spirit to fight the adversity after her husband left.[40]

Fukushima's interpretation of mother-child suicide changed once he began to call for the protection of mothers' rights. No longer were widowed mothers blamed for failing to be strong enough. In April 1917, in the editorial that urged for the protection of mothers' rights, Fukushima recognized the presence of widows with several children who were "at a loss what to do," some of whom killed their little ones and committed suicide, of "many unfortunate mothers" unable to achieve self-support, and of "frail mothers" who needed the support from the State to properly raise their children.[41]

Not only did Fukushima stop blaming helpless mothers, but he now suggested that the occurrence of mother-child suicides should be attributed to a social failure, meaning that any individual could not be solely responsible for these tragedies. In December 1917, a detailed account of mother-child suicide appeared in *Fujo shinbun*. This case that had just happened in Akashi Beach in Hyōgo

involved a mother and five children who attempted suicide together. The mother failed to kill herself and one of the daughters also survived. Her common-law husband, who was a barber, never thought about the family, indulging in gambling. The mother did wage work to scrape together a living, but the income was too low, and she finally lost hope. Noting that some would blame the husband for the tragedy and suggest that he should be punished, Fukushima maintained he "should rather be pitied." It was "almost impossible" for him to support five children, given his financial circumstances, and it was even "natural" that he "ended up dreaming of making a fortune by gambling." Fukushima argued that the family's tragedy was "a natural result of a society of free competition." Fukushima clearly departed from his previous approach to the financially deprived: his new position was that the poor themselves were not to be blamed for the poverty and despair they underwent, and the development of "social policy" was essential to the solution.[42]

In 1926, Fukushima renewed his effort to arouse awareness about the crisis. In February, his editorial reported: "almost every day" there were newspaper reports of child desertion and mother-child suicide cases caused by poverty. Yet, "neither the government nor society reflects on the issue of the protection of motherhood, which is the fundamental solution" to the problem causing the mother-child tragedies. Pushing for a "social policy" designed to protect motherhood, the editorial specified where the greatest need was: to make the goal realistic, beneficiaries might have to be limited to "widows with children," but their protection had to be "realized on the earliest possible date."[43]

In April, Fukushima declared the formation of the Association for Aid to Mothers and Children, soliciting the support of the readers. As he organized the movement, he gave more "examples"[44] of mother-child suicide to emphasize the sense of urgency.[45] Fukushima framed one such case as the direct impetus that prompted him to take this definite step forward.[46] In this case that happened in Shimo-nerima, Tokyo, the mother killed three young daughters and committed suicide. The father had lived with the family until recently. Even with the father and his income, the family had lived in destitution. After he left home, the mother

was "at a loss what to do," searching for him, but to no avail. Having no idea where he was, she left home with her children, to look for a place to kill them and herself. The "suicide" happened ten days after the father had left home, and when the report was written, he was still missing.[47] Following the detailed description of the case, Fukushima commented that it was in order to "put an end" to such tragedies that Aid to Mothers and Children had to be quickly enacted.[48]

While presenting his campaign for Aid to Mothers and Children as a reaction to painful cases of mother-child suicide, significantly, Fukushima did not believe that feelings of pity toward poor mothers should define the nature of the cause he campaigned for. He had a reason to be careful, because if mothers' helplessness was the reason that they needed government aid, then it could be labeled as charitable, which he wanted to avoid. Moreover, if it were charitable, it could then be labeled as harmful. Such criticism had actually been made, and *Fujo shinbun* had published it before. Following Fukushima's initial calls for the protection of mothers' rights in 1917, *Fujo shinbun* carried an article about this question contributed by Abe Isoo, a Christian socialist and professor at Waseda University. In essence, Abe repeated the prevailing idea in early twentieth-century Japan that the poor, including mothers with small children, should be pushed to achieve "*dokuritsu jiei* (independence and self-support)"—the notion that had been advanced in the expert discussion of good ways of helping impoverished families whose male breadwinners were serving in the military during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).[49] In that way of thinking, "mere charity" was injurious because it would harm "the spirit of independence" of its recipients, making them lazy and irresponsible. Abe made this point clear, commenting on the recent advocacy for the protection of mothers' rights: he agreed that protection of widowed mothers was necessary, but simultaneously he warned that it would be harmful if it were given as charity or in the form of cash.[50]

Fukushima as a campaigner for the State-provided aid to mothers agreed clearly that it was not charitable in nature. He did so in his editorial two weeks after the announcement of the establishment of his association in 1926. He

discussed what the spirit of Aid to Mothers and Children was, in relation to the theory of Ellen Key, who had just passed away. He remarked that it was "a mysterious fate" that Key whom he eulogized as a champion of "mother love" and "child rights," died on April 25, the same day as the date of birth of the Association for Aid to Mothers and Children.[51] Key, who theorized about "a State provision of motherhood,"[52] had been a major inspiration to Fukushima. Her discussion of love, marriage, and divorce in terms of what is in the best interest of children, and her eugenic approach to the question of what choices should be made to "[produce] the best children"[53] and to "guarantee the improvement of the [human] race,"[54] had a strong appeal to him. He was especially impressed by her discussion of the "right of the child to choose his parents," the welfare of children who are yet to be born.[55] Key's ideas of motherhood as a "service to the society"[56] and choices to be made to promote "the welfare of the race"[57] were blended with his nationalist sympathies when Fukushima asserted:

> The Aid to Mothers and Children Law is neither a law of relief [which is created] out of pity, nor [in the sphere of] charitable social work. It ought to be passed and implemented as a duty [of the State], from the standpoint of the need of the State to be independent, and justice for the human race.[58]

If it was national independence that was at stake, the purpose of the law could not be defined as charitable. At the same time, the viewpoint that the nation's future hinged on the outcome of the campaign for mothers' aid served the purpose of highlighting the urgency of the problem. While mother-child suicide was cited as a uniquely Japanese phenomenon, the suffering of widows and their children was far from unique to the country. Fukushima kept paying attention to how other countries tackled this problem, making it part of the project of the Association for Aid to Mothers and Children to conduct research on mothers' aid laws already passed in Western countries.[59] The fact that Japan lagged behind in this area of social legislation was "humiliating," and national pride and the country's need to

emulate other international powers represented a significant reason for the need for quick action.[60]

As noted before, it was during the war that *Fujo shinbun* began to focus on the need to protect mothers' rights in 1917. From the beginning, Fukushima presented it as "a matter of national importance," contending that considering its relevance to national prosperity, it was absurd that the State remained indifferent to mothers' rights.[61] The issue of the protection of mothers' rights was initially mentioned as part of the discussion of Japan's postwar agenda in the editorial published right after the diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Germany were broken off. In this editorial, Fukushima made the assertion that the goal of "making excellent mothers" was most "fundamental" in Japan's "postwar management" since it was mothers who would bear and rear "the great people of the nation." The eugenic interest in mothers' influence on the offspring, along with the significance of the maternal role in raising children after their birth, was stressed as a reason to claim that the betterment of motherhood was fundamental and urgent. It would take multiple efforts to attain this goal of "making excellent mothers," he argued. Educating women was obviously necessary. Also important were progressive changes in social customs and legislation so that mothers' status was improved, and they did not have to suffer from want. Even social reform for mothers' rights and mothers' well-being was thus defined as "a national problem," not a problem for women alone.[62]

The theme of the protection of motherhood as a national question appeared repeatedly in Fukushima's editorials. He not only used nationalist language to justify the need to protect motherhood, but also indicated the possibility of using the advocacy for mothers to promote nationalism. As a proponent of the protection of mothers' rights who embraced nationalism, he proposed: to pursue nationalism, one could draw a parallel between women delivering babies and men serving in the military.[63] Still, can he be simply described as a nationalist sympathizer inclined to eugenic thought who had no idea of the welfare of women in their own right? Fukushima was no doubt a conformist in the sense that he

had no intention to challenge the prevailing sentiment of the era, but this aspect of him did not necessarily contradict his commitment to improving mothers' welfare and gender relations in Japan. As long as one was not determined to refute the logic of wartime nationalism, drawing the analogy between women's act of parturition and men's military service could be a way to help garner more respect for motherhood and change the position of women vis-à-vis men.

## Conclusion

Given his blatant use of nationalist language, it can be easily argued that Fukushima's activism was "consistently" directed at the goal of protecting motherhood for the purpose of "the prosperity of the state," not for women's rights to equality with men, as concluded by historian Ishizaki Shōko whose study highlights Fukushima's commitment to eugenic thinking. It would be possible, however, that such criticism of his contributions to the system created during World War II that made use of motherhood in order to secure human resources[64] overly blurs the multiplicity of Fukushima's motives that he expressed in his own words.

This paper has shown that nationalism was behind Fukushima's activism for mothers' rights, but it is also undeniable that he addressed the question of unsupported mothers as a means of tackling the problem of women's low status and inequitable gender relations in Japan. To highlight the urgency of the need to provide aid to poor mothers, he both cited tragic mother-child suicide cases as proof and centered on the nationalist motive for addressing the question of mothers. Importantly, stressing the cause of national prosperity not only served the purpose of heightening the sense of national crisis. He was also motivated to deny the notion that mothers' aid was a form of charity, which was labeled as harmful in early twentieth century Japan. He described mothering as a "profession," which deserved protection and respect. What he advocated was a fair reward for motherhood and the elevation of mothers' status.[65]

## Notes

1 Imai Konomi, *Shakai fukushi shisō to shite no bosei hogo ronsō: "Sai" wo meguru undōshi* (Tokyo: Domesu shuppan, 2005).

2 This study draws heavily on the examination of *Fujo shinbun*'s editorials. Fukushima authored most of the editorials in his newspaper, but his name did not often appear as bylines, which was his conscious choice. For this point, see Fukushima Shirō, "Shakoku," *Fujo shiubun* (November 5, 1915). In this paper, the discussion about Fukushima's ideas is based on the assumption that all the editorial articles cited were written by Fukushima and the anonymity did not affect what he wrote.

3 Fukushima Shirō, "Zen aidokusha ni gosansei wo kou: Boshi fujo hō seitei sokushinkai secchi ni tsuki," *Fujo shinbun* (April 25, 1926).

4 "Boken wo yōgo seyo," *Fujo shinbun* (April 20, 1917). In this paper, all the direct quotations from sources in Japanese are translated into English by the present author.

5 "Boken wo yōgo seyo (futatabi)," Ibid. (April 27, 1917).

6 "Boken wo yōgo seyo."

7 "Sengo no konponteki keiei: Mazu daikokumin no haha wo tsukuru wo yōsu," Ibid. (February 16, 1917).

8 Fukushima, "Zen aidokusha ni gosansei wo kou."

9 Ibid.

10 Fukushima Shirō, "Kako sanjūgo nen ni okeru Fujo shinbun no gyōseki," in Fukushima Shirō, *Fujinkai sanjū gonen* (1935: repr. Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 1984), 1. Fukushima's speech at the thirty-fifth anniversary party for *Fujo shinbun* in 1935 was recorded in a written form and appeared in the reprinted edition of *Fujinkai sanjūgo nen*, the book that collected about a third of articles written by Fukushima himself and published in *Fujo shinbun* since its foundation.

11 Fukushima Haruura, "Fujo shinbun sōkan no dōki," *Fujo shinubun* (November 5, 1915); Fukushima Shirō, "Fujo shinbun no kako to shōrai," quoted in Fukushima Sugio, "Chichi, Fukushima Shirō no koto," in *Fujo shinbun to josei no kindai*, ed. Fujo shinbun wo yomu kai (Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 1997), 15-18 and 21-23; Ibid, "Kako sanjūgo nen," 1-3; Ibid., "Kantō no ji," *Fujo shinbun* (July 18, 1919).

12 Fukushima, "Fujo shinbun no kako to shōrai," 17.

13 Fukushima Sugio, "Chichi, Fukushima Shirō no koto," 14.

14 In his speech given in 1935, Shirō was 11 years old at that time. Fukushima, "Kako sanjūgo nen," 2.

15 Fukushima Haruura, "Fujo shinbun sōkan no dōki;" Fukushima Shirō, "Kako sanjōgo nen," 2.

16 Fukushima Haruura, "Fujo shinbun sōkan no dōki;" Fukushima Shirō, "Fujo shinbun no kako to shōrai," 21-22; Ibid., "Kako sanjōgo nen," 2-3.

17 Yamada Waka, "Bosei hogo mondai: Yosano shi to Hiratsuka shi no ronsō ni tsuite," *Taiyō* Vol. 24, No.11 (September 1918), 127.

18 As a socialist, Yamakawa criticized both movements. She argued the movement for women's rights contributed to the rise of problems connected to increased women's participation in the labor force, liberating women to be exploited and exploit others under capitalism. The mothers' rights movement tried to deal with some evils of capitalism but failed to eradicate the cause of social tragedies. Yamakawa Kikue, "Yosano, Hiratsuka nishi no ronsō," *Fujin kōron* Vol. 3, No.9 (September, 1918), 22-25.

19 "Boken wo yōgo seyo."

20 "Ichigei ni tasseshimeyo," *Fujo shinbun* (May 19, 1916).

21 Ibid.

22 Yosano Akiko, "Shieiroku," *Fujo kōron* Vol.3, No.3 (March 1, 1918), 37-38.

23 "Boken wo yōgo seyo."

24 "Boken wo yōgo seyo (futatabi)."

25 "Sengo no konponteki keiei."

26 "Boken wo yōgo seyo."

27 "Bosei hogo to hahaoya hoken," *Fujo shinbun* (June 28, 1918).

28 "Beikoku Mishigan shū no jidō fujohō," (July 11, 1926); Fukushima, "Dō tsukuri ageruka," Ibid. (May 23, 1926); Namae Takayuki, "Boshi fujohō no kigen," Ibid.; Namae, "Boshi fujohō no naiyō," Ibid. (March 21, 1926).

29 Ellen Key's *The Century of the Child* appeared in *Fujo shinbun* under the title "Bosei no sonchō" (Respect for motherhood), starting in the issue of June 21, 1917. The final installment was published in the August 9 issue.

30 Ellen Key, "Unborn Race and Woman's Work," *The Century of the Child* (1909: repr. New York: Arno Press, 1972), 63-105.

31 Ibid., 85-86.

32 "Fuken to boken," *Fujo shinbun* (June 21, 1918).

33 Ibid.

34 "Sengo no konponteki keiei."

35 "Fuken to boken."

36 "Boken wo yōgo seyo."

37 Kaneko Shigeri, "Boshi fujohō seitei sokushin undōshi," *Shakai jigyō* Vol. 20, No. 10 (January, 1937), 57-78.

38 "Boshi fujohōan riyūsho," quoted in Kaneko, 62-63.

39 Ibid., 63.

40 "Sanji wo shisatsu shite jisatsu seshi haha," *Fujo shinbun* (December 5, 1913).

41 "Boken wo yōgo seyo."

42 "Higeki no kataru kyōkun: Akashi kaigan ni okeru boshi rokunin nyūsui jiken," *Fujo shinbun* (December 7, 1917).

43 "Bosei hogo no kyūyō," Ibid. (February 1, 1926),

44 See, for example, "Hisan naru sakin no jitsurei," Ibid. (October 20, 1926).

45 Fukushima Shirō, "Zen aidokusha ni gosansei wo kou."

46 Ibid.

47 "Mugibatake no nakani makura wo narabete: Osanaki sanshimai no shi," *Tokyonichinichi shinbun* (April 19, 1926), reprinted in "Bosei fujohō seitei no kyūyō: jitsurei," *Fujo shinbun* (April 25, 1926).

48 "Bosei fujohō seitei no kyūyō."

49 T. Namae, "War-Time Relief in a Typical Japanese City: How the Distressed Families, whose Husbands and Sons are Now at the Front are Relived at Kobe in Japan," *The Charities* Vol. 24, No.23 (September 2, 1905), 1047-1050; Kōsuke Tomeoka, "For Those at the Front for Japan: The Relief Work to Meet the Present National Emergency," *The Charities* Vol.14, No.14 (July 1, 1905), 889-891.

50 Abe Isoo, "Boken yōgo mondai no nihōmen," *Fujo shinbun* (May 4, 1917).

51 "Boshi fujohō to Eren Kei," Fujo shinbun (May 9, 1926).

52 Ellen Key, *Love and Marriage* (1911: repr. New York: Source Book Press, 1970), 211-212.

53 Ibid., 157.

54 Ibid., *The Century of the Child*, 20.

55 Key expanded on evolutionist and eugenic theories relating to one's decision to marry and have children in the first chapter entitled "The Right of the Child to Choose his Parents" in *The Century of the Child*. For the question of the right of future children "not to suffer for the mistakes and errors of their parents," especially for the discussion related to mothers' employment, see "Unborn Race and Woman's Work" in the same book.

56 Key, *Love and Marriage*, 212.

57 Ibid., 157.

58 "Boshi fujohō to Eren Kei."

59 Fukushima, "Zen aidokusha ni gosansei wo kou."

60 "Boshi fujohō to Eren kei."

61 "Boken wo yōgo seyo (futatabi)."

62 "Sengo no konponteki keiei."

63 "Boken yōgo to hahaoya hoken."

64 Ishizaki Shōko, "Bosei hogo, yūsei shisō wo megutte," in *Fujo shinbun to josei no kindai*, 189-90 and 205.

65 Concerning this point, one episode from 1926 merits attention. By the fall of 1926, the Bureau of Social Affairs in the Home Ministry started to work on Aid to Mothers and Children, renaming it the "Children's Aid" Bill. Fukushima was frustrated with this change in name, and urged that it should return to the original name. In the November editorial, he gave support to the government bill, but simultaneously declared that its goal and that of the movement of the protection of motherhood were not the same. Fukushima did not favor the new name of the

bill because he did not want to see mothers' status lowered because of this. If mothers were supported by the Children's Aid Law, then the implication was that they were fed thanks to their children. In his view, this was not right, given how devoted they were to the job of raising children. "Boshi fujohō no meishō (futatabi)," *Fujo shinbun* (October 9, 1926). In the original title of the editorial article printed in Japanese, the word "futatabi," meaning "again" or "for the second time," is emphasized with a dot above each letter; "Bosei hogo no han'i."