

From Mrs. Jones to Mrs. Sanyo: Women's Identity and Product Advertising in Japan in Prewar and Postwar Home Appliances Ads, 1931-1965

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This presentation will examine Japanese advertising of home appliances in the pre- and postwar periods as an example of the realization of gender stereotypes of Japanese society, from 1931 to 1965. In examining Japanese ads we can pick up and analyze (understand) the gender stereotypes which exist in Japanese society, because women and men pictured in advertising represent gender norms in society.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This research builds on the theory of symbolic self-completion (Wicklund R., Gollwitzer P., Symbolic Self-Completion Theory, Lawrence Erlbaum associates, New Jersey, London, 1982). According to this theory consumers consume products which help them to complete their identity. Only when they find products that express themselves, their goals, personality and its peculiarities, do consumers decide to purchase these products.

People want to be different from each other or identify themselves as belonging to certain group, using symbols to complete their self identity. These symbols can take the form of expressions, gestures and even brand name products. By pursuing certain products, a person can add something to his/herself and complete his/her identity. In the process, people not only complete their identity, but they also become closer to the image of their ideal self. That is, we are not only completing our identity, but we also are narrowing the gap or eliminating the difference between the "real self" and the "ideal, imaginary self". Thus, images in advertising are an instrument which helps people to become closer to their ideal selves.

In human identity, gender characteristics are one of the most important components. In a given society or culture, a set of behavioral norms are typically divided into "male" or "female" roles, which also can include a division of labor – men's work and women's work. Depending on the social group or system, the vision of masculinity and femininity is different. It also can be dynamic and changing.

Subject of Research

To study the formation of Japanese women's identity in the postwar period, the main source of observation will be home appliance advertising and its images; it is both dynamic and static. This work especially concentrates on what kind of identity that has been introduced to Japanese women in certain historical periods and what was behind the changes of women's images in advertising.

Using home appliances could significantly decrease the amount of time which Japanese women used for housework. The introduction of this household technology also influenced the everyday life of Japanese women and the lifestyle of Japanese family. We should consider such changes in consumer culture, because understanding of these two factors makes a significant difference in analyzing Japanese advertising of this period.

The main source for the research will be advertising in the women's magazine "Fujin Koron", which was established in 1916 (5th year of Taisho emperor era) by the Chuo Koronsha publishing house. This magazine is representative of the "old" Japanese mass media. Fujin Koron is a general educative magazine, which also represents the value of the ideal Japanese homemaker's world to the woman reader. Moreover, this magazine reflected many of the changes that happened in Japanese society and women's status in society during the prewar and postwar periods, and it also helped to shape new values in Japanese women. That's why it is important to explore what kind of images and identity were introduced to Japanese women through the advertisements in this magazine.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Women's identity and consuming process; from credit buying to direct shopping.

In postwar Japan (1945-1950) both manufacturing and consuming culture were rapidly expanding, and women became the focus of both of these processes. For the first

IMAGES OF WOMEN IN HOME APPLIANCES ADVERTISING IN PRE-WAR PERIOD (1930-1941)

time, Japanese women received legally declared rights and new freedoms. As a result, they started to have a new understanding of themselves and their consumer purchasing patterns changed.

In the prewar period (1900-1941), however, women typically shopped for products from their home. Several times a month's a special seller came to Japanese homes to sell products to women, who basically stayed at home and chose all the necessary items for the family. But the wife didn't pay money for all of her purchases; rather, the sellers kept records of what she bought, and at the end of month, the husband paid all of the expenses. So, it was kind of a traditional, open line of credit based on mutual trust between seller and buyer. But this system also shows that women who stayed home didn't have any money of their own, even pocket money. After the Second World War, however, Japanese women became more liberated socially and economically, and they started to express their wills and economical power, paying for purchases by themselves. Although they continued doing housework as before, they also started to go outside of the home, working, shopping, and enjoying leisure activities.

At the same time, Japan's economy was expanding, and more people purchased mass-produced consumer goods than ever before. Products which were associated with the upper samurai class and their elements had become more affordable to different classes and types of people, including items such as expensive liquors and cosmetics. After WW II, newly liberated women also had their own money to spend for the first time, buying not only items for the household, but also some "women's" things for their private use.

Manufacturers understood that if they could catch women's interest, they would be able to sell products to the whole family. So, they made it a priority to increase women's consumption and to influence all classes of consumers. In marketing, the mass media and specialty magazines played a very important role, because they not only offered the reader useful information, they also introduced readers to a new lifestyle.

It is crucial to emphasize that this friendly relationship between women and popular magazines was not established until the late 1920s. From this time, these periodicals became a best friend and an advisor to Japanese women. They also became a window to another life and another lifestyle. Women, who had always been keen on every new thing, received new information and advertising with enthusiasm and started to introduce the new ideas and products into their lives. In home appliance advertising we can see this change in the mass media, the increasing level of mass production and consumption, as well as in changes of women's identity in post-war Japan.

Home appliances were introduced during the Taisho emperor period (1912-1926). Around this time, Japanese households started to be equipped with electrical lamps. After great Kanto earthquake in 1923, however, Japanese people started to recognize the safety of electric lamps as opposed to candles or oil burning lamps. By the 1930s, the production and sales of this kind of heater had reached a high level. After learning about modern technology from America, Japanese companies had started to produce their own electric home appliances and introduced consumers to fans, heaters, and washing machines. But the cost of electricity and the prices of electrical appliances remained high in pre-war period, so only a small number of high-class families could afford to have all these items. To ordinary households, washing machines arrived only after WWII.

At the same time, the rich life in the pre-war Japanese period was symbolized by American life -- houses modernized with electricity, tables decorated with extravagant food, and families who owned private cars. For Japanese people at this time, such a rich life meant an improved life, and they strived to change their life for the better -- to modernize. According to Yoshimi, this image of modernized American life became like a motor for their wishes, it drove them to be obsessed with modernization¹ (Yoshimi 2000, 154).

As early as the late 1920s, Japan start to produce washing machines, but production stopped because of the Pacific war and started again only after WWII². During late 1920s the first radio commercials appeared to promote washing machine. They explained how the washing machine could free women from the pressure of their husband and men in their lives, who constantly asked them "wash this for me, quickly"³. At the same time, the desire to have washing machine also came from the same longing for a modernized American life. Still, many Japanese families employed maids for washing clothes. In the countryside, many people heard of washing machines from the radio, but they had never seen one⁴. Thus it was the people who lived in the cities that shared images of a modernized life filled with laborsaving home appliances, such as washing machines.

Image of Women in Pre-war Ads

¹ Yoshimi Shunjya "Home electrification in post-war Japan" in *Media, Culture and Society*, 21 (2), 2000: 154

² Amano S., Sakurai A., "Mono to onna" - *Mitaiisei, kateisei, shakaisei o wa ni*, (Yushindo Koubunsha, 1992): 133

³ *Ibid.*, 136

⁴ Sentakki o jozuni", *Fujin Koron*, September, 1959

During the pre-war era only very wealthy Japanese families had washing machines. The advertising for these home appliances then mainly portrayed images of high-class women, whom the manufacturers assumed could afford the products. For example, a girl dressed in western clothes stands near a washing machine, looking very happy and modern. Such images introduced washing machines to Japanese households, expressing not only the modernization of home, but also the rationalization of housework.

Young girls mainly appeared in modern Western clothes⁵, while older women usually dressed in traditional Japanese clothes (kimono)⁶. But they both look conservative, upper class, and like women who valued their families. The typical woman in these ads also reflects the image of the Confucian ideal of the “*good wife and kind mother*”, which was very strong in Japanese society at this time, so this is a popular portrayal of women⁷⁸ (1920, 1932). Even when her husband and son are dressed up in western clothes, she still wears kimono in the ads⁹, which emphasizes her traditional role in the family, as mother and a loving wife. She is not only pictured as a person who takes care of the family, cooking and doing housework, but we can also see her with her children, who are the main object of her care. At the same time, this portrayal in advertising is consistent with the ideal Confucian image of women, as good wife and caring mother. In other words, these ads reflect the society's norm, where it was seen as a duty for women to get married, give birth, and nurture their children.

In addition to the images of the high-class women and the good mother, the image of the “modern girl” also appears in home appliance advertising, especially in radio ads¹⁰. For instance, there is the singer who is wearing a beautiful western dress and hat, which was very modern and unusual clothing for Japan at that time. In this way, manufacturers associated images of the modern women with a modern product, while the image of the housewife remained a constant. But it is difficult to divide the image of modern girl from the high-class women, as they sometimes overlap. In reality, a modern girl who owns saving home appliances and who had the time to listen to radio and to read magazines was similar to the high-class woman who had leisure time. Also, the prewar images of housewives look more like movie stars than real homemakers, according to Yoshimi¹¹ (Yoshimi 2000, 158). Maybe we can

say that about modern technology ads, but in advertising for family products she looks like a good wife, a nurturing mother.

During WWII, the wife-mother image became even stronger. Although there are few home appliance ads during this period, other products' ads portray her role as a nurturing mother who cares about her family's health¹². Even when she appears as a factory worker in factories assembling military products, she still is working for her family, cooking while conserving electricity for the war effort¹³. The continuity of this image during wartime could mean keeping pre-war tradition, but at the same time there was a need for it, because especially during difficult wartime, the image of a strong but kind mother comforted people.

POST-WAR WOMEN'S IMAGES

Soon after WWII, a new image appears, the Japanese women who fight and call to fight for a better life in a difficult economical situation¹⁴. During this period, the images of the good wife and careful mother also continue to appear in the ads. By the 1950s, however, a different representation appears. The new woman looks like a Hollywood movie star. This period illustrates, then, how advertising reflects the society's consciousness in terms of gender roles and reflects popular culture, fashion, and style, while at the same time it also shapes everyday life.

After the War, many families moved from rural farms to work in large, industrialized cities, because they were looking for a better life. For the first time in Japanese history, family size and shape changed, taking on the new shape of the modern –nuclear family. It was characterized by the salary-man, who works in the city and supports his family, and the full-time housewife, who supports him. Until this time, only upper-class women could afford to be full-time housewives, but after war it became very common and usual for most women. When women moved to the city with their husbands and became full-time homemakers, they deal with many new things, such as managing all the housework and rearing children alone. It was not easy. They could not afford to hire a maid; so electric home appliances played a very important role. Manufacturers seemed to understand the new homemaker, so they emphasized how home appliances could free women from time-consuming housework¹⁵. Also, they emphasized not only the economic benefits but also the effectiveness of washing machines.

Many Japanese ladies became housewives who were living in big cities for the first time, unlike their mothers or grandmothers, so they did not have role models. Because of these enormous changes in everyday life, women started to

⁵ Asahi Shukan, 24 June 1917, Vol. 25, No. 9

⁶ Shufu no Tomo, 4 June 1917, Vol. 4, No. 6

⁷ Shukan Asahi, 24 November 1930

⁸ Shufu no Tomo, June 1920

⁹ Fujin Kurabu, June 1936

¹⁰ Asahi Shukan, 3 March 1934

¹¹ Yoshimi Shunjya “Home electrification in post-war Japan”, in *Media, Culture and society*, 2000, 21 (2), p.158

¹² Fujin Kurabu, 1 May 1942

¹³ Fujin Kurabu, 1 January 1945

¹⁴ Fujin Kurabu, 1 February 1946

¹⁵ Fujin Koron, September 1954

seek a new identity, and in this connection, home appliance advertising played a very important role in the formation of the housewife image. The postwar advertising introduced home appliances in seven different stages: first the electrical lamp; followed by the radio, toaster, and electrical heater; next the mixer, fan and telephone; then the washing machine; the refrigerator; and finally, the television and vacuum cleaner.¹⁶

Ads introduced not only pictures, but also suggestions on how to spend the time saved by using the new laborsaving technology¹⁷. Typical of the time, ads featured images of happy housewives, spending their days surrounded by very modern and useful home appliances. Sometimes the wife looks like Audrey Hepburn: young, wearing a beautiful dress and apron¹⁸. Ads emphasized that the washing machine would transform the busy and hard life of the young Japanese housewife to one of great fun¹⁹. In fact, household appliances helped to reduce the amount of housework spent on this chore by over one-fourth. In 1916, the average housewife spent 19 hours 2 minutes on household chores; most of this time was spent washing clothes. By 1961, then, her time spent on housework had decreased to 16 hours and 6 minutes, saving nearly four hours a day²⁰. With home appliances, she not only saved time, but her housework involved less physical labor. So the Japanese housewife enjoyed more leisure time (in amount of 3 hours 50 minutes by 1961), but in reality, she did not spend her leisure time reading more or starting a hobby as portrayed in a series of Toshiba ads.

In 1954, National ads promised that one day we would see a beautiful and young housewife, living surrounded with home appliances from the time she wakes up till she goes to bed. She is using a toaster, a coffee maker, a washing and a cleaning machine, as well as a refrigerator and an iron, a radio and a TV set²¹. For Japanese housewives at this time, this kind of life was a dream far off in the future. Later Toshiba ads recommended a more rational way of managing their time; that is, women could do several things together while washing clothes²². They could be eating, cleaning, reading more, and improving the household in other ways²³.

Ads also frequently compared this highly-equipped life to the American way of modernized life. Because not many Japanese people knew much about real American life, it was possible to create a mythical image of Mrs. Jones, who had a happy life in her suburban home. In Japanese ads,

we see the image of Mrs. Jones, the happy beautiful American housewife, managing a difficult home with 16 motors with great joy²⁴. Later a Japanese Mrs. Sanyo appears for Sanyo appliances as a imitation of the American Mrs. Jones. Actress Michiko Kogure appears as Mrs. Sanyo in the ads with Mrs. Jones, but clearly Mrs. Jones, who wears a beautiful Western-style dress, looks more attractive²⁵. We see her in many different outfits and poses in the campaign, so every consumer could select a more interesting image for herself²⁶. Also not only Sanyo, other manufacturers started to use similar images. For example, Mr. Mitsubishi later appears for Mitsubishi appliances²⁷. With these images, advertising emphasizes that the introduction of the advertised appliances to the Japanese household will significantly improve their lives. They also should not wait, and if they could not buy all the things by cash, the ads recommended that they could buy now and pay later with credit as a new way of buying consumer goods²⁸.

In addition to the ease of purchase, manufacturers tried to show women how easy it was to use the home appliances. Since women generally were not thought to be competent users of technical equipment, advertisers often used the word “□□□□fun” as a unique selling point to describe the process of home appliances instead of the word “□□□□difficult”²⁹. Again, the Sanyo ads provide a case in point. One can see how the Japanese woman was changing from the naïve young lady, who doesn't know how to use a washing machine (1955-57)³⁰, to the quiet confident madam, sitting in front of the unit and giving orders to the machine (in 1959-1960)³¹. Still, we see the image of man who knows everything about this equipment trying to explain to her how it works. But even just from the appearance of this ad, the recipient can feel that this man also has a supportive function, so it is a set of “the weak woman and the strong man who supports her”³². Using home appliances was not only great fun; it also maintained women's beauty, health, and even youth, since it prevented women's hands from becoming dry and chapped. Thus some ads went so far as to promise that the washer is a machine that protects women's beauty³³.

¹⁶ [Asahi Shukan](#), 21 August 1955

¹⁷ [Fujin Koron](#), January 1954

¹⁸ [Fujin Koron](#), April 1954

¹⁹ [Fujin Koron](#), April 1954

²⁰ Tokyo Municipal Museum Statistics Data about changes of housewife life

²¹ [Fujin Koron](#), January 1954

²² [Fujin Koron](#), August 1959

²³ [Fujin Koron](#), April 1954

²⁴ [Fujin Koron](#), October 1957

²⁵ [Fujin Koron](#), October 1957

²⁶ [Fujin Koron](#), January 1957, March 1957, September 1957

²⁷ [Fujin Koron](#), October 1960

²⁸ [Fujin Koron](#), July 1957

²⁹ [Fujin Koron](#), January 1957, January 1959, April 1959, August 1959, August 1960

³⁰ [Fujin Koron](#), July 1957, September 1957

³¹ [Fujin Koron](#), April 1959

³² [Fujin Koron](#), July 1957, September 1957

³³ [Fujin Koron](#), September 1957

Change of Women's Images from the Late 50s to the Beginning of the 60s

By the late 1950s, the images of women in advertising of home appliances again are changing to reflect larger changes in Japanese society. First, the "nuclear family" starts to live in city apartments, and the housewife becomes more familiar with house management. She learns more about how to use not only the washing machine but also other home appliances from toasters to rice cookers. During this short period, Japanese women are presented with a great deal of information on the new technology, and they respond positively. By the late 1950s, the number of washing machines increases to 61 machines to every 100 households in Japan, compared to 78 of 100 in American households³⁴ (Suzuki 2000, 250).

As the Japanese women adopt the new technology, the image of the modern woman also starts to change. By the late 1950s, the Japanese dress appears closer to western dresses; and by the 1960s, they start to wear dresses with white aprons. Women in trousers also appear in ads for the first time³⁵, particularly in ads for vacuum cleaners³⁶. Because it's more comfortable to clean house in trousers than in a dress, such ads introduce a rationalized way of doing housework to Japanese housewives. Furthermore, the woman in the Toshiba ads now are portrayed taking control of the machines, sitting and giving orders to their washing machine with the headline: "Housewife is a housekeeping coach"³⁷. The house appliance has become the most appropriate friend of housewife, according to Yoshimi³⁸ (Yoshimi 2000, 160). Yet the home appliance was also a partner to the housewife, who stayed all day at home alone. Not an equal, but a partner, who could share the burden of housekeeping chores, while it also served as a helper and a maid, to whom she was able to give orders. Because the housewife was the person who had to do all the housecleaning and housekeeping, raising the children, and supporting her husband, home appliances, in a way, were the only things that she could endlessly command, and they would faithfully respond.

In this Toshiba campaign, the housewife is also introducing this washing machine to other people, emphasizing that "You can wash without hurting your hands." She confidently stands next to the machine, giving orders, and looks like a person who knows a lot about technical equipment. Her image has transformed from the "weak, knowing nothing about appliances" woman to the "strong-well knowing woman," who does housekeeping as

a hobby, not as hard work. She also emerges a manager of her own household, not only a housewife. Clearly, the role of magazines in raising the knowledge of Japanese women about home appliances was significant at this time. Similar to the washing machine ads, the image of the transformed housewife appears in ads for other new appliances, such as for the refrigerator³⁹. Clearly, the new home appliances in Japanese houses increased in number and were making life better for the homemaker. The role of home appliance itself changed from a rational housekeeping process to a friend, supporter, and a maid of the housewife⁴⁰ (Yoshimi 2000, 159). The image of housekeeping also changed from "difficult" to a "fun" process, which had another effect on Japanese society.

In other ads, home appliances were introduced as devices which can produce happiness. For example, one 1957 refrigerator ad promised a "new happiness" and thing which makes "fun life even better than before"⁴¹. Or, if you own a refrigerator, it is not necessary to do shopping every day, you can do it once, refrigerate it, and it will be your own "all-year market without holidays and vacations"⁴². In this way, home appliances not only made Japanese housewives happy, but they also created a happy family by giving women more time to spend with their husband and family. For example, one 1959 rice cooker ad pictured a happy couple on a boat with the copy: "Sunday for only two of us. Let's enjoy outdoors", because "I don't have to worry about meal. I just set up a timer on my cooker and it will make delicious rice for me. And we can eat right away"⁴³. Now the ads clearly pictured the message that it was possible to leave almost all the housework to home appliances, so the owner could enjoy the free time to spend with her husband and family outside the home.

This appealing image of happiness would expand to showing home appliances as devices which both connect and unite the family. For instance, a 1960s Toshiba hot plate ad portrayed a happy family of three enjoying a Christmas dinner. The copy summed up the festive occasion, from "hot atmosphere to hot food"⁴⁴. During this period, ads also used replaced formal words like "□□—housewife," "□□—wife," and "□□—mother" with the more casual expressions of "□□mama" and "mom"⁴⁵. After WWII, the number of young families with kids had increased, and advertisers attempted to reflect this new reality, by shifting the image from "happy housewife" to the image of "happy mother" in ads. For example,

³⁴ Suzuki Jyun, "Shingijyutsu no shakaishi" in *Nihon no kindai* Vol.15 (Chuokoronsha, 2000): 250

³⁵ *Fujin Koron*, December 1958

³⁶ *Fujin Koron*, February 1959

³⁷ *Fujin Koron*, April 1959

³⁸ Yoshimi Shunjya "Home electrification in post-war Japan", in *Media, Culture and society*, 2000, 21 (2), p.160

³⁹ *Fujin Koron*, August 1958

⁴⁰ Yoshimi Shunjya "Home electrification in post-war Japan", in *Media, Culture and society*, 2000, 21 (2), p.159

⁴¹ *Fujin Koron*, July 1957

⁴² *Fujin Koron*, September 1959

⁴³ *Fujin Koron*, September 1959

⁴⁴ *Fujin Koron*, December 1960

⁴⁵ *Fujin Koron*, October 1955

a1963 Toshiba shows a housewife using a washing machine with the copy “mama is tops”⁴⁶. Meanwhile, the number of children’s images appearing in ads was rapidly increasing, as is particularly evident in Toshiba ads. In one refrigerator ad, for example, a young boy says that his mother is great, because she chose a great refrigerator⁴⁷. In another ad, a young daughter cheerfully helps her mother clean the house with a Toshiba vacuum cleaner⁴⁸. A mother lovingly gives her son clothes just washed and dried in a Toshiba dryer⁴⁹. Another ad featured a mother, father and son, sharing a lively conversation⁵⁰. Still other ads portrayed a home appliance as a device that unites the family, saying: “Starting the day with family means having fun together during breakfast. Because of the toaster, the busy morning is gone,” since the home appliances are doing the cooking and cleaning instead of mother. Another 1962 ad pictured a happy family of four people enjoying “ —nabemono,” a one-pot dish frequently cooked at the table, where the diners can pick the food that they choose⁵¹. Here, the electric —nabemono” pot symbolized another special device that can unite one family together. In addition to Toshiba refrigerators, washing machines, and tabletop cooking appliances, ads for oil heaters and other products frequently featured images of the good mother nurturing her children⁵².

Such images of the good mother can be traced to the Confucian idea of Good Wife and Caring Mother, which was very common for Japanese society idea from the Meiji period (1868-1912) and which continued to appear in advertising images throughout the pre-WWII period. But it is clear, that in the pre-war era and immediately after the war, the ads emphasized the “ —good wife” part of this concept. From the late 1950s, however, the ads began to focus more on the “ —caring mother” rather the good wife. Why have these images again become so popular? On one hand, the Japanese historical period was drastically changing, and advertisers perhaps found it more powerful to continue using an image with which people were already familiar. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the ads did not show home appliances as devices that produced free time for women, but which allowed women to spend more time with their families and husbands. So, changing image of the good wife to the caring mother had something in common with idea of the mother as a person who protects the whole life of the family, including their health and well-being.

Among the images of home appliances, themes of the rich American life, especially of rich food culture, also

frequently appear. In the 1960s, for example, one ad shows a Japanese family eating duck for a Christmas meal, while another ad pictures a Japanese family making and eating pancakes⁵³. So, even this time on a different level American culture has been introduced to Japanese society as evidenced in these in ads. These associations with American food culture are strongly connected to the perceived image of the high level of American life and of America itself. An ordinary Japanese housewife looking at such ads, dreaming about emulating the rich American lifestyle and European food culture, may have been thinking, “we will make our house menu deluxe”⁵⁴. Perhaps, it was not only the food culture and rich lifestyle that the Japanese housewife longed for, but that she unconsciously was comparing herself with THAT American Mrs. Jones, wearing a fashionable red dress in which she appeared more colourful, vibrant, and alive, in the ads⁵⁵.

CONCLUSION

The pre-war images of Japanese women in home appliance ads can be divided into two groups: (1) good wife and nurturing mother, and (2) the modern girl. Advertisements emphasized that the goal of women’s life is marriage and having children, reinforcing the image of traditional stereotypes of women in Japan, as evidenced in the advertisements illustrated with a kimono-clad woman in an apron. On the other hand, the modern young girl is beautiful, attractive and high class. Although the good wife is associated with products for the family like food, clothes, and cleaning supplies, the modern girl is connected with products associated with modern life.

During World War II and immediately after, the image of the good mother becomes stronger. This image is important because she is a national symbol – the Great Mother of Japan, an image derived from the Confucian ideal. In the 1950s, the image again shifts from the Great Mother to the image of the happy homemaker. For her, home appliances offer happiness, because they ease the labor of chores and give her more time to spend with her family and pursuing leisure activities. At the same time, the happy homemaker image is a result of many Japanese women’s desire to emulate American consumer culture. In this context, the Japanese housewife can also be seen as agent of the modernization of Japan, as she brings new technology into her home and her family’s everyday life.

By the end of 1950s, however, the housewife is not only the purchasing agent for the household and family, she is also elevated to the manager of the household, as she becomes more familiar with the labor-saving tools of household technology. In the following decade, the advertisements no longer show her as a kitchen slave,

⁴⁶ Fujin Koron, February 1963

⁴⁷ Fujin Koron, May 1961

⁴⁸ Fujin Koron, September 1962

⁴⁹ Fujin Koron, July 1963

⁵⁰ Fujin Koron, April 1962

⁵¹ Fujin Koron, February 1962

⁵² Fujin Koron, April 1962, July 1963

⁵³ Fujin Koron, November 1961, November 1963

⁵⁴ Fujin Koron, July 1960

⁵⁵ Fujin Koron, March 1963

rather they again portray her as the good, warm mother, a popular image during World War II. Now the laborsaving tools of household technology have freed her from domestic labor and time-chores so she can spend more time with her family.

Interestingly, through this entire period from the 1930s to the 1960s the Confucian ideal of the good nurturer remains a constant. This image of wife and mother also could be explained by the high value placed on marriage after World War II. Setting up housekeeping for newlyweds included the purchase of refrigerators, stoves, washing machines, and other home appliances. But many women in their domestic life could not afford such expensive items; the only possibility to receive these appliances was through wedding gifts from the family or from husbands who had the wages to purchase them. In the 1950s, women using home appliances then seemed very happy just to be able to use them, but in the following decade, images of happy mothers with kids were prolific, women surrounded by home appliances which could produce happy family hours.

The stereotype of women's life goal to get married and have kids was so strong that the image of the happy homemaker was a powerful image. Advertisers knew that most Japanese women could not resist being drawn into these ads, because they contained three important aspects of women life – marriage, improvement (modernization) of life and happiness. Of course, these images were part of a marketing strategy to sell more products, but they also mirror Japanese society and women's wants, needs, and desires. On another level, these images also reflect a shift in power which was changing Japanese society. For women who moved from the countryside to urban centers, these advertisements played a significant influence in shaping their identity and life style. However, this topic needs further research in order to examine the connection between the appliance manufacturers and women, society and women, as well as the women's self-identifying process in other historical periods.

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