

## Training Women for Disasters: Gender, Crisis Management (Kiki Kanri) and Post-3.11 Nationalism in Japan 防災に向けて女性を養成 3.11以降のジェンダー、危機管理、ナショナリズム

Mire Koikari

### Introduction

On September 2, 2011, *Takarajimasha* publisher known for its popular magazines, printed an oversized PR piece in the leading national newspapers in Japan. Splashed across the pages of the *Asahi*, *Yomiuri*, *Mainichi*, *Sankei Nihon Keizai* and *Nikkan Gendai* was the 1945 black-and-white photograph of General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, emerging from his plane, *Bataan*, at Atsugi Airport outside Tokyo to commence his reign as head of the occupation forces in Japan.



In 2011, when the nation was barely recovering

from a 9.0-magnitude earthquake that had hit the Tōhoku region, this iconic image of MacArthur was combined with the caption, “*Ii kuni tsukurō, nando dem’ō* (Let’s build and rebuild the country, however repeated),” where “*ii kun’*” would invoke – through Japanese wordplay (*goroawase*) – “1192,” the founding year of the *Kamakura* shogunate. Adding more to this already heavily symbolic representation, *Takarajimasha* chose to publish the piece on September 2, the anniversary of Japan’s official surrender to the Allied Powers and the inaugural day of the Noda Cabinet following the demise of Prime Minister Kan as a result of his failure in handling “3.11,” the national crisis triggered by the triple disasters of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown (Takarajishama 2011).

A few months later, *Takarajimasha* reprinted the same image and caption on the front cover of its signature magazine, *Bessatsu Takarajima*, with a series of essays focused on “Japanese pride,” “Japanese strength,” and “Japanese tradition.” Criticizing Japanese politicians’ inability to cope with the March 11 disaster, the magazine

retraced Japanese history from time immemorial and praised Japanese people for having encountered, but always overcome, numerous “national crises” (*kokuna*), including a series of epidemics in the ninth century, the Mongol Invasions of 1274 and 1281, and the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923. Among various “national crises” discussed in the special issue was the US occupation of Japan, out of which the Japanese people had emerged to lead the nation to its spectacular rebirth, recovery, and resurgence (Bessatsu Takarajima Henshūbu 2011: 74 – 80).<sup>1</sup>

*Takarajimashā*s not alone in criticizing Japanese politicians’ ineptitude or in framing the March 11 disaster within a larger historical context. In an article published in *The Japan Times* “3.11” was described as the “third opening” of the country, the first being the arrival of Commodore Perry and his Black Ships at Tokyo Bay in 1853, and the second being the arrival of Douglas MacArthur at Atsugi Airport in 1945 (Murakami and Kurokawa 2011). In a photo-documentary book entitled *‘Japanese Power of Resiliency’: One Year after the Great East Japan Earthquake*, the Sankei Newspaper Company recounted Japanese people’s “struggles” (*tataka*) through and after the March 11 disaster with more than eight hundred photographs. Criticizing Japanese politicians’ incompetence, it praised the leadership of the Imperial Household and celebrated the unparalleled resiliency (*sokojikar*) expressed by the people of Japan following the

unprecedented calamity visited upon the nation (Sankei Shinbunsha 2012).

In the post-3.11 nation where the power of politicians’ traditional masculine authority has been called into question, Japanese women seem to embody the very spirit, resiliency and pride that are being called for in time of crisis. Once the initial shock subsided, women sprang into action, traveling to the disaster zones to volunteer their time and labor, donating everyday household items to the disaster victims, and participating in local emergency exercises and drills. A new group of experts called “crisis management advisers” (*kiki kanri adobai*), many of whom are women, have begun to offer “women’s perspectives” on disaster prevention and preparedness on radio and television, in books and articles, and at workshops and public lectures. Female academics, policy makers, and grassroots activists now demand “gender co-participation” (*danjo kyōdō sankai*) in disaster planning and response, criticizing women’s underrepresentation in various decision making bodies and calling for their increased participation in local and national affairs (Murata 2012; Sato 2012; Takenobu and Akaishi 2012). In the wake of the triple disaster that has shaken the nation and of the numerous failures of the male-dominant state apparatus, Japanese women seem ready to take charge to “build and rebuild the country, however repeatedly.”

Such unleashing of “women power” in post-

disaster Japan is complex, however, as seen in “reMake Japañ” an online volunteer project where women assist disaster victims by donating everyday domestic materials ranging from toys and kitchen utensils to clothing. Promoted by women in the beauty industry, “reMake Japañ” sends cosmetics to the disaster victims in Tōhoku to facilitate their healing and to forge bonds (*kizuna*) across Japan. Declaring that “women’s power” will “re-make” Japan, “reMake Japañ” praises “women’s instinct as mothers” and extolls their ability to “produce something out of nothing under any circumstance.” Women’s “gentle yet strong power” will surely facilitate the rebuilding of post-3.11 Japan. According to “reMake Japañ” the significance of beauty items and make-up cannot be overemphasized in this process, as cosmetics “assist women (in Tōhoku) in regaining their sense of selves” and thus help them take on the challenging task of recovery and reconstruction. Articulating a link among women, domesticity, and national recovery, Yoshida Chika, a member of “reMake Japañ” sent the following message to women in Tōhoku with several jars of hand cream: “In the past Japanese women have encountered and overcome numerous crises. Women have nurtured and protected our nation, Japan. Women have been spiritually trained to be strong enough to overcome this or any other crisis... Grandmothers, Mothers and Sisters, please continue to protect Japan. From afar I join you in nurturing and protecting Japan” (reMake Japan

2012).

### Re-thinking Gender and Nation in Post-3.11 Japan

This essay explores how women and domesticity are being mobilized in Japan’s “recovery” and “reconstruction” process following the triple disasters of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown. The Great East Japan Disaster, or “3.11,” has caused unprecedented destruction in the Tōhoku region, shaking Japanese society to its core, generating new social, political, and cultural dynamics, and opening up new space for people to (re)articulate their sense of selves in relation to the nation under duress. How to assess such dynamics is a contentious matter, however, as it often leads to divergent and even opposing understandings of post-3.11 Japan. For example, Daniel P. Aldrich, a scholar and long-term observer of state-civil society relation in Japan’s nuclear energy politics, describes the transformation of post-disaster Japan in the following terms: “The crisis has raised and reinforced environmental concerns and health fears, as well as skepticism about information from government and corporate sources. A civil society that for decades has appeared weak and non-participatory has awakened and citizens are carrying out bottom-up responses to the accident, effecting change with grassroots science and activism” (Aldrich 2012a: 1) The disaster has blown the top off the staid society, setting in motion new dynamics of citizen protest and

mobilization. In post-disaster Japan, according to Aldrich, “[c]ivil society (is) rising” (Aldrich 2012b).

In contrast to this sanguine assessment offered by Aldrich, Tomiyama Ichirō, whose scholarship has re-examined Japan’s modernity from marginalized sites and spaces such as Okinawa, warns of a resurgence of nationalism in post-disaster Japan. Noting the similarities between the currently circulating notion of “Rise up, Japan” (*Ganbarou Nippo*) and the World War II-era slogan for general mobilization, “For the sake of the nation” (*Okuni no tame ni*) he observes that the prevailing narrative of disaster, recovery, and reconstruction reinforces national unity and allegiance while stifling differences and dissent. This narrative emphasizes the readjustment of energy policies and life styles as the chief means of recovery, depoliticizes Japanese and American military mobilization in the name of “Operation *Tomodachi*” and glamorizes as “national heroes” those who volunteered to step in and contain the nuclear crises at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. As this narrative emphasizes a linear progress from disaster to recovery and finally to restoration, it steers people’s attentions toward the future while suppressing critical reflection on the past. Obscured in the process are a multitude of factors that have led up to the current crisis. Among them are the symbiotic relation between the government and the nuclear energy industry, the complicity of university

intellectuals in sustaining the myth of nuclear safety, and the “expendability” of marginalized, i.e., remote, economically-stagnant regions such as Tōhoku whose decline amidst Japan’s postwar “economic miracle” motivated local administrations to solicit the construction of nuclear power plants, as well as casual laborers, or “nuclear gypsies,” entrapped in a subcontracting system, whose bodies have sustained the “science” of nuclear energy production while also absorbing dangerous and often killing doses of radiation (Tomiyama 2011).<sup>2</sup>

Although incessant calls for “women’s participation” in post-3.11 Japan seem positive if rather unexpected “fallout” from the disaster at first glance, women’s mobilization amidst “Rise up, Japan” demands some critical reflection. At the confluence of unprecedented crisis, bottom-up mobilization, and a resurgence of nationalism, women’s eager participation in national affairs cannot be assumed to be entirely innocent or uncomplicated.

To explore the complex dynamics surrounding women and gender following the March 11 disaster, this essay examines a series of instructional discourses and practices that have circulated in post-disaster Japan. The proliferating literature of disaster preparation and crisis management defines women as the chief agents of “crisis management” (*kiki kanryō*), casts their homes as the main theater of defense

against real and potential dangers, and urges them to learn a series of skills and techniques considered essential in managing various disasters. Far from facilitating critical reflection on the social, political, and economic dynamics that led up to the current crisis and that continue to threaten Japanese society, the emerging regime of crisis management directs women's attention to the interior space of home and entices them to embody "disaster readiness" through acquisition of the proper demeanors and disposition so as to create safety and security against current and future emergencies.

Despite its domesticating and de-historicizing façade, the post-3.11 regime of crisis management is deeply political. As Jan Bardsley and Laura Miller point out in their study of conduct literature, discourses that prescribe "proper" manners, etiquette, and demeanors to women are always already political, as they "reinforce the power of particular interests, whether institutional, as evident in government and corporate manuals, or informally in the household." As they argue, the notion of "good conduct" also has the effect of naturalizing "gender distinction both as a kind of common sense and as an idealized view of the way the world *should* work." "Efforts to present manners as common sense and as naturally embodied behavior," they state, "disguise the interest of the creators of conduct ideologies, and those who want to promote or sustain such ideologies

recede from the picture." (Bardsley and Miller 2012: 2 – 3). Simultaneously politicizing and depoliticizing, prescriptions for "good behavior," especially those targeting women at home, reflect and reinforce the dominant workings of power, while disguising and concealing their power-laden nature. As discussed below, such dynamics are observed in post-3.11 Japan, where women are instructed to embody a number of behavioral repertoires for the sake of the safety of their families and the security of the nation.

Japan's modern history is full of instances where large-scale disasters and emergencies have spawned a series of discourses that target women and their homes. As Charles Schencking observes, for example, the crisis precipitated by the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake resulted in "the culture of catastrophe" where the cause of the disaster was traced to "national regress" and "moral degeneracy" and the chief means of recovery focused on racial-national "purification" and "moral restoration" (Schencking 2008: 296). A series of regulatory discourses and practices emerged, instructing Japanese people to eliminate excess, observe frugality, value sacrifice, pursue diligence, and practice "spiritual hygiene" for the purpose of facilitating Japanese recovery and reconstruction (Schencking 2008: 311 – 316). The Ministry of Education was particularly zealous in this endeavor, circulating instructional guidelines and urging young people to become "ideal

Japanese subjects” as a way to contribute to national recovery and reconstruction. (Borland 2005: 22).

The “culture of catastrophe” following the 1923 earthquake-disaster was not an isolated episode, as it was very much part of the life improvement movement (*seikatsu kaizen undō*) which began in the late nineteenth century and lasted well into the post-WWII decades. As well documented by Nakajima Kuni, Koyama Shizuko, Sheldon Garon, and Simon Partner, among others, the movement advocated “modernity,” “rationality,” and “efficiency,” mobilized bureaucrats, intellectuals, reformers, and educators, and disciplined people’s everyday sentiments, habits, and practices at home. Simultaneously encoded in gender, racial, and national terms, the life improvement movement especially targeted women and home, urging mothers and wives to pursue thrift, saving, sanitation, hygiene, frugality, and punctuality as the chief signs of Japanese racial-national superiority. Far from reluctant, women proved to be eager participants. Demanding their part in Japan’s nation and empire building, female suffragists, educators, reformers, and activists became willing collaborators, facilitating the state’s intrusion deep into the domestic sphere while promoting women’s participation in public and national domains (Nakajima 1973; Koyama 1999; Garon 1997; Partner 2001). Reaching its peak during WWII, the life improvement movement

facilitated Japanese women’s involvement in general mobilization in which the Imperial Rule Assistant Association (*Taisei Yokusankō*) played the leading role. As feminist leaders such as Ichikawa Fusae, Yamataka Shigeri, and Hani Motoko advocated women’s initiatives in thrift, saving, hygiene, rationalization, and so on, such domestic advocacy was inevitably linked to the geopolitical interests of the Japanese nation-state, turning home into a gendered site of national and imperial mobilization (Yoshimi 1997; Koyama 1999).

The links among women, domesticity, and national exigencies were articulated not only in prewar and wartime Japan but elsewhere as well. During the Cold War, the US witnessed an emergence of its own disciplinary regime where women’s everyday activities at home became the focal site of discipline and regulation in the face of possible nuclear holocaust. To contain nuclear anxieties and produce its own “ideal subjects,” the US civil defense program disseminated a series of discourses and practices such as “duck and cover,” “nuclear fallout shelters,” “grandma’s pantry,” and other domestic skills and techniques as the chief means of survival and containment vis-à-vis Soviet nuclear attacks (Roy 2010; Swedin 2011; Dean and Browning 1981). As gender scholars of the Cold War repeatedly point out, domesticity was at the center of this containment culture (May 1999; McEnaney 2000). A civil defense poster published in Athens, Ohio,

declared, “Good, Clean Housekeeping is Civil Defense Housekeeping,” linking women, domesticity, and nuclear survivability in one sweep. Reducing a nuclear disaster to a bad case of fire, it instructed women to clean their homes as a means of containment and survival (Reprinted in Scheibach 2009: 60). “Grandma’s Pantry Belongs in Your Kitchen,” another poster issued by the Federal Civil Defense Administration and circulated in Battle Creek, Michigan, asked, “Is Your Pantry Ready in the Event of Emergency?” and urged women to stock up emergency food supplies to prepare for nuclear attacks (Reprinted in Scheibach 2009: 62). Yet another poster, “Home Protection Exercises,” issued by the Federal Civil Defense Administration in 1953, emphasized the centrality of family in nuclear survival, as it illustrated various domestic chores each family member should pursue – stocking emergency food, cleaning the house, and assembling emergency aid kits – as part of civil defense (Reprinted in Scheibach 2009: 159).

Similar to the “culture of catastrophe” following the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake in Japan, the Cold War US civil defense mobilization was an occasion for moral regulation and bodily discipline amidst national crises. Its objective was to solidify morale, build ethics, and fortify the nation. Considered a “moral obligation of every household,” civil defense was part of “civil virtues indispensable to the American way of life

in the nuclear age” (Oak 1994: 8). Repeatedly performed across diverse sites and spaces, Cold War civil defense aimed to “create the illusion that national narratives (of containment and survival) were knowable and unquestionable realities” and to convince Americans, “by virtue of their repetition,” that the idea of nuclear survivability was not only possible but also “natural” and even “common sense” (Nadel 1995: 8). Many of the American women leaders turned out to be eager participants in this Cold War national mobilization, playing a central role in militarizing everyday lives at home (McEnaney 2000).

As discussed below, the gendered and gendering dynamics observed in prewar and wartime Japan and the Cold War United States are now being (re)circulated in post-3.11 Japan, where the containment of national crises involving earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown is being linked to the containment of women and home to articulate “disaster nationalism” with its own unique contours. In the name of disaster prevention (*bōsaī*) and crisis management (*kiki kanri*), the post-3.11 disciplinary regime instructs women to re-order their homes, re-feminize their bodies, and re-stabilize their identities as mothers and wives. Urging women to acquire a series of skills and techniques to ensure their own and their families’ security, the new regulatory regime attempts to assuage women’s fears and anxieties by containing their bodies at home and

re-invoking the nation's past. Far from top-down, this is a "bottom up" endeavor where women eagerly participate to promote "women's needs," "women's voices," and "women's perspectives" as indispensable components in the politics of national recovery and reconstruction in which other actors, such as the Japanese Self Defense Force and the US military, also play prominent roles.

As the essay explores the gendered and gendering dynamics of disaster prevention and crisis management in post-3.11 Japan, it does not cover all the dynamics surrounding women and home that have emerged since the disaster. Nor the essay argue that the current regime of crisis management constitutes an entirely new phenomenon, as the national debates on disaster-induced emergencies date back at least to the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995 and even to other, prior disasters. Nevertheless, examining the proliferation of disciplinary discourses in Japan since March 11, 2011, especially their persistent focus on women and home, constitutes an important analytical task. The Tōhoku disaster, unlike the 1995 earthquake in the Hanshin and Awaji region, has become "nationalized" so as to urge the entire nation to "rise up" (Tomiyama 2011). Local and national debates are now being framed by a new set of vocabularies, including "national crisis" (*kokuna*), "bonds" (*kizuna*), and "beyond expectations" (*sōteigai*) (Sand 2012: 314 – 316),

thereby creating a new discursive landscape where the meanings of women, nation, crises, and so on are being re-articulated. Set within this context, the mobilization of women and home since March 11, 2011 constitutes a salient phenomenon that merits careful analysis.

### Training Women for Disasters

In post-3.11 Japan, talk of disaster preparation and crisis management has proliferated. Following the failure of the male-dominant state and the equally or even more male-dominant scientific communities in first predicting and then later coping with the Tōhoku disaster, it is now women across Japan who are charged with responsibilities for crisis management at home where men are largely absent due to their obligations at work. Websites, instructional manuals, public lectures, and training workshops instruct women on how to prepare for, contend with, and survive unpredictable and unimaginable disasters and catastrophes. Frequently authored by "disaster prevention experts" and "crisis management advisers," the instructional materials currently circulating in Japan bear titles that mark the centrality of women, especially mothers, in crisis management: *"Fifty Ways to Protect Children from Great Earthquake's"*, *"Disaster Prevention and Reduction Handbook: Building a Home to Protect Your Family from Magnitude 7 Earthquake's"* *"Women's Disaster Prevention Book: Wisdoms and Tools for Unexpected Disasters"* *"Mothers' Mission*

*in Protecting Children from Nuclear Contamination* unpredictable emergencies and unthinkable crises. Far from an extraordinary or exceptional act, disaster preparation and crisis management should become a “normal” and even “natural” part of women’s everyday routines at home (Kunizaki 2011: 62 – 63). Some even argue that disaster preparation and crisis management should be considered part of “common sense.”

In addition to print media, the instructional discourses are further disseminated via websites, training sessions, lectures and workshops, radio and television shows, and disaster prevention fairs and events.

The basic tenet of disaster preparation and crisis management is not “if” (*moshimō*) but “always” (*itsumo*), where women should be “ready” for any emergency at any moment at any location. Never should disasters and emergencies be approached as some sort of “accident” that might or might not happen. As Yamori Katsuya, a faculty member at Kyoto University and a leading authority on disaster prevention and crisis management, emphatically argues, in order to contend with large-scale disasters and crises, the “disaster prevention life style” (*seikatsu bōsai*) must be cultivated, where disaster management awareness and practice inform and transform every aspect of daily life (Yamori 2011). Kunizaki Nobue, currently one of the most popular female “crisis management advisors,” also recommends an overall transformation of people’s everyday lives by suggesting a series of simple practices to pursue at home. Urging women to approach disaster preparation as a “hobby,” i.e., a preoccupation one regularly attends to and pursues for a long period of time (Kunizaki 2012a: 68), she encourages women to set aside a small sum of money each month and gradually transform their homes in preparation for

One of the advice booklets published recently on the “basic life style” provides a series of tips on cooking, cleaning, health care, and social etiquette as well as techniques of disaster management, all of which, as its title implies, are too “basic” to ask about without embarrassing oneself (Sakaguchi 2011).

Coupled with this call for women’s constant “readiness” for emergencies is the notion that Japanese society is now permeated with countless risks and crises. It is no longer an earthquake, tsunami, or nuclear meltdown alone that threatens and endangers women’s lives. Women are surrounded by a multitude of other risks, including robbery, stalking, sexual harassment at work, and viral computer attacks (Fujii 2013). According to a popular women’s magazine, *an an*, whose readership is primarily young women in their twenties and thirties, Japanese women are constantly faced by “serious crises” (*onna no jūdai ki*) such as unemployment, their parents’ illness, depression, cancer, and singlehood (an an 2013). A textbook, *Life and Risk* published by the Open University of Japan (*Hōsō*

*Daigaku*), consists of fifteen chapters, each of which provides detailed explanations on a type of risk or hazard people may encounter during their lifetime, such as natural disasters, crime, traffic accidents, food poisoning, divorce, unemployment, infectious diseases, and aging. To contend with these risks, the textbook argues, each individual should study the nature of risks and hazards and make necessary preparations in advance (Nara 2009).

Notwithstanding the serious and pervasive nature of insecurity that permeates the society, it is first and foremost individuals' awareness and preparation, and to a lesser extent that of neighborhoods and communities, that should play a central role in contending with countless possible risks and disasters. Repeatedly emphasized in the crisis management manuals, workshops, and lectures is the primacy of "self-assistance" (*jijo*) followed by "neighborhood and community assistance" (*kyōjo*), over and above "assistance provided by local and national governmental entities" (*kōjo*). Given the lack of sufficient infrastructure, resources, and personnel on the part of the local and national governments in the event of large-scale disasters, the argument goes, each individual, family, and neighborhood should be responsible for coping with disasters and other types of emergencies, as the government capacity for assistance is "naturally" limited (Naikakufu 2013). Utilizing (and re-tooling) the terminologies, "*jijo*," "*kyōjo*," and

"*kōjo*," that have previously informed national debates on social security and social welfare, the current regime of crisis management portrays a picture of post-crisis society where individuals and their immediate families and communities are responsible for coping with large-scale disasters and crises, and where the responsibilities and accountability of the nation-state recede into the background.

It is within these discursive contexts that Japanese women are now urged to prepare, plan, and practice for a multitude of risks, disasters and emergencies. As seen below, instructional manuals, guidelines, lectures, and workshops collectively articulate themes that pertain to women, body, domesticity, race, and nation, shaping post-3.11 crisis management culture in a deeply gendered and gendering manner.

### Containing the Uncontainable

First and foremost, post-3.11 discourses of disaster preparation and crisis management emphasize the notion that disasters and calamities are containable, manageable, and survivable. Far from considering the simultaneous occurrence of disasters, as happened in the case of "3.11" where earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown occurred concurrently, the instructional manuals and guidelines treat emergencies and crises as discrete and segmented, further breaking each category of disaster into a series of well-

demarcated scenes and scenarios where women should apply a set of skills, techniques, knowledge, and tools to control and contain. To reinforce the notion that disasters are manageable as well as predictable, the instructional manuals also often follow a chronological order whereby discussions start with “a year in advance” and then move to “six months in advance,” “a month in advance,” and “a week in advance,” and finally reach “the day of the disaster.” The post-disaster recovery and reconstruction are explained in a similar manner, progressing from “a day after” to “a week after” and then to “a month after” and so on. A set of instructions are offered for each stage of disasters and crises so that women know exactly what skills to use, what tools to apply, and what actions to take (an an 2011; Kunizaki 2011; Ishikawa 2012; Sakamoto and Sakamoto 2012). Unpredictable disasters and crises are thus transformed into a series of segmented, predictable and knowable events or stages, with an understanding that after some duration and with women’s proper preparation and application of necessary skills, all crises will be contained and “normal” life will return.

### **Keeping Orderly Homes**

In post-3.11 Japan, such containment narratives are deeply gendered, as they focus on the domestic sphere as one of the central sites of disaster preparation and crisis management. In preparing for, coping with, and surviving large-

scale disasters, maintaining an orderly, well-maintained home is considered most crucial. In large-scale earthquakes, crisis management advisors argue, it is household items that could turn into “killing weapons” (*kyōk*) (Fujii 2013: 35 – 37; Kunizaki 2012b: 16; Kusano 2011: 19). Heavy furniture could come down and block escape routes. Worse, they could fall down to hurt or even kill people. To minimize potential dangers at home and ensure family members’ safety, women must secure furniture to the floors, walls, and ceilings with screws, hinges, and metal chains.

In order to truly prepare for disasters and prevent their harmful consequences, however, it is not sufficient to simply secure large-sized household objects. In addition, women are also instructed to reduce the number of household items and eliminate excess, which, if left scattered about, could pose serious impediments in the event of evacuation. Simplifying one’s life style and learning to live with fewer items thus constitutes a crucial part of disaster preparation and crisis management. Turning domestic space into a “safe zone” requires women’s constant attention to detail. Every space inside one’s home, be it the entrance, hallway, bathroom, or toilet, must be inspected, cleaned, and made “disaster-proof.” It is not enough to check large household items. Smaller items could also become a source of danger and therefore must be inspected, re-ordered, and properly contained

(Kunizaki 2012a, 8 – 25, 44 – 66; Kunizaki 2012b: 14 – 23, 21 – 23; Kunizaki 2011, 27 – 35; Kusano 2011, 18; Shōgakkan Bōsai Chīmu 2011: 102 – 103; Tsunagaru.com 2012: 104 – 105). Broken glasses and dishes flying out of the cupboards during earthquakes could be as dangerous as falling furniture, as their sharp edges could inflict serious and even fatal injury. Some disaster prevention and preparation manuals thus suggest another crisis management strategy, i.e., placing liners with a rough surface on the shelves and installing locks and bars on the cupboards, all for the purpose of preventing these “dangerous” household items from flying out and harming people (Kunizaki 2012b: 16 – 17; Kusano 2011: 19). Stacking up cups, plates, and bowls in a “disaster resistant” manner constitutes an important safety measure to follow if women truly desire to ensure their families’ and especially children’s safety (Kunizaki 2012a: 21 – 22). With excessive attention to the interior home space, the instructional discourses distracts one’s attention away from the controversial topic of nuclear meltdown and radiation contamination as happened in the March 11 disaster.

Excessive attention to domestic space as the central site of resolution of the current and future “national crisis” (*kokuna*) reminds one not only of the general mobilization in Japan during WWII; it is also reminiscent of discourses and practices in the civil defense programs in the Cold War US as mentioned above. As seen in the

1954 documentary film, “The House in the Middle,” produced by the Federal Civil Defense Administration, it was the “house in the middle” – free of rubbish, cleaned and ordered, and painted white – that would withstand the power of nuclear detonation, unlike the other two houses on the left and right, which were out of order, full of litter, and painted black (New Video Group 2008). In post-3.11 Japan, an echo of US civil defense discourse is also found in discussions of “shelters,” whereby constructing a “shelter” at one’s own home is highly recommended as a means of disaster preparation. Converting a single room into a “shelter” by strengthening its structure with wooden or metal reinforcement is recommended as a financially reasonable option for many (Kunizaki 2012b: 32 – 33; Kusano 2012: 43; Sakamoto and Sakamoto 2012: 16 – 17). Yet, to truly ensure one’s family safety and avoid the undesirable eventuality of post-disaster evacuation, a new house must be built, according to Inoue Keiko, female architect, and other crisis management advisers. How would one go about doing this? Women are instructed to first identify, with the help of experts, areas and regions not susceptible to earthquakes, tsunami, floods, or landslides, etc. Once a plot of land firm enough to resist all natural calamities has been identified, a disaster-proof house (*bōsai hausi*) should be built on it (Fujii 2013: 31 – 34; Kunizaki 2012a: 38 – 60; Kunizaki 2012b: 34 – 46; Kunizaki 2011: 10 – 13; Inoue 2011). Although such recommendations

are mostly made in discussions of large-scale earthquakes, on a rare occasion reference is also made to nuclear crisis, as in the case of an instructional manual which recommends building a “nuclear shelter” as one of the last but not entirely unimaginable options (Kusano 2012: 43).

### Training the Family for Disasters

Once a shelter is built, wastes removed, and household items properly organized and stored, women must now proceed to mobilize the entire family, including pets, and train them to be “disaster ready.” The importance of training, i.e., drills and exercises, is repeatedly emphasized, with women in charge of this crucial task. Far from exceptional, such activities are normalized, integrated into everyday activities at home. As part of “parent-children disaster training” (*oyako bōsai*), women are encouraged to involve children and husbands in a “disaster training picnic” (*bōsai pikunikk*), “disaster training camp” (*bōsai kyamp*), and “disaster training play” (*bōsai gokk*) where family members learn how to cook with emergency canned food, sleep in a tent, make do without water and electricity, and so on (Kunizaki 2012b: 88 – 89; Kunizaki 2011: 42; Tsunagaru.com 2012: 108 – 115). To facilitate children’s education about disaster management, various disaster research centers – located at universities or as part of city and prefectural government agencies – have created training devices, where traditional Japanese games such

as *karuta* and *sugoroku* are transformed into *bōsai karuta* and *bōsai sugoroku*, often with popular animation characters, to train children about disaster preparation and prevention (Kōchi-ken 2012; Kyoto Daigaku Seikyō 2012; Shōbō Bōsai Hakubutsukan 2012).



Created by the Kochi prefectural government

Even family pets, especially dogs, have to be trained and prepared, as they must behave themselves in case of evacuation to and resettlement at temporary shelters (Kunizaki 2012b: 136 – 137; Kunizaki 2011: 134; Kusano 2011: 189).

Importantly, training families for crisis management cannot happen overnight; it requires prior planning and repeated practice. Thus various instructional manuals, guidelines, and workshops recommend “family meetings” (*kazoku kai*) where parents and children discuss evacuation procedures, identify rules and procedures to follow in the event of a crisis, and create their own “family disaster preparation manual” (*wagaya no bōsai manyua*). The family manual should contain “essential” information

such as details of bank accounts, health and life insurance policies, passport numbers, and driver's license numbers, as well as weekly schedules of activities for each family member so that they have sufficient information to find each other in the event of a disaster (Kunizaki 2012a: 70 – 71; Kunizaki 2012b: 78 – 87; 156 – 159; Kunizaki 2011: 40 – 41; Kusano 2011: 28 – 29, 53, 57, 188; Shōgakkai Bōsai Chōmu 2011:116 – 126; Tsunagaru.com 2012: 106 – 107). Various disaster manuals, booklets, and pamphlets contain templates for “family manuals,” and city and prefectural governments also issue similar templates on their websites and in their publications (Yokohama-shi Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Suishin Kyōkai 2012). Once such a manual is created, family members should conduct a “practice run” based on the agreed-upon rules and procedures with the help of a “hazard map,” a government-issued map that offers information concerning evacuation routes and other essential matters in disaster situations, in a manner similar to the Cold War civil defense exercises and drills (an an 2011: 28 – 29; Kunizaki 2012b: 80 – 81; Kunizaki 2011: 54; Odagiri 2011: 90 – 91; Shōgakkai Bōsai Chōmu 2011: 100). Preparing for unknown and unforeseeable dangers and threats entails embodied practice and requires mobilization of the entire family.

The process of transforming the home into a site of defense and cultivating proper bodily habits against potential threats and dangers is greatly

aided by disaster management fairs and events, where parents (most frequently mothers) learn and practice, often with their children, various skills and techniques essential for disaster preparation and crisis management. Frequently advertised as “family oriented” and “child friendly” affairs, these events involve all kinds of activities, some of which suggest a not-so-subtle link between crisis management and the military. As Richard Samuels documents, in post-3.11 Japan, the Japanese Self Defense Force (JSDF) and the US military have experienced a significant rise in their popularity due to their joint Operation *Tomodachi* (Samuels 2012: Chapter 4). Female narratives of “strong” and “heroic” deeds of JSDF personnel play no small part in this, as seen in a series of essays penned by Sakurabayashi Misa, a JSDF publicist (Sakurabayashi 2011). Training sites and occasions for crisis management and disaster preparation have been increasingly infiltrated by military discourses and practices in a manner that may seem innocent and innocuous at first glance. At a 2012 disaster training fair in the city of Nagaoka, Niigata – a region hit by a major earthquake in 2004 – children were enticed to ride Japan Self Defense Force (JSDF) vehicles and put on uniforms representing JSDF personnel, firefighters, and policemen to take pictures (Terebi Niigata 2012). A similar program involving children and JSDF vehicles and uniforms was offered at a disaster prevention fair in the Aichi prefecture in the same year (Anjō-shi

2012). On one weekend in January 2013, at the Disaster Prevention Experience-Learning Facility located in the Tokyo Rinkai Disaster Prevention Park, a series of activities, programs, and exhibits included a photo session for children accompanied by their mothers where the children put on uniforms of the Metropolitan Police Force and had their pictures taken against a banner which read in part, “Let’s Protect Our Town from Terrorism.” (Disaster Prevention Experience-Learning Facility 2012).

### Creating “Grandma’s Pantry”

As crucial as creating family manuals, identifying evacuation routes, and training family members in disaster drills is stocking up emergency provisions at home. Women are urged to create a list of household items considered indispensable in disaster situations and buy, stock, and replenish them, creating their own version of “Grandma’s Pantry” in post-3.11 Japan. Frequently the instructional manuals and guidelines provide a “check list,” specifying “essential” items such as a radio, flashlight, army knife, batteries, canned food, dry food, bottled water, first-aid kit, and medicine. Women are responsible for stocking up enough quantities of food, water, and so on to last from three days to a month for an entire family in the event that no official assistance would reach them following a disaster (Kunizaki 2012a: 26 – 37; Kunizaki 2012b: 48 – 63; Kunizaki 2011: 36 – 37, 47 – 48, 51, 61 - 62; Kusano 2011:33 – 39; Odagiri 2011: 25; Shōgakkan

Bōsai Chīmu 2011: 94 – 99; Sakamoto and Sakamoto 2012; Sakakmoto 2011). Among various emergency canned and dry food items sold at stores and online shops for disaster preparation is JSDF ration food or modified versions adapted for civilian consumption. This is taking place against a larger cultural context where there has been sustained interest in so-called *miri-meshi* (military food, or the military diet), as reflected in various publications that focus on military food and food culture (Ozaki 2011; Shōgakkan Shuppankyoku 2010). A link between disaster, domesticity, and the military is more than implicit.



**"Military food" turned "emergency food" with a very gendered/ sexualized image on the package.**

Food and food preparation constitute central topics in the crisis management manuals and guidelines. They frequently provide instructions on various “disaster prevention kitchen

techniques” (*daidokoro bōsai jutōmu* offering “sample menus” and “sample recipes” as well as various tips and suggestions about how to improvise pots, pans, and other basic kitchen utensils in the aftermath of disasters. Rarely do these instructions target men as their main audience; food preparation remains one of the main responsibilities for women (even) in the context of disasters and emergencies (Ishikawa 2012; Nosinger 2011; Kunizaki 2012b: 58 – 63; Kusano 2011: 134 – 141; Xknowledge 2011; Sakamoto and Sakamoto 2012; Sakamoto 2011; Sawai 2011). “The kitchen” constitutes one of the central sites of crisis management where women’s successful performance plays a key role in facilitating recovery and reconstruction and restoring the “normal,” i.e., pre-disaster, life style.

In post 3.11 Japan, however, stocking up food and sharpening one’s culinary skills is not sufficient. Selecting *truly* essential items and stuffing them into an emergency bag or “*hinan bukurō*” constitutes yet another crucial task. As these manuals frequently recommend, each family member should have his or her own emergency bag carefully prepared and strategically placed so that it would be easy to grab when disasters hits. Naturalizing “biological differences” between men and women, the manuals and guidelines frequently recommend different weights based on gender. According to one manual, an emergency bag for men should

weigh no more than 15 kilograms, and for women no more than 10 kilograms (Shōgakkan Bōsai Chīmu 2011: 96).

The gender politics surrounding emergency bags are not subtle. With more and more women demanding “women’s perspectives” and “women’s participation” in disaster preparation and crisis management, some instructional manuals suggest that emergency items and bags should reflect “women’s (special) needs.” What items should women carry in their emergency bags then? The popular women’s magazine, *an an*, dedicates an entire special issue, titled partly in English “Girl’s Life Skill,” to discussions of what women should have when large-scale disasters and emergencies strike.



From this  
(<http://magazineworld.jp/books/all/?gosu=8669>)  
page.

Priority items recommended by the magazine include sanitary napkins, disposable lingerie, a portable washlet (“bidet”), deodorant sheets, disposable zip lock bags, cosmetics and make-up, and hand mirrors (an an 2011). In defining women’s “special needs” and “special concerns,” the emphasis is on maintaining bodily hygiene, eliminating odors, and caring for one’s complexion. Concerns with women’s facial appearance are so paramount that *an an* even instructs women to keep a hat and a mask in their emergency bags – these items could become handy when women have no access to cosmetics and thus want to cover up their “bare faces” (*suppin no kao*) at evacuation shelters (an an 2011: 13). Repeatedly, “all in one cream” or “multi cream” is recommended as essential and indeed indispensable. Useful for more than one purpose, it could help cut down the number of cosmetic items women must carry in their emergency bags (an an 2011: 25).

これさえあれば大丈夫！  
緊急の時もお手入れは欠かせません！

## 乙女の防災グッズ



総額 12,000円相当

※商品の色は選べません

As *an an* further explains, “all in one cream” could be used in combination with plastic wrap, another essential item for women to carry in the emergency bags, as the latter could be placed over women’s faces to help rehydrate (an an 2011: 45). To reinforce gender distinctions even further, various websites and online shops sell emergency bags specifically designed for women, often pink in color and bearing flower names such as *tsubakjshakuyaku* and *nadeshiko*

Regulating Bodies, Disciplining Minds

In post-3.11 Japan, then, managing disasters goes

hand-in-hand with regulating women's bodies where proper – clean, clear, and carefully groomed – bodies are carefully maintained and regularly checked with hand mirrors. Women are twice contained, first inside their well-ordered homes and then in their self-regulated bodies. Disciplining of bodies, moreover, must be accompanied by disciplining of hearts and minds. The instructional manuals, pamphlets, and handbooks offer all sorts of methods, techniques, and tools to maintain emotional equilibrium amidst disasters and crises. The cosmetics and hand mirrors in women's emergency bags are not simply about female vanity; they are also indispensable tools for women to rely on to calm their emotions and maintain composure in the face of unfathomable crises (an an 2011: 62 – 63; NHK 2012; Tsunagaru.com 2012: 68 - 69). Regulating one's emotions is considered especially important in the case of nuclear crises. Large-scale nuclear accidents such as at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant would invariably induce fears, anxieties and uncertainties. However, such emotional challenges could be overcome by crying, a crucial technique of "cleaning one's heart" (*kokoro no osōji*) whose gendered, domestic reference to cleaning ("*osōji*") immediately invokes another method of disaster preparation discussed earlier, i.e., house cleaning (Kusano 2011: 176). Emotional overreactions to a nuclear crisis are not only considered unnecessary but problematic; above all, one should strive to

control feelings of "panic" and maintain a balanced state of mind no matter what, the instructional manuals and guidelines argue (Odagiri 2011: 108; Shōgakkan Bōsai Chīmu 2011: 67). "Disasters of hearts and minds" (*kokoro no shinsa*) need to be carefully monitored as part of overall disaster preparation and prevention. Developing friendships with neighbors, stretching and exercising, or simply gazing into a mirror and smiling and feeling happy are all useful for this purpose (Kusano 2011: 168 - 177). Management of hearts and minds (*kokorono kanri*) is a crucial part of crisis management (*kiki kanri*) where the proper regulation of emotions leads to successful containment and survival in the face of earthquakes, tsunami, and even nuclear crisis (Maeda 2011). Such practice for disaster preparation obviously involves children whose emotions are susceptible to stress, anxieties, and other "negative feelings" during and after disasters. Needless to say, mothers are also responsible for managing and monitoring their children's emotions (Utsumi 2011).



A newspaper article that appeared as early as April 26, 2011, advertising "canned" cosmetics designed by a team of "researchers" from Ritsumeikan University, Kochi University, and several cosmetic companies.

### Turning to Japanese Wisdom and Tradition

As women are urged to mobilize every aspect, facet, and phase of their daily lives for disaster preparation and prevention, it is people's ingenuity, creativity, and inventiveness that offers crucial and perhaps the most reliable resources in crisis management. In the wake of 3.11 where scientific knowledge failed spectacularly in predicting the disaster, Japanese tradition and folkways have indeed (re)emerged as a vital source of knowledge in containing the disaster, sustaining lives, and restoring the nation. A return to the wisdom and knowledge possessed by older generations of Japanese (*senjin no chi*) is highly recommended in disaster prevention and preparation. Thus, the instructional manuals and guidelines repeatedly point out that a traditional domestic item such as a Japanese washcloth (*tenugu*) can be used for multiple purposes and is therefore essential in all disaster situations (Kusano 2011: 124). At a training session at the Disaster Prevention Experience-Learning Facility in Tokyo discussed earlier, one of the speakers emphasized the importance of traditional child-rearing practices as key to protecting children from disasters, demonstrating how to hold an infant on a woman's back with a traditional long cloth (*sarashi*), as done in the past, and urging the audience to seek wisdom on proper child rearing from older women. Clearly post-3.11 nationalism is deeply gendered, whereby an image of

traditional mother is presented as a key to containing national disasters and crises (Disaster Prevention Experience-Learning Facility 2012).

Traditional Japanese food culture (*washoku bun*) constitutes yet another source of wisdom women could tap into whenever they are faced with large-scale disasters and emergencies. A "traditional" method of food preparation called "*yudekoboshi*" where women first boil produce but later discard the water is recommended as an effective method in dealing with nuclear radiation and contamination. Women are advised to follow this traditional cooking method even more thoroughly than usual (Kusano 2011: 184; Odagiri 2011: 121). Traditional food ways constitute a key element in coping with nuclear crisis, some argue, as Japanese bodies are "naturally" resilient to radiation after so much intake of seaweed as part of the basic diet for generations (Shōgakkan Bōsai Chīmu 2011: 67).

Indeed, as Sakamaki and Sakamaki argue in the book, *Disaster Prevention Kitchen Technologies* published by the Rural Cultural Association of Japan, an institution that has had much to do with the life improvement movement, to cultivate culinary skills and techniques necessary for disaster situations, one should simply "return to the past." In order to prepare for disasters and emergencies, they suggest, women should look back into the domestic life style of bygone days (*mukashi no kurashi*), when modern domestic conveniences were not yet available and yet

women managed with whatever they had. As they cheerfully point out, “recalling what it was like merely forty years ago” in Japan is more than a sufficient measure in preparing for large-scale disasters and emergencies (Sakamoto and Sakamoto 2012: 143). Cultivating a “bond” (*kizuna*) with rural farming families is another strategy, as food is abundant in agricultural communities. Japanese women must recover and rediscover a “home away from home” (*furusato*) as a way to prepare for unknown and unpredictable disasters (Sakamoto and Sakamoto 2012: 136 – 137). In post-3.11 Japan, “Grandma’s Pantry” is fused with a nostalgic look back to Japan’s long lost past, whose recuperation is considered crucial as the nation mobilizes itself for crisis management and disaster preparation.

### Conclusion

This essay has explored the complex and convoluted ways in which women, domesticity, and national recovery are being linked together to articulate post-3.11 disaster nationalism in Japan. Faced with the triple disasters of earthquakes, tsunami, and nuclear crisis since March 11, 2011, Japan has pursued its own strategies of “containment,” whereby fears, anxieties, and uncertainties unleashed by these unprecedented crises are being partially resolved, or at least “contained,” by mobilizing women and home as the central site of national recovery and restoration. Japanese women are now saddled with responsibilities for fortifying

domestic space, running disaster drills, stocking emergency provisions, and disciplining bodies and minds, their own as well as their family members’. Notwithstanding its domesticating and depoliticizing façade, the post-disaster disciplinary regime is deeply political, as seen in its similarities to the prewar and wartime life improvement movements in Japan and the Cold War civil defense programs in the US. As Japan tries to “remake” itself, post-3.11 national recovery and reconstruction proceeds in a deeply unsettling manner, in which gender plays a convoluted role to entice women to participate in national affairs while simultaneously containing them within their own bodies and homes.

**Mire Koikari** is Associate Professor of Women’s Studies Department at the University of Hawaii. Her recent publications include *Pedagogy of Democracy: Feminism and the Cold War in the US Occupation of Japan* (<http://amzn.com/1592137016/?tag=theasipacjo0b-20>) (Temple University Press, 2008). She is currently working on a research project, “Making Homes, Building Bases: Women, Militarism, and Cold War Transnationalism in the US Occupation of Okinawa,” in which she examines the link between domesticity, militarization, and post-war empire building in Cold War Okinawa.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In this special issue, *Takarajimasha* offers a gendered narrative of MacArthur’s landing at the Atsugi Airport, a former training ground for Japanese *Kamikaze* fighters. Though MacArthur seemed to exude confidence at the time, this was in fact a “pretense,” the issue points out, as MacArthur was not sure about what he would encounter in Japan following violent confrontations with the US throughout the Pacific War. In effect, the special issue demasculinized MacArthur and instead praised Japanese people for their power and strength which in turn resurrected the country out of defeat, surrender and foreign occupation. (Bessatsu Takarajima Henshūbu 2011: 75).

<sup>2</sup> Yet another strand of the arguments emerging in post-3.11 Japan highlights historical similarities, indeed shared patterns, among peripheral sites and places such as Fukushima, Okinawa, and Minamata, which have been marginalized in relation to Japan’s “center.” See for example Tanaka (2012), Takahashi (2012), and Maeda (2012). Tōbaru Kazuhiko, an Okinawan scholar, points to a tangible, militarized link between Fukushima and Okinawa, as he alludes to the role played by the 31<sup>st</sup> Expeditionary Unit of the US Marine Corps in Operation *Tomodachi*. The unit, which is based at Camp Hansen in Okinawa, also played a central role in Operation

Phantom Fury in Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004 (Tōbaru 2012: 188 – 189).