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What Did She Read?:
Post-War Japanese Cultural Occupation and Translated Girls' Literature

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In the wake of World War II, the US State Department settled its cultural policy: friendship and mutual understanding. Based on this ideal, the Department encouraged US embassies and other governmental institutions overseas to establish US Information Libraries. Library books were carefully selected so that people in foreign countries could get some idea of American culture, including its ideas of democracy, freedom and the so-called American way of life. Also to promote this aim, many "good" books were translated into foreign languages. Literary works were considered to be a vehicle to promote the idea of the American way of life. In this light, reconsideration of cultural occupation in terms of the export/import and distribution/circulation of cultural representations and their reception will serve in tracing the construction of present-day gender configuration.

This paper tries to introduce some aspects of the US cultural politics in post-war Japan, in terms of the US Information Libraries and translated literary works, especially for girls, such as *Little House on the Prairie* written by L.I. Wilder, and *Anne of Green Gables* written by the Canadian writer L. Montgomery. Those translated literary works were enthusiastically received by young girls in post-war Japan.

When considering the fact that the US domestic culture, especially at the early stage of the Cold War, is marked by its strict gender containment, the reception of translated literature by Japanese girls involved in some way or other their introduction to the gender deployment that was acceptable to US cultural policies. It is conceivable that those stories were instrumental in Japanese girls' construction of their version of the fantasy of the democratic nuclear family which revolved around the image of American consumer culture, and in this sense were instrumental in the construction of post-war gender configuration in Japan.