

## “A Message from the Goddess of Peace”: Analysis of News Articles on a Japanese Woman’s Activities at the 1921 Washington Arms Limitation Conference

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**Abstract:** The Washington Arms Limitation Conference held over 90 years ago in November, 1921 was the world’s first attempt to forge a deterrent to war through mutual arms limitations. Although newspapers of the day focused on the Tokugawa prince arriving as an official delegate from Japan, they also featured a 89-year-old Japanese woman, Kaji Yajima, who visited the conference “unofficially” with a message of peace to the women of America. Yajima also presented a peace petition signed by 10,000 Japanese women to President Harding.

Although she is virtually unknown today, Yajima dominated the newspaper headlines for the next several months, throughout the entire conference. The present research analyzes Yajima’s visit using a corpus of 193 newspaper and magazine articles and photographs related to the event. A semantic analysis of the content words most often used in a subset of these articles revealed that reasons for her popularity as a news topic are not only her gender, age, and nationality, but also her appearance, personality, religion, leadership qualities and universal message of world peace, which is perhaps even more relevant today than it was then.

**Keywords:** Kaji Yajima, newspaper, corpus, semantic analysis, Washington Conference

### 1. Introduction

*“When I am gone,” she said, “remember that I stood here looking into your faces expressing the hope that you will do all that is in your power as this old body will, that the world may know peace from now on. We have come to the time when we not only want peace, but know that we must have it. My last desire is to help my people to stand solid behind this movement.”* Kaji Yajima, *New-York Tribune*, 1921, December 1, p. 2

The number of truly world famous female pacifists throughout history are very few, and Mother Teresa, Aung San Suu Kyi, Helen Keller and Yoko Ono can be counted among them. In Japan, the most famous woman pacifist is probably Yosano Akiko, who wrote a heart-rending but highly controversial anti-war poem in Sept. 1904, during the Russo-Japanese war. It was addressed to her soldier



brother, and laid bare her pain at being torn from him for such a foolish reason as war.<sup>1</sup>

For each of these women, however, there are certainly many more who were truly great, if not famous today. One of them is the focus of the present study. For a brief period in 1920-1921, she was an international celebrity, described in world media with a variety of epithets: *Japan's first woman teacher*, *Japan's foremost woman educator*, *Japan's Most Famous Woman Reform Worker*, *the Frances Willard of Japan*, *a torch-bearer from the East to the West*, *a messenger from the Goddess of Peace*, *Japan's Most Famous Woman*, *Japan's new ruler*, and my personal favorite, *Kaji Yajima*, *Japanese Wonder Woman!* Certainly a woman who inspired headlines such as these deserves a bit of fame still today, 90 years later. But Kaji(ko)<sup>2</sup> Yajima (1833-1925) is virtually forgotten even in her own country. Her memory is preserved only in a handful of biographies (Lublin, 2006; Miura, 1989; Kubushiro, 1988) and by a few people in her home town (Mashiki, Kumamoto, Japan), in the school that she headed for 40 years (Joshi Gakuin, Tokyo), and in the women's service club that she presided over for 35 years (Japan Kyofukai, a.k.a. Japan Woman's Christian Temperance Union or JWCTU). One reason for this is certainly the fact that the two latter institutions, although still in existence today, suffered major damage from airraid bombs during WWII. Indeed, the centennial history of the JWCTU (Nihon Kirisutokyo Fujin Kyofukai, 1986, p. 687) reports the existence of a Kajiko Yajima Memorial Hall on their grounds in Tokyo from 1929-1945, which unfortunately burned to the ground during the Tokyo airraids on May 24.

In natural and human disasters such as floods, earthquakes, war and genocide, it is not only lives that are at stake, but also collective cultural memories. Like the human mind, however, human history is housed in a variety of physical locations, and Yajima's contributions to humanity are being rediscovered through non-Japanese sources by international scholars in women's studies. She has been researched as a temperance leader (Bordin, 1981), social reformer (Lublin 2006, 2010), anti-prostitution activist (Lublin 2004, Mihalopoulos 2009) and as one of the first Japanese feminists (Sievers, 1987). Special attention has been given to her in connection with transnational communication between the JWCTU and its sister organizations (Yasutake 2004; Ogawa 2007a, 2007b).

Similarly, records from US newspapers about Mme. Yajima and the collective image they present of this remarkable lady paint a different but complimentary picture to the one within Japan itself. The present study aims to explore the woman behind the headlines, both in order to revise her memory in Japan and to introduce her to the rest of the world. To this end, the author has compiled a database of 236 English newspaper and magazine articles (to date) that mention Yajima, spanning the years from 1893 to 1941. The articles have been gleaned mainly from four online archives:

(1) Newspaper Archive <http://www.newspaperarchive.com/> – a paid service consisting mainly of US newspapers, fully searchable and downloadable;

<sup>1</sup> The Japanese text and English translation of this poem can be found at [http://pw1.netcom.com/~kyamazak/lit/\\_Jpoet/yosano\\_kimishini.htm](http://pw1.netcom.com/~kyamazak/lit/_Jpoet/yosano_kimishini.htm)

<sup>2</sup> In the Meiji era, women whose first names ended in *-ko* tended to leave off this last syllable especially in international settings.

(2) Google News Archives – a now-defunct service which was provided by Google from 2008 to 2011;

(3) The Trove <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper> – a collection of newspapers from Australia and New Zealand;

(4) Chronicling America <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> - A searchable repository for historical American newspapers from 1836-1922.

Reflecting the bias of the above archives, as well as the setting of the event, most of the articles are from the US, but articles from Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Canada, Malaysia, and English newspapers in Japan are included. Articles were found using several variations on Yajima's name: Kaji Yajima, Kajiko Yajima, Mrs. Yajima, Mme. Yajima. Due to poor scans and OCR (optical character reader) software misreadings, variants such as Tajima, Yakima, and Keji Yajima were also found, which clearly referred to the same historical figure.

As can be seen from the Google News Archive screenshot in Fig. 1, Yajima made international news several times in her later life: in 1906 at age 75, when she first went to the US to attend the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) World Convention as head of the Japan WCTU, in 1914 when she was honored with an award for her outstanding social contributions by the Japanese Emperor, and in 1920 when she again went to London, via the US, to attend two World Conventions on two continents. Other newsworthy years for Yajima were 1923, when she survived the Great Kanto Earthquake at the age of 91, and 1925, when she passed away at the age of 93.

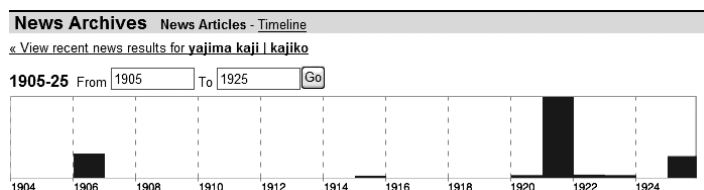


Figure. 1. Timeline for Yajima Articles Found through Google News Archives (Screenshot, June 2011).

However, 193 of the total 236 articles, or 81%, were written between in the 6-month period between September 1921 and February 1922. They focus on the attendance of Mme. Yajima to the Washington Arms Limitation Conference held in November 1921, the world's first attempt to forge a deterrent to war through mutual arms limitations, and her visit to President Warren G. Harding (President of the US in 1921-1923) to deliver a peace petition signed by 10,000 Japanese women. The articles include both one-off pieces and syndicated articles, and the latter were counted separately for each appearance even though the content was virtually the same. Two magazine articles were also included.

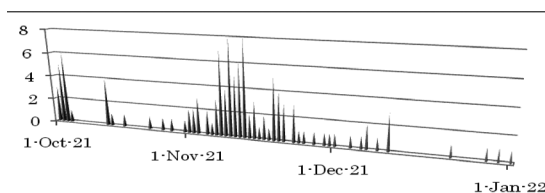


Figure. 2. Timeline for Yajima Articles between Oct. - Dec., 1921.

Figure 2 shows the timeline for this subset of articles. As seen, only a small portion of the articles (37 /193) cover the period leading up to Yajima's visit to President Harding on Nov. 7, 1921 (hereafter referred to as pre-Harding articles), but this number jumps dramatically after her visit, tapering down again by late November. More notably, the tone of the 156 post-Harding articles changed: they became more like human interest stories, featuring photographs and interviews, and several were syndicated. The three longest and most detailed articles were "Venerable Pilgrim Brings Peace Plea" by Constance Drexel (Washington Post, 8th Nov, 1921), "Kaji Yajima, Japanese Wonder Woman!" by Ruth Agnes Abeling (in 7 papers, 11th-17th Nov, 1921), and "Old in Years, but Young for New Japan", a magazine article by Elizabeth Barbary Caraday in People's Popular Monthly, Jan. 1st, 1922 (pp. 20-22).<sup>3</sup>

The second of these three articles features a sketch of Yajima by Frank Wing, which is reproduced in Fig. 2a, and the last includes the picture shown in Fig 2b. Yajima also inspired two poems (Salt Lake Tribune, 1921, November 14 and J. Conkin, Washington Times 1921, November 6.), which are reprinted in Appendix 2.



Figure 2a. Reproduction of (2a) Abeling, Japanese Wonder Woman! (RA15) Syndicated in 7 newspapers  
Figure 2b. Caraday, "Old in Years ...but Young for New Japan" (RA30) Peoples Popular Monthly, 1922, January 1

Just how much fame did Yajima garner in comparison to other notable Japanese of her day? Table 1 shows the number of hits retrieved on three of the four sites used (Google News Archive

<sup>3</sup> These three articles correspond to Respective Articles 9, 15 and 30 listed in Appendix 1. Hereafter, quotations from articles listed in this Appendix will be referred to by their Respective Article numbers, i.e. RA9, RA15 and RA30.

being now defunct) for Yajima, compared with four Japanese historical contemporaries. Two Japanese former prime ministers, Ito Hirobumi<sup>4</sup> and Okuma Shigenobu<sup>5</sup>, were found to have almost twice as many hits as Yajima, which is to be expected from their international standing. Compared with her two most famous contemporary educators, Tsuda Ume(ko)<sup>6</sup> and Fukuzawa Yukichi<sup>7</sup>, however, Yajima has over twice as many hits as the former and almost 8 times the latter. Moreover, Yajima's fame was not as limited to the US as was Tsuda Ume(ko)'s: the Trove data shows she had a much stronger presence in Australia compared to Tsuda.

Table 1. Number of Newspaper Articles on Yajima Compared with Contemporaries

	<b>Trove (1893-1925)</b>	<b>Chron Am (1836-1922)</b>	<b>N.Archive (1893-1925)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Ito Hirobumi</b>	38	53	144	235
<b>Okuma Shigenobu</b>	21	37	156	214
<b>Yajima Kaji(ko)</b>	17	17	90	124
<b>Tsuda Ume(ko)</b>	6	16	31	53
<b>Fukuzawa Yukichi</b>	1	3	12	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	83	126	433	

From a cross-cultural point of view, the extensive media coverage of a little old foreign lady attending a world arms limitation conference of utmost importance merits attention. Why did Yajima garner such interest in the US newspapers specifically on the occasion of this event in 1921, even though it was her third time to the US and her second time to meet a US president<sup>8</sup>? How could this woman from a far-off country, traveling unofficially with no English ability, have generated such interest to deserve this kind of coverage? And why was she newsworthy not only for the event itself, culminating in the gift of the peace petition to President Harding on Nov. 11, 1921, but for months prior and especially thereafter? These questions will be explored in the present paper.

News is not created in a vacuum, but is deemed newsworthy or not in response to local social needs and environmental surroundings. With this in mind, it is proposed that three factors in the US culture and society of the day helped to make Yajima especially attractive to the media:

- (1) the post WWI universal desire for peace,
- (2) the new-found strength of women produced by the vote and prohibition, and
- (3) the position of Japan as a growing militaristic threat.

<sup>4</sup> 1841-1909 1<sup>st</sup> Prime Minister of Japan, assassinated in 1909 in Harbin, China

<sup>5</sup> 1838-1922 Fifth Prime Minister of Japan and Founder of Waseda University

<sup>6</sup> 1864-1929 Japanese educator and feminist, Founder of Tsuda College, who studied in the US from age 6-18.

<sup>7</sup> 1835-1901 Japanese author and educator, Founder of Keio Gijuku (now Keio University)

<sup>8</sup> Only two articles in the database cover her first visit to President Roosevelt in 1906.

To explore the validity of this proposal, a brief historical overview of the US cultural milieu in 1921 is provided in Section 2. Next, a semantic analysis of the content vocabulary in a sample of 33 articles about Yajima from 1921-22 is performed to determine the underlying thrust of the articles. Relevant vocabulary is clustered into 10 semantic groups, and the results are discussed in Section 3. The semantic groups are listed in Appendix 3.

## 2. Historical Background

The Washington Naval Conference, also called the Washington Arms Limitation Conference or Washington Disarmament Conference, was organized by President Warren G. Harding, and took place from Nov. 12, 1921, to Feb. 6, 1922, on the heels of the First World War. The utter devastation in Europe and extensive loss of US lives (over 110,000) convinced Americans, unfortunately wrongly, that this would be “the war to end all wars.” Consequently, the Washington Conference was held at a time when the national mood demanded nothing less than a complete solution to ensure world peace forever.

One result of the conference was the mutual agreement to limit British, US, and Japanese naval strength in a proportion of 5:5:3, a result which many Japanese considered unfair. It also brought an end to the Anglo-Japanese alliance, and Britain and the US became closer allies as a result. The multiple treaties that came out of the three-month deliberations were considered a great success at the time, although in hindsight they inadvertently became one of the underlying causes of the Pacific War as seen by the Japanese government.

### 2.1. Japan’s Significance in the Conference

The participation of Japan in the Conference was of utmost importance to the conference organizers. In Asia, Japan had already colonized Taiwan in 1895 as a result of the Sino-Japanese war, annexed Korea in 1910, and gained control of the Shandong peninsula in China, which was transferred to them from Germany under the infamous 21 demands<sup>9</sup> in 1915, and upheld by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

With this background, special concern was paid to Japanese growing imperialistic tendencies. Japanese participation in the conference was a continued question that was not resolved until close to the last minute, when on Oct. 1, 1921 it was announced that Japan had accepted the conference agenda and was planning to send a delegation headed by Tokugawa prince Iyesato.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, on the next day, there appeared an article in the *New York Times* entitled “Japan’s Path of Honor”, which berated Japan’s methods of colonization by force and

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<sup>9</sup> The 21 demands were made by the Japanese Government to China on 7 May 1915 with the intention of gaining control over Manchuria and Shandong. The next day, the weak Chinese government reluctantly agreed to most of them, as they were aware that they could not win a war with Japan. The U.S. was especially concerned about this move by the Japanese, and successfully demanded that Japan withdraw troops from Shangdong during the Washington Conference.

<sup>10</sup> Several news reports on Oct. 1-3 covering this announcement also noted the proposed visit of Yajima in the same article. This raises the interesting question whether Yajima herself may have had any influence over the Japanese government’s decision to attend.



ultimatums, and advised purchasing territories instead as a modern method of expansion.

## 2.2. Women in the Conference

The year 1920 marked the beginning of an era of unprecedented power for the female sex in the US. They had finally gained the right to vote with the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution (universal suffrage) on October 18th. Just a short time before that, the war had been used as an excuse to pass the National Prohibition Act (Volstead Act) in 1919, paving the way for the final ratification of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment prohibiting alcohol on January 7th, 1920.

With these accomplishments, women now turned their attention to the issue of peace. As Alonzo (1993, p. 85) describes it,

They saw this campaign as an extension of their successful work in government reform...many former suffragists, outraged by the tragic deaths, injuries, and illnesses caused by 'the Great War,' banded together to pressure those in power into taking immediate steps to end violent responses to economic and political problems.

There is little doubt that the passing of these two major reforms was one of the reasons Yajima decided to return to the US a second time on her way to London (and back) in April 1920. Yajima, who had suffered a bad marriage to an alcoholic in her earlier years, centered the bulk of her social reform efforts on temperance work in later life.

A *New York Times* article demonstrates the headiness women were feeling in those days towards their power to reform society. In calling for a disarmament conference, Mrs. Ida Clyde Clarke had this to say:

We women demand that the men who speak for us are to be truly representative of the people. You admit that you've succeeded in getting things in an awful tangle. Now, we are willing to come in and help you straighten things out. When we have done that to the best of our ability, we may be willing to go back to our knitting...I don't know. ("Women Call for Cut in Armament", 1921, March 28, p. 9)

## 3. Yajima in the News: A Semantic Analysis<sup>11</sup>

The following section presents the results of analysis of the semantic content of the vocabulary

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<sup>11</sup> In this article, the term "semantic analysis" was used in the sense of discourse analysis with special reference to semantic content. As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, Neuendorf (2002) does not consider such analyses as quantitative content analysis. I am not claiming that the analysis here is content analysis in her terms, as the sample size used in this article is small and the methods are not as rigorous as required (i.e. only one rater was used, and the key words were organized into categories manually). However, recent research has brought to light several hundred more articles about Yajima Kajiko. Although most are syndicated and repetitious, these findings pave the way for replication using quantitative analysis methods and software such as the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count program. The author is grateful to the anonymous reviewer for providing invaluable information on these.

used in a representative sample of 33 articles, chosen from the time period under study (see list in Appendix 1). Twenty-seven of the articles were published in the US, 3 in Australia and 2 in Japan. Eight were so-called pre-Harding articles (predating the presentation of the peace petition to Harding on Nov. 7, 1921). Thirteen of the articles carried photographs or sketches of Yajima. Only a single copy of each syndicated article was included. Together, they contained a total of 8715 word tokens and 1751 word types. Here, the word “representative” should not be interpreted in a rigorous statistical sense. It means that the article was over a certain length (2 sentences) and did not show signs of syndication. In the case of multiple articles reporting the same event with the same or nearly the same wording, only one of them was used in the corpus. Moreover, several of the articles had bibliographic data but did not have full text files available. Therefore, the 33 articles used here can be characterized as the subset of full-text articles that reported different events or were clearly written by different authors.

The analysis was performed using AntConc3.2.4w (available online at <http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html>) to produce a list of keywords and frequencies. Word families (that is, content words with the same root such as woman/women/womanly) were grouped together by hand. Content word families with a frequency of more than 5 occurrences were included in the analysis, and were manually coded for semantic content.

Content vocabulary types which had 5 or more tokens were selected from the total list of word types and grouped into word families (e.g., teach, teaching, teacher, taught, etc.) to make a shortened list of 123 word families with 2184 tokens. Their semantic content was then classified into one of the following 11 categories: peace, gender, nationality, age, personality, leadership, travel, appearance, Christianity, language, and other. The actual word families and their classifications can be found in Appendix 3. Figure 3 shows the overall results of tokens found in each semantic category.

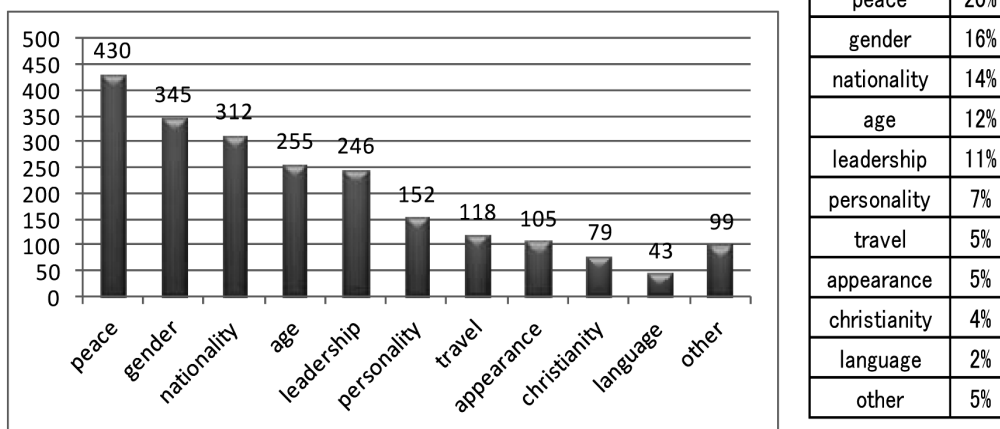


Figure. 3. Analysis of Semantic Content of Vocabulary Commonly Used in 33 Representative Articles about Yajima Kajiko in 1921 (123 Word Families, 2184 Tokens)



### 3.1. Peace (20%)

Vocabulary dealing with war, peace and the conference itself clearly dominated the news articles, taking up 20% of the semantic content. This is an unsurprising result considering that the Washington Conference and the delivery of the peace petition were the immediate events being reported. Moreover, the juxtaposition of Yajima's name with peace is apparent from the beginning, and the petition that she carried is described as a "message of peace" for which she is the messenger:

Madame Kajiko Yajima, messenger of peace, advocate of armament limitation, and leader of women in Japan [said] "the Washington Conference will probably be my last chance to do something for the cause of peace and humanity to which I have dedicated my life." ...Madame Yajima expects to reach Washington on Armistice Day and will distribute 6,000 handbills printed in English and bearing the title "A messenger from the Goddess of Peace." (RA1, 1921, October 1)

This article reports Yajima's departure to a Japan-based audience, and identifies her first in terms of the message she is bringing, rather than by her age or nationality, probably because she was already a well-known public figure in Japan at that time. The repetition of "peace" throughout the article serves to reinforce the image of Yajima as a carrier of peace.

On the other hand, pre-Harding US news articles tend to introduce her in terms of her former status before mentioning her mission, as seen in the following examples:

Madame Kaji Yajima, founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Japan, has arrived in the United States to present to the disarmament conference a memorial from the women of Japan, asking that a lasting peace be negotiated and armament abolished. (RA7, 1921, October 31)

Mme Kaji Yajima, head of the women's movement in Japan, arrived today to present to President Harding a petition signed by 10,000 Japanese women, praying for the success of the arms conference. (RA9, 1921, November 8)

In several of the post-Harding articles, however, she comes to be identified not only as a peace bringer, but as an example of peace itself. Drexel (RA9, 1921, November 8) writes that when asked how she retained her youthfulness, Yajima answered softly "I have peace in my heart, and I am at peace with all those about me." Her translator, Mrs. Topping, goes on to explain in the same article, "I have known her for 25 years...and she has always been like that. In her own person, she is the embodiment of the peace for all the world that she is here to urge." Thus we can say that Yajima's identity as a true peace-activist was developed after her meeting with Harding

### 3.2. Gender (16%)

Terms denoting gender accounted for 16% of the overall semantic content, but it should be noted that the titles Madam(e), Mme, Mrs. and Miss accounted for almost 40% of this category. Even so, the prominent usage of these titles clearly signals that the article is about a woman. However, the “women/woman” word family was even more prominent than the titles, and the following examples demonstrate Yajima’s identity not only as a woman herself, but as a leader of women:

Mme Yajima carries the following message of peace from the women of Japan to the women of the West: “Japanese womanhood prays for the success of the Washington conference and the dawn of a new epoch of higher and better understanding between nations.” (RA2, 1921, October 1)

Mme Kaji Yajima...has been the champion of her sex in Japan for more than half a century...she says the women of Japan want to see real limitation of armaments. (RA4, 1921, November 13)

Her role as a former teacher of girls, and her interest in improving their position in society, are also emphasized:

She has given tireless service to “her girls” in the college through all the years since she became one of its founders, until her retirement a few months ago. (RA30, 1922, January 1)

This little Japanese woman is especially interested in girls. They are the subject nearest and dearest to her heart. In Japan she is known as San-Sol<sup>12</sup>, or teacher, and ever since she was 40 she has taught girls from 14 to 20 years old. (RA16, 1921, November 13)

Thus, her popularity is not simply based on the fact that she is a woman, but rather because she is recognized as a leader and champion of women.

### 3.3. Nationality (14%)

Naturally, the fact that Yajima was Japanese was one of the focal points of the articles, although there are slightly fewer tokens that have to do with nationality than with gender. The term “Japanese” was used not only in reference to Yajima’s nationality, but also to the women who signed the petition, the paper on which the petition was written, and the language. Synonyms used for Japanese nationality included “Nipponese” and “Jap”, used once and three times respectively, in headlines only. It should be noted here that, in the context of headlines, the latter term probably did not carry as much of a derogatory meaning as it does today.

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<sup>12</sup> Obviously transliterated; the correct term is *sensei*.

Similarly, “Japan” was used to refer to Yajima’s country of origin in the 33 articles used for the corpus. The poem in RA17 (*Salt Lake Tribune*, 1921, November 14, cf. Appendix 2), however, refers to her country as “cherry blossom land”. Another interesting euphemism was the “flowery kingdom”, mistakenly used twice for Japan in the larger database, although it actually refers to China.<sup>13</sup>

As might be expected from the discussion in 2.1, the question of anti-Japanese sentiment comes up several times. RA30 (1922, January 1), the author Canaday asks Yajima to comment “about Japan’s need for obtaining more land” and her “faith in Japan’s own delegates” to the conference, to which Yajima’s wise replies are discussed in Section 3.9. RA13 (1921, November 11) discusses Yajima’s visit in contrast to the growing disillusion with Japan’s budding imperialism:

The people of the United States are being fed daily with stories of the warlike preparations made by Japan. We have always suspected that these stories have been part of a propaganda of the militarists of this country to scare the United States into a fevered-campaign of armament. As a matter of fact, statistics of present day preparations show that the United States is today leading the world in military preparations, and this in a time of peace. (RA13, 1921, November 11)

This growing US suspicion is also evident in the first few lines of the second poem in Appendix 2. Finally, a simple but foreboding one-sentence blurb ran in two newspapers, the first eerily on Dec. 7 (the date of the Pearl Harbor attacks by Japan on the US, exactly 20 years later), as follows:

Madame Kaji Yajima, who came to Washington with an anti-war petition signed by 10,000 Japanese women, ought to have taken it to Tokio.  
(*Bemidji Daily Pioneer*, 1921, December, 7, p. 4; *Sandusky Register*, 1921, December 9, p. 4)

The phrase “Japanese character” also appears in RA30 (1922, January 1) “One felt, too, a new appreciation of the Japanese character, so often misunderstood in this country.” One wonders exactly HOW the Japanese character had previously been misunderstood, and what kind of new appreciation Yajima fostered. However, the findings to be discussed in section 3.7 on personality may provide some answers.

### 3.4. Age (12%)

The fact that Yajima was “one of the oldest Japanese to make a trip abroad” was already newsworthy on her second trip, a grand 175-day tour of world conferences both in the US and Europe (*Japan Advertiser*, 1920, March 13, Front Page). It is no wonder, then, that her friends

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<sup>13</sup> This term may come from the title of a 1894 book on the Sino-Japanese war entitled *The Flowery Kingdom and the Land of the Mikado*, or, China, Japan and Corea by Henry Davenport Northrop.

and family discouraged her from this third journey only a year later, as she well might not have returned. Her immensely sensible argument against this was that it was all the same to God whether she died in Japan or in America, because “heaven was the same distance from both countries” (Kubushiro, 1988, p. 354).

In the first few weeks of media attention before her actual arrival, Yajima’s age was usually mentioned in the first line of her introduction, as in the following example: “Undeterred by her 89 years, Mme. Kajiko Yajima, ...left Tokyo yesterday on her way to America.” (“Japanese will Accept Agenda U.S. Suggests” Kokomo Tribune 1921, October, 1). However, it is easy to detect a change in the way the articles treat Yajima’s advanced age after she meets President Harding. Harding himself comments on her energy and vitality as follows “I reverence anyone who at an advanced age can be so youthful and filled with desire for service as you.” (RA9, 1921, October 8). This presidential comment sets the tone for post-Harding articles, which now tend to stress her youthfulness rather than her age, which she also reaffirms in her own words:

Mme Yajima doesn’t look 89 years old, and she certainly does not act it. (RA13, 1921, October 11)

“I may be very old,” she said at parting, “but I am very much alive and can do much fighting yet. I want you to see me so.” She arose and stood erect full of fire. In that mood she could well be the leader of Japanese women. (“Japan’s New Ruler”, *New York Times*, 1921, December 11)

This transition from an extremely aged image to one of almost immortal youthfulness will be explored further in Section 3.8 on appearance.

### 3.5. Leadership (11%)

After nationality, gender and age, Yajima’s next major characteristic from the data is her leadership quality, including her past roles as JWCTU president and Joshi Gakuin principal. Yajima’s role as a social leader in Japan is well documented in the articles. The following is just one example:

Madam Yajima, who has won the sobriquet of “the Frances Williard of Japan,” was the first president of the WCTU of Japan, and it was mainly through her untiring effort that the movement gained in Japan the place it has today. She was for many years principal of the Joshi Gakuin, the first Presbyterian mission school for girls in Tokio, and is now principal emeritus. (RA24, 1921, December 4)

Perhaps even more important than her work as a teacher and social leader in Japan, however, was the role that she was to play in the US, which became especially clear in the post-Harding articles. This was not a simple visit to the President by a foreign VIP; Mme. Yajima was clearly in the US on her final “pilgrimage” as a teacher “Here to Tell About Women of Japan” (RA16, 1921, November 13). As “Mme. Yajima” (*New York Tribune*, 1921, November 3) put it, she

“sailed away across the ocean to teach in a wider school.” The same article goes on to shed light on exactly what was being taught:

In his famous introduction to *Salammb*<sup>14</sup> Edmond de Goncourt...was puzzled by the question of what an Oriental woman thinks, baffled by the psychological mystery screened by veil and iron customs. In these later days, as the visit of Madame Yajima attests, the secret has been penetrated. In the main the woman of the Orient thinks as do her sisters of the Occident, responsive when she has a chance to the same fundamental impulses and feelings that control our young women... (“Mme. Yajima” *New York Tribune*, 1921, November 3)

In other words, her biggest lesson to the US public was the destruction of the stereotype of Oriental inscrutability, with the moral that humans are basically the same, even though they might come from very different races and cultures.

Perhaps the biggest difference between Yajima’s first two visits to the US and her third and final one was the fact that on the final trip, she was not officially representing anything other than herself. On her second trip just the year before, she was in the US (on her way to London) as the President of the JWCTU, as she was on her first trip in 1906. For this third visit, however, she clearly realized the necessity of making this final offering to world peace as an individual, and to that end, she retired (in spite of great pressure) from the JWCTU in early 1921. She reiterates in interviews quoted in several articles that “I come here as a free individual... and am neither an official messenger nor the representative of my country.” (RA13, 1921, November 11)

Although she clearly made it a point to represent herself alone, it was through this act that she came to represent the entire womanhood of Japan, or even more strikingly, humanity itself. The following excerpt shows that she claims not only to represent Japan, but the entire female population of the East:

“Japanese womanhood prays for the success of the Washington conference and the dawn of a new epoch of higher and better understanding between the nations.” That is the brief message she carried from the Japanese women—10,000 of them—and, she said, it was also the echo of the sentiments of millions more in China, India, Persia and all the other countries of the Orient. (“Japan’s New Ruler”, *New York Times*, 1921, December 11)

This sentiment seems to presage the pre-WWII attitude of Japan as the leader of the so-called Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, but it predates this concept by more than 15 years at least. Moreover, in her own words, this self-styled message does not represent the desires of Asian women alone, but of all humankind: “The Washington Conference will probably be my last chance to do something for the cause of peace and humanity to which I have dedicated my life.” (RA1, 1921, October 1)

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<sup>14</sup> *Salammb* was a novel written in 1862 by Gustave Flaubert.

### 3.6. Personality (7%)

With respect to Yajima's personality, there are four major traits that can be recognized in the articles: (1) peacefulness, (2) optimism, (3) friendliness and (4) humor. The first has already been explored in the discussion of how Yajima came to be known as the "embodiment of peace" in section 3.1. Yajima's optimism and friendliness can be seen in some of her own quotes as follows:

"The reasons why I, a woman of 89, have crossed the ocean and the Continent are," she said: "I have faith that the coming Pacific Conference will surely be the foundation of peace." (RA16, 1921, November 13)

I come to say that. "I am the luckiest women in Japan for being able to come here." (RA15, 1921, November 12)

Mrs. Yajima said she hoped as well to bring a message to American women from women of her own race. "We must be friends," she said. "Women the world over must be friends." (RA10, 1921, November 9)

However, it is her subtle sense of humor which comes out most clearly from several of the articles in which she was interviewed:

With Mrs Topping translating, she said "I'm awfully fond of America and American people, and especially the women, they are so active and so hospitable. Oh, already I am looking forward to my next visit to America and I hope I'll see you then." At that her laughter rippled out as merrily as a girl of sixteen. ("On Peace Mission", *Evening Public Ledger*, 1921, November 10)

"If your American words could come out of my mouth as easily as your American food goes in, it would be easy." And what does she like best about America? A slow smile spread over the face of the ninety-year-old little Japanese woman: "Your ice cream! I could eat and eat it!" (RA16, 1921, November 13)

The Japanese laughed outright when someone asked her if they had flappers in Japan, and if Japanese women smoked. "Flappers in Japan would be silly," she said. "They would not wear short skirts. You see, Japanese women always sit on low cushions. They do not exercise as do American girls, and in consequence their legs are not handsome to look at." (RA10, 1921, November 9)

Then the little brown face smiled and she watched closely to see what effect her next words would have. For there was the Japanese love of humor mingled with common sense in her unique proposal, "I should like to see these warships which have been named for scrapping, convened into excursion ships, to take the young Japanese people



on pleasure trips.” (RA30, 1922, January 1)

Her sense of humor even reached the newspapers in Australia:

The films sent out from America constantly show railway trains being ‘held up’ by robbers; and when Madame Yajima had settled herself comfortably in a Pullman car, to cross the continent from west to east, she said, in Japanese, “And now I suppose we shall really see what a hold-up is like.” (RA31, 1922, January 5)

The typical Japanese character, then as now, is often regarded as humorless and inscrutable, but Yajima’s optimism, friendliness, and humor brand her as markedly different from the typical Japanese stereotype. The combination of these traits probably created a surprising gap between expectations and reality, and fanned the spreading fire of Yajima’s popularity.

### 3.7. Travel (5%)

Vocabulary related to travel accounted for 5% of the total content vocabulary. According to an article in the Japanese newspaper *Yorozuchoho* (1922, January 22), Yajima’s entire journey of 18,300 miles took 80 days and covered 27 cities. The length of the trip was emphasized in several articles, especially with respect to her age:

Mme. Yajima stood the long voyage across the Pacific and the 4000-mile railroad journey to Washington well. (RA8, 1921, November 1)

Madam Kaji Yajima, the Japanese woman who has traveled more than six thousand miles in her ninetieth year to be present at the disarmament convention in Washington, brought the names of ten thousand five hundred Japanese women to President Harding who are praying for world peace. (RA26, 1921, December 22)

With a petition signed by thousands of her country women seeking peace, the distinguished woman made the long voyage from Japan to Washington to present the scroll personally to President Harding. (RA28, 1921, December 30)

Even President Harding was quoted as saying “I congratulate you upon the completion of your journey,” (RA9, 1921, November 8), even though it was far from being completed. In the mind of the press, however, her main purpose was the presentation of the “precious roll” of 10,000 signatures for world peace. Yajima began and ended her journey in San Francisco (ex. 26), and stayed in the US for another two months, lecturing, attending receptions, and visiting friends:

...Mme. Kaji Yajima will be the guest of honor at a reception which will be given tomorrow from 2 to 5 p.m. in the International Institute, 1812 Washington Street, San Francisco. Mme. Yajima sails for Japan on January 3. (RA28, 1921, December 30)

### 3.8. Appearance (5%)

Yajima is portrayed in the articles as “small”, “diminutive” and “quaint”. She has a “calm, serene old face and the smiling, hope-filled eyes” (RA30, 1922, January 1) and “a great smile that speaks a right of way into everyone’s heart at first glimpses” (RA24, 1921, December 4). She presented the peace petition to President Harding with “faith shining in her eyes” (RA9, 1921, November 8).

Like this, Yajima’s physical appearance is described in many of the articles. “On Peace Mission”, *Evening Public Ledger*, 1921, November 10, describes her as having “[b]right eyes set in a round little face, [and] a quick smile coming and going, as summer clouds across the sun, animation in feature and voice account in part for her charm.” In RA15 (1921, November 12), her “small hands were gripping” the precious peace petition and her “little feet always hang just amiss of the floor and point together”.

However, as discussed above in Section 3.2., the most striking thing about Yajima’s appearance is her relative youthfulness:

Everyone was astonished at the youthful appearance of the 90-year-old Japanese educator and peace lover. In the morning, when we were waiting for her at her hotel, we could hardly believe our eyes when we saw a petite figure fairly tripping into the reception room, hardly leaning on the arm of her secretary and chatting animatedly with Mrs. Henry Topping, the friend and interpreter who accompanied her from Japan. We could hardly tell the venerable woman apart from her Japanese secretary, a woman of about 30. Mme. Yajima’s abundant hair is hardly streaked with gray; her skin is fresh and unlined, her eyes bright, her expression vivacious. Her sight and hearing are practically perfect, though she wears glasses. (RA9, 1921, November 8)

The juxtaposition of the older woman here with her younger secretary, and the contrast of the aged terms *gray*, *leaning*, and *venerable* with *tripping*, *animated*, *abundant*, *fresh*, *bright* and *vivacious* accentuate the discrepancy between Yajima’s actual appearance and the expectations of her audience.

The changing impressions of Yajima in this passage may be said to symbolize the general trend of the articles overall, which began by stressing the fact that Yajima was OLD but changed their tune after she met the President, whose comments on her youthful vitality were soon transmitted across the country. As the title of RA30 (1922, January 1) “Old in Years — But Young for New Japan” aptly sums up, it is not her age, but rather her almost miraculous youthful vitality that keeps her in the limelight.

### 3.9. Christianity (4%)

Much of the language used in the articles clearly equates Yajima with being a good Christian: she “prays” for peace, she “glows” with anticipation, her travel is a “pilgrimage”. Her own words, when quoted, make it especially clear that she is there as a Christian and that her belief in God has guided her. One reason for her journey itself, quoted from her handbill “A Message

from the Goddess of Peace” is that “All those that believe in God and love peace ought to make this world the home of God.” (RA16, 1921, November 13) She asserts “the most wonderful thing in America is Trinity Church” (RA18, 1921, November 19).

As discussed earlier in 3.3 (nationality), the growing mistrust of Japanese militarism is evident in the following excerpt:

When asked about Japan’s need for obtaining more land, she smiled benignly. “There is a Bible verse” she said, “which says: Produce and fill the earth.’ I believe, if the Japanese people endeavor to uplift their character, that God will find a place for all to live and that they will be welcome everywhere.”

“And have you faith in Japan’s own delegates?” she was asked, not without reluctance on the part of the questioner. It seemed almost unkind to suggest the possibility of the question. But, the confident Yajima could not be dimmed.

“Oh, yes. I have the utmost faith in them all. They will do what is right, what Japan is praying for.” (RA30, 1922, January 1)

Her responses to these questions show an optimistic faith in the inherent goodness of God, and reinforce our image of her as a true Christian.

Several of the newspaper articles mention the fact that the money that she spent for this final world trip was her own, that it was a gift from her students upon retirement, e.g.:

Madame Yajima was willing to use her last penny to make this trip to the United States. When she retired from her school and, as head of the W.C.T.U. of Japan, a purse of \$1,000 was presented to her by her admirers as a nest-egg for her last years. That is the money she took to be able to see the President yesterday, and to convey the hopes and prayers of Japanese women for the success of the Washington Conference. (RA9, 1921, November 8)

This financial selflessness may also have been an appealing aspect of Yajima’s Christian character, serving to bring her closer to God in her public’s eyes, in both word and deed.

### **3.10. Language (2%)**

The fact that Yajima spoke no English is also stressed in several of the articles, for example:

She speaks no English and has a young Japanese woman with her who acts as an interpreter. (RA26, 1921, December 22)

Yajima, born and raised in an era when girls were not expected to have formal schooling, had no experience in learning foreign languages. She not only expresses her own regret at not having been able to master English, but surprisingly declares herself a proponent of the use of English in Japan, similar to the proposal by Mori Arinori, a former Japanese Minister of Education, in 1872.

“I should like to see the Japanese young people give over their own language and take the English language for their own. It is much easier.” At the look of surprise which greeted this, the almond eyes twinkled behind the heavy glasses. “I think I am a language Bolshevik” she said. (RA30, 1922, January 1)

This final excerpt is also a good example of Yajima’s humor, as well as her appearance.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study above identified several themes revolving around the gender, age, nationality, appearance and personality of Kajiko Yajima, which merge to form an image of a sincere, grandmotherly-like Christian pacifist who, although she has Japanese appearance, communicates in the universal language of love of humanity. These characteristics come together in many of the articles, as excerpts (33)-(35) demonstrate.

Mme Kaji Yajima...has been the champion of her sex in Japan for more than half a century. She does not speak English. Mme. Yajima stood the long voyage across the Pacific and the 4000-mile railroad journey to Washington well. She says the women of Japan want to see real limitation of armaments. (RA8, 1921, November 1)

Madame Yajima is the embodiment of serenity and peace. Strong in faith and aggressive against all forms of evil, she yet meets each situation with a calm-ness and confidence reminding us that “the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.” (RA30, 1922, January 1)

It is an inspiring thing when a WOMAN comes from Japan and extends her hand to the women of this country in a desire to end the horror of war. The men of the world have made a botch of things. The influence of women is now being felt. If the women of the world will organize into a world organization war CAN be abolished. The coming of Madam Yajima, a little ninety year old woman to these shores, seems to herald the new era. (“Japan’s New Ruler”, *New York Times*, 1921, December 11)

Remarkably, there was very little negativity connected with any of the articles, with the few exceptions noted in Section 3.4 on nationality. Even in these, however, the barbs were pointed at the Japanese government, not at Yajima herself. It is truly a tribute to her power to generate love and humanity that there was virtually no criticism leveled at her in any of the articles.

The final trip to the Washington Arms Limitation Conference in 1921 and the delivery of the 100-yard petition can be considered Kajiko Yajima’s “swan song” — her final gift to humanity. Although she lived for three more years (notably, through the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923) until her death in 1925, she made it clear that this was to be her final gift to the world. As she told Abeling in RA15 (1921, November 12), “I talk little”... “Saved my strength for this.” ... “Then I can die.”

The world of 1921 was a “new era” defined by the combination of the ending of a most

horrible war, and the beginning of a world in which women finally found a voice. Yajima's sex would have been a detriment just a few years earlier, and the wisdom implied by her age would have been ignored in a world of war, pain and uncertainty. Against the new social background, however, the media and its readers saw Kajiko Yajima as a symbol of hope for the future—a new kind of future in which women would be able to join hands around the world, and preserve peace by controlling male aggressiveness through Christian love, humanity and sincerity. We can imagine that Mme. Yajima, “the Grand Old Lady of Japan” (RA25, 1921, December 7), hoped not only to promote peace in the world through this last act of sincerity and selflessness, but also to provide a fitting closure to the journey that was her own life, from obscure childhood, painful marriage, through self-discovery, and ending in Christian life service. It also represented a widening of scope of this service from the more personal concerns of temperance and women's rights to the most noble, universal and elusive problem facing mankind in every generation: assurance of lasting world peace.

*When the common people of the world, the people who have to do the fighting and the dying in the trenches, will come together in a demand for the abolishment of war; then the end of war will come. The coming of Madam Yajima, a little ninety year old woman to these shores, seems to herald the new era.* (RA13, 1921, November 11)

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- Mme. Yajima from the land of the cherry blossom. (1921, November 3). *New York Tribune*, p. 12.
- Octogenarian worker in temperance cause. (1920, March 13). *Japan Advertiser*, p. 1.
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**Appendix 1. Thirty-three Representative Articles used in the Kaji Yajima Corpus**

1	1-Oct-21	Japan Advertiser	MADAME YAJIMA ON WAY TO AMERICA
2	1-Oct-21	Bakersfield Californian	Japanese Woman Leader Will Bring Message Of Peace
3	2-Oct-21	Eau Claire Leader	NIPPONESE WOMEN'S HEAD ON WAY TO US
4	13-Oct-21	Boston Evening Globe	AGED JAPANESE WOMAN COMES WITH PLEA FOR PEACE
5	17-Oct-21	New Castle News	Japanese Woman, 89, Crosses Sea to Urge Armament Abolition
6	28-Oct-21	Rock Valley Bee	Aged Jap Woman Here.
7	31-Oct-21	Capital Times	WOMAN BRINGS DOCUMENT
8	1-Nov-21	Boston Daily Globe	BRINGS JAPANESE WOMEN'S PLEA FOR ARMAMENT CUT
9	8-Nov-21	Washington Post	VENERABLE PILGRIM BRINGS PEACE PLEA
10	9-Nov-21	Galveston Daily News	Short Skirts Not Becoming to Jap Girls
11	10-Nov-21	Portsmouth Daily Times	SNAPSHOTS
12	11-Nov-21	Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette	JAP PETITION
13	11-Nov-21	Capital Times	THE LITTLE WOMAN FROM JAPAN
14	11-Nov-21	Racine Journal-News	FOUNDER OF W.C.T.U. IN JAPAN AND U.S.
15	12-Nov-21	Daily Globe	Kaji Yajima, Japanese Wonder Woman! SKETCHED FROM LIFE
16	13-Nov-21	Boston Globe	JAPAN'S FLAPPERS QUIT SMOKING AS OLD STYLE
17	14-Nov-21	Salt Lake Tribune	A Line of Type or Two
18	19-Nov-21	Salt Lake Telegram	Aged Japanese Woman Prays for Arms Limit
19	20-Nov-21	Joplin Globe	Mme. Kaji Yajima
20	20-Nov-21	Syracuse Herald	Mme. Kaji Yajima, 90 years old
21	21-Nov-21	New York Times	TOKIO WOMAN BRINGS 100-YD. PEACE PLAN
22	22-Nov-21	News-Sentinel	FOUNDER OF W.C.T.U. IN JAPAN AND U.S.
23	23-Nov-21	Wellsboro Agitator	Mme. Kaji Yajima, 39-year-old [sic] Japanese woman
24	4-Dec-21	Charleston Daily Mail	FRANCES WILLARD OF JAPAN, MME. YAJIMA
25	7-Dec-21	Japan Advertiser	Hundred Yard Peace Petition
26	22-Dec-21	Malvern Leader	Praying For World Peace
27	28-Dec-21	Japan Advertiser	Madam Yajima and the Liberty Bell
28	30-Dec-21	Oakland Tribune	Envoy of Japanese Women to Be Feted
29	1-Jan-22	Popular Mechanics	Japanese Women's Peace Plan 300 Ft Long

30	1-Jan-22	People's Popular Monthly	Old in Years, but young for New Japan
31	5-Jan-22	Sydney Morning Herald NSW	WOMEN'S COLUMN. AGED NINETY.
32	13-Jan-22	The Register (Adelaide, SA )	Concerning people
33	18-Jan-22	The Advertiser (Adelaide, SA )	WOMEN'S WORK IN AMERICA

## Appendix 2. Two Published Poems about Yajima's Visit

From cherry blossom land she comes, a little woman quaint and old,  
 Risking her all that she may bring a gift of spirit sweet and bold:  
 'One hundred thousand women hearts Petitioning for Peace!'  
 No gifts she asks nor favor craves, nor mandate brings for war to cease.  
 From where 'hearts mobilized' await she comes, a human dove of peace  
 'One hundred thousand women hearts Petitioning for Peace!'  
 In this vast land can we do less than 'mobilize our hearts,' as they,  
 The little women of Japan? And kneel with them and bravely pray?  
 An Army of the Spirit, thus Petitioning for Peace!  
 (RA17, Salt Lake Tribune, 14-Nov-21, p. 3)

Even as statesmen of the Christian West.  
 Political astrologers declaim:  
 "The world is still unripe for peace.  
 The Orient still lusts for conquest.  
 No peace is near."  
 With zeal for peace aflame,  
 KAJI YAJIMA is here!  
 Bowed with the weight of well nigh a hundred year  
 This aged mother, for all we know a grand-dame,  
 Casting behind all doubts and fears  
 Across ten thousand miles of ocean came  
 To bid her sisters of the West arise to banish war!  
 When like a prophetess of old Yajima hither fared.  
 Who knows the dangers that she faced.  
 The perils that she dared to proclaim anew:  
 "Peace on earth! Good will to men!"  
 If this be the faith of heathen,  
 Prevent not, Lord!  
 Lord, let the heathen come!  
 (Joe Conkin. The Washington Times, 6-Nov-1921)

### Appendix 3. Semantic Classification of the Content Vocabulary of 33 Articles about Yajima Kajiko

**Peace:** petition/s/ing, war/s/warlike/warships, abolished/ment/abolition, peace, signatures/signed/signers, conference, present/ed/s, plea/plead, armament/s/armed/armistice/arms/army, disarmament, thousand/thousands, message/messenger, limitation/limit, bring/brought, world/worlds, Washington

**Travel:** visit/visited/visiting/visitors, send/sent, travel/traveled, come/coming/comes, journey, arrived/ing, trip/trips/tripping, board, crossed/cross/es, ocean, attend/ed/ing, representative/s/ed/ing/s

**Personality:** good/well, desire, remarkable, right/rights/righteousness, people/s/ person/persons/personal/ality/ally, believe/s/ed, friends/friend/ly/ship, became/becoming, wish, raised/raising, hope, heart/s/ily, great/greatest, supreme, serenity/serene, famous

**Nationality:** Japanese/Japan/Jap (3) /Nipponese (1), continent/al, Tokio, national/nation/s, West/Western, country/ies/countrymen/countrywomen, land, America/n/nly/s

**Leadership:** cause, write/wrote/written/writing/writer, champion/ed, leader/leading/led, school/schools, spoke/spoken, work/worker, education/ed/or, president/s, association/associates, speak/speaking/speaks/speeches, founder/founded/found/founders/foundation, temperance, secretary, head/heading, success/successful/succeed, organisation/s/z/ize/ized, smoking/smoke/smoked, WCTU, teacher/teachers/teaching/taught

**Language:** language, English, interpreter, understand/understanding

**Gender:** woman/women/womanhood/women's/woman's, Madam/e/Mme/Mrs, lady, girls

**Christianity:** pray/praying/s/ed/prayer/s, God/Goddess, faith, Christian/ity/Christ, spirit/spiritual, church/es/churchyard

**Appearance:** hands/hand, figure, look/ed, feet, skirts/skirt, short, face, little, wear/wearing/wears, white, legs, eyes

**Age:** eighty, age/d, young/younger/youthful, year/years, last, forty, retirement/retired/retiring, ninety, old, new, life, health/y

**Other:** like, day/s/daily, always, miss, long, house/home, lasting/last, settled, wide, photo/graph/ed/ers/picture/snapshot, reception