Mapping the Female Body:
The Discourse on Prostitution in Japan (1868-1926)

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Abstract

This thesis provides a historical analysis of the discourse on prostitution in Japan during the Meiji and Taisho periods (1868-1926). By tracing the discourse on prostitution, this study delineates the origins of the boundary that divides women into good women and prostitutes—this boundary still remains today. This research demonstrates that the dichotomy is not a unproblematic natural given, but is a historical product which has been shaped and determined by a multiplicity of factors: a series of laws issued in the early Meiji period, the implementation of the "good wife, wise mother" ideology, and the whore stigma that emerged from anti-prostitution movements.

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Introduction

In 1998, *Shūkan Josei* (Women's Weekly), a popular women's magazine in Japan, sent out a questionnaire which was answered by 500 men who have either wives or partners.[1] The survey found that ninety percent of them had had sexual relationships with so-called *mizushōbai* women.[2] Many Japanese men take it for granted that they have two different spaces in which to operate, both of which contain women with whom they have relationships. At home there are wives, in charge of the household, the children's education, and the purse strings. Very different sorts of women—geisha, bar hostesses, and prostitutes, populate the other world, the world of the evening. Japanese wives appear to accept that just as there are two worlds, so there are two sorts of women: "we," the wives, and the "others," prostitutes.[3]

The role of wife in Japan places a woman at the center of the home. In the social sphere, *mizushōbai* women take over. Many Japanese women are quite conscious of their positions as wives vis-à-vis *mizushōbai* women, i.e. prostitutes. Japanese women tend to see prostitutes as a special category of

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[1] *Shukan Josei* (Women's Weekly), Jul, 14th Issue, 1998. The questionnaire was answered by randomly selected 500 salary-men working in Tokyo.
[2] In this essay, '*Mizushōbai* women' refers to women who work in the red-right district. '*Mizushōbai* women' includes geisha, prostitutes and bar hostesses.
[3] In this thesis, 'prostitutes' refers to women who engage in some form of sexual interaction in exchange for some kind of payment.

women and thus not as belonging to "the women."[4] However, both wives and prostitutes derive their livelihood from their relations with men: as husbands or customers, respectively. Men, on the other hand, if they wish, may freely cross over the boundary separating the women's spheres. Because of this clear boundary between wives and prostitutes, Japanese wives may say, whether they mean it or not, that they do not care even if their husbands have affairs outside the home so long as they are only with *mizushōbai* women. That seems to be because many Japanese wives regard prostitutes as "others," not belonging to the class of mainstream middle-class Japanese women, and therefore not threatening to the status of "lawful wedded wives."

Until now, most research on women's issues in Japan has recognized the dichotomy dividing women into good women and prostitutes. As yet, however, there has been effectively no research examining the origins of this boundary that remains in place even today. The objectives of this thesis are, therefore, to denaturalize this dichotomy by tracing the emergence of this boundary and to demonstrate how it was conceptualized and naturalized. Dissolving the dichotomy and raising women's consciousness are urgent challenges for Japanese feminists. Breaking up this dichotomy will eventually provide researchers with valuable leads to help solve current issues surrounding "military comfort women" and the Third World women working in the Japanese sex industry.

Shannon Bell, the feminist scholar, argues that the female body engaging in some form of sexual interaction in exchange for some kind of payment

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[4] My usage of "the women" is borrowed from feminist scholar, Gail Pheterson, and refers to women who meet the official definitions of womanhood dictated by the state in each period. Since the Meiji period, "the women" has referred to women who live within the codes of the heterosexual-married-childbearing chain. For further discussion on "the women" see Gail Pheterson, *The Prostitution Prism* (Amsterdam University Press, 1996) esp. 14-15.

has no inherent meaning and is diversely signified in different discourses.[5] Bell claims:

> Modernity through a process of othering has produced "the prostitute" as the other of the other: the other within the categorical other, "women".[6]

The fundamental question of this thesis is how is it that in Japan the prostitute is seen not just as "the women" but as a special category of women, "others." Taking discontinuities as a point of departure, this thesis questions existing dichotomous conceptualizations and uncovers how the prostitute was constructed as an "other." This study draws on Foucauldian concepts of "discourse," as a way of constituting knowledge. By tracing discourses on the prostitute, this essay aims not only to rediscover a forgotten part of women's history but also to bring new theoretical insights into the history of prostitution. The working premise is that the dichotomy is not an unproblematic natural given, but is a historical product, which has been shaped and determined by a multiplicity of causes.

My discussion on prostitution is primarily limited to an activity that occurred in Japan. This essay focuses on the Meiji and the Taisho periods (1868-1926). This roughly delineated period saw major transformations of the discourses on the prostitute that continue even today. In order to present the way that the changes have taken place, the essay is basically chronological in form. Every chapter of the essay is a whole in itself but the chapters are interconnecting in that each is exploring the factors affecting discourses on the prostitute. My approach to the study of discourse on the prostitute in Japan

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[5] Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP., 1994) 1-2.
[6] Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, 2.

draws on works of both Japanese and English scholarship, and on feminist theory and gender history. This thesis particularly draws from the Third World or postcolonial feminists, such as Anthias and Yuval Deviss and Minh-ha, who claim that women are not all constructed by the state in the same way but in a heterogeneous way. For example, upper- and middle-class women rather than identifying with prostitutes as women, often identify with the men of their own class. As a result, poor women are oppressed not only by men but also by upper- and middle-class women.

In order to examine the shifting discourse on prostitution, Chapter 1 will look at the social position of prostitutes in the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) during which the prostitution system was institutionalized for the first time. Until recently, most research has understood the modern Japanese licensed prostitution system as a continuation of the premodern (i.e. the Tokugawa) prostitution system. Although the modern Japanese licensed prostitution system incorporated many elements of the premodern system, it was different from the premodern system in many ways. For example, throughout the Tokugawa period, prostitution was an occupation accessible to all classes, from the *Samurai* to *Burakumin* (the outcaste). Because no clear boundary existed between "the women" and prostitutes, prostitutes were able to reintegrate into the society after they ceased their trade. To elucidate the difference, the chapter will delineate the quite different cultural and social settings in which prostitution was practiced.

Chapter 2 examines how the prostitute was reconceptualized and integrated to the modern state formation. At the end of the twentieth century, public argument between feminists became increasingly polarized over prostitution. One group maintains a radical feminist view and argues that men's

use of prostitution is a form of degrading women. This group argues that the practice of prostitution reduces women to sexual objects. The other group says that prostitution is a legitimate and acceptable form of employment freely "chosen" by women. Some feminists even argue that prostitution represents sexual liberation for women.

Strikingly, the language of "choice" introduced by the prostitutes' rights movement echoes the discourse on the prostitute that has dominated in Japan for decades. The dominant discourse on prostitutes since the Meiji period suggests that women willingly "choose" to become prostitutes because of the monetary needs of the families. But the rhetoric of "choice" has never explained how a woman's options have been constituted. It neglects the socio-economic and individual factors that lead women into prostitution. Since the Meiji period, I argue, the Japanese state has used the word "choice" in order to place the responsibility for prostitution upon women. For example, in the recent debates on the issue of "comfort women", the Japanese defenders of "comfort women" have used the rhetoric of "choice" persistently to make military sexual slavery seem acceptable.

An examination of laws and official documents will provide us with a sense of how prostitution was constructed in official discourses. Understanding government arguments is particularly important since they often come to be equated simply with "how things are," and thus with common sense itself, "the one structure of ideas which everybody shares."[7] The chapter will therefore examine in detail the official documents issued by the Meiji government in order

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[7] Stuart Hall, Charles Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Robert, *Policing The Crisis: Mugging, The State, and Law and Order* (London and Bashingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1978) 156.

to trace the shifting meaning of being a prostitute and the changing circumstances of prostitution. In so doing, I argue, the rhetoric of women's "free choice" in becoming prostitutes was used to justify the exclusion of the prostitute from "the women". Because of this rhetoric, people came to believe that prostitution was a consequence of personal moral weakness and therefore came to blame women for prostitution.

Chapter 3 will look at the "good wife, wise mother" ideology that became the moral code of "the women". Despite growing literature, both in English and Japanese, addressing the "good wife, wise mother" ideology, no one has examined the effect of this principle on discourses on prostitutes. Most scholars agree that the "good wife, wise mother" ideology, which articulated women's gender roles as wives and mothers, was imposed on all women regardless of their classes.[8] But I argue the official definition of womanhood articulated in the "good wife, wise mother" ideology marginalized a particular class of women, namely prostitutes. More specifically, in parallel to the legal change defining the "good wife, wise mother", the implementation of the ideology mapped prostitutes and their bodies as distinct from others and others' bodies. It separated the female body into the reproductive body and the unreproductive body. Chapter 3 further examines in what ways the "good wife, wise mother" ideology was used as a tool to create a boundary between wives and the prostitute by showing how "the women" formulated their own identity by producing prostitutes as the "others". I use Gramsci's concept of ideology—a necessary tool for the dominant class to gain hegemony by binding together a block of diverse social elements in acting as

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[8] For example, in her book, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan* (The code: "Good wife and wise mother). Koyama Shizuko details shifting official definition of "womanhood". As yet she does not touch upon the women who were placed outside the code.

cement or as an agent of social unification through the elaboration and penetration of it—[9] to frame my argument.

Chapter 4 explores anti-prostitution movements in Japan. The international anti-prostitution movements emerged during the last three decades of the nineteenth century and spread to Japan in the 1920s. One feminist reformer in Britain, Ellice Hopkins, argued:

> Men drive us women into two classes: us pure women, for whom nothing is too good, and those others for whom nothing is too bad.[10]

Hopkins firmly placed responsibility for prostitution on men. Unlike in Britain where prostitutes were considered the archetypal victims of industrialization, in Japan, they were perceived as ruined women even by the reformers. Japanese anti-prostitution advocates put responsibility for prostitution on women, not on men. They directly imported the "whore stigma" from the West and used it to achieve their political agenda. By examining representations of prostitutes in printings and journals written by prostitution abolitionists, the chapter demonstrates on how the prostitute was reconceptualized and constructed. From this, I argue, the discourse on prostitution was strongly influenced by the language used by prostitution abolitionists. Anti-prostitution crusaders, regardless of their intentions, spread the "whore stigma", which was essentially a "divide and conquer" instrument of sexist social control.

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[9] Roger Simon, *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction* (London: Laurence and Wishart, 1982) 61.
[10] Paula Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) 31.

Chapter 5 will delineate the experience of *karayuki-san,*[11] women who went overseas to work as prostitutes during the Meiji and Taisho period. Through the study of *karayuki-san*, the chapter demonstrates how socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions affected the discourse on the prostitute. The experiences of *karayuki-san* suggests how the same discrimination against class and gender that promoted the traffic of Japanese women overseas in the Meiji and Taisho period would later justify the large-scale abduction of Asian women as military "comfort women" prior to and during World War II.

Sources

The sources used for the thesis, by the nature of its subject matter alone, are bound to be partial and fragmentary. The primary sources of this essay are printed official documents, such as written laws and edicts, and other documents issued by government institutions. The oral history of prostitutes themselves is sparsely documented because of the nature of their job, yet there is some valuable research based on oral history. Although most of the accounts were written from particular perspectives, I will piece the existing literature together and listen to the voices of prostitutes. Specialist journals, such as *Seitō* (Blue Stockings), *Kakusei* (The Purity Society) and *Kyōfūkai Zasshi* (Christian Magazine), proved invaluable in providing in-depth coverage of the issues. Particularly *Kakusei* is valuable, for it attracted many contributors from a variety of occupations and orientations: politicians, scholars, Christians, and non-Christians alike. Another

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[11]The term initially referred to the people of northern Kyushu who sought work overseas regardless of their sexes. Later, the term specifically came to refer to women who went overseas and practiced prostitution between the 1860s and 1930s.

potentially rich body of material is autobiographies written by female intellectuals, though most of them are again written from particular perspectives. Also the writings of the novelists are insightful. Particularly, the background details inserted by authors to authenticate place and character are very valuable. Descriptions of personal appearance, references to prices, and the myriad of small details these authors use to situate their works are important pieces of historical evidence to which can be applied the tests used for other kinds of documentation. By analyzing these existing sources with critical eyes and piecing them together, this thesis will examine the discourses on prostitutes in Japan as these discourses developed over time.

Chapter1. Discourses on Prostitution in the Tokugawa Period

An extensive literature, in both Japanese and English, has been produced on the issue of prostitution in the Tokugawa period. These texts tend to adopt one of two competing viewpoints. The first draws its arguments from feminist theory and claims that the pleasure quarter was the apex of the exploitation of women. For example, Takamure Itsue, a feminist historian, argues that the Tokugawa period was the peak of women's oppression.[12] Ueno Chizuko also claims that this period saw the establishment of a sexual double standard "which paralleled contemporary Victorian morality and its binary opposition of Madonna and femme fatale." [13] They both stress that the dichotomy—good women/bad women—emerged during the Tokugawa period. By contrast, the other group —which includes cultural historians, ethnologists and scholars of Japanese literature—emphasizes the different cultural settings between the Tokugawa and the Meiji period and claims the irrelevance of imposing modern viewpoints on the analysis of prostitution in the earlier period.[14] Each viewpoint provides not only

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[12] Itsue Takamure, *Josei no Rekishi, Jōkan* (Women's history, vol.1) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1972) 287. Takamure argues that the oppression of women was accompanied with the creation of the *ie* system during the Tokugawa period. Under the *ie* system, women were divided into two categories: wives and prostitutes. Many Japanese feminist historians agree with this view.

[13] Chizuko Ueno, "Lusty Pregnant Women and Erotic Mothers: Representations of Female Sexuality in Erotic Art in Edo," in *Imaging/ Reading Eros: Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750-1850* (Bloomington: Indiana University, The East Asian Culture Center, 1995) 110.

[14] Masajirō Takigawa, *Yoshiwara no Shiki* (Four seasons in Yoshiwara) (Tokyo: Seishibō, 1971); Junko Saeki, *Iro to Ai no Hikakubunkashi* (A comparative cultural history of 'eros' and 'love') (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998); Etsuko Yamashita, *Nihon Josei Kaihō Shisō no Kigen: Post-feminism Shiron* (The origin of the idea of emancipation of women in Japan: The post-feminism thoughts) (Tokyo: Kaimeisha, 1988).

a great deal of information on pleasure quarters but also the specificity of cultural and moral settings of the period. Chapter 1 therefore sets out to draw its terms of reference from both approaches and explores the unique cultural settings in which prostitution was practiced.

In this chapter, I examine the following points, which may have had an effect on the discourse on prostitution in one way or another. First, I look at the Tokugawa official discourse on prostitutes that sharply contrasts with the Meiji official discourse. Second, I examine women's lives, particularly the sexual morality among the commoner class from which the majority of prostitutes were drawn. Third, I explore the life of the pleasure quarters followed by the cultural representations of it. Cultural representations are insufficient as historical evidence; nonetheless, they are useful since they molded the popular discourse on prostitutes. Based on these, I argue that the boundary between "the women" and prostitutes was rather fluid, and it was possible for women to cross it.

The objectives of the Tokugawa government in building pleasure quarters

In theory, Tokugawa society was made up of a rigid hierarchy of four classes—namely, the samurai at the top followed by the peasants, the artisans, and the merchants at the bottom. Outside the four classes was the outcaste. But in practice, the main division was between three groups: the samurai and wealthy merchants, the commoners, and the outcastes. [15] The outcaste encompassed a variety of occupations and included the *kugaishu* (literally

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[15] Yasuko Imai, "The Emergence of the Japanese Shufu: Why a Shufu Is More Than a Housewife'," in *U.S. Japan Women's Journal*, English Supplement, no.6, 1994, 63.

meaning 'the people living in the public world'). According to the Japanese historian Amino Yoshihiko, prior to the Tokugawa period, the *kugaishu* signified people who directly served the imperial court in one way or another. Amino refers to *kugaishu* as "privileged others" located outside government control.[16] Among the *kugaishu* were artists, which included dancers and singers, who often practiced prostitution.

The pleasure quarter was called the *kugai* (literally meaning 'public space') throughout its history. *Kugai* had originally signified the place in which people who had escaped from their masters' control lived. By running into *kugai*, people were able to free themselves from the master/servant relationships that dominated feudal Japan.[17] *Kugai* gradually shifted its meaning from "the public place" to "the suffering place" in the late Tokugawa period.[18] But as we shall see, throughout the Tokugawa period, the pleasure quarters functioned as *kugai* (a place free from constraints) in a variety of ways.

From the moment the Tokugawa shoguns who ruled during the entire Edo period came to power, the government made every possible effort to freeze the class system in order to achieve unity and perpetuate its power. The establishment of a stable Tokugawa regime resulted in the growth of a mercantile economy within a still largely agricultural society. This socio-economic change

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[16] For further discussion regarding *kugaishū*, see Yoshihiko Amino, *Muen, Kugai, Raku: Nihon Chūsei no Jiyū to Heiwa* (Free from constraints, public world, and comfort: Freedom and peace in medieval Japan) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987).

[17] Amino, *Muen, Kugai, Raku: Nihon Chūsei no Jiyū to Heiwa*, 121.

[18] Amino, *Muen, Kugai, Raku: Nihon Chūsei no Jiyū to Heiwa*, 298-301. Japanese historians commonly agreed that the shift in the meaning of *kugai*, in regard to pleasure quarters, occurred during the Meiji period. But Amino's discovery of a poem written in the Tokugawa period suggests the shift, from the public place to the suffering place, occurred in the late Tokugawa period.

promoted the growth of cities and favored the rise of new independent merchants, both in numbers and in importance. The primary concern of the government was to suppress anything that could possibly pose a threat to authority. The behavior of the samurai class, which included not only the authorities but also those considered to be potential rivals and enemies of the authorities, was fairly successfully regulated by the "Samurai Codes of Behavior" as well as by the rule of *san-kin-kōtai* (alternate-year attendance), promulgated in 1635. More difficult to control for the Tokugawa authorities was the merchant class, which was positioned outside the Samurai Code that efficiently regulated the samurai class. Despite sporadic confiscations of the merchants' assets and occasional arbitrary annulments of all debts to secure government finances, the financial power of merchants increased. In these socio-economic conditions, the government found it useful to provide merchants with pleasure to divert their energies from potentially rebellious action."[19] Since the establishment of the pleasure quarters, samurai and, above all, wealthy merchants directed their energies and economic power to the cultural and hedonistic fields. The well-to-do merchants, who were theoretically of the lowest social class, could assert themselves and escape from the frustration of the other classes of society that despised them. The merchants were able to realize a measure of social equality with, or even superiority to, the

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[19] Gary Leupp, *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press. 1995) 156; Gregory Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press. 1999) 110. The *Buke sho-hatto* (Laws for Samurai Households), a basic legal document defining proper samurai behavior, promulgated in 1615, banned the samurai visiting pleasure quarters by citing "lasciviousness as a cause of state ruin" without specifying whether the object of lust was male or female." The fact that the samurai class was officially prohibited from visiting pleasure quarters suggests that these places were provided primarily for the rising merchant class.

samurai that was impossible elsewhere. This eventually discouraged dissidents of potential rivals from turning to struggles for political influence or rights by consuming their energies and resources, according them cultural status, and sapping their energies, thereby enabled the government to maintain social order.[20]

It was not only samurai and merchants but, more surprisingly, the prostitutes who may have posed a potential threat to the government. Various types of prostitutes existed before and during the Tokugawa period. Well into the Tokugawa period, Amino argues, prostitutes were considered to have some sort of shamanistic power. They were "privileged others" who directly served the imperial court and, therefore, were beyond the bounds of social customs or government control.[21] They carried on their trade in a variety of places, such as in front of temples and shrines, ports, post stations, bathhouses; all of these places were the so-called *kugai* (public place) and considered to be sacred places.[22] For example, *Arukimiko* (literally meaning 'traveling shaman') and *Kumanobikuni* (traveling Buddhist nun), who were believed to have shamanistic power, traveled freely and provided people with praying and fortune-telling, as well as sexual services. Their shamanistic nature evoked a certain awe and respect among people, although the government reduced them to the outcaste.[23]

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[20] Ivan Morris, Introduction, *The Life of an Amorous Woman and Other Writings* (Norfork, Connecticut: A New Directions Book, 1963) 8. Morris compared the Tokugawa merchants with the bourgeoisie in the West and claims that pleasure quarters prevented Tokugawa merchants from taking political actions toward raising their status in society.

[21] Yoshihiko Amino, "Muen no Onna (A woman free from constraints)," in *Agora*, no.34, 1988, 29.

[22] Amino, *Muen, Kugai, Raku: Nihon Chūsei no Jiyū to Heiwa.*

[23] Ai Maeda, "Han-Toshi toshiteno Kuruwa (An anti-city: The pleasure quarter)," in *Kokubungaku*, Oct, 1981, 30-31.

Kabuki actresses, *Noh* dancers and singers also engaged in prostitution. Their performances usually took place on the open-air stages set up in *kugai*—in front of shrines and temples as well as on the riverbank—to which the government could not extend its power, and attracted a large number of audiences.[24] The actresses often dressed like men and thus opposed the ideal femininity dictated by the government. In addition, their performances often conveyed political messages.[25] For example, the first *kabuki* performance took place in Kyoto in 1603, when peace had barely been established after two centuries of continuous civil war. As an actress sang, "This society is a state of unrest. Don't care about anything! Let's dance, sing, and just have fun!" audiences were electrified. This caused mass hysteria.[26] Such female *kabuki* troupes existed throughout Japan in the major cities. According to Maeda, their energetic, erotic, and mysterious performances had a power that sometimes drove a mob mad.[27] Frequent occurrences of fighting among men over actresses (i.e. prostitutes) led the *bakufu* authorities to worry about the harmful influence *kabuki* might exert upon society. This resulted in a ban on female *kabuki* in 1629. These findings suggest that the government considered the *kugaishu* a possible source of disruption.

It is well documented that the Tokugawa government adopted an isolationist policy accompanied by a series of confinement policies to eliminate potential dangers. For example, the government prohibited Christianity, and it confined the Chinese and Dutch men, who were allowed to reside in Japan under strict control, to a small island off Nagasaki. This prevented subversive ideas

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[24] Maeda, "Han-Toshi toshiteno Kuruwa," 32-33.
[25] Maeda, "Han-Toshi toshiteno Kuruwa," 32-38.
[26] Maeda, "Han-Toshi toshiteno Kuruwa," 32.
[27] Maeda, "Han-Toshi toshiteno Kuruwa," 32.

from contaminating the populace. Probably for the same reasons, the government moved to confine *kugaishu* who practiced prostitution to designated pleasure quarters. Maeda argues, by detaching prostitutes from *kugai* and confining them to pleasure quarters, the Tokugawa authorities attempted to invalidate their shamanistic nature and to reduce the aura surrounding them.[28] In short, the establishment of authorized pleasure quarters eventually enabled the government to pull the teeth of two potential dangers: merchants and prostitutes. It was in this social environment that twenty-five *yūkaku* (pleasure quarters) —among them Yoshiwara in Edo, Shimabara in Kyoto, and Shinmachi in Osaka—were officially approved by the Tokugawa government.

Official discourses on prostitutes

In 1616, the Tokugawa government officially banned human trafficking. But it made prostitution an exception in such cases as people having no other means to pay taxes.[29] The government even approved of married women engaging in prostitution with the consent of their husbands.[30] The law was class neutral and, in theory, allowed women from all levels of society to become prostitutes. But as we shall see, prostitutes were most likely to be the daughters of poor agrarian families. Prostitutes and brothel owners alike were officially categorized as outcastes. However, the following finding leads us to believe that the Tokugawa officials may have maintained the notion that prostitutes were sacred beings.

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[28] Maeda, "Han-Toshi toshiteno Kuruwa," 32.
[29] Matsunosuke Nishiyama, "Kuruwa no Seiritsu (The origin of the pleasure quarters)," *Kokubungaku*, Oct, 1981, 21.
[30] Shun'ichi Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi* (A History of Japanese licensed prostitution) (Tokyo: Chūo Hōki Shuppankai, 1983) 5.

Yoshiwara, a pleasure quarter in Edo, was obliged to provide women for *Hyōteijo* (the equivalent to today's supreme court) to serve tea and meals to the government officials whenever the court was in session.[31] *Hyōteijo* was considered a sacred place where criminals were put on trial in the name of the emperor, a figure directly associated with God. According to Amino, throughout the medieval era, prostitutes were called on for ceremonies to cleanse the *ba* (place) because they were believed to have some sort of sacred power.[32] Apparently the continuation of this practice of providing prostitutes for *Hyōteijo* during the Tokugawa period suggests a continuity of the medieval custom. In the absence of any strong cultural bias against sexual behavior, Amino argues, prostitutes were still somewhat respected by the authorities during the Tokugawa period.[33]

Although the government had banned prostitution outside authorized areas, there were nevertheless numerous other marketplaces for sex. These places were called *okabasho* (literally meaning 'a place on the ground') in contrast to the authorized pleasure quarters and were scattered throughout the cities.[34] For example, many inns located in post stations kept illegal prostitutes, *meshimori onna* (literally meaning 'a rice serving woman'), to attract travelers. The Tokugawa government regulated the number of *meshimori onna* but never attempted to eliminate them. The government's indecisive attitude toward illicit

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[31] Takigawa, *Yoshiwara no Shiki*, 45.
[32] Amino, "Muen no Onna," 29-33.
[33] Amino, "Muen no Onna," 32.
[34] Haruo Suwa, "Kuruwa no Asobi (Play in the pleasure quarter)," in *Kokubungaku*, Oct, 1981, 71. In contrast to the 'floating world', which referred to the pleasure quarters, other market places for sex were called *okabasho*, which implies 'real world'. In Edo alone, there were more than 100 *okabasho*.

prostitution further boosted the *okabasho*. The *okabasho* required less formality and expense from customers and, therefore, became more popular than the authorized pleasure quarters. It was from the *okabasho* that the popular *geisha* (geisha literally means 'an artist' but, in practice, 'a high-ranking prostitute') emerged in the late 1700s and usurped the popularity of women in authorized pleasure quarters.[35]

In sharp contrast to the Meiji regime, as we shall see in the following chapter, the Tokugawa government seldom placed responsibility for prostitution upon women. It was the men—whether they were brothel owners, prostitution brokers, or customers—who were heavily punished for their violation of the law. But the punishment often did not extend to women, the prostitutes. Throughout the Tokugawa official discourse, prostitutes—authorized or illegal—were viewed as "good filial women" who sacrificed themselves for their poverty stricken families. Official documents are filled with narratives that sympathized or praised prostitutes as either filial daughters or devoted wives.[36]

The official narratives may have had certain favorable effects on molding popular attitudes toward prostitutes. But it would be misleading to assume that the government simply approved and praised prostitution. The official narrative is often not a simple reflection of official views, but a reversal or masking of reality. As many historians reveal, the Tokugawa government

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[35] Haruo Suwa, "Kuruwa no Asobi," 71-74.

[36] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 37, 48. Yamamoto cites documents made by the Bakufu that stated that both licensed and unlicensed prostitutes entered their trade primarily for the sake of either their poor parents or husbands. Therefore, they should not be blamed for their occupation. In the official documents, even illicit prostitutes were sympathetically depicted as passive victims of poverty despite their violation of the law. The official documents say that although the illicit prostitutes violated the law, they were worthy of sympathy because of their good motivations.

received most of its finances from taxing peasants. Failure to collect taxes from peasants might have directly threatened the government's finances. The possibility of indenturing one's daughter or wife to a brothel in hard economic times allowed the government to impose heavy taxes on peasants. It is undeniable that the official approval of prostitution as a legitimate response to poverty indirectly contributed to safeguarding government's finances.

Women's lives in the Tokugawa period

Women's experiences in the Tokugawa period varied depending on their class position. But regardless of class position, all women were expected to marry, though the primary aims of marriage for each class differed from one another. Generally speaking, the overarching objectives were as follows: providing a male heir, obtaining additional labor for the household, and advancing the household's status or material interests. Although wives were expected to provide a male heir, unlike the later period, neither the samurai nor the commoner class regarded childbearing and mothering as wives' primary obligations. While children, especially sons, were essential to the continuity of the *ie* (stem family) and for worshipping ancestry, the Japanese family system had ways to compensate for infertility. For example, it was common practice for men of the samurai and the wealthy merchant class to have concubines in order to carry on the male bloodline. In fact, of fifteen Tokugawa Shoguns, twelve were the sons of concubines.[37] Among other classes, the adoption of sons was widely practiced.

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[37] Yōichi Saitō and Shinzaburō Ōishi, *Mibun Sabetsu Shakai no Shinjitsu: Shinsho, Edo Jidai* (The truth about the class society: the Edo period) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995) 17.

Thus, as Anne Walthall states, "a woman's womb was . . . less significant than the ability to maintain the family's fortune and reputation."[38] In contrast to the later period, the duty of wives was equated with neither childbearing nor mothering. As we shall see, this separation or disidentification of wifehood from motherhood affected the discourse on prostitution in a favorable way.

The life of the samurai class women

For members of the samurai and wealthy merchant class, marriage had nothing to do with love but was primarily a political matter arranged by parents to create an advantageous alliance between families. The most important consideration in arranging a marriage was the status of the bride's house; mutual love was the least concern.[39] Since political considerations took priority, the convivial aspect of family life was neglected—conjugal sex within marriage was no more than a means for producing a male heir. Wives were neither expected to provide sexual gratification for men nor to expect it themselves. The social norm discouraged sexual pleasure within marriage and located it outside marriage.[40]

From an early age, the samurai class girls were taught the Confucian moral code that allowed male promiscuity, while it placed female chastity as the ultimate virtue of womanhood and stigmatized divorce and remarriage. The

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[38] Anne Walthall. "The Life Cycle of Farm Women," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945,* ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991) 60.

[39] Kikue Yamakawa, *Women of the Mito Domain: Recollections of Samurai Family Life,* trans. K. N. Wildman (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1992).

[40] Yukichi Fukuzawa, *Nihon Fujinron* (Japanese women), rept. in *Fukuzawa Yukichi: Gendai Nihon Shisō Taikei, Vol.2* (Fukuzawa Yukichi: Modern Japanese thoughts, Vol.2), ed. Ienaga Saburō (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1963) 355.

following quotes from *Onna Daigaku* (The Greater Learning for Women), the manual commonly used by the samurai class women, encouraged women to accept male promiscuity:

> A woman shall be divorced if she fails to bear children, the reason for this rule being that woman is sought in marriage for the purpose of giving men posterity. A barren woman should, however, be retained if her heart is virtuous and her conduct correct and free from jealousy, in which case a child of the same blood must be adopted; neither is there any just cause for a man to divorce a barren wife, if he has children by a concubine.[41]

Girls used this manual over and over for practicing their reading and writing. Yamakawa states that as a consequence, before understanding what the words meant, daughters of the samurai household came as a matter of course to accept them as true. In fact, Yamakawa maintains, many girls grew up in families where concubines and their children were present and eventually took the practice for granted rather than being critical of it.[42]

The belief that it was a moral duty to continue the male ancestral bloodline encouraged childless wives readily to agree to their husbands' taking concubines. Even if the concubine bore a child, the wife's position as official mother would be higher than that of the actual mother. In the samurai and wealthy merchant societies where a wife could be divorced by reason of her failure to bear children, Yamakawa argues that many women probably did feel that the presence of a concubine was preferable to being divorced for failure to bear a child,

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[41] Yamakawa, *Women of the Mito Domain*, 106. Cited from the translation by B.H. Chamberlain in *Things Japanese* (London: John Murray, 1905) 503-504.

[42] Yamakawa, *Women of the Mito Domain*, 106.

as they lacked the means of economic independence.[43]

What were the roles, then, of the samurai wives? Historian Koyama Shizuko argues that the concept of a mother as an educator, a notion prevalent in modern Japan, did not exist during the Tokugawa period.[44] Her careful investigation of Tokugawa women's manuals reveals that their authors did not consider education a maternal duty. On the contrary, women's manuals stressed extensive female moral deficiencies that justified the exclusion of wives from mothering.[45] Many Japanese still quote the proverb, "woman's thinking is shallow." The origins of this idea of women's extensive infirmities are repeatedly listed in *Onna Daigaku*:

> The common evil natures of woman are: (a) to be willful, (b) to be offended easily and be reproached, (c) to be inclined to abuse others, (d) to be jealous, (e) to be shallow-witted. Seven or eight out of every ten women offended above all by these five sins. This is what makes woman inferior to man. . . . In bringing up her children, she merely follows instinct and not reason; so she cannot educate them properly. Utterly devoid of wisdom, she should humbly follow her husband in everything.[46]

These moral deficiencies, supposedly women's characteristics by nature, made wives ill suited for mothering. In addition to female stupidity, a wife was a newcomer to her husband's household and, therefore, had questionable loyalties. This restricted women to playing a limited role in the care and education of the children. Instead, wet nurses provided constant care for infants, while nannies

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[43] Yamakawa, *Women of The Mito Domain*, 107-108.
[44] Shizuko Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan* (Tokyo: Sōkei Shobō, 1991) 19.
[45] Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 19-22.
[46] Shizue Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart Inc., 1935) 280.

watched toddlers and older children.[47] With respect to education, child education manuals were written exclusively for men.[48] The male head of the household and father-in-law had authority over child rearing and education, especially the upbringing of the heir.[49] This was because Confucian logic dictated that male children would assume positions of influence in society, and therefore needed to be reared by virtuous men and not by inferior women.[50]

The women's manuals admonished the samurai wives to serve their in-laws faithfully, to practice frugality and modesty, and to learn to manage the household and servants skillfully. But they scarcely mentioned the responsibilities of motherhood. In fact, their work for the household, waiting on their husband and in-laws and supervising clothing, household décor, and kitchen supplies as well as servants, left wives little time to spend with their children.[51] Thus, as the proverb "borrowed wombs" suggests, the role of women in wealthy families was neither that of child-bearer nor mother but rather a role close to that of domestic servant.[52] Arduous wives' tasks virtually confined women to their

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[47] Kathleen Uno, *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twenty Century Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999) 19-36.

[48] Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 22.

[49] Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 22; Haruko, Hatoyama. *Waga Jijoden* My autobiography) (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Center, 1997) 37-49. In her autobiography, Hatoyama—born in the late Tokugawa period to the samurai class — described her childhood. In her family, there was a clear hierarchy between her father and mother. Child-education was thoroughly entrusted to her father, while household management was her mother's role with instructions from the mother-in-law. As a result, Hatoyama recalls, she looked down on her mother because of her helplessness.

[50] Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 22-23.

[51] Uno, *Passage to Modernity*, 31-32.

[52] Hatoyama, *Waga Jijoden*, 37-49. Hatoyama refers to the relationship between her father and mother as that of master/servant relationship. She states that this sort of relationship was common amongst the samurai class families.

houses and allowed for few occasions to go out. In addition, the samurai class woman was discouraged from going out since going out alone was considered unseemly and liable to damage the reputation of the husband.[53] They were officially forbidden to go to the theaters.[54] Thus, it was unusual to see samurai class women on the street.[55] It would not, therefore, be an over exaggeration to say that the more refined women whom Westerners met on public occasions were exclusively prostitutes. This eventually caused Japan to be known as a "Geisha country."

The life of the commoner class women

A growing body of literature reveals that women of the commoner class experienced lives of much greater freedom and diversity than the official ideology would lead us to believe. The customs for the samurai class were not, in fact, customs common to all Japanese. Unlike the Christian morality that regulated Western public morals, Shinto belief provided no concepts for establishing a code of public morals. Restraints upon sexual pleasures applied only to the samurai class women, who emulated the Confucian moral code. Since the official morality was not an internalized religious morality common to all believers, behavior among commoners was based on social norms. For example, while marriage for the samurai class was primarily a political matter arranged by a patriarch, the selection of a prospective spouse among commoners was generally

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[53] Yamakawa, *Women of The Mito Domain*, 16; Fukuzawa, *Nihon Fujinron*, 359.
[54] Yamakawa, *Women of The Mito Domain*, 22.
[55] Yamakawa, *Women of The Mito Domain*, 16.

left to the young people.[56] Marriage for the commoner class was the uniting of a bride and groom in a companionable relationship. A woman's sexual pleasure was by no means prohibited, but it was located within the marital relationship and made up the core of the conjugal union.

The yobai (night crawling) custom

The following quote from a Christian missionary report may have been written from a particular Christian perspective, but Japanese historians agree that it certainly demonstrates a common sexual norm among young villagers.

> In Europe, people respect women's virginity and chastity. But Japanese people are amazingly unconcerned about women's virginity. Even if an unmarried woman loses her virginity, her community does not stigmatize her at all. Losing virginity does not prevent her from marrying.[57]

In all likelihood, premarital sex was a usual practice among village youths. Japanese ethnologists discovered a number of villages have had the *yobai* custom (night crawling) that provided young people with considerable freedom of

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[56] Tsuneichi Miyamoto, *Wasurerareta Nihonjin* (The Japanese people without a history), 9th ed, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987); Kunio Yanagita, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era: Manners and Customs* (Tokyo: The Tōyō Bunko, 1969).

[57] Luis Frois, *Europe Bunka to Nihon Bunka* (European culture and Japanese culture), ed. A. Okada (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko 1991) 39.

association with the opposite sexes.[58] The *wakamono yado* (communal-lodging system) provided boys and girls with opportunities to get together and often to have premarital sexual relationships. After going through several premarital sexual experimentations, boys and girls chose their partners.[59] Rather than meddling in this practice, girls' parents welcomed night visits from boys. Girls who had passed the age of puberty were tacitly allowed to become familiar with men.[60] These findings suggest that villagers neither cared about girls' chastity nor valued virginity even in the first marriage. Villagers even tended to scorn both men and women who had no premarital sexual experimentation.[61]

Divorce and remarriage

Historian Kurachi's investigation of numerous reports and petitions written by Jesuit missionaries reveals commoners' perceptions regarding divorce and remarriage. According to a missionary report, the most difficult problem with

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[58] Amino, "Muen no Onna"; Kunio Yanagita, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era: Manners and Customs*; Robert Smith and Ella Lury Wiswell, *The through Its Leisure.* ed. Sepp Linhart and Sabine Fruhstuck (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998) 60. Fruhstuck quotes from Takeji Komatsu, "Shonen no Seiyoku Mondai ," in *Kakusei*, vol.3, no.2, 1913, 24-27. Komatsu states that traditionally Japanese have believed that venereal diseases were as "harmless as catching a cold." For further discussion on Japanese perceptions regarding VD, see Akira Ishihara, and Levy Howard S. *The Tao of Sex: An Annotated Translation of the Twenty-eighth Section of The Essence of Medical Prescriptions (Ishinpo)* (Yokohama: Shibundo, 1968). *Women of Suye Mura* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Sabine Fruhstuck, "The Science Took Over: Sex, Leisure, and Medicine at the Beginning of the Twenty Century," *The Culture of Japan as Seen*

[59] Yanagita, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era: Manners and Customs*, 240; Miyamoto, *Wasurerareta Nihonjin*, 78-80.

[60] Miyamoto, *Wasurerareta Nihonjin*, 98.

[61] Yamashita, *Nihon Josei Kaihō Shisō no Kigen,* 49.

spreading Christianity in Japan was likely to be that Christian doctrine banned both divorce and remarriage. Frois wrote:

> In Europe, divorce is sinful and brings dishonor to both husbands and wives. But Japanese people frequently divorce and remarry. Divorced women have no disadvantage with respect to their remarriage. In contrast to Europe where men usually initiate divorce, in Japan, women often initiate divorce.[62]

Without having any religious doctrines that stigmatized divorce, it was likely unthinkable for the Japanese to maintain marital relationships once mutual love diminished.[63]

A number of scholars have understood that a high divorce rate in the Tokugawa period demonstrated women's low status in marriage. The so-called *mikudarihan* (three and a half lines), a document exclusively written by men, has been considered as an indicator of the unequal status of men and women. The most common form of a *mikudarihan* is given below:

> To my wife. *For my personal reasons*, I divorce you. There is no objection to your marrying anyone whomsoever [emphasis mine].[64]

Japanese historians have analyzed the phrase "for [his] personal reasons" as demonstrating an arbitrary and ruthless action carried out by the husband

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[62] Frois, *Europe Bunka to Nihon Bunka*, 49.

[63] Katsunao Kurachi, *Seito Karada no Kinsei-shi* (Modern history: Sex and body) (Tokyo: Tokyo Shobō, 1989) 42-43. Kurachi cites questions asked by believers regarding divorce and remarriage from the Christian manual, *Dochiriina Kirishitan.*

[64] Tadashi Takagi, *Mikudarihan: Edo no Rikon to Josei tachi* (Mikudarihan: Women and divorce in the Edo period) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987) 81. Of the 500 pieces of *mikudarihan* he investigated, the most frequent reason for divorce is stated as men's personal reasons.

against the wife. But family historian Takagi Tadashi's investigation of more than 500 pieces of *mikudarihan* discovered that more women than men initiated divorces. Takagi claims the phrase, "for [his] personal reasons," was often used to cover up women's responsibilities for the breakup and thereby enable them to remarry. For example, Takagi discovered that even if the wife's adultery resulted in divorce, her husband wrote a *mikudarihan* stating "for [his] personal reasons," and seldom touched upon the woman's role in the ending of the marriage, whether the cause be the husband's seeking divorce or her initiating the divorce herself.[65] Takagi demonstrates a number of similar cases and argues that a substantial portion of divorces that occurred throughout the Tokugawa period were at the initiative of the women.

The law required both men and women to possess a *mikudarihan* in order to remarry. To be sure, women were discriminated against by the law because only men were allowed to write a *mikudarihan* and initiate a divorce. But it would be misleading to assume that husbands simply discarded their wives. On the contrary, Takagi's investigation of supplementary documents to *mikudarihan* discovered that in many cases it was the wife who requested her husband to write a *mikudarihan*, often against his will. In each case, the *mikudarihan* rarely touched upon the real causes for the divorce but simply stated that the divorce occurred because of the husband's personal reasons.[66] In this respect, as Takagi argues, writing a *mikudarihan* should be understood as a man's duty rather than as a privilege.[67] The *mikudarihan* is not necessarily indicative of the unequal status between men and women. On the contrary,

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[65] Takagi, *Mikudarihan*, 19.
[66] Takagi, *Mikudarihan*, 19.
[67] Takagi, *Mikudarihan*, 18.

divorce was not a disadvantage for women. As the *mikudarihan* phrase "There is no objection to your marrying anyone whomsoever" suggests, women were entirely free to contract a new marriage once they were divorced.

In all likelihood, a woman's willingness to divorce rested with her status within the household as well as in her community. Since women were valued as productive workers, their natal families would willingly accept their divorced daughters back. Among the commoner class, divorce was by no means considered a social stigma but rather regarded simply as a part of life.[68] A number of scholars discovered that the divorce rate in some agricultural villages was roughly 15 percent in the Tokugawa period. This means approximately one out of seven marriages ended in divorce. Most divorces occurred before women reached the age of 30, and nearly 90 percent of women remarried.[69] Thus, divorced women had little difficulty in remarrying. These findings have two significant implications with respect to the position of the prostitute in their communities. Firstly, among the commoner class, neither virginity nor chastity was valued as they were for the samurai class. Secondly, women were still of marriageable age in their late 20s or early 30s.

Frois also discussed the frequency of abortions and infanticide in Japan. Frois reported:

> In Europe, women seldom have abortions. But this is quite frequent in Japan. I've heard a story about a woman who got an abortion twenty times. Likewise, in Europe infanticide rarely or never happens. But in Japan, if women find it hard bringing up their babies, they simply kill them by stepping on their throats.[70]

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[68] Takagi, *Mikudarihan.*
[69] Laurel L. Cornell, "Peasant Women and Divorce in Preindustrial Japan," in *Signs*, Summer, 1990, 716-719; Takagi, *Mikudarihan*, 30.
[70] Frois, *Europe Bunka to Nihon Bunka*, 50-51.

Like Frois, many Japanese scholars have understood that the root cause of the frequency of abortion and infanticide was poverty.[71] But medieval historian Amino argues that Japanese morality, which did not necessarily identify sex with procreation, was responsible for frequent abortions and infanticides. Amino claims that a substantial number of abortions and infanticides took place to cover up adultery.[72] The commoner's sexual norms, as we have seen, suggest that poverty alone was insufficient in explaining high abortion and infanticide rates.

Who became prostitutes?

The majority of prostitutes came from essentially agricultural societies where domination by a wealthy class molded the patterns of life from generation to generation.[73] An abundance of literature reveals the poor living standard of peasants in Japan. In his novel *Tsuchi* (Soil), Nagatsuka Takashi—who was born and grew up in an agrarian household in the Meiji period—compares a peasant's life to a worm that crawls around the land. Nagatsuka demonstrates how the agricultural experience produced women generally accustomed to hard work, few comforts, and a life from birth to death that remained exactly the same. Since women's labor was in high demand for farming, handicrafts and other productive tasks, peasants' wives had hardly any time to devote to child rearing.

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[71] Kurachi, *Sei to Karada no Kinseishi*, 51; Yuki Fujime, *Sei no Rekishigaku* (The history of sexuality) (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan) 119. Fujime explains the frequency of abortion and infanticide thoroughly in relation to agrarian poverty.

[72] Amino, "Muen no Onna," 24.

[73] Hidemasa Maki, *Jinshin Baibai* (Human trafficking), 5th ed, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975) 143. Maki's research on contracts of indentured servitude revealed that the majority of women came from agrarian families.

Child rearing was usually left to either grandparents, who were less productive in their old age, or older children.[74] Yamamoto Shigemi also discovered the laborious nature of women's lives in agricultural villages in the Meiji period:

> They would have to cut trees in the mountains and remove stones to make tillable plots for growing millet and barnyard grass. But this would not result in the production of enough food for the year. They would have to climb steep hills with firewood on their backs, burn charcoal in the snow, dig bracken roots, work all night to make bracken-root powder, and exchange it for barnyard grass. They had to continue working like this from before dawn until ten or eleven at night.[75]

The peasant woman's life in the Tokugawa period was most likely the same as in the Meiji period. As we have seen, peasant women enjoyed certain powers regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage, which were prohibited to the samurai class women. Yet, the frequency of divorce initiated by women suggests that marriage was not necessarily an ideal career for them. In fact, Edo documents reveal that some *han* (domains) used "forced marriage" as a form of punishment for illicit prostitution.[76] A number of captured illicit prostitutes were sent to remote agricultural villages as brides. The government decree suggests that, of these, many ran away from their new husbands' households and went back to their former occupation, prostitution.[77] This leads us to assume that some women preferred prostitution to becoming the wife of a peasant. Most likely the pleasure quarters provided the path by which poor families and, above

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[74] Takashi Nagatsuka, *Tsuchi* (Soil), 44th ed, (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1971).
[75] Shigemi Yamamoto, *Ah Nomugi Tōge* (Ah Nomugi Pass), 49th ed, (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1995).
[76] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 32.
[77] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 32-33.

all, women could escape from their lowly economic lot.

But it would be misleading to assume that poverty alone drew women into prostitution. There were, no doubt, multiple factors. Coupled with frequency of divorce and remarriage, as we have seen, the following reports suggest that commoners had a very different sense of sexual morality from that of the samurai class. A survey conducted in 1932 in Nishi Shogoku Mura— a post station located in a mountainous area—revealed that villagers customarily provided travelers with homemade sake and even their daughters and wives for sexual services.[78] In such societal circumstances, the researchers argue, it was understandable that villagers casually sold female members into prostitution since their morality neither despised nor discouraged this practice.[79] Another researcher, Aida, also recognizes the importance of socio-cultural conditions. According to Aida, historically, villagers in Echigo did not value female chastity or virginity and sent a large number of women to the pleasure quarters in Tokyo. It was customary for female villagers in Echigo to have premarital sexual relationships with several men. Probably because of this lax sexual norm, Aida maintains, the villagers—including young women—did not regard prostitution as a shameful occupation. Rather, villagers appeared to respect prostitutes who would bring back a lump sum of money with them.[80] There are a number of similar reports regarding villagers' varying views on sexual morality. For

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[78] Kazuya Matsumiya and Nariyuki Hashimoto, "Shōgi Shukke no Gen'in (The reasons for women's entering into prostitution)," in *Nōson Hihei to Shijo Baibai Mondai*, no.4, 1932, rept. in *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryōshū, Vol.1, Jinken* (Documents on Japanese women's issues, Vol.1, Human right), ed. Fusae Ichikawa (Tokyo: Domesu Shppan, 1977) 471-474.

[79] Matsumiya et al., "Shōgi Shukke no Gen'in," 474.

[80] Shinji Aida, "Nōson Kōhai to Daraku Onnna no Kenkyū (Reserch on devastation of agricultural village and fallen women)," in *Kakusei*, vo.5, no.4, 1914, 22.

example, a survey conducted by the Salvation Army discovered that during the Tokugawa and Meiji period, some families sold their daughters into prostitution not because of poverty but in order to build a new house.[81] And yet another survey discovered a case in which parents had sold their daughter into prostitution so as to buy their fancy clothes to go to a festival.[82] For women living in this sort of atmosphere, becoming prostitutes probably involved little or no adjustment in their societal concepts. In fact, several reports written by the Salvation Army based on interviews with women demonstrate that women did not consider their occupation shameful until they were exposed to Christian ideas.

Kugai for the outcaste women

During the Tokugawa period, the social hierarchy was rigid and inter-class marriage was strictly forbidden. For the daughters of the outcaste, the only way to escape the stigma was to become a prostitute and thereby erase their past. If such a woman caught the attention of a man of a higher class, she not only escaped from the class stigma, but even married into the commoner class or even

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[81] Tamiko Yamamuro, "Tōhoku Kyōsakuchi kara Miuri Musume wo Sukuidashita Ki (A report on how we rescued the would-be prostitutes from a poor village in Tohoku)," in *Shufu no Tomo*, Jan, 1983, rept. in *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryōshūsei, Vol.1, Jinken*, 494.

[82] Yūji Tada, "Kuruwa no Meigi (The famous prostitute in the pleasure quarter)," in *Kokubungaku,* Oct, 1981, 87.

the samurai class.[83] Some Japanese historians argue that despite a government decree that forbade the procurement of outcastes for the pleasure quarters, government officials did not strictly enforce the law. The restrictions were likely to be ignored, often with the connivance of the authorities, and the penalties seemed at most to be only sporadically enforced. Apparently many outcaste women became prostitutes anyway, since in 1796 the Edo metropolitan government issued an edict prohibiting outcaste women from practicing prostitution.[84] In the pleasure quarters, women's humble origins were veiled by the distinctive Yoshiwara dialect.[85] There were precedents in the Edo period, therefore, for a large number of outcastes entering into prostitution during the Meiji period. For the outcaste women, the pleasure quarters functioned as *kugai* from which they were able to move up into the higher classes.

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[83] Takigawa, *Yoshiwara no Shiki*, 36-37. Takigawa cites Edo documents that state cases in which a procurer was punished by officials for recruiting women of the outcaste. He also claims that other historians, such as Yanagita Kunio and Nakayama Taro, share the view; Imai, "The Emergence of the Japanese Shufu: Why a Shufu is More Than a "Housewife," 63. Imai states that prostitutes were able, by marriage, to move up into the commoner class or the samurai class.

[84] Saito, et al, *Mibunsabetsu Shakai no Shinjitsu,* 88.

[85] Among Japanese scholars, there are two competing views on the reasons why questioning women's past became taboo in the pleasure quarter, and why inmates were required to speak the distinctive Yoshiwara dialect. Many historians claim that the reason was not to destroy male fantasies by revealing rural origin and humble birth of women. See Matsunosuke Nishiyama, "Yūjo no Nagare (A history of prostitutes)," in *Kokubungaku*, Oct, 1981, 42-43; Sumie Jones, "Sex, Art, and Edo Culture: An Introduction," in *Imaging/ Reading Eros: Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750-1850* (Bloomington; Indiana University Press, 1995) 4; Takigawa, *Yoshiwara no Shiki*, 37-38. Takigawa opposes this view and argues that the reason was to veil the outcast origin of women.

Women's life in the pleasure quarters

In contrast to the samurai class women, who were expected to be thrifty, modest, and obedient according to *Onna Daigaku*, women in the pleasure quarters were molded to fulfill male fantasies and sexual desires. High-ranking prostitutes were trained to acquire not only artificial beauty but to become conversant with the Japanese classics, Chinese poetry, and fluent in the art of conversation, and many other skills. Although strictly circumscribed, they were more sophisticated than any other women of the period. High-ranking prostitutes were highly accomplished women, whether they were from substantial or humble origins, and therefore customers treated them with respect. They could even decide whom to accept or refuse regardless of the rank of the customers. *Great Mirror of the Way of Love* says:

> As for a guest who did not please the *tayu* [high-ranking prostitutes], no matter how high his standing, daimyo or otherwise, able to bribe handsomely or not, he could not meet the lady. Those known to have been refused were shamed irrevocably and fell into deep despair.[86]

Money alone was not sufficient enough to be "chosen" by the ladies. Customers wishing to meet high-ranking prostitutes had to work hard to acquire the necessary attributes those women demanded. According to Teruoka, it was those women who stimulated the drive for education and aesthetic sensibility among the merchants.[87] Rejection by a high-ranking prostitute branded a man as

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[86] Yasutaka Teruoka, "The Pleasure Quarters and Tokugawa Culture," in *18th Century Japan: Culture and Society*, ed. C. A. Gerstle (Sydney: Allen & Unwin,1989) 9. Cited from *Great Mirror of the Way of Love* (Shikidō Ōkagami), ed. Noma Koshin (Kyoto: Yūzan Bunko) 1961.

[87] Teruoka, "The Pleasure Quarters and Tokugawa Culture," 9-11.

"lacking in sensitivity, artistic interests, classical education or physical attributes."[88] A sullied reputation resulting from rejection by high-ranking prostitutes often destroyed his confidence and brought him into dishonor. Because of their talent and pride, high-ranking prostitutes were even regarded as models of womanhood regardless of their birth.

The cultural representation of the prostitutes

Edo culture—produced by exclusively male artists for male consumers—is known for its glorification of prostitutes.[89] Not wives but prostitutes were exclusively heroines in the Edo arts. For example, *kyogen* (a play), the most popular art amongst townspeople, often depicted the prostitutes as graceful ladies in contrast to wives who were lacking in elegance and sophistication. Likewise, one famous *joruri* (puppet show) elevated prostitutes to the level of sacred-beings by likening them to a *Kannon* (a Goddess of Mercy) who rescues men.[90] This sort of representation probably reinforced a popular belief that prostitutes had sacred power and could transplant that power to men through *asobi* (playing) with men, and lead men to enlightenment. This image had been prevalent since the early period. The narratives of the cultural representations demonstrate that prostitutes were not simply sexual objects but as well admirable spiritual beings with whom men could achieve some kind of enlightenment.[91] High-ranking prostitutes were invariably praised for their beauty, intelligence, and loyalty.

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[88] Teruoka, "The Pleasure Quarters and Tokugawa Culture," 9.
[89] Ueno, "Lusty Pregnant Women and Erotic Mothers: Representations of Female Sexuality in Erotic Art in Edo," 110.
[90] Junko Saeki, *Iro to Ai no Hikakubunkashi*, 18-19.
[91] Saeki, *Iro to Ai no Hikakubunkashi*, 165-168.

Edo arts, including such as *ukiyoe* (wood-block prints), *shunga* (erotic printings) and *kibyoshi* (novels), put forth a series of distorted man-made images of women. It would, therefore, be misleading to rely on them too much as historical materials about women's condition. Nevertheless, these works are valuable for two reasons. First, they display the prevailing male mentality of the time and provide rich sources of material on the pleasure quarters. Second, they undoubtedly affected discourses on prostitutes, because a large quantity of prints and novels were produced and circulated among the people. In fact, the majority of people—including women and the poor who were unable to afford a visit to the pleasure quarters—saw prostitutes through cultural representations. Glorified cultural representations of prostitutes led both men and women to admire prostitutes. Many women, including those of the samurai class, looked on prostitutes with respect and admiration for their luxurious and sophisticated life, and willingly followed their fashion.[92] Lacking any cultural biases against such sexual practices, high-ranking prostitutes were looked up to as are today's TV stars.

Kugai: from the "public world" to the "suffering world"

According to Amino, the shift in the meaning of *kugai* from "floating or sacred world" to the "suffering world" occurred at the end of the Tokugawa period. But for many prostitutes, the shift had gradually begun by the time the biggest pleasure quarter in Edo had been rebuilt in Shin Yoshiwara in 1657. Originally, there were roughly two ranks of prostitutes—*tayū* (high-ranking prostitutes) and *jorō* (ordinary prostitutes)—in Yoshiwara. Regardless of their ranks, all

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[92] Tada, "Kuruwa no Meigi," 75.

prostitutes were trained in some of the classic arts. This situation changed, however, with the opening of the New Yoshiwara. The government banned the numerous bathhouses providing prostitutes for customers. As a result, the bathhouse owners moved into Yoshiwara with approximately 500 prostitutes, and re-started their business. Women who had formerly practiced prostitution in the bathhouses were distinguished from the *tayū* and *jorō*, and were called *sancha-jorō* (low-ranking prostitutes). They simply sold sexual services at lower prices than did either *tayū* or *jorō* in Yoshiwara. This made competition among brothels intense, and eventually women's working conditions deteriorated. Eventually, Yoshiwara became accessible not only to wealthy merchants and samurai but also to less wealthy men as well, including poor samurai, less prosperous merchants and nearby villagers. In contrast to wealthy men who visited pleasure quarters to "play with *tayū*," less wealthy men simply went there to "buy sexual services from *jorō*."[93] Thus, arts and sexuality were increasingly separated, and as the term "*jorō-gai* (buying prostitutes)" suggests, most prostitutes were reduced to sexual commodities.

In contrast to the glorified images of prostitutes in cultural representations, a number of references in the literature provide a stereotypical image of women's oppressive lives in the pleasure quarters. These images tend to lead us to certain conclusions when constructing our knowledge of the prostitutes; however, none of them effectively provides us with sufficient factual evidence. Yet, there are some important works based on the official documents. Maki's research discovered that the majority of women started their trade by the legal age of sixteen and left it by the age of twenty-seven. Yet girls were

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[93] Yukiko Miyamoto, "Yūri Guide (A guide to the pleasure quarter," in *Kokubungaku*, Oct, 1981, 75.

sometimes sold at an early age, even under seven years old, to brothels under the guise of adopted daughters. In each case, a considerable sum of money was paid to their parents in advance. In return, parents usually turned over custody of their daughters to the brothel owners.[94] Although dominant stereotypical images of the exploitative treatment of prostitutes prevail, again, most of them are not based on factual documents. But it can be assumed that since brothel owners purchased a woman for ten years, it may have been in their interest to extract the maximum amount of profit from their "daughters" over that period.[95] It would appear, as some scholars claim, that the high-ranking prostitutes enjoyed a certain power unthinkable to other women.[96] But it also can be argued that, no matter how glorified they were, prostitutes were reduced to commodities that existed primarily to fulfill male fantasies. By contrast to the glorified images of the prostitutes in cultural representations, the majority of women were sold to the brothels because of their families' economic needs. As Ueno argues, "what was a pleasure quarter for men was a place of work for women. . . . A place where they were confined and controlled by their employers."[97]

Conclusion: Were prostitutes "the women" or "the others"?

By contrast to the Meiji period, official views on prostitutes in the Tokugawa

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[94] Maki, *Jinshin Baibai*, esp.163-167.
[95] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*. The law forbade abusing women, renewing contract without special reasons, reselling women.
[96] Junko, Saeki, *Yūjo no Bunkashi* (Cultural history: Prostitutes) (Tokyo: Chūō Shinsho, 1987); Teruoka, "The Pleasure Quarters and Tokugawa Culture," 9.
[97] Ueno, "Lusty Pregnant Women and Erotic Mothers: Representations of Female Sexuality in Erotic Art in Edo." 110.

period were, in theory, sympathetic to prostitution, and women were never blamed for practicing prostitution. In parallel with favorable official narratives on prostitution, glorified images of prostitutes in cultural representations generally and free sexual morality among commoners discouraged the populace from looking down on prostitutes. In addition, in contrast to the Meiji period, wifehood was not identified with motherhood, and thus prostitutes were eligible for marriage. It was even commonly believed that prostitutes, having already responded to male desire, made better wives than women who had always been secluded and who therefore might be more prone to temptation.[98] In fact, many important figures of the early Meiji period were married to high-ranking prostitutes. For example, Itō Hirobumi, Ōkuma Shigenobu, Yamagata Aritomo, Kido Takayoshi, Hara Takashi, Saionji Kinmochi, to name a few, all married prostitutes. Some talented novelists, such as Tsubouchi Shōyō, were also married to prostitutes.[99] This suggests that even upper- and middle-class men did not stigmatize prostitutes.

The following speech made by prostitution abolitionist, Ueki Emori, suggests to us that there were, at least, some low-ranking prostitutes who were able to reintegrate into society. Ueki stated:

> Up to now, Japanese society has neither despised nor stigmatized prostitution. It was, therefore, possible for prostitutes to marry respectable men when they ceased their trade and thus be reintegrated into society.[100]

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[98] Maki, *Jinshinbaibai*, 147-148.

[99] Itsue Takamure. *Josei no Rekishi: Gekan* (Women's history, Vol.2), 11th ed, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1981) 35-36.

[100] Emori Ueki, "Haishō no Kyūmu (A pressing need of the abolishment of licensed prostitution)," in *Jogakuzasshi*, no.191, rept. in *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryō Shūsei, Vol.1: Jinken,* 220; Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 61-62.

Maki's research also revealed that a *meshimori onna*, an illegal prostitute, was engaged to a Buddhist monk. The contract paper states:

> My relatives and siblings happily agree to our marriage. I'm happy to delay our marriage till your contract term expires. I wish you to take care of yourself and work hard till then.[101]

This statement suggests that this man did not stigmatize his prospective wife's occupation. Underlying these words is the thought that selling one's body for a woman is just a type of work and thus in no way related to her personhood.

As we have seen, commoners were unconcerned with a woman's virginity or chastity with respect to marriage. In addition, the high divorce and remarriage rates suggest that prostitutes were still eligible for marriage when they ceased their trade at the age twenty-seven. From the Meiji period, as we shall see in the following chapters, prostitutes who were physically unable to reproduce due to the nature of their occupation were excluded from becoming wives. In the Tokugawa period, however, childbearing and rearing were not the wives' primary tasks and, therefore, it was very likely that prostitutes were able to marry as well. Thus, the boundary between prostitutes and wives was rather fluid, and it was possible for women to cross it.

Yamamoto cites the memo written by the doctor who did VD checks on prostitutes in 1860 in response to the request from Russian Navy. The memo reveals that the parents of the prostitutes worried that the VD checks would deprive daughters of the opportunity of marriage because their names were made public. This suggests that prostitutes had a chance for marriage after the contract term expired.

[101] Maki, *Jinshin Baibai*, 147-148. Maki found some documents that indicate marriage between Buddhist monks and prostitutes. He maintains that, in the absence of any cultural bias against the prostitution, such a case was common during the Edo period.

Overall, it can be said that it is incorrect to say that prostitution was so degrading that no one who had any other options would enter the trade.[102] To do so is to impose a modern viewpoint. In fact, throughout the Tokugawa period, the pleasure quarters appeared to function as *kugai* (the place free from constraints) not only for men but also for some women in various ways. For example, the outcaste women entered the pleasure quarters to erase their humble origins and thus to climb the social ladder, while some village women preferred prostitution over living economically hard lives. Yet we should nevertheless recognize that agrarian poverty and inequality among social classes were the main factors that impelled women into prostitution. We should also recognize the essential fact that as prostitutes these women were reduced to the state of commodities whose highly controlled femininity was created to conform to male fantasies and requirements. More importantly, men's behavior in choosing to use women in prostitution was socially constructed through the government approval of pleasure quarters. Even an appreciative view cannot deny that a great deal of the "pleasure quarter" was based on a glorified system of indentured servitude that involved considerable violation of what today are regarded as basic human rights.

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[102] Laurie Shrage, "Should Feminists Oppose Prostitution?" in Ethics, vol99, 1989, 351. Shrage argues that how the practice of prostitution is perceived and interpreted by others is crucial to determining women's moral status.

Chapter 2. The Meiji Official Discourses on Prostitution

> The personal is political and therefore, the separation of them—the "whores"—and us—the "women"—is utterly false, a patriarchal lie.[103]

It is well documented that not only Japan but other countries, such as ancient Mesopotamia and ancient Greece, have had a long history of concubinage and prostitution. Unlike Japan, there were sharp distinctions between the roles of wives, concubines, and courtesans (i.e. high-ranking prostitutes) in these countries. These roles were mutually exclusive; the wives provided legitimate children and household management, the concubines provided daily care for men, and the courtesans provided men with special sexual pleasures.[104] In contrast with these countries where laws made clear distinctions between the three roles, throughout the Tokugawa period, there was no clear boundary between wives, concubines and prostitutes, as discussed in the previous chapter. Prostitutes were not particularly identified as a special class and were thus allowed the opportunity to move out of prostitution. For the majority of women, prostitution was a transitory occupation, and many women reintegrated into their

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This insight can be applied to prostitutes in the Tokugawa period.

[103] Kathleen Barry, *The Prostitution of Sexuality* (New York and London: New York UP, 1995) 10.

[104] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) 143; Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 112-113. In Mesopotamian and Hebrew law, first wives and concubines were sharply distinguished from each other in terms of their class; the married wife was at one end of the spectrum, the slave woman at the other, and the concubine in an intermediate position. The laws enhanced the legitimacy of wife and mother. Legitimate wives had economic and legal rights, while others were treated primarily as slaves.

communities and became either wives or concubines after ceasing their trade. Likewise, wives often prostituted themselves for their needy families. Regardless of their class, women who became prostitutes for their poverty-stricken families were likely to be praised by the society for their filial devotion. However, with the intrusion of "civilized" Western culture, the prostitute was increasingly defined as a distinct outcast group.

This chapter examines the shifting discourses on prostitution in the Meiji period by looking at the Meiji intellectuals' debates on concubines and prostitutes, and a number of legal changes with regard to prostitution. The examination of official documents as well as intellectuals' views on prostitutes will provide us with a sense of social norms of the period because, as Gramsci claims:

> The intellectuals are the dominant group's "deputies" exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government.[105]

This is particularly true in Japan. The Meiji enlightenment intellectuals were exclusively of samurai origins and, therefore, willingly allied themselves to and assisted the ruling class and thus contributed to the state's ability to achieve

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[105] Gramsci Antonio, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffery Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971) 12.

hegemony.[106] Such intellectuals contributed greatly to crafting the means of ideological control of masses, the "ruling ideas" that came to be social norms and became "common sense itself which everybody shares." [107] Tracing the reconceptualization of the prostitute in the official documents, I argue that the Meiji state invented a new sexual morality and set up a boundary between "the women" and the "others", i.e. prostitutes.

Intrusion of a "civilized" Western moral code

Once Japan was enmeshed in world diplomatic order and started its drive to create a modern nation-state after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the consensus developed within the Japanese ruling elites that Japan must absorb Western learning in order to modernize the nation and thus obtain the respect of Western nations. Its recognition as a first ranking nation was handicapped by the presence of cultural differences: such as mixed bathing and nursing in public, and the existence of the pleasure quarters, which Western travelers to Japan perceived as indications of Japan's backwardness. Every possible attempt was made to create the image of a "civilized" Japan by eliminating the cultural

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[106] Gramsci introduces two types of intellectuals, traditional and organic. The former refers to traditional professional intellectuals who are autonomous and independent from ruling class and have influences on inter-class masses. The latter signifies the group that emerged from a particular class and would function to diffuse the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belonged. Some countries saw the emergence of organic intellectuals from the working class. In Meiji Japan, however, both categories of intellectuals came from the same class, i.e. the samurai class, and worked primarily to support their own class. See Gramsci, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, esp. 5-23.

[107] Hall, et al, *Policing The Crisis: Mugging, The State, and Law and Order*, 154-156.

differences that were disparaged in Western culture. New ideas arising from Western learning included the hitherto unknown concept of "sexual immorality". The concept of sexual immorality affected sexual practices in Japan in a variety of ways.

When the system of civil, criminal, and commercial law was completely reexamined, there were heated debates regarding the position of women in their rapidly changing society. Meiji intellectuals, many of whom had studied abroad and had thus been exposed to Western civilization, tended to be highly critical of the male dominated Confucian social order and some promoted a doctrine quite radical for its era: a human rights theory that was based on the equality of the sexes. According to the Confucian moral code, while monogamy in women was considered essential, men enjoyed greater sexual latitude since the emotional, psychological and physical make-up of the sexes was thought to differ. The Meiji enlightenment thinkers regarded monogamy in both sexes as a main element of civilization and began to see prostitution and concubinage as uncivilized practices. Debates on concubinage and prostitution took place several times during the first decade of the Meiji era.

Debates on concubines and prostitutes

Well into the early Meiji period, it was common practice among the samurai and wealthy merchant class to keep concubines. Men regarded keeping concubines as a status symbol. In extreme cases, those who kept concubines tended to boast of their affluence and were disdainful of those who abstained from the practice. The practice of taking concubines was ostensibly for the purpose of producing heirs, but was also acknowledged for the purpose of sexual pleasures.

Tokugawa society was based on a rigid class system that forbade transgression of class boundaries. Therefore, there were various restrictions on the position of concubines. For example, although a concubine usually lived in the same household with a wife, she was treated as being of clearly lower status than a wife. Even if a man had no official wife, he could not change the status of concubine to that of wife. Thus, while keeping concubines was allowed, they were not to encroach on the position of wives.[108]

However, with the Meiji abolition of restrictions on inter-class marriage in 1871, many nobles and officials began marrying prostitutes or taking them, one after another, as concubines.[109] The so-called Meiji enlightenment thinkers were critical of this "uncivilized" practice that fortified a sexual double standard. In 1873, Mori Arinori and other enlightenment thinkers established the *Meirokusha* (Meiji Six Society), a society devoted to the dissemination of modern ideas. The members of the *Meirokusha* used their journal, *Meirokuzasshi*, to discuss women's roles by providing a cautious challenge to Confucian notions, and challenging the double standard that allowed such practices as prostitution and concubinage. In his essay, *On Concubines*, Mori Arinori claimed:

The child of a concubine is commonly made their heir to the

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[108] Yamakawa, *Women of The Mito Domain*, 108.

[109] For example, Kido Takayoshi, Itō Hirobumi, Gotō Shojiro, Yamagata Aritomo, Saionji Kinmochi, Yamamoto Gonbei, Inukai Tsuyoshi, Okazaki Kunisuke, Kuroda Kiyotaka, Ōkuma Shigenobu, Katsura Tarō, Hara Takashi, all of them married with *geisha* (artists but prostitutes in practice). See more details, Itsue Takamure, *Josei no Rekishi, Vol.II*, 12; Il Myong Kim, *Yūjo, Karayuki, Ianfu no Keifu* (Prostitutes, karayuki, and 'comfort women') (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1997) 103-104; Shiroshi Sakatani, "On Concubines," in *Meiroku Zasshi: Journal of the Japanese Enlightenment*, trans. Willian R. Traisted (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1976) 396-398.

> house. . . . To adopt a child from outside the family may not be as shameful for the wife, but for her to be forced to recognize the son of her husband's concubine as her son is indeed cruel and unjust.[110]

Fukuzawa Yukichi, an influential opinion maker, was particularly critical of the prevailing norm among the Meiji oligarchs and called for "exclusion of all concubines from the society of ordinary women."[111] Fukuzawa argued:

> Those who rose from a concubine's position to the position of legal wife shall be treated as concubines. The same shall go for women who were legal wives from the beginning, but in whose marriage transactions, money was involved and they were in actuality purchased by their husbands. Such women must be regarded as equal to concubines, and they must not be accorded the respect due to legitimate women.[112]

Both Mori and Fukuzawa were ardent advocates of monogamy and sympathized with women who were impatient with their husbands' promiscuity. But in practice, such improvements as were made in women's status in marriage were primarily limited to those of their own class, i.e. upper- and middle-class. To be sure, the Meiji intellectuals often promoted radically new ideas of gender relations in the context of Meiji Japan. Yet, for the advocates of monogamy, improvement of wives' positions was eventually linked to degrading or even ostracizing concubines and thus "othering" them from "the women".

Fukuzawa repeatedly discussed the issue of prostitution both in his work, *On Japanese Women*, and in articles published in a number of journals.

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[110] *Meiroku Zasshi*, 105.
[111] Eiichi Kiyooka, *Fukuzawa Yukichi on Japanese Women; Selected Works* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1988) 100.
[112] Kiyooka, *Fukuzawa Yukichi on Japanese Women*, 100.

He ostensibly equates prostitutes with well-known priests, such as *Shinran* and *Nichiren*, who willingly sacrificed themselves to save people.[113] Fukuzawa claims prostitutes are important because:

> Men of higher education should wait marriage unless they become rich enough to marry to the women of upper class. In this social circumstance, the number of bachelors increases. So, although it is very ugly and desperate, it's necessary to depend on prostitutes to maintain safety and order in society. If prostitutes are ordered to cease their business and the pleasure quarters are closed off, how would the people react? Women of good families would be exposed to danger, and a general loss of order in the whole of society will be unavoidable.[114]

In his view, prostitution was "shameful, hateful, and absolutely against human morality," but necessary.[115] Fukuzawa claimed, "the woman who becomes a prostitute abandons her rights of womanhood," therefore, she should be degraded to the level of those counterparts in the West.[116] He believed preserving the outward appearance of Japanese society in the eyes of Westerners was of the utmost importance. Therefore, he proposed that society should conceal prostitution rather than end it. It was a necessary evil to be deplored but tolerated, and prostitutes should be excluded from the community. Fukuzawa advocated the protection of "the women" and society at the expense of prostitutes. In the early half of the Meiji period, nearly 7.5 million copies of his published

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[113] Kiyooka, *Fukuzawa Yukichi on Japanese Women*, 89. Both *Shinran* and *Nichiren* were well-known Buddhist priests who spread Buddhism in Medieval Japan.
[114] Kiyooka, *Fukuzawa Yukichi on Japanese Women*, 88.
[115] Kiyooka, *Fukuzawa Yukichi on Japanese Women*, 92.
[116] Kiyooka, *Fukuzawa Yukichi on Japanese Women*, 90.

works were circulated among the reading public.[117] These figures, together with the relatively high literacy rate in the Meiji period suggest to us that Fukuzawa's arguments influenced discourses on prostitution.

Laws regarding concubinage

Despite heated debate, in 1870 the new government issued *Shinritsu Kōryō* (The Outline of the New Criminal Code) and accorded concubines legal status equal to that of wives. *Kaitei Ritsurei* (The Revised Criminal Statutes) enacted in 1873, allowed husbands to have exclusive sexual access to both wife and concubine, while it banned both wife and concubine from committing adultery or bigamy. Regardless of the legal and social status of wives and concubines, their sexual activities had to take place within their conjugal relationship and their husbands had to be their exclusive partners. In contrast with women for whom adultery was both a civil and a criminal offence, adultery by husbands generally went unpunished. A man was charged only in cases involving a married woman. Thus, the law made monogamy essential for women but not for men. Foucault's theoretical views regarding adultery in ancient Greece are useful in explaining the Meiji government's perspective. "It was the marital status of the woman, never that of the man, that made it possible to define a relation as adultery."[118] This is because the offence was essentially against the man who held authority over the woman, and thus posed a potential danger to patriarchy.[119]

The 1870 law legalizing comcubinage was repealed in 1883 and

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[117] Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey* (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1992) 106.
[118] Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 147.
[119] Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 147.

concubines lost their legal status. However, concubinage certainly continued to exist in practice. The Family Law enacted in 1898 included significant articles (article 827 and 970) that provided for the registration of an illegitimate child only by a father and granted the right of such a child to inherit his father's title and properties.[120] While the law formally upheld monogamy, in fact, by affirming the propriety of keeping concubines, it allowed for polygamy. In contrast to modern Western countries that discouraged married men from having intercourse with women other than their wives, in Japan married men were legally permitted to have concubines or to have intercourse with other women. The Family Law not only contributed to strengthening male supremacy in society, but more significantly, it degraded concubines and created a boundary between them and legitimate wives.

The government's tolerance of concubinage probably stemmed from the practice of polygamy by the Meiji emperor. The Imperial Household Law, promulgated in 1889, defined the succession of the throne only by the male line of the royal family. The first article of the law stated that in such a case where there was no son of the emperor and the empress, in order to secure a male line of succession, an illegitimate male child of the emperor and a court lady (i.e. concubine) should succeed the throne.[121] Thus, polygamy was practiced in the imperial household and, in fact, the Taisho emperor was the son of the Meiji emperor and one of his concubines. In a period when the emperor was regarded as a living God, as Ichikawa argues, the practice of the Meiji emperor's polygamy

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[120] Noriyo Hayakawa, "Sexuality and the State: The Early Meiji Debate on Concubinage and Prostitution," in *Feminism and the State in Modern Japan*, ed. Vera Mackie (Melbourne: Japanese Studies Centre, 1995) 31-32.
[121] Hayakawa, "Sexuality and the State: The Early Meiji Debate on Concubinage and Prostitution," 34-35.

discouraged Meiji intellectuals from criticizing concubinage, and, later on, prevented anti-prostitution advocates from including monogamy as part of their political agenda.[122]

The Maria Luz Incident

In the early Meiji period, the official view on prostitution was ambivalent. It was in an attempt to counteract the Western perception of Japanese "primitiveness" that a series of modern laws regarding prostitution was imposed. Japan's longtime approbation of the flesh trade came under international scrutiny in 1872 when a Peruvian vessel, the Maria Luz, entered Yokohama harbor for repairs. On board were a group of Chinese slaves under transport from Macao to Peru. An anchored British battleship rescued one of the Chinese who escaped from the ship. The resident charge d'affairs of the British Empire investigated the incident, contacting the Japanese minister of foreign affairs about the mistreatment of some 230 Chinese "passengers," among whom were thirteen children. Under close scrutiny from several foreign legations, the Japanese government declared the Chinese coolies to be free and condemned the Peruvians for running a slave trade. Peru's savvy minister to Japan protested and claimed that because Japanese law permitted the sale of women and children into prostitution, traffic in human beings was perfectly legal. Although the Japanese court dismissed the claim, the incident encouraged the government to reexamine the entire system of regulated prostitution since many Western nations kept watchful eyes on the incident.

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[122] Fusae Ichikawa, "Introduction," *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryoshusei, Vol.1, Jinken*, 41.

"The Cattle Release Act"

Immediately after the incident, the government issued the Ordinance Liberating Prostitutes and declared the abolition of human trafficking in order to demonstrate Japan's "civilized" status to the Western nations. In addition, the ordinance ruled that prostitutes and *geisha* would not have to repay monetary advances to the brothel keepers. This was because:

> Indenture contracts rob people of their rights and reduce them to *horses* and *cattle*. As one cannot demand that horses and cattle repay their debts, neither can one demand that prostitutes and geisha repay their indenture amounts.[123] [emphasis mine]

Regardless of its contents, the decree is significant for its metaphor comparing prostitutes with horses and cattle.[124] Though the act became known humorously as "The Cattle Release Act", it seemed to speak for the shifting official views on prostitutes; from filial daughters to cattle, and finally to fallen women. Thereafter, the official documents gradually came to refer to prostitution as a "shameful occupation".

This law consequently emancipated a large number of prostitutes; however, it had an adverse effect on many of them. Since the government promulgated the law abruptly without providing alternative work for the women, it left them stranded. Yamamoto's study discovers that many prostitutes

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[123] Mark Ramseyer, *Odd Markets in Japanese History: Law and Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP., 1996) 117.

[124] *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryoshūsei, Vol.1, Jinken*, 191. In 1872, a member of the Meirokusha, Tsuda Mamichi, used this metaphor in the petition that opposed licensed prostitution system.

continued their trade outside the pleasure quarters. In some prefectures, prostitutes requested the local government to allow them to continue their trade.[125] Yamazaki Tomoko, who has written extensively on *karayuki-san*, has documented what happened to one group. The day after the edict was issued, seventy women released in Yokohama found themselves without means to survive and were transported to Hong Kong, Singapore, and other destinations by a Chinese man, and thus became *karayuki-san*.[126]

The language of "choice": a victim-blaming mechanism

The government had no intention of eliminating prostitution, since it did not perceive prostitution as problematic, though it did consider the slave system inhuman. In October 1872, shortly after the promulgation of "The Cattle Release Act," the government issued the Regulations Concerning Brothels and Prostitutes for the purpose of restructuring pleasure quarters. According to this decree, only women who "chose voluntarily" to carry on with their trades were to be able to obtain a license and practice prostitution at designated rental parlors, i.e. brothels. The decree was significant with respect to two points. First, prostitution became for the first time the legitimate occupation for women who obtained a "license". Second, its deceptive and hypocritical rhetoric emphasized women's agency and thus placed the responsibility for practicing prostitution upon women. With respect to the use of the language of "choice," feminist

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[125] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 109.

[126] Tomoko Yamazaki, *Ai to Senketsu: Asia Josei Kōryū-shi* (Love and blood: A history of an interchange of women) (Tokyo:Sanseidō, 1970) 22. See Chapter 5 of this essay for further discussion on *karayuki-san*.

scholar Shiela Jeffreys argues that it is a masculine tactic of victim-blaming.[127] In this victim-blaming mechanism, Jeffreys claims:

> Men's abuse of women in prostitution is explained in terms of the actions of women they abuse, i.e. a woman's choice to be there.[128]

In contrast to the Tokugawa official discourse on prostitution in which responsibility for prostitution was placed upon men—be they brothel owners, pimps, or women's parents—this decree clearly shifted responsibility from men to women. Thus, the 1872 decree reconceptualized prostitutes as independent sex workers and no longer as victims of poverty. The impact of this decree transformed prostitution from a temporary livelihood for poor women to a specially identified distinct group who willingly "chose" prostitution as their occupation. This illusion that prostitution was a legitimate type of work based on "women's choice" became the foundation for the state's discourse on prostitution.[129] Most prostitutes appeared to "choose" the trade more or less involuntarily. They were coerced by economic necessity, filial piety, and lack of alternative—owing to both individual situations and general economic and demographic conditions—but not by direct threats. But the language of "choice" masked the fact that licensed prostitution was an exploitative mechanism against those belonging to society's lowest level. It also concealed male promiscuity behind the notion that women "chose" prostitution and promoted the view that the root cause for prostitution could be located in a lower social class and resulted from the lack of moral ethics of the prostitutes themselves. The intense focus on

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[127] Sheila Jeffreys, *The Idea of Prostitution* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1997) 139.

[128] Jeffreys, *The Idea of Prostitution*, 139.

women's will and their "choice" made identification of women as prostitutes more specific. It also made finding alternative employment or reintegration into society difficult.

Prostitution as a class-specific occupation

Immediately after the Meiji Restoration, a considerable number of women of the dislocated samurai class became prostitutes. Since the 1872 decree was issued, many women of the former samurai class applied for prostitution licenses to the prefectural governments.[130] The central government regarded this situation as morally objectionable, and in 1876 instructed prefectural authorities not to grant licenses to former samurai and their women to engage in such "shameful occupations" as running brothels or working as prostitutes or *geisha*, no matter what the circumstances were. [131] Although the qualifications for licensed prostitutes differed according to prefectures, almost all prefectures banned "women of rich families" from becoming prostitutes. [132] Some prefectures required women to list "poverty" as a primary reason for applying a prostitution

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[129] Fujime, *Sei no Rekishigaku*, 91.
[130] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 238.
[131] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 238-239. The documents written by the Home Ministry quoted in his book says that former-samurai have to know "shame" and should not engage in prostitution business.
[132] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 241. Instructions put forward by the Metropolitan Police in 1887 list six terms that disqualify prostitution: a woman under age fifteen, a woman who falsified family register, a woman who has no parents, a woman of the former samurai class, a woman who is coerced, and a woman from a wealthy family.

license.[133] Some prefectures also banned not only wives but also concubines from becoming prostitutes.[134] This class biased law enforced by the government, despite its declaration of legal equality of all classes, made prostitution a legitimate occupation for lower class people only. As previously discussed, during the Tokugawa period, prostitution was an accessible occupation to all women except *Burakumin*. In the Meiji period, however, in contrast with women of the samurai class, women of *Burakumin* were bestowed with the "freedom" to become prostitutes.[135]

A considerable number of *Burakumin* became prostitutes. A report written by Tomeoka Kosuke in 1907 states:

> I speculate the reasons why a large number of people become prostitutes in this small village are as follows. One is poverty, and the other is women's mobility to get out from the Buraku and integrate into the commoners. . . . Some research should be done to investigate the reasons why so many Burakumin become prostitutes.[136]

Because of their poverty and extremely low social standing, the women of *Burakumin* most likely had difficulties in finding alternative employment, such

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[133] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 243. Article One of the Regulation on Prostitutes, issued by the Mie prefectural government in 1879, specifies that the poverty should be listed as a primary reason for taking up prostitution.
[134] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 241. Article One of the *Regulation on Prostitutes*, issued by the Shiga prefectural government in 1899, specifies that both wives and concubines are not allowed to become prostitutes. This demonstrates the high status of concubines in the early Meiji period.
[135] Fujime, *Sei no Rekishigaku*, 153.
[136] Kōsuke Tomeoka, "Shin Heimin no Kaizen (The outcaste and reform)" in *Keisatu Kyōkai Zasshi*, 1907, 80-81,83, in *Mie-ken Buraku Shiryōshū, Kindai-hen*, ed. Mie-ken Kosei Kaikan (Tokyo:Sanichi Shobo, 1974), 53-55, cited by Fujime, *Sei no Rekishigaku*, 153.

as a wet nurse or a domestic servant, due to persistent discrimination against them. Thus, prostitution became increasingly a class-specific occupation, involving not just poverty-stricken peasant families but also the outcaste stratum which continued to exist despite formal granting of equality as commoners.

Reformulation of the commoner's moral code

"Civilized morality", introduced by the West, contained the Christian notions of purity and virginity. In codifying "civilized" standards of sexual behavior, Meiji officials had to choose among laws and customs that varied widely according to class and locality. As we have seen, during the Tokugawa period, having premarital or extramarital sex was common among the non-samurai class. With respect to the sexual norm in rural Japan, Takamure cites a description in the following poem:

> The festival night is a night of promiscuity.
> The pairing is determined by a lot.
> Young men draw a lot.
> Young women make up and await their partners eagerly.[137]

Numerous local customs not only tolerated but even encouraged young people to have premarital sex, with the frequent consequence of premarital pregnancies. But the Criminal Code of 1882 outlawed both abortion and infanticide, both of these were customarily practiced during the Tokugawa period. Violation of the code was met with harsh punishment including imprisonment and other penalties.

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[137] Yamashita, *Nihon Josei Kaihō-shisō no Kigen*, 44. Yamashita quoted "*Nichi Getsu no Ueni*" from *Takamure Itsue Zenshū*.

According to Morisaki, since the mid 1890s a local newspaper in Kyushu began reporting the names of people who violated the law. This provides one example of how legal changes indirectly discouraged promiscuity and gradually changed the sexual norm in the villages. The possibility of criminal penalties without doubt brought social disapproval for the promiscuous behavior leading to the pregnancy in the first place.[138]

With regard to marriage and family, it was the samurai model of patriarchal authority over the *ie* (household) and its members and succession by a single heir that prevailed over the varied practices of all other classes. Most Japanese treated marriage with considerable laxity well into the 1890s. Commoners entered rather casually into marriage and then dissolved them with great frequency. Before the enforcement of the Meiji Civil Code, in 1897, the national rate of marriages ending in divorce ranged from 2.28 (1885) to 4.34 (1896).[139] In other words, statistically speaking, one out of every three marriages ended in divorce. The high divorce rate was likely because of the absence of legal restrictions and perhaps, more importantly, of moral sanction such as Christian condemnation against divorce. The family and inheritance provisions of the Meiji Civil Code of 1889, which required the official registration of all marriages and divorces, put an end to the rather free popular attitude toward marriage and divorce.

It would be misleading, however, to assume that legal changes alone contributed to the decline in the divorce rate. Equally important was the

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[138] Kazue Morisaki, *Baishun Ōkoku no Onna-tachi: Shōfu to Sanpu ni yoru Kindaishi* (Women in the sex paradise: A modern history of prostitutes and wives) (Tokyo: Takarajima-sha, 1993) 44-45.

[139] Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1996) 187.

creation of a moral code that changed social norms regarding sex. By way of consolidating central control, the government sent new police officials to the countryside. Equally important were the graduates of the institutions of higher educations who came to take charge of public schools in villages. These intellectuals from outside brought Japan's new "civilized" culture to villages. They spread the notion of "purity", which was primarily associated with virginity, and discouraged "barbaric" practices, such as promiscuity, prevalent among villagers.[140] In addition, they had on the whole a higher living standard than the average villagers and presumably represented a social model for villagers to look to in their aspiration to improve their living conditions.[141]

In parallel to this intrusion of urban intellectuals, a number of villagers began going to cities for a variety of reasons. The expansion of capitalist industry drew young women and men into the cities for work. Also the establishment of higher education system encouraged wealthy farmers to send their sons temporarily to cities.[142] More importantly, the universal military conscription system required virtually all men to live in an urban district for a certain period of time.[143] Those men and women who lived for a time in urban districts were exposed to "civilized" culture and brought it back to home villages. Thus, in addition to a series of legal changes, village returnees beaming "civilized"

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[140] Yanagita, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Period: Manners and Customs*, 74.

[141] Gramsci, *Selection From The Prison Notebooks*, 12. Gramsci introduces a politico-social function of rural intellectuals. Their most important function is bringing the peasant masses into contact with the local and state administration.

[142] Yanagita, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Period: Manners and Customs*, 71

[143] Yanatiga, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Period: Manners and Customs*, 158.

culture undoubtedly affected the social norms in villages.

According to Ueno, by the 1910s the local government dissolved *Wakamono-gumi* (age-groups) among farm villages and transformed them into *Seinen-dan* (youth association) and *Shojo-kai* (virgins' association). The word "virgin" made its first public appearance with connection to this.[144] Thus, the Meiji regime gradually imbued this "civilized" moral code and changed the sexual norms among the populace.

Conclusion

As we have seen, in the Meiji official discourse, prostitutes were no longer filial daughters but independent sex workers who willingly "chose" their occupation. Responsibility for prostitution was thus shifted from men to women. In parallel to this shifting view, prostitution became a class specific occupation in which only lower class women were permitted to participate. Official discourse recognized prostitution as a necessary and inevitable evil, as in any other country. However, a necessary evil was an evil nonetheless, and official recognition did not imply respectability. As individuals, prostitutes were increasingly stigmatized and regarded as the dregs of society.

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[144] Chizuko Ueno, "The Position of Japanese Women Reconsidered." in *Current Anthropology.* vol. 28, no.4, 1987, 79.

Chapter 3. Mapping the Female Body: The "Good Wife, Wise Mother" Ideology

Despite the growing literature on the "good wife, wise mother" ideology, there has been effectively no research examining its effects on prostitutes. For example, Koyama Shizuko's groundbreaking work *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan* traced in detail the origin and the development of the "good wife, wise mother" ideology and its implications for "the women". Yet this book makes no reference to its effects on prostitutes. Likewise, gender historian Fujime Yuki's *Sei no Rekishigaku* provides us with a detailed historical analysis of Japanese prostitution, but again it does not examine the relationship between this ideology and the prostitute. In this chapter I argue that the "good wife, wise mother" ideology was a powerful tool of the Meiji patriarchal capitalist state and created a boundary between wives and prostitutes. This dichotomy emerged in the mid-Meiji period and still continues today. Chapter 3 traces the use of the "good wife, wise mother" ideology by Japanese women in formulating their own identity by producing prostitutes as "others". From this, I argue, it is the social outcome of the ideology that created the boundary between "the women" and the prostitute, and thus confirmed the existence of an outcast group and an underclass.

As revealed by both Western and Japanese scholars, the rise of the "good wife, wise mother" ideology roughly parallels the emergence of female domesticity in England and republican motherhood in the United States and

France.[145] Reconceptualization of the family, the basic unit of the society, was a key element in the dominant ideology of the nineteenth century in all the major capitalist countries. This ideology was based on the assumption that women were able to contribute to the state through the maternal role of rearing and educating the children and the spousal role of taking responsibility for housework. Even though housework, childcare, and other domestic duties were carried out at home, these were not solely for the home's sake. They were also deemed to be significant in terms of national development.[146] According to Amy Rossiter, a feminist scholar:

> Images of mothering, created by men who are located in the ruling apparatus, has helped to structure women's concepts of mothering. We are led to believe, for example, that our culture's organization of mothering derives from nature. When this "fact" becomes part of our common-sense knowledge, we tend to overlook the organization of mothering through history, through the material world, and through language. Overlooking these constitutive processes enables us to overlook the ways in which we create a culture built on relations of domination.[147]

The ideology of motherhood, a historically and culturally specific phenomenon in Western capitalist nations, emerged in the late nineteenth century. This ideology not only created gender roles, but "it also constructed some locations within social relations of race, class, sexuality, ability, and so on as more

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[145] Uno, *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth Century Japan*, 148-149; Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 6-7.

[146] Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 6-7.

[147] Amy Rossiter, *From Private to Public: A Feminist Exploration of Early Mothering* (Toronto, Canada: The Women's Press, 1988) 18.

appropriate for motherhood than others."[148] In this chapter, I examine the ideology of motherhood in Japan as it emerged roughly in the same period as Western countries, and trace how it constructed the social location of the prostitute.

As discussed, throughout the Tokugawa period, womanhood, wifehood, and motherhood were neither static nor synonymous. Unlike in the West, marriage was neither a particular nor a privileged union which alone could provide legitimate offspring. Wives' primary task was not equated with procreation, since there were many ways to compensate for infertility. Among the upper echelons of Japanese society, keeping concubines was common practice. Adoption also constituted a socially acceptable means of maintaining household continuity. Although wives' roles varied considerably according to their class position, rather than devoting their time to child care, wives in poor and ordinary households engaged in productive activities such as agriculture, handicrafts, or wage labor, while those in wealthy households were involved in household management. Regardless of class, it was customarily the male household head or senior household members, rather than the mothers, who made important decisions about the care and education of children.[149]

With respect to the project of nation building, the Meiji state's objective was the formation of a new citizenry ready to engage in the affairs of an industrial and imperial nation. An important area for concentrated government attention was what would now be called "gender construction". Although gender

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[148] Marlee Kline, "Complicating the Ideology of Motherhood: Child Welfare Law and First Nation Women," in *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader*, ed. B.Crow and L. Gotell (Toronto: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 2000) 196.

[149] Uno, *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth Century Japan*, 21.

construction became a paramount concern for the Meiji rulers, by the late nineteenth century a positive role for women's participation in the new nation state had not yet been formulated. The Meiji elites, however, shared the view that Japanese womanhood had to be reconstructed to meet the needs of the new age. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Ministry of Education resolved the issue by supporting the notion of "good wife, wise mother," an imprecise formulation asserting that private domestic labor in the home would be women's indirect contribution to the common good.[150]

The "good wife, wise mother" ideology: a tool to create illusions

Lerner claims, "the system of patriarchy can function only with the cooperation of women."[151] Put in place during the Meiji period, the creation of the "good wife, wise mother" ideology was a deliberate and large-scale attempt by the state to reconceptualize womanhood in order to integrate women into the patriarchal and capitalist nation building process. In contrast to the Tokugawa gender regime which did not necessarily identify womanhood with motherhood, the new Meiji regime determined women's biological roles as child bearers and, above all, the educators of their children as their primary roles and these defined their social worth. As "wise mothers", women were thoroughly expected to train children to become industrious, patriotic citizens who would be useful to the new nation-state.[152] Female inferiority was no longer grounds for denying women a major role in the education of children. Uno refers to Japanese female

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[150] Uno, *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth Century Japan*, 146.
[151] Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, 217.
[152] Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, 145.

domesticity as "imperial motherhood", calling attention to the nationalist motivations for its genesis and the infusion of nationalist aims into normative values and behavior for the female gender.[153] Thus, in the Meiji discourse, women were positioned as imperial subjects through "a national duty" of mothering.[154] The different duties of male and female subjects were also outlined in various ways in the provisions of the Civil Code that encoded a patriarchal family system, an essential part of the structures of the new state. This patriarchal family was, Vera Mackie argues, "dressed up in the ideology of 'good wives and wise mothers', which idealized women's contribution to the family."[155] Since its implementation, the "good wife, wise mother" ideology has undergone a substantial transformation over periods. But the assumption that women's essential function was to keep house and raise children has stubbornly persisted.

Several scholars point out that the "good wife, wise mother" ideology had new implications for women's roles as mothers by lessening the stigma of inferiority that had justified limiting women's responsibility for child rearing during the Tokugawa period.[156] A new emphasis on the importance of women in rearing and educating children persuaded women that they could achieve emotional satisfaction within marriage, and compensated them for their lack of political rights.[157] The Meiji Constitution allowed for quite limited participation

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153 Uno, *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth Century Japan*, 148.
154 Koyama, *Ryōsai-Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 34.
155 Vera Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP., 1997) 40-41.
156 Uno, *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth Century Japan* 145.
157 Uno, *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth Century Japan*, 41.

of women in the public spheres of politics and economy. It was available only in so far that it did not alter the functioning mechanism of the ideology designed to confine women to the domestic role. The function of mothering justified the exclusion of women from public spheres in a variety of ways. For example, women were denied direct public roles as soldiers, voters, bureaucrats, and elected office holders for the purpose of making women commit entirely to mothering. In contrast to the West, in which the family was configured as a private sphere, according to Mackie, in Japan the family was political and administrative unit of the nation state rather than being seen as a private sphere. [158] Recognizing the value of women's economic and educational contributions, the Meiji leaders claimed the home as a public place.[159] Unlike men, who were identified as members of the nation by their productive capacity and military service, women were recognized as belonging to the "imagined community", the modern Japanese nation-state, for their domestic support for those male activities and for producing and shaping the character of its future citizens. The "good wife, wise mother" ideology prevented women from having any further identity than that of mother. Thus, as Koyama argues, this ideology successfully "enclosed" women in domestic spheres without stigmatizing them.[160]

There is no doubt that the "good wife, wise mother" ideology achieved its power by means of an illusion. This ideology theoretically opposed the sexual hierarchy, *Danson Johi* (Respect men, despise women), in the family and elevated the position of women. In reality, on the contrary, this ideology confined women

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[158] Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900-1937*, 40-41.
[159] Sharon H, Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, "The Meiji State Policy Toward Women," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991) 173.
[160] Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 54-55.

to the roles of wife and mother, and thus consolidated the sexual division of labor. But it also provided a new and appealing role for women, that of mothering. More importantly, it contained a conceptual sexual equality and thus created the illusion that men and women were equal as Japanese nationals, though their roles were different from each other.[161] With respect to the institution of motherhood, Adrienne Rich argues:

> Powerless women have always used mothering as a channel—narrow but deep—for their own human will to power, their need to return upon the world that it has visited on them.[162]

Another feminist scholar, Amy Rossiter, similarly theorizes the institution of motherhood and claims that "mothering is a powerful site for enforcing women's constitution as Woman."[163] Looking at Meiji Japan, Japanese women used the institution of motherhood as a tool to destroy some of the sense of isolation linked to their previous domestic existences. They could confirm their connection with society and achieve a sense of "belonging" and their own personhood.[164]

Japanese feminists and the "good wife, wise mother" ideology

In the early twentieth century, some Japanese feminists strove to deny the apparent validity of the "good wife, wise mother" ideology and to generate social counter-discourse which would serve to break down the rationale behind this

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[161] Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 238-239.
[162] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York and London: W.W.Norton & Company, 1986) 38.
[163] Amy Rossiter, *From Private to Public: A Feminist Exploration of Early Mothering*, 15.
[164] Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 65.

ideology. Several former *Seitō* (Bluestockings) members linked reproduction with political structures and engaged in a debate on the so-called "motherhood protection". Participants in the debate were keenly interested in theorizing the relationship between women and the State. Yosano Akiko initiated the debate and repeatedly called for economic independence for women. She was opposed to women's dependency on men and claimed that without economic independence, women would be unable to maintain their health and would therefore produce unhealthy children.[165] She argued that women should be capable of earning an independent livelihood if they want to become good mothers. Thus Yosano considered economic independence of women was a necessary condition for female duty, mothering. The most eminent feminist, Hiratsuka Raichō, in opposition to Yosano, theorized the relationship between motherhood and State as follows:

> The mother is the source of life, and when a woman becomes a mother, she moves from the realm of private existence to an existence which is part of society, the nation, and humanity. For this reason, the protection of the mother is not just a matter of individual happiness. Rather, because it ensures the livelihood of the child, it is necessary for the whole of society and all of humanity. Because the maternal function has such a social meaning, I think it is mistaken to equate the demand for State protection for a mother who, through childbirth, has lost the ability to work, with `the care of the aged and disabled in institution'. Even if there is such a similarity, this is no reason for denying protection to such women.[166]

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[165] Akiko Yosano, "Rōdo to Fujin (Work and women)," in *Yokohama Bōeki Shinpō,* 1918, rept. in *Shiryo: Bosei hogo ronsō* (Documents of the motherhood protection debate), 3rd ed, ed. N. Kouchi (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1992) 166-167.

[166] Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900-1937*, 87.

Although Hiratsuka stressed the importance of motherhood and elevated it to the public sphere, judging by the goals she stated—to liberate and empower women by denouncing the "good wife, wise mother" ideology—her argument was self-defeating. She accepted the premise that mothers were responsible for the molding and well being of their children. It is very likely that her emphasis on the social meaning of motherhood led to her entrapment by, and even support for, the ideology set up by the patriarchal state. As Barbara Molony points out, the motherhood protection debate was framed by feminists' acknowledgement of that responsibility.[167]

Ishimoto Shizue, although not a member of the *Seitō* but one of the prominent feminists, inaugurated the birth control movement in the early 1920s. Initially, Ishimoto focused on women's liberation, equality and the alleviation of workers' poverty; yet she did not renounce the existing socio-economic system. While centrally concerned with women's liberation, like Hiratsuka, she did not wholly reject the family-based values of mainstream Japanese society. Ishimoto's speaking position was primarily that of the upper- and middle-class housewife. She argued that fewer children would allow mothers to have more time and better health to devote to the education and well being of their children. In her view, this ultimately benefited the nation as a whole since children represented the future generation of the country. In addition, Ishimoto maintained that having fewer children would give mothers more time and money to cultivate themselves for their self-fulfillment.[168] Like Hiratsuka, Ishimoto appealed primarily to the interests of her upper- and middle-class audience. Common to many feminists

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[167] Barbara Molony, "Equality versus difference: the Japanese debate over `motherhood protection`, 1915-50," in *Japanese Women Working*, ed. J. Hunter (London, New York: Routledge, 1993) 126.
[168] Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life*, esp. 220-243.

was a desire to ease the burdens of motherhood. They focused on domestic life as the site of women's oppression and overlooked the lower class women, such as the prostitute, who always work outside the immediate confines of the home. While both leading feminists raised woman-centered arguments; there was no rejection of the dominant "good wife, wise mother" ideology, but rather the strengthening of it. Rossiger argues:

> Although images of mothering were created by men of the ruling apparatus, women overlooked the constitutive process and believed that their culture's organization of mothering derived from nature.[169]

Feminists were not prepared to challenge the male hypocrisy and female complicity with male privilege in their own ranks. Therefore, ironically, the struggle against the ideology set by the state evolved into a movement that used the instruments of the state and further confined women to the female code set up by the state. Although feminists tried to set the standards of sexual conduct, they were not freed from, in Minh-ha's terms, the "master's tools" that ultimately enforced the dominant discourse.[170] The struggle ended in supporting the "divide and conquer" system, common to all patriarchal states. This is precisely what Minh-ha claims, the "master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."[171] The Japanese feminist views demonstrate that as long as women confined their

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[169] Rossiter, *From Private to Public: A Feminist Exploration of Early Mothering*, 18.

[170] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Women, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989). Minh-ha, a post-colonial feminist, repeatedly claims that master's tools (i.e. patriarchal language, theory, and analytical concepts) cannot be used to fight against patriarchy.

[171] Minh-ha, *Women, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, 80.

discussions and demands to the role of women within the family, there would be little challenge to the dominant discourse.

Creation of a boundary between wives and prostitutes

Why did Japanese women, even notable feminists, willingly accept the role of mothering? I argue that the reasons for Japanese women's acculturation to the "good wife, wise mother" ideology without notable resistance rested with the existence of concubines and prostitutes. As discussed earlier, in contrast to the West, in Japan there was no clear boundary between wives, concubines and prostitutes. Since the Tokugawa period, the upper- and middle-class located the domain of sexual pleasures outside the marital relationship. Women were excluded from both sexual pleasure within marriage and social gatherings, and confined to home. By the 1880s, concubines lost their legal status of being equal to wives, yet they continuously provided male heirs to the households, particularly to those of the upper- and middle-class. Above all, the *geisha* which literally means "artists" but in practice means "high-ranking prostitutes," enjoyed the so-called heyday of the Meiji period. The *Rokumeikan*, the great symbol of westernization known for its fabulous ballroom, was built in 1883 for the purpose of demonstrating Japan's "civilized" status and entertaining foreign diplomats. Since respectable wives were unaccustomed to socializing, *geisha* were usually called upon for ballroom dances or banquets hosted by the prime minister and other oligarchs to entertain foreign guests. Conscious of their ineptness at socializing, upper- and middle-class wives, though unwillingly, accepted this practice. Yamawaki Haruko (a founder of Yamawaki Women's College) states:

> On the whole, Japanese wives are not only dull witted but lack a sense of beauty. In contrast to *geisha*, they are careless about their appearance. Therefore, it is inevitable that men are reluctant to accompany their wives to social gatherings.[172]

With their unique ability to span the social hierarchy, *geisha* were poised to become the leading women of the period. They were at the forefront of society as trendsetters, fashion leaders, and companions and confidantes of powerful men. Takamure refers to the period as "the heyday of the prostitution culture," and states that their role was equivalent to that of a lady of rank in Europe. So important was the role of the *geisha* that wives had to tolerate and treat the *geisha* with respect. In this social environment, important men like Itō Hirobumi (the country's first prime minister), Ōkuma Shigenobu (the founder of the Waseda University), Kido Takayoshi (the leading figure in the Meiji Restoration), to name a few, all married *geisha*. Other respectable men also kept geisha as their concubines and took them out in public.[173] Several articles in the magazine *Kakusei* suggest to us that this practice, respectable men marrying *geisha,* continued well into the Taisho period among the upper- and middle-class.[174]

It is understandable that this prevailing social environment evoked uneasiness in respectable wives who were at home in the shadow of the *geisha*. In her autobiography, Ishimoto Shizue states, "it is undeniable that the existence of the *geisha* is a grave menace to good housewives and a force destructive of the peace of family."[175] According to Ishimoto, respectable men often opened their

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[172] *Kakusei*, vol.2, no.1, 1911, 36-37.
[173] Takamure, *Josei no Rekishi Gekan*, 35-39.
[174] *Kakusei*, vo.2, no.3, 1911, 18.
[175] Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways*, 295.

hearts to the *geisha* and discussed with them the theater, movies, political and economic issues that they never discussed with others, least of all with their wives.[176] Likewise, every important function in Japan had feasting on the program with the *geisha* for entertainment. The stiff and artless wives were entirely excluded from these functions.[177] Ishimoto further claims that men often spent enormous sums on the *geisha*, but never even spent a little on their wives.[178] Patronizing the *geisha* was an enormously costly practice. Downer's study shows us that besides a monthly allowance of approximately $4,800-$6,400 in modern currency, men spent money on kimonos and classes—*shamisen*, dancing, etc.—and periodic expensive gifts to the *geisha*.[179] Upper- and middle-class wives were even expected to bring up children born between their husbands and concubines, i.e. the *geisha*. In this societal environment, it is understandable that the *geisha* were bitterly disliked by upper- and middle-class women.[180] There are many stories of how concubines were bitterly treated by legitimate wives after the deaths of their husbands. For example, they were barred from attending the husband's funeral. Such stories are indicative of the wives' hatred toward the *geisha*.

The new ideology was diffused through secondary education primarily enjoyed by females of the upper-class whose lives were mostly affected by the concubines, usually former *geisha*, and the prostitutes. It is not surprising, therefore, that upper- and middle class women used the "good wife, wise mother"

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[176] Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways*, 284.
[177] Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways*, 284.
[178] Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways*, 285
[179] Lesley Downer, *Women of the Pleasure Quarters: The Secret History of the Geisha* (New York: Broadway Books, 2001) 173.
[180] Aisaburo Akiyama, *Geisha Girl*, 3rd ed, (Yokohama: Yoshikawa Book Store, 1937) 1.

ideology as a tool to protect their position by degrading concubines and prostitutes. Thus, motherhood was conceptualized as "a privilege" rather than as "a right" accorded to only legitimate wives.[181] The implementation of the "good wife, wise mother" ideology eventually created a boundary between legitimate wives and "others", and consolidated the hierarchy within women. After the implementation of the ideology, childrearing came to be expected only from legitimate wives, while concubines still provided male heirs and prostitutes provided sexual services respectively. This ideology elevated the status of wives and placed them at the top of the hierarchy. Since being a prostitute was a departure from the reproductive code that defined female legitimacy, prostitutes were excluded from the family system, and placed at the bottom of the hierarchy. Although the boundary between wives and concubines was somewhat ambiguous in terms of procreation, in parallel to the revision of law that excluded concubines from family registers, the new ideology "good wife, wise mother" equated womanhood with motherhood, and thus degraded concubines.

Since the implementation of this ideology, the existence of concubines and prostitutes was often discussed in opposition to that of "good wives and wise mothers." In her autobiography, Ishimoto reveals her view on prostitutes, including the *geisha*, from her position as an upper-class wife. She reveals her sympathy toward the plight of prostitutes, nonetheless she is critical of them:

> Regardless of the reasons or background for their professions, both low-class prostitutes and the geisha are the enemies of domesticity and as such, enemies of civilization in Japan.[182]

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[181] Kline, "Complicating the Ideology of Motherhood: Child Welfare Law and First Nation Women," 196.
[182] Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways*, 293.

Her view on the *geisha* is particularly unsympathetic in comparison with her view on the prostitute. Ishimoto stresses the difference between the women of her own class and the *geisha*:

> We often see them in trains accompanying men on pleasure trip . . . they try their best to look like wives . . . . But at a glance anybody can detect the difference. Even when properly married, they cannot look and act like ordinary wives.[183]

Although Ishimoto considered both the *geisha* and the prostitute to have shameful occupations, unless they threatened the life of the upper- and middle-class women, they were worthy of sympathy. Prostitutes were tolerable probably because the boundary between them and the upper- and middle-class women was unambiguous, and they remained as "others". But once they transgressed the boundary, they were labeled "evil" and "immoral" creatures. Hatoyama Haruko, a notable supporter of the ideology and devotee to creating future "good wives and wise mothers" by establishing Kyoritsu Women's University, criticized the *geisha*:

> Such a woman who sells her body should not be regarded as the same human beings with us. Since her behavior is same as that of animals, our society should ostracize her as a shameful creature, different from us, human beings. . . . But on the contrary, such women are now better treated or more respected than us, ordinary wives. . . . Particularly the *geisha* were present at any official functions, freely associating with ministers and other respectable men, and were treated with respect. Wives, however, were

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[183] Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways*, 294.

totally banned from such occasions.[184]

Hatoyama claims that since both *geisha* and prostitutes engage in the same "shameful occupation," it is unfair to treat the *geisha* with respect. Both prostitutes and *geisha* are less than human, because they separate sexuality from reproduction, the most important task for women. Hence, society should equally ostracize both occupations.[185] It is striking that throughout her writings, she repeatedly referred to the *geisha* as "*dōbutsu*"(animals) to distinguish them from "the women."

It is very likely that both Ishimoto and Hatoyama's views reflected the general views of the upper- and middle-class wives of that time because they were often forced to endure their husbands taking concubines or visiting pleasure quarters. Yet in the absence of alternative avenues for upper- and middle- class women, their survival thoroughly depended upon a secure legal marriage. In such a social environment, it is understandable that upper- and middle-class women took the "good wife, wise mother" ideology as a tool to consolidate their status, to draw a line between them and "others", and to elevate the status of wives at the cost of the "others".

Hiratsuka Raichō opposed artificial contraception, precisely because she believed that the separation of reproduction and sexuality would render all women prostitutes, and hence blur the boundary.[186] Thus, since the

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[184] Haruko Hatoyama, "Geiko no Bakko to Katei no Fujin" in *Kakusei*, vol.4, no.1, 1913, 16-17. Rept (Tokyo: Ryūkei Shosha, 1995). Subsequent references for Kakusei are based on the Ryukei Shosha reprint.

[185] Hatoyama, "Geiko no Bakko to Katei no Fujin," 17.

[186] Raichō Hiratsuka, "Hinin no Kahi wo Ronzu (On abortion)," in *Nihon Hyōron*, vol.3, no.9, 1917, rept. in *Shiryō: Sei to Ai wo Meguru Ronsō*, ed. M. Orii (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1991) 194-195.

implementation of the ideology, prostitutes were increasingly categorized in relation to the female ideal, "good wife, wise mother." They were always the disprivileged "others" in relation to the privileged "good wife, wise mother." In other words, it can be said that the "good wife, wise mother" was constructed in relation to the production of the bad woman, i.e. the prostitute, and vice versa.

As many studies reveal, the diffusion of new ideas of womanhood proceeded unevenly depending on class and locality. During the initial decade of the twentieth century, the introduction of the "good wife, wise mother" ideology began in the higher girls' schools from which poor girls were excluded. But in 1910, by the time female elementary school attendance reached nearly 100 percent, this ideology was incorporated in moral education in the elementary schools as well.[187] This resulted in diffusion of the ideology among all women, regardless of their class, and blurred class differentiation. Uno states:

> In expecting lower class mothers to raise industrious and loyal citizens and middle-class women carefully to rear future leaders, the state's new views of womanhood nominally entrusted women with unprecedented responsibility for shaping the destiny of nation and society.[188]

The voice of the prostitutes

How was the "good wife, wise mother" ideology internalized by prostitutes? A fact often overlooked by feminist historians is that Yamada Waka—one of the participants in the "motherhood protection" debate—was a former prostitute.

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[187] Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo to iu Kihan*, 208.
[188] Uno, *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth Century Japan*, 44.

Her emphasis on the need for State recognition and support of motherhood echoes that of Hiratsuka Raichō. However, unlike Hiratsuka whose speaking position was always that of the upper- and middle-class, Yamada's speaking position was that of lower class women, more specifically the prostitutes. In contrast to other feminists, Yamada did not challenge existing gender relations. She emphasized an idealized family system and gendered division of labour and, above all, the social significance of procreation. Yamada made explicit links between paternalistic values and nationalistic values:

> Giving birth to future generations, loving and rearing them, trying to better and strengthen this nation as good wives and good mothers, we Japanese women are all descendants and counterparts of *Amaterasu Omikami* [Sun Goddess].[189]

Thus, in marked contrast to other feminists, Yamada's position was total acceptance of the "good wife, wise mother" ideology. Later on, Yamada vigorously opposed contraception and eulogized a mother's love as the "fount of all that is good, the seedbed of human compassion, the source of patriotism—the source of social order."[190] For Yamada, children are a blessing from heaven to the family that is knit together by love. Therefore, Yamada maintains, parents are obliged to make every possible sacrifice to bring up their children.[191] Probably because she was a prostitute and had no prospect of marriage and being a mother, Yamada

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[189] Waka Yamada, *The Social Status of Japanese Women* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai, 1935).

[190] Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism*, 90. Cited from Waka Yamada, "Fujin no Kaiho towa," in *Fujin to Shinshakai*, no.3, May, 1920, 10.

[191] Waka Yamada, "Datai ni Tsuite (On abortion)," in *Seitō*, vo.5, no.8, 1915, rept. in *Shiryo: Sei to Ai o Meguru Ronso* (Documents on debates over sex and love), 177-178.

states that she considered herself "good-for-nothing" before her marriage.[192] Her argument presents important implications when considering the influence of the ideology on the prostitute. It is very likely that her view on ideal womanhood and, above all, her emphasis on mothering derived from her past occupation, i.e. prostitution. As a prostitute, she was denied motherhood, and she was thus placed outside the family system. Her experience as a prostitute also left her physically unable to reproduce. Unlike other feminists who put forward rather idealistic arguments on motherhood, Yamada's views are based on her own experience. It seems that she spoke for the prostitutes who were excluded from becoming "good wives, wise mothers" and thus located in a "disprivileged" position.

With respect to the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that the institution of motherhood entails, Kline argues:

> Motherhood has been constructed ideologically as compulsory only for those women considered 'fit,' and women have often been judged 'unfit' on the basis of their social location.[193]

As discussed earlier, since the Criminal Code of 1881 was enforced, women's denial of procreation, both through abortion and infanticide, met punishment by law. However, because prostitutes were considered "unfit", procreation was often

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[192] Tomoko Yamazaki, *Ameyuki-san no Uta: Yamada Waka no Suki naru Shogai* (Documents on debates over sex and love) (Tokyo: Bunbei Shunju, 1978) 144.

[193] Kline, "Complicating the Ideology of Motherhood: Child Welfare Law and First Nation Women," 196. Kline discusses those "unfit" for mothering in terms of race, class, sexuality, ability and so on in Western contexts by referring to disabled women, black women, First Nation women, and immigrant women. But her insights are also relevant in thinking about the prostitute in modern Japan.

devalued and discouraged for these women. With respect to the societal view on procreation by prostitutes, Morisaki cites a newspaper article that reads, "Look for a Father":

> A popular prostitute, Tuyayoshi, seems to suffer tympanites recently.
> Because she has eaten too many men!
> Her tummy is getting round day by day.
> So, she began looking for the baby's father.
> But there are more than twenty prospective fathers.
> She is in trouble now.[194]

Although written humorously, from the prostitute's point of view, this newspaper article is likely extremely cruel. The prostitute's pregnancy was scorned by the society, in sharp contrast to that of wives whose pregnancy was socially valued.

The prostitute was prohibited from mothering. Many prostitutes became barren after long years of exploiting their bodies. Even if they gave birth to babies, these babies were brought up by foster mothers, usually the wives of the brothel owners, or even sold to somebody else. Thus, the prostitute's sexuality was sharply separated from mothering. This stigmatized the prostitute and evoked feelings of inferiority. Morisaki's study shows us that a former prostitute named Okimi repeatedly states, "the life without children is a hell."[195] A former *geisha*, Uehara, presents the position of the *geisha* in relation to wives in her autobiography: "In such occasions as we happened to meet our patron's wives, we paid due respect to them and behaved accordingly." Uehara

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[194] Morisaki, *Baishun Ōkoku no Onna-tachi: Shōfu to Sanpu ni yoru Kindaishi*, 65. Morisaki cites some similar newspaper articles as well.
[195] Kazue Morisaki, *Karayuki-san* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1980).

maintains that wives usually treated prostitutes like servants.[196] Another former *geisha*, Kimi, stated that many *geisha* girls longed to become a wife, since marriage was considered the gateway to respectability and stability.[197] These studies suggest to us that according to the changing social norm, the prostitutes themselves began to see their status as inferior to those of wives and increasingly perceived themselves as being at the bottom of a hierarchy set up by the state. Thus, both "the women" and prostitutes internalized the "good wife, wise mother" ideology, but in different ways, and they both located themselves in different positions in the hierarchy. Thus, the "good wife, wise mother" ideology gradually became part of the landscape, seeping into the Japanese environment until women thought it was a natural outgrowth of Japanese culture rather than a system of control imposed from above.

Conclusion

Gramsci reminds us that no regime can sustain itself through organized state power and armed force alone without gaining popular support. An ideology is a powerful tool to maintain hegemony by gaining "spontaneous consent." It is not merely an arbitrary instrument of the ruling class in order to gain hegemony but also a tool of those governed who "want to educate themselves in the art of government" and are thus conscious of their social position and social tasks.[198] Put in place during the Meiji Japan, the "good wife, wise mother" ideology gained

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[196] Eiko Uehara, *Tsuji no Hana: Kuruwa no Onnna-tachi* (Flowers on the street: Women in the pleasure quarters), 13th ed, (Tokyo: Jiji Tsūshinsha, 1977) 70.

[197] Yuki Inoue, *Kuruwa no Onna* (A woman in the pleasure quarter), (Tokyo: Asahi Bunko, 1984) 135.

[198] Antonio Gramsci, *A Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. David Forgacs (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988) 197.

spontaneous consent of "the women" and, as Mackie argues, united them as "imperial motherhood" and hampered the development of class-consciousness.[199] To be sure, the "good wife, wise mother" ideology transgressed the class boundary and united "the women", yet it excluded a segment of women, prostitutes. As Lee and Cardinal observe, the sense of belonging is obtained through practices of exclusion.[200] Their insights can be applied to Japanese women. By alienating prostitutes from the "imagined community", Japanese women seemed to maintain their sense of belonging. While positive evaluations of motherhood elevated the status of mothers, they also led to the repudiation of women who did not have children. Because being a prostitute was considered a departure from the reproductive code, prostitutes were excluded from "the women" and fell outside the boundary set up by the Meiji state.

The post-colonial feminist Poliack Petchesky opposes the radical feminist view that "production divides us but reproduction unites us"[201] and argues that "reproduction, rather than uniting all women, divides them more at this time in history than production does."[202] As we have seen, Petchesky's insights are relevant to Japan's situation. The reproductive role united "the women" on the one hand, and alienated prostitutes from "the women" on the other, thus making two groups drift apart. As Minh-ha argues, the divide and conquer

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[199] Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism*, 41.

[200] Jo-Anne Lee and Linda Cardinal, "Hegemonic Nationalism and the Politics of Feminism and Multiculturalism in Canada," in *Painting the Maple: Essays of Race, Gender, and the Construction of Canada*, ed. Veronica Veronica Strong-Boag et al. (Vancouver, Canada: UBC press, 1988) 225.

[201] Poliack Petchesky, "Reproduction and Class Divisions among Women," in *Class, Race and Sex: The Dynamics of Control*, ed. Amy Swerdlow and Hanna Lessinger (Boston: C.K. Hall & Co, 1983) 224

[202] Petchesky, "Reproduction and Class Divisions among Women," 236.

system, common to a slave system, is also common to capitalist patriarchy. In each case, masters who are afraid of the unification of slaves, women in the case of Japan, use a trap that sets them up against each other.[203] As we have seen, the "good wife, wise mother" ideology gained consent not only from "the women" but it gained the passive consent of the excluded "others", prostitutes. The "good wife, wise mother" ideology, an inevitable tool of capitalist patriarchy, successfully ingrained slave morality into both "the women" and prostitutes, thus preventing interaction between them, and setting a boundary between two bodies which still remains today.

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[203] Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, 80-86.

Chapter 4. The Abolitionist View on Prostitution

In *The Prostitution Prism*, Pheterson argues, "the whore stigma is essentially an instrument of sexist social control."[204] She claims that the patriarchal state uses the "whore stigma", a patriarchal "divide and conquer" tool, against any particular women who transgress the boundary—the basic criteria of female legitimacy: heterosexuality, marriage, and reproduction—set by the state. Any break or impropriety in the heterosexual-married-childbearing chain is used to rationalize the whore stigma and its abusive consequences.[205] In this respect, prostitutes are accused of committing a crime for they separate sexuality from reproduction. Pheterson claims that "oftentimes, non-prostitute women struggle against the whore stigma by disidentifying with prostitutes."[206]

As discussed earlier, in the Tokugawa period, there was no clear boundary between "the women" and prostitutes. But a series of legal changes in the early decades of the Meiji, followed by the implementation of the "good wives, wise mothers" ideology, gradually excluded prostitutes from "the women." In addition to these two factors, this chapter argues that the language used by anti-prostitution advocates strongly influenced discourses on prostitution. Existing research on Japanese prostitution tends to view anti-prostitution

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[204] Pheterson, *The Prostitution Prism*, 12.
[205] Pheterson, *The Prostitution Prism*. 12.
[206] Pheterson, *The Prostitution Prism*, 12.

movements uncritically and overlooks the repressive outcome of the campaigns.[207] However, this chapter argues, despite their intention to emancipate prostitutes, anti-prostitution crusades used the "whore stigma", which attributed "good" and "bad" labels to women, and thus articulated a boundary between them. Furthermore, the anti-prostitution crusades subdivided prostitutes into "forced" and "voluntary." This division still prevails today.

In Britain, anti-prostitution movements emerged in the late 1880s. They opposed a series of Contagious Disease Acts, which were passed from 1864 on, that aimed to control venereal disease in the army and navy by registering prostitutes. Ellice Hopkins, the pioneer in social purity in Britain, argued that "prostitutes should not be seen as a class apart."[208] Hopkins claimed that "men drive us women into two classes: us pure women, from whom nothing is too good, and those others for whom nothing is too bad."[209] By denying the whore stigma's validity, Hopkins challenged the dichotomy that divided women into two classes, the respectable and the whore. Thus, she firmly placed responsibility for prostitution upon men, not women. According to Bartley, however, this caring approach was undermined by a powerful class ideology held by middle-class women driven by middle-class values and prejudices.[210] Middle-class women internalized the "whore stigma" and reduced prostitutes to an infected group who

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[207] Nobuhiko Murakami, *Meiji Joseishi, Gekan* (Women's history in the Meiji period, Vol.2) (Tokyo: Rironsha, 1973). Murakami glorifies anti-prostitution movements carried on by Christian abolitionists; Kaneko Yoshimi, *Baisho no Shakaishi, Kaiteiban* ((A social history of prostitution, revised edition), (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1992). A feminist historian, Yoshimi Kaneko highly values the contribution made by *Kyōfūkai* to anti-abolition movements.

[208] Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914.* 31.

[209] Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914*, 31.

[210] Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914*, 119.

would contaminate society rather than being victims in need of rescue.[211]

Several anti-prostitution movements emerged in Japan roughly in the same period as in Britain. Each group had a different political agenda from one another. A common view shared by all groups was a fear that licensed prostitution would attract a good deal of attention from Westerners and thus destroy the dignity of the nation. This fear led to attempts to oppose licensed prostitution.

The first prostitution abolition movement against the licensed prostitution system began in Gunma prefecture in 1880. The movement inspired many Christians, such as Shimada Saburō, Ueki Emori and Iwamoto Zenji, and stimulated them to organize the National Prostitution Abolition League in 1890. The league spread its prostitution abolition message through lectures and journals. In response, medical institutions together with some politicians formed a national movement and defended licensed prostitution. The defenders argued that licensed prostitution would prevent the spread of venereal diseases, and thus maintain the social order. The abolition/defense battle between two groups intensified year after year.

Ueki Emori, a devoted Christian, challenged the Confucian moral code, *Danson Johi* (Respect men and despise women), in his book *Tōyō no Fujo* (Women in Asia), and advocated monogamy in order to improve the low status of women in society.[212] Being a prominent anti-prostitution advocate, Ueki made several speeches on the issue of prostitution. Ueki's stated objectives were abolishment

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[211] Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914*, 157.
[212] Emori Ueki, *Tōyō no Fujo* (Women in Asia) (Tokyo: Tokyoshi Shizoku, 1889). rept. in *Meiji Bunka Zenshū* (Documents on the Meiji culture), *Vol.16,* 2nd ed, ed. Meiji Bunka Kenkyū Kai (Tokyo:Nihon Hyōronsha, 1969) 183-234.

of the slave system, i.e. the licensed prostitution system, and emancipation of women. But his arguments on prostitution were not necessarily shaped by religious conviction but were wholly male-centered and pragmatic. He argued that in principle eliminating prostitution was impossible. He opposed the licensed prostitution system on the one hand, but encouraged illicit prostitution on the other.

Ueki argued, "it is impossible to abolish prostitution because it is deeply rooted in Japanese culture" that has never stigmatized male promiscuity. But as Japan civilized itself, according to Ueki, the prostitutes would eventually be ostracized. From a humanitarian point of view, he suggested, illicit prostitutes were far better off than licensed prostitutes in civilized Japan. Because the illicit prostitutes would voluntarily "choose" prostitution and practice it secretly, they would be able to quit their trade on their own will and reintegrate into their communities without revealing their pasts. By contrast, licensed prostitutes would be clearly identified as prostitutes by the state and by the society even after they ceased their trade. Because their occupations would be recorded in police registration and never erased, they would be stigmatized even after they ceased their trade. Therefore, Ueki claimed, the state should tacitly permit illicit prostitution rather than regulating and licensing it. This would not cause any confusion because, Ueki claimed, many women who would work otherwise probably would remain illicit prostitutes. Thus, Ueki maintained, the state would be able to withdraw from its shameful involvement without inducing confusion.

By using *omote/ura* logic, Ueki argued that the state could maintain its face by eliminating prostitution from the *omote* (visible to the eye) society;

nonetheless prostitution would remain in the *ura* (invisible) society otherwise.[213] It is notable that despite his stated objectives, Ueki often frequented the pleasure quarters and was often involved in sexual scandals with prostitutes.[214] This suggests that his primary concern was simply to maintain the reputation of the nation, not at all to emancipate prostitutes.

Reconceptualization of prostitutes as "others", *Sengyōfu* (fallen women)

Since the early 1900s, with the establishment of the abolitionist organization, *Kakuseikai* (The Purist Society), debates on prostitution attracted the broadest following among progressive politicians and intellectuals, Christian and non-Christian alike. In general, the arguments that abolition movements made were not based on the perspective of the social class from which prostitutes were drawn. They tended to point out moral differences between the upper- and middle-class women and prostitutes as a root cause for prostitution. The following quote from *Kakusei* may not delineate the real causes of prostitution but it does portray what many reformers believed it to be:

> Poverty and inadequate wages for female workers may have been the overwhelming reason for prostitution, but poverty alone does not necessarily drive women into prostitution. . . . The middle-

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213 Emori Ueki, "Baiin Kōkyo no koto o ronzu (On licensed prostitution)," in *Kokumin no Tomo,* vol.2, no.22, 1880, rept. in *Meiji Bunka Zenshū, Vol 16,* 237-248; Japanese frequently use the logic, *omote/ura*, that signifies two aspects of things. Further discussion on *omote/ura* logic, see Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Self: The Individual Versus Society*, trans. M. Harbison et al, (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd, 1985) 23-34.

214 Aiko, Ogoshi. *Kindai Nihon no Gender: Gendai Nihon no Shisōteki Kadai wo tou* (Gender in modern Japan: Challenging the idea of the emancipation of women) (Tokyo; San'ichi shobō, 1997) 80-81.

> and upper-class women, even as they complain about the difficult times they are forced to endure by not becoming prostitutes, engage in other kinds of work and accept low wages at their lot. For the respectable, prostitution is never an alternative. Because they know that the work of prostitution is vulgar, shameful work.[215]

Therefore, the argument goes, the real cause leading women to prostitution is moral weakness, rather than poverty.[216] Another article mentions laziness as among the causes determining prostitution followed by vanity and desire for clothing. The contributor defined laziness as the desire to procure happiness without work.[217] These multiple causes are inscribed over and over again in *Kakusei.*

Not everyone placed responsibility for prostitution on women; and some criticized the socio-economic conditions that bred prostitution. For example, Masutomi considered prostitutes to be victims of poverty and criticized the abolitionists for calling them "fallen women".[218] Yet the majority regarded the prostitute as a "shame of the nation" and put responsibility on women. Overall, a number of abolitionists believed that prostitution was a consequence of personal moral weakness, lack of education, and the preference of indolent ease to labor, and thus blamed women for prostitution.

Yet, at the same time, abolitionists claimed that the government was responsible for drawing a large number of uneducated women into licensed

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[215] Shō Tamagawa, "Hinmin no Risō tosuru Fujin (An ideal woman for poor people)," in *Kakusei,* vol.1, no.6, 1910, 47.
[216] Tamagawa, "Hinmin no Risō tosuru Fujin," 47.
[217] *Kakusei,* vol.2, no.1, 1911, 10-11.
[218] Seisuke Masutomi, "Risaisha wo Sukue (Rescue the victims)," in *Kakusei.* vol.1, no.1, 1910, rept. in *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryō Shūsei, Vol.1, Jinken,* 296-300.

prostitution. An article in *Kakusei* written by the Moral Reform Society argues that because the government institutionalizes prostitution as a legitimate female occupation by issuing a license and thus never stigmatizes it, prostitutes are proud of their occupation rather than ashamed of it. Because of this, the article maintains, uneducated and morally weak women are willing to enter the occupation. As a result of the government's involvement in prostitution, except for a few moralists, society in general treats prostitutes with a certain respect, instead of stigmatizing them.[219] Therefore, the article argues, the government should stigmatize and criminalize prostitution by withdrawing from this "shameful occupation."[220]

Forced/Choice dichotomy

Ukita Kazuomi, a doctor of laws, was one of the ardent anti-prostitution advocates. His arguments were significant in reconceptualizing prostitutes. According to Ukita, in addressing social problems, such as the issue of prostitution, one should consider the majority's benefit rather than taking a moralist view. Even though licensed prostitution is morally objectionable, it should be tolerated because it is beneficial for society at large. He claimed that eliminating prostitution was impossible and encouraged illicit prostitution for the almost same reasons that Ueki claimed. What is notable in his following argument is his use of the forced/choice dichotomy in explaining differences between licensed and illicit prostitutes. He argued, licensed prostitutes are coerced workers enslaved in the pleasure quarters, while illicit prostitutes

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[219] *Kakusei*, vol.2, no.5, 1-8.
[220] *Kakusei*, vol.2, no.5, 8.

"choose" their occupation voluntarily.[221] Unlike licensed prostitutes, illicit prostitutes "choose" their trade not only because of their poverty but because of their desire for an easy and luxurious life.[222] Thus, Ukita viewed licensed prostitutes as victims in needs of rescue, but saw the women who chose illicit prostitution as acting positively rather than reactively. Many prostitution abolitionists shared his view and clearly marked out illicit prostitutes as culprits rather than victims. Another article says:

> Some defenders argue that the abolishment of licensed prostitution would result in an increase in illicit prostitutes. But that would not be the case. . . . Illicit prostitutes 'choose' their occupation, while licensed prostitutes are coerced by their parents. . . . Thus, they are fundamentally different sorts of women from each other. . . . Therefore, the abolition of licensed prostitution should be considered separately from the issue of illicit prostitution.[223]

Thus, prostitutes were subdivided into two groups, those who were forced/those who chose. This dichotomy is used by prostitution defenders even today.

Many anti-prostitution advocates opposed the state's involvement in prostitution but never denounced prostitution itself. The prostitution abolitionists' main objection to the licensed prostitution system was that the state was the agency that granted permission to engage in prostitution. The overall objectives of the prostitution abolition movement were to save the nation's dignity by ending such official government permission, to criminalize those involved in prostitution, and to spread the social ethic that saw prostitution as a criminal vice

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[221] Kazuomi Ukita, "Kōshō Mondai no San Yōten (Three main issues regarding licensed prostitution)," in *Kakusei*, vol.2, no.1, 1911, 7-14.
[222] Ukita, "Kōshō Mondai no San Yōten," 10-11.

and prostitutes as depraved creatures. Underpinning this narrative is the argument that the primary causes of prostitution, which are male demand and economic inequality, are ineradicable.

Female prostitution abolitionists

Some female social reformers revealed their sympathy towards their sisters, i.e. prostitutes. For example, an article written by the wife of a member of the Diet, Hinata, regards prostitutes as victims of poverty and patriarchy in need of rescue. She blames wealthy men, be they customers or brothel owners, for their abuse of women.[224] However, a number of female social reformers stressed the difference between themselves, "the women", and prostitutes. In an article in *Kakusei*, one of the male abolitionists stated, "women are extremely unsympathetic and cruel towards fallen women, i.e. prostitutes."[225] Many female abolitionists claimed that prostitutes, be they licensed or illicit, were a disgrace to them, "the women". Female reformers considered prostitutes, and above all the *geisha*, as sexual contaminators who had destructive influences on upper- and middle-class families. Unlike their male counterparts, female reformers never recognized prostitution as a legitimate employment. In their arguments, female reformers repeatedly

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[223] *Kakusei,* vol.1, no.2, 1910, 19.
[224] Hinata, "Fujin Shakai to Gei-Shōgi Mondai (Women's society and the problem of geisha and prostitutes),"in *Kakusei*, vol.1, no.3, 1910, 40-43.
[225] Takeji Komatsu, "Kenkō to Seiyoku (Health and sexual desire)," in *Kakusei*, vol.2, no.5, 1911, 14-17.

equated prostitutes with animals to distinguish them from "the women". [226]

The *Nihon Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfūkai* (Japanese Christian Women's Moral Reform Society) was an organization that solely consisted of upper- and middle-class women and had a distinctive political agenda. According to Hiratsuka, by 1917, *Kyōfūkai* had 46 branches and 3500 members all over Japan.[227] Many members had received their education at Christian mission schools, since these institutions were often the only places where upper- and middle-class women could receive a higher education. Therefore, it is quite understandable that the international abolitionist and social purity movements that emerged during the last three decades of the nineteenth century directly inspired the group. Their goal was a purification of the state that would protect lives of women and would destroy the immoral, sexist double standards that assured men's access to prostitutes. They drew on the Christian tradition of social reform and the "good wife, wise mother" ideology, and carried out campaigns against prostitution.

The members of *Kyōfūkai* believed that only Christian morals could guarantee Japan's civilization, and therefore called for an education based on "purity," which was associated with virginity until marriage and monogamous marital relationships. Purity required a prohibition on any non-reproductive

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[226] For example, see "Fujin Shakai to Gei-Shōgi Mondai (Women's society and the problems of geisha and prostitutes," written by a wife of a member of Diet, Shimada, in *Kakusei*, vol.1, no.6, 42-43; Haruko Hatoyama, "Geiko no Bakko to Katei no Fujin (The rise of geisha vs housewives)," in *Kakusei*, vol.4, no.1, 1913, 16-19.

[227] Raichō Hiratsuka, "Yajima Kajiko to Fujin Kyōfūkai no Jigyō wo Ronzu (On Yajima Kajiko and her activities in Kyōfūkai)," in, *Shinshōsetsu*, 1917, rept. in *Shiryō: Sei to Ai o Meguru Ronsō*, 261.

sexual activity both within and outside the marital relationships.[228] Thus, in contrast to male abolitionists, *Kyōfūkai* members rejected the idea that prostitution was inevitable and aimed to eliminate it completely. From its formation, the leaders of *Kyōfūkai* tirelessly petitioned the government to legislate and propagate the principle of strict monogamy and to protect a wife's marital position. In their understanding, the idea of equality under law was integrally linked to the necessity of an equal moral standard in which men must emulate the chastity and morality they expected respectable women to display.

Since their call was for "purity" and preservation of the family, they viewed prostitutes as immoral for engaging in sexual activity outside the marriage.[229] They saw prostitutes as different kinds of women for they separated sexuality from the reproductive code that defined women's social worth. They assumed that unchastity or immorality began with prostitutes and spread from them to chaste society via men. An article in *Kakusei* written by a member of *Kyōfūkai* states:

> Nowadays, our society is filled with bacillus, i.e. prostitutes. The aim of our movement is to exterminate this bacillus that makes thousands of respectable men neglect their lawful wives.[230]

Another member says, "As a mother, I have to oppose prostitution which not only

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[228] Sabine Fruhstuck, " Then Science Took Over: Sex, Leisure, and Medicine at the Beginning of the Twenty Century," 68.
[229] Yuki Fujime, "The Licensed Prostitution System and the Prostitution Abolition," in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, vol.5, no.1, 1997, 137.
[230] Tatsuko Okuyama, "Shakai Sakuran no Bacillus wo Messeyo (Elliminate the bacillus which brings harm to society)," in *Kakusei*, vol.3, no.1, 1912, 22.

disturbs my child's morality but also contaminates every family."[231] In order to achieve this end, one member claimed:

> We have to teach geisha the shamefulness of their occupation. We have to teach them that their occupation is crime and brings a misery to respectable family. We have to make them realize how disgusting and sinful they are.[232]

Rather than blaming men, the *Kyōfūkai* members placed all responsibility on prostitutes for male promiscuity.

A former *geisha*, Uehara, who was encouraged by the *Kyōfūkai* members to cease her trade, states:

> Listening to their story, I was very irritated and felt like shouting that "please do something for our poor parents who had to sell us rather than teaching us how immoral our occupation is . . . . What did they mean exactly by stating that they would rescue us? . . . I felt that they didn't know there was no social welfare system, unemployment insurance, or a care home for the aged.[233]

Their agitation over prostitution reflects upper- and middle-class anxieties and tensions concerning the sanctity of the family rather than the objective reality of the economic conditions of the lower class population. In fact, the language used by these female abolitionists did not suggest even a modicum of sympathy and compassion towards prostitutes. As in the Victorian purity crusades, Japanese female abolitionists viewed prostitutes as an infected group which would

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[231] Utako Hayashi, "Osaka Yūkaku Haishi to Kyōfūkai (Kyōfūkai and the abolishment of the pleasure quarter in Osaka and)," in *Kakusei*, vol.5, no.5, 1914, 14.

[232] Kōnan Ito, "Yosano Akiko-shi ni Tamau (To Yosano Akiko)," in *Kakusei,* vol.5, no.9-10, 1914, 50.

[233] Uehara, *Kuruwa no Onna-tachi*, 274-275.

contaminate society rather than as victims in need of rescue.[234] Their argument is that the supply of prostitutes creates the demand for them. Thus, prostitution is the cause of its own existence. The speaking position from which they addressed the issue on prostitution was always upper- and middle-class. Like those of Britain, anti-prostitution movements carried on by the *Kyōfūkai* were preoccupied with protecting female virtue and preserving the family.

Feminist views on prostitution

Itō Noe, a member of the *Seitō*, pointed out the hypocritical nature of the anti-prostitution campaign carried on by *Kyōfūkai*. Itō argued:

> The objective of their movement is to satisfy their vanity . . . . They call miserable women "*sengyōfu*" . . . . Their argument is grounded simply in the idea that being a prostitute is shameful in the eyes of Westerners. . . . They carry on the anti-prostitution campaign in order to save the appearance of the country in the eyes of Westerners, not to save miserable women. . . . A woman enters into prostitution as above most likely because of poverty. But they seem to believe that the root cause stems from her stupidity, not from poverty. They appear to insult her lack of education.[235]

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[234] For further discussion on the Victorian purity crusades, see Judith R. Walkowitz, "Male Vice and Female Virtue: Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in Nineteenth-century Britain," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed, Ann Snitow et al. (New York: The Monthly Review Press, 1983) 419-438.

[235] Noe Itō, "Gōman Kyōryō nishite Futettei naru Nihon Fujin no Kōkyō Jigyō ni tusite (On arrogant and inefficient Japanese women's social movements)," in *Seitō*, vo.5, no.11, 1915, rept. in *Shiryō: Sei to Ai o Meguru Ronsō*, 206.

Itō further argued that, on the one hand, the *Kyōfūkai* members appeared to sympathize with miserable women. But on the other hand, through the moral crusade, they excluded prostitutes from "the women" and consolidated the boundary between themselves and the "others", prostitutes.[236] Unfortunately, Itō's insightful argument was not further developed among Japanese feminists.

Some feminists regarded prostitution as the result of the artificial constraints placed on women's social and economic activity: lack of alternative employment opportunities forced lower class women into prostitution. They realized that the popular sentimentalization of motherhood only thinly masked women's real status as sexual objects to be bought and sold by men. For example, Hiratsuka Raichō and Ikuta Hanayo recognized that female sexual respectability was purchased at a high price, with little promise of social independence. They believed that destitution directly produced a certain number of prostitutes and in eliminating its causes prostitution would diminish.[237] Yet other feminists regarded the root cause of prostitution as stemming from women's moral weakness and, therefore, like the *Kyōfūkai* members, blamed women for prostitution.[238]

Overall, it can be said that there was no egalitarian approach to prostitutes among the feminists. They tended to see prostitutes principally as

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[236] Ito, "Gōman Kyōryō nishite Futettei naru Nihon Fujin no Kōkyō Jigyō ni tusite," 210.

[237] Hanayo Ikuta, "Taberu koto to Teisō to (Food or virginity)," in *Hankyō*, Sep., 1914, in Shiryō: *Sei to Ai wo Meguru Ronsō*, 13-18; Raichō Hiratsuka, "Shojo no Shinka (The value of virginity)," in *Shin Koron*, Mar. 1915, in *Shiryo: Sei to Ai o Meguru Ronso*, 65-71.

[238] Satsuki Yasuda, "Ikiru koto to Teisō to: Hankyō, 9gatsu gō 'Taberu koto to Teisō to' wo Yonde (Life or virginity: Reading the critics on 'food or virginity' in September issue)," in *Seitō*, vol.4, no.11, Feb. 1914, rept. in *Shiryō: Sei to Ai wo Meguru Ronsō*, 18-24.

objects of concern rather than as representing their, "the women's", own issue. For example, Yamakawa Kikue, a Socialist feminist and an anti-prostitution advocate, believed that the root cause of prostitution stemmed from the unequal distribution of wealth and opposed the licensed prostitution system. But she did not take the issue further, because "the issue of prostitution is smaller than many other issues we confront."[239] Yamakawa stated, "if prostitutes cease trade, 'somebody' will help them by providing alternative employments."[240] Thus, Yamakawa appeared unconcerned about the future of women thrown out of the brothels. Probably because there was no unified view on prostitution among Japanese feminists, and, more importantly, because they viewed prostitutes as "others", Japanese feminists failed to take the issue of prostitution as their political agenda.

Conclusion

Regardless of its political agenda, each Japanese anti-prostitution movement had repressive effects on discourses on prostitutes. As was true of their Western counterparts, Japanese anti-prostitution advocates held the same middle-class biases, used the "whore stigma" as a tool to attack prostitutes, and thus relegated prostitutes to a degrading position. Furthermore, by articulating a forced/choice dichotomy, the male abolitionists justified the abuse of prostitutes.

The mission to purify society carried on by female abolitionists would

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[239] Kikue Yamakawa, "Nihon Fujin no Shakai Jigyō ni tsuite Itō Noe shi ni Atau (To Itō Noe: My opinion on Japanese women's social movements)," in *Seitō*, vol.6, no.1, 1916, rept. in *Shiryō: Sei to Ai wo Meguru Ronsō*, 218.
[240] Kikue Yamakawa, "Sara ni Ronshi wo Akirakanisu (Further discussion on Japanese women's social movements)," in *Seitō*, vol.6, no.2, 1916, in *Shiryō: Sei to Ai wo Meguru Ronsō,* 228.

also prove critical in constructing them as the "others". Frequently they talked and wrote about prostitutes as the "others", or "the whore", to emphasize their own argument in regard to inequality of the sexes. In sharp contrast to Ellice Hopkins, who blamed men for their abuse of women, Japanese anti-prostitution advocates firmly placed responsibility for prostitution upon women, not men. By reconceptualizing prostitutes as "fallen women", the anti-prostitution advocates articulated a boundary between the whores and "the women", and thus made the exploitation of prostitutes justifiable.

Chapter 5. From "National Pride" to "National Shame"

Although the economic contribution made by prostitution throughout the Meiji and Taisho period is sometimes overlooked, this chapter will argue that prostitution too was instrumental in laying the foundation to achieve the Meiji slogan "*Fukoku Kyōhei*" (enrich the nation and strengthen the military). The official rationale for the tolerance toward prostitution was to maintain social order. This explanation created the illusion that the state was an entity separate from the prostitution industry. Unlike the Tokugawa regime that did not tax prostitutes, however, the Meiji state used prostitution for its economic gain by imposing tax on both *geisha* and prostitutes. Within the nation, the state monopolized the prostitution industry by prohibiting and criminalizing unlicensed prostitution taking place outside the state's authority. Not only the licensed prostitutes but, as we shall see, *karayuki-san* were from the earliest days of the Meiji era, a valuable export merchandise that generated foreign exchange for the country's costly nation-building enterprise. Through the study of *karayuki-san*, this chapter demonstrates how socio-economic, and socio-cultural conditions affected discourses on prostitutes.

Taxes from licensed prostitution

The Regulations Concerning Brothels and Prostitutes enacted in 1872 allowed only licensed prostitution practiced under government control. It made all prostitution taking place outside government control a criminal act. The central government formally delegated responsibility for regulating prostitution to the prefectures in order to avoid criticisms from the Western countries. In 1872, the

Tokyo Metropolitan Government issued the Regulations Concerning Brothels and Prostitutes. This law fixed a monthly licensing fee levied at five yen per month for brothels, and at two yen per month for prostitutes and three yen for geisha respectively. These provisions became the model and were applied throughout the nation.[241] The enormous sums of taxes collected from licensed prostitutes were incorporated into local taxes as "miscellaneous income" rather than as "prostitution taxes." For many local governments, the tax revenue from the prostitution industry was extremely important.[242] Therefore, to increase local tax revenue, local governments authorized new pleasure quarters one after

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[241] Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 175-177.

[242] It is difficult to speculate on the value of this tax in today's value. But Gen'nosuke Yokoyama`s research provides us with useful insights. These taxes were extremely high compared to the price level of the period. The average daily income of male *shokunin* (artisans) was approximately 40 sen. This means that the monthly tax each prostitute paid was equivalent to 5-days male income. In 1898, an average annual income of a tenant farmer was approximately 50 yen. This means, the yearly tax from each prostitute was equivalent to nearly 50 percent of average farm household's yearly income. In 1898, the average annual income of a female maid-servant was 4-5 yen. The average monthly income of female workers in cotton spinning plants was 3.80 yen. These figures suggest that the monthly tax levied on each prostitute was more than 15- days female wages. See Gen'nosuke Yokoyama, *Nihon no Kasō Shakai* (The lower classes of Japan), 31st ed, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1978) 88-89, 265-266, 276; Hane provides for an another useful reference. In 1890 men who could afford to pay a national land or income tax of fifteen yen or more were given rights to vote. But the number of people who met the requirement was as small as 1.14 percent of the total population. See Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey*, 154.

another.[243]

In 1882, the total amount of tax generated from the prostitution industry, including brothel owners, prostitutes, and *geisha*, was as small as 700,000 yen. However, in 1913, the national total tax revenue from prostitutes was 1,260,000 yen,[244] while the tax from geisha was 1,550,000 yen.[245] In Tokyo, the tax from *geisha* in 1913 was nearly 160,000 yen, and was the largest of all the miscellaneous tax incomes.[246] According to the *Kakusei*, the national amount spent on the prostitution industry was as much as 728,000,000 yen in 1911.[247] These figures suggest to us the significance of the economic contribution to the state made by the licensed prostitution.

Beautiful export merchandise: *karayuki-san*

Since the Meiji government lifted the ban on going abroad in 1866, many people, particularly those of the western part of mainland Japan, began emigration abroad. The number reached over 100,000 in the half-century following the Meiji

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[243] The total number of licensed prostitutes, which was approximately 27,500 in 1888, doubled and reached 52,000 by 1898. The number of licensed prostitutes peaked in 1916 at 54,049 and remained at around 50,000 during the 1920s and 1930s. In contrast to the number of prostitutes that remained relatively stable throughout the Taisho period, the number of geisha dramatically increased, from 28,600 in 1899 to 56,000 in 1913, and reached 80,000 in 1929. So, altogether were 130,000 prostitutes and geisha in the early Showa period. The figures are cited from: Murakami, *Meiji Joseishi, Gekan*, 26; Yamamoto, *Nihon Kōshōshi*, 444-457, 518-519; Sho Tamagawa, "Kakusei Jigen (Editorial)," in *Kakusei*, vol.3, no.6, 1913, 10-11.

[244] Fujime, *Sei no Rekishigaku*, 94-96.

[245] Tamagawa, "Kakusei Jigen," 10. According to Tamagawa, the tax from geisha was the second biggest of all the miscellaneous tax income in 1913.

[246] Tamagawa, "Kakusei Jigen," 10-11.

[247] Tamagawa, "Kakusei Jigen," 10-11.

Restoration.[248] The term *karayuki* initially referred to these people who went overseas regardless of their sex. But from the 1970s, *karayuki* came to refer primarily to women sold into overseas prostitution between the 1860s and 1930s. The peak in trafficking in women was around 1910 when Japan annexed Korea and the Japanese industrial economy was rapidly expanding. The government statistics show that by 1910, there were close to twenty thousand Japanese women registered as overseas prostitutes.[249] The main regions in which *karayuki-san* settled were Siberia, Manchuria, China, Southeast Asia, and North America.[250]

The *karayuki-san* led economic advance

Before World War I, Japan could not yet successfully compete with the West as a modern industrial nation for markets and products, and was desperately in need of overseas currency to foster its capacity to do so in the future. Government

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[248] Sachiko Sone, "The Karayuki-san of Asia 1868-1938: The Role of Prostitutes Overseas in Japanese Economic and Social Development," in *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol.26, Summer, 1992, 44.
[249] Masanao Kurahashi, *Kita no Karayukisan* (Karayukisan in the North) (Tokyo: Kyōei Shobō, 1989), 73. Cited from the statistics made by the Foreign Ministry of Japan. The number excludes the prostitutes settled in both Korea and Taiwan both of which were Japanese colonies in this period; Tomoko Yamazaki, *Sandakan 8 ban Shōkan: Teihen Joseishi, Josho* (Sandakan No.8 brothel: A history of the lowest class women: A preface) (Tokyo: Bungei Shujū, 1975); Kazue Morisaki, *Karayuki-san* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1980). The majority of *karayuki-san* went abroad from impoverished villages in the western part of mainland Japan, particularly from Kumamoto and Nagasaki prefectures. These prefectures were among the poorest regions in Japan, with scarce arable land and overpopulation. Nagasaki, which became the primary place for exporting women overseas, had been the only port open to the outside during Japan's seclusion policy. Therefore the girls there experienced less hindrance in leaving the country.
[250] Kurahashi, *Kita no Karayuki-san.*

policies encouraged overseas migration as an important source of foreign exchange earnings, and this indirectly encouraged trafficking in women. A leading political theorist, Fukuzawa Yukichi, vigorously encouraged the emigration of prostitutes. He argued that since there was no future for these women in Japan, except as prostitutes, it would be far better not only for them but also for the nation that they go abroad to accumulate foreign currency.[251] Fukuzawa stated, "the women who go abroad should not be criticized; rather, since emigration is being encouraged, they should be given the freedom to do so."[252] It is impossible to assess the actual extent to which Fukuzawa's ideas influenced government policy, nonetheless, it is clear that while the Japanese government did not openly support the emigration of women, no measure was taken to discourage it either.

Many researchers claim that brothel prostitution was the most economically viable Japanese industry in Southeast Asia. And thus, they maintain, the *karayuki-san* were instrumental in laying the foundation for the early Japanese economic advance into the regions.[253] For example, in 1919, Tsukuda Koji and Kato Michinori wrote:

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[251] Yuko Suzuki, *Jūgun Ianfu to Naisen Kekkon* (The 'comfort women' and intermarriage) (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1992) 17. Suzuki quoted *Jiji Shinpō*, 1896, in *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū*, vol. 15, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1961) 364.
[252] Motoe Terami-Wada, "Karayuki-san of Manila:1890-1920," in *Philippine Studies*, vol.34, 1986, 307. Cited from "Jinmin no Jiyū to Shōfu no Dekasegi," in *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū*, vol.15.
[253] Sachiko Sone, "The Karayuki-san Of Asia 1868-1938: The Role of Prostitutes Overseas in Japanese Economic and Social Development."; Hiroshi Shimizu and Hitoshi Hirakawa, *Japan and Singapore in the World Economy: Japan's Economic Advance into Singapore 1870-1965* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999); Terami-Wada, "*Karayuki-san* of Manila: 1890-1920."

> They, the Japanese prostitutes, needed Japanese foods, Japanese beverages, Japanese clothes, and many other Japanese goods. Their demand was met by the queer Japanese sundry-goods stores which dealt in a wide variety of goods, ranging from Japanese clothing to tinned foods. As the Japanese goods were also sold to non-Japanese customers by such stores, they became widely known. The prosperity of Japan's Southeast Asian trade today is not thanks to Mitsui & Co. and some other large merchants. But the trade was in fact developed by these sundry-goods retailers, behind whom there was a shadow of the Japanese prostitutes.[254]

Likewise Sone argues:

> The *karayuki-san*, as `beautiful merchandise`, were a valuable commodity to export, as there were so few Japanese goods to retail in Southeast Asia in the first fifty years after 1868 . . . . In a very real sense, as migrants, Japanese prostitutes were early pioneers in the history of Japanese economic expansion in Southeast Asia, especially in the period before 1920.[255]

It is amply documented that the European colonialists turned colonized women into prostitutes during the period of primitive accumulation of capital.[256] What characterizes Japan's expansion overseas is that, having no colonies, Japan turned its own women into prostitutes in this process. The above studies demonstrate to us that *karayuki-san* paved a path to Japan's expansion into

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[254] Shimizu, et al., *Japan and Singapore in the World Economy: Japan's Economic Advance into Singapore 1870-1965.* Cited from Koji Tsukuda and Michinori Katō, *Nanyō no Shin Nihonjin Mura* (Tokyo: Nanbokusha, 1919).
[255] Sone, "The *Karayuki-san* of Asia 1868-1938: The Role of Prostitutes Overseas in Japanese Economic and Social Development," 48. Borrowing from Sue Gronewold, *Beautiful Merchandise: Prostitution in China 1860-1936* (New York: Haworth Press, 1982), Sone refers to *karayuki-san* as beautiful merchandise exported from Japan.
[256] Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books, 1986) 74-111.

Southeast Asia. Furthermore, in Singapore, Shimizu and Hirakawa discovered that a number of *karayuki-san* used part of their earnings to provide loans to other Japanese residents or to invest in rubber and other plantations.[257] Shimizu and Hirakawa denote the model of economic development in Southeast Asia as "the *karayuki*-led economic advance".[258] Probably, the same phenomena were observed throughout the world where the *karayuki-san* settled.

It is difficult to assess the economic contribution made by *karayuki-san* on the national level. Yet at the prefectural level, it is said that the Nagasaki post office annually handled over 200,000 yen, which was remitted by *karayuki-san* of Amakusa origin.[259] The capital *karayuki-san* remitted boosted tiny local markets and poverty stricken villages. According to Yoshimi, in 1900 Japanese immigrant workers in Siberia, primarily in Vladivostock, sent back to Japan about one million yen. Of this sum, 630,000 yen came from *karayuki-san*.[260] By contrast, the amount sent by *Nihon Yusen Kaisha* (Japan Postal Shipping Company)—a large company under the protection of the government—was as little as 45,000 yen.[261] According to Yamatani, the total

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[257] Shimizu et al., *Japan and Singapore in the World Economy*, 33-40.
[258] Shimizu et al., *Japan and Singapore in the World Economy*, 20-35.
[259] D.C.S.Sissons, "*Karayuki-san*: Japanese Prostitutes in Australia, 1887-1916," in *Historical Studies*, vol.17, Apr.1976-Oct.1977, 337. Cited from *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun*.
[260] Yoshimi Kaneko, *Baisho no Shakaishi, Kaiteiban*, 12.
[261] Kenji Miyaoka, "Shōfu Tokōki: Jōshigun Banka(Migration of prostitutes)," in *Dentō to Gendai, Special Issue: Shōfu*, Dec, 1968, 100.

amount sent by *karayuki-san* in 1902 was more than 12 million yen.[262] Yamatani argues that *karayuki-san* was the fifth biggest export item: the first was raw silk; the second was silk fabric; the third was cotton yarn; the fourth was coal; and the fifth was *karayuki-san*.[263] These studies demonstrate the magnitude of economic contribution *karayuki-san* made.

Were they "others"?

Although they were issued with licenses by the colonial authorities, in contrast to licensed prostitutes in Japan, the colonial law specified that *karayuki-san* were entirely free to quit their trade at any time. As soon as they ceased to work as prostitutes, in theory, their debts to brothel-keepers would be written off unconditionally. Nonetheless, most of the *karayuki-san* remained loyal to their brothel keepers and did not cause any nuisance to them.[264] This is probably because many *karayuki-san* were aware that if they returned to Japan, they would have great difficulty in finding an alternative job. Those women had to work anyway; otherwise their families would starve. More importantly, unlike prostitutes in mainland Japan, the *karayuki-san* were an integral part of their Japanese communities. The majority of the overseas Japanese came from the

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[262] Tetsuo Yamatani, *Japayuki-san: Ajia wa Onna da* (Japayuki-san: Asia is a woman), 8th ed, (Tokyo: Jōhō Center Shuppankyoku,1990) 260-261. The figures include the remittance from all overseas Japanese immigrants. The number of *karayuki-san* (prostitutes) made up roughly one third of overseas Japanese population. But in this period, many people engaged in prostitution related industries, such as kimono shops or hairdressers. Therefore, it is likely that nearly a half amount was remitted by prostitution related people, including prostitutes themselves.

[263] Yamatani, *Japayuki-san: Ajia wa Onna da*, 260-261.

[264] *Kakusei*, vol.3, no.12, Dec. 1913, 498-499.

same class as the *karayuki-san*, i.e. the lowest class and, therefore, did not stigmatize prostitutes.

Contrary to the common view on *karayuki-san* as passive victims, a considerable number of *karayuki-san* were out of debt within four to five years, became independent and worked on their own account in a brothel according to Yamazaki. Some *karayuki-san*, who successfully paid off their debt and became madams, called their sisters and relatives from their home villages to join their business. Many *karayuki-san* married Japanese men of their own class living overseas.[265] Likewise, research has revealed that many other *karayuki-san* became wives or concubines to Europeans, Chinese, or ethnic Malays.[266] These discoveries lead us to assume that *karayuki-san* were not only integrated to the local Japanese community but to the larger society in which they settled.

The successful adaptation of *karayuki-san* probably stemmed from socio-economic conditions in the communities that housed them. In her book

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[265] Yamazaki, *Ai to Senketsu: Asia Josei Kōryūshi*, 34; Yamazaki, *Sandakan 8 ban Shōkan*. Osaki-san was the one who married to the Japanese man of her own class. Also Osaki-san's oral history reveals that a number of karayuki-san married Japanese men living overseas; Magoichi Nunokawa, "Nihon Fujin no Tsura Yogoshi (The shame of Japanese women)," in *Fujin Kōron*, vol.3, no.2, rept. in *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryō Shūsei, vol.1, Jinken*, 330-336. As a staff of the Home Ministry, Nunokawa visited Siberia in 1916 and wrote a report on *karayuki-san*. In his report, Nunokawa deplored the decline in moral standards of Japanese and stated, "in Siberia, many Japanese men married to *karayuki-san* who were not worthy of becoming wives."; Saburō Shimada, "Imin Mondai to Waga Fūzoku (The problem of migration and Japanese morality)," in *Kakusei*, vol.8 no.11, 1917, rept. in *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryou Shusei. vol.1, Jinken*, 341. Shimada reported that in British Malaya, of 705 women married with Japanese, 75 percent were ex-*karayuki-san*.

[266] Shimada, "Imin Mondai to Waga Fuzoku," 341. Shimada reported that in British Malaya, 310 *karayuki-san* either were married to or became concubines of Europeans. Also he wrote that many married ethnic Malays, Indians, and Chinese living there.

Karayuki-san, Morisaki states, she was perplexed when she heard ex-*karayuki-san* stating without any hesitation that "[she] lived overseas and did female work" that indirectly meant prostitution.[267] This made Morisaki believe that prostitution was not different from other female occupations, such as those of wet-nurse or maidservant, for the villagers. The villagers called these women with a friendly term, "*karayuki-don*", which involved considerable warmth.[268] Many ethnologists argue that the official morality did not swiftly disseminate into the countryside, that earlier traditions survived in rural areas and among the villagers well into the Showa period.[269] For example, Henmi discovered that in a small village in Mie prefecture, well into the Showa period, many women casually engaged in prostitution, the so-called *hashirikane*, without being stigmatized by villagers. Many men of the village were willing to marry these women since being a *hashirikane* was regarded a good experience for women, enabling them to know how to deal with men. Yanagita also reveals that in several fishing villages, the *wakamono-yado* remained throughout the Meiji period. Young men and women met there and decided their partners after sleeping with several members of the opposite sex. These findings lead us to assume that "chastity" may not have had the same social meaning that it did for people in cities. The villagers lived according to social norms that neither stigmatized nor ostracized *karayuki-san*. In the villages, the distinction between "the women" and prostitutes probably did not exist; therefore, villagers were willing to marry *karayuki-san*. The villagers were even proud of *karayuki-san* who brought home

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[267] Morisaki, *Karayuki-san*, 21.
[268] Morisaki, *Karayuki-san*, 20.
[269] Jun Henmi, *Umi no Shōfu: Hashirikane* (Prostitutes in port-towns) (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1981) 17-26; Kunio, Yanagita, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era: Manners and Customs,* vol. IV.

wealth.[270]

Western colonialism and *karayuki-san*

European colonies, such as British Malaya, North Borneo, and the Netherlands East Indies as well as the American-controlled Philippines, all welcomed *karayuki-san* as a matter of course under colonial policy. The common characteristic of those countries was a gender imbalance resulting from male labor migration into the colonies. The colonial authorities regarded the presence of prostitutes as indispensable in maintaining the immigrant coolie labor force necessary for those countries in the process of exploiting natural resources.[271] Hence the *karayuki-san* were welcomed as a kind of safety-valve for immigrant workers. Their principal clientele were Chinese and Indian migrant workers followed by local coolie labors. Yet *karayuki-san* were also popular among European colonial authorities and soldiers alike. This was because they were all licensed and went through medical check-ups, hence were regarded as clean in contrast to Chinese prostitutes as well as those of Indians and Malays.[272]

In late nineteenth century Western Europe, public opinion became increasingly critical of the trafficking of women. In 1904 and in 1910, two international agreements on prostitution, an agreement on control over the traffic in women and girls for prostitution and an agreement on banning prostitution, were concluded in Paris. The critical view on prostitution spread into the European colonies in Asia and directly hit the life of *karayuki-san*. In 1913, the

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[270] Yamatani. *Ajia wa Onna da: Japayuki-san*, 252.
[271] Kurahashi, *Kita no Karayukisan*, 79-81.
[272] Shimizu, et al., *Japan and Singapore in the World Economy:Japan's Economic Advance into Singapore 1870-1965*, 32.

Batavia government in the Netherlands East Indies ordered Japanese brothel keepers to close their business. Influenced by the measure taken by the Batavia government, the colonial authorities in Singapore banned prostitution by white women in 1914. As a consequence, Japanese brothels in Singapore began to face harsher criticism from every quarter.[273]

"Othering" *karayuki-san*

Economic growth during World War I resulted in a significant change in the occupational and sexual structure of the Japanese population in Southeast Asia. For example, a sharp increase of Japanese exports to Singapore was accompanied by a large increase in the number of importers, retailers, employees of large companies and others in the "proper trade" and their dependants. The newly arriving member of the middle class brought their class biases with them and began to marginalize *karayuki-san.* Shimizu and Hirakawa state that the Japanese middle class increasingly came to see *karayuki-san* as a national disgrace and started campaigning for the abolition of Japanese prostitution.[274] For middle class people, it was a question of national honor and prestige, and of being viewed as a "civilized" nation in the eyes of the West. According to Hayashi, *karayuki-san* in Shanghai became marginalized, as in Singapore. In her short story "Yellow Sand," Hayashi wrote of the popular mentality of overseas Japanese:

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[273] Shimizu, et al., *Japan and Singapore in the World Economy:Japan's Economic Advance into Singapore 1870-1965*, 44.
[274] Shimizu et al., *Japan and Singapore in the World Economy:Japan's Economic Advance into Singapore 1870-1965*, 44-45.

> When living in a foreign country, one was apt to feel that each person represented his or her home country. Since at that time national prestige was important, the Japanese residents especially were strongly self conscious . . . . As extreme expressions became commonplace among adults, the clannishness among the Japanese intensified. . . . Okiyo-san [a prostitute], though Japanese, was excluded from the group.[275]

The *karayuki-san*, once an asset of the nation, were gradually excluded from the overseas Japanese communities and finally labeled as a national disgrace.

Debates on *karayuki-san*

Since the beginning of the Taisho period, there was an extensive discussion on *karayuki-san* in such journals as *Kakusei*, *Fujin Kōron*, and *Fujin Kyōfukai Zasshi*. Not only Christian moralists but many people of different occupations, such as politicians, professors, and doctors addressed the issue of *karayuki-san*. A director of a hospital in Manchuria revealed his critical view on *karayuki-san*:

> Many prostitutes live in Manchuria and deal with despicable Chinese and Russian coolie labors. Their shameful activities would destroy the prestige of the Japanese nationals.[276]

He argued, "their miserable life is worthy of sympathy on the one hand", but on the other hand, "they deserve it because they are such shallow minded women

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[275] Kyoko Hayashi, "Yellow Sand," in *Stories by Contemporary Japanese Women Writers*, trans. and ed. Noriko Mizuta Lippit and Kyoko Iriye Selden (New York: M.E.Sharpe) 202-203.

[276] Hakuyō Shibata, "Kita Manshū no Shūgyōfu (Prostitutes in Northern Manchuria)," in *Kakusei*, vol.3, no.12, 1913, 22.

who left Japan seeking for an extravagant life."[277] Another report mentioned that such uneducated agrarian women were fools who were brought up by uneducated peasants, and thus were easily lured by honeyed words of pimps. He further claimed that *"joson-danhi"* (respect women and despise men, which was opposite to the Confucian moral code) was common practice in the colony. *Karayuki-san*, who were spoiled in this circumstance, did not deserve to reintegrate into normal life and to become wives of ordinary Japanese.[278] This view of prostitutes as national disgrace was shared by female abolitionists as well. A member of *Kyōfūkai* wrote:

> The dignity of us Japanese women is, of course, sullied by prostitutes. We don't even know how much they harm the national prestige of Japan. Now the rampant presence of these women is directing the attention of the world to the new territorial possessions, and this is something that should be lamented.[279]

In contrast to the term "*karayuki-don*" used by villagers, the intellectuals used a variety of insulting terms to refer to *karayuki-san*. For example, *karayuki-san* were called *inbai* (an obscene seller), *shūgyōfu*, (a woman in an ugly trade), *jōshigun* (Amazonian troops), *sengyōfu* (a woman of a dishonorable calling), and *baishōfu* (a woman seller of laughter). Underlying those words was the "women-blaming" mechanism that emphasized women's agency and thus placed responsibility for prostitution on the women themselves. In the writings produced by the upper- and middle-class, the

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[277] Shibata, "Kita Manshū no Shūgyōfu," 22.
[278] Magoichi Nunokawa, "Nihon Fujin no Tsurayogoshi," 330-336.
[279] *Nihon Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfūkai Hyakunen-shi* (A one hundred year history of Kyōfūkai), 228-229.

dominant discourse on *karayuki-san* was always *shūgyōfu* or *sengyōfu*, a woman who brought the shame to "the women" and nation, and therefore had to be eliminated. The abolitionists emphasized the women's responsibility and paid scant attention to the material poverty of the village that allowed many girls no alternative but becoming *karayuki-san*.

Recent research on *karayuki-san* argues that a considerable number of girls were impressed by former *karayuki-san* and "chose" to work overseas by their own accord.[280] To be sure, some *karayuki-san* chose to go abroad. For example, a former *karayuki-san* stated, "I wanted to go to *Nanyō* (Southeast Asia) rather than staying in the village."[281] She further stated, "in those days, many villagers dreamed of going abroad."[282] But the economic conditions of their home village point out how their choice was not entirely free. According to Yamazaki, a former *karayuki-san* named Osaki said:

> There were days when I would have nothing to swallow but water from morning 'til night. Even when noon came around, or when the sun had set, I still hadn't even the neck of a sweet potato to eat.[283]

Osaki also said, "I didn't feel unhappy staying in *Nanyō* (Southeast Asia).

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[280] Sone, "The *Karayuki-san* of Asia 1868-1938: The Role of Prostitutes Overseas in Japanese Economic and Social Development," 57. Sone claims that the *karayuki-san* who became independent after completing their years of bondage should be called "migrant laborers, practicing a profession by choice."; Shimizu et al., *Japan and Singapore in the World Economy: Japan's Economic Advance into Singapore 1870-1965*. Shimizu reveals the same view with Sone by citing from DRO.

[281] Yamatani, *Japayuki-san: Ajia wa Onna da*, 252.

[282] Yamatani, *Japayuki-san: Ajia wa Onna da*, 247.

[283] Yamazaki, *Sandakan 8 ban Shōkan*. 68.

Because I could eat three meals a day, anyway."[284] These words suggest that seemingly "free choice" was not exactly free but was severely restricted by their economic conditions.

Japanese government policy regarding *karayuki-san*

As early as in 1896 the Emigrants Protection Act, a law that forbade prostitutes and pimps going abroad, was passed. But it did not discourage the migration of pimps and *karayuki-san.* Since the act was not applied to Korea and China, procurers were able to take women to other parts of the world via these countries.[285] The government turned a blind eye to this practice. Even if the criticism on *karayuki-san* grew, it was not an easy task for the government to put an end to the trafficking in women because of the vital role brothels still played in the economy of both the overseas Japanese communities and the villages where *karayuki-san* came from. The Japanese government kept silent probably because the demand for foreign capital made trafficking in women too tempting to resist.

By the end of World War I, however, the Japanese economy had grown to the degree that it was, in some areas, becoming more able to compete with the West. As a consequence, the currency coming from *karayuki-san* became less significant in the new post-war economic climate. In 1920, after a long year of silence, the government took decisive measures to ban prostitution overseas, curtail traffic in women, and send them back to Japan. The *karayuki-san*, once an asset of the nation, were dumped at the nearest port of arrival without any

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[284] Yamazaki, *Sandakan 8 ban Shōkan*, 48.
[285] Morisaki, *Karayuki-san*, 101.

financial assistance.[286]

Conclusion

As we have seen, it is undeniable that the *karayuki-san* were instrumental in laying the foundations for the early Japanese economic advance into many regions. The existence of *karayuki-san* was indispensable until Japan could economically catch up with the West. It is understandable, therefore, that the state made no attempt to halt trafficking in *karayuki-san* regardless of repeated demands from Christians and the middle-class overseas residents. But the development of capitalism resulted in the decline in economic importance of *karayuki-san*, and thus the discourse on them gradually shifted from the "national asset" to the "national disgrace" and marginalized them. By the time when *karayuki-san* were sent back to Japan, the "civilized" moral code had gradually spread to the villages and created a boundary between them and villagers. The discourse on *karayuki-san* shifted, reducing them from being the pride to the shame of the village. Thus, *karayuki-san* were increasingly marginalized and treated as "others" by the state and by their communities.

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[286] Yamazaki, *Sandakan 8 ban Shōkan*, 268.

Conclusion

In this study, I have explored how the discourse on the prostitute developed in Japan, and prostitutes came to be seen not just as "the women" but as a special category of women, the "others". This issue has taken increasing importance since the disclosure of the official documents on the "comfort women". Unfortunately, however, it has hardly raised consciousness among Japanese women. It appears that the boundary between us, "the women", and them (the prostitutes) stubbornly persists and thus prevents Japanese women from addressing the issue. The objective of this study has been, therefore, to deconstruct this boundary by tracing how it was constructed in a specific historical period.

As we have seen in chapter 1, throughout the Tokugawa period, official views on prostitutes were, in theory, sympathetic, and commoner women were never blamed for practicing prostitution. In parallel with official narratives favorable to prostitutes, glorified images of prostitutes in cultural representations and tolerant sexual morality among commoners discouraged the populace from looking down on prostitutes. In addition, in contrast with the Meiji period, wifehood was not necessarily identified with motherhood, and hence prostitutes were eligible for marriage. Because of these multiple factors, prostitutes were not particularly identified as a special class and were thus allowed the opportunity to move out of prostitution. In other words, prostitution was a transitory occupation for poor women.

In the Meiji period, however, discourse on prostitutes underwent substantial changes. In the preceding chapters, I have argued that three major factors intertwined and altered the discourse on prostitution: a series of laws

issued in the early Meiji period, the implementation of the "good wife, wise mother" ideology, and the "whore stigma" that emerged from anti-prostitution movements. By looking at the Meiji intellectuals' debates and a number of legal changes with regard to prostitution, Chapter 2 discovered how the language of "choice" was introduced and used to reconceptualize and define the prostitute as a distinct body. In the Meiji official discourse, in sharp contrast to the Tokugawa period, prostitutes were no longer filial daughters who sacrificed themselves for the poor families but independent sex workers who willingly "chose" their occupation. Thus, responsibility was shifted from men to women. In parallel to this shifting view, prostitution became legally a class specific occupation in which only lower class women were allowed to participate. Chapter 3 focused on the new gender ideology— "good wife, wise mother"—dictated by the patriarchal state. This ideology gained consent from women and divided women one from the other by defining respectability and deviance by awarding class privileges to conforming women. Internalizing this ideology, "the women" consolidated their own identity by constructing prostitutes as the "others", and vise versa. It should be noted that this ideology has undergone substantial transformation since its implementation. But the assumption that women's essential function was to keep house and raise children persisted, and is still a major factor behind the boundary between "the women" and the "others" (prostitutes) today. Chapter 4 examined how the "whore stigma"—a divide and conquer instrument of sexist social control—emerged and was used to marginalize prostitutes. The Japanese anti-prostitution crusades used the "whore stigma", which attributed "good" and "bad" labels to women, and they further subdivided prostitutes into "forced" and "voluntary". This division still prevails today and makes the exploitation of prostitutes justifiable. Lastly, by looking at the experience of *karayuki-san*,

chapter 5 explored how the socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions affected the discourse on prostitutes.

An enmeshed combination of multiple factors that I examined affected the discourse on prostitution, divided women into good and bad, and consolidated that artificial boundary. This boundary still persists today, and is a major factor behind such issues as the "comfort women" and Asian women working in the Japanese sex industries today. Excluded "others" have comprised women of different classes or race in each historical period. In the Meiji period, they were exclusively women of the rural and urban poor. As Japan's imperialism grew, women from the colonized countries and occupied territories took their place. And now the majority of "others" are women from the Third World. I hope my findings will encourage Japanese women to acknowledge the origin of the boundary, deconstruct it, and build solidarity between "the women" and the "others".

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