

Base Cultures: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Occupied Japan

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This article examines how the bodies of Japanese women became a key site of political and cultural contestation during the Allied occupation. The sale of sex, once legally recognized and regulated, became a conspicuous symbol of postwar chaos. Ostracizing sex workers who catered to servicemen provided a means to display an abiding nationalism without directly confronting the occupiers. But these women were also indispensable in the economy of military base cities. Journalists and social critics sought to discern or impose order by devising elaborate taxonomies, cartographies, health regimes, and moral codes. Sex workers were active participants in this process, but their personal testimonies show how their lives defied categorization. When the Diet finally intervened with the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law, it was merely the culmination of a long process involving every segment of Japanese society.

IN OCTOBER 1946, YOSHIDA Sumiko sent a letter to Allied occupation authorities: “Please make it possible for hundreds of women to go home freely to their fathers and mothers as soon as possible. We can do nothing because the employer holds the notes for our debt” (USNA 1946c).¹ Yoshida wrote seeking her freedom. As a matter of law, Commander in Chief Douglas MacArthur had ordered it earlier that year, when he directed the Japanese government to abrogate all laws that permitted licensed prostitution and nullified all contracts that committed any woman to the practice (USNA 1946a). But MacArthur’s decree did not close the market in sexual services, nor did it free women from all forms of debt bondage. It merely deregulated the market. With deep poverty and an influx of American and British Commonwealth servicemen, there were unparalleled incentives and opportunities to sell sex for money.

Streetwalkers known as *panpan* quickly became a vivid and contentious symbol of the Allied occupation.² In the military base areas, a flood of new sex

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¹The names of all sex workers have been changed. “Allied occupation” refers to the period from August 1945 to April 1952 when Japan was subject to foreign control and occupied by Allied troops.

²There is no one word—in English or in Japanese—that describes the world of *panpan*, formerly licensed prostitutes, base workers, and other women who sold sexual services from 1945 to 1956, much less all of the others who profited from this trade. “Sex worker” is a term coined by practitioners themselves to describe the sale of sexual services. It has some problems, as it was not

workers and military personnel forced Japanese men, women, and children to confront a changed physical and social landscape as it was reconfigured to accommodate the occupying forces. As the commercial sex markets boomed, its representatives became increasingly unpopular: Government surveys, literary accounts, and anecdotal evidence demonstrate that sex workers faced animus and discrimination by many ordinary men and women.³ When Allied officials failed to control commercial sex, metropolitan and regional governments—including Metropolitan Tokyo in 1949—passed some sixty local ordinances (*jōrei*) to prosecute sex workers (Fujime 2003, 41–43; Fujino 2001, 195–97). But collusion between the police and proprietors' associations rendered them largely ineffective. At the same time, sex workers, proprietors, and clients also participated in complex negotiations and compromises that proved to be more important in determining how sex would be bought and sold. How did these more informal, everyday exchanges contribute to the conditions that finally provoked Japan's first national law against prostitution in 1956?

Most scholars have focused on the political history leading up to the 1956 law, highlighting the role of Allied occupation officials, government bureaucrats, and Japanese feminists. They have explored the ways in which feminists cooperated with American officials against the sex work industry, as well as the U.S. military's sexual violence against women. Fujime Yuki, Japan's foremost scholar on commercialized sex, has analyzed the politics of local government prostitution ordinances (2006b) and the influence of the "American Plan" on the reorganization of the Japanese prostitution system (2006a). Hirai Kazuko (2004) looks at the problem of violence during the U.S. occupation more broadly, concluding that U.S. military authorities not only continued to take prostitution for granted, but actually depended on it to sustain troop morale.

coined during the period. But the term *baishun*—the one Japanese scholars and the public normally use for prostitution—is also anachronistic, as it entered common usage only in the postwar period, beginning with the term *baishun mondai* (prostitution problem) (Yunomae 2000). In its origins and almost by definition, *baishun* makes sex work inherently problematic. Moreover, it does not distinguish between selling sex (*baishun*, literally "selling spring," 売春) and buying sex (*baishun*, literally "buying spring," 買春). "Prostitution" also has negative connotations (e.g., "I prostitute myself to my job"), which this article aims to explain and cannot take for granted. Its use is sometimes unavoidable, such as when referring to the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law (a standard translation). "Licensed prostitute," also a standard translation, is useful in conveying the idea that some were considered more legitimate than others. By also using the term "sex workers," I want to underscore this complex reality.

³Such surveys began in 1949, when the National Public Opinion Research Institute of the Japanese government conducted a survey of attitudes toward prostitution among the Japanese people. This survey was published in Japanese and also in English. For the latter version, the information gathered by the Cabinet Deliberation Public Opinion Room of the Japanese government was analyzed and published by the Public Opinion and Sociological Research Division of the Civil Information and Education Department. Later surveys conducted by the Women's and Minors' Bureau of the Ministry of Labor include *Rōdōshō Fujin Shōnen Kyoku* (1953, 1955). A wide range of literary accounts, some recently translated into English, paint a similar picture (see Molasky 1999).

While historians have begun to explore how Allied abolition of regulated prostitution changed the political and legal landscape, relatively less attention has been paid to the way sex markets developed in the absence of effective regulation and the ways this forced Japanese men and women to reconsider sex work. This article examines how the bodies of Japanese women became a key site of political and cultural contestation during the Allied occupation. Deregulated sex markets shaped the built environment and economy of Japanese cities. But it also spurred many people to reimpose order by constructing elaborate taxonomies, cartographies, health regimes, and moral codes to give meaning to this most conspicuous sign of their occupied status. Sex workers were active participants in this process, but their personal testimony shows how their lives defied categorization. When conservative members of the Diet finally agreed to intervene, it was merely the culmination of a long process involving every segment of Japanese society.

There is a long history of international influence in shaping Japanese sex markets. Since 1589, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi established the first regulated “pleasure district” (*yūkaku*) in Kyoto, authorities have overseen the commercial sex markets and their practices. But licensed prostitutes, like many others in Japan, saw their lives change with the establishment of the Meiji government in 1868. The new political leadership studied and adopted a variety of European-style prostitution regulations, including invasive and mostly ineffective medical examinations (Fujime 1997a, 1997b).

Four years after the restoration, the *Maria Luz* incident further highlighted how the Japanese regulated sex work through a dialogue with outside actors. The affair revolved around the Peruvian ship *Maria Luz*, which had stopped in Yokohama for repairs, and Chinese laborers aboard who escaped to a British warship. When a special Japanese court declared the laborers free, the Peruvian captain asked why foreigners should be denied the right to buy and sell laborers when, after all, slavery existed in Japan’s licensed quarters. Sensitive to foreign perceptions, the Japanese cabinet issued a proclamation liberating indentured prostitutes (Garon 1997, 1; Ramseyer 1991, 97–98).

One week later, the Ministry of Justice lacked similar sensitivity when it issued an infamous order excusing geisha and licensed prostitutes from paying back their debts. It argued that if farm animals could not be expected to pay back their debts, neither could the women. The order did not void the practice of prostitution, only indenture contracts—and these were reinstated by 1875 (Ramseyer 1991, 98).

Standard accounts date the beginning of the abolitionist movement to the late nineteenth century (Garon 1997, esp. 98–99; Takemura 1982; Yoshimi Kaneko 1992, 107–19). The Freedom and People’s Rights Movement (*Jiyū Minken Undō*), which called for a popularly elected Diet and a democratic constitution, may have laid the groundwork (Fujime 1997a, 142). But it was not until 1880, when Christian activist Yuasa Jirō and others submitted a petition to abolish

prostitution to the Gunma prefectural assembly, that any true Japanese antiprostitution movement can be identified. The prefecture, which adopted an ordinance against prostitution in 1891, soon emerged as the center of operations for the National Prostitution Abolition League (*Zenkoku Baishō Dōmeikai*) and for the abolitionist movement more generally.

By this time, explicitly Christian groups had also begun to organize against prostitution. In 1886, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (*Nihon Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfūkai*) began operations in Tokyo, and was joined by the Salvation Army (*Kyūseigun*) in 1900. After fires razed the Yoshiwara licensed district in 1911, these two groups were joined by the Purity Society (*Kakuseikai*). But anti-prostitution activists could not stem a flourishing commercial sex market or persuade public authorities to outlaw it. For instance, the Gunma ordinance may have stopped licensing prostitutes, but the taxation of sex work businesses and mandatory venereal disease examinations continued (Fujime 1997a, 152). Activists' efforts did little to discourage the sale of sex or to improve the work conditions of women in the licensed districts.

With the rise of the café waitress in the 1920s, clients and sex workers interacted in new ways. In the popular press, café waitresses were associated with the phenomenon of the “modern girl” and, with it, notions of independence and sexuality. Café waitresses worked in a highly eroticized atmosphere and received their wages from tips. While evidence suggests that sexual labor was not mandatory and occurred outside the café premises, many women probably engaged in after-hours activities (Tipton 2002). They had control—albeit limited—over their bodies and their choice of clients (Silverberg 1998, 224). But this kind of work did not provide status or financial independence.

Despite sporadic crackdowns, café culture continued to be popular into the 1930s. By 1936, there were twice as many registered café waitresses as licensed prostitutes. Abolitionists exploited the coming of war, imposing restrictions on cafés and bars (Garon 1997, 108). Licensed brothels worked with them to limit competition. Sex workers remained organized into a strict hierarchy of licensed workers and unlicensed workers (Fujime 1997b, 288; Garon 1997, 106–10).

At the beginning of the Allied occupation, Japanese authorities were inclined to manage servicemen's sexual behavior preemptively in the same ways that Japanese military servicemen's behaviors had been engineered during the Asia-Pacific War (1931–45). Japanese politicians and officials rushed to organize sexual services for American servicemen only six days after defeat, founding the Recreational Amusement Association (RAA, *Tokushu Ian Kyōkai*). Establishing and administering state-sponsored brothels was not a new enterprise for the Japanese military command, which had established the first documented “military comfort stations” (*jūgun ianjo*) in Pingquan, China, in March 1933 (Yoshimi Yoshiaki 2000, 47).⁴

⁴The issue of “military comfort women” (*jūgun ianfu*) has been an extremely controversial one among Japanese and Korean scholars in recent years. In Japan particularly, a battle has been

Even though RAA women participated voluntarily, if only for a lack of other readily available options, this network of institutionalized sexual service centers proved unacceptable to Allied military command. When MacArthur directed the Japanese government to “abrogate and annul” all laws and ordinances that permitted licensed prostitution, he effectively abolished the system that had regulated female sex workers since the end of the nineteenth century. The RAA was disbanded and the Allies concentrated thereafter on reducing venereal disease.

U.S. regulation of sexual behavior also fits into a longer history. The United States typically regulated prostitution in its overseas possessions and its garrison towns, whereas incarceration and rehabilitation became increasingly common elsewhere (Briggs 2002, 30–32; Pivar 1973, 50–77). It was first regulated on a national basis in 1941, when the May Act prohibited prostitution within “reasonable distances” of military and naval establishments. During the war years, raids occurred sporadically in base towns in the continental United States (see, e.g., Lutz 2001, 58). Like their counterparts in Japan, U.S. military officials were mainly concerned with preventing venereal disease.

Different models of regulation or prohibition were therefore available to both Allied and Japanese officials. As we shall see, they resorted to a range of different measures during the first postwar decade. But even the Americans could not simply rule by decree. Instead, the process of regulation was shaped by the response of Japanese journalists, activists, and ordinary men and women to what they viewed as a prostitution problem that was out of control.

“GEISHA GIRLS” AND GI JOES: *PANPAN* CULTURE AND ITS CRITICS

Politicians and journalists in the popular and elite press in Japan focused on what they claimed to be enormous growth in sex work after 1945. However, the data suggest that the sex worker population may not have increased dramatically. In 1955, an estimated one in twenty-five women between the ages of fifteen and

waged in courtrooms and newspapers by the victims and their supporters for an official apology and compensation. Conservative politicians, activists, and certain scholars maintain that the Japanese government has already settled war claims or, more provocatively, that survivors were merely prostitutes lacking historical “evidence” to back up their claims of forced labor. Yoshimi Yoshiaki, a Japanese activist and historian at Chūō University, has conducted extensive research and has spearheaded the fight for restitution and recognition among historians: The translation of his 1995 *Jūgun ianfu* remains the best English-language work on the topic. For an English-language introduction to the debates surrounding the issue, see Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (2003). For a recent introduction to the topic that explains its contemporary importance and places it in a broad human rights context, see Yoshimi Yoshiaki (2006). Testimonies may be found in Keith Howard (1995) and Maria Rosa Henson (1996). On the progress of the issue through the courts and on remaining issues ensuing from lawsuits against sexual violence, see the report on Japan’s War Responsibility and the Comfort Women (*Sensō sekinin kenkyū* 2005).

twenty-nine worked in the commercial sex market.⁵ Yet the numbers were comparable thirty years earlier, when one of every thirty-one women between eighteen and twenty-nine was so employed (Garon 1997, 94). Moreover, although the mass media portrayed the clients of sex workers as predominantly Allied servicemen, their customers also included Japanese men. While it is difficult to determine whether and to what extent the numbers of sex workers increased, the focus of their critics' ire is unmistakable. It was not just prostitution per se that bothered them, but the patronage of Allied servicemen.

Ever since Allied forces landed in August 1945, no figure was more notorious than the *panpan*. They were the source of desire, debate, and derision. Dangling cigarettes or popping amphetamines, they were frequently shown extending their arms languidly to invite servicemen away for a few hours. Ubiquitous photographs, newspaper articles, and literary descriptions proffer vivid images of heavily made-up women standing on street corners, posing on a subway platform, or lurking under bridges. *Panpan* wore the latest Western fashions, it was said, whereas ordinary women were still clad in wartime work trousers. Photographers and other visual artists most often portrayed the *panpan* looking away from the camera (Tsubota 1983, 29). This may have been intended to protect their privacy, but the anonymity gave the impression that any Japanese woman could become a *panpan*.

Many Japanese today associate the *panpan* solely with Allied servicemen, if only because the most common pictorial, literary, and filmic representations depict them in their company. But the word was applied to any woman who sold sex on the street, and the new population of occupying American servicemen were simply their most conspicuous clients. But it is clear from the use of terms in the popular Japanese press such as *yōpan* (Western *pan*—in other words, *panpan* specifically for foreigners) and *wapan* (*pan* who took only Japanese clients) that *panpan* engaged in sexual commerce with both Japanese and foreign men. One witty cartoon in the weekly *Sandee Mainichi* summed up the hypocrisy that *panpan* often elicited: Upon seeing a serviceman and a *panpan*, a Japanese onlooker remarks, "I can't stand seeing such fraternization," at the same time pulling a package of Lucky Strikes from his pocket (USNA 1946b, 4).

Allied observers commented about the omnipresence of the *panpan*: In Iwakuni, F. C. Bibby, an Australian air force officer, complained that after getting out of his jeep, two Japanese women walked by and one poked what appeared to be an inflated white condom in his face, saying something in Japanese. Both girls laughed and proceeded on their way (AWM 1950d). G. R. Gregg noted, "It is impossible at any time, either day or night, to walk along the street without being accosted by prostitutes or being approached and

⁵The 1955 calculation uses the figure of 500,000 female sex workers used by the mass media and politicians in the Diet combined with Japanese population statistics from Nihon Tōkei Kyōkai (1987, 80).

mauled by elderly woemn [*sic*] or young men procuring for prostitutes” (AWM 1950c). The American popular and military press also displayed ambivalence about *panpan* culture. The *New York Times* pointed out that “Geisha Girls” were hardly real geisha, but *panpan*, as the subtitle of one 1945 report emphasized: “She is not what Joe thinks she is” (Parrott 1945).

The most popular “how-to guide” to Japan and Japanese women was Bill Hume’s *Babysan* cartoon, which originally appeared in the *Navy Times*, and was later collected in a book published simultaneously in Japan and the United States (Hume 1953). Hume’s highly erotic pinup-style portrayal of the *panpan* played to American male fantasy. But most of the cartoons rendered Babysan as getting the better of her GI patrons—two-timing them while taking their money. While dressing and wearing her hair like Veronica Lake, she was also portrayed as challenging American stereotypes of Japanese culture. This points to what may have troubled Japanese men and women about the *panpan*: Even while representing unwelcome changes in Japanese society, the *panpan* were also in a position to represent Japan to the occupiers.

Early postwar journalists and others therefore devoted a great deal of time to analyzing the *panpan*, beginning with determining the origins of the term. While the Japanese language continued to maintain a rich and specific vocabulary to refer to sex workers, the coinage of a new word reflects the extent to which the *panpan* were viewed as a new cultural phenomenon, one specific to living in an occupied polity. And while its etymology remains ambiguous, early on, a consensus emerged on two points: that the word originated in the South Seas, referring to a sex worker for the Imperial Japanese Navy, and that Japanese servicemen stationed there later brought the word home.⁶

Such a derivation is another example of how the Japanese interpreted the occupation through their own imperial history. After all, the word reminded men of a time when they were the primary consumers of sex from colonial subjects in a foreign place. But ex-soldiers may have felt uncomfortable when it was Japanese women who were selling their services.⁷

In 1945, there were reports of former Japanese servicemen attacking women who consorted with GIs. One sailor, Risamatu Masaharu, age nineteen, was taken to provost marshal headquarters after allegedly striking a Japanese girl in Hibiya Park for dating an American soldier. Witnesses said he was one of nine who did the same thing (*Stars and Stripes* 1945). There were also threats against Japanese

⁶By 1949, the authoritative *Gendai yōgo no kiso chishiki*, a dictionary of current usage, reported, “It was a fashionable word in the postwar, the returned sailors used it since during the war” (1949, 139). Early etymological accounts may be found in the contemporary popular press by authors such as Kanzaki Kiyoshi (see, e.g., *Zadan* 1949). Contemporary American historians of Japan have also discussed the word’s origins (see Dower 1999, 132; Garon 1997, 197; Pflugfelder 1999, 330).

⁷On parallel developments in occupied Germany, which has been relatively well examined by historians, see especially Goedde (2003), Maria Höhn (2002), and John Willoughby (2001). For the case of South Korea, see Katherine H. S. Moon (1997).

women who worked on bases (AWM 1947a). But the more common response among those Japanese angered by women who associated with GIs was to ostracize them. They were called “gaudy” and “disgusting” (SCAP 1949, 2). Men and women avoided them in the street, gossiped with their neighbors, and made angry complaints to the Metropolitan Police.

Yet threats and ostracism were not Japanese society’s only reactions, and perhaps not the most significant ones. There was also a marked tendency to find order in the chaos that *panpan* came to represent. The chaos, of course, was considerable. *Panpan* were among the 9 million men and women who struggled to find temporary shelter in the fall of 1945. The war years had wrought unprecedented destruction. After U.S. forces had finished their work, sixty-six of Japan’s largest cities were devastated, with only 60 percent of built-up areas still standing. Almost a third of Japan’s city dwellers were made homeless (United States Strategic Bombing Survey 1946, 17).

In March 1946, one journalist tried to write about rocketing inflation and the extent of unemployment in a mainstream women’s magazine, *Fujin Asahi*. “With the upward swing of the price of commodities, it becomes absolutely foolish for a person to stick to natural, honest ways of living. This leads to degradation of morale; crimes increase. Day by day the social outlook becomes more threatening.” The writer continued, “People engaged in acts that they might not have done otherwise. Criminals, robbers, and practitioners of *oihagi* [stealing clothing off the wearer by force] stalked the streets.” The comments were stricken by a censor for “disturbing public tranquility” (Prange Collection 1946).

In Tokyo, where 65 percent of residences were destroyed, Ueno Park became the center for the poor and the homeless and the place best known for its high concentration of *panpan*.⁸ Some even said that it was the origin of *panpan* culture. Other people flocked to the park to make their living as well—returnees from the former Japanese colonies, war victims, widows and their children. They became both sellers and buyers of sex.

The misery in Ueno Park became fodder for articles in the popular press. Writers explained the social problem that plagued Japan with a style of “scientific” reportage replete with charts, graphs, and maps. Their books and articles mapped out the park in laborious detail, providing diagrams that showed the hierarchies of *panpan*, what it meant to sell what kind of sexual services where, how much was charged, and even what sex workers wore. Elaborate studies by mainstream women’s magazines as well as lowbrow weeklies explained for the concerned reader—as well as for the lascivious one—the postwar commercial sex market.

Kanzaki Kiyoshi, a social activist, reporter, and writer, quickly emerged as the leading “scholar” of the *panpan* and of prostitution in the postwar era. Kanzaki

⁸In 1948, Ōtani Susumu estimated a population of 1,500 to 2,000, depending on seasonal conditions (Prange Collection 1948).

would soon skyrocket to national fame as an antiprostitution crusader, writing several articles in the popular press, publishing an astonishing number of books, and even testifying before the Diet. In 1949, Kanzaki published an article titled “The Zoo without a Cage” in *Josei Kaizō*, a leftish women’s monthly. In describing the conditions in Ueno Park and its environs, Kanzaki conducted himself like a zoologist taxonomizing a lower form of life. He is clear to point out early on that these women are different creatures from the intended reader—presumably, an educated woman.

A year earlier, investigators such as Ōtani Susumu had found only three classes of sex workers in the park (Prange Collection 1948, 73). Kanzaki claimed to have discovered a much more detailed map, complete with status markers and an intricate explanation of class relations among streetwalkers. Kanzaki described to readers the hierarchy based on the geography of the park grounds. He explained how clothes and accessories showed buyers “who was who” in Ueno Park. The lowest level of sex worker was called *yama no pan*, or the *panpan* who lived in the heights of the hills of the park. In Kanzaki’s hierarchy, the next group, *shita no pan*, the pan underneath, came higher. She worked at ground level in the park, by the south exit of Asakusa Station. Kanzaki considered her more “modern,” noting that “they wore garish western clothes, shoes, and some have kimono, but it is of low quality.” Kanzaki outlined another category, less desirable than the *shita no pan*, whom he called “women of the three-mat room” (*sanjō no heya*) (Kanzaki 1949a, 65–67).

Elaborate taxonomies of Tokyo’s sexual markets continued to appear in the popular press. But journalists writing for the intellectual weeklies displayed a tendency to categorize sex work according to a moral system, rather than a merely taxonomic one. Thus, social critics such as Ōtani Susumu and Minami Hiroshi argued that toiling to save one’s family from financial ruin was acceptable, but working out of personal choice was not. In his 1948 ethnography of Ueno Park, Ōtani tugged at the heartstrings of readers by presenting the sad stories of women such as Katō Yoshie, who struggled to support her six younger siblings, and Okawa Katsuko, who had been orphaned by the war and abandoned by her brother (Prange Collection 1948, 70). However, Ōtani sharply criticized those who worked for other reasons. “While they say they cannot lead the lifestyle of war victims or returnees, they are devoted to extravagant color and to their appearance and spend huge sums on living expenses. Their ideas and lifestyles clearly have no balance” (Prange Collection 1948, 91).

One year later, Minami Hiroshi, a professor at Japan Women’s University, argued that, even worse, postwar sex workers articulated a social transformation from a prewar ideal of household responsibility to the postwar reality of personal choice. In a roundtable discussion published in the progressive journal *Kaizō*, Minami compared the sex workers of his own day unfavorably to their prewar counterparts, who had been sold to proprietors by their parents “because of their families’ poverty.” As for postwar sex workers, Minami opined, “I think

everyone chooses this kind of work out of their own way of thinking.” Itō Akiko, a sex worker participating in the same panel, had a different perspective: “Some enter such society out of necessity, facing a dead-end; others enter out of vague curiosity; still others join in because of their extreme idolization of foreigners.... Also, there are those who are drawn into it, having been lured by someone” (Minami et al. 1949, 74).

Surveys and other evidence suggest that the majority of military base sex workers, like their counterparts at other points in the twentieth century, entered the profession for economic reasons (Rōdōshō Fujin Shōnen Kyoku 1955; see also Garon 1997, 94–95). A police report revealed that 60 percent of prostitutes said that their motivation was the difficulty of living, and many also had to pay for medical expenses for husbands or children or were war widows (USNA 1950b). Sex workers were relatively well paid. A 1955 survey from the Women’s and Minors’ Bureau of the Ministry of Labor showed that most sex workers made between 20,000 yen (\$56) and 30,000 yen (\$83) per month. Few women saw monthly earnings of less than 5,000 yen (\$14) or more than 70,000 yen (\$194). This income compared favorably with that of other female workers: A factory worker could expect to earn on average between 7,600 yen (\$22) and 11,500 yen (\$29) per month, a textile worker 7,500 yen (\$21) a month, and a miner approximately 8,500 yen (\$24) a month (Nihon Tōkei Kyōkai 1987, 256–57; Rōdōshō Fujin Shōnen Kyoku 1955, 9). The same survey showed that, of all sex workers, those near military bases tended to be the most independent. Sixty percent of military base sex workers entered the industry for financial reasons, compared to 73 percent of other sex workers (Rōdōshō Fujin Shōnen Kyoku 1955, 66). The military base women carried relatively few debts: 48 percent owed money, compared to 82 percent of the other district sex workers. The same pattern held true for their visions of the future: 55 percent of the district women preferred marriage, and 26 percent wanted to work for themselves. Among military base sex workers, 25 percent preferred to marry, while 52 percent wished to work for themselves (Rōdōshō Fujin Shōnen Kyoku 1955, 66).

But the reasons for becoming a sex worker were not always reducible to economic incentives. One 1952 survey in Kanagawa Prefecture indicates that military base sex workers serving Euro-American clients had complex motives (Hirata and Morita 1953, 20). As with other local surveys of the period, it is not clear how the sex trade was conducted. But the author, Takahashi Fuyō of Kanagawa-Ken Women’s Rehabilitation Center, reported that it included 1,352 women. The sex workers cited a range of different reasons: They were encouraged by friends and family, they had a previous relationship with a serviceman, they were deceived by a procurer, or they simply wanted to move to an urban area and saw no other means (Hirata and Morita 1953, 20).

While the choice to become a sex worker depended on personal circumstances, financial or otherwise, the discussion in *Kaizō* suggests that even some

knowledgeable critics were quick to make broad generalizations about the kind of women who were drawn into sex work. *Panpan* were deeply unpopular among another audience as well. For some Japanese males—particularly veterans, returnees from Japan’s colonies, or the unemployed—condemning the *panpan* served as an oblique and effective way of criticizing the occupiers and expressing dissatisfaction with postwar life. Some Japanese men and women resented the *panpan* because of their (stereotypically) flashy clothes, lascivious behavior, and bright makeup.

A 1949 government survey reveals the extent of popular dislike for the *panpan*. A forty-six-year-old white-collar worker from Sendai said of the street girls, “[T]hey are gaudy and conspicuous, so they strike the eye,” while a thirty-two-year-old farmer from Kumagaya City was harsher: “The *panpan* are disgusting” (SCAP 1949, 2, 3). Most Japanese found organized prostitution less objectionable. A forty-two-year-old housewife from Kawaguchi City said, “Organized prostitutes don’t go out so much, they don’t run loose in the streets. They are not as harmful as those *panpan* girls” (SCAP 1949, 5). One Sendai farmer agreed: “There have been places like the Yoshiwara since a long time ago, so I don’t particularly think they are bad.” These comments reflect a difference not only in perception but also in reality: Regulated prostitutes behaved in expected ways, and mostly stayed in the former licensed prostitution quarters. In contrast, *panpan* could be found brashly strolling through the metropolis.

But citizens’ groups also began to target more traditional establishments. In Kanagawa Prefecture, they wrote to occupation authorities to complain about four houses that were “hotbeds of venereal disease and are poisoning society.” The letter testified that the women were held in debt bondage, while the masters lived in “the lap of luxury,” concluding, “it is a matter of grave significance to society that venereal diseases are prevalent through the aforementioned houses. These evil persons should be ostracized from society as early as possible, otherwise our society will never be bright and fair” (USNA 1949a). An investigation revealed the complaints to be well founded, and the owners were charged by the Supreme Command of the Allied Forces (SCAP) with violation of Imperial Ordinance no. 9, which abolished indentured contracts.

In an undated petition, most likely from November 1950, the president of the Imazu Women’s Association, Tanaka Mitsuye, complained about behavior in the public baths. She claimed that “questionable girls” had been seen washing their linen in the public baths, in violation of rules against their using it. She also reported that a primary school teacher had seen a woman who clearly had venereal disease and was forced to go home without a bath. Children were also affected: A third-year primary school boy had been playing with a condom he found on the road, and others had engaged in *panpan* play (AWM 1950a).

The press also was outraged: A 1950 article in the Hiroshima newspaper *Chugoku Shimbun* complained about the lack of attention to the *panpan*. “Public denunciation is getting intensified, much to the concern of local authorities on the question of street girls strutting down the street, not in the

evening but in broad daylight with their painted lips and glaring neckerchiefs” (AWM 1950b).

The *panpan* visually transgressed the borders of what was acceptable, intruding into daily life where organized sex workers had not. In response, social critics sought to discern order in *panpan* culture, and to impose it where necessary. They argued that the *panpan* differed because their work was performed not out of filial duty but out of female choice. But these critiques were expanding to encompass the former licensed districts and the people who worked there.

BLURRING THE LINES: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE FORMER LICENSED DISTRICTS

After MacArthur’s 1946 decree abolishing licensed prostitution, authorities struggled to maintain order with a series of new laws and regulations. Proprietors would have to register, not as providers of sexual services but under new, more ambiguous classifications. Particularly in the Yoshiwara district, trade associations took advantage of public health reforms to boast supposedly disease-free employees, setting their establishments apart. But even while they underwent a complete redistricting and a transformation of their legal status, their greatest problem was the *panpan*. Though they maintained close relations with the police and legislators, their struggle to keep sex work legal was a losing battle.

In contrast to the self-employed *panpan*, the delivery of sexual services in brothels depended on several categories of people besides sex workers: recruiting agents (*keian*), touts (*ponbiki*), and rickshaw drivers. The agents procured sex workers, sometimes from the farthest and poorest reaches of the Japanese archipelago. Touts encouraged clients to visit sex work establishments, while rickshaw drivers transported them there. All of these workers received a cut of the earnings. But proprietors relied most heavily on recruiting agents.

Recruiting agents had been essential to the market’s functioning since at least the end of the nineteenth century. The work remained lucrative: One journalist concluded that it was the most profitable job in the commercial sex market (*Shūkan Yomiuri* 1953b). Recruiting agents provided advance money to parents or guardians for women to enter multiyear contracts, most commonly with proprietors. Even though MacArthur’s 1946 decree abolished indenture contracts, women could still be bound by debt contracts. According to a 1955 survey by the Women’s and Minors’ Bureau, a majority of sex workers had some sort of contract. They typically agreed to serve for a maximum contractual term and could not stop working any sooner unless they repaid the principal.⁹

⁹According to a 1955 survey by the Women’s and Minors’ Bureau, a majority of sex workers had some sort of contract, despite MacArthur’s order. Loans accompanying indentured contracts remained legal until 1955, when the Japanese Supreme Court officially ruled them void in the case *Fujita v. Okazaki* (Rōdōshō Fujin Shōnen Kyoku 1955).

After the war, established proprietors had to rebuild more than just their recruiting networks. The destruction that devastated Tokyo disproportionately affected red-light districts: Firebombing destroyed Yoshiwara and Tamanoi. In 1945, only 50 out of 3,000 sex workers were estimated to be left in the few remaining houses in Yoshiwara (United States Strategic Bombing Survey 1947, 224). Japanese authorities improvised a set of regulations to allow prostitution to continue. In Tokyo, beginning in 1946, Police Bureau guidelines created “special eating and drinking shops” (*tokushu inshokuten*) limited to the former licensed districts. Proprietors had to set aside one room as a café. Some questioned why they needed even the trappings—tables, chairs, and the like—as they would be conducting business as usual (Kobayashi and Murase 1992, 96–97; Molasky 1999, 108; Sanders 2005, 145). In their maps, the police drew borders around these areas with red lines (*akasen*). But they also demarcated other areas of Tokyo that had a significant population of sex workers with blue lines (*aosen*) (Rōdōshō Fujin Shōnen Kyoku 1955, 11).¹⁰ In this way, even the Tokyo Metropolitan Police recognized that their regulations could not contain the actual extent of sex work.

The “special eating and drinking shops” were just the first in a series of efforts by authorities to regulate the entertainment industry in a way that accommodated sex work businesses without legally recognizing them. The 1947 Adult Entertainment Law (*Fuzoku Eigyō Torishimari Hō*) the Food Hygiene Law (*Shokuhin Eisei Hō*) passed that same year, and the 1948 Venereal Disease Prevention Law (*Seibyō Yobō Hō*), as well as many local regulations, together created an ambiguous and transitory regulatory environment.

Trade associations would play an important role in responding to the new regulations and the growing competition outside red-line districts. They worked both on a local level and organized under the national umbrella group, the National Council on Venereal Disease Prevention (*Zenkoku Seibyō Yobō Jichikai*). The police preferred that they work together to create one big association, thus making it easier to regulate their activities and reduce the *panpan* problem. Sometimes police even allowed trade associations to open more establishments, such as the 1949 case of *Shinkōkai* and the first postwar association in the area, the *Hanazonokai* (Kanzaki 1949b, 131–33).

As for the sex workers themselves, the stories they told show how little life in these establishments had changed. Aware of the decree that had abrogated the laws regulating licensed prostitution, Yoshida Sumiko was not the only one to write to occupation authorities to complain about the conditions that they continued to face. In Tokyo, Sakamoto Mitsuko wrote to General MacArthur in 1947 about proprietor Ichikawa Chūkichi’s establishment, *Shojikirō*. “The policemen come and the owner treats them with feasts but he does not protect us women

¹⁰Ono Tsunenori claims the practice may have begun as early as 1876, when police began using red lines on maps to denote *fuzoku eigyō chitai* (Ono Tsunenori, *Angura Shōwashi: sesoura no ura no hijihatsukokai* [Minami Shuppanbu: Hatsubai, Shuei Shōbo, 1981], n. 11, cited in Nagai 2002, 238).

even once. With the power of the Allied forces, call on each woman and ask them to find out the evil owner's way of life" (USNA 1947).

Sakamoto Mitsuko described her house as run in "the old manner." She likely meant a strong proprietor who used debt contracts to control his workers. In Nagoya, Tanaka Seiko also wrote to SCAP authorities to protest her working conditions. She described a situation that was in many ways typical of the prewar system, in that she incurred debt with her employer for meals that she ate at the house. Even worse, the lack of condoms at her establishment led Tanaka to contract venereal disease, and she was forced to continue working despite her condition (USNA 1950a).

With poorly paid and corrupt police, confusing laws, and conflicting jurisdictions, regulations were often ineffective. Perhaps more important than the formal regulations was the attitude of the police who enforced them. They criticized sex workers as "nothing more than a sort of women who hate to make themselves busy about any honest calling, fond of leading an easy, dissolute life, wanting to make easy money. They are just the women belonging to the so-called 'pastwar school'" [*sic*] (USNA 1950b).

There were a number of welfare and social organizations to help sex workers, some of them organized by sex workers themselves. On May 15, 1949, one such organization distributed pamphlets to the public in two Tokyo neighborhoods known for their high concentration of sex workers, Yurakucho and Hibiya. The pamphlets explained that the women were "lost sheep" who were born from the "social evils produced by the postwar confusion." Deprived by the war of parents, brothers, and husbands, they were often homeless and hungry, and selling their bodies was their only choice. In the five years since the war, "[w]e were chased by the police, put into the prison, and how often did we pledge to ourselves to go into a new life, looking at the moon through the bars of the jail weeping and thinking of our past happy days when we were all innocent girls?" (USNA 1949b).

For female sex workers in proprietor-type houses, tight relationships among recruiting agents, proprietors, presidents of street associations, and the police made it difficult to escape despite MacArthur's new proclamation. Sex workers who wrote to him cannot be assumed to have been representative. But a 1955 survey conducted by the Women's and Minors' Bureau suggests they were not atypical. It was conducted by employees of the bureau, other ministry bureaucrats, as well as local officials. They assessed some fifty different areas throughout Japan, including military base areas. A total of 350 proprietors participated and some 600 sex workers took part in group interviews. It provides rare examples of sex workers telling their own stories, albeit mediated by the officials who spoke with them (*Rōdōshō Fujin Shōnen Kyoku* 1955).¹¹

¹¹The interviewers used the roman letters "A," "B," and "C," to identify the women. To these letters they appended the suffix "ko," a common female name ending in Japanese. Therefore, the women are identified in the case studies—and this article—only as "A-ko," "B-ko," and "C-ko."

One participant, “A-ko,” twenty-five years old, was married and the mother of a one-year-old. Although she had graduated from Girl’s Higher Normal School and was the daughter of shopkeepers, A-ko had fallen on hard times. Together with her husband, she had been drawn into a ring of small-time crooks. At the time of the survey, he was serving a term in prison. Meanwhile, A-ko had become a serving maid at a hot springs resort, earning a paltry salary of 3,000 yen (\$8.33) per month. A-ko, crying, insisted that “if my husband’s salary had been paid, I wouldn’t have done such work. When my husband is released from prison, if he doesn’t understand, we will get divorced and I will go on living on my own.”

While A-ko came from a lower-middle-class background, thirty-year-old “C-ko” had lived a life of extreme poverty, so poor that she could only attend school as a nursemaid to the teacher’s children. A divorcee with two children of her own, she earned a pittance as an employee of the local police station. She began to moonlight at a “special drinking place” at night. The police administration, unsurprisingly, found her part-time job troublesome, so C-ko had to quit. After working at a noodle shop, she met and married a day laborer, who then went to Hokkaido for work. She reentered the sex market when, sitting near “K” station, someone solicited her. When her husband found out, he left her. For women such as these, facing severe hardship, sex work was the least worst option.

When the Women’s and Minors’ Bureau first started this survey, they intended to distinguish between two types of sex workers: those who worked within red-line versus blue-line districts (Rōdōshō Fujin Shōnen Kyoku, 1955, 4). The similarities in their social origins and the conditions in which they lived made it impossible to maintain this distinction. The practices denoted by “blue-line” appeared with great frequency in “red-line” districts, and vice versa.¹² Nevertheless, “blue-line” and “red-line” became buzzwords for journalists, writers, and film directors. Red-line most often evoked the former licensed quarters, while blue-line stood for the supposedly new bars and restaurants. The very frequency with which people persisted in their attempts to map the entertainment districts underscore the demand for some system that could represent order in a radically changed world.

If there was any licensed quarter that might have maintained its distinctive presence, it would have been the Yoshiwara, the most famous amusement quarter, glamorous, if notorious, since the beginning of the seventeenth century. After 1945, the quarter and the sex workers employed there faced

¹²After 1956, when the Diet passed the Prostitution Prevention Law, clever journalists took these appellations a step further, calling them white-line (*paisen*) districts. The white denoted the space above the black dots marking illegal brothels. In the late 1950s, several articles referred to *paisen*, including Morimura Akira (1957), *Shūkan Yomiuri* (1958, which dates the first use of *paisen* to three years previous), and *Ooru Yomimono* (1958).

unprecedented challenges: the destruction of the wartime air raids, the discontinuation of licensed sex work, and the ongoing occupation. But the Venereal Disease Law of 1948, which required health inspections and reporting of statistics, gave proprietors and workers of the Yoshiwara the means to put forward a healthy and hygienic front in their competition with *panpan*.¹³ Their health union, called the New Yoshiwara Women's Health Preservation Association (Shin-Yoshiwara Joshi Hoken Kumiai) conducted weekly venereal disease inspections. The union hierarchy wanted to show that the elite sex workers of the Yoshiwara were the healthiest of all in Tokyo and thus shield them from restrictive legislation. Yet the reliability of their inspections was questionable, as sex workers were frequently examined at union headquarters, rather than at independent medical establishments. Contemporary critics viewed the unions as manipulated by proprietors (Shiga-Fujime 1993, 25).

The association's newspaper, *Fujin Shinpū*, shows that the health regime was hardly perfect.¹⁴ The newspaper showcased a range of products and services. But the most prominent spots were by far the ones addressing venereal disease. The major advertisers were pharmaceutical companies, many of which are best known today for name-brand food products. Morinaga, Meiji, and Sankyō all maintained that their brand of penicillin was the best. Meiji ran the most thorough campaign, and a careful reader could find its advertisements in almost every issue. Perhaps most compelling of all was Meiji's 1954 spot: A drawing of a medicine bottle labeled "Kills. Penicillin. Meiji" surrounded by five pills. Antibiotics cured everything, or so the marketing implied. The early appearance of advertisements focusing on preventing venereal disease indicates that companies believed they had a good market among sex workers. The frequency and persistence of the spots suggests that they were right.

Besides the advertisements, articles in the same newspaper showed an emphasis on preventing venereal disease within the union itself. The association, after all, was officially a health preservation union. While some proprietors may have used the threat of venereal disease as a scrim behind which to keep sex work legal, it is unquestionable that disease was a business risk. For sex workers, it was a serious economic risk as well as a threat to their lives. The association sought to burnish the reputation of the Yoshiwara with its slogan "A Happy Yoshiwara Is a Healthy One!"

Accordingly, in December 1953, the newspaper featured a roundtable discussion with seven sex workers who had received "superior" medical examination results the previous month (*Fujin Shinpū* 1953a, 2). "T-ko," "H-ko," and "K-ko"

¹³Venereal disease examinations were by no means new, and had begun in the Meiji period for licensed sex workers. For more on Meiji-period inspections, see Sabine Frühstück (2003).

¹⁴See *Fujin Shinpū*. The newspaper contained materials of interest for elite sex workers, including poetry, film reviews, and news on the latest developments in the law. For English-language articles that refer to the newspaper, see Yuki Shiga-Fujime (1993) and G. G. Rowley (2002).

were among those who shared their preventative methods. While T-ko used condoms, her co-worker H-ko used both condoms and the spermicide *shikuro*. K-ko was among the many who only used “cleansing.” Yet, as the chair pointed out, cleansing could make things worse if proper methods were not followed. “It is important to make certain not to push the bacteria further ‘inside’ by trying to reach ‘inside.’” The chair further instructed, “I want you to practice prevention and take medical examinations every day, and if you suspect anything, I hope you have penicillin shots immediately.”

Although it appeared to be an open discussion from its roundtable format, the association was in fact using prescriptive educational methods to teach effective practice for preventing venereal disease. However, the Yoshiwara sex workers did not achieve any particular success. In 1953, the diagnosed infection case rate for gonorrhea, soft chancre, and “those in danger of infection” compared unfavorably to Shinjuku, the next most populous district, and exactly matched Tokyo’s average for tested union members (*Fujin Shinpū* 1953b, 2).

Accounts in the mass media also suggest that individual sex workers might not have been so savvy about venereal disease prevention techniques. A 1950 article in a popular magazine recounts some of the practices that the reporter found circulating in the neighborhood (*Ooru Yomimono* 1950). Sex workers, he wrote, were so afraid of failing the weekly union-sponsored tests that they first visited a private clinic in a nearby neighborhood. The Yoshiwara Hospital—where infected women were quarantined—had such an awful reputation that fabulous stories circulated about folk cures and means of escape. The reporter described women who would trim their hair to get better—one was said to have been cured after cutting off all her locks. Others said urinating in a secret place in the hospital could make venereal disease go away. Those employing this method were advised that a spot on the second floor in front of the director’s office held particular potency (*Ooru Yomimono* 1950, 91).

Hospitals were widely perceived as inadequate or even harmful. But for those forcibly interned, cost was also a major concern. By December 1948, SCAP policy was that hospitals should accept patients without reference to ability to pay but charge them for treatment. At most, the government would provide half of the payment (AWM 1947b). A year later, authorities bore a greater proportion of the cost, as state and prefectural authorities also paid a portion. A report on the treatment of venereal disease in Kure Hospital revealed that in 80 percent of the cases, the cost of the treatment was split between the state and prefectural governments. In the remaining 20 percent of cases, patients paid it on their own (AWM 1949).

In attempting to stave off competition, proprietors and sex workers in the red-light districts thus struggled to adapt to changes that were already under way. By conducting educational campaigns, buying drugs, and undergoing venereal disease inspections, elite sex workers fought hard to redefine themselves as hygienic and safe. But to many observers, these responses did little to stem

disorder and disorganization, and the former licensed districts were in crisis. As early as February 1948, one *Seikai Jiipu* reporter wrote that “[t]hese places of publicly recognized, unlicensed prostitution are an even more serious problem than that of the many streetwalkers in defeated Japan” (Columbia University Libraries 1948).

Outside Tokyo, deregulation affected more than the red-light districts. Wherever Allied servicemen were stationed, sex workers soon followed. By focusing on one particularly important base area, we can observe how U.S. military forces helped remake local economies, and how local leaders tried to create a new regulatory framework.

SEX WORK RESITUATED: SASEBO AND THE NEW LOGISTICS OF SUPPLY

The former Japanese Imperial Navy port of Sasebo would become the main staging area for U.S. and United Nations forces during the Korean War. But it resembled many other base towns in postwar Japan. Neon lights flashed the names of new businesses along Paradise Street, such as the Silver Dollar and the Top Hat Bar (Honda 1979, 132–33). Behind the newly built entertainment arcade stood older rickety houses, refurbished to welcome clients into environments that would evoke America. Rooms, in Sasebo as in others in base districts, likely featured beds instead of futons, side tables, and radios arranged carefully on shelves (Rōdōshō Fujin Shōnen Kyoku 1955, 22). It was not just sex workers and proprietors who depended on this business, but also hairdressers, seamstresses, letter writers, and rickshaw drivers (Uchida 1989).

Sasebo was once a small fishing village but became an imperial naval base in 1883, largely because of its natural harbor. It once boasted two flourishing entertainment quarters, but both were destroyed by fires from an American air raid in May 1945. As early as New Year’s Day 1946, *Nagasaki Shimbun* was advertising the opening of the Rose Land Dance Hall. “Under great support from the occupying army,” the management sought to hire 200 applicants. “Dance and English class, free place to live, set up an appointment to discuss the details! Interview any time every day!” (*Nagasaki Shimbun* 1946). Such advertisements indicate the extent to which entertainment was initially tolerated, though it was shrouded in euphemism.

The housing market in the district surrounding the shipyards and base was soon filled with sex workers. Some women rented rooms monthly (*kashiseki*), and others found more permanent dwellings. The area was so busy and the money so good that women streamed into the district. Sasebo, like other American military base towns, struggled to reckon with what was perhaps the most important and controversial development in the commercial sex markets in the first postwar decade: the mass movement of sex workers to the vicinity of Allied military bases. This trend paralleled prostitution in the United States,

which flourished near military bases. In 1949, the American Social Hygiene Association had found in a survey of 213 communities that most with unsatisfactory prostitution problems were close to army camps, air force installations, or naval bases (*Journal of Social Hygiene* 1949, 148).

The war that would rage up and down the Korean peninsula, just 110 miles from Sasebo, accelerated the trend. Approximately 15,000 to 20,000 American servicemen were based there, with many more coming ashore from the 100 warships and freighters that were typically in port every day. Sasebo's population went from 140,000 at the end of World War II to 220,000 in 1950. Public safety records show that no fewer than 3,200 were *panpan* (*churyūgun ianfu*, women working for the occupying forces). Of that number, 1,000 were *yami no onna* (women without a residence), and 2,200 worked in Japanese-style rented rooms (*kashi zashiki*) ("Haiki kōaniinchō hapyō dai 14 1950," in *Sasebo no Joseishi* 3 1994, 47). SCAP estimated that there were as many as 10,000 sex workers in the Sasebo area (USNA 1950c).

In one Sasebo government report from 1950, 34 percent of 2,895 verified sex workers were infected with venereal disease ("Sasebo hokensho 1950," in *Sasebo no Joseishi* 3 1994, 47). By this point, a separate survey showed that venereal disease also affected one-quarter of servicemen in the area (McNinch 1954). Base commanders told city officials that until the prostitution problem was "cleaned up," the men would be kept in camp and off the streets (USNA 1950e). Government authorities and private citizens quickly combined resources to fight prostitution. On the very day that base commanders declared the city off-limits to the military, a wide range of groups formed a civilian organization called the Sasebo Public Morals Purification Committee (*Fūki Shukusei Inikai*). The committee took the battle against prostitution seriously. It sought to change the atmosphere through shaming offenders. The 300 executive members of the committee identified themselves by wearing armbands.

Despite its pure name, it seems that the aims of the committee were more concerned with protecting commerce than promoting chastity. Mayor Nakata explained its goals in a 1951 report to the chief of the Kyushu Coordination Liaison: "Contributing to the economic development of Sasebo City" and "Mak[ing] a sound recreation place of Sasebo City for the Occupation Forces" (USNA 1951). The composition of the committee indicates that economic development was a priority, including as it did representatives from the hotel association, the souvenir association, the rickshaw association, and the Entertainment Business Association, along with the social association for the occupation powers. Maki Ken'ichi, head of the Sasebo Chamber of Commerce, served as chair and Asai Gihei, head of the Sasebo Stores Association, as vice chair.

The threat of losing all servicemen's business was enough to make local elites take rapid and efficient action. In early December, Tanaka Shōsuke, the mayor of Sasebo, signed into law an ordinance aimed at controlling prostitution. It was promulgated three weeks later, after revisions ordered by occupation officials

(USNA 1951). While reporting their progress to the occupation command, the committee also posted signs to encourage sex workers to act more discreetly, such as this “Appeal to all young girls!!”

To you young girls who work in Sasebo during the night! You are the people of a defeated country, but you are also the Japanese women who once had pride in “your quiet manners.” STOP BEHAVING INDECENTLY in the street. Even the Americans are disgusted with you.... Street-girls [*yoru no onna*] in New York, London and Paris are more graceful and prudent in their manners than you are. Eliminate this night view of Sasebo which we cannot bear to look at and which can never be seen in any other part of the world, by reflecting upon your personal conduct. For the sake of the future of Sasebo! For the sake of the education of the next generation of the nation! STOP CLINGING TO FOREIGNERS ON THE STREET! For the glory of Japan! For the prosperity of Sasebo! (USNA 1950d)

Placing equal stress on “personal conduct,” the “glory of Japan,” and “the prosperity of Sasebo,” the Sasebo Public Moral Purification Committee made its appeal in words that were redolent of wartime rhetoric. Unlike wartime propagandists, however, Western mores were now held up as an example to emulate.

If the intention was to eliminate or even limit the sex markets in Sasebo, no evidence exists that it was effective. Even after the antisolicitation ordinance was on the books, sex work was still very evident in the port city.¹⁵ In 1952, journalist Kanai San’kichi visited Sasebo and asked, is Sasebo a colony? He found an astonishing dependence of the city on the military base: Fluctuations in troop numbers in connection with the Korean War directly affected a number of different businesses. From June 1950 to June 1951, rickshaw businesses increased from 20 to 850, taxis from one to seven, cabarets from three to seven, and beer halls from zero to seventeen (Sasebo Chamber of Commerce, in Inomata et al. 1953, 197). From 1951 to 1952 (when many had shipped off to Korea), rickshaw pullers, taxi drivers, and souvenir sellers all reported less income, while the demand for beer had fallen by 25 percent (Kanai 1952).

Sasebo’s economy rose and fell depending on the demands of American servicemen, and sex workers played a pivotal role. They kept large segments of local society employed by buying goods and services. They needed seamstresses to sew their clothes, letter writers to pen notes to servicemen, and bankers to safeguard their money. Other residents benefited indirectly. Taxi drivers and rickshaw pullers transported clients, souvenir salesmen sold trinkets to foreign men, and food and drink companies supplied proprietors. Therefore, it was not only servicemen who supported military base economies, even if they were the

¹⁵Uchida Fumio, purveyor of a shop that wrote and translated letters for sex workers by the dockside, recorded ongoing sex work practices in his 1989 memoir.

catalyst. In 1953, *Sandee Mainichi* reported that the city of Sasebo was giving licenses to sex workers who engaged in ongoing relationships with serviceman (*onrii*) (1953, 78–79).

But was everyone better off under the new economic order? Activists argued that some people had not benefited from the prostitution that was shaping Sasebo's economy. Tsuruta Heijirō, a teacher from Kasuga elementary school, wrote an essay about the economic impact of *panpan* on Sasebo for the 1953 volume *Kichi Nihon*, an attempt to look critically at the military bases by using children's voices (Inomata et al. 1953). The book was not an unbiased view, collected as it was by Inomata Kōzō, Kimura Kihachirō, and Shimizu Kitarō, all socialist and peace activists. Yet these testimonies are a valuable record of children's observations of occupation. Even if they were writing to please their teachers, they articulate what their parents may have only whispered.

"K" (female) wrote, "What does a person from outside the city think when they see our situation? ... It might be true that these foreigners are bringing money to Sasebo, but it doesn't mean it is good.... If there weren't foreigners, there would be no *yoru no onna* (women of the night) or flower-sellers and the world would be peaceful" (Inomata 1953, 200). Others detailed the way prostitution blighted the city and its sense of civic pride. Chiaki Tasaki, a third-year student at Sasebo Asahi Junior High School, wrote,

It has been 7 years since the war ended and Japan has gradually taken steps to become a member of the global community. With this in mind, I go to school everyday, a proud young Japanese girl. But what about the women around me? The town is different than before—it's gotten flashy. There are people from different countries [GIs] on top of them and young women wearing garish clothes and thick makeup walking and laughing out loud. I see the women walking and it's like a dream. I truly don't want to see their disreputable houses located on my way to school. Is this punishment for losing the war? I always want to be pure and beautiful. Is this just a transient sentiment of a young girl? (Hirata and Morita 1953, 31)

For the young observer, the sex workers were a manifestation of defeat. She made explicit what for many adults was unspoken.

By the mid-1950s, the refiguring of streetwalkers as a controversial symbol of the occupation, visible changes in the red-light districts, and the development of a culture of military sex work had changed the landscape of sexual commerce. The visible presence of "objectionable" women reminded many of their status as an occupied nation. The occupation was written on the bodies of Japanese women, apparent to both the occupiers and the occupied. With *panpan* on their streets, Japanese men, women, and children were forced to reckon with a subject many had not even considered before. Journalists and activists responded with a nationalist critique, reregulating prostitution through

taxonomies, maps, moral codes, and local ordinances. The first national antiprostitution law would mark the culmination of a long process of marginalizing sex workers precisely *because* they had come to occupy such a central role in the postwar economy.

In Sasebo, as elsewhere, sex workers faced an increasingly hostile climate. Middle- and upper-class women were pressing to pass abolitionist legislation. Those who occupied positions of political power in the Diet served as the most public voices of the abolitionist movement. Beginning in 1946, they introduced five different antiprostitution bills into the Diet. Women across Japan succeeded in obtaining dozens of local regulations against prostitution (Fujime 2003, 41–43; Fujino 2001, 195–97).

By 1956, this pressure had forced the hand of the conservative Ichirō Hatoyama government, which introduced the Prostitution Prevention Bill into the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Diet. It did not actually ban the act of prostitution or associated sexual services. Instead, it focused on the practices that made sex work visible to the larger public, outlawing solicitation and procurement. At the same time, it sought to “protect” and “rehabilitate” sex workers, suggesting that prefectures establish facilities to shelter women and *requiring* new consultation offices (Fujin Sodansho) (Baishun Taisaiku Shingikai 1959, 29). The latter would inquire about women needing rehabilitation, provide counseling, assist with medical, psychological, and vocational decisions, and give temporary aid. The protective and rehabilitative sections of the law would go into effect in April 1957, one year after it had passed, while punishment provisions would be enacted a year after that.¹⁶

Historians have noted that Japan’s first national law against prostitution was the first in which a cross-party group of women played a significant role. Such coalitions are unusual within the Japanese parliamentary system, which has characteristically passed legislation along strict party lines. The law thus demonstrated the power of a gender-based alliance. But in terms of sex work and its significance in Japanese history, the law merely codified a basic shift in how prostitution was now viewed and understood. It reflects a strong emphasis on rehabilitation, premised on the idea of prostitutes as “fallen women.” Abolitionists behind the passage of the law had pressed this view, arguing in the Diet, on the opinion pages of newspapers, and in other forums. Yet, as historian Hirai

¹⁶The Prostitution Prevention Law’s first section is intended to be gender neutral. “In this law, ‘prostitution’ means sexual intercourse with an unspecified other party for compensation or the promise of compensation.” Its gender-neutral status, unlike other prostitution legislation previously before the Diet, derives from the Osaka Supreme Court Fifth Criminal Department’s 1952 ruling on Amagasaki City’s local regulations. These regulations were judged unconstitutional because they punished only female sex workers, an asymmetry with Article Fourteen of the Constitution, which guarantees men and women equality. Nonetheless, it should be noted that some provisions of the law are sex specific. The Protective and Rehabilitation Provisions, for example, are limited to females. Moreover, the law governs only the act of male–female sexual intercourse.

Kazuko (2001) has argued, ordinary citizens had previously believed sex workers were a “necessary evil” and supported (or ignored) them for economic reasons.

In the decade preceding the 1956 law, journalists and ordinary Japanese were already reregulating prostitution through taxonomies, maps, and moral codes. Legislators could not have succeeded if they were not responding to this evident demand.

By investigating how sex work was changing, we can see not only why these women appeared fallen, but also where they landed. In some places, such as Sasebo, they occupied a crucial niche in the postwar economy. The Sasebo law reflects a cooperative approach by local leaders to the occupation command. The powerful economic interests of local residents to retain the business of American servicemen determined their response.

The effect of all of these regulatory efforts was conditioned and constrained by the economic importance of sex workers, especially in the base areas. Despite the legislation that came into force in 1958, military sex work continued in places such as Sasebo. Just six years later, for instance, American naval base chief commander A. F. Farwell again requested that local officials suppress the threat of venereal disease. In response to Farwell’s request, the police department visited hotels and bars that encouraged prostitution activities (Sasebo Municipal Archives 1964). Sex workers, no longer protected by any sort of contract or legal status, became even more marginalized, even while remaining central to local economies. They emerged from the process without any labor rights, because what they did was no longer considered labor. Once tolerated and regulated, it was now officially codified as a “social evil.”

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