

Course No. 3507/3508

**Contemporary
Japanese Culture and
Society**

Lecture No. 15

Sexuality

Sei

性

Sex in Japan is a complex topic



***In an earlier lecture we discussed
social control (社会管理)***

We saw how some critics have argued that Japan is a very tightly controlled society, whether through rules (“hard control”) or by instilling obedience through subtler means – education, prosperity etc. (“soft control”).

Well speaking of rules...

What about life's little pleasures...? Or life's little vices, depending on your point of view.

Country	Drinking Age 飲酒年齡
Korea	21
United States	21
<i>JAPAN</i>	<i>20</i>
Britain	18
Thailand	17
Italy	16
France	16

Japan and the US are both at the top end of the scale

But what about enforcement?

The USA has very strict rules on drinking, especially in public places. *Break out some ID!*

In Japan, drinking in public is not against the law.

If it was, you'd have to arrest half the salarymen every Friday night...

Vending machines

It is easy to buy alcohol from vending machines in Japan. Some years a law was passed to make them stop vending from 11pm to 5am, but kids can still pop a coin in the slot at 10.59.

What about smoking?

Country	Smoking age 最低喫煙年齡
<i>JAPAN</i>	<i>20</i>
Korea	19
US	18
Britain	18
Thailand	18
Italy	16
France	16
Argentina	16

保守的な日本

Japan looks pretty conservative here. Again the huge number of outdoor vending machines indicates a big gap between written and enforced law... but now you need a TASPO card to use the machine.

What about driving?

Country	Driving license age <i>運転免許最低年齢</i>
United States	16-18
Korea	18
<i>JAPAN</i>	<i>18</i>
Britain	18
Thailand	18
Italy	18
France	18

Japan: on the conservative side

**High drinking age, high
smoking age, average
driving age.**

..... What about sex?

Age of consent 承諾年齡

Country/state	Age of consent
California	18
South Dakota	16
Britain	16
Thailand	15
France	15
Italy	14
Korea	13
<i>JAPAN</i>	<i>13</i>

At the other end of the scale!

Many other national and local laws restrict child prostitution etc., but if there is no money involved, 13 is the age of consent for sexual activity.

As well as being very low...

The Japanese Age of Consent

- **Applies only to heterosexual acts. There is no legal measure either banning or permitting homosexual activity at any particular age.**
- **Applies only to genital intercourse.**
- **Is not clearly stated or well known.**

It is indirectly, or negatively stated.

Article 177 of the Penal Code puts the age of consent for sexual activity at 13 years, in the sense that a sexual act by a man with a woman over 13 is defined as rape if threats or violence are used, whereas any sexual act with a woman under 13 is automatically defined as rape, with or without threats/violence.

刑法第一百七十七条

(強姦)

暴行(ぼうこう)又は脅迫(きょうはく)を用いて十三歳以上の女子を姦淫(かんいん)した者は、強姦(ごうかん)の罪とし、二年以上の有期懲役に処する。十三歳未満の女子を姦淫した者も、同様とする。

Interpreting the low age of consent

1. In a positive light: In Japanese culture sex is not burdened down with guilt like it is in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The low age of consent shows that this is viewed as a natural human activity, not subject to moral condemnation.

積極論：

ユダヤ教・キリスト教の伝統と違って、日本の文化にはセックスを「罪」として見なすことがあまりなく、「自然な行為」として見なす...

Goes back to the Heian Era?

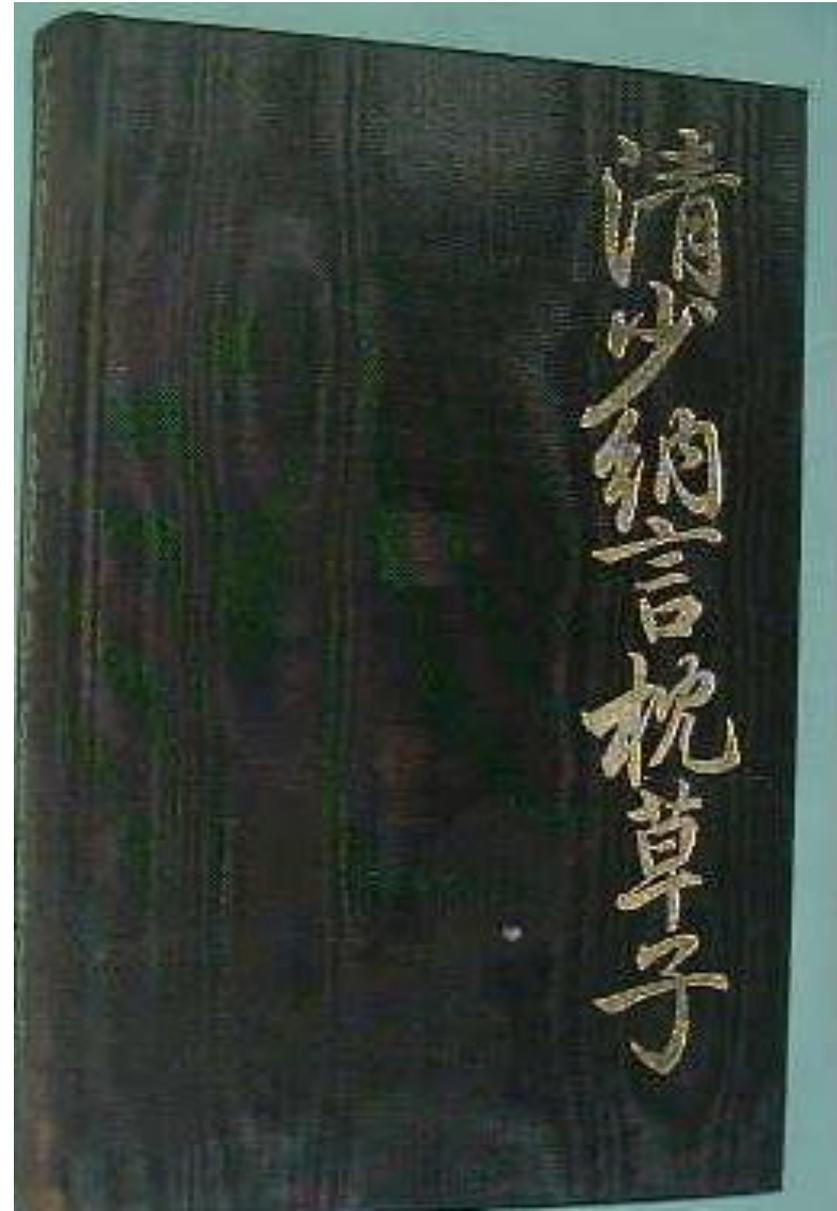
Fans of guilt-free Japanese sexuality like to trace it back to the Heian Era, and classics such as the *Tale of Genji* and *the Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon...* and *shunga* (Edo era erotic woodcarvings).

E.g. Film critic Donald Richie

Sei Shonagon *Pillow Book*, 996AD



清少納言『枕草子』



THE FLOATING WORLD



浮世 Ukiyo The Floating World
浮世絵 Ukiyoe
Pictures of the Floating World

Boisterous Folk Culture...

While Heian Era aristocrats engaged in elegant amours, the common folk also had a culture that openly celebrated sex.

「浮世」は主に貴族のものだったが、庶民の文化もセックスを強調した...

**Fertility
symbols
abound...
like Tengu
天狗 with
his phallic
nose**



Watsuji Tetsuro 1889-1960

**Ancient Japanese were “children of nature”
古代日本は「自然児の世界だった」**

“Disobeying one’s parents and engaging in promiscuity were approved because they were actions proceeding from human nature” (*Japan’s Ancient Culture*, 431).

親不孝(おやふこう)や姦通(かんつう)でも、「人間の自然性から発生した行為(として)肯定(こうてい)された。」(「日本古代文化」、431頁)

- ***Watsuji makes reference to the numerous Japanese fertility festivals, in which carved sculptures of genitalia often feature.***



**Tochio 栃尾市 Hodare
Festival, Niigata**

「ほだれ(穂垂れ)祭」

2 meters、600n kg “hodare”



Nostalgia for ancient hippies?

Watsuji celebrates an ancient freedom of sexuality, that was later repressed by Confucianism and Buddhist influences from China. Japanese gradually lost their “magnificently childlike character.”

「愛の自然を制度によって圧迫(あっぱく)した支那の風習」などによって、「自然人の偉大な『子供らしさ』を次第に没落させてしまった。」

***Japan's Ancient Culture* 370, 377**

『日本の古代文化』 370、377

Watsuji blames China...

... for spoiling the fun of sexual innocence in ancient Japan. More modern critics tend to blame the United States, for introducing Christian-style guilt (cf Ruth Benedict on guilt culture and shame culture yet again...) to Japan. The low age of consent reflects “original” Japanese culture, while many of the other laws regulating sexual activity are attempts to meet ‘global’ (i.e US) standards of sexual morality.

ANYWAY...

To a British observer (me), it is interesting that when some older Japanese men go on about the “good old days” (furuki yoki jidai 古き良き時代) they are talking about a golden era of sexual freedom, rather than an age of stricter sexual morality like most older British men.

Interpreting the low age of consent

2. In a negative light: The idea of youngsters having natural fun together ignores the fact that in many (most?) cases it's an older man with a young girl. Power relations are involved and it may be commercial.

消極論:「子供の自然な遊び」とか「フリー・ラブ」より、年上の男性と年下の女性というケースが多いではないか。力関係・金銭関係が大体絡んでいるのではないか。

... and ignores all the suffering during the long history of forced prostitution of women by men and of children of both sexes by men.

E.g. Chizuko Ueno (*Nationalism and Gender*, 2003 Trans Pacific Press); most other feminist critics.

Child prostitution thrives...

Japan has frequently been criticized for allowing the abuse of children's rights by adults.

Japanese men are often criticized for taking part in “sex tours” to other countries, sometimes to engage in underage sex.

***Rorikon* ロリコン (Lolita Complex) is part of the Japanese language today.**

May 26, 1999

Law passed in the Japanese Diet:

**Law for Punishing Acts Related to
Child Prostitution and Child
Pornography, and for Protecting
Children**

**Defines “child” as “a person under
the age of 18 years” and
“prostitution” as “paying for sex.”**

Article 1 - Objective

“... to protect the rights of children by prescribing punishment for acts related to child prostitution and child pornography, and by establishing measures including the giving of appropriate protection to children who have suffered physically and/or mentally from the said acts.”

Penalties 罰則

Up to three years in prison or a three million yen fine for engaging in child prostitution or trading in child pornography. 買い手: 懲役3年間か罰金3百万円

Stiffer penalties (up to 10 years in prison), for organized commercial supply of children for prostitution. 売り手: 懲役10年間まで

Ages for legal purposes

Article 2 - Definitions

For the purpose of this Law, a 'child' means a person under the age of 18 years.

Not the 13 specified in the Penal Code.

More grey zones

Japan has plenty of laws relating to sexual morality, but few that are vigorously enforced.

両義的な性倫理？

(... perhaps reflecting that ambiguity between indigenous culture and the perceived need to meet ‘modern’ standards of decency...)

Public Act of Indecency (公然わいせつ)

Is not defined in the Penal Code, but is punishable by up to 6 months in prison and a fine of up to ¥300,000 (Article 174).

第一百七十四条 公然とわいせつな行為をした者は、六月以下の懲役若しくは三十万円以下の罰金又は拘留若しくは科料に処する。

Obscene publications (猥褻/わいせつ物頒布等)

Banned under article 175 of the Penal Code; 2 years in prison or max ¥2.5 million fine.

第175条わいせつな文書、図画その他の物を頒布し、販売し、又は公然と陳列した者は、二年以下の懲役又は二百五十万円以下の罰金若しくは科料に処する。

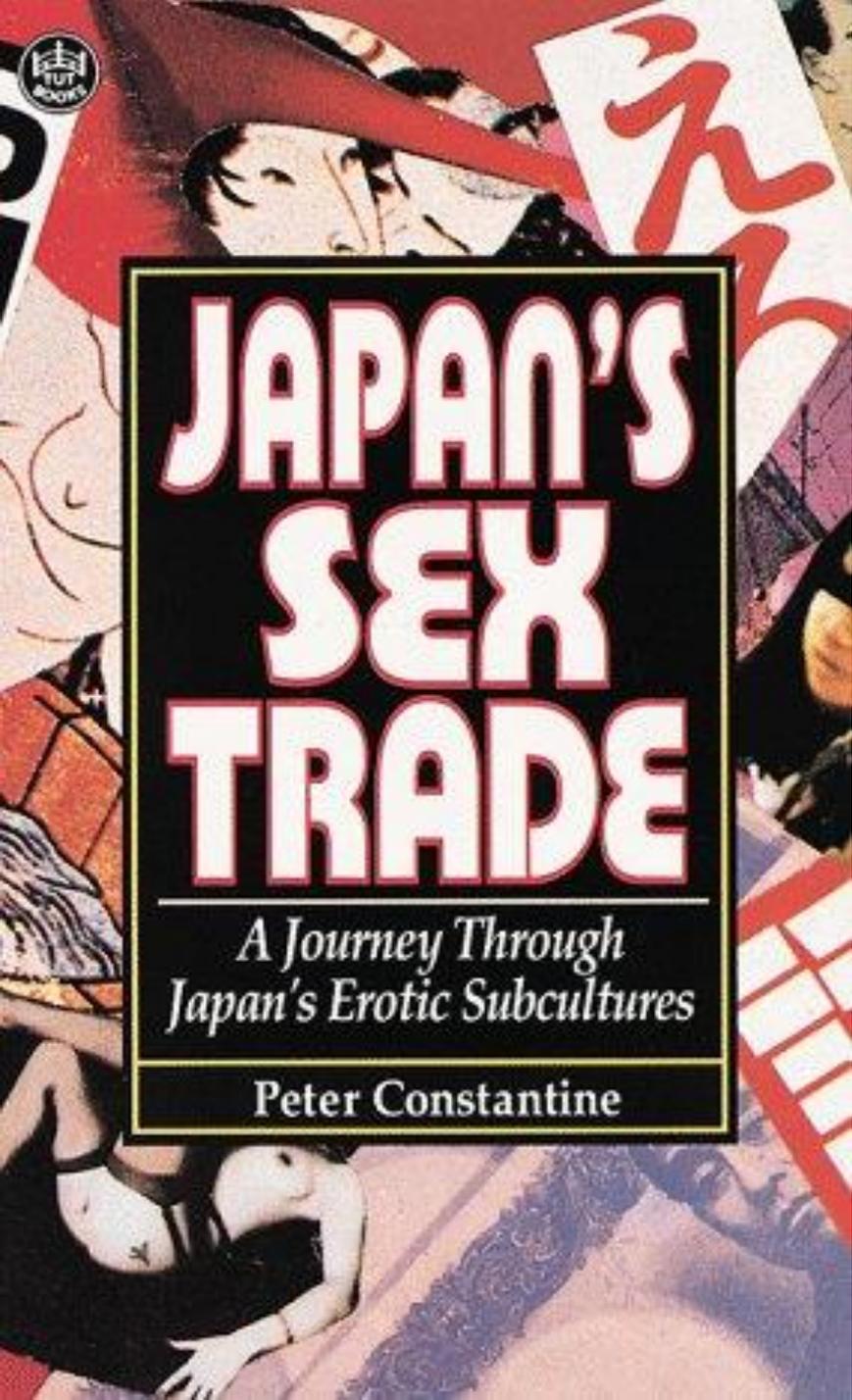
*... yet you can
buy some
fairly hard-core
pornography
from vending
machines in
the street.*



PROSTITUTION

卖春

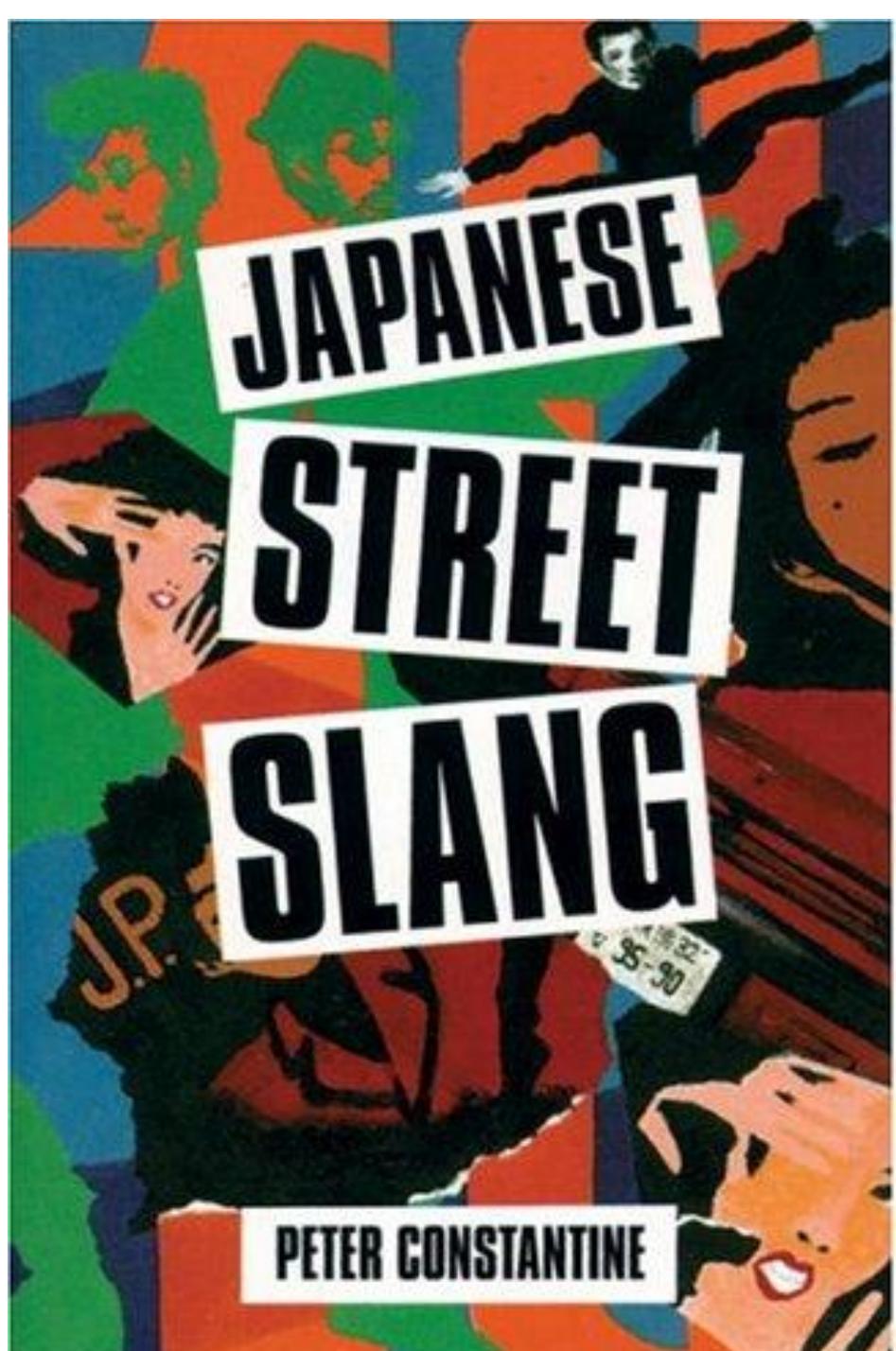
Baishun



JAPAN'S SEX TRADE

*A Journey Through
Japan's Erotic Subcultures*

Peter Constantine



JAPANESE

STREET

SLANG

PETER CONSTANTINE

Soliciting for prostitution

Banned by Art. 182 of the Penal Code:

“Anyone who, for profit, solicits a woman who is not a habitual philanderer into an act of adultery” gets up to 3 years or a fine of up to ¥300,000.

(淫行勧誘) 第一百八十二条 營利の目的で、淫行(いんこう)の常習のない女子を勧誘して姦淫(かんいん)させた者は、三年以下の懲役又は三十万円以下の罰金に処する。

The 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law

does not make practicing prostitution illegal.

The law does, however prohibit

- soliciting for purposes of prostitution**
- procuring a person for prostitution**
- coercing a person into prostitution**
- profiting from the prostitution of others**
- concluding a contract for making a person a prostitute**
- furnishing a place for prostitution**
- engaging in the business of making a person a prostitute**

**“Pink
chirashi”
used to be
everywhere,
but have
declined
along with
public
telephones**



"Police started watching the district toward the end of last year, then began raiding one place after another. Then, they posted a 24-hour guard on the area and there is not a single brothel operating in Kogane-chō anymore. On weekends, the streets used to be so jam-packed with people, it was like being in the middle of (Tokyo's famously busy) Ginza. Now, the only people you see out there are cops. My sales have plummeted by half."

Local restaurateur, quoted in *Weekly Playboy* magazine 12 April 2005.

**... yet prostitution
thrives between
crackdowns**

**Yokohama,
Kogane-cho
横浜・黄金町**



Before →

← After



Yoshiwara: ¥30,000 / 90 mins
Kogane-chō: ¥10,000 / 20 mins

***Chon-no-ma* ちょんの間**

Just a quick one.

**Kogane-chō sprang up
after WW2... 100
little bars under the
Keikyu railway lines.**

- **Main rival: Nishi
Kawaguchi, in
Saitama prefecture.**





**The man who
finally (?) shut
down Kogane-chō:
ex-Yokohama
mayor Hiroshi
Nakata
中田宏横浜市長**

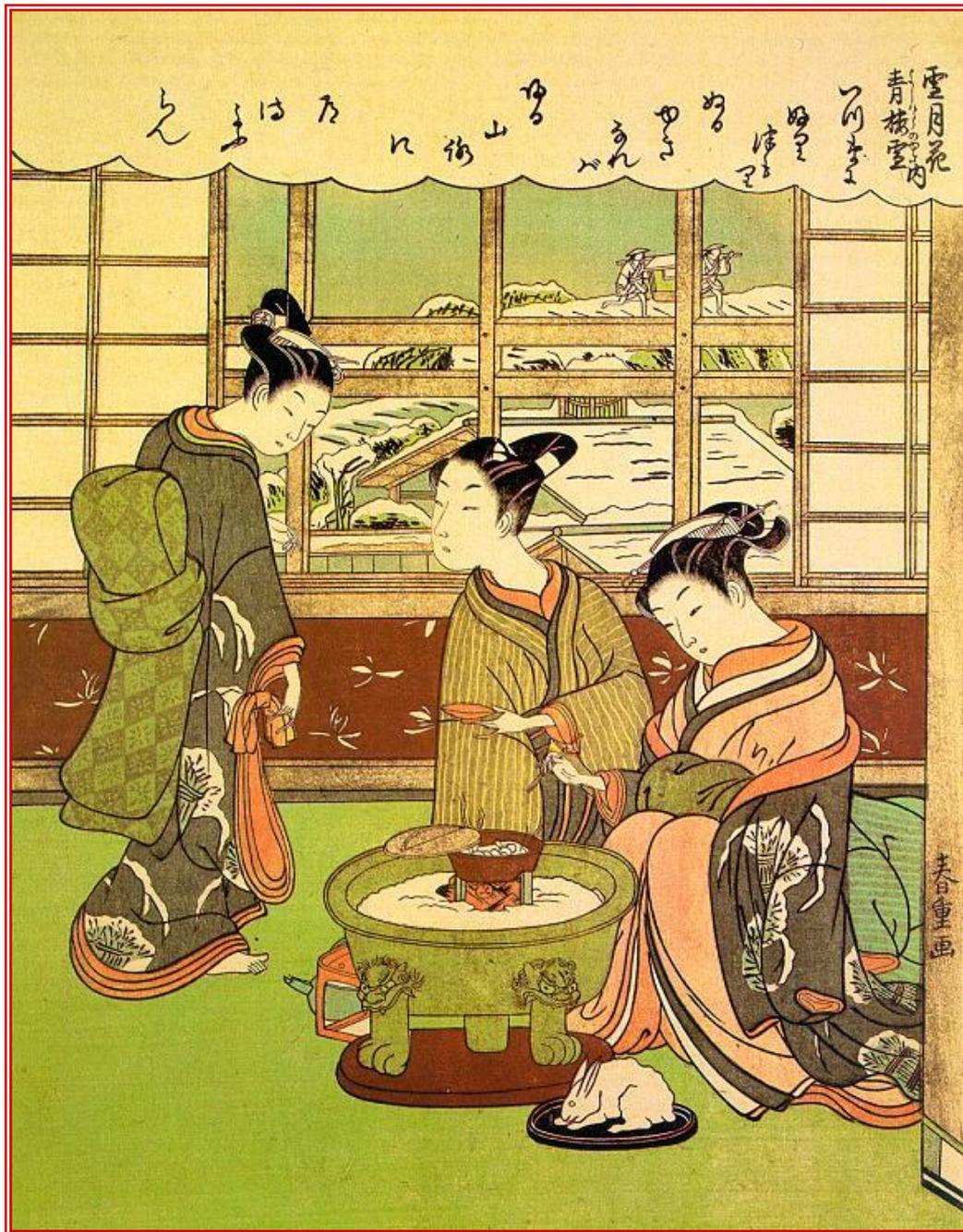
I was nearly arrested for taking this photo of Kogane-chō on 12 Jan 2006



The place was deserted, and quite spooky

History of Prostitution

At the founding of Edo, latter day Tokyo, in the early 17th century, prostitute quarters were banished to marshy areas outside the city walls, that later became the floating world of Yoshiwara 吉原, a prostitution and entertainment district.



Yoshiwara (Tokugawa era)

Christian influence...

Yoshiwara was slowly dismantled in the late 19th century, in response to American and European disapproval, and a new system of national morality being developed in Tokyo. However, the strict segregation of sexually active and sexually passive women, of whores and married pure women, continued into the twentieth century.

Yoshiwara
吉原 (c.1900)



1958 Anti-Prostitution Law: brothels renamed 'Turkish baths' (Toruko トルコ)



Re-renamed in 1984

... after complaints from Nusret Sancakli, a Turkish seismology student at U of Tokyo that the use of the term 'Toruko' was giving Turkey a bad name.



The turkish bath industry invited suggestions from the public for a suitable new name, and the winning entry was...

“Soaplant”

... or *“Soap”* for short

Avoiding prostitution law

Officially, a soapland customer pays only an admission fee (*nyujōryō*) to enter the establishment and be bathed. He then “falls in love” with the woman who is washing his naked body, and they have sex, perhaps in the bathroom, perhaps in an adjoining bedroom. He then gives her some cash as a sign of his affection, in reality the “service charge” (*saabisu-ryō*).

**Everyone knows it is nonsense,
but it suits everybody, including
the police, to overlook that fact.**

**... So here is another one of
those Japanese “grey
zones,” somewhere between
banning prostitution and
permitting it.**

飛田 Tobita, Osaka



One of Japan's very few remaining traditional licensed districts

Taiyoshi-hyakuban

A famous brothel and designated cultural treasure



鯛よし百番
(有形文化財)



心愛

心愛



心愛

心愛



The style is that of an old-fashioned brothel (yuukaku 遊郭), with a single young woman on display, with an older woman who is the manager or pimp. The customer talks to the older woman to discuss price and services to be provided by the younger woman.

It feels like a mother selling her daughter.

Officially, the brothels at Tobita are *ryōtei* 料亭 (high-class Japanese-style restaurants)... they charge ¥10,000 for *15 minutes*.*

They don't even have baths (customers get a quick wipe with a moist tissue) so they're not soaplands... to be honest I don't quite know why they're legal.*

**Asahi Geino magazine, 2006*

Licensed zones

The old morality, in which behavior forbidden in most areas is permitted in one special area, is still at work.

The government and police like to have the prostitutes all together in the same place, so they can keep an eye on them, and keep other parts of the city “clean.”

Skid Rows & Red Light Districts

In Tokyo: Yoshiwara is next to San'ya

**In Osaka: Tobita is next to
Kamagasaki**

**In Yokohama: Kogane-cho is near
Kotobuki-cho**

赤線地帯: ドヤ街

吉原: 山谷 :: 飛田: 釜ヶ崎 :: 黄金町: 寿町

“Health clubs” (Herusu)



Like a soapland, but with a shower rather than a bathroom. You get more time than at a *chon-no-ma*, and probably with a better-looking woman, but at least in theory there is no genital intercourse, just a hand-job usually.

“Delivery health clubs” (Deriherusu): the woman will be sent to your hotel/home

TOKYO LOVEマシーンを初めてご利用のお客様

店長会心の一撃!!

通常割引からさらに!!

1,000円 割引

写真指名 **無料**
全エリア交通費 **無料**

場合	通常価格	割引後
45分の場合	14,000円	13,000円
70分の場合	16,000円	15,000円
100分の場合	22,000円	21,000円
130分の場合	28,000円	27,000円

1000 yen off for first-timers

(なづき) (こと)

(The customer will have to pay extra to the woman to get genital intercourse.)

... and will have to telephone the management and pay by credit card if he wants to extend his time.

Watakano Island, Mie pref. 渡鹿野島



An entire island devoted to prostitution.

街頭での客引き 呼込等を
している人には、絶対相手
にしないようご注意ください。
渡鹿野旅館組合

Freelance prostitution?

Enjo kosai 援助交際

“Subsidized dating”

The internet age

Nowadays, much prostitution is done over the internet, through adult dating sites (*deaikei saito* 出会い系サイト) often using mobile phones. The term *enjo kōsai* 援助交際 (lit. “subsidized dating”) is a popular euphemism for arranging sex for money. In the late 1990s there was a moral panic about *enjo kōsai*.

New law passed in 2003

On June 6, 2003, the Japanese parliament passed a law banning the soliciting of sex from minors over the Internet. Under the law, anyone who posts messages on Internet sites asking minors for sex, whether they offer money or not, will face fines of up to ¥1 million.

Quote from Asahi Shinbun:

“Japanese police say the number of crimes linked to Internet personals services in Japan, especially those using mobile phones, has been rising sharply with teenage girls accounting for most of the victims.” (Continues)

Victims or culprits?

“Police have also acknowledged, however, that minors are often willing participants in prostitution, making the initial approach to adults.

“The new law does not exclude minors who solicit sex for money from being punished.

“Minors can be put under official monitoring if they violate the new law, police officials said.” (Asahi Shinbun)

A long-standing discourse

Japanese culture has traditionally tended to divide the roles of women between that of “good wife, wise mother” (*ryôσαι kenbo* 良妻賢母) and that of sexual object, usually defined as a prostitute.

Brothels/Toruko/Soaplands

**... are institutions controlled by *men*,
and run for the benefit of men.**

**Girls who engage in enjo kôsai are
often working independently and
not controlled by men – and are
hence seen as a threat to male-
dominated society.**

**Hence, argues
Sharon Kinsella:**

**“The school girl
amateur prostitution
debate speaks to a
concern about the
collapsing social
management of
female sexuality.”**



Enjo kosai became popular around the same time that some controversial fashion styles made their appearance.... Again they seemed to perhaps threaten male domination...

Kogyaru コギャル



- **Slightly radical young women's fashion, popular c. late 1990s to early 2000s**

Yamamba 山姥



Ganguro ガングロ

In the 1990s, enjo kōsai was associated with some radical new fashions

The term *ganguro* is a portmanteau of the Japanese word *gangan-kuro* (ガンガン黒), meaning extremely dark, and *guro* (グロ), meaning grotesque





**Original
yamamba
("mountain
hag"); a
folkloric demon**

山姥



So young women, even girls, were referencing something grotesque, scary, not at all cute

(Or maybe they were cute after all, in a weird sort of way... *kimokawaii?*)

**Kimochi warui = disgusting
Kawaii = cute
Kimokawaii = disgusting but oddly cute**



**What happened to all the
kogyarus, ganguros and
yamambas?**

***I think Japanese youth fashion has
gone very dull and conservative in the
last decade.***

“Parasite singles”

The debate on *enjo kosai* relates to another one we discussed before: on “parasite singles” – young women are suspected of rejecting their role as mothers by staying with their parents and postponing or even cancelling marriage.

(In fact, it may well be that a majority of ‘parasite singles’ are *men...*)

Sharon's view

In this unpublished paper, Sharon Kinsella (Manchester University, British) draws a connection between amateur prostitution using mobile telephones and women postponing or refusing marriage. All are cases of women using their sexuality for their own purposes and refusing to subordinate themselves to men.

Sex/labor connection

“Instead of this, young women before and after and through delayed marriage, are turning their libidinal energies towards their own lives, they are becoming masters of their own potential, creative or sexual. The liberation of female sexuality threatens to undermine the tightly wound family system that underpins the structure of labor.”

“At the same time, there is an anxiety in the school girl prostitution debate that the previously firm boundaries between prostitute and non-prostitute are becoming blurred, that in effect all women could potentially be both pure daughter and obedient wives and at another time be prostitutes or simply sexual decadents.”

“The feminine search for remuneration for their labor and even their sexual services has become more individualised and more demanding.”

The Broader Sex Industry

Japan has one of the biggest, most lucrative and most sophisticated sex industries in the world. Simple prostitution is only one small part of it.

Hostess clubs



Very expensive conversation, with almost no sexual activity except suggestive talk and close proximity

A Ginza hostess club... 50,000 yen when you walk through the door

Ginza mama-san

No menu, no price list.
She will charge you how
much she thinks you can
pay. *Being overcharged
is a mark of respect!*

The bill is a tiny slip of
paper, strictly non-
itemized. Often, a
company will pay.



Bottle-keep ボトルキープ

Regular customers may reduce cost by keeping a bottle at a hostess club. You buy a bottle and consume it over several visits.



Outside Ginza and Aoyama, customers are more cost conscious, and the mama knows she cannot charge outrageous prices if she wants customers to return.

Kyabakura キャバクラ

- From “cabaret” (kyabaree) and “club” (kurabu). Similar to a hostess club, except
- (1) Some have a “show time” with singing and dancing, which may be almost like a real cabaret.
 - (2) You pay by the hour or half-hour, rather than paying for drinks.
 - (3) Tends to have more erotic options.



The women who work there are called *kyabakura-jo* キヤバクラ嬢

The “System”

First hour is 80 yen a minute up to 9pm, then 120 yen a minute, extensions 180 yen a minute

The girls will try very hard to stop their customers from going home



Cos-play コスプレ

**Maids, nurses,
school teachers,
cartoon characters...
nowadays a fairly
harmless teen
amusement, but
originally from role-
playing kyaba and
herusu**



Host clubs



Like a hostess club, only for the ladies. There is a very clearly defined “host look” – effeminate, slim, young, dyed hair. No big tough guys here.

Strip theatres

Sutorippu gekijo ストリップ劇所



Mostly shabby
little places...
sometimes
customers can
have sex with
performers, on
stage.

Maid cafes

Underwear fetishes

S&M Clubs

... love hotels

Molesters / Chikan 痴漢

- **The crowded trains of urban Japan make ideal places for molesters to feel up female (and sometimes male) passengers.**
- **Victims tended to suffer in silence – the chikan relied on the reluctance of people to cause an embarrassing scene in a crowded train (shame culture?).**
- **And could always have a chance of denying it if exposed.**

Exposing chikan

- Now women are gradually asserting themselves more strongly, and chikan are having a harder time.
- Note the posters saying 'molesting is crime' (痴漢は犯罪だ) at many station platforms.
- And some yakuza now work with women to falsely accuse passengers of molesting.
- An on-the-spot payment of ¥100,000 prevents legal documents being sent to your family, (Shame culture working in reverse?)
- 「痴漢弾劾詐欺. . . 逆「恥の文化」?

Women-only carriages 女性専用車両

In recent years, more and more rail companies have introduced these, usually at peak rush-hour times only.

In May 2005 most rail lines in Tokyo installed them.

Reaction is mixed:

"It's made it much harder to ride in an ordinary carriage. If you do so, it sort of sends this message to others around you that this woman doesn't mind if she's molested and may make you an even easier target for gropers," a 42-year-old housewife says. "I think the Women's Only carriages show too much attention is being paid to the matter."

Josei Seven, June 9 2005

- **"While I was lining up to get onto a Women's Only train, a group of schoolgirls were pointing at me and laughing and one of them said, 'that old biddy doesn't need to ride on a Women's Only carriage.' What they were trying to say is that some old woman like me has nothing to fear from a lust-filled molester. The carriages have created ill feeling among different groups of women. There's this weird prejudice that seems to make it OK for young and pretty women to use the carriages but not others. It kind of defeats the purpose."**

Josei Seven, June 9 2005

Contraception

and abortion

避妊/妊娠中絶

Criminal Code, Section 29 (1907)

Article 212: When a pregnant woman aborts using medicinal or other methods, she shall be sentenced to not more than one year of penal servitude.

Article 213: Up to 2 years for someone performing a ‘consensual abortion.’

Article 214: 3 months to 5 years for ‘professional abortion..’

And yet...

Even official figures say that in the year 2000 there were some 341,164 abortions, against 1,190,547 live births.... Figures loudly laughed at by most experts... who put true figures 2 to 3 times higher.

Contraception vs. abortion

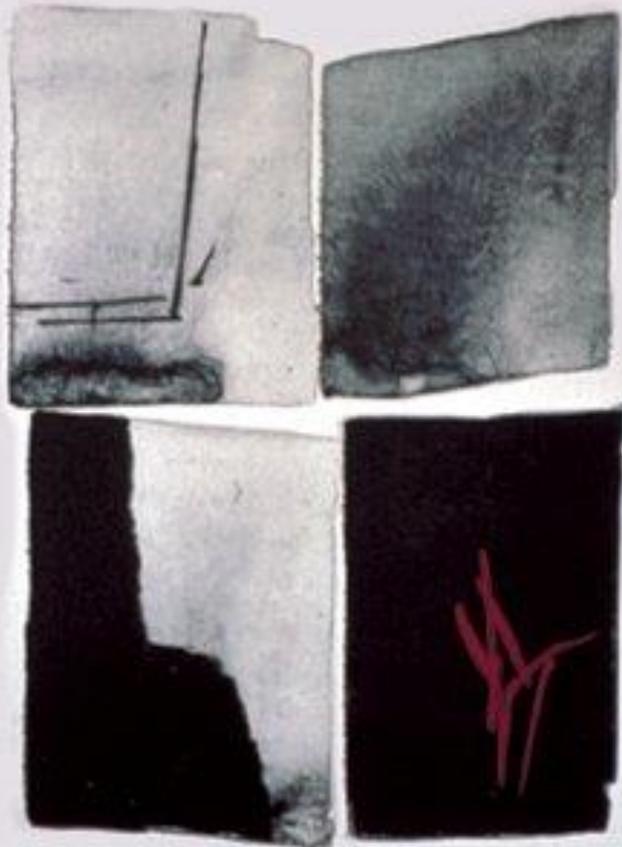
避妊/妊娠中絶

Abortion has long been *effectively* legal in Japan, and is very commonly practiced. But Japan was one of the last countries in the world to legalize the contraceptive pill... it only happened in 1999. Even today, condoms and diaphragms are the main method... and this results in increasing the number of abortions.

Abortion

BEFORE BIRTH CONTROL

The Politics
of Reproduction
in Postwar Japan



Tiana Norgren

**Tiana
Norgren
wrote the
book
(Princeton
University
Press, 2001)**

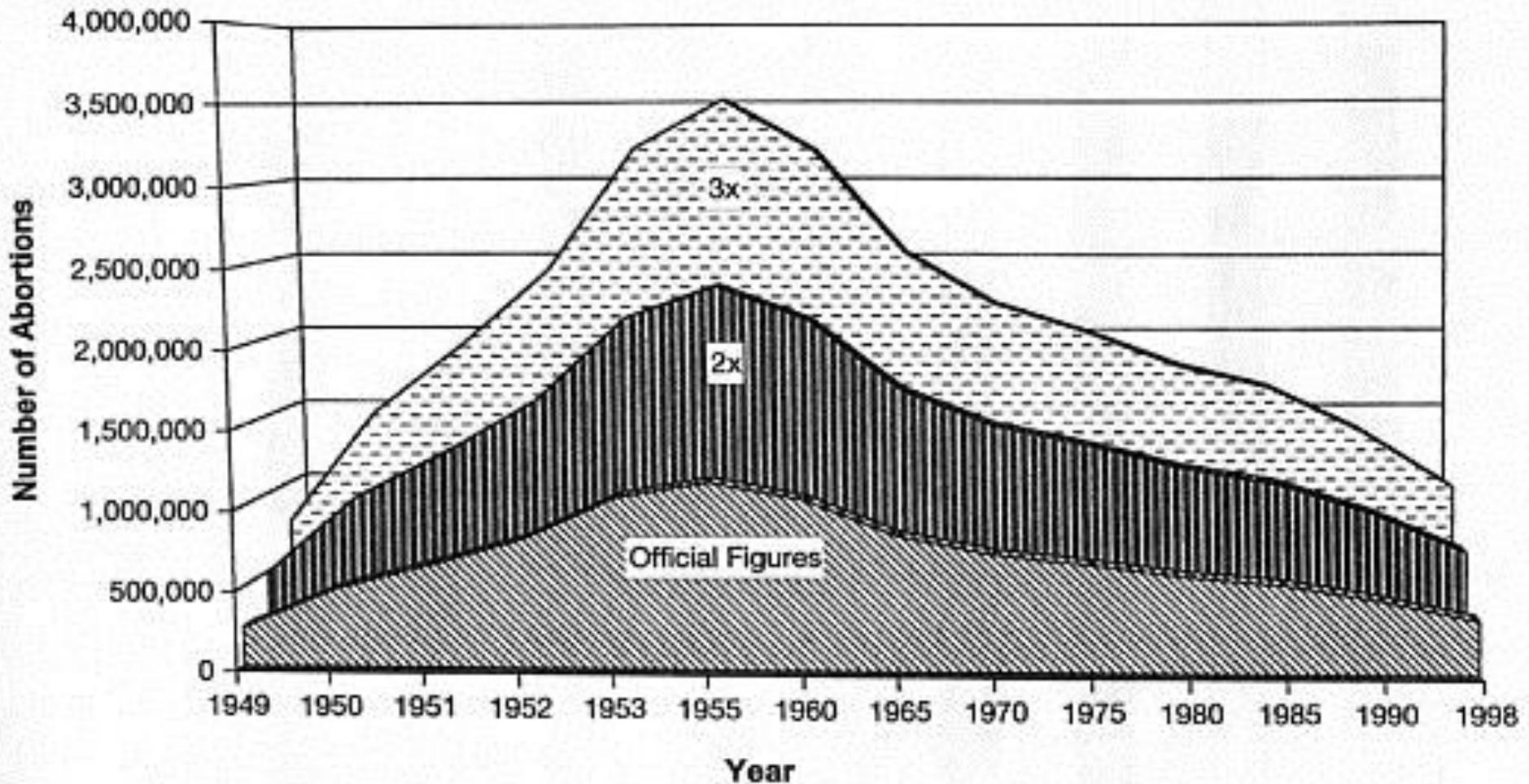


Figure 1.2. Number of abortions in Japan, 1949–1998, official figures and estimates (two and three times official figures).

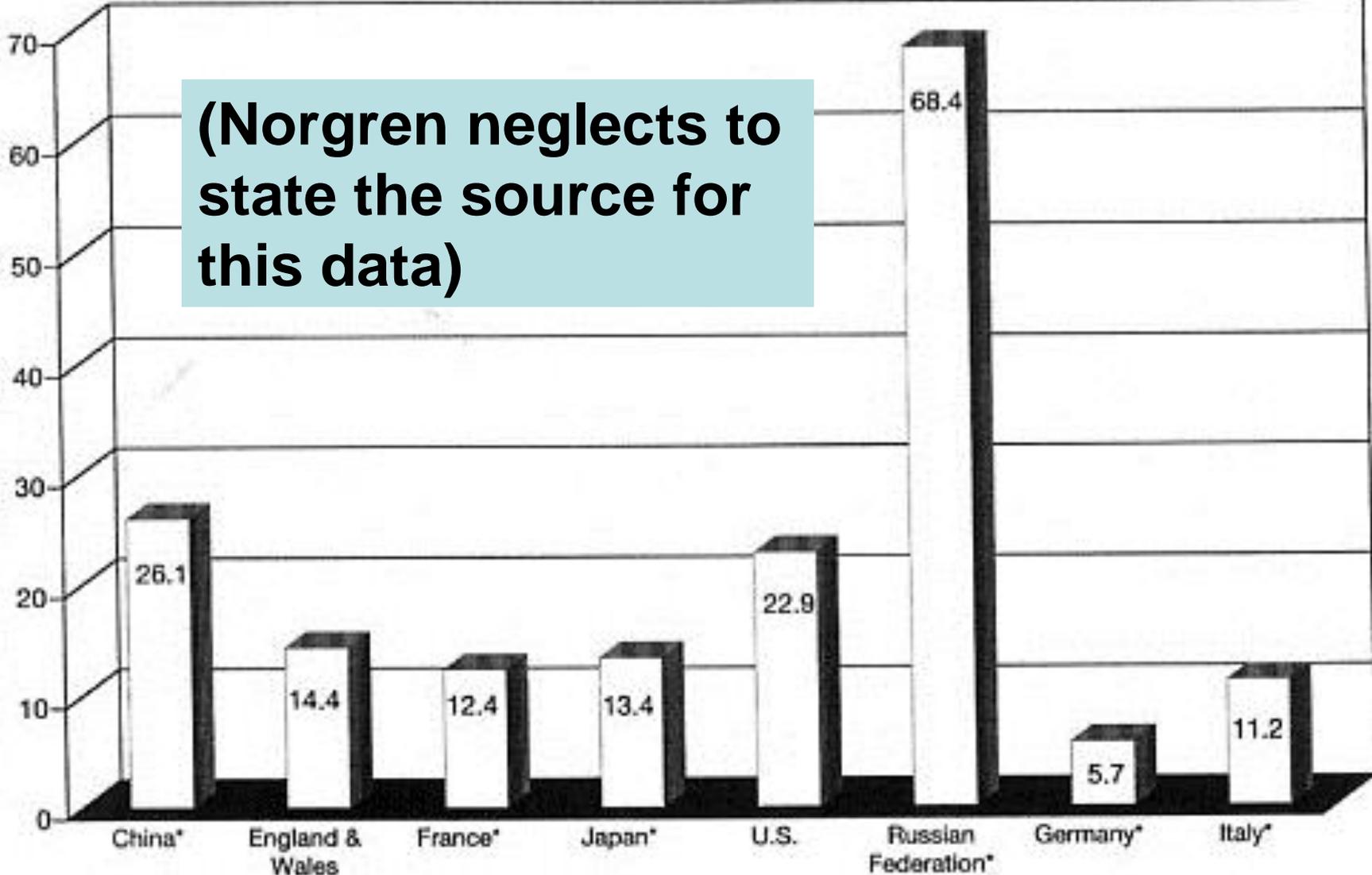
Norgren, 2001, p.7

Why the big range?

... because it is widely believed that gynecological clinics underreport the number of abortions to conceal income and reduce their taxes. Unlike in the case of a live birth, no evidence remains after an abortion; and abortion is not covered by health insurance, so far less documentation.

Number of Abortions Per 1,000 Women,
Age 15-44

(Norgren neglects to
state the source for
this data)



*Statistics incomplete or of unknown completeness
(possibly as much as 20% underreporting)

Figure 1.3. Cross-national comparison of abortion rates per 1,000 women, ages 15-44 (1995).

Official figures put Japan in the low-mid range...

... but if the true figure really is 2 to 3 times higher, Japan would be getting close to Russia.

(Then again, Russia's abortion data is also widely suspected of being underestimated.)

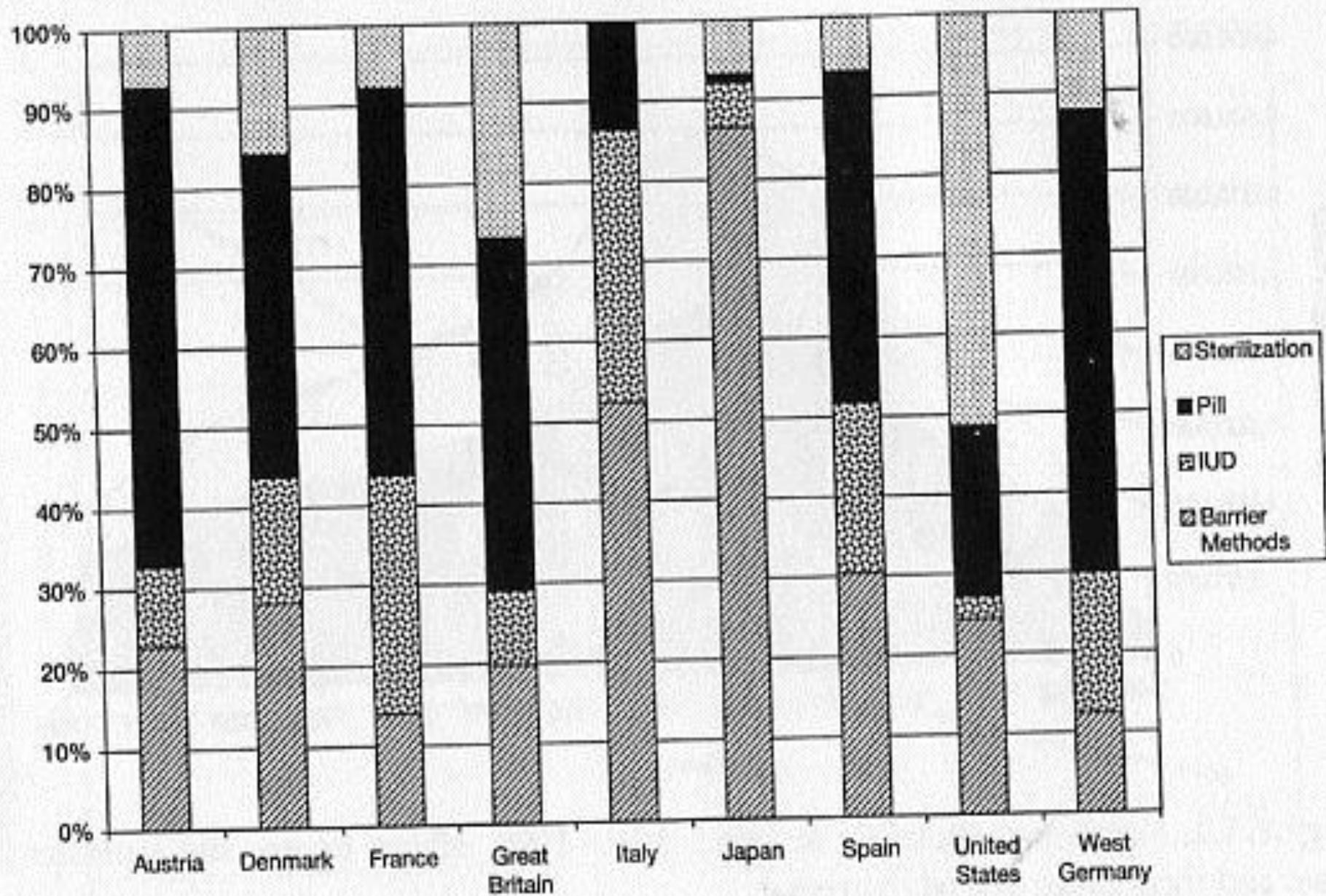


Figure 1.4. Cross-national comparison of contraceptive methods used.

The law that effectively legalized abortion

**Eugenic Protection Law (1948-
1996)**

**Art. 1: “The purpose of this law
is to prevent the birth of
eugenically inferior offspring,
and to protect maternal health
and life.”**

The loophole:

**Chapter 3, Article 14, paragraph 1,
item 4:**

“A designated physician may perform an abortion if the continuation of pregnancy is likely to seriously damage the mother’s health for physical or **economic reasons.” (Norgren p. 149)**

**Norgren estimates that 99%
of all abortions in Japan
are carried out under the
'economic health' item.**

Is this a puzzle?

**“Why has Japanese abortion policy been relatively progressive, while contraception policy has been relatively conservative? The Japanese government legalized abortion in 1948 but did not approve the pill until 1999.”
(Norgren, back cover)**

Norgren's argument:

Usually countries that are quick to legalize abortion are also quick to legalize the contraceptive pill... countries that oppose abortion also oppose the pill. So the Japanese pattern seems to need explaining.

Any suggestions?

1. Culturalist argument

Japan has a long history of abortion and infanticide (*mabiki*), and so has a natural tendency to favor abortion, rather than more modern forms of birth control.

Jolivet (1997) has many lurid example of abortion/infanticide practices from the Meiji Era. But Norgren and Jolivet both also provide examples of women being punished or condemned for these practices.

2. Government line: no inconsistency

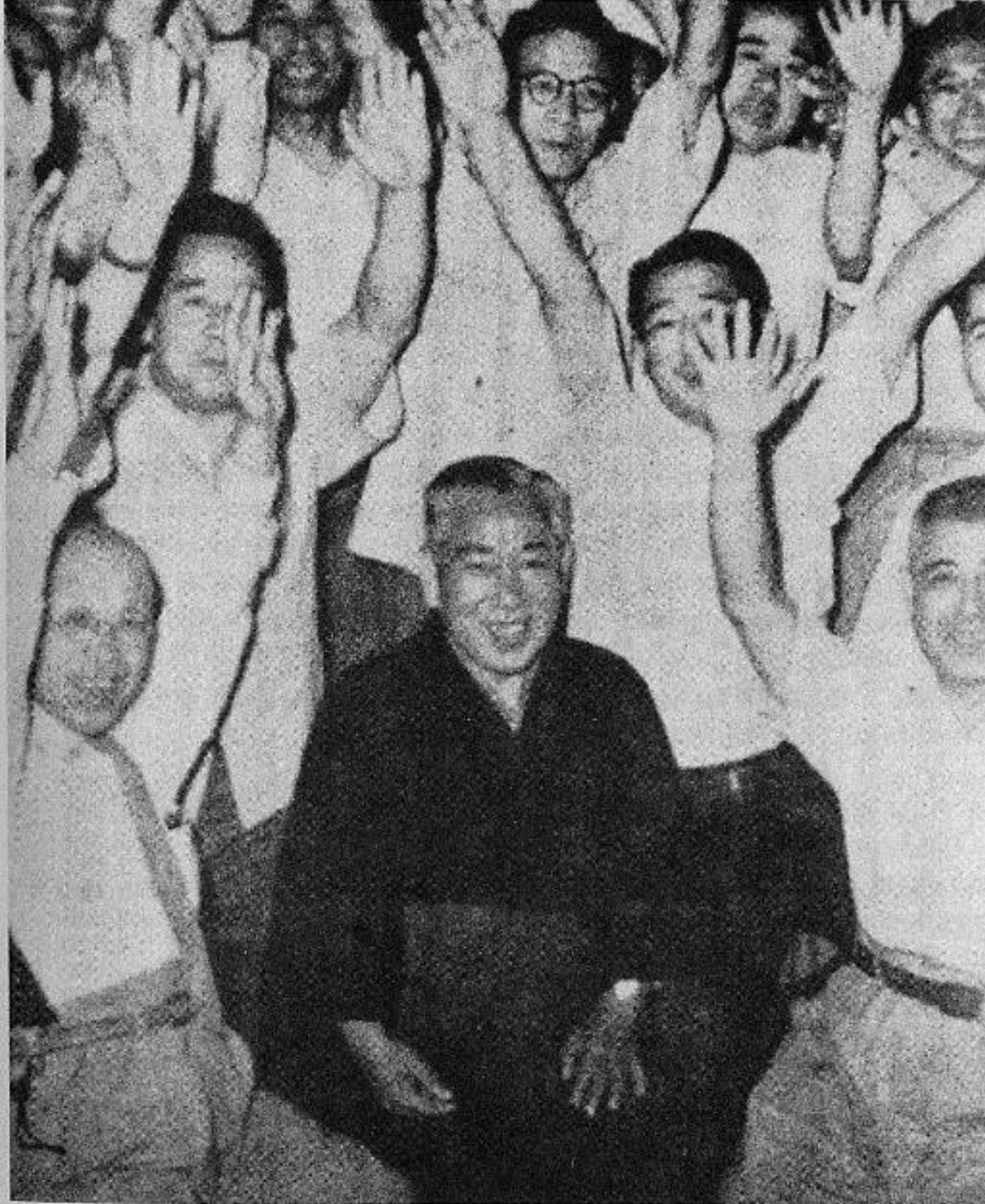
Abortions allowed in cases where there may be damage to a woman's well-being.

Pill not approved because of safety concerns that may indicate a threat to a woman's well-being.

The Ministry protects!

3. Political power

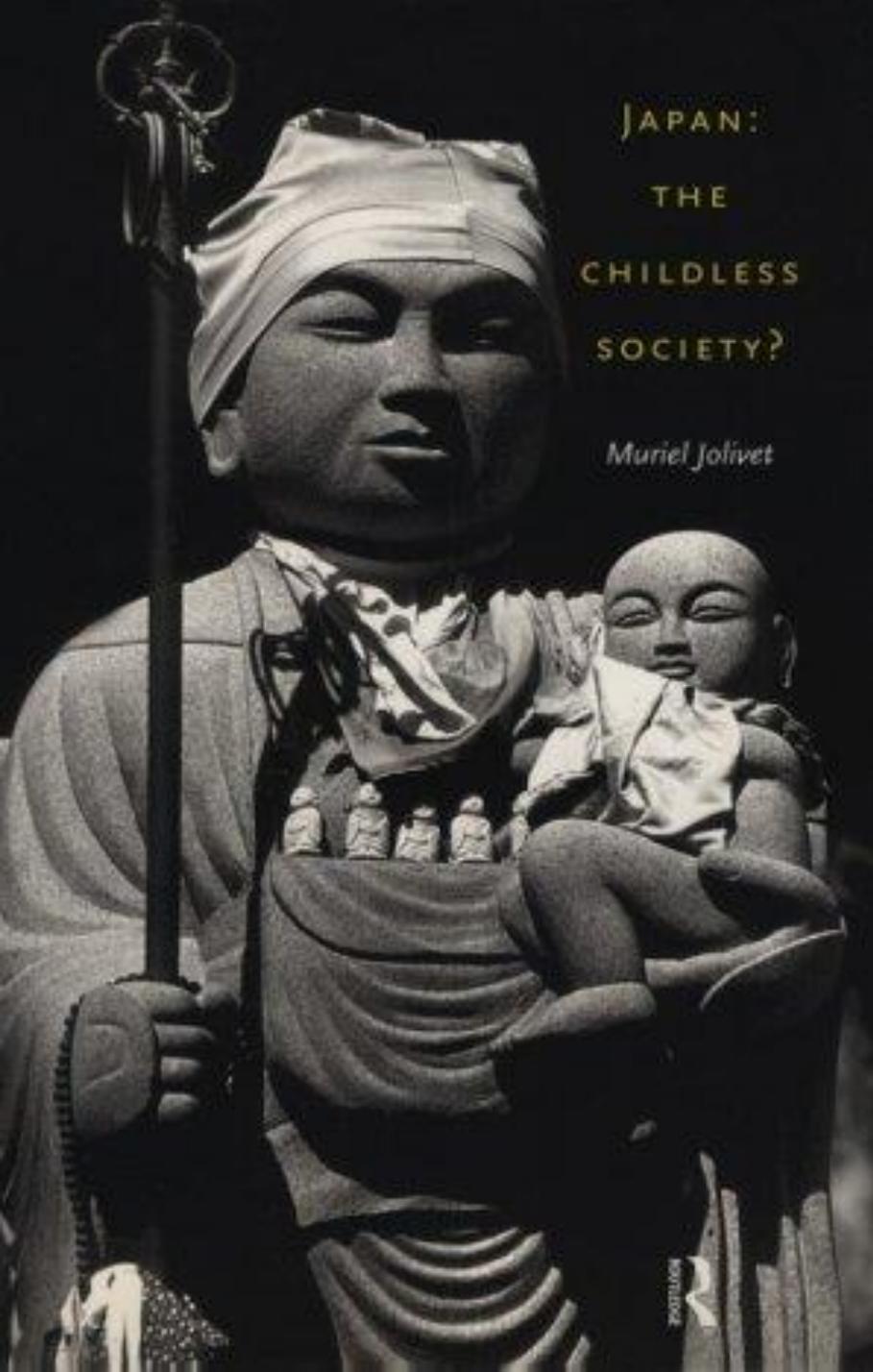
Norgren sees the situation stemming from different historical circumstances and the lobbying of different pressure groups. Legalizing abortion was possible because of the massive baby boom after WW2. The 1948 Act gave gynecologists a monopoly over abortions, and their society (Nichibo) lobbied ever after to defend abortion and keep out the pill.



**1956: Dr.
Yasaburo
Tanniguchi
celebrates
re-election
to the Upper
House with
supporters
from
Nichibo**

A long campaign

Claims that the pill would promote promiscuity, lead to a rise in the spread of AIDs and STIs, and would lead to oestrogen contaminated waste polluting the environment and cause low sperm counts among Japanese men, all helped delay the pill's legalisation.



***Japan: The
Childless Society?***
(Routledge, 1997)
By Muriel Jolivet
**(professor, Sophia
University,
French)**

The religious side of the abortion business

An abortion costs ¥70,000 to ¥100,000... cheap enough for most women to turn to in an emergency.

But many pay far more to a Buddhist temple for purifying rituals and memorial services for the aborted foetus.

Jolivet fingers Buddhist sects as another group tacitly lobbying against the pill.

**Helen
Hardacre,
(U Cal
Press, 1999)
takes an
even harder
line...**

**MARKETING
THE MENACING
FETUS
IN JAPAN**

HELEN HARDACRE



... arguing that *Mizuko Kuyo* (ceremonies to console the spirits of aborted babies), usually portrayed as a traditional part of Shinto ritual, were greatly elaborated in postwar Japan by certain Buddhist sects as a way of instilling guilt in Japanese women and making them pay a lot of money for ritual purification rites.

Water babies 水子 *Mizuko*



(Note the water imagery)

Mizuko Aborted / Miscarried babies

**Mizu shoubai / Water trade / Hostess
etc industry**

Ukiyo / Floating world

**... all cases of “mono no aware” (the
fleetingness of things” maybe...**

We've seen that it took the Ministry of Health and Welfare about 40 years to approve the contraceptive pill...

Speaking of pills,

I wonder how long it took the Ministry of Health and Welfare to approve Viagra?

Quiz time

- 1. One year?**
- 2. Three years?**
- 3. Five years?**
- 4. Still hasn't been approved?**
- 5. Other**

Answer: *six months*

Submitted: July 1998

Approved: January 1999

**Olympic gold medal speed by
ministry standards.**

**Little study on safety; foreign clinical
data accepted.**

**Norgren argues (p. 129) that the
Viagra shock helped shame the
MHW into legalizing the pill.**

“The contrast between the Health Ministry’s unusually hasty approval of Viagra and its decades of foot-dragging about the pill starkly exposed the sexist and unscientific nature of the decision-making process at the MHW and provoked an immediate outcry from Japanese feminist groups, women politicians, and the media.”

As one British journalist put it:

“Japan remains a society dominated by men – elderly men willing to license a pill for their own benefit, but who seem scared of giving young women control over their fertility and sexuality. Japan remains a male gerontocracy.”

(Financial Times Feb 27-28 1999. Cited in Norgren p. 130)

Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare stats

- **Only 1.3% of Japanese women use the pill, most of them to ease period pains (2004).**
- **40,000 teenage girls had abortions in the the same year (2004).**
- **150,000 marriages where the woman was already pregnant (1980: 83,000).**

And now for that sexiest of topics...

... *marriage.*

It's legal...

Age of consent for marriage
Articles 731 and 737 of the Civil Code provide that the age of consent for marriage is eighteen (18) years for men, and sixteen (16) for women. But when a minor wants to get married, he or she needs the consent of his or her parents.

(though bigamy is not)

**... and you can serve up to 2 years
for it under Article 184 of the Penal
Code**

(重婚)

第百八十四条 配偶者のある者が重ねて婚姻をしたときは、二年以下の懲役に処する。その相手方となって婚姻をした者も、同様とする。

... but it's not very popular.

(Movie poster for Shiro Toyoda's 1955 movie, *Fufu*

Zenzai

夫婦善哉

(Hurrah for Marriage)



Arranged marriages お見合い結婚

**Traditionally marriage in Japan has been between two families, not two individuals (cf Nihonjinron theories of groupism...)
Today, *omiai kekkon* are said to account for about 10% of all marriages (National Institute of Population and Social Security)... and are statistically less likely to end in divorce than love matches.**

Before and after

“Dating” ... going for a drive, to a restaurant, to a hot spring or ski resort etc. is a heavily promoted lifestyle for per-marital couples. It builds up to the razmatazz of a ‘Western’ style wedding, a honeymoon in Guam, Hawaii or even touring 7 European countries in 10 days... followed by life together “in a 2 DK in Saitama” (McLelland 2000: 95)... and a rapid loss of romance.

Sexless marriages increasing

- In a 2012 survey 41.3% percent of married couples in Japan said they have sex less than once a month.
- 1,306 people surveyed, aged 16 to 49.
- 2004: 32%. 2010: 40%.
- Men: 28.2% not interested in sex because they were "tired from work."
- Women: 23.5% find sex "troublesome."

Source: Japan Family Planning Association

Troublesome: mendokusai めんどくさい

Sexless marriages

- **Sexlessness is so rampant among married Japanese couples that condominium construction companies are starting to market their wares by telling prospective buyers their homes are so large there's enough room for a married man and woman to have one bedroom each, according to *Shukan Taishu* (4/28/2003).**

- **Surveys conducted recently by a number of housing construction companies have shown that about one in three young married Japanese couples with children sleep separately, with the percentage rising closer to 40 if only 30-somethings are counted.**

‘Second Virginity Syndrome’

Jolivet (1997) cites Mizuno Mari, author of *Second Virgin* (セカンド・ヴァージン,) as saying: “Young women these days go out of their way to lose their way to lose their virginity (because it is what everyone else is doing or because they are curious) and then become ‘second virgins’ (Jolivet p. 162).

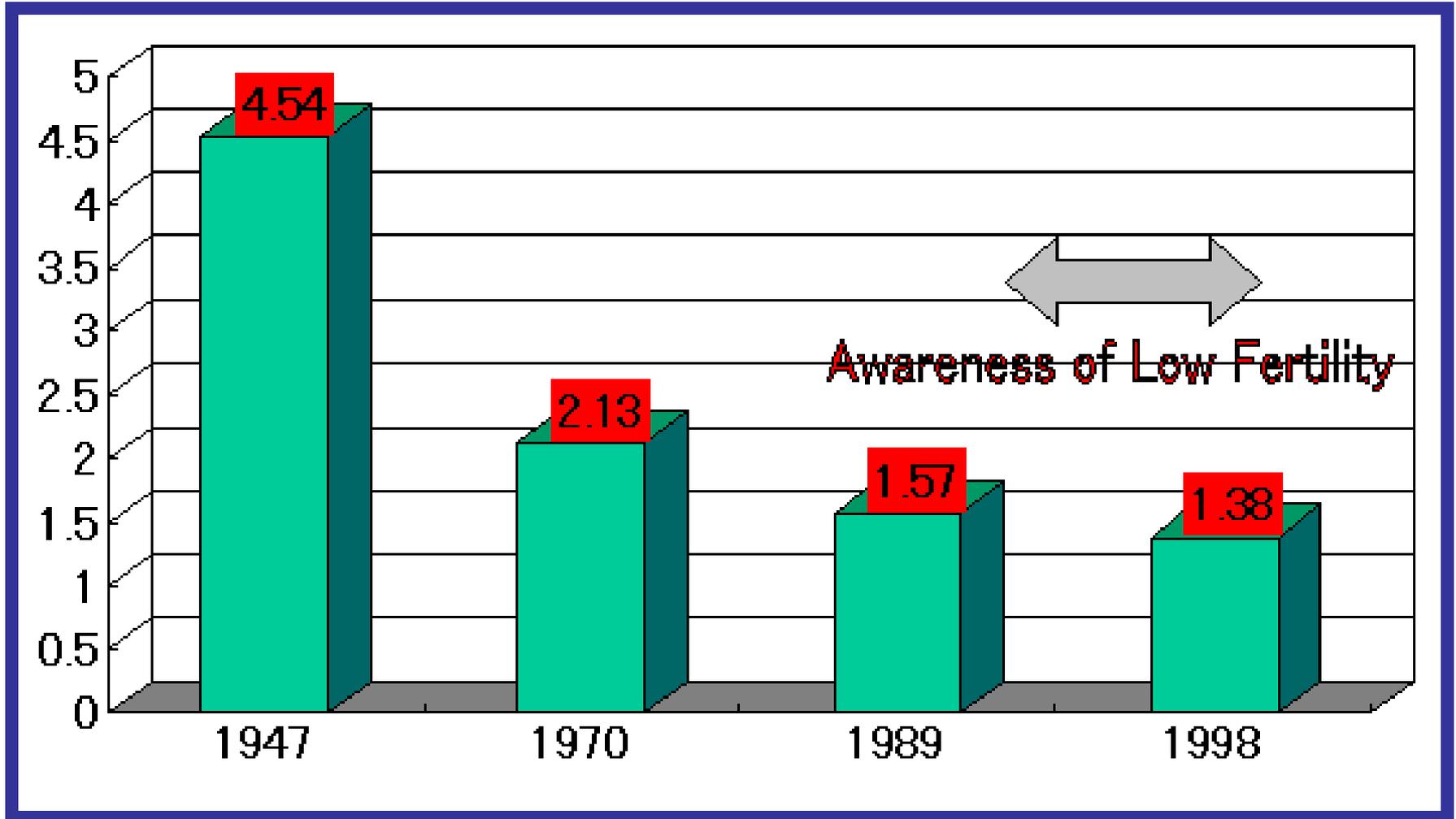
Young men also prefer 'DIY' sex?

“It’s not so much that they are not interested in the act itself but rather all the energy required to get them there (dinners, dates, not to mention the risk of being jilted and all the stress and humiliation associated with that).”

“‘If that’s the price to pay,’ one young man explained, ‘I’d rather go without.’”

(Jolivet 1997: 162)

Some think that this lack of interest in sex is an element in the falling birthrate.



Births out of wedlock

The principle that couples should be married before they have children is still widely respected in Japan.

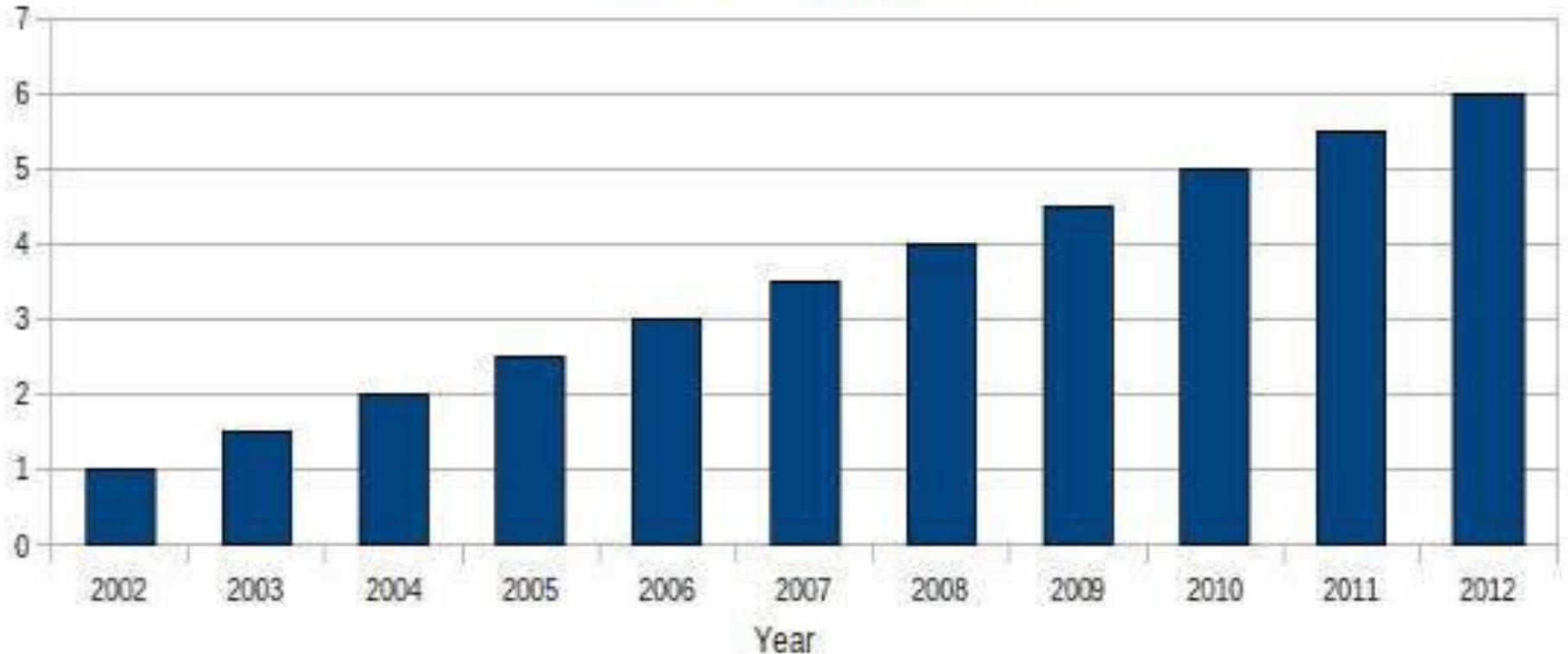
Year 年	Births out of wedlock 嫡出で ない子の割合
2003	1.93%
1980	0.80%

An international exception

Japan	2003	1.93
U.S.A.	2002	33.96
Sweden	2003	56.00
France	2002	44.30
U.K.	2003	43.10

... and the divorce rate continues to rise. *Now at 6% of all marriages.*

Current Divorce Rate in Japan



亮