

local competitors. Given the cost of relocating abroad, they earned generally higher wages than they could earn within Japan (Park, 2014: 451).

The expatriate prostitutes tended to come from two discrete communities on or near the southern island of Kyushu: Shimabara and Amakusa. That most of them came from a few small communities is crucial: it makes implausible any notion that they had been tricked by duplicitous recruiters. Trickery works when the target audience does not know what is at stake. When young women (or girls) from small, closed communities leave for several years and then return, they report what happened. Word travels, and others in the community learn what the trip entails.

Author Tomoko Yamazaki (1972) traveled to Amakusa to explore this history. There, she befriended an elderly emigrant prostitute named Osaki. Osaki had indeed worked many years abroad, but hers was not a story either of paternal oppression or of sexual slavery. Osaki had been born in a small village to a family who already had a boy and a girl. A few years after her birth, her father died. Her mother then found a new lover. As he had no interest in her very small children, she abandoned them and married him anyway. The three children survived together in a tiny shack, and scrapped together what they could to eat. Other women in the community had worked as prostitutes abroad, and had returned with substantial sums of money. In time, her older sister left to work abroad as a prostitute herself.

When Osaki turned ten, a recruiter stopped by and offered her 300 yen upfront if she would agree to go abroad. The recruiter did not try to trick her; even at age 10, she knew what the job entailed. She discussed it with her brother, and decided to take the work to help him establish himself in farming. She travelled to Malaysia, and worked as a maid for three years. She was happy, she recalled. Her family fed her white rice and fish every day, which was more than the three abandoned children had been able to scavenge in Amakusa.

At age 13, she began working for the family as a prostitute. Because of the cost of passage and three years of room and board, she now owed 2000 yen. Under the new terms, customers paid 2 yen for a short stay and 10 yen for an overnight visit. The brothel owner kept half the amount, and provided room and board. Out of the remaining half, she paid down her outstanding balance and bought cosmetics and clothing. If she worked hard, she found that she could repay about 100 yen a month.

Before Osaki had finished repaying her loan, her owner died and she found herself transferred to a brothel in Singapore. She disliked her new owner, so one day she and some of the others went down to the harbor and bought a ticket back to Malaysia. The point is important: even overseas, women who disliked their jobs at a brothel could – and did – simply disappear.

Osaki found a new brothel. She liked the couple who owned it (and they negotiated her release from the earlier brothel), and in time took to calling the wife mother. There she stayed until an expatriate Britisher made her his mistress. Later in life, she returned to her home in Amakusa.

### 2.3. Prostitution in Korea

1. *The phenomenon.* – As Japanese emigrants began to move to Korea, they established in their communities structures akin to the licensed brothels at home. Japan formally annexed Korea in 1910, and the new government imposed uniform licensing rules for brothels across all Korea in 1916. It set the minimum age for prostitution at 17 (not 18 as on the Japanese islands), and required regular medical examinations (Fujinaga, 1998, 2004; Kim and Kim 2018: 18, 21).

Although both Koreans and Japanese could use the new licensing system, the Japanese did so more readily. By 1929, for example,

1,789 Japanese licensed prostitutes worked in Korea but only 1,262 Koreans. The Japanese prostitutes entertained 450,300 guests, where the Koreans entertained 110,700 (252 guests per year for the Japanese prostitute, 88 for the Korean). By 1935 the number of Japanese licensed prostitutes had fallen to 1,778 but the number of Koreans still had risen only to 1,330 (Kim and Kim 2018: 18, 21; Fujinaga, 2004).

Plenty of Korean women worked as prostitutes, but they simply did not work within the licensing structure. In 1935 Korea, government records report that 414 Japanese women worked as bar maids and 4,320 as cabaret workers (both euphemisms for unlicensed prostitutes). Of Korean women, 1,290 worked as barmaids and 6,553 as cabaret workers.<sup>4</sup>

2. *The contracts.* – (a) *Prices.* To recruit their licensed prostitutes, Korean brothels used indenture contracts much like those in Japan. Prices, however, reflected the lower standard of living in Korea. Over the economy as a whole, from 1910 to 1940 the ratio of Japanese to Korean wages varied from about 2.5 to 1.5. Korean men in the 1930s earned about 1–2 yen per day (Odaka 1975: 150, 153).

Within this Korean market, Japanese prostitutes charged more than Korean prostitutes. Japanese customers were generally wealthier than Korean customers, after all, and Japanese customers tended to prefer Japanese women. By one account, in 1926 Korean prostitutes charged 3 yen for an assignation; Japanese prostitutes in Korea charged 6–7 yen. Customers spent an average 3.9 yen on a visit to a Korean licensed prostitute; they spent an average of 8 yen on a visit to a Japanese licensed prostitute in Korea (Kim and Kim 2018: 26, 89, 96; Nihon yuran, 1932: 461). In one (apparently poorer) Korean community in 1929, Japanese licensed prostitutes generated annual revenues of 1,052 yen; Korean licensed prostitutes generated 361 yen (Nihon, 1994).

The higher Japanese revenues resulted in higher upfront cash payments to the Japanese prostitutes working in Korea than to the Korean prostitutes. One source (see Kim and Kim, 2018: 96) described Korean licensed prostitutes receiving advances of 250–300 yen (and occasionally 400–500 yen) on three year contracts; Japanese licensed prostitutes received 1,000–3,000 yen (note the higher amounts than in Japan). Another source calculated the average upfront payment to Korean licensed prostitutes at 420 yen, while the Japanese licensed prostitute received 1,730 yen (Nihon, 1994: 63).

(b) *Contractual term.* Consistent with the experience of prostitutes in Japan quitting within six years, Korean licensed prostitutes left the industry by their mid-20s. In one study, 61 percent of Korean licensed prostitutes were 20–25 years old; only 16 percent were over 25 (Kim and Kim, 2018: 97; see Ito, 1931: 172–94). In another, 680 of the 1,101 licensed prostitutes in the Seoul area were age 20–24, but only 273 were 25–29. Of that group of 1,101, 294 were in their fifth year of service; 65 were in their sixth, and 17 in their seventh. On the base population of 1,101, 317 entered in 1924, and 407 quit (Michiya, 1928).

2. *Korean prostitution abroad.* – Like the Japanese karayuki, young Korean women too travelled abroad. Crucially, Korean women went abroad to work as prostitutes long before several Shanghai brothels became the first licensed “comfort stations” in 1932. The comfort stations, in other words, did not begin the practice of Korean young women working abroad as prostitutes. The young women had been working abroad as prostitutes for decades before.

Already by the 1920s, Korean women were travelling to Manchuria to work as prostitutes (Fujinaga, 1998). In 1929, 196

<sup>4</sup> , Chosen (1906–42), Nihongun (2020).