

Textual similarities between “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War” (2021) and “Indentured Prostitution in Imperial Japan: Credible Commitments in the Commercial Sex Industry” (1991), by J. Mark Ramseyer.

J. Mark Ramseyer, “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War,” *International Review of Law and Economics* 65 (2021): 1–8.

J. Mark Ramseyer, “Indentured Prostitution in Imperial Japan: Credible Commitments in the Commercial Sex Industry,” *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 7 (1991): 89–116.

Page 2 Similarly, if brothels were keeping prostitutes locked in debt slavery, the number of years in the industry should have stayed constant beyond six. Yet of 42,400 licensed prostitutes surveyed, 38 percent were in their second or third year, 25 percent were in their fourth or fifth, and only 7 percent were in their sixth or seventh (Ito, 1931: 208–11; Kusama, 1930: 281). On a workforce of about 50,000 licensed prostitutes, 18,800 women registered as new licensed prostitutes in 1922 and 18,300 de-registered (Yamamoto, 1983: 388; Ito, 1931: 211–13). Consistent with a general tenure of about three years, in other words, one third of the work force replaced itself every year (Keishi, 1933: 96–98; Kusama, 1930: 227–28).

Other data make the point more directly. In the early 1920s, of 42,400 licensed prostitutes studied, 11,400 (27 percent) had worked less than one year, 16,200 (38 percent) were in their second or third year, 10,400 (25 percent) were in their fourth or fifth year, 3100 (7 percent) were in their sixth or seventh year, and 1300 (3 percent) had worked more than seven years. The mean number of prostitutes in their fourth or fifth year (5200), in other words, was less than half those in their first year (11,400).⁴⁵ Similarly, consider the entry and exit from the industry. During 1922, 18,800 women registered as prostitutes and 18,300 women deregistered. Of the work force of some 50,000, about one-third turned over each year.⁴⁶

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Page 3 (c) *An example.* Consider some simple calculations (Keishi, 1933: 96–98; Kusama, 1930: 227–28). In 1925, customers made 3.74 million visits to the 4,159 licensed prostitutes in Tokyo. Aside from payments for food and drink, they spent 11.1 million yen. Of this amount, prostitutes kept 31 percent, or 3.4 million yen – 655 yen per prostitute. Under the standard arrangement, the prostitute would have applied 60 percent of this amount (393 yen) toward the repayment of her loan, and kept the rest (262 yen). She would have repaid her initial loan of 1200 yen in about 3 years. The average adult factory wage (both sexes; room and board not provided) in 1925 was 1.75 yen per day, and in 1935 was 1.88 yen per day (Shakai, 1936: 53; Ohsato, 1966: 68). To earn their income, the prostitutes in 1924 served a mean 2.54 customers per night (Keishi, 1933: 96; Kusama, 1930: 220–21; Uemura, 1929: 492–501). They worked about 28 nights per month (Keishi, 1933: 96–98).

Consider first some simple finances.³⁹ In 1925, consumers made 3.74 million visits to the 5159 licensed prostitutes in Tokyo. Aside from charges for food and drink, they spent 11.1 million yen. Of this amount, the prostitutes kept 31 percent, or 3.4 million yen—655 yen per prostitute. Under the usual arrangement, each prostitute would have paid 60 percent of this amount (393 yen) toward the loan principal and kept the rest (262 yen) for personal expenses. With an initial loan of 1194 yen, the average prostitute would have repaid her principal in 3.03 years. Nor should she have found it hard to live on 262 yen—21.8 yen per month. After all, she received room and board free. Young industrial workers earned modal monthly wages of *less than 2 yen* if they also received room and board, and 15–16 yen per month if not;⁴⁰ adult factory workers (generally *not* receiving room and board) received a mean monthly wage in 1925 of 47 yen.⁴¹

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