

# Managing the Truth of Sex in Imperial Japan

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My lecture is a lecture on biology. Therefore we will not be dealing with venereal diseases or perversions but with perfectly normal sexual phenomena. From my experience during the past two semesters I know that most of my students, or about sixty percent, still live chaste lives. We will become familiar with many technical terms and foreign (European) words. On the one hand, using technical scientific terminology is unavoidable, and on the other, we use it to avoid making obscene associations . . . I expect you to be familiar with the textbooks in physics and natural history and urge you to also take a look at the textbooks from girls' schools . . . I consider knowledge a product, lecturers like myself both the creators of knowledge and at the same time original researchers and brokers of knowledge.

Yamamoto 1921a, 51–53

Although the importance of ideas of rationality and science are acknowledged in most texts that treat the period between the Meiji restoration (1868) and the end of World War II, historiographical accounts of sexuality—for good reason—tend to focus on analyzing notions of gender and the erotic (Silverberg 1998), gender ambivalence and ambiguity (Robertson 1998; Roden 1990), homosexuality (Pflugfelder 1999; Robertson 1998), and other questions that highlight various aspects of the eroticization of gender and sexuality (Muta 1992; Ueno 1990). I suggest stepping back to view sexuality in modern Japan from a different angle. The late nineteenth-century rise of statistical thinking was complemented in the early twentieth century by a plea for scientism that potentially affected all areas of Japanese society (Nihon tōkei kenkyūjo 1960). I will examine the move toward scientism addressed by the zoologist and sex researcher Yamamoto Senji. With respect to sexual practices, he forcefully proclaimed “seeking the truth” (*shinjitsu no tsuikyū*) as his goal (see Odagiri 1979). This article is an attempt to describe the making of “sexuality,” or the transforming of sex into discourse (Foucault 1990 [1976]) during Japan’s imperial

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era. The Meiji state began to gather statistical data not only on economics but also on culture and crime as well as on education and hygiene. By the early twentieth century, several actors became involved in the pursuit of the truth of sex and its social management in an arena of conflicting forces. The methods of investigation and the aims varied widely, but governmental institutions, scholars, and social reformers were connected by a common desire to understand, document, and regulate the sex lives of the Japanese populace.

In this paper I explore several areas of discourse and practice in which the pursuit of the truth of sex came to the fore with the development of the modern Japanese state. In the first part, I recapitulate the concept of “the empire as body” and its implications for the building of a new health regime. The modern state was most clearly described by Gotō Shinpei in his important work “Principles of National Hygiene” (*Kokka eisei genri*, 1978 [1889]), in which the emperor appears as part of an organism that is likened both to the body of the individual and the body of the nation (*kokutai*). In the second section, I address the construction of children as the primary source of knowledge about present-day society and as a symbol of the future potential of the nation. The third part focuses on controversies and disputes in the first few decades of the twentieth century over the legitimacy of the search for the truth of sex and its management. In the fourth section, I describe a feature intrinsic to the search for the truth of sex: experts’ efforts to popularize their sexual knowledge by encouraging the public’s urge to confess in order to gain data, legitimacy, and status for their program of launching a “radical sex education” (*kyūshinteki seikyōiku*).<sup>1</sup>

My approach is important because it integrates the study of the emergence of a science of sex into the body of similar discussions of reform, modernity, and Japan’s place in the world in other fields, i.e., historiography (Tanaka 1993) and ethnography (Silverberg 1992), from which the proponents of a “science of sex” in and outside of Japan borrowed their strategies (Nye 1991). Many historians of sexuality have focused on the problematic issue of gender and the way it has shaped the production of sexual knowledge. With my investigation, I hope to broaden the perspective by showing the tremendous importance that was ascribed to children in the construction and legitimization of sexology and sexual knowledge. Many historians of imperial Japan have acknowledged the speed and receptiveness with which Japanese scientists and intellectuals grasped and integrated foreign ideas and knowledge. In the field of sexology, as I will show, Japanese medical doctors, zoologists, pediatricians, and amateurs were equally adept at receiving foreign sexological knowledge and integrating it into new research that was internationally influential.

Japan’s imperial era is defined here as the period beginning with the establishment of a Central Sanitary Bureau as part of the implementation of a new medical system (*isei*) in 1872. A governmental institution frequently employed to investigate public health and hygiene nationwide, the Bureau most clearly marked the Meiji government’s conviction that an enlightened, rich, and strong nation was above all a healthy nation. The almost complete halt of the popularization of sexual knowledge that occurred during the late 1930s serves as the other chronological marker of my account.

### The Empire as Body

From the late nineteenth century to the early Shōwa era (1926–89), Japanese scholars and practitioners in medicine, psychiatry, psychology, and sexology, as well

<sup>1</sup>This view was presented by Japan’s pioneer sex researcher Yamamoto Senji in the newspaper *Tōkyō asahi* in 1921 (Yamamoto 1921b).

as philosophers and bureaucrats, developed a new understanding of the management of the Japanese body and, through it, of the entire population. They increasingly employed scientific knowledge to guide policies and other prescriptions aimed at producing well-functioning and well-regulated bodies that would constitute a better and more modern nation. Physical differences between the Japanese and other “races” were proclaimed, and suggestions put forth for improving the bodies and souls of “the Japanese.” Indeed, “the reform of body and soul” (*shinshin no kairyō*) became one of the explicit aims of the Japanese bureaucracy in its pursuit of modernization and civilization.

The reform of body and soul was presented as critical in relation to two ongoing conflicts: resistance to western colonial powers, and competition among Asian countries. From the middle Meiji years, the Home Ministry and other state authorities had shown an intense interest in controlling people’s lives in general, their sexual behavior in particular, and in accumulating and disseminating scientific data on both.<sup>2</sup> It eventually brought about the development of several powerful instruments for channeling data into a state data pool. These data-gathering agents included various bureaucratic bodies such as the Central Sanitary Bureau (1872), the school hygiene system (1898), and laws and legislation, including a law requiring health checks for prostitutes (1900), decrees targeted at safeguarding public morality, and the Peace Police Law (1900).

Nagayo Sensai (1838–1902) and Gotō Shinpei (1857–1927) were powerful engineers of the social and administrative aspects of Japan’s modern health regime. Both had studied medicine and had familiarized themselves with European theories on and models of public health administration. Nagayo Sensai coined the term “*eisei*” (a translation of the German term “*Gesundheitspflege*” or “*Hygiene*”) after returning home from a visit to Prussia in 1872 (Marui 1980, 99). He founded the Sanitary Bureau as part of the Ministry of Education, thus establishing a governmental institution that was able to collect nationwide data on the constitution of the Japanese “national body” for the first time in Japanese history. The Sanitary Bureau published these data in lengthy reports every two years and later also published data in English (Naimushō eiseikyoku 1893/94). In 1874, the Sanitary Bureau was renamed the Bureau for Hygiene (*Naimushō eiseikyoku*) and incorporated within the Home Ministry, where it became one of seven powerful departments (Jannetta 1997).

Gotō Shinpei described his vision of the state as a body or organism in a book entitled “Principles of National Hygiene” (*Kokka eisei genri* 1978 [1889]). German organism theories, Rudolf Virchow’s “social medicine” (*Sozialmedizin*), Otto von Bismarck’s “social policy” (*Sozialpolitik*), as well as Herbert Spencer’s “social organism” inspired his concept of the close relationship between public health and national integrity. Echoing the writings of other Japanese thinkers in the late nineteenth century who participated in the construction of a “modern emperor dualism” that metaphorically divided the emperor into a “body natural” and a “body politic” (Kantorowicz 1957; see also Fujitani 1998, 156, 158), Gotō stated that one should think of human beings not simply as individual bodies but as parts of a collective. He termed this collective “state as human body.” The “state as human body” should be equipped with weapons, just as any animal with claws and fangs. It

<sup>2</sup>The concern for control was reflected in what Carol Gluck called the “Meiji ideology” (Gluck 1985) and in Tetsuo Najita’s notion of regulation as opposed to eradication of conflicts (Najita 1983, 16). It also considerably shaped discussions on the transformation of entire scientific disciplines (Tanaka 1993, 15).

should also have a public health system, just as any living being utilizes its own means to take care of its well-being. In addition, it should have the economic means to secure its maintenance, just as any living being has the ability to feed itself (Gotō 1978 [1889]). On the basis of this set of ideas the Japanese state began to inspect and measure public health (*kōshū eisei*) during the late nineteenth century, in the hope of finding explanations for the spread of infectious diseases and the comparatively high mortality rates of infants and tuberculosis patients (Iwanaga 1994, 79–118). When the spread of acute infectious diseases slowed by the turn of the century, the focus of public health administrators shifted toward chronic diseases such as tuberculosis, leprosy, and mental and venereal diseases. These chronic diseases were less life-threatening, but were perceived as potential threats to social order and stability, which had become a central concern of Japan's bureaucracy. Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922), an immensely powerful and influential figure in both politics and education, forcefully addressed this concern in a speech to the participants of a conference on mental illness in 1922. Ōkuma promoted a law that would regulate the lives of the mentally ill. His appeal was clearly dominated by the idea of social order and the potential challenge posed to that order by the “the chronically ill”:

Insanity occasionally becomes infectious. This infection can be terrible, spreading ceaselessly among the people. A society, or even a state, can eventually become morbid. I suppose that a nation like Russia might be affected by insanity. In the beginning, it was neurasthenia, then it became psychosis, and finally it turned into a pathological attack which would lead the nation to end in a complete failure—a revolution. Being insane produces a peculiar effect. Because, once affected by insanity, even the Japanese, who have been known for a unique loyalty to their Emperor, may exhibit a disloyalty. . . . Insane persons should be taken care of by the state. Why? If they are neglected, the infection will make the nation more and more morbid, and the whole society will become confused and out of control.

(See Nakatani 1995, 15)

Ōkuma emphasized what he perceived to be the three main attributes of insanity: infection, moral degradation, and the threat to social and national integrity. He argued that a decadence of public morals—indulgence in alcohol, art, and literature—prevailed among Japan's youth and was causing neurasthenia, which occasionally developed into genuine psychosis. According to him, the contagiousness of immorality was associated with the infectiousness of mental disorders, and was equally devastating because it threatened the morality of the people and would lead to social turmoil.

In Ōkuma's times, neurasthenia was associated with social unrest and the potential for political instability. Many medical doctors and bureaucrats who dealt with public health policies believed that one of neurasthenia's main causes was masturbation (*shuin*). In their eyes, masturbation was a pathological phenomenon that could potentially endanger the national body. Far into the twentieth century, they retained the view that an excessive and misled sex life, of which masturbation and prostitution were but the most obvious manifestations, could cause tuberculosis. Tuberculosis was in turn not considered a disease in its own right but was identified with certain forms of syphilis (Johnston 1995, 189–93). It was also commonly believed that the development of insanity followed a pathological evolution that was disastrous for the individual and society and similar to that of venereal diseases and other infectious diseases: extensive autoerotic practices, which could be stimulated by alcohol and “bad literature,” would lead to neurasthenia. Neurasthenia was the preliminary stage of psychosis which would bring about pathological consequences and eventually

culminate in moral degradation, social chaos, and even revolution. Hence, in their view, masturbation was but one expression of insanity. Japan's bureaucracy responded to this reasoning by taking several measures to exert control over the sex lives of the Japanese population in general, and venereal disease and masturbation in particular. New regulations tightened the control over prostitution and prostitutes; others focused exclusively on recruits (Rikugunshō 1927; see also Burns 1998, Fujime 1997, Garon 1993). Most important and far-reaching, however, were regulations designed to better instruct, control, and discipline children who were referred to as the core focus of the program for the "improvement of the race" (*jinsbu no kairyō*) and the "improvement of society" (*shakai kairyō*) (see Saitō 1993, 132; Otsubo 1998).

Two events of 1898 powerfully reflected the close interconnection between the state's policies and science's advancements. In January of that year, a new system of school physicians was set up.<sup>3</sup> That November, educational psychologists founded the first pediatric journal. Children rapidly became a critical resource for the production of knowledge, and the development of pedagogical theories; they allowed access to the means of controlling, guiding, and managing society. They were considered the obvious starting point for many pressing social problems and thus symbolically united all agents involved in the management of sex. Representatives of psychology, pedagogy, and medicine began to accept the "discovery" of the sexual instinct of children. Prostitution and hence venereal disease were recognized as major obstacles on the way to modernity. Sexologists pushed for instruction and research on masturbation, homosexuality, and other sexual practices that were defined as "deviant." In addition, the rise of statistical thinking led to ever more detailed quantification of society both by "public amateurs," such as self-appointed sexologists, and by "secret bureaucrats" (Hacking 1990, 16; Kawai 1989; Takeuchi 1989).

### Sexing Children

A quarter century after primary school education had become obligatory, a special Division for School Hygiene was established by imperial decree on January 8, 1898 as the central authority in a new system of school physicians. It gave physicians unhindered access to the bodies of children and adolescents. By the year 1902, more than 9,000 school physicians had been hired. Of these, 8,700 of them worked at primary schools, while the others were affiliated with teacher seminars, middle schools, and girls' schools (Leuschner 1906, 790–93).

School hygiene programs were implemented mainly to control the spread of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and tracheitis, which had occurred in epidemic proportions after the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95). Children were told not to use the handkerchiefs or towels of other children and, and in moral education and sports classes, were educated about the principles of cleanliness. All children were to be examined twice a year. Height, weight, circumference of the body, general constitution, sight, and hearing were systematically measured. The results of these measurements and all illnesses diagnosed were noted in a student's graduation certificate, which had to be produced at the entrance examinations for secondary schools (see Narita 1995, 68). After the turn of the century, illnesses, morphology,

<sup>3</sup>At the time the school hygiene system was established, about 55 percent of the children under the age of eleven attended primary schools (Linhart 1974, 117).

and athletic abilities were central in these examinations, which became ever more detailed. Pupils were examined for the following diseases: scrofula, malnutrition, anemia, beriberi, pulmonary tuberculosis, headaches, chronic diseases, nervous dejection, and exhaustion. School physicians and pedagogues referred to these examinations when reporting that children or adolescents suffered from headaches, exhaustion, melancholia, or other forms of unsatisfactory physical or psychological development, and frequently claimed that these diseases were caused by masturbation.

Only one year after the Division for School Hygiene had been established, medical doctors and pedagogues began openly to discuss the sexual instinct in children, which was just one item of the broader “sexual question” (*seimondai*) that would be the focus of debate for many years to follow. In November 1898, the educational psychologists Takashima Heisaburō (Takashima Beihō), Matsumoto Kōjirō, and Tsukahara Keiji founded “Pediatric Research” (*Jidō kenkyū*), the first pediatrics journal. In the May edition of the following year, Takashima wrote an article on the causes of psychological illnesses among children, in which he named masturbation as one factor (see Matsubara 1993, 232). Similar views were articulated by pediatricians in the “Journal for Pediatrics” (*Jika zasshi*) and other journals that dealt with children’s health during the years to follow.

In 1901, the medical doctor Fujikawa Yū (1865–1940) submitted an article to *Jidō kenkyū*. In this article, entitled “The Sexual Instinct in Children,” Fujikawa contributed information about the medical aspect of the sexual instinct (*shikijō* or *seiyoku*) in children (see Matsubara 1993, 234). There, and in many other medical, pedagogical, and general newspapers and magazines, Fujikawa stated that children masturbated because they were not educated correctly in sexual matters by parents or teachers. In Fujikawa’s view, the readership of pedagogical and medical journals had to be given scientific information on the sexuality of children, and he considered it his mission to provide that information. In 1905, he founded his own journal *Jinsei-Der Mensch*, which he organized as a forum for discussions on new developments in a number of scientific fields. Two fields regularly treated in the journal were sexual science and eugenics. In the editorial, Fujikawa explicitly mentioned the most important pursuits of the journal: first, to provide solutions for the social and psychological problems of mankind (see Figure 1); second, to lay the cornerstone for collaborative research about these problems between the East and West; and third, to contribute to research on the history of mankind. He had in mind a potential readership of lawyers, bureaucrats, pedagogues, theologians, physicians, anthropologists and other “scientists who were concerned about the great problems of mankind” (Fujikawa 1905, 1). Most articles in *Jinsei-Der Mensch* were clearly unintelligible to a nonspecialist readership, but Fujikawa also presented his views in newspapers and magazines which were read by educated lay people (see, i.e., Fujikawa 1908a, 1912, 1915, 1919a, 1919b, 1919c, 1919d, 1923, 1924, 1928).

On March 20, 1906, *Jika zasshi* printed the written version of a lecture given by Mishima Tsūryō, a pediatrician and the founder and first director of the Division of School Hygiene in the Ministry of Education. He had delivered the lecture to the first International World Conference on School Hygiene (1905) in Nürnberg, Germany. In the article “The Sexual Questions of School Children” (*Gakkō seitō no shikijō mondai*), Mishima proclaimed that it was indeed the German notion of “sexual pedagogy” (*Sexualpädagogik*) that would be the most effective prophylactic measure for the prevention of masturbation and venereal diseases. His article provoked a great deal of discussion among directors of schools and teachers because he urged them “to educate



Figure 1. The cover of *Jinsei-Der Mensch* (April 1905) illustrates what the medical doctor Fujikawa Yū and many other intellectuals envisioned as the merging of western (European or German) and eastern (Japanese) science. In the center of the cover there is a globe with an ostensibly rising sun, to the sides of which the Greek sun god Apollo (right side) and the German war god Baldur (left side) are placed facing one another.

children on the dangers of venereal diseases and their evil consequences in relation to the sexual instinct" (Mishima 1906, 95–104).

In other contributions to the journal, the German discourse on sex and sexuality in particular was well received and propagated. Eventually the introduction of sex education into Japanese middle schools, girls' schools, and high schools was considered. In 1908, Fujikawa succeeded in initiating the first lecture in sex education. In a course on hygiene, he presented his views to a middle school audience, combining "scientific German approaches" with his own beliefs. The lecture took up questions of the function and hygiene of sexual organs as well as consequences in cases of inadequate hygiene. It was explicitly emphasized that there was no reason to be ashamed about sexual matters. Fujikawa noted that five years earlier a lecture like that would have been absolutely impossible in a public school (see Matsubara 1993, 233). However, Fujikawa's public lectures were not limited to schools. He was asked by a number of social reformist groups to lecture at their meetings in a style appropriate for lay people. Similar lectures were given by other like-minded people from the fields of medicine and pedagogy. The editor of "Sex/Sexuality" (*Sei*), one of the sexological journals I will describe below, offered "public talks on sex and love" (*seiai kōen*) all over Japan for a minimum of thirty people at a time in exchange for the reimbursement of his travel costs. Here and there, teachers tried to implement systematic sex education in schools. These lectures provoked harsh criticism in the print media. A discussion of the appropriateness of a systematic sex education eventually crossed the boundaries between pedagogical and medical journals on the one hand and general newspapers and magazines on the other (Tatsuyama 1908, 268).

## Disputing Education

The first national newspaper to take up the touchy "sexual question" in connection with the health and welfare of the nation was the *Yomiuri shinbun*, one of Japan's oldest Japanese newspapers. With a daily distribution of 60,000 copies, it was the third largest paper after the *Asahi shinbun* and the *Mainichi shinbun*. Between September 1 and October 13, 1908, the *Yomiuri shinbun* serialized the views of prominent medical doctors and pedagogues on what was coined the "sexual question" (*seimondai*). Until then, sexual questions had been discussed primarily in scholarly journals; to a lesser extent and in a different way, issues of sex entered into disputes about naturalistic literature, which was denounced by its critics as damaging to the morals of young people for its depictions of sex (Rubin 1984). The series of articles presented by the *Yomiuri shinbun* was particularly significant because it presented the sexual question to a huge, heterogeneous readership that was not necessarily scientifically literate. In fact, the *Yomiuri shinbun* catered to the less educated classes, since it was the first Japanese newspaper that printed syllables next to uncommon Chinese characters.<sup>4</sup>

The controversy in the *Yomiuri shinbun* represents an entire repertoire of new ideas characterized by three main features: the ideas always appeared together; they were tightly intertwined and thus mutually supportive of each other; and at their core they carried the necessity of the creation and popularization of correct knowledge in order to improve the Japanese populace. "Scientific method" required that confessions of

<sup>4</sup>This practice reflected the aim of the publisher to print "useful information in a form comprehensible to everyone" (Muzik 1996, 83–84).

children, diagnoses of school doctors, and empirical data on the sexual behavior of students fulfill certain criteria. Scientific knowledge had to be clearly cut off from religious customs and social traditions. Moreover, the conclusions had to be prophylactic in nature, aimed at preventing dubious sexual practices (e.g., masturbation or prostitution) and their “consequences” (e.g., neurasthenia, venereal diseases, or unwanted pregnancies). Debates over “sexual questions” included discussions of the problem of sex education (*seikyōiku mondai*). Some authors asked further questions: What exactly does sex education mean? Why should it be carried out? Who is to be enlightened on sexual matters? What is the goal? What can be said? Who has the authority to speak? The controversy indicated the broad ramifications of the new scientific and pedagogical interest in sex. Intrinsic to the debate were concepts of individual and social responsibility, self-restraint and happiness, and disease and the concern for the nation’s health. Also inherent in these discussions were questions about the authority of scientific experts as opposed to laity, the putative advancement of western sciences, and the universality of sexological findings and theories across national and cultural boundaries.

For the contributors to the series on the sexual question in the *Yomiuri shinbun*, sex education had three aspects: speaking with children; encouraging children to speak; and making children investigate themselves and their behavior. Yoshida Kumaji, a prominent pedagogue who taught at one of the imperial universities, argued that the term “children” had to be carefully and clearly defined, since education about the sexual instinct (*seiyoku*) might harm children of certain age groups (Yoshida 1908, 5). The right age for sex education remained unclear, but it was agreed that ignorance or error had to be combated. The focus of sex education remained controversial. Would it suffice to teach “correct knowledge”? Was the right dose of knowledge crucial? Or did sex education simply mean finding a pedagogically acceptable substitute for knowledge on the sexual instinct, such as self-restraint, will power, and physical training? What exactly should be taught? What behavior should children avoid? How much responsibility could be demanded of the parents? Could they decide when their children were sufficiently mature to be taught about sex? Or did they lack a minimum sensibility to the sexual question because they either knew nothing or were deprived of the right sexual morals themselves?

Mukō Gunji, professor at the prestigious Keiō Gijuku Daigaku, began the series of articles in the *Yomiuri* on September 1, 1908. He viewed sex education positively: “I am against telling children as little as possible about the sexual instinct” (Mukō 1908a, 5). Mukō continued, “If this topic is not discussed in families the danger that children would do something bad is very likely to prevail” (Mukō 1908b, 5). Moreover, he criticized those parents who avoided answering these questions:

Parents who do not talk about sexual matters with their children think that their children are completely innocent, but they forget about the impurity of society.  
(Mukō 1908b, 5)

If parents failed to provide sex education for their children, children would be unable to develop as proper moral beings or to acquire knowledge of physiology and of pathology caused by sexual practices. According to Mukō and other promoters of sex education, parents could observe the symptoms of masturbation if they paid close attention to signs of headaches, pale faces, weak eyes, passivity or melancholy, stomachaches, or tuberculosis. However, some proponents doubted that parents knew enough about “physical hygiene” to be able to provide education to their children.

They therefore suggested that schools implement a special course for sex education (Washiyama 1908a, 5). In contrast, other participants in the newspaper series considered parents the primary authorities qualified to observe their children and elicit their responses. Despite this parental authority, they argued, it was still imperative for sex education to employ even more intrusive techniques of surveillance: it had to make the youth so self-conscious that they would “carefully investigate themselves” (Washiyama 1908b, 5). In order to prevent “immoral behavior,” the writers suggested, parents should speak with and interrogate their children. But what was to be done if they found out that their offspring had in fact “been bad”? Since parents were believed to have a rather weak “sexual consciousness” (*seiishiki*), Mukō and other more conservative educators held that it would do only harm to disclose too much, and urged parents to choose the appropriate words carefully so that their children would “shudder at the idea of contravening their parents’ advice” (Mukō 1908a, 5). He also pointed out that the parents’ weak sexual consciousness might make them resemble children and concluded that in reality the matter could not rest with them. Mukō pointed out that it was parents who “were not ashamed to relish having sex while sharing a bedroom with their children,” and thus concluded that they should sleep in separate rooms because otherwise children might remember the bad as well as the good (Mukō 1908a, 5).

Minami Ryō, the director of Daiichi Kōtō Gakkō that was later integrated in the pedagogical faculty of Tōkyō University, viewed the parents’ role somewhat more positively. Because of individual differences regarding the age of sexual maturity, Minami favored parents as sex educators, since they were best capable of knowing when the right time had come for their children. Minami addressed another burning question: what exactly and how much should be said? He introduced the German physician and sexual pedagogue Friedrich Wilhelm Förster as a “western scholar” and presented three exemplary conversations on sex education based on what he called “Förster’s method.” These conversations were far more moderate in tone than one would expect, given Förster’s views of sex education. In Germany, Förster was considered a radical opponent of any sex education that went beyond instruction on how to suppress sexual desires.<sup>5</sup> Explicitly referring to Förster’s concept of will power, which was to control the sexual instinct, Minami suggested that self-control and will power were more important than knowledge about the sexual instinct:

Physical things are not so important. One has to imagine the psyche as the basis for morals and personality. To be sure one must take preventive measures to counter immorality, since today, as much as in the times of the old Greeks, unnatural forms of the satisfaction of the sexual instinct cause major mischief.

(Minami 1908b, 5)

Other authors vigorously advocated unlimited forms of sex education which would teach children everything about the dangers involved in the sexual instinct. They thought that children should no longer be told “that they descend from trees” (Inagaki 1908, 5). Instead, knowledge had to be “popularized” (*tsūzoku-ka suru*) in order to avert the danger to the nation’s health and welfare represented by masturbation and

<sup>5</sup>Magnus Hirschfeld—one of the leading German sexologists and eugenicists of the early twentieth century—once characterized Förster’s recommendations, such as “soft treading in the evening, soundless closing of the door, and hushed conversation out of regard for those wanting a rest,” as naïve, and thought Förster’s concept of the ideal sex life as being “determined by ignorance of the world” (Hirschfeld 1926, 105).

venereal diseases. Ignorance of sexual matters was seen by proponents of sex education as directly linked to “neurasthenia” (*shinkei suijaku*) or “sexual neurasthenia” (*seiteki shinkei suijaku*), which were repeatedly diagnosed by physicians of middle schools and ascribed to “sexual immorality” (*seiteki fudōroku*) (Mukō 1908a, 5). A direct connection between masturbation and neurasthenia was widely agreed upon by contemporary pedagogues, whether they propagated or opposed sex education at schools. They agreed that excessive autoerotic practices led to paleness, loss of appetite, forgetfulness, indifference, or melancholy among predominantly male youth, and to poor scholastic results (Mukō 1908b, 5; Shimoda 1908b, 5; Minami 1908c, 5; Washiyama 1908b, 5).

Most pedagogues who contributed to the debate in the *Yomiuri shinbun* agreed that sex education was necessary primarily to “avoid the horrible consequences of masturbation” (Mukō 1908a, 5). Yubara Motoichi, the head of Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō, suggested discussing sexual instinct in a way that would not embarrass young boys and girls. He also considered it essential to separate boys and girls during sex education. Masturbation, he argued, was to be mentioned rarely and only if absolutely necessary, and before doing so a doctor was to be consulted (Yubara 1908, 5). For Washiyama Yayoi (Yoshioka Yayoi), founder and director of Japan’s first medical school for women, the Tōkyō Joi Gakkō, masturbation was “the most terrible ailment related to the sexual instinct.” Regarding sex education, she asserted: “The only purpose of the sexual instinct is reproduction and any abuse has fatal consequences.” Washiyama believed that ignorance led students between the age of fifteen and seventeen to masturbation. Since masturbation did not lead to satisfaction, they masturbated frequently and had to bear unimaginable consequences (Washiyama 1908a, 5).

It was not always made clear in the sex education dispute whether the focus was on boys, girls, or both. Teachers and directors of girls’ schools, however, “knew” that masturbation was rampant. They thought that as a precautionary measure girls should be educated on sexual matters as well (Washiyama 1908b, 5). Potential dangers included both masturbation and homosexuality, which were not clearly distinguished. Although lesbian encounters among girls at girls’ schools were thought to be quite common (see also Pflugfelder [forthcoming]; Robertson 1998, 1999), some authors suggested that masturbation/homosexuality, when practiced by girls, would not be “animal-like” as among boys. Yamamoto Senji (1889–1929) claimed that purely platonic relationships among girls were erroneously being judged as “sexual” (Yamamoto 1924, 39–42). As the predominantly male directors of girls’ schools were unfamiliar with the female psyche, they would regard “homosexual love among girls” (*shōjokan no dōsei renai*) as a pedagogical problem. Yamamoto castigated them for equating “platonic love” (*puratonikku rabu*) among girls, who simply hugged each other without any “carnal trick” and who remained yearning, with the “psychotic group forms of masturbation and sodomy” common in boys’ dormitories (Yamamoto 1924). Yamamoto and others argued that schoolmasters scandalized the “completely harmless behavior” of girls, and fought it unnecessarily with draconian measures. As a result, girls developed a strong sense of shame, which could in itself have disastrous effects on their lives. In response, Yamamoto suggested sexually educating students as well as male and female teachers in order to enhance their knowledge of the female psyche and physique (Yamamoto 1924, 39–42).

The sexual nature of relationships among young female factory workers was less clear. School physicians, teachers, and gynecologists who examined female factory workers believed that many of them masturbated regularly. Furthermore, in light of

the general lack of “proper education” among workers, it was assumed that there were more “such women” in the factories who were prone to sexual indecencies. In 1925, Hosoi Wakizō, the author of “The Sad Story of Factory Girls” (*Jokō aishi*), reported on women who had secretly taken home short pieces of pipe from the factories and inserted them into their vaginas. Others used potatoes for the same purpose and eventually had to see a doctor when it became impossible to remove them. Tall girls pressed their bodies against the machines, thus sexually arousing themselves while working (Hosoi 1974, 317). By pointing out that only the better-equipped dormitories of the factories provided a single futon for each girl, while in most cases two girls shared a futon, Hosoi suggested that the cramped housing conditions may have furthered their activities. In the morning one could find at least 30 percent of the girls in “strange positions,” another 30 percent had unintentionally embraced each other while sleeping, and 40 percent had intentionally done so. Hosoi concluded:

The phenomenon of lesbianism is quite common and includes a wide range of practices ranging from mutual psychological love to extremely lustful activities, which are accompanied by a strong sense of jealousy.

(Hosoi 1974, 316–17)

Hosoi Wakizō had been working in a factory since the age of thirteen, and in his book he referred to stories he had been told by female workers and a factory physician with whom he was acquainted. From his book, the issues aired in the *Yomiuri shinbun*, and a variety of other records, it is clear that most pedagogues and physicians were convinced that education would have a positive effect on sexual morals (Yoshida 1916).

The concept of “the nation’s health” legitimated a fine network of investigation, control, and observation by schools, parents, and children themselves. This network appeared in the forms of self-investigation and self-observation by children, interrogation by their parents, teachers, and physicians, as well as prohibitions. Contributors to the *Yomiuri* series, and other authors later, feared that certain newspapers and magazines of an already depraved society would cause children’s impressions of their parents’ morals to deteriorate further. They argued that even children who “came from a good home and received a good education” were in danger. What could possibly be done? Although the ethical basis was to be found at home and at school, an equal portion of responsibility for the education of “a morally strong people” was ascribed to the state. Discipline once instilled by the “ethics of the warriors” (*bushi no dōtoku*) was, in Mukō’s view, now to be carried out by an apparatus of “social punishment” (*shakaiteki seisai*) formed by three major authorities: the home, the school, and other governmental institutions. An especially important role was ascribed to the upper classes, which were better-educated and thus perceived as morally superior. The elite bore the burden of implementing a social system of punishment against ethical violations in order to guarantee a healthy population. Only then would sex education of children become unnecessary. Until that utopian goal had been reached, Mukō and others argued, only sex education could prevent children from harming their bodies and souls (Mukō 1908c, 5).

The *Yomiuri shinbun* debate focused on two potential dangers to the “national body”: masturbation and venereal disease. Some of the contributors believed that the maintenance of “the purity of body and soul” through will power would sufficiently ensure continued self-restraint. Others thought that only in the framework of an institutionalized and systematic program of sex education would knowledge of sex and associated individual and societal risks be brought to children and youth. Sex education proponents also pointed out that by targeting children they could gain

access to parents and other groups in Japanese society that could no longer be reached by the instructive and managerial power of schools. Sex education was defined as being twofold—a pedagogical and a medical issue. As such, representatives of medical and educational fields claimed an exclusive right to negotiate and sanction correct sexological knowledge. Even authors who took an ambivalent or incoherent position regarding the implementation of sex education at schools advocated it, if only to prevent less competent agencies from doing so. The discourse of sex had a hierarchy of interlocutors, led by “experts” who derived their authority from science, and followed by “non-scientific educators” such as journalists, authors of obscene literature, “bad friends,” young “inexperienced” teachers, and “uninhibited parents” who did not possess the necessary knowledge themselves. A dichotomy of “experts versus others” was established, which created a special place of legitimacy for those so-called “experts” and allowed them to try to monopolize decisions on a number of questions: Which knowledge was to be labeled “scientific”? Who should be taught about this knowledge, to what degree, where, when and by whom? The series of articles on sex education in the *Yomiuri shinbun* came to an end, but it contributed to the development of a discursive configuration intertwining concerns of the nation’s health, individuals’ sex lives, and the rise of scientific thinking.

In the remaining parts of this article I describe how this configuration was extended, remodeled, and reshaped by describing two strategies central to contemporary commentators’ efforts toward the popularization (*tsūzoku-ka*) of sexual knowledge. The two strategies I will highlight are the use of confession as a tool to gain data on sexuality, and attempts made to establish a “science of sex” as a legitimate and necessary science.

## Confessions

The urge to investigate, speak, and confess about sexual matters was first discussed in the debate contained within the *Yomiuri shinbun* series, but it was institutionalized rapidly in popular journals and magazines of the 1920s. “Popular Medicine” (*Tsūzoku igaku*), “Popular Hygiene” (*Tsūzoku eisei*), and other popular journals on medicine and hygiene printed articles of considerable length on sexual questions. The 1920s also witnessed the emergence of journals that specialized in sexual questions and were somewhat negatively labeled “sexual instinct journals” (*seiyoku zasshi*) by censorship authorities (*Naimushō keibokuyoku* 1976). These journals adopted the journalistic form of advice columns typically used by newspapers and magazines to create a space for choreographed interaction and exchange of knowledge between creators of sexual knowledge and their public. Among them were journals entitled *Sei* (“Sex/Sexuality,” founded in 1920), *Sei no kenkyū* (“Research on Sex/Sexuality,” 1919), *Seiyoku to jinsei* (“Sexual Drive and Man,” 1920), *Seiron* (“Theories on Sex/Sexuality,” 1927), *Hentai seiyoku* (“Perverse Sex/Sexuality,” 1922) and *Sei to shakai* (“Sex/Sexuality and Society,” 1925). Analyses of these journals are important, especially considering that the scientific beliefs held by lay people are more likely to originate in the popular media than in the more specialized and less accessible academic journals. A typical issue of one of these sexological journals brought together a diverse group of proponents of sex research and instruction. For example, the Spring 1920 issue of *Sei* (see Figure 2) included articles from a prolific writer on sexual issues, Sawada Junjirō (see also Roden 1990); the literary critic Sawada Keiko (Sawada Junjirō’s wife); the founder of Japan’s



Figure 2. The spring issue of the sexological journal *Sei* ("Sex/ Sexuality," 1920) dealt almost exclusively with the "female sexual instinct" (*fujin seiyoku*). The motto of the journal features poems by Friedrich von Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe dealing with desire and sacrifice. The cover shows an adaptation of a scene from Goethe's *Faust* depicting Mephisto.

first socialist party and professor at Waseda University, Abe Isoo (1865–1949); the statistician Yokoyama Masao; the head of a women's hospital, Akimoto Seiji; the chairman of the Japan Society of Sexology (*Nihon seigakkai*), Yokoyama Torao; the medical doctor Ozawa Kenji; as well as less well-known people such as a director of a girls' school, a newspaper journalist, a "scholar of improvement of the race," and others whose expertise was not specified.

Editors and authors repeatedly emphasized the importance of "direct interaction and exchange with the masses." For them, advice columns served as a space for communication between experts and the readership. Concepts and theories that in scientific language might be too difficult and abstract for the common reader were recast into the form of confessions and "expert" responses in advice columns. Advice columns served as a forum where the public was both addressed and enabled to talk. Written confessions and questions were used as proof that there was a public out there that needed advice on sexual questions, lacked sexual knowledge, and actively sought help. In the advice columns sexologists situated themselves as experts, sex educators, and confidants. They did not rely just on their knowledge of specialized literature or the small amount of empirical sex research carried out in Japan. The sexologists' expertise was based substantially on conversations with patients, on discussions with audiences at their public talks, and on the correspondence they had with their readers. For them, the advice columns were quasi-authentic material to which they referred when they spoke of their decade-long experiences advising readers, whose lack of knowledge or wrong beliefs had become apparent in their letters. Illnesses that could potentially result from lack of proper knowledge, as well as endanger the nation's health, legitimized their sex talk, even if it was as direct as that appearing in the advice columns. In most cases sexologists were less concerned with empirical research, than with a sexually ignorant public full of questions that needed answers. The journals' columns served as evidence that a science of sex had to be developed, institutionalized, and disseminated to the masses. The advice columns also created a position for sexologists as "experts," presenting them as capable of solving people's problems and curing their ailments. To make sure that readers understood what they wrote about, sexological and popular medical journals printed *furigana* next to all the new specialized terms, which were often translations of German or English terms. Echoing the practices of their European colleagues, Japanese sexologists used readers' letters to legitimize their attempts to establish sexology as an academic field, and to position themselves at the top of an imagined hierarchy of authority over the truth of sex.

The thirty years of sex research that Magnus Hirschfeld referred to in the title of his 4,000-plus-page work "Sexology Based on Thirty Years of Research and Experience" (*Geschlechtskunde auf Grund dreißigjähriger Forschung und Erfahrung*, 1926–30) was based partly on letters from clients and readers of his numerous articles. In the same manner, the German authors of "Birth Control: Means and Methods" (*Geburtenkontrolle: Mittel und Methoden*) declared that the booklet was "a result of practical experience" (Hirschfeld and Linsert 1928). This "practical experience" included "Question and Answer Evenings" regularly held at the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft und Eugenik in Berlin, letters addressed to the Institute asking for advice on methods of birth control, and questions that had come up at workshops and during guided tours at the Institute (Hirschfeld and Linsert 1928, 5). The psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing reported receiving a flood of letters from homosexuals who told him their life stories. Many of these accounts of homosexuals' lives in late-nineteenth-century Austria were included in his most notable book

*Psychopathia Sexualis*, published in 1886 and first translated into Japanese in 1913 (Hauser 1994, 211).

Similarly, a removable form for readers' questions was included at the back of Sawada Junjirō's text on "Real Contraception and the Methods of Birth Control" (*Jissaiteki binin to sanji seigenbō*, 1922). Habuto Eiji, a gynecologist and extremely productive writer on sexual issues, included an advice column in *Seiyoku to jinsei* (the journal he founded and edited) since he also continuously received letters. Most other sexological journals took the same step, and by the late 1920s some of them contained advice columns that occupied more than ten pages. They were entitled "Solutions to Sexual Worries" in *Seiyoku to jinsei*, or "Questions and Answers to Hygienic Questions" in *Tsūzoku igaku*, and reflected problems that were discussed in the journal's articles.

*Tsūzoku igaku* promised anonymous advice and encouraged readers to approach the editor about all sorts of problems, including "sexually caused nerve ailments, masturbation, excessive intercourse, premature ejaculation, irregularities in the development of genitals, nocturnal pollution, impotency, *acute and chronic gonorrhea* [emphasis in the original; *the author*]." The editor also urged readers to be cautious about "immoral physicians who advise patients to waste several months and a lot of money without healing their illness." He continued as follows:

Some of them even commit suicide as a consequence of trusting a physician. What is to be done for a fast and complete recovery? Choosing the correct healing method is the first step. The advice of an expert is absolutely necessary. We guarantee you absolute anonymity. Ask us for advice!

(*Tsūzoku igaku* 1934 12/9, 139)

For sex reformers such as the zoologist and sex researcher Yamamoto Senji, the physician Majima Yutaka, and the socialist Abe Isoo, *Tsūzoku igaku* was the most important forum for popularizing their ideas of sex education. In 1925, the editor of *Tsūzoku igaku* permitted the publication of several articles on sex education and birth control. Yamada Waka and Yoshioka Yayoi, opponents of the more progressive sexologists, also took the opportunity to express their views. Eventually, Yamamoto Senji began to function as an expert advisor in an advice column for sexual problems. Typical of readers' letters were questions that referred to neurasthenia or nervous exhaustion (*shinkei suijaku*):

Question: I am 17 years old and began to masturbate three years ago. As a consequence I suffer from serious nervous exhaustion. Although I received different kinds of medication from several physicians I have not been healed but now suffer from nocturnal pollution. Please inform me of an appropriate healing method.

Answer: My advice in one word is: Stop that bad habit. It is not good to masturbate and to be unable to stop and hence to become neurasthenic is embarrassing. Make sure that you get enough exercise and try to go to sleep early in the evening. If you were older medication would be an option but it would be wiser from the viewpoint of your psychological development to do without. However, do not overestimate the consequences of masturbation.

(*Tsūzoku igaku* 1928 (6)1: 137)

The advisors commonly were identified by their name and occupation, such as "clinic director" or simply "medical doctor." Most of them served as advisors for several months or even years. In return, advertisements for their clinics or their published booklets were printed at the end of the advice column section. These booklets were

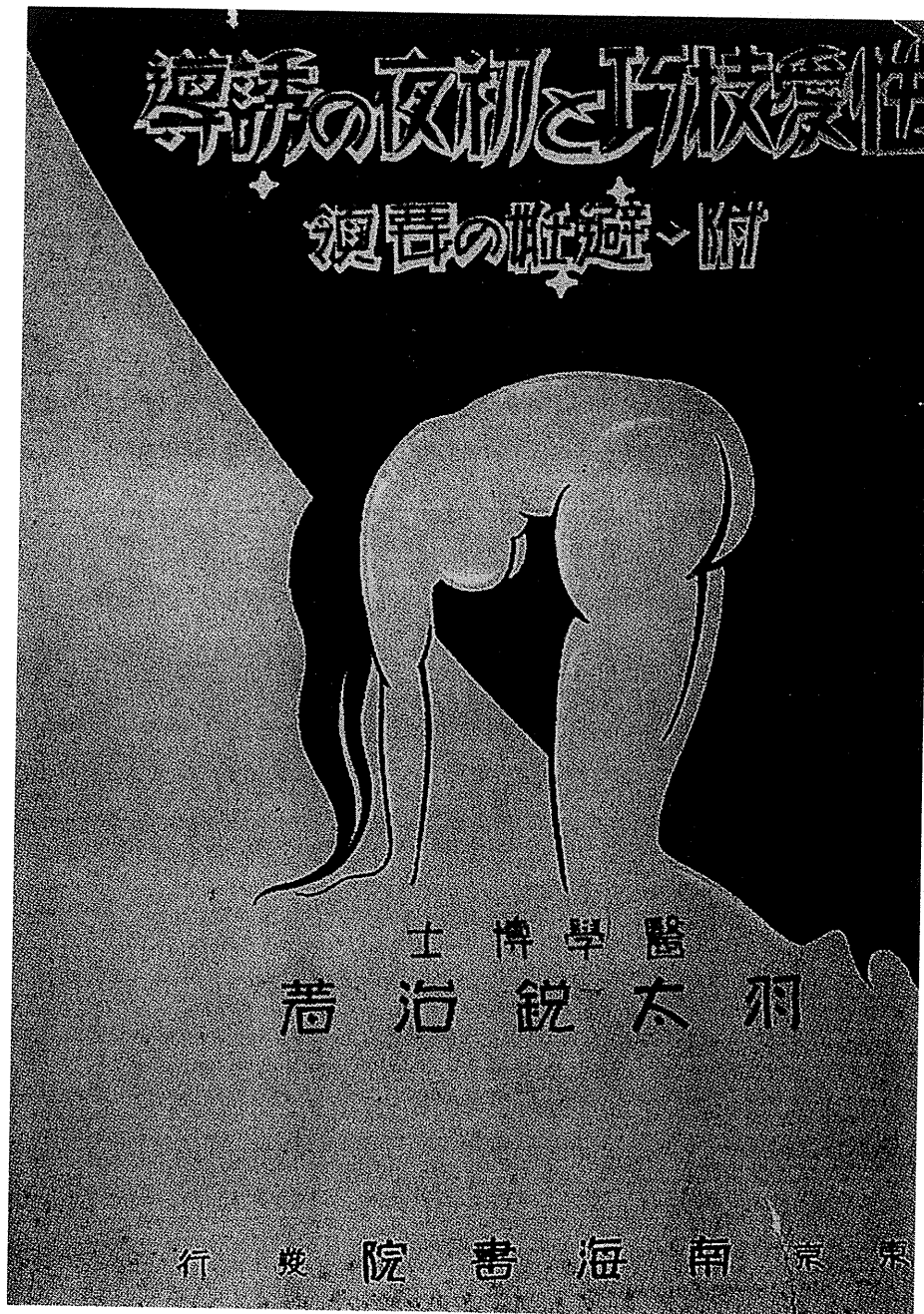


Figure 3. The gynecologist and author of “Techniques of Sexual Love and Guidance for the Bridal Night” (*Seiai gikō to shoya no yōdō*) Habuto Eiji (?–1929) was but one of the immensely popular writers of sexual advice.

published by the Japanese Society of Popular Medicine and were free of charge for subscribers. Titles included: *Mysterious Experiences: For People who Suffer from Nervous Illnesses Caused by the Genitals*; *Why Have I Contracted a Venereal Disease?*; *Mystery of Sexual Love: Impotency and the Success of Hormone Medication*; and *Quick Healing Methods for Gonorrhea Patients*.

Whoever sought advice had to complete the questionnaire entitled "Health Advice Sheet for Readers," which asked them to list their place of residence, name, age, sex, marital status, occupation, current condition of the illness, cause and development of the illness, and the methods of treatment used up to that point. According to the information printed at the end of their letters, advice seekers were mostly women and men between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five years. The majority of the readership was about twenty years old, male, and unmarried without children. Women commonly asked about birth control methods, how to become pregnant, sexual violence, venereal diseases, frigidity, and masturbation. Men were more often concerned about venereal disease, the condition and appearance of their penis, and masturbation. Some men were interested in how to tell "a virgin" from "a sexually experienced woman" or the differences between male and female sexual desire:

Question: Five years have passed since we got married. We do not have a single child and my wife says that she has no interest in sexual intercourse. Please let me know whether there is medication for that. Answer: Your wife's genitals seem to be harmed. She should be examined in order to find the reason for this ailment. Is she otherwise physically completely healthy? Does she suffer from any kind of nervous illness? . . . Consult a gynecologist.

(*Tsūzoku igaku* 1925 (3)10: 110)

Male readers also typically asked about healing methods for venereal disease they had contracted in the "pleasure quarters."<sup>6</sup> Their questions ranged from the relation between venereal disease and prostitution, and syphilis and sexual intercourse, to healing methods for syphilis and gonorrhea, the best diet for people suffering from venereal disease, and venereal disease and marriage. Prevalent throughout, however, was the confession of indulging in masturbation. In fact, the confession of masturbation became the most common introductory remark for all kinds of letters. Before describing the problem readers often wrote:

When I was a fifteen or sixteen year old boy, I used to hang out with bad friends and began to masturbate. I continued this practice for several years and don't remember the slightest joy when having intercourse with women . . .

(*Tsūzoku igaku* 1931 (9)9: 152)

I remember that I have enjoyed masturbation since the age of thirteen. As a consequence, I started to become very forgetful this year . . .

(*Tsūzoku igaku* 1931 (9)10: 171)

It makes me feel very uncomfortable to tell you this but I started a bad habit a couple of years ago. Since I learned from your journal how disastrous it is I stopped completely. Since June of this year I get a headache as soon as I begin studying. I went to an optician but . . .

(*Tsūzoku igaku* 1935 (13)5: 176)

<sup>6</sup>For the changing attitudes toward prostitution in modern Japan, see Frühstück 1998.

I am very embarrassed about having adopted a bad habit from a friend which I have intensively indulged in for several months but have stopped completely. Now, I am suffering from nocturnal pollution (*musei*).

(*Tsūzoku igaku* 1935 (13)5: 176)

While the advertisements for the physicians' clinics are direct indicators of the existence of actual physicians, we do not have the same certainty about the readership that turned to the advice columns. We do not know whether the questions printed in advice columns of sexological and popular medical journals are representative of the letters the journals received from readers. It is also difficult, if not impossible, to tell whether the letters are authentic, or whether the wording was changed by the editors; whether they were selectively printed according to particular topics, or whether they were entirely made up by the editors themselves. In the end, we must remain focused on the question of why the journals printed advice columns in the first place, and why so many of them?

### Creating Sexual Knowledge

Sexological journals, and particularly advice columns, created and represented a need for the popularization of a scientific approach to sex. The development of journals was triggered by sexologists' difficulties in establishing sexology as a separate subject in school curricula (let alone as an academic field), and made possible by a rapid increase in literacy throughout Japan. An extensive literature arose during the 1930s and 1940s with the purpose of familiarizing all classes with a new way of thinking about sex. As was true in other emerging scientific fields (see, e.g., Bayertz 1985, 214), class-related issues entered the picture as sexologists struggled for public support and recognition of their discipline. A large number of those who were involved in sex research and education came from the middle classes and perceived themselves as fighting against an elite class. Thus they criticized governmental institutions or university professors in medicine or biology for denouncing sexual knowledge as destructive to the purity of science, not to mention social morality and order.

Publicly criticized by his former teacher, University of Tokyo professor Nagai Hisomu, and hindered from publishing the results of his sex research, Yamamoto Senji insisted on using technical terms rather than the familiar words that had been overused in the print media (and which had obtained obscene or negative connotations). He translated numerous words from the German literature on sexuality, and coined "self comfort" (*jii*) as a translation of the German term *Ipsation* (used by the German sexologist and eugenicist Magnus Hirschfeld). Yamamoto used *jii* instead of words for masturbation with negative connotations, such as *shuin* (masturbation, or onanism) and *akubeki* (bad habit). Yamamoto also worked to ally himself with the more common classes by explaining that he returned to Ōsaka, where he had grown up as the son of an inn, because he could not adapt himself to the aristocratic atmosphere at the University of Tokyo. He had found it very difficult, he explained, to become friends "with the young lords at the most luxurious institution supported by the tax of this country of poverty" (Yamamoto 1921b, 51).

The sexologists' purpose in popularizing sexual knowledge was to create the conditions for increased public support and to establish a legitimate science of sex. The intense involvement of medical doctors and scientists in popularization was part of a strategy that aimed to increase state tolerance and even support of their efforts.

It is not surprising, therefore, that throughout the 1920s and 1930s the demand was made repeatedly for the integration of a special sex education course in school curricula and the permission to publish in reputable academic journals. While only a handful of teachers attempted to introduce sex education at their middle and high schools, in 1924 Yamamoto and Yasuda succeeded in publishing the results of their empirical sex research in "Physiological Research" (*Seirigaku kenkyū*), edited by Ishikawa Hidetsurumaru, a professor in the Medical Department of Kyōto University (Odagiri 1979, 514).

The sexologists were not alone in their attempts to establish a new field of research and teaching. During the first decades of the twentieth century, many Japanese intellectuals attempted to establish new fields or transform existing disciplines by pushing a more empirical view of scientific truth and findings and becoming less interested in the mere translation of Western works and ideas. Sexologists turned to the same strategies. Yamamoto Senji distanced himself from taxonomy, the methodology dominant in zoology and biology up to the 1920s. He taught human sexuality in biology courses at Dōshisha University and Kyōto University and began to gather and produce data on the sexual behavior of Japanese male youth. Together with the medical student, and later professor of medicine Yasuda Tokutarō,<sup>7</sup> Yamamoto carried out the first survey on sexual behavior in male students in 1922 (see Odagiri 1979, 511).

Japanese sexologists used several means to collect data on the sexual practices of the Japanese population for they were critically in need of the approval and acceptance of their knowledge claims. They created their findings from answers to questionnaires that were distributed to the same university students Yamamoto addressed (cited at the beginning of this text) and to the audiences of his and other sexologists' public talks. In addition to the data provided by the questionnaires, information was collected from personal letters, readers' letters to the editor, advice columns of sexological and popular medical journals, as well as from discussions that followed their public talks. The fragments of knowledge extracted from these sources and materials were held together by the fact that they were created in the very act of interaction between self-appointed experts and the public.

This public was not a passive consumer of new ideas on sex. Instead, it played the tremendously important double role of being simultaneously the object and the agent of sexual knowledge created during the 1920s and 1930s. Independent publications such as popular and scholarly books as well as the sexological journals brought about a significant increase in publications on sexual matters. These publications helped create what Pièrre Bourdieu (1980) termed a new "intellectual field," acknowledged even by regional and local newspapers, which reported on the great wealth of magazines and books that dealt with sexual questions during the early 1920s. Following the dispute in the *Yomiuri shinbun* discussed above, *Shin kōron* ("New Review") and *Chūō kōron* ("Central Review") had printed special issues on the sexual instinct and results of sex surveys, respectively, among high school students. Furthermore, in 1921 the editor of the woman's weekly *Fujo shinbun* announced that:

<sup>7</sup>Yasuda Tokutarō had an interest in the numerous variations of "normal sexual development" inspired by Sigmund Freud's sexual theories, some of which he translated into Japanese. Yamamoto carried out the first survey on sexual behavior in male students in 1922. For an analysis of his survey, see Frühstück 1998, 126–34.

On trains one sees people reading books exclusively on sexual questions, the psychology of love and sex research. Many magazines write continuously about sexual topics only to steer the curiosity of youth and to increase the number of copies sold. Nowadays there are even specialized journals that deal entirely with these topics.

(See Furukawa 1993, 114)

The increase in publications dealing with sexual questions was the result of several social developments and the successful public relation strategies by the sexologists. The broadening of school education and the general increase in literacy gave birth to a significantly larger readership than had existed one or two decades earlier. In 1930, readers could choose from 11,118 registered magazines and journals, while the population of 65 million bought 10 million daily newspapers (Maeda 1993; see also Silverberg 1993, 123–24). Social reformers no longer turned exclusively to elite newspapers and magazines but voiced their ideas in the popular media, including the radio after 1925 (see also Marshall 1992, 95, Silverberg 1998, 33). This strategy was also employed by the sex reformers. General interest magazines printed advertisements for their sexological treatises and produced booklets, articles, and reports of their activities, thus contributing to a rise to celebrity status for some medical doctors and biologists.

Publishing houses served their own interests; they were aware that “sex”—especially when wrapped in scandalous confessions—increased the numbers of copies sold. By the 1930s, popularization had become an independent activity and was no longer merely an avocation of research scientists. Innovative thinkers inspired others, setting into motion the collective creation of sexual knowledge. A considerable number of popularizers were now autodidacts, and many of those with scientific training were no longer involved in research nor were they employed by educational institutions. In fact, in the 1930s, journalists and social critics were the primary discourses on sex in the popular media. The popular sex discourse of the time heavily criticized women’s growing independence, which writers argued manifested itself in a variety of negative ways, including young women’s self-determination with regard to their sexual life styles (Inoue 1998; Robertson 1998 and 1999; Silverberg 1991 and 1998). Journalists and social critics furthered the popularization of sexual questions amongst the Japanese public. Interest in the topic of sex was intensified by the flair of the piquant, indeed of the forbidden, that was conferred upon sexology by its opponents. Other social reformers joined in the discussion, perhaps most notably women’s groups led by prominent feminists Hiratsuka Raichō and Ishimoto Shizue (Katō Shizue), who pushed for the legalization of birth control. These early feminists argued in favor of birth control as a means of preventing an imminent population explosion, fighting poverty, ensuring a lasting peace, guaranteeing maternal health, eliminating illegal abortions, and, in general, improving the Japanese populace. Many sexologists who derived their authority from science joined this more popular discussion of social reform, while others opposed it as “nonscientific.”

The representatives of governmental control, however, did not bother to distinguish between erotic and pornographic stories meant to entertain, and articles that provided advice on birth control or reported on sex research. Under the banner of maintaining social order and public morals, units of the Special Higher Police (Tokubetsu kōtō keisatsu) prevented the publication of sexological books and journals and interrupted sexologists’ public talks when they addressed the harmlessness of masturbation in too explicit a manner. Yamamoto’s academic career ended suddenly as a consequence of such an incident. In 1922, he went on a lecture tour from Ōsaka

to Kōbe, Nagoya, and other small cities throughout Japan. In Tottori, police observers interrupted his talk several times before they pulled him off stage. The police report noted that Yamamoto had used technical terms but had nevertheless encouraged masturbation, approved of abortion, and talked about "other obscenities" (see Odagiri 1979). As a consequence of the scandal he was fired from his positions at both Dōshisha and Kyōto universities.

It was the sexologists' dictum of educating the masses on sexual matters and thus enabling individuals to make sexual life style choices that made them so threatening to the state. During the increasingly militaristic 1930s, the Special Higher Police began confiscating entire issues or ordering editors to blacken entire articles in journals as diverse as *Sei* and *Fujin kōron* ("Women's Review"), *Tsūzoku igaku* or *Chūō kōron* ("Central Review") (Naimushō keihokyoku 1976, 214–15). They eventually imprisoned a number of sexologists for violating what they considered a good sense of public morals (*fūzoku*). Following the outbreak of war with China in 1937, sexological journals were discontinued altogether (see Oshikane 1977, 185–201), thus abruptly bringing to an end Japanese sexologists' efforts to create sexual knowledge based on the experience of Japanese citizens.

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