

# Good women for empire: educating overseas female emigrants in imperial Japan, 1900–45\*

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## Abstract

*This article examines two tutelage campaigns launched by Japanese social reformers targeting Japanese emigrant women in Manchuria and California in the first two decades of the twentieth century. It reveals how these two middle-class-based social campaigns jointly paved the way for the Japanese state's 'continental bride' policy in the late 1930s, which mobilized and exported women from across the nation to Manchuria on an unprecedented scale. Synthesizing the stories of Japan's colonialism in Manchuria and Japanese labour migration to the American Pacific coast, this study traces the convergence and flows between the women's education campaigns in Japanese communities on both sides of the Pacific. It moves the debate of Japanese imperialism beyond Asia and situates it in a transnational space encompassing the local, the national, and the global.*

**Keywords** continental bride, emigrant women, Japanese imperialism, Japanese Protestants, picture bride, prostitutes

In 1937, the Japanese government launched a plan to send a million households to Manchuria within twenty years to support the empire's expansion and wars in East Asia. Mobilizing and exporting women from Japan itself was an important part of this policy.<sup>1</sup> Referred to as 'continental brides' (*tairiku no hanayome*), most of these women came from rural Japan and were expected to foster Japanese agrarian settlement in the Asian continent by marrying Japanese male peasants there. They were supposed not only to bear and rear racially pure Japanese children and to assist their husbands in farm work, but also to represent Japanese

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1 Kanō Jikiyo, 'Manshū to onna tachi (Manchuria and women)', in Ōe Shinobu, ed., *Bōchō suru teikoku no jinryū (Human flow of the expansive empire)*, vol. 5 of *Iwanami kōza: kindai nihon to shokuminchi (Iwanami lecture series: modern Japan and its colonies)*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005, pp. 211–12.

female morality to local women.<sup>2</sup> The project of continental brides, like that of comfort women, has usually been cited by scholars to illustrate how gender subjugation converged with racial subjugation in the Japanese empire at the high point of militarism and war mobilization.<sup>3</sup> Such an imperial instrumentalization of women, however, was hardly an anomaly in the history of the Japanese empire or simply a product of the Asia-Pacific War. As the following discussion demonstrates, between 1900 and the 1920s the social campaigns for Japanese prostitution abolition in Manchuria and emigrant women's education in North America jointly paved the way for the state's mobilization of women for colonial expansion in the 1930s.

As early as 1912, the Japanese Salvation Army leader Yamamuro Gumpei argued that Japanese prostitutes in Manchuria should be rescued and resettled with other professions for the sake of the improvement of the colony:

In our new colonies the number of male [settlers] far exceeds that of female. The shortage of housemaids is particularly serious in Manchuria. Meanwhile, in certain areas of Kyūshū and Chūgoku, it is customary to send daughters abroad [to work] as prostitutes. In addition to simply rescuing these women from the hands of evil people, we will introduce them to good professions to contribute to the colony's operation.<sup>4</sup>

On the other side of the Pacific, just four years later, Kawai Michi, the National Secretary of the Japanese Young Women's Christian Association (JYWCA), attributed American anti-Japanese sentiment in California in part to the involvement of rural Japanese immigrant women in agricultural work. As she complained, 'husbands and wives working together in the field is what Americans hate most, since it neglects housekeeping and childcare. Thus it has been impossible [for Japanese immigrants] to assimilate into the American society.'<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the JYWCA initiated a series of programmes to educate Japanese immigrant women, particularly those from rural Japan, introducing them to Western lifestyles, Protestant morality, and bourgeois social manners.

The Japanese Salvation Army's plan of abolishing Japanese prostitution in Manchuria and the JYWCA's strategy to appease anti-Japanese sentiment on the other side of the Pacific emerged in different historical and political contexts. But they both assumed that Japanese emigrant women, most of whom were from impoverished families in rural Japan, would play crucial roles in the empire's overseas expansion.<sup>6</sup> Both Yamamuro and Kawai believed that

2 Aiba Kazuhiko, Chen Jin, Miyata Sachie, and Nakashima Jun, eds., *Manshū 'dairiku no hanayome' wa dō tsukurareta ka (How Japanese 'continental brides' were made in Manchuria)*, Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1996, pp. 204–11.

3 *Ibid.* pp. 13–14.

4 Yamamuro Gunpei, 'Manshu no jochu yushutsu (Exporting housemaids to Manchuria)', *Kakusei (Purity)*, 2, 6, July 1912, p. 32.

5 Kawai Michiko, 'Tobei fujin wa seiko shitsutsu ari ya (Are Japanese women in the US successful?)', *Joshi Seinen Kai (Young Women of Japan)*, 13, 10, October 1916, p. 55. Kawai Michi used the pen name 'Kawai Michiko' for most of her essays in *Joshi Seinen Kai*, the official journal of the JYWCA.

6 In referring to Japanese immigration to the US as 'expansion', I draw on recent studies that treat the Japanese American migration as a part of Japan's worldwide emigration beginning in the Meiji era, in which emigration was closely intertwined with expansionism. See, for example, Eiichiro Azuma, *Between two empires: race, history, and transnationalism in Japanese America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 17–30.

after receiving appropriate tutelage and discipline these women could become a powerful force for Japanese settlement abroad. While Yamamuro Gunpei aimed to transform evil prostitutes into good women in Japanese Manchuria, Kawai Michi urged Japanese women in America to abandon outside work and stay at home for housekeeping and childcare.

In this article I examine and compare these two tutelage campaigns initiated by Japanese Protestant educators targeting Japanese emigrant women in Manchuria and California in the first two decades of the twentieth century. My research builds on recent studies on the Japanese empire that have started to unveil the connections between different phases of Japanese overseas emigration. In her salient study of Japanese imperialism in Manchuria, Louise Young suggests that prefectures involved in the state's mass migration project that sent the largest numbers of colonists to Manchuria in the 1930s all held long traditions of overseas emigration.<sup>7</sup> Before mass migration to Manchuria, these prefectures (including Nagano, Hiroshima, Yamagata, and Kumamoto) all participated in Japan's colonization of Hokkaido and sent substantial number of emigrants to Hawai'i, North and South America, and Micronesia. Eiichiro Azuma, through a cultural and discursive lens, illustrates how the complicated and distressing experience of Japanese immigrants in America was reinvented as a success story of Japanese agricultural colonialism and a forerunner phase in the grand narrative of Japanese overseas expansion. This invented past became a powerful resource for the government and mass media to use in mobilizing the society for mass migration in the 1930s.<sup>8</sup> Works on Japanese immigrants in Latin America, written by Daniel M. Masterson and Toake Endoh, have shown that Japanese migration to Mexico and Brazil was also closely tied to the global expansion of the Japanese empire.<sup>9</sup>

Heeding the insights of these studies, this article draws on the connections between Japanese colonial settlement in Manchuria and Japanese migrant experience in California to deepen our understanding of the nature of Japanese imperialism. In particular, it shows how the ideas of sending women overseas for expansion and of disciplining emigrant women to maximize their service as mothers, inferior labourers, or symbols of racial and national progress were developed and practised in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The imperial instrumentalization of women fully embodied in the 'continental bride' project was therefore not a product of the total war era. Instead, it originated from the prostitution abolition campaigns in Japanese Manchuria and women's education campaigns in Japanese communities in California one and two decades earlier respectively.

Between the 1900s and the 1920s, Manchuria and California, previously unconnected parts of the world, were drawn together by Japanese migration. Admittedly, differences between Manchuria and California shaped the campaigns on the two sides of the Pacific in different ways. As the following paragraphs will show, while the groups involved in the prostitution abolition campaign in Manchuria included the Japanese Salvation Army, the

7 Louise Young, *Japan's total empire: Manchuria and the culture of wartime imperialism*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999, p. 331.

8 Eiichiro Azuma, '“Pioneers of overseas Japanese development”: Japanese American history and the making of expansionist orthodoxy in imperial Japan', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 67, 4, 2008, p. 1203.

9 Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004, pp. 27–8, 79–82; Toake Endoh, *Exporting Japan: politics of emigration toward Latin America*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009, pp. 59–79.

civic administration, and the military, the campaign in California was private, mainly launched by the JYWCA through collaboration with the Japanese American Association in California. However, a focus on these two areas shows that the campaigns in disciplining and educating Japanese female emigrants represent the two major correlated paradigms of defining self and other in Japanese imperial and national ideologies. First, the desire to eliminate Japanese prostitutes in Manchuria, where the empire was expanding, tells us how ‘Japaneseness’ was invented vis-à-vis the colonized. Second, the programmes of educating Japanese rural women in North America, where Japanese immigrants were struggling with white racism, provide clues to how Japan’s racial self was defined in relation to Western imperial powers. Both of these paradigms were crucial for the formation of the Japanese modern nation and racial self. The nature of Japanese imperialism, I argue, cannot be fully understood unless it is gauged in relation to both Asia and the West at the same time.

The backbone of the campaigns in both Manchuria and California was the new Japanese middle class that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century with Meiji Japan’s rapid industrialization and urbanization.<sup>10</sup> Members of this new middle class occupied a wide political space in the nation, including educators, professionals, government bureaucrats, journalists, and urban office workers. Armed with newly acquired Western social knowledge and an international discourse of progress and civilization, new middle-class reformers strove to establish their own version of national development as the authoritative standard for the nation, in which the reform of social morality and public health was a crucial element.<sup>11</sup> Many of them converted to Protestant Christianity, receiving it not simply as a religious belief but as an ultimate ethical system to guide the entire nation. In this context, the ideas and practices of middle-class-based Protestant groups assumed particular importance. I will give particular attention to the most vocal and politically active participants in prostitution abolition and women’s education campaigns: the Japanese Salvation Army (*Nihon Kyūseigun*), the Japanese Young Women’s Christian Association (*Nihon Kirisutokyō Joshi Seinenkai*), the Japanese Young Men’s Christian Association (*Nihon Kirisutokyō Seinenkai*; JYMCA), and the Japanese Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (*Nihon Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfukai*). By identifying and disciplining the other – the shameful, degenerated, and unpatriotic women – these activists not only redefined the bourgeois self but also attempted to achieve political power and nationalize their Christian-based gender morality.

In concentrating on these organizations, I do not deny the agency of the emigrant women themselves. For most of them, migrating abroad was an opportunity to find a better life. Some sought to get a profitable job in order to make a living and send money back home;<sup>12</sup>

10 For a comprehensive study of this new middle class, see David Ambaras, ‘Social knowledge, cultural capital, and the new middle class in Japan, 1895–1912’, *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 24, 1, 1998, pp. 1–33.

11 Works providing illustrations of how Japanese bourgeois activists achieved self-empowerment by collaborating with the state and embracing the discourses of nationalism include Sheldon Garon, *Molding Japanese minds: the state in everyday life*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997; Sabine Frühstück, *Colonizing sex: sexuality and social control in modern Japan*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003; Elizabeth Dorn Lublin, *Reforming Japan: the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in the Meiji period*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010.

12 Karen Colligan-Taylor, ‘Translator’s introduction’, in Yamazaki Tomoko, *Sandakan Brothel No. 8*, trans. Karen Colligan-Taylor, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999, p. xx.

others hoped to escape patriarchal oppression and family obligations.<sup>13</sup> Thus their participation in Japanese overseas settlement was usually not coerced but voluntary. To analyse and assess their agency in Japan's imperial projects is absolutely necessary and there is a robust and growing literature on the topic.<sup>14</sup>

This article, however, is concerned not so much with the agency of the emigrant women as with the role of middle-class social groups in shaping the nature of Japanese female migration. It is divided into three parts. The first looks at the campaign launched by the JYMCA and the Japanese Salvation Army to abolish Japanese prostitution in Manchuria at the turn of the twentieth century, and discusses the unlikely cooperation between Japanese middle-class abolitionists, brothel owners, and local police in maintaining the colonial order. The second part examines Japanese social leaders' campaigns to educate Japanese rural women who migrated to the United States in the 1910s and 1920s, and investigates how classist and racial struggle interacted with nationalism in this trans-Pacific project of tutelage and discipline. Building on the analyses in the first two parts, in the third I assert that the social campaigns for Japanese prostitution abolition in Manchuria and emigrant women's education in North America had an impact on the women's education movement in Japan itself. Further, I argue that these campaigns jointly paved the way for the state's mobilization of women to Manchuria in the 1930s. The article ends with a short account of the tragic experiences of these Japanese female settlers when they returned to Japan from Manchuria after the end of the Asia-Pacific War, which coincided with Japan's discursive shift from an expansive empire to a peaceful nation-state.

## The Japanese Women's Rescue Home and the ethics of Japanese Manchuria

This section explores the nature of Japanese prostitution abolition in Manchuria through the lens of the Japanese Women's Rescue Home. It analyses the close relationship between the Home and the Japanese military as well as the Kantō administration.<sup>15</sup> By looking at how the Home rehabilitated prostitutes, I reveal the unexpected ways in which it supported the Japanese system of licensed prostitution in Manchuria.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, Japan's costly process of nation- and empire-building impoverished many people at home; at the same time, it opened up new channels

13 Yanagisawa Ikumi, '“Shashin hanayume” wa “otto no dorei” datta no ka: “shashin hanayume” tachi no katari wo chūshin ni (Are “picture brides” their “husbands’ slaves”?) Focus on the words of the “picture brides”)', in Shimada Noriko, ed., *Shashin hanayome sensō hanayome no tadotta michi: josei iminshi no hakkutsu (Crossing the ocean: a new look at the Japanese picture brides and war brides)*, Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2009, p. 62.

14 See, for example, Ayako Kano, *Acting like a woman in modern Japan: theater, gender, and nationalism*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001; Chizuko Ueno, *Nationalism and gender*, trans. Beverley Yamamoto, Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2004; Noriko Horiguchi, *Women adrift: the literature of Japan's imperial body*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011; Suzuki Ikuko, *Feminizumu to sensō: fujin undōka no sensō kyōryoku (Feminism and war: Japanese feminists' collaboration with war)*, Tokyo: Marujusha, 1997; Tomisaka Kirisutokuyō Sentā, *Josei kirisutōsha to sensō (Japanese female Christians and war)*, Tokyo: Kohro-sha, 2002.

15 The Kantō administration refers to the Japanese civilian government. Established in 1906, it was in charge of the leased territories in the Liaodong Peninsula that Japan obtained from the Qing empire following the Russo-Japanese War.

for overseas emigration. The empire's enlarged territories provided Japanese subjects with new opportunities to make a living, and state policies of encouraging outward migration facilitated Japanese settlement abroad. As part of the tide of migration, a large number of impoverished Japanese women migrated to Manchuria, Siberia, Southeast Asia, Hawai'i, and North America, and made a living through prostitution.<sup>16</sup>

The majority of Japanese overseas prostitutes in Asia ended up in Manchuria;<sup>17</sup> the Japanese abolition campaign in Manchuria was also the most vocal among all overseas projects carried out by Japanese abolitionists. The customers of the Japanese prostitutes in Manchuria included not only Japanese soldiers and businessmen but also local Chinese, Manchus, and Russians. While the call to abolish overseas prostitution in order to maintain the pride and dignity of the race and empire had been voiced since the 1890s, limited financial and human resources left Japanese abolitionists unable to take effective action until the end of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05). After Japan's triumph in the war, the Japanese Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) established the Manchuria Women's Rescue Home in June 1906.<sup>18</sup> In order to facilitate Japan's colonial operation in Manchuria, which was 'under the gaze of Western powers', and to eliminate the empire's 'shame',<sup>19</sup> the Home rehabilitated Japanese prostitutes by providing them with physical and moral education.<sup>20</sup> As the headquarter of the Japanese abolitionists in Manchuria, the Home was soon handed over to the Japanese Salvation Army, which managed it until the end of the Second World War.

While celebrated by some scholars as 'the light in dark night' or 'Buddha in hell',<sup>21</sup> the Women's Home was closely associated with the Japanese military from the very beginning. The founder of the Home, the Reverend Masutomi Masasuke, went to Manchuria in a mission to give solace to Japanese soldiers during the Russo-Japanese War. This mission was carried out as the result of cooperation between the Japanese government and the Japanese YMCA. Working with local American missionaries, the Japanese YMCA tried to replicate the American YMCA's successful campaigns to comfort American soldiers in the American Civil War and the Spanish–American War. The Japanese YMCA members also hoped that this mission would expand their work in both Japan and Manchuria. The Japanese

16 As recent studies have shown, the category of 'prostitute' is far from fixed. Some women who sell sex also at times engage in other forms of labour and vice versa. See, for example, Kathy Peiss, '“Charity girls” and city pleasure: historical notes on working-class sexuality, 1880–1920', in Thomas Dublin and Kathryn Sklar, eds., *Women and power in American history*, vol. 2, 2nd edn, Harlow: Pearson, 2001, p. 74. The prostitutes examined in this article are limited to the Japanese women who sold sex in either licensed or private brothels in and outside Japan.

17 According to Japanese government statistics, in 1910 there were 12,203 Japanese prostitutes in Manchuria, comprising 36.5% of the entire Japanese female population there. This far exceeds the number in Southeast Asia (3,745), where the second-largest population of Japanese prostitutes was found. Kurahashi Masanao, *Kita no karayuki-san (Japanese overseas prostitutes in the north)*, Tokyo: Kyohei Shobō, 1989, p. 38. While there seem to be very few records left, one might expect that debates on Japanese prostitution in Manchuria also existed in other colonies of the Japanese empire, such as Korea and Taiwan.

18 Kurahashi Masanao, 'Kyūseigun no Dairen Fujin Home (The Salvation Army's Dairen Women's Home) (1)', *Kikkan Chūkoku (China Quarterly)*, 11, Winter 1987, p. 48.

19 The 'shame' referred to Japanese prostitutes in Manchuria: see *Fujin Shinpō (Women's Herald)*, 109, May 1906, p. 159.

20 'Manshū Fujin Kyūsaikai genjō (The current situation of the Japanese Women's Home in Manchuria)', *Fujin Shinpō*, 110, June 1906, pp. 19–21.

21 Kurahashi, 'Kyūseigun no Dairen Fujin Home (1)', p. 54.

**Figure 1.** Two Japanese YMCA members providing a haircut and shave service to Japanese soldiers in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War. Source: University of Minnesota Libraries, Kautz Family YMCA Archives.



government, on the other hand, aimed to use this Christian mission to show Western powers a civilized and progressive image of the empire.<sup>22</sup>

The solace mission involved delivering speeches on patriotism and Christianity to the soldiers and offering them haircuts, bathing facilities, and clean clothing (see Figure 1).<sup>23</sup> The Japanese YMCA's prostitution abolition activities, including the Women's Home, were an extension of this collaboration. The military not only helped the abolitionists deport a few Japanese prostitutes from Manchuria to Japan but also assisted in the daily operation of the Home.<sup>24</sup> Protestant officers in the army, such as Major Hibiki Nobusuke, a paymaster, Sano, and an army surgeon, Osaki, sometimes even delivered lectures to the prostitutes in the Home.<sup>25</sup>

Because of similar concerns, the Kantō administration offered support to the Women's Home as well, by providing free land and financial aid for the Home's establishment and its ensuing upgrades.<sup>26</sup> The administration worried about the trouble that the expatriate prostitutes might cause to Japan's colonial rule in Manchuria, particularly when they were regarded with

22 Jon Thares Davidann, *A world of crisis and progress: the American YMCA in Japan, 1890–1930*, Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1998, pp. 112–17.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

24 Kurahashi Masanao, 'Manshū fujin kyūsai to Masutomi Masasuke (Masutomi Masasuke and campaigns to save Japanese women in Manchuria)', *Rekishigaku Kenkyū (Journal of Historical Studies)*, 598, 10, 1989, pp. 36–9.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

26 Kurahashi Masanao, 'Kyūseigun no Dairen Fujin Home (The Salvation Army's Dairen Women's Home) (2)', *Kikan Chūkoku*, 12, Spring 1988, p. 48.

contempt even by poor Chinese.<sup>27</sup> Thus it expected the Home to improve the image of Japanese women in order to reinforce the difference between the colonizer and the colonized.

The support of the military and colonial authorities for the Women's Home also resulted from their concerns about the health of Japanese soldiers and male settlers. From the last few decades of the nineteenth century, health examinations of members of the Japanese military showed an increase in the number of soldiers infected with venereal diseases;<sup>28</sup> the ratio was as high as approximately 2–3% of all soldiers who were examined in the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>29</sup> According to an observation by American Christian missionaries in a Japanese military hospital in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War, one-third of the admissions were caused by venereal diseases.<sup>30</sup> In Japan's Siberian expedition from 1918 to 1920, 2,012 soldiers were infected with venereal diseases, far exceeding the 1,387 who were killed on the battlefield.<sup>31</sup> As early as the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese military started to manage special brothels for soldiers along the march to control the infection rate. All prostitutes in these brothels were required to receive medical examinations before they served the soldiers.<sup>32</sup> After the war, from the autumn of 1905 to early 1906, the Kantō administration issued a series of laws to regulate the booming prostitution business in the Kwantung Leased Territory, in order to maintain the health of Japanese soldiers and male settlers and thus the stability of the colonial community. This set of laws formed the licensed prostitution system in Japanese Manchuria, which not only legalized prostitution by imposing tax and age requirements on prostitutes but also required them to receive regular medical examinations.<sup>33</sup> These regulations also made the practice of prostitution less visible by restricting it to special locations and renaming Japanese brothels (*kashizashiki*) and prostitutes (*shōgi*) as restaurants (*ryōriten*) and hostesses (*shakufu*) respectively (see Figure 2).<sup>34</sup>

While aiming to abolish Japanese prostitution in Manchuria, the Women's Home responded actively to the authorities' concerns about venereal diseases and cooperated with the licensed prostitution system in unexpected ways. The Home accepted Japanese prostitutes selectively at best. As the Reverend Uemura, one of its managers, clarified, it only accommodated those prostitutes 'who truly decided to quit prostitution and do good work instead'. For those who 'escaped from brothels just on an emotional impulse' or

27 Kiyama Sei, 'Hokushi oyobu Manshū dendō kaishi tenmatsu ryakki (A short report on the start of the evangelical missions in north China and Manchuria)', *Fujin Shimpō*, 2140, 4 March 1937, cited in Kurahashi Katsuhito, 'Manshū ni okeru karayuki kyūsai jigō (The campaigns to save Japanese overseas prostitutes in Manchuria) (3)', *Kirisutokyō Shakai Mondai Kenkyū (Study of Christianity and Social Problems)*, 58, 2010, p. 23 and n. 159.

28 Frühstück, *Colonizing sex*, p. 35.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

30 Galen Fisher, *Japanese young men in war and peace*, New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1905, pp. 5–6.

31 Frühstück, *Colonizing sex*, p. 37.

32 Fujinaga Takeshi, 'Nichiro sensō to nihon ni yoru 'manshū'e no kōshō seido ishoku (The Russo-Japanese War and Japan's translation of the licensed prostitution system to Manchuria)', in *Kairaku to kisei: kindai ni okeru goraku no yukue (Pleasure and licence: the path of entertainment in modern times)*, Osaka: Osaka Sangyō Daigaku Sangyō Daigaku Kenkyūjo, 1998, pp. 72–7.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Ibid.*



**Figure 2.** Cartoon of Japanese prostitutes waiting for customers in front of a Manchurian brothel renamed a ‘restaurant’. Source: *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, 26 July 1912.



‘just wanted to run away from their debts [to brothel owners]’, the Home would either persuade them to return to the brothels or consult with the Kantō administration and accept these prostitutes only with its permission.<sup>35</sup> It was reported by *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, a major newspaper in Japanese Manchuria, that an escaped prostitute was sent back to her brothel after the Home refused to accommodate her and handed her over to the police.<sup>36</sup>

The Women’s Home’s accommodation capacity was limited to eight or nine prostitutes per month.<sup>37</sup> Since there were several thousand Japanese prostitutes in Manchuria at the time,<sup>38</sup> the Home did not therefore cause substantial damage to the business of Japanese

35 *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun (Manchurian Daily)*, 24 and 25 July 1912, cited in Kurahashi, ‘Kyūseigun no Dairen Fujin Home (1)’, p. 55.

36 *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, 10 August 1910.

37 According to Yamamuro Gunpei, the leader of the Japanese Salvation Army, from June 1906 to June 1912 the Home accommodated 620 women in total, therefore averaging eight or nine prostitutes per month. See Yamamuro Gunpei, ‘Manshū ni okeru fujin kyūsai (The campaigns to save Japanese women in Manchuria)’, *Kakusei*, 2, 6, 1912, p. 30.

38 See above, n. 18.

brothels. Instead, the brothel owners were more likely to welcome the Home, since, as the historian Kurahashi Masano insightfully observes, it functioned as an asylum for those prostitutes who could no longer work in brothels as a result of sexual diseases or other physical or mental problems. In other words, the Home helped the brothels dispose of dysfunctional prostitutes.<sup>39</sup>

The founder of the Home, the Reverend Masutomi Masasuke, lamented the spread of venereal diseases among young Japanese in Dairen and ascribed it to the existence of local Japanese prostitution.<sup>40</sup> Major Hibiki Nobusuke, the main supporter of the Home in the military, managed to establish the Dairen Christian Benevolence Hospital with the cooperation of Japanese Protestant groups and the Kantō administration.<sup>41</sup> The hospital provided medical care exclusively to Japanese prostitutes infected with venereal diseases.<sup>42</sup> We can assume that, by providing such treatment, the hospital also aimed to decrease the possibility of Japanese soldiers in Manchuria being infected by venereal diseases via sexual contacts with prostitutes. Because the Women's Home and the hospital were operated by the same group of people, the hospital could cooperate with the Home and provide treatment for the infected prostitutes it accepted. The Kantō administration also established special hospitals in cities to conduct regular examinations on and provide medical treatment for Japanese licensed prostitutes. By providing treatment for the infected prostitutes, the Home therefore actually helped the government to control venereal disease for the sake of the health of Japanese soldiers and male settlers.<sup>43</sup>

Besides accommodating diseased prostitutes and providing them with medical treatment, the Home also supported the licensed prostitution system by decreasing potential private or 'illegal' prostitutes. Without the Home, the prostitutes escaping from the licensed brothels would go elsewhere, and might end up returning to the business as private sex workers. As a journalist from the *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun* observed, the Women's Home prevented those prostitutes from being 'cheated by evil people and being mired in dangerous situations'.<sup>44</sup> Given that the brothels mentioned here were obviously under the licensed prostitution system, 'dangerous situations' thus indicate prostitution beyond governmental and legal control. The Home, in accommodating prostitutes who had escaped from licensed brothels and controlling their mobility, therefore further guaranteed the health of Japanese soldiers and male settlers by forestalling and limiting prostitution that was not subject to the state's regular medical examinations.

39 Kurahashi Masano, 'Kyūseigun no Dairen Fujin Home (2)', pp. 46–9.

40 Masutomi Masasuke, 'Manshū ni okeru nihon shogyōfu (Japanese prostitutes in Manchuria) (1)', *Yorozu Chōhō* (*Yorozu News*), 8 December 1907, cited in Yuhara Kenichi, 'Kyokudō ajia e no nihonjin imin to shōfu (Japanese emigrants and prostitutes in East Asia)', *Aichi Ronsō* (*Aichi Forum*), 79, 2005, p. 21.

41 *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, 22 November 1907. The president of the hospital was Shibata Hakuyō, an enthusiastic prostitution abolitionist and a strong supporter of the Home. See Shibata Hakuyō, 'Mankan ni okeru santantaru shugyōfu (The wretched Japanese prostitutes in Manchuria)', *Kakusei*, 1, 5, November 1911, pp. 47–9; Shibata Hakuyō, 'Dairen no fūki', *Kakusei*, 2, 4, April 1912, p. 165. While the hospital was initially established in response to venereal diseases, it later turned into a general hospital, providing affordable service for the lower classes in Manchuria: see Shin Ketsu and Nagaoka Masami, eds., *Shokuminchi shakai jigyo kankei shiryōshū: Manshū/Manshūkoku hen* (*Documents relating to social issues in Japanese colonies: Manchuria/Manchukuo*), Tokyo: Kingendai Shiryō Kenkōkai, 2005, vol. 9, p. 144.

42 *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, 22 November 1907.

43 Kurahashi, 'Kyūseigun no Dairen Fujin Home (2)', p. 46.

44 *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, 24 July 1912.

The Women's Home not only functioned as an asylum for escaped Japanese prostitutes but also trained and resettled them. Of the prostitutes it accepted, except for a small number who were deported back to Japan, the majority received professional training in the Home and were resettled in Japanese Manchuria with the understanding that they would follow new occupations. A small number of the prostitutes found jobs such as telephone operators and nurses, but most ended up working as housemaids.<sup>45</sup> Housemaids became the Home's main channel of prostitute resettlement for two reasons. First, housemaids did not require substantial professional training; this option was therefore practical and manageable for the Home with its limited resources. Second, this approach responded to the dire need for housemaids in local Japanese communities. Before the mass agricultural migration to Manchuria in the 1930s, Japanese settlers were mainly composed of officials in the Kantō administration, bourgeois businessmen, and employees of Japanese colonial companies, such as the South Manchuria Railway Company.<sup>46</sup> They had both the need to hire housemaids in order to live a bourgeois life and the financial capacity to afford them.<sup>47</sup>

In Japan itself, the demand for housemaids in cities could be satisfied by migrant women from the countryside. But in Manchuria, where most of the Japanese settlers lived in urban areas, this labour resource was very limited.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the occupation of housemaid appeared far from attractive even for impoverished Japanese emigrant women in Manchuria. Compared with the position of a housemaid, which demanded long hours of physical labour at a modest wage, being a prostitute, with a wage several times higher, was more appealing.<sup>49</sup> Meeting the need for housemaids thus became a major issue for the middle- and upper-class settlers in Japanese Manchuria.

In addition to transforming local prostitutes into housemaids, the abolitionists further planned to import housemaids from Japan who would be legitimately employed and thus eliminate the tendency for poor women to become prostitutes. The Reverend Yamamuro Gunpei, the leader of the Japanese Salvation Army, which had operated the Women's Home from 1906, was the initiator of this plan. After his investigation and discussion with colonial officers, Yamamuro concluded that many women were duped into believing that they would be legitimately employed, but were then sold as prostitutes. He contended that the prevalence of this practice debased both the society and public hygiene in Japanese Manchuria. Meanwhile, the number of Japanese men there far exceeded that of Japanese women, and thus their need for housemaids and wives remained unmet. Therefore, in addition to the passive act of abolishing prostitution, Yamamuro argued, it would be more effective to solve the problem proactively by

45 Kurahashi, 'Kyūseigun no Dairen Fujin Home (1)', p. 53. See also Shin and Nagaoka, *Shokuminchi shakai*, vol. 6, p. 294.

46 Yanagisawa Asobu, *Nihonjin no shokuminchi keiken: Dairen nihonjin shōkō gyōsha no rekishi (Japanese people's experience of the colonies: a history of Japanese manufacturers and businessmen in Manchuria)*, Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1999, pp. 23–6, 45–81.

47 Citing Hiratsuka Raicho's complaints regarding the redundancy of housework, Shimizu Michiko, 'Jochū' imeiji no katei bunkashi (A cultural history of the development of the housemaid's image), Tokyo: Sekai Shisōsha, 2004, pp. 77–8, shows that it became a common practice for the emergent middle-class families to hire housemaids.

48 Yamamuro, 'Manshū ni okeru fujin kyūsai', p. 32.

49 Kurahashi Masanao, 'Kyūseigun ni yoru Manshū e no "jochū" no yushutsu no kuwadate (The Salvation Army's attempt to export housemaids to Manchuria)', *Aichi Kenritsu Daigaku Bungakubu Ronshū (Forum of the Faculty of Literature at Aichi Prefecture University)*, 39, 1991, pp. 21–2.

sending good-natured (*zenryō naru*) women to Manchuria.<sup>50</sup> He suggested collaboration with a hotel in Monshi, Kinparo, which would recruit unmarried women in the Kyushu area and send them to the Home. The Home would then provide these women with the necessary training before introducing them to potential employers of housemaids.<sup>51</sup>

The distinction between prostitute and housemaid provided the foundation of these two endeavours: the abolitionists attempted to transform the prostitutes – the shameful and filthy – into housemaids – the civilized and healthy – and to use the latter to displace the former. However, both attempts exploited the similarities of these two groups of women in unexpected ways. Coming from rural and impoverished areas of Japan, prostitutes and housemaids alike were assumed to be capable of meeting the needs of the Japanese male settlers, though the former was for sexual needs while the latter was for social needs. The interchangeability between members of the two groups in reality further proved the feasibility of these attempts: while some prostitutes eventually earned enough money to repay their debts to brothel owners and quit prostitution,<sup>52</sup> many Japanese women in Manchuria turned to prostitution for higher wages after working as housemaids for a short period of time.<sup>53</sup> Others who migrated to Manchuria aiming to find positions such as restaurant waitress or housemaid ended up working as prostitutes. While there is no evidence so far as to whether sex was involved in any case of housemaid employment in Japanese Manchuria, in early twentieth-century Japan prostitutes were sometimes introduced to their customers as housemaids. Housemaids were at times hired for both housework and sex service (see Figure 3).<sup>54</sup>

While Yamamuro's maid-importation plan failed to materialize owing to the Japanese Salvation Army's limited human and financial resources,<sup>55</sup> the Home's programme of turning prostitutes into housemaids proved to be fruitful. The Home further worked as an agency to introduce local Japanese women to housemaid jobs and encouraged them to continue on this career path by hosting housemaid gatherings and rewarding dedicated housemaids.<sup>56</sup>

The Japanese social reformers' war against prostitution was driven by a variety of factors, including their religious ethics, bourgeois morality, and sympathy for the impoverished.<sup>57</sup>

50 'Manshū shugyōfu no fukuin: Yamamuro Taisa no dan (Good news for Japanese prostitutes in Manchuria: the words of the Reverend Yamamuro)', *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, 3 May 1912.

51 Yamamuro, 'Manshū ni okeru fujin kyūsai', p. 32; 'Manshū shugyōfu no fukuin'.

52 *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, 14 October 1912 and 24 December 1916, cited in Kurahashi, 'Kyūseigun ni yoru Manshū', p. 32, n. 9. Based on a survey carried out by police, about half of the 685 prostitutes in the Sūsaki quarter between 1925 and 1927 were able to quit prostitution by paying all or part of their debts to the brothel owners. See Sheldon Garon, 'The world's oldest debate? Regulating prostitution and illicit sexuality', in *Molding Japanese minds*, p. 95.

53 *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, 28 September 1916, cited in Kurahashi, 'Kyūseigun ni yoru Manshū', pp. 20–1.

54 Shimizu Michiko, '“Hashutsufu” came in: modification of the image of *jochū* (housemaid) between the two world wars', *Bulletin of Kansai University of International Studies*, 4, March 2003, pp. 148–9.

55 Kurahashi, 'Kyūseigun ni yoru Manshū', p. 18.

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 22–6.

57 Bill Mihalopoulos, 'Mediating the good life: prostitution and the Japanese Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1880s–1920s', *Gender & History*, 21, 1, 2009, p. 21. The campaign for prostitution abolition and the housemaid training programme were just part of the Home's activities. See Shin and Nagaoka, *Shokuminchi shakai*, vol. 1, pp. 26–9.

**Figure 3.** Cartoon capturing the potentially problematic relationship between a master and his housemaid in early twentieth-century Japan. The master gazes lasciviously at his housemaid while his wife, unnoticed, watches angrily. Fearing an affair between her husband and the housemaid, she makes up her mind to replace the current housemaid with one who is ‘uglier and more competent’. Source: ‘Yuwaku no ōi hashutsufu (Temporary housemaids with many temptations’, in *Shokugyō dukushi: gendai manga daikan dai hachi hen (Numerous occupations: an overview of modern manga, vol. 8)*, Tokyo: Chūō Bijutsusha, 1928, p. 171).



Yet a major goal of the Home's abolition campaign in Japanese Manchuria was to deal with possible trouble that the prostitutes might cause for Japan's colonial regime.<sup>58</sup> The Home accommodated the escaped prostitutes and provided medical treatment for those who were infected with venereal diseases. It not only helped brothels to manage the health of prostitutes at a lower cost but also reduced the rate of potential 'illegal' prostitutes and hence strengthened the state's prostitution control. Further, it sought to shift prostitutes in Manchuria toward

58 Sheldon Garon's study on the collaboration between prostitution abolitionists and the Japanese state provides an analytical model that can also be applied to Japan's colonies in earlier periods of the empire (see Garon, 'World's oldest debate?', pp. 88–114).

careers as housemaids, who, they believed, were equally capable of meeting the social and sexual needs of the Japanese male settlers, but in a justified and civilized way.

## Representing a civilized nation and race: Japanese emigrant women's education in California

Abolitionists of Japanese overseas prostitution did not limit their gaze to Manchuria but considered it a global problem for the nation. Yamamuro Gunpei, for example, argued that Japanese prostitutes in the United States fuelled local anti-Japanese sentiment and sabotaged Japanese immigrant settlement there.<sup>59</sup> Expressing the same concern, the JYWCA's National Secretary, Kawai Michi, lamented in 1923, 'It has been said that in the world, the United Kingdom is known for its flying national flags, China is known for its labourers, and Japan is known everywhere for its prostitutes.' As long as Japanese women were seen by the world as 'toys', Kawai reasoned, Japan could never be treated as a civilized nation.<sup>60</sup> However, she further pointed out that the problem did not reflect only on the prostitutes but on all Japanese women. The judgment of a nation, Kawai argued, was based on the position of women in society, and Japanese women's current social status and education level were far behind the standard of 'first-class' nations. It was therefore imperative for all Japanese women to receive education for the sake of the nation.<sup>61</sup>

Abe Isoo, a prominent Protestant politician and advocate of women's rights in Japan, further voiced the importance of exporting Japanese females to enhance Japanese settlement on the west coast of the United States. In order to 'strengthen the ground of Japanese communities', he believed that it was imperative to encourage Japanese women to migrate to the United States to rescue Japanese emigrant males from 'insipid life' and 'degradation'. Exporting women to the United States, Abe continued, would also 'inspire our [Japanese] women's great spirit of overseas expedition'. To this end, Abe suggested that Japanese government should both tighten its ban on Japanese prostitutes' overseas travel and encourage women with 'good education and morality' to go to the United States. He also expected Japanese social leaders and organizations both in the United States and Japan to provide assistance to these migrant women.<sup>62</sup> This section examines the JYWCA-led education campaigns targeting Japanese immigrant women in California. I will discuss the ways in which these women were disciplined for particular national and racial representations and were assigned to specific professions while being refused access to others.

While the bulk of the Japanese population in Manchuria before the 1930s consisted of urban middle-class settlers, Japanese immigrants in California at the beginning of the twentieth century were mainly male agricultural labourers. Most of them were impoverished bachelors.<sup>63</sup>

59 Yamamuro Gunpei, *Shakai kakusei ron (On abolishing prostitution in society)*, Tokyo: Keiseisha Shotten, 1914, pp. 384–92.

60 Kawai Michiko, 'Nihon fujin no sekai hyō (Remarks on Japanese women in the world)', *Joshi Seimen Kai*, 16, 3, March 1923, p. 1.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

62 Abe Isoo, *Hokubei no shin nihon (A new Japan in North America)*, Tokyo: Hakubun Kan, 1905, pp. 62–9.

63 According to the annual census of the United States, in 1900 the Japanese population in the US comprised 23,341 males and 985 females. See Yanagisawa 'Shashin hanayome', p. 6. The gender ratio is close to 24 : 1.

Inter-racial marriage between Japanese and white Americans was legally forbidden in California, and Japanese male immigrants usually could not afford to go back to Japan to find marriage partners, because of financial limitations and possible military service obligations in Japan.<sup>64</sup> Many therefore chose to ask their relatives in Japan to pick partners for them. After the two sides exchanged photos by mail and agreed to marry, the man would pay the travelling expenses for his bride, so that she could come to the United States to meet him and live with him. This type of marriage, which became increasingly popular among Japanese immigrants in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, was called ‘picture marriage’; Japanese women who immigrated to the United States through this form of marriage were known as ‘picture brides’.

Although scholars now commonly use the term ‘picture bride’, it was originally coined by Japanese Protestant bourgeois educators to label poor Japanese women who were obsessed with the idea of a good life abroad and were willing to obtain a steamship ticket to the United States by marrying men whom they had never met.<sup>65</sup> Like Japanese overseas prostitutes, these picture brides, who were mostly from rural areas and poor families, were criticized by Japanese Protestant educators as bringing shame on the Japanese race and nation because of their ‘inappropriate’ manners and ‘outdated’ make-up and dressing styles.<sup>66</sup> Kawai Michi even attributed American anti-Japanese sentiment in part to the ‘uneducated’ behaviour of these women.<sup>67</sup> Those who came to the United States through a picture marriage therefore did not feel comfortable being called a ‘picture bride’ because they saw this term as derogatory.<sup>68</sup>

Under Kawai’s leadership, the JYWCA and its main branch in California initiated education campaigns to discipline picture brides so that they could represent Japan in more desirable ways.<sup>69</sup> With support from local government and politicians, the JYWCA established an emigrant women’s school in Yokohama, providing classes on housework, English, childrearing, American society, the Western lifestyle, and travel tips for the picture brides before they left for the United States.<sup>70</sup> Besides training, the JYWCA disseminated pamphlets with similar guidance among emigrant women. The JYWCA’s California branch also offered accommodation and similar training to picture brides after their arrival.<sup>71</sup>

During an investigation of the third-class cabins of a ship headed to the United States, a JYWCA member expressed anxiety about the impression that these poor emigrant Japanese women would make on Americans because of their filthy and smelly luggage, improper body

64 *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

65 Takanashi Takako, ‘Shashin kekkon no hanashi (On picture marriage)’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 16, 4, April 1919, pp. 21–4.

66 *Ibid.*

67 Kawai Michiko, ‘Enjeru shima no ichinichi (One day on the Angel Island)’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 12, 8 and 9, September 1915, p. 50.

68 Ishuin Hideko, ‘Sōkō tayori (Report from San Francisco)’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 14, 2, February 1917, p. 30.

69 Abiko Yonako, ‘Zaibei Nihonjin Kirisutokyō Joshi Seinen kai sōritsu no shidai (On the establishment of the Japanese Young Women’s Christian Association in the US)’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 9, 9, October 1912, pp. 17–18.

70 *Kono yūwa no ue ni: Yokohama YMCA hachijū nen shi (On this rock: seventy years of the Yokohama YMCA)*, Yokohama YMCA, 1993, p. 10.

71 Abiko, ‘Zaibei Nihonjin Kirisutokyō Joshi Seinen’, p. 16.

language, and overly loud voices. Deeply concerned about ‘how to educate these ignorant rural women who know nothing and turn them into “ideal women” quickly’, the author gave them guidance pamphlets and urged them to go to the JYWCA branch when they reached the shore. She compared this solicitude for them to that of ‘a mother [who] looks at her daughters and wants her daughters to appear beautiful so that they will not be disliked by others’.<sup>72</sup>

Kawai herself penned a series of articles in JYWCA’s journal, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, to instruct picture brides in preparation both for their journey to the United States and for the investigation procedure in the immigrant bureau.<sup>73</sup> The series is laid out as conversations between four fictional figures: a teacher and three students. The teacher, Mrs Nishida Yoneko, is a well-educated middle-class woman married to a Japanese businessman in New York and familiar with Western culture and society. The students are three picture brides: Itō Naho, Shimizu Masa, and Nakamura Sei. They are from rural areas and know nothing about lifestyle and polite manners in the United States. Nishida is generously willing to give them guidance before they leave Japan. The first scene is in Nishida’s house, where Nishida teaches the three brides the correct ways to dress and wear make-up, as well as appropriate gestures and manner of speaking.<sup>74</sup> The second scene is on a ship, when they are on their way to the US; Nishida, in attractive Western clothes, comes to see these brides in the third-class cabin, providing guidance on how to avoid seasickness and warning them not keep smelly food.<sup>75</sup> In the third and last scene, on the deck of the third-class cabin, Nishida’s tone becomes more critical. After checking the picture brides’ room, she criticizes them for throwing dirty things on the bed and urges them to keep the room clean and tidy. She also warns them not talk to men on the ship. In the end, after a few suggestions on what to do during the immigrant check-in procedures and advice on bathroom manners in the United States, Nishida urges them to go to the JYWCA branch in California for further education when they reach shore.<sup>76</sup>

Whether it was a caring mother’s concern over her daughters’ appearance or a strict teacher’s warnings to her students regarding their misconduct, both the tropes of parenting and teaching normalized the social hierarchy between middle-class Japanese elites and impoverished emigrant women from rural Japan, and between Protestants (well-educated and civilized) and non-Protestants (uneducated and uncivilized) into natural categories. Social subordination and cultural tutelage of the former over the latter thus appeared not only justified but also necessary. Such normalized tutelage was further empowered in the name of nation and race. Both the investigative report and the instruction series ended with the expectation that these uneducated women could eventually represent Japan well to Americans and improve the image of the Japanese race in the United States.<sup>77</sup>

72 ‘Chihō no tokōsha no katagata e (To those who go to the US)’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 16, 7, July 1919, p. 36.

73 For a more detailed and comprehensive account of this series, see Tanaka Kei, ‘Japanese picture marriage in 1900–1924 California: construction of Japanese race and gender’, PhD thesis, State University of New Jersey, 2002, pp. 214–19.

74 Kawai Michiko, ‘Tobeisha no shiori (Guide for people going to the US)’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 14, 6, June 1917, pp. 23–7, and ‘Tobeisha no shiori’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 14, 7, July 1917, pp. 35–6.

75 ‘Tobeisha no shiori’, July 1917, p. 37; ‘Tobeisha no shiori’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 14, 8, August 1917, pp. 52–3.

76 ‘Tobeisha no shiori’, August 1917, pp. 54–5; ‘Tobeisha no shiori’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 14, 9, September 1917, pp. 39–41; ‘Tobeisha no shiori’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 14, 10, October 1917, pp. 27–9.

77 See ‘Chihō no tokōsha no katagata e’, p. 36; ‘Tobeisha no shiori’, October 1917, p. 29.



The mission of disciplining rural women's wrongdoings did not stop at correcting their manners in daily life but went as far as regulating their marriage and occupation. Owing to limitations of communication and understanding between the two sides before marriage, not all picture marriages ended happily. In order to find a good partner, some Japanese male immigrants used fake pictures to appear younger and more handsome than they really were. Others lied about their financial situation, claiming that they were successful businessmen or rich landowners, while in reality they were merely agricultural labourers.<sup>78</sup> As a result, many picture brides felt either disappointed or cheated when they faced the reality. Since there were far fewer women than men in Japanese communities in California, it was relatively easy for a single female to find a job and live by herself. Many disappointed brides thus chose divorce.<sup>79</sup> Japanese Protestant educators and local Issei (first-generation migrant) male leaders attributed these wife-initiated divorces to 'the weakness of Japanese females' and 'degradation of female morality'.<sup>80</sup> They warned that these 'degraded women' were the cause of American anti-Japanese sentiment, and urged all Japanese immigrant women to remain loyal to their husbands and fulfil their duty to raise children.<sup>81</sup> Local Japanese Christian women's homes sometimes even intervened and managed to prevent such divorces.<sup>82</sup>

In responding to financial difficulties and the hardship of agricultural life, most Japanese immigrant women living in rural areas had no choice but to work in the fields with their husbands.<sup>83</sup> American exclusionists accused them of transgressing the normal gender spheres of man and woman, in which a man should be the only breadwinner while a woman should stay at home taking care of the family. They described the Japanese women in the field as the slaves of their husbands, and attributed such 'transgression' to the racial inferiority and uncivilized tradition of Japanese immigrants.<sup>84</sup> Replicating the claim made by white racists, Kawai argued that if women went out to work, their housework and childrearing duties would be neglected. She maintained that Japanese female immigrants' farm work was driven by their greed for money, and assumed that it was a cause of American anti-Japanese sentiment.<sup>85</sup>

This study does not deny the historical significance of the JYWCA's education campaigns as a collective effort of Japanese immigrants to fight for their own racial dignity and equal rights in the face of American racism. Unlike the case of Japanese Manchuria, where the settlers enjoyed political and racial privileges protected by the Japanese colonial power, Japanese immigrants in California were at the bottom of society in terms of racial hierarchy

78 Yuji Ichioka, 'Amerika nadeshiko: Japanese immigrant women in the United States, 1900–1924', *Pacific Historical Review*, 9, 2, 1980, pp. 347–8. See also Yanagisawa, 'Shashin hanayome', pp. 64–5.

79 Rumi Yasutake, *Transnational women's activism: the United States, Japan, and Japanese immigrant communities in California, 1859–1920*, New York: New York University Press, 2004, p. 125.

80 *Ibid.*; and Kusunoki Rokuichi, 'Beikoku kashū engan no dōhō (Our brethren in California in the US)', *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 11, 7, July 1914, p. 8.

81 Yasutake, *Transnational women's activism*, p. 133.

82 Kusunoki Rokuichi, 'Beikoku', pp. 7–8.

83 Yanagisawa, 'Shashin hanayume', pp. 69–76.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

85 Tanaka, 'Japanese picture marriage', p. 211, and Kawai, 'Tobei fujin', p. 11.

Figure 4. Pamphlet distributed to Japanese picture brides in the United States in 1919 by the Japanese American Association, entitled 'A new guide for women migrating to the US'. Source: Wakayama Municipal Library, Wakayama Prefecture, Japan.



and social rights. Owing to the overarching white racism, they were left with few choices but to manipulate the discourse of race for their own survival.<sup>86</sup>

Such white racism, however, ironically lent power to class subordination under Japanese nationalism within Japanese American communities. Protestant family and gender values, bourgeois-based ways of living, and manners in daily life were carefully justified and taught to immigrant women in the name of nation and race. Social elites both in Japan and in Japanese American communities supported these Protestant-based education campaigns and

86 As Eiichiro Azuma has pointed out, facing racial subordination and exclusion in the United States, Japanese Americans used ideas such as 'Japanese-white likeness' to justify their presence and debunk the fear of the 'Yellow Peril'. Azuma, *Between two empires*, pp. 8-9.

saw these immigrant women as a crucial force for promoting the overall image of the Japanese around the world. According to a pamphlet issued by the Japanese American Association in 1919 (see Figure 4), Japanese women in the United States were supposed to have both passive and positive responsibilities (*shōkyokuteki sekinin* and *sekkyokuteki sekinin*). They were not to stain the dignity of Japanese women, on the one hand (passive responsibility), and were to represent Japanese women as products of a first-class nation by assimilating to American society and widening their knowledge of the United States, on the other (positive responsibility).<sup>87</sup> In order to protect the Japanese race from American exclusion, it became a national and racial obligation for poor and uneducated Japanese migrants to follow the tutelage of Japanese Protestant educators and adopt their religious values and middle-class-based lifestyle.

## Expansionism and the instrumentalization of women: from housemaid and picture bride to continental bride

Both Japanese prostitution abolition activities in Manchuria and the Japanese women's education campaign in California could be considered unsuccessful. The Women's Home accommodated escaped prostitutes on a very limited scale and did not challenge the licensed prostitution system in Japanese Manchuria, while the lack of financial and human resources thwarted the Japanese Salvation Army's housemaid exportation plan. Programmes for educating Japanese women in California failed to prevail against American exclusionism,<sup>88</sup> since the real problem lay in white racism itself, not in how Japanese immigrants behaved.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, as this section will show, these campaigns did have important social effects: they jointly drove the women's education movement in Japan itself and paved the way for the state's nationwide project of mobilizing and exporting women to Manchuria in the 1930s.

In both campaigns the expatriated females were described as not only staining the dignity of the Japanese nation and race but also sabotaging Japanese overseas expansion. Since Japanese overseas settlement was crucial for the empire's development,<sup>90</sup> disciplining and educating these women became a national necessity. This problem of women abroad, in both cases, further came to serve as a powerful justification of the women's education movement in Japan itself. As Kawai Michi straightforwardly put it, in order to avoid the trouble caused by the degraded Japanese women in the US, it was imperative to promote women's education in the home country.<sup>91</sup>

An investigative trip to Siberia and northern Manchuria in 1919 led by three members of the Japanese Woman's Christian Temperance Union (JWCTU) diagnosed the Amakusa

87 Zaihei Nihonjin Kai (Japanese American Association), 'Shin tobei fujin no shiori (A new guide for women migrating to the US)', 1919, p. 2.

88 The passing of the 1924 Exclusion Act shut the American gate against any further Japanese migration.

89 For a comprehensive discussion of Japanese Americans' racial struggles in the early twentieth century, see Azuma, *Between two empires*, pp. 65–81.

90 Both the colonization of Manchuria and Japanese communities in California were seen as playing an important role in Japan's 'robust expansion', and the fate of Japanese immigrants was equated to the fate of Japan. See 'Manshū Fujin Kyūsei Kai (The asylum for Japanese women in Manchuria)', *Fujin Shimpō*, 109, May 1906, pp. 3–4, and Kusunoki, 'Beikoku', pp. 7–8.

91 Kawai Michiko, 'Kichō no aisatsu (Greetings after returning to Japan)', *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 13, 9, October 1916, p. 5.

and Shimabara areas in Kyūshū as the origin of Japanese prostitution in Manchuria.<sup>92</sup> The JWCTU accordingly sponsored another investigative mission to Kyūshū in the same year and issued a pamphlet about Shimabara and Amakusa.<sup>93</sup> It attributed the prevalence of overseas prostitutes to ‘uncivilized’ local customs and to low levels of female education in those two areas.<sup>94</sup> Reports following these missions concluded that Japan’s licensed prostitution system should be abolished, and that it was imperative to establish programmes to provide moral education for the women of Shimabara and Amakusa about the dangers and shame of prostitution. The report of the Siberian investigation noted in particular that, in order to launch educational campaigns, greater cooperation between the government and social groups was required. Public speeches by JWCTU members and Christians, it argued, were far from sufficient, and the government needed to take responsibility for moral education by revising textbooks and providing social campaigns with financial and political support.<sup>95</sup>

At its annual meeting in 1919, the JWCTU decided to launch special education campaigns in Shimabara and Amakusa.<sup>96</sup> Thereafter, JWCTU leaders embarked on a speaking tour of schools in Kyūshū,<sup>97</sup> and the Kyūshū branch sponsored an essay contest on overseas prostitution for all Kyūshū students.<sup>98</sup> By 1921, the JWCTU had successfully organized a series of well-attended gatherings in Kyūshū and had formed close alliances with local authorities and social groups to support women’s education campaigns.<sup>99</sup> These public gatherings and the Kyūshū branch’s meetings were supported and attended by local government officials, social educators, and journalists.<sup>100</sup> Through these campaigns the JWCTU strengthened its local branches and its cooperation with local government and women’s social groups in Kyūshū.<sup>101</sup> In particular, the JWCTU cooperated with the Virgin Society (*Shojo Kai*), a state-run women’s organization, to conduct its women’s education campaigns in rural areas from the end of the 1910s.<sup>102</sup> The Society planned to include

92 Miyagawa Shizue, ‘Shiberia shisatsu no ki (Note on the tour of investigation in Siberia)’, *Fujin Shinpō*, 261, April 1919, pp. 9–16.

93 Kurahashi Katsuhito, ‘“Karayuki” to fujin kyōfūkai: Kyūshū no ichi chiiki joseishi no shikaku kara (Japanese overseas prostitutes and the Japanese Women’s Christian Temperance Union: from the perspective of women’s history in a district of Kyūshū) (1)’, *Kirisutokyō Shakai Mondai Kenkyū (The Study of Christianity and Social Problems)*, 51, 2002, pp. 41–3; Kurahashi Katsuhito, ‘“Karayuki” to fujin kyōfūkai: Kyūshū no ichi chiiki joseishi no shikaku kara (2)’, *Kirisutokyō Shakai Mondai Kenkyū*, 52, 2003, p. 91.

94 Nunokawa Seien, ‘Shimabara Amakusa no kenkyū (A study of Shimabara and Amakusa)’, *Fujin Shinpō*, 267, October 1919, pp. 12–16.

95 Miyagawa, ‘Shiberia’, p. 14.

96 ‘Kirisutokyō Fujin kyōfūkai dainijunankai daikai kiroku (Report of the Japanese Women’s Christian Temperance Union’s twentieth annual meeting)’, *Fujin Shinpō*, 262, May 1919, p. 25.

97 Kurahashi, ‘“Karayuki” to fujin kyōfūkai (2)’, p. 90.

98 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

99 Kubushiro Ochimi, ‘Shakai kaizen no kanki (Joy for the improvement of society)’, *Fujin Shinpō*, 291, December 1921, p. 5.

100 Kurahashi, ‘“Karayuki” to fujin kyōfūkai (2)’, p. 93.

101 Sidney Xu Lu, ‘The shame of empire: Japanese overseas prostitutes and prostitution abolition in modern Japan, 1880s–1920s’, *positions: asia critique* (forthcoming).

102 Onozawa Akane, ‘Daiichiji sekai daisengo ni okeru haishō undō no kakudai: Nihon Kirisutokyo Fujin Kyōfū Kai no katsudō wo chūshin toshite (The expansion of the prostitution abolition movement after the

‘facilitating Japanese women’s overseas emigration’ as its mission as early as 1918.<sup>103</sup> Though the plan was not carried out at that time, the Virgin Society eventually became the government’s main apparatus for training and exporting women to Manchuria after 1937.<sup>104</sup> The JWCTU itself also launched a series of workshops to train women before they were sent to the Asian continent during the total war era.<sup>105</sup> To facilitate women’s emigration, the Japanese government established the Overseas Women’s Association (*Kaigai Fujin Kyōkai*) in 1927 to encourage and guide Japanese women to migrate overseas and also to serve as a marriage agency between Japanese male settlers abroad and women in domestic Japan. Kubushiro Ochimi, a prominent JWCTU leader in the 1920s and 1930s, was one of the association’s directors.<sup>106</sup> The association later served as a key institution for mobilizing and training continental brides.<sup>107</sup>

Similarly, the JYWCA’s school for emigrant women’s training in Yokohama also collaborated with domestic women’s schools and even participated in poverty relief activities in local areas.<sup>108</sup> Through a series of public lectures in Kyūshū and western Japan, Kawai Michi addressed the problem of Japanese women in California and promoted the collaboration between the JYWCA and local authorities and women’s schools. Her speaking tour was particularly successful in Nagasaki, Kumamoto, and Hiroshima, the places in western Japan that sent the largest numbers of women abroad annually. Meeting with local governors, mayors, and directors of police departments, Kawai stressed the necessity of establishing local JYWCA branches and enhancing women’s education, and won their support.<sup>109</sup> After resigning from her position in the JYWCA, Kawai Michi established a private women’s college, the Keisen School for Young Women (*Keisen Jogakuen*), in Tokyo in 1929. Besides general education, this school aimed to provide training in horticulture and farming skills to young Japanese women who planned to migrate to Japan’s colonies.<sup>110</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has shown that in the first two decades of the twentieth century two transnational campaigns led by Japanese Protestant educators and social leaders not only

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First World War: the activities of the Japanese Women’s Christian Temperance Union), *Kokusai Kankeigaku Kenkyū (Studies of International Relations)*, 26, 1999, p. 60.

103 Watanabe Yōko, *Kindai Nihon joshi shakai kyōiku seiritsu shi (A history of the establishment of women’s education in modern Japan)*, Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1997, p. 109.

104 Aiba, et al., *Manshū*, pp. 291–301.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 286.

106 *Ibid.*, pp. 280–3.

107 *Ibid.*

108 ‘Yokohama iminbu no hataraki no ichibu (A section of the emigration organization in Yokohama)’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 16, 2, February 1919, p. 41.

109 Kawai Michiko, ‘Nagasaki yuki (Heading for Nagasaki)’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 14, 10, November 1917, pp. 21–4; and Kawai Michiko, ‘Kyūshū yuki (Heading for Kyūshū)’, *Joshi Seinen Kai*, 14, 11, December 1917, pp. 24–9.

110 *Keisen Jogakuen gojūnen no ayumi (Fifty-year review of the Keisen School for Young Women)*, Tokyo: Keisen Jogakuen, 1979, p. 27. The school also had a special department for ‘overseas students’ (*Ryūgakusei bekka*), which provided training in housework skills and Japanese culture to nisei (second-generation) Japanese American female students.

laid the social, discursive, and institutional ground for training female emigrants and sending them abroad but also formed cooperative networks between the state and social women's groups. These campaigns and networks eventually enabled the state to launch the continental brides project. The idea of instrumentalizing women behind the governmental project of 'continental brides' was not new in the 1930s. Nor was it a product of the total war era. In the late 1930s, when state officials went to rural areas in Japan to persuade young women to migrate to the Asian continent on behalf of the empire, they met with few expressions of misgiving and little resistance. Nationwide lectures and speeches by the JWCTU and the JYWCA in earlier decades had already diffused information on Japanese overseas communities, informed Japanese women in the countryside about the possible opportunities to settle abroad, and convinced them that this would lead to a better life.

While problematizing Japanese overseas women, Japanese abolitionists and social activists never repudiated the importance of women for the nation and race. Instead, they generally considered Japanese women to be the crucial resource for Japan's overseas expansion. The campaigns on either side of the Pacific did not disavow the value of Japanese emigrant women per se, but aimed to transform bad women into good ones. On the one hand, the Women's Home accommodated prostitutes and resettled them in Manchuria as housemaids in order to meet the needs of Japanese male settlers in Manchuria in a civilized way. On the other hand, Kawai's programmes and Abe's proposal focused on educating Japanese emigrant women prior to their settlement in the United States and sending well-educated and moral women to eliminate the racial shame experienced by Japanese people in America.

At the core of this transformation was the debated question of how women (the rural and impoverished in particular) should be educated and called into service for the nation. Japanese Protestant educators and social moralists in both Japanese Manchuria and Japanese communities in the United States strived to maintain their leadership in local societies by connecting their class-based social and religious ethics, family values, and standards of cleanliness and social manners with Japanese national and racial authenticity. Employing the language of patriotism, their programmes of abolishing prostitution and enhancing female education and morality not only marginalized impoverished emigrant women but also disciplined them in ways that strengthened middle-class hegemony in Japanese overseas communities. This classist subordination was further conducted under the discourse of racial hierarchy and progress. These degraded and uneducated women became obstacles to claiming Japanese racial superiority over the colonized in Asia, on the one hand, and impediments to proving the desired equal position of the Japanese with white Americans, on the other.

In addition to class-based subordination, the distinction between bad and good women and campaigns to transform the former into the latter testify to the close relationship between womanhood and population power as unveiled by recent post-colonial feminist theories.<sup>111</sup> Women's sexuality was considered the crucial factor in guaranteeing the health and power of the next generation of empire-builders; thus it had to be carefully controlled and monitored.

111 See Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and motherhood', *History Workshop Journal* 5, 1, 20 March 1978, pp. 9–66; and Anne McClintock, *Imperial leather: race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995, p. 47, for ways in which the British empire rationalized and incorporated motherhood and childrearing in national policymaking to secure racial purity and population power for colonial expansion by the next generation.

To rear children and maintain racial purity and quality became a national duty. Non-productive women, such as Japanese prostitutes on both sides of the Pacific and uneducated Japanese women in California who would work in the field at the expense of childrearing, came to be labelled as problematic and unpatriotic. The Japanese social reformers' value of monogamy, their sexual and social ethics, and their embrace of the Western discourse of civilization converged seamlessly with the ideologies of instrumentalizing women for Japanese imperial expansion. Japanese Protestant social activists, too, fully sensed the usefulness of their ideologies for the empire, and actively utilized these ideologies to maintain their faith in the dominant social discourses in imperial Japan.

Furthermore, campaigns in Manchuria and California also illustrate that the national and imperial instrumentalization of women went far beyond concern with population power. It materialized in different ways under various historical and political contexts. Accordingly, the category of 'good' women in phases of Japanese expansion was a constantly fluid one, exemplified by the contrasting standards for what it meant to be a good woman in Japanese communities on opposite sides of the Pacific.<sup>112</sup> To satisfy the needs of middle-class Japanese male settlers and their families in Manchuria at the turn of the twentieth century, the occupation of housemaid was elevated and presented to the impoverished and powerless Japanese women as a desirable and patriotic profession. Those who sought to work as housemaids were thus lauded as good women. Sharing the desire for expansion, Japanese prostitution abolition groups formed an unlikely alliance with colonial authorities and the military. The goal of their mission became maintaining the sexual health and hygiene of soldiers and male settlers, so only diseased and unlicensed prostitutes fell into their target group. The state-controlled licensed prostitution system itself coexisted peacefully with the Japanese Women's Home in Manchuria until the end of the Second World War.

On the other side of the Pacific, to foster Japanese settlement in the American West and prevent male emigrants from slipping into degradation, the exportation of female marital partners to meet their needs for sex and family became a national necessity. As the result of white racism and the class subordination inside Japanese communities, all emigrant women became responsible for representing the progress of the Japanese nation and race. Rural and uneducated females were thus identified as problematic and shameful, and were assigned the national and racial obligation to learn to dress, speak, and live in middle-class (thus civilized) ways. Only those who fulfilled these obligations and stayed at home as dedicated mothers and wives could be called good women. Those who worked in the field to assist their husbands were criticized as greedy for money and irresponsible with regard to their position as representatives of Japanese womanhood. The various roles and obligations assigned to the emigrant women in Manchuria and California aimed to exploit women in particular social conditions on the frontiers of the empire's expansion. Opprobrium fell on any women that transgressed or failed to fit into the approved category.

The standards for good women were transformed into yet another version in the project of 'continental brides' launched by the imperial state in 1937 (see Figure 5). As the government's handbook distributed to female emigrant training schools in Japan stated, the

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112 While my discussion focuses on the discourse surrounding 'good' women, as we can see, 'bad' women such as prostitutes were equally, if not more, necessary for the empire, though the latter demand was carefully hidden by the emphasis on respectable females.

Figure 5. Cartoon drawn by a Japanese colonial artist, Sakamoto Gajō, depicting the morning ritual of Japanese emigrant women in a continental bride training school in Manchuria in 1940. Source: *Shin Manshū* (*New Manchuria*), 4, 12, December 1940, p. 125.



goal of the training programmes was to make sure that emigrant women would serve the empire at three levels in the following ways:

1. As a force to accomplish [Manchurian] frontier policies
  - a) Increase the stability of the colonial settlement in order to secure the national and racial resource;
  - b) Secure national resource and maintain the purity of the Yamato race;
  - c) Transplant Japanese womanhood to the continent and create a new culture in Manchuria;

....
2. As women in village communities
  - a) Take care of food, clothing and shelter, and create domestic culture in the frontier;
3. As housewives in individual agricultural families in the colony
  - a) Competent assistants to pioneer farmers in the field;
  - b) Competent comforters in the family;
  - c) Competent caretakers of children of the second generation.<sup>113</sup>

To support the empire, good women now were not only required to assist their husbands with farm work in the field but were also responsible for breeding and rearing children, comforting their husbands, and doing housework at home. Besides these physical obligations, they were further assigned the cultural duties of maintaining Japanese racial purity and transplanting Japanese womanhood to the continent.<sup>114</sup>

113 Takumushō Takubeikyoku (Department of Northern Development, Ministry of Colonization), *Joshi takushokusha teiyō* (*A guide for female colonists*), 1942, pp. 124–5.

114 *Ibid.*, p. 124. Purity-centred racial ideology was just one discourse on race in the history of the Japanese empire. Recent scholars have shown that Japanese racism was much more complicated than a belief in the



The divergence in the standards of 'good' women in Japanese Manchuria and Japanese America in the early twentieth century and in the 'continental bride' project in the late 1930s was stark. For example, while continental brides were supposed to help their husbands in the field, the expectation regarding ideal wives in Japanese America in the campaign two decades earlier was exactly the opposite. Yet these three stories converge to reveal how women were utilized in various phases of Japanese expansionism.

The standard of 'good' women shifted again following the intrusion of Soviet troops into Manchuria in 1945. Russian soldiers sexually assaulted a large number of Japanese female settlers.<sup>115</sup> After the end of the Asia-Pacific War, the continental brides, who were mobilized to migrate to Manchuria for the purpose of maintaining Japanese racial purity, returned to Japan only to find themselves regarded as a threat to such purity. The public in Japan perceived these female repatriates not only as possible carriers of venereal diseases but also as potential bearers of mixed-race children.<sup>116</sup> Based on the same anxiety, the Japanese government conducted organized examinations and sponsored abortions of those who were pregnant after assaults,<sup>117</sup> despite the fact that abortion itself was still illegal in Japan.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, in the aftermath of the war, these female emigrants, who once exemplified the nation's ideal women, now stood in opposition to appropriate Japanese womanhood. They served as a foil to model Japanese women who stayed 'at home' in Japan during the war and thus did not 'fraternize, willingly or not, with foreign men'.<sup>119</sup> These repatriated women were thus stigmatized as belonging to Japan's imperial past, fully carrying its moral guilt and historical trauma, from which the new and peaceful Japan, signified by the 'real' and 'unstained' Japanese women at home, could easily disengage.

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homogeneity of the Yamato race. In *Race for empire: Korean as Japanese and Japanese as American*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011, Takashi Fujitani demonstrates a strong multi-ethnic racial discourse in Japan during the Asia-Pacific War. This discourse attempted to grant imperial citizenship to people in the colonies in order to mobilize all resources throughout the empire for the war.

115 The precise number of Japanese women assaulted remains unknown, but a fictionalized evaluation by a Japanese medical doctor, Takeda Shigetarō, in 1984 estimated the figure to be between 30,000 and 40,000. Lori Watt, *When empire comes home: repatriation and reintegration in postwar Japan*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009, p. 111.

116 As demonstrated in an article in *Asahi Shinbun* on 24 April 1946, cited in *ibid.*, pp. 111–12.

117 In two major repatriation centres in Hakata and Sasebo, the numbers of abortions conducted were 1,200–1,300 and 400–500 respectively (*ibid.*, p. 120). Some of these women died in the abortion process (*ibid.*, p. 115); others committed suicide owing to social pressure (*ibid.*, p. 116).

118 Abortion was not legalized in Japan until 1948; the government-sponsored abortions among the female repatriates were conducted around 1945 and 1946. *Ibid.*, p. 119–20.

119 *Ibid.*, p. 113. As Watt further observes (p. 125), this discourse also resulted in the collective silence of the repatriate women about the atrocities that they experienced in the post-war era. In contrast to some comfort women who eventually came forward to uncover the war crimes committed by the Japanese military, the assaulted repatriates had 'nothing to gain and a great deal to lose by confirming suspicions of the violation', since this would do nothing but further reinforce their otherness in Japanese society.