

LOVE, SEX, AND DEMOCRACY IN JAPAN DURING THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION

Mark McLelland

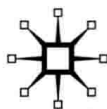


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A Note on Japanese Names and Sources

The bulk of primary sources for this book reside in the Gordon W. Prange Collection, the originals of which are housed in the library of the University of Maryland. The Prange collection contains virtually everything that passed across the desks of the Civil Censorship Detachment set up by the Occupation authorities to ensure that materials published in Japan during the first three years of the Occupation met with Occupation guidelines. There was very little published at the time that did not go through this precensorship process and the Prange collection houses the vast bulk of all material published in Japan between 1945 and 1949. Microfiche of the collection are available at the University of Michigan and also at the National Diet Library in Tokyo. Material for the book was sourced from both these locations. The collection *Kasutori shimbun: Shōwa 20-nendai no sesō to shakai*, edited by the Kanshū shimbun shiryō raiburarī, and published by Ōzorasha in 1995, is also an excellent source for pulp periodicals of the time. Reference was also made to my substantial personal collection of original early postwar sex magazines obtained on the second-hand market as well as originals held by the Hentai Shiryōkan museum in Kagurazaka, Tokyo.

Japanese names are notoriously difficult to transliterate accurately. I have, where possible, checked pronunciations against records held at the National Diet Library but sometimes have had to make an educated guess at obscure authors' given names. I have followed Japanese tradition in listing names with surname first except when referring to Japanese authors published in English where I follow the Western order. Japanese terms and place names now common in English have been rendered without macrons in the text, however, when they appear as part of a citation in Japanese, they have been transliterated with the appropriate macrons.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The idea for this book came about while seated reviewing some early postwar publications in the unfortunately named “Perverts Museum” in Kagurazaka, Tokyo, in 2004.¹ I was at that time collecting documents about early postwar sexual minority subcultures for my book *Queer Japan from the Pacific War to the Internet Age*. Although I was mainly interested in nonheterosexual expressions of sex and romance at the time, one illustration in a very dog-eared copy of *Modan Nippon* (Modern Japan), a kind of general-interest pulp magazine common in the years following the end of the war, caught my eye. The illustration accompanied an article on the newly introduced practice of coeducation. Here is what I wrote in my research diary at the time:

Magazines such as *Modan Nippon* were instrumental in disseminating information that helped generate new modes of heterosexual interaction. The July 1949 edition, for instance, carried an article on “co-education” in which film actor Gary Cooper was held up as a model of masculine chivalry. It was suggested that many men were nervous about how to conduct a date—whether it was necessary to take a bath before hand, for example. The illustration shows a classroom full of mixed-sex couples wearing surgical masks as the instructor writes “kiss” on the blackboard.²

I wrote a memo to myself to “check this out further” before getting back to my search for articles about early postwar male prostitution. The chance to check out this kind of pulp publication finally came about in 2007 when I was invited to take up the post of Toyota Visiting Professor of Japanese in the Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan. I knew that the Michigan Graduate Library owned one of very few copies of the microfiche collection of magazines and newspapers from the Gordon W. Prange Collection housed at the University of Maryland.³ The Prange collection comprises the galley proofs of all publications submitted for precensorship to the Occupation authorities from 1945 through 1949 and contains practically everything published in Japanese during that time. I was thus not only able to revisit the *Modan Nippon* article I had

discovered earlier, but to collect hundreds more on the topic of new dating practices that had entered Japan as a consequence of the country's defeat and occupation by the Allied forces.

The sheer volume of discussion about supposedly "new" and "modern" practices of courtship and romance, as well as an entire genre instructing young Japanese people in sexual technique was astounding. It is estimated that between 1946 and 1949 there were between 700 and 1,000 editions of magazines and newspapers published that included reports, articles, editorials, and stories that in various ways celebrated postwar "sexual liberation."⁴

As a sociologist I struggled with how to make sense of this sudden outburst of discussion about sex and romance and the many detailed instructions that Japanese people were supposed to follow in order to fully "liberate" their sexuality, a prerequisite it seemed for full participation in modern, democratic society. It just so happened that at that time I was developing an undergraduate course titled "Body and Society" that used the idea of the "habitus," as elaborated in the work of Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu, to explain to students how people's experience of embodiment differs between genders, cultures, and time periods. For Mauss, the habitus was a conglomeration of "techniques of the body"—socially engendered ways of using the body that differ markedly between "societies, education, proprieties and fashions, [and] prestiges."⁵

Bourdieu extended the idea of the habitus beyond bodily practices to include beliefs and prejudices, arguing that seemingly objective social structures are incorporated into the subjective, mental experience of social agents. Bourdieu's idea of the habitus is much more inclusive than that of Mauss; he refers to the habitus as a set of "dispositions" that he defines as enduring sets of *beliefs* and corresponding actions.⁶ In his discussion of the habitus, Bourdieu points to a range of preferences for material goods and services such as clothes, furniture, food, music, and leisure activities. For Bourdieu these objects and lifestyle choices have significant symbolic power and are imbued with both social and cultural capital.

Back in the 1920s Mauss had already observed that "Hollywood cinema" was a major conduit via which American bodily actions and lifestyles were being globalized on account of the "prestige" that accrued to these representations.⁷ During the Occupation, this process of acculturation, as Japanese people were introduced to a dazzling array of American consumer goods and lifestyles, gathered pace. One aspect of Japanese life that was to be radically impacted in only a short span of time by newly imported American models was courtship behavior. In particular, demonstrating one's ability to engage in new, modern, "democratic" styles of courtship became an important way of acquiring social capital in postwar Japan.

The habitus is a set of learned behaviors. Different individuals develop different kinds of habitus depending on the social situations or “fields” they encounter. Bourdieu uses the example of sport in which athletes develop a “feel for the game,” which becomes second nature and automatic. As Bourdieu also points out, the rules of the game are arbitrary, as are the rules for all human interactions, and yet they come to seem “natural” to the participants through “a long, slow process of autonomization.”⁸ Social “fields” are highly dependent upon factors such as class, gender, ethnic grouping, and educational background. Individuals who have been socialized into the appropriate habitus for a given situation seem to fit into that situation seamlessly whereas others, for whom that situation is unfamiliar, feel conspicuous and out of place.

If we consider American-style courtship routines to be a new kind of “field” introduced into Japan after the war, not only through imported Hollywood movies but also through the very visible presence of the many GIs and their Japanese girlfriends on the streets and in the parks of Japan’s major cities, then we can begin to understand why the press was so full of advice on how to navigate this new set of relations. Unlike Americans, who had been socialized to interact in a flirtatious and friendly way with the opposite sex since childhood,⁹ the practice of dating prior to marriage, in which a young man or woman might “go steady” with several partners before finally committing to marriage was unknown among the Japanese.¹⁰ In Japan most marriages were still arranged by parents, and “women from good families,” at least, had very little opportunity to interact with their betrothed prior to the wedding day itself. Men, although free to consort with “professional women” of the pleasure districts, were likewise unable to court respectable women. Opportunities to learn the rituals of dating through participating in mixed social gatherings were basically nonexistent prior to the war’s end. Hence, it is no wonder that increased “*danjo kōsai*” (male-female social interaction) struck many early postwar commentators as one of the most notable changes that the Occupation had brought about.

The realization that dating as a “field” of behavior was largely unknown in Japan helped me understand why such a massive advice industry sprang up in the popular press offering to instruct young men and women how to conduct themselves on a date. However this advice went much further than walking arm in arm, hand-holding, and kissing, and also extended to detailed instruction in sexual techniques. Why might this have been necessary? When thinking through this issue I found the notion of “sexual scripting” developed by sociologists William Simon and John Gagnon to be particularly useful. In the 1960s, Simon and Gagnon, influenced by emerging theories of social interactionism, developed a theory of sexual

behavior that stressed the importance of environmental and historical factors over purely physiological or personal elements. They argued that “there is no sexual wisdom that derives from the relatively constant physical body. It is the historical situation of the body that gives the body its sexual (as well as all other) meanings.”¹¹

Their research showed that sexuality was constructed in terms of what they term “cultural scenarios” that “not only specify appropriate objects, aims and desirable qualities of self-other relations but also instruct in times, places, sequences of gesture and utterance.”¹² It is these “qualities of instruction” that ensure that individuals are “far more committed and rehearsed at the time of our initial sexual encounters than most of us realize.”¹³ They posited that sexual behavior was “essentially symbolic” and that “virtually all the cues that initiate sexual behavior are embedded in the external environment.”¹⁴

Simon and Gagnon’s argument is an early iteration of the “social constructionist” approach to sexuality whose most famous proponent is Michel Foucault. Foucault argued that sexuality is not an inherent property of bodies, some kind of transcultural biological reality, but rather “the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations by a certain deployment deriving from a complex political technology.”¹⁵ This insight has important implications for sexuality studies since it helps us understand how seemingly “personal” experiences such as sexual responsiveness are in fact highly structured in relation to the transnational movement of power, people, ideas, and imaginaries. As Fran Martin reminds us, sexualities are not “inert, autochthonous forces planted in the soil of a given location” but rather “densely overwritten and hyper-dynamic texts caught in a continual process of transformation.”¹⁶ To build on Martin’s metaphor, Japan’s Occupation period was characterized by a voluble sexual discourse in which previous attitudes toward sex and the body were quite literally being rewritten in line with new orthodoxies and ideas encouraged by the Occupation authorities and disseminated through media such as radio, film, literature, and the press and through the very visible presence of American men and women on the streets.

Japan’s catastrophic defeat at the end of the Pacific War and its occupation by mainly US forces from 1945 to 1952 ushered in a period of great social and cultural change in the realms of individual subjectivity and personal relationships as much as in the spheres of government, education, and the economy. Simon and Gagnon note that such periods of dramatic social change “have the capacity to call into question the very organization of the self”¹⁷ and it is possible to understand the collapse of Japan’s imperialist regime—and its supporting ideologies—at the end of the Pacific War as just such a moment, during which “the very ecology of the self

[was] disturbed.”¹⁸ Simon and Gagnon go on to argue that such moments require that “all aspects of the self that previously required a negotiated outcome must be re-established.”¹⁹ Hence, given the sudden collapse of Japan’s imperialist regime and its attendant symbolic representations of appropriate gendered and sexual behavior, which occurred alongside the introduction of new and very visible representations of sex and gender embedded in American culture, it is not surprising that there should have been so much discussion in the early postwar press about the need to renegotiate and redefine male-female relationships.

Insights gained from Mauss, Bourdieu, and Simon and Gagnon have framed the overall argument of this book, although in the interests of readability I have avoided burdening the discussion with too much academic terminology. The essence of my argument is that far from being a “natural” outcome of attraction between the sexes, dating practices are learned behaviors that have symbolic value. The actions that we perform on a date, the “techniques of the body” such as walking arm in arm, smooth talking, and kissing are brought into play in the context of broad “cultural scenarios,” that is, ways of understanding one’s body and desires in relation to wider systems of thought that explain, contextualize, and naturalize ways of acting and thinking that are, in fact, highly artificial and contrived. Dating practices, like other “fields” of action, usually change quite gradually over time but in early postwar Japan we are able to discern a rapid transformation in male-female interactions that was widely remarked on by commentators at the time and that can be reconstructed to some extent through an analysis of contemporary media reports.

In this book I argue that despite the continuity of a masculinist bias in the construction of female sexuality, a series of disjunctures did take place between prewar and postwar attitudes toward male-female relations. Of particular importance was the clear connection made in the Japanese press of the Occupation period between the loosening of “feudal” strictures restraining individuals’ bodily behavior, particularly between the sexes, and the process of “democratization.” In the chapters that follow I try to unravel the manner in which the presence and actions of American *bodies*, fashions, and cultural products on the streets of Japan were as important as any political directive in bringing about a reassessment of Japanese male-female relations and of sexuality more generally. I suggest that this “bottom up” account, which pays attention to “sexual scripts” in the popular media, offers a different perspective from other accounts of the period that have stressed the influence of top-down policy on sexual behavior and attitudes.

Despite its focus on the new kinds of sexual discourse that exploded onto the cultural scene only six months after the arrival of the Americans, this book is not about American-Japanese relations. The multiple relationships

that were established between American male Occupation personnel and Japanese women have been the subject of intensive scrutiny by other scholars.²⁰ Instead, this book focuses on the varied conversations and conflicts that took place *between Japanese themselves* concerning the “liberation of sexuality” that had supposedly been brought about by such factors as the collapse of the old militarist ideology, the lifting of the prewar censorship regime, the widespread reform of legislation relating to women’s domestic and public roles, and the introduction of Hollywood lifestyles and romance. Indeed, because of the new censorship regime imposed by the Occupation authorities that prohibited, among other things, reference to fraternization, little mention is made of Americans in the bulk of texts on which this study is based. The focus, then, is very much upon the new scripts and paradigms for sexual interaction between Japanese men and women (and between men and between women) that were elaborated during the Occupation period that lasted from August 1945 to April 1952. Also, since even after the abolition of the prepublication censorship system in October 1949, a limited postcensorship system was maintained, some reference is made to texts published from 1952 to 1955 that look back on the Occupation period and offer reflections that it may have proven difficult to publish while American authorities still held sway in Tokyo.

The sources for this study are derived from the popular Japanese press of the period. By “popular”²¹ I mean publications that addressed a broad readership, and that were cheap and easily accessible across Japan and not just in the major cities. The largest number of texts is taken from a genre that was known at the time as *kasutori* (“the dregs”). The history and typology of this genre are outlined in Chapter 3 but basically it comprised hundreds of short-lived newspaper and magazine titles published over a three-year period from 1946 to 1949 that took as one of their main themes the supposed “liberation” of sexuality. These texts were well circulated throughout Japan, contained articles by established as well as amateur writers, and many of the issues they addressed were taken up by other media such as literature, film, and the popular dailies. Although sometimes described as the “sex press,” *kasutori* publications were characterized more by the great detail their authors lavished on sexual topics rather than by their coverage of sexual topics per se. The publication in America in 1948 of the Kinsey report into the sexual behavior of American men, in particular, provided an enabling context for the widespread and detailed discussion of sexuality that also took place across the Japanese mainstream and high-brow press.

Specific behaviors, such as the newly discovered (or reinvented, depending on who you believe) practice of kissing were widely discussed in both *kasutori* and mainstream outlets, including in the newly revitalized genre

of movie magazines. The upsurge in male prostitution, which might seem a niche interest, was also taken up by the popular dailies, as were reports of female cross-dressers. Throughout the book I have done my best to search out a range of different sources including popular journalism, middle-brow commentary, and “expert” sexology in order to give a sense of the variety of opinions available on any one topic as well as the relative appeal that these issues held for the Japanese reading public.

Writing at a remove of over 60 years from the period described, our access to the lived realities of everyday life under the Occupation necessarily comes from accounts published at the time. Quite how these accounts relate to actual lived experience, especially in the personal realm of sexuality, is difficult to know. With this in mind, in this book I am mainly concerned with shifts in “discourse,” that is, the ideas, “scripts,” and “cultural scenarios” that were on offer in the media to help guide, structure, and make sense of sexual relations in the new “democratic” environment ushered in after Japan’s defeat. However, where appropriate I have also pointed to some contemporary and later surveys that directly address the issue of behavior. Surveys of people’s sex lives, as the controversy following on from the publication of the first Kinsey report attests, cannot of course be offered up as conclusive proof of actual behaviors. I offer this data here as yet another example of a discursive shift in postwar rhetoric about sexuality. This survey data is important not so much because it “proves” that a change in behavior had taken place, but rather for the way it was used in the popular press to establish “norms” to gauge individual practice. I have also made use of contemporary and more recent Japanese scholarship on the sexual customs of the Occupation period to give a sense of how this material has been discussed in the Japanese literature.

Outline of the Book

Chapter 1, “Love, Sex, and Marriage on the Road to War,” offers an overview of the changing ways in which the newly founded Japanese state intervened to control and organize the population’s sex lives following on from the reestablishment of imperial rule during the Meiji Restoration. Many aspects of previous Edo-period attitudes to sexuality such as the endorsement of concubines and male same-sex relations now came to seem feudal. Differing regional ways of organizing marriage, childbirth, and inheritance were done away with and a new nationwide regime instituting monogamy and marriage registration was set up. However these new patterns of relationship were not simply copied from the West. Indeed, as groups of young Japanese were sent overseas to study and an increasing

number of foreign experts took up residence in Japan, the stark difference between Western and Japanese attitudes toward male-female relationships emerged as a contentious topic for debate. Many Japanese struggled to understand the Western concept of "romantic love" that as an ideal, at least, posited equality between the sexes and required that marriage be founded on mutual regard and sentiment. This companionate model of marriage was quite different from the Japanese tradition of arranged marriage and many Japanese felt that "love" was a somewhat egotistic and unstable basis on which to found a lifelong alliance. Although love matches were championed by some among the literati, some feminists and Christian-educated women, they were almost impossible to negotiate in practice since there were few circumstances in which young men and women could associate in public. Until defeat and Occupation in 1945, "male-female social interaction" was highly regulated in Japan.

Relations between the sexes were particularly constrained during the long war years (which for the Japanese began in 1931 with large-scale military incursions into China). As militarism tightened its grip on all aspects of society and censorship took hold of culture, Japan witnessed a "death of romance" as men were imagined as citizen-soldiers and women as mothers to the nation. It is no surprise then, after the long years of privation occasioned by the war, that Japan's eventual defeat was welcomed by many with a sense of relief and liberation from a regime that soon came to be seen as "backward" and "feudal" in its moral scope.

Chapter 2, "Sex and Censorship during the Occupation," looks at the impact that American policies on gender relations, fraternization between US troops and local women, and censorship of the Japanese press had upon the kinds of sexual culture that developed in the early postwar years. Although Japan's defeat and Occupation by the former enemy was experienced as an emasculating humiliation by some men, reforms instigated by the Occupation authorities actually improved the social standing of Japanese women. The constitution was rewritten to establish the equal rights of women, and family and labor laws were restructured so as to give women increased agency both in marriage and at the workplace.

However, the presence of large numbers of American military personnel also put vulnerable women at risk of sexual predation and exploitation. Concerns over the rapid spread of venereal diseases among the US troops led to humiliating crackdowns on the sex workers who catered to them in a range of state-sponsored "leisure facilities." Yet, despite the very obvious presence of sex workers on the streets, little mention was made of them in the press due to a stringent precensorship regime that forbade any reference to fraternization between local women and foreign troops. One unforeseen side effect of the censorship regime was that mention of sexual

relations between Japanese themselves went largely unregulated by the US authorities, it being considered the role of the Japanese police to pursue publishers guilty of obscenity. The result was an enormous outpouring of sexual discourse previously unprecedented in Japan.

The first three postwar years have been characterized as a time of "sexual anarchy" during which previous paradigms regulating female sexuality, such as "good wife, wise mother," were in abeyance. Hence, Chapter 3, "Sexual Liberation," looks at the outpouring of sexual discourse in the popular press and considers the claim that Japan's defeat and Occupation had brought about the "liberation of sexuality." After reviewing early postwar rhetoric that attempted to position women as sexual and desiring agents in their own right, the chapter considers the rhetorical linkage made in Japan's early postwar press between new US-inspired heterosexual dating practices and the broader program of democratic reform. It is argued that this linkage facilitated the swift transmission and uptake of more "liberal" American modes of bodily comportment and male-female interaction. It was also during the Occupation that Alfred Kinsey's first pathbreaking study into the sexual behavior and attitudes of American men was translated into Japanese, and there was much discussion in the Japanese press about the role that "science" had to play in overcoming the moralism surrounding people's sexual lifestyles and choices. Kinsey's "American" and "scientific" pedigrees were used by sex reformers to establish the open discussion of sexuality as a fundamental necessity for the development of a modern, democratic, and open society.

Chapter 4, "The Kiss Debate," examines the impact that the physical presence of American bodies on the streets of Japan as well as Hollywood visions of American actors on screen had upon local understandings of physical deportment and gender relations. In particular, the controversies about kissing on the screen and in daily life are examined so as to point out the symbolic linkages made both by Japanese commentators and the Occupation authorities between sexual and political "openness." It is argued that shifts in the scripting of sexual behavior are most clearly visible in the "kissing debate" that was generated by the early postwar screening of Hollywood love scenes and, increasingly, love scenes in locally produced movies. It was openly acknowledged at the time that Hollywood movies, in particular, were the "scripts" being used by young people to negotiate the unfamiliar terrain of dating. The role that popular sexology played in promoting the "new idea" that sex was a recreational activity for men *and* women, a means of sharing *mutual* pleasure, in the context of courtship, is outlined.

Chapter 5, "The New Couple," looks at the new role that "sexual satisfaction" was now considered to play in the marital relationship through

a discussion of the influential “couple magazine” *Fūfu seikatsu* (Conjugal couple lifestyle). In the prewar period the representation of marital sexuality had been out of bounds but a new genre of marriage magazines placed a “proper sex life” at the very heart of the “new” or “modern” marriage. These magazines traced a “course” of sexual discovery that dating couples should take from walking side by side, to hand-holding, to kissing and finally to the sexual acts performed on the wedding night. Both male and female partners were encouraged to educate themselves in an “*ars amatoria*” that would help them understand not only their own sexual responsiveness but how to attend to the newly discovered needs of their partners. In these texts American dating practices and American lifestyles in general (complete with all the necessary time-saving home accessories) were held up as an ideal for Japanese couples to follow. The publication in 1953 of Alfred Kinsey’s volume on the sex lives of American women further reinforced the perceived need for Japanese women to “catch up” with their more liberated peers.

Although the bulk of sexual discussion in the print media of the early postwar years was heterosexual, it was not particularly oriented toward discussions of procreation. Indeed the previous militarists’ reduction of a wife’s main role to that of mother was frequently criticized as a “feudal” remnant and the need for mutual pleasure reinforced. Chapter 6, “Curiosity Hunting,” investigates the Japanese term *ryōki* that translates as “curiosity hunting”—that was used as a descriptor for a genre of fictional and documentary reports about “strange” sexual activities and people. The *ryōki* paradigm embraced and even celebrated the strange and unusual in sexual practice, and was important in disseminating new ideas about female sexual agency through its discussions of sadism, cross-dressing, and female-female sexuality. Also important in this discourse was a discussion of *danshō*, male cross-dressing prostitutes, who were a visible feature of Tokyo’s cityscape in the immediate postwar period. Although the sex lives of the “new couple” were very much oriented toward supposed American ideals, the *ryōki* paradigm was indigenous and functioned with little reference to the increasingly paranoid American distinction between hetero- and homosexuality that intensified with the onset of the Cold War. The evidence offered in this chapter is an important balance to some accounts of postwar sex and gender mores that stress the conservative and restrictive nature of sex reform during the Occupation.

The Afterword considers the extent to which the sudden upsurge in discourse about the “liberation of sexuality” was representative of changes in people’s lived experience. As much other research into the Occupation period has shown, celebrating the new at the expense of the old was something of a postwar obsession. In many ways, as later Japanese feminist