

MEN OF UNCERTAINTY

The Social Organization of Day Labourers
in Contemporary Japan

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PhD

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ABSTRACT

Men of uncertainty: the social organization of day labourers in contemporary Japan

By Tom Gill

Japan is a country strongly associated with strong, long-term relationships, whether they be located within kin-groups, local communities or large industrial enterprises. Yet Japan also has a long tradition of people who have been excluded from these relationships, whether voluntarily (hermits, mendicant monks, etc.) or compulsorily (outcasts etc.).

This thesis deals with a contemporary category of people who operate largely outside the certainties of long-term relationships: day labourers. Whereas Japanese industry has become famous for 'life-time employment', my subjects often work under contracts for just one day. Most of them are also excluded from family and mainstream community life, living singly in doya-gai -- small urban districts with cheap hotels which resemble the American skid-row. These districts center on a casual labour market (yoseba), divided between a formal sector (public casual labour exchanges) and an informal sector (jobs negotiated on the street with recruiters often affiliated with yakuza gangs).

Fieldwork (1993-5) was conducted mainly in Kotobuki, the Yokohama doya-gai, with brief field-trips to similar districts in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Kitakyushu and Fukuoka. Most of my informants were Japanese nationals, though Koreans and Filipinos are also briefly discussed.

The thesis describes the lives and attitudes of day labourers, and the social organization of the very distinctive districts which they inhabit. Based on participant observation, backed up by historical analysis and cross-cultural comparison, the thesis considers the role of these 'men of uncertainty' in a society which craves certainty.

In economic terms, that role is to enable the construction and longshoring industries to adjust to fluctuating demand and changing weather conditions while maintaining a stable core workforce. But day labourers, like other stigmatized minorities, have a parallel cultural role, as an "internal other" in the formation of mainstream Japanese people's identity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	3
Table of contents	5
List of tables.....	8
List of illustrations	10
Acknowledgements	11
Note on the text	12
1. Introduction - Men of Uncertainty	13
I. First encounter	
II. What is a day labourer?	
III. Fieldwork	
IV. Outline of the present study	
2. General Historical Background	31
I. Overview	
II. Mushuku and Hinin	
III. Hiyatoi : Burakumin :: Hinin : Eta?	
IV. The pre-industrial proletariat	
V. License, welfare, control	
VI. The Ninsoku Yoseba of 1790	
VII. The industrial revolution	
VIII. The interwar years	
IX. The post-war yoseba	
X. The modern construction industry	
3. Ethnography of Kotobuki	73
I. Location	
II. Landscape	
III. Population	
IV. History	
V. Employment	
a. Formal institutions	
b. The street labour market	
c. Other methods	
d. Pay and conditions	
e. Employing industries	
VI. Residence	
VII. Play and other non-work activities	
a. Gambling	
b. Drinking	
c. Drugs	
d. Sex	
e. Fighting	
VIII. Bureaucratic systems	
IX. Health	
X. The union	
XI. Events	

4. Ethnography of other doya-gai and yoseba	142
Introduction	
I. Sanya	
II. Kamagasaki	
III. Sasashima	
IV. Day labouring in Fukuoka and Kitakyushu	
V. Other yoseba	
5. Profiles of Day Labourers	200
I. Sakae	
II. Kohei	
III. Nishio	
IV. Tadao	
V. Noriyuki	
VI. Ron-chan	
VII. Kimitsu	
VIII. Shigehiro	
IX. Kuriyama	
X. Yoshio	
XI. Manabu	
6. Family background of day labourers	238
I. Geographical background	
II. Occupational background	
III. Age	
IV. Marital status	
V. Sib size and birth order	
VI. The War and the Big Move	
7. The meaning of home	261
I. Why Mr. Nozawa sleeps in the street	
II. Homelessness -- narrow and broad definitions	
III. Homeless house-builders	
IV. The yoseba as symbolic home/hometown	
a. The Summer Festival	
b. The Winter Survival Campaign	
V. Bonfire as hearth	

8. Social Freedom and Economic Constraint, Daily Uncertainty and Long-term Fate: The Human Condition as Experienced and Perceived by Japanese Day Labourers	302
First metaphor: Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle	
I. Mobility	
II. Passivity	
III. Isolation; weak bonding; volatility	
IV. Uncertainty	
Tentative interim conclusion	
The broader framework	
Second metaphor: balloonist and train passenger	
Postscript: Yoseba gambling revisited	
9. The yoseba/doya-gai as special cultural zone ..	393
I. What is a special cultural zone?	
II. International comparisons: the slum, ghetto and skid row	
III. The yoseba as special cultural zone	
IV. The yoseba as stigmatized cultural zone	
V. The view from inside	
VI. Kegare and the creation of the yoseba	
VII. Kegare in the modern city	
10. Conclusion	463
I. A useful place	
II. Temple of Sanctuary vs Mountain of Abandonment	
III. The future of the yoseba	
IV. The future of Kotobuki	
Appendix 1: Statistical tables	486
Appendix 2: Yoseba glossary	513
Appendix 3: Birth-order data	538
Bibliography	543

LIST OF TABLES

Note: All tables are to be found in appendix 1.

Table 1: Numbers of day labourers carrying the white handbook (narrow definition) and monthly employment/unemployment averages.

Table 2: Average days per month spent working or claiming unemployment benefit by registered day labourers.

Table 3: Day labourers (broad definition) by gender, in millions.

Table 4: Number of day labourers (broad definition) and other non-regular workers in the Japanese working population, in millions of people.

Table 5: Population of Kotobuki district by gender and household composition.

Table 6: Population of Kotobuki by class and ethnicity, as of 30/12/94.

Table 7: Age range of welfare recipients in the Kotobuki district, as of April 1, 1996.

Table 8: Population trends in the three precincts including the Kotobuki district.

Table 9: Person-days of employment transacted at the Kotobuki Labour Centre, with take-up rates for one-day and period contracts.

Table 10: Where do Kotobuki day labourers go when they need a job?

Table 11: Average Kotobuki day-wage levels, 1985-95.

Table 12: Companies using the Kotobuki Labour Centre, by industrial sector.

Table 13: How do Kotobuki day labourers pay for medical treatment when they get ill or injured?

Table 14: Symptoms most commonly reported by visitors to the Kotobuki Clinic, 1992-3

Table 15: Day labourer placement by prefecture: the Top 10 (financial year 1990).

Table 16: Main Tokyo yoseba and doya-gai, 1939.

Table 17: Emergency assistance for homeless people in the 23 wards of central Tokyo, summer 1994.

Table 18: Officially arranged day labour in Fukuoka prefecture, April 1994.

Table 19: Geographical Origin of Workers in Kotobuki, by Prefecture/Region.

Table 20: Occupational background of my informants in Kotobuki.

Table 21: Age of my informants in Kotobuki as of Jan 1 1995, as told to me.

Table 22: Age of registered day labourers in Kotobuki, 1975-91.

Table 23: Marital status of my Kotobuki informants.

Table 24: Sibling order of day labourers in Kotobuki and other yoseba.

Table 25: Simplified sibling order figures.

Table 26: Degree of success in day labouring by simplified birth order class (well-known Kotobuki informants only).

Table 27: Homeless people found in the Kannai area (including Kotobuki) on selected Thursdays, 1991-3

Table 28: Homeless people found in the Kannai area during the Winter Survival Campaign (Ettô)

Table 29: Order of events at the 1994 summer festival

Table 30: Donations to 1994 Kotobuki Summer Festival (not including rock concert)

Table 31: Japanese national spend on different types of gambling in a boom year (1988) and a bust year (1993).

Table 32: Male and female population of Kamagasaki

Table 33: Contents of union collecting boxes, January 4 1995

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MAPS

1. Map of the Kotobuki district [separate]
2. Location of Kotobuki district within Yokohama [separate].

PHOTOS ETC.

Day labourer with white handbook	300
Doya room	301
Kotobuki Summer Festival	391
Karaoke at Kotobuki Summer Festival	392
In Kotobuki	461
The late Sudo Taizo, Christmas Eve	462
Kamayan, the cartoon day labourer	487
Kotobuki central crossroads	563
Koreatown: the ethnic mall	564
Koreatown: the front approach	565

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

Japanese names have been given in the Japanese order, family name first.

I have attempted to adhere broadly to the Hepburn system of romanization in transliterating Japanese words, always aiming to convey the pronunciation of the word as clearly as possible.

Whenever a Japanese-language reference is cited, the translation is by myself unless otherwise stated.

I generally underline Japanese words on a first reference only. Likewise I use macrons only on underlined references.

The yen-pound rate has changed constantly during the process of researching and writing this thesis. Where I have cited pound equivalents, I have used an exchange rate of Y160 to the pound, prevalent at submission time, approximating generously. As a rule of thumb, Y1,000 is about six pounds or ten US dollars in this thesis.

I have changed the names of some day labourers to protect their privacy; changed names are indicated with an asterisk. In most cases I have used first name only, and in a few cases, where I know that the individual would not object, I have used the full name.

References consisting of an "F" followed by a page number are to my own field notes. Where relevant I have added the date of the fieldnote as well, thus: 5/7/94 means the 5th of July 1994. References to individuals are to the life histories in Ch.5 (e.g. 5:IV) or to the index of informants included in my fieldnotes (e.g. 1-26).

Anyone wishing to examine the fieldnotes can apply to myself or to my supervisors at the Social Anthropology Department of the London School of Economics, who also have a full set.

Tom Gill, 30/9/96

Chapter 1: Introduction - Men of Uncertainty

I. First encounter

I did not even know that they had day labourers in Japan until January 1986, when the murder of a day labourer union leader in Tokyo by a gangster briefly hit the headlines [1]. At the time I was working for the Japanese news agency, Kyodo, and I visited Sanya, Tokyo's main day-labouring district, to write an article about the murder.

I had never heard of Sanya, yet it proved to be less than half an hour by underground from the Kyodo office in central Tokyo. When I did get there, it seemed at first like any other outlying district of Tokyo, albeit with buildings somewhat greyer and shabbier than average.

There were, however, several men lying asleep on the pavement, smelling of dry urine and alcohol. There were men who would accost one and talk with great animation, and others who seemed permanently anchored in the cheap bars dotted around the place. As I had arrived in the afternoon, I only saw the men who had failed to get jobs. Some slept in the street that night, others in cheap lodging houses.

The next morning, everyone was up and looking for work by 5 a.m., and I realized that there were other kinds of

1 This murder is discussed in Ch8:IIc.

day labourer as well as the battered old men that had first caught the eye: young ones, strong ones, skilled ones. The majority, however, looked over 40. They stood there in the dark before dawn, cigarettes and cups of tea in hand. Soon the labour recruiters showed up. They were a tough-looking lot; some were probably yakuza themselves. They went among the men, taking a few away to waiting trucks and vans after negotiations which were sometimes protracted and occasionally threatened to turn violent.

In a nearby park there was a small flea market, selling old boots and balaclavas and trousers and bric-a-brac. There another group of day labourers were gathering with some radical students, easily identifiable with their crash helmets, dark glasses and bandannas. Some were armed with baseball bats. They set out with the labourers on a demonstration, condemning the yakuza for the murder and the government for letting the yakuza get away with it.

Hundreds of riot police were deployed at strategic locations, apparently protecting the gangsters from the wrath of the day labourers. The labourers and students threw stones and bottles at the riot police, and a general shoving match ensued. But after a few minutes the demonstration continued on its way, leaving one to wonder how far the violence was real and how far symbolic. I later found that these early-morning confrontations happened almost daily, which surely affected the emotional

involvement of the participants.

In 1986 I had lived in Japan for over two years. Things which struck foreigners as strange now seemed readily explicable; I was on my way to becoming a 'Japan hand'. In Sanya, however, I felt suddenly disoriented. I resolved to research the phenomenon properly. After a number of brief visits during the late 1980s, followed by two years spent studying for an MSc in Social Anthropology at the London School of Economics, I returned to Japan to prepare the present work in 1993.

II. What is a day labourer?

The definition of a day labourer is, as they say, contested. According to the Ministry of Labour (MoL), there are fewer than 50,000 day labourers in Japan [2], whereas another government department, the Labour Statistics Bureau of the Management and Coordination Agency (MCA), says there are about 1.2 million (MCA 1995:72-3). The reason for this gross disparity will soon be made apparent.

'Day labourer' is the most common translation of the Japanese hiyatoi rōdōsha, which literally means 'a worker employed by the day'. Some Japanese workers and activists

2 Official figure: 48,517 as of Jan.'95. Interview with MoL official, 7/3/95.

insist that hiyatoi rōdōsha should be translated 'daily worker' because 'labourer' corresponds more closely to the Japanese rōmusha which sounds pejorative to them, implying unskilled, menial labour [3]. Others, by contrast, take pride in describing themselves as hiyatoi rōmusha--rōmusha having a more proletarian ring than rōdōsha, and more obviously being translated as 'labourer' [4]. I choose to use the term 'day labourer' simply because it is familiar in the English language.

In fact, very few people satisfy the literal definition. Even the strictest day labourer will sometimes work on period contracts (yūki keiyaku) which last at least a few days and typically involve living nearby a construction site at a labour camp (hanba), although a substantial amount of the work done by my informants does last for just one day, with payment made in cash, on the day. 'Hiyatoi rōdōsha' is an occupational category recognized by most Japanese, and one with a long history which clearly differentiates it from other forms of employment (see Ch2).

3 E.g. "In media reports they use the term 'vagrant' (furōsha) or 'labourer' (rōmusha), a discriminatory term used to distinguish them from 'workers', although they work just the same" (Onishi, 1994:11).

4 E.g. Mr. Nakamura, veteran day labourer and activist of Sanya (F1094); note also that a workers' newsletter published in Kamagasaki during the '70s was deliberately entitled Rōmusha Tosei (The Labourer's Profession); see Terashima 1976].

But 'day labourer' does not just describe a particular working arrangement. The term also carries a rich set of cultural associations: with poverty, struggle, loneliness, failure, vagabondage, and, like Hope at the bottom of Pandora's Box, freedom. From Yoshida Hideo's melancholy early reportage, Hikasegi Aiwa (lit. 'A Sad Tale of Earning by the Day', Yoshida 1930), to Okabayashi Nobuyasu's celebrated '80s pop ballad Sanya Burûzu (Sanya Blues), day labourers have inspired writers and musicians to put the sadness of the disaffiliated worker before a mainstream audience. In a lighter vein, songs like Soeda Satsuki's Sutoton-bushi before World War 2 and more recently those sung by Ueki Hitoshi have celebrated the happy-go-lucky aspect of the stereotyped day labourer. Miwa Akihiro's Yoi Tomake no Uta pays tribute to the courage and determination of a day-labouring mother. Thus a small but vivid branch of Japanese popular culture is dedicated to these people and their haunts.

Again, the Japanese language is peppered with terms to describe day labourers, from the stiffly bureaucratic (hikasegi ninpu, nikkyu rôdôsha, hiyô kasegi, etc.) through the colloquial (nikoyon, ankô, gonzô, etc.) to the downright insulting (tachinbô, pû-tarô). To the left they are jiyû-rôdôsha or ryûdoteki-na kasô rôdôsha (free workers, flexible lower-class workers), and a sizeable

academic association [5] publishes frequent bulletins and an annual collection of papers on the political, social and cultural significance of day labourers.

Strictly speaking, the main subject of this thesis is 'yoseba day labourers', traditional day labourers who look for work in urban labour markets called yoseba. These are very clearly defined zones, found in most large Japanese cities, where day labourers gather to look for work and employers, or their representatives, come to look for casual labour. The term literally means 'a gathering place'. Yoseba day labourers used to work in many industries, but nowadays they work mainly in two industries: construction and (to a lesser extent) longshoring.

Like 'hiyatoi rōdōsha', the word 'yoseba' is controversial. Day labourers are 'free workers' (jiyū rōdōsha) in the strictly limited Marxist sense of the term, which is to say they are not bound by any legally binding ties to an employer. But the question of whether they are free in a broader sense is a fundamental one, embedded in the language associated with the occupation. The word 'yoseba' derives from the causative form of the verb 'yuru', (to gather, meet, or assemble), and literally means 'a place where (people) are made to gather'. There is an

5 The Japan Association for the Study of Yoseba (JASY; Yoseba Gakkai).

alternative word, 'yoriba' which uses the ordinary form and literally means 'a place where (people) gather'.

Many day labourers and activists are keenly aware of this distinction. Some prefer 'yoriba', because it implies that they gather and seek work as free agents, not as passive objects of capitalism. Others prefer 'yoseba', because they think they are in fact victims of capitalism. Thus both terms are prone to accusations of political incorrectness. The question of free agency versus coercion was the strongest single theme running through my conversations with day labourers; I discuss it chiefly in Ch8. In this thesis I use the term 'yoseba' simply because it is the more widely known of the two.

The yoseba is typically a small area, embedded in the city, where men stand in the street very early in the morning and look for work opportunities. There are two basic ways of doing this: formally, through the casual labour exchanges set up in yoseba by national and local government agencies; or informally, through negotiation with street labour recruiters called tehaishi (lit. 'suppliers'), who usually have some connection with the yakuza.

The MoL population figure is derived by counting up people holding the MoL's day labourers' white handbook (shiro-techô), used to register at an exchange and to claim casual unemployment benefit (see Ch3:IVa). However, many

day labourers do not carry the handbook for various reasons: some have been stripped of it for making fraudulent claims, others work in areas lacking casual employment exchanges, others do not carry it because they are working informally, perhaps claiming social security at the same time. Hence the MoL figure is an obvious underestimate.

Even so, MoL statistics (tables 1 and 2, in appendix 1) give a clear picture of day labouring as a steadily declining occupation, at least in the formal sector, with men removing themselves from the market either by not registering or by not using their registered status to get work through the official channels. Handbook-carrying day labourers declined by 81% in 25 years, from 256,000 in 1970 to 48,500 in January 1995, while person-days of registered labour fell faster still, from 4.3 million per month in 1970 to 327,000 in 1990 (table 1) -- a decline of 92% in 20 years. The proportion of registered day labourers using their handbooks to get at least one day's work a month also declined steadily, from 89% in 1970 to just 34% in 1990 (ibid), indicating that a growing proportion of registered day labourers are effectively unemployed or relying on the informal, street-corner labour market.

Until 1994, day labourers needed to get stamps showing evidence of employment for an average of 14 days a month in order to maintain eligibility for dole payments on days

without work.

In 1994 the Ministry of Labour responded to the long-running recession which started in 1990 by reducing the minimum to 13 days a month, and raising the maximum daily dole payout from Y6,200 to Y7,500.

From 1970 to 1990 the number of days worked per month fell steadily closer to the all-important figure of 14 (table 2). Meanwhile unemployed days per month for non-dormant day labourers rose throughout the period. The net result: whereas active day labourers worked six times more days than they claimed the dole in 1970, by 1990 they were claiming almost as many days as they worked, stretching the dole system to the limit of its viability. If the average number of days worked by non-dormant day labourers declines far beyond 13 days a month, it will probably signify the collapse of the system, since most day labourers will not then be getting enough work to qualify for the dole.

The broad definition of day labourers used by the Management and Coordination Agency gives a very different picture. The MCA figure includes all workers on contracts of less than 30 days, or working without benefit of a contract. (MCA 1995:72). Over half the people classified as day labourers by the MCA are women, many of them working as piece workers at home (table 3). My study does not cover these people: it is restricted to the almost exclusively male population of the yoseba districts. It is

significant, however, that a government agency will admit to such a substantial population of workers with virtually zero security of employment. If one looks at other categories of irregular workers -- part-time, casual, temporary, self-employed, etc., my rough estimate is that some 17 million Japanese, or about a quarter of the total workforce, are working with very little job security (table 4) [6]. In other words, the yoseba day labourers are just the tip of a huge iceberg of insecure labour, which appears from government figures to be declining, but much more slowly than the yoseba day labourer population. The decline is largely being caused by the dwindling population of rural smallholders which is a major element in the 'family workers' (kazoku jūgyōsha) category. 'Casual employee' (rinji) is an increasing category, although one doubts whether it fully reflects the vast number of corporate employees on various forms of short-term contract.

This thesis is primarily about yoseba day labourers. They are hard to count. Matsuzawa, perhaps the best-known Japanese authority, estimates 400,000 yoseba day labourers in one paper (1988c:149), but 30-40,000, (with another 150,000 "migrant and other mobile low class workers") in

6 Steven (1988:103), using different definitions and terminology, calculates a 'floating reserve army' of over 13.2 million people in the Japanese working class, with another 9.2 million economically inactive people classified as 'latent' and 'stagnant' reserve.

another paper published the same year (1988a:65). My own semi-informed guess is that there could be up to 100,000 day labourers making regular or occasional use of the yoseba, made up of 45,000 or so registered with the MoL plus about the same number of unregistered men.

Although a majority of broad-definition day labourers are women, nearly all yoseba day labourers are men. In the Japanese countryside all-woman road gangs are still a common enough sight, and women do many kinds of demanding labour which tend to be reserved for men in most advanced industrialized societies. There used to be far more female construction workers [7], and even in the modern yoseba a handful of women can be found who carry the white handbook, mostly while doing office cleaning work. However, in cities the burgeoning service sector has provided sufficient employment in restaurants, convenience stores, etc. to take women away from heavy manual labour, and the doya-gai are inhabited overwhelmingly by men. These men are my principal subjects; the role of casual female labour in the Japanese economy is another vast topic beyond the scope of the present study.

Yoseba day labourers are as clearly distinguished by residential patterns as by employment practices. Many of them live in cheap lodging houses, called doya in Japanese

7 Kōriyama (1983) is the autobiography of a female radical activist who worked as a day labourer in Tokyo during the 1950s.

(a street-slang inversion of yado, an inn). Areas with many doya are called doya-gai (lodging house towns). In three famous cases, the yoseba is also a doya-gai: Kamagasaki, in Osaka; Sanya, in Tokyo, and Kotobuki, in Yokohama, where I did most of my fieldwork. Day labourers sometimes refer to these three places as Kama (the first character of Kamagasaki); Yama (an alternate reading of the first character, 'mountain', in Sanya) and Hama (the second character in Yokohama). Kama, Yama, Hama: They form a natural trio, and there is a strong sense of solidarity among these three great urban oases of non-mainstream culture.

Today there are reckoned to be roughly 21,000 day-labourers at Kamagasaki, 9,000 at Sanya, 6,000 at Kotobuki, with another 3,000 using the yoseba at Sasashima in Nagoya and smaller numbers at various other yoseba [8].

III. Fieldwork

I spent 20 months based in Yokohama, from May 15, 1993 to March 29, 1995. I visited Kotobuki several times a week and also made field trips lasting several days each to Sanya, Kamagasaki, Sasashima, Chikko (in Fukuoka) and

8 Police figures, cited by MoL official, 7/3/95. Yoseba activists give somewhat higher estimates.

Tobata (in Kitakyushu). I stayed in doya rooms in Kotobuki for several days on six different occasions.

In the yoseba, I made a point of getting up as early as possible in order to observe the daily job market. I attempted to get employed as a day labourer myself, but never succeeded. This was the greatest disappointment during fieldwork. My period in the field happened during the worst phase of the Heisei recession (c.1990-5), and work was very scarce even for day labourers far better qualified than myself. This, and deep suspicion on the part of the tehaishi about employing such an obviously foreign-looking worker, were the main reasons for this failure.

However, I learned as much as I could about work from listening to hundreds of day labourers talking about it. I shared their lives in other ways, living in doya, drinking with them in the street, gambling in the numerous illegal gambling dens in Kotobuki, and generally mingling in as best I could.

I did not use a tape recorder, and only on one occasion did I take a camera with me to the field. Both these items tend to be viewed with suspicion by day labourers, many of whom have reasons for preferring to remain anonymous. I recorded material only on pocket memo pads, which I refrained from producing in front of an informant. I am convinced that any kind of simultaneous

recording of conversations qualitatively affects the relationship between fieldworker and subject, usually to the detriment of the data obtained.

For similar reasons, I refrained from carrying out formal interviews, except on three occasions early in fieldwork; and I generally avoided asking questions except where they arose naturally out of the conversation. Nonetheless, I was able to build up quite a clear picture of several dozen day labourers whom I met on numerous occasions and most of whom I now view as friends.

I attempted to make up for the lack of simultaneous recording by making notes in my memo pads as soon as possible after each conversation and incident, and by inputting data straight into my computer, usually the same day or the following day. This produced some 600,000 words of fieldnotes, which are the principal source of material for this thesis.

I also did my best to read the massive Japanese-language literature on day labourers. In one of these books (Kawahara 1987), the author tells how he went to Kotobuki in search of the truth about his younger brother, who joined the air-force, quit after a couple of years, vanished completely, then showed up seven years later at the family home in Akita pref., ill and on the verge of death. He died three days later, leaving no evidence of where he'd been except for a few Yokohama place names,

muttered in his delirium, which led Kawahara to Kotobuki. On his first visit he showed a photo of his younger brother to several men hanging around the Labour Centre: one man said the brother had treated him to a meal a month before, another said he'd met him just the previous day. All said they knew him. In fact the photo was ten years old and the brother had already been dead six months by then. Time melts, identities blur and merge, people misremember and sometimes people lie... in Kotobuki.

It was not uncommon for people to contradict themselves in conversation with me. I would notice discrepancies between statements made several months apart; or a man might change his world-view after another drink; or one man might accuse another of lying.

In this uncertain and disorienting environment, I use the following principles to try and identify patterns of thought and behaviour among the widely varying people I met in Kotobuki:

1. I have given greater credence to statements that do not have implications for the honour or social status of the informant.
2. I have given greater credence to statements by informants whom I know relatively well.
3. Where I was told two different stories, I have tended to give greater credence to the second version, told to me after I had got to know the informant better.

The fact remains that Kotobuki is the kind of place where one can make gross errors even after years of fieldwork. Thus I have the strong impression that contrary to conventional wisdom, there are very few ethnic Koreans or Burakumin outcasts (see glossary) among the day labourer population. However, people in both these groups are physically indistinguishable from other day labourers and, being subject to discrimination, have sound reasons for concealing their identity.

IV. Outline of the present study

This thesis is an attempt to account for the persistence through time of day labourers and their gathering places in Japan, to understand the lives of contemporary day labourers, and to set them in the context of broader Japanese society.

The first step is to examine the history of day labouring, which accounts for much of the resonance now carried by the term (Ch2). This is followed by a detailed ethnography of Kotobuki, the Yokohama yoseba which was my main fieldwork site (Ch3), describing the environment and the working and leisure lives of day labourers, plus the employment and welfare institutions which influence their lives.

At first glance Kotobuki looks much the same as the other yoseba around Japan. However, a closer inspection reveals striking regional differences in the way casual labour is negotiated and perceived (Ch4). The yoseba at Tokyo and Osaka have longer histories than Kotobuki, and the associations between the yoseba and other stigmatized zones such as Burakumin districts, prostitution quarters and execution grounds are much clearer than in the young city of Yokohama. In northern Kyushu the yoseba have largely been supplanted by rôdô-geshuku, 'workers' boarding houses', which combine the functions of cheap accommodation and work introductions. All over Japan, freedom and security emerge as the issues involved in casual labour, but always in subtly varying ways.

The next two chapters close in on individual day labourers. In Ch5 I consider the vital statistics of yoseba day labourers in Kotobuki and elsewhere, focusing on place of origin, previous employment, age, marital status and position in sibling birth order. Ch6 presents the life histories and attitudes of 11 of my Kotobuki informants, selected to give a more detailed picture of day labourers skilled and unskilled, hopeful and desperate, amiable and otherwise. Some broad patterns of similarity emerge from this chaotic jumble of contrasting individual lives.

One set of associations with the day labourer category relate to homelessness. In Ch7 I focus on the debate over

literal homelessness ('rooflessness') versus detachment from traditional home life ('rootlessness'). For most day labourers, I argue, homelessness is a risk to be avoided rather than a defining aspect of their lives, although literal homelessness has been on the rise around the yoseba as day labouring contracts have dried up under the Heisei Recession. I also describe the various ways homes in which homes and hometowns are replicated in the yoseba, for instance through festivals and the ad hoc institution of the bonfire.

The two main interpretative chapters follow. In Ch8 I look in detail at the human condition of day labourers, exploring the themes of mobility, passivity, isolation and uncertainty in an attempt to define the areas of freedom and fate, agency and objecthood in the lives of these 'free workers'. Ch9 analyses the stigma attached to the yoseba through cross-cultural comparison with slums, ghettos and skid rows, and by reference to the Japanese concept of kegare (defilement).

Finally in Ch10 I attempt to bring together the major themes of the previous chapters and speculate about the future of Kotobuki and the yoseba in general.

Chapter 2: General Historical Background

I. Overview

Japanese history offers many examples of institutions for the control of workers which bordered on imprisonment and slavery. Slavery itself was nominally abolished in the Heian era (794-1185) and was re-abolished many times after, but "there continued to be a body of semi-slaves such as serfs, bond servants, and indentured tenants" (Price 1972:16). During the Kamakura era (1185-1333) tradesmen called hitoakibito engaged in buying and selling servants, and in the Ashikaga era (1336-1573) children were kidnapped, bought, and sold as servants (ibid).

Day labourers emerged from this culture of slavery and serfdom to pose a great challenge to their political and economic masters. Their history can be characterized as a long and continuous struggle by free workers attempting to express their autonomy on the one hand, and employers and civil authorities that have sought to control them and even incarcerate them, on the other. Sometimes these attempts to exert control have been made in the name of the workers' welfare, at other times they have been more obviously exploitative. But the struggle continues to this day.

II. Mushuku and Hinin

Short-term casual labourers appear to have played a significant role in the Japanese economy from about the middle of the 17th century. (Leupp 1992:16). Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who ruled Japan from 1583 to 1598, outlawed the employment of day labourers, which he saw as a threat to the stability of the feudal relationship between master and man, and to the all-important rice harvest. Thus even four hundred years ago, 'day labourer' ('hiyatoi' was a common term of reference then), signified far more than just a particular way of making a living. As Leupp puts it, "during the late 16th century day labor and abscondence had been nearly synonymous." (Leupp 1992:160)

Until the warlords -- Oda Nobunaga, then Hideyoshi, then Tokugawa Ieyasu -- went about unifying the nation from the mid-16th century onwards, Japan was a loose collection of mini-states, perpetually warring and intriguing against each other. Each state saw its vital interest as lying in keeping the peasantry firmly tied to the land so that the maximum possible rice tax could be extracted from them. All sorts of measures were taken to prevent peasants leaving the land, and after the Tokugawa shoguns unified the nation, regional strongmen (daimyō) tended to strengthen the rules rather than the reverse. A 1612 edict from the province of Tosa (in what is now Kochi pref., on

Shikoku island) is a case in point:

"It is a very serious crime to desert to another province. Those who assist in the getaway are equally guilty. Both ears and nose must be cut off. If, at a later time, the runaway is caught and brought back, he will be punished by death, and so will those who helped him" (ibid 7-8).

The main bureaucratic device used to prevent abscondence was the census register (ninbetsu-cho) kept by the local temple -- a forerunner of the civic family register (koseki) used in Japan today. People travelling to other parts of Japan were obliged to carry a tsûkô tegata, a sealed statement from the temple certifying that the bearer was properly registered there and had been granted permission to travel. It was in fact a sort of passport. Anyone who travelled around without this document was defined as mushuku -- literally 'without a home' (Mori 1988; Kashiwahara 1988:50). This was part of the so-called danka system -- formally enforced in 1664; formally abolished as part of the Meiji reforms in 1871 (ibid 49-50) -- under which households had to register at their local temple and receive a tera-uke, a document confirming that they accepted the Buddhist faith. Thus religious persecution (chiefly against Christians, who were supposed to renounce their faith) melded with political control, through the bureaucratic powers invested in the temples.

Strictly speaking, mushuku were homeless only in the legal sense of lacking a household of registered domicile,

though some of them may also have been literally homeless. Yado-nashi, written with the same characters as 'mushuku' but written the other way round and with Japanese rather than Chinese readings, was used to mean literal homelessness (Takayanagi 1980:28-9).

People could become 'mushuku' by their own action, typically leaving home without acquiring a tsuko tegata, or they could be made mushuku against their will, being expelled for committing a crime. Dead, they would become 'unconnected spirits' (muen-botoke), and their names would be expunged from the kakôchô, the record of the past kept by the temple. This expression, muen-botoke, is still used in Kotobuki to describe men who die with no known relatives.

Another category of people that overlapped with mushuku and day labourers was the Hinin, literally 'non-people'. The first written use of the term dates from the year 842, in the Heian era (Takayanagi 12), and meant a person who had lost his rights of citizenship for some offence, most commonly failure to pay rice taxes. These people were struck off the village register and were made to perform menial labour. By the middle ages the term had become quite complex, with several sub-divisions. Kakae-hinin ('employed non-people') were registered, kept in workhouses (koya), and set to work under workhouse bosses (koya-gashira). No-hinin ('wild non-people'), by contrast,

were unattached to any workhouse and were sometimes literally homeless. Many Tokugawa era day labourers appear to have been drawn from their ranks. For the most part a blind eye was turned, but periodic round-ups (kari-komi) expelled Hinin from the cities or put them into workhouses. The biggest of these round-ups in Edo occurred in 1743 and 1837. Other ways of controlling Hinin included forcing them to wear close-cropped hair and identifying tattoos. (Takayanagi 214-5).

III. Hiyatoi : Burakumin :: Hinin : Eta?

The Burakumin are an outcast group with an ancient history, now thought to number between 1.5 million (Sumida 1986:312) and 3 million (Yoshino and Murakoshi 1977:3). They tend to live in ghetto-like settlements known informally as buraku ('hamlet'), some of which are designated 'equality areas' (dōwa chiku) and are subject to government improvement programmes. They still experience intense discrimination from mainstream Japanese, notably in the fields of marriage, employment and education. The stigma against them is related to occupation, in particular with the meat and leather-tanning industries which were outcast monopolies until the titles of Eta and Hinin were abolished under the 'emancipation edict' of 1871 (Yoshino and Murakoshi, 1977:46). The Burakumin are the subject of

a massive Japanese-language literature (e.g. Kan 1986, 1988, Sumida 1986, Kashiwahara 1988, Takamoto 1993, etc.); English accounts include De Vos and Wagatsuma (1967), Yoshino and Murakoshi (1977) and De Vos and Wetherall (1983).

Mr. Fukada, a day labourer unionist in Kamagasaki, put it to me that day labourers are the cultural descendants of the Hinin, while the Burakumin are the biological descendants of the Eta (lit: 'filth abundant'), another despised group with ancient origins which became clearly defined during the Tokugawa era (F749-50). If true, this would imply an enduring pattern of what Murata calls the "multiple class stratification of discrimination" (sabetsu no jûsôka) (Murata 1988:19-24).

The grounds for Fukada's claim that day labourers are modern Hinin is based on two main planks: (1) They share the mobile, fluid lifestyle; (2) They are excluded from family life, though in the case of day labourers this is a cultural, rather than legal, exclusion. Being 'non-people', Hinin could not legally marry and head households, says Fukada. Eta could marry, though only to fellow Eta.

The point about marriage is contentious, but the rest of his distinction between the Eta and Hinin is confirmed by Price:

During the Ashikaga period (1336-1573) the Eta were the most fortunate of the pariah classes, that is, of the Eta-Hinin caste. They held special skills and economic

monopolies, owned property, and had a stable community life; albeit this very stability assured their continuity as an outcast population. The Hinin trades usually required less skill, so that a person could move from one Hinin trade to another with relative ease. Also the Hinin were geographically more mobile. They could move in and out of Eta or Hinin villages or take up a respectable occupation in a commoner village and in time actually become a commoner. Written records from the Tokugawa period maintain that the Eta are outcasts permanently by inheritance whereas the Hinin are outcasts only by occupation and social status. (Price 1972:21).

Note also that Eta, unlike Hinin, were incorporated into the danka system. During the Tokugawa period the main Buddhist sects maintained Eta-dera ('Eta temples'; 'defiled temples') where Eta would be registered (Kashiwahara 1988:48-58). Hinin were excluded from temple registration or had run away from the temple.

The historical relationship between Eta and Hinin was complex. In the early Tokugawa Era they were treated as synonyms, or even combined in a single word ('Eta-hinin') (Takayanagi 1981:116). Some modern scholars casually conflate them (eg Komatsu 1987:S37), while others argue that Eta became subsumed within the class of Hinin (eg Yoshino and Murakoshi, 1977:33), and yet others argue that the categories were clearly distinct from each other, at least until well into the Tokugawa Era (e.g. Price 1972:21). Sumida has it that the category of 'Hinin' disappeared at the end of the Tokugawa Era (1866), while the Eta continue to exist -- renamed Burakumin -- to this day (Sumida 1986:310). No two accounts of these two groups

concur.

Takayanagi, a historian who has written a book-length account of the Hinin, says that the two classes were mixed together until the 17th century, but were deliberately separated by the Shoguns (1981:116), as an extension of the divide-and-rule policy under which they divided the rest of society into a four-class hierarchy. Takayanagi identifies the key differences between the two classes as follows:

1. 'Eta' was an inherited status, whereas the status of 'Hinin' was generally imposed as a punishment, typically for (1) absconding from one's village; (2) failed double suicides; (3) petty theft by people under the age of 15; and (4) running illegal gambling games (Takayanagi 1981:17-26).
2. Eta were officially recognized as being superior to Hinin. For example in 18th century Edo the Hinin-gashira ('head of the Hinin') in Asakusa, Kuruma Zenshichi, was officially subordinate to the Eta-gashira ('head of the Eta') Danzaemon and was obliged to supply him with 1,000 man-days of Hinin labour each month (ibid 116) [1].
3. There was considerable friction between the two groups, developing into a protracted feud which broke out in 1720,

1 De Vos and Wetherall assert, without citing any authority, that it was the other way round: "The highest in status of these lower groups were the Hinin... Beneath the Hinin were hereditary outcasts called Eta..." (1983:4).

smoldered on for the next 150 years and erupted in a major uprising of Hinin against Eta in 1838, "because the contempt of the Eta had become too much for the Hinin to bear". This ended with the execution of the Hinin leader (ibid 121). The feud was still in full swing as the Tokugawa era came to an end and the classes were abolished (ibid 125-130). }

While there is nothing between Burakumin and day labourers remotely resembling the Tokugawa era feud between the Eta and Hinin, it is fair to say that there is very little sense of solidarity between them. Sumida Toshio, himself a Burakumin and a famous campaigner for liberation says (1986:313) that the Burakumin in Nishinari (the Osaka ward containing Kamagasaki) contemptuously refer to day labourers as tachinbō (see VII below). Sumida divides the Kamagasaki population into two groups. The former are in fairly regular employment, may have families, and contemptuously refer to the Burakumin as 'eta'. The latter are 'drifters and down-and-outs' and, he says, do not discriminate against the Burakumin.

In Sumida's division of the yoseba population one hears an echo of the old distinction between 'controlled' and 'wild' Hinin (Kakae-hinin, No-hinin). Sumida himself concedes that the inhabitants of Kamagasaki show some resemblance to Hinin (ibid). This brief sketch of a very complicated historical question suggests that the X

standard model of Japanese society, of mainstream and margin, insider and outsider, may require modification. There does seem to be evidence of a fairly consistent pattern of dualistic discrimination here.

IV. The pre-industrial proletariat

Tokugawa Ieyasu came to power in 1600 after crushing his opponents at the Battle of Sekigahara, and was given the title of shogun by the puppet emperor in 1603. This was the start of the Tokugawa shogunate, a 265-year period (1603-1868) also known as the Edo era after the city of Edo, present-day Tokyo. The shogunate was born during a period of frantic urban construction: 25 cities were founded between 1580 and 1610 (Leupp 1992:11-12). As the era wore on, the policy of the shogunal government was marked by an increasingly irreconcilable contradiction between the shoguns' desires to (1) maintain a large, settled agrarian population which could be relied on to turn in the rice harvest very year, and (2) develop a large, flexible urban labour force which would help in the rapid construction of cities and castles. In the rural districts, ruthless exploitation caused large numbers of peasant rebellions (2,700 big enough to be recorded during the Tokugawa era [ibid 8]), while in the cities, periodic crackdowns to send absconders back to the country

alternated with periods of turning a blind eye because their labour was so obviously needed.

A pre-industrial urban proletariat developed, which was useful to the shoguns and daimyo in supporting the Tokugawa economy -- especially mining, construction and transportation -- but was also big enough and rebellious enough to pose a potential threat to shogunal control. The urban equivalent of the peasant rebellions were frequent violent street riots called uchi-kowashi (lit. 'smashings'), often directed at rice-shops or pawn-shops and demanding cheaper rice or the free return of pawned items (Kodansha 1989:174).

One reason why day labourers were such a potent threat to law and order was that their numbers were so great. In the castle town of Okayama, for instance, 28% of the registered households belonged to day labourers by the mid-17th century; corresponding figures of 17% for Okazaki in 1801 and 39% for Yamaguchi in 1844 have also survived (Leupp 1992:4). Matsumoto estimates that by the end of the Tokugawa era 60% of the Edo commoner population consisted of "day labourers, palanquin bearers, domestic servants, beggars, prostitutes or entertainers" (ibid). Even the poorer class of samurai did day labour on the side to supplement their income (ibid 126). These figures have to be treated with some caution, since usage of the various words for 'day labourer' seem to have varied in

significance from 'any person working for a wage' to 'vagrant': "Wage-work (chinpu) is, by the current custom, referred to as day labor (hiyô)..." [2]. Moreover, the raw numbers of people involved was enormous: In 1700 the population of Edo was roughly 1 million, making it one of the biggest cities in the world. Osaka had a population of 400,000, and some 15% of the Japanese people were living in cities. Only Britain and Holland had higher rates of urbanization (ibid 11-12).

The Tokugawa shogunate's attempts to control and repress the day labourer population were restrained to a degree by the frequent labour shortages which afflicted the big cities. Smith (1959:110, 124-5) contrasts this situation with the labour surpluses that were common in western European cities during this period, and Leupp suggests that this difference in the supply and demand of labour enabled Tokugawa day labourers to enjoy considerably better working conditions than their European counterparts (Leupp 1992:146-7). Even so, economic fluctuations and in particular, poor rice harvests, occasionally reduced large numbers of day labourers to vagrant status and made them into a greater threat to law and order. At such times the blind eye policy towards urban migration from the rural provinces would be discarded and rules enforced when numbers of migrants appeared to be rising too high. But

2 Dazai Shundai, c.1730, quoted in Leupp 1992:17.

the shogunate also imposed a series of organizational structures on day labourers within the city, as we shall now see.

V. License, welfare, control

Early attempts at licensing systems for day labourers in Edo entailed the appointment of day labourer chiefs who had the job of issuing licenses. The earliest surviving edict dates from 1653:

"As it was formerly commanded, people working as day-laborers must receive a license (fuda) from the day-laborers' chiefs (hiyatoi-gashira). Anyone employing persons without such a license will be fined. This is a criminal offense." [3]

These 'fuda' were wooden tags to be worn on the person, and were similar to ones already used in licensing systems for beggars (Leupp 1992:161). The Edo authorities also attempted to set maximum wage levels for day labourers, expressed in terms of the number of labourers to be supplied by an oyakata -- leader of a work gang -- for a fixed amount of gold. Thus in 1657, with wages soaring after the great Meireki Fire of that year, the shogunate set an upper limit of one ryô (roughly 11 grammes of gold) per 65 day labourers with their own tools, per day. If

3 Takayanagi Shinzo and Ishii Ryosuke, Ofuregaki Kanpô Shûsei (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1976) No.2343, cited in Leupp 1992:160.

the day labourers did not have tools, no fewer than 70 should do a day's work for one ryo (ibid). The oyakata-- a term still very much in use today, literally meaning 'father figure' -- thus could skim off as much as he could get away with. He seems to have been half-way between a worksite foreman and a modern street labour recruiter (tehaishi).

In 1665 the shogunate moved to strengthen the licensing system by setting up a day labourer registry, the Hiyatoi-za. The authorities frequently tried to tighten their control of day labourers, for example by adding new professions to those covered by the registry, by cracking down on day labourers who avoided paying the license fee by sharing one license between several men, by obliging the registry chiefs to collect lists of day labourers from their landlords, and by holding the chiefs responsible for the behaviour of men on their lists (Leupp 1992:162-3).

The Registry finally collapsed in 1797. Yoshida suggests two reasons for this: (1) The post of registry chief had become a financial liability and was thus very hard to fill; (2) The whole system was based on a faulty premise: that 'day labourer' could be defined as an occupational status (mibun) comparable to 'samurai' or 'artisan' when in fact it was a mere 'condition' (jôtai)

that people easily drifted into and out of [4].

Probably a third reason for the collapse of the Registry was a shift in the shogunate's approach to the control of day labourers. During the Kansei reform (1787-93), the concept of regulation was giving way to a dual approach of carrot and stick. During this period the Edo authorities collected 22,000 ryo from houseowning townsmen, and another 10,000 from the shogunal treasury, to fund the establishment of a poor relief office called the Machikaisho. "Up to 410,000 needy townspeople were receiving assistance, in the form of rice and money, by the Tenpo period (1830-44)" (Leupp 1992:159).

The period of the Kansei reform also saw the birth of another famous Edo establishment: the ninsoku yoseba, or 'navvy gathering place'. According to which scholar you listen to, this was either a highly progressive institution to make solid citizens with useful skills out of vagrants, or a forced labour camp for innocent victims. Takikawa (1994) is typical of the former position, Matsuzawa (1988) of the latter [5]. Several day labourers told me that this was the origin of the word 'yoseba' as used today.

4 Yoshida Nobuyuki, Toshi Minshū no Seikatsu to Henkaku Ishiki in Rekishigaku Kenkyū #534, Oct. 1984, in Leupp 1992:163-4.

5 "The aim was that of preventive detention and intimidation of the rest of the population" (Matsuzawa 1988c:152).

VI. The Ninsoku Yoseba of 1790

The prototype for the ninsoku yoseba was a 'mizugae ninsoku yoseba' (water-changing navvies' gathering place) which was established on the penal island of Sado, in present-day Niigata pref., in 1778 (Leupp 1992:166). That year Matsudaira Ukyonosuke, a leading Edo law-enforcement official, wrote to the Edo City Commissioner as follows:

"Since there are many vagrants these days, evil deeds are being done. Therefore [I] have decided to send 40 or 50 innocent vagrants who have committed no other particular offense (muzai no mushuku) to Sado as water-changers (mizugae). Since there are such people, put them in workhouses (koya) and set them to work. If some among them mend their ways, they should [be allowed to] return home. In any case, this is to discipline immoral, dissipated vagrants" (Leupp 1992:169; his additions).

This statement is very explicit on the point that the inmates of the camp are not guilty of any crime -- though Takikawa repeatedly points out that the term 'muzai' (blameless, crime-free) was used to describe people who had completed sentences as well as those who had never committed an offence (Takikawa 1994 passim). The most direct inspiration for the ninsoku yoseba was the hinin goya, or workhouse for outcasts, popularized by the authorities of Kanazawa, who opened their first workhouse in 1670. There is evidence that the categories of labourer (ninsoku) and outcast (Hinin) were confused, especially by the officials on distant Sado (Leupp 1992:170).

In 1790, spurred to action by the Tenmei uprising of 1787, the Edo bakufu (shogunal government) decided to take action against the growing number of unregulated labourers and vagrants on the streets of Edo. Hasegawa Heizo, an Arson and Theft Inspector, proposed a brand-new yoseba for Edo [6]. It was built (in just two months, by Hinin labourers brought over from the tame [Hinin prison] at Asakusa) on an island of reclaimed land in the middle of the Sumida River, close to the estuary, in between two existing islands, Tsukudajima and Ishikawajima (Takikawa 1994:117). A deep moat was excavated between the yoseba and the two neighboring islands. The new island became known as 'Vagrant Island' (Mushuku-jima) by the people of Edo (ibid 116).

As in the Sado yoseba, the inmates were not necessarily guilty of any crime. At first it was simply a place for vagrants, including "sons disinherited because of their dissipation and merchants whose morals have deteriorated" (Leupp 1992:171). After 1820 the authorities started to put petty criminals in the yoseba as well (ibid). The site area was 12,000 square yards, and though it was designed for 120 to 130 inmates, it was always overcrowded, housing up to 600 by the Tenpo period (ibid).

At the yoseba inmates were put to work on such projects as making charcoal briquettes, recycling old

6 Takikawa 1994 is a biography of Hasegawa.

paper, dredging rivers and milling rice (Hayashi 1988). Two centuries later, paper recycling and river-dredging are still underclass occupations [7]. Work parties were sent out from the yoseba to other parts of Edo, and their members became known as 'water-drop navvies' (mizu-tama ninsoku) from the distinctive pattern of water-drops on their light-brown uniforms (Takikawa 1994:117). By the mid-19th century, "oil squeezing became the largest enterprise, bringing the workhouse eight hundred gold ryo in profits every year." (Leupp 1992:171) Inmates were paid for their work and were forced to save one-third of their income (ibid).

Three years was the standard term at the yoseba, though the term was occasionally shortened or lengthened. Three times a month the yoseba inmates were subjected to moral lectures from scholars of Shingaku -- a Confucian-Shinto-Buddhist amalgam with a heavy stress on the dignity of hard work (ibid 173-4). People who attempted to escape from the yoseba faced draconian punishments -- Hasegawa pointed out that an earlier workhouse, set up in Fukugawa ten years earlier to house homeless paupers after the Tenmei famine, had failed because it was too easy to escape and the penalties for doing so were too soft (Takikawa 1994:123).

7 See Glossary: 'Bataya', and F770.

No such criticism could be made of the new yoseba. Among punishments prescribed in the 'Yoseba Official Punishments' (Yoseba Go-shioki Tsuki) announced in 1797 were: the death penalty for breaking out of the yoseba; tattooing and flogging for running away from work within the yoseba; 300 days in manacles for conspiring to escape even if the attempt was abandoned; and flogging or exile to a distant island for gambling in the yoseba (Leupp 1992:172-3).

The rules attempt to distinguish between yoseba labourers and Hinin, and stated that anyone discovered to have concealed their Hinin identity would be handed over to the Hinin headman. But note that in the same year the yoseba was set up, the authorities also tightened their control over the Hinin:

If the Hinin broke the rules by stealing, using coercion, or leaving their assigned areas (my emphasis), they were subject to fixed penalties. The first time they left they were just scolded and told to stay. The second time they were tattooed on the upper arm, the third time around the left wrist, and the fourth time they were killed. These penalties were strengthened in 1790; the first time they were tattooed on the upper left arm, the second on the left wrist, and the third time they were killed" (Price 1972:27).

Leupp (1992:174) says the yoseba movement lasted about 80 years, from the 1780s to the 1860s. After Edo, yoseba were established at Nagasaki (1814), in Osaka (c.1840), and in Nagaoka (1851 or 1852). Interestingly Fukawa (1994:90-1) describes one set at Kobe in 1871, after the Meiji Restoration; it only lasted three years, however. At the

very end of the Tokugawa shogunate, most of the inmates of the Edo yoseba were relocated to Usubetsu, on Hokkaido, and put to work fishing (Leupp 1992:174). The site became a straightforward prison, and was later relocated to Sugamo in 1896 and then to Fuchu, where the main Tokyo prison remains today (Takikawa 1994:173-4). Among modern day labourers who know their history, the ninsoku yoseba is remembered with special loathing: in one year alone, over 1,000 inmates died (Leupp 1992:173). Today the word 'yoseba' is still used to mean 'prison' in yakuza slang (Matsushige 1988:207).

But even the Tokugawa shoguns could not control the proletariat forever. As their grip on power weakened in the mid-19th century, Edo and the other great cities were hit by wave upon wave of street protests. The blind fury of the uchikowashi gave way to more overtly political protests called yonaoshi, or 'world rectification' movements. Walthall (1986) says that day labourers, vagrants and drifters played a major role in these urban uprisings, and in the end they must have contributed to the collapse of the shogunate.

VII. The industrial revolution

Moving into the Meiji era (1868-1912), labour arrangements bordering on imprisonment showed no sign of

disappearing. The shift from feudalism to capitalism happened very quickly, and capitalists viewed their relations with employees in terms of lord and retainer (Crump 1983:158). The role of the oyakata expanded, and he became a kind of employer-landlord, who would sign up labourers on exploitative long-term contracts and house them in primitive on-site dormitories called hanba or naya (Matsuzawa 1988c:152).

Employers were supported by a series of governments which made virtually any kind of attempt by workers to improve their situation illegal, most notoriously through the Public Peace Police Law (Chian Keisatsu-hō) enacted in 1900, Clause 17 of which forbade workers "to stop work or refuse offers of employment for the purpose of bringing about a strike" (Crump 1983:20-22). This piece of legislation "proved to be the death knell to all phases of the labor movement" (Katayama 1918:58-9).

While organized labor struggled in this hostile environment, individual resistance appears to have been widespread, often expressed in systematic disloyalty to employers. Many workers put a positive value on mobility, and felt something like contempt for those who stayed in the same job for long. Here is an anonymous machinist writing in 1898:

"A worker is someone who enters society with his skills and who travels far and wide with them. Who could possibly credit with a spirit of advancement those

workers who cling to a single place and put up with all sorts of abuse? ... Past and present, whatever the occupation, a worker is someone who travels broadly, enters factories here and there, accumulates greater skills and, overcoming adversity, finally becomes a worker deserving of the name." [8]

Gordon describes how frustrated managers in turn-of-the-century industry tried various tactics to prevent 'spontaneous job-switching', including forms of seniority-based pay systems (forerunners of the stereotypical modern Japanese corporate pay system), withholding of wages that would be lost if the worker left without notice, and mutual pacts with other employers not to take on workers who had run away from each other's factories. Gordon argues that these control systems largely failed, the reason being that workers did not change jobs simply to look for better terms, but because, as the machinist's comment just quoted suggests, mobility was seen as a good thing in its own right. Figures for the Ishikawajima Shipyard and the Shibaura Engineering Works, two of Tokyo's biggest manufacturing centres, showed that in 1902 over 80% of the workers had been there for five years or less, and that about half of the workers seemed to move back and forth between the two companies (Gordon 1985:33-6) This high degree of mobility contrasts sharply with the high degree of immobility observed among 19th century East London casual labourers (Jones 1971:81-4).

8 Article in Rôdô Sekai, 4/1/1898, p.6, translated in Gordon 1985:36.

Why this high degree of mobility in Japan? Littler (1982:148-50) points out that the Japanese industrial revolution (c.1880-1915), unlike its British predecessor, took place at a time of economic expansion, so that the economy was more often troubled by labour shortages than by unemployment. It is striking that Smith and Leupp say much the same about the Tokugawa era (see citation above), and this long-running tendency towards labour shortage-- perhaps related to the labour-intensive nature of rice cultivation -- may be one of the most important factors differentiating Japan from other countries in the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

While the labour aristocracy embraced job mobility, those further down the labour hierarchy had it thrust upon them, picking up casual work wherever they could find it. Some of the worst-off lived in kichin yado, cheap doss-houses which were the forerunners of the doya. Yokoyama (1985[1899]:62-3) counted 135 of these around Tokyo in 1898. The disgusting conditions in one kichin yado are described by Matsubara (1988[1888]). The patrons were peddlars, mendicant monks and travelling actors along with day labourers (hiyatoi; tachinbô). Five or six residents would share a single room, staking out territory by laying out their possessions. Most of the men were travelling, some of them with wives and children in tow. The kichin yado charged 3 sen per night (Matsubara, 1988[1888]:21-3),

only one sen less than the rent quoted by Matsubara for the cheapest kind of family accommodation (ibid 158) [9].

One technique often used to maintain some kind of stability in the workforce was to employ indirectly, via an oyakata. He would be paid a lump sum, out of which he would pay his apprentices (who often lived in his house or in a dormitory owned by him) an amount agreed between them without reference to the end employer. Matsubara says that the oyakata of late-19th century Tokyo are

the section commanders (shō-taichō) of this society, and are called foreman (tōryō; also implies 'pillar of society') or room-boss (heya-gashira); they have a certain amount of authority, and are influential men about the neighborhood as becomes one who has some 40 or 50 men under his command. (Matsubara 1988:156)

There is something of the modern tehaishi about the oyakata, and in both cases the exact status of the individual varies greatly -- from wholly independent operator to employed company operative via all points in between. In Matsubara's day the principle end employer was the public sector -- principally the civil engineering department of the prefectural government (fuchō no doboku-ka). Sometimes the bureaucrats would go directly to the oyakata with their labour requirements; sometimes they would go via a private company, which in turn sometimes used a higher-level middle man called an ukeoishi (contractor) to pass on requests to oyakata (Matsubara

9 100 sen = 1 yen.

1988:156). So in some cases the employment chain went bureaucrat - private company - middle man - foreman-worker. Very similar chains may be found in the modern construction industry (see X below).

Yokoyama (1985[1899]) offers further interesting parallels to modern conditions. He divides 'day labourers' (hikasegi ninsoku) into six categories: repairers of roads and bridges; general navvies (dokata); those employed in factories; those working for carpenters, plasterers and stone masons; those engaged in road haulage (shariki); and the tachinbō-- men who would wait, typically at the bottom of a hill, and help the shariki get his cart up the hill by pushing from behind while he pulled from the front. For this service they would get a very small payment (ibid:33). The other kinds of day labourers often sustained a household, but "the tachinbo has no house" (tachinbō ni wa ka'oku nashi). The tachinbo of Tokyo would sleep in kichin yado in Asakusa and elsewhere during the cold months, and on benches in Ueno Park, Kudan or Asakusa Park when it was warm enough (ibid 39-40). Yokoyama remarks that bad diet has broken the spirit of these men, yet still they will remark that they "wouldn't do something so stupid as to get a steady job" (Oraa, jōyatoi no yō na baka-na koto wa shinê -- ibid:40) -- a comment which may still be heard in the yoseba today.

If the tachinbo seem to correspond to some of the more marginal modern day labourers, several of Yokoyama's other types show the shrewd, tactical approach of the more successful day labourers known to me. The road and bridge repairers routinely had their wages skimmed by recruiters (a practice known today as pin-hane), with a 40 sen day wage paid by the local authority being reduced to 32 or 33 sen by the time the ukeoishi and oyakata had taken their cuts. Women workers got just 20 sen (ibid 33-4).

They responded to this exploitation by having a relationship with their boss (oyakata) which Yokoyama describes as "extremely weak". The majority of them worked on different jobs in different places every day, and they would not hesitate to work for a different oyakata if he was offering one or two sen a day extra. They had "no sincerity or compassion towards the boss." In dramatic contrast, some had allowed themselves to get into debt to an oyakata by accepting advances on their wages, and were forced to work for as little as 25 or 26 sen a day (ibid:34). These free and unfree day labourers have their counterparts in the yoseba and ninpu-dashi workers of today (see Ch4:IV).

There are also numerous Meiji era accounts of employers struggling to physically restrain their workers from escaping. Women were being rapidly drafted into the labour force and were especially prone to prison-like

conditions, generally justified on the grounds that the employer was acting in loco parentis, and had to defend the women's sexual virtue (Crump 1983:17). This often had tragic results, as when 31 young spinning girls were burned to death in the sealed dormitory of a spinning company in 1899. (Katayama 1918:57)

Men were also subjected to forms of forced labour. On coalmines and construction sites, bond labourers were kept locked up in the notorious 'tako-beya' (see VIII below [10]). Similarly restrictive were the naya -- literally a barn or warehouse. "Our miners live in congested barracks like rows of sheds, which are built by the mining company," runs an account from 1918 (Katayama 1918:79).

But as Katayama points out, the physical closeness in which miners lived their lives, and their ability to talk in secret while working underground, also gave them a special solidarity and made it easier for them to organize (Katayama 1918:79-80). Throughout the period there were uprisings by miners, peaking in 1907 when there were major, violent insurrections, at the Ashio copper mine in Tochigi (February), at the Horonai coal mine in Hokkaido (April), at the Besshi copper mine in Shikoku (June) and at the

10 The emergence of the tako-beya has been dated to the 1890s, when work began on opening up Hokkaido for commercial exploitation. 'Tako-beya' literally means 'octopus room'. There are many theories as to the origin of the word, the most popular being that it comes from the idea of an octopus pot: you can get in but you can't get out (Furukawa in Takada 1977:219-20).

Ikuno silver mine near Osaka (July). Each one was put down by military intervention. (Crump 1983:163-4).

In this economy of coercion, day labourers had an important role to play for the capitalists and political authorities, as what Marx called "a disposable industrial reserve army, ... for the changing needs of the self-expansion of capital, a mass of human material always ready for exploitation" [11]. For this reason, the more doctrinaire Japanese Marxists have tended to label day labourers as class traitors, part of what Marx called "the 'dangerous class', the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society... [whose] conditions of life... prepare it... for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue" (Marx and Engels 1977[1888]:92) [12].

Matsuzawa dates the birth of the modern-style yoseba to the end of the 19th century:

Between 1885 and 1890, yoseba were established for the first time in back streets and flophouse quarters to keep up with the growing hanba demands for day labour power. (Matsuzawa 1988c:153).

The hanba were prison-like workers' quarters which Matsuzawa sees as synonymous with the 'naya' (see above). Recruiting agents would come to the slum districts of big

11 Marx, Capital, quoted in Matsuzawa 1988c:147).

12 I have not found any concrete instances of day labourers being used as scab labour to break up strikes, though it has happened in America (Anderson 120-1).

cities in search of labour for the mines and factories. The alternative to a lengthy spell in a hanba would be casual work "as navvies, carters, ricksha men, scavengers and buskers" (ibid). Here we see the origins of the choice facing the modern day labourer, between period contracts (often at work camps still known as hanba) and one-day contracts. In 1879 the Ryukyu islands (now Okinawa pref.) were annexed, and during the Meiji era the Ainu were steadily dispossessed of their land in Hokkaido. Displaced people from both areas came into the yoseba and worked as day labourers.

During the late-19th and early-20th centuries there were some efforts to organize day labourers. As early as 1882 a sort of union for rickshaw drivers was set up, though it never got very far (ibid). Some time around the turn of the century a Japanese Day Laborers' Union was set up, and at one point included the early Socialist leader Katayama Sen among its officers [13].

VIII. The interwar years

As Japan built up her economic and military muscle on her way to becoming a major colonial power, coercive labour practices flourished. Convict labour (kangoku rōdō) was widely used, especially in the development of Hokkaido, and

13 See Louis C. Fraina, in Katayama 1918:25.

the convict labour camps were barely distinguishable from the tako-beya, where the workers were trapped by brokers (shūsenya) who lent them money and then forced them to sign up for six-month contracts to pay off the debt (Furukawa in Takada 1977:220). Takada (1974, 1977) has a vivid first-hand account of life in the tako-beya on railway and other construction projects in Hokkaido, 1930-44. Wanted posters were put up for escaped workers, and "you couldn't even go for a crap or a piss without permission" (Takada 1974:33). The tako-beya system persisted until it was dissolved under the allied occupation in 1946 (Matsuzawa 1988c:157) [14].

The 19th century naya system also remained widespread. They were all-male establishments, and the men lived in tiny spaces which Oto (personal communication, F698) compares to cupboards. Discipline was maintained by the naya-gashira, or barn boss, and was notoriously harsh. Allen found naya still standing during his recent fieldwork in the Chikuho region of Kyushu, and describes a system of "virtual incarceration of miners in company housing" (Allen 1994:5).

The day-labouring population grew rapidly in this period, and was officially estimated at some 24% of the

14 Many day labourers insist that tako-beya still exist today, for example that this is the fate awaiting many illegal foreign workers. Lesser hells are called 'han-tako' (semi-octopuses).

working population by 1931 (Kusama 1932:293) [15]. Nakagawa (1985:119-26) finds that day labourers formed a large and growing part of the urban underclass in the period just after World War I. Many factory workers escaped from the underclass, leaving casual building workers and porters behind in the notorious nagaya, long wooden terraces where whole families would live in rooms 3 to 6 tatami mats in area (ibid 116). Kusama visited a nagaya at Minowa, very close to the present-day yoseba at Sanya. Amid Rabelaisian squalor, he found 75 households totalling some 300 people in one building. About 14 or 15 of the households belonged to factory workers, most of the others to "miscellaneous labourers or day labourers" (Kusama 1936:115-6).

The global depression of the early '30s hit day labourers hard, with 11.5% officially unemployed by (Kusama 1932:293) [16]. There were 31,106 officially unemployed

15 Kusama, probably the most authoritative writer on poverty during the inter-war period, cites government statistics which mention 1,678,460 day labourers in a working population of 6,901,576 in 1931. These figures are not big enough to cover the whole of Japan; frustratingly, Kusama says only that they are "for the districts covered by the investigation."

16 The government unemployment figures cited by Kusama divide workers into three categories: 'salaried men' (roughly 25%), 'day labourers' (ditto) and 'other labourers' (roughly 50%). Again the statistics are infuriatingly poorly presented: the categories are not defined, nor is 'unemployment'. The rather low figure of 11.5% for day labourers may stem from the exclusion of anyone getting a day or more of work in the month.

day labourers in Tokyo as of February 29 that year, and Kusama describes a number of less-than-effective measures that were taken to deal with the problem, one of which, instituted in 1928, was a forerunner of the present bureaucratic employment system for day labourers.

This was a registration system "aimed at safeguarding bonafide unemployed Tokyo citizens against the unfair competition of workers flowing in from places outside the city" (ibid 294). Rather like the Tokugawa era distinction between Kakae-hinin and No-hinin, the system recognized 'good workers' (permanent Tokyo citizens) and 'bad workers' (typically peasants who would come into the city in the winter months when there was no work in the country). The division was replicated within the population of registered workers, who were further divided into 'specified or regular workers' and 'non-specified or irregular workers' (ibid 295).

To the former category belong those who have won the confidence of their employers and have secured regular employment [17], while those belonging to the latter category are employed only temporarily in miscellaneous work and without any fixed location. To them fall such jobs as road making one day and, perhaps, street cleaning the next" (ibid).

The Municipal Labour Exchange would pay wages, later

17 How these same people are also defined as 'unemployed' is a mystery, one of many that bedevil Kusama's writing.

recovering them from employers [18].

During 1931 the Exchange was supplying work for some 6,000 men a day out of some 18,000 registered day labourers. Some 2,000 of these men were 'specified workers' and got work every day, while the other 16,000 were divided into four groups of 4,000, getting work roughly once every four days on a rotation system, usually at the minimum day wage of ¥1.35. Even worse off than these were the unregistered day labourers, who "have only a very remote chance of securing employment" (ibid 296). The rotation (rinban) system is still in use today in Ministry of Labour casual labour exchanges, as is the concept of the 'specified worker', whom an employer has requested by name.

During the depression many day labourers lived in abject poverty. A national census found that 1,799 people were sleeping outdoors in Tokyo on October 1, 1930, of which 60% were categorized as day labourers (ibid 297). Kusama further estimates that the number of rag-pickers in Tokyo rose from about 700 in 1921 to 5,000 in 1932. The average daily earnings of 300 rag-pickers interviewed by Kusama's staff proved to be "the incredibly small sum of 13.7 sen per man" (ibid 298).

18 A similar divide-and-rule tactic was used in the pre-war Liverpool docks, where casual dock hands were divided between 'low numbers' -- workers with good reputations who could generally be sure of work -- and 'high numbers' who had to make do with whatever labour demand was left over (Williams, 1912:6, 18).

The interwar years saw a rapid influx of foreign workers, especially Koreans. In 1923 there were 62,000 Koreans working as 'irregular labourers' in Japan, out of a working population of 79,000; by 1931 there were 525,000 irregular labourers in a working population of 630,000 (Matsuzawa 1988:154). Koreans played a notable part in the day labourer movement, first through the General Alliance of Korean Labourers in Japan (Chōsen Rōsō), founded in 1925 and swelling to a membership of 24,000 over the next five years; and then within Zenkyō, the 'National Conference of Trade Unions of Japan' launched in 1928 by the Japan Communist Party. Despite its name, Zenkyo was a small affair (16,000 members in 1932), with many day labourers and about 50% Koreans in its membership (Matsuzawa 1988:155-6).

Mr. Fukada, a day labourer unionist in Osaka, says there were two pre-war day labourer unions: Zenkyō Doken (the construction workers' section of Zenkyo) and the Kanto Union of Free Workers (Kantō Jiyū Rōdō Kumiai). The former was militant, often organizing demonstrations at labour exchanges; the latter was more charitable in approach, organizing food handouts for unemployed labourers etc. Both unions, he says, grew out of the struggle of Korean labourers, who were the principle victims of the vicious pre-war forced labour camps (F764).

In the run-up to the Pacific war, unions were banned

and day labourers were herded by the government into groups called Rōmu Hōkoku Kai (Patriotic Labour Society) and Rōmu Kyōkai (Labour Association), and put to work by force (Matsuzawa 1988c:156). As Japanese men were put into military service, yet more Koreans and other people from Japan's new colonies were press-ganged to Japan to replace them in the workforce. By 1945 there were some 2.4 million Koreans living and working in Japan; the post-war repatriation still left 544,903 behind, a number that has edged upwards since then (De Vos and Wetherall 1983:9-10).

IX. The post-war yoseba

There was no role for a free labour market like the yoseba in the wartime command economy. But they soon reappeared after the war, when there was a massive demand for flexible labour to rebuild Japan's shattered infrastructure, matched by a massive supply of workers who had lost their livelihoods during the war.

From this time on, day labourers fall into two bureaucratic categories: ordinary ones, and those given employment under the unemployment countermeasures (shitsugyō taisaku or shittai for short) launched in 1950. Workers covered by this programme were called shittai rōdōsha, a term translated by Caldarola (1968:513) as

P.E.S.O. workers [19]. The programme, ended as a temporary measure to cope with the post-war employment crisis, took on a life of its own, only finally being terminated in March 1996 [20]. In 1950 there were 283,000 P.E.S.O. workers (including 70,000 women). The programme peaked in 1960, with 350,000 workers (including 142,000 women) [21] before going into a long, slow decline until by 1995 they accounted for just 2,635 of the 48,517 registered day labourers in Japan [22]. P.E.S.O. workers formed 13% of the doya-gai dwellers surveyed by Caldarola (ibid) -- but I never knowingly met one during my own fieldwork. Only one prefecture had significant numbers in 1994-5: Fukuoka [23].

After the war a more extensive system of public casual labour exchanges was set up to regulate the labour market and keep it out of the hands of gangsters -- a mission which has never enjoyed more than limited success (see next two chapters). The white handbook system (Ch3:IVa) was launched, in a half-hearted attempt to bring a measure of security, and in 1965 the Dock Workers Law created a separate system for longshoremen, with a blue handbook.

19 From the Public Employment Security Offices which administered the programme.

20 MoL interview, 7/3/95.

21 Figures from Eguchi 1980 Vol.1:156.

22 MoL interview, 7/3/95.

23 See Ch4:IV below.

This system was abolished in 1988 [24].

In the high-growth economy of the 1950s and '60s, day labourers had plenty of work to do. Yoseba in particular cities went through regional booms with events like the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 and the Osaka Expo of 1970. These booms would push up casual wages, but would also attract more people to the day-labouring life, until wages fell back again. A very pure form of free-market economics prevails in the yoseba, and it has meant that there have always been men struggling to survive on the edges of the day labourer population, in good times and bad.

In 1974 the first oil shock hit the yoseba, creating major problems of unemployment and homelessness and spurring on the protest movement associated with the yoseba. Twenty years of campaigning for better welfare provision for day labourers have had varying degrees of success around the country as we shall see in the next three chapters. The day labourer union movement is alive and kicking, though constantly plagued by political factionalism (in Sanya, for instance, there have been at least 20 different day labourer unions and committees since

24 "The blue ones were much better, they carried superior dole entitlements and pension entitlements too. When the government scrapped the system they bought back the blue handbooks from their holders, paying off the pension rights in a single, large, lump sum. A lot of guys went on massive drinking and gambling sprees and threw away prospects of a secure old age in a few weeks or months"-- Nagoya day labourer, F1011, 15/12/94.

the war [Funamoto 1985]), and since 1982 most of the yoseba unions have managed to unite in Hiyatoi Zenkyō, the National Federation of Day Labour Unions. Since 1987 the Federation has published its own monthly newspaper, Hiyatoi Zenkyō News.

Post-war day labourers have maintained the rebellious, street-fighting tradition of their forebears, but there has been a marked tendency for the men to riot in relatively good times rather than during recessions. In Kamagasaki there were 20 riots from 1965-73 -- high-growth years-- and then none for the next 17 years of the oil shock and after until 1990 (See Ch4, Ch8). In Sanya there were 13 riots from 1959 to 1968 and then none until 1984 (ibid), and in Kotobuki the last riot I know of was in 1975 (Kotobuki ni Ikite). The official figures for the day labourer population have shown a steady decline for the last 20 years, and the population has been aging rapidly, to the point where the average day labourer anywhere in the country is now in his 50s.

It is common nowadays to assume that there are still many ethnic Koreans in the yoseba (e.g. Kurtenbach 1992), but 1974 Ministry of Justice figures found just under 500,000 Koreans in the workforce, of whom 15,177 men were listed as 'simple manual labourers', another 10,681 as 'builders and construction workers', and 47,564 were 'unreported' (Lee and De Vos 1981:227). This would suggest

that ethnic Koreans were a fairly small part of the day labourer population by this time; my impression is that they have dwindled further since then, partly because of upward social mobility (Ch.4:IV).

The range of industries using casual labour from the yoseba has greatly narrowed in the postwar years. Transportation and manufacturing, both major employers before the war, have virtually ceased to use the yoseba. The docks, another traditional mainstay employer, still use casual labour but in much smaller quantities now that containerization has come to pass. The one industry which can still be relied upon to recruit day labourers in substantial numbers is the construction industry.

X. The modern construction industry

Of all the major industries, construction is the one least amenable to automation, mass production and suchlike job-threatening phenomena. It remains a high-risk business, at the mercy of the elements, and prone to massive fluctuations in demand with the changing economic climate. It is a big-unit industry, and constituent companies can see their business thrive or fail on the outcome of a single big-ticket tender. Although building techniques have become more sophisticated, there will always be a need for unskilled help on the building site.

All these factors make the construction industry a natural user of casual labour, in Japan as in other industrialized countries, and it is here that Marx's concept of the 'disposable industrial reserve army' can still be seen vividly illustrated.

The big Japanese construction companies, such as Kajima Construction and Shimizu Construction, are a typical example of the 'core and peripheral workforce' that has come to be associated with Japanese management methods (Chalmers 1989). They maintain the smallest possible permanent, salaried workforce, and supplement it when necessary by using sub-contractors (shita-uke, lit. 'under receivers') and sub-sub-contractors (magou-uke, lit. 'grandson receivers'). Day labourers are never employed directly by the likes of Kajima and Shimizu; rather they are employed by a small company at the very bottom of the line of sub-contractors.

This system, compared variously to a pyramid, a ladder, or the tentacles of an octopus, is highly favourable to the company at the top, a general contractor or zenekon in its Japanese abbreviation. They win large contracts, do the more profitable work themselves, and sub-contract most of the hard labour to smaller companies which feel indebted to the general contractor for giving them the work, and are usually too small to dispute terms. When contracts are in short supply, a sub-contractor may be

dropped, or given less work so that it has to cut off a sub-sub-contractor. The general contractor can usually evade legal responsibility when industrial accidents occur, though it may discretely pay off the sub-contractor which suffers the legal consequences. Unions connive at this arrangement; the insecurity and low pay of non-unionized workers at the sub-contractors contributes to their own security and high pay, and there is no sense of solidarity (cf Mouer and Sugimoto, 1986:353-4).

The Japanese construction industry resembles nothing so much as the criminal underworld. In major yakuza syndicates such as the notorious Yamaguchi-gumi, a boss (oyabun) rules over the pyramidic hierarchy of a central gang, which in turn dominates descending chains of lesser gangs. This resemblance is no coincidence. Even today many construction companies have the word kumi (often softened to gumi) in their names; the same word is used to signify a yakuza gang and if you trace these two institutions back far enough they prove to have common origins (see, e.g. Ito 1987:58, who says that in the Taisho era, 1912-26, the two were virtually indistinguishable). Even today, many smaller sub-contractors are directly or indirectly controlled by yakuza [25]. Likewise, the yakuza

25 During fieldwork, I received a first-hand account of a major public construction project in Yokohama. The contract went to a consortium of four companies, one of which was a front for a yakuza gang and did no work despite getting 10% of the ¥5 billion contract. Most of the actual

oyabun is a close cousin of the oyakata [26] who manages day labourers. Both terms literally mean 'father figure' - - and this overt paternalism is a popular control system in contemporary Japan.

In my fieldtrips I have come across exploitative lodging/employment institutions reminiscent of the hitoakibito and similar institutions of the Tokugawa era-- the ninpu-dashi (Ch4:IV). The signs are that this kind of institution is making gains at the expense of the yoseba in the casual labour market. As recently as 1995 Japan was criticized in the United Nations for her practice of hiring out imprisoned convicts to work for private contractors. These are reminders that the historic struggle between coercion and free labour is not yet over.

Summary

This brief historical sketch shows that in economic and socio-cultural terms alike, 'day labourer' is a well established category in Japan; and that it is a contentious category, around which the issues of autonomy and security have been negotiated for many centuries.

work was done by several small sub-contractors which were not even members of the consortium and were housed in separate, inferior offices on the worksite.

26 The even more literal oyaji (dad) is also used.

Chapter 3: Ethnography of Kotobuki

I. Location

My main fieldwork site was Kotobuki, the day-labouring district of Yokohama (map 1). It is a yoseba and also a doya-gai, with 88 lodging houses (as of June 1996) in an area roughly 300 metres square. In the Japanese literature this district is often referred to as Kotobuki-cho, 'cho' being an urban sub-division similar to the American 'precinct'. In fact, the Kotobuki district also covers parts of the neighboring precincts of Ogi-cho and Matsukage-cho. It is located in Naka ward, the traditional centre of Yokohama, within a ten-minute walk of the fashionable Motomachi boutique street, Chinatown with its famous Chinese restaurants and bijou ethnic craft shops, the Yokohama Bay Stars baseball stadium, the ward office and City Hall (see map 2). In short, this rough centre of underclass life is slap in the middle of the most desirable real estate in the city of Yokohama. The location is a historical quirk (see below) and is replete with meaning for the future of Kotobuki.

Kotobuki's main natural boundary is the Nakamura river, which runs north-east through Naka ward on its way to Yokohama Bay. For its last few miles, this narrow river has a concrete elevated expressway (the Kanagawa No.3

Kariba line) running directly above it. The river is rather polluted and has various fishing boats and pleasure craft moored along its banks. There are many bridges crossing the river, and the shelter provided by the expressway overhead makes these popular places for homeless people to take cover from rain. Roads run along either side of the Nakamura River, and the narrow strip of land between river bank and pavement is also used by homeless people to construct shacks (see chapter 7).

The river forms Kotobuki's south-east border. Chojamachi Street forms the south-west border and Shin-Yokohama street the north-east. These roads are rarities in having names; Japanese urban geography is based on points rather than lines. The fourth side is an un-named but major road which runs parallel to the Nakamura River from Urafune-cho to the baseball stadium at Kannai. This road is frequently plied by ambulances taking sick or wounded day labourers to the emergency casualty unit at the hospital in Urafune-cho.

The two nearest stations are Kannai and Ishikawa-cho; the nearest underground station is at Isezaki-Chojamachi. The main Yokohama docks are 15 to 30 minutes' walk away and virtually any place within the city of Yokohama can be reached within an hour by public transport. Central Tokyo is less than an hour away by train.

II. Landscape

There is an immediate and striking change in atmosphere as one crosses any of the borders into Kotobuki. The boundary is often marked by a litter of abandoned cars, some of them smashed up and some burned out. A few of these vehicles are actually inhabited by homeless day labourers. There is rubbish lying around in the street-- though not on a scale that would impress slum-dwellers from most countries -- and here and there one may come across a man lying unconscious in the street.

People dress differently. The smart suits of businessmen and designer fashions of youth give way to a determinedly proletarian look. The men wear blue overalls or work trousers covered with pockets, and battered jackets, perhaps with the name of a construction company embroidered on the breast pocket. Baseball caps are common, and some men wear towels on their head, turban style or tied beneath the jaw. A few still wear the traditional baggy pantaloons (shichibu-zubon) and canvas boots (tabi) of the Japanese working man.

People walk differently. In the rest of Yokohama they walk quickly, in a straight line, on the pavement, eyes fixed ahead of them. Here they walk slowly, meandering around the road, looking about them or sometimes surveying

the ground for cigarette butts, paying no attention to cars that hoot at them. They urinate in the street, sometimes even when standing right next to the public pissoir located in the middle of Kotobuki. The smell of stale urine hangs in the air.

Altogether, people behave differently. They sit on the pavement, drinking and talking. Many will happily talk to a stranger, and it is easy for a strange-looking foreigner like myself to get into conversation with a man I have never met. In this respect, it is a more sociable place than the rest of Yokohama.

The area is dominated by the Kotobuki-cho General Labour Welfare Building (Kotobuki-chō Sōgō Rōdō Fukushi Kaikan). It is generally known simply as 'the Centre' (sentā), conflating it with the Kotobuki Labour Centre located on its ground floor. This is a massive, grimly grey ten-storey building opened in October 1974, which contains two casual labour exchanges, a large canteen, a shop stocking working clothes and daily necessities, a public bath, the Kotobuki Clinic, a reading room, lockers, and even a bank (it has just one branch and is run by the social services). The higher floors of the centre are given over to municipal apartments, some of them used by the city authorities to house single-parent families. The building has a quite large central courtyard; this and the outdoor stairways of the labyrinthine construction are

natural meeting places for men and pigeons alike.

The streets of Kotobuki form a fairly regular square grid, with the Centre filling one block. To the south of it is the eating-and-drinking quarter (inshoku-gai), a very narrow alley lined with tiny bars and restaurants. Despite its raffish appearance, I never noticed an obvious prostitute here or in any other part of Kotobuki; the mama-sans who run the bars are generally of mature years and brook no nonsense.

On all other sides, the streets are broader and lined with buildings, typically five or six storeys high. These are the doya (lodging houses). A few small wooden ones still survive, but most are concrete structures built within the last 30 years. Many have pretty names such as Tsukimi-sô (Moon-view Mansion) or Shirayuki-sô (White Snow Mansion); other names are geographical references, mostly to resort towns near Yokohama -- the Atami-sô and Hamamatsu-sô, for instance. Though all signboards are in Japanese, the doya are nearly all owned by ethnic Koreans, and on closer inspection a few of them prove to be patronised by Korean migrant labourers. On the ground floor there may well be a bar or restaurant, with the menu as likely to be written in Korean as in Japanese.

Another landmark is the Seikatsu-kan (lit. 'Livelihood Hall'), a four-story building with a TV room, free showers and meeting space, plus a day-care centre for children and

a small alternative school for school refusers. The tiny Kotobuki Children's Park, used mostly by adults, is right opposite the Seikatsu-kan. Nearby is the Kotobuki Welfare Centre (Kotobuki Fukushi Sentā), which contains a nursery, an office for welfare consultations, and a self-help group for alcoholics. Next door is the Precinct Association Hall (Chōnai-kaikan), a rickety two-storey building which houses the Kotobuki Day Labourers' Union (Junichirō).

Just behind that is a much smarter, bigger building containing three workshops: (1) the Hope Revival Centre (Kibō Kōsei Sentā), for physically handicapped people from all over Yokohama and outlying towns; (2) the Light Centre (Hikari Sentā) a workshop for blind and partially-sighted people; and (3) the Kotobuki Workshop (Kotobuki Sagyō-shō), a workshop for the physically handicapped people of Kotobuki itself, who are segregated even here. All three workshops attempt to train users in crafts that will give them satisfaction and some income. Also in Kotobuki is the Roba no Ie, literally the 'Donkey House.' This embarrassingly named institution is a workshop for people with learning impediments, run by Christians.

Then there are two churches, an imposing Baptist one and a much more modest one run by a Korean evangelical group; and the Yokohama branch of Chongryun, the representative organization of Japan-resident Koreans who support Pyongyang rather than Seoul. These landmarks

tell us a number of things about Kotobuki. Firstly, the population is not exclusively male. There are some women; there are a few children. The children of Kotobuki used to enjoy a formidable reputation. The book *Bare-foot Primitives* (Hadashi no Genshi-jintachi; Nomoto 1974) paints a vivid picture of the gangs of urchins that used to roam the district. Murata Yoshio, who has been running the Kotobuki Welfare Centre for over 20 years, recalls that when he first arrived in Kotobuki, in 1968, he was amazed to see small children jumping up and down on the roofs of cars. In the early 1970s there were 1,200 children living in Kotobuki, attached to 550 households (Murata 1992:11-12). My own informants tell me that it used not to be uncommon for whole families to live in doya rooms; and there was even a children's baseball team, the Kotobuki Bears, which played its first game on July 7, 1973 (Kawase 1985:347).

Nowadays the Bears are a distant memory. There are far fewer children in Kotobuki; a few who live in the municipal apartments and a few more who come in from outside to take advantage of the alternative child-care and educational provision in Kotobuki. Figures from the Welfare Centre for late 1994 show 62 Japanese children in the Kotobuki district: 22 pre-schoolers, 23 of elementary-school age, 5 of middle-school age and 12 aged up to 17. Nearly all of them live in the municipal apartments. In

addition there were 25 foreign children, mostly living in doya. Nearly all day labourers live alone, and the only families living in doya rooms are Korean or Filipino. Still, the history of Kotobuki children raises the question of how far the isolation of modern day labourers is culturally ingrained and how far a product of changing economic circumstances.

Secondly, the concentration of welfare facilities in the area bears witness to the strong tendency of the Yokohama city government to put all its problems in one basket. People with any kind of disability are likely to be sent to Kotobuki, there to mingle with the long-term unemployed and chronic alcoholics. It is common to see blind people and wheelchair users making their way home from the Kotobuki Workshop, and it is a tribute to the tolerance of the day labourers that the staff of the workshop report almost no cases of bullying or abuse directed at users of the facility (F414). At the same time it is a tribute to the intolerance of mainstream society that the authorities and charities alike find it very difficult to locate facilities for people with disabilities anywhere else in the city.

Thirdly, the presence of the two churches -- and no Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples -- tells us that this is a special zone in terms of religion, too. Officially Christians make up only 0.7% of the Japanese population

[1], yet Christianity plays a far larger role in the affairs of Kotobuki than either of the two major faiths. During fieldwork I met a Baptist missionary, the Rev. Sato, who conducted Salvation Army style hymn-and-prayer meetings in Kotobuki. He had hopes of turning the place into a Christian stronghold in the heart of Yokohama.

Fourthly, we see that as well as being an island of outsiders in a sea of conformity, Kotobuki is also, in a sense, a Korean island in a Japanese sea. The historical reasons for this I will shortly discuss.

One more feature of the Kotobuki landscape deserves mention. There are two buildings, designed as private residences, which are very obviously the offices of yakuza gangs. They are much newer and cleaner than any other building in Kotobuki, made of shiny grey laminated prefab units and studded with air-conditioning vents. Gangsters, immediately recognizable with their loud clothes, permed curly hair and dark glasses, come and go. Expensive cars, usually white Mercedes-Benzes, are moored outside like private ships.

Police figures say there were 14 gangs with offices in Kotobuki as of spring 1994. Some were operating out of doya rooms, or from more respectable apartments across the Nakamura river. Ten of the gangs, and all the ones active

1 N: Agency for Cultural Affairs, Yearbook of Religious Affairs (Shūkyō Nenkan), 1992.

in Kotobuki, were affiliated to the Sōai-kai, a minor yakuza syndicate with bases in Kanagawa and Chiba prefectures. The boss is an ethnic Korean, but most of the rank-and-file members are Japanese. The other four gangs were affiliated to the Yamaguchi-gumi, Japan's biggest and most powerful syndicate by far. Their operations were down on the docks rather than in the doya-gai; Kotobuki merely provided a convenient base, at a time when citizens' movements against the yakuza were making it very difficult to maintain premises in more respectable parts of town [2].

Nowadays the traditional labour rackets are less important as a source of income than gambling. Dotted around Kotobuki are some 20 illegal bookmakers, operated by the yakuza and heavily patronized by day labourers and, to a lesser degree, by slumming salaried men and taxi-drivers. See VII below.

III. Population

The Kotobuki Welfare Centre conducts annual population surveys, by gathering residence figures from the managers of all the doya (table 5) and cross-referencing to welfare statistics and casual employment statistics (table 6). The Naka ward office (kuyakushō) keeps figures on welfare recipients (table 7).

2 Police interview (F370-9, 1/2/94).

Quite a clear picture emerges from these figures. The traditional doya-gai population of single Japanese day labourers is steadily aging and leaving the workforce, without being replaced. They are ending up either as welfare cases, which now account for over half the population, or are drifting down into the poverty class, sometimes via an intermediate period as occasionally working day labourers. Meanwhile, much of the really tough work, demanding youth and muscle, is being done by foreigners -- mostly illegal Korean migrants. The foreign population peaked in 1994 at around 1,100 and fell sharply in 1995 as many went home because of the lack of jobs caused by the continuing recession, or tried their luck elsewhere, for instance at earthquake-ravaged Kobe.

My impression is that most foreign workers are in their 20s and 30s, whereas the average age of Japanese day labourers in Kotobuki is estimated by the union at around 54 or 55.

The distinction between functioning day labourers (gen'eki, lit., 'on active duty') and those who are no longer up to it is keenly felt in Kotobuki. The most common term for the latter is yankara (see glossary). These men tend to sit drinking round the bonfire under the outdoor steps of the Labour Centre in the colder months, sometimes getting black in the face from the soot. Various degrees of sympathy and contempt are felt by the gen'eki

for the yankara, and the lack of solidarity between the two groups is a major source of concern for the union.

Komai (1995:112) remarks that Kotobuki is the only doya-gai with a significant concentration of foreign workers resident. He suggests three reasons for the general absence of foreign workers from yoseba: (1) They are easy targets for immigration officials (nearly all the foreign workers being illegal); (2) Many doya landlords bar foreigners; and (3) Building improvements in Sanya and Kamagasaki have pushed up room costs. In contrast, he argues, Kotobuki's landlords have renovated and raised rents more slowly, but more importantly, the fact that most of them are ethnic Koreans makes them more sympathetic to Koreans and foreign workers in general.

Komai's points are generally valid. However, recent shifts in the ethnic balance of the population suggest a further factor. Ventura (1992) describes a thriving underground population of Filipinos, large enough to be subdivided into gangs based on provincial background in the Philippines. Though he offers no estimate of the size of the Filipino population, it must have been far larger than it was when I arrived in Kotobuki just a couple of years after Ventura left. Since then the Filipinos have largely been supplanted by South Koreans. Komai (ibid) dates the start of the increase in the South Korean population to 1988, and it is no coincidence that this was the year that

Roh Tae Woo, then president of South Korea, lifted the republic's previously very strict travel restrictions. Once it became possible for ordinary South Koreans to acquire passports, they started to target Japan as a destination for well-paid migrant labour. In Kotobuki they easily established a presence, helped by the fact that the doya-owners were ethnic Koreans who spoke the Korean language and had a natural sympathy for their fellow countrymen. They have the added advantage that they look more similar to Japanese than Filipinos do, and these two factors gave them a decisive edge.

A large proportion of the Koreans in Kotobuki, doya-owners and migrant labourers alike, are originally from Cheju island, off the south coast of the Republic of Korea. Within Korean society, Cheju people are subject to discrimination and have a strong sense of solidarity. This helps to account for their preponderance among the Korean population in Japan: for them, unlike most other Koreans, life in Japan has tended to mean less discrimination than in the home country. Cheju fishermen have maintained links with Japan for several centuries (Martinez, personal communication), and a ferry service opened between Cheju and Osaka in 1922.

The Great Cheju Massacre of April 1948 killed perhaps 60-70,000 people, or about a quarter of the island's population (the figures are hotly disputed). The islanders

were basically being punished for refusing to participate in the south-only presidential election of May 1948, which confirmed the division of the Korean peninsula (Kim 1994). This event was a powerful incentive to Cheju Koreans left in Japan after the war to stay there, and for those who had returned home to re-migrate to Japan. In Yokohama, Cheju people stuck together and concentrated their capital in Kotobuki. The genocide inflicted on the people of Cheju by the South Korean government gave them a natural sympathy with North Korea, which helps to explain why the local headquarters of Chongryun is situated in Kotobuki. So even in international terms, Kotobuki may be seen as a zone of tolerance for people who suffer discrimination in other places including their home country.

To sum up: the meaning of being in Kotobuki is quite different between the Japanese and foreign day labourers. For many (though not all) of the Japanese, it signifies failure. They are at the bottom of the socio-economic pile, and are estranged from their families. For the Korean and Filipino workers, by contrast, the risky venture of illegal migrant labour is a heroic challenge to better the lives of themselves and their families. As Ventura observes, migrants rarely come from the poorest class in their own country [3].

3 "They had gone there [i.e. to Kotobuki] not to make money but to make more money, not for their daily bread but for the finer things in life" (Ventura 1992:125).

Most of the Koreans and Filipinos I met had families to which they were still attached. Occasionally the families would be living with them; alternatively, they would come over to visit during holiday periods. Moreover the migrants were generally younger and fitter than the Japanese, so much so that some labour recruiters would only employ foreigners.

IV. History [4]

Compared with the doya-gai of Tokyo and Osaka, Kotobuki has a very short history. Until the 1860s, the area of Yokohama which includes Kotobuki was under the sea. During the Meiji era (1866-1912), land reclamation works turned the area first into marshland and then into inhabitable dry land. The reclaimed land was divided into seven precincts (chô): Yoshihama, Matsukage, Kotobuki, Ogi, Furo, Okina and Bandai. Collectively they used to be known as Umechi Nanakamachi -- the Seven Reclaimed Towns.

The earliest reference to Kotobuki in the city histories dates from 1877, when the people of Kotobuki-cho and Matsukage-cho demanded of the city authorities that water be supplied to their part of town. But the water

4 Where not otherwise stated, historical refs are from Kawase 1991 or Murata 1992.

supply was still a problem in 1886, when emergency water supplies were taken to Kotobuki-cho and Matsukage-cho to cope with the cholera epidemic of that year. Kotobuki seems to have been a poor part of town even then, and 1903 saw the start of its career as a focus for Christian good work, when the Yokohama Corps of the Salvation Army was established at Kotobuki 1-chome, under the command of Colonel Henry Broad of Britain [5].

The district gradually developed into a fairly prosperous area of small-scale silk manufacturers and merchants over the first half of the 20th century, only to be burned to the ground during the American fire-bombing campaign of World War II.

Kotobuki's association with day labour did not begin until well after the war. In pre-war Yokohama, day labourers had been scattered around the city, with the main concentrations being in Nakamura-cho (just across the Nakamura River from Kotobuki) and Noge-cho. After the war, a day-labouring district rapidly grew up at Sakuragi-cho, a couple of miles west of Kotobuki and directly fronting the bay. The allied occupation forces were making heavy use of the port of Yokohama to import essential supplies (for several years school meals for the whole of Japan were imported via Yokohama, for example), and Sakuragi-cho became a major regional communications centre.

5 All refs this paragraph from Matsunobu 1989.

moved to Kotobuki [6].

Thus in just a year or two, the whole scene was shifted east and inland to its present location. Within five years (1956-61), 63 doya had been built (Saito 1994:131). They were filled immediately: the high-growth economy had spawned a large population of day labourers (ibid). By 1960 the three precincts in the Kotobuki district had a combined population of 2,131, rising to 7,968 by 1965 and settling down to around 5.5 thousand until the end of the '70s (table 8).

Kotobuki was a tough district in the 1960s. In October 1960 the Isezaki-cho police had reported finding 17 children who had never been to school and 6 long-term non-attenders in Kotobuki-cho (Matsunobu 1989) and the district was developing a growing reputation for lawlessness. There were several riots, including one on the night of October 30, 1967, when "several hundred" day labourers besieged the Kotobuki police box from 9pm until 4am the following morning (see Ch8:IIIId).

Precincts in Japanese cities usually have their own local representative associations, called chônai-kai (precinct associations) or jichi-kai (self-governing associations). In 1945 a joint association for the seven precincts on reclaimed land (rengô chônai-kai) was set up.

6 Selling blood was a source of emergency income for day labourers for many years; see Ch9:VII.

However, this body tended to be dominated by shopkeepers and landlords living in the non-day-labouring districts, and in April 1969 a group of Kotobuki residents set up their own independent body, the Kotobuki District Self-governing Association Kotobuki Chiku Jichi-kai. This idealistic attempt to bring together day labourers and non-day labourers from the area eventually foundered; the differences in interest were too great (Murata, personal communication). Today the day labourers are represented mainly by the union, and the doya and shop owners have their own organizations. There are two groups of doya owners, divided on political lines between sympathisers of North and South Korea. The chonai-kai is practically defunct, though it still exists on paper to collect government grants to chonai-kai and to administer the chōnai-kaikan, the building which it owns.

The late '50s and '60s were a period of high economic growth, with plenty of casual work in construction and longshoring alike. But in 1974 the first oil shock plunged Japan into recession, and casual labourers are of course the first to be laid off in a business downturn. Bereft of employment and with no money saved, many of the day labourers of Kotobuki found themselves plunged into destitution. In the winter of 1974-5 activists supporting the day labourers held the first Winter Survival Campaign (Ettō), supplying emergency accommodation and food for

homeless men during the new year period when the government welfare offices were closed. This became an annual Kotobuki event, the 22nd being held in the winter of 1995-6.

Junichiro, the Kotobuki day labourer union, was founded on May 18, 1975, amid mounting anger at the authorities' failure to provide assistance for day labourers during the recession. A week later there was a riot provoked by the contemptuous attitude shown by police towards the body of a dead day labourer. The riot police went in and 14 were arrested. On November 25 that year, sixty workers from Kotobuki held a sit-in at the prefectural hall, demanding funds for the winter survival period and jobs (Matsunobu 1989). In 1978, the union and other sympathetic bodies launched the annual Kotobuki summer festival, held in mid-August every year, the 18th being celebrated in 1995. The family aspect of Kotobuki life had virtually disappeared by the end of the '70s. The very low population/household ratios for 1980 onwards (table 8) show that the prevalence of single men was well established by 1980. Employment picked up during the construction boom of the mid-'80s 'bubble economy', but towards the end of the decade the bubble burst and casual employment went into a decline from which, as I write, it has never recovered.

On April 23, 1983 nine middle-school boys from

Yokohama were arrested for assaulting at least 16 homeless day labourers in areas near Kotobuki, killing three (see Ch9:IV). This appalling incident prompted the formation of the Thursday Patrol (Mokuyō Patorōru), which has been patrolling the areas used by homeless people ever since-- every Thursday in winter and one or two Thursdays a month in the warmer seasons. Every winter a few men die of cold, starvation or injuries around Kotobuki, but the patrols, plus some improvements in welfare provision, have helped to reduce these numbers.

V. Employment

a. Formal institutions

There are two casual labour exchanges in Kotobuki. The Kotobuki Labour Centre Free Employment Introduction Office (Kotobuki Rōdō Sentā Muryō Shokugyō Shōkaijō), located on the ground floor of the Centre building, is operated by an external organization of the Yokohama city and Kanagawa prefectural governments called the Kanagawa prefecture Labour Welfare Association (Kanagawa-ken Rōdō Fukushi Kyōkai). Directly above it on the first floor of the Centre building is the Yokohama Port Labour Public Employment Stability Office (Yokohama Minato Rōdō Kōkyō

Shokugyô Antejô), which is directly administered by the Ministry of Labour. Here I refer to these two institutions as the Labour Centre and the Labour Office for simplicity.

This split between local and national government in administering casual labour is also found in Sanya and Kamagasaki. None of the officials I interviewed offered a convincing explanation for this, but it may reflect dissatisfaction among city governments with the Ministry of Labour's administration of casual labour.

Outwardly, the two institutions look very similar. The job-seeking workers do not enter either office: instead they wait for metal shutters in front of the office to rise, revealing job advertisements displayed on a line of small rectangular back-lit panels with reference numbers at the top, above cubby holes where officials allocate jobs from behind reinforced glass windows. The job details are telephoned or faxed by employers the night before or early in the morning. Once a job is arranged, the official will give the day labourer a contract, often with a little map showing how to get to the worksite. The day labourer usually has to make his own way to the worksite, which may be as much as a two-hour journey away.

Thus far the two exchanges are much the same. However, there are important differences between the two.

The Labour Centre opens Monday to Friday at 6.15am (and at 4pm on Friday for weekend work). Jobs are

allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. During the Heisei recession (c.1990-5), when jobs were often very scarce, I witnessed many a desperate scramble for jobs. Men would gather outside the shutters an hour or more before they went up, crouching in the dark on scraps of cardboard like the devout at prayer, or sprinters awaiting the starter's gun. In a sense, they were both. A job for the day could make the difference between hunger and a full stomach, sleeping on the cold street or in a warmish room.

The moment the shutters started to rise, there would be a great rush forward -- but only as far as a second set of shutters, which would rise half an hour later. The advantage of all the waiting was to secure a more favourable position in the almighty scrum when the inner shutters rose. Men would memorize the numbers corresponding to each panel and shout out the numbers when the shutters had risen just high enough to show which panels were lit up, but not high enough to reveal the nature of the job, the location, the conditions or the rate of pay. They would thrust their identity cards [7] under the shutters, knowing that they would get a job if one of the officials took it out of their hands. As one day labourer put it to me, "the long arm wins" (nagai ude ga katsu).

7 These were issued by the Labour Centre, meaning that even men who did not have the day labourer's white handbook used by the Labour Office could use the Labour Centre.

Officials justified this procedure on the grounds that it was simple, and functioned as a crude form of natural selection. Stronger, fitter men had a better chance of getting jobs, and those were the kind of men employers wanted [8].

The Labour Office opens on the same days as the Centre, but at 6.45am, with the shutters going up a few minutes earlier. The system is very different. Workers must acquire a Ministry of Labour handbook, including their name, address, photograph and registration number. Jobs are allocated according to a strict rotation: each morning, in principle, the first man to be given a chance to choose a job from those on display is the one with the number after the last number which got a job the previous day. In practice there are some rather complex modifications to the system to deal with situations where one or two jobs are 'refused' by a large number of men because they require skills or qualifications, such as the ability to drive a truck, that most of the men do not possess.

In short, we have a free-market free-for-all downstairs, and a brand of fair shares socialism, half an hour later, upstairs. The difference in system is reflected in the atmosphere outside each exchange. The

8 Cf the practice in early turn-of-the-century Salford of propping spades up against a wall and giving jobs to the first men to reach them from 100 yards away, described in Roberts 1971:66].

desperate struggle for jobs at the Labour Centre is often over in less than a minute, whereas at the Labour Office men do not start to gather until well after the shutters have gone up, and the air is of apathy rather than desperation. Once the jobs have been allocated, typically to just a handful of men, a far larger number will deposit their handbooks to claim the dole (see below).

This bipartite system often presents a day labourer with a difficult choice: whether to go for a tough, badly-paid job at the Labour Centre, when his number is near enough to the top of the pile to stand a fairly good chance of getting a job -- perhaps a better job -- afterwards at the Labour Office. By the time he discovers whether there is a better job for him upstairs, the one downstairs will be long gone. During the Heisei recession, the matter was often academic, since there were hardly any jobs at either place, but the bipartite system is certainly not in the interests of the workers.

During my spell in Kotobuki, it was quite clear that the Labour Centre was supplying more jobs than the Labour Office, by a ratio of roughly 70:30. Typically there would be 20 to 30 jobs at the former and a dozen or so at the latter. Employers seemed to prefer the slightly better chance of getting a strong worker offered by the free-for-all, and the Labour Centre also allowed them to nominate (shimei) workers whom they knew to be efficient. However,

table 9 shows that by 1995 the Centre was only supplying about 10 days work per year to the average Kotobuki man [9] and the Office was supplying even fewer jobs.

The bubble burst early in Kotobuki, suggesting that casual labour statistics may be a leading indicator of impending recession. Person-days of labour arranged through the Labour Centre collapsed from a peak of 154,574 in 1986 to a trough of 50,806 in 1993, a fall of 67% in seven years (table 9). Period contracts were worst affected, falling 75% in this period while one-day contracts fell by 44% [10]. Consequently the two kinds of contract now account for roughly equal amounts of casual labour arranged at the Centre, whereas three times as many days were worked on period contracts as on single-day contracts ten years ago (ibid). Apparently employers have been cautious of taking on obligations even of just ten or fifteen days during the recession.

9 Assuming very roughly 5,000 men interested in day labourer. The Labour Centre's estimate is about 6,000 (Kotobuki 1996:3).

10 A Labour Centre official said that the market for period contracts in 1993 was the worst since the Centre was founded in 1974 during the oil shock recession (Labour Centre interview F356, 31/1/94).

b. The street labour market

The stated objective of the Kotobuki Labour Centre is to provide free job introductions for day labourers, and thereby to "stabilize employment, normalize the paths to employment, eliminate the open-air labour market (aozora rōdō shijō) and improve working conditions" (Kotobuki 1996:1). However, over two decades since the launch of the centre, the great majority of jobs are still arranged not at the public labour exchanges but on the street [11].

The legal status of street labour markets in Japan is complex. Street recruiting is legal only for construction work and only in designated areas, which correspond closely to the yoseba in each city. The president (shachō) of the employing company may do it himself freely, but if one of his employees does the recruiting, a 'direct recruitment permit' (chokusetsu boshū kyōka) from the MoL is required. Applicants must be enrolled in the day labourer unemployment and health insurance programmes, and can lose the license if found guilty of 'intermediary exploitation' (chūkan sakushū), i.e. pocketing part of the day wage (pin-hane).

Such is the theory. In practice the system is widely

11 There are no statistics for the street labour market. However, a Labour Centre official admitted that the two employment exchanges could not account for more than 10%, at the very most, of Kotobuki job contracts (interview, F362, 31/1/94).

abused. Often the recruiter (tehaishi) is not a member of the employing company but a freelance operator; he may not be licensed; and he may be illegally recruiting men for dock work etc.; and pin-hane is commonly practised. The authorities generally turn a blind eye [12].

Jobs are negotiated between recruiters and day labourers. It is widely believed that the recruiters are all yakuza gangsters or in the pay of them, but the reality seems to vary from one yoseba to another. In Kotobuki most of the tehaishi appear to be independent operators, or representatives of large employers [13]. The yakuza get their share of the business indirectly, by charging a monthly fee (shoba-dai; see glossary) to permit tehaishi to recruit in Kotobuki. One recruiter for a longshoring company told me his firm paid ¥100,000 a month to the Soai-kai, and that this was a standard figure, irrespective of company size or numbers recruited. His own company had only about ten regular employees, and hired up to 70 day labourers on particularly busy days (F9-10, 30/6/93). Some employers would deliberately park their cars just outside Kotobuki, or show up on a Sunday to take men for a whole

12 Some day labourer unionists think the Nakasone government's 1985 Labour Dispatch Act effectively legalized pin-hane.

13 Saito (1994:129) says that some 200 tehaishi operate in Kotobuki. Half of them are 'semi-pros', labourers who do some recruiting on the side. The other 100 are 'pros', often connected to yakuza.

week, apparently to avoid paying shoba-dai.

Day labourers get up very early, often 5am or before, and stand at strategic positions in the street, often at crossroads. Certain groups of people are associated with particular locations: the burly young Koreans congregate in front of the Okura snack-bar at the central crossroads, for instance (see map 1). Likewise, some recruiters have a well-known stamping ground. When jobs are plentiful, recruiters will walk busily around, looking for good workers; when they are scarce, the workers will anxiously prowl the streets looking for recruiters.

Once a recruiter has agreed to employ a day labourer, he may well put him straight on a minibus. Every morning before dawn the minibuses and a few larger coaches park in and around Kotobuki. Sometimes the driver will double as the recruiter. Alternatively, where the workplace is nearby or the number of men needed is small, the recruiter will give the man directions and sometimes his bus or train fare.

Here is an account of some prominent Kotobuki tehaishi by Nishikawa Kimitsu, an experienced day labourer whose speciality is longshore work.

"Mr. A is that small chap, with the close cropped hair thinning on top. He works for a longshoring firm, mainly recruiting stevedores to unload the banana boats. The money is very good: Y17,000 a day, the best you can get for unskilled labour... for two reasons: firstly, the longshore union at Bankoku-bashi, where the banana boats unload, has fought to improve wages there; and secondly, that company's oyakata is such a

bastard that people won't work for the firm at ordinary wages. He is very quick-tempered and will beat a man up as soon as look at him if slacking is suspected. This all happens in the hold of the ship, where no-one can see or interfere. When the man goes drinking in Kotobuki he is very friendly and buys everybody drinks -- but he's a devil in the workplace.

"Mr. B is a veteran longshoreman himself, now working as a recruiter for three different companies. He specializes in young Koreans and Chinese and seldom takes on Japanese.

"The buses from the company C take men to work in warehouses loading up trucks. The money is very bad: Y11,000 a day. The men are kept working by a big supervisor with a tattoo on his arm.

"Mr. D specializes in plant maintenance, and in good times he arranges employment for 50 to 100 men, sending them to numerous destinations. Even now he sends 20 or so. He is getting on in years, and sometimes when he feels tired or indisposed he stays in bed and entrusts the business to an assistant. Once the assistant did a runner, carrying about Y1 million. I reckon Mr. D will knife the man if he ever finds him.

"Mr. E recruits for another longshoring firm. The work is mostly unloading banana boats -- also the emergency imports of rice now coming in.

"Mr. F recruits for a firm that specializes in unloading refrigerated ships: frozen fish, octopus, squid etc."

(F631-2, 11/6/94)

The kind of relationship which a day labourer establishes with the recruiters is of crucial importance to his economic prospects. Successful day labourers lay great stress on the importance of cultivating more than one recruiter:

"He now works for about 8 different companies-- though times are hard and he can only nail down about 14 days work a month. He says that most experienced day labourers like to play the field: avoid over-dependence on a single tehaishi; maintain good relations with many. Maintaining a subtle balance in one's network of tehaishi is the key to keeping enough work when times are bad -- as they are now. 'In good times, you can hold your head up high: the tehaishi will beg you to work for them. In bad times, you have

to grovel to them. And the more you've helped out in the good times, the better your chances in the bad times.'" (Kohei [C5:II] F23, 7/7/93)

Many day labourers tell of how recruiters would beg them to work for them, literally fighting over the better men, during the peak period of the bubble economy. They tell of being woken up by a recruiter banging at their door or pulling them out of bed to work. There is of course no guarantee that favours rendered in good times will be reciprocated in bad; many recruiters simply stopped showing their face in Kotobuki after the bubble burst. Still, the successful day labourer will have a subtle understanding of the sense of obligation and the degree of reciprocity likely to be felt by each recruiter, and play them accordingly. In hard times the recruiters often choose men on the principle of kaozuke -- employing only those whose faces they know. Men like Kohei make sure that their face is familiar in all the right places.

For the older, weaker men, this ideal strategy may not be practicable. Such men are likely to end up developing a client relationship with a single recruiter or employer, sacrificing much of their independence in order to develop stronger bonds of obligation which they hope will outlive their usefulness to the other party:

Aged 58... in Kotobuki several decades. Started in construction, then switched over to dockwork. Better paid. But ran out of work there and moved back to construction. Now can't even find work in construction.

He used to play the day labouring game: working for various companies, through various tehaishi, going where the terms were best. But in recent years has found it more effective to stick with a single company, a single boss (oyakata). Every summer, at the Obon gift-giving season, he gives the oyakata some beer; at the year-end gift-giving season, he gives the oyakata some sake or tangerines. In the last year or two, the oyakata has been unable to provide him with much work, but he does his best to take care of Masayoshi: for example, he will put employment stamps (inshi) in his handbook and rubber-stamp them, even when no actual employment has occurred -- enabling Masayoshi to claim the day labourer dole (F327, 4/1/94).

In this decidedly informal economy, each day labourer has to work out his own employment strategy. Kohei and Masayoshi represent extremes; others mix elements of both approaches.

c. Other methods

The men in Kotobuki use many other methods of finding employment besides the traditional recruiters and casual labour exchanges (table 10). Some establish semi-regular arrangements with a single employer. This practice is called chokkô -- 'going directly.' It is especially common with the more skilled, reliable men in the longshoring sector. Some of the minibuses arriving at Kotobuki before dawn were mostly picking up the same men every time. Two or three buses were making a regular shuttle journey between Kotobuki and the port at Kashima, a drive of some three hours, carrying 30 to 60 men a day. The buses set out at 6 a.m., and the men had an informal rotation to

decide who should rest on days when smaller numbers were needed. When I asked Shuzo*, a well-paid crane operator who is a regular on the Kashima bus, why he didn't go and get an apartment in Kashima, he insisted that he preferred the social life in Kotobuki. He was a gambler. Besides, he and his friends enjoyed drinking shōchū (glossary) on the way home.

Another man with one of these semi-regular arrangements was Saburo*:

"Short, longish hair, middle-aged (40s), glasses, cheerful. Says he works for a large shipping company. Gets Y15-17,000 a day, depending on the skill, labour-load and danger entailed in each job. He always works for the same firm, though he has no contract. Sometimes they send him to a job at the Tokyo docks, too. There is a system for non-contract regulars like him. Their names are put up on noticeboards, saying who is needed the next day and where.

I put it to him that the arrangement cost him his freedom to pick and choose where he worked, without giving him any security or rights in exchange. But he wasn't bothered: he said he could take a holiday any time -- one month at a stretch was OK, a day off here and there also OK. He still enjoyed significantly more freedom than the company's payroll employees (sha'in), and had no wish to become one himself. (F656-7)

Other day labourers sometimes use personal connections to get work, attaching themselves to a man with a good reputation and asking to be taken along. The first man gains a certain amount of prestige and may eventually become a sort of minor boss or recruiter. This pattern is prevalent among the foreign migrant labourers, where a man with connections and language skills may become

a leader. I saw this happen with Kim Sang Chon, a 68-year-old political dissident who came over from Inchon to work as a day labourer in Kotobuki and soon parlayed his pleasant manner and excellent Japanese language skills into an informal position arranging work for a dozen or more men every morning.

Another way of getting work is through the job adverts in the sports newspapers. These go on sale around 5 a.m. every morning in Kotobuki, from a small wooden barrow in front of the Centre building. It is not practical for companies to advertise single-day contracts, so most of these jobs are for periods ranging from ten days to a month or more.

d. Pay and conditions

The pay and conditions for jobs at the casual labour exchanges are written on the panels above the windows. Here are a few examples:

Employer: Keihin Doro
Location: Uraga (about 20 miles away)
Workers required: 2
Content: Constructing access road for condominium
Hours: 8.30 to 5.30
Pay: Y10,000
Lunch: Yes.
Travel expenses: Yes.
Insurance: Accident: Yes. Employment: Yes. Health:
Yes.
Limitations: None.

(Labour Office, February 23, 1994)

Employer: Nichi'ei Soko
Location: Hanezawa Warehouse (nearby)
Workers required: 4
Content: Container loading
Hours: 9-5
Pay: Y10,000
Lunch: Yes
Travel expenses: No
Insurance: Labour: Yes Employment: Yes Health: Yes.
Limitations: None

(Labour Office, February 25, 1994)

Employer: Yano Kogyo
Location: Isogo-ku
Workers required: 1
Content: Labouring; construction
Hours: 8-5
Pay: Y12,000
Lunch: No
Travel expenses: No
Insurance: Labour: No Employment: Yes Health: No
Limitations: Age up to 53

(Labour Office, June 7, 1994)

Employer: Ihara Kogyo
Location: Shinbashi-cho, Izumi-ku, Yokohama (a few miles)
Workers required: 2
Content: Construction; basic excavation work, rubble clearance etc.
Hours: 8-5
Pay: Y12,000
Lunch: Yes
Travel expenses: Yes
Insurance: Labour: Yes Employment: Yes Health: Yes
Limitations: None.

(Labour Centre, December 8, 1994[14])

I never saw a job that paid less than Y10,000 (about

14 The employment and health insurance programmes are described below. Industrial accident insurance is a another MoL-run system whereby employers pay premiums to insure against the cost of compensating for workplace accidents.

60 pounds), although in other parts of Japan they are all too common. A few effectively paid less than Y10,000 because of non-payment of travel expenses etc. Y15,000 seemed to be the top rate for unskilled labour, with the average around Y12,000. Skilled work involving driving, carpentry skills, etc. paid up to Y18,000 a day, and dangerous high altitude work (done by tobi, the aristocracy of day labourers) might reach Y20,000 (120 pounds) on a good day. Many day labourers told me of good old days when skilled work would pay as much as Y25,000 or even Y30,000, but there were no such jobs when I was in Kotobuki.

The day wage (dezura) is considered highly sensitive to economic trends, but data collected by the Kotobuki Labour Centre (table 11) suggests that the Heisei recession hit job numbers much harder than wage levels. Broadly speaking, day wages in the formal market rose by almost 50% during the six years from 1985 to 1991, then stagnated from 1991 to 1995. The best-paid worker (spiderman; tobi) earned roughly 50% more than the worst-paid (oddjob-man; zakkô) throughout the period 1985-95, though the gap tended to widen in good years and narrow in bad. Informants say that wages in the informal market are broadly similar, though they tend to be higher at the top end of the scale and lower at the bottom end.

Jobs obtained through the recruiters seldom carry the range of safeguards that come with the formally arranged

jobs. Many employers using the street labour market do provide insurance stamps, which helps to explain why hundreds of day labourers claim the dole at the Labour Office every day though only a handful get jobs there [15] but informants insist that many others do not.

Jobs arranged through the exchanges are paid for, in cash, by the employing company at the end of the day's work. Tehaishi jobs are paid sometimes by the company and sometimes by the tehaishi. In the latter case, the tehaishi will usually show up at Kotobuki to meet the returning minibuses, bearing a sheaf of brown envelopes containing the cash, which he hands over to each worker with a flourish. Occasionally he may even give the men their money before they set out to work, if he believes them to be trustworthy. The actual role of the tehaishi varies considerably: He may be a simple middle-man, finding the labour and being paid a flat rate per head; or he may have his own capital resources and pay the men himself, billing the company at the end of the month. The latter system is said to be far more common in Osaka than in Tokyo-Yokohama, but I found one clear instance of it

15 In the month of August 1993, for instance, the Labour Office supplied a grand total of 1,573 person-days of work, yet paid out 16,231 person-days of dole money. Since the Labour Centre supplied 3,753 person-days of work that month, that would still leave roughly 11,000 person-days' worth of stamps that must have come from employers using the street market, since the system requires one to work at least one day for each claiming day.

happening in Kotobuki (F213-5).

No-one can agree on the percentage of the wage taken by the tehaishi as pin-hane, but most estimates are in the area of Y1-3,000 per man-day. If so, this would represent something like 8 to 24% (less than the cut taken by legal temporary dispatch agencies, which take 30% or more.

As a rule, casual wages are better, measured day against day, than wages for regular employees doing similar work in the same industry. The general rule is that employers pay a little bit extra for the convenience of having no long-term responsibility for the worker (see Shigehiro, Ch5:VIII, for more on this) [16].

Because the yen is so strong, day labourer wages seem quite good when translated into other currencies. Remember, though, that Japan has a very high cost of living; and that for most day labourers, earning power steadily declines with age, whereas for people in steady employment it tends to rise. Wage levels have virtually no relation to age (cf Koike 1995:8), but ability to get work falls steadily. Many employers now specify an upper age limit in their advertisements, often 55 or 60 -- a practice deeply resented by day labourers in Kotobuki.

16 Cf. "There seems to be an understanding among this class of men not to work for less than 50c an hour, and they are loath to accept steady employment at 35c to 37.5c [an] hour when they can do temporary work, and work at a different job every day, or any day one pleases, at 45c to 50c an hour." (Anderson, 1923:120).

e. Employing industries

Nowadays, the construction/civil engineering industry probably accounts for roughly two-thirds of all work done by Kotobuki day labourers, and longshoring/warehousing for the other third. Other industries, such as transportation and manufacturing, offer very few job opportunities these days. At the Labour Centre over 90% of the registered employers are in construction (table 12), but the longshoring industry is more active in the street market and has other Kotobuki men like Saburo (Vc above) with semi-regular arrangements.

Longshoring used to be the dominant employer in Yokohama, as the post-war history outlined above indicates, but the advance of containerization has eliminated many jobs at the docks -- a complaint often heard in Kotobuki. Meanwhile the construction boom of the '80s (a prominent feature of the bubble economy) helped to replace some of those jobs with extra employment in the construction industry. Still, many people told me that the Tokyo docks were even more containerized than the Yokohama ones; most yoseba are even more dependent on construction than Kotobuki.

Manufacturing industry used to be a major employer,

but these days manufacturers seldom patronise the yoseba. I knew men who got work for Coca-cola (Ch5:IV) and the Japanese domestic telephone company NTT (Ch5:IX), but these were rather exceptional [17].

f. Period contracts vs one-day contracts

Both the casual employment exchanges in Kotobuki deal in period contracts (yūki keiyaku), usually lasting 7, 10 or 15 days, as well as one-day jobs. Some men specialize in these longer-term jobs, but the majority seem to avoid them as far as possible. Even in the teeth of the Heisei recession I sometimes noticed period contracts that were displayed all day without finding a taker, and Labour Centre statistics show consistently lower take-up rates for period contracts (table 9). Since 1991 virtually all one-day contracts have been snapped up, but relatively many period contracts have been spurned.

Partly this is because of the poor reputation of the work-camps (hanba) where these jobs are mostly done, and the makeshift dormitories where hanba workers usually stay. These work-camps are notorious for exploitative work arrangements and lax safety measures, and during my

17 Interestingly, though, Ventura and a dozen Filipino friends got work coiling cables for KDD, Japan's international telephone company (Ventura 1992:46).

fieldwork period there were at least three fatal fires resulting from inadequate safety precautions at hanba [18]. Other abusive practices at hanba include lending money at high interest at the start of a contract and deducting it from wages; selling cigarettes and alcohol at a hefty premium; refusing to pay for work done if a man quits in mid-contract, etc. Bad hanba are called ketaoshi hanba or han-keta (glossary).

Still, not all hanba are hell, and period contracts obviously offer greater certainty and regularity of income than one-day contracts. Wage levels tend to be lower on period contracts, but not by much. Hanba work also obviates the need to get up extremely early in the morning. Some say that heavy drinking in the yoseba is partly a way of getting to sleep in order to make this early start. Again, Kato (1991:304) refers to the early-morning period (roughly 5 to 7am) as "a fixed period which [the worker] must allow to be consumed in order to sell the product which is his labour... and which lengthens the period for which he is under duress (kôsooku jikan) each day." That is only half the story. Kato omits to mention that this is

18 E.g. Eight men died in a nocturnal fire on July 6, 1994, at a very dangerously designed construction workers' dormitory at Ebina, 20 miles from Yokohama. Most of the 53 men staying there were migrant workers from Hokkaido and Tohoku. (Asahi Shinbun 6/7/94, evening edition, p. 17). The Asahi said the dormitory belonged to a small construction company called Komuro-gumi. In fact it belonged to Tokyu Construction, a massive company using Komuro-gumi as a subcontractor. Tokyu escaped publicity.

also the most sociable time of day in the yoseba, when men share their experiences and useful information about recruiters and employers. Even men who obviously are not planning to work, being still in their pyjamas or hobbling around on crutches, often appear on the streets around 5 or 6 in the morning. Partly no doubt this is from force of habit, but partly also it is a desire for community, I believe. So getting up at 7 instead of 5 is not as attractive as might imagine.

Several other factors are involved in preferring one-day or period contracts.

One is health. Period contracts can be attractive to a strong, fit man, because he can do enough work to maintain eligibility for the day labourer dole on a single 15-day contract and have the rest of the month off. Hard work and often remote locations tend to prevent one from spending too much money and enable one to save up a stash. Some middle-stage alcoholics use a spell at a hanba to dry out and restore finances before returning to Kotobuki to enjoy the fruits of their labour, usually with more drinking. However, older men and more advanced alcoholics cannot cope with the prolonged gruelling labour at a hanba and have little choice but to seek single-day contracts.

Another factor is the worker's residential situation. Hanba jobs generally include accommodation, which is an advantage to the day labourer with few possessions who can

clear his room at the drop of a hat and cut out the cost of renting a doya room while in the hanba. But it is much less appealing to the man who has been living in the same room for years and has acquired a vast clutter of possessions. He will have to keep on paying for his doya room even when not living in it.

Seasonal factors also play a part. The worker may seek period-contract work in late autumn to build up funds for the winter (see Ch5:V for an example).

VI. Residence

The Korean ownership of Kotobuki lodging houses is reflected in decorative style. Some doya in Sanya are little wooden buildings, covered with ivy and resembling a quaint country inn except for the minuteness of the rooms. But in Kotobuki the doya are almost uniformly large and functional with no frills. Only a handful of wooden ones remain; the great majority are multi-story ferro-concrete structures.

The number of doya in Kotobuki has fluctuated slightly with economic trends. There were 86 in 1989; 92 in 1991; and 88 in 1994. The number of rooms available has held steady at 6,100 to 6,200 (Kotobuki 1990, 1992, 1995). Here is one of the rooms:

Nice room, 2.5 mats, no cockroaches. Walls: greyish, mottled. Phone numbers biro'd on, stickers from newly bought clothing affixed. Furniture: 1 rickety coffee table. 3 or 4 shelves, boards of wood on bits of wood nailed in, held together with skeins of string and yet more nails... Count 85 nails protruding from walls. One strip light, middle of ceiling, operated by switch in ball hanging from it. Nasty damp patch in corner, evidence of many botched attempts to cover it up: bits of cardboard, sheets of newspaper, torn-off calendar pages, masking tape etc. Damp still coming through. Greasy, damp tatami mats. Lank futons. Nailed to the wall, a light brown bakelite bathroom fitting with mirror and little shelf for soap etc. Faded floral border. English phrase in curly writing: 'Hi, Bonny Pet'. (F188, 17/10/93).

The recent shortage of day labouring jobs does not appear to have damaged the business of the doya-owners unduly: most of the doya seem to be full most of the time. This resilience to recession has several causes: some people who could no longer afford better moved down to doya; Korean migrants now occupy all the rooms in some doya; and the Yokohama city government is housing more welfare cases in doya rooms. Most doya-owners welcome this arrangement, since the city government is a far more reliable source of rent payments than the uncertain income of a day labourer. As table 6 suggests, over half are now occupied by people on welfare. By 1995, it was starting to get quite difficult for a travelling day labourer to find a room in Kotobuki because of this.

Doya rooms range widely in standard, from vilely filthy to spotlessly clean. The better ones have TVs and sometimes even fridges and air conditioners. Rents vary

accordingly, from roughly Y1,000 to Y3,000 in 1995. But none have private toilets or even wash-basins (they must be shared with many others) and occupants must pay to use one of the three public baths or numerous coin showers around Kotobuki -- or queue for the free showers at the Seikatsukan -- if they wish to get seriously clean.

Another thing all doya rooms have in common is that they are extremely small, ranging in size from 2 to 4 tatami mats (3.3 to 6.6 square metres) in area (ibid and personal observation). They are designed as very efficient devices to maximise the return on land in an area where land is at a premium and the rent-paying population poor. They are also well adjusted to the day labouring lifestyle: rent is payable by the day rather than the month, making it easy to come, go and be kicked out. Residents are given a small card with the name of the doya and his room number on it, and a grid, very like the one used to record employment in his white handbook, in which the concierge (chôba-san) will stamp the seal of the doya for every night's rent paid.

This system adds another dimension to the day labourer's life strategy. Some will generally pay an entire month in advance, others will aim to stay just a day or two ahead of the game. Others will be perpetually falling slightly into arrears, and will let it slide to the point where they risk eviction, before doing a few days'

hard work to retrieve the situation. Officially, arrears are not permitted at all; in practice, most choba-san will be patient for some time. The grace period seems to be roughly in proportion to length of residency: Newly arrived tenants will get no quarter, whereas men who have stayed for many years may be allowed to fall as much as a month or two behind before the choba-san reluctantly gives up on him.

Compared with any other kind of hotel, doya are very cheap, but compared with cheap apartments, they are quite expensive. The doya room I described above cost Y1,100 a night, or roughly Y33,000 a month. For that, or not much more, one could get a modest apartment, maybe 6 mats rather than 2, certainly with running water and probably its own toilet. But moving into an apartment in Yokohama entails paying about six months' worth of rent up-front (2 months deposit, 2 months non-returnable gift to landlord, 1 month agent's fee, 1 month rent in advance). It also entails supplying the landlord with the name of a guarantor, a citizen of good standing who will vouch for the good character of the tenant and, in the worst case, take financial responsibility for any damage done. Few day labourers can supply either the large initial sum or the guarantor. Like poor people everywhere who cannot afford to buy in bulk, day labourers pay a premium for their housing because they lack the resources to pay large

amounts up-front. The doya owner requires no deposit and asks no questions about social standing or even proof of identity. This flexibility and anonymity enables them to charge over the odds.

Many doya in Sanya and Kamagasaki operate a curfew (mongen), and lock their doors around 10pm. Kotobuki doya have no curfew, and residents may come and go much as they please. This freedom of movement, much appreciated by the day labourers, reflects a more relaxed management style on the part of the Korean owners (cf Saito 1994:132).

Men who cannot afford to stay in a doya, or who are barred for bad behaviour, can easily end up on the streets (See Ch7).

VII. Play and other non-work activities

a. Gambling

Nowhere in Japan, not even on my visits to larger yoseba, have I ever seen such a concentration of gambling facilities, legal and otherwise, as in Kotobuki.

For a start there are some twenty illegal off-course bookmakers where you can bet on horse, bicycle and power-

boat races [19]. These are located in lock-up shops, sheds, or tents; some are just trestle tables standing in the pavement. Most are equipped with satellite TV and radio, transmitting odds and live coverage of races, and they are well patronised. The Yokohama police have a reputation for being soft on the yakuza who run these places, and just make a few token arrests two or three times a year. These illegal bookmakers are called nomiya, literally 'swallowing shops'. The same word, written with a different character, means a drinking shop, but in Kotobuki a nomiya is one of the few places where you cannot get a drink.

Nomiya do not allow complicated multi-race combinations, or simple win or place bets on single contestants. Invariably one must predict the first and second place finishers -- a bet called a forecast in Britain, a quinella in the USA, and a baren ('consecutive horses') in Japan. On a few of the big classic races, one may identify two horses by their own numbers, but in most horse-racing and all bicycle and speed-boat racing the bet is further depersonalized by placing all the contenders in eight brackets (six for speed-boats). So supposing there are 12 runners, the first four brackets will each have two runners and the last four only one each. Selecting a

19 Keiba, keirin, kyôtei, the "three Ks" of leisure to match the three Ks of work; see Ch9:VIa.

bracket containing two runners gives one two chances of success. However, imbalances between brackets tend to be faithfully reflected in the odds, which are calculated at the course by computerized totalizer. This variation on the forecast bet is called a bracket quinella in the US and a wakuren in Japan. In the first few races of the day the wakuren is reversible -- so that a bet on say, 3-5, will win on a result of 5-3 as well as 3-5. A red line is drawn across the results chart, and in the later races under the line the bet is not reversible.

The bracket quinella is a very impersonal bet. Gambling conversations at the nomiya sometimes discussed horses and jockeys, but mostly the talk would be of whether 4-7 or 3-7 offered the best prospects. A few day labourers would study the form very intently, but for many numerology seemed to play a large part in their betting decisions.

The traditional bookie, drawing up his own odds on the strength of his own knowledge and ingenuity, is not to be found in Kotobuki -- or, as far as I know, anywhere else in Japan. The tote leaves nothing to chance: the odds on each combination are automatically calculated to allow a generous 25% margin to the race operator (a body licensed by central or local government). This betting tax covers running expenses, prize money etc., and the residue goes into the public coffers. In Kotobuki, the yakuza use the same odds, electronically broadcast from the track, but

pocket the 25% margin themselves. It is a very easy way to make money, and helps to explain why yakuza in Kotobuki drive brand-new white Mercedes-Benzes while most of the workers go around in beaten up sandals. However, since the nomiya's odds are calculated on a different population to that actually patronising the nomiya (the punters at the track), it can, very occasionally, go wrong. Yakuza and gamblers alike love to tell stories, possibly exaggerated, of these rare events when a nomiya got taken to the cleaners.

There are also several mah-jongg parlours in Kotobuki, one of them next door to the biggest yakuza office, and several arcades and coffee shops where one may play video one-armed bandits. These games are supposed to be for amusement only, and it is illegal for these establishments to give cash prizes -- but in Kotobuki they all do. Then there are several dice games in Kotobuki, their number and location varying in response to periods of firmness and laxity on the part of the police. My friend Shuzo took me to one that was run in a yakuza safe house:

The game was going on in a brightly-lit, all-white room on the ground floor of an ordinary apartment building. The room had a bamboo screen pulled diagonally down in front of it, forming a kind of lean-to, which I suppose was to give a little extra privacy. I saw no signs of sound-proofing, but the game was going on in low, hushed tones. Shuzo was greeted in the polite manner he'd led me to expect. ('We are their customers; they have to treat us well.')

There was a table, about the dimensions of a small billiard table; a white cloth stretched across it. I

guess the bright light, the brilliant whiteness and the complete absence of cigarette smoke -- unthinkable in gambling joints in most parts of the world -- had something to do with purity, with fairness, with nothing-up-my-sleeve; that it was analogous to the white gloves worn by Japanese politicians at election time.

There were about 14 to 16 people assembled round the table, of whom 3 or 4 were yakuza running the game. There were two dice, which were kept in an old fruit can; the participants took it in turns to cup a hand over the can and shake it. Then they would turn the can upside down and slap it down on the table with a flourish, so that the dice remained concealed under the can. Only then would bets be placed, when the dice had already settled but were still concealed. Wads of blue Y1,000 notes were placed on the table; sometimes in long sheaves, sometimes in little L-shaped snaffles. A few brown Y10,000 notes were also in evidence; and some Y100 coins.

The House wins on evens and the punter on odds. Shuzo took out about Y10,000 in Y1,000 notes and started betting. He clearly didn't believe in the cautious approach: he would usually stake at least half his stash, and once he'd started losing he put his last Y5,000 down in one go and promptly lost that too. He asked the House to stake him; an unfriendly grey-haired yakuza gruffly said they weren't doing that tonight. A friendlier young yakuza, with a Hawaiian shirt and a look of great long-suffering, folded up three blue notes and tossed them across the table to Shuzo, who won once, then lost everything on the next two throws of the dice. We took our leave; we can't have been there more than 10 minutes. Shuzo had lost over Y10,000; the best part of a day's income. (F69-70, 3/8/93)

Finally, there are three massive pachinko halls in Kotobuki, called MAX I, MAX II and MARINE. Pachinko is by far and away the biggest form of gambling in Japan, an industry with an annual turn-over estimated at Y17 trillion in 1994 and Y20 trillion in 1995. Pachinko is often called 'Japanese pinball' but it is more like a highly sophisticated bagatelle. Players sit in front of

upright machines and attempt to ping ball-bearings into targets which will trigger the machine to disgorge more ball-bearings. Winning players take baskets of ball-bearings to the counter, where they are counted by automatic weighing machines. They are supposed to be exchanged for prizes (legal), but most players prefer to collect their winnings in cash (illegal). The player takes a chit out of the hall and exchanges it for cash at a small, shabby booth nearby. In Kotobuki, the MAX payout booth was located on the ground floor of the multi-story car-park attached to the hall, while the MARINE booth was a tiny window in a nearby doya.

The Kotobuki pachinko halls are under ethnic Korean ownership, like the great majority around the country. In recent years pachinko has become a diplomatic issue between Japan and the US, with the latter claiming that pachinko profits remitted to Pyongyang have been propping up the government of North Korea [20]. Meanwhile, my visits to the Kotobuki pachinko halls suggest that this is the most addictive form of gambling in the area, and the most rapid way of losing money. Kotobuki men rarely seem to bet more than a couple of thousand yen on a race, and must wait some time for the result -- but a modern pachinko machine can swallow Y10,000 (60 pounds) in 20 minutes. Several day

20 See Tokyo Insideline, #21p.8 (29/10/93) and #28p.6 (31/5/94)].

labourer narratives included a battle with pachinko addiction, and several men seemed to be losing that battle.

b. Drinking

Japanese academics of the social pathology school have tended to characterize doya-gai as breeding grounds of alcoholism (e.g. Ohashi 1972, Oyabu 1981). Certainly a lot of heavy drinking goes on in Kotobuki, but Murata Yoshio, who has been working with alcoholics in the area for 25 years, firmly refutes this view. His personal estimate is that some 30% of the Kotobuki population (roughly 2,000) have some kind of alcohol problem, just over half of which (roughly 1,200) he would classify as 'alcoholics.' At the same time 20% are tee-total (double the national average of about 10%). Of those who may be classified as alcoholics, he estimates that perhaps 90% were already alcoholics before they arrived in Kotobuki. Far from breeding alcoholism, he sees Kotobuki as a sort of sanctuary for people whose lives have been disrupted in other branches of Japanese society. He finds that many of the alcoholics have mothers or fathers who were also alcoholics, which points to childhood environment rather than doya-gai environment as a factor in alcoholism. He also says that alcoholics in Kotobuki show a much broader social profile than day labourers in general; all classes are represented

with a split of roughly 7:3 between working-class or under-class types and middle-class types.

The Alcoholics Anonymous group run by Murata has a success rate of "about 30%" in breaking people out of this downward spiral and enabling them to live relatively normal lives. The process generally takes over three years. There are now 40 to 50 people regularly attending the AA, and numbers are gradually rising. Murata has been running the group for 15 years, during which many former members have left Kotobuki and succeeded in getting steady jobs [21].

c. Drugs

Alcohol is by far the biggest drug in Kotobuki, but there are others to be had. In the summer of 1993 I met a dealer there who said he was selling heroin (pe in street slang) at Y10,000 for three hits, and also a little opium. He operated on the street, sending customers to a regularly changed doya room to do the transaction with a partner. He said he was not a yakuza but had to pay off the yakuza for protection. The rate had recently gone up from Y50,000 a month to Y100,000, and he was refusing to pay. He was thus at risk from the yakuza as well as the police. After this one early meeting, I never saw him again. Nor did I meet

21 Interview with Murata Yoshio, F956-62, 19/11/94.

any other obvious dealers, although there was talk of men using amphetamines (shabu, or hirapon in older slang). I never saw or heard of any use of marijuana. The volunteers at the Kotobuki medical unit reckon there is a small minority of amphetamine addicts; my dealer estimated the drug-taking population of Kotobuki at "about 30 patients, or 1% of the population" (F24-6, 7/7/93).

Several people told me that in the small hours of the morning wealthy young people would motor into Kotobuki to score drugs. I never saw this myself, but then I was rarely on the streets between 1 and 4 am.

d. Sex

I have the impression that Kotobuki is an area of extremely low sexual activity. As stated, very few men there have wives or regular partners. There is the alternative of visiting the prostitutes in the long row of brothels under the Keihin elevated railway line that runs through Kogane-cho and Hinode-cho (about a 20-minute walk from Kotobuki), but day labourers are seldom in a position to pay Y10,000 (roughly one day's wages) for 20 minutes of intercourse. Many of the Kogane-cho women are foreigners, from the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, etc.

Some foreign prostitutes live in Kotobuki, but do not generally work there. They use it as a low-rent base from

which they set out around dusk, usually to work the street corners of nearby Wakaba-cho.

Several men told me that after decades of drinking they no longer had any interest in women, nor the physical ability to express such an interest. Others had rooms littered with pornographic magazines, which are on sale from vending machines and convenience stores in Kotobuki, as in most other parts of Japan. Masturbation is probably the most common form of sexual activity in Kotobuki, and is often joked about.

Homosexuality seems to be quite common in Kotobuki, though little talked about. I myself was discreetly propositioned half a dozen times, by men who scratched the palm of my hand while shaking hands -- a secretive message of sexual interest in Japan as in Britain. One gay rights activist who knows Kotobuki well said that it was mostly 'opportunity homosexuality' (kikai dôsei-ai), stemming from the availability of men and unavailability of women in this mostly masculine community. There is the converse possibility that homosexuality is a factor in marriage breakdown and arrival in Kotobuki for some men.

There are a couple of transvestite bars in Kotobuki, but they appear to be patronized for novelty value rather than as pick-up venues. In Japan as elsewhere, there have always been gay men with an interest in building workers, and although the deteriorating physical condition of the

Kotobuki population has discouraged these people in recent years, I hear that there are still a few who come into Kotobuki.

e. Fighting

There is quite a lot of fighting in Kotobuki, mostly drunken brawls. Many men carry scars from past fights, and some are constantly threatening violence. There are a few bullies who take pleasure in humiliating and injuring weaker men. But the number of murders has been around one or two a year of late [22], quite a low figure in view of the circumstances. Personally I never saw a knife or a gun drawn in anger, nor did I observe yakuza bullying workers other than verbally. This tends to confirm a common view in day labouring circles, that the Kotobuki yakuza are a lot easier to get on with than their brethren in Sanya or Kamagasaki.

Nor did I personally witness any inter-ethnic fighting. Most fights were between fellow Japanese or fellow Koreans. The Koreans are certainly resented by many of the Japanese day labourers, but since they tend to be younger, stronger and better organized, any racist attacks would have disastrous consequences for the perpetrator.

22 E.g. There were no murders and two manslaughters in Kotobuki in 1993 (Police interview, F370-6, 1/2/94).

VIII. Bureaucratic systems

The Labour Office has the important function: of administering the MoL's special unemployment insurance system for day labourers. Day labourers are legally obliged to register at an employment exchange -- though not all do -- and on registration they are given a white handbook, with grids of squares representing days of the month. Employers are supposed to stick an employment stamp (inshi), which costs Y176 (about 1 pound), on each day they have employed the holder. Officially the employer and worker are supposed to share the cost of stamp, but in practice the sum of money is so trivial that the employer does not bother to collect the worker's contribution. The heavily-subsidized system generally pays out Y7,500 (about 45 pounds) per day without work to any man who has stamps to prove he has worked at least 26 days in the last two completed calendar months [23].

In a 1994 survey of 100 Kotobuki day labourers only 69% admitted to knowing that it was illegal to work without the white handbook; however, the advantages are clear, and 90 were in fact carrying it (Kotobuki 1994a:4,6). As of 17/9/96 there were 3,513 registered day labourers at the

23 The yakuza sometimes sell fraudulent sets of stamps -- see Ch5:V, also glossary: yami inshi.

Labour Office, which expected this number to rise by about 1,000 as day labourers got registered in order to take advantage of the MoL's end-of-year special payment to day labourers. This was Y33,000, or about 200 pounds, in 1995.

Since 1989 there has also been a system of health insurance for day labourers under article 69, part 7 of the Health Insurance Law (Kenkō Hoken-hō), but this is far less widely used than the unemployment insurance, mainly because it is far more expensive for employers and workers alike. Again there is a handbook; for a man paid Y12-14,500 a day (typical for Kotobuki), the daily stamp costs Y1,410, of which Y870 is payable by the employer and Y540 is supposed to be deducted from the day wage paid to the worker. The system is also very bureaucratic, and quite unsuited to most day labourers since the expensive premium covers a huge range of dependent relations.

The scheme is supposed to be compulsory, but many employers ignore it. Until 1996 the Labour Centre refused to supply workers to employers not enrolled in the scheme, but the Labour Office (much to the chagrin of the Labour Centre) turned a blind eye (F358-60) [24].

On April 1, 1996 the Labour Centre finally scrapped the requirement for employers to be enrolled in the scheme,

24 Health insurance for day labourers was thought up by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, but the Labour Office is run by the Ministry of Labour, which has never liked the system.

and stopped insisting even on unemployment insurance. Accident insurance has never been compulsory. So nowadays, out of three kinds of day labourer insurance mentioned on official job descriptions, the Office only insists on unemployment insurance and the Centre on none. The recent slight recovery in jobs transacted (table 9) must be seen in the light of this ad hoc, ground-level deregulation.

The result is that in the 1994 survey, only 49 men out of 100 were carrying the health insurance handbook; and of those 49, only 23 had enough stamps to actually use the insurance. Some men preferred to use the standard national health insurance (kokumin kenkō hoken), for which the premiums are fairly cheap for those on low incomes; on the other hand, the standard insurance pays only 70% of medical costs against 90% for the special day labourer system. Others pay their own expenses in full or rely on social services (table 13).

Men who cannot support themselves by working must turn to the social services of Naka ward. Assistance comes in two broad categories: social welfare (seikatsu hogo) [25] and extra-legal assistance (hōgai engo). Social welfare pays room rent plus roughly ¥80,000 (500 pounds) a month for a single man. In theory it is payable to anyone without means of support; in practice, welfare officials in

25 Sometimes more literally translated as 'livelihood protection'.

most Japanese cities have insisted that recipients must be physically unable to work, and require a doctor's letter to that effect. This approach may have been defensible during Japan's long years of high economic growth, but during the Heisei Recession there were many able-bodied men who struggled to maintain employment. Lengthy negotiations between the day labourer union (see X below) and the ward and city authorities have gradually eased the latter's interpretation of welfare eligibility; hence the recent marked increase in welfare recipients in Kotobuki (table 7).

As the name suggests, extra-legal assistance is help which the authorities are not legally obliged to give; it may be given as a favour. In Yokohama, this assistance takes two forms: food vouchers (pan-ken) and lodging-house vouchers (doya-ken). In 1995 the former were worth Y660 (4 pounds), and were exchangeable for goods (not including alcohol or cigarettes) only at a few selected shops in the Kotobuki region; the latter had a face value of Y1,400 (9 pounds) and were good for one night's accommodation at one of 25 doya in Kotobuki which accept them. The fact that both kinds of voucher are only usable in Kotobuki naturally tends to attract the poor from other parts of Yokohama into the doya-gai.

Until 1992, the staff at Naka-ku ward office were issuing about 30 accommodation vouchers a day. By 1994

they were issuing around 300 a day (and about twice as many food vouchers), and the level has scarcely declined since. The predictable result is that the doya which accept them are nearly always full, and the vast majority of the vouchers are unusable. They are called kara-ken (empty tickets). The best you can do with a kara-ken is sell it to a yakuza who will then attempt to defraud the local government of the Y1,400. The yakuza used to pay Y500 for a dud accommodation voucher, but during the Heisei Recession the market was flooded and the price sank to Y300 -- supply and demand in action again.

IX. Health

Kagoshima Masa'aki, a leading figure in the union (see IX below) estimates that roughly 180 people die every year in Kotobuki, and that life expectancy is around 56, fully 20 years below the national male average for Japan [26].

The people of Kotobuki are prone to various ailments, of which the most common is back trouble and the most disturbing is tuberculosis (table 14). Saiki Teruko, the doctor in charge of the Kotobuki Clinic and something of a Yokohama celebrity (see Saiki 1991[1982]) told me early in 1994 that she was seeing roughly three cases a week of TB,

26 Quoted in Saito 1994:133.

up from about one a week a couple of years before. "And these are really awful cases, often at a very advanced stage," she added. This she ascribed to the impact of recession-induced poverty. She guessed that TB was responsible for at least 5% of all deaths in Kotobuki.

Day labourers who lack medical insurance (see Va above) or money to pay the full cost of treatment cannot be seen at most clinics and surgeries. The Kotobuki Clinic is an exception. Those who cannot pay are treated as "special cases" (tokubetsu shinryô) and are required to fill in a form, addressed to the mayor of Yokohama, asking the city to lend them the price of their medical treatment. This is simply a matter of form; no effort is made to get the money back. The patients are simply encouraged to pay back what they can, when they can. In 1993 Y18 million (110,000 pounds) was "lent" in this way, of which Y380,000 (2,500 pounds, about 2%) was paid back.

There is nothing like this special system for the uninsured in Tokyo or Osaka. Dr. Saiki says the Yokohama approach reflects the lingering influence of progressive policies adopted by the Socialist administration the city had in the '70s. She admits that some people abuse the clinic, especially yakuza looking for sick-notes to facilitate bogus welfare claims, but after 15 years in Kotobuki, she reckons she can spot them [27].

27 Interview with Dr. Saiki, F363-6, 31/1/94.

There is also a volunteer group called the Medical Team (Iryōhan) operating in Kotobuki. Once a month the Iryōhan set up a table and conduct simple on-the-spot medical examinations. In a serious case, they will pass the patient on to a professional doctor (also a volunteer) or even call an ambulance and accompany the patient to hospital (cf Stevens 1995a, 1995b, esp 247-8). On April 1 1996, two Iryōhan doctors opened a new clinic, open 6.30-8.30 every evening, aimed primarily at the foreign workers in Kotobuki [28].

X. The union

The Kotobuki Day Labourers' Union (Junichirō) prides itself on its human face. It has an extra character in its Japanese name which slightly distinguishes it from unions in other yoseba: they are 'day labour unions' but Junichiro is a 'day labourer union.' It has a very informal organization, with no formal leader. Anyone who turns up at a meeting may participate in decision-making. During my fieldwork period, Junichiro had only one paid worker (and he only intermittently), Kondo Noboru. Mr. Kagoshima, also had a paid job helping to run the Seikatsu-kan as an

28 Reported in Kotobuki Iryōhan Tsūshin, the Iryōhan's monthly newsletter, #67, May 1996.

indirect employee of the Yokohama city government. A third, Hanada Masaru, was in charge of running the coin lockers in the Centre, and the other dozen or so activists mostly made a living as active day labourers.

Union activists mentioned four main objectives: (1) to represent members in negotiations with employers over abuses such as non-payment of wages, failure to compensate for industrial accidents, etc. (2) to negotiate with the city, prefectural and national authorities for better employment and welfare measures for day labourers; (3) to help organize the summer festival and winter survival campaign; and (4) to raise political awareness among day labourers and encourage them to fight for their rights, by organising demonstrations etc.

Members are defined as any day labourer in the Kotobuki area. Officially there is a monthly due of Y500, but hardly anyone pays this and Junichiro makes no apparent effort to enforce payment. Most day labourers in Kotobuki have a positive attitude towards the union, but few do anything to actively support it. They only go to the union when they need help, typically in an industrial dispute. It several times struck me that in its relations with the Kotobuki day labourers, Junichiro was more like a charity than a union. There is one other union seeking to represent day labourers, the Kanagawa City Union, based in the neighboring city of Kawasaki but with branches in

Yokohama and Yokosuka (Saito 1994:141-2). This union was making little impact on Kotobuki when I was there. One Junichiro member despised the City Union because, he said, it targets the better-off dock workers, insists on levying membership dues, and retains a percentage of cash won from employers in negotiations. Junichiro is a member of the National Federation of Day Labour Unions (Zenkoku Hiyatoi Rōdō Kumiai Kyōgi-kai, or Hiyatoi Zenkyō for short), founded on June 27, 1982 after several earlier attempts to form a national day labourer union. Hiyatoi Zenkyō groups unions from Osaka, Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Fukuoka and Naha (Okinawa). Junichiro attends the annual Hiyatoi Zenkyō conference, which rotates among member cities, and sometimes sends personnel to support struggles in other yoseba.

Junichiro is fiercely internationalist, and seeks to support illegal foreign workers as well as Japanese workers. In May 1987 the union got together with concerned citizens groups to form the Association in Kotobuki for Solidarity with Foreign Migrant Workers (Kotobuki Gaikokujin Dekasegi Rōdōsha to Rentai Suru Kai), better known as the Kalabaw Association [29], offering legal advice, Japanese language lessons, shelter and support to migrant workers. Kalabaw has links with citizens'

29 It takes its name from the Tagalog word for a water buffalo.

movements in Korea, the Philippines etc., and in 1990 published probably the best book yet on the "foreign worker problem" [30].

I got to know many activists from Junichiro and other day labour unions. There is a fairly general consensus within the movement that Junichiro is less doctrinaire and more practical in its approach than others. It organizes very few purely political events, but puts a heavy stress on negotiation with local authorities, in which it has succeeded in winning several important concessions over the years.

XI. Events

There are two major annual events in Kotobuki, each with counterparts in the other major yoseba: the Summer Festival (Natsu matsuri) and the Winter Survival Campaign (Ettô). These are discussed in Ch7.

Summary

At first glance, Kotobuki looks like a paradigm of free-market capitalism, a labour market where men can be freely used, then left to die when no longer needed. A closer inspection reveals a wide variety of measures, put there by government and citizens, to soften the system and regularize employment, health and welfare. Yet closer inspection shows that many of those measures are largely ineffectual, and have the ironic side-effect of highlighting Kotobuki's status as a 'special cultural zone' (see Ch9 below). Ironically, the place is probably harder to leave these days.

Chapter 4: Ethnography of other doya-gai and yoseba

Introduction

Day labourers are very unevenly spread around Japan (table 15). All the major day-labouring prefectures are in relatively warm regions, with none to be found in the north-east or along the Japan Sea coast, and there is a marked concentration in western Honshu. The top eight prefectures all have major cities in them, while predominantly rural prefectures have very few: Yamanashi prefecture had just two registered day labourers in FY1990. Only Fukuoka, Kōchi and Kumamoto prefectures were anywhere near supplying regular work for their registered day labourers; elsewhere informal labour markets would probably have accounted for the bulk of employment.

I. Sanya (Tokyo) [1]

Some 70% of Tokyo's day labourers live in and around Sanya (there are smaller concentrations in Takadanobaba and Kamata), making a population of about 9-10,000, mostly accommodated in the doya. I have been there many times since my first visit in 1986 (Ch1:1).

1 I have given a more detailed description of Sanya in Gill 1994; see also de Barry 1988, Fowler 1992.

Location and history

'Sanya' is written with characters meaning 'mountain-valley', yet the place is flat as a pancake. It is located in Northeast Tokyo, near Minami-Senju station on the Hibiya line. There is a broad street, generally known as Sanya-dori (Sanya Street), running through the middle of the district, lined with pachinko parlours, bars, restaurants and doya. Sanya-dori crosses Meiji-dori at a broad, nondescript crossroads which marks the entrance to the main drag. This is called Namidabashi, the Bridge of Tears, though there is no bridge nor any sign of a river.

However, this name is the first clue to the inauspicious history of this part of Tokyo. The main Edo execution ground was located here; it was called Kotsukappara [2], and it is thought that some 200,000 people were killed here during the last two centuries of the Edo era (1667-1867), by methods including beheading and crucifixion (Asahi 1986 Vol.2:7-8; Kaji 1977 Vol.1:11). The condemned would bid their loved ones farewell at Namidabashi. Near Minami-Senju station there still stands a large statue of Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy, where people would pray for the souls of those executed.

2 Usually written with characters meaning 'Field of Small Tumuli', sometimes 'Field of Bones'.

Sanya-dori used to be known as Kotsu-dori, a name still used by some people to describe the portion to the north of Namidabashi. There are rival theories to account for this name, which appears to mean 'bone street'. One says it is simply an abbreviation of 'Kotsukappara-dori'; the other is that it refers to bones lying around the cremation ground which was located at present-day Minami-Senju 5-chome from the Edo period until 1887. Digging back still further, the name Kotsukappara itself may derive from a tumulus in the region dedicated to the disgraced fire-god, Susano (Asahi 1986 Vol.2:7-8).

Amid these reminders of Sanya's brutal past, a couple of place-names stand out in intriguing contrast. Tamahime Kōen (Jewel Princess Park) and the adjacent Hōrai Chūgakkō (a middle school named after the island of eternal youth in Chinese myth) form a kind of island in central Sanya. The small park, a traditional gathering place for off-duty day labourers, has had three-quarters of its area fenced off for use as a sports ground by supervised children. The only gate is kept firmly locked outside hours and there is a wire-netting roof as well, forming a fairly secure cage [3]. On a mild afternoon one may often see rheumy-eyed old men sitting on benches, or even hanging onto the fence,

3 It was used as a tennis court when observed a few years earlier by Kogawa (1987:170), who saw this as a demonstration of the authorities' determination to encourage middle-class incursion into Sanya.

watching children play baseball inside the cage.

Sanya has a close association with the Burakumin outcast group (Ch2:III), reflected in the considerable number of meat, leather and footwear wholesalers to be found in the area. The local Shinto shrine, dedicated to Inari, the fox-god, holds semi-annual footwear festivals in which a couple of dozen local retailers set up stalls in the shrine grounds.

Sanya also has a close association with prostitution. The famous Yoshiwara pleasure quarter was located nearby when it was launched in 1617 (completed in 1626), and after the old Yoshiwara burned down in the Great Meireki Fire of 1656, the houses of assignation were temporarily moved over to Sanya. Though the exact location of the Yoshiwara varied over the next three centuries, it was never very far from Sanya. During the Edo era Sanya served as an adjunct to Yoshiwara: there were cheap Hinin prostitutes, known as yotaka (night-hawks) for those who could not afford to patronize the Yoshiwara, and it was also a 'nest of pimps' (zegen no su) who supplied women to the Yoshiwara itself (Kaji 1977 Vol.1:3). Edo was latticed with waterways, and Yoshiwara patrons would often arrive on boats which put in at Sanya-bori (a man-made waterway running from Imado, on the Sumida river, to Sanya). Hence the expression 'Sanya-gayoi' (lit: commuting to Sanya) which was a slang term for visiting the Yoshiwara brothels (ibid).

The Yoshiwara was officially closed in 1959, but the modern Yoshiwara, with its neon-lit massage parlors and fantasy brothels, has somehow survived and is just next door to the doya-gai. However, the Sanya-Yoshiwara boundary is very clearly demarcated, and as far as I can see, there is no prostitution within Sanya itself. The population here is even more exclusively male than in the other doya-gai.

Until World War II, the most notorious slum district in Tokyo was located around Fukagawa and Honjo, on the far side of the Sumida river from Sanya and slightly further south. Kon Wajiro, writing in 1925, describes the Sumida river as a kind of class boundary mark: the east bank is a "country of different ways", a great seamless slum (Kon 1971[1930]:120). He quotes another study of Honjo which found 1,560 dwellings per acre, making it over 100 times more crowded than the average residential district, and he observes human dwellings little bigger than dog kennels (ibid:121). Elsewhere, day labourers were living three to a three-mat room at flophouses charging them 30 sen a night each for the privilege (ibid:122). Many could not afford even this and just stood around in the street. None had families. There were bars everywhere [4].

This part of Fukagawa-Honjo sounds fairly similar to

4 More on Kon's street observations in Gill 1996.

modern Sanya. But Kon also mentions that other parts of the slum were made up of large factories surrounded by the homes of their workers, who had just enough income to support family life (ibid 122-3).

By 1939, the main Tokyo doya-gai were as shown in table 16. Sanya features as the second-biggest concentration of free workers after the massive Honjo-Fukagawa slum, though the name is given as 'Namidabashi'. It was rapidly gaining in importance as a casual labour center, especially for unskilled labourers. It already had a substantial day labourer population, but they made up only 60% of all doya inhabitants. The other 40% were out-of-town people using the area as a cheap base for visits to the prostitutes in the neighboring Yoshiwara; worn-out prostitutes who could no longer make it in the Yoshiwara; and travelling street players and peddlars on their way into and out of central Tokyo (Imagawa 1987:123).

The 1939 study cited in table 16 was made by a government official, in order to suggest ways of harnessing the wild and unreliable day labourers to the war effort against China. Interestingly, he concluded that the official casual labour exchanges in the main yoseba would be ineffectual, and that "although it is somewhat feudalistic, we should use the oyakata" (ibid:124). These oyakata (see glossary) were the very same tehaishi that still recruit in Sanya today. The district was then

controlled by a gang of yakuza called the Akiba-gumi, an affiliate of the larger Sekine-gumi, and this report effectively calls for the government to treat the gangsters as partners.

During the war the allied fire-bombing of Tokyo destroyed all the doya-gai. Sanya was razed to the ground on March 10, 1945 (Kaji 1977 Vol.1:1). As the city rebuilt, the Fukagawa-Honjo district was gradually cleared up [5]. As for Sanya, it initially set up as a brothel district, with the girls operating out of makeshift barracks (ibid:2). Just as it did after the great fire of 1656, Sanya served as a temporary prostitution zone while the Yoshiwara was being rebuilt -- and was actively encouraged to do so by the Japanese government under direction from the allied occupation authorities. Sanya was a "special comfort facility for the occupying forces" (shinchû-gun tokushû ian shisetsu) (ibid:3, citing Kanzaki 1955).

Kaji Daisuke, a day labourer himself and Sanya's most famous modern historian, says that Sanya started to revert to its pre-war status as a day labouring centre around 1948 (ibid:18), by which time the Yoshiwara was up and running. Again government policy played a big role, since the Tokyo

5 Honjo, once a ward in its own right, is now just the name of a nondescript stretch of Sumida ward. The neighboring districts of Ryogoku, Komagata and Kinshi-cho also cover parts of the old slum.

Welfare Bureau (minsei-kyoku) built barracks in Sanya to house single men whose homes and families had been lost in the war. Some were pre-war residents returning to Sanya; others were soldiers hailing from Tokyo. From the following year, however, a growing number of migrant labourers from impoverished peasant families came into Sanya after failing to find anywhere better to work in Tokyo (ibid 19-20).

After the war, doya landlords started subdividing room space into ever smaller units to maximise profits, for instance by installing bunk beds in their tiny rooms. Some of these landlords became wealthy and influential men, controlling large chains of doya (Kanzaki 1974:2-10). Their families still dominate Sanya. As of 1991, out of 189 doya in Sanya [6]. The Tamura family owned at least 23 doya, the Sato family at least 19, the Kaeriyama family at least 14; and the Ueno family 12 [7]. These families were all well represented on the board of the doya-owners' union. Thus we have a mixed picture of lively free-market capitalism within which a small number of wealthy clans negotiate influence. Kanzaki (ibid) lists the ten wealthiest people in Sanya. Sato Hiromichi came top with an annual income of Y32.78 million in 1971, roughly 750,000 pounds at 1996 doya prices and exchange rates.

6 This had risen to 197 by 1994.

7 Source: Doya owners' union membership list, 1991.

Class warfare

With such a wide and obvious gap between rich and poor, Sanya has been a theatre for class warfare for most of its postwar history. The district experienced its first major riot on October 22, 1959, and a dozen more followed during the '60s, peaking in 1967-8. The largest one, in 1967, followed protests about unfair treatment of a day labourer involved in a traffic accident. Some 2,000 men rioted, throwing stones, setting fire to shops and pachinko parlours, and assaulting the mammoth police box [8].

Some of the small doya in the warren of back streets off Sanya's main drag look positively picturesque, with ivy climbing all over them, or jumbled collections of pot plants around the front door. But many of the larger doya were renovated during the years of the Bubble Economy (the late '80s), and this gentrification has forced up room charges. They average about Y2-2,500, well above the average for the Kotobuki doya. There is even one 'deluxe doya' which charges Y4,100 a night and has a stone rooftop jacuzzi. On the other hand, Sanya still has a few 'bedhouses', where several men (often around six to eight) share a single room, and pay less than for an individual

8 See Tokyo 1969; also Funamoto 1985 passim, Kaji 1977 Vol.1 42-54. I discuss yoseba riots in Ch8:III.

room. In 1994, bedhouse prices were Y800-1,100 a night--comparable with an individual room at the very cheapest Kotobuki doya.

In 1994, the smartly redecorated doya were mostly half empty. Short of work and unable to afford the increased rents, a growing number of men were sleeping rough; in 1994 there were some 400 men sleeping on the street every night. Another 300 or so were sleeping a short distance away at Ueno station, and there was another major concentration at Shinjuku station on the other side of Tokyo.

Another reason why Sanya doya have lower occupancy rates than those in Kotobuki is that the Tokyo metropolitan government rarely houses welfare recipients in doya, unlike the city government of Yokohama. The vast majority of occupants have to pay their own way; fewer and fewer are able to do so.

There is a distinct change in atmosphere as one crosses Sanya-dori from Kiyokawa (the east side) to Nihonzutsumi (the west side). Most of the narrow alleys and pretty doya are in Kiyokawa. The roads are wider and dirtier on the Nihonzutsumi side, and it is here that the homeless men of Sanya tend to gather. One road in particular has a look of bleak desolation to it. I often saw thirty or forty men lying around on the pavement there. At night the area is less popular because it lacks shelter, and homeless men prefer to sleep in the Iroha covered

shopping mall, or under the shop-front awnings of Asahikai-dori, a nearby shopping street.

The major landmarks on the Nihonzutsumi side are the Johoku Welfare Centre and Sanya Labour Centre, a large concrete building roughly corresponding to the Labour Centre at Kotobuki; the Sanya workers' hall, built by day labourers with funds raised by activists to give them a base of their own (see Sanya 1992); the Iroha shopping mall; and a brand-new, exceptionally large police box, known like its predecessors simply as 'the Mammoth'. On the Kiyokawa side we find the Palace Hotel bedhouse; Tamahime Park; Tamahime Inari shrine; Horai Middle School; and, importantly, the headquarters of the Kanamachi-ikka (Kanamachi Family) yakuza gang.

The fact is that Sanya-dori, an ordinary, busy main road, also serves to divide Sanya into two separate spheres of influence. Broadly speaking, the Nihonzutsumi side is the territory of left-wing activists working in support of the day labourers and the Kiyokawa side is yakuza territory. Government institutions, whether of welfare or control, are also on the Nihonzutsumi side. The mammoth police box has actually crossed the road -- the old one was on the Kiyokawa side of Sanya-dori.

In Kotobuki, it is not unknown for day labourer unionists passing a yakuza in the street to nod or in some modest way acknowledge the latter's existence. One

activist told me that such a thing would be unthinkable in Sanya. He and his comrades try to keep away from the Kiyokawa side of the road, and the yakuza keep out of the Nihonzutsumi side. This man declined to eat in any restaurant on the Kiyokawa side, saying: "As you know, those guys (the yakuza) killed two of my mates. I don't want to meet them" (F528).

Relations between day labourers and yakuza have been far more confrontational and violent in Sanya than in Kotobuki. In Sanya the informal labour market is largely controlled by a single yakuza gang, the Kanamachi, which has a strongly right-wing political colouring [9] and is engaged in a bitter, long-running feud with the main left-wing union-type organization, the Sanya Sôgidan (Dispute League), founded in October 1981 after a byzantine sequence of rifts and mergers between over 20 left-wing sects and committees dating back to the early '60s (Funamoto 1985).

The two murders just mentioned occurred in the mid-1980s, and are discussed in Ch8:IIc below. Hearing the news of the second murder was what first brought me to Sanya. Tensions were running very high, with large early-morning anti-yakuza street demonstrations every day. It was quite obvious that the hundreds of riot police deployed

9 It is affiliated to the Great Japan Pure Country League (Dai-Nippon Kokusuikai), an ultra-nationalist organization.

in Sanya were functioning to protect the yakuza from the righteous anger of the day labourers -- there was even a cordon across the road which led to the boss' house, to prevent demonstrators from damaging his person or property.

These demonstrations continued for months on end, and are still occasionally repeated today. I participated in one held to mark the tenth anniversary of one of the murders (F1078-84, 15/1/95). Meanwhile, another indirect consequence of the murders was the decision, by the Sogidan and various Christian support groups, to build the Sanya Workers Welfare Building (Sanya Rōdōsha Fukushi Kaikan), as a more secure headquarters.

The building of the Fukushi Kaikan was an inspirational event in the history of Sanya, proving that day labourers could be organized into a major self-help operation. But the story has a sad sequel to it. In November 1995, a far-left sect, claiming to be saving the day labourers from corrupt leadership, stormed and occupied the building (see Ch8:IIc). This was the latest in an interminable sequence of ideological schisms that have plagued the yoseba movement and every other left-wing movement in Japan.

These left-wing feuds seem increasingly irrelevant to the day labourers of Sanya. They are rather quiet these days, probably because of the aging of the population. As in the other yoseba, most day labourers are now over 50.

Administration

During the '60s Sanya's reputation for filth and violence became an embarrassment to the metropolitan authorities, which made rather pathetic attempts to legislate the place out of existence. The name was struck off the map in the course of boundary changes, with Kiyokawa-cho and Nihonzutsumi being expanded to cover the area that had belonged to Sanya-cho and the other central precinct, Tanaka-cho. To further obscure matters, the local welfare centre and the landlord association now use the name 'Johoku' ('North of the Castle') in their titles. This archaic name, dating from the Edo period when it designated the part of the city to the north of the shogunal palace, is another euphemism.

Administratively Sanya is now divided three ways: between Kiyokawa-cho, Nihonzutsumi and, north of Namidabashi, Minami-Senju. Minami-Senju is in Arakawa ward, while Kiyokawa-cho and Nihonzutsumi are in Taito ward. Responsibility for employment and social welfare in Sanya is thus divided between two wards, besides the city of Tokyo and the national government, giving ample potential for bureaucratic chaos and buck-passing.

As in Kotobuki, casual employment is handled by two separate employment exchanges. The Sanya Labour Centre

(Sanya Rôdô Sentâ) is run by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, indirectly, through an external organization (gaikaku dantai). Its shutters go up at 6.30am every weekday, and as at the Kotobuki Labour Centre, the principle is first come, first served. There is only one set of automatic shutters, however, and the men do not wait for them to go up. The technique is to press one's head as hard as possible against the slowly widening gap until it gets through, then force the rest of the body through and sprint to the clerks' windows. The tactics are rather different to those used at the Kotobuki Labour Centre (Ch3:IVa):

Kotobuki: Wait/jostle, sprint, wait/jostle, scrum.

Sanya: Wait/jostle, limbo, sprint.

Sanya's other employment exchange is a ten-minute walk away, on the far side of Tamahime Park. Jobs are given out at 6.45am, so one has to hurry to try both places. This one is run by the Ministry of Labour, and uses the same fair shares rotation system as its sister exchange in Kotobuki. But whereas in Kotobuki the bureaucrats express tired indifference, in Sanya they adopt an air of urgency and razzmatazz. A bell rings out and a young man calls the numbers rapidly and with great excitement, as if he were auctioning art treasures rather than offering casual labour

contracts. Other young men in jeans and tee-shirts rush around the bay in front of the job advertisements, grabbing handbooks from applicants and slamming them into wooden trays under each advertisement like basket-ball players making a dunk.

The number of jobs available is somewhat larger, mainly because there are some made available under a modest government job-creation program. When I visited in spring 1994, for instance, there were two programs running: From April 18 until June 9 there would be 30 jobs a day doing weeding and cleaning at Yabashira Rei-en, a large municipal cemetery; and from April 11 until June 9 there would be 35 jobs doing weeding and cleaning at landfill projects in Tokyo Bay, also cleaning facilities and trimming trees on the verges of Tokyo city roads. The pay on both projects was Y10,125 a day, minus Y625 in sundry deductions, leaving Y9,500 in hand. A further Y500 would be deducted if a bentô (lunchbox) was provided, leaving Y9,000 -- 50-60 pounds at recent exchange rates. Since several thousand men use the employment exchange, one could rarely hope to get more than one day's work a month on these schemes.

Day labourers who had worked on them told me that very little work was actually done, and that the program is a thinly disguised hand-out.

It is very hard for those without jobs or homes to get accepted for social welfare in Sanya, and extra-legal

assistance is severely limited. In 1994 the Johoku Centre had contracts for 60 beds a night at welfare institutions and boarding houses around Tokyo, for which it was getting several hundred applications a day. Instead of food vouchers the Centre gave out emergency rations of eight slices of bread and 200cc of milk, but would not give these rations to the same man two days in a row, on the grounds that they were meant for strictly temporary relief. Relief measures elsewhere in Tokyo varied greatly from ward to ward (table 17).

II. Kamagasaki (Osaka)

"I hear that in the past, there were a number of outsiders who were separated from their guides, became deeply lost in the interior of this densely crowded district, and were never seen again..." (Osaka magazine article on Kamagasaki, quoted in Takeda, 1933).

Location and landscape

Home to over 20,000 day labourers, Kamagasaki is the biggest yoseba/doya-gai in Japan, with a fearsome reputation to match. It is located in Nishinari ward, central Osaka, next to the Japan Railways Shin-Imamiya station, and there are four more stations of various private lines dotted around the district.

However, when I visited Kamagasaki, for two weeks in the summer of 1994, I was struck by how small the place

was. Day labourers and activists speak of the place as if it were a mighty stronghold of day-labouring culture, but it would be difficult for anyone to get lost in Kamagasaki today. It is roughly square in shape, with sides of around 600 metres (Genki 1989:3), making it about four times bigger than Kotobuki. You can comfortably walk across it in any direction in ten minutes. Even so, the relaxed, shambolical atmosphere may reflect a sense of safety in numbers. The place felt somehow maternal, and its denizens like sons.

There are yakuza offices all over Kamagasaki; informants among the day labourers and activists told me that the whole district was carved up between seven or eight gangs, all of them affiliated to the Yamaguchi-gumi (Japan's biggest underworld syndicate, based in neighboring Kobe). The biggest gang is the Kano-gumi and the Azuma-gumi is also a major player. They do the usual gambling and drugs business, and take protection money from stallholders in Kamagasaki's lively street market. But informants disagreed as to how heavily they were involved in the labour market.

One informant, a Christian woman running a rehabilitation centre for alcoholics, said that Kano-gumi was a Korean gang, and that Koreans were gradually taking over Kamagasaki. I saw no evidence for this except for a few stalls selling Korean products in the street market.

History

Mr. Yamada, leader of Kamanichiro, the main Kamagasaki Day Labour Union), says that institutionalized casual labour in Osaka dates back at least to the Tokugawa era, when it was used by the Bugyōshō -- the shogunal government in Osaka. People would flee from rural poverty in the surrounding villages and end up living in kichin yado (see glossary). These rural migrants were employed in public works or as porters and lived in Nagamachi, near the present Nihonbashi, on what was then the southern edge of Osaka (F773):

"(Nagamachi wards 6-9 are) licensed as cheap lodging house (wards). One does not see independent travellers there, but homeless beggars who have drifted into bankruptcy, or day labourers who leave the city daily, or porters and laborers who work in rice-polishing mills, sake breweries, and oil-squeezing shops." [10]

The city authorities used the licensing system mentioned here to concentrate the doss-houses and their clients in one part of the city (Honma 1993:25). But with the coming of the Meiji Era, a large labour pool was needed to make the Meiji modernization happen, and the Nagamachi slum grew rapidly. The old heavy-labour occupations of

10 Osaka-shi Hensangakari, eds., Osaka-shi shi, 8 vols. (1909-29) Vol.2:806, quoted in Leupp 1992:149.

rice polishing and oil-squeezing gradually gave way to miscellaneous forms of employment more closely resembling today's employment profile. The city government vacillated between its traditional policy of tolerating and concentrating the doss-houses and a new one of sweeping them away. The city's first experiment with slum clearance came in 1886 but failed (ibid).

Then in 1911, when the great Industrial Exhibition (Kangyō Hakurankai) was held in Osaka, the Nagamachi slum was demolished because it happened to lie in the route to be taken by the Emperor on his way to the exhibition, and most of the population was relocated to Kamagasaki (Genki 1989:81 [11]). By this time Kamagasaki also had a match factory on its turf, providing hazardous employment.

World War I and the rapid industrialization which followed turned Kamagasaki into a major doya-gai. Most of the newcomers were single men, who soon came to outnumber the existing family households (Honma 1993:26). Like the rest of Osaka, Kamagasaki was bombed to oblivion during World War II, but it made a rapid recovery after the war as an important labour pool supplying casual dockers and building workers to the rebuilding of Japan. There were quite a few men with families as well as the solitary males.

11 Japanese officialdom has a long history of razing the homes of the poor for the sake of prestige events, meticulously documented in Enami et al 1989.

The Kamagasaki Riots

Post-war Kamagasaki was known as a lawless and dangerous place. In 1961 it had its first major riot. This is an almost legendary event in the memories of the day labourers there. The following is an eye-witness account given to me by Shinya Noboru, a veteran inhabitant of Kamagasaki:

"It was August 1, 1961. I was walking along the main street in front of Kamagasaki... (when) I happened to witness a traffic accident. A man, a worker of Kamagasaki, was hit by a passing car and seriously injured. He was knocked sprawling, and he was bleeding all over. The driver didn't stop -- he put his foot down and escaped. Well, I called an ambulance. But in those days, ambulances didn't like going into Kamagasaki... and besides there was the question of who was going to pay for the medical treatment. Sometimes you could call a taxi and it never would come.

"Anyway, I stood there next to this poor bloke for an hour before the ambulance finally showed up. It wasn't moving very fast, and it didn't even have its siren going. It pulled up and a couple of ambulance men got out. They took one look at this man and said 'Oh, he's already dead.' They got out a mushiro, that's a kind of thick mat which they used to put over dead bodies...

"But the thing is, he wasn't dead. He was still moving, anyone could see he wasn't dead. So I said 'Hang on, he's still alive!' They ignored me and carried on wrapping him up in the mushiro. They weren't going to take him to the hospital, they were going to take him to the morgue, that was it. So I got angry, and I took a swing at one of them. Well, there was quite a big crowd gathered by now, and a lot of the others got angry too, and started shouting at the ambulance men, who got frightened and ran away. Then we turned over the ambulance, like this, heave-ho, heave-ho (yoi-sho, yoi-sho) until it went crash (dokkan) onto its side. We set fire to some newspapers and shoved them through the window and set the thing on

fire.

"By this time there was such a big crowd that the traffic couldn't get through. The first car to stop in the crowd, we smashed in its windows, the driver ran away, then we set fire to that as well. It's true, as you say, that the driver had nothing directly to do with the affair, but you have to remember that in those days there weren't nearly as many cars around as there are now. If you had a car it meant you were pretty rich. It was one of these rich people in his car who had knocked down that man in the first place, and hadn't bothered to stop; and because people in Kamagasaki were poor people, the ambulance hadn't shown any interest in saving the man's life. Do you see what I mean? It was the gap, the gap between rich and poor.

"In the end we destroyed about 20 cars. Then the police came in and cordoned off the area... There was a Christian church near the station, called the Kyûrei Kaikan, which the cops used as a base, to treat their wounds, have a rest and a cup of tea, etc. To this day you'll find that most men in Kamagasaki hate that church, though in general they don't mind Christians.

"We threw stones at the police for about a day and a half. We tore up all the paving stones and used up all the stones we could find lying around the area, and then people started going up the stations and collecting the stones they put under the rails as bedding. People were selling stones, for Y5 each. 10 for Y50. 20 for Y100. In those days a navvy's daily wage was Y500, and a room in a doya was about Y50, so Y100 was about Y2,500 in today's money, which seems like a lot of money to pay for a bag of stones, but somehow Y100 didn't seem like a lot to pay in those days. And even if just one of them hit a policeman, you got a lot of satisfaction out of it.

"After a day and a half, we finally ran out of stones. For the next day-and-a-half there was a nirami-ai (staring match). We workers stood facing the police with just a few metres between us, in the middle of the road, all silent. We stood there like that until the evening of August 3, and then it started to rain. The workers were getting awfully wet, and one by one they drifted away. Eventually I looked over my shoulder and saw there was hardly anyone left behind me, so I scarpered too, before the police arrested those who were left.

"And that was the end of what came to be known as the First Kamagasaki Riot. Though we didn't even know the word 'riot' (bôdô) in those days."

"What about the man who was in the original traffic accident?"

"He did die, yes. There was a riot going on all around him as he lay there. Well, it was his fate (unmei) to die. They'd even got the mushiro out for him at the ambulance. It was his fate." (F759-760, 4/8/94)

I have heard and read several other accounts of this famous riot (eg Arimura 1992 57-68; Honma 57-9; Tanba 208-215) all differing in detail but confirming the broad outline of Shinya's version. Everyone remembers the traffic accident, and the detail about the stones for sale. The riot was a defining moment in Kamagasaki history, and the first of many. Riots are carefully counted in Kamagasaki, and have totalled 23 to date. The chronological distribution has been very uneven:

1961: 1st riot.
1965: 2nd riot.
1965-73: 19 riots in 8 years.
1973-90: No riots in 17 years.
1990: 22nd riot.
1992: 23rd riot.

The 1990 riot thus drew on a tradition which had been dormant for some 17 years. It was provoked by a leaked report to a local newspaper to the effect that a senior local police officer had been tipping off the Kamagasaki yakuza about the timing of police raids on their gambling dens. It was a major riot, lasting from October 2 to 7 and

televised around the world [12nn]. Press reports mentioned 55 arrests and 189 injuries, including 150 policemen [13]. Hester (1991) has a full account of the riot.

The 1992 riot was triggered by the abrupt suspension of a special city government loan programme to help jobless day labourers, on the grounds that the budget had dried up just nine days after the programme was launched. Kamanichiro organized a sit-down protest at the welfare office by about 750 men, and fighting broke out when police tried to move them on. Rioting lasted two days; 2,500 police officers were mobilized [14].

The police have responded to the revival of Kamagasaki's rioting tradition by building a bigger, more central police station, which was under construction during my visit in 1994. Another aspect of Kamagasaki crowd control are the 15 closed-circuit surveillance cameras dotted around the district. They were first installed in November 1966, during the main rioting period. Significantly, none of the cameras point at yakuza offices. In July 1990 a group of twelve residents filed suit at the Osaka District Courts, demanding removal of the cameras and ¥14.4 million in compensation for gross violation of their

12 I was living in Britain and saw footage of the streetfighting on the BBC news.

13 Asahi Shinbun, Oct 10 1990.

14 Japan Times, 3/10/92, Mainichi Daily News 3/10/92 and interviews.

privacy. On April 27, 1994, the judge ruled that just one of the cameras -- the one trained directly on the union offices -- was a gross violation of privacy and ordered its removal. The other 14 cameras were deemed necessary to the prevention of crime. No compensation was awarded [15]. When I arrived in Kamagasaki, three months later, the offending camera was still in place. The police were appealing.

Administration and employment

The day labour market in Kamagasaki differs from those in Kotobuki and Sanya in two very important respects.

Firstly, the dualistic approach found in the other yoseba, with one casual labour exchange run by central government and the other by local government, is greatly modified in Kamagasaki. The two institutions are both to be found within the same building, a massive concrete structure called the Airin Labour and Welfare Centre (Airin Rôdô Fukushi Sentâ), built 20 years ago at a cost of Y2.3 billion [16]. However, here in Kamagasaki the office run by the Ministry of Labour does not even attempt to supply jobs -- it merely processes the day labourers' white

15 Asahi Shinbun, April 27 1994, evening edition.

16 This building was to be the model for the smaller one in Kotobuki.

handbooks and pays out the unemployment insurance. The legal job market is handled by the local office, which, as in Kotobuki and Sanya, is an 'external organization' (gaikaku dantai) of the city government.

The day labourers generally hate the MoL-run office, and violently attacked it in the spring of 1994 as part of a campaign for better employment and welfare measures to deal with the recession. In sharp contrast, they feel fairly positive towards the local office, the staff of which includes Sumida Ichiro, a prominent Burakumin activist, and Arimura Sen, the cartoonist whose fictional creation, Kama-yan, has become the dominant fictional representation of day labourers (Arimura 1987a, 1987b, 1991, 1992).

Secondly, employers in the other two yoseba must choose between regulated recruitment at the exchanges, or informal recruitment on the streets; but in Kamagasaki they may formally recruit on the streets, under a system called the 'face-to-face formula' (aitai hōshiki). The employer registers with the centre and promises to honour his responsibilities for unemployment stamps, health insurance, etc. He is then given a permit which allows him to recruit in Kamagasaki. Typically, he sends along his own recruiter in a minibus that will carry the workers to the site. The minibuses gather around the Centre -- some of them entering a covered forecourt on the ground floor -- and the

recruiters display the terms of the jobs available on official forms which are sellotaped to the minibus' windscreen. They then negotiate with workers just like the Sanya and Kotobuki recruiters, but legally.

For the employers this system has the great advantage of enabling them to pick and choose workers taken on each day. The reason why the MoL labour office has gradually withdrawn from handling job introductions over the last decade is because it would be legally obliged to hand them out fairly using the rotation (rinban) system. With 2,600 handbook-carrying day labourers over the age of 60 (as of summer 1994; interview with Sumida Ichiro, in F778), employers would not accept the unfavourable odds against getting a fit, strong man. The MoL's withdrawal from the labour market, and the invention of the face-to-face formula (in the '70s), both happened in response to street-level realities (ibid).

For the workers the system affords a greater degree of legal protection than with unlicensed recruiters, and gives some kind of framework for the union to use when negotiating with employers. Members of Kamanichiro told me with some pride that they had established a minimum day wage in Kamagasaki, which usually went up by Y500 each year. They had not raised it in 1993-4, in view of the recession, but had succeeded in holding it at Y13,000 for

unskilled labour [17]. The Kamagasaki system also means that nearly all day labourers are supplied with transport to the worksite, whereas many in Kotobuki and Sanya have to undertake long journeys by public transport or even on foot.

But the aitai-hôshiki system also has a serious disadvantage for the worker. It makes it easier for employers to dump men who are viewed as too old, too weak, or potential trouble-makers. The divide between viable and non-viable workers is wider and deeper in Kamagasaki, and it was here that I encountered many of my most and least successful day labourers. One of the most successful was Ogata Haruo:

He is short and slight of build, with glasses. Ogata is 40 years old, hails from Saitama prefecture, and first came to Kamagasaki some ten years ago. He is a second son, with one older brother, a younger sister and two younger brothers. He is a determined libertarian who favours day labouring because it enables him to work on his own terms.

A skilled house-carpenter, he commands ¥20,000 a day or thereabouts. He has built and owns no fewer than three houses: one in Wakayama prefecture, one in Yamaguchi prefecture (both in western Japan), and one in the Philippines, in a small town about an hour's drive out of Manila. He has been spending over half the year in the Philippines for the last five years, avoiding the colder months in Osaka. He says he generally spends 3 to 6 months in Kamagasaki and then uses the money amassed to spend 6 to 9 months in the Philippines, where the yen is strong and the cost of living much cheaper.

He has a Filipina girlfriend who lives in the

17 I noticed one or two employers offering slightly less than that for period contracts, but generally the minimum wage seemed to be holding in the summer of 1994.

house near Manila and teaches at a local school. He is seriously considering marrying her. While in Kamagasaki, he frequently takes long weekends at one of his two houses in western Japan. He can't drive, but makes deals with car-owning friends who do the driving in exchange for free accommodation. If all this is true, he appears to have one of the best-planned lifestyles I've ever come across. (F804, 12/8/94)

Men like Ogata displayed a confidence and joie de vivre which I rarely noticed in eastern Japan. At the other extreme, Kamagasaki also had far more homeless street-dwellers than any other yoseba. In the spring of 1994 the union had succeeded (by violent direct action) in getting the city government to leave the shutters at the Centre open overnight so that men could sleep there. Every night during my stay there were some 500 men laid on dirty futons and bits of cardboard at the Centre, watched over by union members. It looked like the aftermath of some awful disaster, like an evacuation centre, or a morgue.

When day labourers lose their ability to support themselves, they find themselves in a much harsher bureaucratic environment in Osaka than in Tokyo or Yokohama. The city government will not allow people to go on welfare unless they are clearly physically unable to work and have a doctor's letter to prove it. The sad irony, that welfare policy encourages people to make themselves ill, is at its strongest here. Nor is there emergency assistance to match the food and accommodation vouchers in Kotobuki or the milk and bread in Sanya, nor

any job-creation programme like the one in Sanya [18]. Kamanichiro leaders told me that for them, welfare was a secondary issue. Hand-outs were humiliating; the key slogan was still "Give us a job!" (shigoto yokose).

Parallels with Sanya and Kotobuki

Though it happened earlier, the shift from Nagamachi to Kamagasaki seems to quite closely parallel the Honjo/Sanya and Sakuragi-cho/Kotobuki shifts in Tokyo and Yokohama. There is a consistent picture of slums being placed, tolerated, controlled and shifted around town to suit the authorities. In other ways, too, the history and geography of Kamagasaki parallels that of Sanya. Like Sanya, it is located on the site of a former execution ground (Genki 1989:79) and again like Sanya it has had its name removed from the official map, though again much earlier, in 1922 (ibid:82, Honma 1993:27). Honma reckons that the name was abolished as a sort of punishment to a district which had been at the heart of the 1918 rice riots (ibid:28). In a post-war development, the city government has stopped using the name 'Kamagasaki' even to informally describe the day-labouring district. It has been officially renamed 'Airin-chiku', which roughly means

18 A small, temporary job programme was granted in the winter of 1994-5.

'district of neighborly love'. The new name is heartily loathed by most inhabitants.

Again like Sanya, Kamagasaki has a historical association with the Burakumin outcasts, though some think the relationship is subtly different. Mizuno Ashira, a day labourer and activist of Kamagasaki, remarks that Sanya "was originally a Buraku town," whereas in Osaka the two groups have tended to be adjacent rather than in exactly the same place. Today one of the biggest Burakumin centres in Japan is at Tsurumi-bashi, just the other side of Route 26 from Kamagasaki. He prefers the Kamagasaki lay-out because, he says, "Burakumin have always discriminated against day labourers" (F788; cf Ch2:III above).

Yet again like Sanya, Kamagasaki is located next to a celebrated red-light district, in this case Tobita. Tobita was one of Osaka's seven cemeteries in the 17th century and became Osaka's main red-light district in 1919, after its predecessor, at Minami, burned down (Constantine 1993:20). In 1994 Tobita was still surrounded by the remains of a high wall, clearly visible in gaps between the neighboring shops. Mizuno explained that this wall used to go all the way round Tobita, and functioned to prevent women from escaping. Only men were free to come and go, as it were, via a large heavy gate with watchmen on it. We came to where this gate used to be: in place of the old watchmen, there was now a police box on the corner. There was no

wall left here, but one or two outdoor stone lanterns to hint at a sort of boundary. Within this boundary, Tobita still affects the air of an Edo period licensed quarter, with the brothels designed to look like quaint rural tea houses.

III. Sasashima (Nagoya)

Sasashima is located in the major central Japanese city of Nagoya. It is a yoseba without a doya-gai. There are doya-type hotels in Nagoya, but they are scattered around several different districts and there is no residential centre, no permanent place of community, for the day labourers here. By day Sasashima is an ordinary commercial district, a couple of streets with small shops and offices in the lee of a gigantic skyscraper, the Sumitomo Life Insurance Building. The only clue as to Sasashima's early-morning identity is the Naka Public Employment Exchange, located just across the road from Sumitomo Life. It is a general employment exchange, mostly catering to people looking for long-term jobs. But round the back, fronting onto a narrow side-street, is an inconspicuous door, which most people only ever see closed by blue-grey metal shutters. This is the casual labour exchange.

From about 4 o'clock every weekday morning, several hundred men (up to 1,000 on a very busy day) gather in the

pitch-black streets around the casual labour exchange, warming themselves around bonfires, looking out for minibuses, heading off for work. Then the sun comes up, a blinding light beaming off the mirror-glass windows of the Sumitomo Life Insurance Building, and the remaining men at the yoseba slowly disperse. The bonfires are put out, the three or four men selling second-hand clothing and bric-a-brac pack up their stalls, and by the time the smartly suited employees of Sumitomo Life start turning up for work the yoseba has disappeared, leaving only a few blackened areas in the gutter.

Activists and police concur that some 3,000 day labourers base their employment activities on Sasashima. Employment here is almost entirely in the informal sector. During the several days I spent at Sasashima in November 1994, there were never more than two jobs on offer at the exchange itself, and usually there are none at all. The importance of the exchange to the day labourers has nothing to do with job-finding: it is simply a place to collect the daily dole. It is run by the Ministry of Labour and there is no alternative locally-run exchange of the kind found at the larger yoseba.

Officials I interviewed at the exchange insisted that in fact the minibuses which recruit on the street are licensed, under the same 'face-to-face formula' used at Kamagasaki. But unlike at Kamagasaki, there was no sign of

any official documentation on the minibuses. The officials said that there were 18 companies licensed to recruit in Sasashima, but Onishi Yutaka, leader of Sasanichiro, the local day labourer union, had a list of about 100 employers using Sasashima. This means that the vast majority are unlicensed. The officials admitted that they had never checked the minibuses. It appeared to be a policy of wilful neglect.

Licensed or not, Onishi says employing companies have to pay off the local yakuza, the Inabachi-gumi, at Y30,000 a month for the privilege of recruiting in Sasashima. Officially the money is paid to a body called the Nagoya Construction Friendship Association (Meiken Shinboku-kai) as a 'membership fee', but this organization is an Inabachi front (F1026). In 1994 the Inabachi were the only gang in Nagoya that had yet to be absorbed into the massive Kobe-based Yamaguchi-gumi syndicate [19]. As in Kotobuki, the casual labour racket appears to be too small to interest the big fish. Even so, in late 1994 the employment exchange was paying out roughly Y170 million a month-- just over a million pounds -- to some 2,000 claimants of the day labourer dole [20].

Union activists say that many of the unlicensed recruiters do not supply unemployment insurance stamps, and

19 Police interview, F1025, 16/12/94.

20 Interview with exchange officials, F1024, 16/12/94.

even the labour exchange officials admitted that this was a problem. Employment stamp fraud seems widespread; four arrests were made by Nagoya police in October 1994. The offence, 'forging a seal on an official revenue stamp' (yûin shubi gizô) carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison, though one year is a more likely penalty [21].

My overall impression was that the struggle between capital and labour was being fought in Sasashima with less state intervention than in any of the larger yoseba. Many people told me that it was extremely difficult to qualify for social welfare in Nagoya, and there were no emergency food handouts and no job creation programme.

However, the day labourers of Nagoya showed great spirit. In conversations round the bonfires of Sasashima I rarely heard pessimistic or self-pitying talk about the recession. Even those who were living in cardboard boxes seemed to be coping with the situation [22] and several of them enjoyed relentlessly arguing about history and politics. It was tempting to draw the Thatcherite conclusion that the absence of the nanny state had made these men more independent-minded than some in Kotobuki; alternatively, the fact that residence (doya etc.) and employment (yoseba) were separate in Nagoya, perhaps meant that despairing day labourers were away from Sasashima.

21 Police interview, F1025.

22 E.g. 'Lazybones' in Ch7:II.

History

Like the other yoseba, Sasashima has had its name changed. Today the gathering place is known prosaically as Mei'eki Minami 1-chome (meaning Nagoya Station South, 1st precinct). Officially the name 'Sasashima' is attached only to a bus-stop and a small police-box on the corner of the yoseba. But 'Sasashima' also appears on several large office buildings in the area, suggesting that the name is less polluting than 'Sanya' or 'Kamagasaki'. I believe the reason for this is that 'Sasashima' ('Bamboo-grass Island') is itself a euphemism. The district occupies a small part of what was Nagoya's most notorious pre-war slum district, Suisha (lit: Water-wheel).

Hasegawa (1994:2) has traced this place-name all the way back to 1670 [23]. Apparently there really was a water-wheel there, powered by water sluiced through a man-made channel between the Egawa river and the Horikawa river and used to power oil-presses. In 1684 a man named Shinzo was employing 600 men a day there to press oil and transport the raw materials and end product from and to warehouses (ibid).

23 It was written with the same characters but originally pronounced in the indigenous Japanese style, 'Mizuguruma', rather than the Chinese-derived 'Suisha'. Perhaps 'Suisha' is itself a euphemism.

For the next 200 years Hasegawa gives only a vague picture of a rural outskirts slowly urbanising and growing more populous. The name 'Sasashima' first appears in 1805, designating a nearby village. After the Meiji restoration demand for industrial casual labour rose, culminating in the construction of Nagoya's railways from about 1877. Workers started to congregate at Suisha, and by 1890 there was a major slum there. By the time of World War II there were some 90 kichin-yado at Suisha, about one-fifth of which belonged to a Taiwanese chain called 'Kiraku', but the whole district was fire-bombed to extinction by the allies (Yamamoto, 1, 49). After the war, Nagoya was rebuilt rather more systematically than the other big cities, and today the city centre has far broader, straighter avenues than can be found in Tokyo, Osaka or Yokohama. Suisha was taken off the map, and unlike the governments of Tokyo, Osaka and Yokohama, the Nagoya government tried to plan the doya-gai out of existence in fact as well as name.

In the immediate post-war years (c.1945-62) there was a lively slum-type environment around Nagoya station, with a black market, a Burakumin ghetto, and numerous boarding houses for day labourers (ninpu-dashi; see below). But the authorities finally broke up the district, and today the day labourers of Nagoya are scattered around the town except for the early morning when they gather at Sasashima.

The city has only one other casual labour exchange, at Atsuta, and officials at the Sasashima exchange told me that only about 50 workers made regular use of it. Another one, at Ozune, was shut down in 1988 and there are no others anywhere in Aichi prefecture (F1022).

Sasanichiro estimates that 98% of all one-day, cash-in-hand jobs are negotiated at the yoseba in Sasashima. But for period contracts the split is about 50-50 between the yoseba and illegal recruiters who pick up unemployed men at the parks and stations. The union says wages do not fall below ¥10,000 at the yoseba, but some of the contracts arranged outside the yoseba pay as little as ¥6,000 a day, reduced to ¥2-3,000 after deductions for room, food, etc. (F1026).

IV. Day labouring in Fukuoka and Kitakyushu

Although the vast majority of day labour in this industrial area of northern Kyushu is informally arranged, even official statistics show it as the top day-labouring prefecture in Japan, well ahead of the second-placed prefecture, Tokyo (table 15). This reflects the collapse of the coal industry and the decline of the steel industry in northern Kyushu. When I visited the area in summer 1994, nearly 90% of jobs at the prefecture's casual labour

exchanges were being supplied by public agencies to people covered by the 'unemployment countermeasures' programme (table 18). This programme (discussed in Ch2:IX) was scrapped in 1995, which must have had a crippling impact on some 5-600 people.

Chikko (Fukuoka city)

Chikko is the smallest yoseba that I have visited. It consists of a portion of a single street leading to the central wharf at Hakata, Fukuoka's main port. The location reflects its original function, as a supply-base for dock workers, and even today dockwork accounts for some 40% of demand for casual labour (union estimate), since the march of containerization has been relatively slow here. The other 60% of demand mostly comes from the construction industry. I found about 130 men standing at Chikko on the morning of Monday July 25, 1994, and 70 or 80 the following morning, despite heavy rain that day.

As in Sasashima, residential and employment functions are separated off. There is only one, very run-down doya in the Chikko district itself; there is a very modest doya-gai called Dekimachi, over a mile further south, just north-east of Hakata station. It has five doya. Inevitably the name Dekimachi is no longer to be found on the map -- it is now part of Hakata Eki-mae 1-chome

('Hakata Station Front, 1st Precinct').

Here in Fukuoka, the disintegration of the day-labouring lifestyle has gone a step further than in Sasashima, for even the formal and informal labour markets are far apart from each other. The casual labour exchange run by the Ministry of Labour is at Ginsui, a good two miles south-west from Chikko, and as in Sasashima there is no locally-run alternative. When I visited Fukuoka, in July 1994, the Ginsui exchange -- a shabby little bungalow set in a garden of weeds and rubbish -- had almost ceased to function as a supplier of jobs. In the first quarter of calendar 1994 it transacted an average of 147 person-days of casual labour per month, barely enough to sustain ten day labourers at the minimum level of work to maintain dole eligibility. This was down from a monthly average of 971 person-days in 1992 and 448 in 1993 [24].

The Fukuoka Day Labour Union (Fukunichiro) has made numerous attempts to have a casual labour exchange set up at Chikko, with no success. The one small concession the union has won from the authorities is to have the Ginsui exchange open a little later in the morning -- at 7.30am-- to give day labourers time to cycle over there after first trying their luck at Chikko. (Most Chikko day labourers travel by bicycle; it is an essential item in this city.)

24 Official figures from Fukuoka Prefecture Central Employment Exchange.

So most day labourers have to hope for a tehaishi to pick them up at Chikko, and then make the trek to Ginsui to claim their dole payment if they fail to get work and have maintained their entitlement. With no employment officials at Chikko, the tehaishi can do much as they please.

Fukunichiro says the biggest yakuza gang in Fukuoka is the Izu-gumi, but it has no interest in day labourers. The yakuza around Chikko belong to the Hagoromo-kai, a Korean-led gang. They are fairly well-behaved (otonashii). There is also a gang called the Umezu-gumi which is run by burakumin. The founder ran a workers' boarding house (see below), and indeed there is still one in Fukuoka bearing that name.

Workers' boarding houses in Fukuoka and Kitakyushu

There is one other alternative open to day labourers unable to make a living with these thoroughly unhelpful arrangements, and that is to go into a workers' boarding house or rôdô-geshuku, also known as ninpu-dashi ('navvy-supplier'). These places are also sometimes described as hanba in western Japan, though 'hanba' usually means a work-site with its own dormitory in eastern Japan.

The workers' boarding house is an institution of crucial importance to understanding Japanese day labour. It combines the functions of the doya (cheap, low quality

accommodation) with those of the tehaishi (introductions for casual work). The worker enters the boarding house and relies on the owner of the place to house him, feed him, and supply him with work. The wages are typically paid by the owner of the boarding house (who later settles up with the employer), and payments for rent, meals and sundries are deducted from the wage.

The significance of the boarding house system is that it concentrates enormous power in the hands of the owner. He combines the roles of employer and landlord. He has complete control over the worker, and probably, too, complete knowledge of how much money the worker has and what can be done with him. Compared with the traditional form of day-labouring in eastern Japan, it leaves the worker with far less freedom. Whether he enjoys greater security in recompense will depend on the character and economic circumstances of the owner of the boarding house. It certainly seems to be the case that day labourers will tend to prefer the street-corner approach when work is plentiful, and retreat into a boarding house when it is not. However exploitative the arrangement may be, at least the man will have a roof over his head and three meals a day for some time [25].

25 There have been reports of similar institutions in the US, where men are arrested for vagrancy and delivered to labor contractors in the Louisiana oil exploration business or agribusiness. "The labor contractor houses and feeds the men and in exchange receives and keeps most of

In Fukuoka, the boarding houses dominate the casual labour market. Oto Katsu, a leading activist in Fukunichiro, estimated that there were about 10,000 day labourers in the city, but only 200 of these were to be found at Chikko. The others are mostly in boarding houses. He said that the recession had forced many men into boarding houses, which tended to attract older men. Broadly speaking, yoseba workers tended to be in their 40s and boarding house workers in their 50s and up.

Geographically, Fukuoka's key day-labouring locations are linked by the Mikasa River. The Chikko yoseba stands just to the west of the estuary; the main boarding house districts are a little further up-river, also on the west bank, with the main Burakumin and North-affiliated Korean districts on the opposite side; and the Dekimachi doya-gai is another mile up-river, again on the west bank. The Ginsui labour exchange is on the west bank of the next river along, the Nakagawa. Rivers run through just about all day-labouring districts in Japanese cities, perhaps because they are associated with sanitation problems and bad building land [26].

their wages, having charged them for numerous services whether rendered or not." (Peterson and Wiegand, 1985:227, citing Getschow 1983a, 1983b; and Williams 1983).

26 'River people' (kawara mono) is one of the many old euphemisms for Eta (Price 1972:13).

The boarding houses vary greatly in style. Some are shabby little buildings resembling doya; others are smart new multi-story buildings, sometimes with a covered forecourt for minibuses to park. Clearly some people are doing very well out of them.

Wages are generally low in Fukuoka. The going-rate for unskilled construction work is Y9,000, and even trusted semi-regulars seldom make more than Y13,000. Oto says that men who live in boarding house are lucky if they still have Y6,000 in hand after paying for board and lodging (F686). This of course assumes that the proprietor of the boarding house has supplied a day's work; even if he has not, board and lodging are still deducted from the worker's account. Add in the fact that wages are often withheld for several weeks, during which the management of the boarding house will lend money at interest, sell alcohol and cigarettes at inflated prices, charge extra for showers and TV, etc., and what one sees is a highly effective recipe for exploitation. Many informants accused the boarding houses of deliberately taking on more men than they could find jobs for, forcing the men to take days off in rotation and sometimes giving the men so little work that they ended up owing the boarding house money rather than vice-versa. The system destroys solidarity, for the owner may well find more jobs for obedient workers and fewer for trouble-makers.

Until 1986, these labour-supplying boarding houses were illegal, though the police usually turned a blind eye. But in that year the government of Yasuhiro Nakasone passed an act called the Labour Dispatch Business Law (jinzai hakenqyô-hô) which legalized the practice of agencies taking money from an employer and paying their own, much lower wage to the worker.

I had not even heard the terms ninpu-dashi or rôdô-geshuku until I arrived in Fukuoka. I subsequently learned that there is a big boarding house district in Osaka, quite near to Kamagasaki and used by some 7,000 people, that they exist in Kyoto too, and that they are the dominant form of casual employment in Fukuoka's neighboring city of Kitakyushu (see below). The pattern seems to be fairly clear: ninpu-dashi are strong in the west of Japan and yoseba in the east.

Oto suggests that the reason why the system is especially prevalent in northern Kyushu may be because of the area's close historical connection with the coal and steel industries, which have a tradition of tight control of workers through the naya system (see Ch2:VII, VIII), which Oto sees as the forerunner of the modern ninpu-dashi system (F698).

Most informants agree that the boarding houses are gaining ground steadily, thanks to the Nakasone legislation, plus the recession and the aging of the day

labourer population. This signifies a steady shift among day labourers towards security at the expense of freedom. In the worst cases, say informants, men get so heavily into debt with the boarding house that they become little more than slaves.

Boarding houses in Senbo and Torihata (Kitakyushu)

A one-hour drive east of Fukuoka lies the city of Kitakyushu. It is a bureaucratic invention, a sprawling mixture of urban and rural landscape consisting of five towns which were yoked together in 1963 to form a 'city' of a million inhabitants: Kokura, Tobata, Yahata, Wakamatsu and Moji. It is the home of Nippon Steel, the world's biggest steel-maker, which has a pair of massive manufacturing centres at Yahata and Tobata, and was an important industrial powerhouse in pre-war Japan. (The Nagasaki atom bomb was meant for Kokura, but bad weather forced a diversion.) Nippon Steel, like its host city, was formed by a merger: that between Yahata Steel and Fuji Steel in 1970.

Casual labour in Kitakyushu has always closely followed the fortunes of the steel industry, the principal employer of casuals in the 20th century. (Yahata Steel was founded, as a state-run enterprise, in 1901. Fuji Steel's predecessor, Tanaka Steel, was founded in 1887.) The pre-

war yoseba was in a famous slum district called Harunomachi ('Spring-town'), next to the Yahata works. But since the '60s the industry has declined and Nippon Steel has gradually run down Yahata [27]. In the '70s the main yoseba was at Senbo, just next to the Tobata works, which are still functioning. However, when I got to Senbo in the summer of 1994 I found that the yoseba had virtually withered away, with probably no more than a couple of dozen men standing in the street (F726-8).

Even these men were not necessarily looking for a recruiter. Many of them already had work arranged and were just waiting for the truck or minibus to pick them up. They were living in boarding houses. The boarding houses' dominance of the casual labour market is even more total here than in Fukuoka. Yoseba activist Taguchi Kiyotaka says it was always so. The decline of the steel industry has damaged the boarding houses as well as the yoseba, but the former were always the dominant institution (F726).

Kamata insists that large-scale use of casual workers was a consistent policy of Yahata Steel from its inception at the turn of the century. Originally, when the firm was still a public enterprise, the casuals were kept in massive dormitories called 'thousand person huts' (sen-nin koya; Kamata 1971:72, 120); later, when the firm had been

27 Part of the disused land is now covered by Space World, a theme park built by Nippon Steel to employ some of its cast-off workers.

privatised, the relationship was made indirect and the boarding houses came into their own. After the war the institutions were made illegal under article 44 of the occupation-inspired Employment Security Law (Shokugyō-antei-hō), which states in part that: "It is an offence to operate a worker supply business, or to use workers supplied by a person operating such a worker supply business." They were made legal again forty years later by the Nakasone law mentioned above.

Illegality just made the boarding house business more brutal. Kamata has a vivid description of the violence and coercion of post-war employment at Yahata Steel [28]. The boarding houses peaked around 1960, when there were 150-160 of them at Yahata, supplying 3-4,000 workers a day, and another 50 at Tobata, supplying about 3,000 a day. By 1965 there were 114 boarding house at Yahata, supplying about 1,800 workers a day; by 1970 there were 40 supplying 600 (Kamata 1971:70). Initially some of the missing workers went over to Tobata, where new plant was being constructed, but by the time Kamata wrote his book (1971) the Tobata boom was over and the boarding houses were struggling along by gradually shifting from steel work to construction.

28 A feud between rival ninpu-dashi owners over control of the Yahata work-force culminated in the summer of 1959, when the chairman of the Association of Workers' Boarding Houses (Rōdō Shukuhakujō Kyōdō Kumiai) was shot dead in the street at Harunomachi by two men (Kamata 1970:69).

Amid his horrific accounts of workers being beaten up for trying to escape from their boarding houses, Kamata is careful to mention that "these were not all violent boarding-houses dominated by underworld gangs. It is said that there were also some extremely homely (katei-teki) places run by Japan-resident Koreans" (ibid). By the time I reached Kitakyushu in 1994, the entire boarding house industry appeared to be in Korean hands. Both Chongryun and Mindan (see glossary) had branches near Senbo, and the former was a sumptuous new building (F730). No-one I asked could name a Japanese-run boarding house.

I was fortunate enough to have several interviews (F715-7, 724-5, 733-5) with a Korean widow who runs a boarding house in a district of Tobata called Torihata, where there are several such establishments. She views the term 'ninpu-dashi' as insulting and prefers 'rôdô-geshuku'. Her son was still more sensitive: He thought 'rôdô-geshuku' was also discriminatory, and preferred jinzai hakken-gyô, meaning 'personnel dispatch business'.

Her company has a name ending in Kôgyô (Industries) which makes it sound like a construction company. One worker told me that it was embarrassing to admit to fellow workers that one was with a ninpu-dashi, and that it was nice to simply mention this respectable-sounding name. It is a sizeable operation, dispatching 90 to 100 men to worksites in Kitakyushu and neighboring cities every

weekday morning, in a fleet of 20 vehicles. It is semi-residential, with 30 men living on the premises, and another 60-odd living elsewhere, but showing up in the morning for employment. The company pays Y8-10,000 a day, occasionally rising to Y12,000 for more skilled work. It charges Y900 a night for a three-mat room (including a Y100 TV charge) and Y300 for breakfast, which is optional. The final employers are billed monthly in arrears, and the company's margin is 'Y1-2,000' per person-day.

When work is short, some men may be asked to 'rest' for a period. The widow said that residents of the boarding house would generally be given preference, but if they are laid off for some time and run short of cash, they will be allowed credit against their room-bill. She also said that she looked after ill workers and helped them to get compensation and social welfare in serious cases. She stressed that the business was run like one big family (katei-teki). She also said that her businesses and others like it were doing a social welfare job themselves. Thanks to them, men who would otherwise be sleeping in the street had a place to stay and gainful employment. Certainly I noticed only one possibly homeless person in Tobata.

Wages are paid in cash, at the end of each day's work. I observed this happening. The widow said that this was the usual practice in Tobata, but that there are some

larger, more impersonally run boarding houses in Kokura where wages are withheld for a week or ten days until pay-day. She had heard of many cases of abuse at these places, such as deliberately forgetting about overtime, or refusing to pay a worker's wages if he wanted to leave before pay-day.

This informant confirmed that the entire industry was run by Koreans. I asked her if there were also Koreans among the workforce and she said there were very few: the Koreans in Tobata were upwardly mobile and seldom did unskilled labour -- something which day labourers later confirmed. She said the recession had damaged her business. However, there seemed to be plenty of activity, and her father was driving what looked very much like a brand-new Bentley in British racing green.

Day labourers working for this boarding house confirmed most of the above, and said that this was one of the better places. One of them claimed, however, that the cosy, family-style relationship between employer and workers only lasted for as long as the latter was fit enough to generate income for the former. The boarding-house would dump anyone who was reckoned to be past it. The widow did indeed say that she never employed old people, and that the average age of her workers was about 45.

She repeatedly described her workers as 'diligent'

(majime) and 'obedient' (sunao). She contrasted them with the workers in Senbo, who were sometimes very badly behaved. A sushi chef in Senbo gave the same impression. He said that day labourers in Senbo would not do a stroke of work unless they were flat broke; they would sleep in their dirty work clothes; and some of them would even urinate in their own room. He portrayed life in the boarding houses of Senbo as a battle between unruly Japanese workers and tough, unsentimental Korean landlords.

V. Other yoseba

There are many other day-labouring districts in Japanese cities which I did not have time to visit.

Tokyo-Yokohama region

In Tokyo, as well as Sanya there are smaller concentrations of day labourers at Takadanobaba and Kamata, and another casual labour exchange at Tawaramachi. There used to be sizeable day-labouring district at Nakamura-cho in Yokohama, but no longer (see Ch9:IV).

Kawasaki, a major city between Tokyo and Yokohama, has a sizeable yoseba at Harappa, used by several hundred workers. It combines a street labour market with a Ministry of Labour casual employment exchange, but as in

Sasashima, there is no doya-gai. There is no union for day labourers in Kawasaki, but the Kotobuki union, Junichiro, frequently sends teams of activists to Kawasaki, and there is a volunteer homeless patrol in Kawasaki on Wednesday nights. Unionists, volunteers and day labourers forced a series of intense negotiations with the city government of Kawasaki during 1994, with important results. The city started to provide emergency food rations to homeless men, along the lines of the Yokohama system, and arranged temporary accommodation in a municipal gymnasium for the New Year period.

Osaka-Kobe region

In Osaka, Fukada (F738) says that Kamagasaki has been acting like a 'black hole', drawing in workers from peripheral yoseba. The two smaller yoseba within Osaka, at Tendoku and Chidoribashi, have both disappeared, as have several medium-sized yoseba in Osaka's neighboring cities. Matsuzawa (1988b:175) mentions 500 men using the yoseba at Deashiki in Amagasaki city (Hyogo pref.), but unionists and workers in Kamagasaki confirmed that the place is now a shadow of its former self (F772, 786). By contrast, a hanba-gai (boarding house district) at Hatsushima, also in Amagasaki, is reportedly thriving (F773).

The yoseba at Kyoto is extinct; day labourers are

widely dispersed and hard to keep tabs on, though many inhabit a district called Kujō, just south of Kyoto station, where the main Korean and Burakumin districts are located [29]. There is a recognized problem with homeless day labourers and a volunteer group called Yomawari no Kai (The Night Rounds Association) working to help them (F34, 986).

The city of Kobe used to have a nationally notorious slum at Shinkawa, which Axling (1932:39-40) describes thus: "Here ten thousand people were sardined into houses six feet square, more like prison cells than homes... usually there were no windows...the alleyways reeked with filth... as to occupation, these people were scavengers, freight-handlers, day labourers, factory workers, jinriksha-pullers, basket-makers, tub-menders, boat-men, road-workers, smoking-pipe menders, charcoal-ball makers, waste-paper collectors, vendors of cheap sweets, cargo-carriers, fortune-tellers, gamblers, beggars, thieves, murderers, pimps, and prostitutes. The district swarmed with under-nourished children covered from head to foot with scrofula and various kinds of skin diseases..."

The district is associated with the crusading Christian Socialist Kagawa Toyohiko (1888-1960), an early campaigner for the rights of day labourers, who is the subject of Axling's book.

29 Tokyo Journal, Nov.94, p.30.

A postwar account of longshoring at Kobe harbour in the early '60s (Mori 1962) estimates that day labourers were doing 70-80% of the work (ibid 38). Mori describes brutal, inhuman treatment of ankô ("drifters and day labourers who hire out as dock-hands") by the local tehaishi, and an ongoing battle by the local authorities to put the tehaishi out of business and control the labour market through the Kobe Harbour Employment Security Office. Interestingly, Mori also says that the daily wage for casual dock-work at Kobe harbour was in the region of Y1,000, at a time when many workers around Japan were making less than Y300. "...the ankô's daily wage, therefore, represents a labour victory... the ankô who sell their labour strictly on a money basis represent a 'capitalistic' form of laborer seldom seen in Japan. It is ironical, but to be deeply pondered, that such hard-headed bargaining can take place so successfully at the very depths of Japanese society" (Mori, 42).

Day labourers in Kamagasaki said that most day labour in Kobe was done by men travelling from Kamagasaki, which is less than an hour's train-ride away. Kamagasaki was the base from which day labourers set out to help clear up the wreckage left by the Kobe earthquake.

Hiroshima

According to Prof. Aoki Hideo (F1072-3), there is no doya-gai in Hiroshima, but there are two small yoseba-- one near the station (mostly for construction work) and the other near the docks (for dock work). Only about 50 men use each yoseba. Of course there are more than 100 day labourers in Hiroshima, but most of them are in semi-regular employment with employers who "know their face" (kao-zuke).

Since the labour market is small and there is no doya-gai, long-term migrant workers are rarely drawn to Hiroshima. Instead, most of the day labourers are from towns and villages within the prefecture, working to supplement inadequate farming incomes. When work is not available, they tend to go back to their homes rather than onto the streets. Hence there are relatively few homeless workers in Hiroshima -- about 30 in 1994-5 by Aoki's estimate.

The deep south

Oto (F700) says that Kagoshima has a small yoseba at a district called Tenmonkan.

There is also a minor yoseba, said to be used by about 50 men, at Shuri, in Naha, the prefectural capital of

Okinawa. Though few in number, the day labourers of Naha support a branch of Hiyatoi Zenkyō (the National Federation of Day Labourer Unions). They are seldom able to send delegate to conferences, but always send fraternal messages.

The north

I have not come across any evidence of yoseba or doya-gai in Niigata, Sapporo, or any other northern city. This may reflect the cold climates of these cities. Matsuzawa (1988c:147) says there used to be yoseba in Sapporo, Aomori, Sendai and Kanazawa -- four cities with harsh winters -- but my informants insist that there are no yoseba in those cities today.

Summary

The yoseba/doya-gai in Tokyo and Osaka have much longer histories than Kotobuki's, with intensely polluted associations. In Nagoya and Fukuoka yoseba are ad-hoc spaces with no residential (doya-gai) dimension. The worker's boarding houses dominate casual employment for construction in western Japan, especially Kyushu. The bureaucratic approach to day labourers is different in

every city. Even so, all the cities I visited had a recognizable day labouring scene. Ultimately the similarities between Kotobuki and the older yoseba are considerably more striking than the admittedly numerous differences.

Chapter 5: Profiles of Day Labourers

Before speculating about the lives of day labourers, let us meet a few and get to know them as human beings rather than mere statistical data or theoretical ciphers. I met hundreds of day labourers during fieldwork; the following selection is inevitably biased and arbitrary to a degree.

However, I have tried to make it as representative as I can. Thus people who say they actively chose to become day labourers make up a small minority of my informants, which is why I included Kohei. Others didn't choose it but are getting along fairly well, like Sakae and Shigehiro, or cheerfully putting up with poverty, like Kimitsu. A few have international experience, like Manabu, while others travel widely around Japan, like Noriyuki. Nishio represents a growing population of Latin-Americans with Japanese ancestry now working for the yen. Some day labourers are sinking into despair, like Tadao, or filled with self-loathing, like Yoshio. Yet others, like Ronchan, aren't really labourers at all. Kuriyama is one of the relatively young ones who still entertains serious hopes of leaving the yoseba. The one point which all these men have in common is a willingness to talk about their lives.

I. Sakae

Sakae was the first man I got to know in Kotobuki. Slim and trim, he was always respectably dressed and often carried a Walkman. He sometimes listened to an English conversation tape and had a smattering of painfully memorized English idioms.

Sakae once told me that the trouble with life was that you had to carry on with it to the end. He wished it were like a film, where you could walk out in the middle if you weren't enjoying it. Indeed there was an element of fiction and fantasy in his self-presentation, and over time he contradicted himself several times. He was consistent on his age, though: 45 in 1993.

In one early meeting he said he was he was the youngest of five children, and bitterly blamed his parents for making more kids than they could feed in the hard years just after the war, living in a rough district of Osaka. Later he had gone on to Nagoya Industrial University where he studied engineering. At a later meeting, he said he had just one sibling, an elder sister; that he was born and bred in Gifu prefecture; and that his education didn't go beyond high school.

The Gifu version of his family background continued thus. He always went back to Gifu at Golden Week (a holiday period in early May) to see his folks. They were

very old, and his dad was confined to a wheelchair, barely able to hear or talk. They were looked after by his sister and her husband, who was a mukô-yôshi -- a man adopted to be a husband for one's daughter. Sakae described this as a deliberate policy by his parents to replace his wandering self, their only son.

Sakae's account of his working life varied too: initially he told me that he'd spent 20 years "digging holes" (ana-hori), but later he said he had worked for Daikyo Oil till 10 years ago, in pressure turbine maintenance, until he got bored and quit. Since then he'd been moving around the country doing a few months' work here and there. He would disappear for long periods; after one of these he said he had just completed a 4-month stint doing night maintenance at a factory in Kashima (Ibaraki pref.). He said he had developed a seasonal pattern of work -- for instance, during the new year holidays he would work as a night watchman for one of the companies running pleasure boat rides on Lake Hamanaka down in Shizuoka prefecture.

He consistently said that he had an apartment in Heiwajima, Tokyo, and worked on relatively long contracts away from Yokohama. He used to live in Kotobuki but had moved out because there were too many people there who had lost the will to work, and the defeatist spirit was catching. He came back to Kotobuki to see old friends and

sometimes to get employment. His infrequent appearances in Kotobuki seemed to bear this out. On one occasion I saw Sakae talk to a tehaishi, who he later said had fixed him up with a one-month job repairing boilers in Osaka.

Sakae was keen on science and mathematics. He was a great admirer of Werner von Braun, and tried to impress me with his ability to solve trigonometric problems and to measure small irregular shapes using bits of paper divided into 2 millimetre folds. He had a project, of which he often spoke, to make an improved embossing machine that would give him an income and something to do in his old age. Several times he showed me embossed samples. At first these were rather crude impressions on small pieces of card, but over the months they gradually improved in definition and he became able to emboss images on flattened tin cans.

He had a pessimistic philosophy. The life of man is one of sorrows: the knowledge of pain, hunger and poor circulation; poverty; the death of one's parents; parting from friends; suffering and sadness. He himself was born under an unlucky star (kurushimu hoshi). But everyone is subject to physical laws such as gravitational attraction: fat or thin, it would always take us 9 seconds to hit the ground. This he found comforting. He also said there is balance in all things; if one person becomes happier, another becomes less happy, and vice-versa.

He believed that individual freedom was heavily constrained by material circumstances, and that men who wound up in Kotobuki did so because they had been "defeated by culture". Life was only as bad as one was culturally trained to believe: there were people in other countries much poorer than Kotobuki men, but they did not sense their poverty.

Sakae seemed a lonely man, and spoke at length about his friendship with a three-year-old boy called Tatsuo, whom he got to know in Kashima and to whom he became a sort of adoptive uncle. He credited Tatsuo with curing him of his addiction to pachinko; he learned to spend his free time taking Tatsuo for treats rather than feeding money into a pachinko machine.

Ultimately his embossing project seemed to be a means of combatting fear of loneliness and mortality:

"When I die, I'll leave no family, no wife, no children, no friends, no property... nothing. I'll just fly away on my own. Over there." (Pointing beyond the high buildings again). "But there's one thing I want to do first. I want to get one of those big heavy stones -- you know, a nice smooth, grey one -- and I want to invent a better sort of embossing machine, and find some way of embossing my own face on it... not just a picture, the whole thing, in three dimensions. Then I'm going to go to some cliff, and throw the stone out to sea, so that even after millions of years, long after I'm dead, I'll still be there. That's my dream."

II. Kohei

Kohei was a short, thin man, grey haired with silver-rimmed spectacles. He was 52 when I first met him in July 1993. He looked almost elfin, especially when he wore his pointy green cap with ear mufflers.

I last saw him in February 1995. All our meetings were on weekdays, and most of them were early in the morning, the time for seeking out work. This was because Kohei was a business-like worker. He had a profession, as a ship's carpenter, and specialized in building the timber frameworks used in cargo ships to prevent the load from shifting with the movements of the sea.

He said he worked for about eight companies, via some 15 tehaishi. He would strategically manipulate the recruiters to maximise job security (see his quote in Ch3:Vb). He was always careful to ascertain pay and conditions before agreeing to any job proposition. He showed a professional respect for the recruiters and strongly denied that they were a bunch of gangsters.

He was a day labourer by choice: he had worked at the Nissan factory in Atsugi for four years in his youth, but got fed up and left in 1967 to travel the world on his motorbike (he toured the US four times and Europe once). Afterwards, he found he could make better money working freelance on ships than as a tied worker in a car factory.

He'd been working out of Kotobuki for 25 years, but no longer lived in the place, having rented an apartment nearby. He commuted to Kotobuki on a smart and sturdy bicycle. He also said he owned seven large Honda motorbikes, but this was a hobby: he did not ride them to Kotobuki.

He claimed to have a life-strategy. He did not drink, smoke or gamble, and deliberately avoided making friends. In Kotobuki, he said, friends were a serious liability. Nor had he ever married or had children -- he couldn't afford it. He saved money obsessively, and said he had substantial reserves. He was planning to retire in the year 2000 and return to his native town of Kagoshima, in southern Kyushu. Both parents were still alive and living there in 1993.

As a lone wolf, Kohei apparently had no use for the day labourer union. I once rattled a Junichiro collecting tin under his nose when he had just collected his year-end benefit; he gave me a broad smile but no money.

The Heisei recession was a damaging blow to Kohei, but he seemed to be weathering it. Almost every time I met him he would say that he had failed to get a job that day, but this may have been because he would be out of Kotobuki very early on successful days. By his own account he managed 23 days' work in September 1993, about 20 in October, seven in November, 13 in December, about 11 in January 1994 and

about 15 in February. After that I lost track of him for about a year, but in February 1995 he told me he had "plenty of work" because of the Kobe Earthquake, which had diverted a lot of shipping from Kobe to Yokohama.

Resourceful and phlegmatic, Kohei always gave the impression that he could cope.

III. Nishio

I first met Nishio on Thursday August 12, 1993 -- a warm summer afternoon. Thin and slightly stooped, with white stubble and a leathery yellow face that often cracked into an infectious grin, he'd spent much of his life in Brazil. He spoke Portuguese about as well as Japanese, and wasn't quite perfect in either.

He was born on the outskirts of Sendai around 1937. but his family emigrated to Brazil when he was three. (Japanese emigration to Brazil started in 1908 and continued into the early 1960s -- Staniford 1973:8,20). He married and started a family in Sao Paulo, but found he could make better money as a migrant labourer back in Japan, sending money back to his folks. He was on his fifth stint in Japan when I met him, each one lasting a year or more.

He had enjoyed great success as a migrant laborer. He still had his Japanese passport, which meant he could work

legally, and this opened up job opportunities not available to non-Japanese migrants. He used to do night maintenance for Japan Railways, which paid about Y20,000 a night. His family in Brazil could live on \$1,000 a year, and since the yen was closing on 100 to the dollar in 1993-4, he could theoretically support his family with one week of hard work per year once he had covered his travel expenses. He used to go back to Brazil with anything up to \$5,000 in cash hidden in his shoe.

His family had enjoyed great economic benefits from Nishio's efforts. They had a large house with eight rooms, and his four children had got a proper education. He also claimed to own seven apartments in Sao Paulo and to have Y10 million stashed in Japan, and spoke of setting up an ice-cream parlor back in Sao Paulo. Alas, however, when I met him he was rapidly blowing his hard-earned wealth on a prolonged alcoholic bender and had stopped sending money back to Brazil.

The trouble seemed to be that his lengthy spells abroad had alienated him from his own family. His well-educated children did not respect him and treated him like a stranger when he was home. None of them had learned Japanese and they despised his imperfect Portuguese. He had also fallen out with his wife, who had somehow discovered that he was keeping a mistress during one four-year stint in Yokohama, and had started badmouthing him to

their friends. Then there was a serious financial problem over some land which he bought from his brother-in-law, who had already mortgaged it before the sale and had subsequently gone bankrupt. And so Nishio, who seemed a happy-go-lucky guy when I first met him, would walk the streets of Kotobuki with shoulders hunched and eyes cast down, tormented by worry over the situation in Sao Paulo.

Many times I asked him why he didn't go home. Surely he already had enough money for a comfortable retirement, ice-cream parlor or no. Here in Yokohama he was just wasting money, not earning. But he wouldn't go home. Partly it was fear of the reception from his family, partly fear that he would get ripped off. He himself had been mugged in Sao Paulo last year -- had a knife stuck in him. People would kill for a couple of hundred dollars over there. Also he had some family in Japan -- he seemed to enjoy the trips he made to see his cousins in Sendai.

Nishio's money was only making him miserable, so perhaps it was understandable that he was spending it like water. It wasn't just that he drank far too much, but the terms on which he bought the drink. Most Kotobuki men buy cheap liquor from a corner store, but Nishio used to frequent the Tôzen, a Korean bar with hostesses. He bragged of his wealth, so the management cruelly overcharged him. He would always insist on treating me, and anyone else who happened to wind up at the same table,

and would bitterly resist any attempt to treat him back. He had no interest in sex, having been impotent for years, a fact which he pathetically mentioned right in front of the Tozen bar-girls.

I came to believe that Nishio was on some kind of death trip. He was wilfully ruining his finances and his health. He suffered from diabetes, and was often so ill that he couldn't even respond to a knock on the door. He had whisky for breakfast. His face was yellow, his hair and teeth were falling out, he was decaying by the day.

The second-to-last time I saw him was on New Year's Eve, 1993. We had a festive drink at the Tozen, but he showed unusual restraint and went to bed shortly after midnight, saying he had to work a very badly paid, 24-hour shift sweeping up rubbish at Yokohama station on New Year's Day. This was to be his first day's work in over three months -- an attempt to kick start the new year and bust out of his downward spiral of drunken dissolution.

After that he disappeared from his doya room and I didn't see him for eight months. Then I saw him on August 14, 1994, at the Kotobuki Summer Festival. He looked OK, rather pale and drawn but at least no worse than 8 months before. He said he'd moved out of Kotobuki, taking a flat in neighboring Nakamura-cho, and had abandoned the Tozen after a Korean friend had started charging his drinks to Nishio's account even when Nishio wasn't there. He had a

friend with him, a tall, middle-aged, good-humoured-looking Japanese man, who said he was Nishio's flat-mate. I asked Nishio if he was working these days. He said no, with a laugh. I wondered what he was up to, and had a funny feeling that maybe the other guy was freeloading off him.

I agreed to meet them in a bar a little later, but failed to find them when I got there. I never saw him again.

IV. Tadao

Tadao was slight, thin, with a deeply lined face, grey-white hair and few teeth. He smiled a lot and spoke with a lisp. He once told me the following in the Apollo cafe:

"I was born in Yaizu, Shizuoka prefecture, on March 6, 1939. It's a port city and there were always plenty of girls waiting for the sailors to put in. My father worked on cargo ships. He made captain. They were small ships of about 250 tonnes, and mostly carried coking coal. He would sail to Kobe or Tokyo, and be away for a week or so each time. There'd be 5 or 6 crew on board, 8 at the very most. The fact that he was a captain gave him some status in town.

"I was the third of ten children. The first two were both girls, so I was the oldest son. Normally that would mean I'd inherit the family house, but now my younger brother, the second son, is there. I never got on with my dad. He was very strict and always drunk on shōchū. Mind you, he worked very hard: supported a wife and ten children. He did carpentry and house-building as well as sailing. I pray for him every day. (I converted to Christianity while I was in prison.)

"But I hardly talked with him at all. If I had any problems, I'd discuss them with my mother. She would always listen. She died three years ago, aged 80.

"I was born just before the war. We were always hungry. We ate potatoes, corn and pumpkins. My mother grew them in the garden. When I was 5 or 6, US battleships bombarded Yaizu. We had to turn all the lights out, and dig holes to hide in. I was very scared. The B-29s came roaring over too.

"At last the war ended, and I went to primary school. The teacher was very tough: he often used to push me around. I didn't study much, and I got into fights. I had some good friends at school, but we all went different ways after leaving. I don't seem to be very good at making friends. I try, but other people don't reciprocate. Here in Kotobuki, I have drinking friends but they are only friends as long as we are drinking. There's no-one to look after me when I'm in trouble.

"I went to junior high school in Yaizu, and then to the Maritime School in Takahama, Aichi prefecture. I was there for one year, and got my seaman's license. I graduated at 16 or 17 and immediately got a job with a shipping company in Osaka called Iino Kaiun. They operate cargo ships around Japan, carrying coking coal between Kobe, Kawasaki, etc. This was the best period of my life. I enjoyed life at sea, and we would always get drunk when we reached port. Sailors usually drink a lot. I think it's because when you're at sea, you never know what's going to happen. You might sink at any time! So when you get into port, you spend all your money on drink.

"I was with Iino for 4 or 5 years. Then I had a traffic accident. A taxi ran into me while I was crossing the road and broke my thighbone. It was partly my fault: I was drunk, and not crossing the road at the right place. Still, I got Y2.5 million [c.15,000 pounds] compensation. There was no litigation -- we settled the matter out of court. I was in hospital for 9 months, and was unable to move freely for a couple of years. When I finally recovered, I think I could have gone back to Iino, but I decided not to. There was just too much drinking.

"For a year I did no work. I lived on the compensation. I had an apartment in Mikawashima, near Minami Senju [ie near Sanya]. It was a very tough year. My thigh kept hurting. Eventually I got some work as a tobi. But I have low blood pressure, and I get dizzy in high places. I fell off several times, and was saved by the safety harness each time. This was about 1960-5.

"I had to quit being a tobi. After that I got various jobs around Tokyo and Osaka, mostly at nightclubs. I was a barman at various times; I also spent several months as a yobikomi (barker, see

glossary). I never stayed more than a few months in any job; I just couldn't settle down. I never had good relations with the management at these places, though I got on well enough with the girls. The relationship between cabaret girls and their yobikomi is a special one.

"In 1961 I married a cabaret girl, two years younger than myself. It wasn't arranged, of course--we married for love. We had one child, a daughter. We had 6 or 7 years of successful married life. We both worked at the Hollywood in Shinjuku. I was a bartender and she was a waitress.

"What finally broke up the marriage was my gambling. I spent all my money on gambling. I used to go the off-course gambling centre in Asakusa..."

At this point Tadao abruptly got up to go. But in other conversations he told me that later on he'd worked in a bar at the US naval base at Yokosuka. While there, he got into a fight with an American serviceman, knifed him, and got six years.

By the time I met him, he was falling to pieces. He was usually drunk, and once I saw him with a head wound which he said he'd got from falling down the stairs under the influence of drugs. Twice during our acquaintance (August 1993 - April 1994) he spent time in mental hospital.

For some time he worked nights at a coca-cola bottling factory, 10pm to 8am for Y10,000 a night. But within a few months he was on welfare. He stayed in at least three doya while I knew him, and I also found him sleeping on the street once. He would get very aggressive when drunk, especially when trying to defend me from imagined aggressors. On one occasion he slipped me a note in a

crowded bar which said, in English, "I love you".

He disappeared from January 6 1994 to April 4, when I found him standing gaunt but upright on the street corner. He said he had been back in the mental hospital, but was more or less OK now. He looked a year older but scrubbed and clean.

I was in a hurry. I suggested a drink when next we met, but I never saw Tadao again.

V. Noriyuki

I first met Noriyuki on a street corner in Kotobuki, very early in the morning of Tuesday, October 19, 1993. I last saw him two days later. He was short, stocky, weather-beaten, looking tough and leathery but getting on in years. Minus a few teeth.

Noriyuki said he was born in Hokkaido on February 11, 1939. He used to work in the famous Akabira mine until it closed in the late '70s. After that he was a yakuza for five years, but got fed up with that and became a touring day labourer: Kamagasaki, Sanya, Kotobuki, Takadanobaba, Sasashima. For most of 1993 he was struggling along on about 2 days work a week.

Every year he conducted his own winter campaign. In early November, he would look for a big construction

project with a work camp [hanba] away from the city, and work very hard through November and December. Hanba life being inexpensive and devoid of amusement, he could usually save Y2-300,000 (1,200 to 1,800 pounds). Come the year-end festivities, he would choose a nice sauna and live there through the New Year and January [N: Japanese saunas are typically in big buildings, with restaurants, cinemas etc. Many are open 24 hours a day and offer little rooms where you can sleep in solitude if you don't want to sleep in the cinema. The total cost of living in a sauna is about double the average doya but with free bath facilities.]. Armed with his hanba money, Noriyuki could rest his bones in a sauna throughout the harsh January weather: a kind of hibernation.

He said he ever went for period contracts at other times of year. He can't last the distance and he gets bored. But "New Year is completely different. Spending New Year in a yoseba is just too miserable." Apparently the prospect of spending New Year on the streets gives him extra energy.

During the summer months, Noriyuki sometimes takes to the country, doing seasonal work and living off the land. He eats snakes, mice, and dogs -- but not cats, which taste vile. He loves to eat exotic foods (getemono); dogs are his favourite.

He's not been back to Hokkaido in ten years. His

parents are long dead. He is the sixth and youngest son. He has brothers and sisters in Hokkaido, but "that's no reason to go back." He likes children, but has never married or had any of his own.

He cannot use the Ministry of Labour employment exchanges because he had his handbook confiscated for forging employment stamps. When I met him he was struggling to get work in Kotobuki although he said he got up earlier every morning -- at 3.30 am on the day I last saw him. He said he was dreading asking his chôba-san (landlady) to wait another day for the rent, but knew from experience that morning was the best time to do this: choba-sans grew steadily more hostile as the day wore on. If he left it till evening he was likely to find that the room had been emptied and his possessions were lying around the stairwell.

I lent him Y2,200 for a day's rent (he was staying at a relatively expensive doya because he could not bear to be without TV). He accepted the money with an enormous smile and promised to pay me back the following week: he had a couple of days's work lined up on a demolition job the following Monday and Tuesday. But I wasn't able to be in Kotobuki on those particular days... and I never saw him again.

VI. Ron-chan*

In the Tokyo-Yokohama area at least, the diminutive suffix 'chan,' when used with a man's name, tends to demarcate him as somewhat out of the mainstream, an object of patronizing affection. I found just seven men with 'chan' nicknames in Kotobuki and ten more in the other doya-gai. The Kotobuki 'chan' men included two men who were unusually small of stature; one who was mentally retarded; one who was old and homeless; and three who perhaps liked to think of themselves as good-natured rogues and used the 'chan' suffix mutually. One of these was Ron-chan.

I first met him late in the afternoon of Friday September 10, 1993. He was a youngish man in shorts and T-shirt with spiky hair, handsome dragon tattoos on both arms and a cynical smile of worldly ennui on his face. He would have been a fine figure of a man once, but was running to fat and generally letting himself go.

He said he hailed from Tachikawa, on the western outskirts of Tokyo, and was the youngest of five siblings, all brothers. The others all went to university; one of them became an architect, another an aerial surveyor. But Ron-chan never went to university. Instead he joined the local yakuza gang and got his beautiful tattoos done. His parents disowned him, but these days he goes and visits them sometimes, invited or not, he says. He only stayed in

the gang for three years: he had a romantic notion of the yakuza as 'defenders of the townsfolk,' but soon discovered that 20th century reality was very different. The gang in Tachikawa was led by a 'bad yakuza', a Korean who just wanted to make money any way he could, and ruthlessly exploited the local community. He said he quit after three years, coming to Kotobuki about ten years ago (as of 1993).

When I knew him, Ron-chan had very mixed feelings about yakuza. Sometimes he would talk of going back to the yakuza life, and insist that there was some nobility in it; later on he grimly denounced yakuza for making trouble for respectable people. I suspected that his attitude varied with the treatment he got from the Kotobuki yakuza; I felt sure he was running errands for them, but never got any hard evidence.

Ron-chan's background may help explain why he has a snobbish interest in the relative power of university degrees (Cambridge far outscores Tokyo University, he saw the rankings on TV), and an intense hatred of Koreans. He insists that they are intellectually inferior to Japanese, because "the vascular tracts in their brains are narrower" (nô no kekkan ga hosoi kara). By contrast, he reckons British people are even cleverer than Japanese. Ron-chan himself is incredibly ignorant: he thinks Oxford and Russia are both to be found in the USA.

I met Ron-chan many times, and never once saw him make a serious attempt to get work. He seemed to live mostly from government and volunteer hand-outs, patronage from more successful mates, and bullying weaker men into giving him food and money. Many people told me that he was a thief, and I did see him gleefully snatch a bottle of sake from a stranger in the street once. His behaviour was often disgusting -- he was dirty and would lounge around with his hand in his pants, obviously playing with himself. He would squeeze one nostril and blow skeins of liquid snot onto the pavement from the other. On two occasions I saw him kick weaker men to the point where I was concerned for their lives. In both cases the kicking was justified as punishment for misdeeds -- one of the men had allegedly stolen some money from a mentally retarded girl, the other had apparently failed to show respect.

His attitude to me was very ambiguous and changeable, with elements of deference, contempt and suspicion. He tried to assault me once when drunk, but was restrained by a friend. On another occasion he treated me to several drinks and gave me Y2,000, which he told me to spend on food for myself. This was just after the New Year, when government welfare payments flow into Kotobuki.

I found him sleeping in a filthy futon in front of the labour exchange early one morning; I also heard tell of him sleeping on other men's floors. Many people spoke ill of

him, but there were always those who would help him, whether out of sympathy or fear or regard for a certain boyish charm he could sometimes muster. He also seemed to have a certain attraction for women, and I spent one bizarre evening touring bars with him and an elegant but eccentric non-Kotobuki woman, middle-aged and with a toy dog. He seemed to know her well and chastised her for showing her knickers to other men in the bar.

Ron-chan liked to describe the day-labouring life as a piece of cake. He could get work any time he felt like it, for good money. He claimed he often helped out his buddies by using his connections to fix them up with work too. One day he planned to open a little bar or restaurant -- it would only cost Y5 million or so, all he needed was a wealthy sponsor or a bit of luck on the gambling -- easy.

But for all the bragging, Ron-chan was very insecure. He declined to tell me his name, saying it "wasn't a name of any consequence" (taishita namae ja nai). In a philosophical discussion with me, he insisted on the existence of hell. Moreover, hell was subdivided into different levels: the worse you were, the deeper into hell your spirit would be plunged, the worse would be its torment, and the more millions of years it would take to get out. I wondered if at the back of his mind he thought he might be heading that way.

VII. Kimitsu

I first met Nishikawa Kimitsu in October 1993 and saw him throughout fieldwork thereafter. I was immediately captivated by his genial manner, mastery of English, and his encyclopedic knowledge -- of British politics, world history, existential philosophy, jazz, photography, cinema, post-modernism etc., etc.. His tiny room in the Daimaru doya was stacked to the ceiling with heavyweight intellectual books and he also played the guitar.

Kimitsu hails from Kyushu. He was born in Kumamoto prefecture, near Mount Aso, around 1941. He was the oldest son of a prosperous banker, and had one older sister and two younger brothers. His father was a movie buff, and used to stage private showings of films at the Nishikawa homestead. He had a proper screen. All the local kids would come and watch.

The war spoiled everything. The Kenpeitai (secret police) forced Kimitsu's father to quit his excellent job with Yasuda Bank (today's Fuji Bank), and he started working for a public agency distributing emergency supplies of rice for a quarter of his previous salary. Family fortunes never recovered after the war, and the result was that Kimitsu couldn't go to high school.

After that there is a gap in the story. At some point Kimitsu did a couple of years as a truck-driver in the

Ground Self-Defense Force, but even then he was a heavy drinker and left after several near-accidents. At another point in his youth he had a regular job with a small construction company, and then there were a couple of decades of day labouring, mostly based in Kotobuki though with a couple of years in Sanya a few years back.

In the course of the footloose years, he was disowned by his family. There has been no contact for over 20 years. The last time he saw his folks was when he went back to Kumamoto for his father's funeral. "My brothers and cousins beat on me. Say 'bastard! Go back to Yokohama'. Only my mum defend me." Today, he doesn't even know if his mother is still alive. His sister is a kindergarten teacher and has stayed at the parental home in Kumamoto. One of his brothers is in Osaka, another "somewhere in Kansai." "They are scattered. Like civil war! Family civil war!" (Loud, long, almost hysterical laughter). "But here (Kotobuki) is good place for me. This is my right place." (Quotations in original English).

Kimitsu prefers longshore work to construction because of the romance of the sea. He loves any taste of foreign culture, though he has never been abroad. Dock-work has helped him to pick up a lot of English and a smattering of various other languages. Nowadays, though, he takes whatever work he can get, from the labour exchanges or the tehaishi. During the time I was seeing him, he was still

making it as a day labourer, but only just. He was averaging about two days work a week, and was usually broke and a few days behind with the rent on his doya room. Luckily he had been staying in the same room for many years, which made his Korean landlady less inclined to throw him out. But it seemed to me that Kimitsu was on a downward trajectory and would probably be out on the street in another two or three years. He said he expected to die at 60. Wealth of experience, not length of years, was what constituted a good life.

He reckons to average Y12,000 per day worked. The doya costs Y1,500, and his liquor habit about the same. He doesn't eat much -- mostly rice and pickled vegetables bought from market stalls and eaten at the doya -- and daily outlay is about Y1,500 again. He gambles only occasionally. With total outgoings of about Y5,000, he should have a surplus of about Y7,000 from an average day with work. And yet he usually wakes up the next day with just one or two thousand-yen notes left in his pocket. "I have never been able to understand this mystery," he ruefully remarks.

It seemed to me that two characteristics defined Kimitsu. One was tolerance. Shoved out of the way in the rush to bag a job at the exchange, he would laugh it off, saying that all day labourers were in the same boat. When his landlady got angry and threatened to chuck him out, he

would put it down to the long history of Japanese imperialism in Korea. Unlike many day labourers, he never condemned the street-corner recruiters -- they were just doing their job, and he was grateful to them for finding work for him. Even the yakuza were only doing their job. He was a free-wheeling liberal and showed no interest in the union's attempts to organize day labourers. His concept of solidarity embraced most of the day labourers' class enemies as well as themselves.

The other key characteristic was paranoia. Though he hardly ever thought ill of known individuals, he was deeply suspicious of authorities, governments and abstract social forces. I once found him waving his arms around and shouting "espionage!" outside the labour centre. He meant sabotage: a run of failures had convinced him that someone had blacklisted him. He compared human beings to subatomic particles, subject to laws over which they had no control, such as Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle (see Ch8). He had an obsessive interest in the holocaust, and had drawn large cartoons of Nazi officers on several walls around Kotobuki. On some of these he had written the names of American film actors. We went to see the film Schindler's List together and he never stopped talking about it. His point was always the same: that the yoseba was itself a prison camp, with the added irony that its inmates were blissfully unaware of the fact.

This paranoid element fed into a bleak personal philosophy. He once described the gruelling work he had to do as "hard labour... punishment for existing." But this was said with a great roar of drunken laughter, which convinced me that here was a genuine existentialist hero.

VIII. Shigehiro

With his thin, face, high cheekbones, prominent adam's apple, slightly effete curly perm, very pale complexion and gold-rimmed glasses, Shigehiro exuded insecurity and nerves. But he loved to talk, and was perhaps the most eloquent social theorist among the day labourers I knew.

Shigehiro was 39 when I first met him in January 1994. He was born in a small fishing village in Miyagi prefecture, the oldest of three sons. One of his younger brothers is now looking after the family home; the other is in the Air Self-Defense Force. Shigehiro himself used to be a barman: his finest hour came in 1977 or 78, when he was runner-up in the Saitama prefecture area finals of the All-Japan Cocktail Contest.

His ambition was to serve drinks at one of the big international hotels, but he failed for want of good handwriting and foreign language ability. At 29, he was still working in a revolving restaurant at the top of a love hotel, making Y200,000 a month with no bonus and

having to pay his own taxi-fare home at 3am every night.

At this point his wife left, taking their son with her. The boy was 18 in 1994; Shigehiro hadn't seen him for ten years. They were living near the mother's family at a village in Ibaraki prefecture, and his ex-wife would ask his parents for help with money sometimes. He himself has never sent his ex-wife any money -- he spends what he earns and works when he's broke.

Shigehiro hadn't been back to his parental home in a decade; he said the village was a conservative place, and the neighbors would think badly of his folks if they allowed him to come back. On the other hand, he was fairly confident that his family would arrange for his body to be interred in the family grave: once he was dead, the neighbours would think badly of his family if they did not take him back. His family has belonged to the Sôdôshû Buddhist sect for 15 generations and has its grave in the grounds of the local Sôdôshû temple.

When his family life collapsed, he abandoned bar-tending and went to Sanya, where he retrained himself as a tekkin-kô -- the man who builds the framework of steel reinforcing rods in the making of reinforced concrete. In Sanya he can make around Y18,000 (110 pounds) a day with this semi-skilled work. If he can find 20 days work in a month, that makes Y360,000 (2,200 pounds) -- nearly double his old bar-tending wage.

Shigehiro prefers period contracts of 10 or 15 days, rather than single-day jobs: if you work by the day, he says, you end up spending all the money the same day. But he has no wish to become a regular employee of one of the construction companies he works for. "That way they can boss you around -- and besides, the money's worse." He reckons regular tekkin-ko only average about Y16-17,000 per working day. They also suffer tax and insurance deductions (which the casual laborer can usually avoid) and are paid their wages a whole month in arrears, far longer than Shigehiro has to wait. Also, when there's a big project at a work camp, the regulars have about Y1,500 a day deducted for accommodation in a prefab dormitory, whereas the casuals get it free.

The downside, of course, is that when the work runs out, the regulars still have an income and the casuals do not. Shigehiro was struggling to find 15 days work in a month when I met him. He admits that casual labouring doesn't look so attractive in the light of the current prolonged recession, but he says, "the trouble with the casual labouring life is that you get used to it -- and then you can't change."

He thought deeply about the day labourer's life, and was very knowledgeable about how to make a go of it. He was always on the lookout for a good thing, and liked to read books on how to succeed in business. Politically he

was decidedly to the right, respecting the emperor and interested in racial theories about the origins of the unique people of Japan.

Shigehiro mostly worked out of Sanya, where the money was somewhat better, and came to Kotobuki mainly to drink, gamble and visit prostitutes; activities which he called "immoral but necessary". In the case of prostitutes he said "if the girls were forced into it, that's quite wrong; but if they are doing it willingly, I can but be grateful to them." I met him at the winter and summer festival seasons in Kotobuki, but the last time I saw him was in March 1995, when he had decided to work out of Kotobuki for a while.

On that occasion he told me that he had in fact resumed contact with his parental family. He had just finished a period contract and made about Y150,000. On an impulse he rang up his mother, and this led to an invitation to his cousin's wedding. He spent all his money on a suit, presents and a train ticket, and went home for the first time in over a decade. It was a very strange but moving experience, and he was surprised to find that his mother and father were keen to re-establish relations with him. This brought new problems: now they wanted to know his address and phone number, and he had neither. He had been lying about his circumstances (claiming to be a regular construction worker rather than a day labourer),

and keeping in touch only by telephone. His parents were uneasy about it and he thought they suspected he was involved in some kind of criminal activity.

I suggested that maybe he should tell them the truth. Better to be known as a day labourer than taken for a criminal, surely?

He shook his head. "I know what you mean, but I just can't... I mean, well, maybe I will one day."

Another sign of change in Shigehiro's wandering life was his purchase of three goldfish which he kept in his doya room in Kotobuki and to which he seemed rather attached. Previously he had not owned anything which could not be packed into one fairly small bag. Would he just flush the fish down the toilet next time he made a move, or were they the first step towards settling down?

IX. Kuriyama*

When I first met Kuriyama, in January 1994, he told me had been in Kotobuki for just seven months, having gone there after being thrown out of the house by his father. He was an only child, and at 40 he had still been living with his parents. He used to work as a cook, but kept getting fired from jobs for drunkenness and fighting.

After work he used to go out drinking and come home late and noisy.

"When my father finally threw me out, he told me never to darken his door again. I know he meant it. He's a retired civil servant, from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. He never makes jokes. He never smiles."

He was somewhat thin, with glasses and no chin. He talked fast and breathlessly, and gave an impression of infinite weakness. As well as the alcohol, he said he was also addicted to saunas, and had spent several million yen on visiting them over a couple of years. He also claimed that he had another ¥3 million in a bank account, but had left the pass-book and seal at his parents' house and didn't dare go back for them. He fawned on me, and on anyone else who seemed to have a rough idea what they were doing. He sponged somewhat, though I somehow believed him when he said that one day he would return favours.

How had this mild-mannered man got into so much trouble? Perhaps it had something to do with the "great love" [dai-ren'ai] which he said he experienced when he was still a teenager. The girl was a teenager too. They wanted to marry, but their parents thought they were too young. Her parents actually sent her away to live with distant relatives. He lost touch with her, and says he's barely looked at a woman since.

Kuriyama had a tough time in Kotobuki. At first he stayed at the Atami-so, but he couldn't keep up the rent payments and took to the streets. In the warmer months he

slept in the covered area atop the stairs in front of the labour office, but in mid-January that got too cold and he moved into a home-made shack built on a flower-bed concealed behind a hedge along the side of the Nakamura River. The old man in the shack next door helped him to build it. He referred to this man as his ô-oyabun [grandfather figure] and a slightly less elderly man in the third shack in the flower-bed as his oyabun [father figure]. He seemed to crave these paternalistic relationships.

When I knew him he was living in his shack, under heavy threat of police eviction, with a stray cat he'd picked up and named Shigeko.

Getting work was always a struggle for Kuriyama. At one point he did night work, reeling up drums of cable for NTT, the telephone company. Later he found some semi-steady work at a construction site in Oyama, a two-hour journey from Kotobuki. It only paid Y10,000 and they didn't even cover his travel expenses. Once they even sent him back to Kotobuki empty-handed because they didn't happen to have work for him on that particular day. Even so, he was grateful for the work, and pointed out that regular work was better than single-day contracts even if the pay was a bit lower. When he couldn't find work, he lived on the food vouchers handed out by the Yokohama government.

Kuriyama visibly aged and frayed during the three months I knew him. He was a sensitive man who hated suffering and tried to help others, seldom getting any gratitude. He would fetch a blanket to cover up a drunk acquaintance lying in the road, and try to stop people catching alight at the bonfire. He saw much filth, violence and degradation, and was asked to carry dubious packages by yakuza. He dreamed of buying an interview suit and escaping from Kotobuki, perhaps by getting a job at a pachinko parlour. These places are havens for hard-working people with difficult personal histories, but unfortunately they usually insist that new employees be no more than 35 years old, as Kuriyama gradually discovered.

The last time I saw Kuriyama, in March 1994, he was subjected to a vicious verbal assault by a sadistic bully, and scurried away in fear. I hope his subsequent disappearance was for positive reasons, but I do not know.

X. Yoshio*

Yoshio was a very quiet man, in his 50s, who often used to hang around the Seikatsu-kan (a welfare building) in Kotobuki. The only time I heard him speak at any length was on Friday February 25, 1994, when a middle-aged female volunteer asked about his life. Slumped in a sofa, he rambled on in a bored, listless manner, roughly as follows:

"I was born on November 15 1940, in Ishikawa prefecture, on the Noto peninsula, in a village called Hakui. I was the second-born of four, and the oldest of three sons. My father was a smalltime farmer; he also used to go to Kanazawa to do construction work. But then he did his back in and couldn't work any more. After that he lost his self-respect.

"I was a bad boy. I often got into trouble and I didn't study. I used to steal things, even after becoming an adult. I think it's pathetic.

"After leaving school, I worked for a tatami maker. He used to send me out to buy the straw to make the mats. I would pile it up in the workshop, five metres high.

"My father's elder brother had a big farm in Iwate prefecture. He arranged a marriage for me, with a woman called Akio who was four years younger than me, from Tono in Iwate prefecture. We met just once before the wedding, at my dad's place. Then she went back to Iwate until the wedding day. We were married on January 15, in heavy snow.

"The marriage lasted five or six years, and we had two children. At first we lived at my parents' house in Hakui, but I was drinking a lot, and my wife couldn't relax in my parental home. I also think one of my younger brothers was having an affair with my wife while I was out working on the night shift.

"My wife wanted me to get us our own apartment, but I couldn't afford it. Eventually my dad booted us out. Later, I realised that he probably did it because he could only claim welfare money for his back injury if he was living alone. Having able-bodied people in the house meant he couldn't get the payments. Also, he'd had to go to hospital for a year, and I never went to visit him...

"Later we went to live at my wife's family's house in Iwate prefecture. It was very difficult for me. They speak a different dialect there, and the winters are terrible -- piss freezes. I used to get haemorrhoids when I was out working -- my trousers were all bloody. Then I did my back in. I drank more and more and lost all interest in working. I was only making about Y7-8,000 a month; Y20-30,000 at most. I was cold, poor and irritated. It was no fun. Booze was my only pleasure, and TV was the kids' only pleasure.

"I took to burglary. I would break into someone's house and steal Y2 or 3,000. I'd do it again the next time I ran out of money. My younger brothers despised me. One of them lives in Nagoya now, and the other in

Osaka. I borrowed money from the one in Osaka, but spent it all on booze and gambling. Now we're out of touch.

"The marriage collapsed. I had the kids taken into care by the social welfare, to keep them away from my wife -- but I think she got hold of them later. I abandoned everything and went to Tokyo. I got a job delivering sushi to customers at the kabuki theatre-- I used to steal the rice. I drifted around, doing various jobs, and came to Kotobuki a few years ago. I feel a sense of shame about my life.

"These days I'm sleeping rough: I found a room at the Keirin-so (a doya), paid 20 days' rent in advance, and then got chucked out for drunkenness after just a day or two. Now I'm trying to get back the money for all the lost days."

XI. Manabu

I met Manabu just three times, at roughly monthly intervals and always at 4.30pm on a Friday. This was the time when the Labour Centre opened for weekend work contracts, which appealed to men who wanted to work but didn't fancy the very early start needed to compete for weekday contracts.

Manabu was 39 when I first met him, on Friday November 4, 1994 -- short, stocky and neatly groomed in navy-blue work clothes. He spoke fluent English, having lived in America for 15 years. He had considerable experience of doing casual work in the States, and said it was far easier than in Japan. He showed me an ID card issued by a casual employment agency in Denver, which classified jobs into four categories according to how physically demanding and dangerous they were. Manabu had put down only for 'C' and

'D' -- the two easiest categories. He complained that most Kotobuki jobs were of the class 'A' variety.

He was born in Fukuoka but went to America to seek his fortune. After roaming around for a while, he married "a big fat blond" with whom he had one daughter. Armed with his green card, he thought he could get work with one of the many Japanese manufacturers operating in the US, but found that racial affiliation counted for nothing. He was a self-employed handyman in Los Angeles, 1985-7, and then managed to get a job as a sushi chef in Lexington, Kentucky. This is considered a highly skilled job in Japan, but Manabu said "anyone can do it", with a cynical laugh.

His wife ran a bar at a one-horse town (pop. 6,000) near Lexington, where there were hardly any decent shops but three intensely competitive rival bars. His wife's bar kept losing money, but he could never persuade her to give it up. Every time New Year rolled round, she would insist that this would be the big year. He was almost the only foreigner in the little town, and had to endure a lot of racial abuse, including an attempted knife attack. Stress built up, and eventually he was fired from the only sushi restaurant in Lexington after getting into a fight with his boss. The only sushi job he could find after that was in Atlanta -- a six-hour drive away. He used to commute home at weekends.

The first time I saw him, Manabu said that his wife had chucked him out. But in a more detailed later account he said that after ten years of working himself into the ground to subsidize his wife's bar he finally he gave up, leaving his wife, eight-year-old daughter and the States. He also admitted that he had a problem with gambling, especially poker and other fast-action games. He didn't like race-betting, it was too boring hanging around waiting for the result. He thought he ought to spend some time in a non-poker environment, though he soon discovered that pachinko gave a similarly immediate buzz. Anyway, thinking he'd try his luck in his native country, he came to Kotobuki.

A fastidious man, he was shocked at the filth of the place. He would not have dreamed of living in a doya, and rented an apartment nearby. He soon got the hang of the day labouring life, though, and had a clean driving license which helped him pick up some of the better jobs which entailed driving small trucks. The toughest work he did was unloading container ships. He said he could get work whenever he wanted it, but would ruin his health if he did it regularly.

He found Kotobuki depressing and always intended his stay to be strictly temporary. In fact he was unimpressed by Japan in general -- the economy was depressed and the culture didn't favour people with his kind of background.

He gave his mother in Fukuoka a ring at New Year, but said he couldn't afford the train fare to visit her. She offered to pay it for him, but, he said, pride forbade him from accepting the offer.

He really wanted to go to Canada, which he preferred to the US because there were fewer "cockroaches"-- Manabu's word for black people, whom he blamed for many of the problems with US society. His own experiences as a victim of racism had not bred tolerance.

After four months, he succeeded. He had struck up a friendship with a man called Akashi, who had saved some money and longed to see the world. Akashi, tall, thin and frayed, lived in a car which he sometimes used to shuttle from one yoseba to another. Then he took to staying at Manabu's apartment, where he would do the cooking. Manabu thought Akashi might be gay but it didn't bother him. Finally the two men flew off to Vancouver together, Akashi lending Manabu the plane fare in exchange for help with finding work and negotiating cultural and linguistic obstacles.

I last saw Manabu on January 20, 1995. I saw Akashi one more time, a month later. He had popped back to Japan to "sort out my car and a few other things". He proudly showed me some US and Canadian dollars in his wallet. He was planning to rejoin Manabu in Vancouver in another month or so. He reckoned Manabu already had a job and was

confident that Manabu would find something for him too-- he didn't mind what.

Though Manabu hated Kotobuki, when I put it to him that it was a convenient place for someone looking for a bit of income-generating work at a difficult point in his career, he said that was certainly so.

Summary

How much of the above should be taken as fact, and how much as self-presentational narrative, each reader must decide. Reading back over these brief life stories, however, it is hard to deny that considering this is supposed to be a representative sample there is a pervasive unhappiness running through a lot of the narratives. Even so it is not good enough to simply dispose of all yoseba workers with the phrase "sad labourers" (Tsurumi 1988:4). They are not all sad, and if many are, we must inquire further as to how that came to be. Having shown something of the variety of experience among our subjects, I will now try to trace some continuities and patterns in the melee.

Chapter 6: Where Japanese day labourers come from, who they are, and how they get to the yoseba

"The solitary workers of Kamagasaki and Sanya did not grow on the branches of trees," observes Funamoto. "It follows that somewhere there is a 'factory producing low-wage workers'. That factory is located among the disintegrating farming and fishing villages, among the Ainu settlements, in Okinawa, in the unliberated Buraku, in the rationalized coalmines, in the Korean settlements" (Funamoto 1985:169). As we shall see, my own findings only partially support Funamoto's observation [1].

I. Geographical background

Geographically, the overwhelming majority of the Japanese day labourers in Kotobuki come from rural backgrounds [2], with concentrations in the rural northern prefectures and the Kanto region (table 19). A 1992 survey by Junichiro found that nearly 60% of the population came from these two regions, and my own very small sample

1 Throughout this chapter the data refers only to Japanese day labourers and not to the migrant labourers from abroad.

2 Remarkably, Caldarola (1968:515) states that only 25.5% of his 1964 doya-gai sample come from rural backgrounds. I would have expected far more.

concur. However, all districts are represented to some degree, and locally born people are decidedly the exception. The Junichiro figure for Tokyo + Kanagawa is only 21.4% and my own is 17%. Adding in the other major urban prefectures of Osaka and Aichi still gives only 25% in the Junichiro survey and 17% in mine [3].

The only major divergence between Junichiro's figures and my own is that I had the impression of a far larger Okinawan community than the Junichiro figures suggest. My figure of 22% is certainly too high -- a result of associating with a couple of Okinawans who introduced me to their friends --but I also feel sure that the union's figure of 0.8% is far too low. There is a distinct Okinawan community in Kotobuki. It may be that its members tend not to use the free prefab accommodation set up in Kotobuki during the Winter Survival Campaign (Ch7:IV), which is where Junichiro annually collects its information.

II. Occupational background

On occupational background, my sample is too small and haphazard to say anything authoritative. However, rough patterns do seem to emerge from the 56 men who told me

³ This is just a rough rule of thumb. Of course there are large cities in 'rural' prefectures, and large rural areas in 'urban' prefectures.

about what they had done before coming to Kotobuki (table 20).

The range of previous occupations is a very wide: a reminder of the truth that just about anybody might wind up in the yoseba. At the same time, only about 10 of the 56 informants have mentioned middle-class occupations -- and that includes the ambiguous category of "engineer." The vast majority have not fallen from any great height, and some are simply doing the same kind of work as before but on a casual basis. The Japanese media like to tell tales of elite salarymen who have taken to the street, but such people seem to be a minute minority.

Another popular yoseba stereotype (this time favoured by academics and activists) is that people from declining heavy industries are often forced to become day labourers by changes in the macro-economy. However, I only found a couple of ex-miners who fitted this stereotype, and nobody who mentioned a background in iron and steel or shipbuilding [4].

The figures on father's occupation are even skimpier, but there is at least some further evidence to add to the figures on geographical background in support of a third yoseba stereotype, that of the migratory worker from the

4 This pattern, of losing work in declining heavy industry and drifting to the yoseba, is chiefly associated with Hokkaido and Kyushu. There may well be more such people at the larger yoseba in Tokyo and Osaka.

country who never quite went home.

III. Age

The extent to which the yoseba population has aged is clear enough from my age statistics (table 21), which broadly concur with those compiled by Junichiro (table 22). Nearly everyone is in the 40-60 age range, whereas Caldarola's 1964 survey of several doya-gai found that "their (day labourers') age usually ranges from 20 to 40 years." (1968:513). Junichiro's progressive figures show how the population has aged continually, though at varying speed, through the intervening years.

The mean of the ages told to me was 53.2, which coincides almost exactly with Junichiro's estimate of 53 for the overall day labourer population of Kotobuki, as of the winter of 1994-5 [5]. Continued aging of the population at 0.8 or 0.9 years per year from 1991 (see table 22) would also give a mean of about 53 by 1995. It is clearly fair to say that the great majority of day labourers in Kotobuki are in their 40s or 50s. The almost complete absence of day labourers under the age of 35 confirms that the yoseba is an institution in decline, while the almost complete absence of any people over 65

5 Junichiro, materials for the 1994-5 Ettô:7.

gives an ominous credibility to Junichiro's assertion that the average age at death is 56 [6]. The population has been aging at close to one year per year since 1975 except for the first half of the '80s, when apparently the construction boom associated with the bubble economy temporarily made day labouring a more attractive style of work to younger newcomers. This spectacular rate of aging, coupled with the almost zero population of under-30s and just 10% population of under-40s, strongly suggests that there are very few newcomers and that basically what we are seeing is the same group of men getting steadily older.

IV. Marital status

Nearly everyone I met in Kotobuki seemed to be living alone, with the exception of six men, mostly living outside Kotobuki and using the place for job connections, who said they were living with a wife and, in some cases, children. The question of why people are living singly is a delicate one which I seldom asked. However, I identified two widowers and eight men who said they were divorced or separated. Another 12 said they were bachelors, and 48 more I knew to be living singly from having visited them at home. That still left more than half the sample for

6 Ibid.

whom I have no concrete evidence. Most of these I would expect to be living singly (table 23).

Comparing my own material with Caldarola's 1964 study, I find that Caldarola's sample has 23% married, against roughly 4% for mine. That is explicable by the 30 years between us, during which time high economic growth and rising material expectations must have made marriage to a day labourer steadily less attractive to Japanese women.

V. Sib size and sibling order

When I arrived in Kotobuki, I guessed that many of the day labourers would be second or third sons of rural families. This appeared likely because of the well-known Japanese tradition whereby the oldest son inherits the house and other major assets such as the farm or fishing boat, while younger sons are often obliged to leave home and seek employment elsewhere. In his three-volume survey of rural poverty in the period just after WWII, Kondo (1953-5) argues that the problems of second and third sons were especially acute in this period, during which many of my informants were in their teens.

The intense poverty of that period must not be forgotten. Kondo quotes a Ministry of Labour report documenting 674 cases of families selling children into

bondage during a one-year period from 1950 to '51, and guesses that the true figure would probably be "ten or twenty times higher" (Kondo 1953:19). Many of these would be cases of daughters sold into prostitution or service, but Kondo says that second and third sons were sometimes sold too (ibid). The practice was especially prevalent in the north-eastern prefectures of the Tohoku district, and relatively rare in the Kansai (western Japan), where a greater concentration of industry made it possible for younger siblings to contribute economically with a wage rather than by being sold off (ibid). The Tohoku district is also well-represented, and the Kansai under-represented, in the Kotobuki population -- though of course the large yoseba at Kamagasaki would be a more obvious destination for Kansai day labourers.

Kondo describes finding widespread fear for future survival among rural households on his travels through farming, fishing and mountain villages. He adds: "The oldest sons, who inherit their fathers' land, are relatively well-off, but there was something thought-provoking in the dark expressions of the second and third sons." (ibid:13).

Kondo identifies oldest-son inheritance as a key factor sustaining pre-war Japanese capitalism. It ensured a steady supply of junior sons to work in industry, and provided them with a refuge if they became unemployed in

the form of the parental household in the countryside, which would be maintained by the oldest son when the parents died or became incapable. This, Kondo argues, enabled capitalists to get away with paying low wages and was a key factor limiting social unrest and revolutionary sentiment in pre-war Japan (ibid 14). Under the reforms imposed on Japan by the American-led occupation, it became illegal for eldest sons to inherit the father's entire assets, but since most farmers owned too little land to be divided and still bring in a living, the reform was sometimes ignored. Many junior sons formally renounced their newly received inheritance rights at local courts during this period (ibid 15).

Considerations of this kind led me to expect to find junior sons in the yoseba. Indeed in the mid-60s, a decade on from Kondo's observations, Caldarola found that "... a good number of them (doya-gai dwellers) were the youngest children who were thereby exposed to discrimination in the typical old-fashioned Japanese families." (1968:517) As it turned out, I did indeed find numerous youngest children in the yoseba -- but to my surprise, I also found a large number of oldest sons (table 24).

The key terms here are chōnan and suekko. They are not opposite in meaning or even mutually exclusive. 'Chōnan' means 'eldest son' -- or more literally, 'great son'. He is not necessarily the first-born, as he may have

older sisters. He may even be the last born of an otherwise female sib. 'Suekko' means last born, irrespective of gender. Note that these are important conceptual categories in Japan. The first-born son matters because he usually inherits; the last-born child because he or she is subject to a unique mixture of stigma and romance --in times past the child most likely to suffer infanticide, in latter times the one most likely to be sold into prostitution or servitude, the one least likely to inherit and most likely to have to leave home and village, but also, in stories and perhaps in reality too, the one most likely to have a special place in the parental affections [7].

The terms jinan and san-nan mean second and third son, and they may also include some suekko of course, where there are no younger siblings. In addition, a few men just said they were 'in the middle' (naka). Of course, they could possibly have been chonan if all their older siblings were female.

Assuming that jinan and san-nan are middle children (and thus probably underestimating the suekko population), and that 'middle' children are not chonan (thus possibly underestimating the chonan population), I can now speculatively rearrange my data as in table 25, counting

7 For a populist view of birth order as a determinist system to rival blood groups and horoscopes, see Hatada 1994.

Jinan + San-nan + 'naka' as "Middle"; and hitorikko (only children) and chonan who are also suekko as 1/2 chonan, 1/2 suekko. This admittedly rough-and-ready approach divides the population of 105 into three groups, with 43 'oldest sons', 42 'last children' and 20 'middle children', some of whom may in fact be 'last children' (table 25).

My tentative conclusion, based on a sample too small to give better than suggestive data, is that roughly 40% of yoseba workers are chonan, 40% are suekko, and 20% are somewhere in the middle. Sample definition and rounding will, if anything, have overstated the number of non-chonan/suekko.

Of course, whether this is of any significance depends on sib-size and gender distribution. In present day Japan, where the average married couple has about 1.5 children, most sons are chonan, more than half of all children born are suekko, and the intermediate categories are much rarer. But whereas the 'total special birthrate' for 1992 was 1.50 children per woman, it was over three times higher at 4.54 in 1947 (the post-war peak year) and was above 4 throughout the war years [8]. The mean sib size for my informants was 4.75 (483 siblings including the 102 who told me sib size)

8 Ministry of Health and Welfare population trend survey, 1993.

[9]. The 483 siblings mentioned included 228 boys, 85 girls, and 170 for whom gender was not specified. Subtracting the 102 informants -- all of whom were boys-- gives the following figures for gender breakdown of gender-known siblings:

Boys = $228 - 102 = 126 = c.60\%$

Girls = 85 = c.40%

Total siblings: 211

Thus parental families of day labourers seem to have a significantly higher proportion of male siblings than average, with a 3:2 male:female ratio among the siblings of day labourers. This may suggest somewhat more intense competition among brothers than in the average household.

Returning to the chonan/suekko problem, if we assume a mean of 4.75 children per sib, with 60% male, we would expect to find the following proportions if the day labourer population were randomly distributed in terms of birth order:

All children: 4.75. Male children: $4.75 \times 60\% = 2.85$.

Chonan = $1/2.85 = 35\%$. Suekko = $1/4.75 = 21\%$.

9 Since most of them are from rural families, it is not surprising that sib size is slightly larger than the national average for this period.

Given that the actual figures are about 40% for each category, we appear to have twice as many suekko as one would expect from a random distribution, and slightly more chonan than one would expect from a random distribution. However, the chonan figures are more striking than this suggests, since their presence in the yoseba is not supposed to be governed by random distribution in the first place: oldest sons are supposed to be the ones that stay at home. Moreover, several informants expressed the view that oldest sons were particularly numerous in the yoseba. Early in fieldwork, my assumption that there would be few of them was flatly contradicted:

I said [to Noriyuki (Ch5.V), a suekko] I had the impression there were rather a lot of younger/youngest sons in Kotobuki, and relatively few first sons. He disagreed. "Kekkō iru yō!" (There are quite a few you know!) Seemed surprisingly sure on this point -- it must crop up in conversation quite often. (F196, 19/10/93)

Later, when I started to think it was the other way round, the suggestion would be enthusiastically confirmed:

I told him [Kimitsu (Ch5:VII), a chonan] about my oldest son theory. In Kimitsu's English, 'chonan' is rendered not as 'oldest son' but as 'top brother'-- interesting terminology. He thought the theory was spot on. "That's right! There are so many. Like me!"
Why? "Something deep behind it. Need careful study of Japanese traditional family system." (Peering through microscope gesture) "Must open the door."
(Door-opening gesture)

Me: oldest son stays at home, so...

"That's right. Top brother has rights. Top brother has power. So we are soft. We are spoiled. When we graduate from home..." (resigned shrug of

shoulders.) "When I look for work, I have no ... confidence. My whole life, I try to find why I exist."
(F427, 24/2/94; conversation in English)

I tentatively conclude that birth order is an important factor influencing people's careers, including those in the yoseba, and that both oldest sons and youngest children may be over-represented in the yoseba population. By contrast, Bahr (1971), analysing birth order on the Bowery, finds 'only children' to be the only category overly represented, with neither youngest children nor first-born men excessively present [10].

Mid-way through fieldwork I started asking day labourers what they thought about the idea that there were a lot of chonan and suekko around. Everyone seemed to find the theory plausible; the most common explanations were psychological, like Kimitsu's above. His idea is that chonan are first pampered, having no male rivals for their mother's affection, and then loaded with responsibility as they get older -- a fatal combination. Shigehiro (Ch5:VIII), another very articulate chonan, quoted to me the Japanese proverbial expression "sōryō no jinroku"--

10 Bahr studied 203 Bowery men, 199 inmates of Camp La Guardia, a hospice for infirm men located on the Bowery, and a control sample of 125 men living in a low-income Brooklyn neighborhood. He found 10% only children on the Bowery and 12% in La Guardia, against 5% in the control. Last-born men somewhat over-represented in Camp La Guardia but not in the Bowery population. Oddly, 56% of last-born men in Camp La Guardia were heavy drinkers, against 34% of first-born men, but identical proportions of 33% were heavy drinkers among first- and last-born Bowery men.

"the foolishness of the oldest son" [11] -- and said wealthy chonan have a reputation for squandering the wealth bequeathed to them by their fathers.

"On the other hand, where the family is poor, there is a lot of pressure on the oldest son. He has to somehow keep the family household alive, and make sure there is enough money for his younger siblings to be fed, clothed and schooled. The oldest son is a sort of second father (dai-ni otōsan) in the family, and when the father dies, he has to take over responsibility for everything. Sometimes they crack up under the pressure, and end up escaping to Kotobuki or Sanya. I too have noticed a lot of oldest sons among my acquaintances in both places." (F322-3, 3/1/94)

In contrast, several other men argued that last-born children were the ones that got spoiled. They would still be children after the others had grown up, and often had a special place in the parental affections -- especially the father's. But once they grew up, economic reality would take over and they would be turfed out to fend for themselves. For some it seemed almost axiomatic that suekko (youngest child) = amaembo (spoilt brat):

Carried on with Sakashita. He tells me he is a "suekko", the last-born of 5. This, he says, accounts for his character: he is an "amaembo", a spoilt child. (F468, 26/3/94)

Matsubara says he is a typical suekko, i.e. an amaembo. He says he is from a family which has traced itself through the female line (jokei kazoku); it has a

11 Sōryō, another word for 'eldest son', literally means something like 'general steward', a reference to the traditional idea that the oldest son inherits the household as a manager on behalf of the family rather than as an individual owner.

tradition of strong women and weak men; this plus two older sisters he offered to account for his being an amaembo. (F605, 3/6/94)

The word amaembo derives from amai, roughly meaning 'presuming on another's indulgence', a word made famous by the psychiatrist Doi Takeo, who sees it as not much less than the key to understanding the Japanese character (Doi 1973). Some of my informants thought that they had been "spoiled" (amaekasareru) in childhood, in part because of being either a chonan or a suekko. This may be a catch-all excuse for not achieving great social heights, but it is not entirely implausible. What the two categories have in common is a period of relatively undivided maternal attention, followed by a pre-determined role which is not necessarily easy: maintaining the household, or being cut loose to fend for oneself. The psychological argument favoured by some of my informants says that some people cannot bear to perform these ordained roles; they cut and run, and occasionally they end up in the yoseba.

Once there, how do they get on? This is a very subjective matter, but I had the rather strong impression that the suekko and middle children I knew were making a better fist of the day labouring life than the chonan. In an attempt to quantify this impression, I awarded star-ratings for chonan and suekko known well enough to me to make a rough appraisal (table 26). Again this is merely suggestive data, but among my informants roughly three-

quarters of 'middle' siblings were fairly successful at getting work and staying well fed and housed, against two-thirds of the suekko and only one-third of the chonan [12].

The samples are too small and the criteria too subjective to say anything dogmatic on this subject; still, the picture of chonan having a harder time than the rest is again supported by my informants, several of whom took the view that life in the yoseba was that much harder for chonan because they were brought up with the expectation that they would stay at home and not have to cast about for an occupation. At least the suekko did not have the expectation of a cosy life at home once they were old enough to think about work.

Kojima's (1989) statistical analysis of the Eighth National Fertility Survey has some numerical support for this chonan expectation of staying at the parental home: he finds that for the 1940-44 birth cohort, 65.1% of married eldest sons co-resided with their parents before marriage, against 42.6% for non-eldest sons (1989:36), while even in the year of the survey (1982) 76% of never-married eldest sons aged 30-34 were still living with their parents against 58% of never-married non-eldest sons (ibid 35), whereas in the United States eldest sons were less likely to live with their parents than younger sons (ibid 37). In

12 The criteria for this exercise are explained with table 26 in appendix 1.

the Japanese data, the gap in co-residential probability between eldest and younger sons widened with increase in sib size (ibid 38), and co-residence was generally more common in rural than urban families (ibid 41-2). Thus for my informants, mostly born around 50 years ago and coming from large, rural families, the expectation that eldest sons would live in the parental household would have been particularly strong.

Several of the most successful day labourers I knew were suekko, and gave a strong impression of having some kind of plan or guiding principle for their working lives (eg Shuzo 1-9, Okada* 1-60), but I also noticed that the two worst bullies in Kotobuki were both suekko (Ron-chan Ch5:VI; Morimura* 7-20) -- and that the more philosophical day labourers tended to be chonan (eg Tadao Ch5:IV; Kimitsu Ch5:VII; Shigehiro Ch5:VIII; Yoshio Ch5:X; Nozawa* 1-55). In general, I felt there was a tendency for chonan to be passive and accepting of their lot while suekko were more active and determined to stamp their own will on their surroundings, whether by controlling their own working careers or by wielding power over those weaker than themselves.

VI. The War and the Big Move

My own view is that the intriguing data on birth order must be viewed alongside the age and geographical data. The picture which emerges is of a body of men mostly born in rural prefectures during World War II or shortly before or after.

The role of the suekko has always been difficult in rural smallholding families practising inheritance by primogeniture; the role of the chonan can be easy or hard, depending on the family's material circumstances. The special circumstances of the lost war meant that for a generation of chonan the role was a burden more than a privilege. Unfortunately I have no way of knowing whether chonan tended to stay away from the yoseba in generations less affected by the war, but I am sure that the war experience was a major influence on my generation of day labourers.

Returning briefly to Doi, his discussion of the weak or absent father in Japanese society may be relevant to the yoseba chonan and suekko. My informants very seldom spoke of their fathers, and only a couple mentioned having lost their father in the war. However, their ages, and the massive losses sustained by Japan, make it very likely that some of them did in fact lose their fathers, perhaps

obliging chonan to take on the role of "second father" mentioned by Shigehiro, and perhaps leaving suekko to fend for themselves in disintegrating families. Even fathers who did survive may have lost much of their authority:

"Japan, too... would seem in a sense to have become, since the Meiji Restoration, a 'fatherless society' (phrase borrowed with acknowledgement from Federn), insofar as all existing order and authority, with the exception of the emperor system, was overthrown when Western civilisation was introduced... Even so, until the end of the last war the father was still something to be looked up to. With the end of the war, he rapidly ceased even to be respected, one reason being that the defeat dealt an even more decisive blow to the old morality... the loyalty-filial-piety ethic that had hitherto lain at the heart of the national spirit was subjected to criticism from all sides." (Doi 1973:153)

Such were the circumstances in which my informants grew up and set out to work.

The government statistics quoted earlier (table 3) suggest that 1957 was the peak year for day labouring in Japan, at which point my average informant was 15 -- just old enough to legally leave school and look for work. However, if he was an oldest son, his younger brothers would not have been old enough to leave home. This may help to explain the relatively high proportion of oldest sons in the population. I suggest that the roving lifestyle of my informants may have been triggered by an initial Big Move -- the move from country to city -- which helped to trigger the countless smaller moves they have

made since. They may have ventured out to one of the big cities in a bid to support a fairly large number of younger siblings in a struggling household within an economically depressed rural district. Shi-okuri -- the practice of sending money home -- is a practice well enough established to be a single word in Japanese. In many cases it may not have been intended as a permanent move. Perhaps some of them failed to send money home; perhaps others succeeded, but got into the yoseba habit and never got out of it; and perhaps some of them didn't fancy rural life once they had tasted the excitement of the city [13].

I write in this speculative fashion because most of my informants were reluctant to speak of their youth and how they became day labourers. Occasionally, however, I would get a fleeting glimpse of the distant past:

When I was a kid there were six of us... My childhood wasn't particularly happy. Family affairs were complicated. Besides, there was the war: from 1942 to 1949 we had eight very tough years. There was nothing to eat. We were living on radish leaves and potato skins. (F42, 14/7/93)

His youngest sister was killed at the age of 10, in a landslide. He doted on her... In those tough days just after the war, they never had enough food. Food for a typical day would be two loaves of bread

13 Caldarola (1968:512) quotes Yokoyama (1899) as reporting that the original inhabitants of Kamagasaki and Sanya were "generally tramps, migratory workers, and vagrants who came in from the countryside in order to gain some experience in urban living but intended to return to their villages after having earned some cash." This would suggest that the pattern of 'temporary' migrants getting stuck in the yoseba may have a long pedigree.

between six. He and the two other children would try to make their portions last -- they'd have four slices each usually. But the youngest sister would scoff hers in no time, and then plague Nozawa to give her some of his, which he usually did, because she was so sweet. He says he has never got over the tragic loss of that sister. (F437-8, 25/2/94)

At the end of the war, he and most of his family spent two years living in 'a hole in the mountainside'. His dad was killed fighting in Siberia; Fukuoka was burned to a cinder by the incendiary bombs. His mother led the children up into the nearby mountains, on foot, with wet futons over their heads as protection against the incendiary bombs. "We ate things I can't describe." (F710-1, 26/7/94)

For many chonan, this kind of traumatic childhood would then have been followed by heavy responsibilities towards the family at a time (the aftermath of defeat) when their legally enshrined privileges were being swept away by the Occupation. The new inheritance law in 1946 recognized the inheritance rights of the wife and younger siblings, and although as I mentioned above, many younger sons renounced their inheritance rights, the role of the oldest sons was certainly far less secure than it had been before the war, when chonan had been exempted from military service because of their special role at home, leaving their younger brothers to fight in the Imperial army (Kondo 1953:12). Likewise most of the pre-war emigres to Manchuria, Latin America etc., had also been younger brothers (Guelcher 1994). In short, the privilege of the chonan was rigorously protected by the pre-war government of Japan; and then abolished almost overnight by the

occupation government which replaced it.

My theory is that the combination of clearly established traditional sibling roles, plus the abrupt economic, legal and social changes which followed Japan's defeat in WWII, may jointly account for the preponderance of oldest sons and youngest children which my admittedly limited sample seems to reveal in the yoseba population.

Summary

Anybody can end up in the yoseba, but some are more likely to do so than others. Rural origins and a childhood scarred by war or its aftermath are elements common to the life experiences of many yoseba day labourers. The special rules of Japanese kinship towards first-born males and youngest children may also be a factor in the journey to the yoseba -- whether that journey be characterised as escape, fall or conscious choice.

Chapter 7: The meaning of home

I. Why Mr. Nozawa sleeps in the street

Mr. Nozawa is a well-loved character around Kotobuki. Mr. Kagoshima, one of the Junichiro (Kotobuki day labourer union) leaders, has known him for 20 years. Slight and thin, with battered black glasses and bandy legs, he is often to be found around the union offices. He is not really an activist, he just likes a party, likes a festival, likes a bit of camaraderie. He vociferously joins in when the union conducts negotiations with local officials, and can be relied on to join any demonstration. He sometimes joins in the patrols run by the union and volunteers to check on the well-being of homeless people, which is ironic because he himself is more or less permanently homeless.

Nozawa is a rather unsuccessful day labourer, who has spent an awful lot of nights on the street. Kagoshima reckons he probably spends 11 months in the year sleeping rough, and the rest of the time mostly on friends' floors; he can rarely afford a doya. He is ashamed and embarrassed about it, but if he does get spotted by the homeless patrol he will try to make a joke of it and ask for a blanket or a cup of soup. Sometimes he complains that the union men refuse these requests; perhaps they just fail to recognize

when Nozawa is being serious.

Why does Mr. Nozawa sleep in the street? Fate and character are involved. He has a mild disability: weak legs, afflicted by some kind of partial paralysis. He walks with an uneven, crabby motion. Kagoshima thinks it was a birth defect. So when Nozawa does get a day's work on a building site, he tends to be rather slow. He gets jeered at, or criticized for low productivity, slowing the work up, etc. Having a reputation as a slowcoach makes it harder to get work where you are known; and the abuse saps Nozawa's willingness to keep trying to get work. But at the same time, his disability is classified as minor and only qualifies him for a very small disability allowance. It is a classic hole in the safety net: the disability is too serious to allow the man to generate much income, but not serious enough to persuade the state to fill the gap. To make things worse, Nozawa has an alcohol habit, doesn't particularly enjoy hard manual labour, and likes to have a laugh with his mates. Put all these factors together, and that is why Mr. Nozawa sleeps in the street.

One slightly cheering thing about Mr. Nozawa is that his family have not entirely abandoned him. He still goes down to see them at Hakkei (some 20 miles from Kotobuki) now and then. It seems to be pride and embarrassment that stop him from staying there all the time. Kagoshima says Nozawa is 48 or 49 now. He reckons the man has about another five

years to live. Though Nozawa is a unique character, there are many other men who, for similar combinations of personal and structural reasons, may often be found sleeping in the streets around Kotobuki.

II. Homelessness -- narrow and broad definitions

For many years academic debate on homelessness has had a problem with defining the term. Does it mean literally not having a roof over one's head, or does it mean detachment from mainstream life? Or as Somerville (1992) puts it, does homelessness mean 'rooflessness' or 'rootlessness'? Most of the Euro-American literature seems to approximate to the latter position, classically summed up thus:

"Homelessness is a condition of detachment from society characterized by the absence or attenuation of the affiliative bonds that link settled persons to a network of interconnected social structures." (Caplow et al, 1968:494)

Or more recently and cross-culturally, thus:

"...terms such as the Spanish 'descamparado' (without the protection or comfort from other people), the Japanese 'furosha' (floating people),... or the American/English

'homeless' imply the loss of family and social relationships" (Glasser 1994:5).

By contrast, my impression is that the prevailing Japanese view remains closer to the literal definition, or to put it another way, a furosha (drifter) is not necessarily a nojukusha (homeless person). 'Furosha' does imply 'the loss of family and social relationships' but is not an appropriate translation for 'homeless' as Glasser implies. Mr. Nozawa would strike most Japanese people as homeless, but of the 11 men described in Ch5, only Kuriyama (Ch5:IX) might be viewed as such.

"To the poor people who cannot afford a house, a single tatami mat in a doss-house is a sort of home." (Yokoyama 1899:67, my translation).

Under the American 'detachment' definition, almost all day labourers would be homeless. Nor is this a recent development. Anderson (1923) frequently uses the word 'homeless' to include men with regular rooms. As Kalvis (1995) rightly points out, "one can see the problem that this 'detachment' definition could have with other possible models that highlight the chance of a different order of interaction, of creative, positive social relationships and value systems on the street that preserve solidarity in

adversity." There is an inherent assumption in the definition that there is a certain kind of normative lifestyle associated with home and that anyone who does not live in that way is thereby deprived.

Just to give some idea of how loaded with value-judgments the 'detachment' definition can be, consider the paragraph which follows Caplow et al's definition quoted just above:

"At the extreme point of the scale, the modern skid row man demonstrates the possibility of nearly total detachment from society... Homeless persons are poor, anomic, inert, and non-responsible. They command no resources, enjoy no esteem, and assume no burdens of reciprocal obligations. Social action, in the usual sense, is almost impossible for them" (Caplow et al 1968:494).

This supposedly objective encyclopedia entry is in fact no more than an expression of prejudice. A large swathe of people are defined as homeless and then assumed to share a state of total, sub-human apathy. It does not fit my experience in Japan, and is also criticized by Giamo in his study of the New York Bowery (1989:178, 184-5).

In recent years some American writers have attacked this view -- notably Hoch and Slayton (1989) and Groth (1994). The former stress that there can be a kind of community in the skid row hotels that are being torn down and replaced with 'homeless shelters' that connote failure and expulsion from community far more than the old hotels; the latter draws attention to a more general American

tradition of living in residential hotels, found among the very rich as well as certain segments of the poor.

In the case of the yoseba/doya-gai, there are many men who have lived in the same doya room for many years, have cluttered them up with large numbers of possessions, enjoy stable relationships with some of their neighbours, and would be rightly indignant if told they were 'homeless'. At the same time, other rooms in the same doya may be occupied by transient men who have virtually no possessions, work infrequently, and sleep rough when they cannot afford the doya-dai (rent). Their rooms are almost totally bare [1]. Are these people homeless or not? They themselves would argue that they are homeless only on nights when they cannot get a room.

Furthermore, those men who do not live in the doya also show a variety of approaches and attitudes to the question of residence. Many say they avoid the doya during the summer months because they get stiflingly hot (which I know to be true) and they prefer to sleep al fresco. Others, like Kuriyama (Ch5:IX) have built their own shacks (koya; lit. 'little house') in slivers of urban space around Kotobuki -- a practice which seems more common in Yokohama than in other big cities, probably because of relatively tolerant policing. The police mostly turn a

1 See the two photos at the end of this chapter for examples of contrasting styles in the doya.

blind eye, doing the minimum required to deal with complaints from locals. Some of these shacks are quite well built -- many of the occupants are building workers by profession -- and have a homely atmosphere about them. There was a thriving shanty town of some 20 to 30 residences under the elevated railway track at Kannai station in 1993-5, and the hedges lining the Nakamura River also concealed several improvised homes.

Some men were living in shacks because they could not afford the doya, others because they preferred the greater independence afforded. Two men told me they were living in koya because they had pet animals, which are not allowed in doya. Naturally they had no mains electricity, gas or water supply, but they made do with battery-powered lighting, bottled water, etc. Being moved on by the police was a perpetual threat, and the riverside koya were cleared away shortly before I arrived for fieldwork in 1993, but they were back by the time I arrived, and during the two years I was there the koya-dwellers were not disturbed. Were these men homeless, and if so in what sense?

There were also a few people living in abandoned vehicles, although the police had a clear-out of these during my fieldwork period, and were doing their best to stamp out this form of residence.

Finally, many men and a few women had nowhere to stay and were sleeping in the streets. There were usually 2-300

people sleeping rough within a half-mile radius of Kotobuki while I was there (table 27). The two main areas were (1) the semi-sheltered walkways running round Yokohama City Hall and its annex, near Kannai station; and (2) the underground shopping mall around Kannai station. The former was favoured because the city officials would not kick or hose down the homeless people, whose presence was a daily reminder of a failure in their own social welfare policies; the latter because it afforded outstanding shelter, although station officers were far less tolerant and frequently moved people on.

Every evening a neat row of cardboard boxes would encircle city hall, with the same people regularly setting up on the same pitches. Many completely enclosed themselves inside the boxes, pulling the last flap down over their heads like Dracula retiring to his coffin. These were experienced rough-sleepers, who had their boxes and futons safely hidden away during the day and usually had plenty of warm clothing in the colder months. Nearly all were men, but occasionally the Thursday patrol would come across single women. There was one elderly couple, who shared a double futon and had a small pet dog, with his own futon.

The people sleeping in the underground mall were less experienced and less adept at handling homelessness. They chose the mall because it offered solid protection from the

elements, but had to endure harassment and bright lights. They tended to be worse equipped, too. Few had futons and many had nothing more than a scrap of cardboard between themselves and the concrete floor. There were more alcoholics and more people with serious health problems.

Only the people sleeping in cardboard boxes would be unequivocally viewed by Japanese standards as 'homeless', and for the rest of this chapter I will use the word 'homeless' in this limited, literal sense. Those living in shacks are not counted in the homeless tally maintained by the Thursday Patrol (Mokuyō Patorōru), a volunteer group which tours the main Yokohama homeless districts at night and hands out blankets, food and advice on health and welfare. Japanese day labourers living in *doya* do not view themselves as homeless, but rather see homelessness as a danger to be avoided by keeping up rent payments.

Nowadays the English word 'homeless' is rapidly gaining currency in Japan, transliterated as hōmuresu and meaning 'living on the street'. The orthodox term for homelessness is nojuku (lit. 'field living' or 'living in the wild'), which a respected dictionary renders as 'camping out; bivouac; sleep [pass the night] in the open (air); sleep on the bed of grass [under the open sky]' (Masuda 1974:1245). The slang term favoured by day labourers is aokan (a contraction of aozora [blue sky] + kantan [simple]) in street slang. In both cases we are

clearly talking about narrowly-defined, on-the-street homelessness, and with a distinct hint of romance to it as well. Before rejecting that element of romance out of hand, consider the following conversation I had with a homeless day labourer in Nagoya.

I met 'Lazybones' just twice, in 1994, on two consecutive December mornings in Sasashima. This conversation took place at 8.15 am, long after all those who would work that day had left for the worksite:

He is of average height, 'nearly 50,' going to grey, dressed shabby but warm, bicycle. Face always about to break into a smile.

Me: Going to work today?

He: Naah... not in the mood.

Me: Since when have you not been in the mood?

He: Oh, since about 25 years ago.

Me: What sort of life are you leading?

He: I sleep outdoors, under the overhang of a large building. It keeps the rain off. It's quite OK, I have futons, a pillow, everything I need.

Me: Don't you get cold?

He: No, I have plenty of futons, so I'm nice and warm.

Me: But in winter, surely...

He: Winter's the best time of the year. Not so many people wandering about the streets at night making a noise.

Me: What do you do about food?

He: It's no problem -- I eat stuff that's just past its sell-by date. The supermarkets have to chuck it out, but it's still quite OK. The only draw-back is that they tend to chuck it out at 3 or 4 in the morning, and I have to compete with other homeless people to get the good stuff. But the food itself is excellent.

Me: Don't you use money?

He: Well if one doesn't have much money, why fuss about it? Better to have none at all.

Me: How's your health?

He: I'm fine. I'm nearly 50, and I expect to

live another 20 years.
Me: How about a drink?
He: No, I don't drink at all. That's why I'm OK.
The friends who joined me round this bonfire
last winter are nearly all dead. Once you
start drinking, that's it -- you're dead in
one or two years.
Me: Might I know your name?
He: You don't need to know it. It's not a name
of any consequence.

(F1013, 15/12/94)

I had a slightly similar conversation at new year
1995 in Yokohama, at the Naka ward welfare office where
I met a man dressed like a tramp waiting for a food
coupon. We had just been discussing the question of
people sponging off each other in Kotobuki:

He: I live off what I can get myself. I don't owe
nothing to no-one. I work when I can, I come and
get the food vouchers -- like today -- when I
can't.
Me: Are you living in Kotobuki?
He: No, I'm homeless (nojuku). I sleep rough, but not
where the other guys sleep. I have my own place.
Me: And are you staying in the prefabs (temporary
shelters) now?
He: No way! I'd much rather sleep on the streets.
It's too noisy in the prefabs, all those guys get
on my nerves. And I'm always getting into fights.

(F1055-6, 4/1/95)

Yoseba activists and left-wing academics will
vigorously resist any suggestion that homeless day
labourers live the way they do because of their own
personal weakness or laziness, and the suggestion that
they live this way because they like it is practically
treasonable. These people are the innocent victims of

capitalism [2]. No doubt this is true of many people, but the two conversations quoted above are reminders that the truth is complex and various. Laziness, too, can be a political statement. The fact that 'Lazybones' doesn't drink is very important, of course, and his unwillingness to tell me his name may hint at some concealed shame. Still, his narrative is a reminder that in a society as wealthy and wasteful as Japan, no-one need die of cold or hunger if they keep their wits about them and are not too proud about what they eat [3].

As for the man in Yokohama, he was a self-avowed misanthropist, who claimed to disdain any interest in the community of his fellow beings. It may be naive to take

2 One contemporary writer who defies political orthodoxy in a spirit of quirky postmodernism is Kogawa Tetsuo. He defines homeless people as 'people who cut across space' (spêsu no ôdansa). He contrasts furôsha ('drifters') with hômuresu ('homeless') and controversially suggests that whereas the former have been forced onto the streets by sheer economic hardship, the latter have--consciously or subconsciously -- chosen a different lifestyle. The homeless may be classified as 'unconscious drop-outs'. Japanese homeless are 'post-homeless', he says, unlike US homeless, many of whom genuinely can't feed and house themselves (Kogawa 1987:173-5). Kogawa's argument, though based on poorly-defined categories and dubious cultural assumptions, makes an interesting contrast to the left-wing orthodoxy of victimhood.

3 People do sometimes die of starvation in contemporary Japan. Mizushima (1993) describes how his mother starved to death in Hokkaido after being turned down for social security. There was a similar case in the papers in spring 1996, when a mother and son starved to death in Shizuoka prefecture. These deaths were caused by relative cultural want rather than absolute material want. The people who died would literally rather die than scramble for discarded food from convenience stores.

narratives like these at face value, but it may also be naive to assume that nobody could possibly be happy without an apartment and family.

Against these relatively positive homeless narratives, I must set the evident misery of many other homeless people I met in Yokohama and elsewhere. The following is extracted from my account of one of my nights on the streets with the Thursday Patrol.

It was about 11 o'clock. We descended into the system of underground malls and passageways around Kannai station...

We found four isolated sleepers around the brightly lit passageways, but the vast majority, at least thirty... were in a single short, relatively grubby and dimly lit passageway on the fringe of the subterranean system...

Some raged. Poor Inaba (a volunteer) got another flea in his ear from a thin and ragged man, tanned and short of teeth, who rubbed in the ineffectuality of his work:

Inaba: Got any problems?

Man: For a start it's pretty strange that I'm in a place like this, eh? I've only had four days' work this month."

Inaba: Hm, I see...

Man: Whadyamean, 'I see'?!...

A few places further on we find a middle-aged man who is in an awful state. Eyes very bloodshot; hands and legs grotesquely puffed up. Something wrong with his liver: probably cirrhosis or hepatitis. Said he'd been going to the Ariga Hospital for a week as an outpatient, though he could hardly make it for the pain in his legs. Couldn't walk as far as his doya, fell over 4 times when he tried; he couldn't eat, had no appetite, could only swallow water; he couldn't get work, even his older brother who was a tobi (see glossary) was out of work... as he told us all this, the next man along constantly interrupted with sarcastic remarks implying that Swollen-Legs was really a mere idler. Inaba got his personal details and promised to inquire as to whether he could be hospitalized.

(F29-30, 8/7/93)

There are plenty of people who are in despair about being on-the-street homeless. However, they will not necessarily take advantage of shelter when it is offered. Tables 27 and 28 show numbers of homeless people in the Kannai district, which includes Kotobuki and its surroundings, on ordinary Thursdays (table 27) and during the period of the Winter Survival Campaign or Ettô (table 28). During the latter period there are prefabricated shelters set up by the city government in Kotobuki in which anyone may stay. But although hundreds of people do stay in the prefabs, often hundreds more do not. Thus the average number of people found sleeping in the street during the 1992-3 Etto was 111; the last Thursday Patrol before the Etto found 91 homeless people and the first one after found 107. In the 1993-4 Etto the parallel figures were 122 just before the Etto, 197 during it, and 138 just after it. In both cases there were actually more people sleeping on the street while the temporary shelter was available than when it was not.

While this is partly to do with the absence of employment opportunities and closing of conventional welfare services over the new year period (the original *raison d'être* of the Etto), the figures do strongly suggest that many of the people using the prefab accommodation are not long-term homeless people but day

labourers who are not usually homeless but take advantage of the free accommodation briefly available at New Year. Many homeless people, like the two men quoted above, decline to use shelter even when it is available.

This phenomenon is not restricted to Yokohama. In Tokyo many of the homeless people sleeping at Shinjuku station declined to be temporarily rehoused in prefabs during part of the winter, prompting the following bemused headline in the International Herald Tribune: "Luxury Digs? Tokyo's Homeless Prefer Cardboard" (Jordan 1996:1). In fact, there are sound reasons why many long-term homeless people decline to make use of temporary shelters. Often they have established a favourably located pitch which they fear may be taken by someone else while they are in the shelter, or the loss of their bulkier possessions which may not be taken into the shelter [4]. Their attitude is based on a well-justified cynicism about their chances of 'getting back on their feet' after leaving the shelter. At the same time, they often have a kind of community on the street which they do not wish to leave. In a way, these people are literally homeless but not necessarily homeless in the American sense of 'detached'. Sometimes they turn out to have their own network of relationships.

4 "If I went to the shelter at night, my things would be stolen." (homeless man in Kotobuki, quoted in Weisman 1991).

III. Homeless house-builders

Sutoton sutoton to ie o tatete
Sutoton sutoton to daiku-san
Jibun de tateta sono ie
Shikikin harawanya hairarenu
Sutoton sutoton to

Knockety-knock, build the house
Knockety-knock goes the carpenter
That house he built himself
He can't get in it without paying a deposit
Knockety-knock, knockety knock.

--- 'Sutoton Bushi' (The Knockety-knock Song),
written in the 1930s by Soeda Satsuki

One of the enduring ironies of the day labouring life is that although many day labourers build houses and apartments, they cannot generally afford to live in one themselves. It is an irony keenly felt, symbolic of social injustice. However, the conceptual space of the Japanese home is reproduced in the most unpromising circumstances. The rooms in the doya, although in many ways more primitive than the worst in an American skid row hotel [5] will always have a genkan, a symbolic entrance area where one takes off one's shoes. In a house or school (Tobin 1992:32-3), the genkan may be quite a large hallway,

5 Hoch and Slayton (1989:130) surveyed rooms in Chicago single-room occupancy hotels (SROs) in 1984 and rated them thus: 3 points for a bath, 2 for a closet (which I think means a toilet), and 1 each for a sink, heater, window, stove, phone and television. Except for two cubicle hotels that averaged 0.85, the Chicago SROs averaged 9.60. Doya rooms usually have windows and the pricier ones have TVs; still, Hoch and Slayton would not award more than two points to most doya rooms. Most doya won't even let residents use their own stoves or heaters, because of the fire risk and electricity bills.

symbolically marking the transition from public to private space; in a doya room, it is a rectangle of space at a lower level than the tatami-mat floor, just big enough to park one or two pairs of shoes. Even so, spatial transition is marked by removing ones shoes in the doya as in any other home or interior space [6].

I have noticed that some day labourers who have become homeless still maintain this sense of space:

There was just one homeless man in the park... He had turned the area underneath a small slide (about 1 metre high) into a cosy little home. He had draped a plastic car cover over the top of the slide to form a protective awning, and he was sound asleep (or faking it) in a futon underneath the slide. Near his feet was a larder, with quite a selection of instant noodles, bottled water, dry biscuits etc. He had even contrived a sort of genkan, by laying out a blue rectangular plastic bath cover at the entrance to the house. A pair of battered boots were standing neatly together on the bath cover. (F1004-5, 14/12/94, Nagoya).

Not all improvised residences were as tidy as this. The following is a description of Mr. Nakasone's hidden home, concealed under a disused motorway access ramp near Kotobuki:

We walked a little way up the road. It was raised up on a solid block of concrete. On the left, 20 yards from the barrier, something protruded an inch or so over the kerb. It was a small ladder. It led down to

6 In some of the Sanya and Kamagasaki doya, there is a tertiary division of space. One swaps outdoor shoes for plastic slippers on entering the doya, then takes off the slippers on entering a room. In Kotobuki, the Korean landlords are less fussy and one wears outdoor shoes in the corridor and on the stairs.

Nakasone's home, which was in a small fissure between the concrete sides of the road and another great wall of concrete a couple of metres removed from it.

There was a concrete overhang under which were the futons and sleeping bags of Nakasone and two other men, spaced at wide enough intervals to allow some privacy, and a sort of communal al fresco living room in front of the overhang, with a low table, a homemade cooker created from a large salad oil tin with holes cut out of it, a mulch of cardboard and old newspapers on the floor, and a black rubbish bag which proved to be the larder, well stocked with bread and vegetables.

The whole place was filthy. There was a go board, but the pieces were scattered all over the living room, along with empty cans, cigarette butts, plates with not-quite-finished meals decomposing on them, etc. Conveniently, there was a sewer grill set into the concrete in one corner of the living room; Nakasone and his friends would piss straight into it. (F597, 29/5/94).

Later, this residence added a garden:

I was impressed to find they had considerably improved the premises: Nakasone was sitting on a camp chair just behind the white gate in front of the ramp, under an improvised awning, having a shochu sun-downer with Kishimoto, the young Okinawan man with the speech impediment. It looked very cosy, especially since they had a large number of potted plants scattered around the area -- perhaps 30 or so, in black plastic seed trays. (F679, 13/7/94).

See also my account of Kuriyama (Ch5:IX) for an example of how shack-construction can entail cooperative enterprise and hierarchical exchange relationships.

My overall impression was that homeless yoseba men were resourceful and mutually cooperative in improvising places to live and ways of living. Other observers convey a similar impression:

"Walking around the area at night I saw homeless men camped out by the roadside, in a small encampment on a

railway embankment, in the edges of doorways, in the tunnels underneath the overhead railway line at Shin-Imamiya, lying amid the bicycle racks around the underground stations, beneath road bridges in their own self-constructed cardboard and metal structures. Some have gone so far as to bring furniture out onto the street, so there are chests of drawers and tables -- to visit them is as if walking into their pavement living room." (Kalvis 1995:21-2, in Kamagasaki).

In 1994 photographer Miyamoto Ryuji staged an exhibition at the Yokohama Portside Gallery called 'Cardboard House'. It consisted mainly of photos of homes made out of cardboard boxes (invariably without the occupant). These photos were set amid Miyamoto's own structures made from clean, new cardboard boxes, and the exhibition dwelled on the minimalist aesthetic of the constructions (Templado 1994). I suppose this was the ultimate tribute to the resourcefulness of homeless people.

IV. The yoseba as symbolic home/hometown

Sanya ni wa nannimo nai ga	There's nothing in Sanya
Taiyo to kuki to	But sunshine and air
Yujo dake wa ippai da	And friendship aplenty

Dakara Sanya o ai shi	And so loving Sanya
Sanya ni ikite iku	We live on in Sanya
Watashitachi no machi Sanya	Our town Sanya
Watashitachi no furusato Sanya	Our hometown Sanya

Anonymous poem, reproduced in Kaji 1977 Vol.2:523.

A number of times during fieldwork day labourers referred to the yoseba as a hometown or community. It sometimes seemed that what concerned them about their detachment from mainstream life was not so much being 'homeless' as being

'hometownless'.

This impression was reinforced through my participation in the two major events in the Kotobuki calendar, the Summer Festival (Natsu Matsuri) and the Winter Survival Campaign (Etto), which struck me as more or less conscious attempts to replicate the community spirit of a close-knit village environment.

a. The Summer Festival [7]

I participated in the 16th and 17th versions of this annual event, in the summers of 1993 and 1994. The festival is usually held over three days including a weekend around the middle of August. It is organized by a committee grouping people from the union, the Kotobuki Welfare Centre and other well-wishers. The timing is designed to coincide as closely as possible with Bon, the feast of the dead, which is generally held August 13 to 15 or 16 in this part of Japan. It is customary in Japan for people to spend Bon with their parental families, and the summer festivals held at Kotobuki and other yoseba are designed to dispel the gloom which isolated day labourers may feel at not being able to go home at this important time of year. Accordingly the summer festival features

7 See table 29 for the order of events at the 1994 festival.

traditional Bon singing and dancing, the wearing of loin cloths and happi coats, and the carrying of portable shrines (mikoshi) around the streets.

Another traditional element is the festival fan. These used to be made of splayed bamboo, but nowadays are mass-produced out of plastic, with paper pasted over the supports. One side will have a stereotyped painting of some flowers, or maybe a rural scene; the other side will have the name of the people organizing the festival, sometimes with a slogan. The fans are handed out free at the festival. The Kotobuki version interestingly combines the evocation of rural tradition with overtly political sloganeering. The 1994 version, for instance, features on one side a stylized ink-wash picture of a Chinese bellflower (kikyô), growing out of purple earth against a pale-blue summer sky. The other side has the following slogans written on it:

Hitori ga minna no tame ni	One for all
Minna ga hitori no tame ni	All for one
Shigoto o yokose!	Give us jobs!
Han o yokose!	Give us rice!
Neru tokoro o hosho seyo!	Guarantee a place to sleep!
Oretachi wa danketsu no	We will fight with the power
chikara de tatakau-zo!	of solidarity!

'94 Kotobuki Natsu Matsuri Jikko Iinkai (Summer Festival Committee)

This is also one of just two times in the year when Buddhist monks are seen in Kotobuki (the other being during the Etto). There is a small outdoor stone altar behind the

Centre, where monks from a local temple (Tokuonji) chant sutras and the people of Kotobuki come up and place lighted joss sticks next to a small statue of the Buddha, in remembrance of deceased day labourers. (Once in a few years, a mass memorial service is also held for day labourers who died without known kin.) Thus Shinto celebrations of life, such as the dancing and mikoshi-carrying, mingle with Buddhist death ceremonies in the characteristic Japanese mix, and for once Christianity takes a back seat.

Most of these elements are held in common with summer festivals in other yoseba. In 1994 Kamagasaki celebrated its 23rd summer festival, Sanya its 22nd [8], Kotobuki its 17th, Sasashima its 11th and Fukuoka its 7th. Another much more modern institution common to all is the karaoke singing contest, which in a decade or two has permeated Japanese society from top to bottom. But there are also elements to the Kotobuki festival which are more location-specific. One is the participation of children [9]. It is very important to Kotobuki people that the place does not consist entirely of lonely old men, that there are young people too. Hence the rather small band of children (a

8 This number is disputed, because at various times rival left-wing factions have sponsored rival festival in Sanya.

9 Some children also take part in the Kamagasaki summer festival.

couple of dozen) who still live in Kotobuki always get star treatment at festival time. They lead the Bon dancing, shuffling around a ten-foot high elevated stage while the rest of the revellers follow round at ground level, glancing up to check the steps. There are special events for children too, such as blindfold melon-smashing (suika-wari) and sumo wrestling. The festival organizers also make a conscious attempt to celebrate Kotobuki's special ethnic identity, chiefly by including professional performances of Korean folk songs on one of the evenings. At the 1993 festival this backfired when a beer-can was thrown at one of the Korean ladies in mid-song (F113, 15/8/93). The 1996 festival featured Okinawan folk singers.

Ever since the second year of the festival, there has also been a free rock-concert, which dominates one day of the festival. It has become quite a trendy event of late, and is the one day of the year when large numbers of young women may be seen in Kotobuki -- followers of the bands, who may have come from as far away as Osaka and Kyoto.

Most festival events are centered on a big stage, decorated with the red-and-white paper lanterns that are a traditional feature of Bon festivals. The stage is set up in the Centre courtyard in a symbolically important act of communal labour (butai-zukuri; stage-building) eagerly anticipated by some day labourers and union men. The stage

is built on the morning of the first day of the festival, and dismantled the day after the festival ends.

The stage has several levels of significance for those who make it.

(1) Its erection and dismantling symbolically mark the beginning and end of non-quotidian, festival time.

(2) It is a sampler of the construction worker's craft. Mr. Matsumoto, an elderly day labourer who helped build the 1993 stage, took some pride in explaining how the network of tubular steel pipes (tankan) is held together with fixed (chokko) and movable (jizai) clamps (shimegane), with metal plates with hooks on (anchi) firming up the structure and large wooden boards (kompane) and safety rails (tessuri) on top (F94, 15/8/93). Whereas day labourers usually do their work far away from the yoseba, this was a rare opportunity to demonstrate skill on home territory.

(3) It is an act of labour freely given for the sake of the community. Most of the time day labourers sell their labour to the highest bidder and have to struggle for every yen. But the erection of the stage is entirely voluntary work. It recalls the communal house-building and thatching still found in some rural districts of Japan, one of which, at Shirakawa, Gifu prefecture, I have earlier described (Gill 1992). These activities do have an element of very long-term reciprocity: families provide free labour on the

understanding that one day -- perhaps decades later -- the favour will be returned. The Kotobuki stage-building does not even include this highly-delayed form of reciprocity-- here the work is done entirely voluntarily.

In practice, the symbolism is slightly muted. I observed the 1993 stage-building -- and helped out in my own inadequate way. On the face of it, the operation brought together a cross-section of the community. There were young and old (about 50-50), male and female (about 80-20). There were some artisan types sporting leather pouches full of tools, plus student-types, housewife types and one or two day labourer types. But a close look at who was involved revealed an irony: Kotobuki is full of construction workers, yet very few of them actually helped with this simple construction job. For the most part it was the volunteers doing the work: I saw a pair of young salarymen, who had taken a day off from work especially to help build the stage, struggling to straighten out the warped wooden ladder for ascending the stage, observed silently by working men who surely could have done a better job (F94, 13/8/93).

In other respects too, the symbolism of community was muted. A few of the day labourers danced with the youngsters during the rock concert, but others still resolutely attempted to get their afternoon sleep

stretched out on the upper levels of the Centre while great waves of noise came crashing off the concrete walls. The 1993 festivals at Kotobuki, Kamagasaki and Sasashima prompted a pictorial in the Japanese weekly edition of Playboy magazine entitled "There's a recession on -- but grandad's doing fine" (Fukyō da ga -- Otchan wa genki da). In fact a close inspection of the pictures shows one or two day labourers amid a sea of youth. I was there, and I saw young women gingerly picking their way round the prone bodies of a couple of day labourers lying unconscious in a pile of rubbish, bleeding from untreated head wounds. The scene went unphotographed.

The bon dancing and the tour of the omikoshi do, however, generate a much more convincing community atmosphere. Held on separate days from the rock concert, they draw far fewer outsiders. Far larger numbers of day labourers take part, everyone has plenty to drink, and the bon dancing invariably goes on far beyond the scheduled close. All the noise and merriment happens in the middle of an otherwise eerily quiet Yokohama: nearly all the businesses and shops are closed for the Bon holidays, and a large portion of the city's population has decamped to spend Bon with elderly relatives in the country. After a few drinks and a few shuffles round the Centre courtyard, with children belabouring the great taiko drum on the stage, it is just about possible to believe that yes--

this is a kind of hometown [10].

The festival entails substantial costs-- scaffolding, lighting, sound equipment, fans, transportation, refreshments, etc. Some of the cost is met by sales of food and drink at the festival, but most of the money comes from donations. Hats are passed round at the rock concert, and more formal donations are taken on the other two days and recorded on pieces of paper pasted up on a sort of wooden scoreboard erected in the Centre courtyard -- a common practice at Japanese festivals. Each paper records the name of the donor and the amount given.

At the 1994 festival the donations recorded were as shown in table 30. The total was just over Y1 million, roughly 6,000 pounds. The median donation was Y5,000. Just over half the doya contributed, although many with pathetically small amounts -- Y2-3,000 -- considering the tens of millions of yen they take in rent each year. There are two associations of doya owners, one favouring South Korea and the other North Korea. The former gave Y20,000, the latter Y10,000. Bars and restaurants donated far more generously than doya. By far the biggest donation (Y100,000) came from the Kotobuki Mah Jongg Club.

10 For some people, of course, Kotobuki is their literal hometown. The highlight of the 1993 festival was a performance by an all-female song-and-dance troupe led by Kikutsuru Sen, a well-known singer of enka (sentimental ballads). She was raised in Kotobuki, in the times when there were more families around, and often comes to perform at the festival, in homage to her hometown.

Activists at other yoseba are rather shocked that Junichiro takes festival donations from local doya owners, shopkeepers etc. Mr. Fukada of Kamanichiro told me that such people were class enemies of day labourers and that Kamanichiro would not take their dirty money. He said that the Kamagasaki summer festival was financed entirely from donations from the workers themselves (F750-1, 2/8/94). It is quite clear that Junichiro's concept of 'community' is far more inclusive than Kamanichiro's.

b. The Winter Survival Campaign (Ettô)

I took part in the 20th and 21st Etto, in the winters of 1993-4 and 1994-5. The word literally translates as 'wintering' or 'passing the winter', but in context it has a somewhat grimmer ring to it, hence my translation above. Henceforth I will use the Japanese term.

Just as the Summer Festival is focused on the ritual of Bon, so the Etto is focused on the other great event in the Japanese calendar, Shôgatsu (New Year). Once again the great cities fall silent as people struggle through appalling traffic-jams to their parental or grand-parental families in the country, while those who stay in the city hole up watching festive TV and eating rice-cakes and dried persimmons.

In Japan, no-one questions the importance of company

at Bon and Shogatsu. The great difference, of course, is that Shogatsu is a winter festival, and in yoseba the winter is associated with severe physical hardship and risk of death. Each year one of the Etto slogans is that "not one person will die" (hitori mo shisha o dasanai), but this is not always achieved. There were four deaths in the Kotobuki region around the time of the 1993-4 Etto, for example: one man found dead of exposure right in front of the Centre just before the Etto started, another found floating in the Nakamura river during the Etto, a third found dead in his doya room, apparently of natural causes, on new year's day itself; and a fourth who died in hospital a couple of weeks later, after the volunteer medical unit (Iryôhan) had sent him there in an ambulance during the Etto period (F339; cf Stevens 1995a:176-7).

Back in December 1969, the Kotobuki District Self-governing Association [11] staged a Winter Festival. However, the experiment was not repeated until 1974-5, by which time the oil shock recession was threatening the lives of underemployed day labourers. So the idea of the winter festival merged with the need to protect lives, campaign for employment and welfare measures, producing the characteristic format of the Etto. The main events of the Etto last from about December 28 to January 3, for two good reasons: first, this is the period when building sites,

11 Kotobuki Chiku Jichi-kai. See Ch3:IV.

docks, casual labour exchanges, welfare facilities, etc. are closed for New Year, depriving day labourers of their usual sources of income and support. Secondly, this is also the period when it is easiest to mobilize volunteers, since they too are off work.

The volunteers, some of them day labourers themselves but mostly students and other idealistic younger people, provide hot meals, blankets, medical advice etc., and organize karaoke contests, debates etc. Most of the volunteers are either Christians or politically left-wing. Some of the catering is done by a self-help group called the Old People's Club (Rōjin Kurabu) and some by the monks of Tokuonji. The aim is to avoid street deaths, reduce physical discomfort and keep spirits up at this depressing time of year, and the Etto generally has some success in these aims. As with the summer festival, the Etto is an institution at the other major yoseba too. The winter of 1994-5 saw the 25th Kamagasaki Etto and the 23rd [12] at Sanya.

But alongside this voluntary operation, which may reasonably be characterized as a winter version of the summer festival, there is also an official, bureaucratic

12 As with the summer festival, rival factions have held Etto-type events in Sanya. I attended the Sanya Etto on new year's eve, 1989-90. There were two stages at opposite ends of the crowd. Rival factions took it in turns -- quite amicably -- to provide entertainment. The men just turned round at half time.

Etto. Ever since the oil shock winter of '74-5, the Yokohama city government has taken measures, focused mainly on Kotobuki, to keep the homeless off the street over New Year. Over the years, Junichiro and other groups have vigorously campaigned for the extension and improvement of these measures, and each year the line of battle between the pressure groups and the authorities shifts a little way -- usually in the form of gradual, grudging concessions by the latter.

The most important form of public assistance is housing. Each year, the city government pays a private contractor to put up pre-fabricated housing, usually in the small park at the heart of Kotobuki, to house several hundred homeless workers over New Year. This is an expensive business -- costing over Y80 million in public funds for the 1994-5 Etto -- but ironically enough, the prefabs are dismantled a couple of weeks after being put up, and many of their inhabitants go back on the streets. Residence in the prefabs was permitted for 11 days (December 29th to January 8th) at the 1994-5 Etto, itself the longest period ever allowed.

These prefabricated dormitories are the symbolic centre of the Etto just as the stage is the centre of the Summer Festival. But whereas -- in theory at least, and to a degree in practice -- the building of the stage is done by the people of Kotobuki for themselves, the prefabs are

built by an external contractor which makes no use of day labourers. In January 1994 I interviewed the site manager, who said it was not uncommon for on-looking day labourers to shout out "give us a job!" (shigoto kurê-yo) while his men were erecting and dismantling the prefabs.

Although the day labourers are excluded from construction work, Junichiro makes a big point of keeping the day-to-day management of the prefabs under worker control. "Autonomous Control in Force" (Jishû kanri jissai-chû) proclaims a banner outside one of the prefabs. There are no policemen or bureaucrats in the prefabs to keep an eye on the men, in sharp contrast to most other Japanese cities -- Tokyo and Nagoya for example -- where temporary winter accommodation for the homeless is strictly controlled, often with the use of private security firms.

[13]

Junichiro is justifiably proud that it manages to

13 The Asahi Shinbun described the Tokyo Etto prefabs in its evening edition of Saturday January 8, 1994. Whereas in Yokohama shelters are set up in the heart of Kotobuki, in Tokyo they are set up at Heiwajima, Ota-ku, many miles from Sanya. Users are bussed in under strict security. The shelters closely resemble prison camps. Riot police maintain a permanent presence; there is a barbed wire fence; inmates wishing to leave the shelters, permanently or temporarily, must sign out and explain why they want to go out; outsiders are not allowed in. The Asahi Shinbun reporter was no exception: he had to base his account mostly on remarks made by people who came out of the prefabs. Partly because of this, no doubt, they tended to be negative. One man said he was going back to Sanya: sleeping rough was preferable to sleeping in a concentration camp.

maintain the Etto prefabs as a kind of commune rather than a prison. Bureaucrats who come to check up on the prefabs are given a cool reception, and during the 1992-3 Etto a Junichiro member tried to refuse the police permission to photograph the interior after a man had died in one of the prefabs (Stevens 1995a:177). But there is a price to pay for this degree of autonomy: the union itself must deal with any problems of drunken bad behaviour, and must shoo the men out into the cold January air on the last morning of 'autonomous control'. This is despite the fact that the coldest period of the Yokohama winter does not come until February.

The government argument is that workers should be able to survive by their own efforts or orthodox forms of social welfare outside the holiday season, but under the Heisei recession (c.1990-96) this has been even less realistic than before. The opening of the permanent shelter at Matsukage-cho in November 1994 was a belated and inadequate recognition of this truth by the city government.

My own impression was that seasonal sentiment, similar to that behind Christmas bonuses to old age pensioners in Britain, was the main factor in the city of Yokohama's Etto provisions in Kotobuki.

V. Bonfire as hearth

Another important symbol of community in Kotobuki is the bonfire (takibi), which is kept burning most of the time during the colder months. People also make bonfires at the other yoseba of course, but in Kotobuki there is a single, well-established location which gives this ad-hoc gathering place the air of a permanent institution.

The location is an area of concrete about 5 metres square underneath the outside staircase leading to the upper level of the Centre. At the lower end there is a concrete wall, at the higher end two metal stanchions create the meeting points of three more imaginary walls. The wall and the sloping ceiling are blackened by years of smoke, and the ground is strewn with dirty old futons, cardboard boxes, empty bottles and cans, etc.

If the Summer Festival and Etto replicate the hometown, the bonfire works at a much more micro level. It is a symbolic hearth, which is kept burning almost constantly through the colder months, and preserves a homely atmosphere although the people keeping warm around it are rarely the same from one day to the next.

I mostly found the bonfire a relaxed and friendly place. It was home to the bottom layer of Kotobuki society, the yankara (see glossary) whose soot-blackened faces associated them with the bonfire even when they

wandered away from it. At the same time, more successful day labourers would drop in on their way to and from work, to warm their hands and pass the time of day. Anyone who found a piece of wood or a cardboard box in the vicinity would be likely to drop it off at the bonfire for fuel. The old man who ran a fruit and vegetable stall in front of the Centre always dropped off his empty boxes at the bonfire. In summer people sometimes sat on the pavement in front of the Asahiya grocer's shop, whose master would make ineffectual attempts to move them on, sometimes even hosing them down. But no-one ever tried to break up the bonfire.

There was a less homely side to the bonfire as well. The combination of drunk people and an open fire leads to numerous serious accidents, one of which I witnessed [14]; and a fatal stabbing incident which occurred at the bonfire on April 18, 1990 led to a day labourer named Nobuta Masao being convicted of murder.

Despite a strenuous campaign to prove his innocence by the union and other sympathisers, an appeal to the Supreme Court was rejected on October 24 1995. Nobuta is currently serving an eight-year prison sentence. To day labourers

14 A drunk man fell into the bonfire and had suffered very serious burns by the time we managed to extinguish his burning clothes. He was rushed to hospital and his life saved. I met him again a year later. Once more he was drinking by the bonfire. (F255-9, 26/11/93; 1039-40, 30/12/94).

there is a double affront here: Nobuta was convicted solely on the strength of a forced confession which he later retracted, with the police unable to find any witnesses. The judge at the original trial remarked that it was not surprising that a drunken dispute might end in murder, because the aggressor might fear being killed himself out of revenge if he allowed the victim to live, and that "Kotobuki being a so-called doya-gai where people who know nothing of each other's personality or history gather and live together, one has to admit that such a motive would have reason to it." At the same time, the eight-year sentence is unusually light for murder, reflecting a tendency among judges to undervalue the lives of day labourers. Thus the Nobuta affair is seen as an insult both to Nobuta and to the victim of the stabbing, a day labourer named Yamada Takao (Nobuta-san 1992, 1996).

Again, Dr. Saiki of the Kotobuki clinic, told me of a case in 1992 when a man came in with hideous burns on his face and hands but with the rest of his body unscathed.

"It's all my fault," he told her. "I was lazy. I wanted to keep warm at the fire, but I never gathered any fuel to put on it. I used to hang around at the edge of the group round the fire, hoping they wouldn't notice. One night they got angry with me and shoved my face and hands into the fire. I kept shouting for help, but they wouldn't lift me out of the fire until I promised to get something to put on it. Then they released me. I wandered around, looking for something to burn. I couldn't find anything. At last I managed to steal a brand-new tyre from a tyre shop. I put that on the fire and they forgave me. It saved my life. It was all my own fault for being lazy." (F366, 31/1/94)

Clearly the bonfire was not such a free society as to dispense with rules altogether, a fact which the victim of this assault seemed to accept despite the horrific attack.

At one point during my fieldwork, Morimura* turned the bonfire into a curry restaurant, selling curried rice cooked over the bonfire at Y400 a portion. Very few people actually paid this amount -- friends were given free helpings, others exchanged drinks for food, and one or two made donations worth more than the announced price of the food (F465-71). The restaurant lasted less than a week. On one occasion I was left in charge of it. There were no customers, and the bonfire burned on with only myself to enjoy the heat. I was reminded of times when I had seen the bonfire burning with nobody there at all. Sometimes this strictly temporary institution seemed to have an existence independent to those of the people who used it.

I looked into the embers. It was fully night by now, and I was alone in the heart of Kotobuki.

I thought of the houses of Shinohata (a village described by Ronald Dore in his book of that name), and the steady symbolic replacement of the timbers as the generations passed (Dore 1978:138)... The takibi has no timbers, of course, it is just a semi-sheltered space, framed by the staircase overhead, the wall at one end and the metal cross-beams between the iron girders at the other. And yet it is a sort of house. It has a hearth, indeed it is defined and coloured black by the hearth, like the "unreconstructed soot-blackened houses" of Shinohata (ibid 133). It has a roof, which is why it was selected as the place for the hearth. And it too has housed many generations: but in Kotobuki the generations change over much more quickly, from month to month the regular crowd at the takibi may be completely different. Last month there was no Morimura; this month he is running a restaurant here.

Next month, who knows?

As the wooden beams of Shinohata are slowly replaced, there must be two points in time, undetectable of course, when the house actually consists entirely of different materials -- just as I remember being taught in biology lessons at school that tissue and cell replacement means that the human body replaces all its constituent materials every few years, and is, in one sense, a different body.

And yet the houses in Shinohata are, in a much more important sense, the same across the years; and the human body is, in a much more important sense, the same across the years; and even the takibi, which may change all its constituent human elements from month to month, week to week, or even in the space of a few hours, is still recognizably the same social institution.

And for all its associations with poverty and death by fire, it is a cosy place. Sometimes you may find a few umbrellas hanging from a clothes line; or some futons, or some clothes or cushions. Or there may be a big pile of firewood. It is a construction of home, of community, in the midst of urban anomie.

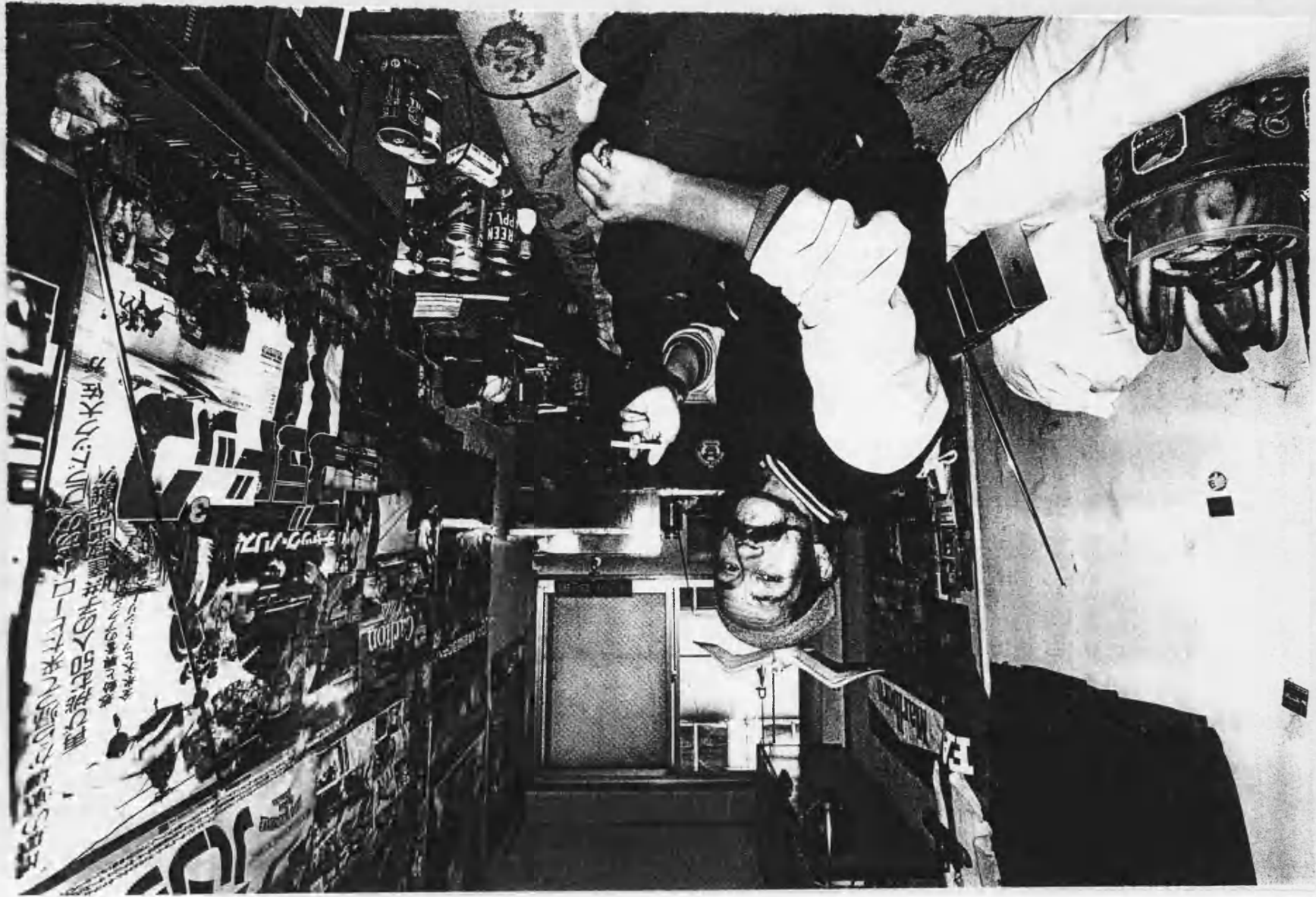
(F469, 25/3/94).

Of course, as Dore points out, the oldest son has a special role in maintaining the traditional household: he is in charge of generational transition, ensuring that the house endures even after his parents' death (ibid 138, 140-2). Perhaps the blackened hearth at the heart of Kotobuki had a special significance for those who, according to custom, should have been presiding over a different hearth, in a very different place.

Summary

The concepts of 'home' and 'hometown' are constantly being negotiated in the yoseba. Sometimes their importance to the individual is rejected; sometimes ruefully recognized. In the lay-outs of doya rooms, shacks and even cardboard boxes or the space around a bonfire, recognizably homely spaces are created. In the summer festival and winter survival campaign there is a conscious evocation of romanticized village community alongside radical political messages and -- in winter -- the practical matter of staying alive.





Chapter 8: Social Freedom and Economic Constraint, Daily
Uncertainty and Long-term Fate: The Human Condition as
Experienced and Perceived by Japanese Day Labourers

Having painted in the main circumstances of yoseba life, I will now attempt to identify character traits and behavioural patterns common to many day labourers and sketch a sort of Weberian ideal type.

First metaphor: Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle

Some of the day labourers I met during fieldwork had a strongly philosophical streak. This I ascribe to three factors: being at what is generally viewed as the bottom of the pile, they feel a stronger need than most people to explain and justify their place in life; they also have more time at their disposal than most people to think about the nature of life, since most of them work only intermittently; and they do not usually have a wife and children, which provide a readily available answer to most other Japanese men if they ever pause to ponder the purpose of their existence.

One of the most thoughtful men in Kotobuki is Nishikawa Kimitsu (Ch5:VI), and over a beer in the Apollo Cafe one day, he supplied me with a paradigm for thinking about day labourers.

I sat back and let him talk. He talked about some of his favourite writers -- Eric Hoffa, Lewis Mumford, Rene Descartes, Montaigne, Lyall Watson, Colin Wilson, Richard Fennyman, Conrad Waddington, Richard Dawkins... He mentioned Lorenz's light studies and Dawkins' vehicle theory. The latter he criticized --Dawkins had reached his conclusion too quickly, more study was needed. He praised Max Planck, and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle.

I said I'd always wanted to understand Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. He drew a picture of an atom on my memo pad, with an electron orbiting round the core. "We never know where the electron is," he said. "Likewise, we cannot see the future, including that of my own life. It stands on physical science, not philosophy." (F442, 25/2/94)

I later discovered that Kimitsu's account of the Uncertainty Principle was basically correct. This cornerstone of quantum mechanics was developed by Heisenberg in 1927. It states that some properties of atoms and their particles can be determined simultaneously only to within a certain degree of accuracy. Absolute limits are placed on the accuracy of measuring a particle's position and momentum at the same time. The process of measuring its position disturbs the particle's momentum, and vice versa.

This metaphor, of men as uncertainly wandering particles, clearly appeals to Kimitsu, and it appeals to me too. Like so many metaphors, it carries a greater load of meaning than a literal, non-metaphorical statement, and in this chapter I will attempt to take it apart and investigate how suitable it may be for describing the lives of him and the other residents of Kotobuki.

At least four aspects of the behaviour of sub-atomic particles have resonance in the yoseba: aspects which overlap, interact, and sometimes contradict each other. In the first place, the particle is mobile, in constant motion along complex pathways; secondly, it is passive, its movements dictated by various physical forces acting upon it and not by its own volition; thirdly, it is isolated, a single particle which is influenced by other particles but never comes into contact with them; and fourthly, and most obviously, its movements are uncertain, knowable only to a finite degree of accuracy. I will now consider each of these properties in turn.

I. Mobility

In a sense, all construction workers are nomadic, in their work if not in their private lives. They move from one worksite to another as projects finish or contracts end; and the Japanese word for a construction site, genba, literally means "present place", or "actual spot", (the same word is used to mean the scene of a crime or accident, or "You are here" on a street map). The word has proletarian machismo: it suggests that actual, concrete work, in the here and now, is being done -- as opposed to meaningless, unreal pen-pushing work. But in construction at least, genba also implies a temporary place of work. It

moves, it is literally the present place, a place without a long past or future as a place of work.

The more and the further one's place of work moves, the more likely one is to develop a mobile personal lifestyle. Especially if one's career starts with the Big Move -- migrating from country to city (Ch.6) -- and if one has to spend long periods of time in temporary worksite dormitories, as many construction workers do, this will militate against marriage and family life, and may corrode family life in cases where it does get established. The absence of family in turn enables the worker to move about more freely in search of work.

Out of 158 Kotobuki day labourers, I found only 14 who had any apparent reason to hang around, such as a wife, children, house or immovable possessions. There were 44 who travelled frequently and another 100 of whose movements I knew little (fieldnotes).

Mobility is a vitally important aspect of the lives of day labourers, which sharply distinguishes them from many other groups commonly labelled as being in the underclass. Thus Jones (1971:81-4) says that 19th century casual labourers in the East End of London were strikingly immobile, largely because of their dependence on the small but regular incomes often earned by their wives. Davis (1995:24) quotes the US writer on underclass issues, William Julius Wilson, as saying "Residents of inner-city

neighborhoods have no option other than to remain in their neighborhoods... Social mobility leads to geographic mobility." Davis comments: "The underclass he scrutinizes might as well be in chains for all the mobility they have" (ibid). The freedom of movement of day labourers is of course restricted by poverty, but it is nevertheless a real freedom.

Detachment from family also distinguishes day labourers from many other occupational groups commonly defined as being in the "informal economy" (Hart 1971). In the third world context at least, the informal economy is usually portrayed as consisting of "many small-scale enterprises whose labour input is predominantly provided by relatives of the owner." (Bremner 1994:6, citing an ILO report of 1976.) In Japan too, there are numerous small-scale enterprises, such as the machi-kôba ('town factories'), that make use of kin labour. But day labourers do not work for relatives. On the contrary, their labour arrangements tend to be more impersonal than those of people in the formal economy.

Day labourer mobility takes many forms. Some day labourers make a positive virtue of voluntary mobility, moving around in pursuit of pleasure and variety as well as economic advantage. Some, like Shô'ichi (1-38) and Shigehiro (Ch5:VIII), mostly oscillate between Kotobuki and Sanya; others, such as Noriyuki (Ch5:V), Kishimoto (1-79;

see below), or 'Jumbo' (7-21), tour from yoseba to yoseba over a much wider district, sometimes getting away from the big cities by doing stints on rural construction projects or seasonal farm work. Many more spend periods of several years in one yoseba before moving to another, like Kimitsu (Ch5.VII). A few even roam internationally, like Ogata (Ch4:II) or Manabu (Ch5:XI). Some, it is true, prefer to hunker down in one yoseba indefinitely, like Kohei (Ch5:II) -- but this too is a matter of personal choice for them. Voluntary mobility implies the possibility of voluntary immobility.

The mobility of day labourers is in sharp contrast to that of white-collar workers whose companies forcibly transfer them to distant towns, often forcing them to live apart from their families. This phenomenon, known as tanshin-funin ('solitary posting') is now recognized in Japan as a major social problem (see eg Shina 1994). Although day labourers are often separated from their families too, at least they have a fair degree of control over where they go in their everyday working lives.

This hobo lifestyle is much glamourized by the Japanese left, as in the following quotation from a book written by left-wing activists:

"The yoseba workers drifted off in search of food and work. To drift is a good thing. Water also lives by

drifting. Standing water soon goes stagnant." [1]

Left-wingers often use the word tensen to describe the day-labouring lifestyle (F690). This literally means 'fighting from front to front', but most roving day labourers I have met are, understandably, far less romantic about it. For instance I found Noriyuki's rambling, close-to-nature lifestyle (Ch.5:V) powerfully appealing, but when I asked him which yoseba he liked best, he replied: "I hate them all. I go to them because there's no alternative. Not because I like it" [2].

Likewise Mitsuo (1-5), who roamed Japan on an artificial leg after a mining accident in Hokkaido in 1955:

I travelled around day labouring for more than 30 years, but I don't think it's a good way of life. There's no continuity. Your friends are always changing. It's not good for your humanity. I've worked in Sanya, Sasashima, Kamagasaki and Kotobuki. Until five years ago there were still many jobs to be had... but even those were hard times, tough to bear. (Mitsuo, F41)

Some day labourers portray their movements as a quest, sometimes a spiritual quest, sometimes a more literal quest for a missing person. Shinya Noboru (15-18), a Kamagasaki-based day labourer, was separated from

1 "Yoseba no rōdōsha wa shoku [=food/work; both characters in text] o motomete nagarete itta. Nagareru koto wa yoi koto da. Mizu mo nagarete koso ikite iru. Tamari-mizu wa jiki ni kusaru mono da." Kama-Kyōtō 1974:190.

2 Zenbu wa kirai yo. Shōganai kara itteru. Suki dakara janai" (F196).

his brother thirty years ago and has been searching for him ever since. Fukazawa Ken'ichi, a childhood polio victim who wandered all over Japan before settling in Kotobuki, writes in his autobiography that he came to believe that he was driven to roam by the desire to locate his mother, who abandoned him when he was an infant: "Thus I came to hate being tied down and became used to walking around freely and being a vagrant. But I also have the feeling that in some sense I was looking for my mother" (Fukazawa 1985, 50). In Japanese aruku, to walk, or arukimawaru, to walk around, are often used in the sense of 'roam', but here the reference to "walking around freely" (jiyu-ni arukimawaru) is poignant, since like Mizubata, Fukazawa never did have the free use of his legs.

Other day labourers seem to be trying to exorcise the memory of some powerfully traumatic event in their past. I have already mentioned Nozawa's tragic story of his lost sister (Ch.6.VI); Billy Muraya* (7-2), an unstable, suicidal man, put his troubled life down to the desertion of his father, an American GI who suddenly left Billy's Japanese mother and went back to the US. In Kotobuki he looked like an American, sounded like a Japanese, and he was the saddest man I've ever met.

Some day labourers had a much more positive view of the mobile life. One was Kishimoto Atsushi (1-79), aged 42, a native of Okinawa. A cheerful, politically aware man

with a slight speech impediment, he tours the yoseba and told me he had spent roughly two years in Sanya, three in Sasashima, and one in Kotobuki. I met him in both Kotobuki and Sanya. He said he went home to Okinawa roughly once every two years to see family and visit family graves (F598, 1084). I asked a mutual friend why Kishimoto was always on the move. "He just has too many friends to visit," he replied (F1155).

So when I speak of "voluntary mobility", I do not mean these men are foot-loose and fancy free. Many are carrying heavy emotional baggage. Most of them have tried the more orthodox Japanese lifestyle and it has not worked for them. Many of them have an estranged wife and children they have not seen for a decade or two. But at least the decisions of everyday life are taken by the individual for his own reasons. By contrast, the relocated salaryman is in a very weak position:

"A worker's human rights ought to carry just as much or more weight as [sic] a company's right to enforce personnel administration, but Japanese companies have for a long time operated on a modus vivendi that is quite the opposite, assuming absolute control over the working lives of their employees but also over the fate of employees' families." [Shina 1994:27].

Voluntary mobility may also be observed at the micro level of streetwalking style. As I mentioned (Ch3:II), Kotobuki men amble around the street and display the utmost contempt to drivers who hoot at them to get out of the way. Yoseba have a reputation for traffic accidents, usually

blamed on drunks or on atariya, people who deliberately get hit by cars to make compensation claims (F561-2); though such people do exist, I believe many yoseba traffic accidents happen because the driver, an outsider, does not know that the rules of the road are different here.

Ventura, the Filipino writer who worked in Kotobuki, loathed the practice of street-corner recruiting:

The standing men are like prostitutes. Our customers are discriminating -- they size us up. They like us young and strong, muscular but harmless-looking... we greet them as politely as we know how. Their method of rejection is not to return our greeting. Every day begins with this little humiliation. (Ventura 1992:57-8)

But Shinya (see above), saw the same act of standing quite differently:

"It's a crying shame [3]. Day labourers used to have more pride. When I was a young man, you wouldn't have caught Kamagasaki day labourers running around begging for work. No. We had more pride. We would rather have gone hungry than asked someone for a job."

And he demonstrated how a day labourer should behave -- standing impassively with arms folded, feigning great indifference. "You might be starving hungry, you might not have eaten for months, but still you had your pride. Have you heard of bushidō (the old samurai code of ethics)? A true samurai would never ask for food, or money, or shelter. He would hold his head up high even if he'd not eaten for days. That's how we day labourers used to be. The recruiters had to come to us. We would just stand there, showing that we were available by the fact that we were dressed for work and carrying a bag of tools.

"They would come up and say, 'Shinya san, we're a bit short-handed today, do you think you could help us out?' Then I would just nod, saying nothing, and climb into the minibus. That's still how I do it -- and if

3 I had just observed that many day labourers seemed to run after recruiters asking for work.

you look around, you'll see a few other older men who won't move either -- but I'm afraid we're a small minority now. You can't really blame people, especially now, with jobs being so scarce in the recession, but still it's a shame." (F770)

Shinya is right: there are still quite a few day labourers who will not lower themselves to chasing a job. I think there are more of them in Kamagasaki than in Kotobuki or Sanya; Kamagasaki is Japan's biggest yoseba and there seems to be more working class pride there. My point, then, is that some day labourers (not all of course) have an ideology of personal autonomy that finds particularly strong expression in forms of movement or non-movement.

Mobility, present orientation and egalitarianism

Day labourers are, to borrow Breman's phrase, 'wage hunters and gatherers'. They share the high level of mobility of the Gujarati labourers he describes (Breman 1993:133-287), although in India casual labour is still a family enterprise as it once was in Japan (4). Relations between worker and mukadam (labour broker) show many parallels with that between a day labourer and a tehaishi, though with a greater stress on moral and financial

4 The married couples and families who worked in the pre-war coal-mines, for instance (Morisaki 1970) were rather similar to the family-based koyta work-gangs that Breman describes,

indebtedness (ibid 188-92) that is more reminiscent of the ninpu-dashi system of Western Japan (Ch4:IV).

Wage hunter-gatherers, like real hunter-gatherers, may be classified into two broad categories -- those that obtain an "immediate return" on their labour, eg by promptly eating any food killed or gathered; and those that obtain a "delayed return," e.g. by storing food for later consumption (Woodburn 1982). The former Woodburn associates with egalitarian systems, since they deny the basic opportunity to build up capital, and the latter with relatively hierarchical systems, since storing useful materials is the first step to developing inequalities of wealth. I would like to argue that Japanese day labourers show a number of the characteristics that Woodburn associates with immediate return societies such as the Hadza and the !Kung bushmen.

Firstly, the day labourer, traditionally defined, does a day's work and receives a day's pay: a sort of immediate return. In practice this is not always the case. As I have shown (Ch.4) casual labour is negotiated in all sorts of ways in Japan, with very marked differences from city to city, and in the workers' boarding houses payment may be delayed for a month or more. But ideally day labourers usually prefer to be paid by the day, and the employer's ability to delay payment is resented. My impression is that the length of delay is a direct function of the

balance of power between capital and labour: when unemployment is high, as it has been during the current recession, day labourers will tend to be made to wait longer for their money. In Kamagasaki by contrast, I observed men being given their money at the start of the day: an advance return which implies a degree of trust on the part of the recruiter.

The Japanese word for a cash-in-hand job is genkin shigoto. The characters spelling genkin mean 'present gold' and the word shares its initial character with genba (see above). These are a fundamental pair of terms for day labourers:

GEN	BA	GEN	KIN
現	場	現	金
PRESENT	PLACE	PRESENT	GOLD

'Workplace' and 'cash-in-hand' written in Japanese.

Cash is of course a store of value and hence introduces an element of delayed return absent from traditional hunter-gatherer societies, but the delay is rarely very long for a day labourer. Money is soon spent, and many day labourers have the principle of not working again until they are broke.

Admittedly some day labourers do save money and

acquire possessions, sacrificing a degree of mobility in the process. Kohei (Ch.5:II) is a case in point. He has managed to rent a house, and naturally he stays in Yokohama to use it. Even so, his seven gigantic Honda motorbikes and his track record of extensive foreign travel suggest that he is a mobile man at heart. Another economically successful day labourer I knew, Shô'ichi [1-38], had acquired enough possessions to fill up his doya room in Kotobuki and bemoaned the fact that he had to pay the rent on it even during his frequent absences. He was the only day labourer I met who owned a car... and in such ways the conflicting desires for mobility and possessions would reveal themselves in individual lifestyles.

Saving money does not come easily in Kotobuki. The officials at the special bank told me that one of their principles was to allow any number of transactions on an account in a day. Some savers would deposit a day's wage on getting back from work and then withdraw it at intervals of hours or even minutes in the course of the evening [5].

Despite Japan's famously high rates of personal saving [6] day labourers can call on a counter-trend in the culture which despises saving. Several day labourers

5 The bank stayed open until 8pm.

6 As of 1990, Japanese households saved 14.1% of disposable income, against 4.9% for Britain and 7.3% for the United States. Germany and France and were not far behind Japan; Taiwan and Korea were well ahead (Bank of Japan, in Asahi 1994:193).

quoted to me a proverbial saying of the Tokugawa period, Yoigoshi no kane wa motanai -- "Money is not something you keep overnight." A similar sentiment appears in many of the songs of Ueki Hitoshi, a popular singer admired by many day labourers:

Zeni no nai yatsu
Ore'n toko e koi
Ore mo nai kedo, shinpai sunna
Miro-yo, aoi zora, shiroi yuki
Sono uchi nantoka naru daro

Guys who ain't got no money
Come and join me
I ain't got none either, but don't you worry
Look at that, the blue sky, the white snow
Something'll turn up by and by

(From Damatte Ore ni Tsuite Koi, "Shut Up and Come With Me," sung by Ueki Hitoshi. Lyrics by Aoshima Yukio, now mayor of Tokyo.)

This powerful orientation to the present -- getting the reward for one's labour immediately, and spending it immediately -- recalls Orwell's observation in Down and Out in Paris and London that

"When you are approaching poverty, you... discover the great redeeming feature of poverty: the fact that it annihilates the future. Within certain limits, it is actually true that the less money you have, the less you worry... You think vaguely, 'I shall be starving in a day or two -- shocking, isn't it?' And then the mind wanders to other topics" (Orwell 1986[1933]:16).

A number of American sociologists have discussed present-orientation in social pathological terms, relating it to lower social class, juvenile delinquency and mental illness. As Murray puts it (1984:155): "Deviant behaviour

is related to deviant time orientation." He also quotes Wiseman (1970), who suggests that skid-row alcoholism programmes often fail because the counsellors are oriented to the future and the alcoholics to the present. Liebow (1967:68-9) argues that the present orientation of his street-corner informants is in fact a realistic orientation towards a future that is "loaded with trouble". Murray trumps everybody by arguing that time in skid-row is cyclical, rather than linear [7].

The immediate return principle has the disadvantage of rendering people extremely vulnerable to bad weather, bad luck, and aging, as was been all too obvious during the Heisei Recession. Without savings, day labourers are very soon in trouble when jobs dry up, and may be reduced to sleeping rough. If they get ill, they seldom have adequate health insurance to get proper treatment. As another yoseba saying has it, "Your lunch-box and your injuries are your own affair" [8]. The net result is summed up in yet another proverbial expression: "You don't need a knife to kill a day labourer. Three rainy days in a row is all

7 He gives two reasons: (1) "One's primary goal is survival, a goal which must be re-achieved every day"; and (2) "the cyclic schedules of the institutions which affect the homeless." (Murray 1984:157).

8 Kega to bentō wa temochi. This phrase is quoted in Akiyama et al, 1960:Vol.2,201-2, and I have heard it myself. Most yoseba do not have the kind of medical provision available in Kotobuki (Ch3:IX).

it takes" [9].

Day labourers also resemble hunter-gatherers in their use of time. Ideally, they like to work 13 days a month, that being the minimum number of days to establish eligibility for the day labourer dole on days without work (Ch3:Va). Since they tend to work an eight-hour day, this means that given sufficient job opportunities they will average about 3.5 hours of work per day -- towards the low end of the three to five hour range posited by Sahlins for hunters and gatherers (Sahlins, 1988 [1972]:34). Like the peoples described by Sahlins, day labourers vary widely in their use of this ample leisure time. Some drink and gamble, others use their time to master foreign languages, read heavy books etc.

By contrast, the average company employee in a Japanese workplace employing 30 or more persons worked 2,124 hours per year in 1990 (10), averaging $2,124/365 = 5.8$ hours a day. It is a safe bet that people working in smaller companies worked considerably longer hours than that.

It is possible to interpret work avoidance negatively, to argue that the day labourer is completely alienated from his workplace. He has no stake in the work, he gets

9 Hiyatoi o korosu ni wa naifu ga iranai, mikka ame fureba ii-yo. Heard frequently.

10 Ministry of Labour, Labor White Paper, 1992.

no satisfaction from it, so why should he do more than the bare minimum? Conversely one could argue that the day labourer is not alienated but liberated from the workplace, freed from the choking web of workplace relationships which are the background to the well-documented problems of middle-age burnout and karōshi [death by overwork] among regular company employees [11]. Most day labourers I know seem to take a pragmatic view of their work, neither loving it or hating it but simply getting on with it when necessary.

Whatever ideological colouring one applies, it is a plain fact that the division of time between work and leisure of most Japanese day labourers is much more akin to that of a hunter-gatherer than that of a regular white-collar or blue-collar worker.

Levelling Devices

Another part of Woodburn's theory of egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies is that they maintain equality through the use of 'levelling devices', customs which make it difficult for any member of the community to accumulate greater wealth than others. Two of Woodburn's best-known examples are to be observed in Kotobuki: gambling and

11 These topics are constantly in the Japanese media. See also Lummis and Saito 1991.

demand sharing.

The Hadza gambling game involves throwing bark discs against a tree and seeing which way up they fall. Woodburn says that this game involves little skill and has a randomizing effect, shifting property rapidly from hand to hand and preventing any lasting distinction in wealth among the participants (Woodburn 1982:442-3). Unlike the Hadza, Kotobuki men typically gamble against professionals, be it bookmakers, pachinko operators or yakuza running dice games. Although the net result is to transfer much money from day labourers to yakuza, if we are talking strictly about the day labouring community, rather than the broader set of people associated with Kotobuki, then gambling is an efficient way of burning off any temporary cash surplus and keeping most day labourers in a state of poverty-stricken equality [12].

Demand Sharing

Demand sharing, another levelling device cited by Woodburn, prevents people from gaining large surpluses of

12 Breman (1994:31) points out the absurdity of lumping together people running businesses and those selling their labour under the general heading of "informal economy." He suggests that people operating in the informal economy be sub-divided into 'petty bourgeoisie' and 'sub-proletariat'. In the yoseba, the yakuza, doya-owners, restaurateurs etc. would fall into the former category and day labourers into the latter.

wealth by obliging them to share it with other people who will very insistently demand it if it is not done voluntarily. I have observed this kind of behaviour quite a lot in Kotobuki. Occasionally it takes the form of straightforward begging:

A few people in. Quite lively atmosphere. Drinks. Tet-chan asked Engineer to "gimme some money" (kane kurê). E: "How much?" (Ikura?). T: "Y1,000" (sen-yen). E reaches for wallet. T: "Y2,000" (ni sen). A common begging technique: ask for small sum, increase when mark shows sign of complying. (F317)

There are few cases of begging for cash in my fieldnotes; asking for drinks is more common. At the same time there are several other cases of people making anti-begging comments or refusing offered assistance on the grounds that they are not beggars (F30, 234, 770)[13].

At one end begging fades into theft, demand sharing at its most forceful. This is not unknown in the yoseba,

13 The fact that relatively little begging goes on in Japan is often cited as an instance of what Benedict has famously called the "shame culture" there. However, begging has a long tradition in Japan: Nishida (1970:4) describes an elaborate system of organized begging in Edo during the Tokugawa era. In contemporary Japan, too, begging for alms is still done in the traditional manner by some Buddhist monks. They sometimes stand outside railway stations, wearing coolie-style hats and simple monk's robes. They hold a begging bowl in one hand, and in the other a small bell which they ring when alms are given. The bell and a small bow are the only communication they offer. Perhaps the relatively low incidence of begging in the yoseba is not so much because Japanese people in general are too proud to beg, but because there is a time and a place for begging, and a kind of person who begs, but the yoseba is not in the begging category.

though again it is not as common as one might expect. At the other end it fades into sponging, which in turn fades into charity, then mutual sharing, and finally into voluntary giving. These three are all common among day labourers, and the concept of sharing what you can, when you can, is generally accepted, especially where food or drink, rather than cash, change hands:

When he (San-chan) has money, he always gives to those who ask. If in money form, there is some limited sense of requirement to repay. When he sees the borrower, he will ask "got any money?" (Okane aru kai?) If not, it can't be helped (shōganai). When he gives in drink or food form, there is no obligation to repay (F525).

Several day labourers (eg Akira, F528) told me that they would generally accede to requests for money, food or drink from friends as a matter of principle, since you might need a similar favour from them one day. It is a sort of loose reciprocity. A hard-headed minority -- invariably of the more economically successful variety -- rejected this view, seeing friends as a liability to be avoided at all costs (eg Kohei Ch5:II; 'Frank' 1-86).

In the yoseba, very large amounts of alcohol are consumed by people other than the person who bought them. It changes hands on all sorts of terms, from coercive to voluntary. Some, like Nishio [Ch5:III], always give; others, like Harada [7-6], always seem to receive. The overall effect of all these exchanges, without a doubt, is to reduce inequalities among the inhabitants of the yoseba.

The low-obligation society

The broader social organization of the yoseba also displays all four of the aspects which Woodburn associates with immediate-return hunter-gatherer societies, namely that social groupings are flexible and changeable; based on choice; not bound by material dependency; and do not involve long-term binding commitments. In each case the yoseba contradicts the stereotyped image of Japan as a place where long-term relationships, based on heavy obligations, are the norm.

Social groupings are extremely flexible (Cf Ch7:V on the bonfire). A friendship which seems strong can suddenly be suspended by the disappearance of one party, only to be resumed six months later as if the interval had been a day or two (E.g Kariya 1-37 and Nakajima 1-26).

Nearly all relationships are based on choice. In addition to the familial estrangement already mentioned, I should add that I found only one pair of brothers in Kamagasaki and none in Kotobuki, or any other yoseba.

As for material dependence on others, it is true that day labourers do need the services of a tehaishi (labour recruiter) or oyakata (worksite boss) for employment and hence income. In some cases a relationship of dependence can develop, as in the case of Masayoshi described in

Ch.3:Vb. However, even Masayoshi is dependent on a man outside the community of day labourers. The boss does not live in Kotobuki; Masayoshi's dependence on him need not colour his daily life. Within the community of day labourers, this kind of debilitating dependence seems rare. The general view, explained to me several times, is that one should spread one's dependence around among as many people as possible. The more tehaishi one knows, the better one's employment chances; the more friends one has, the better the chance of getting a drink.

Finally, there are no long-term binding commitments among day labourers. There is certainly a stress on sharing and mutuality, but the commitments engendered can mostly be settled by the purchase of a drink, abandoned by going somewhere else, or forgotten about in a few weeks.

II. Passivity

Mobility is not the same thing as freedom or autonomy. I return to Kimitsu's image of the sub-atomic particle: however rapid its movements may be, it remains subject to physical laws, and the uncertainty observed by Heisenberg is only within highly circumscribed parameters over which the particle has no control. So too with day labourers: their freedom, though real, is exercised only within a powerful limiting framework.

Hence the irony of the fictionalized image of a day labourer at the end of this chapter. This charming cartoon, showing a happy-go-lucky man with nothing in his bag but 'freedom', was drawn by Arimura Sen, who is on the staff of the Kamagasaki Labour Welfare Centre (Ch4:II), in which capacity he daily deals with the problems of day labourers unable to fend for themselves and forced to resort to the rather inadequate welfare provisions of the Japanese state. The Heisei recession has thrown many day labourers onto the street, and brought loud calls from the day labourer unions for better welfare and job-creation programmes. We have been sharply reminded of the vulnerability of the day-labouring life, and 'happy-go-lucky' has begun to look like 'helpless'.

Fatalism

While many day labourers manage to stay well in control of their day-to-day lives, their overall view of life is often characterized by a pervasive fatalism -- a combination clearly expressed by Sakashita, a skilled labourer specializing in high-level work. I remarked that his work was pretty dangerous. He responded thus:

"I'm not afraid of death. I'm aware of the possibility. If you fall, that's it. It's all over in a flash. But I'm ready for death. I can go any time. I've designed my life that way: I've no wife, no kids, and no regrets that I have no wife or kids. If I'd started a family, I'd have to take more care of my own

life, I would have to think of the others. I'm better off on my own. I can die any time and it won't bother anyone. That is real freedom. I'm that sort of guy and I can't change." (F468, 26/3/94)

Sakashita shows an acute awareness of uncertainty and attempts to deal with it in this narrative by reasoning that every eventuality has been planned for -- only to undermine his theme of willed living by admitting that the exercise of his own free will is itself predetermined by his own immutable character. Earlier in this conversation he was who he was because he was a last child [suekko] and was consequently spoiled (Cf. Ch6:V) -- a form of sociological determinism to match the ontological variety in the passage quoted.

Sakashita twice remarked that he "just drifted" into Kotobuki in this same conversation. The verb nagareru, to drift, elegantly combines the concepts of mobility and passivity and is frequently used by day labourers, who are themselves sometimes referred to disparagingly as nagare-mono (drifters). Look again, too, at the activists' comment quoted above:

"The yoseba workers drifted off in search of food and work. To drift is a good thing. Water also lives by drifting. Standing water soon goes stagnant." [14]

The imagery surrounding these drifting day labourers is very liquid and piscine. They are called 'angler-fish'

(ankô) as they wait on the sea-bed of society for a job to come along, and go fishing (asaru) in rubbish bins. They are caught in 'octopus traps' (tako-beya); when a man is mugged while sleeping in the street they call the incident a 'tuna' (maguro), because the victim is helpless as a tuna on a chopping board; getting fired mid-way through a job is 'getting the chop' butakiri, [15]. When day labourers fail to get a job they say they have 'overflowed' from the market (abureru) [16]; if depressed they may 'drown themselves' (oboreru) in vice; in anger they will call a man 'scum' (kasu), and when it's time to leave town, they may simply 'evaporate' (jôhatsu suru) [17].

Thus do day labourers present themselves as protean but passive beings. The yoseba vocabulary simultaneously suggests the cunning and slippery fish (mobile agent); the same fish on the chopping board (passive victim); and the liquid all around it (helplessly spilled and poured substance).

In all sorts of ways, day labourers seem to deny their responsibility for their own actions. Those who had once been married would rarely admit to having walked out on

15 I was told this derived from butsugiri, "to cut [hack, chop] (a fish) into irregular lumps" (Masuda 1974:101)

16 Originally the same word as afureru, to overflow.

17 All these terms are in the glossary, some with longer explanations.

their wives; they would prefer to say that they had been 'booted out' (oidasareta). In fact I doubt whether marriage break-ups are as one-sided as that, and one man (Manabu, Ch.5:XI) even told me he'd been booted out when we first discussed the topic and then said he'd got fed up and walked out when we discussed it again.

During my many hours spent drinking and gambling in Kotobuki, it occurred to me that these two popular yoseba activities might also be read as tools for denying self-agency.

When you gamble, you delegate agency to the horse or cyclist or boat pilot. Once the money is on, you cannot influence what happens to it. (On the track, you can at least shout and cheer and hope to encourage your man that way; but off-course betting is even more alienated. You can do nothing but stand around waiting for the result.) If the horse, cyclist or boat pilot loses, that is their fault -- quite obviously. You curse them for lack of skill or effort. If they win, you suddenly remember that it was your brilliant idea to back them. When you drink, you delegate agency to the drink. When drunk, you are 'not in your right mind', hence not responsible for actions, not an agent. Yopparateta kara... ("Because I was drunk...") is probably used to excuse even more bad behaviour in Japan than in this country -- and not only by day labourers.

This brings us to another aspect of the Kotobuki

concern with fate and human agency: the popularity of various kinds of divination. Several Kotobuki men practised fortune telling, one of them professionally. The favoured method was palmistry. I had my palm read several times, once by a yakuza who correctly diagnosed that I was an oldest son.

Again, several day labourers told me that they believe in the predictions of Nostradamus. Perhaps when you are flat broke, the idea that everyone is going to die in 1999 is kind of comforting. One day labourer (Umeda*, 1-9) got drunk and staggered around shouting "We're all gonna die!" (Minna shinjau!; F1106). Others believed in telling character from blood-groups, a popular modern variant on the idea that one's fate is in one's blood.

These are of course deeply determinist modes of thought. The fate of mankind is already decided; one's personal destiny is written in one's own hands or blood or one's sibling position; and one has no control over these things.

Ota Naosuke, [1-7] had a modified apocalyptic view: he said Nostradamus predicted that 3% of the human race would survive the cataclysm of 1999, and that the pure of heart would be among them. So the individual has a chance. Still laughing, he added that Nostradamus' predictions are 98% accurate.

Naosuke also claimed to believe in a sort of

evolutionary reincarnation:

"We have been animals, we have been cockroaches... two million years ago we were both FISH! It is not just chance that brings you to Japan: in a previous incarnation you may have been a samurai."

In one of his previous incarnations, Naosuke told me he was a hired assassin in the Ashikaga Era (14th century). He was caught and crucified, and had a spear shoved in his side, just like Jesus Christ. He mimed this, laughing loudly.

He also had a theory that all horse-races had their results fixed in advance by some shadowy syndicate and reckoned he was on the way to cracking the code. In all his theories, a pervasive paranoia was modified by the possibility that the individual had a slight chance of beating the great tides of fate: the 2% chance of Nostradamus being wrong; the possibility of escaping doom by having a pure heart; the chance of cracking the horse-race code. He saw himself as the crucified victim of fate; yet with some small room for maneuver. [F64-5, 97]

In the end I came to think that this small space was the true meaning of the 'freedom' espoused by many day labourers; that there was really no insurmountable contradiction between Sakashita's expressions of autonomous willed action and of passive drifting. Both are part of the day labouring life. On an everyday basis, one chooses whether to try for a job or stay in bed, whether to stay in Kotobuki or go to Sanya or Kamagasaki, whether to go for a

one-day contract or a period contract, etc. But these decisions are made within a broad framework over which one has little control. Your coal mine closes down and there are no alternative jobs in the district. The bubble economy bursts and suddenly there are no jobs in the construction industry. Japanese culture says you cannot join a respectable company if your previous employment was doing casual labour out of a yoseba. On these matters, one can but shrug one's shoulders.

Some fatalistic day labourers take out a kind of spiritual insurance by converting to some form of Christianity:

There was a thin little old man drinking shochu, face lined with grey dirt. Said he was diabetic and had a dicky heart. "You need to be careful," I said. "I'm already 60 so it doesn't matter if I die. I've been a Catholic for ages so I'll go to heaven. I go to church properly, every Sunday. They give you wine and bread, you know, just like this --" and he stuck out a licky little tongue... (F330, 5/1/94, 5.30am)

IIC Activists and passivists

Of course this kind of attitude to life makes it very difficult to organize day labourers in support of their civil and employment rights. The day labourer unions sense this fact and their propaganda often reads like a desperate attempt to haul day labourers away from fatalism: Yararetara yarikaese, "If they get you, get 'em back," is the most famous slogan of the movement and has become the

title of a book and a film. Another important one, also used as a book title, is Damatte Notarjinu-na, "Do not be silent and die in the gutter." However much the unions may claim to be a part of the day labourer movement, its slogans always give it away: couched in the imperative, they are demands from an activist minority, for a passive majority to get its act together.

At the same time, activists frequently indict employers for practising tsukai-sute -- 'using, then throwing away' on day labourers. To activists, the commoditization of labour, as something handy and disposable, is an affront to human rights. Day labourers themselves, however, are acutely aware that disposability is one of their key selling points in a competitive labour market. In theory at least, and sometimes in practice, the employers' freedom from long-term obligations is compensated for in higher wages.

The fate of the film, Yama: Yararetara Yarikaese (Sanya: If they get you, get 'em back) starkly reveals just how deep the issue of passivity runs through the movement. Filming started in 1984, under the direction of a radical young film-maker called Sato Mitsuo, working closely with the Sanya Sogidan. The aim was to reveal the true nature of yoseba life to a wider audience; but only a couple of months into filming, Sato was stabbed to death by a Kanamachi family yakuza, in December 1984. Direction was

taken over by Yamaoka Kyo'ichi, a prominent leader of the Sogidan and of the national day labourer movement. In January 1986, just as the film was approaching completion, he too was assassinated by the Kanamachi, shot by a young gangster called Hoshina Tsutomu.

The film thus cost two lives to make. Its makers had very literally been 'got'. In the following years the completed film was shown in art cinemas and at meetings of day labourers, to general acclaim. But in the early '90s, it ran into trouble again. This time it fell foul of a newly active far-left group called the Hazama faction, which was based in Fukuoka and claimed to represent the interests of the poverty-stricken former miners of the Chikuho region, in the hinterland of northern Kyushu behind the cities of Fukuoka and Kitakyushu. As Allen (1994) has clearly documented, the Chikuho region was effectively abandoned to its fate by government and big business when the coal industry lost its economic competitiveness in the 1960s. For decades parts of Chikuho were cut off from electricity and tap water; even today, the area has incredibly high rates of unemployment, welfare dependence and even illiteracy, and is defined as a unique special zone by the Ministry of health and Welfare [Allen + Ministry refs].

The point is that Chikuho features briefly in the Sanya film, with unemployed miners shown queuing up to

collect welfare payments as part of a sequence explaining one of the routes by which people may fall out of regular employment and become day labourers. The Hazama faction objected that the film portrayed the men of Chikuho as 'helpless victims' and was a breach of their privacy and an affront to their pride. The faction, also known as the Blue Helmets from their characteristic street-fighting gear, actually threatened to kill anyone who showed the film -- despite the fact that it was made by fellow yoseba activists and widely admired by day labourers who had seen it.

By the time I returned from fieldwork, the film had not been shown for three years while a lengthy sequence of agonizing negotiations ground on. Should the offending sequence be cut, or the men's faces blurred over, or apologetic leaflets handed out at screenings, or what? Later, in November 1995, I heard that the Hazama faction had actually stormed the Welfare Building [Fukushi Kaikan] in Sanya and put it under occupation in a direct challenge to the other kinds of activist who had supported the offending film.

This affair is rich in irony. The slogan in the film's title exhorts day labourers to 'get back' at those who do them down, yet even a modest act of defiance such as showing the film has been rendered impossible, not by the authorities or the capitalists, but by a small group of

doctrinaire militants claiming to support day labourers themselves. And the point of doctrine at issue is precisely the one I am discussing in this chapter: namely, the question of whether day labourers are free agents or passive victims. Either position is invariably denounced as politically incorrect by one faction or another.

The other famous slogan, "Do not be silent and die in the gutter," also carries powerful irony. I believe this slogan was originally thought up by Funamoto Shuji [dates], a legendary yoseba activist. At any rate he used it as the title of a pamphlet, and it is also the title of his posthumous collection of essays and pamphlets. The life and work of Funamoto interestingly combines the object/agent theme: He was born in Manchuria, the son of a Japanese military policeman who was shot by a Red Army firing squad at the end of World War II. Funamoto briefly studied at Hiroshima University (to which he was attracted because of the symbolic significance of the A-bombed city), before dropping out along with some fellow left-wing students to become a full-time yoseba activist.

Funamoto was soon wanted by police for alleged acts of violence at demonstrations (other activists have always insisted that this was a police frame-up) and was forced to go underground. He surfaced in 1972, when he committed suicide by setting fire to himself outside the US air-base

at Kadena, Okinawa, in a symbolic protest against a state visit by then-crown prince Akihito, the present emperor. Current yoseba activists are divided as to whether this was a glorious self-sacrificial act or a crazy piece of irresponsibility (Funamoto left a wife and two kids) that did little to further the movement. Either way, Funamoto's death is always described with the word kekki, a piece of activist jargon which roughly translates as "arousal to action." To some, his death is the diametric opposite to that of a non-activist, or passivist day labourer who quietly drinks himself into an early grave; to others, both kinds of death are a positive symbolic rejection of modern society; and to yet others, both men are innocent victims of that society .

IId Foreigners and prostitutes

Nowadays, there is a large and rapidly growing body of literature in Japan on the 'foreign labour problem' or gaijin rōdō mondai [refs - Komai etc]. Much of this literature treats foreign workers as victims of a racist government which needs foreign workers to do the dirty work which Japanese refuse to do. The government turns a blind eye to illegal immigration when necessary, then suddenly starts noticing illegal foreign workers when their numbers exceed requirements.

This liberal critique of government immigration policy is fair enough. However, although foreign workers in Kotobuki are well aware of the economic facts of life, they do not present themselves as victims. Rather, they see themselves as daring entrepreneurs, working hard and taking chances with the immigration authorities in order to build a better lives for themselves and their families armed with the strength of the yen .

Foreign workers' view of life is also strongly influenced by the much lower standard of living that often prevails in their mother countries. Thus on my visit to Nagoya I happened to be with Arturo, a Filipino labourer, when I observed about 150 homeless day labourers queuing up at Nagoya station for a meal of gruel being handed out by Christian volunteers, including a couple of formally dressed nuns. The men were a ragged-looking lot, but Arturo's reaction was interesting: "These people can't really be poor. They've got clothes and shoes. They must be just lazy." I was reminded of Sakae's (Ch5:I) remark that "there are many people in foreign countries who are poorer than us, but they do not sense their poverty in the same way." Attitudes similar to that of Arturo on the part of other Filipino workers are reported by Ventura (1992): they often viewed their Japanese counterparts as a bunch of lazy, drunken bums.

Here, then, is an alternative discourse to the

fatalism of some Japanese day labourers: a discourse of choice and challenge. This, too, is problematic, however. The fact that a strong majority of the Koreans in Kotobuki come from the discriminated people of Cheju island (see Ch3), and that they are subject to periodic purges by the immigration reminds us that these people, too, are subject to social and macro-economic forces beyond their control. The underground Filipino community observed by Ventura was full of men who thought they were in charge of their own destinies; yet the community had almost disappeared during the three years or so between Ventura's departure and my own arrival.

A similar debate on voluntary action versus victimhood is going on about a group of people often compared to day labourers, namely prostitutes. Orthodox feminists portray them as people forced into their profession by economic necessity, whereas Japanese media representations of them often give the impression that they have chosen it. Few would deny that economic necessity was a powerful factor until well into the post-war period, but in recent years there have usually been plenty of legitimate jobs for young Japanese women. These jobs have often been dull, poorly paid and subject to patriarchal management. Still, very few Japanese prostitutes could put hand on heart and say that there was no other way for them to make a living. Likewise the foreign girls see it as a quick, efficient way

to make money. The fact is that external pressure and internal motivation come together differently for every one of us, and this is a matter which defies politically correct interpretation.

As with Japanese prostitutes, so with day labourers: There is no simple answer to the question of whether these people are free agents or hapless victims. The balance varies from person to person, and elements of freedom and unfreedom are inherent in their lives, perhaps more obviously so than in the lives of other people. Allsop (1967:ix) quotes the following definition of the American Hobo used by the Wobblies (the Industrial Workers of the World, which tried to organize the hoboes in the first half of the 20th century): 'half industrial slave, half vagabond adventurer'. I can but echo this paradoxical definition for Japanese day labourers.

III. Isolation; weak bonding; volatility

The third characteristic that Japanese day labourers seem to share with the particle in the Heisenberg metaphor is isolation -- from the natal and marital family, and from the set of relationships associated with a regular workplace. In place of these ties of kinship and workplace, the most important relationship for most day labourers is that of informal friendship. Friendships may

be durable or fleeting, honoured or betrayed, but at any rate they do not carry the heavy load of obligation entailed in relations with a parent, spouse or sibling. Perhaps they may be compared to the weak electro-magnetic connections between particles that co-exist with the stronger gravitational pulls. To take the metaphor a step further, day labourers are volatile, far more likely to riot spontaneously than to engage in organized political activity.

IIIa. Isolation from family life

This is a really striking aspect of yoseba life, remarked upon by every observer, whether Japanese or foreign . It is, however, exceedingly difficult to quantify. Nearly all day labourers are at least isolated from their natal family and wives (where applicable) in a geographical sense, for the great majority live on their own, either in doya rooms (the middle mass), apartments (the elite) or wooden shacks and cardboard boxes (the homeless). Some day labourers say that they have been explicitly rejected by their parents (Kurita 5.9) or siblings (Kimitsu Ch5:VII), others assume that they would be rejected or feel too ashamed to go home anyway (Shigehiro Ch5:VIII), or avoid their folks because they dislike them or see nothing in common (Mizubata [1-5], Noriyuki 5.V, Tomisada [1-45]).

Similarly some men say they have run away from wives or children (Kariya [1-37]) or been thrown out by the wife (Shigehiro again, Yoshio Ch5:X, Honma [1-91]), or simply say they are long separated (Suzuki [1-94], Kataoka [1-99]). I also heard indirectly but from a reliable source of the case of a man whose parents would allow him to come home to his village, but who had to make his infrequent visits under cover of darkness so that the neighbours would not know that his parents were still seeing him [F].

Supposing that most day labourers are in fact isolated from their families, it would be tempting to read this as a reflection of a culture of exclusion (of which more in Ch9). However, it would be quite wrong to assume that day labourers have always and in all places been isolated from family life. Leupp makes it clear that most day labourers in Tokugawa Japan were family men, and this seems to have been the case even going into this century. But from the Meiji era onward a split seems to have developed, with family men and solo operators co-existing and competing. Matsubara's 1888 account of the Tokyo poor has a brief chapter on the subject (Matsubara 1988[1888]:158-60). He describes the miserable struggles of the family men to support their families on inadequate wages, then states very clearly, "In contrast to this, it is the

bachelors who have it easy" [18]. They can live very cheaply, change lodgings at the drop of a hat, and are not bound by debt and obligations to landlords and employers.

Matsubara's value judgment appears to be echoed some 40 years later in Kon's 1926 account of the Fukagawa-Honjo slums. By this time the two types of day labourer are living separately, though in close proximity. In the slum Kon finds doss-house areas inhabited by single men rubbing shoulders with areas of working-class housing grouped around factories. The family men who lived here clearly had somewhat higher status than the solitary males, yet as Kon toured the district after dark, he couldn't help thinking that "these little households were somehow more miserable" than the solitary day labourers. They at least could get heartily drunk and lose themselves in dreams. Drunks he describes, rather oddly, as "a medal on the chest of the slum, an ornament" (Kon 1971[1930] 122-3).

The reason why the single men are in a better position than the married men is stated by Matsubara and implied by Kon: neither in 1888 nor in 1926 were day labourers paid enough to support a family except in extreme poverty. The dual population described by the two Japanese scholars makes an interesting contrast with the fictionalized British day labourers described by Robert Tressell in his

18 Kore ni han-shite kigaru naru wa dokushin-sha nari. Op.cit. 158-9.

famous book, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists. First published in 1914, in between Matsubara and Kon, the book describes the intense fear of unemployment among jobbing house-painters in the fictional town of Mugsborough. The point is that all these men were married, and the need to feed their wives and children is described as the dominant fact of life for them. In an age when insecure labour was the norm, it carried no stigma; but its effect on family life, as described by Tressel, are nothing short of disastrous.

In Japan today, if a man is skilled, resourceful, careful and lucky, he may be able to support a family as a day labourer; yet the family men have almost disappeared from the day-labouring population. This seems to have been a fairly recent development: Nomoto (date) describes Kotobuki with plenty of lively family life, and several of my informants confirmed that there had been families in Kotobuki in their memory. One (Nozawa [1-55]) said that in his youth he had shared a doya room with his mother.

During my fieldwork in Kotobuki, I came across just two day labourers who were definitely still married and maintaining family life. One of these was Mr. Aoyama [1-14], an elderly man who used Kotobuki and maintained a house with his wife a 20-minute walk distant. Aoyama was intelligent -- he spoke good English and read Hebrew scriptures for a hobby -- and had acquired a sheaf of

licenses to operate various kinds of industrial machinery such as fork-lifts and cranes. He was also very well-informed about all kinds of social security and insurance benefits and ruthlessly abused the various systems. Even so he grumbled constantly about the difficulty of making ends meet, and I believe his wife was working too. He had two grown-up children, and was groaning under the expense of financing his daughter's wedding when I knew him. Another day labourer, 'Hank' [1-25] said he was living in Kotobuki with his wife, whom he pointed out to me.

Aside from these, Akiyama [1-32], 'Niigata' [1-33] and Kato [1-81] also claimed to be married and living with their wives outside Kotobuki. Matsubara [1-80] claimed to commute to visit his wife in rural Tochigi prefecture, but was described as a liar by Aoyama. (Matsubara also claimed to have a daughter who was a professional ballet dancer.) So that made two definite cases of sustained married life, three probables and one improbable out of 158 Kotobuki informants.

One other married day labourer I got to know on my travels was Mizuno Ashira of Kamagasaki. He is a university drop-out turned carpenter, a vigorous yoseba campaigner who loves the day-labouring lifestyle and is proud of his ability to sustain family life with the fruits of his own labour. He has published a lot of polemical journalism and explains how he combines day-labouring with

family life in a contribution to a recent book (Mizuno, 1993). His unique perspective on family life has also made him one of the most interesting figures in Japan's budding 'men's lib' movement. His wife Mariko is also active in the yoseba movement, and their two teenage children always take an active part in the Kamagasaki summer festival. But no-one would deny that these days, the Mizunos are an exceptional family.

Mizuno points out that Kamagasaki has not always been a town of solitary men; indeed in the days after the war when it was known as a 'slum' rather than a 'doya-gai', women were actually in the majority (table 32)

He suggests the following reasons for the gradual decline in doya-gai family life and the female exodus shown in the figures.

1. The authorities responded to the first Kamagasaki riot (1961) by trying to reduce the size of the place. One tactic was to speed up offers of municipal housing to day labourers with families, and tearing down the barracks in which they lived.

2. At the same time, a contradictory policy, to concentrate the Osaka region's casual labour market in Kamagasaki at the expense of smaller yoseba elsewhere, brought more men into Kamagasaki. Doya operators responded by designing ever smaller rooms.

As in most aspects of doya-gai life, government policy plays a part alongside broader social and economic factors. To me, the gradual disappearance of the family man from the yoseba is one illustration of the degree to which poverty is a social, as much as an economic, phenomenon. Even now that Japan's 'economic miracle' has given way to prolonged recession, competent day labourers can make far better money than at any time before the war. The difference is that day labour used to be viewed by many women as a reasonable occupation for a husband, whereas today it seems that hardly any women take that view. After the high-growth decades, they have come to expect better. The economic problems of day labouring have been softened, but the stigma has strengthened. One lesson of all this is that it is worse to be poor in a rich country than to be poor in a poor country.

(Incidentally, a similar argument may be applied to the disappearance of young men from the yoseba: yoseba jobs on building sites and docks pay roughly twice as well as jobs in convenience stores, pachinko parlours and video rental shops -- to name a few popular unskilled occupations for young men. The yoseba is spurned not because it pays badly but because the newly-acquired affluence of society as a whole has made hard, grimy work less socially acceptable. The yoseba has become a frightening and little-understood place.)

When I first approached the topic of Japanese day labourers, I had the feeling that their exclusion from marital and family life meant that they were worse off than their counterparts in Britain and America, who still have some aspiration to family life. After seeing the men's lives at first hand, it was hard to resist agreeing with the implications of Matsubara and Kon, that parting from one's family, or not starting one in the first place, was, in a sense, a Good Thing. Shame at economic inability to support a family is not just a factor in Tressel's Edwardian house-painters, but in nearly all accounts of men without steady jobs -- the black men described by Liebow in Tally's Corner, for instance. [More examples]. Isolation is the blessing, and the curse, of the modern Japanese day labourer.

Many day labourers told me that they could not go home to their parental family because they had been disowned. I often wondered whether this was necessarily true in every case, or whether some day labourers were wrongly assuming that they would not be allowed home. Shigehiro (Ch5:VIII) was pleasantly surprised to find how pleased his parents were to hear from him after ten years' silence. Several owners and managers of doya told me that they were often visited by people looking for missing menfolk, who would show them an old photograph and ask for information. It is impossible to put any kind of number on this, but my

intuitive feeling is that for every family that has expelled a male member for unacceptable behaviour, there is one that longs for the return of a man whose behaviour-- did he but know it -- had not been as unacceptable as he thought.

Whether from actual expulsion or irrational shame, a strong majority of the mainland Japanese I encountered in the yoseba were isolated from their families. However, the Okinawan minority were an exception. It is significant that Kishimoto (quoted above) is Okinawan. Out of 13 Okinawans among my Kotobuki field survey, six [1-9, 1-67, 1-77, 1-79, 1-87, 1-95] were definitely in touch with their natal family and none were definitely isolated. Several Okinawans told me that however poor they might become, they would always find the money to make a trip home to visit their parental family, and ancestral graves, once every two or three years. Being a day labourer did not imply failure to them as it did to some mainland Japanese -- on the contrary, they were engaging in migrant labour -- something with a long and honourable tradition in the Ryukyus. Their attitudes and social situation were much closer to those of the foreign workers in Kotobuki than to those of the mainland Japanese.

As well as maintaining stronger connections with home than the mainlanders, the Okinawans also maintained closer connections among themselves. They were often to be found

in groups, and one reason why they figure relatively prominently in my survey is because one would often introduce me to another. They stressed friendship and reciprocal obligations.

To sum up: Isolation from the family is the most widely observed aspect of the day-labouring life. Isolation is very real in Kotobuki, but it is not an absolute or timeless phenomenon. My evidence suggests that (1) the profession has not always been associated with the solitary life to its present degree; (2) at least some day labourers have an exaggerated view of the contempt for them held by their kin; and (3) in Okinawa, a place where different cultural values and economic expectations hold sway, day labouring is far less stigmatised than in mainland Japan.

IIIb. Isolation from workplace relationships

Many writers have commented on the great importance of workplace relationships to the Japanese male. Since most day labourers work for many different companies for short periods of time, they are naturally excluded from these relationships. Regular men who work side-by-side with day labourers show a range of attitudes towards them: some will ignore them, others enjoy their company and feel a sense of pity or admiration for their different way of life ([F];

more on this in Ch.9). But they certainly view them differently from their fellow regulars, who will usually fall into one of three categories: senpai, kôhai or dôki. These categories refer respectively to people who joined the company before, after, or at the same time as ego. Years of service usually count for more than simple age in determining relative categories, and will deeply affect attitudes and forms of address. It follows that an awareness of rank is built into most workplace relationships, even where rank happens to coincide.

Since day labourers are outside the company, they are also outside the system of hierarchical relationships. Indeed some, such as Ogata [1-60], specifically mention inability to get on with this system as one of their reasons for quitting or being fired from companies they once worked for. Whether they are ideologically egalitarian or not, all day labourers are outside the dominant institution enforcing hierarchy in Japan and to that extent isolation from the company implies approximate equality in the yoseba.

IIIc. Isolation mitigated: friendship

In the absence of the obligatory relationships associated with the family and the company, day labourers are free to choose their relationships. Friendship, not kinship or

workplace proximity, is the dominant form of association.

I came across several day labourers who actively avoided all forms of friendship, on the principle that a friend in need is a bloody nuisance (Kohei Ch5:II; 'Frank' 1-86). But this was a minority view; most of my informants saw friends as a necessary insurance against the day they needed help, and worked on the principle of a very loose, informal, long-term reciprocity.

Several pairs of day labourers were such close friends that I found them in each other's company more often than not. These included Nozawa [1-55] and Shoji [1-56]; Senba [1-82] and Matsuda [1-84]; and Nakasone [1-77] and Tomitaka [1-78]. The latter pair claimed to have been together for 25 years, and were sharing a sliver of space under an expressway ramp when I first met them (Ch7.III). Nakasone (an Okinawan) referred to Tomitaka (a mainlander, from Miyazaki prefecture in Kyushu) as his oyabun (father-figure, boss), but this was mostly in jest. Tomitaka said he used to be an oyabun, in charge of recruiting 50 guys a day. Nakasone was one of his five kogashira [sub-foremen], in charge of 10 guys. A lot of the guys were Okinawan: he and Nakasone even published a little occasional newsletter called the 'Okinawa Shinbun'. When I jokingly asked Tomitaka why he put up with Nakasone, he said Nakasone rescued him when he was down, and gave him food. Nakasone was very intelligent and also very popular with women: they

used to live in a koya [shack] on the bank of the Nakamura River, and the madames from the brothels used to bring food to them in the morning, because they all fancied Nakasone.

Although Nakasone and Tomitaka seemed to freely mingle fact and fiction in their conversation, I got to know them well enough to believe that they'd been knocking around together for many years. Nozawa and Shoji also seemed to go back a long way, and Nozawa set great store by this and other friendships. His favourite pastime was mawari-zake - lit. 'going around drinking' -- strolling around Kotobuki with one or two friends, drinking from the same 'One-cup' of sake (nomi-mawashi -- lit. 'passing round drink') and discussing life. These walks would sometimes be interrupted by another little rite of friendship, the tsure-shon. This slang expression, derived from 'tsureru' (to take [someone] along) and 'shonben' (piss) means to stand alongside your friends and urinate in the street together.

These were very light-hearted drinking games, and make an interesting contrast with a much-discussed feature of skid row life -- the bottle gang, a group of men who shared the price of a bottle of liquor. Rooney's Californian bottle gangs worked on the principle that the leader passed the bottle to his left, each man had two swallows, and the leader drank last and closed the bottle. Rooney's comparison between the bottle gang and the business

corporation [19] is the most formalized view of the bottle gang. Far more informal versions are described by Jackson and Connor (1953), Peterson and Maxwell (1958) and Gleason (1966). The bottle-gang debate is summarized in Bahr (1973:157). Some ethnographers have found the role of leader less emphasized than in Rooney's account, others that the rules were different or less strictly defined. Bahr insists that "the obligations are weak, the sanctions are weak and the web of community spun therefrom is weak indeed" (ibid). Even so, the bottle gang is a sufficiently formal institution to have a name and to have generated a large amount of ethnographic analysis. Rubington (1968) goes so far as to identify six different phases in the life-cycle of a bottle gang, and Giamo (1989:182-3), visiting the Bowery at the end of the '70s, finds the same institution with the same name, 20 years and the width of America away from Rooney's study. He describes it as a "spontaneous and tenuous" grouping with few fixed rules; at the other extreme, Mars (1987:96-7) describes drinking groups among casual longshoremen in Newfoundland as a highly structured institution, with a host who carefully manipulates group membership and amounts consumed with a careful eye on obligations incurred.

19 "The management of the capital is handled by a leader who acts as general chairman. Each member is a stockholder and maintains rights to consumption of the communally purchased bottle of wine..." [Rooney 1961:449]

But in Kotobuki I couldn't even find a structure as informal as a bottle gang. Men -- and sometimes women-- would drink together in groups, with some tendency for the same people to be together quite often, but membership seemed to be totally informal, with people who (as far as I know) were complete strangers coming in, and people who (as far as I know) were regulars suddenly disappearing. There were no calculations or anything like the formalized, short-term reciprocity described by some of the American bottle gang ethnographers -- indeed such considerations were scorned in Kotobuki. Open-handed generosity, and shameless sponging, abounded.

As we stood there struggling to say things, along came Harada again. He had a huge bottle of plum shochu, four-fifths empty, with a few pickled green plums bumping against each other in the bottom. He poured drinks for all of us; Kimitsu insisted on giving him Y100. Harada also had three quite nice decorated china plates of varying size and design. God knows where he got them. He wondered if any of us would like to buy one for a mere Y200. But while we studied the wares, Harada wandered off again. Half-an-hour later he had not come back, only the plates and the empty plum shochu bottle were left to remind us of his fleeting presence. (F477)

Shigehiro said he'd go and lay in some more beers for us. "I don't like that guy," said Honma, as soon as he'd gone. "Why not?" I asked. "Going off to get beer just for himself, it's not on. You can't trust a guy like that." I said I was pretty sure he was going to get beers for all of us, but Honma said no, he wouldn't...

Shigehiro duly came back with three large cans of beer which he spread among us. His character was vindicated.

Honma, however, was barely capable of drinking any more beer. He sat there, struggling to stay awake, with the can standing next to him unopened. Now it was Shigehiro's turn to take offence. "Nomee!" [drink!] he brusquely ordered.

As the above examples show, the drinking behaviour which I observed in Kotobuki was thoroughly miscellaneous, with no prevalent institution resembling the American bottle gang, and very little evidence of reciprocity in the economic sense of the word. Honma was supposed to return Shigehiro's generosity by drinking up and showing gratitude, not by buying the next round.

In my own relations with day labourers, I also found little sense of reciprocity. Those who treated me showed no expectation that I would treat them back, while those whom I treated very seldom returned the compliment. Rather, the principle was simply that one should treat drinks if one had money. Those who abused the principle, by not earning money or by concealing it, mostly got away with it.

To conclude, the yoseba seems to replace the powerful binding relations of kinship and workplace with the elective and less binding relationship of friendship. Some friendships are remarkably durable, others last only as long as a single shared bottle. But even by comparison with the American skid-row setting, the obligations implied by friendship seem extremely weak. Thus friendship scarcely reduces the freedom of day labourers, though sometimes it appears to do little to offset the isolation

of the individual either. It is striking that in Japan, where many observers have stressed the importance of fulfilling obligations in society at large, relations in the yoseba seem more unstructured, more individualistic and less governed by obligations than in the American skid row, which is probably the nearest cross-cultural equivalent.

Even so, I do not lightly use the word 'community' in discussing the day labourers of Kotobuki and other yoseba. There is a sense of place and of shared destiny among day labourers, and I doubt whether it has ever been the case that "doya-gai society is characterized by an almost complete absence of community life... [consisting of] agglomerates of individuals who live their own lives in complete anonymity." (Caldarola 1968:513). Community is there; but you have to look for it.

IIId. Political organization versus the riot

Weak bonding that does not respect the principle of obligation is reflected in political activity in the yoseba, of which, as I have mentioned, the riot is the representative mode. Riots in yoseba may be grounded in general discontent, but they tend to erupt in response to particular, often personal grievances. As I mentioned in Ch.4, at least two of the most famous yoseba riots (Kamagasaki 1961, Sanya 1967) erupted in response to

mistreatment of individual day labourers involved in traffic accidents. More recently, the mid-'80s brought prolonged rioting in Sanya over the murders of Sato and Yamaoka.

Nakada (1983:218-21) has an account of a riot at Kotobuki which broke out on the night of October 30, 1967, of which the following is a summary translation. A drunken labourer was mugged in the street -- bashed on the back of the head and robbed of all the cash he had on him. He came stumbling into the Hamako Bar (still in Kotobuki today), bleeding profusely, and called for help from some friends of his who were drinking there. Then he staggered on to the nearby police box (it's still there too) to file a complaint with the police. The police couldn't understand what the man was saying too well -- he being drunk and talking in a strong regional dialect.

Meanwhile, the friends in the Hamako had already decided that the guy was unlikely to get much cooperation from the police and were readying themselves for a riot. Sure enough the police got fed up with the guy's ramblings and turned him away from the police box. The friends from the Hamako objected and fighting broke out. Reports quickly spread through Kotobuki and 'anti-establishment elements' came flocking from all corners, throwing stones at the police box. It was about 9pm, and strong workers had come home from work and had several shots of sake.

Soon several hundred men were besieging the police box. Some yakuza from the Soai-kai syndicate came in to try and repel the rioters but were soon forced to retreat, licking their wounds.

The entire complement of police from Isezaki-cho police station donned hard hats and made for Kotobuki. It was the first serious riot in Yokohama in living memory, and the police didn't know how to handle it. A detachment of riot police came all the way from Tsurumi, and were rushing around town demanding to know where Kotobuki-cho was. There were calls of "Cops out!", a hail of stones and bottles, some thrown from the roofs of nearby doya, and all the windows in the police box were broken. Some of the police were in plain clothes, which added to the confusion. The riot continued until 2am, by which time both sides were very tired and there were hardly any missiles left to throw.

At this point there was a sort of mutual agreement between some of the rioters and the chief of police that it was time to call a halt. The chief of police ordered the riot police to withdraw through a loud-hailer. Unfortunately, some of the workers started triumphantly shouting that they had "won." This enraged the rank-and-file riot police, who disregarded orders, broke ranks, and waded into the rioters. Fighting continued for another two hours, until about 4am. As dawn approached, the rioters

finally began to disperse, very tired and aware that daylight would make it easier for the police to recognize their faces and make trouble for them later. Amazingly, according to Nakada, there were "no serious injuries and no arrests."

Three common threads run through this and the earlier accounts of riots in Sanya and Kamagasaki:

(1) They were triggered by an angry response to a perceived slight against a single day labourer. This characteristic of the yoseba riot has been widely noted, though with variations in detail and emphasis. Kaji (1977:43) reports that the first Sanya riot (October 22, 1959) started in response to over-zealous questioning of a day labourer by a policeman, after which some 300 day labourers wrecked the local police box. An official publication of 1969 gives brief descriptions of 14 Sanya riots, from 1960 to 1968. Nearly all were prompted by personal grievances, typically offensive behaviour by police, rather than by overtly political issues. The riot comes across as the act of a mass of disaffected individuals, rather than an organized political statement (Tokyo 1969:105-7). Funamoto (1985:144) says of the thirty-odd riots that had broken out in Sanya and Kamagasaki, that "one thing they had in common was that they started as explosions of the workers' rage regarding discriminatory or inhuman treatment of a comrade

by the police." Hester (1991b:15) says that Kamagasaki riots "were often sparked when a worker as an individual or workers collectively felt they were not being treated with proper dignity: for example, if a shopkeeper was rude to a worker, or if a fire truck arrived late at the scene." By contrast, I can find no cases in the literature of day-labourer involvement in broader political struggles such as those against the Japan-US Security Treaty or against government corruption.

(2) They were not planned or organized to any degree.

(3) They occurred during the high growth period of the 1960s, when there were plenty of jobs for day labourers. Kogawa (1987:178) associates yoseba riots with the high growth period of the '60s, Quotes Paul Viccone's argument that trends in left-wing activism move in tandem with trends in the Dow Jones stock average. The idea is that relative prosperity gives people the time and energy to engage in political activism, whereas hard times render people apathetic and fatalistic. Whether this applies to earlier periods in Japanese history is arguable: the rice riots of the Edo era are usually ascribed to desperation over extreme exploitation. However, it is striking that the 17 years in which there were no riots at Kamagasaki (see Ch4) started in 1974, the year of the first oil shock and the start of a period of relative economic stagnation

[20].

Many attempts have been made to analyse the yoseba riots. Funamoto (1985:141) calls them "a means of lower-class self-expression"; Kaji (1977:44) calls the Sanya riots "a human declaration" [ningen sengen]. Arimura draws attention to the celebratory, festive element to Kamagasaki rioting, while Meyerson (1991:10-11) quotes a day labourer who accounted for the 1961 Kamagasaki riot by saying "Gee, I guess there was nothing better to do" (maa hima [de] sho ga nai ne).

All these factors are undoubtedly part of the truth, but my own instinctive feeling is that the yoseba riot is an extension of the principle of friendship, a voluntary form of mass association motivated by a sense of solidarity with a particular fellow human being which defies oppression by police and orchestration by activists alike.

Funamoto, himself an activist, accuses "the establishment, bourgeoisie, mass media and rightists old and new" of disparaging yoseba riots as "aimless, anarchic, meaningless, the work of lumpen proletarians and vagrants, naturally erupting and without any organization" (1985:143). To me, these riots are anarchic without being

20 Meyerson (1991:89-91) offers the opposite explanation, pointing to the relative prosperity of the year 1974 thanks to employment generated by the World's Fair held that year in Osaka. Still, the formal labour market at Kamagasaki was in sharp decline that year, reaching the lowest level seen since 1961, when the first riot occurred.

aimless, disorganized without being meaningless. They may reasonably be put alongside the 'everyday forms of peasant resistance' identified by Scott (1985). Day labourers also practice many of the other kinds of 'petty resistance' listed by Scott -- "ridicule, truculence, irony, petty acts of noncompliance, foot dragging, dissimulation, disbelief in elite homilies, grinding efforts to hold one's own against overwhelming odds" which he sees as being rooted in "the relatively uncensored subculture of subordinate classes" (1985:350) [21].

This subculture may be politically inchoate and may fail to refute the dominant ideology, but it enables the poor to see that domination is not inevitable, and to maintain an area of autonomy from what Scott calls 'hegemonic representations' (ibid:335).

In contrast to their occasional involvement in riots, day labourers mostly resist being organized into demonstrations based on abstract principles such as More

21 Funamoto gives a couple of examples of 'everyday resistance' by day labourers. If the employer fails to maintain supplies of toilet paper at the worksite, regular workers might organize a delegation to demand improvements, but day labourers will simply use newspaper until it blocks up the toilet. The capitalists will supply fresh paper rather than paying for more expensive repairs (Funamoto 1985:152). Again, if the employer only replaces the working gloves at a building site once every five days, although they generally wear out after three, rather than demanding better supplies the day labourer will deliberately slack off so that the gloves will last five days (ibid:214).

Jobs or Better Welfare. The union at Kotobuki has long since given up trying to issue membership cards or collect dues, and simply defines all the workers in Kotobuki as de facto members. Most day labourers in Kotobuki seem to have fairly positive feelings about the union, to which they go for help in cases of unpaid wages, industrial injury etc. But willingness to materially support the union is very limited, as seen in the very modest donations to the Kotobuki union for the 1994-5 winter struggle, which totalled Y135,000, or about 800 pounds (table 33).

To put that figure in perspective, I should explain that (1) this is the union's only major collection from day labourers in the year; (2) the day of the collection is the first day on which the casual labour centre is open for business, so that many day labourers receive unemployment payments for several unworked days over the new year period. Seven or eight union collectors are strategically located close to the windows through which the workers receive their cash payments.

I estimate, from direct personal observation, that at least 2,000 men received dole payments on this day, mostly in the region of Y30-40,000. Between 1 and 3pm, very roughly Y80 million was dispensed by the labour office, so the Y135,000 collected by the union comes to very roughly 0.15% of the amount paid out at the office. I don't suppose more than one man in 20 donated; the majority

completely ignored the appeals. Considering that the union people work round the clock on behalf of the day labourers, do not extract dues, and unfailingly support them in their frequent disagreements with employers, I found the workers' unwillingness to donate extremely dispiriting. Several union activists complained that donations were falling by the year, and one tried to explain the trend by pointing to the recession (which had made it harder for men to get enough work to maintain dole eligibility) and the Ministry of Labour's crackdown on day labourer dole fraud, which had deprived many day labourers of the right to collect the dole. Ironically, support for the union tended to be stronger among the lower-level people, who had no money to donate. Others were more gloomy, and said that Kotobuki men weren't what they used to be.

In sharp contrast, the bars around Kotobuki were thriving after the big pay-out, and I myself was treated to many drinks and actually given Y2,000 by Ron-chan (Ch5:VI). Many day labourers will happily buy a drink for a union man who has done them a good turn, but this individual goodwill rarely develops into commitment to the union as an idea.

IV. Uncertainty

There are plenty of good reasons why a Japanese day labourer like Kimitsu should be interested in the uncertainty principle. In a country famous for lifetime employment, he does not know if he will even have a job tomorrow. In a country which prizes family life and still has a very low divorce rate, he has no family, either parental or marital, to provide a bedrock of stable personal relationships. In a country where people will take out 50, 60 or 70 year loans to pay for a home of their own, he lives in a room where the rent is payable by the day and from which he will be kicked out when he loses his ability to pay the rent. In short, in a country which prizes certainty, he and many like him are Men of Uncertainty.

The contrast between secure and insecure employment seems sharper in Japan than elsewhere. Here in Britain, even casual workers on building sites will generally be employed through to the end of a project, and will generally be paid by the week -- while on the other side of the coin, very few British salaried workers is free from fear of the sack. But in Japan the concept of working by the day and being paid by the day is deeply ingrained and has a long history, as I have tried to show in Ch2.

IVa. Uncertain employment

The principal employer of day labourers in Japan is the construction industry, an industry especially prone to uncertainty. As Herbert Applebaum puts it in his classic ethnography, Royal Blue: The Culture of Construction Workers:

"Uncertainty is the norm in the construction industry, which is reflected in job insecurity for construction workers and a loose, informal, day-by-day type of administration on the construction job site."

That is true for Japan as well as America, and to a degree for dock-work (the second biggest form of employment in Kotobuki) as well as construction. Bad weather is a constant threat. On Wednesday April 20th, 1994, there were a total of 104 jobs at the two casual labour exchanges in Sanya, whereas the day before it had rained in the morning and there had been just three jobs on offer. The sun came out later, but too late for the day labourers.

Variation in the number of hands needed during the changing phases of construction projects, and the changing numbers of ships needing to be loaded and unloaded at the docks, also bring uncertainty to day labourers' job prospects. They are a supplementary work force, and are

the first to be laid off when fewer workers are needed. Indeed, that is their appeal to the employer: they allow him to fine-tune the size of his work-force by taking on however many extra workers he needs on each particular day. In the words of a book written by day labourer unionists, "The general pattern of employment in the yoseba is that you are taken on in the morning, fired in the evening, and exploited by a different capitalist every day" (Kama-kyoto & Sanya Gento'in 1974:196).

That is one way of looking at it. Another way would be to say that day labourers quit every evening. The question of whether day labourers are agents or victims was a theme that recurred throughout my time in the yoseba. In any case, this activist account of the day labourer's lot is predicated on the assumptions that a different capitalist will want to exploit him every day, which has rarely been the case under the Heisei Recession.

In terms of the individual day labourer, the uncertainty of everyday life is played out against an all too certain decline in employment prospects as he grows older. The aging process is especially painful if one's self-identity is predicated on physical strength in the workplace.

So although the chances of work and income on any one day may be highly uncertain, this short-term uncertainty

exists against a backdrop of longer-term probabilities. The fact remains that the best day labourers could get permanent jobs if they wanted --but they do not. The rest of them could at least get period contracts, but they usually prefer one-day contracts. Is this a welcoming of uncertainty? Or at least, a valorization of freedom that accepts uncertainty as a price worth paying?

IVb. Gambling and drinking

Many day labourers gamble, especially in Kotobuki (Ch3:VIIa), where, they say, the local police are relatively soft [22].

In any case it is striking that once a day labourer has overcome the uncertainties of his working life sufficiently to have some money in his pocket, he may well put some or all of it on the nose of a horse, introducing a further element of uncertainty to his life.

Many day labourers are also great drinkers. Again not all of them, but it is a common thing in a doya-gai to come across a few men sprawled on the pavement or in the gutter,

22 Giamo (personal communication) tells me that he observed no gambling on the Bowery, so we should not assume that people at the bottom of society will necessarily gamble. In this respect at least, Kotobuki is more like the pre-war Italian slum of the Boston North End described by Whyte, where the Numbers Game was an obsession comparable with the nomiya in Kotobuki (Whyte 1993[1943]:111-46).

lying where they fell after drinking themselves unconscious. When you drink like that you don't know where you will wake up in the morning, or even if you will wake up at all. Every year scores of day labourers are found dead in the street. Typically the victims are not long-standing homeless men -- they are people who didn't make it home after a heavy night and died of hypothermia. Again, they may get into a fight, sometimes with fatal consequences. So even the ultimate certainty of death has a random element to it in the doya-gai.

However, as with work, so with leisure, certain caveats must be made about these apparent 'uncertainty-generating devices'.

In the first place, drinking and gambling are both social activities. As Inagaki puts it, in the yoseba "If you don't drink, you don't make friends!" So too with gambling: In Kotobuki the nomiya are important social centres. They are open almost every day, from about 11am to 4pm and later on summer days when there are evening race meetings. Their opening hours provide a convenient fit with those of the bars, some of which do not open until the evening. The nomiya are usually crowded and noisy, and race betting is a particularly sociable form of gambling since one has to wait quite a long time between races, and the odds, form of contestants, luck of friends etc. are ready-made topics of conversation. In the colder months

the nomiya also provide heating -- at least a brazier in the street -- and the yakuza who run these establishments are generally polite and friendly to their customers. They even hand out free sake and other tokens of esteem at new year and other festive occasions.

Gambling can also be justified in strict economic terms. Although, as I explained in Ch3, the odds invariably favour the house, it is still perfectly rational to gamble if you are down to your last ¥500, and the choice is between a bowl of noodles or the slight possibility of having ¥100,000 instead of ¥1,000 -- well, the noodles will soon be finished anyway. Each individual gamble is economically justifiable; it is the long series of gambles that destroys lives and is not justifiable. So too with drinking: each individual drink helps one to feel mellow and relaxed, and sharing it with friends can enhance one's social life. It is the long years of drinking that do the damage, but the man with a ¥500 coin decides what to do with that coin, not what to do with his life.

Furthermore, I noticed that many Kotobuki men are quite conservative gamblers. Many of them believe in the concept of the 'insurance bet'. Instead of betting their last ¥1,000 on a rank outsider (ô-ana), they will bet ¥500 on the outsider and ¥500 on the favourite (honmei). This actually worsens their odds, because they are betting against themselves and at least one of their bets will

lose. Still, it is not the strategy of one who relishes uncertainty.

Drinking and gambling make yoseba life easier to bear and harder to leave. While it may be fair to describe these practices as uncertainty-generating devices in the short term, their long-term effect is to make it all the more certain that the day labourer will not ever leave the yoseba, and will ultimately 'die in the gutter'.

Tentative interim conclusion

Do the life histories of my day labourer informants (Ch5), and my broader population data (Ch6) imply inescapable fate, free will, or random chance? All these elements can be read into them. I think it is fair to say that at some level most men are in the yoseba by choice. Kohei could have stayed at Nissan; Shigehiro could have got another bar-tending job; Nishio and Manabu could have made a living in Brazil and America respectively. Even the ones with really grim life histories could at least have chosen a different yoseba, and there is the further option of touring around the yoseba like Noriyuki or Kishimoto.

At the same time we can see an element of social determinism at work too. As chapters 5 and 6 show, most of my informants come from rural, working class families, and are oldest sons or youngest siblings. The great majority

are living singly and (although this is a subjective impression supported only by flimsy data) most of them seem to have been married in the past and to have had some kind of regular employment in the past. The overall impression, always with exceptions, is that there is a quite strong degree of commonality of experience. The movements of individual day labourers are quite unpredictable -- as a fieldworker, I rarely knew where to find any particular man -- but the group as a whole does show certain strong patterns. To return to the metaphor of the particle, they exhibit Brownian motion. The particles within a gas appear to move randomly, but the gas itself is subject to physical laws.

Uncertainty is one of those laws. Maybe it would be overstating the case to argue that day labourers actively embrace uncertainty, but they do have to deal with it in their everyday lives. They negotiate uncertainty; they flirt with uncertainty; they flit around the concept like moths around a naked flame. Their interest in fortune-telling and Nostradamus hints at a frame of mind where the future may be knowable if not alterable; their penchant for gambling suggests a tantalizing suspicion that a person might somehow tune into the tides of fortune and turn his special knowledge to advantage.

Many months after Sakashita told me of his policy of planning for uncertainty (325-6 above), I happened to see

him again. He was drunk and mellow.

He said: "Whatever we do, it's all been decided beforehand. The fact that I'm drunk, the fact that I'm talking to you."

I said: "Well then, do humans have no freedom?"

He said: "Oh yes they do."

Evidently Sakashita is just as confused as the next man about the nature of life. But I think the blend of voluntarism and fatalism in his philosophy is there in many Kotobuki men, though rarely so clearly expressed. Sometimes they like to think that they are in charge of their lives, unlike the salarymen to whom they often compare themselves. At other times, especially when their lives appear to be in decline, they like to evade responsibility for their own problems. And here too, uncertain employment, alcohol and gambling have a part to play: failure to get work is blamed on market forces, bad luck, or even conspiracy on the part of employers and bureaucrats; bad behaviour is blamed on the bottle; and lost bets are blamed on horses and riders.

The broader framework

All these actions and thoughts take place within a broad framework within which day labourers live their lives. The uncertainty of their lives is a corollary of

the certainty of other people's lives. Big, famous construction companies are able to guarantee lifetime employment for their workforce because it is small, and subcontracts out less lucrative work (Ch2.X).

As you go down the cascade of sub-contractors, people have less and less of a stake in the successful accomplishment of each job. At the day labourer level it makes so little difference to one's life whether a project is successful or not that one is completely alienated from the work and does it simply to pay for the next beer. At the same time, freedom increases as you descend the cascade: as noted, the elite worker's long-term relationship with his company can be reassuring but it can also be oppressive [23].

Nor are regular workers necessarily rewarded with very much security in recompense for their loss of freedom -- as the Heisei Recession, with all its attendant talk of downsizing and rationalization, has reminded us. Job descriptions at Japanese companies can be very slippery. Part-time workers who work full time; temporary workers who work permanently; irregular workers who work regularly. There is an 'inner periphery' of insecure workers within the company as well as the outer periphery employed as casuals or through subcontractors.

23 See Kondo 1990, esp. 119-225, for an intense problematization of the ambiguities entailed in the way Japanese companies seek to present themselves as 'families'.

Now in a sense this is a clever trick by capital to make labour work for it on its own terms. But at the same time there are workers who can see the appeal of a more distant relationship with the employer. A recent (10/2/94) issue of GAT'N, an employment magazine, encourages its readers to "declare free agency", a term borrowed from professional baseball. The independent, freelancing craftsman is the magazine's ideal type, and the argument is that you can do better playing companies off against each other than by devoting yourself to just one. Day labouring may not have much appeal to youngsters, but change the word to 'free arbeiter' (furī âbaitâ) and the same basic concept is altogether more appealing.

There is even some evidence to suggest that people do, on occasion, choose to be day labourers. Jones (1971:67), describing the situation in Victorian London, asserts (without seeing any need to defend the statement) that "It was a basic precondition of the casual labour market that supply should be permanently and chronically in excess of demand." There does not seem to be any such precondition in contemporary Japan, where the day labourer population appears to rise during a boom and decline during a slump. This is the opposite to what one would expect if day labour were purely residual labour. In a boom more people ought to be able to quit day labouring and get steady jobs; in a slump, more people would be kicked out of steady jobs and

become day labourers.

One reason why the opposite seems to be the case is because day labouring wages are much more sensitive to shifts in supply and demand than regular salaries are. Employers will pay what they need to secure the number of casuals they need, and wages can shift from day to day and week to week. The day labourer unions campaign with limited effectiveness to keep them above a certain minimum, but otherwise terms of employment are decided on the purest of free market principles. So when there is a labour shortage -- as was the case for most of the mid-1980s-- day labouring wages will rise sharply. At the same time, the risk of not being able to find work when one wants it is diminished. Put these factors together and you have quite a strong incentive to quit a regular job, which may itself be very badly paid, and become a day labourer.

As for the recessionary phase of the business cycle, Mr. Sekine, the man in charge of Kotobuki affairs at the Yokohama city government, offered this explanation. "In hard times, companies tend to draft the more reliable day labourers into the regular workforce as members of their subsidiaries [shitauxe no sha'in]. They take advantage of the workers' weak position to gain stronger control over them. The control society strengthens [kanri shakai ga tsuyomaru]." Again this is more or less the opposite to what one might expect: in hard times one would expect

construction companies to be firing, not hiring. I'm sure that in practice both things happen, but at any rate Mr. Sekine's opinion suggests that irregular working arrangements are not perceived unproblematically as favouring management at the expense of workers [24].

This may have something to do with the historical supply and demand for labour. As I mentioned in Ch2, there have been severe labour shortages at critical junctures in the development of Japanese capitalism. Shortages occurred again during the bubble economy of the late '80s, and even now, with the economy mired in recession and unemployment rising, there are still areas of the economy where labour is scarce. Unskilled manual labour is one of those, hence the government's blind-eye policy on illegal immigration. This is the state-level, international equivalent of the sub-contracting system: by turning a blind eye to immigrant workers, rather than legalizing them, the government can make use of their labour without taking on any responsibility for the long-term well-being of the workers.

A number of day labourers that I know say they see

24 For another instance of casual labour being viewed positively by workers, see Phillips and Whiteside (1985, esp 269-301) for an account of how many workers resisted decasualisation of the British docks for decades. The more employable workers relished the freedom and high hourly wages available; the less employable workers feared that they would be the first to suffer complete unemployment if the workforce were to be decasualized.

their work as a conscious choice of freedom at the expense of certainty (cf Shigehiro Ch5:VIII and Kohei Ch5:II). In Ch4 (p.196) I cited Mori's account of the 'ankô' (day labourers) at the port of Kobe, who were making four or five times the minimum wage at the time. Mori even says that they are better off than many salaried employees.

I also heard, from a bureaucrat at the Ministry of Labour, that large numbers of carpenters and spidermen [daiku and tobi] had quit regular jobs in order to work as day labourers in the massive operation to restore the city of Kobe after the earthquake there. The disaster had caused a regional construction boom and these people clearly felt they could make better money as day labourers in Kobe than as regulars in some other town.

Natural disasters like the Kobe earthquake remind us of one of the reasons why certainty is so highly valued in Japanese culture. At the same time, such disasters bring the men of uncertainty into their own. Much of the very dirty work at Kobe -- pulling bodies out of the rubble and carrying them to ambulances -- was done by day labourers from Kamagasaki. One day labourer recalled being paid a bounty for each body retrieved after the great typhoon which devastated Ise bay back in the '60s. Another, in Fukuoka, told me he was hoping for a typhoon that would rip a lot of tiles off and enable him and his mates to eat hot

noodles again [25]. It is indeed an ill wind that blows no-one any good. Even in normal times, an important category of work for day labourers is demolition -- like undertakers, they are called in when a building has ended its life.

The Kobe earthquake, the collapse of the bubble economy and the end of the LDP monopoly of political power, are signs that the forces of uncertainty are once more on the rise in Japan. Even the trains, which always used to run on time, are prone to nerve gas attacks these days.

The LDP's success was always built on people's desire for certainty. No-one ever loved the LDP, but it was the devil they knew. I remember during Nakasone's double election of 1985, seeing an LDP poster which had a picture of a smiling housewife washing the dishes, and the slogan ANZEN, ANTEI, ANSHIN -- "Safety, Security, Peace of Mind." Even Britain's Conservative Party does not strike such a ruthlessly conservative note in its appeals to the voters.

At the same time, these cautious people have always admired people who do take risks, who do go out on a limb. I'm thinking of national heroes like Uemura Naomi, the mountaineer who died on Mount McKinley after conquering the highest peak of every continent. There always have been these Japanese who feel the urge to venture into the

25 Akiyama et al (1960:Vol.2, 227) describe similar attitudes among Tokyo day labourers.

unknown, and far more Japanese who identify with them at the same time as craving security in their own jobs.

Day labourers also have this appeal. Despite their general poverty and outcaste status, or sometimes perhaps because of these things, the fact is that when non-day labourers talk about them, there is often an air of wistfulness or envy. They view them as yosutebito-- people who have thrown away the cares of this world. Several regularly employed building workers told me they admired Kotobuki men for maintaining their independence, and when I told a Japanese friend with a high-powered job in journalism that day labourers' freedom was not for real because it was not economically supported, and often led to death in the street, he replied, "What difference does it make whether you die in bed or in the street? I envy their freedom."

Romanticized day labourers have inspired a number of popular ballads (Ch1:II), and even in real life, there certainly are genuine libertarian day labourers. There are also many other, typically less skilled and employable, who have little choice in the matter. One problem for the day labourer unions is to establish some kind of solidarity between these two, very different groups. Still, however much the day labourer may be constrained by economic and social limitations, he still has enough freedom to make some people with regular jobs and stable families think

that maybe the advantages are not all on his own side. And, as a physicist friend of mine pointed out, the company man transferred against his will to a distant branch may have more in common with a particle passively acted upon than a day labourer trying to decide whether to try his luck in Kotobuki or Sasashima.

Neither man is wholly free or wholly fated, but the balance between freedom and fate is different.

Second metaphor: balloonist and train passenger

Let me try one more metaphor. To me, day labourers seem like balloonists: they are tossed and buffeted by the winds of economic trends, are at the mercy of the weather, and have little idea where their journey will end. They can, however, throw out a sandbag, let out some gas, choose who to take with them, and in such ways modify their motion through life.

Salarymen are like train passengers: the wind and the rain are of little concern to them, but their journey has been decided in advance, they cannot alter the lie of the rails, and their destination is more or less known: it is death of old age, whereas death, by violence or disease, can come at any age to the day labourer.

In the end, day labourers are not the only ones who have to come to terms with the human condition; nor are

they the only ones who drink and gamble. Interest in fortune-telling, horoscopes and blood-groups is strong throughout Japan and the prophecies of Nostradamus have launched numerous best-sellers. It is striking, too, that this country, with its evident concern for security and saving, is also probably the biggest centre of gambling in the world [26]. It appears that the social-psychological tension between certainty and uncertainty is particularly acute in Japan.

Finally, a scrap of evidence in defence of my grossly romantic metaphor of the balloonist. There are many slang words used to describe day labourers in Japan, but the one I most often heard was pū-tarō. Tarō is a common Japanese male name, and pū is a corruption of fū, meaning wind. A day labourer, in Japanese cultural terms, is not just a man who does short-term manual labour; he is a 'Jack o' the Wind,' a man who does have a certain romance about him. To me this emic expression conveys something of the liberty of being 'free as the wind', something of the helplessness of being 'tossed in the wind', and something of the uncertainty of human beings lost between the two [27].

26 According to AERA magazine (Vol.7 No.30, 25/7/94:32-9) Japan gambles 5.7% of her GNP. Per-capita sales of betting slips are 2.3 times higher than in the second placed USA, and four times higher than in Britain.

27 Aoki says the word pū-tarō is said to derive from ninpu (a labourer), thus: ninpu to punin (slang inversion) to pūnin to pū-tarō (substituting common male name for character meaning 'person') (Aoki 1989:135). Even if this

Post-script: yoseba gambling revisited

Many months after I returned to Britain from my fieldwork in Kotobuki, as I attempted to visualize my many happy hours spent drinking in her many bars, I became aware of a paradox which had not occurred to me at the time. Despite the plethora of professional gambling establishments in Kotobuki, men there never seemed to gamble among themselves.

Of course they may have gambled in their rooms, but the only time I observed a private game of cards for money was in a room occupied entirely by Koreans. And with so many hardened gamblers in the population, why did I never see a game of cards, or hana-fuda, or mah-jongg, or dice, going on in the Hamako or the Kabin or the Yuen or the Tozen? In Kamagasaki I was taught the terms goraku (pleasure) and eiri (business) to distinguish amateur gambling among friends from professional, yakuza-run gambling. But although I witnessed countless cases of the

derivation is correct, the fact is that nowadays the word is written with the character for 'wind' (fû). A respected dictionary (Matsumura 1988:2090) says the word is sometimes pronounced fû-taro, which would cast doubt on the 'ninpu' derivation (since fû is the standard reading for 'wind' and is never a reading for the 'pu' in 'ninpu') unless fû-taro is a later back-formation from pû-taro. Matsumura offers two definitions for pû-tarô: (1) A day labouring longshoreman (hiyatoi no kowan rômusha); (2) A person without fixed employment or residence; a vagrant (Teishoku mo naku, jûkyo mo sadamaranu hito. Furôsha).

latter on my way through the doya-gai, I never saw any case of the former. Why?

Several possible explanations present themselves:

1. Economic. Most day labourers have little money, therefore there is no point gambling against a fellow day labourer if you hope to win a lot of money.

2. Social. Gambling between fellow day labourers is potentially divisive. Successful gamblers could inflict sufficient damage on their friends to cause them to fall out. Gambling only with professionals maintains solidarity among the day labourer ranks. Most of the time they are fellow losers, and when gains are made, they are not at the expense of one's friends.

3. Philosophical. There is something about the outlook on life of many day labourers which pre-disposes them to gamble with professionals rather than with their friends.

Although I guess all three of the above are factors in the pattern of day labourer gambling, I would now like to develop this third point, by attempting a typology of gambling.

Types of gambling may be classified by four principles:

1. The size of the opponent. In a game of cards, dice or mah-jongg, one's opponent may be a single individual, or a few individuals. At a Kotobuki-type freelance bookmaker or dice game, one will be pitted against a small gang of

yakuzas (though they may be affiliated to a much bigger group). At a pachinko parlor one takes on a private company, typically a small or medium-sized one. At a legal bookmakers, one gambles against a large bureaucratic organization such as the Japan Racing Association. In playing the takarakuji (the national lottery), one takes on the whole government.

2. The degree of professionalism or mechanization of the opponent. This broadly corresponds to principle 1, but with the occasional exception. Playing cards, dice or mah-jongg against a professional is likely to have a very different outcome to playing against a friend. But broadly speaking, the bigger the opponent, the more professional he will likely be. Mechanization is a sub-set of professionalism. Unlike a human bookmaker, a computer-operated tote never gets the odds wrong; and the computer-programmed pachinko machine is also the equivalent of a highly professional opponent.

3. The likelihood of winning and (conversely) the size of the possible pay-out. Participants in a private card game have a good chance of winning, but -- unless they are already millionaires -- are unlikely to win very large sums of money. At the other end of the scale, participants in a government lottery have only a tiny chance of winning, but stand to make a fortune if they do. Other types of gambling -- on racing, pachinko, roulette etc. -- fall

somewhere between these two extremes.

4. The degree of skill and (conversely) luck involved in the game. There is always an element of luck in poker or mah-jongg, but winning consistently at these games requires skill. In race betting, the element of luck is greater but there is still some chance to exercise skill in making selections. And in lotteries there is virtually no skill involved, just luck. The question of the skill/luck ratio in pachinko is highly controversial, but my own impression is that the balance tilted irretrievably towards luck a few years ago, when the computerized digit-counter was introduced. Whereas before one could make the machine pay out by hitting certain targets, now these targets merely activate the a three-reel digit counter, which has to land on a triple to activate a big pay-out.

Now if we superimpose these four criteria on each other, we find that they correlate pretty closely. By and large, gambling with a small opponent will tend to be an amateur affair, with a high chance of winning but a low pay-out, and a high degree of skill and low degree of luck. Gambling with a large opponent will tend to be a professional affair, with a low chance of winning but a high pay-out, a low degree of skill and high degree of luck.

Moving a step further, I would argue that the former

type of gambling -- let us call it 'small gambling' -- will appeal to people who believe in free will and their control of their own destiny, while the latter -- 'big gambling'-- will appeal to those who believe in fate.

I have a little evidence to support this assertion. Government figures (table 31) show that after Japan's bubble economy gave way to the Heisei recession (c.1990) the amount of money staked annually on mah-jongg (archetypal small gambling) declined, whereas the amount staked on the national lottery (archetypal big gambling) increased. This seems to make sense in terms of my typology. When business is good and people feel confident of their economic future, they will believe in their own ability and tend to favour small gambling; when business is bad, they will lose that self-belief and prefer big gambling, fatalistically entrusting their future to Lady Luck. At the same time, the take on lotteries and mah-jongg alike were dwarfed by the amounts gambled on horse-racing and pachinko -- mid-range gambles where the element of skill lies in choosing to whom to entrust ones fate.

The form of gambling favoured in Kotobuki seems to correspond roughly to the image of limited control over destiny suggested by my metaphor of the balloonist. Day labourers rarely play the national lottery, which is big gambling, a total abandonment to fate. On the other hand they do not seem, either, to be very interested in playing

cards, dice or mah-jongg among themselves, which is small gambling. Rather they favour race-betting and pachinko, right in the middle of my typology. Perhaps the overwhelming popularity of these two gambles in the general population shows that day labourers are, after all, just ordinary Japanese guys.

*

You entrust your fortunes to riders in a distant arena over which you have no control; but you can at least attempt to apply knowledge and skill to your selection. You can win substantial amounts of money -- but not enough to permanently change your life. (This is especially true at the nomiya of Kotobuki, where the house rules generally put an upper limit of 100 to 1 on the return to successful gamblers, unlike in legal off-course betting, where there is no upper limit). Your opponent is not the overwhelming power of the government-run race-courses, but a bunch of small-time gangsters. You avoid both the alienation of big gambling and the potential personal problems of small gambling with friends. In short, race-gambling is quite similar to balloon flight, in its curious mixture of fate and agency.

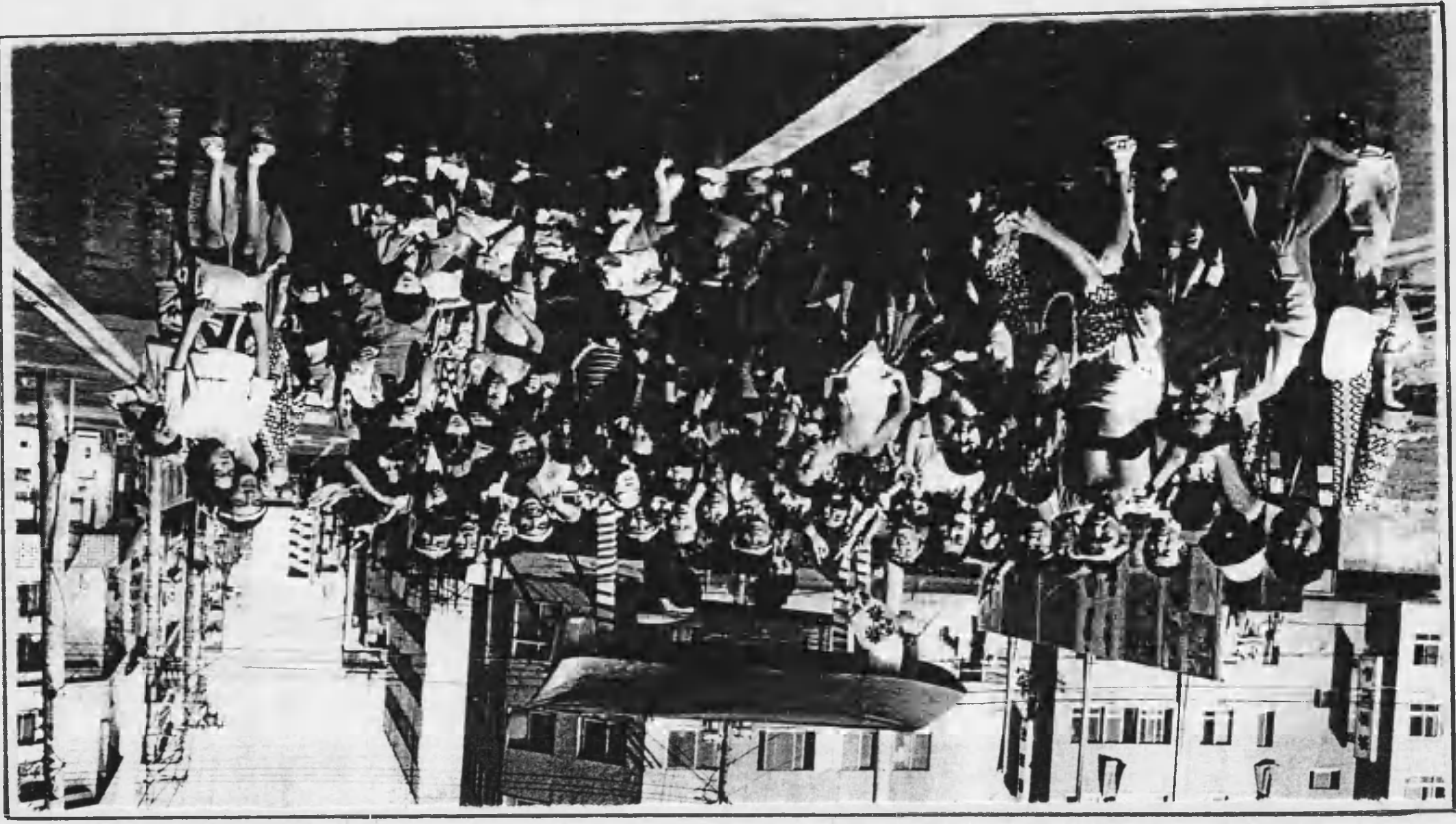
Probably the second-most popular kind of gambling in Kotobuki is pachinko. Again it is near the middle of my

scale. The potential winnings are substantial but not sufficient to change one's life unless repeated many time. Although as I say it appears to be overwhelmingly a game of luck these days, there is still enough skill involved, or enough of an appearance of skill, to spawn a massive literature on the topic of how to win at pachinko (there's even one in English now -- Sedensky 1991).

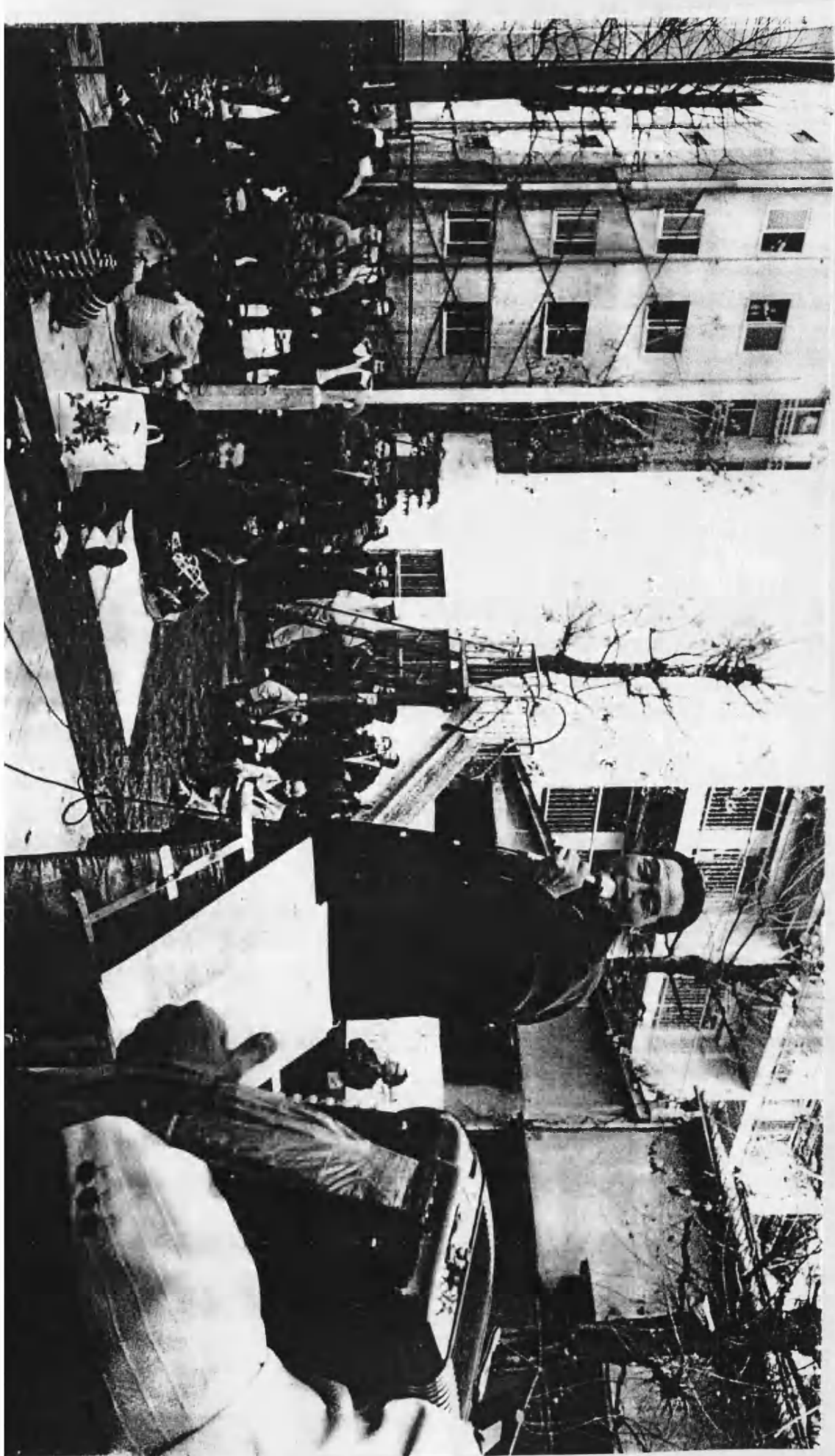
Apart from outright cheating -- such as using a concealed magnet to divert the flow of the balls -- the principle kind of advice given by these publications concerns how to hurl yourself into the embrace of fate at a time when fate is more likely to be kind to you. It is well known that the managers of pachinko parlours adjust their machines, whether manually, by gently tapping the bagatelle nails into more or less obstructive formations, or electronically, by reprogramming the electronic digit counters. Thus one should avoid playing on the 25th of the month, since that is payday for many salarymen and the pachinko managers know they will spend money even if the machines aren't paying out (Sedensky 120-1), and at New Year's, when cold weather and holidays mean that the pachinko parlours don't need to pay out to fill the hall (Sedensky 122). I have also heard theories about playing at certain times of day, and hanging around before playing to spot a machine that has had a lot of money put into it without paying out. (I doubt this has any validity, since

these days the supply of balls to all the machines is centrally controlled via a kind of conveyer belt behind the machines).

Anyway, pachinko shares with off-course race gambling the characteristic that success or failure is a function of modified fate. You cannot make the horse win or the machine pay out, but you can use your ingenuity to put yourself in a position where fate is that much more likely to favour you, like a balloonist looking for a good air-current to ride upon.



391



Chapter 9: Yoseba/doya-gai as special cultural zones

I. What is a special cultural zone?

A 'special cultural zone' (SCZ), is a district which (a) has clearly marked boundaries; (b) is inhabited by people differentiated from those outside by class, status, gender or ethnicity; and (c) is governed by rules of behaviour different from those prevailing outside -- something like what Lefebvre calls 'special preserves' (1991:35).

Many, though by no means all SCZs are inhabited by people who are marginalized or discriminated against. A classic example of this kind of SCZ would be Boston's North End of the late 1930s, the 'Cornerville' of Whyte's Street Corner Society:

"... a slum district... which is inhabited almost entirely by Italian immigrants and their children. To the rest of the city it is a mysterious, dangerous, and depressing area. Cornerville is only a few minutes' walk from fashionable High Street, but the High Street inhabitant who takes that walk passes from the familiar to the unknown... outsiders... have long felt that Cornerville was at odds with the rest of the community. They think of it as the home of racketeers and corrupt politicians, of poverty and crime, of subversive beliefs and activities" (Whyte 1993:xv).

Save for the obviously culturally specific references, this passage could just as easily refer to Kotobuki and Motomachi as to Cornerville and High Street. Inoue (1996:24) describes the 'fundamental nature' of

Kamagasaki as "a completely unchanging [condition of being] the extraordinary in the middle of the ordinary" [1]. Arimura (1991:135) describes Kamagasaki as "a solitary island in a distant sea." These images insist on a special status for the yoseba, which makes the place feel detached from society at the same time as being geographically right in the middle of it.

In Japan there is a rich variety of SCZs. Perhaps the most immediately striking one is the imperial palace and its grounds in the centre of Tokyo. "The entire city turns around a site both forbidden and indifferent, a residence concealed beneath foliage, protected by moats, inhabited by an emperor who is never seen..." (Barthes 1989 [1970]:17). It is the single most common theme of radical left discourse in Japan that the emperor and the despised minorities are two sides of the same coin; that emperor implies hierarchy and hierarchy implies someone at the bottom.

Other Japanese SCZs would include ghetto-like districts inhabited by Koreans, Okinawans and Burakumin, prostitution districts, and also the numerous US military bases, though in their case the historical process of their coming into being is far simpler and the element of coercion more obvious.

1 "Kamagasaki no honshitsu wa sukoshi mo kawaru koto no nai nichijō no naka no hinichijō."

II. International comparisons: the slum, ghetto and skid row

These three terms overlap to a degree and are sometimes used interchangeably, so let me start with definitions.

Longman's Concise English Dictionary (1985) offers the following:

Slum: 'A poor overcrowded area esp in a city'.

Ghetto: 1. 'Part of a city in which Jews formerly lived'. 2. 'An often slum area of a city in which a minority group live, esp because of social, legal or economic pressures; broadly an area with 1 predominant type of resident'.

Skid row: 'A district frequented by down-and-outs and alcoholics'.

All three terms have been used to describe yoseba. Fallows (1988:16-17), for instance, says that Sanya isn't really a slum for three reasons: (1) No families. (2) "Sanya lacks... an air of impending danger." (3) There is no colour-based racial aspect to Sanya. He concludes that Sanya is "what Americans would call a Skid Row or Tenderloin district, full of people who are not just poor but also sick, drunk and down-and out" (ibid 16). The analysis assumes a very American kind of slum as a model.

For my part I use 'slum' in the dictionary sense, including poor districts with a strong ethnic colouring which are sometimes described as 'ghettos'. I use 'ghetto' in its original, Jewish sense; and I use 'skid row' to

describe the American institution of that name, with the understanding that skid row has not always and exclusively been the preserve of 'down-and-outs and alcoholics'. As Groth (1994:151) points out, "before the 1950s, these areas (skid rows) -- with their high concentration of hotel housing -- were very different places, for which the term single laborers' zone might be more appropriate."

a) The yoseba/doya-gai and the slum

Visitors to doya-gai, especially visitors from third-world countries, are surprised to hear them described as slums because they seem to be too clean and tidy. This is especially true of Sanya, which is kept pretty clean by the efforts of the city sanitation department, the doya-owners, and a number of businesses not directly concerned with Sanya's role as a yoseba. One Kamagasaki informant told me that he found Sanya "uncomfortably clean." He could relax more easily in the messier environment of Kamagasaki. But for sheer squalor no Japanese yoseba begins to compare with Philippine slums like Tondo (personal observation, 1986) or 'Looban' (Jocano 1975), or even with a British slum area like Hulme in Manchester (personal observation, 1984) or the more run-down parts of Hackney (Harrison, 1992).

The second major difference between the slum and the yoseba (at least in recent years) has been the almost

complete absence of family life in the latter. The black American slum districts described by Liebow (1967), Hannerz (1969) and others are largely based on the nuclear family, albeit shaken by frequent breakdowns in family life, and the same is true of the Manila and London slum districts described by Jocano and Harrison (ops cit). In Whyte's American Italian slum the family is a very strong presence, and "the Italian's network of family obligations extends far beyond that which is experienced by the middle-class native American." (Whyte op. cit. 208). But in Sanya, where family life has disappeared even more than in the other yoseba, Matsuzawa (1988:148) says that "99.7 percent (of day labourers) are single males."

Thirdly (and my previous point is a sub-set of this), the discontinuity between most slums and their urban surroundings is less striking than in the case of the yoseba. The sharp contrast in mode of residence, employment and public behaviour characteristic of the yoseba and its setting does not seem to be matched by other slums that I have seen or read about. Breman (1994:8) summarizes research on third world slums by saying that "...it appears repeatedly that the inhabitants of low-income pockets and shanty towns in the urban periphery do not form a separate and distinctive social order. Studies of slums show a varied composition and strong and close ties with institutions of the general urban system rather

than any deviating pattern of norms and values."

Lifestyle distinctions are sharper in the racially defined slums of industrialized countries often referred to as ghettos, but even here, continuities exist. Hannerz admits to a 'bias of exoticism' in contrasting life in 'Soulside' and outside it: "There are people in the ghetto who have good, stable jobs, help their children with their home work, eat dinner together at a fixed hour, make payments on the car, and spend their Saturday night watching Lawrence Welk on TV -- to their largely mainstream way of life we will devote rather little attention." (Hannerz 1969:15-16). Not even the most successful doya-gai dweller has a lifestyle as close to the mainstream as that. Ethnicity and colour may divide the inhabitants of some American slums from the mainstream in one obvious way that does not apply very strongly in Japan; but in lifestyle terms the divisions appear to be deeper in the doya-gai than in the slum.

b) The yoseba/doya-gai and the ghetto

Doya-gai have been explicitly likened to ghettos (Pons 1990; Meyerson 1990:18-19). The Jewish ghetto is an institution which has varied widely in character in the numerous cities where it has appeared, and ghetto-formation has shown varying degrees of coercion and voluntarism.

Roth (1969:297-8), describing the medieval European ghetto, points out that although "in most cases they (the Jews) fought fiercely against its establishment... it soon became apparent that the ghetto walls, though intended to keep the victims in, were no less useful in keeping their enemies out. It is significant that the gates were furnished in many cases with bolts on the inner side for use in emergency... with an insight rare in the oppressed, the Jew realised that segregation, however humiliating it might be, tended to be a powerful preservative of solidarity and culture. Thus we find the paradox that, at certain places in Italy, an annual feast-day was instituted, and long observed, to celebrate the establishment of the Ghetto."

Wirth goes still further in arguing for the functionality of the ghetto, calling it "the unwitting crystallization of needs and practices rooted in the customs and heritages, religious and secular, of the Jews themselves... Through the instrumentality of the ghetto there gradually developed that social distance which effectually isolated the Jew from the remainder of the population." (Wirth 1964[1927]:86,88).

There were sound religious reasons for Jews to gather together -- the need to be within walking distance of the synagogue, and for easy access to a kosher butcher, a Jewish school, and the mikveh (the ritual bath for menstruating women). In addition, social and economic

advantages, and the simple need for self-protection-- safety in numbers -- had brought about the development of Jewish quarters long before the ghetto was enforced. When the ghetto walls came down across western Europe in 1789, religious avoidance gave way to racial discrimination, not necessarily to the advantage of the Jewish people (Rabbi Jonathan Romain, personal communication).

Wirth views the ghetto as functional for both Jews and gentiles: the former enjoy "the inner solidarity of the ghetto community," while the gentiles were able to make use of financial and trading services forbidden to them by the Christian church without risking the spiritual contamination of living side-by-side with the Jews who provided the services. Wirth claims that "the historians of the ghetto are usually inclined to overemphasize the confining effect of the barriers that were set up around the Jew... The laws that came to regulate the conduct of the Jews and Christians were merely the formal expressions of social distances that had already been ingrained in the people" (Wirth 89). Wirth further implies that the same voluntaristic logic can be applied not only to other ethnic quarters, but even to "Bohemias and Hobohemias, slums and Gold Coasts, vice areas and Rialtos in every metropolitan community."

The Japanese yoseba/doya-gai shares with the ghetto a history whereby legally enforced segregation has gradually

given way to culturally enforced segregation. The 18th century ninsoku yoseba, like the original Venetian Getto Nuovo of 1516, was a legal measure dividing a despised group of people from the mainstream. The modern yoseba has no such element of legal compulsion. Instead the authorities encourage them by the strategic locating of casual labour exchanges and by granting planning permission for doya only in specified districts. In addition, discrimination on the part of landlords outside the yoseba, who are unwilling to rent apartments to day labourer types, and on the part of citizens who will generally object to any doya-like accommodation being built in their neighborhood, further encourage the continuation of segregation [2].

Another structural factor in doya-gai formation is the Japanese practice of landlords extracting large down-payments and a legally liable guarantor from their tenants at the start of a tenancy (see Ch3:119).

Hence there are strong negative reasons why day labourers tend to congregate in the yoseba. There are also positive reasons, such as easy access to the casual labour exchanges and to the informal street recruiters; the relaxed atmosphere, enhanced by the tendency of police to turn a blind eye to gambling, drunkenness, etc, which they

2 In the case of the landlords, their attitude is not without justification since day labourers have a not-entirely-undeserved reputation for struggling to pay rent.

would act against in other parts of town; and the sense of solidarity with other day labourers.

In the traditional European ghetto, the Jews were not permitted to own their homes or land, and were systematically exploited by gentile landlords (Roth 1969:299). In Kotobuki the landlords are usually Korean and not Japanese. This particularly clear distinction between the landlord and tenant class is another interesting parallel with the ghetto.

c) The yoseba/doya-gai and the Hobohemia/skid row

The most important point on which the yoseba/doya-gai differs from the ghetto is in the almost complete absence of family life and structured social relations. In this respect there is a much closer resemblance to the American skid row, a resemblance explicitly discussed by Tsuchida, who translates 'doya-gai' as 'Skid Row Neighborhood' (1966a:203) and Caldarola (1968), whose survey of 628 doya-gai dwellers around Japan is titled 'The Doya-gai: A Japanese Version of Skid Row',

I have already (in Ch8) drawn attention to some differences in behaviour between day labourers and skid row inhabitants. There are striking similarities too, however, especially with the pre-war skid row. It is no wonder that The Hobo, Anderson's classic account of Hobohemia, a skid

row district of Chicago (Anderson 1965[1923]) in the early 1920s, is the only non-Japanese book included in the list of '100 Yoseba literary contributions' published by the Japan Association for the Study of Yoseba (Yoseba, Vol.3, 1990) [3].

Anderson says the population of pre-war Hobohemia never fell below 30,000 in summer, doubling in winter, and reaching 75,000 and over in periods of unemployment. [Anderson 13] This makes it considerably bigger than Kamagasaki, the biggest doya-gai in Japan. Let me briefly summarize the similarities between Anderson's Hobohemia and the doya-gai as observed by myself:

1. Hobohemia has cheap hotels with tiny rectangular rooms a la doya. The hotels have a mix of permanent residents, seasonal regulars, and brief passing trade, similar to doya clientele. There are also flophouses resembling the 'bedhouses' in Sanya and Kamagasaki (ibid 31).

2. There is a similar range of lifestyles. Anderson's

3 One book that should be added to the JASY list is Groth's Living Downtown (1994). In this fascinating study of the American tradition of living in residential hotels, Groth greatly complicates the skid row picture by describing several other kinds of residential zone showing similarities to the doya-gai: the 'workers' cottage district', the 'mid-priced transient hotel neighborhood', the 'rooming house district' and the 'cheap lodging house district'. The latter roughly corresponds to skid row but has a far more overwhelmingly male population (Groth 1994:131-167). Groth's account of San Francisco's Chinatown (ibid 156-9) is much more reminiscent of Kotobuki than of Yokohama's present-day Chinatown.

divides Hobohemians into "at least five" types: the seasonal worker, the hobo, a transient or occasional worker; the tramp, who "dreams and wanders," the bum, who seldom wanders and seldom works, and the homeguard, who lives in Hobohemia and does not leave town [ibid 89]. All these types may be found in the yoseba too.

3. As in the yoseba, there is a bi-partite labour market, with public labour exchanges and private, tehaishi-type agencies, albeit they usually seem to have operated out of offices rather than on the street. The breakdown between the two is similar as well, with the private sector dominant (ibid 110-7).

4. Quite a number of Hobohemians were single-day specialists (ibid 117-120), though the proportion may have been smaller than in the yoseba [4].

5. There is much heavy drinking in Hobohemia, especially of the binge ('spreed') type, with many alcoholics (ibid 134-5), but fewer drug abusers (ibid 67-9).

6. Hobos benefit, or come into their own, when disaster strikes. "After a flood, a fire, or an earthquake, there is a great demand for labour. The migratory worker is always ready to respond." (ibid 109) As the 1995 Kobe earthquake demonstrated, the same is true for day labourers

4 Anderson gives the example of John M., who seems to have done 26 single-day jobs in three months May 4 to July 26, 1922: "John M. is a casual laborer. He is one of a type that works by the day, is paid by the day, and lives by the day" (118-9).

in modern Japan (see below).

7. "The majority of homeless men are unmarried. Those who are married are separated, at least temporarily, from their families... Of the 1,000 men studied by Mrs. Solenberger, 74 per cent gave their marital status as single. Of the 400 interviewed by the writer 86 per cent stated that they were unmarried. Only 8 per cent of the former and 5% of the latter survey claimed they were married. The others claimed to be widowed, divorced or separated from their wives." (ibid 137)

8. Like Sanya and Kamagasaki, Hobohemia is located next-door to a prostitution district. "These women... do not live in the 'main stem,' but adjacent to it" (ibid 142-3).

9. The amenities of Chicago's Hobohemia closely resembled those of a doya-gai. One street on the 'main stem' had eight cheap hotels, ten private employment agencies, seven cheap restaurants, six bars, five cheap clothing stores, two gambling dens, two fortune-telling shops, one cigar store, one drug store, and one Christian mission (ibid 15).

10. As the presence of fortune-telling shops suggests, the Chicago hobos shared the day labourer's interest in fate and fortune. In his discussion of hobo reading material, Anderson says: "Works on phrenology, palmistry, Christian Science, hypnotism, and the secrets of the stars, etc., are of perennial interest" (ibid).

11. "Behind the Field Museum, on the section of the park

(Grant Park) that is still being used as a dump for rubbish, the hobos have established a series of camps or 'jungles'. Here, not more than five minutes from the Loop, are numerous improvised shacks in which men live." (ibid 11) Anderson's account of the Grant Park jungles sounds very similar to the shanty-town at Kannai station near Kotobuki. In both cases, there is an area of improvised housing close to the zone, containing men who are even more marginal than the inhabitants of the zone itself.

12. Hobohemia attracts Christian charity (ibid 171 etc). Many skid row studies (Anderson 1923, Allsop 1967, Bahr 1973, Giamo 1989, Rossi 1989) include accounts of missionary work, and it may well be that the skid row was the model for the Christian missions active in the doya-gai around Japan. Just as men have to 'sing for their supper' at the skid row missions (Miller 1982:5), so in the doya-gai the rule is 'amen de ramen' (getting noodles by saying 'amen').

13. The theme of freedom and incarceration which I have discussed in relation to the working lives of Japanese day labourers (Ch2, Ch8) is part of the American hobo experience too. Hobos were often occupationally defined as criminal and could easily be arrested for 'vagrancy' or 'trespass'. Sometimes arrested men would be 'bound out' to a private company and set to work as a 'convict labourers' (ibid 163-7).

14. The hobos had a penchant for poetry (Anderson 194-214). Many Japanese day labourers also write poetry, and many examples may be found in the periodical Yoseba Shijin (Yoseba Poets). The bitter-sweet theme of lonely freedom runs through the hobo and day labourer poetry alike.

15. Anderson describes various political movements to unionize hobos and raise their political consciousness (ibid 230-24). These groups show some similarity to the yoseba movement, notably a tendency to schisms and infighting (ibid 247-9).

16. The reasons given by Chicago hobos for leaving home cover many areas also mentioned by my own informants: Seasonal work and unemployment; 'industrial inadequacy' (e.g. mental or physical handicap, alcohol or drug addicts, old age); defects of personality; crises in the life of the person; racial or national discrimination; and wanderlust (ibid 61-86).

The main dissimilarities I noticed between Hobohemia and yoseba were:

1. The greater range of employing industries in Hobohemia, including many in the agricultural sector. There is no custom of hiring yoseba day labourers for agricultural work in Japan, despite the fact that rural depopulation must have created demand for seasonal casual labour on farms.

Instead the reverse pattern, of farm workers coming into the yoseba during slack months in the country, has prevailed.

2. The clothes and the food in Hobohemia are genuinely cheap (ibid 15). In Kotobuki they can be remarkably expensive. My informants say that this is because shopkeepers take advantage of day labourers who come home from work carrying ready cash and too tired to shop anyway other than locally.

3. Although hobos were often isolated from family life, Anderson does mention that many of them have a special respect for their mothers and a tendency to stay in touch with them (ibid 138-9). Giamo also mentions this in his much later book on the Bowery (Giamo 1989), but I never came across this in the yoseba.

4. There is relatively little begging in the yoseba, whereas all accounts of Hobohemia/skid row mention begging. Giamo (personal communication, 1995) says "Everyone begged on the Bowery." Caldarola says he can "testify to the dignified poverty of the Japanese skid row men who never asked for money and often refused to accept even a cigarette" and goes on sharply contrast this with behaviour with that of American skid row men (1968:523); cf note 13, p321.

Finally, there is one more, glaringly obvious

difference between the yoseba and the skid row: the former exists, while the latter has disappeared from many American cities [5]. Hobohemia is long gone from Chicago, and the Bowery district of New York has almost completely shed its skid row function. Symbolically, the last bar on the Bowery -- Al's Bar -- closed at Christmas, 1993 [6]. On May 8 1993, the Bowery featured in the Sunday Times style section as the latest fashionable place for rich young kids to party at bars with trendy decor. Presumably these bars were unlike Al's Bar.

The American skid rows have fallen prey to 'urban renewal' and 'gentrification' (Miller 1982). Owners of cheap hotels and other property in Skid Row areas have been made unrefusable offers for the land, while establishments like Al's Bar that rented their premises have been forced out by sharp rent increases. Thus the cheap hotels and bars have gradually given way to office buildings and penthouses. Ironically, this is more or less what Donald Bogue, one of the best-known '60s writers on Skid Row, recommended should be done to it (Rossi 1989:32-3).

The recent history of American policy on skid rows and homelessness (documented e.g. by Rossi 1989, Giamo and

5 There are still recognizable skid rows on the west coast of the United States, notably in Seattle and Los Angeles. The political battle over what to do about the L.A. skid row is described in Goetz 1992.

6 'Last Call for Bowery's Last Gin Mill', New York Times, Dec 25 1993, p.16. Quoted in Giamo, 1994:1,15.

Grunberg 1992) suggests that the guiding principle in many cities has been to disperse unaffiliated men who do casual work, whereas in Japan the principle has been to concentrate them in carefully delimited districts. In both countries these men have been viewed in pathological terms, but in the US skid row has been seen as a malignant growth, to be rendered harmless by breaking it up and dispersing the diseased tissue widely enough for it to be neutralized by the healthy tissue surrounding it; while in Japan the key metaphor has been one of germ infection, whereby the solution to the dangers posed by unaffiliated men to orderly society is to enclose them in the smallest possible area and isolate them [7].

In Yokohama it is striking that the city government often houses welfare recipients in doya rooms. This is in sharp contrast to the practice in some parts of the US, where "Many welfare agencies encouraged their clients to locate elsewhere in the belief that they would thus be saved from the negative influence of the skid row sub-culture." (Snow and Anderson, 1993:17) [8].

7 There are exceptions to this generalization. In Nagoya and Fukuoka, for example, the city authorities seem to have applied a dispersal policy to the old slums; see Ch4:III-IV.

8 Hoch and Slayton (1989:132) report that policy on housing welfare recipients in SRO hotels varies between cities just as Japanese cities vary in their approach to housing welfare recipients in doya. It is common practice in New York and Los Angeles, but relatively infrequent in Chicago. People on welfare are given accommodation vouchers very much like the doya-ken used in Yokohama. Sometimes these hotels are located away

Lefebvre distinguishes between 'appropriated space' and 'dominated space', and from the point of view of the authorities, yoseba/doya-gai are supposed to be dominated space. Thus Mr. Shibuya (F257, 369-378), a senior officer at the Narcotics Section of the Public Order Division, Isezaki-cho police station, told me that neither the police nor the city government had any wish to eradicate Kotobuki. He admitted that the district had a far higher crime rate than the rest of the city, but expressed the belief that closing down the doya-gai would cause higher rates of crime in other districts which would more than cancel out any gains in the Kotobuki district. His view was that Kotobuki was functional for the police, keeping trouble-makers away from respectable citizens.

Some day labourers take the contrasting view that the doya-gai is in fact appropriated space, a place which they have made their own. They see the yoseba/doya-gai as oases of alternative culture in the desert of modern life, or as fortresses linked by class solidarity. Being from Kotobuki means you are accepted in Kamagasaki or Sanya [9]; there is a sense of solidarity.

The contrast between Japanese and US policies on the doya-gai and skid rows is paralleled by a very similar

from skid row areas, "stimulating considerable protest from the neighbours" (ibid 280).

9 Funamoto (1985) saw the yoseba dotted around Japan as a potential revolutionary network.

contrast in the field of mental health. As van Wolferen (1990) points out, Japan has shunned the policy of the United States and some European countries of de-institutionalizing mental patients to receive what is known in Britain as 'care in the community'. Incarceration is still the usual response to mental illness in Japan, and numbers are growing. By June 1990 there were 336,271 patients registered in mental hospitals in Japan, double the figure of twenty-five years before (Weisman 1991). Four-fifths were incarcerated without their own consent compared with a figure in Britain of one in twenty (van Wolferen 1990:195).

d) Is the yoseba turning into a skid row?

At least two Japanese academics (Tsuchida 1966, Aoki 1989) have noticed the similarity between the doya-gai and skid row, and have compared and contrasted the two institutions in various ways. They also list points of similarity and difference, but the comparison is with the more modern, post-war skid row rather than the pre-war Hobohemia. By the time Tsuchida was writing, the skid row had lost much of its pre-war function as a source of casual labour and was rapidly becoming a home for drunks and social misfits, which he sharply contrasts with the proud working men of the yoseba. Aoki maintains the argument,

though the tone is softened to reflect a certain shift in the status of the yoseba which he accurately describes as sukiddorôka ('skid rowization').

Still, Aoki in 1989 is able to claim that (1) yoseba people are younger than skid row people; (2) the skid row has more people incapable of working than the yoseba; (3) personal relations are more casual and disorderly in the skid row, whereas there is a degree of order and solidarity in the yoseba; (4) drinking culture is far more dominant in the skid row, whereas yoseba culture is based on the lifestyle of the day labourer, of which drink is only one part; and (5) the skid row resembles a 'slum of dissolution' (kaitai-gata suramu), whereas the yoseba resembles a 'slum of integration' (tôgô-gata suramu) (Aoki 1989:56-7).

By the mid-1990s the differences between the two institutions had shrunk further still, although many of the skid rows were disappearing. Rapid aging, which was already apparent enough to warrant a footnote in Aoki's book, had gone much further; there were plenty of people incapable of working; relations often seemed casual and disorderly; drinking culture was rivalled only by gambling culture as the dominant fact of yoseba life; and integration was not a striking feature.

In short, viewed from the end of the 20th century, the yoseba and skid row look like very similar institutions

indeed: rather than being divided by culture, as Tsuchida and Aoki seem to suggest, perhaps they have been divided mostly by a difference in chronology. Despite its flamboyant name, Hobohemia was a place to get work. Famously, the hobo was 'a man who works and wanders' (Anderson 1923:87).

In post-war American writing, however, 'Hobohemia' seems to be used more or less as a synonym for skid row [10]. 'Skid row', too, was originally associated with work rather than social failure: it is a corruption of 'Skid Road,' deriving "from the skidways on which lumberjacks in the Northwest transported logs." (Bahr 1973:32) [11].

Only with the depression of the 1930s, "when great numbers of disconsolate unemployed men invaded skid row and changed its character" (Rooney 1970:18), did the skid row start to lose its work associations, and take on its present image, as a place for people who are themselves, 'on the skids'. In 1923 there were ten employment agencies on West Madison Street, the 'main stem' of Chicago's Hobohemia/Skid Row district; by 1964 there was just one (Hoch and Slayton 1989:93). The district's population fell

10 E.g. "Every metropolis has its Hobohemia populated by homeless and often jobless males who live in barren rooms and eke out a drab existence" (Gist and Fava, 1964:368).

11 Bahr says that the original Skid Road was a cluster of "lodging houses, saloons and establishments... contiguous to the 'skid road' running from the top of the ridge down to Henry Yesler's mill" in Seattle (Bahr 1973:32).

from roughly 60,000 in 1907 to 30,000 in 1923 and to 12,000 in 1958 (ibid 92).

By 1965, Wallace was able to sum up the history of skid row by saying that its function had shifted "from employment pool to old age rest home" (Wallace 1965:25). Two years later Bahr published 'The Gradual Disappearance of Skid Row' (Bahr 1967), and by 1970, Rooney was saying that the aged, ill and disabled seemed to be locating elsewhere, leaving skid row "to serve as an open asylum for alcoholics and the psychically disabled" (Rooney 1970:34).

The yoseba now seems to be undergoing a similar transformation and decline. The place retained its working identity for longer than skid row, but is now shedding it more quickly. In the mid-1990s the population of welfare recipients in Kotobuki has reached 4,000, or roughly half the population. This is a symbolic milestone in the transformation of a town of independent workers into a giant, informal welfare institution. Stevens, who did fieldwork in Kotobuki in the early 1990s, describes how this district, traditionally called a 'workers' town' (rôdôsha no machi) was increasingly being referred to as a 'welfare town' (fukushi no machi) (Stevens 1995b:230-1, 237).

Why has the yoseba retained its working character for longer than comparable American institutions? Partly because urbanization came later and faster to Japan,

providing numerous jobs in construction, an industry which was also relatively slow to mechanize. Many day labourers refer to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics as the high water mark for day labouring in construction, and in those days bucket gangs were still used on building sites in Japan. Again, post-war Japan has famously seen a massive increase in international trade, supporting employment in longshore work, the other classic day labourer occupation.

Conversely, change is now rapidly overtaking both sectors. Increasingly, buildings are being made of pre-fabricated units which eliminate jobs, and are being put together by less labour-intensive machinery, while containerization has eaten into dock employment. Also, the yoseba have become overly reliant on these two industries. Bogue's classic study of the post-war skid row in 24 American cities found that 20.4% of inhabitants worked in restaurants, 16.4% on railways, and 15.7% in manufacturing. Construction ranked only 7th, with 5.7%, and longshore work did not feature at all, probably reflecting intense unionization of American ports (Bogue 1963:177).

Among the doya-gai, Kotobuki today has an unusually high welfare population as I have mentioned. Even so, on my yoseba travels I found a general consensus among day labourers and observers alike that men who earned their living by working were a steadily dwindling part of the yoseba population and were being replaced by welfare

recipients and those unable to work but refused welfare and consequently destitute.

Tsuchida happened to compare the skid row and yoseba at a time when the transformation from work zone to outcast zone was already well advanced in the former and had yet to begin in the latter; Aoki when it was complete in the former and only half-way progressed in the latter. They mistook differences in location on similar developmental curves for cultural differences. Aoki, and most other left-wing observers of the yoseba, stress the identity of its inhabitants as 'workers'. He even uses the unorthodox Japanese expression 'hatarakido' (a 'working-person') to describe them. Yet the sad fact is that a growing number of yoseba inhabitants do not or cannot work.

The differences in transformational timing between doya-gai and skid row have to do with historic and macro-economic factors. Japan's defeat in World War II slowed her down in mid-century and created rootless workers and demand for their labour. Later on, Japan overtook the United States in economic growth and progress in automation, speeding the decline of the yoseba.

Overall, the similarities between these two institutions are far more striking than the differences; the Oriental/Occidental divide seems very narrow.

III. The yoseba as special cultural zone

Some left-wing Japanese academics find the whole concept of yoseba as special zones discriminatory:

"It should be noted that the tendency often found in sociology, architecture, urban studies etc., to define (the yoseba) as a 'slum', (hinmin-kutsu, saimin-kutsu), 'area of poor housing' or 'doya-gai', often ends up taking a discriminatory view which lumps together the yoseba, the discriminated Burakumin districts etc. as 'special zones' (tokutei chi'iki) which are deviant (from normality)." (Matsuzawa 1990:164)

My own view is that 'special zone' thinking is only discriminatory if based upon an uncritical view of the rest of the city as 'normal'. Later in this chapter I will discuss what implications the existence of the yoseba may have for our understanding of the society outside it. For now, suffice to say that there is abundant evidence to show that yoseba and doya-gai do have a very special position in Japanese cities, a position which reflects cultural role as well as socio-economic function. Let me now consider how the yoseba fits my original definition of a special cultural zone.

a) Clearly defined borders

As shown in Ch3 and Ch4, the three great doya-gai of

Kamagasaki, Sanya and Kotobuki all have clearly defined borders, marked variously by roads, rivers and railway tracks, and by a very noticeable change in atmosphere when the border is crossed [12].

This spatial distinction is matched by an equally clear-cut conceptual distinction. As my statistical tables show, day labour is a traditional, recognized occupational category -- albeit of disputed definition (Ch1:II) -- kept separate from 'temporary workers', 'self-employed' and other such categories which tend to subsume day labourers in other capitalist countries. Moreover, as I tried to show in Ch2, it is a category with a long and contentious history.

b) Different rules of behaviour

As I have tried to show in earlier chapters, there are drastic differences in behaviour inside and outside the yoseba. Often there are men lying drunk or exhausted in the street, loudly talking outside a bar, or warming themselves at a brazier in the colder months. The streets of the doya-gai are an infinitely more sociable environment than those outside its boundaries. The streets outside are

¹² I have Japanese friends living on the other side of the railway track from Sanya who have a pleasant, expensive apartment, work in banking and stock-broking, and would not dream of setting foot in Sanya.

nowhere -- they are just passages linking one somewhere to another. The streets inside are somewhere in their own right. Note too, that the need to rise early to find work means that the yoseba operates in its own time zone. The day labourers rise at 4 or 5 in the morning, and the place is generally almost silent by 10 o'clock at night.

There is probably more drinking, gambling and drug-abuse inside the yoseba than outside, though the first two of these activities are also extremely popular among mainstream Japanese. Murata Yoshio of the Kotobuki Welfare Centre also says that there are some 20% tee-totallers in the Kotobuki population -- well above the national adult average. Interestingly, this is exactly the figure-- "about one-fifth" -- suggested by Bahr for tee-totallers in Skid Row (Bahr 1973:27) [13].

c) People inside are differentiated from those outside by class, status or ethnicity

As I have tried to show in earlier chapters, there is a great gulf in lifestyle and domestic arrangements between the doya-gai and the outside world. The almost complete detachment from marriage and family life, paralleled by a

13 Caldarola found 33% tee-totallers in his 1964 survey of 628 doya-gai dwellers (1968:523) and concludes that the doya-gai is a more sober place than the skid row, for which he quotes Bogue's 1963 figure of 15% tee-totallers.

similarly sharp detachment from the important workplace relationships associated with a long-term job, place these men outside the two most dominant institutions of Japanese society.

IV. The yoseba as stigmatized cultural zone

I now attempt to show that the yoseba is not just special but also stigmatized. This is not as obvious as it may seem. Day labourers are not forbidden to ride on trains or buses, they are served in shops and they are seldom physically attacked (except when they become old and weak and are found sleeping in the street; see below). There are no legal sanctions against them and no obligation for them to remain in the yoseba. Compared with, say, a Pakistani in Britain, or indeed a Burakumin in Japan, the stigma attached to Japanese day labourers appears on the face of it to be rather mild. Nevertheless, it is always there in the background to life in the yoseba. Here are some pieces of evidence:

a) Stigmatized neighbours

It is striking that doya-gai tend to be located next to other stigmatized zones, such as baishun-gai (red-light

districts), execution grounds (up to the 19th century), and ghetto-like areas inhabited by Japan-resident Koreans and Burakumin (see Ch4).

Day labourers often compare themselves with prostitutes -- both groups are selling nikutai rōdō (literally, 'bodily labour') on a casual basis. The word tachinbō -- literally 'one who stands' -- is applied to both day labourers and prostitutes, from the idea that both professions entail waiting in the street for a customer to pick you up. The proximity of doya-gai and baishun-gai invites two alternative explanations. One, suggested by Aoki (undated:3) is that day labourers are important customers for prostitutes, and that the prostitutes are, in his odd turn of phrase, 'parasitic' on the day labourers. In 1993-5, however, few day labourers could afford to patronize prostitutes at all regularly. The men cruising the red-light districts were salaryman types. A likelier explanation could be that the proximity of day labourers and prostitutes reflects a tendency to put stigmatized professions in one place, away from the mainstream [14]. Add in the proximity of execution grounds to Sanya and Kamagasaki, and you have a triple nexus of bad work, bad

14 Hester (1992:2) describes the yoseba as a way of "mapping stigmatization onto urban space".

sex and bad death [15].

When I attended a rally at Sanya to mark the tenth anniversary of the assassination of Sato Mitsuo, it was striking that although the speakers -- mainly day labourer union activists -- called for solidarity with just about every conceivable group of workers in the world, the prostitutes of the neighboring Yoshiwara district were not mentioned. There seems to be no solidarity between these two groups.

Historically both doya-gai and baishun-gai have been deliberately located in districts and moved to other districts at the authorities' convenience. The Yoshiwara, for example, was set up by the Edo government in 1617 as a licensed quarter to concentrate the city's brothels, which until then had been scattered widely around the city, and was subsequently moved around several times over the centuries (Longstreet and Longstreet, 1988). A factor in the decision to grant the petition from brothel-keeper Shogu Jingemori to set up the Yoshiwara was social control. One of the conditions set by the city governor's office (Bugyōshō) was that

15 The comparison between day labourers and prostitutes is of course controversial. Some day labourers told me that prostitutes were better off than them, getting paid roughly the same for one trick as the day labourers got for a whole day's hard work, and with free accommodation too. But a Roman-Catholic missionary in Kamagasaki said this attitude "showed no understanding of the history of man's oppression of women."

"Proper enquiries shall be made of any visitor to a brothel, no matter whether he is a gentleman or ordinary citizen. In case any suspicious individual appears, the information shall be carried to the Bugyo-sho." (ibid:12; their translation).

Nor were prostitution quarters the only kind of 'licensed district' in the past. Yokoyama (1985[1899]:62-4) describes how kichin yado, the forerunners of the doya, were restricted to licensed districts. There were nine such districts in late-19th century Tokyo, including two each in the notorious slum wards of Honcho and Fukugawa.

The case of Nakamura-cho

A more modern example of stigmatized zoning is the Yokohama city government's treatment of Nakamura-cho, a precinct just down the road from Kotobuki, which used to have a mixture of doya and regular dwellings. It had been a slum district since well before the war, probably because it was located on marshy land at the foot of the Yamate bluff, not well suited to human habitation. The pre-war kichin yado were completely destroyed in allied bombing raids, but landlords swiftly replaced them with about a dozen doya-type cheap hotels after the war. In July 1962, with one eye on the major riot in Kamagasaki the previous year, the Kanagawa prefectural government opened the Aisen Home, a settlement house for homeless people, in Nakamura-cho (Tokuji 1972:17).

There was much friction between the domestic residents and the doya landlords, on two main fronts: (1) The doya, mostly cheaply constructed of wood and surrounded by dwellings, were a serious fire risk. On the night of January 11 1970, two of them burned down, with four fatalities. (2) The domestic residents disliked the doya-dwellers, who were mostly day labourers and given to urinating in the street, throwing cigarette butts and mouldy fruit and vegetables out of windows, getting drunk and shouting, and making camp fires in the children's parks (Tokuji 1972:19). The doya-dwellers were also suspected of being "criminals and sexual deviants living under false names" (ibid).

At the same time that a vociferous citizens' movement was demanding the removal of the doya from Nakamura-cho (1970-1), the government of Yokohama was reviewing its policy on Kotobuki. The conclusion, reached in 1971, was that "rather than dispersing the Kotobuki district, there is nothing for it but to aim at improving the standard of the district" (ibid). This decision led to construction of the General Labour Welfare Centre, the massive building which dominates Kotobuki to this day.

With Kotobuki's future as a yoseba/doya-gai thus assured, the pressure to 'clean up' Nakamura-cho became irresistible. The doya were gradually closed down, usually by suddenly noticing illegal fire hazards that had

previously been tolerated and refusing planning permission for enlargements and improvements. The net result is that today the doya of Yokohama are concentrated in Kotobuki and Nakamura-cho is a nondescript district of family dwellings. I quote this case at some length to show how a blend of tolerance (towards the special zone) and intolerance (towards people living outside it who are associated with it) can find expression in gradually altering the urban landscape into zones with clearly defined boundaries.

b) The academic/bureaucratic response

Japanese academics and bureaucrats alike have responded to doya-gai in a way which suggests they find the places disturbing at a quite deep cultural level. In academia, the social pathologists have done battle with left-wing scholars who have seen revolutionary potential in the yoseba riots. The bureaucrats have attempted to expunge the doya-gai from the map by the naive device of changing their names (see Ch4), and at other times have poured large quantities of public money into various attempts to improve the places.

Note, though, that when local governments have attempted to do something to improve life in the yoseba, such as setting up labour exchanges and welfare centres, or shelters for homeless people, they have invariably done so

indirectly, via an 'external organization' (gaikaku dantai), a sort of quango financed by government but not officially part of the government. There are practical aspects to this, such as the fact that staff of these bodies do not get such good pay or job security as those who are directly employed public officials; but it is also a kind of cultural distancing device, rather like the chain of sub-contractors which separates the prestige employer from the day labourer. In both cases, practical and socio-cultural advantages meld seamlessly.

c) Home of outcasts

There is a marked tendency for people with stigmatized identities to become day labourers or to end up in the doya-gai even if they are not day labourers. Hence all the facilities for people with disabilities in Kotobuki; and hence, possibly, the presence of Burakumin [16]. In Hiroshima, hibakusha (atom-bomb victims) have consistently been over-represented among day labourers (Lifton 1967:180).

d) The mainstream citizenry's response

16 Funamoto (1985:171) says that one-third of the workers in Kamagasaki are "said to be Burakumin", but admits that it is impossible to say anything certain on the point.

The response of mainstream Japanese people to the yoseba is often discriminatory. In the endless struggle between capital and labour, day labourers have long occupied a special and despised category, specifically excluded from union attempts to improve job security for other classes or workers. Consider for instance this statement, from a skilled temporary worker at the Yokohama docks in 1926:

"We have been raising our voices against the unfair temporary system at each opportunity for years now... to no avail. We are workers and we are skilled. Must we continue to be treated like day labourers?" (Koshinkai-ho, 1/1/1926 p.3, quoted in Gordon, 1985:149).

But alongside this long tradition of disdain, there have also been more sympathetic responses (Ch8, esp. 380-1). As a further example, consider my acquaintance Otsuka Yosuke, a successful commercial cameraman who abandoned his career to become a day labourer after coming across Kotobuki in the course of an assignment. His superb collection of black-and-white photos of day labourers in Kotobuki is entitled Rakantachi (1983). A rakan is a Buddhist monk who has achieved salvation -- an arhat, arahat or arahant in English. Mr. Otsuka is tapping into the tradition of noble outcasts, which is very strong in Japan [17].

17 the Chinese character SEI, meaning 'sacred,' also has a purely Japanese reading HIJIRI, meaning a wandering mendicant monk.

Mr. Otsuka thinks the Kotobuki men have something. He does not feel sorry for them. Perhaps one reason why most Japanese do not feel any great urge to help homeless doya-gai dwellers may be to do with this view that they may have something -- that they are pursuing a different path through life which is not necessarily inferior to their own. By contrast, the small minority of Christians in Japan see the poor as a focus for pity and charity, hence the numerous doya-gai missions.

At the other extreme, some Japanese react to the doya-gai and their inhabitants with disgust expressed in physical violence. There have been countless incidents of day labourers being beaten up, especially when they are sleeping rough in streets or parks, and even murders are not uncommon. In the mid-80s at Sanya there were several murders of men in the street committed by youths, and in 1992, there was a spate of attacks in which fireworks were let off in the direction of men sleeping rough near Yokohama baseball stadium. In 1994 there was a horrific assault upon a 57-year-old man in Fukuoka. Some young people, he thinks school kids, attacked him with an industrial-size stapler and left him with five 1 cm staples in his head. He was drunk and asleep in a shrubbery adjoining the approach to a shrine at the time, so this was a very literal violation of sanctuary [18]. Similarly

18 Asahi Shinbun, October 8, 1994.

Matsushige (1988a:208-10) describes a 1986 airgun attack by school-age boys against a group of men from Kamagasaki who were sleeping in the grounds of a Buddhist temple. In November 1995 the Tokyo metropolitan police announced that they had arrested three teenage boys for beating and kicking to death a 69-year-old unemployed man in the Jujo district of northern Tokyo. He had upset them by sleeping on a park bench which they used for nocturnal meetings with their biker friends [19]. A few weeks before that, a 63-year-old homeless labourer drowned after he was tipped into the Sumida river by two young men who found him sleeping on the wheel barrow he used to collect cardboard for recycling [20].

The above are just a tiny selection of incidents that have become commonplace. The most notorious incident of this kind happened in 1983, when a gang of schoolboys assaulted 16 homeless men in Yokohama, killing three [21]. This famous case, described by Kan (1986:18) as "a prominent expression of the discriminatory nature of our civic society," is documented in great detail by Sae (1983) and Aoki (1984), from whose works I now summarise the most

19 Asahi Shinbun, November 14, 1995.

20 Asahi Shinbun, October 18, 1995.

21 The number of victims varies from one account to another. Sixteen were documented by police, but there may well have been far more. One of the three murder victims was killed by a different group of boys to the main group implicated in the incident (Aoki 1984:37),

important points.

Although this case is sometimes referred to in Japan as the 'Kotobuki Incident' [22], few of the assaults actually happened in Kotobuki. There is safety in numbers within the zone, but as I mentioned (Ch.7), homeless men tend to sleep in a more dispersed area around Kotobuki. Most of the assaults were committed by a gang of ten boys, all of them aged around 15 and attending the same middle school in Yokohama. Seven of the ten had divorced parents, and most of them were not doing well at school. They called their gang the Kyōmai Rengō (which translates very roughly as 'Terrifying Dance Alliance'), but lived in fear of a stronger gang called the Chūka Rengō ('Chinese Alliance', though its members were also Japanese boys). On January 31, 1983, a show-down (kettō) was scheduled between the two gangs for February 6, 1983.

The Kyomai boys' habit of attacking homeless men had started back in mid-December 1982, when one of them kicked a man lying in the gutter in Kotobuki "casually, for fun" [23]. However, the assaults escalated as the show-down approached. On February 4 a 53-year-old man called Okada was found dead in front of a bank in Chojamachi (near Kotobuki), though the police decided there was insufficient evidence to prosecute the boys for this

22 N: E.g. in Kan, 1986:18, and Matsuzawa 1988:148.

23 'Futo shita asobi' (Aoki 1983:19).

murder. At 8.20 the following evening, the boys attacked eight different men in the lee of Yokohama Stadium, one of their victims suffering a broken arm. They then proceeded to Yamashita Park, where they came upon Sudo Taizo, aged 60, who was living in the park. They "attacked him truly like wild animals, repeatedly kicking and beating him, and then they threw the unconscious Mr. Sudo into a rubbish bin. They span the bin round and round" (Aoki 1983:33). Sudo was discovered at 10.30pm by a passing tourist who heard his moans coming from a shrubbery where the boys had abandoned him. He had hideous wounds to his head and chest, numerous broken ribs, and was drenched in blood. He was rushed to hospital but died two days later.

Like most of the other assaults perpetrated by the boys, this one happened in a well-frequented part of Yokohama, quite early in the evening. There must have been witnesses, yet neither Sae nor Aoki managed to find anybody who would admit to having seen any of the assaults. Nor was the Kyomai gang inventing a new sport: the police investigation found evidence that similar attacks had been going on for many years.

One lingering image of the affair is of the studied indifference of the general public. The authorities took a relatively light view of the matter: the police did not set up an investigation headquarters until several days after the murders (ibid:32-4) and the boys were not heavily

punished. Nine of the boys were sent to a reformatory (shōnen-in) and one to a somewhat tougher kind of reform school (kyōgo-in). None drew prison sentences. To add insult to injury, the city government of Yokohama sent 'condolence money' of ¥30,000 to relatives of each man killed, and ¥10,000 to each man hospitalized (ibid:37). At 1983 rates, these pay-outs were about 100 pounds and 30 pounds respectively.

According to Aoki, several of the boys were genuinely surprised when they were arrested. They told reporters that the men were "dirty and smelly", and they thought they were doing the city of Yokohama a service by "cleaning rubbish off the streets"; that they did it "half for fun", and that "it was fun to watch their pathetic attempts to escape". One boy commented: "When I put the boot in, the bones broke with a kind of crisp, popping sound that made me feel refreshed" [24].

The newspapers made great play of the fact that the boys' victims did not resist -- they were kicking a poor defenceless man. In fact, as Aoki points out (1983:67-8), any attempt by a Kotobuki man to fight back at his assailants would be far more likely to bring the police to the scene than the original assault. Onishi (1994:10) describes a recent case in Nagoya, where a homeless worker

24 "Ashigeri o ireru to hone ga bokki-to ore, kibun ga sukatto shita." (Sae 1984:140).

hit back at some youths who were tormenting him. The police arrested him and charged him with attempted murder. The youths were not arrested or charged.

The day labourers of Kotobuki did not ignore the 1983 incident. A protest rally was held, and bands of day labourers were still handing out leaflets outside middle schools around Yokohama two months later. They were headed simply WE ARE ANGRY, and appealed to all middle-school students not to forget the murders [25].

V. The view from inside

It is impossible to generalize about how day labourers view their own status, since their views often conflict. For example: I was asked to write an article about Kotobuki for a Japanese magazine, and a young photographer had come along to take some pictures in front of the Labour Welfare Centre. It was a rather desolate scene, with three or four yankara sitting round a bonfire, black all over their

Compare the attitudes of the Kyomai boys with this:
"... the tramp is consciously and enthusiastically imitated. Around the camp fire watching the coffee pot boil or the 'mulligan' cook, the boys are often found mingling with the tramps and listening in on their stories of adventure.

"To boys the tramp is not a problem, but a human being, and an interesting one at that. He has no cares nor burdens to hold him down. All he is concerned with is to live and seek adventure, and in this he personifies the heroes in the stories the boys have read. Tramp life is an invitation to a career of varied experiences and adventures" (Anderson 1983:85).

faces, and a couple of dozen men waiting for the labour exchange to open.

"One of them objected to being photographed. "Hottoite kure, omē to kankei nē daro" (Leave us in peace, it's got nothing to do with you!) he shouted. This was a stocky, red-faced man with bags under his eyes whom I've seen a few times. A thin man with a small moustache, glasses and baseball cap argued back: "Don-don toreba ii'n dayo. Zehi kono sanjō no koto o sekai ni oshiete moraitai!" (He should take as many pictures as he likes. We want the truth of this tragic scene told to the world!)

A different objection came from Nishikawa Kimitsu, who was also standing in front of the shutters. He didn't like the second man's use of the word sanjō (tragic scene): "Iie, sanjō ja nai. Futsu na hito dake dayo." (No, this isn't a tragic scene. We're just ordinary guys.) (F383)

Here are three quite different views of doya-gai life from three men who know it from the inside. The first man seems to view the doya-gai as a shameful place, or at least a special, private place, and resents outsiders poking their noses in. The second man shares the negative view of the doya-gai, but blames it on failings in Japanese society rather than on the men themselves, and wants the outside world to be made aware of what's going on. The third man rejects outright the whole idea that the yoseba is a special, problematic zone [26].

One theme which often cropped up in conversations with day labourers was that the doya-gai is a place where the

26 This despite the fact that on other occasions Kimitsu compared Kotobuki to a Nazi concentration camp: Ch5, p.224.

formal social codes of mainstream society do not apply. People could make friends rapidly, because they were all in the same boat. There was no uchi/soto (insider/outsider) problem because everyone in the doya-gai was an outsider anyway. People would talk straight, rather than using tatemae (saying things for form) for outsiders and reserving ones honne (true feelings) for insiders. In other words they were presenting the doya-gai as a place for 'uncrafted selves', to modify Kondo -- unpolished nuggets of selfhood.

One strain of Kondo's argument derives from socio-linguistics. Drawing on Harada 1975 and Bachnik 1982, she discusses discusses the wide range of pronouns (watakushi, watashi, boku, ore etc) and other labels (kin descriptors, job titles, using one's own name, etc.) available to refer to oneself in Japanese and remarks "the plethora of available "I's" throws into relief the multiple ways people present themselves and their identities in particular situations... so-called pronouns are indexical and deictic, shifting with social positioning and the relations between "self" and "other" (Kondo 1990:29). However, a computer search of my fieldnotes threw up just three uses of boku, two of watashi (one from a very effeminate man) and one of watakushi, against 27 uses of ore, the crude, macho pronoun

[27]. It may well be that the men would use other pronouns and referents outside the doya-gai, but inside you could be your simple self.

Sometimes this absence of artifice had disastrous results:

Mr. Yoshida (a former salaryman now working as a day labourer) was as cheerful and lively as ever, and gave me a lecture on what a wonderful place Kotobuki was: Unlike the corporate society (kaisha no shakai) that he was used to, there was no tatema, only honne - people expressing themselves in a straightforward, honest manner.

"Sometimes a little too straightforward," I said. "Too much honne can lead to fights."

Almost as if to illustrate the point, Kameyama, who had been talking with 'Jimmy', chose this particular moment to deliver a crunching punch to Jimmy's jaw. The smack was audible all round the crossroads, though it didn't knock Jimmy down. He staggered back, rubbing his jaw. Yoshida and I stepped forward to intervene. Kameyama elbowed us aside. Kasu!" (scum) he shouted at Jimmy. "Pû-tarô!" Yoshida tried to pull him away. Now Kameyama went after Yoshida, chasing him across the road, past the Okura snackbar. Yoshida is no fighter, and he swiftly disappeared, perhaps to reflect more deeply on the nature of this honest, straightforward society of men. (F593-4)

VI. Kegare and the creation of the yoseba

The role of the yoseba/doya-gai in the modern Japanese city may be explicable in terms of of 'kegare' -- a word variously translated as 'defilement,' 'impurity' or 'spiritual pollution'. This idea was first put to me by

27 The sample is rather small because I usually write fieldnotes in English, occasionally adding the Japanese for reference.

Mr. Oi Kazuaki, a young Christian who works at a Kotobuki welfare facility and also runs the Thursday Patrol (269-74). Referring to the presence of municipal facilities for the mentally and physically handicapped in Kotobuki, he said that all the different people in Kotobuki were viewed as being tainted with kegare. "Japanese establish cooperative groups," he added, "and defend them by expelling that which is different. That's why they put all the problem people in one place." Oi called Kotobuki a town of solitary individuals ('tanshinsha no machi'), placed outside the Japanese family system. The fact that they had left or been expelled from the family he thought was closely connected with their polluted status (F15).

There is a large literature on kegare (Sakurai 1974, Namihira 1977, 1984, 1985, 1987; Gamo 1984; Shintani 1986, 1987; Ohnuki-Tierney 1987, etc.), which contains a fair amount of supportive material for Oi's view. Early Shinto writings, such as the Norito and the Engi Shiki, outline five categories of kegare: physical dirt, such as faeces or decomposing matter; blood; anything relating to death; subjection to disasters or misfortune; and any action tending to disrupt the smooth working of human society. Whether kegare thinking can actually be described as causing social prejudice, or whether it offers a religious justification for pre-existing prejudice (a possibility briefly alluded to by Hoshino and Watanabe, 1986:126) is a

moot point. Still, it is a fact that doya-gai and their inhabitants fall into all of the ancient kegare categories to varying degrees:

a. Physical dirt.

Doya-gai are certainly more dirty than the average urban district, and day labourers do a lot of dirty work. Several of them gave me graphic descriptions of jobs entailing repairing sewage pipes and the like. It is also well-known that day labourers have in the past been recruited to do dangerous work cleaning out nuclear power plants (Tanaka 1985, 1988) -- a very literal form of contamination. One of the cliches of contemporary Japanese journalism is that youngsters these days will not do jobs in the '3K' category, meaning 'kitanai, kitsui, kiken' (in English it is 3D: 'dirty, demanding, dangerous'). It is certainly noticeable that students and other young men looking for casual jobs seem to prefer working at convenience stores, karaoke boxes or video rental shops to working on building sites, even though the latter work pays twice as well. Day labourers often grumble about this lack of spirit.

While preparing for field trips to Kotobuki, I sometimes worked out at a health club. Its slogan was "Ii ase o nagashimashō" -- "Let's make good sweat flow." There

is good sweat and bad sweat in Japan. Exercise sweat is voluntary, self-improving, good sweat. Labouring sweat is forced, self-destructive, bad sweat.

b. Blood.

This category is mainly to do with women's menstruation and childbirth, but the Norito also refers to the wounds of warriors. Perhaps a third of the men in Kotobuki have visible wounds, and I saw some quite awful wounds go undressed. Physical imperfection in general has long been associated with kegare; Aiba (1965:42) mentions a document of 916 A.D. which describes observances to dispell the kegare associated with physical handicap.

c. Misfortune.

This seems a very important category. Namihira Emiko, one of the best-known writers on kegare, points out that the term has traditionally been used to account for bad luck and failure (e.g. 1985:269-79). Day labourers are generally viewed as failures in the game of life, and I think at some level this failure is associated with kegare -- there is something wrong with them which makes them more disturbing to outsiders than people who are merely down on their luck. Hoshino and Watanabe (1986:126) likewise

observe that "people who are poor or of low status are viewed as 'abominable polluted beings' (itowashii fujōsha), and put it down to the Buddhist belief that material poverty is a 'reward to karma' (shukugyō), that is, a punishment for spiritual poverty and particularly for insufficient alms-giving in the previous life.

d. Death.

A combination of hard work, heavy drinking, irregular eating and occasional or frequent sleeping in the street tends to prevent yoseba day labourer living long beyond their 60th birthday. Although I never came across a corpse in the street myself, people in Kotobuki would talk quite calmly about poor old so-and-so who'd been scooped off the road and taken to the morgue the other day. The early and miserable death suffered by many day labourers is a theme running through the literature -- four yoseba books even have 'death' in the title (Funamoto 1985, Aoki 1989, Ifunke 1991, Higa 1993).

The kegare generated by death is typically cleansed through elaborate post-mortuary rituals which are used to gradually purify the dead person -- a process which can take 50 years or more in some parts of Japan (Namihira 1977:47-52). The spirits of dead people who have not been properly purified are often named by shamans as responsible

for any ill fortune subsequently visiting their family or village (ibid). Now the point is that these rituals are carried out by the family members of the deceased, and many day labourers are estranged from their families and are likely to die without any known relatives to carry out the observances: a classic *kegare* risk. Even the identity of the man himself may be unknown.

When this happens in Kotobuki, it is customary for the monks of Tokuon-ji, a nearby Buddhist temple, to cremate the corpse and perform the bare minimum of ceremonies--the Buddhist equivalent of a pauper's burial. The organized Buddhist religion, which so seldom engages in charitable works towards living day labourers, does take care of them after death (see also Ch7 p.281-2).

These solitary dead people are called muen-botoke or 'unconnected spirits' (cf Ch2:II, p.34). This status is the after-death equivalent of the living day labourer's estrangement from his family, and it seems to bother them more. Mr. Nozawa always carries his sister's name and address in his pocket. He never visits her, but he has an understanding that she will see that the appropriate rites are performed after his death, and this is a great comfort to him. As mentioned (Ch.5:VIII), Shigehiro says that village neighbours would disapprove of his parents if they let him in the house alive, but would also disapprove if they did not inter his body in the family grave. One

reason for this could be that failure to take care of the dead man's remains would expose the village to kegare.

e. Disruption of social order

The detachment of most day labourers from family and company means that they have disrupted the social order on their way to the yoseba. Some of them also have criminal records -- which defines them as 'zenka-mono', 'a person with a previous record,' another polluted status [28].

Their very unconnectedness flouts the social order. Their fluid way of life does not recognize any settled order of things, and relationships are taken up or abandoned at irregular intervals. One is reminded of Douglas' Durkheimian argument that "primitive means undifferentiated; modern means differentiated." (Douglas 1984[1966]:77). The men in the yoseba are not differentiated, by class, income, status etc. to anything like the degree shown by those outside it, and this seems an important element in its role as a Special Cultural Zone.

In short, I think Mr. Oi is right. The kegare concept

28 Prison is another Special Cultural Zone, with its own social rules and language, vividly described in Watanabe 1983. The prisoner's slang-term shaba, meaning 'the outside world' derives from the Sanskrit Saha, meaning 'this world' or 'the land of the living'. Interestingly, I also heard this word used in the yoseba to describe the world outside it.

does indeed seem to explain many aspects of doya-gai life. Note that one does not become tainted by kegare by 'doing something bad'. It is not a category based on Judeo-Christian morality. Kegare is associated with people or actions which are inauspicious rather than evil. Admittedly crime attracts kegare, but so too does illness (eg Namihira 1987:S69-70). Most mainstream Japanese do not condemn day labourers; they avoid them. We are talking here about (Im)purity and Danger (Douglas 1984), as opposed to Crime and Punishment, and this distinction strikes is crucial to understanding Japanese society in general, which sometimes confuses Euro-American critics by seeming to be remarkably tolerant and worryingly repressive by turns.

Thus the policing attitude mentioned above-- accepting high crime rates in Kotobuki because they imply lower rates elsewhere -- does not work in terms of absolute morality, but works very well in terms of kegare. Pollution cannot be totally eradicated, but it can be focused in one district and kept in one place.

Again, the schoolboys did not kill the day labourers because they thought they had done something wrong, but because the men were perceived as dirty, they were rubbish in the streets, they were, in the famous phrase, 'matter out of place'. At some level, the legal system accepted the logic; hence, perhaps, the light sentences. As I mentioned, few of the attacks and none of the murders

occurred in Kotobuki itself, where day labourers are not out of place, they are in their place; for there is a place for everything and so long as everything is in its place there will be no problem.

VII. Kegare in the modern city

If the doya-gai is seen as a zone of pollution, what then about the rest of the modern city? Is it in some sense pure? Or is it just ordinary?

The debate on kegare among Japanese anthropologists and folklorists usually places the term alongside two others: hare, and ke. Broadly speaking, hare signifies the sacred and pure, kegare the sacred and impure, and ke is a residual category covering the rest of human experience (fig.1):

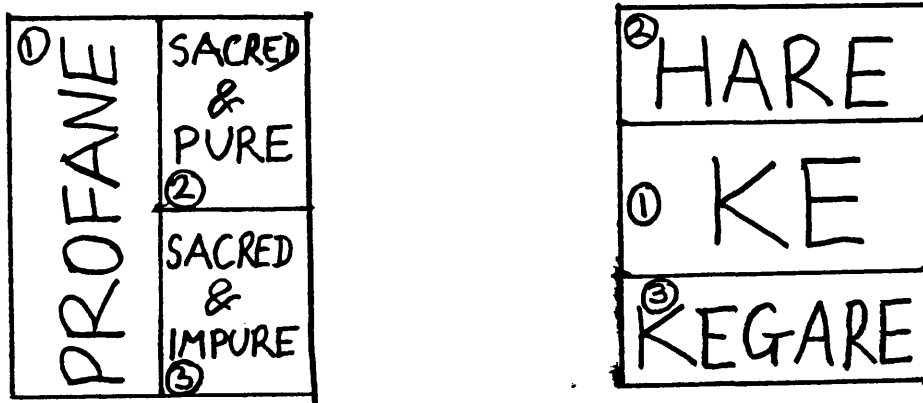


Fig. 1 Conceptualization of Space/time:

(a) Pure Durkheimian model.

(b) Namihira model.

This triad, or rather this double dichotomy (sacred:profane plus pure:impure) seems to correspond very closely to Durkheim's conception of the sacred and profane (Durkheim 1967 [1915]:51-2) -- indeed, so closely as to make one wonder how much the pattern owes to Japanese academics with a Durkheimian training.

However, Namihira (1977:247-9) argues that there is one big difference between the two patterns: namely that whereas Durkheim sees the pure and impure closely related by both being in the realm of the sacred, she strongly insists that in traditional Japanese societies there is no direct link between hare and kegare. Rituals and festivals are designed to neutralize kegare into a harmless state of ke, as in mortuary observances; or to elevate ke into an exalted state of hare, as in most celebratory Shinto festivals. But polluted things cannot be made pure, they can only be made harmless. Murata (1988:52) explicitly applies the same construct to social structure, with a diagram showing the emperor at the top (sacred and pure), the common folk in the middle (profane) and senmin, a word variously translated as 'the poor' or 'outcasts' at the bottom (sacred and polluted). His argument is that these special groups above and below the bulk of the citizenry are created, or at least manipulated, by the ruling powers as a tool of social control; and that, as the ambiguity of 'senmin' suggests, the technique involved conflating

discrimination on grounds of wealth with old concepts of ritual pollution (ibid 46-61).

Namihira sees the kegare principle expressed in the contrasting development of religion in Europe and Japan. Christianity is a single, exclusive religion claiming to handle all aspects of life, death and resurrection. The pure and the impure are under the same roof, reflecting their close connection. In Japan, however, there is a division of labour with Buddhism in charge of death/kegare and Shinto handling life/hare (1977:249).

She also sees the principle expressed in spatial terms, in the layout of the villages she studied. Thus at Katsumoto-ura, an island near Nagasaki, she observed that the shrines were right next to the sea, which is worshipped by the people as the source of their livelihoods; that the grave-sites were up in the hills behind the village, with the Buddhist temples a little further down the slope; and that the houses of the village were in between the temples and shrines. Thus there were zones of hare (the shrines and the sea); kegare (the temples and the graves) and an intervening area of ke (the village) separating the two and serving as the venue for everyday life (Namihira 1977: 128-34). This in turn she relates to Japanese cosmology, where again the ke zone (earth) separates the hare (heaven) and kegare (hell) zones (ibid:20-34).

This is persuasive. But what happens when people

brought up in this supernatural landscape suddenly find themselves in a vast, anonymous city like Tokyo or Yokohama or Osaka? Are the traditional modes of thought swept away, or do they endure, or are they transformed?

The division of labour in Japanese academia tends to leave the villages to anthropologists and folklorists, and the cities to sociologists, and I have yet to see *kegare* discussed in an urban context, except by Hoshino and Watanabe, who argue that thinking based on the *hare/ke/kegare* categories still influences Japanese social welfare policy (1986:123-6). But out of all the day labourers I got to know in Kotobuki, fewer than 20% were born in the Tokyo-Yokohama region, and the vast majority had rural upbringings. The same is true, to a slightly lesser degree, of the Japanese urban population in general -- as we are reminded by the annual exodus to the country at Shōgatsu (New Year) and Bon (Midsummer festival of the dead), the calendrical high spots of *hare* and *kegare* respectively. These scenes remind us that urbanization has happened later and more rapidly in Japan than in most industrialized countries.

The question of how rapid urbanization affects people's world view is very complex. In the case of pollution concepts, some Japanese writers distinguish between 'black uncleanness' associated with death and 'red uncleanness' associated with blood, menstruation and

childbirth (eg Namihira 1987:S68). In modern Japanese cities, black uncleanness is still taken seriously--funerals and subsequent rites are carried out with scrupulous attention to detail. On the other hand, the red variety seems to have lost much of its ability to disturb. Menstruating women do not have any great social problems in modern Japanese cities.

It is probably safe to assume that migrating to the metropolis radically changes the supernatural landscape. The kind of symmetry of hare and kegare observed by Namihira in Katsumoto-ura cannot, physically, be reproduced in the big cities, where temples, shrines and graveyards are jumbled together amidst the homes of the people. On the other hand, one can generally expect lower rent on an apartment located next to a graveyard, or formerly occupied by a suicide. The Imperial Palace in Tokyo is a clearly defined area of hare; and the doya-gai and Burakumin districts are perhaps the nearest thing to a clearly defined area of kegare.

Even if Namihira is right in arguing that traditionally hare and kegare must be mediated through the everyday condition of ke, this is not necessarily the case in the modern city, where the categories seem to be distorted though not obliterated. Perhaps the varied responses of mainstream Japanese to doya-gai dwellers outlined above, the visceral hatred of some and the wistful

admiration of others, suggests that hare and kegare are not as discretely separated in the modern city as they are in the traditional village.

Moreover, a number of writers implicitly reject Namihira's partitioning, claiming to find close connections between hare and kegare categories. Thus Yamaguchi (1977) argues that the emperor and the burakumin are both derived from god-like strangers in folklore called marebito, lit. 'rare people'. Folklorist Shintani Takanori explicitly applies this kind of thinking to kegare: "It is true that there is a profound ambiguity as to whether places like doya-gai are sacred or profane, polluted or pure. This is part of a more general ambiguity over the nature of kegare. The concept implies sacred power; the negative connotations stem from fear of power that cannot be controlled. Being unaffiliated, day labourers resist control; this associates them with the emperor, who is also immune to the controls affecting mainstream people." (Shintani personal communication). He went on to argue that kegare cycled between the top and bottom ends of Japanese society, between the imperial court (kyūtei) and the doya-gai. The institution of the emperor prevented kegare from being properly exorcised from Japanese society, and it had to be absorbed in places like the doya-gai.

Shintani has also published against the Namihira/Murata position on the complete separation of hare

from kegare by ke:

"... it should be noted that kegare can arise from a state of either ke or hare. Chaos and a lack of inhibition, characteristics of hare events, including violence, sexual permissiveness, drinking and gambling, can quickly turn into kegare, and people must be careful to avoid this and return to the normal daily pattern of ke." (Shintani 1987:xix; extract from English summary).

Here is one clue to the varied responses of the mainstream to yoseba life. One aspect of the yoseba is play (violence, drinking and gambling), which is in a conceptual zone where hare shades into kegare (pace Namihira). One might further argue that there is a somewhat similar ambiguity about the work aspect of the yoseba: dirty work may defile the worker, but it also helps to purify the environment. Hence the word kiyome, translated in Masuda 1974 as 'purification, cleansing, purgation, exorcism, ablution' -- but also, in the Edo period, signifying a street sweeper [29].

Amino -- another scholar linking hinin with yujo (prostitutes) in his influential study of sacred and profane space in medieval Japan (Amino 1994) -- has evidence to suggest that the kiyome also had a side-business selling salt, important in ritual purification to this day (1994:56-8). Thus the same defiled occupation

29 De Vos and Wetherall cite a 13th century document as saying that Kiyome was a less common term used interchangeably with eta, to refer to "street sweepers, well diggers and craftsmen enjoined to certain temples" (1983:4).

handled both practical and symbolic purification.

Shintani has also got a theory about how the Shinto gods (kami) emerge from states of kegare, which concludes thus:

"Kegare is always reproduced as a result of living activity, and is linked to the image of death; and given that it has the characteristics of being impure, dangerous, powerful and contaminating, it can never be left untreated. Some kind of ritual process is always conducted to drive it out. Then, when kegare is released from the hand of man in... (this) process, its power becomes uncontrollable by man and actually increases its sinister character. At this point comes the folkloric spirit with its mechanism which reverses the value system, re-reads kegare, and turns it into a force for good fortune, from which ultimately the gods are born. The gods on the borders (sakai no kami), the rare people (marebito), the visiting gods (raibôjin), the spirits and gods of the ancestors, were all in this way born from kegare." (Shintani 1987:168; my translation).

Shintani derives this proposition from an analysis of the many and varied Japanese rituals relating to crows. As in Britain, crows are birds of ill-omen. People in many parts of Japan associate the sound of their call with somebody dying. However, other rituals, also very prevalent, seem to treat crows as propitious divinities. Food is shared with them on special occasions, for instance. Shintani argues that the various inauspicious and auspicious roles taken by the crow are not mutually contradictory but located at different spots on the kegare processing line.

What has all this to do with day labourers? One of

the main sets of crow beliefs described by Shintani concerns their role in eating food offerings left on gravestones. It is customary to leave fresh food, typically rice-cakes and tangerines, sometimes with sake and cigarettes, in front of gravestones, for the deceased person to consume. Especially large quantities of food are left when someone has only recently died, since raging hunger and thirst are thought to be characteristic of the newly-dead person's soul. It is very inauspicious (kegare) to find that food uneaten and rotting away several days later. Ideally, it should be eaten by a crow (Shintani 1987:53-63); but sometimes it is consumed by a human passer-by. He may be a wanderer; a scavenger; or even a day labourer.

I mentioned earlier (Ch4:I, p.157) that the Tokyo city government has been running a job creation programme under which 45 day labourers are bussed to the massive municipal cemetery at Yabashira, to clean up the graves and cut the grass. I later met a man who'd been on that job:

It's a laugh. The men are supposed to form straight lines and work their way steadily across the cemetery, weeding and litter-collecting as they go. In fact, they soon break ranks, drifting around in twos and threes, talking, joking, and eating tangerines and rice-cakes left on the graves by mourners for their deceased relatives... After a couple of hours they eat the lunch-box provided and get on the bus back to Sanya (Riki, F1010).

On the one hand, the day labourers are flagrantly

violating taboos and showing no respect for the dead. On the other hand, somebody has got to eat the tangerines and rice-cakes or they will go physically and spiritually bad. Kiyome, indeed.

Similarly, the cases I discussed of day labourers digging up bodies after disasters (Ch8, 378-9) may also be read as instances of day labourers absorbing kegare on behalf of the broader society. Of course only a tiny proportion of work done by day labourers falls into this very clearly inauspicious category, but still it seems significant that when disaster strikes, the Men of Uncertainty come into their own. They benefit economically, while working hard and facing horrors that others would rather avoid. They look death in the eye and sometimes even, as in Yabashira Cemetery, laugh in its face.

Until quite recently, men in the yoseba used to make this ambiguous gesture (noble sacrifice / benefit from others' misfortune) even more literally, by selling their blood. Onishi (undated 10) and de Barry (1974:67) describe this practice, the latter explaining how underweight men from Sanya would put stones in their pockets to pass the minimum body weight for giving blood [30].

30 Japan opened its first commercial blood bank during the Korean War, in conjunction with the US-led occupation. In the 1960s, up to 98% of all blood used for transfusions in Japan came from people selling it to private companies (Titmuss 1970:175), which made a point of locating facilities close to the yoseba.

Some writers also say that the bodies of dead day labourers are commonly used for dissection practice in medical training (eg Onishi undated:10-11). But day labourers also sacrifice their bodies for the greater good in less obvious ways in their day-to-day life. For a start they do risky work, often taking chances with their own lives that more regular workers would refuse:

I asked him (a Sanya tobi) if he used a safety harness (anzen-tai) when doing dangerous high-level work. "I do and I don't," he said. We have to wear a safety harness by law, so we always have one strapped round the waist. But the trouble is, it obstructs your movements and slows down the work. So usually we don't secure the other end. It's just for show. If there happens to be an accident, the fact that the man had a safety harness on will get the employer off the hook." Work has been very short of late, and he has just recently started sleeping rough. (F548).

This tendency to sacrifice day labourers' lives is indirectly confirmed by Fujimoto and Park (1994), in their interesting comparison between rates of crime and rates of accidents. In a five-way comparison between Japan, the US,

There were frequent problems with 'dirty blood' infected with hepatitis and a gradual shift to imported blood and voluntary donations. Ironically, since much of the imported blood came from the US, where skid row people also have the custom of selling their blood, the symbolic flow from margin to mainstream may well have continued. Later the scandal concerning AIDS-infected imports dealt a further blow to the transfusion service, which is now striving to get by on voluntary donations alone. In 1989 only 26,900 liters of plasma were bought, down from 570,000 liters in the peak year of 1963. In September 1989 the Ministry of Health and Welfare officially adopted a new policy of using only freely-donated blood. The last blood-buying centre was closed in 1990 (Mainichi Daily News, 29/7/90).

the UK ('England' in some of the data), (West) Germany and France, covering post-war data up to about 1988, they find Japan showing by far the lowest rates of homicide, reported rape and theft, and the second lowest rate (after England) in the table for deaths due to traffic accidents. In striking contrast, Japan had the worst record of the five for industrial accidents (0.7/100,000); and unlike the other countries, there was no decline in the rate during the period covered by Fujimoto and Park. Industrial accidents are the big blot on Japan's public safety statistics. In a broader comparison between 16 developed countries, only Austria had a consistently worse record.

Fujimoto and Park argue that "many or most work-related deaths, including those resulting from accidents on the job, are the consequence of management's refusal to pay for safety measures and the government's refusal to enforce safety standards," and they describe work-related deaths as "crime by any other name." (1994:116). This is certainly the view of day labourers and yoseba activists. Campaigning for workplace safety and for compensation in case of injury is an important part of the unions' work, and Junichiro (the Kotobuki day labourer union) fought a great legal battle against Chiyoda Construction Co., to force the latter to admit responsibility for the death of Kawase Seiji, a day labourer and popular union member who died after being accidentally run over by a bulldozer on a

construction site where he was working for a Chiyoda subsidiary. The two key points at issue were (1) that workplace negligence is a kind of crime; and (2) that however long the intervening chain of sub-contractors, the prime contractor still bears responsibility for people working for it. The case ended in a memorable victory for the union and Chiyoda were forced to pay compensation (Kawase etc. 1985).

If we compare murder with worksite deaths, the former crime is something that can happen to anybody, while the latter is one that generally happens only to people in certain hazardous professions. Moreover, casuals are more likely to be put in dangerous situations than regulars:

He (Mr. Fukada of Kamanichiro) said there are roughly 2,000 fatal accidents in the workplace every year in Japan, of which about 1,000 are in construction. "And you won't find one single regular employee of a big general contractor among them. The further down the hierarchy you are, the more likely you are to get killed." (F748)

In short, here is a pattern which tends to concentrate the risks of everyday life in a small part of the population viewed as expendable. A similar pattern may be observed in the distribution of nuclear power stations in Japan: They are tightly concentrated in a few rural coastal areas which take on a disproportionate share of the risk from any accident. Airborne radioactivity may not respect prefectural boundaries, but at least the cultural

pollution associated with it can be contained [31].

Horie points out that areas with thin populations and poor living standards tend to be picked as sites for clusters of power plants: the main nuclear power plant area of Fukushima prefecture, for instance, used to be known as 'the Tibet of Fukushima' for its grinding rural poverty. Thus the power plants become a badge of shame at the same time as endangering the lives of the people and giving them a further polluted association (Horie 1981:166ff).

Hare/ke/kegare thinking is a way of ordering the universe and defining ones place within it. Discrimination against groups of people is one way of doing that. The creation and continued existence of the Burakumin is the biggest example of that, but there are many others. In Umani, another one of Namihira's villages, they discriminated against people suspect of having supernatural powers associated with animals (inugami-suji); in Edward Norbeck's study of the island of Takashima (Norbeck 1978) he found they discriminated against some people alleged to practise drag-net fishing (soko-biki) -- and so on.

Displaced to the cities, people with rural roots attempt to impose some sort of pattern on the anomie of

31 In 1987 there were 13 nuclear reactors running or under construction in a small area of Fukushima prefecture, and 15 in the "Nuclear Ginza" in Fukui prefecture. These two small areas accounted for well over half of all Japan's 57 reactors running or under construction (Tanaka 1985:149). By contrast, Britain's 13 nuclear power stations are distributed fairly evenly around the coast, with no more than two in any county.

urban life. They join associations of people from the same prefecture or town; or clubs of old boys from the same school or university. (Even in London there are clubs like these for ex-pat Japanese from a particular prefecture.) And it may be, as some have argued, that urban Japanese seek in the corporate workplace a substitute for the *communitas* of village life.

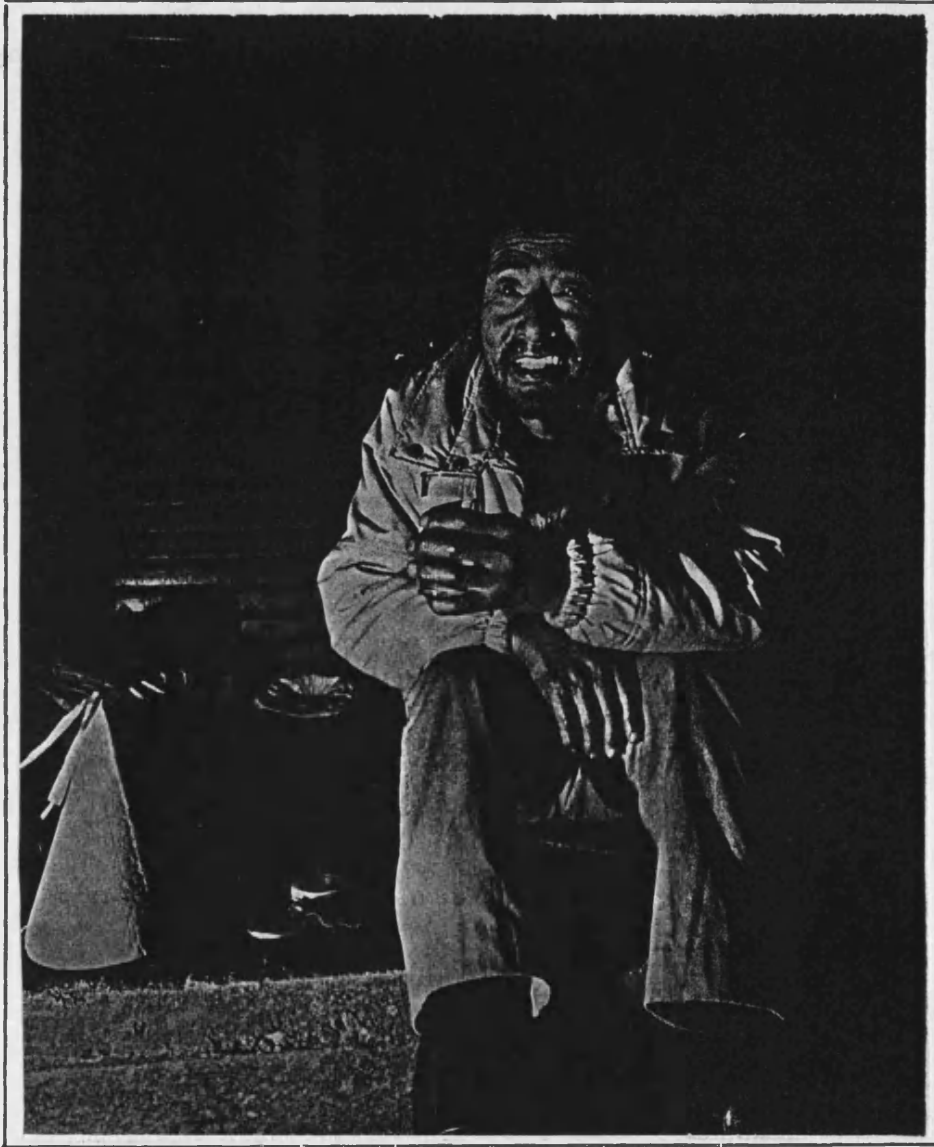
My point is that in a sense Yokohama is Kotobuki writ large. This great city was itself a fishing village just 100 years ago. It is a great big 'gathering place' where people from all over Japan gather and attempt to somehow maintain their identity. They attempt to replace the divisions and distinctions of traditional rural life, and the *doya-gai* has a useful conceptual role as a polluted no-go zone against which to define one's non-polluted self. One aspect of its polluted status is the fact that distinctions and divisions tend not to be respected in the *doya-gai*. People from all sorts of different geographical and occupational backgrounds (Ch.3) rub shoulders in an undisciplined, disorderly way. As we know (VI:5 above), disorderliness is itself a source of *kegare*, as in the case of Susano, the fire god in the Japanese creation myth, who was banished to the underworld for offences which included kicking over the muddy banks dividing people's rice paddies from each other. "Destroying the paths along the ridges between rice fields" is cited as a cause of *kegare* in the

Norito.

Lack of distinction, as well as lack of affiliation, are key elements in the special aura surrounding the doya-gai. And as with so many things alleged to be impure, they do have a certain attraction. Like Milton's Satan, Susano, the impetuous fire-god, is an appealing character, characterized more by uncontrolled energy than by evil [32]. So too, the lives of doya-gai dwellers represent a kind of wildness which, even though strictly circumscribed is both envied and despised by the disciplined mainstream city-dweller.

32 And Susano has his own sacred tumulus very close to Sanya; see Ch4:I, p144.





462

Chapter 10: Conclusion

I. A useful place

As I mentioned in Chapter 4, the Osaka yoseba of Kamagasaki is dominated by an enormous grey concrete employment/welfare centre, on which the smaller one in Kotobuki was modelled. It reportedly cost Y2.3 billion to build, and it is of striking appearance:

Gustav Dore would have loved to draw the Kamagasaki Centre. It has great gloomy recesses where the sunlight barely penetrates, where old men lie on rush mats, half undressed with their tongues hanging out. It even has a round hole cut in the ceiling of the ground floor through which people on the top floor love to look down upon their fellow workers. Below the hole, remarkably enough, is a fountain, with bronze cherubs. It doesn't seem to work. Rush mats spread out from the fountain, making it look like an ornate clock face when viewed from above.

Many hundreds of men were milling round the gloomy concrete expanses of the centre. The effect was somewhat softened by some 20 assorted shops--newspaper sellers and coffee shops downstairs, cheap restaurants upstairs. Fukada (a Kamanichiro activist) told me that these establishments had been doing business on the land where the Centre was built, and were granted concessions within the Centre as part of the deal under which their previous premises were demolished.

On the ground floor, the sound which kept booming out was the call of KOH... KOH... this is all that is left of the word tekkin-kô after it has been repeated many thousands of times. These men, who make the steel frames for reinforced concrete, were in great demand this morning. I stayed till about 8am, and there were still minibuses with men calling for KOH... KOH... When the minibus men -- generally stout, businesslike men dressed a couple of degrees smarter than the workers -- spotted a known tekkin-ko, they descended on him and tried to argue him onto their minibus, sometimes physically pulling them towards the 'bus. If the man showed even the slightest willingness, they would frogmarch him to the minibus and more or less bundle him in. (F742-3)

I asked Mr. Fukada for his views on the institution of this massive central building. He said it was convenient for the union, because everyone gathered there in the morning, making it the natural setting for meetings and demonstrations; convenient for employers, because it was a one-stop shop for recruitment; and convenient for the workers because it offered a single, unified job market with a lot of peripheral services [F746]. To me, this remark was very revealing, about the yoseba in general and not just this one building. Despite all the conflict, there is perceived to be a shared interest among workers, employers and activists in getting people together in a 'gathering place' (yoseba). Whether you go there to shop for disposable labour, to earn a crust, or to instill political awareness, there is a shared interest in the simple act of coming together which probably accounts for the historical continuity of the institution. From the workers' point of view, it is both exploitative and functional. Being there is stigmatised in various ways; but not being there would arguably be worse. The yoseba is a useful place.

It is useful to the men who use it, many of whom would struggle to find work and acceptance elsewhere.

It is useful to business as a supply of instant disposable labour.

It is useful to the radical left, because there is

always a crowd of people with an interest in social change to address.

It is useful to the police, as a place where perceived trouble-makers can live out of the way of mainstream society.

It is useful to local authorities, as a place where welfare cases may be housed and facilities for the physically or mentally handicapped located.

It is useful to mainstream Japanese, as a place that absorbs dirt both physical and cultural.

A little more detail:

1. It is useful to the men who use it.

The yoseba offers an alternative mode of employment not available elsewhere in the Japanese economy. As a place where you can work by the day and be paid on the day, it permits a present-oriented lifestyle in a society where the deferment of reward is the prevailing norm. One reason why many day labourers hate to work at hanba (work camps) or out of ninpu-dashi (workers' boarding houses) is because these institutions delay the reward to labour, sometimes to a criminal extent.

Deferment of reward rests on two assumptions: (1) The worker is sufficiently well-off to finance his life while

waiting for the return on his labour; (2) There is a relationship of trust between employer and worker. In the case of day labourers, a low propensity to save money and a sometimes well-founded suspicion of employers means that neither of these assumptions apply.

In the case of regularly employed workers, reward is not just delayed until the end of the month, but frequently for half a year (through the semi-annual bonus system) or even for a whole working lifetime (through the institution of large retirement bonuses which may be threatened by disapproved behaviour or leaving the company). Regular workers cannot always wait until payday: the widespread patronage of sarakin (loan sharks; lit. 'salaryman financing') is testimony to that. Often sarakin loans are repayable when the half-yearly bonus is paid. Again, during the five years of the Heisei Recession, many regular workers have discovered to their cost that the relationship of trust only lasts as long as it suits the employer: Japan's steadily rising unemployment figures bear testimony to that.

Mr. Nemoto, a Yokohama welfare official, once told me that the institution of the yoseba looks quite different according to the angle from which you view it. He compared it to a teapot, which looks round from one angle but not from another. From one angle, he said, the yoseba looks purely exploitative; from another angle one can observe

elements of mutuality [sôgôteki na koto] and flux/intercirculation [ryûdôsei] between yoseba society and mainstream society. I sometimes think that mainstream society is also like a teapot: viewed from the wreckage of some of my yoseba informants' lives, its long-term working relationships with deferred reward and mutual obligations seem enviably secure and reassuring, but after another glass of shochu, those same relationships can seem oppressive and demeaning.

2. It is useful to business

The scene I described in Kamagasaki reminds us that even today, the yoseba still retains an important role as a source of labour. The construction industry is more resistant than most to the onward march of workplace technology, although even here the demand for casual labour is increasingly directed at men, such as the tekkin-ko, who have particular skills.

A clue to the importance of casual labour to industry may be found in the system of unemployment and health insurance for day labourers (Ch3). Both schemes require the worker to be in employment for at least half the month in order to maintain eligibility. In other words, you have to be quite well employed to get unemployment benefit, and you have to be quite healthy to get health benefit. The

people getting least work and in worst health -- i.e. those most in need of help -- cannot get unemployment benefit. Clearly, this is not 'welfare' in the traditional sense of help for those who need it most. Rather, it is a system to maintain a minimum level of fitness among those day labourers who are still of use to the construction and longshore industries.

Not that these industries have to pay much for the privilege of complete freedom to hire and fire, day to day, at zero notice. The employer's contribution towards the Y7,500 day labourer dole system is exactly Y73 per man employed, per day. The man pays another Y73, and the state pays the rest -- an effective subsidy of about 95%. This is one of the many reasons why construction companies make such generous donations to politicians, and give plum management jobs to retired bureaucrats: part of the pay-off is right here, on the streets [1].

3. It is useful to the radical left

Most workers live in apartments or houses which are scattered around urban districts not clearly differentiated

1 In Kanagawa, of which Yokohama is the prefectural capital, when the city or prefectural government issues a public works contract, it always specifies that 2% of the labour should be hired from one of the casual labour exchanges in the region -- but this requirement is nearly always cynically ignored, and no effort is made to enforce it.

by class, and not in very close proximity to their fellow workers at their own company. When they are in the workplace, their company makes a powerful claim on their loyalty, as does their family. But workers in the yoseba are always in close proximity to fellow workers, and usually have no company or family to distract them from class loyalty. Their willingness to riot, long after the days of the '60s and early '70s when violent conflict was last to be observed on any scale among regular workers, has made day labourers the object of enduring fascination among the Japanese left.

As I discussed in Ch8, yoseba riots have tended to break out in response to perceived insulting behaviour towards individual day labourers rather than broader class issues. However, the left has not entirely failed in its attempts to organize day labourers. In Yokohama and its neighboring city of Kawasaki I witnessed three separate rounds of negotiations with city authorities aimed at improving welfare provisions for the winter survival season. The negotiations were very forthright, and often succeeded in their aim, which was to win concessions by humiliating the officials for failing in their duty under Article 25 of the Japanese constitution to allow "all people the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living" (official translation).

Although union activists took the leading role in

orchestrating the negotiations, each round was attended by over 100 day labourers, many of whom spoke out from the floor. In terms of my Ch8 discussion of agency and passivity, receiving welfare implies passivity; demanding welfare, however, showed day labourers in a decidedly active mode. It would be far harder to mobilise day labourers for this kind of purpose without the institution of the yoseba to bring them together.

4. It is useful to the police.

The attitude of the police to the yoseba varies from city to city. It is at its most intrusive and confrontational in Kamagasaki, where constant surveillance is maintained through closed circuit TV cameras (Ch4). It is at its most detached and tolerant in Kotobuki, where there never seemed to be anybody manning the tiny police box on the corner of the district. The illegal gambling dens were usually left to get on with their business, with just a few token arrests, typically two or three times a year. Several day labourers told me to be careful about using the betting shops in February and March, since this was the period just before the annual round of personnel changes in the local police force. Officers angling for promotion would come to Kotobuki and pick up some gamblers to improve their arrest record.

With these occasional exceptions, life is interrupted by the police far less often in the yoseba than in the American skid row. Spradley's classic account of American 'urban nomads', You Owe Yourself a Drunk (1970), takes its title from a comment often made by tramps on being released from a period of imprisonment for public drunkenness. Over half the book is devoted to his informants' repeated experience of arrest, trial and imprisonment, usually for public drunkenness or vagrancy. One of them had been arrested 114 times between November 1957 and June 1968, receiving 58 jail sentences totalling just over eight years. Every single arrest was in Seattle, and the offence, in every case was public drunkenness (Spradley 1970:195). By contrast, vagrancy, public drunkenness and homosexuality are not criminal offences in Japan (Parker 107). (If public drunkenness were to be made an offence, the Japanese police would have to arrest not only the bulk of the yoseba population but a large proportion of the entire male population of Japan.) During fieldwork only one of my informants was arrested to my knowledge, and that was for an assault on a woman.

Spradley describes how tramps could even be arrested for "public drunkenness" while in a bar. Bars also had a yoseba-type role ("If I want work, I go to a bar; that's where they come to hire a man."), and since records of minor offences did not cross state boundaries, meaning men

would get lower sentences in a new state, Spradley accounts for his informants' travelling lifestyle thus: "Urban nomads visit Skid Road and its bars because they travel; they are arrested because they live and drink in this area of town; and they travel because they are arrested. They are indeed induced by American law enforcement agencies to be mobile!" (Spradley 1970:179) This pattern of travel-special zone - arrest - travel is not a factor in the mobility of Japanese day labourers.

Spradley says (ibid) that the police in Seattle deliberately target skid row areas and are more likely to arrest tramps there than elsewhere. In Yokohama, the reverse seems to apply: Except for their occasional swoops on the gambling dens, or when serious crimes occur, the police stay out of Kotobuki. In nearly two years I never saw a policeman patrolling there; I only saw them when incidents had occurred. Their presence is more obtrusive in Sanya and Kamagasaki, and doubtless less obtrusive in some states than others in the US, but still it seems defensible to say that yoseba are less heavily policed than skid rows.

Japan is often described as a "control society" (kanri shakai), and the most commonly quoted Japanese proverb in the literature of Japanological cliches is "The nail that

sticks out gets hammered in." (Deru Kugi wa Utareru) [2]. But the nail that sticks out is not always hammered in. Often it is left to rust in the wood. Large areas of this "control society" are not controlled; they are treated with tolerance, or indifference. This is more like abandonment than control.

5. It is useful to local authorities

The rapid rise in the population of welfare recipients is seen by many as gradually turning Kotobuki into a "welfare town." This is not true to the same degree of other doya-gai, but there is a general tendency to locate facilities for the mentally and physically handicapped in doya-gai districts because there is less discriminatory resistance to them than in other parts of town.

6. It is useful to mainstream Japanese.

Mainstream Japanese may be roughly divided into three categories vis-a-vis the yoseba/doya-gai: (1) Those who are unaware of its existence; (2) Those who know of its existence and avoid it; and (3) Those who sometimes go there.

² It has even been used as the title of a book about Japan by a French Catholic priest based on his experiences among construction workers in Kawasaki (L'Henoret 1994).

For type (1) people, the yoseba allows them to live their lives in blissful ignorance of who does some of the dirty work which supports those lives, and where they live.

For type (2) people, the yoseba works as a kind of polluted other against which to form their own, non-polluted self-image. There may be an element of romance associated with the yoseba, but in any event it makes ordinary life seem comfortably secure in comparison.

For type (3) people (a small minority), the yoseba may have practical uses, as a handy place for gambling, or for getting a drink outside normal bar hours. (I once found a whole fleet of taxis parked together in Kotobuki; their drivers were taking time off for a flutter at one of the nomiya.)

II. Sanctuary v Dumping Ground

To me, the cultural meaning of the doya-gai is summed up by two similes which I heard while in the field. Mr. Shibuya, a Yokohama police officer, described Kotobuki as a "kakekomi-dera" or "temple of escape"; while Mr. Kagoshima, the head of Junichiro, the Kotobuki day labourers union, described it as an "ubasute yama," or "mountain of abandonment." Both terms indicate a very special cultural zone. The kakekomi-dera was a kind of convent [ama-dera], to which married women could flee from

their husbands during feudal times. Performing ritual observances for three years would enable the woman to dissolve the marriage. These places were also called "tie-dissolving temples" (enkiri-dera). As for the ubasute-yama, historians are divided as to whether this institution properly belongs to history or myth. In any case it signifies a mountain on which old women would be left to die once they had ceased to be of economic benefit to the family, to save food in times of famine.

There are a number of striking similarities between these two images. Both make it clear that the yoseba is not just a place where people happen to work by the day, but has a deep cultural meaning. Both imply a hostility on the part of the mainstream, which ejects the misfit, or from which the misfit escapes. Both are places with the function of breaking up family ties, whether through divorce or death. Both, interestingly, relate to women.

The important difference between the two models, apart from a positive and negative colouring which is the difference between a thoughtful policeman and a thoughtful union leader, takes me back to my recurrent theme of voluntary agency vs. passive acceptance. The kakekomi-dera is a place to which one escapes of one's own volition, while the ubasute-yama is a place where one is dumped.

Two portrayals of the yoseba/doya-gai

KAKEKOMI-DERA	vs.	UBASUTE YAMA
Sanctuary		Place of abandonment
Refuge		Rubbish bin, dump
Tolerance of pollution		Abhorrence of pollution
Sever ties by divorce		Sever ties by death
Voluntary		Compulsory

To rephrase the agency/passivity dichotomy, the kakekomi-dera is functional for the escaping individual, while the ubasute-yama is functional for the expelling society. The truth is that people who get dumped in places do have a way of reclaiming space and making it their own, or 'appropriating' it in the term popularized by Danny Miller.

Namihira (1987:S68) has some fascinating 16th century evidence from the island of Hachijojima (near Tokyo) to suggest that menstrual huts, symbols of female pollution, may have been used by women and girls as sanctuaries. Sometimes women deliberately stayed in the hut far longer than necessary, perhaps, she argues, "to take refuge from married life or home life in the local society." I have the feeling that day labourers have similarly turned their mountain of abandonment into a temple of sanctuary.

The communality of interest in the yoseba among so many elements in Japanese society helps to explain why there has been no movement in Japan comparable to the American urban renewal programmes which have swept away so many skid rows.

III. The future of the yoseba

It is widely acknowledged that in the years to come, casual work will take an increasing role in the Japanese economy, where high growth has now given way to the lower rates associated with a mature developed economy, and sometimes during the early '90s the zero or negative growth of an economy in recession. Sassen (1991:244) claims that in Tokyo "the majority of new jobs in the 1980s were part-time jobs and temporary employment agencies constituted one of the fastest growing industry branches."

The Japanese media are full of reports predicting the imminent demise of lifetime employment and the seniority promotion system, the twin pillars of Japanese industrial relations; for at least two-thirds of employees, those working for smaller enterprises, lifetime employment has never been more than a theory anyway, but now even the big companies are wondering whether they can afford to continue to offer the kind of long-term job security with which they have hitherto been associated.

Paradoxically, I expect the yoseba as an institution to decline at the same time that casualization spreads through the economy, for three reasons. One is the steady loss of jobs in traditional yoseba industries: containerization at the ports, prefabricated units on the building sites. Another reason is the steady shift from

Japanese labour to migrant labour where those jobs still exist. With the one exception of Kotobuki, where the historical Korean connection and blind-eye policing have allowed illegal Korean migrants to form their own community, these foreigners avoid the yoseba. The "gathering place" is an easy target for immigration officials, and they use other, less visible routes to the workplace. My third reason is that with more and more people working on a more or less casual basis, and in occupations that are not particularly dirty or dangerous, the fact of lacking corporate affiliation may cease to matter so much. At the same time, with Japanese people tending to marry later in life, more of them staying single, and the divorce rate rising, detachment from family life may also lose some of its stigma. Hence the connection between irregular labour and residence in a stigmatized zone may gradually weaken.

These processes may already be at work, and may account for the rapid aging of the yoseba population. While I do not expect the yoseba to be "abolished" or "cleaned up," there is a distinct possibility that they will gradually be transformed into cheap, outdoor welfare centres, as discussed earlier.

IV. The future of Kotobuki

In the case of Kotobuki, there is another transformative possibility. As I have mentioned, Kotobuki is a Korean-owned town. This thesis has largely been a story of Japanese men, of whom my main group happen to live in Korean-owned lodging houses. But one could write a very different story of Kotobuki, about the Koreans themselves who form the backdrop to this thesis. As I mentioned (Ch3), most of them are from a despised group in their mother country, being from the island of Cheju. They are despised in Japan too, for being Koreans rather than for being Chejuans. Although almost every building in Kotobuki is owned by Koreans, there is no hangul writing to be seen on shopfronts and doya nameplates -- though often a restaurant will prove to be serving Korean food and to have a Japanese-Korean bilingual menu.

A recent proposal from some of Kotobuki's Korean landlords would change all that if it came to pass. The idea is to turn Kotobuki into a 'Koreatown', modeled on the highly successful Chinatown which is a five-minute walk away.

Chinatown is another special urban zone, but a very different one from Kotobuki. Far from being a despised ghetto, Chinatown is one of the most fashionable tourist visits in Japan. If there are any opium dens in Chinatown,

they are very well hidden indeed. It has 570 shops, including 200 restaurants, crammed into an area not much bigger than that of Kotobuki (400 metres square), is visited by 13 million tourists a year, and turns over hundreds of billions of yen a year [3]. Its prosperous ethnic Chinese business leaders are pillars of the Yokohama community. Chinatown is spotlessly clean, adorned with freshly painted and gilded chinoiserie, and is famous for the remarkably long queues of people waiting to patronize the more highly-rated restaurants. It is Yokohama's Number One Tourist Attraction, an automatic selection on every itinerary.

China and Korea share an unhappy history of relations with Japan, and natives of both countries have long been subject to discrimination. But while the Korean-owned quarter is shabby, little-known, avoided by respectable folk and seen as infested with drunk day labourers and gangsters, the Chinese have somehow succeeded in turning their district of Yokohama into an exotic, fascinating object of curiosity, generating wealth beyond belief... just across the road.

For many years, some of the doya-owners have dreamed of turning Kotobuki into a Koreatown to match Chinatown.

3 The YOKE (Bimonthly publication of the Yokohama Association for International Communication and Exchanges), 1996: "Kensei Hayashi: Driving Force Behind Chinatown's Growth." Vol.14 No.78:8.

The most recent version of the concept was launched in 1992, and briefly surfaced in the local newspapers in November 1994. The plans were drawn up by a Yokohama architect's office on a commission from some of the doya-owners.

Kotobuki would be a very different place if Koreatown came to pass. Practically every building in the district would be torn down, and the whole district rebuilt from scratch. It would be divided into five zones (fig.1, 2).

Zone A would consist of four smart office blocks and a huge, legal, multistory off-course betting centre to be administered by the Japan Racing Association. (There is a similar one not far from Sanya, where you can "attend" a different race meeting on each of eight or nine floors.)

Zone B would be the centrepiece of Koreatown -- a bijou ethnic shopping mall, with plenty of Korean restaurants and handicraft shops, centered on a "promenade" with an "event space" in the middle of it (fig.3). The Kotobuki General Labour Welfare Centre, whose massive concrete bulk currently overshadows zone B, would be demolished and rebuilt -- renamed simply "the Welfare Hall" -- in zone C. The remnants of the former day labourer population, by now presumably entirely dependent on welfare, would be housed in five clean new doya -- henceforth to be called "simple hotels" [kan'i hoteru] -- also in zone C.

Other public facilities, such as hospital,

administrative buildings, kindergarten and church, would be put in zone D, while zone E would be devoted to car-parking, essential to any tourist attraction. The overall effect, to judge from the artist's impression, is of a super-high-tech moon base with a little shopping shrubbery in the middle of it.

As I write, there is no knowing if or when Kotobuki might actually metamorphose into Koreatown. Numerous requirements would have to be met, including: (1) massive capital investment; (2) permission from the city authorities to demolish and move public buildings; (3) agreement between the rival doya-owner unions, sympathetic to North Korea and South Korea respectively, and perpetually at loggerheads; (4) conviction among the entire Korean community that they would actually stand to gain from this ambitious venture (when, as two Korean landlords told me, running a doya is actually a very profitable business itself); and (5) overcoming the intense opposition of the day labourer union and most of the day labourers themselves.

If it does happen, I for one will have mixed feelings. I like Kotobuki and its inhabitants and would be sad to see the yoseba way of life slip into history, and there is something distinctly disturbing about this attempt to present Korean culture as a desirable product for sale. Moreover, the sanitized versions of Chinese and Korean

culture presented at Yokohama's Chinatown and the proposed Koreatown bear about as much resemblance to the real thing as Western-land at Tokyo Disneyland (a temple of American culture on the eastern outskirts of Tokyo) does to the historical American Wild West. All three zones (Chinatown, Koreatown, Disneyland) lay a heavy stress on physical cleanliness, an antidote perhaps to polluted associations.

In the case of the 1992 Koreatown plan, there also has to be a suspicion that Koreatown itself is a mere front, an excuse to put up the hotels and office buildings that would make the serious money.

On the other hand, this is an interesting attempt to negotiate the ingrained racism experienced by the Korean minority in Japan. Like the Burakumin, ethnic Koreans are subject to an enduring stigma which is inherited by successive generations and often expressed in violence. The Koreatown concept rejects the usual alternatives on offer to ethnic minorities -- cultural assimilation or permanent outcast status -- with an approach that keeps the zone and attempts to change its associations from polluted to auspicious -- a shift from the sacred and impure to the sacred and pure, to return to Durkheim. It is a kind of ethnic cleansing; and as well as cleaning the Japanese workers off the streets, the plan would also cleanse the Korean image.

Probably one day, some kind of Koreatown will be built

in Yokohama, and it could well be at Kotobuki. (There are already shiny Koreatowns in Osaka and Kawasaki). If it happens, it will mark a shift in race relations which might be no bad thing. But such a Koreatown would be haunted by the ghosts of day labourers; it would be a poignant reminder that although you can change your job so much more easily than your race, sometimes it may actually be more feasible to shed racial stigma than occupational stigma.

THE END

APPENDIX 1: STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 1

Numbers of day labourers carrying the white handbook (narrow definition) and monthly employment/unemployment averages.

Year	Registered labourers	Unemployment/ent/month	Labourers finding one or more days [A]	B/A	Person-days of labour arranged per month [B]	Person-days of labour arranged per month
1970	256,000		229,000	89%	4,342,000	698,000
1975	171,000		136,000	80%	2,524,000	531,000
1980	163,000		114,000	70%	2,047,000	501,000
1985	129,000		75,000	58%	1,209,000	652,000
1988	91,000		34,000	37%	539,000	372,000
1989	78,000		28,000	36%	418,000	316,000
1990	68,000		23,000	34%	327,000	266,000
1995	48,517*		-	-	-	-

Source: Ministry of Labour, Employment Security Bureau. Quoted in MCA 1995:83. * Figure cited above.

Note: The employment statistics are compiled from returns at MoL casual employment exchanges and do not include jobs negotiated with unregistered employers at the large informal, street labour market.

Table 2

Average days per month spent working through formal channels or claiming unemployment benefit by registered day labourers

Year	[A] Working days/month	[B] Unemployed days/month	[A/B]
1970	16.96 [18.96]	2.73 [3.05]	6.21 [6.22]
1975	14.76 [18.55]	3.11 [3.90]	4.75 [4.76]
1980	12.58 [17.96]	3.07 [4.39]	4.10 [4.09]
1985	9.37 [16.12]	5.05 [8.69]	1.86 [1.86]
1988	5.92 [15.85]	4.09 [10.94]	1.45 [1.45]
1989	5.36 [14.93]	4.05 [11.29]	1.32 [1.32]
1990	4.81 [14.22]	3.91 [11.57]	1.23 [1.23]

Source: Derived from table 1 above. Main figures derived using figure for all registered day labourers; bracketed figures using figure for day labourers getting at least one day's work per month.



KAMAYAN,
THE CARTOON
DAY-LABOURER

BY SEN
ARIMURA

"HOTEL NEW
KAMAGASAKI"
1992

Hotel New
釜ヶ崎

ありむら潜
Sen Arimura

サンワックス
31703
VC
COMICS

Table 3

Day labourers (broad definition) by gender, in millions.

Year:	1953	1955	1957	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990
Men:	0.90	0.92	1.09	0.77	0.79	0.66	0.69	0.67	0.61	0.58
Women:	0.49	0.60	0.70	0.45	0.48	0.52	0.54	0.63	0.65	0.68
Total:	1.39	1.52	1.78	1.21	1.27	1.18	1.23	1.30	1.26	1.26

Five-yearly intervals, plus 1953 (first year for which statistics exist) and 1957 (peak year for both men and women).

Source: MCA 1992:72-3; Japan Statistical Association, 1987:390-4.

Table 4

Number of day labourers (broad definition) and other non-regular workers in the Japanese working population, in millions of people.

Year	Total	Self-employed	Family workers	Casual employees	Day labourers	Irreg % of total
1955	40.90	9.50	12.84	-	1.52	58.34+x
1960	44.36	9.48	10.61	1.30	1.21	45.35
1965	47.30	8.48	9.15	1.52	1.27	43.17
1970	50.94	8.10	8.05	1.65	1.18	37.26
1975	52.23	7.70	6.28	1.77	1.23	32.51
1980	55.36	7.65	6.03	2.56	1.30	31.68
1985	58.07	7.25	5.59	3.21	1.26	29.81
1990	62.49	6.85	5.17	3.93	1.26	27.54
1991	63.69	6.71	4.89	3.98	1.27	26.46

Source: MCA 1992:72; Japan Statistical Association, 1987:390.

Note: The figure for 'self-employed' people excludes those who have employees working for them. The irregular percentage I derived myself from self-employed without employees + family workers + casual employees, divided by total workforce. The category 'casual employees' was only introduced in 1959 and is thus missing from the 1955 calculation.

Table 5

Population of Kotobuki district by gender and household composition. [Figures in brackets: Foreigners.] Survey date: December 30th each year. Homeless people not included.

Year	1990	1993	1995
<u>Total pop.</u>	6,362 [814]	6,205 [932]	6,340 [651]
Men	6,050 [710]	5,711 [633]	5,991 [467]
Women	282 [96]	449 [264]	320 [161]
Children	30 [8]	45 [35]	29 [23]
<u>Households</u>	6,091 [722]	5,893 [735]	6,109 [530]
Single men	5,808 [626]	5,443 [471]	5,789 [369]
Single women	54 [12]	179 [99]	115 [62]
Childless couples	205 [78]	237 [138]	180 [79]
Couples & children	20 [6]	31 [27]	21 [20]
Mother & children	3 [0]	3 [0]	3 [0]
Father & children	1 [0]	0 [0]	1 [0]

Source: Kotobuki Welfare Centre survey.

Table 6

Population of Kotobuki by class and ethnicity, as of 30/12/94.
 [Figures in brackets: As of 30/12/95.]

Total pop. of Kotobuki zone, including homeless: approx. 8,000

- A. Regularly working day labourers [gen'eki-so] 1,500
- B. Occasionally working DLs [fuantei juro-so] 800
- C. Welfare recipients [seikatsu hogosha] 4,000
- D. People living in poverty [hinkon-so] 700
- E. Foreigners [gaikoku-jin][651].. 1,083

The foreigners are further divided thus:

- E.1. Foreign men[467].. 816
- E.2. Foreign women[161].. 242
- E.3. Foreign children[23].. 25
- And thus:
- E.4. Korean (including 18 [20] children)[533].. 824
- E.5. Philippine (including 6 [2] children) ..[91].. 170
- E.6. Thai (including 1 [0] child)[24].. 89
- E.7. Taiwanese (including 0 [1] child)[3].. 0

The income of the various groups is roughly estimated thus:

- A. Y250,000 +
- B. Y80,000 to Y180,000
- C. c. Y120,000
- D. Under Y50,000 [at least Y679 a day, i.e. 1 pan-ken]
- E. Upper class: Y400,000 +. Lower class: On the streets.

Source: Kotobuki Welfare Centre survey.

Table 7

Age range of welfare recipients in the Kotobuki district, as of April 1, 1996.

Age:	0-29	30-40	41-54	55-59	60-64	65+	TOTAL
Recipients:	15	98	1,116	874	833	1,052	3,988

Source: Naka Ward Office

Note: A further sharp rise in the welfare population brought the total number of recipients to about 4,600 by September 1996 (Kagoshima, personal communication, 17/9/96.)

Table 8

Population trends in the three precincts including the Kotobuki district.

Year	Kotobuki-cho	Ogi-cho	Matsukage-cho
1950	0	0	0
1955	8	5	0
1960	1,309	542	280
1965	3,843	977	3,148
1970	2,230	900	2,518
1975	2,577	934	2,325
1980	2,254	904	2,288
	(Households) (1,744)	(674)	(1,927)
Pop/household:	1.29	1.34	1.19
1983	2,207	898	2,261
	(Households) (1,811)	(690)	(2,028)
Pop/household	1.22	1.30	1.11

Total population of Naka-ku:

1980: 121,474 (46,711 households). Pop/household: 2.60

1983: 118,413 (47,148 households). Pop/household: 2.51

Source: Naka-ku Kushi (The History of Naka Ward). Yokohama City Government, 1986. Population/household ratios added.

Table 9

Person-days of employment transacted at the Kotobuki Labour Centre, with take-up rates for one-day and period contracts.

	1-day contracts		Period contracts [Person-days]	Total person- days	Change
1985	40,312 [97%]		104,848 [85%]	145,160	
1986	39,403 [96%]		115,171 [82%]	154,574	+ 6.5%
1987	45,983 [93%]		101,342 [67%]	147,325	- 4.7%
1988	46,923 [89%]		89,180 [64%]	136,103	- 7.6%
1989	43,740 [91%]		65,843 [62%]	109,583	-19.5%
1990	55,848 [88%]		48,252 [61%]	104,100	- 5.0%
1991	53,120 [97%]		50,650 [79%]	103,770	- 0.3%
1992	35,556 [99%]		46,427 [93%]	81,983	-21.0%
1993	22,014 [100%]		28,792 [95%]	50,806	-38.0%
1994	23,903 [99%]		29,593 [89%]	53,496	+ 5.3%
1995	25,662 [99%]		27,076 [76%]	52,738	- 1.4%
1996*	28,000		33,000	61,000	+15.0%

* Projection based on returns for first five months (April 1 to August 31)

Change from peak year (1986) to trough year (1993): -67.1%.
One-day contracts: -44.1%. Period contracts: -75.0%

Bracketed percentages show take-up rate. E.g. In 1995 employers requested 26,012 person-days of work on one-day contracts, and got 25,662, leaving 350 contracts not taken up, for a take-up rate of 99%; whereas employers only secured 27,076 person-days of period contract labour out of 35,564 requested, leaving 8,488 person-days' worth unfilled for a take-up rate of 76%.

Note: These are financial years; thus FY1995 covers April 1 1995 to March 31 1996.

Source: Kotobuki 1991-6, and monthly bulletins of the Kotobuki Labour Centre, 1996. Take-up rates calculated by the author.

Table 10

Where do Kotobuki day labourers go when they need a job?

1. The Labour Centre	92
2. The Labour Office	58
3. Street market recruiters (<u>tehaishi</u>)	49
4. Personal arrangement with employer (<u>kao-zuke</u>)	45
5. Introductions from friends	32
6. Newspaper advertisements	15
7. Other	1
Total answers	292

Source: As table 10. Multiple answers permitted. Note that since this questionnaire was given to men using the Kotobuki Labour Centre, it inevitably exaggerates the number of men using the Centre.

Table 11

Average Kotobuki day-wage levels, 1985-95.

Job Description	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995
Labourer (<u>Dokata</u>)	8,589	9,579	11,526	12,595 [+47%]	13,032	12,687 [+1%]
Odd-job man (<u>Zakko</u>)	8,331	9,127	10,733	12,379 [+49%]	12,626	12,397 [---]
Driver/labourer (<u>Untenshu/dokata</u>)	9,214	10,671	12,180	13,327 [+47%]	13,495	13,354 [---]
Carpenter (<u>Katawaku daiku*</u>)	12,688	12,080	16,507	17,012 [+34%]	17,000	17,368 [+2%]
Spiderman (<u>Tobi*</u>)	12,393	13,037	16,764	19,101 [+54%]	18,946	18,314 [-4%]
Tobi/Zakko differential:	+49%	+43%	+56%	+54%	+50%	+48%

* See glossary

Note: These are figures for one-day contracts. Period contracts tended to carry marginally lower rates of pay. Bracketed figures show percentage change, 1985-91 (six years) and 1991-95 (four years). The tobi/zakko differential shows the percentage advantage of the best-paid worker over the worst-paid worker.

Source: Kotobuki, 1990:9, 1995:9

Table 12

Companies using the Kotobuki Labour Centre, by industrial sector.

Industrial sector	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995
Construction	626	672	712	642	589	537
Transportation*	34	37	34	30	28	26
Manufacturing	23	23	18	13	13	9
Services etc.	27	14	14	11	10	9
Total	710	746	778	696	640	581

* Includes longshoring and warehousing.

Change, 1985-9: +10%. 1989-1995: -25%.

Construction as percentage of whole: 92% (1985, 1989, 1995 alike).

Source: Kotobuki Vol 17 (1990:6) and Vol 22 (1995:4).

Table 13

How do you pay for medical treatment when you get ill or injured?

1. Use the day labourer health insurance	26
2. Use the national health insurance	11
3. Pay for it myself	27
4. Ask for help at the welfare office	33
5. Other / No answer	4

Source: Kotobuki 1994a:8. (Survey of 100 men using the Kotobuki Labour Centre).

Table 14

Symptoms most commonly reported by visitors to the Kotobuki Clinic, 1992-3

1. Back trouble	141
2. Stomach complaints	80
3. Abnormal blood pressure	79
4. Colds	64
5. Lethargy	50
6. Hand or arm pains	48
7. Diabetes	37
8. Numbness in hands or feet	36
9. Bowel complaints	35
10. Coughs/phlegm	31
11. Wounds	30
12. Pulmonary tuberculosis	28

Source: Kotobuki-cho Kinrosha Fukushi Kyokai, 1993:13.

Table 15

Day labourer placement by prefecture: the Top 10 (financial year 1990).

Prefecture [Capital]	No. of registered day labourers [A]	Man-days of work arranged through exchanges [B]	B/A*
1. Osaka	19,330	18,490	1.0
2. Tokyo	13,643	606,797	44.5
3. Hyogo [Kobe]	5,919	165,319	27.9
4. Fukuoka	5,328	908,367	170.5
5. Kyoto	3,859	171,574	44.5
6. Kanagawa [Yokohama]	3,515	96,380	27.4
7. Aichi [Nagoya]	2,139	129,393	60.5
8. Hiroshima	1,447	148,202	102.4
9. Kochi	1,240	253,079	204.1
10. Kumamoto	999	170,733	170.9
JAPAN TOTAL	66,357	3,923,320	59.1

* This ratio represents the number of days' work arranged for the average registered day labourer during the year. The very low figure for Osaka is an anomaly, caused by the use of the aitai hoshiki system of job introductions (see below). This system means that most jobs are agreed on the premises of the labour exchange but without the exchange's mediation. The very high figure for Fukuoka reflects special public works projects in a depressed former coal-mining region. Other areas with high figures may have less well-developed informal labour markets than others, but this is just speculation.

Note: These Ministry of Labour figures only cover officially registered day labourers and the work they obtain through public employment exchanges. While the true population of people working in the traditional day labouring manner may be up to twice as large, it is unlikely that adding in unregistered day labourers would greatly alter the geographical distribution.

Table 16

Main Tokyo yoseba and doya-gai, 1939.

Location	Doya	Doya pop.	Workers as % of pop.	No. seeking work daily
Higashi-Komagata (Honjo ward)	62	2,000	80%	163
Kotobashi (Honjo ward)	91	3,500	90%	120
Takabashi-cho (Fukagawa ward)	96	3,500	90%	450
Asahi-cho (Yotsuya ward)	27	1,500	40%	150
Namidabashi (Asakusa ward)	108	4,000	60%	500
Shibaura (Shibaura ward)	-	-	-	600

Note: The port district of Shibaura was a yoseba but not a doya-gai. Men gathered there to get dock-work.

Source: 'Tokyo-shinai no Jiyu Rodosha Shuhi Jokyō', ('The Situation regarding Distribution of Free Workers within Tokyo') compiled by Shibata Sentaro, pub. in Shokugyo Jiho (Employment Bulletin), Sept. 1939, reproduced in Imagawa, 1987:122.

Table 17

Emergency assistance for homeless people in the 23 wards of central Tokyo, summer 1994

Adachi: Tinned crackers (kanpan).
Arakawa: Nothing.
Bunkyo: About Y500 to buy food.
Chiyoda: Kanpan, underwear.
Chuo: Rice, canned food, pickled plums [umeboshi], kanpan.
Edogawa: Instant noodles [ramen], kanpan or Y3-500.
Itabashi: About Y500 to buy food.
Katsushika: About Y1,000 to buy food, plus kanpan.
Kita: Y5-600 to buy food.
Koto: Kanpan, other canned food, underwear.
Meguro: Nothing.
Minato: Kanpan, instant ramen.
Nakano: Kanpan.
Nerima: Kanpan.
Ota: About Y500 to buy food.
Shibuya: Kanpan.
Shinagawa: Kanpan plus Y2-300 to buy food.
Shinjuku: Instant fat noodles [udon].
Suginami: Kanpan.
Sumida: About Y300 to buy food.
Setagaya: Steamed rice with red beans [okowa], kanpan.
Taito: Instant ramen.
Toshima: Instant ramen.

Source: Asahi Shinbun, 15/6/94, evening edition, p.12
Table 18

Officially arranged day labour in Fukuoka prefecture, April 1994.

(A) Number of person-days of day labour arranged by labour exchanges in Fukuoka pref. in the month of April, 1994. (B) Sub-total: unemployment countermeasures. (C) Sub-total: Public and semi-public enterprises. (D) Sub-total: Private enterprises etc. (E) Person-days of day labourer unemployment benefit claims.

	A	B	C	D	E
1. Tagawa	6,896	6,896	-	-	163
2. Fukuoka	6,359	5,241	960	158	2,253
3. Omuta	5,509	3,636	676	1,197	1,338
4. Iizuka	4,923	4,923	-	-	17
5. Kitakyushu	2,835	2,653	99	83	4,653
6. Nogata	1,792	1,792	-	-	555
7. Kurume	620	421	-	199	48
8. Yukuhashi	562	562	-	-	1,579
Total	29,496	26,124	1,735	1,637	10,606
Percentage	100	88.6	5.8	5.6	-

Source: Monthly bulletin of Fukuoka Central Labour Exchange, April 1994.

Table 19

Geographical Origin of Workers in Kotobuki, by Prefecture/Region

1. Northern Japan

Hokkaido	[14%]	5.2%
Aomori	[2%]	2.9%
Iwate	[6%]	1.9%
Akita	[2%]	2.3%
Miyagi	[6%]	3.4%
Fukushima		3.4%
Yamagata		2.9%

Subtotal [30%] 22.0%

2. Kanto Region

Gunma	[2%]	2.7%
Tochigi	[2%]	2.5%
Ibaraki	[2%]	3.0%
Saitama		2.5%
Chiba	[6%]	3.9%
Tokyo	[3%]	8.3%
Kanagawa	[14%]	13.1%

Subtotal [29%] 36.0%

3. Hokuriku Region

Niigata	[4%]	2.4%
Ishikawa	[4%]	0.6%
Toyama		0.7%
Fukui		0.3%

Subtotal [8%] 4.0%

4. Chubu Region

Yamanashi		1.3%
Nagano	[2%]	1.7%
Shizuoka	[8%]	2.7%
Aichi		1.5%
Gifu	[4%]	0.5%
Mie		0.3%

Subtotal [14%] 8.0%

5. Kansai Region

Osaka		2.1%
Shiga		0.2%
Kyoto		0.7%
Wakayama	[2%]	0.4%
Nara		0.1%
Hyogo		1.5%

Subtotal [2%] 5.0%

6. Shikoku Island

Kochi	[1%]	0.5%
Kagawa		0.2%
Ehime		0.9%
Tokushima		1.3%

Subtotal [1%] 2.9%

7. Chugoku Region

Okayama		0.8%
Hiroshima	[2%]	1.0%
Yamaguchi		0.9%
Tottori		0.3%
Shimane		0.6%

Subtotal [2%] 5.6%

8. Kyushu and Okinawa

Fukuoka	[2%]	3.2%
Saga		1.0%
Oita		1.7%
Nagasaki		1.5%
Miyazaki	[4%]	1.5%
Kagoshima	[2%]	1.9%
Kumamoto	[2%]	1.6%
Okinawa	[22%]	0.8%

Subtotal [32%] 13.2%

Others 5.3%

Source: Materials published by Junichiro, the Kotobuki Day Labourers Union, in conjunction with the 19th Annual Winter Survival (Etto) Campaign, December 27, 1992. Figures in brackets

are percentages of my own personal sample.

Note: Out of all my 130 day labouring contacts in Kotobuki, I only ascertained prefecture of origin in 51 cases. One of these told me Saitama once and Miyagi once, so I excluded him and counted the other 50 men at 2% each. Mr. Ota, born Kochi but moved to Tokyo at the age of "one week" I counted as 1% each for Kochi and Tokyo.

Table 20

Occupational background of my informants in Kotobuki

Occupation	Self (before Kotobuki)	Father's
Longshoreman	6	-
Seaman	5.5	1
Catering [cook/barman]	5.5	-
Military	4	-
Engineer	4	-
Career day labourer	4	-
Yakuza	3.5	-
Spiderman ['tobi']	3	-
Fisherman	3	2
Salaryman	3	-
Farmer	2	6
Boxer	2	-
Miner	1.5	2
Carpenter	1.5	-
Massage parlour barker	1.5	-
Pilot	1	-
Auto worker	1	-
Tourist information	1	-
Dairy worker	1	-
Warehouseman	1	-
Boss of small company	1	-
Guerilla	1	-
Computer engineer	1	-
Street artist	1	-
Civil servant	-	3
Greengrocer	-	1
Sample total	56	15

Note: Where informants mentioned two or more previous occupations, I counted 0.5 to each of the two that were mentioned in most detail.

Source: Fieldnotes.

Table 21

Age of my informants in Kotobuki as of Jan 1 1995, as told to me.

35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74
3	6	5	10	11	6	2	2
Total sample: 45.			Modal class: 55-59.		Median class: 50-54		
Mean: 53.2.							

Source: Fieldnotes

Table 22

Age of registered day labourers in Kotobuki, 1975-91

	'75	'80	'85	'88	'91
Up to 29	13.6%	6.6%	2.6%	1.8%	0.9%
30 - 39	40.4%	28.8%	25.3%	15.8%	9.7%
40 - 49	38.7%	38.5%	48.5%	46.4%	40.1%
50 - 59	7.0%	24.6%	21.3%	32.3%	41.3%
Over 60	0.3%	1.5%	2.3%	3.7%	8.3%
Approx. mean age in yrs*	38.6	43.1	44.0	46.4	49.1
Change	-	+4.5	+0.9	+2.4	+2.7
Interval (yrs)	-	5	5	3	3
Mean annual change	-	+0.9	+0.18	+0.8	+0.9

*Using class mid-points and assuming 25 for average age of "up to 25" class and 62 for "over 60" class.

Source: Report for the 19th Winter Survival Campaign, published December 27, 1992 by Junichiro, the Kotobuki Day Labourers' Union. Derivations by myself.

Table 23

Marital status of my Kotobuki informants

Married, living with wife:	6*
Widower:	2
Divorced/separated:	8
Bachelor:	12**
Single, status unclear:	48
Unknown:	82
Total:	158

* Includes one man married in Brazil who spends long periods alone in Kotobuki.

** Includes one man who entered into a marriage of convenience with a Filipina during my fieldwork.

Source: Fieldnotes.

Table 24

Sibling order of day labourers in Kotobuki and other yoseba

	Kotobuki	Sanya	Chikko	Kamagasaki	Sasashima	Total
Chonan (Oldest son)	20	10	2	5	0	37
Hitorikko (Only child)	2	2	0	0	1	5
Cho/sue (Oldest son + last child)	4	2	0	1	0	7
Suekko (last child)	22	6	2	6	0	36
Jinan (2nd son)	3	1	1	3	0	8
San-nan (3rd son)	5	3	0	0	0	8
"Naka" ("Middle")	2	1	0	0	1	4
Total	56	25	5	15	2	105

See Ch6:V for explanation of terms.

Source: Fieldnotes.

Table 25

Simplified sibling order figures

	Kotobuki	Sanya	Chikko	Kamagasaki	Sasashima	Total
Chonan	23	12	2	5.5	0.5	43.0
Suekko	25	8	2	6.5	0.5	42.0
'Middle'	10	5	1	3	1	20
Total	56	25	5	15	2	105

Note: In the Kotobuki column, three of the 'middle' sons and one of the chonan, are Okinawan. Okinawans are generally younger and more successful than mainland Japanese workers and do not conform to the birth order pattern described here.

Source: Derived from table 24 above.

Table 26

Degree of success in day labouring by simplified birth order class (well-known Kotobuki informants only).

Sample size: 44.

Chonan	Suekko	"Middle"
***** 2	***** 3	***** 1
**** 1	**** 5	**** 3
*** 2	*** 4	*** 4
** 7	** 5	** 3
* 3	* 1	* 0
Sample: 15	Sample: 18	Sample: 11
Star av. 2.47	Star av. 3.22	Star av. 3.18
Making it [3*+]: 33%	Making it [3*+]: 67%	Making it [3*+] 73%

Criteria

- ***** Can get work any time. Skilled. Saves money. May live in regular apartment or even have family.
- **** Can usually get work. Enough money to keep the same doya room long term. Drinking habit under control.
- *** Can sometimes get work. Rarely sleeps rough. Just about making it. Often drunk, but keeps out of hospital.
- ** Rarely gets work; often sleeps in the street; not making it, but spirit not entirely broken.
- * Never works; sleeps rough; depressed, in and out of hospital for alcoholism, accidents, mental problems etc.

Source: Fieldnotes.
Table 27

Homeless people found in the Kannai area (including Kotobuki) on selected Thursdays, 1991-3

Date	City Hall	Underground mall	Total homeless	Weather
01/08/91	37	32	69	
05/09/91	105	23	128	
03/10/91	92	27	119	
07/11/91	55	29	84	
05/12/91	39	25	64	
1991 mean	66	27	93	
09/01/92	33	29	62	
06/02/92	39	37	76	
05/03/92	28	30	58	Rain
07/04/92	69	38	107	
12/05/92	70	29	99	Clear
09/06/92	61	41	102	Clear
07/07/92	58	29	87	Cloud
04/08/92	107	38	145	Rain
08/09/92	89	32	121	Clear
13/10/92	67	46	113	Rain
05/11/92	76	36	112	Clear
03/12/92	52	32	84	Cloud
1992 mean	62	35	97	
07/01/93	48	59	107	Rain
04/02/93	44	49	93	Clear
04/03/93	57	26	83	Rain
13/04/93	65	46	111	Showers
11/05/93	99	40	139	Clear
03/06/93	74	62	136	Clear
01/07/93	84	63	147	Cloud
12/08/93	97	57	154	Clear
07/09/93	124	44	168	Rain
12/10/93	101	52	153	Clear
04/11/93	89	44	133	Clear
02/12/93	64	58	122	Clear
1993 mean	79	50	129	
13/01/94	56	82	138	Rain
03/02/94	51	68	119	Cloud
03/03/94	57	71	128	Cloud

[No patrols were made in April or May 1994]

1994 mean

55

74

129

Table 28

Homeless people found in the Kannai area during the Winter Survival Campaign (Etto)

1992-3: 19th Etto

Date:	28/12	29/12	30/12	31/12	01/01	02/01	03/01	Mean
1. Prefabs:	-	163	213	243	265	284	341	252
2. Homeless:	168	129	125	95	108	45	108	111
3. On patrol:	49	53	51	56	46	64	41	51
4. Meals served:	460	1000	494	800	1211	926	1011	843

1993-4: 20th Etto

Date:	28/12	29/12	30/12	31/12	01/01	02/01	03/01	Mean
1. Prefabs:	-	402	487	502	512	529	*535	495
2. Homeless:	111	160	253	152	251	176	274	197
3. On patrol:	----- [Not recorded] -----							-
4. Meals served:	-	1100	910	1210	1405	1343	1348	1219

1994-5: 21st Etto

Date:	28/12	29/12	30/12	31/12	01/01	02/01	03/01	Mean
1. Prefabs:	-	196	238	255	253	281	*301	#254
2. Homeless:	210	167	177	162	189	192	167	@181
3. On patrol:	38	52	49	41	40	44	43	44
4. Meals served:	-	1100	910	1210	1405	1343	1348	1219

* The prefabs stayed open for three more days in 1993-4 and for five more days in 1994-5. In each case roughly the same number of men used them as in the last couple of days of the main Etto period.

Probably the main reason for the sharp fall in numbers of men using the prefabs in 1994-5 was because this was the year of the first ever Etto at Kawasaki, the major industrial city between Yokohama and Tokyo. It ran from December 29 to January 3 and at its peak there were 418 people sleeping at the Kawasaki Municipal Gymnasium. Many of these people had travelled to Kotobuki in previous years.

@ The slight reduction in homeless numbers may owe something to the fact that late in 1994, after many years of strenuous lobbying by Junichiro and others, the city government set up a shelter in Matsukage-cho which could house up to 70 people for up to a fortnight -- a 'permanent temporary shelter' whereas the prefabs are 'temporary temporary shelters'.

Table 29

Order of events at the 1994 summer festival

August 13 (Saturday)

The Kotobuki Free Concert: 3pm to 9pm.

Featuring: The Orange County Brothers and Sisters (bluegrass), Koyama Yoshikazu (cowbells and yodelling), Kaneko Mari and Mama (Janis Joplin covers), Tengoku Jack (heavy metal), Soul Flower Union (folk-rock, including Ainu and Okinawan music), the Gamblers (big band jazz), Chibo & the Mojo Blues Band (R&B).

August 14 (Sunday)

1.00 to 3.30 Carrying the omikoshi portable shrine around the streets of Kotobuki.
 3.00 to 4.00 Children's events: suika-wari (melon-smashing) and sumo wrestling.
 7.00 to 8.30 Nodo-jiman Taikai (Karaoke contest; lit. 'Throat-pride Meeting')
 8.30 to 9.00 Bon dancing.

August 15 (Monday)

Noon Kuyo ceremony for the deceased, led by priests from Tokuonji Temple.
 3.00 to 4.00 More children's events.
 7.00 to 8.15 Korean folk-singing and dancing.
 8.15 to 9.00 Bon dancing

Source: Festival programme.

Table 30

Donations to 1994 Kotobuki Summer Festival (not including rock concert)

Type of donor	No.	Total given	Mean
Doya	52	Y351,000	Y 6,750
Doya associations	2	Y 30,000	Y15,000
Other local businesses	32	Y455,000	Y14,219
Support groups [13]; unions [3]	16	Y121,000	Y 7,563
Individuals	10	Y 74,000	Y 7,400
Total:	112	Y1,031,000	Y 9,205

Source: Noticeboard at festival.

Table 31

Japanese national spend on different types of gambling in a boom year (1988) and a bust year (1993).

Game	1988	1993	% change
Lotteries	490	720	+47%
Pachinko	11,530	17,500	+52%
Horse-racing	2,920	4,560	+56%
Mahjong	310	250	-19%

Unit: Billions of yen.

Source: Leisure Development Centre, 1994 Leisure White Paper, 72.

Table 32: Male and female population of Kamagasaki

Year pop.	No. of males	No. of females	Total
1945	4,949	5,792	10,741
1950	10,954	13,136	24,090
1955	16,110	17,959	34,069
1960	18,610	17,592	36,602
1965	17,237	15,574	32,811
1970	21,797	11,739	33,536
1975	22,090	11,778	33,868
1980	21,984	9,892	31,876

[Source: Kamagasaki Resource Centre 1993:229]

Table 33: Contents of union collecting boxes, January 4 1995

Notes			Coins		
Y10,000	Y5,000	Y1,000	Y500	Y100	Y50/10/5/1
1	2	63	50	123	[c.Y15,000 worth]

Total value of collection: c.Y135,000 [c.800 pounds]

APPENDIX 2: YOSEBA GLOSSARY

n noun v verb a adjective ab abbreviation ad adverb pn proper
noun np noun phrase vp verb phrase ap adjectival phrase ex
exclamation lit literally

Abareru v To rampage, go wild.

Abureru v To fail to get work. Oddly similar to 'abareru',
and both words frequently used of Kotobuki people.

Abure-teate n Day labourer's dole payment.

Agito n An activist's lair, typically a small room stuffed with
books, posters, street weapons etc. From 'agitation'.

Aitai hōshiki np Lit. 'Face-to-face formula'. The recruitment
system used by the Kamagasaki labour centre, where legalized
tehaishi [qv] bring their minibuses to the Centre and
negotiate directly with workers.

Amaembo n Lit. 'child who indulges'. A spoilt brat. Many
Kotobuki men describe themselves thus. From 'amaeru', to
presume on indulgence, word made famous by Doi Takeo.

Amen de ramen p Saying amen to get noodles [ramen]. Hence, the
practice of attending Christian services purely for the food
handouts that follow.

Ana-hori n 'Digging holes', slang for construction work.

Ankō n Lit. 'Angler Fish'. Kansai slang for a day labourer.
Said to come from the idea that a day labourer waits in the
street to snap up a job like an angler fish lying still on

the sea bed waiting to pounce on smaller fish passing by.
But Leupp (1992:134) has an Edo period ref. to 'ankonakashi' ('bean-jam labourers') -- with short 'o'.

Ankoku n Darkness. Hence ankoku-gai, the underworld, gangland;
also ankoku-men, the seamy side (of life, society, etc.).

Anzen-gutsu n Safety boots, with heavily reinforced toes so that
you can drop tons on your toe in safety. Drawback: awful
chaps, chilblains etc.

Aokan suru v To sleep rough, lit. a simple life in the open air.
Contraction from 'aozora' [blue sky] + 'kantan' [simple].

Arubaito n Part-time job, from German 'arbeit'. Hence
'arubaitaa', one who does such jobs, also 'furi arubaitaa',
one who does such jobs freely and without commitment, and its
contracted form 'furiitaa'. These are the words associated
with young, fashionable casual labour as opposed to old,
unfashionable 'hiyatoi rodo' (qv).

Aru-chū n An alcoholic. Contraction of 'arukoru' [alcohol] +
'chudoku' [addict].

Asaru v Lit. 'to fish'. To forage, hunt for, scrounge. Eg
'Gomibako de zanpan o asaru', to forage for scraps in rubbish
bins.

Atariya n Lit. 'hit merchant'. A kind of con-man/stunt-man who
specializes in getting hit by cars to claim compensation.

Bakayarō ex Lit. 'stupid guy' You stupid bastard! See yaro.

Baken n A betting slip [for horse-racing].

Bakutō n A professional gambler. 'Tobaku' backwards. One

branch of yakuza origins.

Barashi n Demolition. From Barasu (v), to smash up. Cf kaitai.

Baren n A [horse] quinella bet. You pick the numbers of the first 2 horses home. Offers longer odds than the wakuren (qv) because *only* 1 horse per number.

Bari-bari a (Of one's way of working) like crazy, like the dickens. Approving. Opposite of 'jaku-baran' [qv].

Bataya n One who collects discarded rubbish -- typically cardboard -- for a living. The bataya pushes his cart through the streets, piling up flattened cardboard boxes on top of it, and sells the cardboard for recycling. Traditional underclass occupation. Also 'kuzu-hiroi'.

Bira n A leaflet, a flyer.

Borantia n A volunteer, a do-gooder. English import.

Bōshin n The foreman in charge of a hanba (qv) or genba (qv). Might derive from 'bosun'.

Bottakuru v To cheat someone by overcharging -- frequent complaint about management of hanba/ninpu-dashi (qv).

Boya n A small fire, such as might break out in a doya room.

Butabako n Prison [slang, lit. pig box].

Butakiri suru v Lit: 'To chop off sbdy's head' To fire a man halfway through a work contract, depriving him of some or all of his wages. 'It usually happens about noon, halfway through the day. The boss says 'you're no good, get the hell out of here!' and gives you Y500 for the bus-fare home'. Probably a corruption of 'butsugiri': clean, powerful

cutting, usually of fish -- 'maguro butsugiri' (sliced tuna).

Chara ni suru vp To let someone off repaying a debt.

Chinpira n Universal slang term for a junior yakuza.

Chôba[-san] n Concierge, manager of doya.

Chô-han n Odd and even. Very old term for dice gambling.

Chokkô n Going straight to work. Person who has work connection and need not wait for tehaishi: goes direct to work-site.

Chongryun pn Organization of North-affiliated Koreans in Japan.
Japanese pron.: Chosen Soren

Chû-hi, chu-hai n A pre-mixed drink with shochu [crude spirit] and sparkling fruit juice.

Contradistor n A job broker who specializes in setting up contracts for Latin Americans of Japanese descent. Supposed to be Spanish for 'contractor'.

Daiku n A carpenter.

Dame jiji/baba np Useless old man/woman.

Dankô n Short for 'dantai kôshô' -- 'group negotiations'.

Deka n Slang term for police.

Dekasegi n Leaving home to do migrant labour. Hence also someone who does migrant labour.

Derashine n 'Someone who has lost his hometown'. From French, deracine, lit. 'rootless grass'. Used by intellectuals.

Dezura n The wage paid to a day labourer. Slightly old-fashioned slang, more current in Tokyo than Yokohama.

Doboku n Civil engineering. Homonym of doboku, servant/slave.

Doboroku n Unrefined home-made sake.

Dokata n A construction worker. Informal.

Dokō n Official term for construction worker.

Dokutā Sutoppu [Doctor Stop] np A doctor's letter stating that the bearer is physically unfit to work. Used to support welfare claims. Social welfare jargon. Cf Shindan-hyo.

Dōmoto n A bookie.

Doro-mochi n Lit. 'Mud-holder'. A plasterer's hod-carrier.

Doya n Very common slang term for a cheap hotel. Flophouse. Derives from 'yado' [an inn] with syllables reversed.

Doya-gai n Area with many doya. One definition of Kotobuki.

Doya-ken n Lodging coupon, from local govt, usable at some doya.

Eigyō-man n Lit. 'businessman'. Used to describe managers of construction firms who tour around the regions recruiting dekasegi [qv] for long-term contracts in the big cities.

Enka n Traditional-style Japanese ballads, very sentimental.

Ettō n Lit. 'Passing winter'. But connotes grim struggle--surviving winter. The annual New Year support campaign by the city authorities, day labourer union and other support groups.

Furai-jin n A person who shows up from nowhere -- lit. who comes with the wind. Hence a wanderer, an unsettled person, a worthless person, vagabond, tramp, waif. Also furai-mono, furai-bo -- same meaning, though lit. 'a wandering monk'. This is also the 'bo' in amaembo, tachinbo [qv]. Cf pu-taro.

Furitā [freiter] n See 'arubaito'. Term used contemptuously to describe men who come to yoseba seeking freedom,

experience, thrills etc., but give it up after a few years.

Garadashi n Making the wooden frames for pouring concrete into.
Cf Katawaku daiku.

Gashi n Death by hunger.

Gase n A fake, a fraud.

Ganburu n Gambling. 2 types: 'eiri' [run by professionals, for profit] and 'goraku' [between friends, for fun].

Geba n Contraction of 'gebaruto', from German 'gewalt'. Violence. Left-wing jargon. Hence 'uchi-geba' [in-fighting] and 'geba-bo' [stick used for street-fighting, lit. 'violence stick'].

Genba n Lit. 'Present/actual site'. A work place, esp a building site.

Genba kantoku n A site supervisor, a foreman.

Gen'eki n A currently active labourer, capable of getting work.

Getemono n Lit. 'exotic things'. Dogs, snakes, rats etc. as food.

Gonzo n Apparently this is Kyushu slang for a day labourer, especially a docker.

Gure-yado n Lit. 'Inn of dissolution'. 19th century slang for a kichin-yado [qv]

Hadaka-ikkan n Lit. 'Entirely naked'. Penniless, owning nothing but one's own body.

Hakobiya n Lit. 'Carrier'. In a gambling nomiya [qv], a man who carries money and betting tickets to a separate location to be counted and get winning tickets paid off. Cf. Kakiya.

Hanba n A work camp, with accommodation, where men work on longer-term contracts. In western Japan, also used to mean 'rodo-geshuku' [qv].

Hanchō n A sub-foreman, head of a 'han' [work party]. Status lower than genba kantoku [qv], but higher than bōshin [qv].

Han-keta n Lit. 'Half-kickover'. A hanba or ninpu-dashi that is almost as bad as a ketaoshi one.

Han-tako n Lit. 'Half-octopus'. A labour camp half like a 'tako-beya' camp [qv], i.e. almost as bad.

Higurashi n Living by the day. Elderly slang term for day labourer. See Akiyama et al, 1960:Vol 2, 187.

Hiropon n Old slang term: amphetamines, from brand name. Speed.

Hiyatoi rodosha/romusha n Lit Daily employed worker/labourer. Translated as 'day labourer' in this work.

Hiyatoi techo np The handbook used by day labourers to record evidence of work done by sticking on inshi [qv]; used to claim day labourer dole.

Hiyatoi techo kinyu np Day labourer handbook financing. A form of loan-sharking where someone, usually a yakuza, lends money to a day labourer to be repaid out of his dole claims. Observed in Osaka.

Hiyatoi Zenkyo pn The national federation of day labourer unions.

Hiyō-kasegi [np] Earning by the day; one who does so. Also hiyō-tori np

Hizeni n Money for the day, one day's money.

Hôgai engo np Extra-legal assistance. Temporary help given to people not on seikatsu hogo [qv]. There is no legal obligation to provide this service, which includes doya-ken and pan-ken [qv].

Honmei n Favourite (in racing, also in love, etc.).

Honsen n Lit. 'a depot ship'. '70s slang for dock work.

Hoppy n Old-fashioned brand of non-acholic beer, mixed with shochu to make 'hoppy-hai'.

Horô n Wandering, roaming. Hence 'horo-kuse', vagabondage, wanderlust; also horo-sha, a tramp, a vagabond.

Hôsuisha n A police vehicle equipped with water cannon.

Inshi n Stamp affixed to techo as evidence of 1 day's work done. See also yami inshi.

Inshoku-gai n Licensed district, area with many bars etc.

Ippatsu n Lit. '1 blow'. A triumph; a punch in the face; a home run; a fuck.

Iryôhan n The volunteer medical team which does free check-ups etc. in Kotobuki.

Itachi-gokko np The practice, common among homeless people, of leaving a pitch under pressure from police or residents' and going back to it once the coast is clear. Heard in Nagoya.

Jaku-baran n Osaka slang. Lazy work; also one who works lazily.

Jikka n Familial home, from which many Koto people are estranged. Lit. 'Real home'.

Jinzai-haken-gyo n Personnel dispatch business. Most formal and polite way of describing rodo geshuku or ninpu-dashi [qv].

Jitsurô n Lit. 'Actual work'. In a period contract, this means a day labourer must work the actual number of days in the contract -- ie days missed for rain etc. don't count. Cf. nissu.

Jitsu-rôdô n Lit. 'Actual labour'. Usually, physical labour.

Jôbi n A regular worker. Same as jôyô [qv].

Jôhatsu suru vp Lit. 'To evaporate'. To suddenly go missing.

Jôyô n A regular worker. Opposite of rinji, a casual [qv].

Jukuren-ko n A skilled worker, a craftsman.

Jûminhyô n Certificate of residence. Key bureaucratic document. Resented recent rule-change means you can only use shokuan if you have one. See koseki tohon.

Junichiro pn The Kotobuki Day Labourers' Union (kanji acronym).

Kaen-bin n A petrol bomb, a Molotov cocktail.

Kai-goroshi n Variously, working someone till they die, keeping someone although they are no longer useful, etc. Sometimes applied to workers who have lost their freedom, to an employing company or a ninpu-dashi [qv].

Kaikin teate np See kinzoku teate.

Kaitai n Demolition. Common job for day labourers. Cf barashi.

Kakiya n Lit. 'Writer'. In a gambling nomiya, a man who writes out betting tickets. Cf. Hakobiya.

Kamagasaki pn The yoseba in Osaka. Some older men still know it as Kasumi-cho. Now officially called Airin-ku; also called Nishinari after the Osaka ward in which it lies.

Kake[ru] n [v] A bet [to gamble]

Kakekomi-dera n A temple of sanctuary. Word sometimes used to describe Kotobuki and other doya-gai.

Kakuseizai n Stimulants -- amphetamines etc.

Kanpa n A donation, a contribution.

Kao-zuke n [Employment by] knowing someone's face. No newcomers.

Kapparau v To purloin, pilfer, swipe or nick something.

Kara-ken n A doya-ken which is of no value because all the doya which accept them are already full. Lit. 'empty ticket'.

Kasu n Scum. Term of abuse.

Kashira n Lit. 'Head'. Boss, foreman, gang leader, ring leader. Sometimes 'kashira-bun', lit. 'Head-part'. Cf. Kogashira.

Katawaku daiku np A carpenter specialised in building wooden frames into which concrete is poured to make foundations.

Katazuke n Tidying up. Simplest, lightest, worst-paid work on building site.

Keiba n Horse-racing, the turf.

Keibi n Security, hence a security guard. Common form of casual labour.

Keirin n Bicycle-racing.

Ketaoshi n Lit. 'kicking over'. Used to describe brutal forced labour camps [hanba] and boarding houses [ninpu-dashi]

Kichin-yado n A doss-house. The old-fashioned equivalent of 'doya'. Kanjis are wood + fee + inn. In antiquity, the 'wood fee' was charged by inns for supplying firewood for travellers to cook their rice. A term still occasionally used today. Over 300 years old.

Kinzoku teate np A bonus payable on completion of a labouring contract, typically at the end of a month, if no days have been taken off. Kanji: work + continuous. Also called kaikin teate all + work).

Kiseru n Lit. 'Pipe'. The art of fare-dodging on the trains. A kiseru has a metal mouth-piece and bowl, and a long thin wooden stem. The fare-dodger buys a ticket to go a very short distance, travels a much longer distance, and pays for another short-distance journey at the other end.

Kobochi n Lit. 'breaking'. Smashing up wooden walls, floors, tatami mats etc. at a demolition job. Cf barashi.

Kogashira n Lit. 'Small head'. A sub-foreman or recruiter's lieutenant. Cf. Kashira.

Kojiki n A vagabond, a tramp. Sometimes, a beggar. Derogatory.

Koki-tsukau v To work into the ground. Also: Gyuba no yo ni kokitsukau, to work sbdy like a beast of burden, lit 'like oxen and horses'.

Kokushi n Abuse or exploitation, usually of workers. 'Kokushi sarete iru rodosha' = 'downtrodden workers'.

Komawari n (Osaka) A job where a day's work is defined by the completion of a particular job. A fast worker can get off early. Slowcoaches work late. Rather rare these days.

Kono yarō [see yarō] ex Lit. 'This guy' You bastard!

Kōrō-byōsha n An unidentified traveller taken ill on the road. Japanese prefectures have a centuries-old obligation to provide health-care for such people.

Koryôri n A small, traditional bar-restaurant. A cookshop.

Koseki Thon np Family register. Key bureaucratic document.
Kept at one's familial home town. Must produce when applying for juminhyo [qv]. Koseki tohon is then amended, allowing relatives to trace fugitive family member. Assumption: no secrets within families.

Kowan rodosha np Lit. 'Harbour worker'. A longshoreman.

Koya n Lit. 'Small house'. A home-made hut or shack.

Kuinige n Lit. 'Eat-escape'. The act of leaving a restaurant without paying the bill. + suru = vp.

Kuni n One's country or place of origin.

Kusakari n Grass-cutting. One of the worst-paid day labourer jobs. Done with kusakari-kikai [mower], kusakari-gama [scythe] or even by hand.

Kussaku n Excavation, digging. Common day labourer job.

Kusô n, ex Shit. Shit!

Kuso jiji / baba n Lit. 'Shit grandad/ma'. Stupid old bastard.

Kusuneru v To pilfer or purloin.

Kusuri n Medicine. Hence also drugs.

Kuzu n Rubbish, left-overs, unwanted or useless items. Also used as insult -- 'ningen no kuzu', 'human rubbish'. Almost the same as 'kasu' [qv].

Kuyakushô n The local ward office.

Kyôtei n Motorboat racing.

Maegari n Lit 'Advance borrowing'. An advance on one's wages or welfare payment.

Maegashi n Lit. 'Advance lending'. Same as maegari, but from the point of view of the employer or agency.

Mago'uke n Lit. 'Grandson-contractor'. A sub-sub-contractor, one rung down from a shita-uke [qv].

Maguro n Lit. 'Tuna' + suru = vp to mug a person sleeping in the street. The idea is that the victim is as helpless as a tuna lying on a chopping board. Cf mogaki, shinogi.

Make-inu n Lit. 'Losing dog'. A whipping dog, a loser.

Makoli n Crude milky white Korean liquor, fermented from rice.

Manmosu n Lit. 'mammoth'. The giant-size police box in Sanya.

Mawari-zake np Lit. 'Going-round-booze'. The act of walking around, drinking alcohol. + suru = vp.

Mig-mig n Filipino term for the immigration bureau + officials.

Mikko n Human smuggling; stowing away on a ship. One way of avoiding mig-mig.

Mindan pn Organization of South-affiliated Koreans in Japan.

Mogaki n Lit. Writhing, violent struggle. + sareru = vp to be mugged. Sanya equivalent of Kotobuki's 'maguro' [qv].

Mokuyô Patrôru n The Thursday Patrol, volunteer group which tours parts of Yokohama on Thursday nights, handing out blankets, soup etc. to homeless people.

Mon-nashi n Penniless.

Monogoi n Begging; a beggar. More explicit than 'kojiki' [qv]

Moto'uke n The prime contractor on a construction project. Employs day labourers only indirectly, via chains of shita'uke and mago'uke [qqv].

Muen-botoke n Lit. 'Unconnected Boddhisatva'. One who died leaving no-one to attend the grave, i.e. no known relatives.

Mûsho n Slang term for 'prison'. Abbreviation of 'keimusho'.

Nagareru v To drift. Hence nagaremono, a drifter.

Nakama n Friend; comrade.

Nawabari n Lit. 'Rope stretching'. Territory, typically that controlled by a gang of yakuza.

Naya n A shed or barn. Also used to describe secure workers' accommodation, especially in pre-war coal industry. Hence 'naya seido' ['shed system'], way of controlling workers by confining them to quarters under supervision of 'naya-gashira' ('barn boss').

Nedaru v To sponge, to mooch, to solicit, to cadge.

Nerai-me n A written tip from a professional tipster.

Ni-age n Unloading, discharge, landing. Hence niage ninsoku, a stevedore, niage-ba, a landing stage or wharf, and niage-bune, a lighter or barge.

Ni-hakobi n Seems to be the Kansai equivalent of ni-age.

Nikoyon n Lit. 'Two and Four'. Old-fashioned slang term for a day labourer. Derives from the fact that in the Showa 20s [1945-55] the daily pay for a day labourer registered at a labour exchange was Y240.

Nikutai-rodo n Lit. 'Flesh-body labour'. Hence manual labour. 'Nikutai' also has sexual connotation, eg 'nikutai shosetsu', an erotic novel.

Nikkyu n A daily wage. Hence Nikkyu-sei, the day-rate plan; and

Nikkyu-rodosha, another term for a day labourer.

Ninpu n A labourer, a hand, a navy. Interchangeable with 'hiyatoi' [qv]. Exact homonym of 'ninpu', a pregnant woman.

Ninpu-dashi n Lit. 'Navy-sender'. Colloquial, somewhat derogatory term for a rodo-geshuku [qv].

Ninsoku n Same as 'ninpu'. Often used to describe dockers.

Ninsoku yoseba n Lit. 'Place for gathering labourers'. A labour camp. First seen in 18th century. Origin of 'yoseba' (qv).

Nissu n Lit. 'Number of days'. In a period contract, this means that the contract will end after the number of days specified, regardless of days lost to rain, etc. Cf jitsuro.

Nitto n Daily wage or daily allowance.

Niyaku n Stevedoring, cargo work.

Niyaku ninpu np Lit. 'Cargo-carrying labourer'. A longshoreman.

Nojuku n Lit. 'Wild-living'. Homelessness. + suru = vp, to sleep rough.

Nojukusha n A homeless person, one who sleeps rough.

Nomikomi n Lit. 'Drinking-entering'. Taking your own alcohol into a bar. + suru = vp. Forbidden.

Nomi-mawashi n Lit. 'Drinking-passing-round'. The act of passing round a bottle of alcohol for friends to drink from. Symbol of camaraderie.

Nomitaosu v Lit. 'Drink-knock over'. (1) To leave a bar without paying for one's drinks. (2) To drink away one's fortune.

Nomitsubureru v Lit. 'Drink-be-crushed'. To be dead drunk.

Nomitsubusu v Lit. 'Drink-crush'. To drink away one's fortune.

Nomiya n A bar or gambling den. In Kotobuki, always the latter.

Nonbee n A drunkard.

Norinige n Lit. 'Ride-escape'. The act of running away from a taxi without paying the fare.

Notarejini, n Death in the gutter. + suru = vp, to die in the gutter, to die a beggar.

O-ana n Rank outsider. Racing term.

Obeya n Lit. 'Big room'. A room -- not necessarily that big-- shared by several men, say a dozen or two. (Also, in drama, a room where utility actors are kept.)

Oboreru v (1) To drown. (2) To indulge in a vice, to be addicted.

Ochikobore n 'Scatterings'. Riff-raff. Not politically correct.

Omote n The outside, hence the streets.

Omote kara iku n Lit 'To go from the outside' -- to get work on the street, rather than from a public agency.

Oshikake n 'Thronging in'. Day labourer union campaigning technique. When authorities refuse to negotiate, activists and workers force entry and occupy until negotiations have been granted and satisfaction obtained. Cf. Suarikomi.

Otchokochoi n A scatter-brain, a goof.

Oyabun n Lit. 'Father figure'. Boss of yakuza gang.

Oyakata n Lit. 'Father figure'. One's patron or boss. Seems to cover worksite foremen, owners of small construction cos too.

Pachinko n Japanese-style pinball, gambling for prizes [legal] or money [illegal but universal].

Pachi-pro np Short for 'pachinko professional'. One who is so skilled, or so good at cheating, that he can make a living just by playing pachinko [qv].

Pakuru v To arrest (informal). Passive form: pakurareru, to be arrested.

Pan-ken n Lit. 'Bread ticket'. Food voucher from local govt.

Pe n Slang term for heroin.

Pinhane n The tehaishi's cut, a percentage of the day's wage withheld by the recruiter.

Ponbiki n Also pon-hiki. (1) A con-man. (2) A pimp.
(3) General term of abuse.

Poriko n Slang term for police.

Pu-taro n Lit. 'Wind-man' or 'Jack o' the Wind'. Yokohama/Tokyo area slang: day labourer. Maybe from 'furaijin' [qv].

Renga-shi or renga-shoku np A bricklayer. 'Shi' = 'master', so sounds better than 'shoku' [= 'worker'].

Rinji a,n Temporary, special. Formal Japanese for a casual, non-staff employee.

Rôdô-geshuku np A western Japanese institution which combines the functions of boarding house and casual labour agency.
The owner supplies his or her tenants with jobs.

Rojô seikatsu-sha np 'A person living on the street'. Official euphemism for 'homeless person'. Cf yagai seikatsu-sha.

Rokotsu n One's old bones. Hence, an old man.

Roten n A street stall.

Ryûdo-teki na kasô rôdôsha np A mobile low-class worker. Left-

wing jargon for a day labourer.

Sabetsu n Discrimination. 'Senmin sabetsu': against 'despised people', eg Burakumin, Koreans. 'Netami sabetsu': out of jealousy, against minorities which have benefitted from govt policy.

Sagyō-in n A worker, a labourer. Standard Japanese.

Saikoro n Dice.

Sakan[-ko/-ya] n A plasterer. Also sakan-koji, np, plastering.

Sake-guse np Lit. 'Drink-habit'. An eccentricity which comes out under the influence of alcohol.

Sake-kusai ap Stinking of alcohol.

Sake-zuki n One who likes drinking. A toper.

Sankaku-koen pn Triangle Park. Famous Kamagasaki location.

Sanya pn The major yoseba in Tokyo.

Sasashima pn The yoseba in Nagoya. Sometimes pron. 'Sasajima'.

Satsu n Slang term for police. Abbreviation of 'keisatsu'.

Seikan-kō np A boiler-maker.

Seikatsu hogo np Lit. 'Guaranteeing life' or 'livelihood protection'. Social security.

Senkyōshi n A missionary.

Senpaku n Ships, shipping, hence dock work.

Sentō n A public bath.

Sewa-nin n An intermediary, an introducer of people. Some successful day labourers become sewa-nin, introducing friends to employers. A step towards being a full-time recruiter.

Shaba n The outside [non-yoseba] world. From Sanskrit, Saha.

Same term is used by prisoners.

- Shabu n Slang term for amphetamines. Speed.
- Shagaiko n Rather formal term for a worker who is not a member of the employing company -- includes day labourers.
- Shaken n A betting slip for a bicycle race.
- Shichibu-zubon n Traditional labourer's baggy pantaloons.
- Shi-go-ichi n Lit. '4-5-1'. Dice game, popular in Osaka. 3 dice used; 4-5-1 is the strongest combination.
- Shikehari n Lit. 'Stormwatcher'. A lookout (slang). Yakuza posted outside gambling den etc. to watch for cops.
- Shindan-hyô n A doctor's note, required to establish a claim for social security on grounds of illness. Cf Dokutaa Sutoppu.
- Shinê x Drop dead!
- Shinogi n Lit. 'Tiding over'. + suru = vp. Used to refer to pawning personal possessions; hence to having one's possessions removed by a mugger. Kamagasaki equivalent of 'maguro' [qv].
- Shiokuri n A remittance of cash. + suru = vp, to send money home, aim of many migrant workers.
- Shita'uke n Lit. 'Under-contractor'. A sub-contractor. Cf moto'uke, magouke.
- Shittai n Local govt and activist jargon: short for 'shitsugyo-taisaku' -- unemployment countermeasures. Mostly projects cleaning up parks etc for low wages paid by local govt.
- Shittai-rôdôsha np Worker employed on 'shittai' [qv] project.
- Shoba-dai n Lit. 'place money'. Payment from street stall-

holder to yakuza for permission to use a particular pitch.

'Shoba' is the word 'basho' ('place'), reversed. Cf. doya.

Lit. 'win-lose'. Result of a contest. Hence: gambling.

Shochu Strong liquor distilled from barley. In Korean: soju.

Shokuan Labour exchange. Abbreviation of 'Shokugyo Anteijo'.

Shoshiki n The practice of a hanba-owner selling things [eg gloves, towels, fags, booze] to his workers on tick. The price (+ margin) is deducted from wages on completion of contract.

Shukusha n A barracks or other simple living quarters for men. Used to describe dormitories for construction workers.

Suarikomi n Sit-in. Day labourer union campaigning technique. Activists and workers hold sit-in at local govt offices until officials agree to negotiate. Cf. Oshikake.

Sukkarakan n The condition of being stony broke.

Sukoppu [Scope] n For some reason this means a shovel.

Sûyô Patororu n The Wednesday Patrol, group of volunteers and Junichiro people which tours Kawasaki, handing out soup, blankets etc. to homeless people. Cf. Mokuyo Patororu.

Tachinbô n 'A standing man'. One who waits for work on a street corner. Hence a day labourer; sometimes a prostitute. Also: a penile erection. Used to mean day labourer by Matsubara (1888:22), and to mean a day labourer working under a cart-driver in Yokoyama (1899:33). Derives from people who, in the Meiji era, would wait at the bottom of a hill or elsewhere, help push any vehicle that came along, and

receive a small payment.

Tachi-nomi n Lit. 'Standing-drinking'. A liquor store where one may drink one's purchase standing at a counter.

Tada-hataraki np Lit. 'Free-work'. Working for nothing, i.e., being wrongfully deprived of one's wages.

Taikô Contender. Racing term.

Takari n Sponging off people. A shakedown.

Takibi n An open outdoor fire for keeping warm. Bonfire.

Takidashi n Free food handout by volunteers, Christians etc.

Tako-beya n Lit. 'Octopus Room'. A prison-like work camp. 'A bond laborers' pen; a concentration shack for forced labourers' (Masuda 1974). Thought to come from its similarity to an octopus trap, like a lobster pot: you can get in but not out. Cf. Han-tako.

Tamahime-koen pn Jewel-Princess Park. Famous Sanya location.

Tan'i shukuhaku np 'Simple lodgings'. Formal term for doya.

Tanima n Lit. 'Ravine'. Traditional word for a slum district.

Tanpakin n See 'tsukebaryo'.

Tatazumu v To hang around, to loiter.

Tedori n Lit. 'Hand-take'. Net income after tax + deductions.

Tehaishi n Lit. 'Hand-distributor'. A street labour recruiter.

Tekkin-ko n A construction worker who specializes in making frameworks of steel rods for reinforced concrete.

Teihen n The bottom (of society). Often used by Kotobuki people to describe their own position.

Teiken n A betting slip for power boat racing.

Tematori n A piece-worker or oddjob man. Sometimes used to mean a day labourer.

Tenbiki n Lending money and taking out the interest in advance.
Cf Tsukebaryo.

Tenraku n + suru = vp 'Fall' as in fallen woman, fall of man, fall of a person into Kotobuki. Not politically correct.

Tensen n Lit. 'Fighting on a series of fronts'. Left-wing jargon glamourizing the day labourers' practice of moving from one yoseba to another in search of work.

Terasen n Lit. 'Temple money'. The house cut in gambling.
From tradition of gambling in Buddhist temple courtyards.

Tesura n The daily wage. Old street slang; same as Desura [qv].

Tobaku n Gambling.

Tobi, also tobishoku n Lit. 'hawk', 'hawk-work'. Construction worker who specializes in dangerous, high-altitude work. A spiderman.

Tokoton n The bitter end; or sometimes, rock bottom. Must be onomatopoeic, maybe from the sound of small items hitting the bottom of a bucket?

Tonkō n The act of quitting before the end of a period contract.

Toriage n Removal -- here, of a day labourer's hiyatoi techo [qv], in punishment for some offence, usually a fraudulent claim.

Toshi [1] n Death by hypothermia.

Toshi [2] n [Different characters] Lit. 'Going right through'.
To work two consecutive shifts, day then night. Working

night then day is a 'gyaku-toshi' [reverse toshi]; working three in a row is a 'san-ban toshi'; four in a row is a 'yon-ban toshi' etc.

Tsukebaryo n In loan-sharking, the illegal practice of holding back a percentage of the total loaned as an immediate first repayment. Also called 'tanpakin'. See also 'tenbiki'.

Tsumikomi n Cargo-loading. Mainstay of casual dock-work.

Tsumi-oroshi n Loading and unloading.

Tsukai-sute np Lit. 'Use-dispose'. Disposable, throw-away. Used by union to describe companies' use of day labourers.

Tsure-shonben np Also 'tsure-shoben', 'tsure-shon'. Lit. 'Taking someone along for a piss'. The act of several people standing in a line together to urinate. Symbol of camaraderie. + suru = vp.

Tsutomeru v To work for someone. Also: to do time in prison.

Ubasute-yama n In old Japan, a mountain where old women were left to die. Hence, one image of doya-gai.

Uchi-geba n In-fighting. Common among left-wing activists.

Uchi-kin n Lit. 'Inside money'. An advance on one's wages.

Wakuren n A bracket quinella bet, where a combination of 2 numbers is picked from which the top 2 horses/bikes/boats must come. There may be more than 1 runner per number. Some, but not all, wakuren are reversible. Cf baren.

Wan-kappu [One-Cup] pn A sealed glass of sake or shochu sold for immediate consumption. From brand name.

Watari-ninpu np A wandering labourer.

Yagai seikatsu-sha np Lit. 'A person living outdoors'. Official euphemism for 'a homeless person'. Cf rojo seikatsu-sha.

Yakan kimmu np Night work.

Yakuza n A gangster. Derives from 'ya-ku-za' [8-9-3], a losing combination of cards in a game resembling blackjack. Note similar word formation to 'nikoyon' [qv].

Yami inshi np Black-market employment stamps. In 1994 yakuza would sell two-month sets of employment stamps, complete with fake employers' seals, for about Y30,000. Labour offices made strenuous, sometimes successful attempts to detect them.

Yankara n Slang term for a man who doesn't work and just sits around the bonfire killing time. Originally Ainu word meaning 'shochu' [qv]. In Kamagasaki, still used in that sense.

Yaro n A guy. Pejorative.

Yaru v To do. Hence also to win, to do something impressive, to fuck, to arrest, to beat up, to kill. Yarareru: passive form.

Yatai n A small wooden shack, sometimes on wheels, serving liquor and light meals. Some stretch to seats, small counters and plastic curtains to keep out the cold.

Yatoware n In yakuza parlance, a hired man who is not a formal member of the gang. Applies to most nomiya staff.

Yobikomi n A barker, a man who encourages customers to enter a massage parlour, brothel, strip club, etc.

Yoi-tomake ex, n (1) 'Yo heave-ho', exhortation shouted esp when pulling in an anchor [from 'maku', to wind up]. (2) A navy

woman, a woman construction worker. (Both in Masuda 1974).

(3) 'In ground levelling operations, an exhortation shouted while raising and lowering heavy loads of earth with a pulley. Hence, the act of ground-levelling and those who perform it. (Kodansha).

Yoi-tomake no Uta pn Famous song sung by transvestite star Miwa Akihiro about his dauntless day-labouring mother.

Yojinbo n (1) a metal bar or bolt. (2) A bodyguard, muscle-man, bouncer or bully boy.

Yoriba n Alternative to 'yoseba' [qv], favoured by some workers because it uses the intransitive form of the verb 'yoru', to gather. 'A place where people gather'.

Yoseba n Lit. 'A place where people are gathered'. An area where day labourers gather. One definition of Kotobuki. Cf doya-gai. In yakuza slang, 'yoseba' means 'prison'-- another place where people are gathered.

Yosutebito n One who has thrown away the cares of the world.

Yunbo n A small power shovel.

Zanpan n Left-over food, scraps.

Zenekon n Short for 'zeneraru kontorakutaa' -- general contractor. Big, high-powered construction companies which are often moto'uke [qv] on major projects.

Zeni n Money. Old slang.

Zenka-mono np A man with a criminal record.

APPENDIX 3: BIRTH-ORDER DATA

Index number, age [Kotobuki only], birth information, stars
Stars denote degree of success as day
labourer [1 to 5]

Chonan [Oldest son]

Kotobuki:

1-02 57 [Blg2b] ***
1-12 55.5 [ggB7x] *
1-14 61 [Bbbgg] *****
1-26 35? [Bgg] **
1-39 54 [bBbb] ***
1-45 45.5 [Bbg] *****
1-46 40 [Bbb] ****
1-52 40?? [Bg] ?
1-54 54 [bBbb] **
1-55 48 [Bgbg] **
1-61 50? [Bbgbb] ?
1-63 [Bbb] **
1-70 45? [Bxxx] *
1-77 53 [gB9x] **
1-78 57 [ggB4x] **
1-123 56 [Bbbb] ?
7-1 55? [gB9x] *
7-21 50? [Bb] **
(11-2 [bbBbb older bros dead])
11-5 [Bb + sisters, count 2b2g]... 20

Chonan

***** 2
**** 1
*** 2
** 7
* 3 Star av. 2.47 Making it [3*+]: 33%.

Av. age of chonan who told me (12): 52.7.

Sanya:

12-5 [gBg]
12-6 [Bbbg]
12-8 [Bbb]
12-15 [gB9x]
12-20 [Bbbbg]
12-21 [B3x]
(12-26 [bBggg older bro dead])
12-31 [Bbg]
12-33 [B5x]

12-39 [Bbg]... 10

Chikko:

13-2 [Bbbg]
13-12 [gBbb]... 2

Kamagasaki:

15-21 [Bggg]
15-22 [Bbg]
15-31 [Bgg]
15-43 [Bgb]
15-48 [BgB + 1 sibling dead]... 5

Chonan/Suekko [Oldest son who is also last child]

Kotobuki:

1-01 46.5 [gB]
1-47 59 [gB]
1-126 42 [gB]
7-26 c.50? [gB]... 4

Sanya:

12-7 [bbB older bros killed in war]
12-43 [gB]... 2

Kamagasaki: (15-18 [bB older bro missing])... 1

Hitorikko [Only child]

Kotobuki:

1-37 c.50?
1-51 42 ... 2

Sanya:

12-23
12-48... 2

Sasashima:

16-13... 1

Suekko [Last child]

Kotobuki:

1-06 49 [bbB] *****
1-11 55? [2b1gB] ****
1-34 55.5 [5xB] ***
1-38 37? ['suekko'] *****
1-60 50? [6xB] ****
1-69 60? [4xB] ?
1-80 57.5 [ggbB] ?
1-81 55.5 [bbB] ***
1-82 45.5 [ggbB] ****
1-85 41 [3b1gB] **
1-86 40? [bB] ****
1-88 47.5 [4b3gB] *****
1-91 48? [6xB] **
1-93 40? [3b2gB] ***
1-100 40? [9xB] ?
1-124 55? [9xB] *
1-127 55? [bggB] **
1-128 50? [6xB] **
1-130 73 [6xB] ****
7-9 35? [bbbbB] **
7-20 40? [4xB]... 21 ***

Suekko

***** 3
**** 5
*** 4
** 5
* 1 Star av. 3.22 Making it [3*+]: 67%

Av. age of those who told me (8): 53.1 - "old timer" (7) = 50.2

Sanya:

12-7 [bbB]
(12-11 [bbBg sister dead])
12-14 [7xB]
12-21a [gbbB]
12-41 [3xB]
12-44 [ggbgB]... 6

Chikko:

13-1 [bbbbB]
13-13 [2b1gB]... 2

Kamagasaki:

15-20 [gbB]
15-24 [1b1gB]
15-29 [bbbB]
15-33 [8xB]
15-39 [8xB]
15-49 [8xB]... 6

Jinan [Second son, not suekko]

Kotobuki:

1-05 Mizubata 64.5 [bB + 4 others] **
1-56 Shoji 50? ["2nd son"] **
1-79 Kishimoto [bgBbbb]... 3 **** Okinawa

Sanya:

((12-26 [bBggg older bro dead]))
12-42 [bBxxx]... 1

Chikko:

13-15 [1b4gB7x]... 1

Kamagasaki:

15-32 [bBbb]
15-51 [bgBgg]
15-53 [bBgbb]... 3

San-nan [Third son, not suekko]

Kotobuki:

1-67 35? [bbBg] *** Okinawa
1-84 40? [bbBg] 'suekko mitai' ***
1-120 57 [bbB+3x] ****
1-125 58 [bgbBgbbbg] *****
1-129 50?? [2b1gBxx] ****

... 5

Sanya:

12-11 [bbBg]
12-19 [bbBg]
12-24 [2b1gBb]... 3

"Middle child"

Kotobuki:

1-95 45? [middle of 4b4g] *** Okinawa
1-104 70 [4xB5x]... 2 **

Sanya:

12-32 [2nd or 3rd of 6]... 1

Sasashima:

16-21 [xxxBx]... 1

Kotobuki Jinan + Sanan + "middle"

*****	1
****	3
***	4
**	3
*	0

Star av. 3.18
Making it [3*+] 73%

Married day labourers: 1-14; 1-24; 1-32; 1-33; 1-81.

Widowers: 1-87; 1-88.

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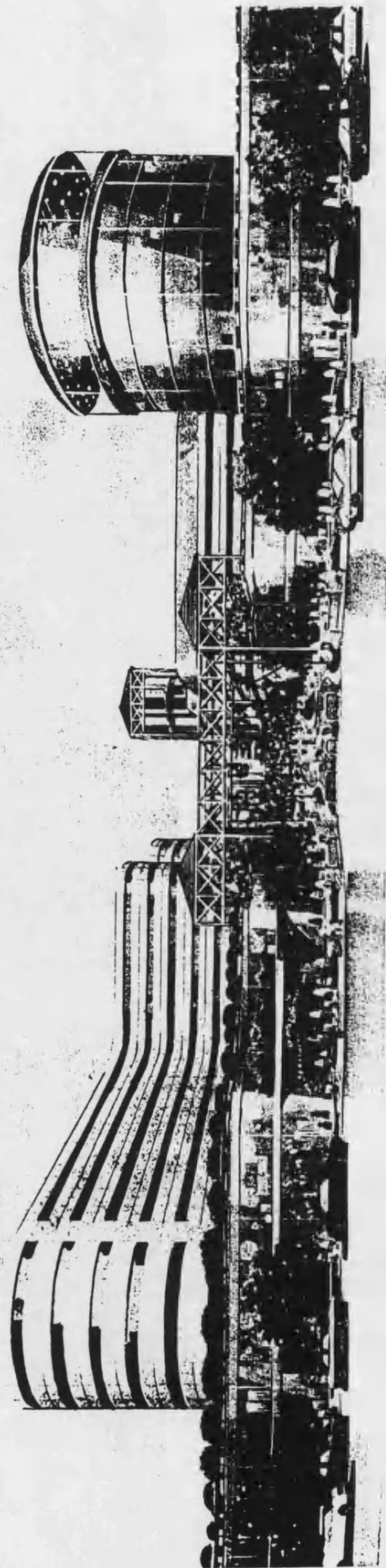
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563





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"CONCEPTUAL"
C. 3 MILES SQUARE

ROUGHLY
TO SCALE

MAP 2

LOCATION OF KOTOBUKI DISTRICT

JAPAN RAILWAYS
NEGISHI
LINE

至東京

YOKO-
HAMA
STATION

横浜

SHŪTO
EXPRESSWAY

首都
高速道路

YOKOHAMA
PARK

BASEBALL
STADIUM

CITY
OFFICE

PREFEC

県

OFFI

京
浜
急
行

KEIHIN
EXPRESS
RAILWAY
LINE

高島町
TAKASHIMA
CHŌ

桜木町
SAKURAGI-CHŌ

市営地下鉄

関内

KAN-
NAI
STN.

市庁

J R 根岸線

関

KANNAI STN.

EXPRESSWAY
INTERCHANGE

野毛町
NOGE

GYMNASIUM

伊勢佐木町商店街
ISEZAKI-CHŌ SHOPPING STREET

日ノ出町
HINODE-CHŌ
STATION

長者町
5丁目

伊勢佐木
長者町

ISEZAKI-
CHŌJAMACHI
STATION

THE SEA - YOKOHAMA DOCKS

ONLY C. 1/2 MILE SALE SQUARE

YAMASHITA PARK

山下公園

FECTURAL

県庁

FFICE

マリナータワー

MARINE TOWER

MOTOMACHI SHOPPING STREET

元町商店街

横浜公園

横浜 スタジアム

中華街 CHINATOWN

横浜公園

インター・チェンジ

NISHINO BASHI

至本牧

TO HONMOKU

港橋

MINATO BASHI

ISHIKAWA-CHŌ

横浜公園

インター・チェンジ

至大船

TO ŌFUNA

KAMENDBASHI

横浜文化 体育館

KOTOBUKI 当所

G.S.

KOTOBUKI

G.S.

G.S.

AREA ON MAP 1

ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY

NAKAMURA RIVER

OKINA BASHI

長者町1丁目 CHŌJAMACHI CHŌME

至浦舟

TO URAFUNE

至山元町

TO YAMAMOTO

KURUMA BASHI

KOTOBUKI GENERAL LABOUR WELFARE CENTRE

BASHI = BRIDGE

G.S. = GASOLINE STATION

(A)

MAP OF THE KOTOBUKI DISTRICT
寿地区案内図

(EXTERNAL MEDICINE)
KENTJI CLINIC

石川内科
TAKADAMA CAR RESIDENTS

石川駅前
TOISHI-KAWA-CHO
STATION

NEW EMPIRE
FLODDS

IFUKU
SOKUJIC
CENTRE

HATANO
ELEGANT
LAUNDRY

HAND-
MENS LAK
PARK

BUILDING
SITE FOR
NEW, 7-FLOOR
DOYA WITH
SHOPS

山登屋
TICHIBAN
GARDEN
RESTAURANT

MANIONS
BARIKI
TOWER

LARGE
MANSION
PARK

TWO-
STORY
CAR-
PARK

THE NEB
PENCIL
HETAN
BLDG

LARGE
VACANT
LOT: GRASS MUD.
FENCED, LOOKED

(B)

MAP 1

GENERAL
OFFICE

PEOPLE'S
POOL OF
KATAMARI
UNISO K.C.

BUSINESS
KATAMARI
UNISO

HOTEL
浜松荘
HOTEL
HAMAMATSU

第三ホテル
浜松荘

盛田
新栄荘

平成館
HEISEI-KOEN

ASIA
BLDG.
LAKE
APARTMENTS

丸光
MARUKO
APARTMENTS

東会館
HIGASHI-KAIKAN

長生館
CHOSEIKAN

信明荘
SHINMEI-CHO

松本 妙
大和荘

朝日荘
ASAHI-CHO

第5浜松荘
第6浜松荘

YAMATA
X-ROADS

(C)

EAST

MARKETPLACE
MARKETS

CAR
SHOPS

HAYASHI
林会館

HOME
HOTEL
小川

大信荘
TAISHIN-CHO

丸井荘
丸井本館
丸井荘
丸井新館

三好館
SANSHO-KOEN

寿生会館
JUSEI-KAIKAN

第2双葉会館
第1双葉会館

川崎荘
川崎上水

三和荘
SANWA-CHO

豊 荘
YUTAKA-CHO

桂林荘
KEIRIN-CHO

米和荘
EIWA-CHO

青葉荘
AYOBA-CHO

同栄ビル
DOEI BLDG

NEKSH
X-ROADS

MATSURAGE
X-ROADS

YAMATA
X-ROADS

YAMATA
X-ROADS

YAMATA
X-ROADS

YAMATA
X-ROADS

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YAMATA
X-ROADS

TOYOTA SERVICE CENTRE
"KUYAKUSHO STREET"
"WARD OFFICE STREET"
MIMIKI (USEFUL OFF-COURSE
BOOTS/STAIRS)
DOYU WHICH ACCEPT WARD OFFICE
"DOYA-MEN": ACCOMMODATION VOUCHERS
WORTH ¥1400. DOWN MARKET.

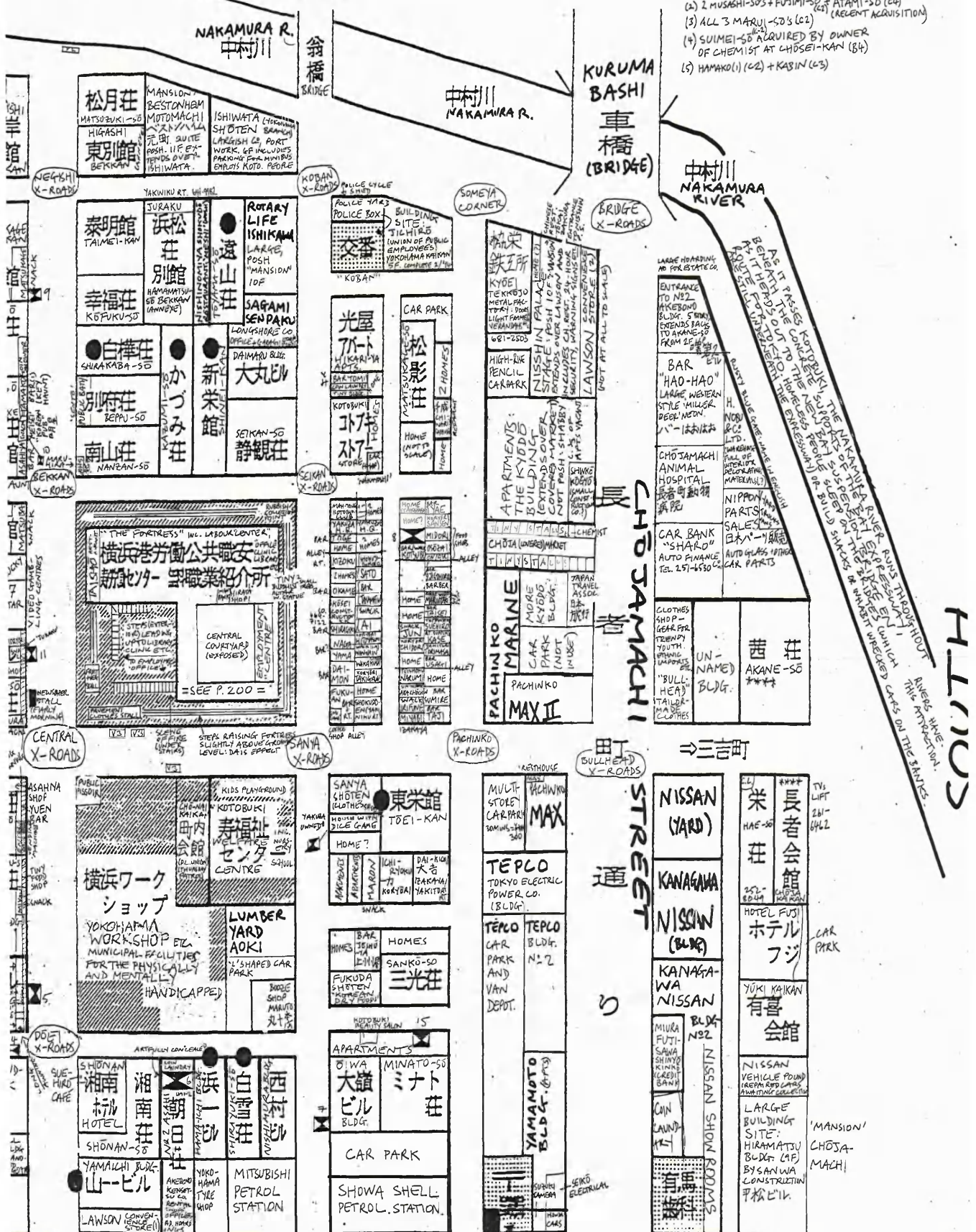
LEGEND:
DEBILIT LAYS (MAY)
DTPD (MAY)
DAYS WHICH ACCEPT WARD OFFICE
"DOYA-MEN": ACCOMMODATION VOUCHERS
WORTH ¥1400. DOWN MARKET.

1ST (D) (E) (F) (G)

OKINA BASHI

COMMON OWNERSHIP

- (1) ALL 6 HAMAMATSU-SO'S (B2 X3, D2, C4, B4 X2)
- (2) 2 MUSASHI-SO'S + FUJIMI-SO + ATAMI-SO (C4)
- (3) ALL 3 MARYU-SO'S (C2)
- (4) SUIMEI-SO ACQUIRED BY OWNER OF CHEMIST AT CHOSEI-KAN (B4)
- (5) HAMAKO (1) (C2) + KASIN (C3)



HATIKOSU

浦舟町 → URAFUJIMACHI

VEST

- * DA-I-CHI KEITAN BLDG.
- GF: MEIJI TRAVEL CO. 22411
- 1F: TOM CO., STEEL CO. (COMMUNIC)
- 2F: KANAGAWA KOSUBISHI CO.
- 3F: ASAHYI DEPARTMENT CO. (70 2211)
- 4F: MAH JONG & TOSHIMAWA (1) 2211
- 5F: EISHIN CO. (?) 2211 (NAME?)
- 6F: CAPE GRACE
- 8F: AT. 'THE GOWN OPERA' (三文魚?)

長者町 交差点 CHOSJA-MACHI CROSSROADS

救済会病院 HOSPITAL + TEMPLE EKISAIKAI SEAMEN'S HOSPITAL

2 MINUTES BY AMBULANCE TO THE CRITICAL CARE UNIT AT THE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL (DR. TAKEUCHI)