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Moralizing Confections in Japan, 1890–1930

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One of the most symbolic events in modern Japanese food history was the report, filed in January 1872, that Emperor Meiji (1852–1912) had become a meat eater. Most historians agree that this political gesture helped to dampen the centuries-old resistance to the slaughter and consumption of domesticated animals, setting off the process by which the Japanese nation, especially within the expanding towns and cities, was speedily converted into a country of unapologetic meat lovers by the 1880s.¹ Much of the impetus for this radical overhaul of the Japanese diet came from the understanding, popularized by leading intellectuals such as Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834–1901), that Westerners derived their superior physique from the eating of meat. Pointing to Western nutritional science, intellectuals argued that meat was not only “essential to growth, health and strength” but that it was also a “significant source of intellectual and moral capacity” because meat contained high levels of protein.² Confections, at first glance, appear to have had very little to do with this biochemically inspired moral discourse on meat. It is the chief contention of this chapter, however, that sweets were equally exposed to a powerful, scientifically informed moral gaze: the turn toward meat had, thus, a much broader impact than existing scholarship allows.³

Due to the nutritional fact that Western confections contain an abundance of “strong” animal-derived ingredients such as milk, eggs, and butter, while Japanese ones make predominant use of “weak” plant-derived ingredients such as *azuki* red beans, agar-agar, and rice flour, Western

confections were deemed morally superior. Physicians, with the tacit support of the state, made concerted efforts to promote Western-style confectionery (*yōgashi*) as “good” and to convince consumers that Japanese-style confectionery (*wagashi*) was “bad.”⁴ In contrast to rice, which Francesca Bray shows became a part of the Japanese self, Japanese-style confectionery during the period under review thus increasingly became the “other,” while Western-style confectionery became the “ideal self” to which health-conscious Japanese should aspire. Even though Japanese-style confectionery frequently used rice for its chief ingredient, this fact appeared to count for little in processed foods such as confections.

Many of the contributions in this volume are concerned with issues arising from, or in opposition to, a meat-based society. In their respective chapters, Angela Leung and Jia-Chen Fu make clear that China also grappled with a powerful, biochemically informed meat discourse but chose, instead of adopting meat or dairy milk, to follow a different dietary path that embraced vegetarianism and soybean milk because they appeared to fit the country’s dietetic traditions better and offered hope of an alternative, non-Western avenue to modernity. One objective of this chapter is to show how Japan’s experience with “nutritional modernity” had—with the exception of the 1890s—little room for such alternatives. Based on a nutritional and reductionist reappraisal of the place of sweets within modern society, a biomedically inspired moral gaze sought to discipline the behavior of producers, vendors, and consumers during the early twentieth century. Particularly characteristic of the Japanese experience was the extent to which the fulfillment of nutritional modernity was not enough; it was deemed increasingly important that standards of “hygienic modernity” should also be met.⁵ By the late 1910s, “good” confections were, accordingly, those that not only contained the “correct” ingredients but were also produced in the “correct” way, a shift that helped strengthen the impression that, in contrast to Western-style confections, Japanese-style confections, especially cheap ones, were “bad” because of *what* they contained and *how* they were made. Both the implications of such a moralizing drive and its limitations are unpacked in this chapter.

Constructing “Good” and “Bad” Confections in the 1890s

Before confections were subjected to a moral gaze, they first had to become popular, a process helped by the incorporation of sugar in confections

during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, transforming many confections into “sweets.” Prior to this period, sugar, especially the pure and refined sort, appears to have been exceptional. When Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591) laid the foundations of the Japanese way of tea, the accompaniments that were served with the beverage tended to be nuts and fruits such as chestnuts or persimmons; otherwise, unsweetened *mochi* (rice cakes) or *manjū* (stuffed buns) would be offered. Confections did not normally include sugar because it was prohibitively expensive, and so, on the rare occasions it was included, it was served in small individual helpings alongside tea.⁶ When the Portuguese arrived in the mid-sixteenth century, bearing sweets such as *kasutera* (*castella*), *konpeitō* (*confeito*), and *aruheitō* (*alféola*), the situation changed. One of the first to embrace these so-called *namban-gashi*—literally “southern barbarian sweets”—was the eighth shogun, Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684–1751). His partiality for *aruheitō*, a type of candy, is attested by the preferential treatment he gave to craftsmen who made it.⁷ Eventually, *namban-gashi* became a major part of the tea ceremony, which, in turn, inspired the creation of high-end and elaborately decorated confections for both display and gift-giving purposes, the development of which centered on the imperial capital of Kyoto. Very much as in other parts of the world, the amount of sugar used in these confections became an important status marker, a connotation of wealth and an index of power.⁸

During the mid-Tokugawa period, sweet confections remained limited to the upper echelons of society or reserved for special occasions such as weddings or funerals, thanks to the relative scarcity of sugar. Much of the sugar was imported from places such as China by Dutch merchants through the port of Nagasaki, a state of affairs that not only pushed up the price but also presented an economic and political dilemma. Not insubstantial amounts of precious metals had to be surrendered in return, threatening the finances and thus the security of a nation that had only recently developed a sweet tooth. For this reason, Yoshimune ordered the domestic production of sugar, and by the beginning of the Meiji (1868–1912) period, the country was churning out 53,400 tons a year, an amount that certainly helped to meet domestic demand but did not necessarily contribute to making sugar a mass and affordable commodity to the extent that it would lose its revered status.⁹ By the middle of the nineteenth century, the taste for sweets had percolated sufficiently down the social strata, with *manjū*, *dango* (steamed dumplings), *yōkan* (jellied confections), and

mochi becoming especially sought-after, everyday confections. For those who could not afford pure sugar, unrefined brown sugar presented an economical alternative, which found its way as an ingredient into cheap confections that later became known as *dagashi*, paving the road for a mass confectionery culture to emerge.¹⁰

Against this background, critical voices began to be heard about the way in which confections posed risks to health. For example, the Confucian scholar Nakai Riken (1732–1817) held excess consumption of sugar responsible for many premature deaths.¹¹ A partiality for confections was a marked feature of the upper classes, he noted disapprovingly, but the lower orders were now slavishly following this fashion. He conceded that sugar, if consumed in small quantities, could be a beneficial drug, pointing to the medicinal uses of the substance. Yet he warned that, if eaten to excess, sugar harmed the body. Despite the moralizing tone of his language, Nakai's intervention was a rare one; it was also a more overtly social rather than a medical critique that focused just on sugar.

More sustained moral criticisms, which depart from a preoccupation with sugar to a concern with other ingredients, are detectable in the Meiji period, a turnaround that can be attributed to sugar's loss of status as a result of increased supplies from abroad. Following the opening up of the ports, the amount of cheap and pure imported sugar encouraged the consumption of confections to levels that, as Penelope Francks has remarked, were behind those of the United States and the United Kingdom "but not strikingly different to those of continental Europe."¹² In 1885, according to one report, over 200,000 people were employed as producers, wholesalers, and retailers in the sector.¹³ Such a figure is almost certainly an exaggeration, coming as it did from confectionery merchants keen to show the importance of the trade to the overall economy, but it does help contextualize the developed nature of the confectionery scene.

One of the first physicians schooled in Western medicine to deliver a moral judgment on confections based on the science of nutrition was Tsuboi Jirō (1863–1903), a largely unknown and neglected figure in Japanese medical history.¹⁴ At Tokyo Imperial University, Tsuboi worked under the bacteriologist Ogata Masanori, the first professor of hygiene, and climbed to the rank of assistant professor in 1887. Between 1890 and 1895, he studied under the renowned Bavarian hygienist Max von Pettenkoffer. On his return from Europe, Tsuboi offered his expertise as a judge at various exhibitions, served as a consultant for the army's quarantine service,

taught at the National Hygiene Association, and collaborated with Tōyama Chinkichi at the Tokyo Microbiology Laboratory. In 1899, Tsuboi left the capital to head the College of Medicine at the newly established Kyoto Imperial University, where he worked until his death in 1903. Like many other Meiji medical modernizers, such as the highly influential Gotō Shinpei and Mori Rintarō, Tsuboi belonged to the generation responsible for spearheading “hygienic modernity” in Japan.¹⁵ His premature death at the age of forty-one prevented him from establishing a reputation on a par with his more illustrious contemporaries, but his contribution to the biomedical reframing of confections, however, proved to be profound.

In 1890, prior to his sojourn in Munich, Tsuboi wrote about the impact of confections on the body in the pages of the progressive women’s journal *Jogaku zasshi*.¹⁶ In this article, the physician applied the then-dominant Western thinking about the importance of protein to an understanding of Japanese snacks. For this purpose, he went to buy confections from the localities of Tsuruya, Hongō Fujimura, Hongō Okano, and Fūgetsudō—or local confectioners relatively near to where he worked—subjecting them to inspection in his laboratory, upon which he discovered that Japanese confections contained disappointingly few nutrients. This was because indigenous confections were predominately made from plant-derived rather than animal-derived ingredients. His disapproval was quite comprehensive, leading him to issue general warnings about *monaka* (wafers with red bean filling), for example, but he was particularly worried about the candies sold at Tsuruya and *soba-manjū* (rice cakes made with buckwheat flour) made at Fujimura and Okano because they contained very little protein.

Based on this chemical analysis, Tsuboi stripped these confections of identities as “proper food” (*ippan no shokumotsu*), described the harm they inflicted on the digestive system, and concluded that they served “merely to fulfill a fleeting desire [*shikō wo mitasu*].”¹⁷ He also compared confections with alcohol: confections might be less dangerous, both medically and socially, but he warned that sweets were also morally suspect.¹⁸ While in Munich, Tsuboi penned another piece, but this time in the pages of a children’s magazine.¹⁹ He expressed concerns about the high demand for sweets—which, he observed, was on a par with what he was witnessing in Europe—and fretted over the excessive use of sugar and the wrong use of red beans (*azuki*), two vital ingredients found in steamed confections.

For Tsuboi, the nutritional value of red beans and sugar was not necessarily low. Both contained, he wrote, a little protein. However, it was when

these ingredients were transformed into confections that their value nose-dived. Typically, *azuki* would be cooked, sweetened, and turned into a paste (*anko*), which would be used as filling. Yet the problem with this method of preparation, Tsuboi pointed out, was that it led to a significant reduction in the amount of protein. His solution was to increase the amount of *azuki* and decrease the amount of sugar to produce a healthier product.²⁰ By applying nutritional knowledge to confection making, Tsuboi proposed, sweets could thus be made to serve a higher moral purpose.

During a similar period, Ishizuka Sagen (1850–1909), known as the father of the macrobiotic diet, also provided a moral assessment that reflected more domestic influences. Coming from a family of practitioners in traditional medicine (*kanpō*), Ishizuka saw action in the Sino-Japanese war as a pharmaceutical officer in the army before he sat down to write his highly popular manual—reprinted twenty times by the 1920s—on “dietary regimen” (*yōjō*) in 1898.²¹ Unlike Tsuboi, who embraced Western thinking, Ishizuka took a dislike to Western ideas, especially with regard to the Westernization of the indigenous diet, calling for a return to “traditional eating patterns stressing unpolished rice and other whole grains and organic natural foods like sea vegetables and beans.”²² Critical especially of bacteriology, which was rapidly gaining favor, Ishizuka postulated a more holistic approach than the reductionist framework then in the ascendancy.²³

Despite his skepticism about Western medical advice, he readily incorporated, as Nancy Stalker has pointed out, “the language of chemistry and Western science” to support his views.²⁴ Within conventional Western medicine, the three main nutrients—proteins, carbohydrates, and fats—were prioritized; but Ishizuka believed that the neglected minerals—sodium and potassium—were far more important in creating healthy bodies. For Ishizuka the key to the maintenance of health was to strike the right balance between levels of sodium and potassium, a stance that reflected his background in *kanpō*, and this principle was extended to his opinion of confections.²⁵

Like Tsuboi, Ishizuka took a generally dim view of confections and moralized about the way in which they negatively affected society. Unlike the main foods, which he termed *seishoku*, snacks were marginal, luxury foods, or *zasshoku*, which people ate “unthinkingly to stave off boredom.”²⁶ Such a situation was also exacerbated, he opined, because confections played an increasingly important social role. Due to the increasingly

competitive nature of society, people bought more and more confections as gifts in order to oil human relationships necessary to making progress in life, which encouraged, in turn, even more conspicuous forms of consumption. Medically, sweets were a problem, he charged, because they robbed the body of blood, weakened memory, and slowed down thinking.²⁷ Due to the lack of sodium, smooth digestion was hindered, helping increase the risk of snackers contracting diseases such as tuberculosis.

Ishizuka also pointed an accusing finger at *anko*. Products such as *shiruko* (red bean soup), *mochi*, *anpan* (bread with red bean filling), or *manjū* were problematic because red bean paste contained very few minerals. Western-style confections such as *kasutera*, biscuits, and *bōro* (Iberian biscuits) were equally suspect for this same reason. Both types of confections, he suggested, could be made healthier by adding salt. “As long as the ingredients are natural and the amount of salts has decreased only a little,” he argued, sweets could be considered to have positive value.²⁸

For Ishizuka, the damage wrought by sweets also depended on region. Places where restaurants and confectioners were prevalent, or urban centers, tended to have populations whose diets revolved more around *zasshoku*. Those places that had few restaurants and confectioners had inhabitants who were generally healthier because they ate more *seishoku*. Such a distinction roughly translated into the degree to which the area had succumbed to a Westernization of the diet. Those places that had taken to Western-style foods stood at more risk from eating sweets than places that continued to abide by a traditional diet based on cereals and vegetables.²⁹ Because eaters of a traditional diet absorbed sufficient amounts of minerals, they were free to eat confections without fear of an impact on their health.

Both Tsuboi and Ishizuka, writing in the early to late 1890s, thus subjected confections to a similar moral gaze, forcing consumers and producers alike to think more responsibly about the consequences of their actions; but the way in which they did so also displays important similarities and differences. First, both viewed confections as exerting a negative impact on health, but they disagreed about the reasons. For Tsuboi, confections were a problem because many of them lacked the three main nutrients, whereas for Ishizuka sweets were deficient in minerals. Second, both focused on *anko* as the chief ingredient but differed in the solutions they offered. While Tsuboi recommended retaining the high levels of protein that *azuki* contained, Ishizuka was happy with the paste so long as salt was added to the mixture.

Third, both regarded confections as marginal semifoods whose status could be transformed through tinkering with the preparation, but they differed in their views about how these combined with the main diet. Taking a reductionist approach, Tsuboi implied that the impact of confections was uniform and independent of the main diet. Ishizuka, by contrast, assumed a more holistic stance, arguing that the impact of sweets depended on the contents of the main diet. For this reason, specificity of place was important, allowing Ishizuka to make the argument that populations in areas that took in sufficient amounts of minerals with their main meals were less prone to the debilitating impact of confections, while Tsuboi did not see the broader correlation with either rural or urban society in which the lives of eaters were embedded, viewing the act of snacking in rather sweeping terms. Finally, while Ishizuka criticized both Western and Japanese confections, because they both lacked important minerals, Tsuboi came out strongly against Japanese confections, implying a preference for Western confectionery, whose nutritional superiority biomedical practitioners were explicitly to trumpet in later years. By the early twentieth century, as the political regime sided emphatically with Western medical and scientific knowledge, the moral meanings of sweets became less contested, with Tsuboi's biochemical reframing gaining the upper hand.

The Moral Responsibility of Providing "Good" Confections in the Early Twentieth Century

Nowhere perhaps is the ascendancy of biochemistry better illustrated than in the efforts the confectionery sector made when faced with the imposition of the unpopular confectionery tax (*kashizei*) of 1885, the main aim of which was to pay for an expanding army. Rather than choose to employ a holistic defense of what they made, confectioners felt that it would better convince the government if they appealed to nutritional arguments. In 1894, the Association of National Confectionery Merchants thus explained that flour contained nutrients and that sugar helped digestion and raised body temperature; they also argued that the addition of eggs and milk—a reference to Western sweets—further increased the nutritional value of confections: "That is why Europeans eat [sweets] after meals and why they can have health benefits. . . . Confectionery should not be regarded as a

luxury. Nor should it be seen as damaging to health. Placing taxes upon it is unfair and . . . shows prejudice.”³⁰

One year later, when the Fourth Domestic Industrial Exposition (1895) was held in Kyoto, Tsuboi, who had returned from Germany the previous year, was invited to act as judge. Rather than limit himself to the narrow nutritional arguments of the sector, he took it one step further, expanding on his criticism of everyday sweets to encompass ornamental confections, such as those crafted by the Kyoto makers. He dismissed the emphasis on varieties of color and the handiwork that went into crafting the aesthetic pieces of work. Most of the exhibited confections, he remarked, were too sweet, were obsessed with appearance, used color as deception, and paid scant attention to nutrition. Because of this infatuation with appearance, confections did little to make the products look appetizing.³¹ He accepted that ornamental confections might not be meant for eating.

Yet that was no excuse for the use of excessive amounts of sugar and the use of poisonous coloring. By downplaying the fact that confections were meant to be consumed, Tsuboi charged, traditional confectioners lost sight of sweets’ central identity as food. For all these reasons, he argued, confectionery makers needed to pay less attention to looks and more to content: it was the chemicals contained in the ingredients that ultimately affected the body. The most important criteria for making “good” confections were nutrition and health. Only once this fundamental condition had been met did aesthetics matter, if at all. That was why decorative confections were “bad.”

Much of this moralizing rhetoric attacked the fundamental values on which the worth of high-end confections had rested, thereby inviting traditional confectioners to dispute the moral meanings Tsuboi attached to confections. For Taniguchi Heizaburō, a Kyoto confectioner, the problem with Tsuboi was his one-dimensional, reductionist, and simplistic view. Taniguchi complained that the medical scientist overemphasized the importance of nutrition in the creation of “good” sweets. Tsuboi’s insistence on making this one aspect the single most important criterion “to the detriment of all else” represented not only “a major damage to the development of confections but also destroyed hundreds of years of artistic confectionery.”³² Takahama Heibei, another Kyoto confectioner, was equally forthright. He insisted that confections “should be served as tea-food (*chashoku*).”³³ For, as snacks (*kanshoku*), confections had a limited role to support the drinking of *matcha* or *sencha* (two varieties of tea). For

this reason he did not believe taste should be privileged: the confectionery experience was equally about “appreciating shape, color, and beauty.”³⁴

Redefining confections as something “nutritional” was not only completely unnecessary, it was positively offensive. “Helping to whet appetites by adding milk and eggs,” he charged, would only increase the “smell” of confections.³⁵ Given the use of confectionery as an offering to the gods, he explained, such sweets would offend the deity. Confections had a higher moral purpose, it was thus argued, that took into broader consideration religion, aesthetics, and social relationships—to simplify them to a narrow obsession with the chemicals completely missed the point.

For all his sweeping claims, Tsuboi’s biochemical intervention ultimately had limited impact on the moral value of gift giving. In 1916, Sasano Toyomi, the head of Kyōbashi Elementary School, expressed concerns about the increasing numbers of children bringing *anpan* instead of lunchboxes from home.³⁶ Such a problem needed to be remedied, he felt, by putting pressure on manufacturers. Sasano readily acknowledged that sweet-toothed children could not easily be enticed away from *anpan*. Normal bread (*shoku-pan*), he conceded, was not popular with pupils. That was why he suggested removing sweet red beans and replacing them with something healthier.

Yet, within the same piece, Sasano defended his policy of providing decorative confections to pupils on special occasions. For over seventeen years, he pointed out, the school had engaged in this custom. “Beautifully crafted confections,” whose “shape” was “all the same,” had been offered to more than fourteen thousand children. He acknowledged that there were objections. Some suggested that these ornamental confections should be replaced with books or other printed material, the educational benefits of which were beyond reproach. For Sasano, however, presenting children with confectionery as gifts was not a problem because they were occasional and instructed children in an important social practice. Presentations took place just three times a year and thus the consumption of sweets hardly threatened the children’s health. Nor was it the responsibility of the school to police the behavior of children. The consumption of sweets usually occurred at a time and a place distant from school. Children usually ate after returning home from school. For all these reasons, Sasano felt, there was no problem in offering children sweets. When tied to the socially important act of gift giving, decorative confections thus continued to be “good.”

At a broader, quotidian level, however, Tsuboi's intervention stung because the cult of domesticity then in the ascendancy among the middle classes provided fertile soil. Both articles referred to earlier appeared in publications whose main audiences were becoming sensitive to the relationship between women, children, and sweets. In 1899, the Japan Children's Society (Nihon Jidō Gakkai), when it broached the topic of sweets for the first time, pointed to the extent to which adults suffered from stomach-related illnesses, all because of what they had mistakenly eaten during childhood.³⁷

Reforming children's dietary habits, especially confectionery habits, was not just important for the sake of the children—it had implications for the extent to which the state could nurture and maintain a healthy adult population. Similar to what Izumi Nakayama argues in her chapter on breast milk, the central role that mothers would play in bringing up future soldiers and workers also included keeping an eye on children's snacks. In the view of the Children's Society, parents, especially mothers, had to resist children's "pestering" (*nedari*) demands for sweets, indicating the extent to which imported ideals of domesticity had handed women the task of policing children's confectionery preferences. They were thus encouraged to think more seriously about the impact of sweets on their children's health. Pediatricians offered advice to this growing group of women. Developing Tsuboi's nutritional emphasis, they focused explicitly on the relationship between sweets and children's health, offering mothers advice on what should be given and what withheld. For pediatricians, sweets themselves were not the problem. Confections were indispensable to the diet of babies and children: they not only helped them keep quiet but, when consumption was supervised properly, the nutrients they contained contributed to healthy growth. Because infants could not adhere to the adult habit of eating three times a day, their nutritional needs had to be topped up through snacking. When eaten correctly, confections were morally "good."

Unlike Tsuboi, whose preferences were implicit, pediatricians during the early twentieth century explicitly recommended Western-style over Japanese-style sweets. One of the first articles to specifically address the relationship between children and sweets, published in 1906, advised that one-year-old infants should be fed wafers, *bōro* (Iberian-style biscuits), and biscuits.³⁸ Only rice crackers, the journal concluded, were an acceptable *wagashi*. Nagai Iwao, a pediatrician, went further in declaring that

wagashi had little to offer.³⁹ For Nagai, it was not only rice crackers that were damaging: *yōkan* and steamed sweets were harmful too.⁴⁰ “*Kashi* containing sweet red beans, sugar, and agar . . . , should not be given to children,” he warned.⁴¹ Imported snacks were recommended instead: lady-fingers, sponge cake, Osborne biscuits, Florida biscuits, rusks, and cream crackers.⁴² He also mentioned Japanese makers of Western confectionery. Biscuits, wafers, and bread made by Toyō-seika and Fūgetsudō received his medical blessing.⁴³ Nagai’s judgment was based on their nutritional composition: animal-derived ingredients such as milk, eggs and butter made Western confectionery healthy.⁴⁴

All this is not to suggest, of course, that doctors uniformly agreed on the preference for *yōgashi*. In 1916, Takenouchi Kunpei, an influential pediatrician, expressed his doubts about the supposed superiority of Western confectionery.⁴⁵ For example, he took issue with chocolate, which he thought was too stimulating. Chocolate would deprive small children of sleep, and he told mothers to refrain from giving chocolates to children before the age of four.⁴⁶ Milk caramel, the other representative Western-style confection, had also to be selected with care.⁴⁷ Due to a boom in sales, products were appearing in which spoiled milk had been used. Even so, Takeuchi’s warnings did not mean he endorsed *wagashi* instead; his caveat about milk caramel, it bears pointing out, expressed his misgivings about adulteration. His criticism did not extend to casting doubt on the worth of the ingredients themselves. Due to pediatric intervention, the impression emerged that Western confections were intrinsically “good” while Japanese confections were by nature “bad.”

Much of the advice contained within child-rearing manuals written by doctors envisioned a degree of parental control over the choice of “good” confections. In reality, however, as children ventured outside the home, supervision became more difficult, sparking discussion about how children should maintain bodily health in view of the social constraints they faced. One debate that played out in numerous women’s journals was the problem of *oyatsu*—snacking in between meals. Due to the health policies some households were adopting, some children visiting their friends were refusing to accept *oyatsu*, thereby flouting social etiquette.⁴⁸

One journal, *Children’s Friend* (*Kodomo no tomo*), asked: should children, apart from your own, be offered sweets, or should they be withheld?⁴⁹ One fundamental problem with *oyatsu* lay in the sparking of interfamilial competition. Children’s reports that they had received sweets at their

friends' meant the gesture needed to be reciprocated the next time the friend came to play. For keen families, the act would be repaid with interest: confections would be offered that surpassed what their children had received. Most agreed that the provision of *oyatsu* itself was a laudable act of hospitality.⁵⁰ Yet the majority also acknowledged their negative impact on health: "Giving children food with abandon does not serve their interests."⁵¹

A balance between health and hospitality needed to be struck. One extreme solution was offered by Shimoda Jirō, a professor of education at Tokyo Women's School. He proposed that children should say they had already eaten and were full but that they would gladly accept the sweets to take back home, where parents could inspect the nutritional contents of the *oyatsu* to gauge whether they posed any harm.⁵² Most parents, it seems, were unwilling to go that far. When friends came to visit, *oyatsu* should be served, but only when the visit coincided with the time when sweets were usually given at 3 p.m. If visits fell outside this time, hospitality, it was agreed, should be held in check. Entangled as it was with the broader imperative of creating polite children, the *oyatsu* issue presented a dilemma and exposed the limits of biomedical moralization, although it was implied that at visits "good" confections should be offered.

More problematic when it came to enforcing correct ways of behavior was when children themselves were handed complete freedom of choice in an environment in which the moral gaze of families weakened. In 1904, Hara Seiichirō observed the way in which even well-off children could make a mockery of adult attempts to influence their confectionery choices by making visits to the notorious *dagashiya* (small candy stores), where the cheapest kinds of sweets could be bought.⁵³ He reflected on the time he lived with a family whose three children were sent to the prestigious Peers School (Gakushūin). Picked up after school, the children would dutifully return home in time for *oyatsu* that typically consisted of biscuits and wafers—"good," Western-style confections.⁵⁴ Unhappy with these sweets, the children would beg money from their mother and, if successful, would trek across town to the *dagashiya*.

A major problem with this small revolt—apart from the failed parental attempt to prevent children from going to the *dagashiya*—was not only that children would be devouring nutritionally suspect confections but that they would also be exposed to unhygienic surroundings and to "unclean" people. In one scenario, sketched by Sasano, a child, Shintarō, goes out to

buy *dango* (sweet dumplings) with a maid. Chancing upon a *dagashiya*, he manages to convince her to buy him *daifukumochi* (small round rice cakes). What horrified educators such as Sasano was Shintarō's encounter with low-class children cooking up *bottarayaki* (pan-fried batter snacks).⁵⁵ Now commonly referred to as *monja-yaki*, a type of pancake, which was cooked and shared on a communal grill, *bottarayaki* posed serious hygiene issues. Sasano warned that middle-class children should not eat such filth: "To adult eyes they are unclean, unhygienic. [They are] eaten from the same grill by several people."⁵⁶ For him, the fear was that any one of the ruffians could be carrying germs that could be easily transmitted to children such as Shintarō, who would, in turn, carry them back home, helping to challenge the still fragile notion of "good" confections that had been constructed by adults.

Mothers who had subscribed to the promotion of "good" confections were horrified, and efforts were made to reel children straight back home by making handmade sweets that were both nutritionally and hygienically acceptable.⁵⁷ Such was the propensity for children to become bored, however, that mothers needed to constantly come up with newer and more exotic offerings to prevent *dagashiya* from luring children back.⁵⁸ Fears of the *dagashiya*, a mounting sentiment in the early twentieth century, thus ushered in a second criterion of "good" confections, namely a clean environment in which sweets would be produced, sold, and consumed.

Characteristic of the moralizing discourses about the proper relationship with sweets was the conspicuous absence of men, apart from, of course, the experts dishing out advice—a point that Nakayama also makes in relation to breastfeeding. More often than not women—considered weak and irrational—were seen as being at risk of failing to act out their roles. Mothers lacked the discipline to refuse to hand over money to children, and maids failed to prevent children under their watch from buying "bad" confections. Opinions about children also assumed they could act as only irrational consumers. In advanced countries such as the United States, it was pointed out, children could be trusted to make the right choices with their money. One report explained that American children based their decision on a correct appraisal of the hygienic and nutritional benefits of sweets. They did not eat "aimlessly like Japanese children," who, it was intimated, bought to satisfy an immediate craving without an awareness of whether what they bought was good or bad for them.⁵⁹ Given the weakness of the child consumer, the police instead were expected to

intervene to discipline the *dagashiya*, and affordable Western-style sweets that were “good” for health were increasingly promoted, both of which, as the last section will show, became marked from the late 1910s.

Manufacturing “Good” Confections, Policing “Bad” Confections in the 1910s and 1920s

In 1903, the Domestic Industrial Exposition opened in Osaka, to which 4.6 million visitors—a record number—flocked. Western-style confectioners became, for the first time, a distinct presence: an unprecedented number of *yōgashi*—312 items—had been put forward.⁶⁰ Fūgetsudō, the early pioneer of Western-style sweets, was the most conspicuous, presenting around sixty types of biscuits and fourteen types of drops.⁶¹ Morinaga, making an appearance for the first time, exhibited ten items that included chocolate, marshmallow, and nougat.⁶² At the end of the event, eighteen confectioners received prizes: Fūgetsudō came away with the Grand Prize; Morinaga was awarded a bronze medal.⁶³

Reflecting on the competition, the judges welcomed the fact that “as of late demand for Western confectionery has greatly increased.”⁶⁴ They also viewed with concern the undue emphasis placed on the nutritional benefits of sweets. “Encouraging the mindless addition of eggs and milk,” the head judge warned, “contributes to ruining the product and wreaking havoc with the flavor.”⁶⁵ Back in 1895, Tsuboi, who appears not to have adjudicated at this particular exposition, had courted controversy with his biochemical approach to sweets at the exposition held in Kyoto. Even though his criticism had failed to undermine the basis of decorative confectionery, the nutritional reframing of sweets clearly had an impact, providing the basis on which *yōgashi* makers could claim superiority in a market for everyday confections that was very much dominated by *wagashi* makers. At subsequent expositions, nutrition remained the most important criterion. As a result, *wagashi* makers gradually shied away from participation, wary of being labeled makers of “bad” confections on account of the nutritional inferiority of their products.

One manufacturer who quickly capitalized on nutritional modernity was Morinaga. Unlike Fūgetsudō, which was a confectioner with traditions that stretched back to the middle of the eighteenth century, Morinaga was founded in 1899, drawing inspiration from American confectionery

manufacturers. At the outset, Morinaga catered to a niche market of foreigners and the well to do but, following the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), during which Morinaga made a name for itself marketing confection as gifts for wounded soldiers, its popularity spread, and the company boldly set its sights on the national market.⁶⁶ Reflecting the rhetoric of pediatricians, in 1919 Morinaga challenged newspaper readers to think more seriously about the impact of confections on children's health.⁶⁷ Buying Western-style confectionery was an act of parental responsibility, it suggested, that had far-reaching consequences for adulthood. Due to the ubiquity of sweets in children's lives, it warned, parents had to take "daily care" over what their "loved ones" put in their mouths.

Morinaga's Western-style confectionery—marshmallows, drops, and chocolate—helped digestion, contained lots of nutrients, and kept well. In 1913, as Morinaga relaunched its milk caramel product, the nutritional message was directed to an adult clientele. By packaging this confection in a cigarette box, the company encouraged adults to snack on its milk caramel as a viable alternative to smoking, emphasizing the health benefits thus: "Eaten regularly [milk caramel] helps alleviate bodily and mental fatigue."⁶⁸ Morinaga also reassured consumers that its confectionery had no downsides: "However much you eat you will not suffer stomach complaints" was an oft-repeated phrase that implied that Morinaga's products could be eaten almost in unlimited quantities.⁶⁹

For the increasing number of people who visited Morinaga's factories, the levels of hygiene were also a sight to behold. In 1906, a correspondent for the confectionery trade magazine *Kashi shinpō* went to see what all the fuss was about.⁷⁰ Shown around by Matsuzaki Hanzaburo, Taichiro Morinaga's right-hand man, the correspondent was struck by the exacting levels of cleanliness. Prior to setting foot in the factory, everybody had to thoroughly wash their hands. Once inside, he marveled, the place resembled a hospital. Because workers wore white clothes and donned white caps, the men looked like doctors and the women resembled nurses. Even their hands were covered, as these workers, looking as though they were standing at an operating table, proceeded to wrap up chocolate cream with surgical precision. Nothing was left to chance: breadcrumbs, sugar, and other ingredients were prevented from coming into contact with the floor.⁷¹

Such cleanliness, an image *yōgashi* makers were keen to foster, contrasted starkly with levels of hygiene encountered among *wagashi* makers.

Some of the worst culprits were makers of *dagashi*. In 1900, *Yomiuri shinbun* reported on the small makers clustered around Rukangawa-chō in the Kanda District of Tokyo.⁷² Many of these makers operated in cramped and stinking working conditions, and it was not uncommon to witness “craftsmen having dirty hands when they kneaded flour.”⁷³ By the time the sweets, which had been readied for shipment in the morning, were delivered to shops, they had already turned moldy. In 1928 the police took thirty-seven *dagashiya* to court; the following year it investigated six hundred wholesalers/makers. The majority fell short of acceptable hygiene standards.

Problems of hygiene also bedeviled reputable *wagashi* makers. In 1924, following food scares, the police raided the kitchens of traditional *wagashi* makers in Tokyo and announced that four had failed.⁷⁴ It was uncommon for *yōgashi* manufacturers to be implicated; *wagashi* makers by contrast needed to be disciplined to prevent “bad” confections from entering the market. Similar to Robert Peckham’s chapter on the consolidation of spaces for public markets and slaughterhouses in Hong Kong, public authorities tried to control the unhygienic spaces in which confections were produced and sold.

Nutritional arguments lay at the heart of promoting the snacking of Western-style confectionery as a powerful, purposeful, productive practice, strengthening the impression of *yōgashi* as “good” confections. One of the earliest advertisements to do so was by Nestlé. In 1912 the Swiss confectioner published an advertisement that demonstrated the nutritional value of milk chocolate. In the ad, a boy, Taro, clothed in traditional attire, has apparently made a successful ascent of Mount Fuji, Japan’s highest peak. He exclaims, “I’ve made it at last! Without Nestlé’s milk chocolate I would never have done it.”⁷⁵

Such associations with outdoor, public leisure activities became a regular trope. In 1914 Morinaga recommended that newspaper readers buy milk caramel as accompaniments on trips, when reading, on trains, at sports events, and at theaters.⁷⁶ Later adverts continued in similar vein: playing golf, going out for a stroll, dressing up for the night, picnicking, or spending time on the beach should, *yōgashi* makers suggested, be accompanied by confections.⁷⁷ Confections were not only important items of food that enabled the enjoyment of modern leisure activities, however; they were just as important in helping provide energy in the workplace.

In 1926 Morinaga produced an advert for chocolate that depicted workers trying to cope with the solitude and fatigue that came from overwork. That was not a problem, Morinaga assured people, because eating chocolate not only helped solve both issues but also “raised job productivity.” A separate advert for milk chocolate depicts a bespectacled businessman. Underneath, the copy reads, “Eat one for mental refreshment. Eat two for increasing strength. Eat three to improve efficiency.”⁷⁸ Media campaigns thus added a further layer to the meaning of “good” confections. Those that contributed to the development of the nation were “good,” those that did not were “bad.”

Equally important to snacking on Western-style confectionery were sentiments about hygiene. Prior to the arrival of milk caramel and chocolate, confections were bought separately. Vendors would take them out of containers, weigh them, and wrap them in bags for customers to take away. Some would actually breathe into the bags to make space for the sweets, unaware of the bacteriological risks of doing so. Such interventions were rendered superfluous by the fact that both of these products came individually prepackaged in paper or silver foil. Not only did milk caramel and chocolate inspire confidence because machines at the factory were responsible for wrapping up the sweets before they arrived in the shops; it was also reassuring that alien hands could be prevented from coming into contact with the sweets before they were popped into the consumer’s mouth. There was little opportunity for germs to land on the sweet between the time it was first exposed to the outside air and the time it took to enter the mouth. Exchanging a milk caramel with another was not a problem either: so long as it was handed over with the wrapping intact, there was very little risk that germs would transfer. Such a change was, it hardly needs adding, reassuring to hygiene-conscious mothers.

To be sure, *wagashi* makers, sensing competition and demand, tried to respond to the nutritional and hygiene challenge. In 1904, the Hongō confectioner brought out “hygienic *monaka*” (*eisei monaka*), claiming that it had no side effects: “No heartburn however much you eat.”⁷⁹ In 1919 Iwatsuki-ya, a confectioner located near the Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo’s Nihonbashi District, collaborated with a medical doctor to put “calcium rice crackers” on sale.⁸⁰ As these examples show, *wagashi* makers may have been able to improve nutritional levels. *Anko* could be replaced with jam, milk could take the place of honey, and the protein levels in red bean paste could be raised.⁸¹

Yet they were less successful in claiming improvements in hygiene. Toraya, a major maker of traditional confectionery, viewed with scorn the attention paid to the wrapping (a symbol of hygiene) to the detriment of what was most important (taste) but conceded that, even on this point, *wagashi* was losing.⁸² By this time, playing around with the ingredients in an attempt to raise the nutritional value of confections was not enough. Rather, to be considered “good,” confections also needed to be manufactured in a hygienically acceptable environment. For the small and local businesses that overwhelmingly characterized the sector, this was harder to implement. Heavily capitalized corporations such as Morinaga and, later, Meiji, whose automated production facilities were predicated on serving a mass, nationwide market, stood at a distinct advantage, and the vast amounts of money sunk into media campaigns promoting the image of spotlessly clean factories no doubt reinforced public perception that what they were purchasing was “good.”

The Limits of Moralization

In 1917 Miwada Motomichi (1870–1965), a proponent of girls’ education, wrote in the pages of the trade journal *Wayōgashi shinbun* about the significance confections had recently acquired.⁸³ At the beginning of the century sweets had been nothing more than a tool to “stave off whining children,” and the wider moral consequences of doing so had not kept him awake at night. Following scientific and medical reappraisals he realized that such an act had broader implications. Sweets were vital to children’s development; parents needed to pay more attention to the impact of confections on their children’s bodies; and confectioners could no longer evade responsibility. Previously, the aim of sweet giving had appeared harmless, and defeatism had pervaded attitudes to sweet makers. Due to a growing awareness of the importance of nutrition and hygiene, however, a more concerted drive to differentiate between “good” and “bad” confections was necessary.

Prior to the turn of the century, two competing moral visions, whose frameworks derived from domestic and Western thinking, had vied for attention. Both agreed that indigenous confections were a problem but disagreed about what should be added to increase the moral value of sweets. Eventually, the biochemical framework won out, not least because of its affinity with the prevailing health regime and its appropriation of the cult of

domesticity then in the ascendancy. By the early twentieth century, pediatricians were explicitly calling for children to be given more *yōgashi* than *wagashi* because of the nutritional superiority of the former; experts at expositions judged, based on nutritional criteria, that “good” confections contained animal-derived ingredients such as milk, eggs, and butter; and large companies of Western-style confections such as Morinaga aggressively marketed their products as healthy because of the nutrients they contained.

During the 1910s and 1920s, as the popularity of Western-style confectionery increased, the way in which confections were produced also became important when differentiating between “good” and “bad” sweets. Hands came less into contact with *yōgashi*, manufactured as it was in spotlessly clean factories with the aid of machines. By contrast, *wagashi* appeared unhygienic: the risks of exposure to germs, adulteration, and food poisoning seemed greater, especially in the *dagashiya*, to which children flocked. To qualify as “good,” not only should confections contain the “correct” nutrients but they should also be made the “correct” way. Those that did not meet these criteria were “bad.”

Much of this biochemical moralizing had its limits. Despite criticism of ornamental sweets, the custom of gift giving proved hard to dislodge, and children’s preferences, especially away from home, were difficult to control. Not only did children refuse supposedly superior Western-style confectionery on offer; they also persuaded parents to hand over money so that they could leave home to buy sweets at the *dagashiya*, where, to the horror of increasingly hygiene-conscious mothers, children roamed around in dirty surroundings and mingled with hygienically suspect children. Even though steps were taken to discipline *wagashi* makers and vendors of *dagashi*, continued reports of police raids during the period under review suggest the difficulty of holding them accountable to higher hygienic standards. More revealingly, traditional *wagashi* makers themselves were disinclined to accept a biochemical and reductionist view of sweets, fiercely asserting that “good” confections were also those that served religious and aesthetic aims rather than just heightening bodily performance. For a country in the throes of modernization, however, such an alternative view failed to influence the biochemically dominant moral discourse on sweets, which insisted on the “goodness” of Western-style confectionery. No doubt this was because the nutritional and hygienic ideals it embodied meshed with the direction the country was taking and the kind of society it wanted to be.

Notes

My profound thanks to Angela Leung, Melissa Caldwell, and Lawrence Zhang for the extensive feedback on previous drafts.

1. Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power, and National Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 29; Nobuo Harada, *Rekishi no naka no kome to niku: Shokubutsu to Tennō Sabetsu* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993), 238.

2. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*, 33.

3. “Confections” will be used as a broad term to refer to food that did not form part of meals. “Sweets” will be used in a narrower sense to refer to confections that were sweetened with sugar. “Snacks” and “snacking” will refer to confections consumed in between meal times and to the act of eating confections either on the go or at liminal points in time. “Confectionery” will be employed as a collective noun for all types of confections, and “confectioner” will refer to those who make them. Many of the terms and definitions used in this essay are based on usage in Darra Goldstein, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Sugar and Sweets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

4. *Wagashi* and *yōgashi* are terms that entered the vernacular following the rise in popularity of Western confectionery, and will be used for the period after 1900. Before this time, they will be referred to as “Japanese confectionery” and “Western confectionery,” respectively.

5. Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

6. Nakayama Keiko, *Jiten wagashi no sekai* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2006), 279.

7. Ikeda Bunchian, *Nihon yōgashishi* (Tokyo: Nihon yōgashi kyōkai, 1960), 124.

8. Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern Society* (London: Penguin, 1985), chap. 4.

9. Ehara Ayako, Ishikawa Naoko, and Higashiyotsuyanagi Shōko, *Nihon shokumotsu Shi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2009), 113.

10. Barak Kushner, “Sweetness and Empire: Sugar Consumption in Imperial Japan,” in *The Historical Consumer: Consumption and Everyday Life in Japan, 1850–2000*, ed. Penelope Francks and Janet Hunter (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 130.

11. Ikeda Mitsuko, “Yōjō Shisō no Tenkanten–Nakai Riken Rōbashin no Shūhen,” *Kaitoku* 77 (2009): 35–47.

12. Penelope Francks, “Inconspicuous Consumption: Sake, Beer, and the Birth of the Consumer in Japan,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 1 (February 2009): 150.

13. Kobayashi Gisaburō, *Kashi gyō 30 nenshi* (Tokyo: Kashi Shimpōsha, 1936), 113.

14. For more, see Izumi Hyōnosuke, “Eisei gakusha Tsuboi Jirō no keireki to gyōseki,” *Nihon igakushi zasshi* 38, no. 3 (1992): 401–431.

15. Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*, 149.

16. “Nihon no kashi,” *Jogaku zasshi* 194 (1890): 536.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Tsuboi Jirō, “Kashi no setsu,” *Nihon zenkoku shōgakuseito hissenjō* 2, no. 9 (1892): 8.

20. Ibid.

21. Ishizuka Sagen, *Tsūzoku shokumotsu yōjōhō* (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1898).

22. Nancy Stalker, “The Globalisation of Macrobiotics as Culinary Tourism and Culinary Nostalgia,” *Asian Medicine* 5, no. 1 (2009): 10.

23. Fujii Yoshihiro, "Ishizuka Sagen no shokuiku shoku yōhō: Eiyō ryōhō no chiteki wakugumi ni tsuite no kenkyū," *Fuji joshi daigaku ningen seikatu gakubu kiyō* 50 (2014): 28–29.
24. Stalker, "Globalisation of Macrobiotics," 10–11.
25. Namimatsu Nobuhisa, "Kindai Nihon ni okeru shokuyōron no tenkai," *Kyoto Sangyō Daigaku Nihon Bunka Kenkyū Jyo kiyō* 20 (2015): 201.
26. Ishizuka, *Tsūzoku*, 64
27. Ibid., 65.
28. Ibid., 67
29. Ibid., 69.
30. Kobayashi, *Kashi*, 171–172; Ikeda, *Nihon yōgashishi*, 504.
31. Taniguchi Heizaburō, "Kashi shinsa no hōshin ni tsuite," *Hana Tachibana* (1900): 14–15, 15.
32. Ibid.
33. Quoted in Ikeda, *Nihon yōgashishi*, 548.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. *Wayōgashi shinbun*, November 3, 1916, 15.
37. Anonymous, "Kashiya to kokka," *Jidō kenkyū* 1, no. 10 (1899): 530.
38. Ishihara, "Kashi no kuikata oyobi kuwasekata," *Eisei shinpō* 59, no. 9 (1906): 4.
39. Nagai Iwao, *Ikuji no Shiori. Zenpen* (Tokyo: Kyūen shokoku, 1912), 172.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., 169.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Takenouchi Kunpei, *Jikken Kodomo no Sodatekata* (Tokyo: Chuō Hōtōkukai, 1916), 74.
46. Ibid., 77.
47. Ibid., 76.
48. Anonymous, "Asobini kita kodomo ni okashi wo yarukoto," *Fujin no Tomo* 8, no. 7 (1914): 55.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., 54.
51. Ibid.
52. *Wayōgashi shinbun*, October 15, 1917, 3.
53. Hara Seiichirō, *Doku no hanashi: Nichijyō eisei* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1904), 269–270.
54. Ibid., 269.
55. Sasano Toyomi, *Kodomo no shitsukekata: Ichi Mei Ikuji Kempō* (Tokyo: Hattori shoten, 1907), 150–151.
56. Ibid., 150.
57. *Yomiuri shinbun*, September 21, 1913, 5.
58. *Yomiuri shinbun*, June 7, 1910, 6.
59. Mori Kitarō, "Beikoku no kashi to kashiho no jyōkyō," *Jitsugyō Seinen* 3, no. 6 (1909): 6.
60. Ikeda, *Nihon Yōgashi*, 704.
61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., 699.
64. Quoted in Ikeda, *Nihon yōgashishi*, 705.
65. Quoted in Ikeda, *Nihon yōgashishi*, 708.
66. *Asahi shinbun*, November 30, 1904, 5.
67. *Asahi shinbun*, April 7, 1909, 3.
68. *Asahi shinbun*, December 10, 1914, 3.
69. Morinaga Seika Kabushikigaisha, ed., *Morinaga 55-nen Shi* (Tokyo: Morinaga Seika, 1954), 208.
70. [Mrs.] Murai Gensai, "Mise uri no kashi ni tsuite," *Kashi shinpō*, November 14, 1906, 5.
71. Mori Kitarō, "Beikoku no kashi to kashiho no jyōkyō," *Jitsugyō shōnen* 3, no. 6 (1909): 5.
72. *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 14, 1900, 4.
73. Ibid.
74. *Asahi shinbun*, February 22, 1924.
75. *Asahi shinbun*, September 26, 1912, 7.
76. *Asahi shinbun*, November 14, 1914, 7.
77. *Yomiuri shinbun*, January 18, 1931; April 7, 1931; July 25, 1931, 6; March 31, 1933, 3; August 8, 1935, 3.
78. *Yomiuri shinbun*, October 25, 1926.
79. *Yomiuri shinbun*, December 25, 1904, 5.
80. *Yomiuri shinbun*, September 10, 1919, 6.
81. "Kashi chōwa ron," *Kashi shinpō*, April 15, 1907, 1; [Mrs.] Murai Gensai, "Okashi no zenaku," *Shokuyō zasshi* 8, no. 70 (1913): 52.
82. Kurokawa Takeo, "Yōka ni osare gimi na wagashi no tameni," *Jigyō to kōkoku* 6, no. 4 (1928): 29.
83. *Wayōgashi shinbun*, October 15, 1917, 9.