

Birth Control and Eugenics for the Proletarian Class: A Genealogy of the Proletarian Birth Control Movement in Interwar Japan

The Roman proletariat lived at the expense of society, while modern society lives at the expense of the proletariat.¹

1. The proletariat under capitalism: the capitalist representation of human reproduction

The history of the proletarian birth control movement in Japan between the 1920s and the mid 1930s shows the representation of human reproduction of the proletariat under capitalism. Since the early 1920s in Japan, the influx of contraceptive technology ushered in a new way of thinking about human reproduction: Previously a matter of uncontrolled nature, human reproduction became an issue linked to controllable bodies. How did this radical change in the ways of representing reproduction impact socioeconomic conditions of Interwar Japanese society? Rethinking reproduction on the basis of scientific authority gave socialist intellectuals and proletarian activists a new strategy of class struggle. By integrating scientific knowledge and technology regarding birth control into the proletarian movement, pro-birth control class activists strove to challenge the capitalist representation of surplus labor and thus, ultimately, overturn the exploitation of workers. For the activists, controlled human reproduction did not merely mean controlling the number of births; activists also sought to increase the life quality of the proletarian class. Another scientific tool the proletarian movement mobilized in its attempts to refashion reproduction was eugenics, a comprehensive mixture of scientific ideas and methods for the purpose of studying genetic and environmental influences on human quality.

Both birth control and eugenics refashioned the ways in which the proletarian movement thought about reproduction. Reproduction was no longer a means of capitalist exploitation, but a defensive weapon to be wielded for the class struggle. Thus, the proletarian movement reshaped the practice of birth control and eugenics as a science for the proletarian class. The class movement and science came to redefine each other in the process of utilizing the scientific technology of controlling reproduction for the class struggle.

¹ Karl Marx, Preface to the second edition (1869) of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: With Explanatory Notes* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 8.

Moreover, the conjunction between the proletarian movement, birth control, and eugenics during the interwar period blurred a series of distinctions between politics and science, superstructure and base, and class and sex.

While being attentive to these blurred categories, this paper traces the social and intellectual history of the proletarian birth control movement in interwar Japan. The history of pro-birth control proletarian movement is largely divided into three periods: the first period (1922-24) was characterized by the foundation of the *Sanji Seigen Kenkyūkai* (the Society for Investigation of Birth Control); the second period (1925-29) involves the justification of birth control based on the Marxist critique of capitalism; and the third period (1930-33) brought clinic-based, practical actions for propagating contraception and eugenics.

2. The birth of the proletarian birth control movement

A budding biologist and sexologist Yamamoto Senji² published a pamphlet titled *the Critique of Ms. Sanger's Family Limitation* in May 1922. The pamphlet was a Japanese translation of *Family Limitation* written by Margaret Sanger in 1914.³ Despite his intention to introduce rather than criticize Sanger's birth control movement into Japan, Yamamoto advertently included a "critique" in the title to avoid censorship. The arbitrary character of Japanese censorship laws during the Taishō period (1912-26) simultaneously restricted the freedom of press and left the door open for evading for censorship laws under the pretext of

² Yamamoto Senji (1889-1929) was a biologist, sexologist, labor activist, and politician in Japan in the early twentieth century. Originally born in Kyoto, Yamamoto grew up surrounded by the Protestantism of Kyoto Congregational Church and immersed himself in horticulture in his teenage years. His earlier belief in religion and interest in horticulture waned gradually during his stay in Vancouver, Canada where he learned about Darwin's evolution theory and Unitarian Universalism. The liberal nature of the Unitarian Church specifically attracted Yamamoto in terms of reconciling his religious beliefs and his interest in scientific truth. Five years in Canada (since 1907) led Yamamoto turn to biology, and eventually in 1917, he entered Tokyo Imperial University to study Zoology. His scholarly career as a biologist and sexologist began when he became a lecturer in Dōshisha and Kyoto Imperial University in 1920, and underwent a dramatic change over the next decade. After participating in the birth control movement since 1922, he actively engaged in various fields including public and university lectures on sexology, birth control movement, journal publishing, working class education, and the proletarian party activity until he was stabbed to death by the right-wing in March, 1929. This paper specifically traces Yamamoto's last decade in which he strove to bridge the academy and society, science and politics, and sexual and class issues. Sasaki Toshiji's two-volume biography *Yamamoto Senji* (Kyōto: Chōbunsha, 1974) provides a thick description of Yamamoto's personal life along with historical background. Sabine Frühstück also gives a detailed account of Yamamoto's scholarly activities, highlighting his work on sexology. See Sabine Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and Social Control In Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 83-100.

³ An American birth control activist Margaret Sanger visited Japan on the invitation of *Kaizō-sha*, a publishing company in Tokyo, to propagate the ideas and techniques of birth control in March, 1922. The series of Sanger's lectures on overpopulation and contraception stirred up public interest in the issue of birth control in Japanese society.

academic purpose.⁴ Yamamoto clearly understood the arbitrariness of the censorship laws. Although the publication and distribution of a pamphlet on the subject of sex was considered a violation of “manners and morals (*fūzoku*)” under the Publication Law of 1893, the Home Ministry administration showed relative leniency to academic work. Using this loophole, Yamamoto published the first edition of the *Critique* and distributed 2000 copies to medical professionals and university professors.

Although governmental barriers hindered the circulation of information about birth control among the general public, Yamamoto’s pamphlet the *Critique* ended up reaching the outside of intellectual circles. A printing house worker, who printed Yamamoto’s pamphlet at the workshop, told Mitamura Shirō, a Bolshevik and one of the leading members of the Japan Federation of Labor (*Nihon rōdō kumiai sōdōmei*, abbreviated to *Sōdōmei*) in Osaka about the *Critique*.⁵ Inspired by Yamamoto’s pamphlet, Mitamura suggested Yamamoto work to promote birth control among the working class. The collaboration between Shirō, a labor union leader and Yamamoto, a sexologist, resulted in the publication of a popular edition of the *Critique* in December 1922.⁶ Two thousand copies of popular edition with a top secret stamp on it were circulated among Kansai area workers. Thus, Yamamoto’s pamphlet facilitated a growing consensus about the pressing need for birth control particularly among working-class families.

In January 1923, this growing consensus bore fruit: The “*Sanji Seigen Kenkyūkai* (the Society for Investigation of Birth Control, *Seigenkai* from here on),” the first leftist birth control group in Japan, was founded in Osaka. The membership of *Seigenkai* reflects the group’s creation through collaborative efforts

⁴ There were mainly two laws concerning administrative control of the press during the prewar period: the Publication Law (*Shuppan-hō*) of 1893 and the Newspaper Law (*Shinbunshi-hō*) of 1909. The former was targeted at general publication including books, pamphlets, and leaflets whereas the latter covered general newspapers and periodical publication. In the rise of radical thought and publications peddling radical socialism since the late 1910s, liberal government and bureaucrats of the Home Ministry utilized the censorship laws primarily to suppress “dangerous thought.” Although neither censorship laws stipulated an obvious definition of dangerous thought, the arbitrary standard of the violation of “public order (*anne chitsujo*)” and “manners and morals” legitimized the administrative suppress of radical political thought and obscenity. The intensified control of the press during the Taishō period typifies the duplicity of Taishō democracy in terms of the governmental regulation of radical ideas under the veneer of liberalism. As for censorship in Japan during the Taishō period, see Richard H. Mitchell, *Censorship in imperial Japan* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1983), 172-253; Gregory James Kasza, *The state and the mass media in Japan, 1918-1945* (University of California Press, 1988), 28-53.

⁵ Sasaki Toshiji, *Yamamoto Senji* vol.1 (Kyōto: Chōbunsha, 1974), 303.

⁶ Yamamoto Senji, a personal letter to Margaret Sanger, April 1923. In this letter, Yamamoto gave a detailed update on the process of the birth control group organization and the general situation of birth control movement in Japan. This letter is collected in *Yamamoto Senji zenshū* vol. 7, ed. Toshiji Sasaki et al. (Tōkyō: Chōbunsha, 1979), 145-55.

of labor activists and scientists. In addition to Yamamoto and Mitamura, the members of the Osaka affiliate of *Sōdōmei* including Noda Ritsuta, Noda Kimiko (Noda's wife), Ōya Shōzo, and Kuzumi Fusako, and a physician and Yamamoto's cousin, Yasuda Tokutarō participated in organizing *Seigenkai*. Within a month, several branches of *Seigenkai* were established in Nagoya, Kyoto, Kobe, Okayama, and other areas within Kansai.⁷

Seigenkai's main channel for propagating birth control was a public lecture. As opposed to printed materials which could potentially violate censorship laws, a public lecture was a legitimate and relatively efficient way to educate a popular audience about birth control technologies. No sooner was *Seigenkai* founded than the group held its first public lecture at the YMCA Hall in Kobe. A second lecture was held at the Osaka Grand Municipal Hall. These two public lectures, which attracted 400 and 1,000 people respectively, also drew considerable media attention.⁸ *Osaka Asahi Newspaper* carried a series of articles which cast a positive light on the labor union's involvement in the birth control movement and its well-attended lectures.⁹ Meanwhile, *Osaka Mainichi Newspaper*, another major newspaper in Kansai, responded to *Seigenkai*'s activity with a critical editorial on contraception.¹⁰ These two contrasting responses reflected a broader debate among contemporary intellectuals over how to solve social problems and class conflicts. While the *Asahi* articles represented a socialist stance which favored birth control as a way to alleviate the sufferings of lower class families, the *Mainichi* spoke for a pronatalist group that supported either the buildup of national strength or parental morality. This controversy on the media eventually had a

⁷ Ibid., 146.

⁸ In addition, several public lectures led by Yamamoto continued in between February and April. Under the pretext of sex education, Yamamoto gave lectures on the use of contraceptive devices mainly to school teachers and college students in Matsue, Tottori, Kyoto, and Kochi. Ibid., 151-2.

⁹ The *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* (Newspaper), the former *Asahi Shimbun*, was one of the major news papers in Kansai region and known as its left-leaning opinions. The *Shimbun* was attentive to the ongoing birth control movement in Kansai region led by the Labor Union leaders, favorably reporting *Seigenkai*'s argument and its propagation activity. The published articles include "Sanji seigen no jissai undō: Kansai no rōdō kumiai ni jukushita kiun, ko no shussan o osoreru hisanna jijitsu [= The actual movement of birth control: the time is ripe for Kansai Labor Union, a miserable fact about people who fear of giving a birth]" (January 5, 1923), "Rōdō dantai no sanji seigen: jissai mondai ni totsunyu senden kōen ni dai ippo o [= Labor Union's birth control movement: entered into actual problems with a first step to a propaganda lecture]" (January 7, 1923), and "Sanji seigen no jissai undo (editorial)" (January 10, 1923).

¹⁰ "Sanji seigen no senden [= the propaganda for birth control] (editorial)," *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* (March 13, 1923).

promotional effect for *Seigenkai*'s birth control movement.¹¹ Considering the pressure of censorship, it is not surprising that *Seigenkai* reacted favorably to the newspapers becoming an indirect outlet to propagate their ideas.

In May 1923, Noda Kimiko, one of the founders of *Seigenkai*, published a pamphlet “*Sanji seigen kenkyū* [or the Investigation of Birth Control].”¹² This pamphlet summarizes the ways in which *Seigenkai* incorporated birth control into the proletarian movement based on the Marxist critique of capitalism. First and foremost, *Seigenkai* distinguished its support of birth control from Neo-Malthusian theories.¹³ *Seigenkai* denounced the theoretical basis of Neo-Malthusianism, namely Malthus’ principle of population, for its failure to grasp the underlying cause of poverty. In opposition to Neo-Malthusianism that attributed the root cause of poverty to excess population outgrowing food supplies, Noda attributed the root cause of poverty to the economic structure of capitalism. Noda noted that “the capitalist system based on private ownership of the means of production conditions unfair ways of production and distribution.”¹⁴ According to this view, as long as the bourgeois class – including the landed class – monopolized the means of production and produced profitable commodities by exploiting proletarian labor force, simply putting a brake on population growth would not eradicate poverty. For *Seigenkai*, the Malthusian advocates who represented overpopulation as an absolute fact, as well as a social evil, were in collusion with the capitalists. Protected by Malthusian theories, capitalists continued to generate the exploitable labor force, what Marx calls “industrial reserve army,” whose poverty, hunger, and misery enriched the capitalist class.¹⁵

¹¹ Later, Yamamoto recalled that Mainichi’s attacks on birth control proved “an efficient advertisement” for the group. Yamamoto, a letter to Margaret Sanger, 146.

¹² Noda Kimiko, *Sanji seigen kenkyū* (Sanji Seigen Kenkyūkai, 1923). The pamphlet is also collected in *Sei to seishoku no jinken mondai shiryō shūsei*, vol. 2., ed. Ogino Miho, Yōko Matsubara, and Hikaru Saitō (Tōkyō: Fuji Shuppan, 2000), 202-13.

¹³ Neo-Malthusianism began to appear since the late 19th century. One of the pioneering advocates of Neo-Malthusianism was the Malthusian League, a British organization established in 1877. While these Neo-Malthusian advocates basically agreed to Malthus’ principle of population, which presumed increasing imbalance between population growth and food supplies, Neo-Malthusianism differed from Malthus’ theory of population in supporting contraception as a solution to overpopulation. Since the end of the First World War, some Japanese Fabianists and social reformists began to advocate Neo-Malthusianism by which they linked surplus population with widespread poverty and race regression as a casual relationship.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵ Marx, *Capital*, 793. Marx highlights the relative surplus population that forms a disposable industrial army under the capitalist mode of production. According to him, the surplus laboring population is independent of absolute surplus population, but is affected by the expansion of capital that continuously sets free exploitable population. Here the “industrial reserve army” is an unsettled, precarious category because this

Nevertheless, *Seigenkai* members attempted to encourage the proletarian class to practice contraception, as they phrased it “scientific artificial birth control (*kagakuteki jinkō sanji seigen hō*)” in favor of it. Thus, birth control became a defensive solution for various problems, such as poverty, illness, and the high infant mortality rate of the proletarian class. In the pamphlet, Noda argues that:

It is most necessary and appropriate to control too many pregnancies to help relieve the proletariat from poverty and reduce their burden, because for the proletariat, poverty is the problem at hand. Even though poverty is the product of capitalism, there is no need to put up with its faulty system.¹⁶

In contrast to the Neo-Malthusian position that birth control was the ultimate solution to poverty, *Seigenkai* members viewed birth control as a necessary, if incomplete, defense against capitalism. Insofar as the capitalist system prevailed, birth control could function as an individual defense against poverty. Moreover, birth control could help defend the proletariat class in general by preventing those burdened with too many children from dropping out of the class war.¹⁷ This argument for defending the lower classes, worked to counter the concerns of socialists who worried that contraception would weaken proletarian class consciousness. Those who were against the use of contraception among the proletarian class identified birth control with bourgeois class interests. By countering the argument that birth control was bourgeois, *Seigenkai* gave a new class identity to birth control; birth control became the means of self-defense for the proletariat.

Viewed in this light, *Seigenkai*'s slogan for “birth control for the proletarian class” raised a series of broader questions about the capitalist system, the illusion of overpopulation, and socialists' rigid economism. Simply put, birth control was a class issue for *Seigenkai*. Their new understanding of reproduction as a controllable biological phenomenon facilitated a critique of the capitalist structure that exploited an ever-

despotic work of capitalism which constantly shifts the boundaries of employment, half-employment, and unemployment for the self-expansion of capital.

¹⁶ Noda, *Sanji seigen kenkyū*, 16.

¹⁷ Yamamoto Senji also mentioned the importance of birth control in the class movement. He criticized the messianic stance of some labor activists in their pursuit of the revolution while neglecting immediate problems encountered by the proletariat, metaphorically speaking “what those who are suffering really need is rather a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” Yamamoto Senji, “‘Sanji chōsetsu hyōron’ kara ‘sei to shakai’ e,” *Sei to shakai* [=sex and society] no.9 (1925): 13.

increasing proletarian labor force. *Seigenkai*'s stance also altered the representation of human reproduction from being an economic burden to being a defense strategy for the proletarian class.

3. Theorizing birth control: eugenics for the proletariat, proletarianizing science

In February 1925, *Seigenkai* published the first issue of *Sanji Seigen Hyōron* [or Birth Control Review, *Hyōron* from here on], a monthly magazine for birth control research and propaganda.¹⁸ Since its founding, *Seigenkai* organized one-time or short-term lectures to encourage working class people to use contraception. The group also recruited members throughout the Japanese empire and in the beginning of 1925, *Seigenkai* had 5,000 members¹⁹ To improve communication with these members, Yamamoto took the leading role in publishing a monthly magazine that dealt with issues around birth control ranging from academic discussions on birth control to informative contents on contraceptive methods and sexual matters in general. As the title of the magazine suggests, the *Hyōron* was largely influenced by the *Birth Control Review* published and edited by Sanger since 1917. Yamamoto, a committed subscriber of the *Birth Control Review*, attempted to imitate its comprehensive character – topical, scholarly, and popular – while creating an original tone and content which spoke to the legitimacy of birth control on “proletarian” grounds.

In their efforts to legitimize birth control, the editors of the *Hyōron* emphasized the themes of science and class. Many contributing authors used the language of science and class consciousness to argue against persistent social conventions. Science was a new value that displaced arguments for parental responsibility and the laws of nature. The proletarian laborer, who had suffered under capitalist exploitation, became the new subject who should practice birth control. Thus, the theorization of birth control as seen in the *Hyōron*

¹⁸ *Sanji Seigen Hyōron* was published between February 1925 and May 1926, a total of 14 issues. The chief editor was Yamamoto, and contributing writers included Yamamoto himself, Yasuda Tokutarō, a Neo-Malthusian, Fabian socialist Abe Isoo, a medical doctor who managed People's Hospital (*Heimin byōin*) in Tokyo, Kaji Tokijirō, the president of *Sōdōmei* Suzuki Bunji, a medical doctor who also ran People's Hospital in Osaka, Katō Tokiya, a commissioned (*shokutaku*) medical doctor of Tokyo Municipal Social Affairs Bureau (*Shakaikyoku*) Majima Kan, and a eugenicist and social work theorist Unno Yukinori. The title of the magazine changed to *Sei to Shakai* [= Sex and Society] from the ninth issue, October 1925. The whole issues were collected and published in 1983 (Tōkyō: Fuji Shuppan, 1983).

¹⁹ Kanda Ryūichi (the Society for Investigation of Birth Control in Osaka), “Osaka no sanji seigen undo [= The birth control movement in Osaka],” *Sanji seigen hyōron* no.1 (February 1925): 26-7.

centered on questions of reframing reproduction through birth control in order to ensure the scientific reproduction of the proletarian class.

It should be noted that “science” does not merely refer to a modern discipline or the objective knowledge of nature. As Foucault’s term “modern episteme” denotes, modern knowledge, either social or natural science, is bound up with a certain episteme which serves as the “positive ground of knowledge” and constitutes “man’s particular mode of being and the possibility of knowing him empirically.”²⁰ The notions “science” or “scientific (*kagakuteki*)” were frequently used in the birth control debates of the 1920s, and were inexorably linked with specific historical, epistemological conditions of knowledge. On one hand, science signified the regime of biological truth, that is a systemic process of establishing the truth about human bodies. In this regime of scientific truth, the human being was simultaneously a truth-knower and a to-be-known object. On the other, science signified its effect, or the goal of human progress by discovering, conquering, and controlling the object of knowledge. Therefore, “scientific birth control,” as a shared vision of the *Hyōron*, pointed to the progress of human bodies based on the objective knowledge of reproduction.

Viewed in this light, it is no surprise that many authors of the *Hyōron* chose eugenics (*yūseigaku*) as one of the significant principles of scientific birth control. As Diane Paul keenly observed, eugenics has been “a protean concept” which has been easily bonded with humanitarian politics, or its goal for biological progress.²¹ The bond between socialism and eugenics was strengthened internationally in the name of “human progress” during the interwar period. Socialists – including Marxian socialists, Fabianists, and Bolsheviks – viewed eugenics, not as the pure science of genetic determinism, but as a practical science for improving the quality of human stock.²²

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 420-1.

²¹ Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 1998), 19.

²² As to the historical relationship between leftism and eugenics, see Diane Paul, “Eugenics and the Left,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 45 (1984), 567–90; Mark B. Adams, “The Politics of Human Heredity in the USSR, 1920–1940,” *Genome*, 31 (1989), 879–84; Alberto Spektorowski, “The Eugenic Temptation in Socialism: Sweden, Germany, and the Soviet Union,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46 (2004), 84–106.

Japanese socialists were not an exception in this international wave of interest in eugenics among the socialist groups. Yamamoto, the chief editor of the *Hyōron*, was a representative figure who stressed the eugenic value of the birth control practice. Yamamoto believed that birth control led to human physical improvement ever since he began to engage in the birth control movement. His comment on “self-awareness based eugenics (*Jikaku no ueni taterarubeki yūseigaku*)” found in the *Critique* pamphlet illuminates his peculiar understanding of eugenics. Yamamoto claimed:

In terms of eugenics and eugenics, their goals cannot be achieved without social well-being built on people’s self-awareness based knowledge and their sense of responsibility in addition to the legal means for natural selection of the inferiors (i.e. castration or ovariectomy of congenital criminals and mental patients). ... Hence, people’s own discretion is essential to improve their physical constitution. Without it, however good the government is, excellent the laws are, or wise and diligent the authorities are, the goal for physical improvement is unachievable.²³

Yamamoto uses the concept of eugenics in two senses: eugenics and eugenics. Eugenics, as Yamamoto translated it into *gense kaizengaku* [or the study of improving this life], was concerned with the social and environmental conditions that could impact a person’s physical and mental health. Eugenics, or *raise kaizengaku* [or the study of improving next life], on the other hand, was associated with genetic conditions and hereditary traits. These two terms show Yamamoto’s complex understanding of hereditary factors, and acknowledge both the environmental and the genetic influences on human development. However, this indeterminable nature of eugenics spurred Yamamoto on to pursue scientific research on the quality of human traits rather than question the validity of eugenic science. Instead of the “nature or nurture” debate, Yamamoto’s focus was on the question of how to enlighten people regarding scientific ways to improve their own physical and mental quality. In this sense, Yamamoto’s “self-awareness based eugenics” was grounded in scientific enlightenment. This reveals the irony of “self-awareness,” which had to be built on given knowledge, or more specifically, a given ordering of the knowledge object. In the same vein, eugenics presumed knowledge of one’s own body based on a hierarchical ordering of human traits and characteristics.

²³ Yamamoto, “Sanga joshi kazoku seigen-hō hihan,” 73.

During the interwar years, there was an international consensus among birth control advocates that contraception use would result in race betterment. The *Hyōron* functioned as a vehicle for introducing the eugenic value of birth control – an argument used by birth control advocates in Europe and America – to Japanese audiences.²⁴ For example, a British eugenicist and sexologist, Havelock Ellis was an influential source for the *Hyōron*'s reframing of birth control on the basis of positive eugenics. To the Japanese proletarian birth control activists, it was more appealing to place greater emphasis on the quality of the population. The eugenics-based claim for “quality over quantity” strengthened the legitimacy of birth control, and distanced birth control advocacy from the Neo-Malthusian position which was considered bourgeois ideology. Ellis was sympathetic to birth control on the grounds that conception control could contribute to an increase in the quality of citizens, and thus, the advancement of the nation. The following passage taken from Ellis's writings exemplifies his belief that birth control was as a scientific means for national progress:

The demand of national efficiency thus corresponds with the demand of developing humanitarianism, which, having begun by attempting to ameliorate the conditions of life, has gradually begun to realize that it is necessary to go deeper and to ameliorate life itself. ... [The] more searching analysis of evil environmental conditions only serves to show that in large parts they are based in the human organism itself and were not only pre-natal, but pre-conceptual, being involved in the quality of the parental or ancestral organisms.²⁵

Ellis' reframing of reproduction was deeply intertwined with nationalism, humanitarianism, and scientific progress. Ellis deemed that birth control would radically replace natural selection, once considered irreversible human condition, with artificial selection for a better human life, and a more advanced nation. In other words, the predictability and manipulability of reproduction would become new human condition in

²⁴ Historically, eugenics has had double-sided character, positive and negative eugenics. While the former has been concerned with ideas or movements to increase the population with “good” genes, the latter has related to those discouraging the population with “bad” genes from producing offspring. A British statistician, Francis Galton defined eugenics as “the science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognizance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had.” This definition clearly reveals the inherent ambiguity of eugenics. Francis Galton, *Inquiries Into Human Faculty and Its Development* (London: Macmillan and co., 1883), 24-5.

²⁵ Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. 6, (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1910), accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13615/13615-8.txt>. The chapter 7 of the book, titled “the procreation of science” was translated and serially published in the *Hyōron* from no. 7 to no. 13. Ellis' writing was the most frequently translated in the *Hyōron*. His essays introduced in the *Hyōron* include “The Objects of Marriage” (1920) “Children and Parents” (1922) in no.4, “The Love-Rights of Women” (1918) in no. 5, and “The play-function of sex” (1921) in no. 6.

which human and national progress is expressed only in a biological form. As opposed to Neo-Malthusianism that centers on the political economic calculations of the population size, this biological viewpoint focused on the enrichment of the quality of life, by improving either the genetic or the environmental conditions of life. The biological representation of human progress, or conversely, the humanitarian, nationalist representation of science, sums up the main thrust of positive eugenics.

The voice of this British birth control advocate on eugenic grounds were echoed by the Japanese proletarian birth control activists.²⁶ For them, translating Western eugenic views were an important part of theorizing birth control. In the re-contextualizing process or translation, eugenics and scientific procreation became indispensable and legitimate factors in the arguments of proletarian advocates. Through the *Hyōron*, Japanese advocates explicitly articulated how essential birth control was for creating eugenic value, or improving the race,²⁷ and how justifiable artificial selection was in creating the biological, medical, and sanitary conditions needed for healthy mothers and children.²⁸ Thus, contraception embodied a utopian view of human progress based on scientific development. Here, the underlying assumption that reproduction, as a part of nature should be dominated by science, put humanity in a paradoxical position. Humans belonged to nature and thus were an object of science on one hand, but, on the other hand, humans were a knowing subject who should control nature. However, this paradox remained unexamined while the idea of progress – the blending of scientific advancement and humanitarian reform – constantly justified scientific interventions into reproduction. Yamamoto compared birth control to radio communication and modern technologies of

²⁶ Another eugenic-based birth control advocates translated and introduced through the *Hyōron* include a Russian Bolshevik Alexandra Kollontai (no. 1; no. 3), an Irish critic and a member of Fabian Society, Bernard Shaw (no. 2), a Dutch medical practitioner Johannes Rutgers (no. 6), and Margaret Sanger (no. 7).

²⁷ For example, a socialist politician Koike Shirō explicitly criticized the blind spots of Malthusian theory, the unfair control of the means of production and the unequal distribution of products. Nevertheless, Koike stressed the pressing need for birth control for three reasons: first, from the eugenic viewpoint; second, a temporary solution to poverty; third, for mother's health and rights protection. Koike's emphasis on biological and environmental quality of human life is in accord with Ellis' claim for positive eugenics. Koike Shirō, "Jidai ni genwaku sare taru marusasu [= Malthus, blinded by his time]" *Sei to Shakai* no. 14 (May 1926): 18-24.

²⁸ Yamamoto Senji, "Sanji chōsetsu wa tenri ni somuku ka [= Does birth control go against the law of nature?]" *Sei to Shakai* no. 13 (March 1926): 18-23.

transportation, on the grounds that “those are all based on the knowledge of nature, and a human privilege to obey and partly control nature.” Thus, a paradox resides in the idea of progress.²⁹

Meanwhile, there was another crucial factor in establishing the legitimacy of birth control in addition to eugenics and scientific procreation: class. As already discussed above, when proletarian birth control advocates were first organizing *Seigenkai*, they proclaimed that birth control was the proletariat’s “self-defense” against the exploitative system of capitalism. This Marxist perspective remained unchanged in subsequent processes of theorizing. In response to *Seigenkai*’s initial critique of the Malthusian theory of population, some labor activists participated in the discussion of birth control from a class-based viewpoint. Tanizaki Zentarō, a Kyoto-based labor activist, actively criticized Neo-Malthusians who failed to see the illusory nature of overpopulation while representing the interest of bourgeois class. In opposition to Neo-Malthusianism, Tanizaki attempted to shift the association of birth control with bourgeois ideology to that of proletarian praxis. Insofar as the capitalist economic system continued, the proletariat would keep suffering from poverty, exploitation, and unemployment. Tanizaki stressed the exclusive use of birth control by the proletariat for a temporary self-defense on the premise that capitalism was a historically specific economic form. Tanizaki’s class-based logic created a double standard in sexual ethics. Whereas the use of contraception by the bourgeois class was considered to be sexual licentiousness, the same practice by the proletarian class was a justifiable solution to economic problems.³⁰ This double-standard suggests that Tanizaki reaffirmed sexual ethics by limiting the purpose of sex to reproduction. Thus, the practice of birth control was only permitted when aimed at the liberation of the proletariat.

In a larger context, Tanizaki was reiterating the major argument of proletarian leaders who considered the proletarian class “desexualized.” The majority of these leaders limited the discussion of birth control in economic and material issues, and excluded sexual concerns. An individual’s sexual needs were

²⁹ Ibid., 23. Yamamoto’s remark on birth control as one of the modern technologies also can be found in “*radio to sanji chōsetsu* [= radio and birth control]” (December 1925). In this article, he opposed to those who considered contraception the violation of the course of nature, and maintained that contraceptive technology was a kind of modern preventive medicine which would bring happiness and stability to the masses.

³⁰ Tanizaki Zentarō, “Musun kaikyū to sanji chōsetsu [= the proletarian class and birth control],” *Sanji Chōsetsu Hyōron* no. 5 (June 1925): 41-5.

not entirely ignored, but rather resigned to a hidden, private realm. In this way, socialist birth control advocates could embrace birth control as a part of the class movement without contaminating the proletariat class with “immoral” sex. The fact that both the Japan Farmer’s Union (*Nihon Nōmin Kumiai*) and *Sōdōmei* turned down concrete proposals aimed at spreading birth control among the working class in 1925, exemplifies the general desexualization of the proletarian class.³¹ Interestingly, Kuzumi Fusako, a delegate of *Sōdōmei* and a founding member of *Seigenkai*, played a key role in the labor union’s rejection of birth control campaigns. After making this decision, Kuzumi explained why labor union delegates, including herself, objected to the proposal. She clarified that “the campaigns of *Sōdōmei* aim at improving working conditions and abolishing the wage system. In other words, *Sōdōmei* is an organization for the economic battle of the proletariat. And, birth control is simply a means of self-defense. Considering the numerous activities the labor union is currently committed to, we can hardly afford to campaign for birth control at a concrete organizational level.”³² Her remarks clearly illustrate how activities addressing sex and reproduction remained outside the boundaries of the economic base. This discursive desexualization of the working class exposed a contradiction: that is, sexual activity was necessary for the reproduction of proletariat, but the proletariat as a whole was largely desexualized.

The *Sei to Shakai* (previously named the *Hyōron*) was discontinued in May 1926 due to financial difficulties and a rapid change in the proletarian movement. Since the mid 1920s, the continued lack of agreement among proletarian organizations became a major impediment to efforts to encourage individual working class people to practice birth control. The proletariat movement underwent repeated instances of consolidation and dissolution due to both internal factionalism and the state’s suppression of radical thought. Each labor federation developed into different proletarian parties with different ideological lines.³³ The

³¹ In the 4th General Meeting of the Japan Farmers Union in February 1925, the proposal for the “promotion of birth control (*sanji seigen shōrei-an*)” was not adopted. One month later, in the National Meeting of the Japan General Federation of Labour also rejected the proposal for birth control submitted by Inoue Suejirō from Kobe Association.

³² Kuzumi Fusako, “Naniyueni wareware wa hantaishitaka: Sōdōmei taikai ni teishutsu sareshi BC an [= Why did we object to the proposal for BC campaign submitted to the National Meeting of *Sōdōmei*?],” *Sanji Chōsetsu Hyōron* no. 4 (1925): 53.

³³ A major split in the proletariat movement occurred in 1925 between its socialist and communist subgroups, when *Sōdōmei* expelled the communists and a breakaway communist faction founded the *Nihon Rōdō Kumiai Hyōgikai* (Japan Labour Unions Council). In the following

majority of the leading members of *Seigenkai* were involved with the labor union movement, and then later the political party activities ahead of the first general election of 1928. As a result, the group gradually disbanded, and eventually, the magazine *Sex and Society* was discontinued.³⁴

4. The praxis of birth control: towards the socialization of reproduction

Between 1929 and 1932, the worldwide Great Depression and its devastating impact on Japan's national economy ignited a series of proletariat protests. In rural Japan, disputes over tenancy rights between tenant farmers and landlords increased as the price of agricultural products plummeted. In cities, the unemployment rate exceeded 20 percent of the industrial work force and the labor union movement reached a peak in 1931 in proportional terms.³⁵

In such a situation, the proletarian birth control movement resurfaced in two different forms. In Osaka, several birth control clinics opened in the early 1930s to provide free or inexpensive counsel about birth control, child and maternal health, and sexual diseases for the poor and the working class. Meanwhile, in the Tokyo area, *Musansha Sanji Seigen Dōmei* (the Proletariat Birth Control League, or Pro-BC) was founded by a proletarian group in June 1930 to denounce a commodified birth control campaign and meet the growing demand for birth control among the proletariat. These two new developments in the birth control movement focused on popularizing practical contraceptive measures for the working-class people.

year, there was the second split between right-wing socialism and centrist socialism when the latter group separately formed the *Nihon Rōdō Kumiai Dōmei* (Japan Labour Union League). Meanwhile, in 1926, three different political parties were founded after the General Election Law whose purpose was to extend male suffrage to male citizens (over the age of 25). These parties include the *Shakai Minshūtō* (Social Democratic Party, right-wing), the *Nihon Rōdō Nōmintō* (the Japan Labour-Farmer Party, centrist), and the *Rōdō Nōmintō* (The Labour-Farmer Party, leftist). For an account of the leftist movement in prewar and wartime Japan, see Stephen S. Large, *Organized Workers and Socialist Politics in Interwar Japan* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

³⁴ Yamamoto also devoted himself to the labor movement and the political party activity. He was involved in the Labour-Farmer Party shortly after the decision to discontinue the *Sei to shakai* was made in 1926, and elected as a member of the House of Representatives in Japan's first general election of 1928. As to Yamamoto's political activities in the late 1920s, see Sasaki Toshiji, *Yamamoto Senji* vol.2 (Kyōto: Chōbunsha, 1974), 121-382.

³⁵ As to the Shōwa Depression between 1929 and 1932, see Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*, 237-69; Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); 181-201; Nishida Yoshiaki, "Dimensions of change in twentieth-century rural Japan" in *Farmers and Village Life in Twentieth-Century Japan*, ed. Ann Waswo et al. (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 7-37.

As a result, since the early 1930s, the birth control movement unfolded in consultation centers, exhibitions, and voluntary groups.

A quintessential example showing the transition from the intellectual debate to praxis in the proletarian birth control movement is the Eugenic Consultation Center, established in Sumiyoshi district, Osaka, in April 1930. One month prior to its establishment, proletarian activists involved in the Labor Union, the Farmers' Union, and other proletarian parties, cooperated with medical practitioners and midwives to organize a new birth control advocacy group dubbed the "Japan Birth Control Association (*Nihon sanji seigen kyōkai*)."³⁶ The activists announced the three key goals of their newly formed association, which included 1) raising the quality of children on eugenic grounds, 2) the prevention of infant death, and the protection of children's right to life, and 3) saving mothers from the "hell of fecundity (*tasan jikoku*)."³⁷ The expressed goals of the Japan Birth Control Association resembled birth control arguments made previously. However, now, science was directly connected with practical social work. Hence, the Association set up the Eugenic Consultation Center in pursuit of popularizing birth control among individual proletarians.

The Eugenic Consultation Center, as a new venture for the proletarian birth control movement, also became a space for reshaping the meaning of eugenics. As stated earlier, eugenics had been rationalized as a humanitarian science for human progress by previous birth control activists in the 1920s. In contrast, in the new venue, where a modern midwife Shibahara Urako was in charge of counselling work, eugenics became a matter of individualized counselling and thus addressed individual bodies and families rather than universal, ideological goals. More than 3,000 people visited the Center in the first four months since its

³⁶ *Nihon sanji seigen kyōkai*, "Yūsei sōdanho annai: nihon sanji seigen kyōkai sanjyo kaiin no susume," in *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei* vol 7., ed. Suzuki Yūko (Tōkyō: Fuji Shuppan, 1993), 640-3. Originally published in Marcy 1930.

³⁷ "The hell of fertility" was a buzzword in the period of Shōwa Depression. This term, literally meaning of a painful life caused by producing many children, suggests the common representation of fertility as symbolic of a wretched life. In reality, however, fertility was considered an actual problem among the lower class people who suffered from poverty and unemployment. As Fujime Yuki points out, while there was a growing demand for birth control in both cities and rural areas, infanticide was also frequently reported in the news paper between 1930 and 1932. Fujime Yuki, *Sei no rekishigaku: kōshō seido, dataizai taisei kara baishun bōshihō, yūsei hogohō taisei e* (Tōkyō: Fuji Shuppan, 1997), 260-3.

opening, asking for counsel on contraceptive methods. Their reasons for consultation on birth control included having many children, poverty, infirm health of mothers, and possessing an inferior genetic inheritance.³⁸ It should be noted that there was a difference in the understanding of eugenics between the intellectual birth control activists and the general public who were in need of birth control. For the intellectuals, eugenics was associated with a future-oriented goals – mainly the health of population, and the coming proletarian revolution. In contrast, the general public searching for answers to their everyday questions about sex and married life; they turned to eugenics to answer questions about spouse selection, to help ameliorate low income and childrearing duties, and to improve their physical and mental health. Each specific counselling encounter redefined eugenics as a way to improve one's living conditions and health.

In addition to the reshaping of eugenics, the operation of consultation center also marked a shift in the proletarian birth control movement in terms of “gendering” birth control. As the demand for counselling and the perceived effectiveness of the consultation center increased, two more consultation centers opened in Osaka by 1932.³⁹ The consultation centers were increasingly female-dominated realms. This female-specific character contrasted markedly with the previous birth control movement which was, for the most part, led by male intellectuals and activists. At the new consultation centers, professional midwives or female doctors provided cost-free or inexpensive counselling services to women and sold contraceptive devices at a reasonable price. Women, overwhelmingly, sought out the services provided by the eugenic consultation centers. According to an investigation conducted by the Social Bureau of Osaka city, 21,711 people visited one of the consultation centers between April 1930 and December 1932. Women accounted for more than 93 percent of the total number of visitors.⁴⁰

³⁸ According to investigation results published by the Social Bureau of Osaka city, the total number of people who visited the Center reached approximately 6,600 for the first 11 months since opening in 1930. Those who came to the Center were mostly from the married, working-class population, including retailers, salaried workers, manual workers, craftsmen, and unemployed people. Osaka shi shakai bu rōdōka [=Labor Affairs Section of the Social Bureau of Osaka City], “Hon shi ni oke ru yūsei sōdan sho nikansuru shiryō [= Documents on the eugenic consultation Center in Osaka city]” *Shakaibu hōkoku* [= Social Bureau Report] vol. 184 (Osaka: Social Bureau of Osaka City, 1934).

³⁹ In November 1930, the “Eugenic Child Consultation Center (*Yūseji sōdansho*)” was set up by the Proletariat Women’s League (*Musan fujin dōmei*) and another Eugenic Consultation Center, funded by Eugenics Society (*Yūsei kyōkai*), opened in July 1932. *Ibid.*, 10-23.

⁴⁰ The fee for consultation was less than fifty sen (one hundred sen equals to one yen) at all the consultation centers. According to the investigation of the Social Bureau of Osaka City in 1932, 89 percent of workers in general industry made 10 to 50 yen per month. *Ibid.*, 13-5;

Despite the substantial demand for the birth control services they provided, the consultation centers were closed one after another by 1934. Growing governmental restrictions justified by the Harmful Contraceptive Devices Control Regulation of 1930 as well as internal divisions among the proletarian parties in 1932 shortened the life of the otherwise thriving birth control centers.⁴¹ As the consultation centers gradually reframed eugenics and birth control as an individualized practice, these centers became increasingly tied down to the state's regulation of reproduction and subject to the shifting winds of proletarian ideology.

Meanwhile, in 1931, another kind of proletarian birth control movement was launched in Tokyo. Several proletarian organizations (including the Labor Union, the Farmers' Union, the Consumers Union, and a group of physicians and midwives working for the proletariat) joined forces to establish the Pro-BC in June 1931. The Pro-BC inherited the ideological vision of the preceding 1920s birth control movement, and thus maintained a firm emphasis on helping the proletarian class. In vehement opposition to the commercialization of birth control which had been growing since the late 1920s, the Pro-BC issued the following manifesto: "We adamantly reject the existing reactionary, profit-seeking, and deceptive business of birth control. We advocate birth control to support Liberation Front (*kaihō sensen*). We hope for sexual reform on the basis of scientific birth control."⁴² In October, the Pro-BC joined the Japan Proletarian Cultural League (*Nihon Puroretaria Bunka Renmei*, or KOP), a newly founded proletarian alliance for cultural and scientific movements. The move shows that the Pro-BC regarded the proletarian revolution as

Osaka shi shakai bu rōdōka, "Osaka shi shitsugyōsha seikatsu jōtai chōsa [= Investigation of the living condition of unemployed population in Osaka City]" *Shakaibu hōkoku* vol. 169 (Osaka: Social Bureau of Osaka City, 1933).

⁴¹ In Japan since the Meiji period, abortion was illegalized under the Abortion Law (*Datai zai*) in 1880, and severely punished by the Criminal Abortion Law in 1907. Since the early 1930s, birth control activists formed the Alliance for Reform of the Anti-Abortion Law (*Datai Hō Kaisei Kiseikai*, closely discussed in Chp #3) to legalize abortions on eugenic grounds, the laws remained unchanged by 1948, when the Eugenic Protection Law of 1948 was issued. Meanwhile, the Harmful Contraceptive Devices Control Regulation (*Yūgai hinin yō kigu torishimari kisoku*) was issued by the Home Ministry in 1930 to prohibit the sales and distribution of intracervical and interuterine devices. As to the whole text of the laws, see Christiana A. E. Norgren, *Abortion before Birth Control: The Politics of Reproduction In Postwar Japan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 139; *Jitsuyō iji hōki: Sankō hōrei mokuji oyobi bibōran tsuki* (Tōkyō: Kokuseidō Shoten, 1939), 144-5.

⁴² Particularly, the Japan Birth Control League (*Nihon Sanji Chōsetsu Renmei*), founded in January 1931, was a specific target of its criticism for profiting from the sale of Dutch pessaries invented by Majima Kan, one of the leading members of the League. Musansha Sanji Seigen Dōmei, "Musansha Sanji Seigen Dōmei Sengen / Kōryō kiyaku" in *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei* vol 7., 686-8. Originally published in June 6, 1931.

its ultimate goal and viewed birth control as a scientific medium which could help facilitate the revolution and be a “defensive means for class struggle.”

In an effort to replace commercialized birth control, the Pro-BC pursued a different strategy of propagating birth control practices from its Osaka counterparts. Notably, the organization of the Pro-BC resembled that of the Soviet Union’s Communist Party specifically in terms of its democratic centralism. An organic link between a central organization and local units called “circles (*ban*)” characterized the democratic centralist structure of the Pro-BC. The organization focused on the propagation of birth control through and among Pro-BC’s local circles. Although the Pro-BC also engaged in other existing ways of popularizing the practice of contraception among the masses, (for example, the Pro-BC published a popular edition of the “Pro-BC News,” sponsored a birth control exhibition, and operated birth control consultation centers) its main strategy was to organize the “circles” among factory workers and farmers.

In their fight for the socialization of birth control, the Pro-BC used the organizational model of Soviet Russia. In post-revolution Russia, abortion and contraception was legalized on the grounds that reproduction and childcare was a social matter, and the state needed to protect motherhood and infancy to ensure healthier future generations.⁴³ The Pro-BC was sympathetic to a number of Russia’s state policies including state-subsidized maternity hospitals, nurseries, and sex education, as well as the legalization of birth control and artificial abortions.⁴⁴ Acknowledging the differences in socioeconomic system between Soviet Russia and Japan, the Pro-BC members reframed the socialization of reproduction from the post-revolution state policy to match the Japanese context, which required the means of class war to achieve a proletariat revolution. Channeling birth Control propaganda through organizing circles was thought to be a

⁴³ Olga Issoupova, “From duty to pleasure? Motherhood in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia,” in *Gender, State, and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, ed. Sarah Ashwin (London: Routledge, 2000): 30-54.

⁴⁴ The Pro-BC introduced the state policies of Soviet Russia regarding motherhood, reproduction, and childcare several times through its periodical *Sanji seigen undō* and the popular edition of *Pro BC News*. For example, a poet and a founder of Japana Prolet-Esperantista Unio (JPEU) Akita Ujaku, wrote an article on state-run maternity hospitals and a state support for birth control in Russia based on his own experience of travelling to Moscow and Leningrad (the old name of St. Petersburg). In *Pro BC News*, the Pro-BC also reported that the reason for legalizing abortions in Russia was to warn about the risks of performing abortion procedures and to provide the scientific methods of abortions under the state provision. Writing articles on Soviet Russia was a strategic vehicle for the Pro-BC to advocate the socialization of reproduction in Japan. Akita Ujaku, “Sovēto dōmei ni okeru sanji seigen sono ta nitsuite [= Birth Control and the Others in Soviet Union]” *Sanji seigen undō* no. 1 (September 1931):3-5; “Sanji seigen ga jiyū demo Sovēto dōmei wa jinkō ga zōka,” *Pro BC News* (Popular edition) no. 1 (July 1933): 2.

primary step in shifting the burden of reproductive functions from individual families onto the social realm. The Pro-BC, however, failed to present a plan detailing the state's role in human reproduction and childcare in Japan. For them, the watchword "class-based birth control (*kaikyūteki sanji seigen*)" was effective only to the extent that workers, farmers, and other proletarian groups were able to devote themselves to the ongoing class war instead of depleting their energies in raising children in impoverished conditions.⁴⁵ With this defensive understanding of birth control, the Pro-BC inadvertently pursued a strategy that reinforced the distinction between public and private spheres, instead of heralding the socialization of reproduction.

Despite its constant efforts to expand and foster local units and branches, the Pro-BC faced challenges in convincing workers and farmers to voluntarily organize and participate in birth control circles.⁴⁶ Furthermore, after the Manchurian Incident in September 1931, the shifting political situation became a major barrier to maintaining the proletarian organizations. Widespread suppression also sparked a dissension within the proletarian movement and this ultimately led to the dissolution of the KOP and its affiliated organizations in April 1934.⁴⁷ As a result, the Pro-BC campaign was abandoned and the proletarian revolution did not materialize. With the dissolution of the Pro-BC in 1934, the Japanese proletarian birth control movement was also put to an end.

5. An unfinished revolution: rethinking class, reproduction, and science

This paper has explored the genealogy of the proletariat birth control movement during the interwar years in Japan. The movement which began with the birth of *Seigenkai* in the early 1920s eventually ended in the mid-1930s without having facilitated a proletarian revolution. The intensifying state control of leftism and ideological conflicts within the proletarian organizations during the mid 1930s greatly hindered the

⁴⁵ "1923 nendo Pro-BC tōsō hōshin sōan [= a draft for the struggle policy of the Pro-BC in 1923]" in *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei* vol 7., 692-7. Originally published in January 1932.

⁴⁶ According to a report published in the *Pro BC News* in 1932, several circles were established in factories in Tokyo area, and the Pro-BC was planning to further expand the movement into different Prefecture including Mie, Niigata, Ibaraki, Nagano, Dottori, and Hokkaido, though it is unconfirmed the plan was actually fulfilled so far. Given the growing state repression against the Proletariat movement and continuing imprisonment of leading members of the Pro-BC since the early 1932, it is a grim possibility that the latter plan was carried out. *Pro BC News* no. 11 (April 1932).

⁴⁷ Wilson, *The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society*, 105-9; Matsuda, *Joseisen*, 346-7.

movement. Moreover, the call for using birth control as a way to catalyze the proletarian revolution faded into history.

However, the proletariat birth control movement in Japan cannot simply be reduced to an unfinished revolution. The trajectory of the movement provokes a series of critical questions about the socioeconomic representation of reproduction and sexuality under capitalism. Birth control and eugenic ideas radically changed the status of human reproduction from that of uncontrolled nature into the domain of controllable biological phenomena. The reproductive technologies adopted by proletarian activists exposed parts of the exploitative economic system of capitalism under which the production of the proletarian population brought benefit primarily to the capitalists. Furthermore, proletarian birth control activists appropriated the meaning of human reproduction for the benefit of the proletarian class in the process of revaluing reproduction as a defensive means of class survival and revolution. Put another way, the proletarian birth control movement problematized capitalist representations of reproduction, and reframed reproduction with a revolutionary science. Although the revolution ultimately failed, the genealogy of the Japanese proletarian birth control movement casts a still valid question about the complex and interconnected relationships between human reproduction, capitalist economy, and reproductive science.