

The Politics of Survival and Care in Homeless Japan

by

Ji Eun Kim

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Jennifer E. Robertson, Chair
Associate Professor Krisztina E. Fehérváry
Professor Erik A. Mueggler
Professor Markus Nornes
Professor Andrew J. Shryock

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To everyone who committed their lives and deaths to Kotobuki
and my advisor and mentor Jennifer Robertson

Acknowledgements

*Write as if you were dying. At the same time, assume you write for an audience consisting solely of terminal patients. That is, after all, the case. What would you begin writing if you knew you would die soon? What could you say to a dying person that would not enrage by its triviality? (Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life*)*

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On the night before I left Kotobuki in June 2014, Mr. Kondo Noboru at Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union made a toast on my behalf: "Jini moves across the world carrying Kotobuki on her back. We will think that we are Jini, we will take pride that we are Jini, whether Jini is in Korea, America, or wherever Jini goes, we are Jini (*warera ga Jini da*)."

I hope that my dissertation made a humble step in the journey that Mr. Kondo had entrusted me with.

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List of Abbreviations

The Center: Kotobuki-chō General Labor Welfare Center (*Kotobuki-chō Sōgō Rōdō Fukushi Sentā*)

Homeless Law: Special Measures for the Support of Self-Reliance of the Homeless (*Hōmuresu no Jiritsu no Shien nado ni Kansuru Tokubetsu Sochi Hō*)

Jūnichirō: Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union (*Kotobuki Hiyaotoi Rōdōsha Kumiai*)

KCC: Kotobuki Communal Clinic (*Kotobuki Kyōdō Shinryōjo*)

KCCN: Kotobuki Communal Clinic Newsletter (*Kotobuki Kyōdō Shinryōjo Dayori*)

KDC: Kotobuki District Center (*Kotobuki Chiku Sentā*)

Kiraku House: Kotobuki Senior Citizens' Club Kiraku House (*Kotobuki Chiku Kōreisha Fureai Hōmu Kiraku na Ie*)

MHLW: Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (*Kōsei Rōdō-shō*)

UCCJ: United Church of Christ in Japan (*Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan*)

Abstract

This study explores the politics of survival and care in postindustrial Japan. It draws on archival and ethnographic data gathered during eighteen months of fieldwork between 2009 to 2014 in Kotobuki district, once the nation's third largest *yoseba* (day laborers' quarter) in Yokohama City. Postwar Japan has been celebrated for its economic success and social stability; however, such a myth often disguises the exclusion of socioeconomic minorities from the social security system in Japan. This study aims to call attention to the emergent configurations of sociality in postindustrial Japan by tracing the struggles in an underclass neighborhood where predicaments of survival have built up over time.

I begin with tracking the formation of Kotobuki as an urban underclass neighborhood and its transformation after mob killings of the homeless in its vicinity in the early 1980s. Central to this process was the reconstruction of urban underclass men as “the homeless,” i.e., elderly relationless men, whose chances of survival were threatened by their isolation. Framed as a struggle to secure the “right to survival” (*seizonken*) vis-à-vis the state, the activism and support network of the homeless in Kotobuki focused on creating relations that could endure the vagaries of welfare policies, changing compositions of the homeless and their supporters, and the constant threat of unexpected death. While fraternal solidarity has been the main idiom of forming relations in Kotobuki, the struggle for survival called for new idioms of relations to broaden the base of support to a larger

group of citizens including Christian female volunteers, college students, professional caregivers, and medical experts.

This study highlights the temporal structure of daily life (*seikatsu*) underlying social relations and boundaries in Japan by focusing on the incorporation of care relations into the politics of survival. In Kotobuki, a variety of reciprocal exchanges of care as diverse as soup kitchens, AA meetings, and medication regimes became tactics of survival embodying “the rhythm of life (*seikatsu no rizumu*)” and “the will to live” (*ikigai*). Meanwhile, the temporal orientation toward social subversion, which had once dominated the district, was reconfigured into circulatory rhythms of survival through narrative events where the homeless and their supporters became attuned to each other’s horizons. For the Kotobuki homeless today, survival involves their incorporation into the circulation of care as both receivers and givers beyond the boundary of life and death.

This study provides conceptual tools to enrich the study of the state, social exclusion, and poverty. While the scholarship on the political economy of care tends to prioritize the relationship between the state and individual subjects, this study focuses on how individual subjects are made governable through the socioeconomic and political pressure on concrete relations of care and how everyday struggles for survival involve tackling the logic of these relations.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Crossing the Boundary

Yokohama, unlike the centuries-old capital city of Tokyo, is a young city built as an exercise of the modern mind. To Japanese, Yokohama brings to remembrance the modern section of history textbooks, starting with the “Opening of the Port” in 1859 and the designation of areas for European residence and foreign trade from which Western civilization is known to have spread in Japan: from the first rail way, to the first modern water-pipe system, gas street lights, daily news in Japanese, telephones, and reinforced concrete structures, among others. To foreign tourists, Yokohama appears as a must-see spot worthy of coupling with a trip to Tokyo for its dazzling waterfront area of Minato Mirai 21, a short walk from which leads to the bustling scenes of Chinatown. My first visit to Yokohama also followed such a route suggested in a sightseeing guide I acquired in Korea in 2008. A thirty minutes’ train ride from downtown Tokyo carried me to Minato Mirai 21, where I was greeted by a sea breeze. The moving walk through the skyscrapers, the serene ocean view from the waterfront park, tours of nineteenth-century European residences, and dozens of Chinese buns left me with the pleasant memories a typical tour of Yokohama would offer to any tourist. Little did I know at the time that a crosswalk away from Chinatown would have led me to Kotobuki district, whose boundaries have been guarded with vigilance for decades by the authorities and the police.

Encompassed by two intersecting elevated highways, Kotobuki is not easily exposed to the casual passerby, despite its vicinity to the city center and famous tourist sites. The most common way an outsider reaches Kotobuki is from the Japan Railway Ishikawa Station. Instead of walking towards Chinatown from the North Exit, one has to turn to the opposite direction and walk under the elevated highway (Shuto Expressway Kanagawa No.1 Yokohane Route) running parallel to the railway. The first few blocks of the walk from the station reveals nothing more than the usual urban landscape with restaurants, small *kissaten* (coffee houses), convenience stores, and tall *manshon* (literally, mansion, referring to condominiums) buildings. Although a big pachinko parlor grabs the attention of passers-by, it is also a common scene near train stations in Japan. It is when you reach the intersection with the wide crossroads, where you might feel what Japanese refer to as “a sense of incompatibility” (*iwakan*). On the other side of the crossroads, there are no traffic or traffic lights, but only parked cars, bicycles, and some people loitering or sitting in wheelchairs on the street. Suddenly, time seems to grind to a halt.

The temporal illusion is accentuated by a sudden crowdedness. Every block is packed with drab-colored ferroconcrete buildings, while the narrow alleyways expose flocks of people. You notice that most of them are middle-aged or older men. Some are idly chatting with each other, smoking or playing *shōgi* (Japanese chess) together. Others are going about everyday business like eating noodles, reading comic books, fixing bicycles, or simply gazing out into the air. Quite a few have noticeable physical disabilities of one kind or another, some relying on crutches and walking aids, others sitting on wheelchairs and bicycles. You grow uneasy at the stares from every direction as you walk by. Sooner or later, a disgruntled man reeking of alcohol follows you, shouting, “what business do

you have around here, huh?” Broken furniture, abandoned bicycles, televisions, futons, and appliances of all sorts are piled up from corner-to-corner with other garbage. Pigeons busily peck for food on the ground, where fragments of bottles, cans, cigarette butts, plastic bags, dog feces, instant noodle cups, and other litter are scattered. The mixed smells of urine, alcohol, food, and decay fill the air, which echo with the voices of people talking, singing, or shouting.

Created in the 1950s on a land requisitioned from the Allied Occupied Forces to meet the high demand for workers at Yokohama port, Kotobuki has offered home to many day laborers and their families ranging from five thousand to eight thousand at any given time. Ironically, despite the Chinese character representing the district, 寿, which stands for blessings, felicitations, or longevity, Kotobuki has been inhabited by people who were expelled from most places and died years before they reached the nation’s average life expectancy.¹ Sharing the same grid structure with the city center also reclaimed in the nineteenth century, the rectangular-shaped Kotobuki district unfolds over 200 meters (roughly 656 feet) along a road stretching from the north to the east (parallel to the railroad and Shuto Expressway Kanagawa No.1) and contains dozens of blocks over 300 meters (roughly 984 feet) to the southwest from this road. The east end of this road meets

¹ For instance, according to the earliest available district-level statistics of 2000 released by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, the average life expectancy for men in Naka Ward including Kotobuki district was 74.1, shorter than that of Yokohama City 78.5 or the nation-wide 77.7. In 2010, the life expectancy for men in Naka Ward had increased 2.61 years to 76.71, much faster than that of the city, which has shown 1.68 years of increase, or the nation-wide increase of 1.9 years in the same time period. The increase has been attributed to the implementation of the Long-term Care Insurance (*kaigo hoken*) in 2000, which prompted the introduction of helper dispatch centers, meal delivery stores, along with the well-developed civilian support organizations for the elderly in Kotobuki district. <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/seimei/list54-57-02.html>, accessed on July 20, 2015.

at right angles to Nakamura stream, above which runs another elevated highway (Shuto Expressway Kanagawa No.3 Kariba Route). With the stream forming the natural boundary of Kotobuki from the south to the east, and the other three boundaries marked with wide roads, the space of Kotobuki is unmistakably demarcated.

The sensory experiences one gets from a cursory walk through Kotobuki have often served to justify the stigma of the place. Yokohama locals and cab drivers still make a detour around the district. Government officials and the police frown upon hearing news that they are to be transferred to Kotobuki, further frustrating any attempts to improve life in the district. However, when I conjure up the place of Kotobuki in my mind, as many of those familiar with the district would, I try to hold off the flooding of the senses and let the stories and faces surface above. My eighteen months of fieldwork with activists and homeless residents between 2009 and 2014 was a process of learning to navigate the district with a map of Kotobuki centering on where care is given and needed, only then letting the senses emerge with such attentiveness.²

Entering the district, I pass by the queue in front of Kotobuki Communal Clinic, founded and headed by Mr. Tanaka Toshio. Having started his career as a social worker in Kotobuki in 1965, Mr. Tanaka has grown as old as the district. After decades of devoted community organizing, from communal childcare to free medical consultations, Mr. Tanaka decided to acquire an M.D. to spend the last years of his life pushing the last frontier of care in the district. Although there are more clinics now in the vicinity of

² The following is a reconstruction of the encounters and dialogues I had during my long-term fieldwork in 2010-2012. There have been changes in the district since, and some of the scenes I described cannot be found any more. For example, Mr. Tanaka has retired and young Dr. Suzuki took over his position in 2014, and the Center has gone under a series of renovation and is due to be demolished.

Kotobuki than there used to be when Kotobuki Communal Clinic opened in 1996, still many patients prefer to come to see Mr. Tanaka and his crew, finding comfort in the affinity they share. Initially limited to medical services focused on Mr. Tanaka's specialization of psychiatrics along with internal medicine, the clinic has since succeeded in gathering practitioners of orthopedics, psychosomatics, and even acupuncture and moxibustion. So from Tuesdays through Saturdays, the entrance and waiting room of the clinic are always crowded with people waiting for their turn in the morning.

Opposite to the clinic, I see An-chan in front of his inn, rocking his wheelchair back and forth, rolling the wheels with his hands, chatting with a young man. From the uniform, I can tell that the young man is a helper from one of the home-helper stations nearby. Although An-chan has been living in the same inn for almost ten years now, he hasn't befriended other residents in the building. "I just can't see them. I don't know what they're doing in their rooms." Still in his early forties, An-chan is much younger than the average resident of Kotobuki. He likes hanging out with other young people, like the young staffers and backpackers at Yokohama Hostel Village, a block down the road. That's where we met first, when he introduced himself to me as An-chan, *older brother*. An-chan joins me on his way to Yokohama Hostel Village.

We pass by the inns standing on both sides of the road, mostly named with the Chinese suffix, kan (館) or sō (荘). These buildings, mostly six to eight stories, look similar to *manshon* found in residential areas in Japan, yet, a close look reveals the difference. Lacking terraces attached to most *manshon* apartments, these buildings look like concrete blocks covered with tiny windows on all surfaces. Each window represents one room, a home for one person. Self-deprecatingly referred to as *doya* (a word play on

yado, lodging), these single room occupancy buildings gave Kotobuki its nickname, *doya-gai*, a *doya* quarter. Near the entrance of these *doya* buildings are washing machines (“coin laundry”) and shower booths (“coin shower”), along with vending machines selling unknown brands of canned coffee, bottled green tea, fruit flavored beer or one-cup *sake* at somewhere between fifty to one hundred and fifty yen (roughly 0.5 to 1.50 dollars). A handful of *doya* owners reformed one or two floors of their *doya* to run a hostel accommodating young foreign tourists and Japanese businessmen, like Yokohama Hostel Village, while many others chose to renew theirs as barrier-free welfare apartments like An-chan’s inn in the last decade.

Leaving An-chan at the Hostel Village office, I turn right towards Kotobuki Children’s Park. Being one of the two open spaces in Kotobuki, the park offers a gathering place for people to sit, chat, read, eat, and walk their dogs. Under the jungle gym at the entrance, usually blocked with piles of bicycles, are a family of cats, which became communal pets of the district. The park is busy with people preparing seasoned rice porridge for an outdoor soup kitchen held every Friday. The soup kitchen serves somewhere between five hundred to nine hundred bowls of soup every week. I see a man already waiting in line for the soup kitchen. Behind him are a couple of cardboard boxes each reserving a spot in the line to beat the crowd, which grow as big as to form a circle around the whole block surrounding the park by lunch time. As always, Mr. Shinohara is the first to notice me, shouting out “yo!” as he limps toward me on his walking stick. He tells me about the student volunteers he befriended last Friday, showing me pictures from his cell phone, while continuously spitting on my face through the gap of lost teeth as he speaks. Ms. Suda, a volunteer in her fifties, interrupts and nudges Mr. Shinohara, “you

didn't lose money in horse racing again?" "Well, I quit smoking and drinking. That's the only joy of my life now!" Mr. Shinohara and Ms. Suda continue to exchange banter.

At another corner, the voice of Ms. Mimori of Kotobuki District Center giving orders mixes with the constant splish-splashing and chitchatting of volunteers washing and cutting vegetables. I overhear Maikeru, (Michael), who was nicknamed so by young volunteers for his jovial character, and Ms. Kojima chatting with each other, as they peel onions. Ms. Kojima tells Maikeru that she is going on a trip to Odawara, a coastal city located at about 37 miles southwest of Yokohama. "Oh, Odawara? Send my regards to the folks there. I was evacuated to a temple there during the wartime, and they fed me so well!" "Oh, you were so lucky. The place I was sent didn't have any food, so we even scorched tree branches for food!" Both in their seventies with shiny silver hair, Maikeru and Ms. Kojima bond with each other over vivid memories of the wartime, despite the reversal of their positions, with Ms. Kojima living in a villa in the outskirts, and Maikeru in a *doya* in Kotobuki.

Meanwhile, Mr. Kondo and Mr. Yura of Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union are near the large portable gas stoves in the corner sharpening kitchen knives and handling fish and meat with other volunteers. These volunteers include long-term Kotobuki residents and the homeless, who often line up to eat the porridge themselves. Mr. Kondo records them as "laborers" in his journal and soup kitchen report, although most of them have not been able to make a living for a long time. The tasks at the soup kitchen have become much easier after the park was renovated by Sobage Lab, an architecture lab led by Professor Sogabe Masashi at Kanagawa University. However, on one of the jungle gyms hangs a poster of grievances signed by the staffers of Kotobuki Children's Afterschool Care. As

the renovation prioritized the flow of soup kitchen activities, it became harder for children to play soccer freely in the park. Once mounting up to a thousand, children became a minority in the district, and the main purpose of the park is now to host the open-air soup kitchen.

Ms. Makino calls me from a helper station behind the park to join her and Mr. Hanada. “Mr. Hanada, aren’t you glad to see a young girl like Jini rather than an old granny like me? Look at you smiling and all that.” Mr. Hanada greets me and tells me to wait until he comes back. He pushes the button on his electronic wheelchair and rolls by. Ms. Makino tells me that Mr. Hanada, who used to be her client, changed his helper station again because of his temper. I try to imagine Ms. Makino giving a bath to Mr. Hanada. “Punk granny” (*furyō bāba*), as Ms. Makino calls herself, looks skinny and fragile like a winter tree, but her energy is endless. She not only works as a helper, but also volunteers at the Kiraku House (Kotobuki Senior Citizens’ Club) on her days-off and travels all around the world for vacation. Mr. Hanada is now back with his parrot Pipi in a birdcage. Ms. Makino and I exchange some words with Pipi and Mr. Hanada.

A few blocks away, I spot Mr. Arai walking out of Sanagi’s Diner with a take-out lunch-box. Mr. Arai is in his well-ironed deep blue suit and white shirt, neatly shaved as usual. “I save money all the time, you know. I eat 300 yen lunch-boxes at Sanagi, and there are 200 yen lunches at Kiraku House every week. I’m saving money to get a place at the public housing. I’ve applied eight times but never got through. But I’m applying again, and if I get to live in public housing, who knows, my son and wife might come back to me!” Mr. Arai goes into Kiraku House to play *shōgi* with his friends.

As I walk towards Kotobuki General Labor Welfare Center, locally known as “the Center” (*Sentā*), sounds of karaoke boxes from snack bars overflow into the streets blending in with the growls and rumbles of drunken men. I reach the crossroads where the Center, an L-shaped concrete building, opens its gigantic mouth and disgorges staircases onto the street. Kan-chan stands aside the staircases, away from his usual band, anxiously watching them. “I’m worried about my girl, she’s been drinking too much. She was out all night yesterday and still going!” With his hair dyed in orange, Kan-chan looks younger than his actual age of sixties. Although some have warned me not to befriend him for his alleged ties with the *yakuza* gang and drug use, he himself poses as the keeper of the Center plaza, looking after everyone, and cleaning up the mess. Meanwhile, Mr. Kaneoka passes by the staircases, where he used to drink day and night, towards the seven-story Hamakaze homeless shelter across the street. Today he will celebrate his one-year of sobriety at the AA meeting of his Ahiru Group held in Hamakaze. Mr. Kaneoka has been the hope of Kotobuki residents, long-term activists, and volunteers, for showing that one can move up from the Center plaza, which is considered the very bottom of Kotobuki. Everyday, Kotobuki is busy with people going and bringing others along from the *doya*, the street, the Center plaza, to soup kitchens, AA meetings, and sheltered workshops at the outer boundary of Kotobuki, if not out of the district.

Despite decades of change from a day laborers’ district to a “welfare town” (*fukushi no machi*), Kotobuki has continued to serve as a receptacle containing all those excluded from the rest of society. At the time of my fieldwork, they were mostly impoverished, single older men sharing little in common except for the fact that they were disconnected from the previous significant relationships of their lives. Some were former day laborers

who carried on an independent life sleeping on the street until their bodies could no longer handle it, like Mr. Shinohara. Others were alcoholics, the chronically ill or disabled who found themselves homeless after being released from a period of hospitalization, like An-chan. Still others were failed businessman or laid-off salarymen who were left with nothing after being evicted from their homes at an advanced age, like Mr. Arai. This dissertation traces how the experience of destitution and illness in Kotobuki was shaped foremost by extreme social exclusion accentuated in the spatial boundedness of the district, and how people collectively endeavored to survive such a predicament.

In doing so, I attempt to reframe the questions on access to work, housing, and healthcare or on the political economy of welfare, which form the core of the debates by policy makers and social scientists when discussing poverty and homelessness. Discussions on job opportunities or access to health care and housing tend to overlook how activities of production and reproduction rely on particular configurations of relations institutionally and socially sanctioned in a given setting. In Kotobuki, the laments I heard most often was, not the ordeals of living under material deprivation, but the difficulty of carry on living “without relations (*muen*),” or “without any relatives (*miyori no nai*).” For the concerned parties in Kotobuki, questions arose not only on how to secure the rights to survival for the homeless, but also on how to make a home for those who had been estranged from relations by reconnecting them to an inhabitable time and place. The majority of my informants were receiving livelihood protection (*seikatsu hogo*, public assistance), however, their struggle for survival continued in the difficulty of structuring everyday life in the absence of the temporal rhythm and horizon sustained by

normative relations of care. It was also this crisis that long-term activists and sympathizers endeavored to respond to by initiating relational activities that would, in one way or another, add up to creating continual flows of care in the district and beyond.

This is not a story of a utopia. Boundaries were redrawn as much as new relations were formed across them. This dissertation intends to show the dilemma and obstacles people faced in their quest for alternative relations of care, as they crossed and redrew the boundary of the district. First, I start with contextualizing the social exclusion faced by people in Kotobuki as a *yoseba* district.

***Yoseba* as Japan's Underclass**

Yoseba becomes, on the one hand, a “living hell” (*iki jigoku*) fraught with the harsh violence of capitalism. On the other hand, it also becomes an asylum (*ajiiru*) where the wounded keep their bodies close and console each other. (Aoki 2000:36)

When I first started my fieldwork in the summer of 2009, Pastor Watanabe Eishun, a human rights activist in Kotobuki told me that I would be able to learn a lot about Japanese society in the district, as “Kotobuki showcases all the social problems of discrimination in Japan.” Indeed, in the following years, I came to meet people in Kotobuki who had faced discrimination throughout their lives for various reasons –for coming from a certain region or town, for having a foreign descent, for being homeless, for being an orphan, or for having a disability, among others. I also learned to trace Japanese history in the scars left in marginal communities throughout Japan through my connection in Kotobuki. I met day laborers from various parts of Japan in the annual spring struggles and fall meetings held at famous day laborers’ districts. I visited a slaughterhouse in Tokyo where the descendants of the historical outcast(e)s Burakumin

worked. I was introduced to Korean Japanese activists who were involved in implementing multi-cultural policy in the adjacent progressive city of Kawasaki. I slept a night with disability activists in the Kusatsu National Sanitarium in the mountainous Gunma Prefecture where people with Hansen's disease were once incarcerated. And the list goes on.

Although my initial fieldwork plan was to explore the politics of urban redevelopment of Yokohama City, my participation in the Kotobuki Youth Seminar in the summer of 2009 led me to immerse myself in this inner-city area of 0.02 square miles. Like many long-term Kotobuki activists and supporters put it, I felt a certain gravitating force that kept pulling me back to the district. At the same time, I also learned to fathom the resentment, bitterness, and shame felt by those who painfully came to terms with their lives in Kotobuki, as well as those who struggled to escape. How did this small quarter of a city become the hub of homeless activism embracing various members of groups who historically or newly faced discrimination in Japan, while also attracting continuous flows of donations and support? The unique spatial make-up and social organizations of Kotobuki, as well as the sentiments and aspirations associated with its name and place, are inseparable from its designation as a *yoseba* (day laborers' district).

The stratified spatial governance of enclaves such as *yoseba* epitomizes how social boundaries and structures of discrimination were reproduced in postwar Japan beneath its façade as a homogenous and liberal nation-state, as I discuss in further detail in Chapter 2. Japanese social scientists who established *yoseba* studies embraced the term “urban underclass” (*toshi kasō*) to characterize *yoseba*. William Julius Wilson's original conceptualization of “urban underclass” was based on the study of African American

communities in the major cities in the United States (Wilson 1987). By adopting the term underclass, Wilson called into attention the socioeconomic effects of the isolation of impoverished African Americans in inner-city areas observed in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Wilson, the exacerbation of poverty in these areas despite the well-intentioned social programs were attributable to the “concentration effects” caused by the increasing unemployment rate combined with the outmigration of the better-offs, which further isolated those left behind in despair with limited social capital, deteriorated neighborhood infrastructure and resources to face the macroeconomic changes from manufacturing to service industry. Borrowing from Wilson’s observations, Aoki Hideo, a *yoseba* sociologist based in Hiroshima City, noted that similar states of destitution, social exclusion, and spatial boundedness applied to people who occupy *yoseba* districts (Aoki 2006:5).³ Aoki used the term, urban underclass, to refer to both the people and space at the bottom of cities, thus including *yoseba* and specific population groups typically tied to *yoseba*, such as the day laborers, homeless, and foreign workers, most of whom were men living apart from their families (Aoki 2006:3). Similarly, another *yoseba* sociologist Nishizawa Akihiko at Kobe University employed the term “concealed exterior” (*impai sareta gaibu*) to emphasize the exclusion of members of *yoseba* from civil society as well as their vulnerability to capitalist exploitation (Nishizawa 1995). More recently, Nishizawa further went on to characterize *yoseba* as “a jail without bars,” with regard to

³ Aoki Hideo is a founding member and the director of both Hiroshima Buraku Liberation Research Center (established in 1994) and the non-profit academic organization, Institute on Social Theory and Dynamics (previously, Urban Sociology Research Center established in 1990) in Hiroshima City. He has been active as a member of the steering committee of Japan Association for the Study of Yoseba (*Nihon Yoseba Gakkai*) from 1987 to 2004, during which he published prolifically on *yoseba* case studies and theories.

the “exclusion, self-abnegation, and a high death rate” among *yoseba* dwellers (Iwata and Nishizawa 2008:242).⁴

While I find the concept of urban underclass useful in discussing how *yoseba* districts restrict the upward mobility of their inhabitants and intensify their sense of being at the bottom, margin, or even outside, I employ the term with caution. Instead of relying on Wilson’s discussion of “concentration effects,” which runs the risk of reifying the political and daily processes through which social boundaries are created and contested, I focus on the forming and severing of relations among people as they tackle with such boundaries. In doing so, I attempt to analyze how individual subjects are made governable through the socioeconomic and political pressure on their concrete social relations and how their everyday struggle for survival concern the logic of relations. I also extend such an analytical frame to examine the significance of the changes in welfare programs and policies in Japan, which are comparable to the trend described as “the neoliberal shift” or the retreat of the welfare state, as addressed in studies on the homeless and poverty elsewhere (Biehl 2005; Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Cho 2013; Lyon-Callo 2004; Ramos-Zayas 2012; Song 2009; Wacquant 2009; Yang 2015). While Japan’s case share certain trends, such as the increasing reliance on the private and third sectors for welfare services and welfare provision on condition of work and job training, as I address in Chapter 3, the implications of such changes cannot be fathomed without taking into consideration how the postwar Japanese welfare state has mobilized

⁴ In Tom Gill’s ethnography of Kotobuki in the early 1990s, we can also find a similar analogy drawn by an erudite day laborer Nishikawa Kimitsu, who after watching the film, *Schindler’s List*, could never stop talking how “the *yoseba* was itself a prison camp, with the added irony that its inmates were blissfully unaware of the fact” (Gill 2001:170).

normative relations of care, and how the changes encourage or force members of the underclass in and out of such relations.

Yoseba today builds on decades of power struggles waged by various factions of activists and self-governing associations against local authorities' *yoseba* policy targeting underclass single men (Iwata and Nishizawa 2008:25-6), who were considered as a potential threat to public security in need of surveillance and, at the same time, as failed breadwinners in need of punishment and rehabilitation. The government's suppressive approach to *yoseba* like Kotobuki in the postwar growth period has created numerous exceptional conditions that only those within *yoseba* could understand and tactfully deal with through unofficial routes. Struggles and confrontations in one *yoseba* offered referential points to other *yoseba* that tactics of control, resistance, and negotiation traveled across *yoseba*, from the implementation of countermeasures and deployment of riot squads by the government, to the counter-active sit-ins, denunciations (*kyūdan*), and petitions.⁵ The ambivalence of *yoseba* as a protective "asylum," as much as a punitive prison, as summarized by Aoki above, comes from such extreme conditions of social exclusion, which gave rise to counterhegemonic alliances.

The case of Kotobuki exemplifies the changing terrain of the politics of survival in *yoseba*, as urban underclass elderly men were reconstructed primarily as "the homeless," i.e., elderly relationless men, whose chances of survival were threatened by their isolation. In particular, the lynching of the homeless in the 1980s by teenagers in its vicinity

⁵ The tactics of *yoseba* activists were succeeded from earlier successful protests, such as the sit-in protest by fishers who were victimized by the methylmercury poisoning from the industrial waste of Chisso company in Minamata in 1959 (Almeida and Stearns 1998:43) and the denunciation sessions by the historical outcast organization, the Buraku Liberation League in 1974 (Pharr 1992:127-135).

prompted people in Kotobuki to pursue a different logic of relations than before to fight against such hostility. While fraternal solidarity has been the main idiom of forming relations in Kotobuki, the incident motivated activists and local residents to broaden their base of support to a larger group of citizens including Christian female volunteers, college students, professional caregivers, and medical experts, as I discuss in the chapters to come. Framed as a struggle to secure the “right to survival” (*seizonken*) vis-à-vis the state, the homeless activism and support networks in everyday setting centered on creating relations that could endure the vagaries of welfare programs and policies, the changing compositions of the homeless and their supporters, and the constant threat of unexpected death. I suggest that the incorporation of care relations into the politics of survival is best understood in the context of the opposition between principles of *en* and *muen* as it unfolded in modern Japanese history.

The Logic of Relation (*En*) and Relationless (*Muen*) in Japan

En, commonly used to indicate relations, relatedness, bonds, or connections, derives from the Buddhist doctrine of codependent origination (*engi*) or karmic connection (*innen*) (Rowe 2011:45-6; Lock 2001:220). While its Buddhist etymology connotes that everything in the universe is connected by weaves of causality, today *en* is most often used as a suffix combined with more concrete substances like blood (*ketsu-en*, relations of shared blood), land (*chi-en*, relations of shared place), and company (*sha-en*, relations of shared affiliation), to indicate affiliations bounded by respective moral orientations and interests. *Mu-en*, on the other hand, literally means the lack of *en*, the state of being relationless, disconnected, and unbound. According to Japanese historian Amino

Yoshihiko, *muen* lost its positive Buddhist connotation of being free from secular power and only retained its negative implication of being excluded, marginalized, and abandoned as the state power consolidated towards the end of medieval period in Japan (Amino 1996:258).

The oppositional logic of *en* and *muen* has been crucial in the foundation of modern statecraft in Japan. The idea of individuals maintaining each of these obligatory and reciprocal circles of relations has provided a major source of inspiration among Japanese lawmakers, administrators, and developers who were looking to pursue modernization and capitalism without the repercussions of what they perceived to be “Western ailments” (Garon 1998:49). Familial relations in particular, as defined by household units, constituted the core of citizenship as it was restructured during the Meiji Restoration. Following the implementation of Household Registration (*koseki*) Law in 1871, the Meiji New Civil Code of 1898 established the *ie* (extended patriarchal household) system as a legal entity to which every subject must belong under the authority of its head (Plath 1964:308).⁶ On the basis of Household Registration Law and the Civil Code, family members and relatives were legally obligated to support their poor and disabled members, a duty that could be enforced by administrators with the information meticulously recorded in *koseki* (Tatara 1975:87). Meanwhile, Japanese citizens were bound to *ie* even after their death, as ancestral veneration and burial practices were standardized in

⁶ The extent to which this institution derives from “tradition” or is invented as a modern construction has been debated by numerous scholars (Befu 1980). While some trace *ie* back even to the eleventh century (Yamamura and Murakami 1984), it is more widely accepted that the modern model was first established in the Meiji Civil Code, which spread the *ie* system of the minority elite class to the whole population and standardized the diverse practices around the nation (Gluck 1985:186-188).

stipulations regarding ancestral property (Rowe 2011:17-43).⁷ Particular emphasis was given to the maintenance of family gravesites as the right and duty of citizens in their succession of *ie* (Mori 2000: 219). As such, the *ie* system was the cornerstone of the Meiji reformers' vision of a vertically integrated state under the emperor who symbolized the national body (*kokutai*) (Gluck 1985:187).

Although the word *ie* system was removed from the clause in the postwar civil code in 1951, the institutional structure remains to be significant, nonetheless, in the administration of *koseki* system and in the inheritance law. Listing the registered residence, names, dates of birth, death, marriage, and adoption of family members of a household unit defined as a married couple and their children, *koseki* requires individuals to be identified foremost as a member of a household by the state⁸. For the underclass, such identification is directly connected to the matter of their survival due to the kinship care duty stipulated in the Livelihood Protection (*seikatsu hogo*, public assistance) Law. As Article 4 of the Law mandates that the assistance to be supplementary to the support by kinship⁹, including parents, children, siblings, and relatives living together, welfare offices often require applicants to prove that their relatives were unable or unwilling to support. Such a family-based social security has caused disproportionate suffering of the

⁷ The association of Buddhism with mortuary rituals appeared in the eighteenth century and was strengthened with the parishioner system (*danka seido*) that bind obligatory clientele relationships between families and temples over generations, especially with family-centered gravesites which were maintained by parishioner fees (Rowe 2011).

⁸ The easy accessibility of the information in *koseki* has also exacerbated discrimination against children born out of wedlock, single-parent households, and members of minority groups such as *Burakumin* or *zainichi* Koreans (residential Koreans, who are mostly descendants of Koreans who migrated to Japan during the colonial period) in employment and marriage. Although access to *koseki* has been restricted in 1976, copies of *koseki* are still accessible to lawyers, police, and government officials (Chapman 2011) and obtainable through unofficial routes.

⁹ <http://law.e-gov.go.jp/htmldata/S25/S25HO144.html> accessed on July 22, 2015.

marginalized whose strategies of survival often involved violent severance of relations, as was the case for many in Kotobuki.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the Civil Code, regarding the inheritance of ritual possessions (*saishi zaisan*), stipulates that the successor should be designated “according to custom” (Rowe 2011:25), which reinforces the first-born son’s duty to take care of the family grave and ancestral remains. In other words, the familial bond enacted in kinship care duty during the lifetime is eternalized through the extensive and continual attention required of the dead. This adds another dimension to the social exclusion of the homeless, for the prospect of lacking a home after death constituted one of the main concerns of the homeless and their supporters, as I detail in Chapter 6.

Families along with communities, which purported to be the communal corps (*kyōdōtai*) of mutual aid and surveillance among neighbors, and firms, which protected their employees and their families through lifetime employment and medical and pension insurances, constituted the three main pillars of the social security system in postwar Japan, keeping its welfare expenditure low for decades (Garon 1998: 45, 57).¹¹ Such a boundary between those protected by socially sanctioned relations of care and those disconnected from them has been further demarcated by the denial of poverty in Japan.

¹⁰ In a similar vein, sociologist Matthew D. Marr at Florida International University, comparing homelessness in Tokyo and Los Angeles, has pointed out the stronger tendency among Japanese homeless to cut ties from their families, which he attributes to differences in welfare systems and familial norms (Marr 2012:987).

¹¹ According to the data collected by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on its 34 member countries, public social spending in Japan in 1960 was 3.48 % of its GDP, which was half of 6.97% of the US, and much lower than the OECD average of 8.1 8% at the time. Japan’s public social spending has steadily increased since then, yet its rate of increase was lower than other members until the mid-1990s. After exceeding the US’s spending in 1997, and the OECD average in 2009, Japan’s public social spending in 2011 reached 23.1% of its GDP (OECD 2014a and 2014b).

Invisible Poverty in Japan

I have emphasized so far that one of the most crucial task in solving the poverty problem is to “make it visible.” Since it is not visible, the problem itself tends to be regarded as simply “not being there.” If we only make it visible, then actions will be taken because it becomes obvious to everyone that the task cannot be neglected. Making it visible = visualization, is the first step towards the solution of the poverty problem. In this sense, *Haken-mura* (Village of Temporary Workers) was appraised as having some success in such a task.... Obviously, those who gathered at the Village have existed before. They have existed dispersedly before they achieved collectivity in such a form. It is a matter of whether they are dispersed or concentrated, so to say. Yet, the only fact of being dispersed made these lives not to be seen. They could not even be imagined. (Yuasa 2008:5)

When I introduced myself as a researcher interested in the issue of urban poverty to a local skewer (*kushi-yaki*) bar owner near Kotobuki District in Yokohama, I was faced with an instant objection: “If you’re interested in poverty, you chose the wrong site. Those in Kotobuki are not poor. Do you know how much money they get from welfare? See how many folks are wasting it drinking at karaoke bars in broad daylight, using up all our tax money!”¹² This middle-aged man had been managing that modest skewer bar for years after he took it over from his mother. Although the bar is located just across the Nakamura stream, about five-minutes’ walk from Kotobuki, he said that he does not allow people from Kotobuki to enter his bar, because they are likely to cause trouble with other customers.

The bar owner’s condemnation is much more about the balance sheet of Japan’s public finances. It is based on a particular way of viewing poverty (*hinkon*), shared by the majority of Japanese society that had deterred the governmental intervention in resolving poverty: if one tries hard enough, he cannot possibly stay poor in Japan, and

¹² This conversation took place at a small *kushi-yaki* bar in Nakamurachō, Naka Ward, on March 3, 2011.

since poverty is not real if it is self-inflicted, nobody in Japan is really poor or worth reaching out to (Shōji et al. 1997: 67-69). A recent survey conducted by economist Aoki Osamu at Hokkaido University in 2004-5 with 2,558 participants of various backgrounds from Tokyo and Hokkaido showed that the respondents tended to associate poverty with either Japan's immediate postwar period or the developing or war-torn countries abroad, thus, inapplicable to Japan's homeless population or welfare recipients today (Aoki 2007).

Such a denial of poverty connects to the deep-rooted prejudice against any act of seeking for welfare assistance, as illegitimate, suspicious, and even criminal in Japan. As shown in the bar owner's reaction above, most taxpaying citizens hold contempt for recipients of welfare assistance and are prone to question the integrity of the recipients. The reception areas in welfare offices are guarded with vigilance in Japan, as if application is itself a criminal activity. This has been the case especially for livelihood protection, which is comprehensive public assistance including monthly living allowances, housing allowances, and medical assistance, among others. Although the Livelihood Protection Law states its purpose to assist households secure a minimum standard of living, welfare offices have maximized their effort in discouraging people from applying. Seminal in publicizing the actual practices at welfare offices across the nation was a report announced by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA) in 2006 at their annual Human Rights Advocacy Meeting. Based on the phone calls the Federation received through a hotline installed for free consultations regarding livelihood protection, the JFBA confirmed that welfare offices often employed a turn-away-at-the-door strategy against welfare applicants, which

they phrased as the shoreline operation (*mizugiwa sakusen*).¹³ Subsequent investigations and surveys by human rights activists and lawyers revealed a fuller account of the various tactics of the shoreline operation locally devised by welfare offices across the nation since the 1980s.



Figure 1. "What is the Shoreline Operation?"

A four-cut cartoon is included in *The Guide on Applying for Livelihood Protection from the Street*, made by a group of lawyers and judicial scriveners. Subsequent scenes explain how to deal with the shoreline operation in each situation.

¹³ The shoreline operation originally refers to a military strategy of waiting at the shoreline to preemptively destroy the enemy as they land. Japan Federation of Bar Associations strategically used this phrase to identify various informal or directed practices adopted by welfare offices to turn away welfare applicants. As it is illegal to reject applications of eligible individuals once they are submitted, welfare offices aim at discouraging people from completing the application process.

Aruto (The person with a baseball cap): The person at the reception desk looks scary. I think she'll turn me away listing many reasons.

Koguma (The bear): Like what?

Staff: Homeless people cannot apply for livelihood protection!

Aruto: Really? I heard that it's possible...

Staff: People without an address cannot apply. Please go back.

Aruto: I heard that it's okay without an address...

Staff (holding a crystal ball written "application impossible"): See, this crystal ball is saying that you can't.

Aruto: What, you decide by fortune-telling? (Hōmuresu Sōgō Sōdan Netto Wāku 2010:30)

These tactics included insulting applicants, fabricating excuses to deny handing over application forms, handing out transportation tickets to encourage applicants to move to a different district, teaming up with the local police to file complaints or damage reports against applicants, and threatening the applicants who protest against the rejection of application. Following the infamous Kitakyushu City case, where the draconian measures at welfare offices led a fifty-two-year-old man to die from hunger after being forced out of livelihood protection in 2007, JFBA has been actively working with victims of the shoreline operation to bring law suits against the municipalities where the victims' applications were repeatedly rejected.¹⁴

The outrage of the bar owner and his contempt for the Kotobuki district reflects such contestations over poverty emerged in Japan during the time of my fieldwork between 2009 and 2014. Along with the legal discussions brought about by JFBA, the activities of the human rights advocates, such as Yuasa Makoto whose quote appears above, were crucial in shifting policies and perspectives on poverty at the national

¹⁴ JFBA has continued to open hotlines intermittently for free counseling since 2006 and made suggestions of revisions to the livelihood protection law centering on illegalizing the shoreline operation in 2008 (Nihon Bengoshi Rengōkai 2008). However, the revised law promulgated by the government in 2013 stipulated even more rigorous preparation of documents to prove the applicant's income and assets and mandated welfare offices to contact the applicant's relatives who share the kinship care duty. The chair of JFBA announced a letter of protest against the revisions, condemning them for legalizing the shoreline operation in effect. <http://www.nichibenren.or.jp/activity/document/statement/year/2013/130517.html>, accessed on July 10, 2015.

stage. In response to the increasing layoffs of temporary workers following the financial crisis in 2008, Yuasa's non-profit organization Moyai and other human rights and labor activists set up an emergency booth called the Village of Temporary Workers at Hibiya Park in Tokyo. Its purpose was to support the unemployed during the national holidays from December 31, 2008 to January 5, 2009, when the welfare offices were closed. The Village gathered 1,692 volunteers, raised more than twenty-three million yen (roughly 0.23 million dollars), and assisted 240 people to receive livelihood protection. The scene of hundreds of irregular workers lining up for soup at the very heart of Tokyo, between the Imperial Palace, the Diet building, and the ministry offices, drew attention to the severity of the conditions of the impoverished in Japan. Yuasa since then was appointed to work for the Cabinet Office from 2009 to 2012, during which he suggested and initiated various social security programs, such as the Personal Support Service, a one-stop livelihood consultation service modeled after Moyai.

As Yuasa notes in his quote, his success was attributable to the way in which the Village of Temporary Workers made poverty visible to the public. The long invisibility of poverty, in this sense, was due to the fact that these scenes were contained in *yoseba* districts. This dissertation aims to trace Kotobuki's history in people's endeavor to keep the whole district a protective space against the denial of poverty, functioning like the Village all year long.

The Problems with Terminology: “The Homeless”

The contestations over the reality of poverty in Japan show how the application of terms, such as “the homeless,” needs to be approached with caution. This dissertation employs the term “the homeless” to examine the sets of assumptions, actions, and knowledge at work, when this label is applied and utilized in Japan. When I use the term to refer to a group of people, it is to designate those subject to particular administrative procedures or support networks that compel them to negotiate for resources, defend themselves against accusations, and locate themselves within the institutional and discursive fabric as “the homeless.”

In Japanese, the pejorative expressions, *furōsha* (vagrant), *pūtarō* (literally, wind boy, a derogatory term for rough sleepers), and *rumpen* (lumpenproletariat) had been used to refer to people leading a wandering life. These words were associated with stereotypes of being lazy, dirty, causing annoyances to passers-by or disturbances to the social order. In *yoseba* districts, where sleeping outdoors was part of the seasonal fluctuations of day laborers’ life, the emic term, *aokan* (usually written in the Japanese syllabary Katakana, *aokan* is known to derive from the Chinese characters, 青 *ao* meaning blue denoting the sky and 姦 *kan* meaning sex, compositely meaning “outdoor sex”) was used in a verb form, *aokan-suru*, meaning “to sleep outdoors.” An English loanword, *hōmuresu* had only started to appear in mass media to refer to the inner-city problems of Euro-American cities like New York or London, and it was not used to describe the domestic situation until the mid 1990s (Ezawa 2002: 281; Nakane 1999:79-81).¹⁵ For example, in one of the

¹⁵ “The homeless” was not widely used in the US before the 1980s either, and the more common terms were “vagrant,” “hobo,” “bum,” “tramp,” “gandy dancer,” “knight of the road,” and “precariously housed” (Toro 2007:471; Hopper 1990:13).

major newspaper media, *Asahi Shinbun*, the first mention of “the homeless” (*hōmuresu*) appeared in 1985 on a featured article about Los Angeles, after which the term was applied to describe urban crises in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union/Russia. Only in 1989 was it used to discuss a domestic situation in the mention of “the homeless elderly living in rooms for 1200 yen to 1400 yen a night in temporary lodgings in Yokohama”¹⁶ and in a 1990 article about the homeless in Tokyo Ueno Station.¹⁷ Yet, the term was still reserved for featured articles abroad until 1992-3, when the growing homeless population in major Japanese cities started to garner attention as a national issue.¹⁸

In response to the sudden increase of the homeless, various terms were coined by different municipalities in the 1990s, such as *jūsho futeisha* (people of no fixed address, Nagoya City), *nojuku seikatsusha* (people living in the open-air, City and Prefectural governments of Osaka), *rojō seikatsusha* (people living on the street, Tokyo Metropolitan Government) (Aoki 2006:108-113), and *okugai seikatsusha* (people living outdoors,

¹⁶ “‘*Taku*’ *Kaita Zaitaku Fukushi, Nihon Jūtaku Kaigi no Jūtaku Hakusho, Ichibangase Kyōju ni Kiku*” (Home Welfare without a ‘Home’: Professor Ichibangase Discusses the White Paper on Housing by Japan Housing Council), *Asahi Shinbun*, Morning. November 16, 1989:17.

¹⁷ “*Yuki Oru Yoru, Owareru Hōmuresu, Tokyo JR Ueno-eki*” (The Homeless Expelled on a Snowy Night: Tokyo/JR Ueno Station), *Asahi Shinbun*, Morning. February 2, 1990:29. According to a word frequency search of Asahi’s database, the frequency of “the homeless” first surpasses that of “vagrants (*furōsha*)” in 1989 and takes over by the mid-1990s (<http://kotobakai.seesaa.net/article/8238241.html>, accessed on July 14, 2015).

¹⁸ There were no nation-wide official surveys on homelessness taken by the government until 1999 (see Chapter 2), yet the increase in the 1990s was captured in the unofficial counts taken locally by the homeless advocacy groups and journalists. For example, in Japan Railway Shinjuku Station in Tokyo, where the homeless were known to have first appeared in 1992, around 450~700 people slept daily from 1996 to 1997 according to Shinjuku Coalition, an advocacy group formed in response to the municipality’s expulsion schemes against the homeless in the station (Shinjuku Renraku Kai 1996:16; 1997a:13; 1997b:4).

Yokohama City). Meanwhile, activists preferred terms such as *nojuku rōdōsha* (open-air dwelling day laborers) or *nojukusha* (open-air dweller) (Aoki 1999:162; Aoki 2006:112).

However, when the central government implemented the first comprehensive law, Special Measures for the Support of Self-Reliance of the Homeless (Homeless Law) to address the issue in 2002 (Chapter 3), it was the loanword *hōmuresu* that was chosen over other terms. The usage of *hōmuresu* instead of *nojuku rōdōsha*, or other Japanese expressions, implied the pursuit of political neutrality and global currency, which in this case would mean engagement with the international standard of human rights, rather than being drawn into the local political confrontation between the day laborers' union and the municipal administration. The Homeless Law defines the *hōmuresu* as people living outdoors, limited to what is considered as “primary homelessness” in the statistics of the United Nations.¹⁹ As Japanese homeless activists have pointed out, such a narrow definition deliberately excludes a larger category of people living in precarious housing situations, such as those sleeping at Internet cafés, construction camps, temporary lodgings, or at restaurants or stores with live-in arrangements. Some scholars refer to them as “the new poor” (*shin-hinkon-sō*) to be distinguished from the traditional homeless resulting from rural to urban migration, who typically occupied *yoseba* districts (Kasai 1995:11; Aoki 2006:74; See also Ezawa 2002 for criticism on the “newness” of the “new homeless”).

¹⁹ The United Nations Statistics Division defines secondary homelessness to include “people with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation (including dwellings, shelters or other living quarters)” and “persons usually resident in long-term (and so called “transitional” shelters or similar arrangements for the homeless” (United Nations 2008:101). The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development includes sheltered and unsheltered homeless in the statistics, whereas the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Eurostat also include a broader category of secondary homelessness.

Since the *yoseba* districts like Kotobuki have developed advocacy networks for the homeless day laborers since the 1980s, and the Homeless Law propelled municipalities to build shelters for the narrowly defined homeless in these districts, this dissertation focuses on a specific population group of middle-aged or elderly single men who are more likely to be on the street and *yoseba* districts. Young dispatched workers who sleep in Internet-café or single mothers at shelters for mothers and children (*boshiryō*) are not discussed in this dissertation, as they occupy different urban loci and pertain to discrete sets of policies and routes of support. For those who found shelter in *doya* (a pejorative term for Single Room Occupancies), apartments, or the homeless shelter in Kotobuki, I generally use the terms, *Kotobuki residents* or *welfare recipients*, as they did not regard themselves as homeless. However, some people also moved in and out of the welfare system alternating between street-dwelling and Kotobuki residence. Homeless policies and support activities were generally designed in such a way as to take such alternatives into account. In these cases, I adopt the term “the homeless” to imply all those who are potentially relevant to the given activity or policy. The choice of term is not to reinforce the stereotype or essentialize the category, but to capture its power as a signifier that moves people, instigates actions, and induces policies. Regardless of the particular term preferred by different parties, it was such categorization of people who slept rough as a distinctive group facing discrimination (*hisabetsu shūdan*), or as a problem group in need of special measures that transformed the urban underclass like that of Kotobuki into members of a homeless enclave.

Fieldwork (2009-2014): My Exploration with Mr. Nara

This dissertation is built on my ethnographic and archival research conducted in Kotobuki for an eighteenth-month period between 2009 and 2014 (May-August 2009, October 2010- January 2012, May-June 2012, May-June 2014). When I started my long-term fieldwork in 2010, I met a new Kotobuki resident in his late fifties, Mr. Nara Mitsuo, originally from the northernmost prefecture of the main island of Japan, Aomori. Mr. Nara had entered Kotobuki one year earlier upon receiving welfare assistance from the Naka Ward Office, after sleeping rough for several months. He kept a low profile for a year to hide from the loan sharks, until he finally filed for personal bankruptcy with the help of the judicial scrivener (*shihō shoshi*) Mr. Watanabe. So when I started to expand my activities in Kotobuki, Mr. Nara was also beginning to explore the possibilities of his life in Kotobuki. As newcomers, we both looked for activities and social circles to take part in by getting involved in soup kitchens, homeless nightly visits, bazaars, free film screenings, and church activities, among others.

As Mr. Nara and I crossed paths in many instances, we came to develop a mutually helping relationship of introducing each other to new activities and people when we had a chance. One day, I asked Mr. Nara whether I could interview the manager of his *doya*. Mr. Nara brought me to the reception booth of his *doya* to introduce me to his *doya* manager. The manager was very friendly and invited the both of us to his office behind the booth. It was then that Mr. Nara learned that collecting data was part of my activities. Later on, I learned that Mr. Nara had added another item to his repertoire of activities, when he told me how he received his monthly livelihood assistance. “Most people get their welfare allowances by direct deposit, but I prefer to visit the office to get mine. That

way, I can see the faces of people, of those who get money, those who pass over the money. I'm collecting data, just like you, Kimu-san (the Japanese reading of my last name, Kim).”

Mr. Nara's and my parallel exploration of Kotobuki shows how Kotobuki was the site of fieldwork, not only for researchers, policy makers, experts, and supporters, but also for those who found shelter in the district. It was a place under constant fluctuation, with changes in policy, political economy, and alternative associations and organizations, which required constant learning through participation, observation, repetition, imitation, and mimicry. The homeless and welfare recipients with various backgrounds had to learn who their neighbors were, which social circles they could join, what conduct and manners were expected in different settings, and where they could fit in doing what they felt competent enough to do. Among the range of activities, the most approachable were those supporting the homeless, as they were free, regular, and always open to new recruits.

In this sense, my exploration of Kotobuki mitigated my outsider status, positioning me as a fellow participant observer of the vibrantly expanding homeless support network in Kotobuki. Many organizations started in the past three decades, such as Kotobuki District Center, the non-profit organization Sanagitachi, Kotobuki Creative Action, and the various disability workshops, hosted half-day to month-long events, where anyone could learn about the district, the organization, and activities. Students, social workers, Christians, artists, architects, medical practitioners, and volunteers attended these events variously called training (*jisshū*), seminar (*zemi*), training camp (*gasshuku*), or stay-over forum (*otamri fōramu*). Participants of these activities in Kotobuki would also find

themselves recruited to the task of reporting and archiving the activities. During my fieldwork, I was asked to write various newsletter articles and reports.²⁰ As such, doing fieldwork in Kotobuki required one's participation in the making of the history, as reporting and archiving constituted an indispensable part of the homeless support network (Chapters 4 and 5).²¹ In short, this dissertation is based on my fieldwork of how people did fieldwork and recruited more fieldworkers along the way in sustaining the homeless support network.

Although fieldwork itself was the given mode of inhabiting the district, being a female Korean researcher put me in a peculiar position in Kotobuki. Due to Japan's colonization of Korea in the first half of twentieth century (1910-1945), Koreans had a dominant presence in Japan's underclass neighborhoods along with other socioeconomic and ethnic minorities. In Kotobuki, in particular, the owners of *doya* were mostly *zainichi* Koreans (Chapter 2),²² while bars and retail stores on the first floors of *doya* were run mostly by migrant workers from the Jeju Island of South Korea.²³ As a young female

²⁰ My reports appeared in the newsletters of Kotobuki District Center (2010a, 2010b, 2012), Kotobuki Laborers' Welfare Association (2012), and in the annual reports of Kotobuki Soup Kitchen Group (2011), and Kotobuki Creative Action (2012). Additionally, I participated in the editorial committee for the Kotobuki Soup Kitchen Group in 2011.

²¹ Such an endeavor was crystallized in Kotobuki Archive (*Kotobuki Shiryōshitsu*), which was founded and maintained by Kotobuki Medical Team, on the second floor of Kotobuki Communal Clinic.

²² The descendants of Koreans who moved to Japan during the colonial period are distinguished from newcomer Koreans who migrated to Japan in the postwar period.

²³ The majority of Korean migrants who worked in Kotobuki were engaged in a circuitous chain migration between their hometowns in Jeju Island and Kotobuki through kin and neighborhood networks (Koh 2001; Lee 2010:18-21). To them, Kotobuki was a rather disgraceful place, where they stayed temporarily until they earned enough to go back to Korea. When I once approached a female clerk at a Korean grocery store in Kotobuki in November 2010, she asked me "what are you doing in this beggars' town (*geoji dongne*)?" She told me that she worked there only because the pay was good.

Korean from Seoul, I was often mistaken for a migrant worker looking for a job in these bars and stores²⁴ or was avoided for the fear and shame that I might expose to other Koreans outside their hidden career in Kotobuki.²⁵ Meanwhile, Japanese leftist activists welcomed me with a sense of redemption for Japan's imperial past, and often characterized their relationship to me as a form of reconciliation between Korea and Japan.

On the other hand, to Kotobuki residents, what marked me was my gender/sex more than my ethnicity and nationality. The fact that a female researcher could conduct fieldwork, could walk around and talk with people, and find a place to stay in the district, was itself indicative of the expansion of the homeless support network in Kotobuki. Except for a few women who were born in the district, had families or partners in the district, or worked at bars and stores during the day, Kotobuki had been a hostile place for women from outside at least since the mid 1970s. After *doya* became heavily male dominated, as families were offered apartments in public housing in the mid-1970s, as I

When I went back to the store, I found out that she had gone back to Jeju Island for her wedding and marriage.

²⁴ This was the case even when I told that I was a graduate student and researcher, as most Korean young females who worked in the entertainment business in Japan did so in disguise. When I told a Korean woman I met at a church in the neighboring Fukutomi-chō in July 2009 that I was a student staying at Kotobuki, she told me “don't worry sis, I started off in Kotobuki too” and explained that she worked her way out as a hostess to get an apartment out of Kotobuki.

²⁵ However, I have also noticed that Kotobuki's transformation into a welfare-friendly town was increasingly inculcating a sense of pride among Korean entrepreneurs in Kotobuki. A *zainichi* Korean *doya* owner showed me the “barrier-free” *doya* on May 25, 2012 as an evidence of how advanced Kotobuki was in welfare services thanks to the hard work of Koreans who built up Kotobuki against the discrimination they faced in Japan. A Korean bar owner told me in May 11, 2014 of her plans to open a Korean culture center in Kotobuki, tapping again the idea of making Kotobuki a Korea town, a plan that was long frustrated due to the political divide between Koreans who sympathized with either North or South Korea.

show in Chapter 2, *doya* managers typically turned away unattached female customers, because she could become “a cause of neighborhood fights and troubles.” When Ms. Mimori Hisako started to build up Kotobuki District Center in 1989, she had to work through the hostility, suspicion, and contempt Kotobuki men held against Christian volunteers, who were largely housewives. The Public Assistance Department of the Naka Ward Welfare Office hired its first female caseworkers in 1994 (Sudō 2004:2-3), and even then, they were required to be accompanied by male caseworkers when they visited their clients in the district.

However, the growth of the homeless support network in Kotobuki during the 1990s and 2000s, led to an increase in the number of female supporters, caseworkers, helpers, and welfare recipients in the district.²⁶ My fieldwork in Kotobuki is indebted to the relations of trust built over years between female supporters and Kotobuki men in their mutual making of Kotobuki as a community of care. While ethnographies on *yoseba* districts by male researchers vividly depict the typically masculine world of *yoseba* men in sites of drinking, gambling, and day laboring work (Fowler 1996; Gill 2001; Rey 1992 and 2007), the ease with which Kotobuki men opened up to me in sharing their frustrations reflects the changing subjectivity of underclass men in accordance with the spread of homeless activism. My research then, is less an excavation of an underground world, but more a participation in the exchanges of care. The stories and lives people shared with me should be seen as their gifts back to the circulation of care in the district

²⁶ Increasingly more *doya* started accepting women tenants, with women-only floors in 2010, yet these *doya* were located at the boundary of Kotobuki, and still many *doya* at the heart of the district were exclusive to male customers only.

(Chapters 4 and 5). My dissertation reveals the contours of what people in Kotobuki allowed me to navigate.

Overview of Chapters

The rest of the dissertation discusses the historical processes that led to the emergence of homeless activism in Kotobuki and the mundane processes through which the homeless and their supporters maintained the support network. Chapter 2 traces the history of Kotobuki, from the land reclamation project in the late nineteenth century to *yoseba* countermeasures in the postwar period. Chapter 3 examines how a *yoseba* like Kotobuki became the hub of homeless support networks, where the homeless were uniquely protected. In particular, I focus on the local responses to the 1983 Yokohama Incident, which gave prominence to “the homeless” as a distinctive category of people, whose right to survival was threatened. The subsequent expansion of the civilian homeless support networks in Kotobuki thwarted the imperative of the “self-reliance” of the homeless implied in the national Homeless Law implemented in 2002. Chapters 4 and 5 explore how making a “healing place” (*iyashi no ba*) for the homeless involved developing practices through which the homeless could embody the temporal rhythm and orientation of care. Chapter 4 discusses the various pathologies of time sensed by the homeless and supporters, and how practices as diverse as volunteering in soup kitchens, AA meetings, and medication regimes became therapies embodying “the rhythm of life (*seikatsu no rizumu*).” Chapter 5 discusses how the self-narratives of the homeless were incorporated into daily activities and therapies in order to foster “the will to live” (*ikigai*). Chapter 6 addresses how death provided idioms and relations of care in Kotobuki based

on shared fear of facing an isolated death (*kodokushi*) and becoming a lonely, wandering spirit (*muen botoke*). The attention and care given to mortuary rituals in Kotobuki reveal how survival ultimately meant being re-incorporated into the circulation of care as both receivers and givers beyond the boundary of life and death for Kotobuki men.

In the final analysis, I propose that the relations of care formed around the conception of *muen* in Kotobuki prefigure alternative configurations of sociality which are sought after in postindustrial Japan as it tackles with a low birth rate, an aging majority, and economic stagnation.

CHAPTER 2

The Town as a Field Site

Containing the Underclass

Comparing Japan's *yoseba* with American skid rows, anthropologist Tom Gill noted that Japanese authorities have employed a "containment policy" as opposed to the "dispersal policy" of their American counterparts (Gill 2001:185). According to Gill, the American approach is based on "a *cancerous growth* metaphor, seeking to *break up* the skid row and disperse its inhabitants, seeing the threat to society lessened when spread more thinly," whereas, the Japanese approach is based on "a *germ infection* metaphor, seeking to seal up the source of the potential social infection by *concentrating* or *containing* supposedly deviant elements inside the *yoseba*" (ibid, emphasis original). The degree to which a given *yoseba* is bounded or dispersed varies according to the local history of urban development and residential organization: For example, *yoseba* in Tokyo and Nagoya are dispersed, and small-scale *yoseba* exist besides San'ya district and Sasajima district respectively, whereas Yokohama and Osaka kept *yoseba* contained in one place, in Kotobuki district and Kamagasaki district, respectively. Nonetheless, all the places that functioned as *yoseba* in postwar Japan maintained their distinctive characteristics as underclass districts rather than going through demolition or clearance as many skidrows did. The repeating and changing patterns in the governance of *yoseba* and their constituents offer a good insight into how social and public policy in Japan have reinforced spatial boundaries in demarcating target populations. This chapter traces how

yoseba was historically constructed as typical urban underclass, and then discusses the specificities of the spatial transformation, governmental countermeasures, and local activism in Kotobuki, which laid foundations for the emergence of homeless support regime in the 1980s.

Urban Governance and Social Exclusion in Japanese History

The mode of governance and social exclusion implied in “containment policy” can be traced back as early as to the administration of the Ritsuryō system (*Ritsu* stands for penal codes, *ryō* for administrative codes) implemented in mid-seventh century. Following the model of the Tang dynasty’s political system, the imperial court, over a series of administrative and legal reforms, grouped neighborhoods into ten to twenty-five household units for taxation by the early eighth century (Yamamura 1974:1-8; Batten 1993:105-108). The burden of taxation differed according to, among other things, the status of the subject as either *ryōmin* (*lit.* good citizens, free commoners) or *senmin* (*lit.* low/base citizens, slaves). Such spatial and caste groupings were legitimized by Confucian philosophy and Legalism, which promoted social order and harmony through elaborate bureaucracy and a hierarchical status system, which assigned the roles of respective members. However, the court was not powerful enough to prevent people from absconding so they abolished the distinction between the free and the slaves in 830 (Yamamura 1974: 31), and the Ritsuryō system effectively collapsed by the end of ninth century. Historians note that although the Ritsuryō system was unstable and the designation of *senmin* rather fluid, a more stationary status classification started to evolve in the mid-eleventh century with the growth of the *shōen* system (fiefdom), which

gradually reinforced the bond between the lords and their subjects and bound them to the land.

In the medieval period, marginal people who, voluntarily or involuntarily, lived outside agricultural communities, were incorporated into the sociopolitical order and mobilized for their specialized services (Nagahara 1979; Groemer 2001). Some of the earliest attempts to contain marginal people is found in records of *hinin* (literally, non-persons), also referred to as *inu-jinin* (literally, dog priest (shrine person)), a group of people designated by the Gion shrine to live in the Kamo river bed and perform tasks related to funerals in the eleventh century (Nagahara 1979:391-2). Later records mention *hinin* living in and traveling along *hinin-shuku* (literally, lodgings for *hinin*, non-person) in Narazaka to dispose of dead animals, clean the roads, and transport goods by horse along the travelling routes in thirteenth century (Ibid., 393-4). There were a variety of people who occupied the same places as *hinin*, and would often be included in the category of *hinin*, from street performers and entertainers, people suffering from leprosy or other kinds of disability, certain types of artisans and craftsmen, and convicted criminals, among others (Groemer 2001:265). Similarly, there are fourteenth century records of *sanjo* (literally, scattered places, also used for people who live in *sanjo*) designated at the edges of *shōen* for similar tasks (Nagahara 1979:395-6). During the Sengoku Period (literally, the warring states period, 1467-1603), records show increasing attempts of direct control targeted more specifically at leatherworkers as demand for leather goods arose for military purposes. Many powerful *daimyō* (feudal lords) throughout Japan strengthened their control over tanners and leather artisans (often referred to as *kawata*) by restricting their residence to dry river beds and imposing

various sanctions on these quarters (Ibid., 396-400). Although there were others designated as riverbed persons (*kawaramono*), such as dyers, garden builders, makers of straw sandals, *kawata* came to face an increasing degree of discrimination and exclusion from the mainstream society for their association with death and pollution over the medieval period (Groemer 2001:266-7).

Surveying and registering people to establish a permanent status system were crucial to the rule of Tokugawa Shogunate over the unified Japan after one hundred and fifty years of the Sengoku period. The Tokugawa authorities promoted four main status groups constituted of, from the highest to the lowest, samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants, throughout the Tokugawa period (also known as the Edo period, after the new capital of Edo, the present day Tokyo, 1603-1868). Beyond these four status groups were the nobility and Buddhist and Shinto clergy, who were treated as sacred above all, and the outcast, who were increasingly and persistently designated as nonhumans. While commoners were surveyed and registered by Buddhist temples and grouped into five to ten households as units for surveillance and taxation, elaborate mechanisms of discrimination were employed to segregate people outside such a registry system.

In the Edo period, *kawata* were solidified as a hereditary legal status of *eta* (literally, abundance of filth), who were now further stigmatized for being inhumane, cruel, and polluted for killing animals. Such stigma were exacerbated as they were also employed to assist at executions, take charge of crucifixions and burnings at the stake, and to clean up and dispose of dead bodies (Botsman 2005:53). The *eta* in the capital city of Edo were ordered to relocate to the outskirts of the town, Asakusa Shinchō, under the administration and supervision of their leader Danzaemon (Groemer 2001:272). Located

at the inauspicious Northeast direction of the capital, Asakusa Shinchō was a narrow quarter surrounded by temples, adjacent to the Kodukappara execution site, and the famous licensed red-light district of Yoshiwara. As licensed cheap wooden lodgings were concentrated in this area, it was here that day laborers and recruiters gathered in the postwar period, which evolved into the present day *yoseba*, San'ya district.

Impoverished vagrants increasingly crowded major cities, their ranks swollen due to famines (Tenmei Famine in the 1780s and Tenpō Famine in the 1830s), droughts and floods that drove them from the countryside. Tokugawa authorities strove to control the displaced rural inhabitants who fled their registered hometowns as they failed to pay rice taxes. *Hinin*, as they were called, became a label that also included those who were simply born from *hinin* parents and those who were relegated to this status for committing petty crimes. To the Tokugawa authorities, these unbound people posed a potential threat to the social order, while also providing a useful source of flexible labor in the highly urbanized and rapidly growing economy of Edo (Leupp 1992:155-157). The shogunate sought to systemize their control over *hinin* by solidifying their status as outcasts with well-defined duties and restricted rights. *Hinin* were forced to register as *hinin* and were subsumed under a hierarchical order led by the *eta* or *hinin* leaders. The leaders negotiated with the authorities over begging rights and rules and even administered round-ups of unregistered beggars (*mushuku*, literally, without lodgings). Apart from begging, *hinin* provided services for the shogunate and ordinary communities with minimal payments, from street performances, street cleaning, gardening and maintenance at the shogunate's herbarium, among others (Groemer 2001:288). The Tokugawa authorities also used *hinin* to exhibit the punitive rule of the shogunate, as in

assisting in the *eta* for executions, transporting prisoners, tattooing convicts and parading them down the town. To prevent the *hinin* from escaping their status, the shogunate ordered *hinin* to move out of commoners' quarters in 1680, and imposed various visible markers on them, such as restrictions on hairstyle and clothing and mandatory wooden tags.

The idea of confining *hinin* was first attempted with *hinin goya* (*hinin* huts) and solidified in the institution of *ninsoku yoseba* (coolies' workhouse).²⁷ Inspired by the successful operation of the *hinin goya* (established in 1670) in the castle-town of Kanazawa, the Tokugawa authorities implemented similar plans to control vagrants in large cities. After trial and error, the shogunate established a *ninsoku yoseba* in the small island of Ishikawa in Edo Bay (the present Tokyo Bay) in 1790, and similar institutions spread throughout major cities soon after (Botsman 2005:104-107). Now *hinin* vagrants in Edo were routinely rounded up along with other itinerant populations and minor criminal offenders, to be incarcerated in one of the *ninsoku yoseba* in and around Edo. In

²⁷ Historians and legal scholars debate the nature of *ninsoku yoseba*. Many Japanese legal scholars regard *ninsoku yoseba* to be one of the world's first disciplinary institutions for rational and humane punishment through education (*kyōikukei*) and punishment through deprivation of liberty (*jiyūkei*), departing from the brutal and demonstrative physical punishment of the medieval period. For instance, Japanese legal scholar, Takikawa Masajirō, went as far as to praise *ninsoku yoseba* as “the archetype of a modern prison,” “worthy of global appraisal as Japan's legal culture” (Takikawa 1974:2). In a similar vein, historian Gary P. Leupp, situated *ninsoku yoseba* within the early modern transformation in urban governance directed toward confining and disciplining the poor, noting the striking similarities of *ninsoku yoseba* with “the house of correction” in England (the first built in 1575), and *hôpital généraux* in seventeenth century Paris (Leupp 1992:166). Meanwhile, historian James McClain, noting the harsh conditions in the *hinin goya* at Kanazawa, maintained that the primary effect of this institution was to reinforce domination through fear (McClain 1982). In a slightly different vein, historian Daniel Botsman emphasized that *ninsoku yoseba* constituted only one of the penal practices of the Tokugawa regime, whose main function converged in reinforcing the status system and social order of the state (Botsman 2005:11).

the *ninsoku yoseba* in Ishikawa island, the inmates were required to engage in various forms of labor depending on the state of their health and skills, from carpentry, cabinet making, dyeing, paper making, rice polishing, producing lime, making charcoal balls, making straw items, oil squeezing, and construction (Leupp 1992:171). At the same time, they were provided with food rations, medical care, moral instruction,²⁸ job training, and basic education. While in principle, internment at *ninsoku yoseba* was meant to rehabilitate the inmates, so they can return to society after three years of exemplary conduct (Leupp 1992:172), in reality, it functioned primarily as “a tool for controlling potential trouble makers in and around the capital” (Botsman 2005:109). As the authorities became keener on keeping the streets of the capital free of criminals after the great famine in the 1830s, the number of inmates increased, and *ninsoku yoseba* came to house criminals sentenced to banishment as well (Botsman 2005:107-8). With stigmatizing uniforms, and heavy punishment for any attempt to escape with tattooing, heavy flogging, and even the death penalty, *ninsoku yoseba* had become a quintessential institution for confinement by the end of Tokugawa period. In other words, the Tokugawa authorities effectively segregated the outcast from commoners to maintain order and demonstrate the power of the state, while readily using their services for menial and avoided tasks. Although *ninsoku yoseba* also provided welfare and protection, the frequent criminal charges made against the inmates, for attempting to escape, violating

²⁸ The moral education was led by Shingaku scholars of Neo-Confucian tradition. Literally meaning “heart learning,” Shingaku proclaimed a departure from the old Confucian contempt for commerce and combined Confucian doctrines with Shintō and Buddhist elements to emphasize the value of labor and the merchants’ calling. Robert Bellah, in his famous *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Preindustrial Japan*, equated Shingaku with the protestant ethics of Christian tradition for their role in the capitalist development of economy.

restrictions in the institution or out on the street, created a separate spatial circuit for the outcast from *ninsoku yoseba*, to the streets, and to prisons, a pattern repeated among the underclass today.

Tokugawa status-based spatial governance was abolished by the new Meiji government (1868-1912) in its pursuit of a centralized modern nation state. Reforms started with the Household Registration Law, which set up a new administrative unit, *ku* (ward), and required all the households to be recorded by the registrar and deputy of each ward. Although the registrar and deputies were supposed to replace the traditional hereditary administrative system, these power positions were soon taken over by traditional village-group heads and village heads (Totten 1977:488-490). Despite the swaths of legal reforms, demographic and socioeconomic changes, the organizational forms and ideological power inscribed in neighborhood groupings and the household registration system administered in the Edo period tended to be persistently revitalized throughout the twentieth century and up to the present day.²⁹ Even in the postwar period, those who held family registration in the formerly *eta* neighborhoods were identified as Buraku-min (literally, hamlet people) and faced discrimination in education, workplaces and marriages, while historically segregated places have continued to absorb the changing populations of lower and underclass. The experience of the urban underclass in Japan today cannot be understood without taking into account the historical processes by

²⁹ For example, anthropologist Jennifer Robertson notes that neighborhood divisions of the seventeenth century have left their traces in a network of kindred relations maintained through the yard shrine oblations in the satellite city of Kodaira in Tokyo metropolitan prefecture (Robertson 1991:100, 110-149). As Robertson shows, such apparent continuity is attributable to people's conscious efforts to claim legitimation by promoting heritage and historical succession and their practices of maintaining and revitalizing institutional constructions, spatial arrangements, and communal customs of their neighborhoods.

which people have continued to bear the spatial stigma of their traceable place of origin and stigmatized places avoided by mainstream Japanese.

The formation of *yoseba* after the defeat of the war shows striking similarities with the appearance of *hinin goya* and *ninsoku yoseba* in the aftermath of the warring Sengoku period. The present day *yoseba* emerged with the abolition of the pre-war day laborers employment system, which was hierarchically organized as a master-servant relationship between a boss and his workers. The Allied Forces that occupied Japan between 1945-52 banned any intermediary casual labor employment through private-sector employment agencies, and set up an extensive system of public employment agencies. Not surprisingly, these agencies were placed in historically impoverished or segregated neighborhoods, such as San'ya in Tokyo and Kamagasaki in Osaka, both of which covered the formerly *eta* neighborhoods and cheap lodging quarters. These day laborers' quarters provided a niche for people who lost their means of subsistence during the war and migrated to cities in search of the flourishing opportunities offered by the postwar restoration. Unofficial labor exchanges appeared on the street near public employment agencies led by recruiters called *tehaishi* (literally, *arranger*, mostly low ranking yakuza gang or experienced workers) or *ninpudashi* (literally, *providers of workmen*, mostly a boss who recruits workers for owners of construction projects) as well. As yakuza gangs were heavily involved in labor recruitment, they also gained control over these districts and operated gambling dens and bars and engaged in a range of illegal activities from drug trafficking to prostitution. While postwar *yoseba* offered a land of opportunity for many socioeconomic and ethnic minorities, they were also easily exploited by these lawless operations.



Figure 2. The Three Biggest Yoseba Districts in Japan.

In contrast to the majority of Japanese neighborhoods, which benefited from the postwar reconstruction projects carefully planned by civil engineers and funded by local and central governments during the rapid economic growth of the immediate postwar period (Sorensen 2002:151-199), these day laborers' quarters were neglected and deprived of basic infrastructure and public services. *Yoseba* residents suffered from worsening livelihood environment, from crowded SROs to the lack of bathrooms, which contributed to periodical outbreaks of fire and epidemics. The first comprehensive policy

regarding *yoseba* came after the riots in San'ya in 1960 and Kamagasaki in 1961. In both Tokyo and Osaka, government officials, experts, welfare commissioners, caseworkers, and citizens organized task groups to discuss proper countermeasures. The countermeasures were double-edged: they included measures to improve the conditions of welfare, medical care, education, and housing of day laborers and their families in these districts, while also monitoring and managing the whole districts with elaborate systems of policing and repression. The launching of the Jōhoku Welfare Center (1965) in San'ya and the Airin Comprehensive Center (1970) in Kamagasaki were in line with the first objective, while San'ya Countermeasures Bureau (1968) and the Kamagasaki (Airin) Countermeasures Bureau (1960) realized the second objective. These comprehensive countermeasures employed the differential approach to poverty according to gender, age, disability, and marital status of the *yoseba* residents. While families were moved to public housing, single mother households were sent to public housing or women-children facilities, and alcoholics to halfway houses. This left *yoseba* as segregated spaces for single-males with the ability to work by the 1970s (Iwata and Nishizawa 2005:28, 56-7; Haraguchi 2003:135-140). Kotobuki went through similar processes of demographic changes, as will be discussed in the following section.

Notably, the identification of day laborers' districts as *yoseba* came with the rise of historical consciousness of the people who occupied and fought for recognition in these districts. It was after the riots in the 1960s and the oil shocks of the 1970s that the respective unions of San'ya, Kamagasaki, Kotobuki, and Sasajima launched the All Japan Day Laborers' Union Association (*Zenkoku Hiyatoi Rōdōsha Kumiai Kyōgikai*) in 1982, then started gathering at the annual All Japan Yoseba Assembly (*Zenkoku Yoseba Taikai*)

in 1984. Until the early 1970s, the terms that appear more often in governmental documents were *suramu* (slum) or *doya-gai* (SRO quarter). Meanwhile, in social science literature, the foundation of the Society of Yoseba Studies (*Yoseba Gakkai*) in 1987 was crucial in constructing *yoseba* as the key concept through which all problems and practices related to these districts were discussed. Noting the emic terms preferred by day laborers, for example, Kama or Nishinari for Kamagasaki and Yama for San'ya, Aoki Hideo explained that the adoption of the term *yoseba* as a “scientific concept” was useful for the purpose of analysis, in illuminating the historical continuity with *ninsoku yoseba* (Aoki 2006:3). Given that these districts have been renamed and reorganized, so that they remained unidentifiable from the official maps and historical narratives (Mizuuchi 2001), the common application of the term *yoseba* to these districts today reflects the growing visibility of these districts to mainstream society with the involvement of external supporters. Today the term *yoseba* appears most commonly in local literature (pamphlets, newsletters, reports) by homeless support groups and activists calling for volunteers, donation, and petitions, and in mainstream media reporting the homeless issue, poverty, and yakuza gangs' intermediary exploitation of day laborers and welfare recipients. The mainstreaming of the term *yoseba*, in this sense, took place with the decline of *yoseba* as day laborers' districts.

From Marshland to a *Doya-gai*

Kotobuki is located in Yokohama City to the south of Tokyo along the Tokyo Bay, once constituting the nation's largest industrial zone, the Keihin Industrial Belt. Being under the sea until the late nineteenth century, Kotobuki emerged in modern history, as a

theater of aspirations and frustrations with periodical influx and decline. It has been a land of pioneers who struggled to build its infrastructure and experimented with ideas of community and social change. As anthropologist Jennifer Robertson noted, if “[t]he proper object of history is not the past but the past-present-future relationship.” (Robertson 1991:72), the history of Kotobuki can be captured in the varying efforts by a range of actors who tried to realize their visions in the land of Kotobuki.

Until the late seventeenth century, Ōoka River flowed eastward into the Pacific Ocean, forming a small bell-shaped bay. This bay was half-blocked from the south side, where the sand carried by the river formed a narrow sandbank, called Yokohama-mura (Yokohama Village). In 1667, Yoshida Kanbē, originally from a noble family in Osaka made a fortune in the capital of Edo as a lumber dealer and ambitiously took on the grand project of land reclamation with the approval of the Tokugawa shogunate. Over nine years of construction, Yoshida Shinden (literally, *newly developed rice field*) was developed, except for the last bit of marshland facing Yokohama-mura, under which the present day Kotobuki lay. Yoshida Shinden and the surrounding area remained as agricultural and fishing villages for two centuries, until they became the center of an event that changed national history. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry landed in Edo Bay with the US Navy Forces to open trade relations with Japan. After negotiations, the Tokugawa shogunate signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce and designated Yokohama-mura as the treaty port between America and Japan.



Figure 3. The Map of Yoshida Shinden and Yokohama Port (1870). The South First Swamp (*Minami Histotsume Numa*) in the middle of the map including Kotobuki area was the last to be reclaimed.

Within four years, the cluster of villages and newly reclaimed land surrounding Yokohama-mura were developed into a modern trading port, facing Yoshida Shinden with a canal and the marshland in-between. The Yokohama Port side of the canal was designated as the Kannai (literally, *inside the gateways*) area, divided into the foreigners' section to the south side of the customs office and the Japanese section to the north. Soon the Kannai area was bustling with Chinese, British, American, German and other European trading companies, hotels and restaurants, businessmen, missionaries, and Japanese who acquired permits to trade with the foreigners (Saitō et al. 2011:60-61). Meanwhile, the Yoshida Shinden side of the canal came to be known as the Kangai (literally, *outside the gateways*) area, reserved for Japanese commoners.

Overcrowding in the Kannai area resulted in the disastrous outbreak of the Great Fire in 1866, which raised the awareness of the necessity of more space to the authorities. In 1870, the newly established Meiji Government (1868-1912) called for investment in reclaiming the marshland with the promise that the reclaimed land will be given to the developer. Yoshida Tsunejirō, a descendant of Yoshida Kanbē, who owned the land, took on the project in an attempt to keep his family property. Although Yoshida completed the reclamation in 1873, the construction required a lumpsum of capital, which he borrowed at high interest rate from an American company, Walsh Hall Trading Company. Fearing the acquisition of the land by a foreign company, the Meiji Government intervened and bought it off, turning it into public land managed by the Kanagawa Prefectural Government. Auspicious names were given to each of the seven parts of this marshland, which were carried over in their administrative designations as *chō*, as they remain today: Kotobuki-chō (longevity), Matsukage-chō (the shade of a pine which is a symbol of good luck, hope, and agelessness), Ōgi-chō (a folding fan symbolizing longevity, luck, and wealth), Furō-chō (immortality), Bandai-chō (thousands of generations, eternity), Okina-chō (venerable old man), and Hōrai-chō (Mount Penglai, a legendary mountain inhabited by immortals in ancient Chinese mythology). These seven districts were often bundled together for administrative purposes as the Seven Reclaimed Chō (*Baichi Nanaka-chō*).

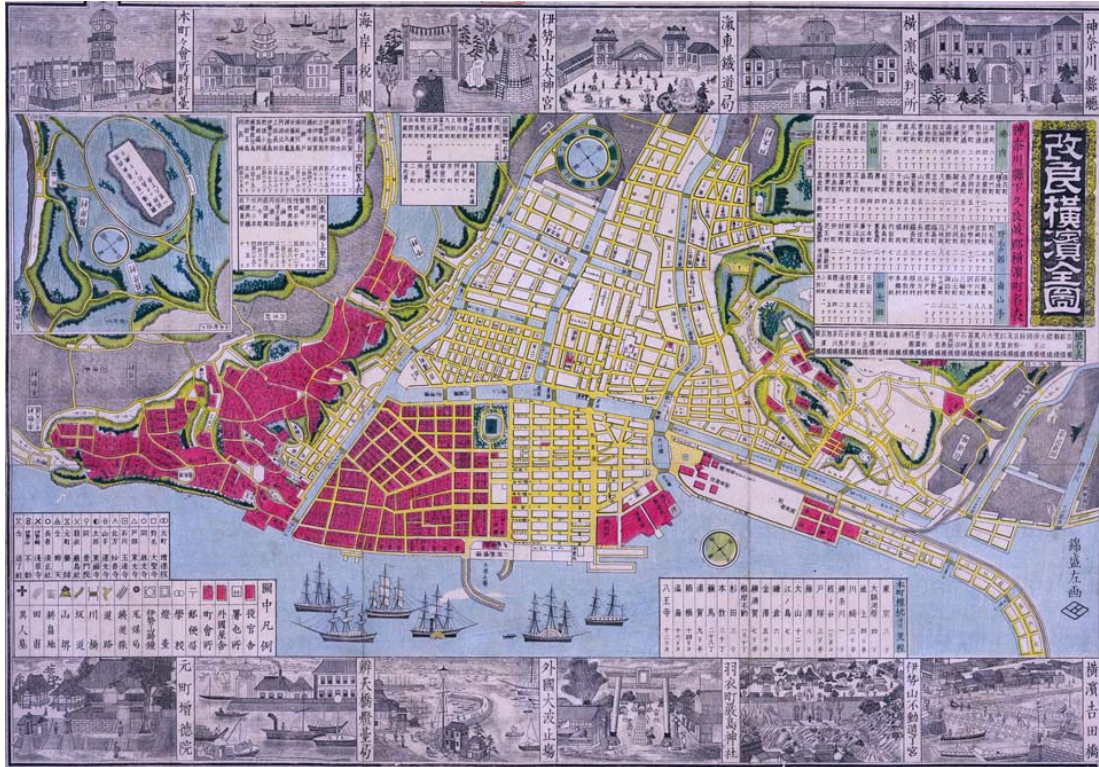


Figure 4. The Map of Kannai and Kangai Areas. The rectangular shaped reclaimed land separated by the canal on the lower part was called Kannai, and the upper part Kangai. The red-colored parts represent foreigners' districts and diplomatic offices. Kotobuki district is the area surrounded by the two foreigners' districts across Nakamura stream and the canal.

As with other parts of the Kangai area, Kotobuki acquired the characteristics of a commoners' town (*shitamachi*) with small businesses and retail shops, factories for silk products, and other export related businesses (Tanaka 1985:206). In response to the influx of people, the Meiji government additionally designated a foreigners' residential section in Yamate district in the hilly south side of the Nakamura stream across from the Kannai area in 1867. Soon after, Yamate became an arena of rivalries between Christian missionaries from the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Dutch Reformed Churches of America. Among them, two churches came to engage with the social issues in Kotobuki: the Sacred Heart Cathedral (first built in 1862 in Kannai then moved to Yamate in 1906) and Japan Baptist Yokohama Church (first established in

1874 in Yamate then moved to Kotobuki-chō in 1923). The ministers and believers of both churches have made Christian volunteerism a familiar scene in Kotobuki, which expanded significantly since the 1980s with the activities of the United Church of Christ in Japan and Korean evangelical churches. In contrast to Yamate, which grew to be an affluent residential district, right on the east of Yamate along the Nakamura stream was the impoverished Nakamura-chō, across Kotobuki district. Nakamura-chō increasingly attracted Koreans, whose population grew in Japan following the colonization of Korean peninsular in 1910. The Koreans in Nakamura-chō engaged in various informal economic activities from making rice wine to running cheap lodgings, and some of the successful landlords came to team up with Koreans from Noge, Yokohama and Asakusa, Tokyo to develop Kotobuki into a *doyagai* in the postwar period. Most of the infrastructure of these areas was first destroyed by the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923,³⁰ then by the Yokohama Air Raid in 1945, after which the Yokohama Port area was requisitioned by the Allied Forces. Kotobuki and the surrounding districts were turned into an army motor pool (Tanaka 1985).

In the war-torn country, Yokohama Port became the land of opportunity with high demand for workers to unload the food, supplies, and foreign aid coming through the dock. On the periphery the requisitioned port area, where the Labor Branch Office of the Yokohama Employment Security Office and the Naka Ward Office stood, forming a black market for smuggled goods and unofficial labor exchanges.

³⁰ The social unrest and massacres of Koreans and Chinese by civilian vigilante groups that swept across the areas afflicted by the Great Kantō Earthquake also devastated Yokohama, and oral history records tell us that the Nakamura stream and Ōoka river often carried along the bodies and blood of Koreans at the time (Yamamoto 2014).

While thousands from all over Japan flooded into Yokohama, the majority of Yokohama citizens still lacked housing. Moreover, unlike the older cities like Tokyo or Osaka, there were no traditional cheap wooden lodging districts to accommodate the migrating population in Yokohama. There were only thirteen public and private temporary housing facilities with the capacity of 2,152 people in total in Yokohama City until 1948 (Serizawa 1967: 4). From Sakuragi-chō station to Noge-chō, the streets were filled with people sleeping rough, competing with food stalls and makeshift lodgings. It was known that Sakuragi-Noge area was regularly occupied by more than 1,000 homeless people, that whenever a recruiter needed a worker, he could pick up anyone from there at the time (Serizawa 1967:5). The pejorative word, *pūtarō* (literally, *wind boy*), is known to have emerged around this time to refer to these people who slept rough. Although Kanagawa Prefectural Government and Yokohama City Government respectively built additional temporary lodgings of 350 (Kanagawa Ward) and 250 (Nishi Ward) at the end of 1948, these public facilities were all distant from the port where the labor market and worksites were located.

In response to high demand, many private lodgings appeared in the vicinities in Sakuragi-Noge. Among them were “floating hotels,” moored at the Ōoka River near the relocated Labor Branch Office in 1949. The floating hotels were renovated barges, first designed by Yokohama City Social Service Association to provide lodging at an affordable price. Following the first three floating hotels by the Association, six more were set up by private entrepreneurs – mostly Korean – who followed suit. The continuing boom of the port exacerbated the overcrowding of the lodgings in the area causing problems from the lice-mediated spread of eruptive typhus (1950) to the overturn

of an overloaded floating hotel (1951) (Serizawa 1967:9-10). As the Social Welfare Service Law was implemented in 1951, these temporary lodgings were required to register as either commercial enterprises or social service facilities. The three floating hotels of the Social Service Association were moved to a welfare facility in Hodogaya Ward, while other six remained until 1959, after which the owners opened *doya* registered as commercial enterprises in Kotobuki district (Tanaka 1985:209).

Kotobuki's development as a *yoseba* was a result of the convergent interests of the administration and the Korean diaspora. Facing continuous complaints by well-organized residents' and retailers' associations in Sakuragi-Noge, the municipal governments (Yokohama City Government and Kanagawa Prefectural Government) devised policies to move the *yoseba* function to Kotobuki district, since the Allied Forces had returned the land of Kotobuki to the city in 1955. Most of the prewar landowners and residents who were forced to leave during the Occupation did not return, and the only structures left were some exterior walls of a few buildings, including the Japan Baptist Yokohama Church and the Public Fresh Market. Pressured by the government and seizing the opportunity, a group of Koreans – mostly *doya* owners and businessmen from Nakamura-chō and the Sakuragi-Noge area of Yokohama, and Asakusa, Tokyo – bought pieces of the land from the city.³¹ After the first *doya*, Kotobuki-sō was built in 1956, similar

³¹ When Japan declared defeat in 1945, there were some 2.4 million Koreans in Japan most of whom repatriated to Korea shortly after the war. Yet, 545,903 remained behind, and the number of these “residential Koreans” (*zainichi*). In 1947 these former colonial subjects from Korea were first registered as aliens from “Chōsen” (denoting the Joseon Dynasty of the Korean Peninsula, which had ceased to exist). In 1952, all resident Koreans in Japan lost the Japanese nationality they had possessed de facto as former colonial subjects and legally became non-citizens, as the Japanese government did not have diplomatic relationship between either of the two Korean governments (Ryang 1997:120). Up until the 1990s, most resident Koreans were excluded from the various

structures of two to four-story wooden *doya* increased in the district. Akiba Shigeru, a small-scale businessman originally from Hokkaidō recalled that Kotobuki seemed a barren land in 1956, with several wooden *doya*, trucks selling *doburoku* (unfiltered rice wine), Mexicans, drug dealers, and pan-pan girls (a derogatory term for street prostitutes who served for foreign soldiers) (Kotobuki Supporters' Group 2002:48-57, based on an interview with Akiba Shigeru on September 9, 2000).³² As the Employment Security Office moved to Kotobuki in 1957, Kotobuki became an official day laborers' quarter, and by 1969 there were seventy-three *doya* with 4,692 rooms/households in total in the district (Yokohama-shi Kenchiku-kyoku 1969). The Jinmu boom (1954-7), and Iwato boom (1958-1961) attracted crowds in the district day and night. Every time a new *doya* was built, it ran out of vacancies (Tanaka 1985:208). Since there were so many night work jobs, many in Kotobuki became addicted to stimulants, which kept them awake in the night. It was during this time from the 1960s to 1970s that Kotobuki earned its nickname, "the Western Town" (*Seibu no Machi*), for its image as a lively and lawless frontier (Serizawa 1967:1).

The concentration of *doya* eventually solidified Kotobuki as a distinctive spatial unit of governance. The first move was made by the Korean *doya* owners. In July 1961,

social and state benefits including child benefits, disability benefits, the state pension scheme, government housing services, and national health service, and from job opportunities in the civil service (ibid.121). Since there was no legal measure to prevent discrimination in job hiring until very recently, Koreans were often discriminated against in recruitment procedures in private companies. Such conditions left resident Koreans with limited job choices of running private credit banks (catering to fellow residential Koreans), *pachinko* (gambling parlors), Korean restaurants and retail stores, or *doya*, engaging in casual labor or miscellaneous informal economic activities, and in some cases of joining the yakuza syndicates.

³² Akiba Shigeru opened a diner on the first floor of a *doya* in 1965, which turned out to be highly lucrative, and later became a powerful local figure as a long-term chairman (1972-2002) of the Self Governing Association of Kotobuki.

Yokohama Temporary Lodging Cooperative Union (*Yokohama Kan'i Shukuhaku Kyōdō Kumiai*) submitted two petitions to the Mayor of Yokohama City, one suggesting a designation as a Self-Restrained District (*jishuku kuiki*) for the self-regulation of the neighborhood environment and restraint on further increase of *doya*, and the other applying for the voluntary renovation of the sixteen *doya* violating the construction law. The boundary of the Self-Restrained District included parts of Kotobuki-chō, Matsukage-chō, and Ōgi-chō, which came to constitute the core of Kotobuki District (*Kotobuki Chiku*) as a *doya-gai* (Serizawa 1976:17-18).

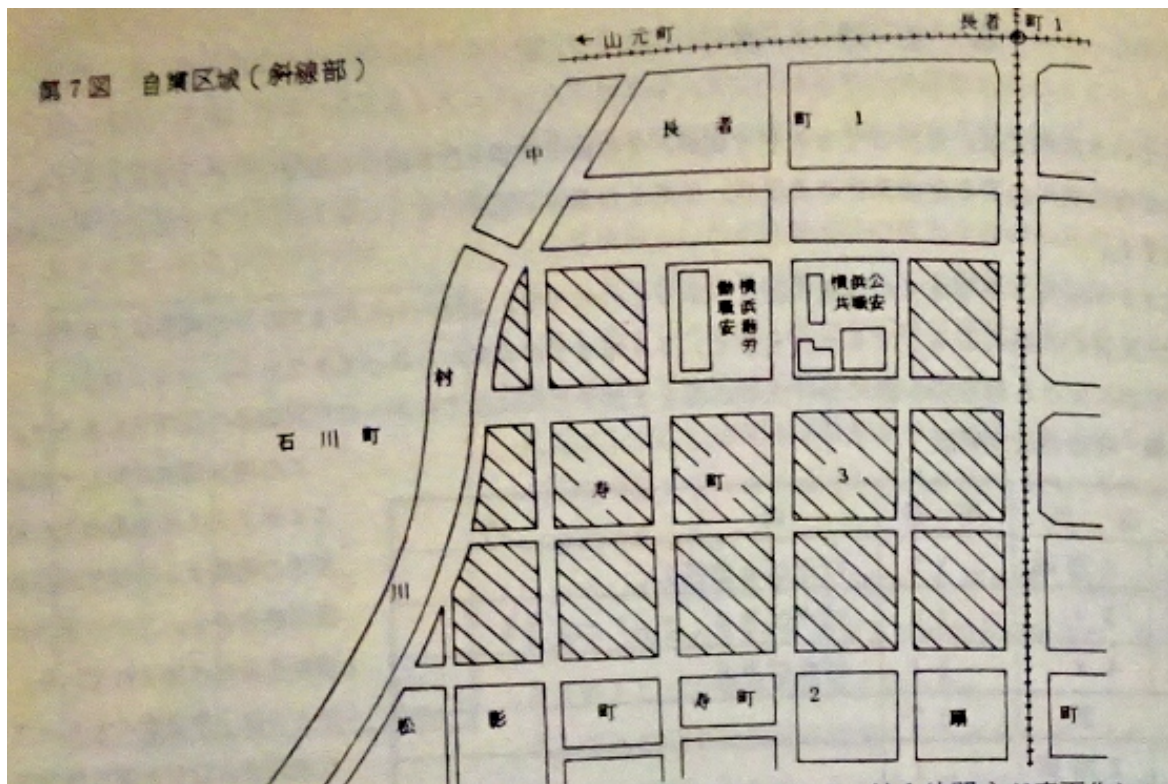


Figure 5. The Boundary of Self-Restrained District (*Jishuku Kuiki*), proposed by Yokohama Temporary Lodging Cooperative Union (the deviant-crease-lined part, from Serizawa 1976:18). The district is demarcated by the Nakamura stream on the left side and the Yokohama City Railway on the right, the Yokohama City Employment Security Office (left) and Yokohama Public Employment Office (right) on the upper side. As more *doya* were constructed, the district was expanded to the upper and lower blocks on the map, which constitutes today's Kotobuki District.

Although the Cooperative Union's objective of self-regulation did not come into effect and still many *doya* were built around the suggested Self-Restrained District, Kotobuki district came to appear as a separate administrative unit, with an expanded boundary, henceforth. In 1962, the Lodging Cooperative Union teamed up with the newly established Allied Self-Governing Association of the Seven Reclaimed Chō (*Baichi Nanaka-chō Jichi Rengō-kai*) to request to the city for improved public facilities and services in the neighborhood, from more day care centers, public restrooms, public bath, streetlights for crime prevention, waste collection, and to playgrounds for children (Serizawa 1976:18). In response to the request, a city assemblyman simply replied that, "we do not intend to create a *doya* paradise" (Tanaka 1985:214). Instead, the city showed main concern over the continuing complaints from local residents surrounding Sakuragi-Noge area, and commissioned the Slum Countermeasures Study Group³³ in 1966 to survey the conditions of these areas. Reviewing the conclusion of the Study Group's research the City government decided that all the problems raised in Sakuragi-Noge area could be solved by gathering all facilities in Kotobuki (*Kotobukichō kesshū hōshiki*) and establishing a comprehensive welfare center in the district (Kangawa Ken Rōdōbu Shokugyō Anteika 1973:4).

With the budget divided among the City Government (Housing Department), Prefectural Government (Public Welfare Department), the Employment Promotion Agency of Japan, and the Ministry of Labor, a nine-story ferrocement structure appeared in 1974, where the ruins of the Public Fresh Market used to stand. The L-shaped building

³³ The participants were commissioned by the City Government. They included the city welfare officers, faculty members from local universities such as Kantōgakuin University (Fukuda) and Yokohama National University, and independent research groups such as the Narumi Research Group and Gun Architectural Research Center.

was divided into two sections, one with welfare facilities (library, entertainment room, coin lockers, a public bath, a hair salon, and a diner, among others), and the other with labor facilities (employment offices), while the upper part from the fourth to the ninth floor housed eighty units of public housing. As families moved into the public housing, *doya* became increasingly more exclusive dwelling places for single men. The plaza, as the biggest of the two open spaces in Kotobuki, became the quintessential *yoseba* (gathering place) for official and unofficial labor recruits, food stalls, street markets, festivals, and soup kitchens, commonly referred to as “the Center” (*Sentā*, abbreviation of Kotobuki-chō General Labor Welfare Center) by the locals.³⁴

³⁴ Regarding the changes brought forth by the construction of the Center, a long-term welfare officer and social work scholar Nomoto Sankichi wrote as follows: “In Kotobuki District of Yokohama, known as a Dockworkers’ Town, one, but in the perspective of welfare administration quite big, change is taking place right now. There is quite a large space in the middle of Kotobuki District, where an enormous, at least in its appearance, structure has been standing since the end of the war. The ravages of the war left this structure with quite a few cavities, broken windows, thick iron rods protruding from the cracked concrete walls, and lived on with such appearance of the nuclear-blasted dome of Hiroshima. At the plaza of this Employment Security Office, jobs are introduced every morning and night, along with private labor recruits next to the public Office, surrounded by trucks full of workers ready to go out for work. At this neglected plaza, when summer comes, there was *bonodori* (folk dance for Obon Summer Festival) with splendid record music, and in the winter, song contests were held surrounding a big bonfire as a winter feast. In Kotobuki District, which lacks any margins, compactly filled with *doya* and eateries, this purposeless open space was somehow allowing the serenity of mind. There, since last year an iron fence was installed around for over a year of construction work, then a nine-story great white edifice was finished this October 7th. It is very modern, in a way “mansion style,” and the night-lightup makes scenery like a nightless quarter. As far as you look at this construct only, you can’t feel the dark atmosphere of Kotobuki District” (Nomoto 1977: 44-5).



Figure 6. "The Center," in the morning of the first day of Obon Summer Festival on August 12, 2011. Local bar owners and community organizations have already started to install their booths. Although the Center used to be a place for daily labor recruitment, only a few minivans are waiting to pick up day laborers in the morning today. Instead, most people come to use the library, the entertainment room, the laundry room, the public bath, and lockers at the Center during the day, or to sleep at sheltered corners around the building in the night (Photo by author).



Figure 7. A View from the Rooftop of the Center. The white building on the left side is Hamakaze Homeless Self-Reliance Center, built with the budget set by the Homeless Law in 2002. Although Hamakaze was built to help the unemployed and the homeless across Yokohama City to escape from their predicaments, it has rather functioned to contain them in Kotobuki. The crossroads is faced by *doya* buildings. On the top center, we can see a distant view of the Yokohama Landmark Tower in the waterfront area (Photo by author).

The Site (*Genba*) for Fieldwork and Struggle

While ordinary districts (*ippan chiku*) in postwar Japan have developed a working relationship between neighborhood associations and municipal governments, when it came to *yoseba* districts, the question arose whether anyone had the legitimacy to speak for the people and make demands on the authorities. Kotobuki, in particular as a newly reclaimed land in the late nineteenth century, had gone through series of complete demographic and spatial transformations that mitigated against the development of a sizeable population who claimed to be “natives.” Even among those who settled in the prewar period, only a few businesses returned to Kotobuki at the end of Allied Occupation, such as Asia Industrial Company, Nagumo Glass, Arai Motor, Yamada Liquor Shop, and Murayama Store (Tanaka 1985:206). The owners of these businesses teamed up with property and business owners in the six neighboring reclaimed districts under the name of the Allied Self-Governing Association of Seven Reclaimed Chō, however, their association had few common interests with the rest of Kotobuki district. Meanwhile, the *zainichi* Koreans, who owned and managed the majority of properties and businesses in Kotobuki, were seen as untrustworthy by the authorities for their foreign citizenship (or lack thereof) and alleged illegal operations. Moreover, following the volatile political situations in the Korean peninsular, the Yokohama Temporary Lodging Cooperative Union split into two unions, one affiliated with South Korea, and the other with North Korea. The antagonism between the two unions hindered them from acting together, which weakened their negotiating power.

The two local groups that developed into representative organizations of Kotobuki district to negotiate with the government were Jūnichirō (literally, an acronym of

Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union, combining the Chinese reading of the character Kotobuki, *jū*, and *nichi* for day, *rō* for labor), and Kotobuki District Self-Governing Association (*Kotobuki Chiku Jichikai*). The former was led by local day laborers and student activist day laborers, while the latter by local retailers, *doya* managers, and left-leaning community organizers. Although Jūnichirō was the face of the district when engaging in confrontational politics against the authorities over unfair policies and treatment, and the Self-Governing Association was entrusted by the municipalities with the administration of funding for neighborhood improvement projects, the two organizations developed a strategic collaborative relationship over time. Both groups had a flexible base of support from day laborers, social workers, student activists, and volunteers, who would quickly congregate for a cause.

If we are to make sense of how these two organizations, run by people who came from outside of Kotobuki in the postwar period, came to represent the district, it is crucial to understand the idea of Kotobuki as a field site (*genba*) that mobilized these dedicated actors. Regardless of their exact political standing, activists and supporters who gathered in Kotobuki commonly did so under the premise that the “true state” of Japan is condensed in the district, and whatever was theoretically known or institutionally established did not apply to Kotobuki. Thus one could only immerse oneself in the district in order to know what the reality was and experiment with various measures in order to find out what worked. In the following, I demonstrate how endeavors to engage in Kotobuki as a field site gave birth respectively to Jūnichirō and the Self-Governing Association. I maintain that the activities of these organizations set the condition for Kotobuki to become a frontier of community welfare (*chiiki fukushi*), establishing the

local area (*chiiki*) as the locus of care, as opposed to the private realm of home/family or the confining institutions such as shelters, hospitals, or rehabilitation facilities, with the rise of homeless activism in the 1980s.

The Occupation of the Livelihood Hall (*Seikatsu-kan*) 1974-1980

In Kotobuki, the first attempts to organize local social groups came from social workers and volunteers rather than from day laborers, in contrast to San'ya or Kamagasaki where day laborers' unions appeared earlier. Following the charity activities by Yokohama Rotary Club, Minami Rotary Club, and Lion's Club in the 1960s, a couple of children's support groups emerged, from Children's Group Bokko (1964-1967), Kotobuki Class (*Kotobuki Gakkyū*, 1964), to Kotobuki-chō Study Group (Kotobuki-chō Benkyō-kai in 1969, became Aozora, Blue Sky in 1971-1980). These groups were organized with the lead of young social workers at the welfare and education departments of the city and prefectural governments (Tanaka 2009a:38-39) and joined by high-school and college students from local Christian universities (such as Kantō Gakuin and Meiji Gakuin Universities) and the Japan Baptist Yokohama Church. Along with regular educational and recreational activities for children and teenagers, members of these groups hosted or supported the seasonal Summer camps and festivals, Fall sports day, and Christmas events (Tanaka 2009a:45-48). The presence of these civilian supporters from outside the district, made the loanword "volunteer (*boranteia*)" well known in Kotobuki by the 1970s. For example, the term was used to refer to the Christian supporters (Serizawa 1976:7), who engaged in activities such as Children's Diner

(*Kodomo Shokudō*, free breakfast for children in Masu 1988:15) or the provision of cheap lunch for the elderly (Watanabe 1977:31).

Summarizing local movements in Kotobuki up to 1985, Tanaka Toshio, who got engaged in Kotobuki as a social worker since 1966, noted that the support activities for children launched by civil servants (such as social workers) expanded as local citizens (such as students and laborers) took over, after which they were integrated back into formal programs administered by civil servants. The same pattern appeared when local supporters moved on to take initiatives in adults' issues (mainly health), until the relationship between Kotobuki and the authorities turned confrontational in the mid 1970s (Tanaka 2009a:51). The shifting power dynamics between local groups and the authorities were epitomized in the series of activities and events took place in the Livelihood Hall (*Seikatsu-kan*), where social workers assumed the role of both civil servants and local supporters.

The Livelihood Hall was constructed following the suggestion of the director of Public Welfare Department (*Minsei-kyoku*) of Yokohama City, Serizawa Isamu. Serizawa first initiated weekly nightly visit consultations in Kotobuki in 1962 for people who could not make it to the Public Welfare Bureau (*Minsei Antei-sho*) in the Naka Ward Office. From this experience, Serizawa noticed that the complicated needs on the ground crossed the boundaries of policies and administrative units (Serizawa 1976:1). Serizawa's suggestion to build a one-stop welfare consultation service center for Kotobuki residents was received positively by local authorities. With the cooperation of a city assemblyman, who had land in Kotobuki, and the construction budget split between the Prefectural and the City Governments, the Livelihood Hall opened in Kotobuki on June 1, 1965. The first

floor of the building was run by the Prefectural Government as a kindergarten, and the second floor was run by the City Government as the Livelihood Hall (Serizawa 1976:1-3). Soon, the Livelihood Hall offered counseling and free medical consultations and administered applications for livelihood protection. With a high demand for communal space, third and fourth floors were added to the Hall in 1972, the third floor as a space for children and teenagers and the fourth as an adults' entertainment room and library. The fourth floor was kept open to residents twenty-four hours a day. Accordingly, Livelihood Hall became the center of community activities, a gathering place for social workers, residents, laborers, children, and volunteers.

The presence of a municipal facility in the middle of a slum area (as it was called at the time) and its openness to the residents signified a revolutionary change in slum governance and made Kotobuki different from other *yoseba*. There was first a change of thought in the executive level, as represented by Serizawa Isamu. In a research report Serizawa edited for a local social welfare institute, *Kanagawa Kyōsaikai* (Serizawa 1976:3) he pointed out that the *doya* countermeasures at the time were based on typologies and theories derived from slum studies in the US. These studies assumed a democratic structure of civil society and expected citizens' spontaneous actions to get involved in community organizing. Serizawa noted that such an assumption ignored Japan's reality, in which vertical and horizontal power relations connected civil society to the government in the form of neighborhood associations, such as *chōnaikai* and *jichikai* (Serizawa 1976:3). Serizawa's philosophy that countermeasures should come from fieldwork on the ground more than anything else, set the ground for welfare officers in Kotobuki to work closely with residents.

Meanwhile, young social workers hired at the Livelihood Hall were recent college graduates who had been influenced by the New Left student activism. They regarded their work in Kotobuki as part of a “settlement movement” (*setsurumento undo*) and endeavored to immerse their lives in Kotobuki (Tanaka 2009a:40). The settlement movement, originally initiated by students in Cambridge and Oxford Universities in 19th century England, was wholeheartedly embraced by Japan’s leftist students in the 1960s as a method of revolutionizing the impoverished by settling in among them. The idea that settlement is needed in order to grasp the reality is well represented in the following statement by Katō Akihiko (penname, Nomoto Sankichi), a social worker at the Livelihood Hall from 1972 to 1981:

I am now working as a livelihood counselor at Kotobuki District, a day laborers’ district in Yokohama, and by living here I came to face the ‘real image of history’ that I have overlooked so far. At first, I was like groping in the complete dark trying to rub skin-to-skin and converse with every single person I met. Then I came to discover Japanese history and modern history condensed in the words and desperate outcries of every single person.... I think we need a new historical view focused on their struggle to live...I confirmed my decision to root myself in the reality of life as a commoner. (Nomoto 1979:5-6, 11)

The first generation Livelihood Hall social workers, such as, Tanaka Toshio, Uchida Tomomichi, Tanigawa Hiroshi, and Miura Yasuyuki moved into *doya* in Kotobuki from 1966 to 1967, setting precedents for the social workers who came later like Nomoto Sankichi. The social workers at the Livelihood Hall worked from 9am to 9pm, and even after hours in *doya* rooms and snack bars for counseling (Nomoto 1977:65). The local groups and activities launched by these social workers included: a children’s library, an afterschool study group, a boys’ baseball team (Matsukage Shadows), the publication of a newspaper for middle-school students, Season (*Kisetsu*), Kotobuki Health Club (*Kotobuki Hoken no Kai*) in requesting the dispatching of a free nightly X-ray

examination van to Kotobuki, and the publication of Kotobuki News (*Kotobuki Shinbun*). One of the long lasting movements was Kotobuki Communal Childcare (*Kotobuki Kyōdō Hoiku*), launched in 1973 led by the Livelihood Hall social worker Tanaka Toshio, his wife, Tanaka Fujie (a youth counselor in Kotobuki), a photographer and day labor unionist Kagoshima Masaaki and his wife, and Sugimoto Kimiko, a single mother and day laborer (*Kotobuki Kyōdō Hoiku* 1982). Modeled after kibbutz in Israel, Japanese Brazilians' Comunidade Yuba in Brazil, and Japan's Yamagishi Group, Kotobuki Childcare aimed at raising children in the neighborhood (*chiiki*), instead of at home or in a children's facility (Tanaka 2009a: 43-44). Based in the third floor Livelihood Hall, the movement lasted for almost ten years.

Meanwhile, Kotobuki Health Group provided an impetus for the participating day laborers to take initiatives in local issues and lead the movement toward the formation of the Self-Governing Association in Kotobuki. Soon after they succeeded in pressuring the City Government to dispatch nightly X-ray vans to Kotobuki, a fire broke out at a *doya* (*Sōun-sō*) and spread to the neighboring *doya* afflicting twenty-four households of 265 residents on May 25th of 1968. The day laborers, who took part in Kotobuki Health Group, worked with social workers at the Livelihood Hall to rise against the *doya* owners for violating the construction law (Murata 1992) and launched Kotobukichō 5/25 Fire Victims' Compensation Request Alliance. After two months of negotiation with the *doya* owners, the Alliance succeeded in getting 2,000 yen plus 5 days of free lodging vouchers as a compensation for each victim. Building on the momentum, the social workers launched the monthly Kotobuki News (*Kotobuki Shinbun*) on August 1st of 1968 with a circulation of 500, sold at 5 yen to day laborers. On the top page of the first issue, they

stated that the objective of the publication was to make a residents' association (*Kotobuki Jūmin no Kai*). With a year of preparation, they succeeded in collecting 850 signatures of the residents, and finally announced the formation of Kotobuki District Self-Governing Association in April 1969. While dozens of day laborer residents, *doya* managers and retailers served on the board, the leading roles were taken by Kinoshita Yōkichi, a secretary-general of Kanagawa Prefecture Lodging Business Cooperative Union and a welfare commissioner (*minsei iin*), Nakata Shirō, a counselor of drug addiction in the neighboring Kogane-chō, Murata Yukio, a social worker at Kotobuki Welfare Center, and Akiba Shigeru, a local restaurant manager (Nomoto 1977:230). Murata Yukio's office in Kotobuki Welfare Center right across "the Center," operated as the office of Kotobuki District Self-Governing Association.

While social workers took the lead in community organizing, day laborers' activism did not take off in Kotobuki until the mid-1970s. The most notable actions were the ten-days' strike led by All Japan Seamen's Union in November 1965 and the sporadic small scale local riots in 1965 and 1966 (Tanaka 2009a: 50-52), yet an organized action by Kotobuki day laborers only appeared in 1973, when San'ya activists came to Kotobuki and guided the organizing of the Kotobuki Arise Group (*Kotobuki Tachi-Kai*) among Kotobuki day laborers (Tanaka 2009a:58-59). Kotobuki Arise Group arranged the first Winter Survival Struggle (*Ettō Tōsō*) in Kotobuki in the ten-day period from December 29th, 1973 to January 6th, 1974. As the government offices closed down during this period, Year-end Year-beginning Close-down Countermeasures had been introduced to Kotobuki since 1966-67, so the Livelihood Hall could keep offering consultation services and provide shelter to those in need during the holidays. However, in 1973-74, Kotobuki

Arise Group teamed up with the Kotobuki Self-Governing Association to conduct their own activities during this period (Nomoto 1977:75-76). They set up headquarters (*honbu*), a Soup Kitchen Team (*taki dashi-han*), a Medical Team (*iryō-han*), a Patrol Team (*patorōru-han*), and a Livelihood Consultation Team (*seikatsu sōdan-han*) in the Livelihood Hall, following the structure of the Winter Struggles in San'ya and Kamagasaki, the tradition that persists today within *yoseba* districts and homeless activism. It was also this time that the first communal memorial service for deceased day laborers (*jinminsō*) was held in Kotobuki Park to mark the end of the Winter Survival Struggle.

This first Winter Struggle set the ground for the occupation of the Livelihood Hall by day laborers and the formation of day laborers union in the following year. As the oil shocks in 1973 and 1974 left many day laborers jobless in Kotobuki, the winter of 1974 looked especially dire. Kotobuki Arise Group formed the Winter Struggle Executive Committee, on November 20, 1974, to negotiate with the Public Welfare Department of Yokohama City Government to leave the management of the third and fourth floor of the Livelihood Hall to the day laborers, and for the distribution of Year-end Relief and extra-legal measures (food and lodging vouchers) along with other demands. Fearing the outbreak of a riot, the City Government gave the permit under the name, Kotobuki District Self-Governing Association Winter Survival Executive Committee (*Kotobuki Chiku Jichikai Ettō Jikkō Iinkai*) (Nomoto 1977:74-5), while also establishing Kotobuki Countermeasures Bureau (*Kotobuki Taisaku-shitsu*) as a task force to prevent and quell any commotion in Kotobuki. Staying nights on the third and fourth floors of Livelihood

Hall, the day laborers conducted the Winter Struggle as the previous year,³⁵ but this time, instead of ending in ten-days' period, they continued to occupy the Hall and put forward their agenda such as demanding the employment of Kotobuki day laborers for the construction of Yokohama Stadium. As the occupation lasted longer than usual, and tension with the authorities arose, the Self-Governing Association withdrew from the Winter Struggle on Feb 17, after which the Kotobuki Countermeasures Bureau declared the occupation illegal.

As the recession continued, the unemployed day laborers who found shelter on the fourth floor of Livelihood Hall mounted to 200 in average per night (Nomoto 1977:84). They collected donations to cook meals everyday, which amounted to 2,000 meals twice a day during its peak (Tanaka 2009:45), and conducted nightly visits to check in on the state of day laborers on the street every two hours in the night (Nomoto 1977:80). It was from these collective activities that Kotobuki day laborers came to conceive the plan of forming a union with the suggestion by an activist from Kanagawa Labor Union Activists' Council (*Kanagawa Rōdō Kumai Katsudōsha Kaigi*). Finally, Jūnichirō (Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union) was launched on May 18, 1975 (Tanaka 2009a:45) with the following manifesto.

The majority of movements and activities in Kotobuki have been led by volunteers (*boranteia*) and administrative officers (*gyōsei shokuin*) until 1974. However, the day laborers in Kotobuki, with their specialization in dock work and construction work, were affected by the oil shock in 1974 and were forced into the devastating situation of no work for a single day in a month, being denied their right to survival. At this critical moment, day laborers for the first time stood at the frontline of movements

³⁵ The beginning of the occupation is well recorded in the documentary made by Ogawa Production, *Yo-ho! Men's Ballad: Kotobuki, the free laborers' town* (*Dokkoi Ningenshū: Kotobuki, jiyū rōdōsha no machi* 1975). The screening of the film in Kotobuki itself became part of the occupation movement bringing in more laborers and sympathizers to support Jūnichirō.

and formed Kotobuki District Winter Struggle Executive Committee to deploy a mass struggle of force (*taishūteki jitsuryoku tōsō*). This tells us that all the power of problem-solving is in the hands of every single day laborer. While the laborers' movements in Tokyo's San'ya and Osaka's Kamagasaki were born in the hot summer of the period of rapid growth, Kotobuki started its struggle as 'the Winter Shōgun.' We formed our union in May 1975 based on these mass struggles of "Give us work!" "Ensure our right to live!" "Provide unemployment benefits!" among others.
(Jūnichirō Manifesto, in Jūminkon 1984:20)

Jūnichirō continued on its struggle on the local level for unemployment benefits and public employment, and on the national level with other *yoseba* unions, such as participating in the Nationwide Day Laborers' Collective Struggle (*Zenkoku Hiyatoi Kyōtō*) during the occupation. Meanwhile, the third floor of the Livelihood Hall was run by Kotobuki Communal Childcare throughout this period, and the Livelihood Hall social workers continued on consultations on the ground in Kotobuki against the order by the authorities to return to Naka Welfare Office. During this period, the City Government only acknowledged the Self-Governing Association as the residents' group of Kotobuki and negotiated exclusively with them for public welfare measures and neighborhood improvement fund (Nomoto 1977:75).

The antagonism between the Self-Governing Association and Jūnichirō ended with the occupation in 1980 with the mediation by the Public Welfare Division of City Government Staff Union on October 27, 1978. The Division arranged a Residents' Gathering (*Jūmin-kon*), in which eleven local groups, residents, and retailers participated, and the Livelihood Hall social workers, the Public Welfare Division of City Government Staff Union members, and Kotobuki Welfare Center social workers, participated as observers. Pastor Masu Iwao of the Japan Baptist Yokohama Church and Kotobuki District Public Welfare Commissioners' Council was elected to be the representative of the gathering in negotiating with the City Government for the following year's budget for

Kotobuki-chō Clinic and over the issue of normalizing the operation of Livelihood Hall (Jūminkon 1984). As Jūnichirō and Kotobuki Communal Childcare agreed to withdraw from the Livelihood Hall in 1980, the Hall underwent renovation and was reopened in March 1981. The consultation service on the second floor resumed, and the management of the third and fourth floors were commissioned to the public welfare foundation, Kotobuki-chō Laborers' Welfare Association (*Kotobuki-chō Kinrōsha Fukushi Kyōkai*), which also operated the Center. The Welfare Association selected four managers of the Livelihood Hall, three of whom were to be selected by recommendation from the residents. As these three positions were taken by Jūnichirō members and sympathizers, in reality, the City Government had acknowledged the management of the Livelihood Hall by Jūnichirō and Kotobuki residents.

At the time of my fieldwork, most of those who were involved in the occupation and the foundation of Jūnichirō had passed away, moved to other places or to the backstage in Kotobuki. Kawase Seiji, who was one of the main participants of the occupation, tragically passed away in an accident at a construction site in 1984 (Chapter 6). Kagoshima Masaaki, who had been at the center of unionization and a key liason with other *yoseba* activists (Gill 2001:74-78), had largely discontinued his activities and appeared only at certain occasions, such as the annual negotiation with the authorities. During the time of my fieldwork, the most active members of Jūnichirō were Kondo Noboru and Yura Tetsuo, with Sudo Yoshimitsu and Murase helping the operation of soup kitchen, while Nara Mitsuo newly joined the union in 2011. The Livelihood Hall social worker, Tanaka Toshio acquired an M.D. to become a psychiatrist and opened the

first mental clinic in Kotobuki, Kotobuki Communal Clinic (*Kotobuki Kyōdō Shinryōjo*) in 1996.

Meanwhile, the consultation service moved out of the Livelihood Hall to the first floor of the Hamakaze Homeless Self-Reliance Support Center under a new name, Kotobuki Welfare Plaza in 2004. The first floor of the Livelihood Hall building was still operated as a prefectural kindergarten, the second floor had a small room for teenagers (*Seishōnen Hiroba*, Youth's Plaza), a meeting room, Jūnichirō's office, and the Self-Governing Association's office. This meeting room on the second floor was used mostly by Jūnichirō and Kotobuki District Center, for activities such as Kotobuki Soup Kitchen, the Winter Survival Struggle, Everyone's Film Screening, Kotobuki Youth Seminar, while the AA groups also used it for meetings. The third floor was used for afterschool care (*gakudō hoiku*). The fourth floor had an entertainment room, shower and laundry room open to the public, and a meeting room and managers' office. The office and the meeting room were used as a gathering place for Kotobuki Supporters' Exchange Group, as Takazawa Yukio (known as Origin) who represented Kotobuki Supporters' Exchange Group and two Jūnichirō members (Kagoshima Masaaki and Murase) were hired as the three Livelihood Hall managers along with one staff dispatched by Kotobuki Laborers' Welfare Association.

Kotobuki Today

As of September 2011, there were 122 *doya*, and 6,429 *doya* residents among the total population of 8,774 in 0.02 square miles of Kotobuki District (Kotobuki Fukushi Puraza 2012; Yokohama-shi Kenkō Fukushi Kyoku et al. 2014). Among *doya* residents, 5,242

(81% of doya residents) were recipients of livelihood protection, and 4,327 (67%) were over 60 (ibid)³⁶. Over the past few decades, the population has steadily grown, and while men have always consisted more than 85% of the total population, there was a significant rise in elderly welfare recipients.

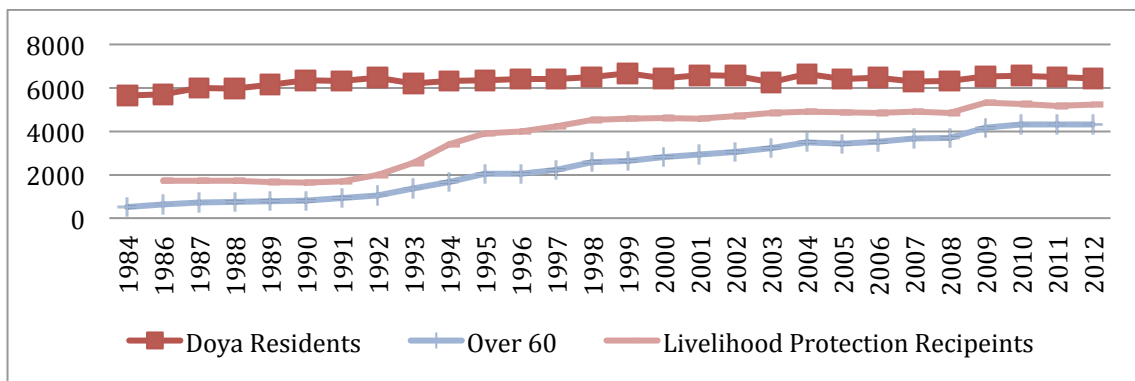


Figure 8. Population Trend in Kotobuki 1984-2012. Data from the annual surveys conducted by Kotobuki Welfare Plaza of the Department of Health and Welfare, Yokohama City Government.

This is attributable firstly, to the aging of the former day laborers who settled in the district, and secondly, and more importantly, to the continuing influx of elderly welfare recipients into the district. The end of the era of Kotobuki as a day laborers’ town can be seen in the reorganization of the Kotobuki Countermeasures Bureau, whose tasks were distributed between Kotobuki Welfare Plaza (*Kotobuki Fukushi Puraza*) and Public Assistance Countermeasures (*Engo Taisaku-shitsu*) in the 2000s. In 2014, there were four clinics,³⁷ five sheltered welfare workshops specializing in different types of disability,³⁸

³⁶ Although once the district was known for its international population amounting to 1,200 in 1991 (Yamamoto 2008:30-31), the economic recession and crackdowns on undocumented workers left only about fifty registered foreigners in the district.

³⁷ Kotobuki-chō Laborers’ Welfare Association Clinic, Kotobuki Communal Clinic for mental illness, Ōishi Clinic for alcohol addiction. Kotobuki-chō Dental Clinic.

³⁸ Kotobuki Welfare Workshop (*Kotobuki Fukushi Sagyōsho*, established in 1983) for people with physical disability, Donkey’s House (*Roba no Ie*, established in 1988) for people with mental illness, Bird of the Wind (*Kaze no Bādo*, established in 1997) for all types of disability are in Kotobuki district, while Shalom’s House (*Sharōmu no Ie*, the

seven helper stations for home helpers,³⁹ two visiting nurse stations,⁴⁰ five day care centers for the elderly, three day care centers for people suffering from mental illness and substance abuse in Kotobuki and in its immediate vicinities.⁴¹

With soup kitchens hosted by different groups two or three times every day and free consultation services by various support groups, Kotobuki had become a place where anyone could apply for welfare service and find shelter, food, and medical care regardless of their background. At the same time, anyone from outside who wanted could easily find a voluntary support activity to participate in. Volunteers were often drawn into a labor distribution system that granted them with differential obligations and responsibilities as their affiliation with local organizations extended over a long time period. The “veteran volunteers” of Kotobuki District Center, for example, jokingly called Ms. Mimori Hisako, the chief staff of the center, the ‘labor broker’ (*tehaishi*) of volunteers, since she allocated a role to each volunteer and supervised them. The publicity activities from guest lectures to writing and sending newsletters of local organizations effectively recruited a “reserved army” of volunteers from Kotobuki residents to students, who could easily fill in the spot.

first established in 1989, the second in 1998, the third in 2001, in Ishikawa-chō) for all types of disability, Aruku Hama Port Workshop (*Aruku Hama Pōto Sagyōsho*, established in Okina-chō) for people with alcohol addiction, and Tefu Tefu Workshop for people with mild disability (*Tefu Tefu Sagyōsho*, established in 2012 in Okina-chō) are in the neighboring districts.

³⁹ Yokohama City Welfare Service Association (1998), Ōishi Clinic Cosmo Helper Station (2001), Custom Long-term Care Support Center Kotobuki (2001), Kotobuki Long-term Care, Chōseidō Home Helper, Care Line Begasasu.

⁴⁰ Naka Ward Medical Center Visiting Nurse Station (1994), Cosmos Kotobuki Visiting Nurse Station.

⁴¹ Aruku Day Care Center for alcohol rehabilitation (the first established in 1993, the second in 1999, the group home Honmoku-sō in 1997), Kotobuki Communal Clinic Day Care Center for people with mental illness (established in 1999), and the Kotobuki-chō Clinic Day Care Center for people with mental illness.

The following chapter will discuss how Kotobuki became the hub of support networks surrounding the figure of “the homeless” following the atrocious incidents in 1983.

CHAPTER 3

The Emergence of “the Homeless”

Becoming a Resident of the Homeless Town

On November 7, 2011, at eight in the morning on a chilly Monday, I hurried towards the Naka Ward Office. A group of thirty-some men were loitering in front of the main entrance. Some were standing up and chatting while others were crouching on the curb each carrying their own big backpacks and plastic bags full of personal belongings. As I approached, Jūnichirō labor union staff and other volunteers greeted me. The piercing November breeze swept through the flock, and everyone ducked their head into their winter jackets. Soon after, Origin, the secretary general of Kotobuki Winter Struggle Executive Committee (*Kotobuki Ettō Jikkō Iin-kai*) and the representative of Kotobuki Supporters' Exchange Group (*Kotobuki Shiensha Kōryū-kai*) asked people to line up in front of the back entrance. After dividing the fourteen applicants into two groups depending on whether they have previously contacted the Network, Origin paired the applicants with one volunteer each to accompany them throughout the process. The volunteers introduced themselves to their appointed applicants and helped them fill out two information cards – one for the Supporter's Network, the other for the Welfare Office. Shortly, we moved to the elevator, conveniently placed in the back entrance to convey the welfare applicants directly up to the Public Welfare Division (*Engo-ka*) on the third floor without interfering with the traffic of ‘regular citizens’ or civil workers across the main entrance. It was through this third floor that thousands of people found shelter in

Kotobuki for decades. While half a dozen who came for food vouchers (*pan-ken*) lined up behind the right-most reception desk, the rest of us waited until everyone was settled to get prepared for the screening interview for livelihood protection. At eight-thirty, the bell rang and Origin lined up the applicant-supporter pairs and seated them on the benches facing the closed doors of the interview booths, as the applicant and his paired volunteer started to be called in by turns for an interview.

I was paired with Mr. Kitano, a relatively youthful man in his early fifties. A short but stocky body, neat haircut, nicely shaved round face, and orderly white teeth bore none of the street-worn markers typical of the homeless. Despite his apparent familiarity with the welfare system, it seemed to be his first time to have a volunteer accompaniment, and he was quite shy and apologetic in his demeanor. He kept telling me that it used to be easy to apply for the livelihood protection alone, like fifteen years ago in 1995 when he first applied, but it became more rigorous these past four or five years. He was particularly anxious about being sent to Hamakaze Homeless Self-Reliance Support Center again, like he had been two years ago. “Those young’uns in Hamakaze are different from us who’s been sticking around for a long time. Here we’re all peaceful, we don’t bother with each other. But in Hamakaze, there are the twenties and thirties who came from different towns and parks. They are wild, they pick on you and fight. They have a different attitude, you know.” As he filled out his information card, I learned that he had been sleeping at the Yokohama Stadium for roughly ten months. Not recognizing his face from the numerous nightly homeless visits (*patorōru*) I made there, I pictured him huddled up in one of those dozens of fully covered cardboard boxes. I also learned that he came from Hokkaido, while his *honseki* (family registry) is in Tochigi Prefecture,

and he did not hold any residential registry at the time, following the typical life course of many day laborers. He said he knew Kotobuki from twenty years ago for work, when he used to do anything from stevedoring to construction. When I asked him what his most well-known construction work was, he casually answered “the Landmark Tower,” the trademark of the beloved waterfront of Yokohama. Throughout all the years roaming from Yokohama to Tokyo and back to Yokohama, alternating homelessness with welfare-facilitated life, he managed to keep his hospital record of treatment for myocardial infarction from sixteen years ago. He must have learned from his first entry to the welfare system that this record was to be his life-long golden key to the system.

Soon after, an interviewer called out our number and we went into booth number six. A lean, thirty-something looking man in white collar suits pulled out Mr. Kitano’s information card and greeted him perfunctorily, “it’s been a while, Mr. Kitano,” noticing that Mr. Kitano had been out of the Naka Ward database system since April in 2009 after having been dismissed from Hamakaze. Mr. Kitano replied that he had moved to Sumida Ward in Tokyo, where he received welfare assistance to rent an apartment, but with continuing failure to get a job, he felt obliged to leave. Mr. Kitano stressed that he had done nothing wrong, duly reported to the real estate company and cleaned up the apartment before he left. The interviewer asked who his caseworker was and made a short call to the Sumida Ward Welfare Division to check the facts. While waiting for the return phone call, the interviewer continued to inquire about Mr. Kitano’s life trajectory, making meticulous note, adding to the already thorough record of Mr. Kitano’s personal information. The interviewer drew a family tree, as Mr. Kitano narrated how he and his four younger sisters got separated from each other to different relatives after their parents

passed away. He was raised by his mother's sister in Hokkaido until he finished high school, after which he left for Tokyo in search of work. Following ten years of miscellaneous jobs from newspaper delivery to pachinko clerk, he started day laboring in Kotobuki in his thirties. To the question of whether or not he had an addiction (alcohol, drug, gamble), gang affiliation, or debt, Mr. Kitano denied any such problems. After over an hour-and-a-half long interview, and with the confirmation from the Sumida Ward, the interviewer declared that Mr. Kitano was now accepted for the livelihood protection: "From now on, your task is to look for a job and take care of your body." Mr. Kitano thanked the interviewer and then bowed to me multiple times, telling me that he would not have been admitted without my company.

That day, fourteen homeless men, all accompanied by voluntary supporters, applied for livelihood protection at the Naka Ward welfare office. All but one, who had complications with his previous welfare record became official residents of Kotobuki: eleven found residence in a *doya* room and two chose to enter the Hamakaze Homeless Self-Reliance Support Center. This was one of the collective applications (*shūdan shinsei*) for livelihood protection organized by Kotobuki Winter Struggle Executive Committee. The committee consisted of the main organizers of homeless support activities in Kotobuki: Mr. Kondo Noboru and Mr. Yura Tetsuo of Jūnichiro, Origin, Mr. Mori Hideo, and Mr. Watanabe of Kotobuki Supporters' Exchange Group, Ms. Mimori Hisako and Mr. Hamano Ichirō of Kotobuki District Center, and other sympathizers. Although Jūnichirō and Kotobuki Supporters' Exchange Group, each based respectively on the second and fourth floor of Kotobuki Livelihood Hall, offered free consultation and support services all-year long, they organized collective applications so as to gather more

applicants and supporters and display collective bargaining power to secure the right to apply for welfare assistance, which was often denied on an individual basis. Collective applications were scheduled typically at the end of the Winter Struggle on January 4, when the welfare office resumed services after the six-days of national holidays, and additionally at roughly bi-monthly intervals.

As shown in Mr. Kitano's application process above, voluntary supporters played their role simply by accompanying the applicants throughout the interview. Each question and procedure during the interview, from a close scrutiny of familial relations and their financial conditions to the repeated suggestion to enter an institution like Hamakaze, were meant to discourage the applicants from seeking welfare assistance. The presence of a third person during the interview process prevents the interviewers from grilling the applicants further and turning them away with false excuses. The seemingly smooth process that Mr. Kitano went through was the hard won fruit of a long-term struggle by local activists, especially those in the Winter Struggle Executive Committee to make Kotobuki district uniquely open to all those in search of welfare assistance. In contrast, other welfare offices often required a permanent address in the given administrative area to be eligible for livelihood protection. The Naka Ward welfare office allowed applicants to set a *doya* of one's choice in Kotobuki as their permanent address; those who slept rough for more than six months in Yokohama city were considered to be qualified residents of the city to apply for welfare assistance.

In the year of 2011, 5,161 recipients of livelihood protection were living Kotobuki district, and 1,257 were newly admitted to Hamakaze (Kotobuki Fukushi Puraza 2012;

Yokohama-shi Kenkō Fukushi-kyoku 2012).⁴² Looking into how Kotobuki embraced all those who lacked shelter or means of livelihood, I could trace most support activities, from regular nightly visits to the homeless, free medical consultations, open-air soup kitchens, to collective applications for livelihood protection, back to the dreadful attacks on homeless men in and around Kotobuki district in the early 1980s.

In this chapter, I offer a close reading of the local and national responses to the incidents to track the formation of the frames of understanding and repertoires of actions for homeless support in Kotobuki today. I suggest that the attacks on homeless men, seen as a fundamental violation of the right to survival, were crucial for the local activists to start regarding the state of being homeless as a condition that called for action. Those who dwelled on the street and public space, regardless of their life trajectories, health conditions, or ideological orientations and values, were gradually seen as one large category of people, who needed to be supported by and connected to the activities based in the district of Kotobuki. While the civilian network of homeless support in Kotobuki initially counted more on extra-legal measures brought about by negotiating with the municipal governments, later ‘the homeless’ emerged once again as a target of national policy. The Homeless Self-Reliance Support Law (2002) launched in the wake of the Koizumi Junichirō administration’s (2001-2006) neoliberal reforms, boosted the flow of the homeless into Kotobuki and to the Hamakaze Homeless Self-Reliance Support Center and other related facilities concentrated in Kotobuki. While the Homeless Law promoted

⁴² This number includes all those who were newly admitted, excluding those who renewed their stay. From April 1, 2011 Hamakaze could accommodate 250 clients in total (230 male, 20 female) at any given time, expanding from its previous capacity of 226 (206 male, 20 female). The admittance period was set as 30 days, after which clients could request for extensions up to 180 days. In order to increase its utilization rate, Hamakaze started to allow extensions up to a year on October 1, 2011.

“self-reliance,” which was in potential contradiction with the premises upon which the various the civilian support activities operated, for the homeless, the governmental program and civilian support offered complementary resources they could alternately rely upon in Kotobuki, as in the case of Mr. Kitano. By demonstrating the historical processes that led to the emergence of civilian homeless support networks in Kotobuki, this chapter examines how “the homeless” subject re-signified urban underclass enclaves like Kotobuki based on distinctive networks and logic of care for homeless survival.

“Yokohama Incident of Serial Attacks on Vagrants” (1982-3)

Like anyone else who got involved in the activities in Kotobuki, I heard about the Yokohama Incident every now and then at the orientation and reflection meetings for the soup kitchens and nightly visits to the homeless organized by Jūnichirō, Kotobuki District Center, and Kotobuki Supporters’ Exchange Group. During these meetings, which were typically added in the beginning and end of participatory activities, the organizers gave briefings on recent incidents of bullying against the homeless in various parts of Yokohama City and beyond, with a short mention on the Yokohama Incident as the starting point when there was a newly joined volunteer. On special occasions, such as Kotobuki Winter Survival Struggle and Kotobuki Youth Seminar, when many students, activists, and volunteers visited Kotobuki, Mr. Kondo Noboru or Origin gave a lengthy orientation about the dreadful attacks in the early 1980s with copies of related news articles at the time. As I looked into the news and collections of reports by local groups following the Yokohama Incident, I noticed that, despite the great sensation the incident caused at the national level at the time, there was a huge gap between the local and

national perceptions of the incident, which ultimately led local activists and sympathizers to form an alternative alliance of homeless support network based in Kotobuki.

The national media reports on the Incident started to come out on February 11, 1983, after it was revealed that a group of teenage boys was under investigation for the charge of injuring and murdering a dozen ‘vagrants’ (*furōsha*) in Yokohama. While the attacks and killings started at the end of 1982, the incidents barely attracted any attention, besides the local newspaper, *Kanagawa Shinbun*, which made a short report on February 8. It was only after the police reported that the suspects were teenagers that the incidents triggered media frenzy.

Indiscriminate Bloodshed by Middle-school Students

Successive Attacks on Vagrants: Thrashed with Bare Hands Leaving Three Dead and Thirteen Injured – In Yokohama, Group of Ten

There have been successive attacks on vagrants (*furōsha*) who slept in parks and the underground passage in the Naka-Ward of Yokohama City by a juvenile group, between January 12 and February 10, which left three dead and thirteen injured. The Joint Investigation Headquarters of Criminal Investigation Section One of Kanagawa Prefectural Police and the police stations of Isezaki and Kagachō concluded that ten juveniles, including seven middle school students were culpable for these crimes and arrested Boy A (from Ōoka of Minami-Ward of Yokohama City, unemployed) on the charge of inflicting bodily injury resulting in death.....

The direct charge against Boy A and his gang was about the collective assault on Sudō Taizō (60, originally from Aomori Prefecture, no fixed abode, a free laborer) on February 5 around ten in the evening. After beating up and kicking Mr. Sudō, who was sleeping in front of a store in Yamashita Park of Yamashitachō, Naka-Ward, Yokohama City, the boys put him in a garbage can in the park and dragged him around in it before fleeing away. Mr. Sudō was found later by a tourist passing by, who noticed the moans and called 110. Although he was taken to the hospital, he died on the morning of the seventh due to brain contusion and costal fractures.

..... Naka-Ward, where these incidents took place, is the midtown area of Yokohama City, and Kotobukichō is one of the three top flophouse districts, following Airin District of Osaka and Sanya of Tokyo, that accommodate free laborers. Recently, there have been about one hundred vagrants living in this district and the neighboring Matsukagechō or Hagoromochō and who pass the night with bonfires while receiving public livelihood assistance from the Welfare Office of Yokohama City.

(*Mainichi Shinbun* 1983. 2. 12. Evening)

As news reports poured out each day, more and more surprising facts were released, and the media could not exhaust the sensational aspects of the incidents as shown in the titles of the articles that followed: “Insane Bullying of the Weak” (*Asahi* 2.12 Evening, 1983), “Killing and Injuring the Vagrants: “Half for Fun””(*Asahi*, 2.12 Evening, 1983), “The Boys Who were Spellbound in the Pleasure of Insanity” (*Yomiuri* 2.13, 1983). Now the public came to know that the incidents were part of a game the boys called “hunting the *pūtarō*/beggars,” for which they had developed a daily route: Isezaki District (game center) – Kannai Station Underground Passage – Yokohama Park (Stadium) – Yamashita Park – China Town (*Asahi* 2.15.1983). Some of the boys confessed that the purpose was to practice and prepare for the fights the group was going to have with another teen gang in the neighborhood. Some said it was a perfect daily pastime to fight boredom without spending money. While some of the boys justified their acts as ‘cleaning-up’ (“Since there are *pūtarō* (*furōsha*, vagrant) in the underground, it stinks like alcohol and is dirty. Let’s wipe them out.” (*Asahi* 2.13. 1983, *Mainichi* 2.13.1983), what shocked the public the most was that the boys did not recognize why the attacks were so horrific, as revealed in one of the boys’ comment: “I’m surprised that we had to get arrested for this and that the society is making such a big deal of it” (*Mainichi* 2.15.1983).

With the question of how a society could make sense of such brutal violence committed by its juvenile members who even lacked the moral sensibility to conceive of the severity of their crime, the media quickly resorted to social pathology and criminology. Statistics were shown to problematize the juvenilization of crimes and the increase of ‘indiscriminate violence,’ indicating that Japan was also inflicted by the

typically Western urban problems that accompanied atomization and isolation. Moreover, the background of the attackers also attested to the collapse of the family and school systems: it turns out that most of the boys were from a “laissez-faire family” (*hōnin katei*), with divorced parents or stepparents, and already showed precursors of their criminality in their bad performance at schools. Meanwhile, another incident in Machida, Tokyo, broke the news on February 15, in which a middle-school teacher and Hiroshima bomb sufferer stabbed a student who had repeatedly teased him. Now the Yokohama Incident and the Machida Incident were lumped together as a symptom of *yowaimono ijime* (bullying of the weak), a problem that had begun to disturb educators a few years previously. Newspapers printed special edited columns like “When Kids Attack ‘the Weak’” (*Asahi*, Feb 17-19. 1983), or “Ijime Society: The Pathology of the Incidents in Yokohama and Machida” (*Mainichi*, February 18-22. 1983). Scholars and social commentators commonly pointed out the over-competitive social atmosphere after the oil crisis that yielded stress in school and family, leading to bullying. As one column puts it, the logic goes “from defending livelihood, to defending society, and to defending the nation, and to eliminating the useless.” (*Mainichi* Feb. 22. 1983) At this point, the Yokohama Incident was no longer a matter of teenagers assaulting “the vagrants,” but a social problem of a weakened respect for life.

What is noteworthy here is that in the development of events, the victims were gradually erased from the picture. With the exception of *Mainichi* that used the term ‘free laborer’ for some victims, the victims unanimously appeared as merely “nonresistant

vagrants” who were attacked while sleeping (or drinking).⁴³ In other words, the media included the victims in the picture as a rhetorical accessory to highlight the cruelty of the attackers, at the expense of discussing the existential conditions of the “vagrants.” The only explanation provided of the “vagrants” was that there were many of them in the district. In this way, the media, commentators and experts effectively represented the attack on the “vagrants” as a threat to civil society without delving into questions like: How could these attacks have continued so long? Why wasn’t there anybody stopping the boys, in such a busy quarter of the city, even when the attacks happened during the daytime? Why couldn’t any of the victims fight back? Why didn’t the incidents get the media attention until the boys were arrested? What were the bases of the sense of righteousness the boys demonstrated in their acts of “cleaning up the city?”

These questions would have made the Japanese public an accomplice to these crimes. Instead, the major media and policy makers swiftly lightened such a burden by laying the responsibility on one section of society: teenage education. Notably, the only actual governmental countermeasure at the national level after this media frenzy was the directive made by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to strengthen human rights education (*jinken kyōiku*) and cultivation of sentiments (*jōsō kyōiku*) at school. It became clear that the victims were made irrelevant to the incidents when nine day laborers were arrested for distributing flyers in front of a middle school in Yokohama

⁴³ One newspaper article was exceptional and pioneering in this sense, in that it shows an incipient form of the science of homelessness that would prosper in the next decade: “These people can be classified into three large groups. Firstly, those who did not get their daily income because they failed to get their daily job and are temporarily sleeping rough. Secondly, those who have the will to work, but have lost the prospect of a job for a long time, because of injury or old-age. Thirdly, those who lack any will to work, or have lost the ability to work, so that they have completely no way to secure an income for the long-term.” (*Asahi*, 2.14. 1983. “News Three-Sided Mirror”)

explaining the socio-economic and historical background of the “vagrants.” Although the victims’ population had to wait another decade to gain national attention, the incidents left an indelible scar on the local society, and irreversibly changed the perspectives and activities of the local activists and organizations.

The day laborer unions and the sympathizers of *yoseba* across the country came to a realization that more and more of the people they intended to represent were not on job sites but on the streets struggling to hold on to their lives. It was then understood that the most urgent task was to prevent the killings of those on the streets rather than to demand more work. Upon their investigation and surveys after the incidents, the day laborer unions and supporters realized that similar attacks had occurred since at least 1975, and that municipalities, police, and local residents had made attempts to expel people sleeping on the streets. Day laborers subsequently gained the realization that there was a huge gap between their self-perception as ‘free laborers,’ who had bolstered the post-war economy, and the contempt and hatred that regular citizens, administrators and police had towards them, such that they had to persuade the public that they, too, had the right to live. Many activists and organizations of *yoseba* joined forces to develop support networks and strategies to protect the lives of those on the streets, and these later come to play an important role in the enactment and implementation of the Homeless Law.

The Birth of Homeless Activism in Kotobuki

While the local society of Kotobuki was left shocked, enraged, and confused by the development of events and sudden media attention, the media swiftly withdrew from the scene following the decision of the court, leaving behind diagnoses and solutions made

by renowned specialists that had little to do with those most closely related to the Yokohama Incident. The day laborers and the homeless who lived in and around Kotobuki realized that their voices were not reflected in the solution of the Incident, but more than that, the Incident could be used against them. After paying a modest amount in reparation to the family of the deceased (30,000 yen, about 125 dollars in the exchange rate in 1983) and to those injured (10,000 yen, about 41.7 dollars in the exchange rate in 1983), Yokohama City began to encourage the vagrants of Naka Ward to move into facilities for their own safety. Facing the unexpected development of the event, local activists, mostly members and sympathizers of Jūnichirō, worked together to put forward their interpretation of and countermeasures for the Incident, accordingly. They requested a discussion with all the managerial officers of the municipal governments below the prefectural level (i.e., the Yokohama City Government and Naka Ward Office).

During the discussion on February 27, 1983, Jūnichirō and sympathizers argued that the Incident was only a reflection of a deep-rooted discrimination against day laborers and the continuation of an on-going expulsion of the homeless instigated by the municipality's policies and projects, such as the Refreshing Yokohama Campaign (*Yokohama Sawayaka Undō*). They condemned the city for using the Incident to further expel the homeless in order for the city to promote development projects without improving the social security condition of the homeless (Kawase 1985:174-175). However, the answers the activists received from the officials were repetitive and nominal: "we see lack of consideration, yet no evidence of discrimination." When asked what the city would do for teenage education to prevent such a tragedy, the Chief of the City Education Bureau answered that they would encourage schools to initiate activities

to raise respect for life, such as raising communal pets at schools, an answer that further infuriated the activists. Starting the following day, Jūnichirō organized sit-in demonstrations in the lobby of the City Hall, and formed an executive committee with a larger group of sympathizers for ‘the Denunciation of the Discriminative Massacre Against the “Vagrants” in Yokohama’ (the Denunciation) after the Memorial Rally in Yamashita Park on March 20. Meanwhile, Jūnichirō members took action to reach local teenagers, and started distributing fliers in front of middle-schools in the neighborhood, following the action of other day laborers’ unions in Kamagasaki District, Osaka and Sanya District, Tokyo that had already initiated such an action in their locales. The hand-written flyer signed by Jūnichirō was titled, “We are Enraged!” and despite its combative tone, the main message was rather a desperate appeal to treat ‘us’ as humans and not garbage:

Middle-school students! We are the day laborers of Kotobuki. You might have already forgotten about the Incident, but it has been two months since its occurrence and the world is falling into oblivion as if things have been sorted out. We realized through this Incident that ‘pūtarō’ came to be a word to call us along with disdainful words like ‘hopeless brats,’ ‘filthy,’ and ‘sluggards.’ Your comrades, in the name of ‘hunting the pūtarō,’ continuously attacked our comrades. And they said they once stopped by Kotobuki-chō to look for a ‘game.’ When did you start to think us as ‘garbage that none would reprimand us no matter what we do with them’? After the defeat of the Second World War, when most people became unemployed, there were people who gathered in Yokohama Noge area in search of a port job related to the American Base, and these people came to be known as ‘the ‘pūtarō of Hama (Yokohama, seashore)’. However they were the symbol of the flourishing Yokohama, and were seen at least as people desperately trying to live. Even during the continuing economic growth, it was our physical labor in construction, shipping, and ship building that supported the growth. Yet we did not get any security for our lives and had nothing else to rely on but our own bodies. However, eight years ago, we lost our jobs in the midst of global recession. Your comrades, ‘cleaned up’ our comrades as if we were not even human beings. Then, the adults, rather than taking it as a preview of a fearsome age that amounts to the German Nazis’ ‘Vagrant Hunting’ and ‘Jewish Hunting,’ or the Great Japanese Empire’s ‘Korean Hunting’ and ‘Nanjing Massacre,’ heaved a sigh of relief with the

announcement of the results of the investigation showed that the Incident was due to ‘infantile cruelty.’ What we want is a relationship between you and us that lets us, rather than seeing those who barely get by as ‘filthy,’ gaze at the state of society reflected in them, and to change this social condition.

Although this was just one of the countless fliers Jūnichirō had drafted that contained all the elements that characterized the Japanese New Leftist stance from workers’ solidarity to anti-imperialism,⁴⁴ it was innovative in its designation of “comrades,” based not on common interests or against an ideological enemy, but on the existential state of being on the street. By equating homelessness as a logical consequence of doing day labor, Jūnichirō effectively declared its solidarity with all the homeless, regardless of their actual work history or alliance with the union. The rather generous designation of ‘comrade,’ and a nonsectarian approach to local issues would later become a trademark of Kotobuki activism, in contrast to other *yoseba* districts across the country. It was a strategic, and also inevitable, move for activists in Kotobuki to readdress the structure of discrimination and fortify the whole district to fight against such discrimination by broadening their target of advocacy to all those whose lives were in constant peril. This led to the emergence of a category of people (*hisabetsu shūdan*, *lit.* discriminated group) whose lives needed to be protected by *seikatsu hogo* (livelihood assistance, *lit.* livelihood protection), which also yielded a constant tension between the ramifications and

⁴⁴ The New Left (*Shin Sayoku*) refers to the radical political groups of students and laborers emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in Japan inspired by the international New Left movement. Breaking off from the Old Left of the Japanese Communist Party and Japan Socialist Party, the Japanese New Left led confrontational social protests, from the *Anpo* (literally, *security*) struggle against the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the US and Japan to the *Zengkyōtō* uprisings (*Zengaku Kyōtō Kaigi*, All Universities’ Collective Struggle Council) from 1968 to 1969. However, with increasingly more violent factional conflicts, the New Left lost public support by the 1980s. Many of the non-Christian long-term activists and supporters of Kotobuki either started their activities in Kotobuki as a member of a New Leftist group or after having left one.

understandings of categories according to legal, medical and discursive uses. Also noticeable in the flyer is how much the Incident called attention to the power of labeling and the importance of delivering a proper image to the public, as shown in Jūnichirō's attempt to re-appropriate the meaning of *pūtārō* and problematize the discriminative connotation of *furōsha* (vagrant). The Incident made it clear that the most urgent task in Kotobuki was to engage with the common citizens' understanding of the district and its people. Thus, the activism in Kotobuki that was once focused on fighting against and negotiating with the government shifted its aim to persuade the public and gain support. As seen in the last sentence, the first step towards such a task was to present Kotobuki as the showcase of the societal contradictions in Japan.

In most cases, flyers were not received cordially by the schools, and finally the whole activity was discontinued on April 23, 1983, as nine day laborers were arrested for 'trespassing,' during their protest against the Namamugi Middle School principal who allegedly ordered the students to dump the flyers as soon as they received them. While the arrest attested to the hostility of the public against day laborers, it also attracted more sympathizers to Kotobuki. The Executive Committee for the Denunciation was able to gather a group of social commentators and educators to hold a symposium about the Yokohama Incident and urge the Welfare Office of Naka Ward to accept the application for Livelihood Protection by the unemployed and increase the value of food vouchers (*pan-ken*). One of the most long-lasting and significant activities introduced by the Executive Committee was the Saturday Patrol (*Doyō Patorōru*), which eventually brought forth the Thursday Patrol (*Mokuyō Patorōru*) and other regular patrols around the neighborhood. While the annual Winter Struggle Patrols that had been organized by

Jūnichirō were considered an emergency measure to assess the well-being of the unemployed day laborers during the New Year's Holidays, when deaths from hunger and exposure in the neighborhood tended to peak (Kagoshima 1998: 46-7), these weekly patrols were meant to be a regular activity throughout the year to construct alternative governance, or 'reverse public-security.' In other words, the purpose of the activity was more than calling an ambulance for those in need, but to develop a network to 'defend the homeless' (Tanaka 2009a:47) from violence, either by the authorities or by the citizens, in contrast to the police patrols that only concerned the security of the regular citizenry and usually resulted in the expulsion or internment of the homeless.

Thursday Patrol: Discovering the "Homeless Problem"

While the resources and activists gathered around the Executive Committee immediately after the Incident, the activities gradually took more diversified forms as time passed by. In the year following the Incident, the Japan Baptist Yokohama Church Reverend Masu Iwao, for example, decided that he should launch his own patrol group instead of sending goods to the Saturday Patrol by the Executive Committee. As indicated in the introduction of the first annual report of the Thursday Patrol, Reverend Masu Iwao launched it precisely to separate it from the political stance of the Executive Committee under the leadership of Jūnichirō.

In the fall of 1983, when one of the Executive Committee for the Denunciation members requested that they would want to have blankets, Mr. Masu thought it would be easy just to provide blankets, yet it would be irresponsible to provide them without actually participating in a patrol himself and knowing the reality of homelessness. Therefore, he suggested that he start a patrol 'that does not look for confrontation, but is open to anyone- even without a particular stand - who would simply like to face the reality' on Thursday as it suits his schedule, in a different line from the Committee..... As it turned fall this year, we discussed 'what we should do this

winter,’ there were various opinions like, ‘it is only a small comfort to do it just once a week,’ ‘it is irresponsible doing it without any follow-ups and it would rather be better to quit altogether that way.’ Yet we heard from Kamagasaki that there are increasingly more homeless because ‘although the number of people who can’t afford to stay in doya is increasing, the number accepted by the municipal lodgings is decreasing.’ Such a report backed by numbers made us realize the importance of investigation, and we decided to do a basic investigation in Kotobuki for future reference. We thought that we wanted to get data that can become a life force for the homeless, not an investigation for the sake of an investigation. In December, the Committee asked for a joint patrol, yet we could not reach a conclusion. We decided to combine forces for at least the things we could collaborate on, like sharing blankets and clothing. Basically, we started with the thought that we want to do something that would somehow make it possible for the homeless to keep on living. (Mokuyō Patorōru 1985:4)

The introduction concludes with two minimally defined objectives of the Thursday Patrol: keeping those on the street alive and grasping their reality. For the first objective, the Thursday Patrol developed a system of handing out what was thought of as the minimal necessities of life, including instant soups, blankets, underwear, soaps, towels, disposable toothbrushes, toothpastes and detergents. However, it was emphasized that such an immediate help should be kept to the minimum, as Thursday Patrol did not intend to pose as condescending benefactors. Those necessities should rather be used as prompts to talk to the street dwellers, listen to their stories and let their voice heard by a larger public through the reports. Aiming at a rather longer-term help, Thursday Patrol also distributed newsletters and leaflets that showed a map of agencies and institutions where the homeless can find help like the Livelihood Hall, the Naka Ward Welfare Office, and the Kotobuki-chō Clinic. Meanwhile, the second objective led Thursday Patrol to keep meticulous records of all the interactions happened during their patrols, which provided them with the number of the homeless at certain locales on one night, the goods and help

provided to each person, along with the lines of conversation between the volunteers and the homeless.

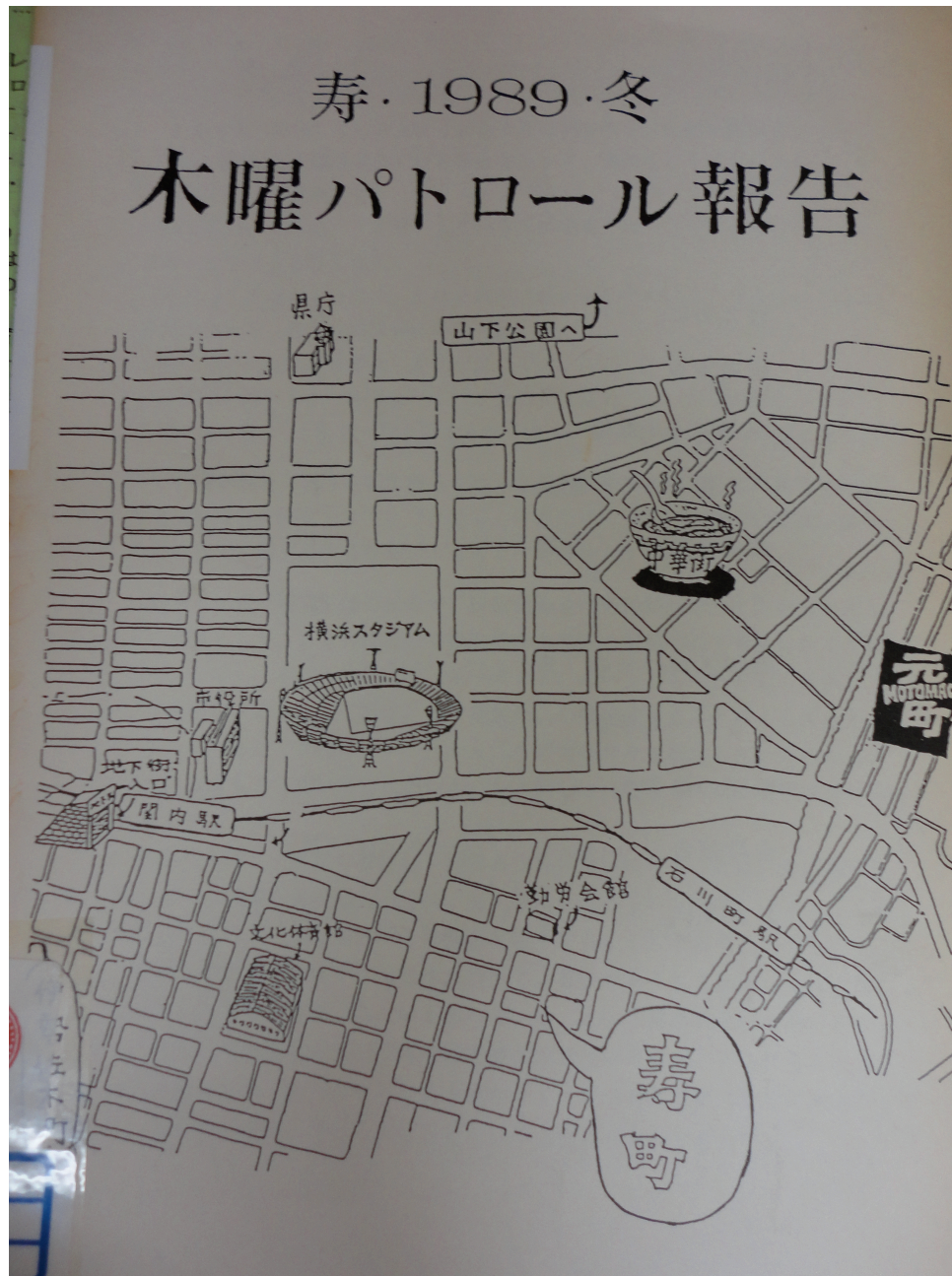


Figure 9. The Cover of Thursday Patrol Report 1989.

Accordingly, there appeared paths of relief surrounding Kotobuki District, centering the sites of the Incident like Yokohama Stadium and Kannai Underground Passage.

Since 1984, these paths were taken by numerous volunteers, every other Thursday from January to March, which later extended to all year round. The volunteers would break into groups with at least three in a group, one for talking, another for delivering food or other necessities, and the last for taking notes – a practice that would disappear as the activity grows and Thursday Patrol establishes a permanent day-time shelter in Kotobuki. The annual reports show how much the early encounters were full of confusion from both ends – the volunteers and the people they intended to help: there were volunteers who inquired too much, gave the wrong information and forcibly endowed things, while there were the homeless who would ask for money, demand a better food, or simply get bothered and move away.

Over the course, the simple task of ‘keeping them alive’ turned out to be much more challenging than Thursday Patrol initially had thought, with the lack of shelters to accommodate the street dwellers and the deep-rooted hatred of police officers, medical practitioners and welfare officers towards the street dwellers. Members of the Thursday Patrol got to witness the deaths of those they visited: sometimes in an ambulance when the neighboring hospitals refused to take the patient in, sometimes on the street when the ambulance crew did not take the patient, or sometimes in the hospital after it was too late. The Thursday Patrol could also keep track of how the City expelled the homeless, sometimes by forcibly moving them into shelters (which would release them back to the streets in few days), or in a non-direct yet unfailingly noticeable way by putting up off-limit signs and placing large flowerpots, at other times.

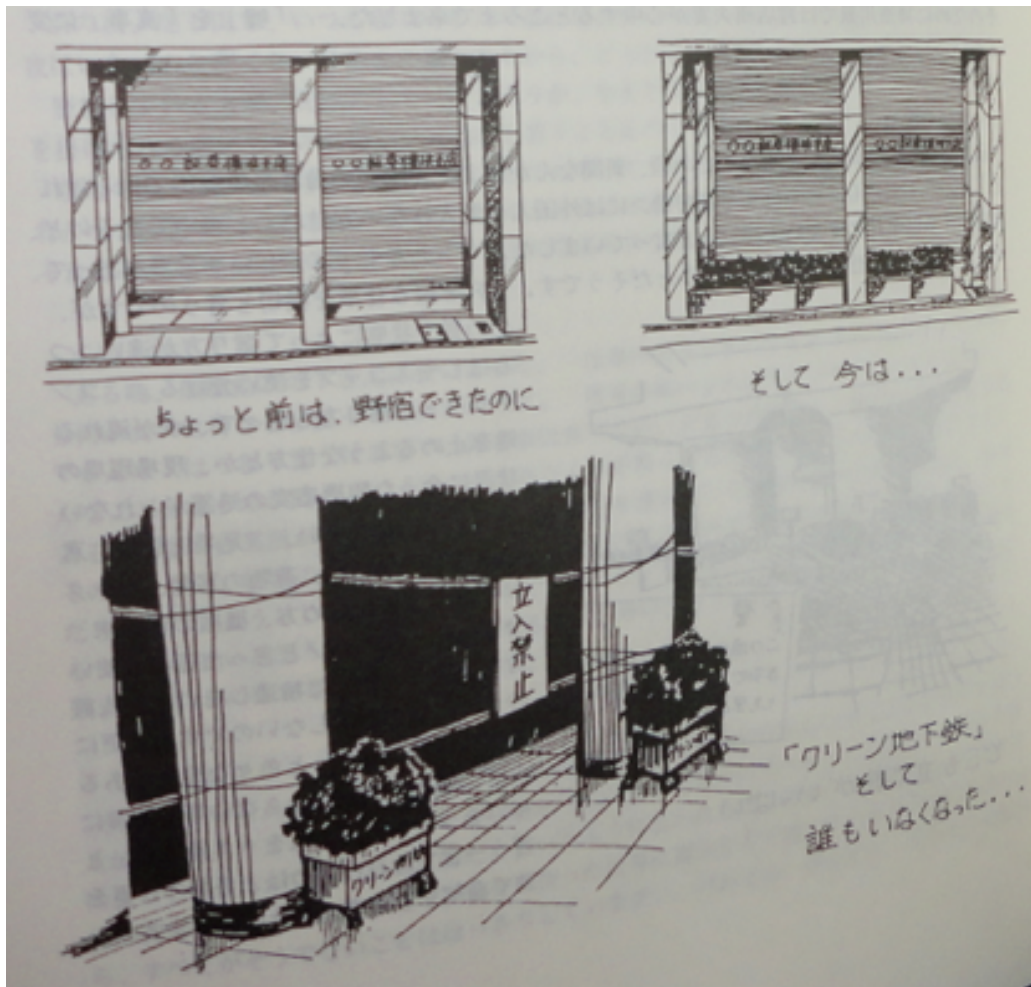


Figure 10. Drawings of Homeless Expulsion Schemes. The captions read: "Although it was possible to sleep rough here, now it is... empty for the sake of 'Clean Subway'...." (Mokuyō Patorōru 1988:28)

In addition, Thursday Patrol participants realized that the meager list of agencies they provided was not useful, because the welfare office turned down most street dwelling applicants and without welfare assistance one could not get any medical service at the infirmary. After hearing complaints and conducting studies, Thursday Patrol members noticed that the practice of turning away the applicants for the livelihood protection before they could actually make it to the screening interview was part of the governmental guideline made in 1985 of ‘administrative reform (*gyōsei kaikaku*)’ to ‘rationalize welfare (*fukushi tekiseika*)’ (Mokuyō Patorōru 1989:2). With such a

realization, Thursday Patrol members started to write letters of introduction for those who sought counseling at the welfare office or infirmary, instead of providing the list, beginning in 1987. These small moves demonstrate the group's gradual positioning as a private organization filling in the gap of the social security network and saving those who slip through the cracks of the public welfare system and administration – a grand leap from the initial under-defined role.

From time to time, I get asked by the street dwellers 'what are you?' 'I get the Union as the Union (*Jūnichirō*), or if it's a religious activity, I would get that too. But what are you?'

When I reply 'we are a group that comes with blankets and soup to meet people who are sleeping on the street during the winter,' still comes another question: 'I get that much. But I really don't understand it, unless I hear what are you to do such a thing (who is doing it for what reason).'

When asked like that, I can't find an answer and come to question myself:

'What is the true identity of this Thursday Patrol Group?'

'I would like to be able to give a rather more satisfactory answer to such a question.' I think.....

The 'reality' of street dwelling has been thought of mainly as the labor issue of day laborers, the issue of welfare, or the issue of social exclusion. However, on top of that, we can think of it from the perspective of 'homelessness (*hōmuresu*),' which implies issues of 'housing,' 'disability' and 'aging.' The fact that we visit those sleeping on the street once a week would probably be useless in solving the problems they face – even if there are few things that we can help (like introducing the welfare office or the infirmary). Blankets are barely enough to protect them from cold, and if there were any meaning at all, it would be that it shows that we want to build a good relationship with them.

We want to know the real condition of street dwelling through these encounters.

Accordingly, we made this report this year again, in the hope that we look back on our own way of living and working and think of the problems we have overlooked without noticing as a given in everyday lives. (Mokuyō Patorōru 1989: 1)

With the national measures to expand domestic demand and the local construction boom related to the upcoming 130th anniversary of Yokohama, 1988 saw a sharp increase in day laboring jobs and the labor exchange market of Kotobuki was thronged by

recruiters (Mokuyō Patorōru 1988: 6). Yet, the records of Thursday Patrol indicated a continual increase, rather than a decrease, in the number of people sleeping in the street (Mokuyō Patorōru 1988: 6; Mokuyō Patorōru 1989: 2-3). It was then the patrol turned its attention to the structural inevitability of being homeless with the lack of affordable housing for low-income laborers and the gap between the assessment of the capacity for working in the labor market and that in the welfare office, leaving increasingly more people with aging, illness, and disability permanently stuck in the street.

In the introduction of the patrol's annual report of 1989 quoted above, we can see how the term *hōmuresu* (the homeless) was introduced to address these newly identified contradictions, marking the Group's discovery of its *raison d'être* as well as its target subjects. The early adoption of *hōmuresu* by the Group and the development of 'homeless' discourses and activities in Kotobuki show its advancement in the emergence of the science of homelessness that were to spread across Japan within a decade. Although begun as an undetermined project, Thursday Patrol's meticulous records of the conversations proved to be instrumental in profiling this newly found subject, the homeless. In contrast to Thursday Patrol's earlier reports that printed transcriptions of selected dates of patrol, the annual report of 1989 presented the records in classified themes like family, work, unfair treatment by the welfare office, the bitter cold in winter, the inconvenience or unavailability of *doya* rooms, hardship on the street, health issues, frustrated desire to work and so on, based on the editors' comprehensive analysis of the records taken between December 1988 to March 1989. Such a classification, which became customary in the Patrol's reports henceforth, attests to the Patrol's built-up competence in diagnosing the common homeless-related problems and in identifying the

loopholes in the welfare system. These problems and loopholes provided referential points around which the Group's activities could be formed, on the one hand, while constituting the basis of knowledge so that the Patrol could speak of and, furthermore, speak for the homeless to the intended readers.

What is notable here is that the Thursday Patrol did not intend to actively make interventions to address social contradictions. Throughout its decades of history, Thursday Patrol stayed faithful to its initial task of 'keeping them alive' by providing minimal goods and information, and even such actions were deemed as mere tokens for communication. Yet, it was such suspension of long-term visions for fundamental changes that allowed Thursday Patrol to extend its activities. Upon perceiving the severe dearth of accessible medical services, the Patrol started advertising the newly launched monthly free medical consultation by the Medical Team (*Iryōhan*) in September 1990. In order to send out the message, Thursday Patrol began to patrol on the night before the monthly consultations to distribute flyers and later in 1993 increased the frequency to twice a month between April and October, adding to the already existing weekly patrols from November to March.⁴⁵ Although the group did nothing more than distributing pieces of papers to promote the health of the homeless, the regularity and continuity of its year-round activity provided a foundation to form a network of support for the survival of the homeless, which later obtained a permanent organizational structure as a registered non-profit organization (NPO) Sanagitachi in 2001. As one of the earliest in the area to

⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the original members of the Medical Team gradually earned Medical Doctoral degrees and opened the first free infirmary for mental health in Kotobuki.

utilize the newly implemented NPO Law in 1998,⁴⁶ NPO Sanagitachi could not have been a better fit to the model assumed by the law that prohibited NPOs from pursuing any religious or political activities by definition. Launched in the aftermath of the Kōbe Hanshin Great Earthquake in 1995 that proved the efficacy of the post-disastrous relief work by citizen volunteers compared to the incompetence of the public sector, the law was enacted to effectively mobilize voluntary civic associations to act as mediators between the public and private service providers and the target beneficiaries. As such, NPO Sanagitachi effectively established itself as a liaison between the state, regular citizens, and the homeless in Kotobuki.

Although the Thursday Patrol was only a small segment of the whole scope of local activities that appeared in the aftermath of the 1983 Yokohama Incident, the course of actions it took represents how most of the voluntary activities in Kotobuki these days came to center on routinized emergency measures assisted with and instigated by an ethnographic pursuit of people categorized as the homeless. Securing the survival of this group of people was considered as an urgent task served by volunteers taking actions and conducting studies and surveys while preventing any political or religious stances from interfering with their activities. Supported by their data and experiences, the local groups could negotiate with the municipalities to take extra-legal measures and exceptional

⁴⁶ The so-called NPO Law, is the Law Promoting the Specially Designated Non-Profit Activities (*Tokutei Hieiri Katsudō Sokushin Hō*) implemented on March 25, 1998. Article Two of Chapter One stipulates that the organizations' activities should be for the common good, excluding the following activities: "activities mainly aiming at spreading religious doctrines, performing religious rituals, or cultivating believers"; "activities mainly aiming at advocating, supporting, or opposing political ideologies"; "activities mainly aiming at supporting or opposing candidates or officials of public positions or political parties." (<http://law.e-gov.go.jp/htmldata/H10/H10HO007.html>, accessed on April 22, 2015)

practices that pertain to Yokohama City or Naka Ward only to rescue the homeless. Such a history made Kotobuki a fortress for the homeless who could be rescued by the network of support in the area. Thus, when the homeless issue attracted the national spotlight in the early 1990s following the collapse of the bubble economy, these local networks of support were readily available for the government, and many homeless organizations across Japan actively engaged with the government in defining and profiling the homeless and designing the policies of the homeless.

Following the Thursday Patrol in 1984,⁴⁷ the scale, frequency, and number of civilian groups conducting patrols for the homeless grew throughout Kanagawa Prefecture. Origin and Jūnichirō launched the Yokohama Wednesday Patrol Group and Kawasaki Wednesday Patrol Group in 1993, which evolved into a larger network of supporters, the Kotobuki Supporters' Exchange Group. Some volunteers who participated in the activities in Kotobuki launched their own patrol groups in their neighborhoods. In particular, the Christian volunteers who got involved in Kotobuki through the Kotobuki District Center of the United Church of Christ in Japan and student volunteers who participated in Kotobuki Youth Seminar or Kotobuki Winter Struggle were crucial in the expansion of patrols for the homeless in the following cities: Sagamihara (1993), Fujisawa (1995), Odawara (1996), Totsuka (1997), Yokosuka (1997), Kamakura (2000), Chigasaki (2000), Atsugi (2001), and Hiratsuka (2001) (Hayashi 2014:198).

⁴⁷ As Kotobuki District Center and Jūnichirō departed from Thursday Patrol to launch their own patrol of the area on Thursdays under the name, Kotobuki/Kannai Nightly Visit Friends (*Kotobuki/Kannai Yomawari Nakama*) in 2001, there were two groups patrolling around Kotobuki and Kannai area all year-round.

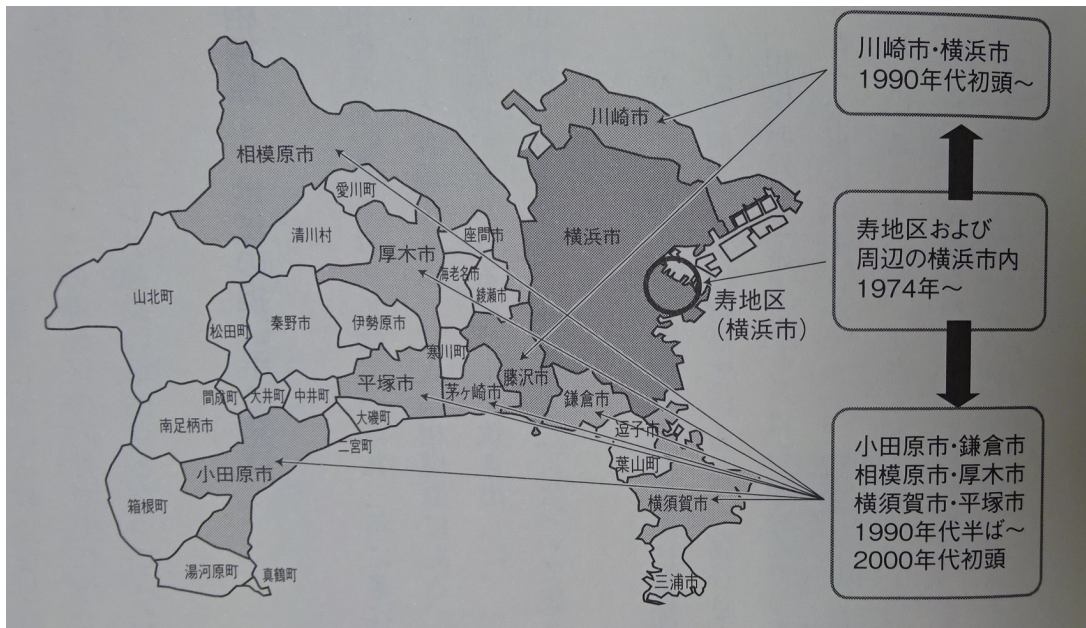


Figure 11. The Civilian Patrol Groups in Kanagawa Prefecture (Hayashi 2014:199).

Kotobuki district is the circled area on the right side. The map shows the spread of patrol groups since the 1990s from Yokohama Station and Kawasaki City areas (upper right side) to outer areas (left and bottom).

These groups held a bimonthly Prefecture-wide Patrol Groups' Meeting (*Zenken Patorōru*) to exchange information on the number and situation of the homeless in local areas, discuss cases of confrontation with the welfare office or attempts of expulsion and exploitation. It was also in these meetings they planned collective actions such as petitions and demonstrations. With the prefecture-wide support network of patrolling groups, Kotobuki became a key node in the web of support for the homeless: the homeless across the prefecture knew that they could rely on Kotobuki as their last resort, and support groups in Kotobuki were informed of the situation of the homeless across the prefecture.

The National Implementation of the Homeless Law (2002)

While the civilian homeless support network expanded from Kotobuki district to Yokohama City and further across Kanagawa Prefecture after the Yokohama Incident,

homelessness did not bring about any policy changes at the national level until late 1990s. Following the collapse of the bubble economy led by financial liberalization and deregulation, the 1990s opened up with an increasing presence of the homeless in public spaces of major cities, from Tokyo to Fukuoka. In particular, the confrontations surrounding the Cardboard Box Village (*Danbōru Mura*) at Japan Railway Shinjuku Station in Tokyo raised public awareness of the homeless issue (*hōmuresu mondai*). The Cardboard Box Village referred to the rows of cardboard boxes inhabited by the homeless in the underground space of the West Exit of the JR Shinjuku Station connecting to the newly built Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office. In response to the expanding Cardboard Box Village since its first appearance in 1992, the Metropolitan Government first attempted to expel the homeless by installing a fence in the underground passage in February 1994. Ironically, such an attempt prompted strong resistance from the homeless and student supporters, who counteractively formed Shinjuku Coalition in Pursuit of the Security of Livelihood and Work of Homeless Laborers (*Shinjuku Nojuku Rōdōsha no Seikatsu/Shurō Hoshō o Motomeru Renraku Kaigi*, abbrev. *Shinjuku Renraku-kai*, Shinjuku Coalition). The Coalition teamed up with activists in San'ya and conducted patrols, distributed meals, offered medical and livelihood consultations, and accompanied the homeless to the welfare office. The Coalition effectively gathered publicity by bringing in journalists, photographers, musicians, and artists to gain support and donations.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ When the Metropolitan Government tried to demolish the Village again in January 1996, the Coalition successfully defended the Village with a sit-in protest and occupied the underground plaza for two years. However, after a fire broke out on February 7, 1998, which destroyed fifty cardboard-box houses and killed four inhabitants of the Village, the

Meanwhile, the government, while perceiving the seriousness of the issue, proved clueless in making sense of this population, as was made clear in the Tokyo Metropolitan Governor Aoshima Yukio's comment that 'they [the homeless] have unique philosophies and views of life,' but 'they ought to feel responsibility for the inconvenience they are imposing on the passengers.' His view represented the sentiments of mainstream Japanese at the time, who regarded homelessness as a matter of life-style choice, a problem created by people who selfishly pursued their preference at the cost of public order. It was only after a decade of experimental municipal programs in cities heavily impacted by the increasing homeless population that the central government came to acknowledge the structural limitations in keeping people from flowing out on the street without a national measure to prevent homelessness. By the end of the 1990s, municipalities like Tokyo Shinjuku Ward Office, Osaka City Government, and Yokohama City Government saw a modicum of success in their respective homeless programs that sheltered the homeless and supported their job search, yet were finding it unsustainable with fiscal strains and administrative constraints. With the call from the administrators of these municipalities, the first national level discussion began in January 1999 with the formation of the Homeless Problem Liaison Conference (*Hōmuresu Mondai Renraku Kaigi*). The Conference headed by the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Labor worked through May with relevant municipalities and central government ministries to lay the groundwork for the national homeless policy project.⁴⁹

Coalition negotiated with the Metropolitan Government to build homeless shelters for all the inhabitants and voluntarily dismantled the Village.

⁴⁹ The participants were Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the City Governments of Osaka, Yokohama, Kawasaki, and Nagoya, and the Tokyo Shinjuku Ward Office from the municipalities and the Cabinet Councilors' Office on Internal Affairs, the National

The consensus was that the national project should be much more than a mere expansion of the existing municipal measures and would require a comprehensive approach with systematic collaboration across different ministries. The final report of the Conference stipulated that the basic principle of the forthcoming homeless project would be “mainly to support the homeless to lead a self-reliant life based on one’s own will, and to provide appropriate protection for those who lack the ability to be self-reliant because of age or health issues.” Reflecting the trial and error of the municipal programs, the report outlined tailored measures for different types of homeless:

- Type 1. Those who have the will to work, but are currently unemployed:
Day laborers who lost opportunities because of the change in industrial structure and recession, regular employees who were laid off due to downsizing, etc.
➔ Support for self-reliance through job-search.
- Type 2. Those who need medical or welfare reliefs:
Those with alcohol addiction or mental/physical illnesses, the aged and the physically handicapped, etc.
➔ Support for self-reliance through welfare and other reliefs.
- Type 3. Those who reject social life:
Those who hate social restraint, those who conceal their identity for some reason, etc.
➔ Support for social self-reliance, along with eviction instruction by the given facility manager.⁵⁰

Police Agency, the Ministry of Construction, and the Ministry of Home Affairs of the central government along with the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Labor.

⁵⁰ “About the Urgent Countermeasures against the Homeless Problem (*Hōmuresu Mondai ni Taisuru Tōmen no Taiōsaku ni Tsuite*)” http://www.jil.go.jp/jil/kisya/syokuan/990526_01_sy/990526_01_sy.html, accessed on April 22, 2015.

In the following section that detailed concrete measures, it was made clear that Type 1 was the targeted beneficiary of the forthcoming homeless project: they were the ones eligible to enter specialized shelters (later named the Homeless Self-Reliance Support Centers) with all-inclusive services and training. Meanwhile, Type 2 was to be referred to the Livelihood Protection (public assistance) system, and Type 3 was to be evicted for public safety and hygiene through increased patrols. This selective approach based on homeless typology epitomized the ambivalent status of the homeless within the discursive and institutional fabric of the homeless policy in Japan, which became a source of contentions and negotiations in the decade to follow.

In the course of numerous reviews and feedback by advisory committees and public hearings, the initial plan found a more nuanced tone, and the categorization became subtler in response to the criticism of scholars and activists. When the Study Group of the Homeless Self-Reliance Support Measures (*Hōmuresu no Jiritsu Shien Hōsaku ni Kansuru Kenkyūkai*) suggested that the category of ‘those who have the will to work’ was too limiting and added “those who have the ability to work” and “those whose will to work needs to be cultivated,” in the clause of eligible subjects of the forthcoming homeless project (Iwata 1995:15), it became impossible, at least in theory, to exclude any homeless from the project. Their final report, which became the blueprint of the Homeless Self-Reliance Support Project (*Hōmuresu no Jiritsu Shien Jigyō*), also stipulated that the local Welfare Offices, instead of branches of the Ministry of Labor, be the primary administrator of the project to prevent the dropouts from returning to the streets.

Shortly after, the project was launched in 2000 with 0.9 billion yen (approximately 8.37 million dollars in the exchange rate at the time) budget for the establishment and management of Homeless Self-Reliance Support Centers in eight major cities including Tokyo, Osaka, and Yokohama, with the total capacity of 1,300. In 2002, the Homeless Self-Reliance Project was deemed as deserving a special law to mandate the municipal governments' effort to reduce the number of homeless. The first move was made by the Democratic Party whose bill reflected the proposal made by an Osaka-based homeless organization. Yet it was the one drafted by the coalition of the three ruling parties that passed the two houses of the Diet and was enacted in July 2002 as the Special Measures for the Support of Self-Reliance of the Homeless (*Hōmuresu no Jiritsu no Shien nado ni Kansuru Tokubetsu Sochi Hō*, the Homeless Law).

The Homeless Law stirred up ruptures in homeless advocacy groups who were involved in the legislation with varying degrees of optimism and skepticism. While some groups harshly objected to the Homeless Law altogether out of suspicion that the government was merely using the law as an alibi to expel the homeless, many advocacy groups in Osaka, Tokyo and Yokohama saw it as an opportunity to mandate the governmental responsibility in supporting and protecting the homeless. After all, it meant that there would be extra budgetary resources allocated for the homeless, which could be used to realize the long held hope for more shelters, as the Shinjuku Coalition had fought for, or for better social security, as Kamagasaki Anti-Unemployment (*Kamagasaki Han-Shitsugyō*) had been urging along with their proposal for the Street dwellers' Support Law (*Nojuku Seikatsusha Shien Hō*). Notably, advocates of the right to labor ("Job First") were less successful than the advocates of the right to survive ("Housing First") in

entering into legislation and conversation with the policy makers. The language that they used in their dialogue with policy makers reflects what came to be the standard in the homeless advocacy discourse: the human rights and the value of life itself regardless of the will or achievement of the homeless.

We think that, as we mentioned in the public hearing, the Law should consider the people who have no other means than to sleep on the streets as “economic refugees” and should prudentially secure their “rights as humans”... (A Letter of Demand To the Three Ruling Parties’ Working Team of the Homeless Problem on March 29, 2002).⁵¹

The Special Law should contain an express provision that the aim of legislation is to secure the dignity of the street dwellers as humans and their right to survive. At the same time, the support should aim at the recovery of humane lives of all the street dwellers through their escape from the streets, and should not emphasize ‘the will of self-reliance’ as an excuse to exclude those who cannot reach economic self-reliance... (A Letter of Advice to Prime Minister Koizumi and Minister Sakaguchi of the Ministry of Welfare and Labor on March 22, 2002).⁵²

... 2. ‘The Homeless Self-Reliance Support Project’ should respect the self-determination of the homeless himself...

....4. Diverse forms of ‘self-reliance’ and ‘the support for self-reliance’ should be acknowledged. In the present day when diverse values and ways of life are being accepted, the diverse courses of reaching ‘self-reliance’ and forms of ‘self-reliance’ should be acknowledged... The urgent priority is to seek the local residents’ understanding of the street dwellers’ diverse forms of miscellaneous work in searching for daily food and diverse forms of dwelling including live-in tents. Only after that should the street dwellers be encouraged to gradually move forward in their diverse courses to reach ‘self-reliance’ in one’s own sensible pace.... (A Letter of Demand to Prime Minister Koizumi on May 22, 2002).⁵³

⁵¹ Kamagasaki Support Organization (*Kamagasaki Shien Kikō*), Kamagasaki Anti-Unemployment Coalition (*Kamagasaki Han-Shitsugyō Renraku Kai*), Shinjuku Coalition (*Shinjuku Renraku Kai*), Ikebukuro Coalition (*Ikebukuro Renraku Kai*), Santama Street-Dwellers Human Rights Network (*Santama Nojukusha Jinken Netto-Wāku*), Street-Dwellers Human Rights Data Center (*Nojukusha Jinken Shiryō Sentā*).

⁵² Signed by the Japan Federation for Bar Associations (*Nihon Bengoshi Rengō Kai*)

⁵³ Signed by twenty seven homeless support organizations headed by the Group Bolstering the Winter of Kōbe (*Kōbe No Fuyu o Sasaeru Kai*)

In these letters of demand sent to the law makers and the administration, the homeless were often referred to as “those who had no other means than to live on the streets (*nojuku o yogi nakusareru hitobito*),” an expression adopted in the Homeless Law as “those who are at the risk of having no other means than to becoming homeless (*hōmuresu ni naru koto o yogi nakusareru osore no aru mono*).” In their appeal to the human rights discourse, many advocate groups also brought attention to continuing juvenile attacks against the homeless that had never ceased to occur despite the tragedies of the Yokohama Incident. These concerns were reflected in the Homeless Law in Article 3-3 that listed ‘protecting the human rights of the homeless through campaigns raising the awareness of the citizens’ along with ‘improving the living environment and securing the safety of residential areas’ as the objectives of the law, replacing the clause of ‘eviction guidance by facility managers,’ that was originally suggested in the report of the Homeless Problem Liaison Conference. In other words, according to the ambiguous language of Homeless Law, ‘the homeless problem’ implied both the homeless as a threat to citizens and the homeless threatened by citizens, which could be solved by improving the living environment and public safety.

Notably, whether as a helpless victim who wished to escape the street or as a potential criminal illegally occupying the public space, it was nevertheless by gaining the name of the homeless that these various underclass individuals were incorporated into governmental censuses and policies. Meanwhile, various homeless advocate groups could engage in drafting and implementing the Homeless Law by envisioning homelessness as the quintessential manifestation of poverty and the last stage of a citizen, demonstrating the failure of the state to salvage its citizen. While the human rights discourse proved

effective in invoking the state's responsibility for "the homeless problem," it also laid the legal foundation for investigating and surveying the homeless, making all the state subsidiaries and relevant civic organizations accountable in the task of grasping the reality of homelessness.

The fact that the homeless emerged as a national problem whose reality escaped the government's institutional experience and knowledge, contributed to the complicated effects of the Homeless Law. From the outset, the law was drafted out of the governmental need to police the homeless who posed a threat to the public order, as shown in their designation of the homeless as 'those who live their daily lives in urban parks, riverbeds, streets, station buildings and other facilities as their residence without permission' – which reflects less the housing or economic circumstances of the subject but more of them being visible in public space. Yet, the failure of various schemes employed by different municipalities had proved that simple expulsion and sheltering only resulted in temporary dispersion and migration. On the other hand, numerous civilian support organization that arose in urban underclass enclaves like Kotobuki had already developed local homeless rescue networks in the aftermath of the Yokohama Incident and the collapse of the bubble economy. They had gained moral and practical support from citizen volunteers, built rapport with the local homeless, and had learned to negotiate with the local administrators and navigate legal and extralegal measures in obtaining a desirable situation for their clientele. When the state finally recognized 'the homeless problem' in the late 1990s, "the homeless" had already been constructed as governable subjects in the networks of civic governance. In this sense, the state's

governing of the homeless subject was inherently reliant on the expertise and conduct of civilian homeless support organizations.

The construction of the homeless subject by the civilian support organizations and the state apparatus was epitomized in their complementary endeavor in producing the knowledge of the homeless. While civilian support organizations like the Thursday Patrol and the Medical Team of Kotobuki had archived quantitative and qualitative data through their nightly visits (*patorōru*) and free consultation services to the homeless, there was not a nation-wide survey until the state’s recognition of the homeless problem. The MHLW conducted the first broad scale survey in seventy seven major cities and wards that were known to have large homeless populations in March 1999, and two full-scale investigations including every municipal district in November 1999 and September 2001. With partial successes in collecting results from these three preliminary surveys, the MHLW finally managed to order all 3,240 municipalities (cities, wards, towns, and villages) to conduct surveys based on standardized questions and methods simultaneously in a one-month period between January to February 2003 and publicized the first all-inclusive nationwide homeless statistics in March 2003.

	Male	Female	Unidentified	Total	2001 Result
Nation-wide	20,661	749	3,886	25,296	24,090 (+1,206)
%	81.7	3.0	15.4	100.0	

Figure 12. MHLW 2003 Nationwide Homeless Survey Results. Yokohama City had the seventh highest homeless population of 470 in 2003, following Osaka City, Tokyo 23 Wards, Nagoya City, Kawasaki City, Kyoto City, and Fukuoka City. 40.8% of the homeless slept in urban parks, 23.3% in riversides, 17.2% on the street, and 5.0% in train and subway stations (<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2003/03/h0326-5c.html> accessed on April 24, 2015).

As the Homeless Law mandated the municipal governments to investigate the current state of the homeless in their districts, the 2003 nationwide survey set a precedent for a

systematized and routinized procedure, starting with the head counts by the governmental officials, which was then followed by more intensive individual livelihood surveys in municipalities with high numbers of homeless population by the referred local civic organizations. The final results were then synthesized and analyzed by specialists. Accordingly, the demographic and sociological data and their diachronic change of the following information regarding the homeless across the nation became available to everyone: age, gender, marriage status, hometown, education level, previously held jobs, sources of income and food, previously registered address, years of homeless state, forms of homeless residence (shacks, boxes, and others), medical condition, and welfare history.

Age	Time and Place of Homeless	Current Job and Income	Previous Job	Homeless Cause	Familial Relations
Average: 55.9 yrs	<1 year: 30.7%	Working: 64.7%	Construction: 55.2%	Job Reduction: 35.6%	Been Married: 53.4%
55-59 yrs: 23.4%	1-3 years: 25.6%	(73.3% collecting recyclable waste)	Manufacturing: 10.5%	Bankruptcy and Unemployment: 32.9%	No Contact with Family or Relatives in the Past Year: 77.1%
50-54 yrs: 22.0%	3-5 years: 19.7%		Regular Employment: 39.8%	Job Loss Due to Illness, Injury, or Age: 18.8%	
60-64 yrs: 20.3%	Sleep in a fixed place: 84.1%	Monthly Income: 10000~30000 yen (35.2%)	Daily Employment: 36.1%		

Figure 13. MHLW 2003 Homeless Interview Results. There were 2,163 homeless individuals who participated in the interview (2,014 men and 101 women). The survey showed that the majority of the homeless (65.7%) was in their 50-60s, have been homeless for less than 5 years (76%), slept in a fixed place (84.1%), were working (647%), and lost contact with their families (77.1%).⁵⁴

Such an expansive data collection would have been impossible if not for the many civilian support organizations' prior relationship and experience with the local homeless in their rescue activities. At the same time, the civilian support organizations'

⁵⁴ <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2003/03/h0326-5.html> accessed on July 17, 2015

involvement in the task of inquiring about the homeless further intensified their anthropological quest, which became central to their activities. Rescuing and supporting the homeless was now equated with knowing and understanding them. Equipped with decades-long ethnographic observations and newly available nation-wide statistics, the homeless advocacy groups could swiftly contextualize the facts in line with their agenda and turn them against the state. Although homeless advocates had had a hard time convincing politicians and the general public that homelessness is not a result of personal characteristics like stubbornness or laziness, it was now with numbers that they could attribute it to the economic structure and the welfare system: the overrepresentation of elderly single males in the homeless population, the time period at which most people became homeless as a testimony to the economic fluctuation, the absolute lack of homeless shelters and affordable housing, among others.

The fact that most homeless stayed in the same place for a long time, usually in proximity to their previous legal residence, disproved the logic often used by local welfare offices to turn down the homeless' application of residence-based welfare services based on the assumption that they were wanderers (*nagaremono*); the fact that many homeless had been regular employees rather than temporary workers diffused the stereotype of the homeless being radically different from the regular citizenry and somewhat undeserving. Meanwhile, the homeless found themselves in the intersecting webs of homeless rescue and support which would, through diversified yet standardized courses, reincorporate them into the realm of citizenry as either a client of a Homeless Self-Reliance Support Center or a recipient of the livelihood protection, albeit temporarily. Such a process required going through multiple instances of confession and

reflection on the part of the homeless, while feeding the institutional knowledge of the homeless in the form of case files (See Chapters 4 and 5).

The enactment of the Homeless Law was an outcome of converging structural forces following their own historical trajectories: fiscal burden on local governments in maintaining their respective extralegal measures, political pressures on Diet members by their discontented constituencies of the unseemly scenes, and the humanitarian concerns of civilian support organizations. Regardless of the contesting intentions and agendas that laid the foundations of the Homeless Law, the implementation of the law invoked ‘homelessness’ to be the label in which rights are claimed and the state’s accountability was questioned. The Homeless Law set the legal and financial bases for facilitating the nationwide flow of information, services and the homeless themselves across different levels of governmental agencies and between the governmental and nongovernmental agencies. The homeless became a subcategory of Japanese citizenry under constant scrutiny and specialized governance centering on underclass enclaves.

The Irony of the “Self-Reliance” of the Homeless

The series of historical events from the occurrence of the Yokohama Incident to the enactment of the Homeless Law involved the concurrent reshaping of the homeless subject and of urban underclass enclaves. The varying homeless rescue networks and the homeless self-reliance support system gave rise to a network in which the homeless were counted, interviewed, and sent to a liminal space where the homeless could be supported, trained, restored the health, and prepared for their return to society. It was the already marginalized enclaves like Kotobuki packed with single room occupancies (*doya*) that

functioned as such a liminal space, with lower prospects of local protests against new homeless shelters. While the homeless were systematically reincorporated into the citizenry as they went through the network of rescue and support, the urban underclass enclaves were refurbished as geopolitical nodes in the state topography that absorbed, contained, and disciplined the homeless. It is notable that the singles without fixed addresses started to be counted in the census only after gaining the name *hōmuresu* who were now entitled with legal protection, welfare provision, and services in the promotion of self-reliance.

At first glance, such an emergence of a network dedicated to the task of transforming the homeless subject into a working citizen seems to attest to the neoliberal turn of the Japanese welfare state as had taken place in many advanced liberal states. The design of the Homeless Self-Reliance Support Project encompassing the whole domains of life from job training, social skills to medical care, resonates well with the neoliberal doctrine promoting the self-management of flexible workers reported elsewhere. However, closer examination of the heterogeneous agendas embedded in the law complicates its neoliberal implications in Japan. From the civilian homeless rescue movements to the recognition of the homeless problem by lawmakers, the implementation of the Homeless Law involved a process of translation from the local problems of the homeless survivals/deaths into the international discourse of human rights, and into the national concern for economy and public security. Self-reliance, equated with escaping from the street, came to be the magic word that could weave together these layers of translation: it was for the self-reliance of the homeless that the state was held accountable for moving them away from public space while guaranteeing their livelihood. In this sense, the

Homeless Law enacted technologies of governing through both the classical containment of the deviated for public security and the capillary neoliberal self-discipline of working citizens for advanced capitalist economy.

This explains the irony that the introduction of self-reliance and support for employment involved systematic affiliation with the welfare department and livelihood protection to prevent the subjects from relapsing into a homeless state. For temporarily laid-off workers, it meant support in job training; yet for those who had been in a homeless state for a long time, the prior task was to make a sound mind-body of a worker by treating one's mental and physical abnormalities. It is no coincident that the most significant outcome of the project was a higher rate of compliance to the alcohol addiction treatment (See Chapter 4). By setting addiction treatment as the first step towards achieving self-reliance, the project created a distinctive time frame for those who needed to take care of their mind-body in their permanent becoming as citizens able to work. It was for such discipline for discipline that the homeless were contained in urban enclaves like Kotobuki, which became both a sanctuary for those whose work is to make their mind-body into an employable state.

The implementation of the Homeless Law in 2002 signified a change in the stopgap approach to poverty. The law stipulated that poverty, the extreme state of which is expressed in homelessness, was in need of systematic managerial intervention. For underclass enclaves like Kotobuki, it meant a transition from the extra-legal measures and exceptional local practices based on decades' long negotiation between local groups and municipalities, towards a more standardized procedure of connecting the homeless to relevant welfare programs and institutions. It was in this historical conjuncture that

Kotobuki came to assume an ambivalent role in providing a liminal yet self-perpetuating sanctuary for the homeless and welfare recipients.

CHAPTER 4

The Rhythm of Life

Time to Survive

On a hot summer day in 2003, Taro (nickname) found himself lying on the concrete in the excruciating heat at Yokohama Port. He had had a blackout after days of heavy drinking. Soon an ambulance was called and he was hospitalized. When he was released from the hospital, his caseworker at Kanagawa Ward Office sent him to the Hamakaze Homeless Shelter in Kotobuki. That was his first entry to Kotobuki, and ever since, his life came to revolve around Kotobuki.

Taro was born in 1952 in the mountainous Gunma Prefecture, Northwest of Tokyo and Yokohama. By the time he entered elementary school, his dad had left the family and his mother and grandmother raised Taro and his older brother respectively. Without a dad, he was bullied all the time as a kid, and he was an infamous “crybaby” (*naki mushi*). His mother, in an attempt to raise him tough, made him do news delivery since sixth grade, but she passed away when he was in his second year of middle school. Taro remembers this as a turning point in his life, when his personality changed and he became charged with feelings of anger and desire for vengeance. After graduating from middle school, he went to Tokyo by himself and found miscellaneous jobs from dry cleaning to furniture sales. He started drinking and enjoying a drifting life. His golden time was when he worked for a moving company. There, he worked his way up to become a board member of its subsidiary company. However, the more he earned, the more trouble he got into

with drinking and gambling. He then went to the Philippines and got married to a Filipina woman and fell further in debt as he sent money to the Philippines and supported her to fly back and forth. Although they had a child together, they continuously argued over where to raise the kid, and Taro's drinking problem exacerbated their conflicts. As his marriage dissolved, Taro received the news that his older brother had been arrested for homicide. Filled with self-pity, Taro fixated on his wife's accusation that he didn't have any love, because he grew up in a family without any love. Everything went downhill from there. He found a new job, got into trouble for heavy drinking, ran away, found a new job, ... The cycle eventually collapsed into constant drinking on the street, day and night. That's how he came to be passed out at Yokohama Port.⁵⁵

Why one becomes homeless or alcoholic is a complicated matter, and how the predicaments faced by individuals could have been prevented or can be addressed are equally debatable. Some would attribute Taro's fall to the deep-rooted social discrimination in Japan against individuals who do not fit under the normative family structure. Others would note Taro's socioeconomic marginality linked to his lack of familial support and social capital under the precarious postindustrial economy. Some might point out the psychological disruptions in the course of Taro's childhood development or the possibility of a congenital neurochemical disorder in his brain. Others might simply blame the lack of moral responsibility or will on Taro's part to live a good life. As the homeless problem emerged as a national concern (Chapter 2), and Kotobuki a refuge for the homeless, this range of interpretations have been competitively circulated among activists, academic and medical specialists, and policy makers, as well as among

⁵⁵ This is a biographical sketch based mainly on a formal interview on October 14, 2011, supplemented with information gathered during personal conversations over the years.

the homeless themselves. What I commonly found in the narratives of the homeless in Kotobuki, regardless of the specific causal relations explicitly laid out by the narrators themselves, was their sense of being caught in an inescapable wheel of decline,⁵⁶ as shown in Taro's biographical sketch above. Telling me his life history, Taro often blamed himself, alcoholism, society, and his fate, none of which could be untangled from each other. His fragile relations and unstable living conditions were intertwined with the chronic condition of his mind and body, which together erupted into intermittent crises. In Taro's narrative, the succession of these life events congealed into his sense of being doomed from birth, with a father who abandoned his family, a brother who is a murderer, and a loveless mother long gone. Even after Taro moved into Kotobuki, his life kept spiraling down cycles of drinking, withdrawal and hospitalization. By the time I interviewed him in the fall of 2011, he seemed to have finally found peace in his life with the assistance of livelihood protection and had been sober for more than a year. Taro's life story, as we shall see in this chapter, epitomizes how homeless survival is bound up with chronic conditions and continuous crises. Those who ended up in Kotobuki often shared the sense of being caught in the fate of decline, yet it was also in Kotobuki where they could possibly imagine a way out.

This chapter explores how the search for survival in Kotobuki involved cultivating a sense of orientation and temporalities of care against the fate of decline and destruction. The past three decades of homeless activism involved struggling not only against spatial exclusion (Chapter 3), but also against various forms of temporal pathologies, most

⁵⁶ The anti-poverty activist Yuasa Makoto keenly captures such a sense in his famous phrase "sliding down society (*suberidai shakai*)," which he also used in the title of his best-selling book *Anti-Poverty: Exodus from a Sliding Down Society* (Yuasa 2008).

saliently manifested in alcoholism. This chapter delves into the struggle for survival surrounding the pathologies of time sensed by the homeless, their supporters, medical practitioners, and social workers, whose discourses and practices often centered on building the rhythm of life (*seikatsu no rizumu*). I deliberately situate alcohol treatment within this broader context of temporal attunement, rather than separating it in the medical realm. For my informants, alcohol rehabilitation program such as Alcoholics Anonymous meetings was only one among the many regimes of care engaging with the sense and usage of time in the district. Although the neoliberal undertone of the homeless self-reliance policies promoted the mastery of self-management through therapeutic regimes, for the homeless, alcoholism and its treatment were inseparable from the temporal orientation and rhythm, which constituted their everyday and overall arc of life. By placing alcohol rehabilitation within the larger context of struggles over temporal representations and techniques in homeless activism, this chapter demonstrates how survival in Kotobuki was sought in attending to the mind and body of one's own and others and sharing narratives of salvation and renewal; all of which contributed to the construction of a distinctive temporality that dwells not on the past nor on the future, but on the repetition of the present perceived as constant crises.

Based on the case of Kotobuki, I suggest that the prominence of the politics of emergency in homeless activism is related to the shifting sense of temporal horizon in postindustrial Japan. My observations are comparable to recent discussions on the politics of survival and emergency, which has gained particular attention in the anthropology of global health. Many anthropologists noted how the global humanitarian regime promotes the moral obligation to intervene in moments of humanitarian crises, creating new forms

of governance that allow international agents to bypass jurisdictions and bureaucratic apparatus of nation states to expedite the provision of medical services when deemed necessary (Abélès 2010 [2006]; Didier 2010; Redfield 2013). Meanwhile, anthropological critiques of the postindustrial political economy have also emphasized the changes in temporal reasoning based on perceptions of uncertainty and crises. Jane Guyer, based on her research on the structural adjustment policies of the military rule in Nigeria in 1990s, pointed out the “decline of the near future” in the economic theories and public discourses of neoliberal conditions which inculcate bifocal temporal perspective prioritizing the immediate present (“enforced presentism”) and a very distant horizon (“fantasy futurism”) (Guyer 2007:410). While I agree that the general forces of the current global political economy restructure temporal reasoning and politics, I would like to reverse the order of analysis by starting from the temporal habitus and practices of the everyday rather than the temporal logic of intervention and knowledge-making. I show that, for the Japanese underclass, it was the certainty of decline, rather than uncertainty, that has shaped their struggle for survival. This chapter aims to shed light on the aspirations for and pursuit of continuity and sustenance in the repetitive rhythms of homeless rescue activities and rehabilitation.

This chapter pays special attention to how homeless rescue activities and rehabilitation revolved around mediating the time-space of Kotobuki through notions and practices of care. I analyze the significances of such medicalization of homelessness with regard to the historiography of life-cycle and everyday life in Japan, which have been central in social engineering in Japan in the course of its pursuit of nationhood, modernization, and democracy (Plath 1980; Garon 1998; Harootunian 2000; Robertson

2010). Temporalities of survival in Kotobuki are constructs shaped by the bureaucratic time-frame of welfare provision, the cultural notion of reproductive life-cycles, and the timescape of social movements in Japan, as I will explain. This chapter ultimately suggests that survival, for my informants, was perceived as a relational work made possible through weaving temporal rhythm and orientation connecting oneself to others, in the absence of normative relations of care defined by family or community. The homeless and supporters' endeavor to survive centered on creating a rhythm of care for the mind and body. Such endeavor moved the focus of care from the individual to relations that spiral out (and back in) this healing place (*iyashi no ba*) of Kotobuki beyond the fault line of life and death.

Slow Suicide and Self-Reliance: From Day Laborers to the Homeless

The district of Kotobuki has been driven by the rhythm of daily survival since its formation in the 1950s. As a *yoseba*, it has functioned as a base for an industrial reserve army in the Marxian sense. While the rest of the society followed a synchronized clock time of regular work hours, *yoseba* day laborers were at the mercy of the vicissitudes of the labor market. While salarymen (*sararii man*) were protected by lifetime employment and a seniority system, day laborers were entrepreneurs of their own, who always had to be on the lookout for opportunities and quick money. While the rest of the country was driven by the dream to own “my home” (*mai hōmu*) and increase their savings, day laborers were expected to jeopardize their body, their only asset, for life-threatening jobs. During the time when capital investment accelerated for a faster return of gains, money earned by day laborers returned right back to the market without being accumulated in

material forms. Money was better spent right away; if not, the laborers lost it through trickery, extortion, or mugging. It was in the bodies of day laborers that the Japanese economic bubble accrued. Kotobuki day laborers were the stevedores who loaded and unloaded shipments that lifted Japan from the postwar rubble; they were the construction workers who built highways, bridges and high-rises during the real estate bubble. In Yokohama, the optimistic rush towards the fantastical future symbolically and materially crystalized in the construction of the aptly named Minato Mirai 21 District (“The Port Future 21 District”) in the 1980s. Many of those who now receive welfare assistance in Kotobuki often “brag about how they used to earn 30,000 ~ 50,000 yen as *tobi-shoku* (construction workers who specialize in high-rises) when they built up the skyscrapers in Minato Mirai” (Sudō 2004:84).

When the bubble economy collapsed in the early 1990s, it was *yoseba* like Kotobuki, which functioned as “a buffer zone that absorbs the brunt of economic exigencies” (Fowler 1996: xv) where the aftereffects manifested most dramatically. Although homelessness was an unavoidable part of day laborers’ seasonal movements, the post-bubble economy made staying homeless an ultimate form of betting: a bet on their lives. Day laborers who failed to find jobs stayed in recruitment spots without avail and ended up spending days and nights crowding the traditional *yoseba* districts and public spaces of metropolitan areas. Mr. Miyagi (pseudonym), who I met at Kadobeya, a space run by affiliates of the non-profit group Sanagitachi, was one such person. Born in the late 1960s, Mr. Miyagi would be classified as the last cohort of the postwar day laborers. He was born an orphan in the Northeastern region (Miyagi Prefecture). Once he was released from the children’s institution, he roamed around the Tokyo metropolitan area taking

miscellaneous jobs, from construction work to street trading. He had his highest earnings in the early 1990s, when he was involved in the extension work of Shinjuku subway line, which paid him 20,000 ~ 30,000 yen (roughly, 200 to 300 dollars) a day. However, his money was spent in alcohol and pachinko slot machines, and sleeping in the Japan Railway Shinjuku Station, a place that also came to be known as “Shinjuku Cardboard Box Village” (*Shinjuku Danbōru Mura*) in the late 1990s. After more than a year, Mr. Miyagi drifted to Yokohama, where he eventually encountered Ms. Mimori of Kotobuki District Center, who persuaded and helped him apply for housing and livelihood assistance.⁵⁷ Like many other welfare recipients in Kotobuki, Mr. Miyagi told me that he had not known about the livelihood protection system, and even after he heard about it, it did not occur to him that he could or should apply for it himself. For day laborers like Mr. Miyagi, even imagining a life with welfare assistance required a radical shift in the relationship they had with their body and their temporal reckoning and habitus for survival.

Mr. Shinohara, about twenty years older than Mr. Miyagi, similarly embodies the history of the economic boom and bust in Japan. Born in a working class neighborhood in Yokohama in 1946, Mr. Shinohara started his first construction work in his teens and saw the ebb and flow of the Lawless Western Town of Kotobuki. During his heyday, he would use up his money on drinking and gambling on horse racing after heavy work. He fondly recalled the days when he used to be recruited by labor brokers at bars in the morning after drinking all night. During the oil shocks in the 1970s, Shinohara also sold

⁵⁷ This is a biographical sketch of Mr. Miyagi from the information I gathered over the many informal conversations I had with him from 2010 to 2012 at Kadobeya, Kotobuki Literacy School, and Thursday Patrols.

blood at the blood bank that stood in Kotobuki from the 1950s until the early 1970s.⁵⁸ As day laboring jobs dwindled, Mr. Shinohara started to sleep outside and spend days after days soaked in alcohol. It was only after being hospitalized for an operation that Shinohara started to receive livelihood protection. Looking back at his time in Kotobuki, Shinohara told me how he escaped death multiple times.

When I first came to Kotobuki [at eighteen after being released from the juvenile detention center] I was surprised to see so many people in wheelchairs and canes. Weren't you surprised too? But, now, I'm the one walking with a cane. It was since I had a neck surgery, so that must be when I was about 54 or 55 [2000 or 2001]. That was the time I also quit alcohol. I decided so in the hospital.... I still remember this. When I had that surgery in the hospital, I once went down to the concession stand. But I couldn't find my way to my sickroom. I realized then that it was really serious, that I had to quit..... It's the same with tobacco. Six years ago [2005] on October 24th, I had lung cancer surgery. I quit tobacco on October 23, a day before the surgery... (Interviewed on June 17, 2011)

Following these two surgeries on his neck and lung, Shinohara went through three more operations on his back, and his left and right thighs. After showing me the scars he got from all these operations, Shinohara said, "Some people think it's a miracle that I'm still alive." Notably, the only way that Shinohara could have made a living as a day laborer was by taking risks and believing in the invincibility of his body. With the downturn of day laborers' market and the decaying of their bodies, it was exactly such a

⁵⁸ The blood bank had been a headache for the public health practitioners in Kotobuki, raising concerns over the spread of hepatitis C (Kanagawa-ken Shakai Fukushi Inukai 1965). According to the records of the dispatched welfare office in Kotobuki, most of the consultations from 1962 to 1964 were related to problems of blood selling. In particular, during the ten-days strike of the All Japan Seamen's Union in November 27 to December 6, 1965, about 1,200 unemployed men lined up in front of the blood bank to sell blood (Serizawa 1976:59). The amount of blood collected in Kotobuki made Kanagawa Prefecture one of the biggest blood-draining prefectures in Japan. One social worker at the time went further to note that "blood selling is like drug addiction" in Kotobuki that nobody would give up once they started doing it (Serizawa 1976:6).

habitus that day laborers like Shinohara had to shrug off in order to survive, which was, indeed a “miracle.”

The life histories of Mr. Miyagi and Mr. Shinohara exemplify the exclusion of day laborers from the social temporal dynamics that sustained the postwar economic boom and the disproportionate toll the economic recession and restructuring took on the lives of day laborers. They also show how the very habitus that used to function as a lifeline for day laborers was turned against them as the labor market changed. Day laborers had to break away from their embodied time-scape in order to survive with welfare assistance at the turn of the century. In the postwar sociopolitical order of Japan, the script of good life for men was to have a secure job with sufficient salary to support a family, while receiving care from his wife and daughter(s)-in-law later in their lives. Care work was to be provided through kinship and marriage according to the normative reproductive cycle (Plath 1980; Lock 1995; Long 1999; Traphagan 2004).⁵⁹ In contrast, day laborers’ lives were defined by daily survival, which worked against the temporal frame of reproductive cycles, and against the logic of care embedded in the family-based social security system.

The anthropologist Tom Gill, who has followed the Kotobuki district and its day laborers closely since the 1980s, remarked that it was such gendered notions of personal autonomy, which contributed to the absolute predominance of a male underclass among the homeless population (Gill 2012). In his short essay on five homeless men living in various parts of Japan, Gill shows how his informants’ ideas of self-reliance were at odds

⁵⁹ The national blueprint of “the good life” in postwar Japan is emblematically shown in Prime Minister Miki Takeo’s social policy, the Outline for the Nation’s Lifecycle Planning (*Shōgai sekkei keikaku kōsō*), proposed in 1975. The Planning stated four pillars of Japan’s welfare society: 1) home ownership support system, 2) lifelong education system, 3) social security system (national pension and health care system), and 4) retirement benefits system.

with the “self-reliance” support provided by the state: They rather preferred to keep their autonomy by building their own shacks, collecting empty cans and fishing in the river, as far as they could survive (Gill 2012). During my fieldwork, I have also encountered a few homeless men who would be offended when they were offered help in applying for welfare assistance and would look down on those who had done so. However, I have noticed that such an attitude, which was held more firmly by those who would count as traditional day laborers, largely faded away in the past three decades. Although being obliged to welfare (*fukushi no seiwa ni naru*) is rarely a favorable option to anyone, increasingly more homeless are making the transition that Mr. Miyagi and Mr. Shinohara had made.

I suggest that such changes were made possible by the politics of survival adopted by the homeless, activists, and supporters against the backdrop of economic restructuring and neoliberal poverty management, which increasingly criminalized and victimized the homeless. Particularly central to the politics of survival and emergency in homeless activism was the reframing of homelessness as a form of social death. A renowned scholar of social policy, Iwata Masami’s analogy of homelessness as “slow suicide (*kanmanna jisatsu*),” exemplifies such a viewpoint (Iwata 1995:275). Iwata borrowed the phrase from Nukada Isao, a doctor who worked in a clinic in a temporary housing district for the victims of the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995. Nukada used the phrase to depict the pattern shown by low-income or unemployed single middle- and old-aged men with chronic illness in temporary housing units. Unlike other population groups, they tended to enclose themselves in their rooms until they faced isolated death (Nukada 1999:185). The equation of isolated death with suicide is compelling, given the immense

public and governmental attention to Japan's climbing suicide rates since late 1990s.⁶⁰ The statistics showed that the majority of suicides were related to economic hardship, and a large number of people committed suicide as a means to relieve the burden they put on their family; so much so that most life insurance companies had to increase the suicide exemption clause from one to two or three years in 2005. In this sense, suicides in postindustrial Japan are not committed as an act of honorable self-sacrifice as the more conventional genre of Japanese suicides, but rather as an act of resignation simply completing what one has perceived to be demanded by society.⁶¹ They were already killed, long before they committed suicide. It would be in the extension of this logic that Nukada, Iwata and the like, portrayed the lack of initiative to escape from a devastating state of alcoholism, homelessness, abuse, or poverty, as slow suicide.

From this perspective, the existential confrontation the homeless face when they apply for welfare assistance and start rehabilitation can be likened to that of a suicidal person. Anti-Poverty activist Yuasa Makoto demonstrates this well in his book, *Anti-*

⁶⁰ For example, the Internet-based Suicide Notification Guideline (*Intānetto-jō no jisatsu yokoku jian heno taiō ni kansuru gaidorain*) released by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication in 2006, shows how the governmental countermeasures are focused on preventing suicide attempts among internet-using youths. However, there is no particular guideline targeting people who commit suicide because of economic hardship.

⁶¹ Expanding on Durkheim's idea of anomic suicide, Marcel Mauss (1979) elaborates on how suicide can derive from the idea of death suggested by the collectivity, based on his analysis of several societies in the South Pacific. The following quote can be useful in rethinking suicide and other self-destructive tendencies in contemporary Japan that complicates the binary understanding of voluntary or forced suicide, without recourse to the individual's pathology: "*death produced brutally, elementarily in many individuals, but quite simply because they know or believe (which is the same thing) that they are going to die..... [T]he subject who dies does not believe or know himself to be ill, he only believes, for precise collective causes, that he is in a state close to death. This state generally coincides with a break in his communion, either by magic or through sin, with the sacred powers and things whose presence normally sustains him*" (Mauss 1979: 37).

Poverty: Exodus from a Sliding Down Society in explaining how his non-profit organization Moyai came to focus on services to assist people's application for livelihood protection. "Most of the counseling in Moyai was sought by people moaning 'I can't go on like this, there is no way out but to die.' The option of livelihood protection was not a 'preferable' one to anyone. Yet, there were no other ways. As far as we cannot tell those sitting in front of us, 'okay, then go die.' the only option left for us was to utilize the livelihood protection system." (Yuasa 2008:132) In other words, regardless of whether they had actively attempted to commit suicide or not, had they not applied for welfare assistance, they would merely have been waiting for death. The endeavors of support groups like Moyai and those in Kotobuki, from publishing handbooks with guidelines of how to apply for livelihood protection to accompanying the applicants throughout the process, is comparable to that of talking people out of suicidal thoughts. Since suicide, either abrupt or slow, is a fulfillment of the expectations of society that deem them dead, whereas applying for livelihood protection would be a betrayal against such expectations.

With the success of homeless activism and the establishment of homeless support regime, Kotobuki became a destination for all those who were susceptible to various forms of self-destruction. However, the transition from being homeless to receiving welfare assistance was rarely a smooth one for anyone, and it involved grappling with existential questions of what life beyond the point of socially prescribed script should be about. The homeless, activists, and supporters who endeavored to create a safe space for survival in Kotobuki have reported, in their newsletters, case studies, and interviews with me, how they struggled to find meaningful conducts of life under welfare assistance, and

livelihood protection in particular, in reorienting daily life based on the temporality of care instead of (survivalist) labor.

The Conundrum of the Livelihood Protection

Until the implementation of the Homeless Self-Reliance Support Law in 2002, those who ran out of their means in *yoseba* like Kotobuki relied mainly on extra-legal measures (*hōgai engo taisaku*), i.e., food and lodging vouchers. The name of the measures reflect the politics of time embedded in the system: “taisaku,” literally meaning countermeasures, were the dominant mode of governance when it came to *yoseba* districts like Kotobuki in addressing local problems from unemployment, tuberculosis, and to substance abuse.

These extra-legal measures were products of an era when it was assumed that the recipients would carry on their lives as day laborers, using the food and lodging vouchers as emergency stopgaps.⁶² It was also such temporality embedded in extra-legal measures that allowed the homeless to manage a “self-reliant” life at the margins of society (Gill 2012). Once Japan’s poverty management was restructured centering on “the homeless problem,” it became harder for the homeless to move in and out of the welfare system at their discretion.

Taro’s life trajectory gives us a glimpse of how the Homeless Self-Reliance Support Law in 2002 affected the homeless in Yokohama. As municipalities had to abide by the Law to reduce the number of the homeless, Yokohama City built the Hamakaze

⁶² The extra-legal measures were implemented by Yokohama City following the oil crisis in 1974, in response to the protests of Kotobuki Day Laborers’ Union (Hayashi 2014:125-126). Yokohama City government abolished these measures in 2012, claiming that they no longer serve their purpose as all necessary services was covered by the Homeless Self-Reliance Law.

Homeless Self-Reliance Support Center in Kotobuki district, one of the largest homeless shelters in the country in 2003.⁶³ It was here that Taro was sent after being released from the rehabilitation clinic. In Hamakaze, Taro got into a fight with the staff for drinking and was kicked out the next day. Out on the streets, Taro had to rely on food vouchers, and eventually the welfare officer in charge of the vouchers recommended that he check in at Hamakaze once again. This time he successfully completed six months of rehabilitation program at Hamakaze, after which he received livelihood protection to live in a *doya* under the condition that he continues on attending AA meetings. However, as he started working part time, he stopped going to AA and fell back into depression. After one and half years of complete social withdrawal and self-confinement in his *doya* room, Taro was diagnosed with bipolar disorder by Dr. Tanaka at Kotobuki Communal Clinic, after which he became eligible for uninterrupted provision of livelihood protection. If it had been before Hamakaze was built in Kotobuki, Taro would have not been sent to Kotobuki in the first place, and if he had any contact with the welfare office, it would have been to get vouchers at best. After the implementation of the Homeless Self-Reliance Law, many homeless in Yokohama, with many twists and turns, ended up living under livelihood protection in Kotobuki, like Taro did.

The option of receiving livelihood protection in Kotobuki was a hard fought victory by local activists and the homeless through their long struggle to secure the right to survival. Although the right to apply for livelihood protection is guaranteed by the

⁶³ Hamakaze can accommodate 250 people, compared to 80-100 people of other Homeless Self-Reliance Support Centers that were built from the budget set by the Homeless Self-Reliance Support Law.

constitution (Article 25),⁶⁴ welfare offices had constructed a bulwark of formal and informal barriers to hinder people from receiving assistance. One of the biggest hurdles for day laborers and the homeless was the inability to provide a permanent home address, which was required at the stage of application. Kotobuki activists have been particularly successful among *yoseba* activists in negotiating with the municipal government to acknowledge a *doya* as a permanent address to be eligible for livelihood protection. After the establishment of Hamakaze Homeless Self-Reliance Center in Kotobuki, however, the homeless and activists had to wrestle with the welfare office to bypass Hamakaze, and the usual outcome was somewhat of a mix: The homeless from all over the city were first sent to Hamakaze, then went through a certain period of moving back and forth between Hamakaze and *doya* in Kotobuki until they reached the retirement age of 65 or diagnosed with certain disability, after which they were considered legitimately qualified for livelihood protection for life.

For the homeless, living in *doya* with livelihood protection was thought of as an antithesis to being admitted to an institution (*shisetsu*) like Hamakaze, where one is subject to structured schedules, behavioral rules, collective discipline and surveillance (Goffman 1961; Foucault 1975). In the lack of any tiered system, the livelihood protection was the only alternative to dying out on the street or being shifted around meaningless retraining programs to get licenses for jobs that do not exist. However, living in *doya* under livelihood protection in Kotobuki posed challenges of its own. It was

⁶⁴ In the Constitution's Chapter Three, "Rights and Duties of the People," Article 25 defines the right to survival (*seizonken*) as follows: "All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living. In all spheres of life, the State shall use its endeavors for the promotion and extension of social welfare and security, and of public health."

up to oneself to resolve the constant tension between one's embodied rhythms, the bureaucratic time frame of welfare provisions, and therapeutic modalities. Ultimately, living within the means of livelihood protection meant readjusting one's conception and orientation of time in the void of punctuations defined by purpose and sociality. As the livelihood protection reception rate rapidly increased in the early 1990s, the following became a familiar scene in Kotobuki:

The rhythm of life in the town of Kotobuki today syncs with the movement of the welfare office. For example, when the Livelihood Protection pay day approaches, the town gets strangely animated..... Gambling dens are crowded with people, bars echo with voices of men and women, and drunkards roll on the street. Some shout, "The Summer feast (*obon*) and New Years (*Tarogatsu*) came at once!" There are fights, ambulances, street markets, as known as 'robbers' market' (*dorobō ichi*), that sell anything from tool kits, clocks, radios, rice cookers, *majong* pieces, *enka* cassette tapes, and to fake pistols. Some say they found their stolen stuff in the market – that's why it's called the 'robbers' market'. There are most fantastic things like a kid's toy box. Yet, such a festive atmosphere would be gone in about a week and it would quickly become lonesome. Especially the town becomes desolate about a week before the pay day, as most would be lying down in their rooms with empty stomachs. (Sudō 2004:84)

Although alcohol and gambling dependency had vexed the day laborers of Kotobuki for a long time, this periodical spree was a scene created by the structure of social security system, which lacked any tiered or partial assistance. The monthly lump sum payment of the livelihood protection required a radical shift from the tactics of daily survival: it required one to have at least a month-long plan to ration out the resources over the course of the month, and attune one's rhythm of life to that of the payment schedules. Over the last three decades, social workers and supporters of Kotobuki endeavored to establish the 'image of life' that suits the monthly cycle of livelihood protection (Sudō 2004:83-4). They encouraged the welfare recipients to set up bank

accounts so that monthly rents can be sent directly to their *doya* owners; they offered help to shop bulk rice, instant ramen, and meal tickets for local restaurants right after the payment days; some caseworkers withheld the payment and distributed it once or even twice a week, a practice that was often adopted by *doya* managers and staffers of sheltered workshops as well. I have also observed people relying on informal relations, as in the case of Mr. Shinohara. Mr. Shinohara had built a long-term friendship with a middle-aged Christian volunteer Ms. Suda, who he entrusted to be his personal financial manager. In the beginning of each month, Mr. Shinohara gave her his welfare allowances (minus his food budget), so that he does not use up his money in horse racing, his last addictive habit. When Mr. Shinohara ran out of money at the end of the month, as it happened occasionally, he turned back to Ms. Suda, who would hand over the money with gentle admonishment.

During my fieldwork, the scene described above was still present to some degree in the beginning of every month. Yet, local support groups have also come up with a myriad of ways to create sustainable monthly flows. Kotobuki District Center, for example, hosted a monthly open-air bazaar on the first Saturday following the payday, except for the hottest month of August. The bazaars offered new and used goods such as clothes and dishes donated by individuals and churches affiliated with the United Church of Christ in Japan at cheap prices from 10 yen to 500 yen (roughly 10 cents to 5 dollars). The monthly sales ranged from 100,000 to 200,000 yen (roughly 1,000 to 2,000 dollars), all of which was channeled back to the district through the homeless support activities of the

Center.⁶⁵ The bazaar at Kotobuki Children’s Park formed an interesting contrast to the bustling street scenes filled with bar hostesses, whom one volunteer jokingly referred to as “competitors” in soliciting customers. Towards the end of the month, Kotobuki District Center hosted free or low-priced lunches at Kotobuki Welfare Workshop and Kiraku House to make sure that no one went hungry.

Livelihood protection put people in limbo between the chronicity of economic and medical conditions and the urgency of daily needs. While it required a fundamentally different set of life habits and planning, there was a constant threat that the welfare office might terminate its provision at anytime, making an issue of recipients’ lack of will for rehabilitation or job seeking. The recipients could not save up either, because it would make them disqualified for livelihood protection. Meanwhile, they were also susceptible to the vicissitudes of the welfare budget, as shown by the sudden cut in allowances for livelihood protection in 2013. In short, the livelihood protection system ironically required living a life within the means of the livelihood protection itself without envisioning a long-term plan.

Pathologies of Atemporality: Stagnated Time and Flowing Time

The homeless, once their housing was settled, were required to receive medical screening upon entering Kotobuki. Accordingly, it was the local medical staff, who most closely monitored the life habits and wellbeing of welfare recipients. Kotobuki Communal Clinic (*Kotobuki Kyōdō Shinryōjo*) and the free Medical Team (*Iryōhan*) have

⁶⁵ In order to protect its independent management, Kotobuki District Center runs strictly on donations and the sales of bazaar only, without any direct financial support from the parish of UCCJ.

been most active in publicizing their findings. In their surveys, the Medical Team and the Communal Clinic discovered symptoms commonly shown by those in Kotobuki and the changes in their patterns. Their records demonstrate how mental and physical ailments were discussed in the medical context in relation to the patients' sense of time.

Alcoholism was but one expression of the range of pathologies accompanying the collapse of healthy sense of time. In the 2001 survey by the Kotobuki Communal Clinic, 189 of its 248 regular patients (75.9%) were taking sleeping pills.⁶⁶ In addition to insomnia, Kotobuki also showed extraordinarily high rates of constipation and dehydration and high demands for enemas and IV therapies, because many people tended to stay immobile in their rooms without doing the most basic activities like going to the toilet, drinking water and eating meals (KCCN 2003, 15: 13-14). Irregular lifestyles also interfered with treatments, as some patients would not take medications because the instruction read to "take after each meal," while others took all the medications at once before going to bed (KCCN 2004). There were even cases of bedsores among people, not because they were sick or disabled, but simply because they spent too much time lying down (KCCN 12:10-11).

At the other end of stagnated time, Kotobuki Communal Clinic staffers also noted the problem of continuous flow represented by walking, almost to the degree that amounts to compulsory walking. Dr. Tanaka, reflecting on his experience in Kotobuki as a social worker and later as a psychiatrist at Kotobuki Communal Clinic made the following observation:

⁶⁶ The medical practitioners at the Clinic related insomnia with a range of issues including, substance abuse (alcohol and drugs), mental illness (schizophrenia, maniac depression, and hysteria), old age, physical pain, and the environmental conditions of *doya* (noise, temperature, ventilation, and bedding).

Although it is not rare to hear about mental patients having trouble falling asleep, or feeling restless and roaming about over the night, I haven't paid much attention to that. I would just say 'let's try to sleep in the night' and adjust the sleeping pills. But after coming here [from a mental hospital elsewhere], I realized that in Kotobuki-chō there are surprisingly many people who walk so much as if they were 'walking devils (*aruki ma*).' I was already familiar with stories like, 'I ran away from the workers' shack (*hanba*) that was like a labor camp (*tako beya*) and walked three days to return to Kotobuki,' long time ago [while I was a social worker in Kotobuki]. But, this is different. It is not even anything like 'walking' [in English] for health, but something that cannot be described other than walking for the sake of walking. There are people who walk around Sakuragi-chō everyday, who walk to Yamashita Park five times a day – despite his walking disability, who walk from Tokyo to Yokohama following the south-bound National Highway Route 1, and so on. Some of them seems to be what I call 'walking for livelihood' types, like 'I walked all night looking down to pick up money. I picked up twice so far.' or like 'There is a place that takes an empty can for 2 yen, so I picked up empty cans to make money for cigarettes, and made it' or 'I walked around Kamiōoka to get left over food,' and so on. As such, there are many people walking beyond the common sense. Some get big bean-sized blisters on the soles of their feet, some develop cracks in their hard heels almost to the state of palmoplantar keratosis, yet these people continue to walk. What is 'walking' to human beings? There might be something like 'walking as part of human nature,' that goes beyond the type of 'walking with some purpose.' Taking a stroll might be one kind of such walking. These days, I came to think that there are many people who walk fervently driven by such nature in Kotobuki-chō" (Tanaka Toshio, "From the Clinic (2): The Walking People", KCCN 1998 6:7).⁶⁷

Dr. Tanaka's observation is a well-known fact in Kotobuki. I have heard of many favorite walking destinations including the rich residential district Yamate hill, the Yamashita Park on the seaside, and the Kuboyama Public Cemetery. Mr. Nara, for example, during his first year in Kotobuki, spent the days hiding from his debtors in his

⁶⁷ Notably, it is not just 'the town's people' who walk intensively. A former Naka Welfare Office caseworker, Kōzaka Shininchi playfully says that caseworkers should become 'foot workers.' It was after helping his colleague handle an emergent case of a suicide attempter, Kōzaka started to stop by the Kotobuki Communal Clinic whenever he can. Mentioning this incident, he writes: "I have always thought that 'when it comes to work, don't hesitate to walk (*futto wāku wo karuku*)', yet the incidence made me take this deep into my heart. Wouldn't the aforementioned word 'foot worker' (*futto wākā*) come to be equated with the word caseworker (*kēsu wākā*) someday?" (KCCN 11:10-11)

doya and came out during the night to walk all over Yokohama City with a fellow he met in Kotobuki. After he was filed bankruptcy with the help of Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union, he maintained his walking routine in the nightly visits to the homeless organized by the Union and other support groups. Taro, on the other hand, walked in the morning. He went to three morning radio exercises (*rajio taisō*) held respectively at 6:30am at Yamashita Park, at 7:30am at Rinkō Park and 8:20am at Kotobuki Center plaza during the summer time. Sometimes he would also join the lunch stretches at Kotobuki Children's Park at 12:30pm. In the quote above, Dr. Tanaka, having his undergrad training in cultural anthropology at Tokyo University, is connecting such walking obsession to the existential crisis those in Kotobuki faced. Without any structured daily schedules or tasks, human nature seemed to reveal its raw form caught in the vast eternity of time, the escape from which was to resort to exhaustion and self-destruction.

Building an ideal "rhythm of life" (*seikatsu no rizumu*) became one of most frequently visited topics of the newsletters issued by the Medical Team and the Communal Clinic by 2010. In particular, the featured piece on "Living with Illness" with suggestions on daily diet, cleaning, and walking was reprinted in the Medical Team's periodical three times between 2010 and 2012. Such health advice shares with other homeless support activities the concern that life in Kotobuki did not naturally offer any "*tanoshimi*," something to look forward to, an essential component of "*ikigai*," the motivation to live (See Mathews 1996 for *ikigai*). Inculcating the motivation to live by instilling daily rhythms into the lives of welfare recipients was set as the primary goal in many support activities, from soup kitchens to AA meetings. In order to comprehend why

time-work became central in Kotobuki, we need to delve deeper into the primacy of “livelihood” (*seikatsu*) in Japan.

The Primacy of Everyday Life (*Seikatsu*) and The Larvae Stage

Configuring the everyday was instrumental to the construction of modernity in Japan, as in other places during the industrial period. Many historians noted the significant role “*seikatsu*” played in Japan’s social discourses from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, during which its meaning expanded from life and livelihood to everyday life, lifestyle, and living (Silverberg 2009:13). Harry Harootunian elaborated on how *seikatsu* served as the “dialectical optics” (Harootunian 2000:124) during this period, mediating historical narrative and lived reality in new forms of communication and temporal experience. Among the many competing versions of the everyday that emerged in scholarly debates, novels, life-style magazines, films, music, and art, there was Morimoto Atsuyoshi’s cultural living (*bunka seikatsu*). *Seikatsu* in this context was distinguished from mere “existence” (*seizon*, literally survival), and it became a defining feature of the urban domestic culture of consumption for the salaried middle-class (Harootunian 2000: 117-8). Jordan Sand focused specifically on domestic space as the site of *seikatsu* and discussed how it was configured from the abstract notions of home (*hōmu*) and hearth (*katei*) to “a new sensibility about everyday life” and “a new mode of occupying space itself” (Sand 2005: 353). Sheldon Garon (1998) paid particular attention to the Livelihood Reform Movement (*seikatsu kaizen undō*) directed by the Ministry of Education and explored in women’s magazines in the interwar period and demonstrated

how such moral suasion in the level of family and community continued to form the basis of social security in postwar Japan (Sato 2003; Silverberg 2009).

The primacy of the everyday in contemporary social policy of Japan can be viewed in this light. The MHLW, in a recent report, emphasized the self-reliance of daily life (*nichijō seikatsu jiritsu*) as one of the areas welfare recipients were in need of support (*shien*), along with self-reliance at work (*keizaiteki jiritsu*) and in social life (*shakai seikatsu jiritsu*) (MHLW 2010:7). If *seikatsu* is defined by daily life structured around the discipline, consumption, and care at home, it is an oxymoron to discuss the “self-reliance” of *seikatsu*, much less, the *seikatsu* of the homeless, who lacks both home and family. While there are many guidelines set by the Homeless Self-Reliance Support Law and numerous step-up programs run by various institutions that help one to find a job and eventually wean oneself from welfare, such a scenario is highly unlikely for most unskilled workers in the post-industrial economy of Japan today. The reality is understood by the caseworkers at the Naka Ward Welfare Office as well, who are surprisingly realistic in their expectations and limit their roles to advising on monetary and health issues. For example, the two tips of advice that Mr. Kitano got from the caseworker following his approval of livelihood protection were: “Do not press yourself too hard for a job,” and “set an everyday goal and see concrete outcomes.”⁶⁸

The absence of a script of viable and meaningful daily life for the homeless and the impossibility of long-term planning for a better future hinder the operation of welfare schemes that pursue homeless self-reliance and “return to society” (*shakai fukki*). For example, we can look at the operation of Hamakaze, the governmentally sponsored

⁶⁸ During Mr. Kitano’s application for livelihood protection on November 2011, I accompanied Mr. Kitano as a voluntary supporter (See Chapter 2).

Homeless Self-Reliance Center built in Kotobuki in 2002. Mr. Kudo, the director of Hamakaze, lamented that most of its former users failed to move into an apartment which would have been the only way to save money and move up the social ladder in the long term⁶⁹. Instead, most Hamakaze users, even after they got a job and graduated from Hamkaze, moved into a *doya* in Kotobuki, which would be more costly in the long term and put them in a precarious position where they could get kicked out as soon as they lost their jobs, without savings to rely on. Hamakaze was showing little success in guiding its users to reach self-reliance, as stipulated by the Law, which Mr. Kudo interpreted as getting a job and “renting an apartment to return to society”. Doing everything to encourage people to move into an apartment after graduating from Hamakaze, he put up posters showing sample budgetary plans and a diagram of monthly progress towards self-reliance on the walls in the shelter lounge. In addition, in October 2011, Mr. Kudo opened individual rooms on the third floor of the shelter, distinguished from the larger rooms full of bunk beds on the other floors, reserved for those who had saved enough money to pay the security deposits (*shikikin*) and key money (*reikin*) required of most apartments. The idea was to let people practice leading an independent life and familiarize themselves with desirable lifestyles and budgetary habits. Ironically, these rooms were nothing more than replicas of *doya* rooms, alluding to the likely future waiting for them right outside Hamakaze.

This leads to the question of whether there is such thing as a “model welfare recipient” in the same way as a model citizen is conceived of in Japan. This was a

⁶⁹ The information provided here is based mainly on a group visit to Hamakaze on October 21, 2011.

question that Mr. Kotara (pseudonym) strove to answer.⁷⁰ Suffering from a rare muscular disease, myopathy, Mr. Kotara had become a recipient of livelihood protection about a year before we met. He had been supported by his family at home for sixteen years since the onset of the disease, but he decided to apply for the livelihood protection because he didn't want to burden his family any more. Telling me about his disease, he emphasized that students like me should try to learn both "good things" and "bad things" about Kotobuki, so that the district and people could improve. As far as outsiders and students like me draw a rosy picture of Kotobuki with a sympathetic view of all the welfare recipients, there is no improvement, but "only living" (*sumu dake*). Mr. Kotara wanted to prove that there are good and bad ways of being a welfare recipient, and wanted to be recognized as the former. Despite his weak muscle, he deliberately refused to use a wheelchair but walked and participated in outdoor activities as much as possible. He also moved out of his *doya* into an apartment in a neighboring district, because "*doya* is a hotel, and hotel is a place to stay, not a place to live." Ironically, he was one of the people who spent most of his time in Kotobuki. Attending every event organized at Kadobeya and Sanagitachi, he commuted to Kotobuki everyday. Sanagitachi is a non-profit organization launched in 2001 locally known for its conservative standing, being more faithful to the governmental agenda in encouraging the self-reliance of the homeless. The name Sanagitachi is a reference to "the larval stage in certain insects when they are at a stage of complete helplessness" (*Sanagitachi Let's Talk* No.3 2002: 1). The organization's stated philosophy is "to inform the public in the wider area of Yokohama

⁷⁰ I have had multiple encounters and conversations with Mr. Kotara at Kadobeya and Sanagitachi from 2010 to 2011. My conversation on this issue took place on August 23, 2011 at Kadobeya.

of the lack of basic needs of those living in Kotobuki-chō,” and to support the street dwellers to “leave their nest” (*Sanagitachi Let’s Talk* No.3 2002: 2).

However, as Mr. Kotara’s attachment to Sanagitachi attests, Sanagitachi offered one of the most stagnant places in Kotobuki, compared to other more left-leaning support groups gesturing toward some sort of social agenda. Sanagitachi’s assumption of top-down style endless support is well captured in the visual representations of its scheme, which lacks any temporal dimension. The diagram that appeared on every leaflet, newsletter and webpage they had, illustrated Sanagitachi’s activities as targeting five main pillars of life of medicine, clothing, job, food, and housing connected by “mental health (*mentaru*)” in the middle. Each of these elements indicate the facilities and activities Sanagitachi managed: Sanagi’s House, a lounge “*ikoi no ba* (a place to rest)” that opened every day from nine in the morning to six in the evening, Sanagi’s Diner that provided three meals a day at 300 to 400 yen (roughly, three to four dollars) or food vouchers, Kotobuki Mimamori Volunteer Program (KMVP) that coordinated support for the every day needs of the elderly, and Kotobuki JUMP Project that encompassed consulting and support services in realms of livelihood, job search, mental health care. The fact that Kotobuki JUMP Project was later replaced by a sheltered workshop *Tefu Tefu* in 2012 ironically demonstrates that their stated goal of “leaving the nest” became merely a spatial scheme, rather than a temporal one. Reflecting Sanagitachi’s philosophy that exchanges between Kotobuki and outsiders (dubbed “Sotobuki”) translated into a source of *ikigai* (motivation to live on), *Tefu Tefu* was built in Okina-chō, right outside of Kotobuki District.

Keiko, a woman in her forties who I always spotted in Sanagi's House, told me once that, she frequently "lost sense of the day" (*yōbi boke*, literally, to go senile and lose track of which day of the week it is), as everyday was the same to her, oscillating between Sanagi's House and Sanagi's Diner. Keiko's self-diagnosis of *yōbi boke* sharply expresses the dilemma of building rhythms of life in Kotobuki. Despite the strenuous effort to build regularities punctuated by aptly placed intervals and special occasions, the inhabitants of Kotobuki could still be lost in the perpetual repetition of "todays" in the lack of any narrative plots that shaped their present lives in Kotobuki District. In the remainder of this chapter, I would like to discuss how "care" emerged as a central organizing theme of daily life in Kotobuki in this context, as exemplified in the challenging realm of alcohol rehabilitation.

Addiction and Immortality

Alcohol rehabilitation in Kotobuki was considered an impossible bet against time and death for the first decades. Murata Yukio, the founder of the first alcoholic rehabilitation center in Kotobuki, had observed that one had to hit the bottom in order to start recovering from alcoholism (Murata 1992). Starting his job in 1968 as a counselor at Kotobuki Welfare Center run by a local private welfare foundation, calling the ambulance and hospitalizing those stricken by alcohol became a daily task for Murata. He recounted in his memoir that, at times, he would run to the ER three times a week. Most of the time, his job was grueling acting as a liaison between the alcohol abusers and the welfare office, endeavoring to persuade both sides to agree on hospital treatment (Murata 1992:20-30). Among those afflicted by alcoholism, the most hopeless were

yankara, the drunkards who sat around a bonfire drinking day after day so that their faces were covered with soot all the time.

There were always ten-some people like that, who would spend all day and sleep rough around the bonfire at the corner of Kotobuki. Surrounding the bonfire, they would drink, sleep, get burnt to death, or get into fights with each other and get seriously injured. Usually, they fought over trivial things like whether the back-number of Nagashima was three or four... The final state of alcohol dependency facing the impending death was expressed in *yankara*, but it was actually from the *yankara* that the recovery from alcohol dependency started in Kotobuki. (Murata 1992:31)

Mr. Takaoka, a senior member of the AA Ahiru Group, was one of those *yankara*. When I asked Takaoka what it was like back in those days, he recounted how he would wake up in the morning near the bonfire to find somebody dead besides him. Takaoka spent years by the bonfire witnessing shifts in generations of *yankara* around him. In Takaoka's own words, he was "gradually degrading into death (*shi ni sotto iku*, literally, getting closer to death, becoming like death)." He sold everything he got to buy drinks for the desire to be entirely free. However, one day, Takaoka found himself arrested after an accident happened while intoxicated. During his two and a half years in prison, he fathomed that it was alcohol after all that led him to that state of the absolute deprivation of freedom. In other words, Takaoka realized that what was waiting at the end of the road to death, which he was pursuing through alcohol, was not absolute freedom, but the opposite. After being released, he joined Murata's NPO Kotobuki Aruku in 2007 and then the AA Ahiru Group, and he has not touched a drop of alcohol since.

In one of the AA meetings I attended, I noticed that Mr. Kaneoka's pursuit of absolute freedom was one variation of the fantasy of immortality commonly appeared in

the self-narratives of alcoholic experience. It was during Ahiru Group's meeting on June 2012, when the topic of the day was "the immortal" (*fujimi*, literally, a body that does not die). Many participants told episodes of nearly escaping death multiple times because of their drinking habits. Some talked about how they used to drink because they had no other desire than wanting to die. Moto had the floor twice by the chairman's mistake. On his second time, Moto lightheartedly remarked, 'I'm grateful to alcoholism. We get welfare because it's incurable. That's why we should cherish our lives and live along day by day.' When about two thirds of the members finished their turn, Mamushi, the chairman of the day and the very person who suggested the topic, intervened to explain the reason he brought up the topic. "We drank so much because we thought we were immortal. We were so arrogant as to believe that death would avoid us." A lot of heads nodded as Mamushi emphasized the importance of humility in leading an alcohol-free life.

Kotobuki's bonfire was extinguished in 2005, while Mr. Kaneoka was in prison. *Yankara* became a distant memory in Kotobuki. As Tanaka Toshio had keenly observed, the disappearance of the bonfire from Kotobuki signified the extinction of free laborers⁷¹ reflecting the fundamental change in the way of life for Japanese underclass men from taking risks to taming death. The successful transition of the homeless in Kotobuki from risk-taking abuse of the body to a routinized bodily care was epitomized in the incorporation of waiting in alcohol rehabilitation.

⁷¹ "On November 14th, 2005, the bonfire of Kotobuki that continued to burn everyday for about fifty years, was extinguished. It is not likely to resume at another spot... I have been seeing Kotobuki people for more than forty years, but it is likely that most of those who were in their thirties forty years ago are gone by now. The few that I have known for long are dying off every year, just like teeth falling out. The manual laborers who upheld the *Jinmu* Prosperity would probably become extinct soon." (Tanaka 2009b:10)

Queuing and Collecting Stamps: Waiting

One of the factors of Kotobuki's success in building a composite rehabilitation system was the fortuitous convergence of the temporal tactics of daily survival and alcohol treatment in queuing and collecting stamps. Both queuing and collecting stamps used to be a means of living for day laborers in Kotobuki district. Also known pejoratively as *tachinbō* (*lit.* stander), day laborers have been marked for, more than anything else, standing and waiting for jobs. During the heydays of Kotobuki as *yoseba*, day laborers would get up at four in the morning and start lining up at five at the Center plaza to be recruited for work.⁷² They had a blue handbook, if they were registered as a dockworker, and a white handbook, if registered as a general day laborer. The chances were that if they had had a blue handbook, it would have become useless by the 1980s at which point they had to switch to a white handbook. Ideally, they would have gotten a stamp (*inshi*) in your handbook for each day they worked. If they collected twenty-six stamps in two months, then they could line up in front of the Public Employment Stability Office to claim unemployment benefits. When jobs in *yoseba* dropped in the 1990s, handbooks gradually became meaningless, and they had to rely on more miscellaneous work, like collecting recycling cans and paper. Interestingly, one of the more ludicrous jobs would have been queuing in front of department or electronic stores early in the morning to get the best deals on behalf of real buyers. When none of these

⁷² Vivid accounts of the official recruitments administered by the two labor offices (Kanagawa Prefecture Labor Welfare Association and Yokohama Public Employment Stability Office) and the unofficial street-side recruitments in the early 1990s can be found in Tom Gill's ethnography (2001: 51-63). These scenes were long gone by the time I conducted my research.

were available, they found themselves queuing for public employment, food or lodging vouchers, and soup kitchens.

Although queuing and waiting no doubt reproduce and accentuate the material and symbolic domination of the providers – whether it be the hiring parties, social service providers or governmental functionaries – over the waiting subjects, as embodied practices of the latter, I suggest that they were empowering as much as alienating for day laborers.⁷³ Although it is true that queuing seizes time that people would have used otherwise, the day laborers during the postwar economic growth period in Japan saw it as a bet worth gambling for a higher paying job than most regular work. Unlike those timid salaried men who were protected by lifetime employment and the seniority system, day laborers were out solely with their bare bodies to make a living by themselves. You would have had to have guts to line up. Not anyone could stand in line – only those with strong minds and bodies. The transient lines of masculine bodies collectively manifested their symbolic and physical strength. It was in these lines that the otherwise independently minded itinerant workers would find each other, share information and vie

⁷³ Building on Bourdieu's attention to the power effects of waiting, Javier Auyero captures the way that the Argentinian urban poor spent time waiting for state services as the "tempography of domination" (2012:4). He suggested that these temporal processes reproduced the power relations by relegating the poor into the category of "patients" rather than citizens of the state (Secor (2007) makes similar arguments about the poor in Turkey). Similarly, Katherine Verdery (1992), in her analysis of temporal politics of Romania in the 1980s, characterized queues as emblematic of the "estatization of time" by the socialist state that deprived people of their means of production and self-realization. Meanwhile, more recently, Simina Bădică (2012: 121-150), speaking of the same time period in Romania, suggested that queuing promoted solidarity among neighbors in their sharing of information and struggling for the common goal. In a similar vein, Mun Young Cho (2012) depicts how the impoverished workers of the post-reformist China would recall queues in the socialist past rationing system as indicative of equality and shared suffering, contrastive to those in the present when "without money, one isn't even qualified to queue in a market." (Cho 2012: 76). For a more general discussion on queuing and waiting, see Schwartz (1975).

for opportunities. While queuing became more desperate and futile as the day labor market waned, in its essence lied a shared expectation of fortune, as much as gambling did.

One such salient example is the early morning queue in front of Kotobuki Communal Clinic. These are the patients waiting for DOT (Directly Observed Treatment), modeled after DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short-course), a method used globally by public health practitioners to treat tuberculosis. DOTS was first introduced to Kotobuki by Yokohama City Government. Alarmed by the high number of tuberculosis patients in the district, the city government commissioned the public clinic run by Kotobuki-chō Laborers' Welfare Association to adopt DOTS in 2000. Since then, the compliance rate increased rapidly, and among the 271 who was diagnosed from 2000 to 2010, 222 successfully finished the full treatment (Kotobukichō Kinrōsha Fukushi K'yōkai 2010:9). Inspired by the success of DOTS in Kotobuki-cho Laborers' Welfare Association's Clinic, Kotobuki Communal Clinic broadened the application of directly observed treatment to help patients with dementia or alcohol addiction. The majority of DOT patients belonged to the latter category, who were advised to come everyday to take alcohol deterrent drugs like cyanamide or disulfiram (Tanaka, KCCN 17: 2-3). Kotobuki Communal Clinic originally administered DOT to patients upon its doctors' recommendation, but then started taking requests from public health caseworkers and nearby facilities as well. While Kotobuki patients have been infamous in the neighboring hospitals for their non-compliance and frequent self-discharge, surprisingly a large number of patients – from thirty to fifty a day – voluntarily shows up for the DOT program at the Communal Clinic. Not only that, they come early – even several hours

before the Clinic opens. Dr. Suzuki, who worked in Kotobuki for years as a volunteer for Kotobuki Medical Team before joining the Communal Clinic told me, “It seems like their habitual behavior. They seem to like it. I told them that ‘you might catch a cold, don’t come so early,’ but they would come like five in the morning, when the clinic opens at nine.”

Collecting stamps has similarly reemerged in alcohol rehabilitation in Kotobuki. In every AA meeting place in Kotobuki, you can find a stamp next to the donation box along with instant coffee and tea. The first thing every AA member does upon his arrival is to go up to this stand and get a stamp to fill in one of the three slots for the day. If you collect three stamps a day, your AA group rewards you with medallions celebrating periods of sobriety from one, three, six, nine months up to one and two years. Collecting three stamps a day indicates much more than one’s sincerity towards rehabilitation; it also means that one is fulfilling his duty as a welfare recipient. The caseworkers at Welfare Offices unofficially use these calendars full of stamps as the condition to continue the livelihood protection of their clients. Meanwhile, the supporter groups in Kotobuki, out of health and moral concerns, support and encourage people to get three stamps a day, and many developed activities that would be considered as a substitute of an AA meeting, thus worthy of a stamp. Mr. Miyagi was one of the most dutiful and proud stamp-collectors. He got stamps everywhere I saw him, at the Kadobeya movement class, the Tuesday Literacy School, Kotobuki Communal Clinic’s Day Care Center for the mentally ill, and of course, at the AA meetings. Looking back on his drinking days, Mr. Miyagi told me that he once stomped on his caseworker’s desk shouting “I’m gonna kill you!” when his caseworker told him that his livelihood protection service might be

discontinued because of his bad financial management and drinking habits. By the time Mr. Miyagi met me, he had been sober for months and had the most gentle nature so that it was hard to imagine the “badass” (*waru*) he claimed to have been before. He was getting his assistance in small amounts twice a week from the welfare office, collected three stamps a day, and made his way to the nine months’ medallion as of the end of 2011.



Figure 14. Mr. Miyagi's Nine Months' Medallion.

The prominence of DOT programs and the relative success of alcohol rehabilitation in Kotobuki emblematically show how the embodied temporality of day laborers played a crucial role in the individuals' entry into the livelihood protection system and the town's metamorphosis into a welfare town. It was by finding the temporal affinity between the day laborers' means of living and the welfare service provisions (including treatments) that people could make the transition smoothly. However, the continuation implied alteration as well, as queuing and collecting stamps themselves became the end goal. While queuing for day laborers had the purpose of winning a prize in the end, queuing for welfare recipients is to maintain the status quo. While queuing and collecting stamps in the past were punctuated with celebratory binge drinking and spending, now these activities have themselves become the only punctuations in time, with the underlying

premise of their perpetual repetition. Among all the contesting temporalities that emerged in the past few decades in Kotobuki, this temporality of repetitive and regular waiting had its predominant appearance under the chronic conditions of alcoholic addiction and economic retrenchment.

Chronicity: Looped Steps

Alcohol rehabilitation, just like other programs of self-improvement and care in Kotobuki, not only enacted daily rhythms of treatment, but also engaged with people's orientation of the past, present and future. Although rehabilitation assumes the patients' determination to clearly break off from their past, the current clinical prognosis and treatment of addiction defy a linear progression towards rehabilitation.⁷⁴ Mr. Murata recounts in his memoir *It's Better to Stop Trying to Make It Better*, the moment he first encountered AA's approach in the late 1970s as the revolutionary turning point in his vision for alcohol addiction recovery.⁷⁵ He wrote, "I came to redefine disease (*byōki*)

⁷⁴ For the contradictions between the biomedical and cultural construction of chronicity of substance abuse and the juridical and popular perspectives that emphasize will and choice see Raikhel and Garriott 2013. For the self-sufficient loop of the chronicity model of mental illness see Estroff 1993: 247-286 and Garcia 2010:13-18. For the liminal status of the chronically ill see Estroff 1993; Jackson 2005.

⁷⁵ Before Alcoholics Anonymous was first introduced to Japan in 1975, Japan had Danshūkai (Sobriety Group), which emerged Kōchi and Tokyo in the 1950s based on the doctrines and organizations founded by Matsumura Harushige. Matsumura was inspired by AA, but criticizing its adaptability to Japan, he established his own principles based on the three pillars of hospitalization, anti-alcohol medication, and self-help groups. Danshūkai allows the participation of non-alcoholic family members in meetings, requires membership dues (about 100 yen per meeting), while AA runs on donation only and have a separate organization for family members called Al-Anon (Christensen 2015:5, 7; Borovoy 2005). The absence of Danshūkai in Kotobuki is notable given that it enjoys a nation-wide membership as twice as many of that of AA in Japan; in 2010, about 10,000 claimed membership in Danshūkai compared to about 5,000-7,000 in AA (Christensen 2015: 65-66). This can be attributed to the Christian legacy in Kotobuki and

through alcohol dependency. Disease is itself a life process of getting better and worse, and the recovery in the hospital is only a small fragment of that process. Getting worse is also part of the process that a person needs to live on.” (Murata 1992:41) After witnessing a miraculous recovery of one of his recalcitrant clients who he accompanied to AA meetings in Tokyo, Mr. Murata introduced the AA model to Kotobuki in 1978 and later established Kotobuki Aruku, the first day care center for alcoholics in the district in 1993. As of 2013, Kotobuki Aruku ran one counseling office, three day-care centers, one group home and one sheltered workshop in Kotobuki and its surroundings and had had more than 2,800 clients in total. Meanwhile, there are now two AA groups (Ahiru, Kotobuki) within the district and two more in the immediate surroundings (New Port, Yokohama) so that anyone can attend three meetings a day regardless of their memberships.

What Mr. Murata found most eye-opening about AA’s approach and what many of my informants took to heart was the idea that the only real step towards rehabilitation started from admitting that dependence on alcohol was a disease that cannot be cured. Believing that you are cured or can be cured makes you vulnerable to relapses. In this sense, if you want to stay sober, you cannot count on your (temporary) sobriety in the present or envision any prospect of full recovery in the future. As the well-known AA slogan goes, you live “one day at a time.” Then how do you orient yourself on a given day? Mr. Kaneoka told me that the key to sobriety lay in watching those who were ahead

yoseba districts in general, as well as, the common practice of physicians directing married men into Danshūkai, and single or divorced men and women to AA (*ibid.*).

in the program and thinking, “I want to become like that.” Once an infamous *yankara*,⁷⁶ Mr. Kaneoka did not understand a single word in the AA handbook when he started the program at the First Aruku Center. Yet, as he attended three meetings a day, he came to observe what others said and did and imitated them until he somehow naturally got it. Since others brought their anti-addiction drugs to the First Aruku and took them together, Mr. Kaneoka started doing the same, as he did not want to fall behind the group. As time went by and he became one of the older members, he grew more conscious of his own performance to show “the right way (*tadashii yarikata*)” of Aruku and AA in front of those who joined later. “That’s why it’s important to stay throughout the whole meeting. An hour and a half of time has its meaning, you know, so you can learn from others,” he said, bragging that he did not have a single slot without a stamp, all fully attended except for the two times he had to leave early because of his gout.

From Mr. Kaneoka’s story, we can see how each AA meeting actualized a certain spatio-temporal field in which trajectories toward ‘recovery’ criss-crossed and refracted in a circular motion. The meetings were mostly organized in large circles that progressed like queues in which every member took turns in sharing his story.⁷⁷ Regardless of the

⁷⁶ A local slang term for the incurable alcoholics who drank day and night around a bonfire until their faces were covered with soot.

⁷⁷ I should note that in Japan, the AA meetings rarely have any psychiatrists or psychoanalysts at present. All the meetings I attended from 2011 to 2014 in Yokohama was run by members themselves, and this was the case even in the Aruku Day Care Center for the Alcoholics, where the staffers were former members who did not have any specialized medical training. The clinicians, NGO workers, public health practitioners, and welfare officials all seemed to emphasize the attendance itself rather than the contents or forms of the stories told in the meetings. In this sense, the “semiotic work” that focuses on talking true to one’s inner self in the AA talks in the United States (Carr 2011: 4), would be quite alien in Japanese setting. Talking honestly is rarely valued in the Japanese folk theory of language; it is rather the mastery of politeness and the competence in performing the expected scripts that is required of a healthy sociable adult. The pathology of the addicts

particular theme of the day, the narratives commonly had the following components: denouncing one's misconducts in the drinking past and a clear-cut rupture from it; appreciation of the everyday of the sober present; and gratitude to the fellow members. While these narratives had confessional function of remaking the self, they were also about instilling a sense of relief into others as much as into oneself and making a healing place (*iyashi no ba*) where members can share daily rhythms and orient themselves in time. In the circle of the meetings, you revisit your past – in your own history, in others' stories, and in the behaviors of those who joined later in the program. In the circle, you see where you might get if you continue to come. In the circle, you find your sober self in companionship with your fellows. The circle consists of your past, present and future selves weaved together in a loop that you continue to revisit repeatedly as you live one day at a time. Then, the question remains, when do you know it is time to leave the circle?

Step 1, 2, 3: Admit, believe, and entrust⁷⁸

The three-tiered program of Kotobuki Aruku is mapped out on the district for participants to spiral out of Kotobuki.⁷⁹ The program starts at the First Aruku Day Care

is located not in their dishonesty, but rather in their anti-sociality. Following the general approach to mental health in Japan, alcohol rehabilitation also pursues social reintegration as its main purpose, and talking is integrated in AA meetings mainly to cultivate a sense of community among members, so they can support each other in their way out. In the meetings I attended, there was no monitoring mechanism by institutional authorities (welfare office, staffers of rehabilitation centers, and doctors) other than checking the attendance, some people would nominally attend the meetings just to get stamps, leave early, sleep throughout the meeting, or skip one's turn saying "I'll give a pass today, because I'm not feeling well."

⁷⁸ This was the title of the AA Ahiru Group's Ninth Open Seminar, held at Kanagawa Labor Plaza (Kanagawa Rōdō Puraza) on October 9, 2011.

Center in Matsukage-cho (First A), inside the Kotobuki District. The members attend the morning and afternoon meetings at the First Aruku Center and choose one of the AA groups in the district for the evening meetings. Once they successfully quit drinking and voluntarily attend meetings, a process that is expected to take two to three months in average, they move on to complete the latter half of the first phase (First B) in Okina-cho right outside the district. During this stage, they repeat AA Steps 1, 2 and 3 and start taking charge of light tasks like making miso soup for lunch, until they “get the rhythm of living without drinking” (*nomanaide ikiru tame no rizumu ga dekiru*, From Aruku Newsletter 2006. No.100:4). When they make due progress, a conference is held with welfare officers, caseworkers, and Aruku staff to determine your transition to the Second Aruku.

The Second Aruku Center is on the second floor of the same building, one floor above the First B. While focusing on AA Steps 2 and 3, participants regularly attend afternoon meetings in other sister institutions in Tokyo and Yokohama area three times a week and participate in external events and seminars. They also take on active voluntary tasks in the neighborhood like gardening and watering the flower beds, cleaning the surroundings of local public facilities, and taking charge of the annual district-wide cleanings and disaster drills, while attending local seasonal events.

After about six to eight months in the Second, they move up another floor to finish the final program at the Third Aruku Center. Here the meetings focus on AA Steps 4 and 5, and they are required to consult the public employment security office twice a week,

⁷⁹ The Aruku program grew with the institution itself, and the three-tiered system as I describe here was an outcome of the expansion of membership, funding and venues that took about fifteen years since its establishment.

mostly for part-time cleaning jobs arranged by local welfare facilities. If they have a severe disability or disease or are over 65, they are eligible to become a member of the Hama Port Sheltered Workshop, a block away from the Third Aruku Center, during any stage of the Aruku program. If they do not belong to any of the categories above, they are advised to get a job and move out of their *doya* in Kotobuki to an apartment elsewhere while they finish up the program in the Third Aruku. The staffers of Aruku told me that they only recommend part time jobs, so people can continue attending AA meetings; if they work full time, they would get exhausted and feel like drinking again.

Mr. Kaneoka, for example, was entering his thirteenth month at the Third Aruku by the time I interviewed him, after spending 7 to 8 months respectively at the First and the Second Aruku. Following the flow of the Third Aruku program, he started working two hours a day cleaning a kindergarten in Yamate district and got housing assistance to move out of Kotobuki. Although he mentioned in his interview with me that the housing assistance was a “prize (*gohōbi*)” from the welfare office rewarding people for years of sobriety, I remembered him recounting his confusion and ambivalence at the time of his transition in one of the AA meetings I had attended earlier: “My caseworker told me that I don’t need to come see her anymore, but I should switch to a caseworker in charge of the Ordinary Districts (*ippan chiku*) on the fifth floor! For two years, I worked so hard to get all the stamps. For two years, I have never failed to show her my stamps. Two years of all the stamping, what was all that for?” Having passed the one-year mark at the Third Aruku, Mr. Kaneoka was qualified to graduate upon his own request (*jiko shinkoku*), but he did not seem to plan on graduating any time soon at the time of the interview.

It was not just Mr. Kaneoka. Quite a few people were still in the Third Aruku well past their one-year qualification mark. Even when they moved out of Kotobuki, they tended to get apartments in adjacent neighborhoods, so they could continue to attend AA meetings, use facilities in Kotobuki and consult the Naka Ward Welfare Office. Since there was no true graduation from alcoholism, graduating from Aruku rarely meant a clear-cut transition in life. Rather, it was by staying connected to the institution that one could truly graduate from Aruku, as Mr. Nakajima's story shows below.

I graduated from Kotobuki Aruku in June, Heisei 15 [2003]. It was after 1 year and 8 months at the day care, followed by a year at the night care [Honmoku Group Home]. During this time, I learned to remember the rhythm of life without drinking. I moved into an apartment in March Heisei 15. I thank everyone who supported me for my recovery: Kotobuki Aruku, the Naka Ward Office, the clinic and many comrades (*nakama*).

After graduating from Kotobuki Aruku, I worked part-time three days a week. I was glad to have the rest of four days free, but the first two months went by fast as I got things settled in the new apartment. After that, when I finally got the long-awaited "idle hours (*himana jikan*)," it crossed my mind that "now I can drink without getting caught."

After much agonizing, I came to think that "there must be something even I can do." So I consulted my sponsor. We came to a conclusion that it would be good to become a volunteer at Aruku where I was much indebted. Soon, I got the permission from the director.

Now I am taking the chair at Aruku Day Care Center [the First Aruku] and the Second Aruku twice a month. In addition to that, I take a lot of roles in AA and spend everyday busy that I have only one day a week of 'idle time' that is dangerous to me. Staying sober is more important than anything else.

I need to attend AA meetings so I can live like a human (*ningen rashiku ikite iku*), and it is here [AA] that I can look back on things. There are so many pitfalls that I might walk into at anytime. I would like to continue my relationship with Aruku forever, so as to avoid that from happening (Nakajima Iwabito, Aruku Newsletter 2006, 100: 24).

Mr. Nakajima exemplifies those considered to be the model graduates from Aruku who figured prominently in Aruku and AA related activities. Graduating from Aruku, in

this sense, meant repositioning oneself in the reciprocal circle of care in the district, now as Aruku OB, rather than completely breaking out of it. Likewise, the success of alcohol rehabilitation program in Kotobuki lied in providing a sustainable way of *living with alcoholism*. Its idea of “recovery” (*kaihuku*) strikingly converged with the concept of “independent living” (*jiritsu seikatsu*) advocated by the disability rights movement that peaked in the 1960s through 1980s: the goal was to make it possible to live with disability in community assisted by local social resources and care (Nakanishi and Ueno 2003; Hayashi and Okuhira 2001).

Indeed, the analogy was drawn when Mr. Murata brought in the AA program to Kotobuki. It was the first step of AA, “We’ve admitted that we are powerless,” that awakened Mr. Murata to recalibrate his activism in a fundamental way. Looking back, he realized that he had a strong conviction to “change Kotobuki” by making various procedures that would widen the support for the individuals in Kotobuki “to become independent (*jiritsu*) and return to society.” (Murata 1992:17) However, after witnessing the miraculous workings of the AA program, he came to think that “[t]he reason why I suffered the past 10 years was because I wanted to do something to empower the day laborers in Kotobuki, to rule over and to get something done.” Concluding that “to make something better is to dominate the other” (Murata 1992:41), Mr. Murata likened AA’s 12 Steps to the Codes of Conduct of the “Group of Green Grass (*Aoi Shiba no Kai*)”, the advocacy group of people with cerebral palsy that pioneered the disability rights movement.⁸⁰ Just like cerebral palsy, addiction was to be better treated by accepting the

⁸⁰ The Codes of Conduct of *Aoi Shiba no Kai* go as follows: “We are aware of ourselves as people with cerebral palsy. We pursue relentless self-assertion (*kyōretsuna jiko shuchō*). We deny the egoism of love and justice. We deny the civilization of the healthy

limitations of the afflicted and making claims based on such limitations, rather than by following the solutions imposed by society based on the standards of the healthy (*kenzensha*).

The community-based Aruku program paired with local AA groups carved out a new spatio-temporal possibility by actualizing a circulatory flow of care with regular rhythms and cycles, which themselves were regarded as the process and the end-goal of rehabilitation. The therapeutic effects of the program lay in engaging individuals in repetitive daily activities, which spiraled in and out of the steps of the program and the boundary of the district, alternating individuals in the reciprocal exchanges of care. Here, we see a sort of inversion in the meaning and functioning of rehabilitation: what mattered was less the individuals' recovery, but more the making and maintaining of a healing place (*iyashi no ba*) where the individuals learned how to orient themselves and spend time day by day. Lacking were the "therapeutic emplotment" that enacted a narrative arc in the patients' progression towards recovery (Mattingly 1994), or the interactive performance of imposing, assuming, and subverting "the script" of righteous recovery (Carr 2011). In this sense, alcoholic rehabilitation in Kotobuki was not constructed as a period of waiting or inaction driven by an anticipation of the better self, but as the succession of "nows" in which the self engages in interactions as at once a giver and a receiver, and the actor and the audience. One could not dream of the future self beyond the therapeutic time-space, because the pressure, the excitement, or the confidence would lead one to relapse. One could not dwell on the past self, because the nostalgia, the melancholy, or the anger would draw one to relapse. As commonly brought up in the AA

people (*kenzensha*). We do not choose the road of problem-solving." For a historical overview of *Aoi Shiba no Kai*, see Hayashi and Okuhira 2001.

meetings in Kotobuki, the AA Step 8 of making amends (*ume awase*) to people who you harmed in the past, was better understood as continuing to come to meetings and stay sober for those in Kotobuki, rather than as trying to reconnect with your family or expect their forgiveness (Sudō 2004: 63-4).

The assumption of chronicity implied in the AA therapeutic modality makes alcohol rehabilitation, and homeless rehabilitation in general, comparable to the disability rights movement. Most groups in Kotobuki, even those without apparent medical pursuit, adopted similar languages and agendas in one way or another soon after Aruku Center. After all, it was not just the individuals' medical conditions that were chronic, but also the state of Japanese economy and welfare.

A Healing Place (*Iyashi no Ba*)

Suffering from mental problems, I had spent a year and a half closed off to myself, but I came to reflect on my past self and realized that I should not continue on living like that. So I once again started to come to help since July last year. Thankfully, I was able to open up my heart (*kokoro wo hiraku*) a little bit and I am grateful that I could heal my own heart (*jibun no kokoro wo iyasu koto ga dekiru*).

During this past year, I also resumed attending AA meetings, going to church, and I could also return to the fellows (*nakama*) in Kotobuki. There are so many grateful things... I am deeply grateful to all the people who accepted the impossible person I am (*dōshiyōmo nai jibun*) in various aspects (*bamen*).

From now on, I will try my best to accept the reality, myself, and the people around me as they are (*ari no mama ni ukeireru*).

I hope to devote myself to serve for God and people around me!

(Taro, in the Kotobuki Soup Kitchen Group Annual Report of 2011)

When I left Kotobuki in 2012, Taro handed me an AA handbook in English he ordered for me, with a note saying, "Thank you for giving me hope all the time!! Please take care and beware of illness and accidents." On my return to Kotobuki in 2014, I found out that Taro had been successfully continuing on his endeavor to be rehabilitated.

He attended AA meetings during the day and bible readings during the night and took weekly seminars at a local theological college. He also became a sponsor of a female member in the AA Yokohama Group, who was suffering from Parkinson's disease. Estranged from his family and having lost his home, Taro strived hard to be reborn in Kotobuki over and over again.

With its unique openness and protectiveness, Kotobuki has become a destination for all those who managed to survive the social structural forces that drove them to self-destructive practices. As some put it, Kotobuki was a refuge where no one is turned away, a port one could always return to. Yet, survival in Kotobuki did not mean a victorious revenge against society, as the labor activists in Kotobuki once dreamed of. It is because their survival was made possible, not by reclaiming life, but by carving out a distinctive spatio-temporal niche beyond the confines of life and death as defined by society. As Kotobuki transformed into a healing place (*iyashi no ba*) for the recipients of the livelihood protection, it also gave form to life comprised of perpetual routines aimed at sustaining the relations of care among the homeless and their supporters. The fact that Taro found hope in me, and narrated his story at AA meetings and church seminars further exemplifies the narrative modality through which welfare recipients in Kotobuki came to configure their daily lives.

CHAPTER 5

The Arc of Life

The Decline of “the Social”

Ichinokawa Yasutaka, a sociologist at Tokyo University, noted that the term *social* (*shakai*) rapidly lost its political power in Japan since the 1990s (Ichinokawa 2006:1). Drawing mainly from his observations of Japanese parliamentary politics, Ichinokawa pointed out that the binary opposition between the liberal (*jiyū*) and the social, which had driven discussions on state and society throughout postwar Japan was replaced by single-sided debates of either promoting or criticizing (neo)liberalism (*(neo) riberarizumu*) (*ibid.* 13-17).⁸¹ Tracing the genealogy of the term in Japan, Ichinokawa attributed the decline of “the social” to its limited usage in Japanese party politics. As it had been strongly associated with socialism and Marxist-Leninism, the fall of communism in the Eastern Bloc led Japanese progressive politicians and intellectuals to abandon the term altogether (*ibid.* 23-26). Meanwhile, Japanese sociologists, according to Ichinokawa, dropped the normative connotation of the term “social” associated with equality or solidarity, as in French or German social sciences and politics; instead, they used the term to refer to value-free human relations and interactions (*ibid.* 35-41). Ichinokawa also noted that while “social” departments and bureaus spread in government bodies in the 1910s to 20s, the Ministry of Internal Affairs also started to oppress socialism spreading among social

⁸¹ For related debates, see the roundtable discussion organized and published by *Gendai Shisō* in November 2001 (Ōuchi et al. 2001).

science study groups at universities in the late 1920s. It was for this reason that the name Ministry of “Welfare” (*kōsei*) was adopted instead of “social” in 1937. The replacement of the *social* by *welfare*, according to Ichinokawa, indicated the state’s attempt to obliterate social disparity and emphasize national homogeneity (*op. cit.*194-199). By tracing how the term “social” has been used by political philosophers, from Rousseau to Habermas, Ichinokawa aimed to pave the ground on which constructive discussions of the social state can take place in Japan today.⁸²

In this sense, we might say that Kotobuki had long continued to be one of the last fortresses of the social in Japan. Many long-term activists and supporters in Kotobuki were the postwar generation who had persistently and resiliently engaged in activities to reclaim the social from the state and “corporate Japan.”⁸³ In particular, the New Left

⁸² Ichinokawa’s timely publication resonated well with activists who have long been frustrated with the lethargy of Japan’s civil society. For example, Yuasa Makoto, in his famous 2008 book that became a manifesto of anti-poverty activism, proclaimed that his aim is to build a “strong society” that has a strong will to prevent anyone from being impoverished (2008:3) and, citing Ichinokawa, called for “more ‘citizens’ (*shimin*) to get involved in anti-poverty activities to change ‘society’ (*shakai*) and politics” (*ibid.* 110, emphasis author’s).

⁸³ What the writer Sabu Kohso noted about the *yoseba* activism since the 1980s would generally apply to that in Kotobuki as well: “After the militarism of the radical sector of the New Left gradually died down in the 1970s, some of those who continued to seek the revolutionary moment went into the big *yoseba*, mostly as individuals, in order to live there and try to learn about the situation of the day workers. This decision was motivated for some by the realization that their earlier activities had failed to incorporate the oppressed masses. First of all, as we have seen, organized labor movements had lost their ground in Japan. In that climate, *yoseba* offered the only loci where the moment of radical class struggle remained. From the viewpoint of traditional Marxism, the unorganized day workers are defined as lumpen proletariat and marginal. However, along with the decline of the formal labor movement, the theory based on the vanguard party of organized workers was thrown into doubt. The activists sought to grasp a new potency in *yoseba*’s workers – more fluid, omnipresent, and rhizomatic forces, as it were, aside from the fact that they were the victims of social inequality, existing as they were as the hierarchical bottom. This became the starting point or the point of starting over for the activists of the generations that followed” (Kohso 2006:423).

activists who settled in Kotobuki in the 1970s to 1980s did so to carry out social experiments according to the ideological goals held by the specific faction they belonged to. Even during my fieldwork some long-term supporters of the district could name Mr. So-and-So to be *Chūkaku*,⁸⁴ and Ms. So-and-So to be *Kakumaru*,⁸⁵ Non-Sect Radical (*Non Sekkuto Rajikaru*), and so on. Although there used to be factional confrontations in the district until the 1980s, all the activists who remained in Kotobuki came to build a form of alliance across their faction or party lines over time. Mr. Kondo of Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union, for example, once a New Leftist activist, was disenchanted with the factional politics and distanced himself from all New Leftist organizations, as he settled in Kotobuki. When it came to party politics today, he told me that his present political position would be closest to that of the Social Democratic Party (*Shakai Minshu Tō*), yet the SDP had never reached out to the district for any election nor shown any solidarity with *yoseba* activism, so there was little incentive for *yoseba* activists to vote for SDP.

Meanwhile, the expansion of Christian activism in Kotobuki was led mostly by sympathizers of the Social Faction (*shakaiha*) of the ecumenical United Church of Christ in Japan, who stood against the Church Faction (*kōyokaiha*) during the internal disputes in the 1970s.⁸⁶ In particular, it was the active members of the Kanagawa Parish Social Committee (*shakai iinkai*) of UCCJ who took initiatives in building a support network for

⁸⁴ *Chūkaku* is an abbreviation of *Nihon Kakumeiteki Kyōsansugisha Dōmei Chūkakuha* (Japan Revolutionary Communist League, Middle Core Faction), the loyalists who remained in JRCL, when *Kakumaru* broke away in 1962.

⁸⁵ *Kakumaru* is an abbreviation of *Nihon Kakumeiteki Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei Kakumeiteki Marukusu Shugiha* (Japan Revolutionary Communist League, Revolutionary Marxist Faction), which broke away from JRCL in 1962.

⁸⁶ The full-scale rift within UCCJ between the Social Faction and the Church Faction originated in conflicts over the participation of the Church in Japan World Exposition in 1970. For more on the history of the disputes see Kobayashi 2012.

Kotobuki in the 1980s. The Social Committee is one of the Standing Specialized Committees under the Missionary Committee, as stipulated in Article 42 of the articles of association of UCCJ revised in 1969. According to the second clause of Article 42, the Social Committee is charge of the following three areas: 1) investigation and planning for social activities (*shakai katsudō*), 2) collaboration and connection with social work organizations (*shakai fukushi jigyo dantai*), and 3) other issues related to social problems (*shakai mondai*). Some of the examples listed as “other issues” included problems related to the revision of Japan’s constitution and the relocation and removal of the United States Army Bases in Okinawa, which overlapped with the main concerns of the New Left. Being one of the most progressive parishes, the Kanagawa Parish Social Committee launched various activities promoting anti-discrimination, anti-nuclear, and anti-war positions, and their involvement in Kotobuki was part of such social engagement. The establishment of Kotobuki District Center by the Committee in 1983 and Naka Mission in 1987,⁸⁷ marked a turning point in the history of Kotobuki: KDC soon founded the Kotobuki Welfare Workshop (1983) and Roba’s House Workshop (1988), while Naka Mission formed Kalabaw’s Group (1987). Additionally, the members and volunteers associated with KDC and Naka Mission were involved, directly or indirectly, in the launching and management of Kotobuki Senior Citizens’ Group (1989), Citizens’ Group Kotobuki Aruku (1992), and Kotobuki Soup Kitchen Group (1993). However, only a few of the Christian activists and volunteers I met during my fieldwork actively promoted the social cause of their involvement. Most of them, women in their sixties and seventies, participated in the activities to fulfill their church duty or to simply socialize, without

⁸⁷ Nakamurabashi Mission center, located in Nakamurachō across the river from Kotobukichō. It1996 that Naka Mission, yet the members and its activities

necessarily understanding or agreeing with the cause of the activities they were involved in.

As such, Kotobuki showcases the sedimentary versions of the social as they were imagined and enacted at different times in postwar Japan. At the time of my fieldwork, another of form of society (*shakai*) was often evoked in Kotobuki in the phrase, “return to society (*shakai fukki*).” This phrase was especially prevalent in homeless rehabilitation programs run by non-profit organizations, such as NPO Sanagitachi (2002). It was also under this phrase that these organizations in Kotobuki garnered support from across the country.

In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate how Kotobuki existed and prospered in this interstice between the *social* which called for redistributive justice and ethics of mutual recognition and the *society* as the normalizing and domesticating force external to individuals. I trace the bifocal temporal orientation in the narrative practices in Kotobuki, which reflect the tension between society that has yet to come and society as it is. Depicting how the social was conjured up and reassembled in the narrative exchanges and events in Kotobuki, I attempt to depart from the approach to narratives as primarily self-transformative practices. Instead, I emphasize the intersubjective construction of the time-space of Kotobuki as a refuge for the homeless. Towards the end of the chapter, I also call attention to the concurrent adjustment in the temporal horizon of local activism postponing any utopian dream to the indefinite future and, instead, focusing on the daunting permanence of the present. I will place such a mode of temporality in the context of the postindustrial Japanese society today dominated by the public concern of the nation’s decline ever since the glory it has seen in the 1980s.

Narrating/“Hearing”

The past has long been a tricky subject in Kotobuki District. It was assumed that a lot of complicated circumstances (*fukuzatsuna jijō*) led one to be nowhere else but in Kotobuki. Many day laborers were known by their nicknames or the name of their hometowns, and it was not uncommon for long-term activists and community organizers to find out the real names of people they have known for years only after they died (Watanabe 1977; Saeki 1982). Even now, it is a general rule-of-thumb in Kotobuki not to inquire about people’s past or personal stories during everyday interactions. However, with the reorganization of local activism centered on the right to survival over the past few decades in Kotobuki, there has been a significant increase in the time-places to extensively talk about and listen to people’s life-stories. Needless to say, it was partly due to the welfare regime that required various moments of self-confession, from the screening process to medical examinations, and to rehabilitation programs. Activists and volunteers, as well as bureaucratic agents and medical experts, inevitably acquainted themselves with these life stories as they accompanied the welfare recipients in administrative procedures. Yet, more importantly, the self-narrative of the (former) homeless and/or Kotobuki residents became a critical node that connected those in Kotobuki to a wider network of supporters. Almost every organization in Kotobuki developed regular occasions for supporters to ask about and listen to the life-stories of those in Kotobuki, variously named as story-telling place (*katari ba*), hearing (*hiaringu*), interviewing (*kikitori*), or study meeting (*gakushū kai*). These stories, either voice-recorded by the organizer or drafted by the narrator himself, would then be printed, either

in a form closest to its entirety or as a summary, on organizational newsletters or periodic reports distributed to donors, volunteers and supporters throughout Japan. As such, storytelling was an activity in and of itself that justified, gathered and expanded support for the organizations and people in Kotobuki. Meanwhile, for the narrators themselves, these were occasions not only to get their stories heard but also to get engaged in activities (*katsudō ni kakawaru*) in Kotobuki. Over time, I saw a narrator for one event appearing in other events for one or more group(s), and his story being rearranged, refined and reframed every time it was retold. I also learned how telling and/or writing one's life history marked a significant moment in the narrator's life in Kotobuki: as a beginning of a trusting relationship with activists and volunteers, as a recognition and acceptance of one's rebirth in Kotobuki, as a promise for future commitments to the organization's cause. By telling and retelling their stories, the narrators not only engaged in conversation with the listeners, but also with the larger narrative of the district and society, thereby interlacing their own lives and activism in their personal and communal stories. I found the cases of two homeless residents of Kotobuki, Mr. Nara and Maikeru, to be particularly illuminating in this regard.

Mr. Nara was an exceptionally outgoing person. He affiliated himself foremost with Naka Mission, and then, expanded his scope of activities to those of Kotobuki District Center, and eventually became a member of Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union. Maikeru, on the other hand, would fall into the category of homeless residents more common in Kotobuki. Rather than belonging to a particular group, Maikeru participated in activities occasionally, as they were deemed to fit his time and purpose. In the following sections, I aim to show how their participation in narrative events were crucial in their search of

home in the district, the sustenance of the homeless support regime, and the maintenance of Kotobuki as a homeless refuge.

Mr. Nara: In Search of Activities (*Katsudō*)

One Sunday afternoon after morning worship and communal lunch, about a dozen followers gathered around the tables in the chapel of Naka Mission Center. Behind the front table where the pastor usually sat, was Mr. Nara, one of the regular attendees from the neighborhood. It was the afternoon study meeting (*gakushū kai*) in which a presenter discusses Christian related themes of social issues, and today was the time for Mr. Nara's life history. Assistant pastor Ms. Ishigura sat next to Mr. Nara to moderate his talk, and a voice recorder was set in front of Mr. Nara's microphone. Some of us, like Reverend Watanabe, Ms. Andō of Kotobuki District Center, Mrs. Ogasawara of Ferris University Volunteer Center and me, took out our notebooks and pens to write down his story. Mr. Nara had prepared pages of handwritten statements for this occasion. With Ms. Ishigura's introduction, Mr. Nara started to read his statement over his glasses, with occasional pauses to add more details here and there.

This was not the first time I heard Mr. Nara's story. Since Mr. Nara started to get involved in local activism almost at the same time as I started my fieldwork, our paths crossed recurrently, and we eventually developed a kind of comradeship in our voracious pursuit for activities. Our first encounter took place in the soup kitchen. Mr. Nara captured my eyes with his bright colored outfits – he was wearing an orange jacket and a red baseball cap working quietly and diligently at one corner of Kotobuki Children's Park. When I saw the same man on a Sunday service at Naka Mission, I almost failed to

recognize him at first because he was wearing glasses, dentures and a more toned down outfit. As we sat next to each other for the communion, we got to introduce ourselves and talk with each other. Delighted to find out that I am Korean, Mr. Nara told me about his ex-wife who was also Korean and had the same last name as mine. He talked to me about his marriage, practiced some Korean phrases he knew, and listed the names of Korean dishes he enjoyed. His marriage and breakup with Kimu-san (Ms. Kim) was a regular topic he brought up for a while in Naka Mission Center whenever there was any occasion to go around and introduce ourselves. It was an oddly personal yet suitable story for the setting, given Reverend Watanabe's renown as a pioneering human rights activist for foreign migrants and Naka Mission Center's progressive stance on *zainichi* Korean issues.

Over the year during the many activities from the nightly visits (patrols), bazaars, Kotobuki Soup Kitchen, and to Kotobuki Youth Seminar, I could gather bits and pieces of Mr. Nara's life-history and see how his life-history found its shape as he navigated activities. At the center of these activities lay narrative practices for activists and volunteers to discuss their motivations for participation and the meaning of the activities: the activities invariably opened with a brief overview of their history and philosophy and self-introductions of participants and ended with a short report and thought-sharing (*kansō*), or even a full-scale reflection meeting (*furi kaeri kai*). As a former homeless participant, Mr. Nara occupied a respected position in these narrative moments, and he was quick to learn how to enjoy and apply such positionality in telling his story. Through many self-introductions, I came to learn that Mr. Nara had moved into Kotobuki a year before I started my fieldwork to live on welfare assistance after sleeping rough for several months. During our patrol to Kotobuki area he liked to point at the place he used to sleep

and recounted what it was like enduring the cold and hostility to new volunteers. When Mr. Kondo of Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union spoke about the seriousness of assaults on the homeless to a crowd of Korean students visiting for a workshop, Mr. Nara showed the festering wounds on the top of his head that made him lose all his hair. At Yamashita Park, during our patrol to Sakuragichō area, Mr. Nara recalled the time he was still on the run from a loan shark and spent a year like a fugitive in Kotobuki – hiding in his *doya* room during the day and going for walks all over Yokohama in the night. He also never missed the Wednesday Yokohama patrol and other activities of Kotobuki Supporters' Exchange Group on the grounds that he himself was rescued by the Group's judicial scrivener Mr. Watanabe who helped him file for bankruptcy and relieved him of his debt. Naturally, Mr. Nara accepted the Group's invitation to be the narrator of a life-history session and then participated in the Kotobuki Youth Seminar as one of the Kotobuki residents to share the experience of homelessness with the student participants.

Building on top of the routine self-introductions and reflections, these extensive narrative events brought together participants – including the narrator himself – to collectively search for patterns of social structural problems in the life histories of those who wound up in Kotobuki and to reconfirm the contribution and orientation of their activities in addressing these problems. For Mr. Nara, these events also provided chances to explore and explain the meaning of the trajectory of his life within the larger context of social structure and activist causes. In the beginning of the story presentation of Kotobuki Youth Seminar, for instance, Mr. Nara wrapped up his self-introduction by posing his quest as follows: “I am lending a hand with various activities here and there, but I came to think of, as one philosopher recently put it, the transformation from quantity to quality.

I want to delve deeper into the reason why I have to take part in these activities.” During the two hours of question and answer between the Kotobuki residents and the student participants, Mr. Nara kept tying back his answers to this initial quest. He briefly mentioned that he got baptized in Naka Mission Center then later explained that he was drawn to Naka Mission Center because of its left-leaning social criticism, to which he was familiar with because of his involvement in the Communist Party in his earlier days.

As much as Mr. Nara endeavored, it was not easy for him to weave his life narrative by the thread of “activities” from those for the Communist Party to those in Kotobuki. Once he talked to me in frustration that he called his former comrade at Kawasaki communist party but was sneered at when he talked about his “activities” in Kotobuki. Mr. Nara was outraged: “That guy told me that I have no title to do such a ‘great’ thing (*erai koto*). Isn’t it cruel? How come he has no understanding of these ‘activities?’ He asked what I’m going to do feeding those bums. I am not going to talk to him again.” Although Mr. Nara had been employing words like “struggle” and “activities” to describe his daily routines, from attending the church to visiting the homeless, from washing vegetables at the soup kitchen to putting up posters for Everyone’s Movie Club, this fight with his former comrade disrupted his effort to find a continuing thread in his life narrative. As time went by, the plot of self-transformation came to figure more prominently than that of social movement in Mr. Nara’s life narrative, as shown in his report for the Kotobuki Soup Kitchen below:

Nice to meet you, I am Nara Mitsuo. I started to participate in the soup kitchen *on the making side* at the Summer Festival last year, as I found a clear solution to the problem I had had. From October 2009 to August 2010, I was *on the side of lining up and eating on my turn*. Back then, I was fascinated by the radiant and vivacious

motions of all of the participants when they started distributing soup after having done the preparation. So I got drawn to it. As I came to participate in the soup kitchen myself, I could see myself getting illuminated with gleaming light as if the person who had been carrying around on his back his shadow of being homeless and had been cornered to the dark was just a lie..... To me, “soup kitchen” is the starting point of support activities!! For that, as a person who used to be himself homeless, I would like to keep working *on the side of making actions (hatarakikakeru kawa)* (Nara Mitsuo, “Almost a year since I started to participate in the soup kitchen,” in Kotobuki Soup Kitchen Group 19th Annual Report Collection 2011: 19, emphasis mine).

Mr. Nara wrote this report about a month after he participated in the Kotobuki Youth Seminar. At the editorial meeting for the Report Collection, which Mr. Nara also attended, the dichotomy between the making side (*tsukuru gawa*) and the receiving side (*morau gawa*) in his report stirred up concerns among activists who defied such a hierarchical relationship. Although the original phrases were retained in the end, the tension itself attested to the inherent contradiction in the activism for the right to survival in Kotobuki. As they say in Kotobuki, an ideal world would be one in which all these activities is deemed unnecessary. In an ideal world, people should not be pushed to rely on others’ help for their survival. In an ideal world, a place like Kotobuki should not exist. However, such an ideal world has not arrived, so there is no choice but to carry on with these activities to keep people from dying. Such indefinite postponement of a utopian future that underlies the activism in Kotobuki weakened the moral purchase of any references to social movement or structural change, as will be discussed in more detail later. It was this void in the temporal field that the narrative of self-transformation filled to effectively structure meanings of people’s repetitive participation in the activities in Kotobuki. With his distinctive thirst for learning and habitus as a former communist activist, Mr. Nara quickly learned the most compelling way of telling and retelling his life narrative in

Kotobuki. It was also through these narrative practices that Mr. Nara could craft his life in Kotobuki in a meaningful and sensible way. Mr. Nara's presentation at the study meeting in Naka Mission Center as described in the opening of this section was a celebratory event that marked a settling of a plausible temporal orientation and structure of his narrative plot and life experience in Kotobuki.

Having participated in similar life history telling events for the Kotobuki Supporters' Network and the Kotobuki Youth Seminar, Mr. Nara was well prepared for the presentation at Naka Mission Center. Starting with the traffic accident that got him laid off from his job as a garbage truck driver, Mr. Nara concisely and effectively laid out the subsequent events: how he accrued debts and was chased by a malicious loan shark, how he got divorced and became homeless until he found his way to Kotobuki. All these events found their place in Mr. Nara's narrative plot, which culminated with his arrival at Kotobuki where he discovered the meaning of his sufferings in his new faith and activities.

Recently, I started to play the guitar accompaniment at Naka Mission Center, upon Reverend Watanabe's request. I think that the fact that a person like me who used to be homeless himself came to get involved in the activities in Kotobuki was exactly in line with the missionary objective of Naka Mission Center. As long as my health condition permits, I would like to *keep on grappling with the reality of Kotobuki* (*Kotobuki no genjitsu ni tori kunde ikitai*). (Kotobuki 'Naka' Newsletter No. 148 2011:1-2, emphasis mine)

The event and his statement were later printed on Kotobuki 'Naka' Newsletter (*Kotobuki 'Naka' Dayori*), as part of the "Thinking of Church from Kotobuki" series. Minor details were trimmed and explicit mentions of Mr. Nara's Communist involvement were removed, but most of what he presented were preserved on the pages. It is

noteworthy that it ended with his promise for future commitment. It was in this promise that his past and present were rendered into a story of salvation and self-transformation. Yet, at the same time, this self-transformation was to be completed by the dissolution of the self into the reality of Kotobuki, the reality that required perpetual engagement in activities to “rescue people.” In this sense, Mr. Nara’s narrative was not one of hope with many possibilities of future selves embedded, but rather of foreclosure that only made sense with the anticipation of the perpetual present. This was a temporal horizon shared by volunteers and supporters, existing and prospective, who would read Mr. Nara’s story and continue to take part in the activities in Kotobuki. Kotobuki as the final refuge was made possible by the actualization of this temporal horizon in which the present is extended to the far future, where the individual selves dissolved into the limited reality of the district, and furthermore of society.

The homeless man who settled in Kotobuki as a welfare recipient transformed himself during routinized attendance in various homeless support programs either civilian or governmental. Although the street dictated that one be made as invisible as possible, in an object-like state hid behind cardboard boxes and pillars, Kotobuki demanded to speak: from interviews with welfare officers, to medical and legal consultations, AA meetings, workshop meetings and to voluntary study groups, one needed to develop a self-narrative that explained his trajectory to homelessness and his plans for life. While the government funded programs that specifically set step-up programs tended to fail at offering a life-long temporal frame beyond self-reliance, the non-governmental support activities were more effective in assisting a newcomer to attune himself to the temporal orientation and rhythms required of the pragmatics of survival of his own and others through narrative

practices. The specific moral or genre of the life narrative could vary according to the narrator and the venue, yet the plot invariably ended with the horizon on which the narrator persistently lived to repay debts of his life through his activities in Kotobuki, as in the case of Mr. Nara.

Maikeru: “Cherish the Encounters”

Kotobuki Supporters’ Exchange Group (*Kotobuki Shiensha Kōryūkai*),⁸⁸ was one of the groups that had embraced the practice of telling and listening most enthusiastically. Led by Takazawa Yukio,⁸⁹ better known by his nickname Orijin (stands for *Orijin*) in the district, the Group was founded in 1993 following the Winter Survival Struggle of 1992-3, during which the participants witnessed a station employee at the JR Yokohama Station assaulting a homeless man. Although nightly visits to the homeless in the larger Yokohama area had been conducted annually as part of the Winter Struggle, the activists and organizations had concentrated their year-round activities on the immediate surroundings of Kotobuki. The incident at Yokohama Station instigated the volunteers and activists to expand their advocacy to a wider area including JR Yokohama Station (about two miles northwest of Kotobuki District) and to be in more constant contact with the homeless of these places. After protesting to the Administrative Authorities of the Yokohama Station and receiving their formal apology, the supporters started their weekly visits to the Station (biweekly during the non-winter seasons) and handed out leaflets

⁸⁸ Sabu Kohso noted that the centrality “to exchange” (*kōryūsuru*, to commingle) in youth activism that emerged in the late 1980s signifies the shifting mentality of activists from individualistic elitism to communalism (Kohso 2006:430).

⁸⁹ Born in 1973, Takazawa was the last to experience the heritage of the Zenkyōtō generation at the local Kanagawa University. After Takazawa, there were no more student activists from KU, who settled in Kotobuki.

with information about free consultations and events in Kotobuki to the homeless and even blankets when requested. Despite seasonal and temporal fluctuations of the homeless, the visits continued year after year, and small talks between the supporters and the homeless became continual conversations and eventually full-scale life-history hearing activities. As Orijin liked to repeat every time for the new volunteers who joined the nightly visits and equally emphasized on the website, the blog, leaflets and reports, the Exchange Group aimed at building “relationships in which faces and names are recognized (*kao to namae no wakaru kankei*),’ among those who live in Kotobuki, sleep on the street, and come to Kotobuki from out of town” and ultimately forming “a loose network that connects the street, Kotobuki-chō and civil society.” In a column he wrote for a regional periodical in the early 2000s, about ten years after the foundation of Kotobuki Supporters’ Exchange Group, Orijin explained the significance of “hearing” in the Group’s activity as follows:

Street dwellers are labeled as ‘sloths,’ ‘losers of society,’ ‘somewhat suspicious chaps,’ and for such prejudice, even become the target of assaults and so on. However, it is the street-dwellers themselves who are the most susceptible to such sentiments of citizens. They think ‘I ended up on the street, because I am a careless person’ and hold an extremely strong sense of self-abnegation.

In our visiting activity to street dwellers, we bring blankets and so on, but this is only a stopgap to prevent them from freezing to death. In theory, given that they want it, they should be secured by society to maintain the minimum livelihood with housing and food through the public assistance system. Although getting public assistance is one’s right, in reality, those who are too reserved dare to think of it that way that they refrain from going to the welfare office for consultation and end up prolonging their street dwelling. That’s why it’s more important in our visiting activity to listen attentively to the street dwellers’ stories and support them psychologically so they can boost their feeling of self-affirmation and awareness of rights than to do something for them ...

There is quite a considerable error in the stereotypical image of the homeless. It is also in order to get rid of such prejudice that we lay stress on life-history-hearing through occasions like Exchange Study Meetings. Everyone, including us, is a being

that lives without a name and dies without one, yet it is needless to say that every single life is a sacred thing. Today's society could not have been materialized without pushing these comrades into a rightless state as street dwellers. I think it is the non-homeless who need self-reflection in order to understand that they enjoy the current civilized life at the expense of others expelled into homeless states and in order to part from society that uses and disposes human beings. And then, create a society that cherishes human beings, every single one of them, as it should. I want to continue with these activities while thinking of what we ourselves can do to make that happen....

(Takazawa Yukio, "Street Dwellers are Beings Created by Society," in Volunteer Information (*Voranteia Jōhō*), February 2003)

In addition to the Wednesday nightly visits to Yokohama Station, the Exchange Group regularly organized interviews and colloquia with the homeless in the name of Life History Hearing (*kojinshi kikitori*) or Exchange Study Meeting (*kōryū gakushūkai*). At its peak in the early 2000s, the Group had twenty-some core members who would not only participate in the activities, but also transcribe the interviews and edit the quarterly reports, which had about 300-400 subscribers across Japan. Transcriptions of the Life History Hearings from 2000 to 2003 were also made public on their website and the interviews of people in Kotobuki were collected in a booklet titled, *Person (Hito)* published to be sold on order in 2001. Some interviewees were living on the street at the time of the interview. Others had moved into a shelter, a *doya* or an apartment with welfare assistance they were able to get with the help of the Exchange Group or other supporter groups. A few had settled in Kotobuki and become full-fledged activists themselves. Regardless, the interviewees invariably had spent some time in Kotobuki for the Winter Survival Struggle or the Obon Summer Festival, if not for the day laborers' exchange in the past, and/or were taking part in the activities like nightly visits and soup kitchens at the time of the interview. It seemed that it was precisely this willingness to stay connected motivated them to participate in the interviews. In telling and retelling

their past, present and future, they were also reflecting on and reshaping their life in society, as will be discussed further later.

At the time I was doing fieldwork, the Exchange Group still continued most of its activities but seemed to have lost some of its past fervor. There were always plenty of volunteers about a dozen to twenty, who showed up for Yokohama Wednesday Patrol, yet the Patrol offered fewer chances of meaningful interaction between the volunteers and the homeless. It already took two hours just to go around, distribute leaflets and exchange quick greetings to the forty some homeless in and around the Station, then to stop by the Stationmaster's Office to exchange information and pressure them for fair treatment, and finally to gather around and review the numbers of the homeless and of the blankets handed-out, discuss any abnormalities and share thoughts. Since Orijin and the core activists already knew almost everyone on the street, the nightly visits seemed to be merely for checking in and preventing abuse by the Station employees. Everyone who was willing to apply for welfare seemed to have already left the street with the help of the Exchange Group, and the rest seemed to be those who preferred to stay on the street or not to be bothered, a stance that the Exchange Group also came to respect. The Group has not published any reports since 2006, yet, they still organized life-history sessions and exchange study meetings at intervals roughly three weeks apart.

One of the Life-history Hearings I attended was on August 21st, 2011 with a Kotobuki resident known as Maikeru (*Maikeru*) for his fancy appearance and youthful demeanor. His silver curly hair, tanned skin, and muscular and lean build exuded vivacity, a quality that made him stand out from most residents in Kotobuki. In his jovial voice, he liked to joke around and offer to buy drinks for volunteers. He did not seem to mind the attention

either and would volunteer to pound rice-cakes for the New Year during the Winter Struggle or to sell *udon* for the Summer Festival. His interview consisted of three segments, each of which lasted for about an hour and a half as the tradition of the Life-history Hearing goes. It was the second segment that I attended, along with about half a dozen who were involved in the activities in Kotobuki as volunteers, researchers, activists and welfare recipients. The interview was held at a conference room on the fourth floor of the Livelihood Hall facing Orijin's office. Surrounded by boxes and boxes of donated goods, back numbers of newsletters and reports, miscellaneous equipment for local activities and extra tables and chairs, we huddled together around four small tables in a square. The rest of the building was unusually dark and quiet without the daytime bustle of people using the facilities. In front of Maikeru were three voice recorders – one Orijin's, another Deguchi's who was a long-term supporter and an editor at a publishing company, and then mine. In the previous segment of the interview, Maikeru had been asked to share anything he wanted to talk about his life, which ended up being mostly about the underground world of Yokohama in the immediate postwar period when Maikeru was in his teens and twenties. As a follow up on the first segment, the second segment was held in a Q & A format between Maikeru and the listeners. Throughout the interview, the listeners maintained empathetic and deferential attitude responding with sympathetic remarks, using honorifics (*-rareru* and *-sharu* verb forms) whenever they addressed to Maikeru, and taking notes while hearing Maikeru's story.

The interview required careful attunement between Maikeru and the listeners. While many questions the listeners asked revolved around Maikeru's transition to Kotobuki – how he came to settle in Kotobuki, how he came to terms with his life in Kotobuki and so

on—, what Maikeru liked to tell was what kind of person he used to be. The life-history we got in the end was a product of careful and playful improvisations of both parties: at times Maikeru led the listeners to the past, at others, the listeners pulled him back to the present. In an hour and a half of the interview, Maikeru's story traveled back and forth along the routes that spanned across Yokohama, Shizuoka and Tokyo during the seventy-five years of his life.

Orijin opened the interview with a joke about what a great job Maikeru did in selling udon at the Summer Festival and then asked how Maikeru got involved in the Summer Festival and what he enjoyed about it. Maikeru answered that during the first two years, he did not even want to look at the town and picked a *doya* that was at the edge of Kotobuki, so he could go for a walk without passing through the town. It was also on one of these early days that Maikeru first met Orijin and was asked tell his story, but Maikeru was not interested at the time. Over the five years since that first encounter, Maikeru came to see how Orijin was “rescuing people” and offering free consultations at the soup kitchen. So he willingly agreed to participate in the interview when asked this time. After a brief review of Maikeru's age and residential history, Ogawa asked how Maikeru was motivated to get involved in the activities in Kotobuki, but Maikeru digressed into his childhood stories and how he got to know Kotobuki in the first place. As a Yokohama native, Maikeru knew Kotobuki from his twenties as his Korean friend's parents ran a *yakiniku* (a *zainichi* adaptation of Korean *bulgogi*, marinated beef) restaurant in the district. Yet, his main stomping ground was his hometown in the northern part of the city and downtown Yokohama where he joined the *gurentai* (the street toughs who roamed the busy streets of urban areas in postwar Japan) having run away from home. Young and

rebellious Maikeru's adventures spanned from getting into fights with groups from other towns to working for a boss who ran a gambling den. Maikeru's recollections brought the listeners to the bustling scenes of the rambunctious postwar times, where "no one ever would have even dreamed that the world would become a good place like this." This led further back to Maikeru's childhood memories in his hometown, which stirred up a discussion on the urban history of Yokohama area. As this discussion came to a natural break, Yamamoto brought the conversation back to Ogawa's question.

Yamamoto: So going back to Ogawa's question, you said you came to Kotobuki five years ago, but you weren't involved in the soup kitchen or the Summer Festival at first? [in honorific]

Maikeru: You're right. The first two years, I just kept quiet. [in casual]

Orijin: Why did you decide to get involved? [in casual]

Maikeru: That was when I went to Paula's Clinic, it's not a big deal but I have an ulcer, because of my neurosis (*shinkeishitsu*) you know. I'm not joking! Whenever I get nervous I feel sick. So I went there [to Paula's Clinic], and one moment, I saw a saying written somewhere [on the wall], "Cherish your encounters with others (*hito to no deai wo taisetsuni*)."

Everyone: Oh...Ah...Hmmm...

Orijin: That's a really good saying.

Maikeru: So really, I came to think. 'Cherish your encounters with others.' If you can't cherish yourself, you can't cherish others. I thought that much at the moment. In my teens, my friend Kobayashi's dad died. He threw himself on the Nambu Line track. But actually, he ran into me right before he threw himself. At the time, I had run away from home. He told me "Hey Ken, it's not like you are in trouble back home. Don't be so undutiful to your parents." I didn't feel anything special at the time. And he died like that. I recalled that time and thought 'Cherish your encounters with others. I killed that person that time' So I thought that moment.... 'Then, since I'm living here, shall I try to be some help here [shy laughter]?' So I started to take part in the soup kitchen.

Maikeru added that he participated just a bit in the beginning. Little by little, he got more active in the third year of his residence, even joining the radio exercises and helping the soup kitchen full-time. This was a lead that the listeners were looking for: a narrative hinge that not only connected the boisterous Ken in the backstreets of Yokohama to the

virtuous Maikeru in Kotobuki but also highlighted the severance between the two. Maikeru's narrative elucidated how he came to terms with his life in Kotobuki by recognizing it as a chance to redeem himself for the misdeeds in the remote past. At the same time, this moment of Maikeru's narration also signaled his reincorporation into the reciprocal circulation of materials and narratives in society. Maikeru's story of his childhood and youth in the raucous urban centers (*shitamachi*, literally, commoners' quarter) in postwar Japan is a well-known genre with familiar characters. Situated in a period that Japanese society made its leap from the postwar rubble, the genre gained popularity through many memoirs and was concretized through numerous cultural products that claimed the style of Shōwa Renaissance (*Shōwa runesansu*) or Shōwa Retro (*Shōwa retoro*). The listeners would not have experienced the time themselves but would have found Maikeru's story to resonate with what they heard from their parents or grandparents, or been invoked of the social memory they embodied through the many cultural representations of the time. Yet, there was a rupture that left Maikeru behind from the rest of Japan: a story that had been suppressed in the official accounts of Japanese postwar history, a story that had yet to be told. The narrative moment above marked a breakthrough in this narrative gap in two senses: Maikeru's own breakthrough in finding a self-narrative to orient his life in Kotobuki prompted by the saying displayed in Paula's Clinic, and the listeners' breakthrough in understanding how Maikeru's trajectory converged with theirs in their concerted activities in Kotobuki. Meanwhile, this narrative breakthrough brought Maikeru back into the material flow of debt and care that is crucial in maintaining one's social and existential being in Japan, as Maikeru's story would show us as it unfolds.

For this, we had to trace how Maikeru was cut out in the first place. For another half an hour, Maikeru gave us vivid accounts of the various gangs and bosses widely known in different parts of Yokohama and Tokyo, the red light districts and dance halls, and his work as the second in command of a gang. It was also his trajectory further and further away from Tokyo where people like him had no place, but towards the South (*kudarugawa*, also means downwards, from urban to rural) “where the dummy’s go (*bonkura no hō*).” It was only towards the end of the interview that Orijin asked Maikeru to wrap up the story by telling us about the time he came to live in Kotobuki. Since there was less work and Maikeru was aging, his boss let him retire with some money. Maikeru used his connection to work at construction sites until he turned seventy and quit.

Orijin: What did you think at that time? When you thought that you couldn’t work anymore.

Maikeru: No, I thought I could still work. I’m not kidding, because I’d been working out. I’m still working out. My muscles are all tight!

Everyone: [Laughter]

Yamamoto: You said last time, “I’d rather go to Okinawa than to become homeless.”

Maikeru: Yes, I thought that. So I kept that much money. Well, actually, in the beginning, I thought I’d rather die. But then, I thought of this [gesture].

Everyone: What?

Maikeru: Robbing a post-office.

Everyone: Eh? Really?

Orijin: Not just shoplifting?

Maikeru: Yeah, I wasn’t bold enough to raid a bank. But even that wouldn’t be enough money to get enough food to get through until I die. I’d have to do it again and again. It was a matter of either dying or doing something bad. I got worried so much that my stomach ached. I was desperate and it got really painful. I knew better than anyone else that gambling didn’t work, but I was so desperate that I thought I could maybe double my money. So I went to cycle-race gambling. I was left with not a penny. You know, that’s why they say, if you’re stupid you’re hopeless....

Yamamoto: So did you go to the Ward Office by yourself? Or did you consult someone?

Maikeru: I sat there on the staircases thinking. You know the staircases in front of the Center. I thought what I could do.... I probably thought for fifteen or sixteen days, since I came to Kotobuki.

Everyone: Uh, hmmm...

Maikeru: I didn't sit there at first. I had walked around Yamashita Park, wandered and wandered. But I got too tired and just collapsed there [in front of the Center]. The person next to me handed me a can of coffee. I drank and asked if there were any work here.

Orijin: That makes sense, because it's a day laborers' market (*yoseba*).

Yamamoto: And you said last time that you thought you might find work if you come to Kotobuki.

Maikeru: Yeah, but all the people I knew were the old ones. I looked for them, but nobody was here. Nobody knew them anymore. The time had changed so much (*jidai ga kawatchatte*). So I asked the person next to me, if there was any work. He told me that the Ward Office might let me get welfare. So I walked to the direction of the Ward Office.

Everyone: Hmmm.

Orijin: You went to the Ward Office?

Maikeru: Well, no, I couldn't get beyond their sign.

Orijin: Ahah, it was hard to get in, right? (*Shikii ga takakattandesuyone*, literally the threshold was too high)

Maikeru: I don't know how many times I tried. I just couldn't get inside.... So one evening, I held my spirit up, and I don't know what time it was, it was quite dark. I brought my business card from the place I used to work to the reception desk [of Livelihood Protection Service], and then told my story [to the interviewer].... I was told 'it's okay (*daijōbu desuyo*).'

Orijin: Of course, that should be. You have your age (*nenrei mo nenrei dashi ne*).

Maikeru: Yes, that moment, I'm not kidding, tears fell down. See, how many times had I tried... I said, 'my body is not broken anywhere, but there is no job.' And I was told 'it's okay.' I'm not kidding, Tears fell down.

Everyone: Hmmm..

Orijin: You were confident that you could work, if there were any job.

Maikeru: I'm not kidding, I can beat anything! If the law didn't change, I wouldn't have to be a burden (*sewa ni naranakute iiyo*). I could pull out a street stall and sell udon.

So here we came back to Maikeru selling udon again. Now after an hour and a half interview, Maikeru who sold udon to raise money for the Exchange Group was refigured as a shadow of Maikeru who could have sold udon at a street stall. It was also through this doubling that his life made sense – or his narrative was “consummated,” to borrow Bakhtin's words. This narrative whole surfaced as the interview broke out of the genre to which Maikeru's early life belonged and was amalgamated into a story of salvation and redemption. Concurrently, Maikeru parted from the character he was, a street tough who “wouldn't have avoided dying early (*hontōdato ore wa shinanakya ikenai*),” to a wise old

man, who upon realizing that “I’m living here,” was living out his last years making amends for his deeds in the past by being “some help here,” after having fallen into extreme destitution. This narrative only emerged through the persistent back and forth between Maikeru and his listeners in making connections, filling out the sequences and checking the causal relationships in Maikeru’s life history. Yet, it was not an open-ended story with an ongoing quest, but rather a completed one with all the conflicts resolved and the destination determined: the past was framed in a narrative plot that ended with salvation, while the present and the future was suggested as an endless horizon to be relived day after day by contributing to the rescue activities in Kotobuki.

This was a horizon also shared by supporters in their contrapuntal narrative for activism in Kotobuki. By double-checking the hurdles Maikeru faced in applying for welfare, the listeners confirmed the facts that their activities were built upon: that people face great internal and external barriers in seeking welfare assistance, that the welfare office discourages the applicants from applying unless they have apparent factors that compromises their working ability like disability, sickness or old age, that one can end up unemployed and homeless no matter how much he is willing to work. These were the exact problems that the Exchange Group was trying to address with other groups (Kotobuki Day Laborers’ Union in particular) in arranging collective applications for livelihood protection, in accompanying the applicants through their interview process, and in monitoring the welfare windows to see if any applicants get rejected for no reason. Although Kotobuki Supporters’ Exchange Group was no longer publishing the life histories through regular reports, the Group kept meticulous records of these events with an eye towards future publication, as the presence of Ms. Deguchi indicates. More

immediately, these stories found their way in the activists' public lectures, negotiations with the local government, and conversations with policy makers. Locally, they were circulated among supporters who reflected on these stories to reconfirm the meaning of their rescue activities. As such, life-history hearing events were shaping the activism and narrative of the district by drawing the narrators, listeners, and readers to the ethics of completing the narrative, i.e., the ethics to collaboratively live the narrative.

It is important to note that the horizon opened up by narrative practices is also the ethical horizon where an inter-subjective encounter between the (former) homeless and the supporters took place. As can be seen in the life narratives of Mr. Nara and Maikeru, people become homeless when they accrued debts to the point where they had to be disconnected from the normative material, affective, and narrative flows in society. The narrative practices in Kotobuki accumulatively revived the connection, or more accurately, conjured up another society, for the homeless and supporters to engage in a different kind of reciprocal flow. The supporters were summoned not only as the audience, but also as moral pioneers who were expected to cultivate the meanings of their activities in response to the stories they hear in Kotobuki. The thoughts and comments of supporters were frequently solicited in the regular activities, life-history sessions and organizational reports and newsletters. The narratives of the two sides often converged on their temporal vision and ethical duty to continue participating in the support activities, as will be discussed further in the following section.

From Social Movement (*Shakai Undō*) to Flowing Tasks (*Nagare Sagyō*)

While self-narratives were part and parcel of the redemptive self-transformative projects that were to be carried on by one's perpetual participation in activities, a similar temporal horizon appeared in the discourses of society and activism in the district. In particular, I call attention to the centrality of flowing tasks (*nagare sagyō*) in the activities that gave rise to the sense of eternity in the narratives of activists, as opposed to the rhetoric of social movement (*shakai undō*) of the earlier times. Jennifer Robertson, in discussing the native-place making (*furusato-zukuri*) campaigns in Japan in the 1970s, noted the linguistic devices used in historical accounts, which denoted distinctive modes of changes (Robertson 1991: 29-30). While the intransitive verb *naru* (to become) conceals intentionality and implies that "things simply enter the realm of present actuality from somewhere in the past" (ibid., 30), the transitive verb *tsukuru* (to make) emphasizes purposeful actions towards a desirable future. In a similar vein, Yamaguchi Tomomi called attention to two distinctive modes of representing history in the timeline charts (*nenpyō*) of a feminist group she worked with: *nagare* as agentless flow and *ugoki* as "agent-informed process of change" (Yamaguchi 2005:51-52). The timeline editors, Yamaguchi demonstrated, chose different events and columns for these two modes depending on the historical epistemologies they wanted to enact. While *nagare* was used to stress the objective accuracy and archival value of the group's timeline, *ugoki* was used to depict the specific achievements of the group. In the support activities and activists' narratives in Kotobuki today, I observed that actions were viewed less as instigating movements toward a better society, but more as facilitating the flow of urgent tasks.

Today the major concern revolved around fulfilling the immediate needs of the homeless rather than discerning the underlying motivation or ideological basis of the participants. Such a time-space for survival is one that defies historicity: there is no revenge or antagonism that drives the movement towards a utopia; what drives everyday action is the cyclical care work surrounding the mortal bodies of human beings. Carrying on tasks for survival became the purpose and course of activism in Kotobuki. In other words, Kotobuki became a social time-space of its own, by generating an eternal flow of tasks fighting against the inevitable fall of people, and moreover, the decline of Japanese society. This is in line with the general trend of “social movements” in Japan since the 1980s, as increasingly more people got disenchanted with the central politics and corporate economy, and most changes were attempted on the local level in small scale, as in the mini-revolutions in everyday living (*seikatsu*). The transformation of Kotobuki not only reflected such disenchantment that predominated Japan but also foreshadowed the overall sense of resignation to inevitable decline.⁹⁰

When Mr. Kondo first arrived at Kotobuki in the mid 1980s, the district was a battlefield of various factions of the New Leftist activists fighting against each other with different visions of the future and conflicting ideas of the right path to get there. Ms.

⁹⁰ Such a change can be in the timeline-making in Kotobuki. Yamaguchi Tomomi had in Japanese feminist movement in the 1970s-90s, *nenpyō*-making as a strategy to represent history in a linear progression of a social movement. In particular, the group juxtaposed “group-related actions” to “social change” (*ugoki*) as a way to “schematically represent the dialectical relationship between activism and social change.” According to Yamaguchi, “[s]uch timelines tend to view history more in terms of *ugoki* than *nagare*.” (Yamaguchi 2005:54) Similarly, many groups in Kotobuki which published periodical reports, such as Kotobuki Soup Kitchen, Kotobuki Communal Clinic, Kotobuki District Center, either limited their *nenpyō* to one-year length (KSK, KDC), or included an all-inclusive chart incorporating various dates and facts of significant changes in the district (KCC).

Mimori, who came a few years later, was not welcome either. They both, Mr. Kondo as a member of Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union and Ms. Mimori as the director of Kotobuki District Center, had to work their way through suspicions and accusations cast upon them. Even until the early 1990s, volunteers were seen as doing charitable service (*hōshi*) that was self-satisfactory at best, and activists (*katsudōka*) differentiated their work from that of volunteers (*boranteia*) (Stevens 1997: 100-101). Yet, as the survival of people came to override other purposes or activities, many different groups came to collaborate with each other and recruit as many volunteers as possible in the three decades that followed. For example, Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union took charge of running Kotobuki Soup Kitchen, to which Kotobuki District Center provided a steady flow of volunteers, money and food. Meanwhile, members of Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union were occasionally hired part-time or full-time at various local community organizations like the Kotobuki Welfare Workshop and Kiraku House Kotobuki Senior Citizens' Club, which were run by donations and volunteers from Kotobuki District Center. The boundary between activism and care work was blurred, and various tasks to gather resources and provide care to Kotobuki residents and the homeless at reliable intervals became the central concern of activism.

These tasks were also considered as work (*shigoto*), which most in Kotobuki had lost and had no hope of getting back. Mr. Shinohara had the habit of asking Ms. Mimori, "Give me some work! (*shigoto kure*)," to show that he wanted to be counted in for tasks at Kotobuki District Center. Meanwhile, a lot of the sheltered workshops, which are literally called places of tasks (*sagyōsho*), were built in the district, mostly with donations from Christian organizations, to offer rhythms and meaning of life to the members with

work comprised of simple repetitive tasks – wrapping soaps, folding paper boxes, sorting out paper clips, and so on – contracted out by affiliated companies. Kotobuki is now a district abundant of tasks: those with apparent disability could do tasks at sheltered workshops, and the rest could do tasks for various rescue activities.

Most of the tasks took the form of *nagare sagyō*, literally meaning ‘flowing tasks.’ Although the term is most commonly used to refer to the assembly-line system in factories, *nagare sagyō* in Kotobuki comes from a different convention: disaster drills in Japan. Learning from major earthquakes (the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake, the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake), the modern Japanese state had systematically incorporated disaster drills to the regular activities of various institutions from neighborhood associations to schools and hospitals. These disaster drills prepare Japanese from their early ages to embody the choreography of disaster relief activities, typically by immediately forming a line to pass pails of water to put out a fire, or to distribute or receive food and other goods. These flowing tasks, by mobilizing a large pool of people in a short time, are effective in providing disaster relief services when all other technologies and institutions are paralyzed, but moreover, can strengthen the sense of community and solidarity among people in helping each other to get through hard times.

The disaster relief style *nagare sagyō* epitomizes the perpetuation of disaster-like destitution and its associated temporality in Kotobuki. In contrast to community activities in ordinary towns that instill the rhythm of life that purportedly extend back to generations before and will continue to be carried on by the following generations, the support activities in Kotobuki instill a sense of perpetual emergency with repetitions of

disaster time spanning beyond an ever receding horizon. For this, some people equated tasks in Kotobuki as climbing the mountain as in the quotes below:

It was since this February that I have been coming to the soup kitchen every Friday. Most of the time, I take charge of the washing part [washing vegetables]. Although the main vegetables remain the same, the shapes and sizes, the color and the softness are slightly different every time, and, accordingly, the flow of work slightly changes as well.

Every Friday, I start setting up the hose for washing and other cooking utensils at 7:30 in the morning at the park, and from 8 I start working with volunteers. Once all the ingredients are chopped up, I have a short break and sort out the donated goods for the bazaar until soup distribution time. I have no time to stay still. On Fridays, I get tired out by the end of the day without any energy to make my own dinner. It is slightly like the feeling after I have finished climbing the mountains.

Many townspeople and volunteers who participate in the soup kitchen are aged, and I think it must be strenuous for them. Sometimes, I want to go ask everyone there, one by one, why they are participating in the soup kitchen. If I ask them, I will probably get a variety of answers. On the other hand, I also think that such a question would be senseless. Because it would probably be the same as asking ‘why are you climbing the mountain?’ (Andō Makiko, *Kotobuki Soup Kitchen’s Group Annual Report* No. 19, 2011:16)

Recently I had a chance to talk about mountains with some members and staffers. When I asked ‘why do people climb the mountain?’, an answer returned that ‘it’s because the mountain is there.’ That moment I just nodded my head thinking ‘that’s interesting,’ but later I came to think that it was the truth. I come to the clinic because there are members and patients. I don’t know if such thinking has any scholarly foundation, but as a person who is still practicing, this was the clearest line of thought I could get. (Fujimoto Azusa, *Kotobuki Communal Clinic Newsletter* No. 15, 2003:19)

The first quote came from Ms. Andō, who had started to work for Ms. Mimori at Kotobuki District Center about half a year before she wrote this report. As a long term volunteer, Ms. Andō had a lot of experience in the district, yet once she became a full-time staff at the Center, she had to take part in almost every activity organized by the Center from soup kitchens to bazaars. Ms. Andō once told me that compared to her previous work at Kalabaw’s Club in Kotobuki that advocated for foreign migrants and

residents which gave her the excitement of unpredictable challenges, her work at the Center and the homeless support activities were strenuous but repetitive. By likening soup kitchen to her favorite hobby in the report above, she was in a way trying to make sense of homeless activism that did not bring in any element of dramatic social change in the way that she understood social activism was supposed to.

The latter quote was from Ms. Fujimoto, a staffer at Kotobuki Communal Clinic Day Care Center for the Mentally Ill. The Day Care Center was built in 1999, three years after the opening of the Clinic, as increasingly more patients were spending time at the waiting room all day long as they had no where else to go than their tiny *doya* room. As a socializing space for the mentally ill, the Day Care Center operated on a daily schedule that culminated with making communal lunch until noon followed by recreational activities in the afternoon. Although the staffers administered the medication of the members whose diagnosis ranged from schizophrenia to depression, the main purpose was to occupy their time. In other words, the Day Care Center was an extension of the waiting room where the patients could wait day after day.⁹¹ Ms. Fujimoto, a young social worker who came to Kotobuki right after finishing her study, was in search of a philosophical basis for her vocation in this place that was so different from the textbook day care centers where patients of a targeted illness were assisted in their course of return to society (*shakai fukki*) or recovery (*kaifuku*). The report above shows how she came to terms with her work in Kotobuki with the analogy of climbing the mountain. Another

⁹¹ In this sense, the waiting room of Kotobuki Communal Clinic was very different from the lobby as “a space of anticipation,” or “borderland where discourses and experiences of otherness create and enclose new possibilities and where larger narrative horizons shadow in the temporary encounters” (Mattingly 2010:8-17).

staffer at Kotobuki Day Care Center went even further to liken time in Kotobuki to cosmic time as in the following:

Spending day after day frantically, I miss the passing of time units or the changes in seasons and feel restless somehow. If there is anything that changes bit by bit amidst all this, what would that be?..... When I come home from Kotobuki, there are times when the heavily built faces of people I talked with that day sweep across my mind. This is the moment when my heart gets sunk filled with sighs. Maybe, I am being influenced [by Kotobuki] unknowingly, when I talk, when I try to express things. Things that do not move, things that do not change. The night sea. The flowing galaxy. No, whether it's the sea or the stars, they are moving bit by bit. It's just that nobody notices that. It's just that I don't notice the long history of Kotobuki and its people, while I'm inside Kotobuki. All I have is a vague sense of why Kotobuki is different. But I think it's important for me to be aware of such cosmic changes on the one hand and continue on building on the trivial things around me on the other. Although I don't know how these two are connected. (Hara Akihiro, KCCN No. 8. P. 12)

While the metaphor of mountain climbing emphasizes the sense of a continual return to the starting point, Mr. Hara's report conveys his feeling of being adrift in time. Mr. Hara, who was also new to Kotobuki like Ms. Fujimoto, had taken the risk of quitting his rather ordinary job as a white-collar salaryman for the excitement of doing something for Kotobuki. Yet, the report above shows that, once he became a staffer at the Day Care Center, it was by resorting to the dim promise that there must be "cosmic changes" beyond the tangible temporal experience that he was making through his hectic days.

However, it would be a mistake to interpret Mr. Hara's words as an indication of the immutability of Kotobuki. On the contrary, Kotobuki had been rather one of the fastest changing neighborhoods in Japan, in terms of its demography, built environment, and social resources. The sensation of timelessness was rather an effect of the expansion and systematization of support activities over years of engagement in the politics of

emergency by local activists. From its creation, Kotobuki has been subject to stopgap measures by the municipal government to contain people who were at the fringes of the social security system. Ever since it was designated as a day laborers' quarter by the Yokohama City Government, which was in and of itself a stopgap measure to resolve the rising complaints and concerns about the makeshift lodgings and the homeless spreading throughout the city, Kotobuki has been challenged with problems unique to itself with people whose predicaments were not addressed by the generic framework of social welfare programs. The proliferation of countermeasures (*taisaku*) and emergency projects (*jigyō*) employed in Kotobuki testifies this well: from countermeasures against unemployment, tuberculosis, alcoholism, to Kotobuki District Emergency Assistance Project (*Kotobuki chiku kinkyū engo jigyō*). At the same time, lacking private resources and networks, people in Kotobuki have been victims to apathetic bureaucratic time, as during the New Years Holidays when the welfare offices shut down along with other government branches. While the government countermeasures for this time period varied from year to year, the local activists and supporters never ceased to mobilize the Winter Struggle since the 1970s to prevent any untimely deaths during the holidays. Homeless support activism in Kotobuki was grafted on to the previous day laborers' activism and community building to provide steady and reliable advocacy in response to the violent vicissitudes of the social security programs that has always been an easy target of budget cuts and political bashing.

The politics of time in Kotobuki is epitomized at the annual negotiations between Jūnichirō and the municipal governments. Every October, Jūnichirō works together with other local groups like Kotobuki District Center, Kotobuki Supporters' Exchange Group,

and Kotobuki Medical Team, to draft a detailed letter of demands, which in 2011 amounted to eleven single-spaced A4 pages long, with sections addressed to specific departments of Yokohama City and Kanagawa Prefectural Governments. Having received the letter, each government proposes respective dates for negotiation, which can be followed up by an additional two or three meetings.

These meetings are always fraught with tension between the governmental officials in meticulous suits sitting in the front, with their overly polite demeanor and almost robotic formality as they take turns in reading their answers to each section of the letter, and Jūnichirō and supporters sitting in the center raising voices with frustration at the token answers. During the negotiation with Yokohama City Government I attended on December 6, 2010, the fire was finally ignited over the case of Residential Registry Revocation. When Jūnichirō urged that the Registry Department should recover the registries that were once granted but later revoked on the ground that the registered address was at Jūnichirō's office instead of a proper home, an official said he had no record to verify the Jūnichirō's accusation and could not answer the question. Mr. Kondo, who had been in the district for more than thirty years, protested that the registry was granted at first by the Registry Department for their administrative convenience because they needed an address for homeless welfare recipients, but these registries were suddenly canceled by the Department without any explanation. Faced with Mr. Kondo's accusation, the official was speechless. The official, who would have just been rotated to this position, was just trying to get this temporary career ordeal over with having moved to a municipality containing a strange district. While these confrontations themselves did not necessarily elicit concrete or immediate actions, other than minor governmental

services to be provided during the New Years Holidays, the Union and other groups had continued writing this letter of demand, which over the years became longer and longer. The thick pages of the letter and the repetitive political drama demonstrated and reconfirmed the activists' role as the guardians of the district who would not go anywhere. They had to survive and continue to survive.

The sense of running on a treadmill or climbing the mountain emerged in the district at this historical juncture, after decades of social experiments and struggle. The economic structure has changed along with social conditions of exclusion and inclusion. Different people found shelter at the district through various life paths, and supporters gathered for different reasons over time. Yet, the agenda of securing the right to survival took roots in the district by powerfully conjuring up the sense of urgency in rescuing lives paired with the prerequisite of the eternity of such urgent conditions. The longer the supporters were involved in Kotobuki, the more they found themselves in sync with the temporal horizon of the long-term activists who had continued their fight, the meaning of which could now only be found in the continuation and extension of their engagement. One of the most revered long-term activists, Mr. Tanaka, looking back on his thirty-five years of engagement in the district, expressed his ever-renewing commitment in his column "Let's continue walking along this long, long, road" as follows:

For years and years, I have turned the pages of a calendar named Kotobuki-chō every day and did my best to build my relationship with this town. But I can't see what's ahead no matter how far I go, as if I am in a bottomless swamp. I will have to walk forward and forward, although all I can see is what's right before me. (Tanaka Toshio, KCCN No. 10, p. 1-2)

Lost Utopia, Postponed Utopia

There are notes floating ceaselessly on the manuscript paper in my head.

When I take one step into this town, various notes start flowing. They create a beautiful tone (?), no actually something closer to dissonance, with discordant dynamics and beats. It is noise (*ongaku*).⁹²

There is nobody conducting, but the notes keep flowing. When I pay attention to them, they sound somewhat soothing (*kokochi yoi*). Is it an auditory hallucination? A hallucination? Or an illusion? No, it is a firm fact. It is music (*ongaku*). This town weaves a sound somewhat different from classical music but more like contemporary music.

When I step out of this town feeling its noise, then I meet with the music outside. It is a moment of relief. Conversely, if I felt the music outside as noise, then I meet the music of this town as music. This is also a moment of relieve. I think this yields the gap between this town and the towns outside...

Even today, the notes keep flowing in my head.

If I stand still and pay attention to the sound... there must be a wonderful harmony playing.

This harmony, is it music (*ongaku*) or noise (*ongaku*) to you?

(Nishitate Naoki, 2005, KCCN No. 19: 12-13)

The above quote by Mr. Nishitate, a staffer at Roba's House, a sheltered workshop for the mentally ill, keenly captured the feeling of disorientedness shared by many working in the district. The fault line that separated Kotobuki from other ordinary towns (*futsū no machi*) ran so deep that it was often hard to know what to expect from Kotobuki, what was good or bad for the people in Kotobuki, how one's work in the district made any change. In other words, for many supporters and care workers with a middle class background, Kotobuki was a place where one's preconception and habitus of being a virtuous citizen and person were continuously challenged and adjusted. Meanwhile, the trajectory of Kotobuki as a town did not neatly fit any coherent historical narrative, and

⁹² This is a made-up word with a combination of Chinese characters meaning self-excruciating sound, a wordplay with the word, music (*ongaku*) written in different Chinese characters.

even long-term activists like Mr. Kondo or Ms. Mimori would hesitate to say that the town had become closer to what they had once envisioned, or even that the town was heading somewhere. The middle part of Mr. Nishitate's report, which was omitted in the quote above, gives an overview of the tragedies and triumphs in Kotobuki district in the past half-century, alluding to the lack of a narrative arc in the history of the district. By bringing up the metaphor of music, Mr. Nishitate was probably trying to speak to the question that came into the mind of those who were attached to Kotobuki: Is Kotobuki a utopia or a dystopia? Mr. Nishitate's oscillation between music and noise reveals his struggle working in the district amongst the continuing sense of discordance and the distant promise of harmony. Repetitive rhythms of flowing tasks reverberated in Kotobuki, yet melody was something that was only hinted at vaguely. Those who remained in Kotobuki did so with the sense of duty to continue with the rhythms of life by postponing their quest for melody, while also accepting the approaching decline: the decline of the aged in Kotobuki who kept flooding in only to vanish away, and the decline of the nation that had seen its peak and lost its hope ever since.

During the time of my fieldwork in 2009-14, signs of inevitable decline haunted Japanese society in every facet of life. Graphs and figures constantly appeared on the news, indicating the impending fiscal crisis with the ever-rising national deficit and the rapid aging of the population. Deflation and the unstable employment structure posed persistent problems with the advent of the "working poor" (*wākingu puā*), a phenomenon hitherto alien to Japan. Concerns over the younger generation came from both the conservative end blaming the lack of work ethics, will and competency among the youth – most famously expressed by Yamada Masahiro's term "parasite singles" and Miura

Atsushi's best-selling book *Lower Class Society (Karyū Shakai)* – and the progressive end worrying how life itself became like a downward slide on which anyone at any point can slide to the very bottom – as shown by Yuasa Makoto's term *Sliding Down Society (Suberidai Shakai)*. At the same time, the extremely low rates of marriage and birth put into question the reproduction of the nation itself. Finally, the triple disasters of the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 11, 2011 stirred up public criticism and self-reflective commentaries about Japan's blind capitalist pursuit and developmentalist schemes throughout the postwar period, while also conjuring up apocalyptic predictions of the next eruption of Mount Fuji or the major earthquake of the most populated and wealthy Tokyo and Yokohama area. "Japan is over already (*nihon no kuni wa mō damedakarane!*)" was a phrase often told to me by many people somewhat enviously and humbly comparing the decline of Japan with the rise of Korea.

What I was witnessing could aptly be characterized as signs of the loss of a social script and momentum for a good life after two decades since the collapse of the bubble economy in Japan. The once plausible dream of achieving a society of 100 million people in the middle class (*ichioku sōchūryū*) gave way to the gloomy prospect of a polarized country made up of a small winning team (*kachi gumi*) and a massive losing team (*make gumi*). What seemed to be at risk in Japanese society was not just the dream of upward mobility – of its people and the nation as a whole – but the confidence that Japan was ahead of the game. The dismal demographic and economic fate of Japan as envisioned in various sorts of media over decades of recession since the 1990s profoundly disturbed such deep-rooted and recurring dreams of Japan.

Contrapuntal to the changing discourses of the national future were the altering aspirations for utopia in social movements. The leftist social movements in the postwar period, in particular, were driven by their unrelenting pursuit of utopia with uncompromising principles, which later assumed a rather romanticist self-destructive genre, as most poignantly expressed in the violent confrontations between the activists and the police or among different factions of the New Leftists in the 1960s and 70s. In Kotobuki, people dreamt of establishing a laborers' town where people supported each other in solidarity and equally contributed to communal cooking and child rearing. When the ever-shrinking day laborers' market prompted the shift in activism in the 1980s towards the right to survival, the temporal landscape of activism had to change as well to endure the banality of life. These days, the most effective visions in the district were not that of a utopia to come, but a reality that one had to endure: Mr. Kondo liked to talk of ant society in which 30% of individuals were assisted by the rest at all times, and Mr. Tanaka's favorite quote was that "schizophrenia is like a tax a society has to pay."⁹³ These visions resonate well with those that were made popular in wider Japan recently by the likes of Futakami Nōki, a director of non-profit organization New Start for the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and author of many books including *How to*

⁹³ I should also note that the transformation of Kotobuki would have been impossible without another strand of changes in the landscape of hope. Many *zainichi* Korean *doya* owners were affiliated with *Jochongryeon* and used to send a large sum of money to North Korea, their "fatherland" (*joguk*, literally *ancestral land*) and "the paradise on earth" (*jisang nagwon*) until very recently. This practice dwindled over time with their increasing sense of betrayal and disillusionment, following the fall of the Soviet bloc, the exposure of the abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea, and most importantly, the suffering and destitution of their relatives who returned to or visited North Korea. The renovation of the *doya* into barrier-free welfare apartments took place as more owners found moral ground as well as economic value in reinvesting money in Kotobuki and Japan where they somewhat came to terms with as their land.

Live Coming Down from the Divide between Winning and Losing (Kachi Make Kara Oriru Ikikata) (2009) or Mukaiyachi Ikuyoshi, the founder of the schizophrenic community, the Bethel's House, whose story was depicted in a documentary titled "How to Live Downhill (*Orite Yuku Ikikata*)," the catchphrase of the Bethel's House. The narratives and support activities in Kotobuki as discussed in this chapter demonstrate how this temporal horizon was pioneered by those in Kotobuki and provided an exit from the wheel of frustration in the earlier social movements. Kotobuki offered a time-space where people could embody a temporal orientation and rhythms of life that formed an ever-expanding circle of care to which more and more survivors and supporters were drawn. It was also a time-space of reflection on human condition, especially of the decaying mind and body that need sustenance and care, that had no ending or beginning, winners or losers. Here emerged the duty not ask where you were going, but to keep on living and defending the district.

CHAPTER 6

Taming Death

Relations of Care at the Edge of Life

On February 2, 2011, the second day I volunteered at the Kiraku House, a silver-haired man in his seventies asked me to take a picture of him upon noticing the digital camera in my hand. He said he was concerned that he did not have any photos of his own and thus, would not have a proper portrait for his funeral. While posing, he emphasized several times that I should print out the pictures and give them to him next time. He refused to tell me his name, and I never saw him again. I asked around, but nobody seemed to know him. I carried around his pictures with me for a year until I left Kotobuki.

Looking into his photos, I cannot help but wonder what it meant for him to be photographed by me. In the first photo, he is posing with the person who was sitting next to him. With his arm around that person, he looks confident and determined. There is no hesitation in his gaze, he looks right into the lens. His tightly-closed lips add a hint of solemnity to his posture. The second one is more playful. He is posing alone this time, making a victory sign with his right hand. Irregular teeth shows through his open lips, but his well-combed hair, nicely layered yellow sweater and navy blue cardigan, and his metal watch convey a sense of chromatic harmony and gracefulness. And his left hand, sitting on his lap, reveals a wedding ring. If he had to ask me, a new volunteer, a foreigner and basically a total stranger, for his funeral portrait, he probably had lost

contact with everyone significant in his life, or had not bothered to make new relationships.⁹⁴ If he did not have anyone significant to attend his funeral, why would it matter so much to have a portrait or not? Was it his last attempt to grasp his human dignity by holding a proper funeral? Or was it the fear that his life would not leave any record of its own? I came to think that maybe, what he was really asking was for me to be a witness to his existence, and perhaps even, his death. I considered that at the very moment I pressed the shutter, maybe I *was* present in his funeral, as the only visitor. The endeavor to define and pursue the life of a social and human being emerged in Kotobuki at the very prospect of impending death.

This chapter discusses how the daily lives in Kotobuki were driven by the motivation to achieve a state in which one could avoid the most bestial way of dying (i.e. isolated deaths) and to properly mourn and commemorate those who had gone ahead. By demonstrating how deaths were anticipated, attended, and commemorated in Kotobuki, I show that death came to provide powerful idioms and images to make claims for life and relations of care in Japanese society today. In the final analysis, I propose that the relations of care formed around death in Kotobuki prefigure alternative configurations of sociality inadvertently generated in Japan by such post-industrial ailments of low-birthrates, an aging majority, and increasing socioeconomic insecurity.

⁹⁴ It is not uncommon for those who end up in Kotobuki to lack any photographs of their own: they could have lost their photo albums in the midst of being evicted or running away, or did not have a chance or equipment to take any photographs, or avoided being photographed because of shame or debt. In response, most organizations in Kotobuki, started to actively photograph their activities and events and take pictures of people who wanted them, so that they can keep them. Thus, it is not hard these days in Kotobuki to have a photograph of your own, if one is involved in any kind of community activities.

The homeless who live out their last years in Kotobuki are the ones most harshly affected by the oppositional logic of relations embedded in the national ideology and political economy in Japan that distinguishes those with familial and associational ties (*yūen*) from those without (*muen*). The harrowing images of isolated death and abandoned graves expose the otherwise atomized and unseen suffering, which only after death is associated with the failure of the state. These deaths enact a form of sociality between the living and the dead that questions and disturbs the social boundaries for the living. Survival in Japan today, in this sense, is a political and ethical project most powerfully effectuated through the traces of the dead body and their affective resonances that unsettle the existing logic of relations.

The Politics of Dead Bodies

Shifting social relations with the dead has been a steady concern in anthropological studies of mortuary rituals and ancestral veneration. Largely under Durkheimian tradition, these studies regarded mortuary and commemorative practices primarily as a collective endeavor to rebuild symbolic order by purifying society of pollution and danger associated with death (Douglas 1966; Hertz 1960) or to harness the life force that can be lost by the death of an individual in order to ensure the regeneration of the group (Bloch & Parry 1982). Meanwhile, the central uneasy place occupied by the dead in modern state has been most provocatively raised by Katherine Verdery's pioneering work in post-socialist Eastern Europe (Verdery 1999). Tracking the controversies over the exhumation, re-interment, preservation of the dead bodies of famous and anonymous individuals in Eastern Europe during the 1990s, Verdery incisively demonstrates that

dead bodies have particular symbolic efficacy in making claims about national belonging, legitimacy, and social transition. While Verdery also accounts for the affective dimension of fear, awe and attachments provoked by their presence, dead bodies for Verdery, are most of all ‘things’: ‘symbols’ waiting to be utilized by the living (Fontein & Harries 2009: 5).

I suggest that the true insight of Verdery’s work is better revealed when we move our focus from the instrumentality or versatility of corpses to the relationship animated between the living and the dead and the conditions that shape it. In doing so, we can better comprehend the relational work required of the dead to sink into oblivion or reappear among the living. The surging demands of proper burials of missing ancestors in many parts of post-Soviet Eastern Europe that Verdery discusses reveal how memories of state violence under the Soviet congealed foremost in the experience of tumultuous refashioning of social relations. The politics of dead bodies betrays that the state’s engagement with the (re)configuration of immediate relations, verified by concrete material engagement with bodies – alive or dead –, as much as with the symbolic abstraction of power.

The power dynamics manifested in the shifting relationship between the living and the dead have been well explored in several ethnographies dealing with the spectral and material confrontation and alterity of ancestors and ghosts in the context of chronic state violence. For instance, Erik Mueggler shows how decades of accumulative violent deaths in the rural lolopo community of Southwest China resulted in incremental transformation of ancestral spirits into wild ghosts who recurrently brought back troubles and pain to the living (Mueggler 2001). The spirit songs during exorcism and mortuary rituals guided the

ghosts and the living descendants along the winding roads from their haunted homes to the realm of the powerful spectral King and Queen at the heartland of the state. In other words, it was through the journeys of wild ghosts that the intimate relations and the abstract bounds of the state were aligned and subverted (Mueggler 2001: 236).

In a similar vein, Heonik Kwon's ethnography (2008) on the revival of ancestral and spiritual rituals in Vietnam in the 1990s demonstrates how ghosts were interwoven into the sociality of the host community through rituals that cultivated fictive kinship and economic partnership. In contrast to the state politics of memory and commemoration that distinguish war heroes from errant enemy spirits, many communities were reconciling "the law of kinship" and the "principle of hospitality" (Kwon 2008: 164) through commemoration and spirit mediumship that served all those who faced unfortunate deaths during Vietnam War. Kwon further suggests that it was only by extending the narrow ritualistic bounds of kinship to incorporate stranger ghosts that ancestral commemoration was to be fulfilled in the condition of mass displacement and missing bodies. It is important to note in these studies that the interaction and exchanges between the living and the dead are enacted by material traces, from bodily remains, to possessions of the deceased, effigies, death certificates, photos, and to graves. In line with these studies, this article traces how the boundary between ancestors and wandering spirits is negotiated by practices of care that attend to the dying and the dead in an urban underclass in Japan.

In Japan the sacralization of the nation state and the enhancement of life have involved the conceptual perpetuation of an entity that regenerates itself through continuous interaction between the living and the dead in everyday life and space. The

dead, whose bodily remains (ashes) reside in domestic memorial altars and family gravesites, are regularly invited and visited, talked to, and offered water and food. Moreover, the surrounding materials, from mortuary tablets, to mortuary urns, and to gravestones, are furbished and festooned with individualized memorial service for at least thirty-three or fifty years, after which their personhood is known to dissolve into anonymity. The bodies of living citizens are subject to management and discipline for better productive and reproductive ability, while that of the dead is integral to the inheritance of the *ie* that ensures the well-being and prosperity of the living (Lock 2001:215-226). Encapsulating the ritual practices in Northeastern Japan, anthropologist John Traphagan recently suggested that shrine visitation and ancestral veneration composed “a total life care system” (Traphagan 2004:79) that secured the wellbeing of the self, the family, the community, and ultimately the nation through reciprocal relations between ancestors and *kami* (gods) and the living humans. In this sense, we can say that it is through death that the relations reinforced by the state are confirmed, strengthened, and regenerated, and the well-being of the nation secured. It is with the sedimentation of these elaborate practices relating to the dead relatives on which the horror against certain forms of death and afterlife is grounded.

Isolated Death, And the Trails of the Body

According to Tanaka Toshio, a long-term former community organizer and the director of Kotobuki Communal Clinic, there were about 600 cases of ‘Revocation of Livelihood Assistance due to Deaths’ in Kotobuki in 2009. In other words, among those who received livelihood assistance, there were 1.7 deaths a day in Kotobuki (Tanaka

2009c:72-3). Tanaka noted that a high percentage of these deaths occurred in *doya* rooms in Kotobuki, making Kotobuki an exception to the general trend in Japanese society today where most people die in the hospital rather than at home (Tanaka 2009c:74-5).

In Japan, such unattended death, infamously known as *kodokushi*, or *koritsushi*, is one of the most dreaded and abhorred ways to meet one's end. Although the term, *kodokushi*, itself started to appear in the media in the early 1970s with the expansion of large-scale apartment complexes (*danchi*) in suburban areas (Yūki 2014: 52–4), it was not until the late 1990s that the term came to occupy a major place in the public discourses. The reports of isolated deaths of the elderly evacuees relocated to temporary housing following the Great Hanshin Earthquake in January 1995, stirred the already saturated public rage against the administration (*gyōsei*) for its failure to provide proper care for disaster victims (Nukada 2013; Otani 2012:161-174). A typical news report that continued to appear on the headlines for months following the disaster would go as below:

On the eighth [of June 1995] around 1pm, Hashimoto Yōji (age sixty seven), who was living alone and unemployed was found dead bundled up in his bed in Building 6, Room No.8 of the Arata Park Temporary Housing (62 units, 60 households) Aratachō, Hyōgo Ward, Kōbe City. He was found by the Hyōgo police officers who checked in after receiving a call from a neighbor reporting that “there is a strange smell.” The autopsy results by Kōbe Medical School confirmed that he died of ischemic heart disease about two to three weeks ago. It is the third “isolated death” of an elder living in temporary housing, which once again calls our attention to the need for “care of the heart (*kokoro no kea*).” (*Yomiuri Shinbun*. June. 9. 1995. “Another Isolated Death in Earthquake Temporary Housing, 67 years old man, postmortem two to three weeks”)

A short biographical sketch follows the above: Mr. Hashimoto had lost his job and then his house in the earthquake, had an outgoing personality but became reserved after moving into temporary housing, spent his last months suffering from diabetes and

alcoholism. This news report displays all the elements that came to define isolated death, from a discovery of a dead body by the excruciating stench to autopsy results giving some glimpse into a life of an isolated aged person. Countless media sources delivered the news of yet another isolated death many months following the Earthquake, with intermittent special series summing up the death tolls and calling for preventative measures. It was also in this aftermath of the Great Hanshin Earthquake that voluntary and municipal “watch-over” (*mimamori*) programs gained recognition and popularity as an effective solution to the problem of isolated death. These programs, previously adopted locally in certain public *danchi* complexes in the 1970s, raised public awareness of the need for community members to regularly check up on the elderly living alone in the neighborhood.

While unexpected death has been common in Kotobuki, the frequency of isolated death increased with the aging of the population in the district, with estimates ranging from 100 to 200 isolated deaths a year. Many of those involved in Kotobuki felt the prevalence of isolated deaths, and cleaning up the body or the room of the deceased was one of their major tasks at the time of my fieldwork. Mr. Okamoto, a Korean Japanese *doya* manager who was referred to by others as a pioneer in his innovative medicalized operation of *doya*, described to me the shock he encountered at the beginning of his career as follows:

When I first came here for some reason, I started by analyzing what kind of business we do, what kind of place this is. So I figured that, this place is a place to rescue people, because it's welfare-related. Then, what are the problems we have? Isolated deaths (*Kodokushi*). It happens quite often. People die unnoticed. Quite a lot. Once they die, the smell of decay leaks out, because the body decomposes. I was so shocked when I first saw one. The body swelled so much like it could burst. Have

you ever seen such a thing? I saw my parents pass away, but you never let a body get decomposed so much to swell up like that. Here, a body can go unnoticed for not just a couple of days, but even a week or two. And because the rooms are sealed, if the temperature goes up to 30 to 40 degrees [celcius],..., maggots and flies come out of the body the moment the life [of the host] expires. So the body swells up like a black person. It's really awful. I was so shocked. I experienced that six times in half a year. I thought that it's too much. (Interview on November 15, 2011)

What is notable in Mr. Okamoto's statement, in addition to the sheer frequency and extremity of the whole situation, is the very fact that the term, isolated death is applied here. The term isolated death has a strong power of association evoking in the public's mind the failure of public administration (*gyōsei*), the loopholes in welfare provision, and the weakening of familial and community ties, while erasing the blame that is likely to be attached to the impoverished individuals while they are alive. In contrast to the poverty-stricken lives whose harshness and deservedness are always points of debate, the isolated deaths stood as a clear fact. Unlike living humans, the dead body threw itself back into human society, raising questions of what it meant to be human and what constituted social responsibility. As such, the dead body, and the brutal violence inflicted on the body by diverse microorganisms and creatures, had the political potential to evoke reflexivity among the witnesses, i.e., society, as we will return to later in this chapter.

Isolated death was the most feared but most probable death of those who were not associated with any organizations or lacked personal networks in Kotobuki. What happens to these bodies following their deaths? The 2002 winter quarterly report of the non-profit organization Sanagitachi described the administrative procedures regarding a dead body in detail with photographs.

“One Morning”

Generally speaking, there are only two ways of deaths for our Kotobuki comrades. You either die in a hospital or in your *doya*. On occasions there might be cases of throwing your body off of a building or on the street, but even in these cases you would be moved to the hospital and die there. If you die in *doya*, then, you would most likely to be found after three days to two weeks of your death, mostly by the *doya* manager who came to collect the rent or noticed the effluvia from decomposing protein. If you ask the caseworkers they would tell you that ‘one or two people a year’ [would be found like that]. If you count the caseworkers Kotobuki District to be around 80, that means there are about 80 to 160 comrades who face their last stage as an organic matter, alone in their *doya* outside of the hospital, in the form of Undetermined Manner of Death (*fushinshi*).

Even if you die in the hospital, it is handled according to the manual.

Even if you die in *doya*, it is handled according to the manual.

Although, the Ward Office does not tell us for some reason, we could postulate that it is the way of death of around 100 persons a year.

(Photos with caption follows)

Encountered an isolated death in a *doya* in Kotobuki District.

The person met the ‘Sanagitachi [NPO]’ too late.

We called an ambulance.

The emergency relief squads confirmed the death as an Undetermined Manner of Death (*fushinshi*), then, the police came. Then started the autopsy.

The police delved into their business while warning “don’t pry into it out of fun.” It’s not even that fun. We’re only watching it to see how our deaths would be handled, because ‘tomorrow, it’ll be my body’. Give us a break, officer. We’re watching the death of our neighbor. It can’t be fun. I’m more intrigued by the scandal of the Kanagawa Prefectural Police.

After the autopsy, then came the turn of the mortician. The body was moved into something like a black garbage bag with a zipper and was put in the left corner of a small van. One process was over. 30,000 yen for the postmortem examination, 190,000 yen for the body clean-up. With the arrival of the bills at the Ward Office, one case is settled. (Sanagitachi *Let’s Talk*, 2002(3):14-19)

Relying on welfare assistance for a living was one thing; placing one’s death in the hands of bureaucracy was another. If one had to move into Kotobuki to receive livelihood protection, it was most likely that he had lost contact with his family or antagonized them

in the course of divorce, eviction, rehabilitation, or incarceration. Even with the prospect of impending death, the Kotobuki resident would not try to reconnect with his family for fear of passing down his debts or imposing the funeral costs on them, for fear of being rejected, or for shame. Without any private relations or emotions to interfere with, his death and body were handled “according to the manual”: if there was no one present at the time of his death, it was classified as Undetermined Manner of Death requiring Administrative Postmortem. Then, his body was cremated in a public crematorium and moved to a corner at a public cemetery, reserved for the Deceased without Relatives. The things normally open to negotiation depending on the relations and values of the deceased, his family and community, from whom to notify, to which mortician and burial site to choose, to what to do with articles of the deceased, were reduced to stipulations in the manual. If the procedure called for a postmortem, then it should be carried out without exception; if it designated a burial site, then the ashes belonged there. Everything else that was not stipulated in the manual was purely a matter of the economics of processing an organic material – whether it meant to use a zipped black bag to carry the body or to pour the ashes into a hole on the ground. It was nobody else but the caseworkers who administered the procedures who felt the sense of void most poignantly as well shown in Sudō Yachiyo’s account below:

A colleague nearby listens to a caseworker who mumbles in front of the large size coffee maker in the office, sighing ‘it might be good to die like this,’ after finishing the procedures of a death report. It must be that, once again, one of her clients died. Many caseworkers routinely deal with the affair of handling a person’s dead body, contacting the mortician, the police, and occasionally the relatives. It was in such shared experience of knowing what it means ‘to die like this’ that they were drinking coffee together. I could tell what she meant to say. The relationship between a person we call a ‘case’ and a caseworker is formed by contingency. Nonetheless, in Kotobuki District, it also included the reality of leaving one’s death to the hands of one’s caseworker. It is a reality not spoken, but mutually felt. There was a colleague

who would even say that ‘they came to Kotobuki to die.’ People here have severed their ties of blood that confine most people in society. Even when I ask ‘shall I call your family?’ they would answer ‘no, don’t bother,’ and die. We might say that the caseworkers here are in charge of the profound business of socially handling the human death.

It is after such a business that we mumble ‘it might be good to die like this’ in front of a coffeemaker. These words imply an attempt to bring a closure to the time and the special relationship we weaved with that person, and to the fact that the person died. That short sentence is in a way a ‘ritual’ that we notify our colleagues around us that we finished the business the same as usual. (Sudō 2004:158-9)

Most caseworkers in Kotobuki District (also known as *Kotobuki tan*, abbreviation of *tantō*, literally, in charge of) were swamped with 90 to 100 cases of Livelihood Protection recipients on average at any given time. Yet, at the same time, a caseworker might be one of the few persons a welfare recipient in Kotobuki had interactions with on a regular basis. Accordingly, the administrative task of Kotobuki caseworkers to manage “cases” was inherently entangled with their moral responsibility to their clients as coexisting members of society. In this regard, Kotobuki caseworkers were called upon to act not only as bureaucratic agents but also as mediators between their clients and society, a fact made most prominent in instances of the “Revocation of Livelihood Assistance due to Death.” Without something beyond the manual, the death of a welfare recipient did not fully become the loss of a social member. It would have been this feeling of deficiency that motivated the caseworker to mumble in front of the coffee maker in the quote above. As one of the few to be close to her client and the only person to know of his death, it was up to her to make his death a social event. At the moment of her utterance, the coffee maker became like an altar (*butsudan*) to commemorate this very individual yet collective death. Like commemorative rites elsewhere, her utterance connected the living and the dead by conjuring up a (transient) community of mourning. However, it was the recognition of “knowing what it means to die like this” that brought the mourners

together, not the unique life of the deceased, or the personal relationships they had with him.

The bodies of those who face isolated death in Kotobuki were most likely to end their journey in the “Charnel House for the Deceased without Relatives,” in Kuboyama Public Cemetery run by Yokohama City. The presence of Kuboyama as the final destination has loomed large in the district, stirring up the fear of becoming a *muen botoke* (literally, a spirit without ties or a wandering ghost). Consisting of the word *muen* (without ties or attachment) and *hotoke* (buddha; the deceased, either individual or collective; grave-side tablets), *muen botoke* contrasts to *hotoke sama* (venerable buddhas) or *go senzō sama* (venerable ancestors), the spirit of the deceased *en route* to the realm of collective ancestral world. Writing in the 1970s, Robert Smith noted that those who died in unfortunate circumstances or those who were not worshiped by their descendants were believed to become *muen botoke* (Smith 1974:41). As a lonely soul without any family who appeases him, a *muen botoke* is doomed to wander around restlessly in sorrow, hunger, loneliness and vengeance. Unlike the tended souls who acquire the status of benevolent ancestors and keep a community together in their continued ties with the living (Yanagita 1988; Smith 1974; Traphagan 2004; Kawano 2010), *muen botoke* are permanently outcast from the world that connects the living and the dead. Since *muen botoke* were known to have the power to enter the body of the newly dead or cause harms to the living, communities often made offerings known as *segakie* to preserve their harmony and well-being (Smith 1974:41-3). Today, *muen botoke* are mostly figuratively associated with untended graves and dilapidated gravestones (Rowe 2011:46-7).

In Kotobuki, *muen botoke* were evoked to express the fear of being forgotten and uncared for at the time of and after death, being dumped in the hole at a corner of Kuboyama Public Cemetery.



Figure 15. The Charnel House for *Muen People* at Kuboyama Public Cemetery. If the funerary urns are unclaimed for five years, the urns are taken out from the Charnel and buried in the ground behind. A collective burial (*gassō*) of unclaimed ashes takes place on October 31 every year, at the presence of a few government officials, including the chief of the department of livelihood protection and, occasionally, caseworkers at welfare offices where the deceased belonged. The funeral is managed by a local commercial funerary service, which was chosen by the government for its modest fee (Interview with a government official at the Department of Livelihood Protection of Yokohama City Government, June 2, 2014).

Within its thirteen square meters of space, the Charnel House stored unclaimed funeral urns on shelves. If they were not claimed for five years, the ashes contained in

these urns were poured into an underground hole (*karōto*) to be mixed with other ashes.⁹⁵ The usage rate of the Charnel House increased 4.7 times in the past two and a half decades from 211 urns in 1989 to 989 in 2013,⁹⁶ a period which coincided with the aging of Kotobuki's population, or rather, the influx of the impoverished aged in Kotobuki following its transformation into a "welfare town." When I asked people what it meant to be a *muen botoke*, the most common reply was that "it depends on what you believe in." Neither have I heard of a story of a particular *muen botoke* haunting the town. However, regardless of their self-identified religious beliefs, no one questioned the mournfulness of becoming a *muen botoke*, and the fear-ridden expression "I do not want to become a *muen botoke*" was always taken seriously. It is only by making a proper transition to the

⁹⁵ This jumbling of ashes and their mingling with dirt, a practice abhorred in mainstream Japanese society, metaphorically and materially represents the isolated yet indistinguishable lives and deaths of those in Kotobuki. Although there has been a significant increase in new mortuary practices and burial sites since the late 1980s, concerns over the method of interment and posthumous care continued to be a source of anxiety rather than being dissipated. For example, it was crucial to develop technological and conceptual distinctions from the abandoned graves for the spread of eternal memorial graves that offered the practice of *gassō* or *gōshi* of immediately combining the ashes of all members in one large ossuary. This practice of *gassō* or *gōshi* still remains unpopular despite its considerably low price compared to other methods that allow individual storage of remains in urns for a certain amount of time (Rowe 2011:60-2), although the former can be deliberately chosen as an ultimate form of revenge to the deceased (*ibid.* 97).

⁹⁶ As *muen* death is a politically sensitive issue, the government official at the Department of Livelihood Protection at Yokohama City I talked to refused to give me long-term data of burials in the Charnel House. Instead, he recited the number of burials in the past five years (June 2, 2014). I could gather more useful information from an article in a local newspaper, "Alas, Ashes without Relatives: 3.7 times more than Twenty Years ago in the City" (*Yomiuri Shinbun* Tokyo Morning, 12.30.2010: 21). Interestingly enough, the reporter of this article links the increase of unclaimed ashes in Yokohama to weakened family ties, which ultimately transfers the costs to the City, leading to the public expenditure of 1,900,000 yen (roughly 190,000 dollars) for the maintenance of the Charnel House. Such a discourse contrasts to the blame that is typically attached to the livelihood protection recipients for being a burden on taxpayers. Once dead, the blame goes to the family that failed to provide proper care and to attend to the deceased.

afterlife that the true meaning of life salvaged by the Livelihood Protection is to be restored. In this sense, it is no surprise that the activities to protect life propelled the rise of interest in decent deaths and mortuary rites. In fact, many activities in Kotobuki came to function in two ways: to organize the lives of welfare recipients in ways to prevent isolated deaths and, at the same time, to commemorate the deaths of others.

Crafting Relations of the Relationless (*Muen no En*)

In the summer, the narrow alleys in Kotobuki bustled with people who crawled out of their *doya* rooms to get air, enjoy the scene, and occasionally chat with their neighbors. People sat around with their dogs on leashes in Kotobuki Children's Park. The Center plaza was occupied by drunkards lying down or sitting around with empty sake cups and beer cans rolling besides them. Somewhere in the alleys surrounding the Center would be Momo, an old lady also known as the Indian by the locals because of her grey-haired braids. She would always be in her typical squatting position with a man known as her lover from a nearby *doya*, whenever I passed by the Center. When I greeted her, she would start chattering with "Anoyo! (You know what?)" in a loud voice, bragged about her contribution to a soup kitchen, offered me pictures of animals, or asked for a beverage. Such greetings would be followed by her complaints about the hardships of surviving the day. "I passed out yesterday again! I was so lucky that somebody called an ambulance for me. You know, I'll never know when I might pass out. I don't want to be in the apartment all alone. I don't want to die, I'm only seventy four." Always outside of her apartment in the gigantic municipal housing overlooking the Center, she would follow the shade made by the building so that she did not get sunstroke.

For residents like Momo the motivation to socialize was driven by the fear of dying alone in Kotobuki. The importance of nurturing *ikigai* (literally, purpose in life or motivation to live) itself is generally emphasized among the elderly population in Japan (Traphagan 2004: 57-77): by keeping yourself busy, finding things to do, and meeting others, you have something to anticipate in your daily life. The dominant discourse promotes self-reliance among the elderly through social activities, which keep them mentally and physically healthy so that they do not become a burden on their family. Yet, in Kotobuki, such a concern was intertwined with the need to circumvent the fate of an isolated death. Socializing meant to rely on others' power to save one's life or at least witness one's death. In Kotobuki, social activities would do much more than to just bring vitality and rhythm to the community; they brought people together to be part of the process that might lead to each other's death.

Such an understanding was shared by organizations, such as sheltered workshops, day care centers for the elderly or disabled, clinics, churches, AA groups, and many other small group gatherings. For these organizations, checking the attendance of their members itself was as important as the main task, so that they could keep track of the state of their members. For example, when I asked a staff member in Shalom's House, a sheltered workshop for the disabled, what the toughest part of his job was, he narrated the following story:

Since they all live alone, I get worried when they don't show up without prior notice. We have some members who take day-offs most of the time and only show up once in a while. In these cases, I would call from time to time to see if they are okay. There was this guy who lived in an apartment... He had severe mental disability and had lost his left hand in an accident at his workplace a long time ago. He was around his fifties. He used to come twice a week but gradually dropped out. I visited him regularly because I got worried. Then, I set up a phone line in his apartment and felt more relieved. I started to call him instead of visiting. Was it a month after that? He

didn't answer any of my calls, so I visited his apartment. I called out loud, but there was no answer. When I was about to leave, I found shoes at the entrance. I went inside and checked the bathroom. He wasn't there, but then I saw the slide doors of the bathtub locked. I forcefully opened the doors, and there lay his body in the tub. It seemed like he had slid into the water while he was taking a bath. He must have drowned as he couldn't get himself above the water, because the handle was on the left side. It seemed like his body hit the plug after he was dead, draining all the water by the time I found him. I really regretted a lot. I should have visited him sooner. I was too relieved after setting a phone line... I saw so many people die while doing this work. Countlessly. (Shionoya Shōsaku, age 36, interviewed on September 7, 2011)

The man might still be alive, had Mr. Shionoya visited him more often. Mr. Shionoya might have caught him the moment he was about to drown. However, more realistically, Mr. Shionoya would, at best, have found him earlier than he did. In this sense, Mr. Shionoya's real remorse came from the fact that he had let the man in an isolated state lay dead for a long time. How Shionoya, or organizations in Kotobuki in general, could make a difference was less in when people die, but in the way they die. Such a duty to intervene in deaths of members comprised a key element of Mr. Shionoya's work.

Sometimes, this would entail granting the last wishes of those who were deemed incurable. Mr. Shionoya had a special memory of Mr. Sakuragi Hamao,⁹⁷ a war orphan who grew up in postwar Yokohama doing miscellaneous work. By the time Mr. Sakuragi joined Shalom's House, he was worn out by chronic poverty and severe alcoholism. While the Shalom's staff members all tried to stop him from drinking in the beginning, Mr. Sakuragi confessed that he would rather die his way. After that, Mr. Shionoya went

⁹⁷ Sakuragi Hamao (literally Sakuragi, the boy of (Yoko)hama) was named after Sakuragi-cho Yokohama, the location of Yokohama City Hall where he was found as a baby during the wartime. The civil worker who registered his birth put January first as his birthday, since the exact date was unknown (Shionoya, interviewed on September 7, 2011). The fate of Mr. Sakuragi Hamao metaphorically represents the lives of numerous free laborers who buttressed the port industry in postwar Yokohama.

out drinking with Mr. Sakuragi every time he called, until, finally Mr. Sakuragi passed away.

Some organizations explicitly set end of life care as their primary goal. The non-profit organization Sanagitachi was keen on providing care and services in areas not covered by the public welfare system and launched the Kotobuki Mimamori Volunteer Program (KMVP, Mimamori literally means ‘to watch over’) in 2007. Ms. Kawasaki Motoko, the staff member who initiated the program explained to me that the purpose of the program was to “prevent isolated deaths.”

孤独死
誰もいない最期を
想像できますか？

横浜市寿地区、ここには、「ドヤ」と呼ばれる
約120軒もの簡易宿泊所が並び、**6,500人前後が独居**、
その**85パーセントが生活保護**を受け、
また**半数が60歳以上の高齢者**です。
かつては日本三大寄せ場の一つとされ、“日雇い労働者の町”
として栄えましたが、バブル崩壊後は“ホームレスの街”を経て
住民は高齢化し、“福祉の街”と呼ばれるようになりました。

**寿町では、孤独死が
3日に1度
現実に起こっています**

近親者や周辺の人をはじめ誰とも付き合いがなく、
一人寂しく亡くなり、その後長期間発見されない。
そんな孤独死が現実の問題として起こっているのです。

Figure 16. Sanagitachi’s Webpage Banner Calling for Volunteers.
“In Kotobuki-chō, isolated death actually occurs once every three days”

With the cooperation of local clinics, home nursing stations, and helper stations, KMVP found its clients and filled in for the roles that would normally have been fulfilled by family members: from talking with bed-ridden patients, checking the whereabouts of

patients with Alzheimer's Disease, taking wheel-chair bound patients to clinics, picking up medications, and helping with walking rehabilitation, to shopping for groceries.⁹⁸ Within the four years of the program, Kawasaki encountered about a dozen or more deaths, and there were several clients who went missing. Telling me that there was a lot for young people to learn in Kotobuki, Kawasaki wrapped up our interview with the following statement: "There are fun parts and hard parts of this work. It's like learning about life. I realized that living *is* dying after all."

Kawamoto Kazumichi, a civil servant of Yokohama City, explicitly used the word "hospice town" to characterize Kotobuki. In explaining the launching of the artist-in-residence program, Kotobuki Creative Action in 2008, Kawamoto said that the Action aimed to provide entertainment for Kotobuki residents to "enjoy the last years of their lives." The Action annually invited young itinerant artists to stay in Kotobuki for a certain amount of time, from a week to a month, who would present dance, music, drawing, and graffiti during their stay. Given that most people end up in Kotobuki for lack of alternatives, rather than by a choice to receive palliative care, the metaphor of a hospice seems rather naïve. Yet it does capture the distinctive logic of care made possible in Kotobuki. Hospice, an institution that did not have a strong presence in Japan until the late 1990s, is still considered to be "foreign" – Western and Christian – by many Japanese (Long 2004:916-7). The emphasis on individual decision-making for the end-

⁹⁸ At the time of the interview, KMVP had thirteen clients in total, with requests from Paula's Clinic, Kotobuki Home Nursing Station, and Yokohama Homecare Service. The clients were all male, ranging from their sixties to their eighties, whose major medical condition derived from cerebral infarction and/or diabetes. KMVP paired each client with one or two volunteers (mainly college students majoring in social work). According to Kawasaki, the total number of clients had been about the same since its beginning, while there were changes in the membership composition due to deaths, disappearances, and new entries.

of-life care associated with hospice is at odds with the sense of duty to care for a dying family member until the end, and most families choose to continue active medical treatment to the terminally-ill or brain dead for a certain amount of time (Lock 2002; Long 2004:922). In this sense, receiving care initiated by family members is not only a privilege but also a duty to most Japanese, whereas those in Kotobuki are more open to the voluntary care by non-relatives. What took place in Kotobuki might be compared with the liminal time-spaces anthropologists have observed emerging at the edge of life. Similar to the “intersubjective construction” of consciousness and personhood in a specialized hospital unit between comatose patients and hospital staff (Kaufman 2003:2254), Kotobuki enacted new relations of care between the abandoned, the dead and their many caregivers, witnesses, bystanders, buriers, and mourners.

One might say that, in the past three decades, Kotobuki has become a fortress to defend itself from isolated death that lurks behind, always looking for a chance to sneak up on anyone alone in the district. Such a transformation, initiated by local activists and community organizers, was accompanied by an increase in care service providers within the district, and finally, stimulated profound changes in the function of *doya*. *Doya*, which occupy most of the space in the district and accommodate the majority of Kotobuki residents, were now incorporated into the intricate network of care in collaboration with various entities, governmental or nongovernmental. Mr. Okamoto, the *doya* manager whose account of isolated deaths appeared earlier in this chapter, further explained how he dealt with the situation, not only with innovative services but also with auxiliary installations in his *doya*.

I thought we could use the governmental helper system. Back then [in the early 2000s], they would send helpers if you're over sixty, but it was based on self-declaration and you wouldn't get one unless you applied for it. That's why I took on the role as their agent, and applied for helper service at the ward office. That way, at least there would be somebody checking in at least a couple of times a week, so we'll find out if he's dead or not for those couple of days that a helper stops by. But even then, there were still four to five days that nobody would check in, so I started to search for lunch box (*bentō*) stores to get the lunch boxes delivered to the rooms. There weren't any such services back then, so I bought them myself and sold them at my counter here. That was too much, because I couldn't leave the counter. I looked for a store that would deliver lunch boxes to rooms, and found the one that we're using now. I had to look 5 or 6 times to find this store. Now the deliveryman tells me 'he looked a bit pale today,' or 'he was lying on the floor,' things like this. Then I can go ask 'how are you feeling?,' 'do you want me to call the ambulance?,' 'do you want to go to the hospital?'. Even this doesn't cover 100%. We have 190-195 residents here, but only 40 gets the lunch box services, so there are still 150 left. What shall I do for them, I thought. And that's how I came to install 'nurse call' systems in each room. They are the same ones used in hospitals. Each room, corridors, and restrooms. Restrooms, especially because people collapse missing their footings in the winter times. (Mr. Okamoto, a *doya* manager, interview on November 15, 2011)

In the two years following the installation of the nurse call systems in Mr. Okamoto's *doya*, he was able to rescue three people during an emergency and only ten people passed away in total: three to four in their *doya* (one due to suicide), and the rest in the hospital (KCCN No.21. 2006. June: 6).



Figure 17. A Nurse Call System Installed at Mr. Okamoto's Office

Mr. Okamoto's *doya*, standing right across the street from Kotobuki Communal Clinic, was often described by local health care professionals as a fine example showing the future of *doya*. Staff members of Kotobuki Communal Clinic worked closely with Mr. Okamoto and would often recommend their patients stay in that *doya*. "We feel relieved if our patients stay there," Dr. Suzuki at the Clinic told me once. The existence of these welfare-oriented *doya* equipped with sliding doors, sloped walkways, elevators, grab bars, electric beds, and monitoring systems, epitomizes how Kotobuki diverged from other former day-laborers' districts like San'ya in Tokyo or Kamagasaki in Osaka whose activism stayed focused more on labor rights than on survival rights. Unlike these two districts, Kotobuki now assumes a built environment like a mortuary where the body is encased, monitored, and tended by many agents working together to facilitate the transition into the next state of existence.

Making a Place for the Dead

On one of my first visits to the Kotobuki Welfare Workshop, a sheltered workshop for the physically disabled in Kotobuki, I noticed a small table right against the inner wall at the opposite side of the entrance. On the tabletop covered with pale pink cloth were two large pictures in black frames. The incense burners in the front immediately made known that this was a memorial altar (*butsudan*). Surrounding each of the framed pictures were a funeral urn wrapped in patterned papers, a plain wood mortuary tablet with a posthumous name, a candle, artificial flowers, drinks, with a few other items that would have been enjoyed by the deceased like cigarettes and candies. Above the tabletop stood metal shelves displaying more than a dozen laminated photos of those who had died

earlier. Over the course of my fieldwork in Kotobuki, I learned that these material tokens of the dead members were attended to with great care in the daily life in the Workshop. Somebody among the staff or members would burn incense, light candles, offer water, *sake* or other drinks and sometimes flowers to those enshrined, with special attention on occasions like the Obon Summer Festival and the vernal and autumnal equinoxes (*ohigan*). For the annual fall trip, the Workshop members would bring along the laminated photos and offer liquor to them before the living were served. Ms. Sato Mariko, staff of Kotobuki Welfare Workshop and vice-chair of Kotobuki Self-Governing Association, explained to me that the members could “carry on living at ease (*anshinshite ikiteirareru*),” knowing that they will not be abandoned after death.

These places for the dead, as much as those for the living, only came after a long period of struggle in Kotobuki. The first mortuary altar sanctified by an official religious institution in Kotobuki was the stone statue of *muen jizō* (Ksitigarbha bodhisattva for *muen* people) right behind the central plaza, known as the Center.



Figure 18. The Statue of *Muen Jizō* at the Center.

Standing between a citrus tree and a maidenhair tree at the corner that leads to the entrance of the municipal housing, the sculpture of *muen jizō* was always decorated with flowers, stuffed dolls, water bowls and incense and visited by people. At the back of the sculpture was a drop box to keep the wooden tablets containing the name of the deceased. While it was officially the Buddhist priest who could enshrine the names with proper memorial service (*kuyō*), the drop box was also filled with scraps of paper submitted by those who wrote names on behalf of their fellow residents who passed away. The proximity of the *muen jizō* to the Center plaza was symbolically powerful, considering that the plaza was the heaven and hell of the most critical substance abusers in Kotobuki. Once when I was showing my friend the *muen jizō*, a drunken man sitting nearby spotted us and shouted “my future native home (*ore no mirai no jikka*),” pointing at the statue. Many would have drunken themselves to death for decades in front of the *muen jizō* thinking the same thing.

The *muen jizō* was constructed in 1978, at the height of laborers’ culture in Kotobuki.⁹⁹ Priest Kano Yusho, the abbot of Tokuonji,¹⁰⁰ a Buddhist temple fifteen miles

⁹⁹ Watanabe Yukiko’s memoir shows how death was commemorated at this site right before the construction of the *muen jizō*: “In one corner of Kotobuki District stands a big wooden grave tablet (*sodoba*, literally stupa) to hold memorial services for the numerous *muen botoke*, who died in this District. From time to time, in front of this tablet would be *sake* sold in cups or steamed yeast buns with filling prepared by somebody. There must be a lot of starved people around, but strangely enough, nobody would touch these offerings. I have even seen a laborer wailing ‘wait for me, I’ll be there soon..’ shedding tears while offering a flower.” (Watanabe 1977:186) She also notes the skeletal ashes being buried in the corners of Kotobuki, a practice that would have been common in the district until it was banned by law.

¹⁰⁰ Tokuonji belongs to the *Shingon* (True Words) denomination of the divine Mount *Kōya* in Wagayama Prefecture. The present chief priest of Tokuonji, Kano Yukan recounted the hardship he had to go through, following his dad, Kano Yusho, for two and a half years to solicit offerings from people in Kotobuki to build the *muen jizō*. According to Kano, Buddhist temples were busy with the high demand of funeral service at the time,

north west of Kotobuki District, learning of the tragic fates of the free laborers during his visits to Kotobuki, raised alms to construct the *muen jizō*. Once it was constructed, the city government ordered demolition on the charge of illegal appropriation of public land. In protest, people formed a human circle around the sculpture and squatted for days until the demolition order was revoked. Ever since its construction, the Priest and his eldest son who succeeded him visited every Obon Summer Festival to give an annual memorial service to the *muen jizō*.¹⁰¹ Accompanied by a distribution of a thousand bowls of soup by the parishioners of Tokuonji, the service continued to provide consolation to the dead and the living alike in Kotobuki.

However, it was only after the collapse of the bubble economy and in the waning days of labor activism that Tokuonji Temple came to provide an actual gravesite for those in Kotobuki. It was in the honor of late Kawase Seiji, who had dedicated his life fighting for those in Kotobuki as the Vice Chairman of Jūnichirō. In January 1991, after years of court disputes over Kawase's death, Jūnichirō was able to prove it to be a work-related accident and receive consolation money of 3,500,000 yen from the company Kawase was

so taking on extra work without a fee was unthinkable to most. However, Tokuonji's activities in Kotobuki gathered media attention over time that the temple started to receive donations from sympathizers across Japan. In response to the rising attention and support, Tokuonji devised a supporter membership program to complement the conventional *danka* system, so that people without ancestral ties to Tokuonji can still stay connected and support its activities. Such an innovative approach was beneficial to Tokuonji in the end that it does not suffer from any financial problem that torments many Buddhist temples today. According to Priest Kano, Tokuonji had more than 100 million yen (roughly, 1 million dollars) of budget for social activities at the time of the interview. (Interview with Priest Kano Yukan on May 29, 2014)

¹⁰¹ The memorial service consists of a recitation of *Prajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Transcendent Wisdom), a sutra used inter-denominationally for funerary service in Japanese Buddhism, incense offering by mourners as the priest recites the names of the deceased in the past year. The whole process takes about 20 to 25 minutes (Interview with Kano Yukan, May 29, 2014).

working for at the time of his death. Kawase's mother who was looking to use the consolation money to honor Kawase, remembered his lament over the problem of the unclaimed ashes in Kotobuki and consulted Priest Kano about the possibility of reserving a burial site for Kotobuki within the new Aoba Cemetery (*Aoba Reien*), the graveyard of Tokuonji that was under construction at the time. Although Tokuonji had been unofficially taking ashes of those in Kotobuki upon request, the idea was to have a proper tombstone that was to be attended regularly with proper memorial rituals, just like any other family tombstones. Priest Kano welcomed the idea and was able to gather additional donations from his parishioners and local businesses, not to mention a modest contribution from Kotobuki residents and sympathizers. Finally, in the autumn equinox of 1991, a sizable granite tombstone engraved The Hill of a Thousand Autumns (*Senshū no Oka*) was erected on the high ground of the multi-tiered Aoba Cemetery.



Figure 19. The Hill of a Thousand Autumns in Tokuonji.

According to the chief priest, there were more than five hundred individuals buried in the Hill as of 2014. (Interview with Kano Yukan, May 29, 2014).

When I visited Tokuonji just past the autumn equinox of 2011 with about thirty members of the Kotobuki Welfare Workshop and Kotobuki Senior Citizens' Club and a few other volunteers, we were notified at the reception that the chief priest Kano Yukan, the eldest son of the late Priest Kano, was away in Northeastern Japan to offer voluntary service to the earthquake and tsunami victims. Regardless, without being disturbed, we all proceeded to do the job as usual. Shinohara and a few others with walking difficulties stayed at the reception hall, while the rest of us climbed up the hill of the Aoba Cemetery towards the Hill of a Thousand Autumns. I paced myself to match Masako who fell behind everyone. Some fetched buckets full of water at the water fountain next to stairways on the second tier. When we reached the very right end rear of the top tier, everyone had already started wiping, cleaning and putting flowers and *sake* in the right places. Then we took turns to offer incense and bow our heads in front of the tombstone. Hayama lit a cigarette and offered it instead of incense. It was all smooth and tranquil. The tombstone reflected the sun off its shiny surface. Some looked down to the fields feeling the autumn breeze, as if to familiarize themselves with the landscape they would eternally settle their eyes on after death. Others walked around to pay their respects to several other tombstones of those who were also related to Kotobuki but managed to have their own family tombstone erected. In contrast to Carolyn Steven's account of the first year of memorial service, when every action had to be directed by the priest (Stevens 1997:171), it seemed like everyone had mastered the ritual and made it their own.

While the Hill of a Thousand Autumns was most closely affiliated with Kotobuki Day Laborers' Union, other long-term organizations, such as Kotobuki Welfare Workshop and Kotobuki Seniors' Club also came to resort to the Hill for their deceased

members. Most recently, the Roba's House, the sheltered workshop for people with mental disability, also obtained a formal approval from Tokuonji to bury their members in the Hill. Ms. Ishiguro, the board director of the Roba's House explained why:

Although Tokuonji had been kind enough to take the ashes of our deceased members from time to time, it was just on a case by case basis. I've heard a lot of our members sighing to themselves, 'I'll end up becoming a *muen botoke* when I die, anyway.' That's why I went to the chief priest of Tokuonji to get his formal approval. Now I can tell our members that they'll be buried in the Hill of a Thousand Autumns and our members will visit them all the time. (Conversation on May 25, 2012)

Notably, the burial in the Hill was free and open to everyone "regardless of religion" (*shūkyō towazu*), as far as the deceased had expressed his wish to be buried in the Hill. Hence, it did not matter that the Roba's House was funded and run by protestant Christians like Ms. Ishiguro herself and its members had different religious affiliations from various sects of Buddhism to Christianity. Long-term activists, like Ms. Sato of Kotobuki Welfare Workshop or Ms. Mimori of Kotobuki District Center, would often say that they would rather be buried in the Hill than their own family grave. Moreover, the Hill was open to other *muen* ashes, like those from San'ya District of Tokyo¹⁰² and foreign migrant workers. In other words, the burial in the Hill was not predicated on faith in Buddhism, or affiliation with Tokuonji or any particular group. Anyone could be buried in the Hill, as far as there was someone who could speak on behalf of the deceased. All those buried in the Hill were offered regular memorial services (*kuyō*) by Tokuonji and was commemorated by anyone who made the visit.

¹⁰² In Kamagasaki District in Osaka, the *Furusato no Ie* (Home of Hometown) run by a catholic church, has a crypt full of lockers containing funeral urns, while the *Isshinji* temple also takes care of funerals and gather all the ashes into a series of life-size statues of Buddha, a practice that has been continued for more than a century in this historically segregated neighborhood.

Such openness of the Hill epitomizes how the abjection associated with *muen botoke* and entanglements over dead bodies cannot be reduced to a matter of a symbolic system or religious belief in Japan. While the Confucian doctrine of filial piety, the Buddhist conception of karmic bonds, or folk beliefs in spiritual beings do form the background, rarely would Japanese explain their ideas and practices regarding death in these terms. Rather “social obligations and expectations” would come up more prominently, as Margaret Lock has concluded in her survey of the Japanese attitude toward recently deceased relatives (Lock 2001:224). The often conflicting and inconsistent ideas surrounding the afterlife in Japan, as revealed in many survey results, contrast with the rather consistent angst regarding *muen* death. Hence I emphasize that the problem of *muen* and the solution sought in the Hill are better understood by looking into relational practices essential to personhood. As discussed earlier, in the course of modern state formation and capitalist development, Japan has made personhood reliant on the willful care by oneself and others in circumventing the natural course of demise and decay. Neglecting a body or allowing a grave to disintegrate in front of you, in this sense, is equivalent to killing the person, who after death has lost his own ability to fight against the natural process. Therefore, it is not a surprise that securing the survival of the homeless involved resurrecting personhood through care for their bodies not only while alive but also after death.

In Kotobuki, the construction of the Hill signified a particular intervention in the normative oppositional relation between *en* and *muen* and in the way personhood was maintained. Unlike the ordinary mortuary rituals that reinforce the vertical ties between the living family and the ancestors along the family line that can be traced back to time

immemorial, in Kotobuki the emphasis was on the horizontal propinquity between the near-dead and the dead. As such, the transformation of Kotobuki to a “welfare town” in defense of the right to survival involved twisting the logic of relationality and personhood. During the heyday of labor activism in Kotobuki before the construction of the Hill, survival meant collectively embodying the retaliatory spirit of *muen botoke*, who would come back to haunt the world of *en* and subvert it. It was for this very reason that some argued against the idea of building a proper communal grave. It was none other than Kawase himself, who had pointed out the dilemma that a communal grave could raise and pondered its ambivalence in his journal as early as 1984.

In Kotobuki, I have seen the deaths of many people. I have felt futility in seeing how the work of searching for a place to settle a departed soul fell upon the hands of the police. Yet, that was still one way of condolence. People who knew the deceased would gather around to simply talk about him and nod together, without doing anything special. Such a moment was itself a memorial gathering (*shinobu kai*). What was important was the feeling of not wanting to become a *muen botoke*, despite its inevitability. However, if we have a system of conveying anyone who dies in Kotobuki to a communal grave only because he did “not want to become a *muen botoke*,” then we might lose the attitude of actively trying to commemorate the deceased. That way, we might end up being real *muen*. (January 24, 1984, from Kawase Kenichi’s article)¹⁰³

While Kawase’s agony over the issue mainly came from his self-reflection on his role as an activist vis-à-vis the people, a question that dominated the leftist activism of his time, he was also raising a fundamental question regarding the purpose of mourning. If activists like himself took the initiative of building a communal grave, wouldn’t the laborers themselves be discouraged from taking any spontaneous actions? Wouldn’t the

¹⁰³ September 1994. in Labor Information (*Rōdō Jōhō*): <http://www4.plala.or.jp/kawa-k/hiyou/SENNSY~1.HTM>, accessed on April 25, 2015.

communal grave merely provide easy comfort in the fact that the deceased would be enshrined? By proposing that the lack of routinized ritual was itself a unique way of mourning for day laborers, Mr. Kawase challenged the normative definition of *muen*. In other words, Mr. Kawase believed in the power of mourning and desperation as a source of further actions for laborers to build their own *en* as opposed to the social perception of them being *muen*. Such a viewpoint would have made more sense in his era when life was still the norm, when death fell upon the unlucky, and when the living had the responsibility and urge to live on in order to revenge the dead. However, Mr. Kawase did not know how Kotobuki was to change with the permanent loss of many day laboring jobs and the restructuring of day laboring markets. As Kotobuki became an asylum for those who irreversibly fell behind the postindustrial economy, the desperation of the living came to lose its poetic potential to conjure up vengeful spirits. Indeed, Kawase might be right, if we see how funerals, at least those arranged by the Union and other affiliated organizations, became streamlined and systematized following the construction of the Hill of a Thousand Autumns.¹⁰⁴ Yet, without these funerals and memorial services

¹⁰⁴ For example, we can have a glimpse at an instantiation of a spontaneous community of mourning as Kawase would have meant in Watanabe's memoir: "On March 8th of Shōwa 50 [1975], Mr. Kuma died. He was found vomiting blood in pain by his doya comrades but passed away in the ambulance on his way to the hospital. We were told that the cause of death was cerebral hemorrhage, but they could not confirm. His age was forty-six. Hearing about his death the next day, I rushed my way to the town of Kotobuki (*Kotobuki no machi*). When I went up the Livelihood Hall where the body was enshrined, an altar was already prepared with sake that Mr. Kuma loved, and cup *ramen* with chopsticks. Amidst the fume of the incense, we all held our hands together and wailed. Mr. Kuma was beloved by everyone in the town of Kotobuki. However, it was more than just the grief for Mr. Kuma's death that was in the minds of those crying here. There was someone who even showed envy saying, Mr. Kuma who can be sent off by everyone must be happy, what would it be like on my turn? Everyone nodded on that remark. There was certain warmth in the atmosphere, as Mr. Kuma used to promote. What Mr.

at the Hill, all that the living would be witnessing would be the disappearance of numerous nameless neighbors, just like sand slipping through their fingers, and not the spontaneous forming of alternative *en*. Kawase's death and the historical irony of its contribution to building a communal grave for Kotobuki, symbolize how mortuary rituals and burial sites were central in the transformation of Kotobuki to an asylum. By constructing mortuary rituals that approximated the norm, the retaliatory spirit that had once mobilized the solidarity of those in Kotobuki was also dispelled. These rituals allowed those in Kotobuki to restore their personhood by creating temporal and spatial niche for the near-dead. This community did not extend to time immemorial like ordinary communities in Japan; it rather perpetuated the last days of life and the return of the dead. It was neither a community-of-becoming that dreamt to subvert the social order that defies its status. It was a self-sufficient community consisted of the near-dead and the dead who were appeased by each other's company.

A Funeral: Mr. Hayashi

On December 22nd of 2011, a week before my departure from Kotobuki, I was invited to the funeral of Mr. Hayashi (pseudonym). As I entered the funeral home with several others, Ms. Okayasu, a dedicated volunteer of Kotobuki District Center, greeted us in her elegant black kimono and asked us to sign the visitors' log. There were about forty-some elderly men and women nicely dressed in black suits, mostly from Naka Mission Center and Momijizaka Church, but none of Mr. Hayashi's relatives. Looking around, I realized that most mourners came out of their comradeship with Kotobuki District Center, rather

Kuma left to this town of Kotobuki, might be this feeling of solidarity. Thinking this, I kept my palms together in prayer." (Watanabe 1977: 188-190)

than out of their personal ties with Mr. Hayashi. Some would have worked with Mr. Hayashi in helping the Kotobuki District Center's business, but others would not even know who he was.

After people got settled in, Pastor Watanabe offered a prayer to start the funeral. Following the hymns known to have been Mr. Hayashi's favorite, Pastor Watanabe gave the memorial speech. "Life is like a tent of the homeless granted to us by God. In the tent, we carry on our lives, but God calls us when the time comes. Then, we have to disassemble the tent to move in to the permanent home that God had prepared for us." Ms. Mimori guided us to form a line to bid our last farewell to Mr. Hayashi. One by one, the mourners picked up a white chrysanthemum from the bunch prepared by the Kotobuki District Center and offered it to Mr. Hayashi in his coffin. While waiting for my turn, I thought how similar this scene was to the weekly soup kitchen: it was the same people working in the same flow coordinated by the same group. My turn came after Ms. Yamaguchi from Naka Mission Center, who whispered, "Mr. Hayashi, you have endured well, thank you," in her characteristic perky voice. Mr. Hayashi looked nothing close to what he looked like alive. His mouth was wide open as if he was gasping, doing no justice to the dainty look he was known for in the district. I looked at the baseball cap and the weary bible on top of the coffin cover, the only remnants that truly represented Mr. Hayashi's life. It was in the blurry picture next to the bible, that I could see the face I knew, Mr. Hayashi with his shy smile. The picture would have probably been prepared in a rush by Ms. Mimori by enlarging a part of an image she had in her computer file.

As I waited for the offering to end, I tried to gather what I knew about Mr. Hayashi's life. Born as a lovechild in postwar Japan, Mr. Hayashi had a hard time getting a job,

even with his bachelor's degree from a prestigious university. So he migrated to the US and found office work in the military and spent most of his time in Boston, until he got a message that his mother was in critical condition. He came back to Japan to take care of his mother, but after her death, he became jobless and eventually homeless. After that, his life followed the same trajectory as numerous others in Kotobuki: he was rescued by Ms. Mimori of the Kotobuki District Center, applied for welfare assistance with her help, and found residence in Kotobuki District. Since then, he became a dedicated member of Naka Mission Center, the church that Ms. Mimori worked for. It was on my first day at the Naka Mission Center, half an hour before the mass, that I met this shy looking old man flipping through bibles and hymnbooks to put the string bookmarks on the right pages for that day. Since I never saw him missing a mass, I knew something was wrong, when the bookmarks were on the wrong pages for two weeks in a row. According to Ms. Mimori and other church members, when they visited him, Mr. Hayashi had already been lying down in his room for a few days after a stroke. He was soon moved to a hospital, but did not last a month after that. I suddenly remembered that Mr. Hayashi had bragged about the prospect of going back to Boston as his friend invited him over and offered a job in the military base. Since he knew he would face objections by Ms. Mimori who was a steadfast anti-militarist, he kept his plan a secret from Ms. Mimori. I wondered what happened to his friend, whether he would still be waiting to hear from Mr. Hayashi. If there was anybody who could have done the job, it had to be Ms. Mimori.

Most people left after the funeral service, and about a dozen followed the coffin to the Kuboyama Crematory, a public crematory run by the City. While we waited for the cremation in the lounge upstairs, Ms. Yamaguchi and other church ladies brought out the

tea and snacks they had prepared. I joined them to help set up the snack trays and pour the tea. All of this was business as usual, everybody perfectly playing their own part. Ms. Mimori took out a pocket album with several photos of Mr. Hayashi which she would have prepared browsing all the photo albums of the events organized by the church and the Kotobuki District Center. She and Mr. Nara talked about the time they went to clean Mr. Hayashi's room after he was hospitalized. The room was so clean as if he had been preparing his death for a long time.

As the staff of the crematory notified us that cremation was completed, we went down to collect the ashes. We lined up again, this time in pairs to put the remains in the urn from the feet to the neck, a practice called *kotsuage*. I was paired with Mr. Hamano, a retired professor of social work and long-term volunteer. When I tried to pick up a bone fracture on our turn, Mr. Hamano told me that we should reach out to the same one together and place it in the urn, as the custom goes. Later on, Mr. Hamano commented on how eclectic this funeral was in combining Buddhist and Christian customs together. Mr. Hayashi's ashes were to be buried in The Hill of a Thousand Autumns five months later, along with the ashes of many nameless individuals who had spent their last years in Kotobuki. Although Mr. Hayashi had drifted from one place to another throughout his life, he finally found his eternal home in the Hill via Kotobuki.

Months later, when I went back to Kotobuki, I found out that Mr. Yamamoto, another Kotobuki resident and a member of the sheltered workshop Roba's House, had become a regular attendee of the church after seeing Mr. Hayashi's funeral. Mr. Yamamoto was motivated by the anticipation of a well-attended funeral held by the Naka Mission Center

and Pastor Watanabe. Other church members told me that Mr. Yamamoto never missed a mass ever since.

The Mainstreaming of Kotobuki

In 2010, several years after Mr. Okamoto's innovations in Kotobuki, isolated deaths once again emerged in the mediascape with a featured documentary series of the national broadcasting system NHK, entitled *Relationless Society (Muen Shakai)*. The first episode was about a man whose decomposing body was found in his apartment in Tokyo. The camera pans around the room, showing the tatami mat floor, the humble furniture along the wall, the phone, a Japanese doll, and a tooth brush, the stillness in the room amplified by the sound of rustling tree leaves through the wind from the open window. The book published later by the production team reveals that the team wanted to convey "the feeling of air (*kūkikan*)," and "the landscape as the deceased would have seen it, the sound he would have heard as he passed away alone" (NHK 2010:29-30). It was also noted that the crew visited every site thinking of the project as a memorial service, and everyone carried around Buddhist rosaries and crystals wherever they went and joined their hands in prayer before leaving (NHK 2010:30-31). The book cover with a panoramic view of the city at sunset with the alarming phrase, "*Muen* death (*lit.* relationless deaths) could be yours tomorrow!," recapitulated the harrowing image: a society of the relationless as a mound of lonely graves.

By reenacting the last hours of those who faced isolated death and commemorating them for their tragic deaths, *Relationless Society* brought back the persons who faced isolated death to the everyday space of the living. The alarming phrase of "thirty-two

thousand *muen* deaths a year,” made popular by the documentary came to haunt policy makers (Yūki 2014:61-68), a number amounting to the infamous suicide rate in Japan. In response, a compilation of guidelines to prevent isolated death was sent to all the municipalities by the MHLW in 2012. The compilation included several model cases of municipal measures successful in working across administrative departments and with the private sector to prevent isolated death. While some municipalities collaborated with postal or electricity service agencies, others developed networks with private companies like news or yogurt delivery, or with neighborhood associations and non-profit groups to watch over any elderly living alone (Yūki 2014: 138-174). Meanwhile, isolated death appeared as one of the major sources and challenges of architectural experiments for neighborhood-making (*machi zukuri*) (Kurahara 2008).

Isolated death and afterlife bring to the fore what is perceived as most fundamental in people’s experience of the entanglements of postindustrial condition. Where the basis of relationships is threatened, *muen botoke* does not haunt the living as revengeful souls. Rather society is full of living *muen botoke*. The case of Kotobuki suggests that an ethical breakthrough might come at this very historical juncture in Japan with the realization of common existential and organic condition of decay giving rise to an alternative logic of care. Notably, the changing logics of care are most significantly displayed in the new burial and memorial practices in Japan. There are eternal memorial graves of various sorts that guarantee eternal memorial service by a third party regardless of familial or religious affiliation that started to increase in the late 1980s (Rowe 2011; Suzuki 2000:174). Then there are various forms of burials under and around trees that animate a community of the bereaved who seeks to overcome grief through collaborative projects

that concerns rehabilitating nature and life (Boret 2013: 177-201). All these variety of attempts can be construed as a change in not only the world of the dead, but also that of the living: how one relates to others in the care one needs in life and death. There seems to be increasing acceptance of one's destiny as an anonymous ancestor crystallized in the material state of jumbled ashes mixed with earth, but nonetheless well attended by the living because of their mutual humanity and not for specific ties. These various burials are not only imagined as the possible destination of one's spiritual and material trajectory, but also the endpoint of Japanese society, and the endpoint from which life and relations are to be recalibrated.

After thirty years of struggle to obtain the right to survival, Kotobuki is witnessing its own history reverberating through the rest of Japanese society.

Epilogue

In the last week of September 2011, Kotobuki appeared in a free architectural exhibition, “Tokyo 2050: 12 Visions for the Metropolis,” held inside the thirty-seven-story Marunoichi Building at the central commercial area between Tokyo Station and the Imperial Palace. I found out about this exhibition months earlier, as the students at Sogabe Lab, who frequented Kotobuki soup kitchen to follow up on their park renovation project, conducted additional surveys in Kotobuki in preparation of the exhibition. Organized by Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture, Tokyo 2050 was a supplementary event to celebrate the hosting of 24th International Union of Architects World Architecture Congress, which was simultaneously taking place a few blocks away under the annual theme of “Design 2050: Beyond Disasters.” A renowned architect and professor at Tokyo University, who himself participated in the exhibition, explained in his inaugural remark that the objective of the exhibition was at “representing the future of Tokyo as a new metropolis,” or as a “model” Asian metropolis developing toward a matured society.¹⁰⁵ Twelve teams of

¹⁰⁵ <http://tokyo2050.com/en/about/>, accessed on July 12, 2015. The architect further touched on the history of Tokyo from its rise as Japan’s capital in the seventeenth century to its high-speed economic growth period and urged that time has changed to envision a future that took into account the global and domestic changes from the environmental crisis to demographic changes and disasters. The global and futuristic orientation of Tokyo 2050 was also detectable in its grouping with two other exhibitions at the same venue: “Le Grand Pari(s)” showed selected works from a recent urban architectural exhibition in Paris, and the “Redevelopment of Otemachi Marunoichi Yurakucho District” exemplified a real case of collaborative city planning based on public-private partnership in the neighborhood of the exhibition venue.

laboratories and departments in architecture and urban studies at universities in the Tokyo Metropolitan area participated in Tokyo 2050 to present their visions of the city's future in various dimensions from technological innovations to paradigm shifts in urban life and design.

Sogabe Lab led one of the twelve teams of Tokyo 2050 to present the case of Kotobuki, in collaboration with another architecture lab at Tohoku University and Professor Suzuki Nobuharu in urban planning at Yokohama City University and Professor Yamaguchi Kahoruko, a long-term researcher and supporter of Kotobuki and a sociologist at Tokyo Metropolitan University. Among the twelve units of bilingual panels and miniatures arranged in the shape of a hollow rectangle, Kotobuki's was the only unit, which did not involve any data collection or research in Tokyo Metropolitan area. Under the title, "Learning from Kotobuki: Restructuring the Urban Space by a Change in Values," (Kotobuki 2050) the panel exhibition opened with the statement, "Kotobuki-chō is a frontier!!" Following a brief opening statement and an overview of Kotobuki's current demographic and infrastructural characteristics, the underlying concept of the exhibition was expressed in big bold fonts, "Kotobuki-chō 2011 ⇌ Tokyo 2050," a message emphasized again in a large graphic image covering one whole panel. The subsequent sections explained how alternative values found in Kotobuki could help envision an urban future in eight key words: social welfare, slow traffic, urban fisheries, renewable energy, woody city, pedestrian paradise, urban small services, and cooperation. Each of these key words was then explained with real life examples from Japan and abroad and with a suggestion of a corresponding hypothetical change in Kotobuki.

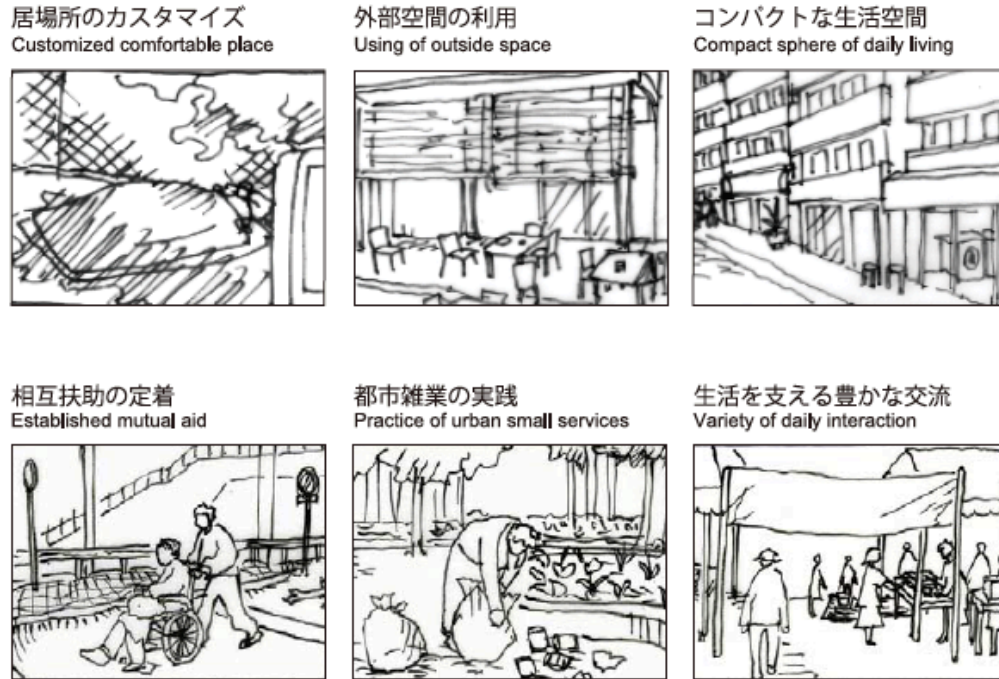


Figure 20. "Alternative Values in Kotobuki," in Sogabe Lab's panel exhibition on Kotobuki at Tokyo 2050: 12 Visions for the Metropolis.

Some of the most radical ideas, also reflected in a virtual chronological table (*nenpyō*) with suggested dates of changes in Kotobuki, included the revitalization of water transportation and fisheries and the municipalization of *doya* management, all of which would contribute to Kotobuki's transformation into a self-sufficient cooperative community based on small-scale labor exchanges. The panel exhibition was supplemented by Professor Sogabe's presentation titled "A Model of a Neighborhood to Solve Social Problems," on the last day of the weeklong exhibition. In a room full of architects, urban planners, and students, Professor Sogabe, using animated slides created with computer graphics, gave a brief introduction of Kotobuki and described a hypothetical day of a single man in his forties living in a shared house in Kotobuki in

2050, where he engages in daily activities and exchanges with other inhabitants in the district.¹⁰⁶



Figure 21. A Miniature Model of Kotobuki in 2050 (Photo by author, on October 2, 2011)

What I found most notable in Kotobuki 2050 was the way in which past, present, and future were reconfigured in its conceptualization of urban futures. While futuristic in its aspirations for changes, it was also surprisingly present-oriented in acknowledging current activities and values, and even retrospective in its search of inspirations. In the section on urban small services, for instance, the panel exhibition included lists of informal practices in Kotobuki, such as *narabi* (standing in line to get tickets or discounted items on behalf of a client) or *jimiya* (searching on the ground to pick up lost valuables or coins), along with small service networks of the Edo period, such as *tagaya* (changing hoops of wooden buckets) or *hamono migaki* (sharpening knives), as possible methods of self-reliant renewable resource management for future cities. The underlying

¹⁰⁶ Later on in an interview with the exhibition staff, Professor Sogabe explained the reason why he chose animated slides as his presentation method as follows: “Hasn’t portraying a city from a bird’s eyes’ view itself been an economic growth perspective that established cities in the twentieth century? I wanted to depart from such a stance and tried to portray a city based on the accumulation of events on the ground.” <http://tokyo2050.com/gt/06.html>, accessed on July 12, 2015.

concept of exploring Kotobuki's present as a guide to imagining and orienting the future of Tokyo, and further, that of global cities is eye-catching in itself, given that the modern profession of architecture has been to materialize blueprints of a utopic urban future. Instead of mobilizing resources in the anticipation of economic returns or implanting ideas of a new social order and aesthetics, Sogabe's exhibition assumed the dearth of resources and the decline of people, and the humbling of the architectural profession in engineering the future under such uncertainties. Facing the irony of the places of dwelling that architects built turning into tombs of isolated death, the irony of the simultaneous increase in the homeless and abandoned houses, innovative architects like Sogabe are grappling with the failings of temporal reasoning embedded in urban planning premised upon and aiming at growth and prosperity.

In Japan, such temporal reasoning has provided the basis of place-making (*ba-zukuri*) and neighborhood-making (*machi-zukuri*) projects, which have been variably pursued by municipalities and civic neighborhood associations often with the support or lead of the central government throughout the postwar period (Bestor 1989; Ben-Ari 1995; Robertson 1991). Along with neighborhood improvement planning and measures, these projects typically included events and activities aiming at inculcating a sense of belonging and community consciousness in the inhabitants. Appealing to nostalgic longing for an ideal past and the collective responsibility for future generations, these projects resignified the bond between a place and its people and mobilized their concerted effort toward advancement and perpetuation, disguising the highly contested processes of social exclusion involved. In contrast, the postindustrial crisis, characterized by sluggish economy and the decrease and aging of the population, calls into question

such conventions of temporal reasoning in conceptualizing urban futures. Kotobuki 2050 exemplified an experimentation on temporal reasoning in the work of engineering the urban future that has been conferred on architects, in a period when the perpetuation of institutions and inhabitants come into question, as epitomized in the marginalized community of Kotobuki. What the exhibition pointed out was that urban design and planning made sense only to the degree they conceived of a sustainable social relational logic, which can survive the loss and decline of people, institutions, infrastructures, and resources.

The challenges of envisioning urban futures are particularly considerable in Japan today, which is still struggling from the aftermath of the triple disasters following the great earthquake on March 11, 2011, which destroyed villages and towns along the Northeast coastline whose inhabitants (up to 207,000) remain evacuated as of June, 2015¹⁰⁷. Sogabe Lab, like most of the other participants of Tokyo 2050, was also involved in another collaborative project at the same time as a member of Archi+Aid, an association of architects organized to support reconstruction of disaster-stricken areas. The “Lost Homes Project: Reconstruction Assistance in Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake”¹⁰⁸ was initiated by an architecture professor at Kobe University aiming at “restoring lost towns and villages by 1:500 scale models in order to inherit and preserve memories accumulated in local scenery, environment, and life.”¹⁰⁹ The participant

¹⁰⁷ http://www.reconstruction.go.jp/topics/main-cat2/sub-cat2-1/20150630_hinansha.pdf, accessed on July 12, 2015.

¹⁰⁸ A more literal translation of the Japanese title of the project would be “Lost Neighborhoods” (*Ushinarareta Machi*; *Machi* is written in the Chinese character 街, which stands for streets, districts, or quarters). I use the official English title of the project as set by the project organizers.

¹⁰⁹ <http://losthomes.jp/en/about/>, accessed on July 15, 2015.

architects and students work in collaboration with evacuees and residents, holding workshops which, in some cases, last up to one-week, to recreate models best reflecting how the neighborhoods used to look like. The project is still ongoing with twenty-five participating universities and over 600 student participants, who reconstructed models of forty-six neighborhoods in the three prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima¹¹⁰. These models continue to be exhibited selectively and intermittently at different venues across the nation. Sogabe Lab has worked closely with two small hamlets (Maginohama and Takehama) in Oshika Peninsula in Miyagi Prefecture, where most villages have been wiped out by the great tsunami that followed the earthquake.



Figure 22. A Poster of an Exhibition of "Lost Homes," held in Yokohama in 2012. The exhibition was held under the theme, "Connecting Yokohama to Tohoku (Northeast Japan)."

Sogabe Lab's involvement in these two different projects poignantly shows the tension in dealing with the crisis faced at the community level in post-industrial and post-

¹¹⁰ https://www.aij.or.jp/images/prize/2015/pdf/2_4award_losthomes.pdf, accessed on July 20, 2015.

disaster Japan. By recreating miniature models of lost neighborhoods, Lost Homes Project intends to engage with the disaster victims and the audience to conjure up the image of the past and aspire for the reconstruction of neighborhoods in accordance with their idealistic images. Meanwhile, Kotobuki 2050 uses the crisis situation as an opportunity to reverse the question of normality and open up a space for the emergency measures to take root in the future, so that they are no longer deemed undesirable.

We see different kinds of healing at work in each case: one by offering concrete materials to the lost homes and relieving the sense of dispossession; the other by offering an image of a future where none is less at home than others. Lost Homes signifies how the post-disaster reconstruction might take the direction of resurrecting “the landscape of nostalgia” (Robertson 1991:182) reminiscent of the native-place making (*furusato-zukuri*) of the 1970s and 1980s, when the growth of suburban cities stirred up concerns over the loss of traditional communities. Such a mode of engagement is impossible in Kotobuki, which no one would or could possibly claim as their native place (*furusato*). The establishment of houses (*ie*) in Kotobuki – Roba’s House (*Roba no Ie*), Kiraku House (*Kirakuna Ie*), Sanagi’s House (*Sanagi no Ie*), and the adjacent Shalom’s House (*Sharōmu no Ie*) – were made possible only through endeavors searching for a place to stay (*ibasho*) open to those who dared to dream of (re)obtaining a house.¹¹¹ Nostalgia has

¹¹¹ Another architectural invention in Kotobuki has been led by Mr. Okabe Tomohiko, the manager of Kotobuki Yokohama Hostel Village launched in 2004 and the chairman of a limited liability company, Koto Lab (*Koto-Rabo*) established in 2007. The website of Koto Lab states that the company’s objective is to engage in “neighborhood-making as event-making (*koto-zukuri*), instead of object-making (*mono-zukuri*).” Further explanation follows that “event-making involves a way of thinking prioritizing the perspective on intangible things that exist or mediate, such as images, communities (*komyūnitei*), ambience, and sentiments. Koto-Lab expanded its activities to outside of Kotobuki and recently launched a new project of renewing abandoned old buildings in a

not been the dominant mode of living in Kotobuki; mourning, also, has been oriented towards the future of one's own death, longing for the promise of a permanent home after death as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Kotobuki 2050 showed a possibility of future direction reflective of conditions in Kotobuki, which are increasingly shared by other communities in Japan: to generate relations for survival and care without longing for the lost. These two different modes exemplify the conundrums urban planners, policy makers, and citizens in post-industrial and post-disaster Japan are grappling with today.

The economic deprivation and social marginalization experienced by those in Kotobuki put Kotobuki ahead of the rest of Japan in grappling with the crisis of care. The potency of the homeless support network in Kotobuki, as discussed in this dissertation, lay in its sustainability and extensibility of the care relations woven through narrative events and activities of support and self-help by shaping a temporal horizon for people to take root in and branch out of the district. The crisis of care, and the immediacy of its countermeasures, made it necessary to cross the normative boundaries and reconfigure social relations, comparable to the way in which a disaster would. Ms. Kinoshita Makoto (pseudonym), a steady member of Kotobuki Youth Seminar and reliable volunteer for Kotobuki District Center, made a similar note in her report in the newsletter of Naka Mission Center after volunteering for elderly counseling and dental care services in the disaster afflicted areas in Northeast Japan for a year.

I really can't stand communal corps (*kyōdōtai*). I don't like sayings that church members are God's family and so on. Yet, I felt that this disaster created a situation in

small city in Ehime Prefecture, which has the nation's second highest rate of abandoned and empty houses and buildings (<http://koto-lab.com/index.html>, accessed on July 12, 2015). Koto-Lab's conception and projects show an interesting twist in native-place-making, which in the suburban town of Kodaira, was once understood as "person-making (*hito-zukuri*)," or creating active agents of neighborhood-making (Robertson 1991:184).

which the afflicted inevitably had to become a family. They had to lead a communal life in shelters, and they cannot live without making a community (*komyunitē*) in temporary dwellings. I came to learn a little bit about “living together” from this activity [volunteering to support the disaster victims]. I came to think that just being together, without necessarily achieving something, is a form of living together. I’ve been involved in Kotobuki-chō for a while, but when I thought of this, I realized that I haven’t been facing people in Kotobuki. I’d say hi to them, but that was it. That’s what made me move my church affiliation to Naka Mission Center. I started attending the worship at Naka Mission Center on Sunday mornings, and then started joining the Kotobuki Medical Team’s free medical consultation in the afternoon. Then, a man who used to say hi to me at the bazaar came for counseling and told me about his life. From there, our unidimensional relationship became three-dimensional, and I came to know the person as he was....” (Kinoshita Makoto, “Being Involved in the Support Activities for the Great East Japan Earthquake’s Afflicted Area,” *Kotobuki Naka Dayori* No.150, April 2012: 2)

Ms. Kinoshita, in her early forties, got involved in Kotobuki as she was going through a life crisis of her own with marital problems. Starting with organizing Kotobuki Youth Seminar twice a year, she has also broadened her scope of activities to monthly bazaars, monthly free film screenings, weekly patrols, to a leftist study group, while changing her job from a dental assistant to a care manager at another city in Kanagawa Prefecture. It was her involvement in Kotobuki that prepared her to readily volunteer to go to the tsunami afflicted villages in Northeast Japan, which then motivated her to change her stance in Kotobuki as well. Such a forging of care relations were not only initiated by supporters going into the district, but also spiraled out into their daily lives as well, as in the case of Ms. Matsumoto Junko (pseudonym).

Having married to a pastor ordained in the UCCJ, Ms. Matsumoto had moved around Japan following her husband, from a *buraku* neighborhood in the Kansai region in southwestern Japan to the northern island of Hokkaido, before settling in the affluent parish in Sakuragi area of Yokohama in 1977. Although she was expected to assist and manage the church business, she was not satisfied with playing the role of “the pastor’s

wife.” After Kotobuki District Center was established in the 1980s, Ms. Matsumoto found her place in Kotobuki. “Kotobuki District Center saved me in that sense,” she once told me, further explaining that her involvement in the Center’s activities allowed her space, where she can be herself while also fulfilling her duty as a Christian and a pastor’s wife. After her husband passed away in 1991, she worked as a staff member at Roba’s House to support herself for seven years until she retired. At the time I met her, Ms. Matsumoto was in her late seventies, living alone in a municipal housing a few stations away with a monthly pension, while commuting to Kotobuki as a reserved volunteer for Ms. Mimori, who she calls half-jokingly her *tehaishi*, a recruiter of day laborers. Although she had suffered from coxitis for a long time, she did not care to get a surgery. One day on her way to Kotobuki District Center, a man, whose face she recognized from the bazaar, seeing her from behind quietly asked, “does your leg hurt?” It was the first conversation they had, although they knew each other’s face all those years. I have seen Ms. Matsumoto recounting this story many times, and every time, she would exclaim, “I thought it was an angel’s voice from the heaven!” After that encounter, she had hip joint surgery in 2010, and now in her freer body, she continues to volunteer at the soup kitchen, the monthly bazaar, and end-of-the-month lunches at Kiraku’s House, Kotobuki Welfare Workshop, and Roba’s House.

Although Kotobuki had been a segregated underclass lacking basic infrastructure, social institutions, and resources, it was under such conditions of deprivation and social exclusion that Kotobuki’s activists and residents developed a locus of care in the district (*chiiki*), contrapuntal to the institutions of family or community (*kyōdōtai*, communal corps), or confining institutions (*shisetsu*). Kotobuki as a homeless enclave became a

time-space where loose connections (*en*) could be built on the promise of care that spiraled out of oneself to the district in the circulatory rhythm of survival, not in the ideal past or utopian future.

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