

modernisation. *Nihon no higeki* (The Japanese Tragedy) is a more cynical rendering of the same subject.

Towards the end of the 1950s, the representation of women underwent an important shift: the female body grew visible as both the object and the subject of desire. The rise of youth films enhanced public attention to the body and sexuality; the abolishing of legal prostitution in 1956 helped to undermine the wife (or mother)/whore dichotomy in cultural representations. **Imamura Shōhei's** heroines, and the women embodied by **Wakao Ayako** in **Masumura Yasuzō's** films actively seek to fulfil their sexual desires. In the 1960s, female sexuality provided politically and/or aesthetically militant male directors, such as **Ōshima Nagisa**, Yoshida Yoshishige and Wakamatsu Koji, with a fertile subject of inquiry. They attempted to break through to the depth of humanity (or inhumanity) via an encounter with the woman as the unknowable, opaque Other, vacillating between misogyny and fascination.

Commodification of the female body, accelerated by the decline of the studio system in Japan, culminated in Nikkatsu becoming a **pornography** studio in 1971. Soft porn made in Nikkatsu, though often staging sexual violence against women, sometimes ironically centred on female subjectivity and pleasure. The 1980s can be described as the decade of *shōjo*, or teenage girls. The destabilised sense of identity in late capitalist society found its manifestation in *shōjo* caught between adults and children, which appeared on the screen embodied by idol singers and young actresses, as in *Taifu kurabū* (The Typhoon Club). Unfortunately, many of the most innovative Japanese directors of the 1990s seem relatively uninterested in the representation of women, so the topic remains rather incompletely explored in more recent film.

**See also:** censorship and film; women in the film industry

#### Further reading

- Hirano Kyoko (1991) *Mr Smith Goes to Tokyo*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.  
Turim, Maureen (1998) *The Films of Oshima Nagisa*,

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Ueno Koshi (1989) *Nikutai no jidai*. Tokyo: Tokyo Shokan.

KINOSHITA CHIKA

## women in the film industry

Outside of acting, the Japanese film world is notoriously closed to women. The few women who establish professional careers in film usually have complicated – even antagonistic – relationships to feminism, even while embodying its ideals of independence and self-expression. Nowhere are the problems of breaking into the industry more clear than in directing. The standard reference book for directors lists only twenty-three women among its 1,000 entries. The female feature film directors generally established themselves as stars, most notably Tanaka Kinuyo, Kurisaki Midori and Hidari Sachiko. However, most women direct within the documentary and avant-garde, where independence allows a measure of freedom. Two pioneers whose careers straddle 1945 were Sakane Tazuko (Japan's first female director) and Atsugi Taka (one of the most important screenwriters and theorists of documentary, and a key leader in the women's movement). Other important directors include documentarists Haneda Sumiko and Tokieda Toshie, and video artist Idemitsu Mako.

Other fields of film-making where women have made their presence felt include screenwriting (Sakane, Wada Nattō) and foreign-film subtitling (Kamishima Kimi, Toda Natsuko), professions that carry considerable prestige in Japanese cinema.

In the 1980s and 1990s, women have made decisive contributions to the national cinema through programming and distribution, where they play a critical role in opening exhibition routes to women artists struggling outside of the mainstream industry. It was through these channels that Japan's youngest woman director, Sentō (Kawase) Naomi, rose from Super-8 experimental films to completion of a prize-winning feature film at Cannes in 1997.

ABÉ MARK NORNES

## Women's Union

The Japan Women's Union (WCTU) (Ni Kyōfūkai), established as a women's organization for temperance and moral behaviour. It was founded in response to prostitution syndicates to leave this industry. The WCTU seeks to help women and victims.

#### Further reading

Ōshima, S. and  
*Eyes of Women*  
Asian Women's

## women's

Many of the perspectives in the early twentieth century were from a women's perspective. After women's organizations were treated to her on a lifelong women in Japan. women's history has always been subject to the possible to imagine. be based on post-war work history was re-tion movement linked to image. The recent revision with movement from below'. S with specific have also entered revisionists who