

Characteristics of Yokohama  
as the Prostitution Area in the 1950s  
Viewed from the Relocation History, Residence and  
Relationship with Urban Residents of Sex Workers.

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## **Abstract**

This study clarified the characteristics of Yokohama as a prostitution area in the 1950s by analyzing the actual relocation and residence of sex workers and the relationship between them and urban residents.

By quantitatively analyzing attributes of sex workers, it was evident that in Yokohama the attributes of sex workers were diverse. In addition, by quantitatively analyzing relocation history of sex workers, it was seen that the place of birth and relocation distance were different for each woman. At the same time, it was evident that many women relocated. By qualitatively analyzing the characteristics of relocation based on some examples, many of them chose prostitution to become independent and support their families at a time when women had difficulty in living without relying on their fathers and husbands. Some women also lived in other prostitution areas before moving here. Some women relocated at their own discretion.

After relocation to Yokohama, they lived on rent across the city, especially in the city center. The location of sex workers residence was not limited to the inside of the prostitution districts, and some of them lived in residential areas. After 1951, when prostitution regulations were tightened by the Yokohama city administration to cope with the increased inflow of sex workers, prostitution on the streets decreased and prostitution in unobtrusive places that were different from existing prostitution districts increased. As a result, the prostitution districts often overlapped with the living space of urban residents who were not involved in prostitution. Upon examining the relationship of sex workers and urban residents, it was clear that urban residents had varied opinions about prostitution and sex workers. Many urban residents had benefited economically from the existence of street sex workers and scattered sex workers. At the same time, many urban residents suffered losses

because of them yet, their positions and criticisms were varied too. In addition, urban residents in Yokohama were not in complete conflict with or without being involved in prostitution and were often interrelated.

The characteristics of Yokohama as a prostitution area in the 1950s were follow. The first is that prostitution districts with multiple Akasens, Aosens, and other areas where street sex workers prostituted, had different customer groups. These prostitution districts were located in the city center and residential areas, and were mixed with the living space of urban residents who were not involved in prostitution. This meant that sex workers could choose various types of prostitution customers and prostitution styles. The second point is that many sex workers lived in ordinary houses in a wide area of the city including the city center. Having the option to reside in residential areas within walking distance of the city center was a major advantage in prostitution as this ensured that the workers were close to the solicitation area and it was easy to avoid crackdowns. The third point is that the customers were from Yokohama as well as other areas outside of the city and the structure of prostitution was not limited within the city. The fact that there were a large number of customers was an important factor for sex workers who wanted to earn enough to be independent and to support their families.

Due to the above characteristic, sex workers and prostitution related workers who included prostitution suppliers and even prostitution customers flowed into Yokohama in the 1950s in large numbers. For sex workers, Yokohama offered favorable conditions by creating a relationship with urban residents, and enabling the workers to earn well.