

# THE SLUM DWELLINGS AND THE URBAN RENEWAL SCHEME IN TOKYO, 1868–1923

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THIS essay is concerned with the social history of Tokyo during the period that begins with the Meiji Restoration (1868) and ends with the Kantō Earthquake of 1923. I have focused here on the structure of urban slum dwellings during the period under study and have included within this purview the theory of poor people's housing. I have structured my analysis around this framework for the following reasons:

(1) The urban slums of this period and the tenements that housed the poor were not only widely dispersed throughout Tokyo's urban space but formed the basic structural core around which the city grew up.

(2) City slums were often a source of major fires and a ready breeding ground for epidemics, afflictions to which in any event they were always vulnerable. As such, slums may be seen as central to the study of urban problems in general.

(3) The strongholds of lower-class agitation which converged with popular social movements during the period of urban revolt following the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) and culminating in the rice riots of 1918 were centered in the housing districts of the poor. This fact affords an important insight into the harsh living conditions of the urban masses.

Although it shares many of the concerns common to sociology (slum life), architecture (urban planning), and history (popular social movements), the housing problem has either been neglected as an area of scholarly inquiry or ignored altogether. The following essay is an attempt to rescue this important problem from obscurity.

## I. THE MODERNIZATION OF TOKYO

### A. *From Semi-Colonial City to Imperial Capital*

The most pressing problem facing Japan's first modern state, created soon after the Meiji Restoration, was the revision of the unequal treaties forced upon the country by the Western powers. At the same time, Japan struggled to avert

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the danger of semi-colonization by adopting policies designed to create national prosperity, build a strong army, and promote the rapid growth of industry and commerce. The following account describes the efforts made by the new government in the area of urban renewal to cope with this critical situation.

In 1868, Tokyo was on the verge of becoming a semi-colonial city, having been forced to build a foreign quarter, the Tsukiji Settlement. The Tsukiji Settlement was completed and ready to let by 1870 and was soon linked with Yokohama, then Japan's largest free port, via a railway built by the government between this city and Shimbashi in Tokyo. In 1872, just one month before negotiations to revise the unequal treaties got under way, the government decided to build a Western-style city center, Brick Street (*renga-gai*), in Ginza near Tsukiji. The Ginza Brick Street was apparently intended to enhance the prestige of a newly emerged nation confronted with the difficult task of dealing effectively with the advanced nations. Brick Street was completed around 1877 and, like Tsukiji, was directly linked to Yokohama by railway. The Tsukiji and Ginza districts became Japan's principal points of contact with the West.

The existence of these privileged quarters are an indication that Tokyo's emerging urban structure was then essentially "semi-colonial" in form. Tokyo retained this character until 1899 when the unequal treaties were at last abolished and the foreign quarters dissolved. However, in line with the nation-building policies of the new regime, Tokyo, following the example of Western cities, implemented a series of urban reconstruction projects. Its development was thereafter characterized by rapid modernization and its transformation into a city befitting the capital of Imperial Japan.<sup>1</sup>

The Tsukiji Settlement was one of several residential quarters reserved for foreigners during their stay in Japan. Its construction began in 1868 with the opening of Tokyo to foreigners and proceeded in accordance with special settlement regulations put into effect in 1867. The project was designed to complete the construction of the Tsukiji Hotel and fill fifty-three subdivisions (one subdivision covered, on average, 1,650 square meters) in the Teppōzu area of Tsukiji, on the right bank of the Sumida River, with Western buildings [29, pp. 90 ff.] [27, pp. 50-52]. Because the architectural traditions existing in Japan were utterly different in origin, modern building styles and techniques had to be imported directly from the West and transplanted here. Foreign technicians directed the work, but those who actually carried out this novel experiment were the urban craft guilds. The guilds were organized around master craftsmen, journeymen, and apprentices, the workers who had been largely responsible for the construction of private residences during the Tokugawa, or Edo, period. After 1868, these artisans were subcontracted and put in charge of both government and private projects. The experience acquired in building the foreign settlement enabled Japanese master workers and carpenters to assimilate the styles and techniques of Western architecture.

<sup>1</sup> Concerning Tokyo and its main features during this period, the reader is referred to the author's earlier research report [11].

Settlement houses for foreigners were modelled after the wood-framed, colonial-style structures then popular in the West. These had a simple, symmetrical floor plan. Roofs and part of the wall structures were furnished with traditional Japanese tile. The spaces between the rows of tile which decorated walls were filled with extraordinarily thick mortar (the *namako-kabe* technique usually employed for the fireproof *kura* buildings of traditional Japan), and the remaining wall surface was then plastered over. A verandah was attached to the southern face of each residence. Thus, while the façade was Western in appearance, the technical features of the houses incorporated the traditional, endogenous technology of the Japanese craftsmen who built them. The final result was a wood-framed, "pseudo-Western" composite structure.

In February 1872, a large fire swept through the town districts of Ginza, Kyōbashi, and Tsukiji. The Ministry of Finance and the Tokyo government seized upon the disaster as an opportunity to enhance the dignity of the "imperial capital" and actively promoted the construction of Brick Street in Ginza, which became the city's first urban renewal project (see [3]). By 1877, approximately 1,400 brick houses, built in the neo-classical style, had been completed on both sides of a street twenty-seven meters wide running north from Shimbashi station. These houses were intended for Japanese inhabitants. Each house had two stories (the plan originally called for three) and was surrounded by a balcony supported by a colonnade. The construction was carried out under the supervision of English engineers, and large numbers of Japanese craftsmen were mobilized for the task. The problem of producing the great quantities of red brick required as building materials was resolved by constructing a new brick factory at Kosuge and retraining traditional tile makers. Brick Street drew its inspiration from London's Regent Street and was originally conceived as a pilot project to test the feasibility of rebuilding metropolitan Tokyo as a Western-style, fireproof city. However, a lack of financial resources, inexperience with the new technology, frequent policy changes, and the popular resistance aroused by the prospect of eviction necessitated revision of the original plan. As a result, part of the second phase of the project was scaled down and eventually abandoned.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Shinjirō Kirishiki [14, p. 70]. Here, Kirishiki indicates that the English engineer responsible for the construction of Brick Street, T. Waters, modelled his plans after London's Regent Street designed by the architect J. Nash. The original plan of Regent Street included a long balcony arcade supported by colonnades set in front of buildings lining both sides of the street. This feature was later removed as it prevented light from reaching the interior of the buildings, and the street was renovated, assuming its present appearance.

The prototype for Ginza's Brick Street, then, was prerenovation Regent Street. Buildings similar to those of this district had by this time already appeared in the city centers of Hong Kong, Singapore, and Calcutta. Moreover, cities such as Shanghai, Macao, and Bombay had, in addition, special residential quarters for Westerners. As most of these cities were former British colonies, the above observations offer compelling evidence that early Meiji Tokyo, with its foreign settlement and red brick district, was in fact a "semi-colonial type" of city closely resembling in its broad outlines the English colonial cities of India and Southeast Asia.

The foreign quarter and Ginza's Brick Street looked to the inhabitants of Tokyo like a foreign country which had suddenly sprung up in Japan some twenty years after the opening of its ports to the outside world; they stood as a symbol of the new cultural enlightenment preached by the Meiji reformers. While they may have left the people with a sense of cultural shock, the foreign buildings in the settlements greatly enhanced the authority of the Meiji state which was actively consolidating the hold of the new culture in Japan. However, where state-initiated urban renovation projects were designed to rebuild Japanese cities "from above," they were implemented by force, without regard for the inhabitants who, indeed, were treated as if they did not exist. The construction of both Tsukiji and Brick Street was no exception.

Part of the Tsukiji Settlement site had formerly been occupied by villages of poor fisher folk, most of whom engaged in small-scale fishing for a living. The Akashi-chō area of Tsukiji, however, contained the tightly clustered Edo residences of feudal clans. When the foreign settlement was built here, the government contracted to buy up land belonging to warrior households and former fiefs and compensated the owners. No record remains of any provision for reimbursing lower-class families for the loss of their properties.

The Brick Street area had formerly been an urban slum inhabited by impoverished small merchants, artisans, day laborers, street peddlers, and those working at odd jobs. The construction of Brick Street entailed the forcible eviction of these residents. The petition of rickshaw operators, employers of prostitutes, and other inhabitants to extend the eviction deadline to gain more time to find alternate housing was flatly rejected by the authorities; their request for indemnification to offset loss of employment was similarly ignored. The finished brick buildings were put up for sale on an installment basis, but the prices were so high that slum inhabitants were excluded from buying them and were, in effect, forced out of the district.

The growing number of public projects led to a proliferation of new Western-style government offices, military installations, company headquarters, banks, schools, and other structures, altering the face of metropolitan Tokyo. However, urban development only affected the heart of Tokyo, an area about 1,600 hectares (six square miles) centered around Nihombashi. Except for this area streets and quarters of old Edo had been preserved even after the Restoration. Consequently, although part of the city had been refurnished with Western-style buildings, the habitations of the urban masses stood alongside these, in fact surrounding them. This was particularly true of the cramped, crude dwellings of the lower class, best exemplified by the numerous barracks-like back-alley tenements called *ura-nagaya*, or simply *nagaya*, which dated from the Edo period.

Table I summarizes housing conditions in Tokyo around 1879. Of the Western or stone structures included for comparison, 922 were brick buildings constructed in Kyōbashi Ward, most of which were located on Brick Street in Ginza. Many of the 95 non-brick dwellings in the same district belonged to foreigners in the Tsukiji Settlement. Table I also indicates that most of the Western buildings were found in the central area of Tokyo.

TABLE I  
THE NUMBER OF HOUSES IN TOKYO BY TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION (1879)

Ward	Western or Stone Houses			Upper- and Middle-Class Houses						Lower-Class Houses						Total (B)
	Brick	Western	Stone	Metal Roof	Glass Roof	Tile Roof	Plaster	<i>Kura</i>	Wood-Shingled Roof	Thatched Roof	Cedar-Bark Roof	Paper-Tile Roof	Subtotal (A)	(A)/(B) (%)		
Kōjimachi	16			3	2	2,687	6	23	2,602	4	11		2,617	49	5,354	
Nihombashi	7	11	9	42	2	6,302	206	566	10,147	1	21	4	10,173	59	17,318	
Kanda		26	2	20	3	4,650	83	63	9,302		33	2	9,337	66	14,184	
Kyōbashi	922	22	73	61		3,313	1,419	517	8,083		129	4	8,216	56	14,543	
Shiba	2	8	5	7		5,154	21	20	6,338	158	56		6,552	56	11,769	
Azabu		2		1		1,364	3	16	1,979	515	46		2,540	65	3,926	
Akasaka				1		648	5		1,619	272	24		1,915	75	2,569	
Yotsuya				1		602	2	7	2,598	112	21		2,731	82	3,343	
Ushigome				1		1,764	4	19	3,088	677			3,765	68	5,553	
Koishikawa		2		4		1,720	2	1	2,062	895	33		2,990	63	4,719	
Hongō		1				2,625	9	6	4,250	255	12		4,517	63	7,158	
Shitaya			2	1		2,682	5	1	3,922	342	50	1	4,315	62	7,008	
Asakusa		5		9	5	6,890	113	15	6,717	151	51		6,919	50	13,956	
Honjo				10		5,753	4	13	3,489	199	103		3,791	40	9,574	
Fukagawa		1				4,290	24	4	3,269	76			3,345	44	7,664	
Total	941	89	91	161	12	50,444	1,906	1,271	69,465	3,657	590	11	73,723	57	128,638	

Source: Shinzō Ogi, *Tōkei shomin seikatsushi kenkyū* [A study of the life of the common people in Tokyo] (Tokyo: Nihon-hōshō-shuppan-kyōkai, 1979), p. 59, Table 2-1. For original source, see Kasai hoken torishirabe gakari monjo [Documents on fire insurance investigation], Tokyo Metropolitan Archives.

Fig. 1. Distribution of Slum Areas in Tokyo (ca. 1891)



Sources: Places shown by black points are derived from Bunsō Kure, "Tokyo fuka himmin no jōkyō" [Condition of poor people in Tokyo], *Sutachisuchikku zasshi*, No. 57 (January 20, 1891); those shown by white points are given in "Kyūmin ibun" [Information about pauperized people], *Kokumin shimbun*, June 15-20, 1890. Slums listed in the above two documents overlap.

The location of lower-class housing may be inferred from the number of dwellings roofed with wood shingles (*kokera*) or thatched with cedar bark. About 10,000 of these buildings were concentrated in Nihombashi where paupers' shacks and tenements accounted for between 50 and 60 per cent of all housing units. This proportion did not vary significantly in any of the city's fifteen wards.

Table I further shows that in the wards of Kyōbashi, Nihombashi, and Kanda, many lower-class lodgings coexisted with Western-style houses and the homes of middle- and upper-class families. Here, houses of Western design and those with tiled roofs lined the main streets of the city, while the dwellings of the destitute stood clustered together out of view along side streets where they constituted urban slums.

Although its data derive from a slightly later period, Figure 1 shows the

approximate distribution of the major slum areas.<sup>3</sup> Even taking only well-known slums of the early Meiji period, the urban poor were found crowded together in at least 110 towns scattered throughout the city. When one considers the high proportion of lower-class lodgings in the entire city area (just under 60 per cent), one gets a clearer idea of the extent of Tokyo's urban slums. The Tsukiji Settlement, Ginza's Brick Street, and the small clusters of Western-style government offices stood in stark contrast to the sprawling slum districts in every part of the city which surrounded this privileged quarter.

### B. *The Theory of Urban Renewal*

In 1871, the Meiji government abolished feudal domains and established the prefectural system. An 1869 land-use survey thus shows us the pre-reform situation of Tokyo. According to the survey, a little less than 70 per cent of the city's land area (more than 3,900 hectares) was occupied by the official buildings of feudal clans and the residences of warrior households; slightly more than 20 per cent was taken up respectively by shrines and temples (877 hectares) and merchant or artisan households (891 hectares). The outstanding feature of Edo's urban composition, then, was the mix of more than 500,000 warrior-class families living mainly in the "uptown" (*yamanote*) area and 500,000 merchant and artisan families residing in the "downtown" (*shitamachi*) area.

The growing numbers of failed smallholders and landless peasants who poured into Edo during the Tokugawa period as farming villages were transformed internally or destroyed outright gave rise to a variegated poor urban working class composed of petty merchants, tradesmen, day laborers, street hawkers, and peddlers. Many of these rented small back-street tenements around which inner-city ghettos later grew up. From the end of the Tokugawa period, as the influx of immigrants grew, slums expanded to encircle the Nihombashi and Kyōbashi areas, extending outward in all directions from the center of the city. These districts became important strongholds of the urban paupers who participated in the popular uprisings (*uchikowashi*, or "house-destroying") that shook Edo in the late Tokugawa period [17, pp. 6 ff.].

Estimations of this lower-class population recorded in the early Meiji period vary from 70,000 to 100,000 and range as high as 300,000; in some specific areas, the lower class comprised the vast majority of residents. In general, it may be assumed that the poor accounted for a large percentage of all urban inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> The existence of the lower-class dwellings shown in Table I and the distribution of slum areas seen in Figure 1 bear this out.

Where the poor were crowded into wooden barracks or into the equally ramshackle and insalubrious "poor people's" tenements, the most immediate

<sup>3</sup> The slum areas shown in Figure 1 are representative ones. It is thought that there were many other slums distributed throughout the city.

<sup>4</sup> Kiyoshi Nakagawa puts the number of urban paupers at 10 per cent of the city's population [20, p. 67], but this figure is most likely meant to include only the very poor. If one defines the poverty level using somewhat different criteria, the entire urban society of Tokyo may be thought of as lower-class in character.

problems they faced were those of fire and epidemics. Here fires occurred frequently and infectious diseases were rampant. Repeated outbreaks of cholera, a much-dreaded epidemic sufferers from which were said to die within three days, were particularly feared.

The great fire of February 1872 prompted the idea of fireproofing the city. The first to propose this measure was the governor of Tokyo, Kimimasa Yuri, who devised a plan to construct brick streets and build new city roads [30, pp. 399-401]. The construction of Brick Street in Ginza was one outcome of this thinking. Although the Ginza project later ran into difficulties and had to be scaled down, the plan's original intent was to protect all of metropolitan Tokyo from the ravages of recurring fires. This concept, later modified as we shall see below, left a distinctive imprint on the urban renewal theories of the day.

Michiyuki Matsuda, the seventh governor of Tokyo, was the first to translate the idea of urban renewal into action. The immediate catalyst was the series of fires that swept through Tokyo every year after 1879. The conflagrations of 1879 and 1881, in particular, known as the two great Meiji fires, caused extensive damage to the city, each reducing to ashes more than 10,000 dwellings in Nihombashi and Kanda. Among the buildings destroyed in these disasters were most certainly large numbers of the highly flammable wood- and bark-shingled tenements of the poor. The Tokyo prefectural government then initiated an urban reconstruction project, purchasing 2.2 hectares of densely inhabited residential land in the center of the city which included Kanda's Hashimoto-chō, a burned-out area. But the project was carried out on a piecemeal basis and never fully completed.

The urban renewal program really began in earnest in 1880 with the establishment inside the prefectural government of the Urban Renewal Bureau. The main features of Matsuda's urban renewal scheme were the segregation of rich and poor and the creation through slum clearance projects of a new business center in the heart of Tokyo for the use of the upper classes. However, because of financial restrictions, Matsuda's plan was limited in scope to the central area containing the largest number of lower-class inhabitants which included the three wards of Nihombashi, Kyōbashi, and the eastern half of Kanda. Here new roads were to be put through, riparian works undertaken, coastal installations improved, and fire prevention and urban reconstruction projects implemented.

This notion was retained by Matsuda's successor, Akimasa Yoshikawa, who became the eighth governor of Tokyo in 1882, but by this time, the idea of urban renovation had already generated considerable interest outside of prefectural government. The economic critic Ukichi Taguchi had stressed the importance of improving Tokyo and its urban environment, and Yūkichi Fukuzawa was advocating the construction of brick buildings. Still others, such as Navy Surgeon-General Kanehiro Takagi and the physician Tōan Matsuyama, advanced the concept of improving poor people's housing as a means of preventing the spread of contagious diseases. These arguments were buttressed by frequent press comments to the same effect.



Although Taguchi's thinking, to take one example, had much in common with the anti-government liberal faction, through individuals such as Eiichi Shibusawa, a modern entrepreneur who was nominated to the Urban Renewal Council, his ideas came to influence perceptibly the approach to urban renewal taken by the Tokyo authorities. His arguments on poor people's housing are laid out in his articles, "How to Prevent Fires" (1881) and "It Is Not Difficult to Improve the State of Housing in Tokyo" (1885) [26, pp. 102, 183 ff.]. The basic thrust of his proposals was to reduce the size of metropolitan Tokyo, widen its streets and thoroughfares, and rebuild the city in brick and high-rise housing units. Taguchi's theory of high-rise construction envisaged five-story buildings. The first floor would be reserved for shops, the second for family residences, the third for students and low-ranking functionaries, and the fourth and fifth for the poor. This conception, then, added to the proposed spatial reorganization of city slums a new cubic dimension based on systematic occupational discrimination.

The idea of scaling down Tokyo's urban dimensions and segregating rich and poor consistently dominated the conceptions of government urban renewal specialists. The ruling groups clearly intended to evict the indigent from the city center which they themselves then proposed to occupy. This idea simply advocated the "modernization" or "Westernization" of Tokyo and left the urban problem unresolved; it was the conception of urban renovation most compatible with the national government's "rich country, strong army" policy. Urban development tailored to the needs of lower-class people, then, was completely neglected. Urban renewal policy consequently took the form of fire prevention, road construction, and the regulation of housing. Since then, none of these measures has ever been completely implemented. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the improvement of poor people's housing, the lowest level of priority, has never been seriously considered.

## II. URBAN SLUMS DURING THE PERIOD OF INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

A rapid shift of population from the countryside to the cities is, historically speaking, one of the characteristic features of urban society during the period of industrial revolution. (It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the forces that induced landless peasants to flock to the cities.) Japan's industrial revolution is said to have occurred from about the 1880s and continued through the early part of the twentieth century. During this period, the vigorous development of industrial capital took place, particularly during the 1890s. This process was also accompanied by the over-concentration of people in Tokyo whose population amounted to nearly 1.4 million in 1889 (the national population at this time being around 40 million). This change brought with it severe social and economic dislocations which adversely affected the lives and livelihoods of the urban masses. To be sure, the ensuing difficulties experienced by the average city dweller, collectively referred to as "the urban problem," were also present

to some extent in premodern society. However, the anarchic concentration of industrial capital in the city coupled with the disorderly accumulation of labor power combined in this early stage of development to plunge the urban population ever deeper into poverty.

The urban problem, then, emerged out of the social contradictions specific to the urbanization process in capitalist society. These problems were both social (slum formation) and environmental (fires, epidemics, and pollution); they converged in the densely settled, constricted space that constituted urban ghettos. The urban problem included other difficulties stemming from over-crowding and which involved housing, land, water, sewage disposal, delinquency, and crime (see [10, pp. 127 ff.]). In this respect, the evils of over-population to which slums gave rise offset substantially the advantages accruing to industrial capital from the concentration of productive forces, financial capital, and large numbers of workers in the city. The urban problems accompanying the early stage of industrial development were mild, however, compared to the more devastating problems caused by industrial pollution which appeared with the establishment of heavy industry following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5.

What exactly, then, is an urban slum? Earlier research has put forward a variety of interpretations, but as yet no broad consensus on the precise meaning of this term has been reached. However, concentrating on its most visible characteristics, a slum may be tentatively described as a densely populated area inhabited by low-income people, particularly the unemployed. Here, single tenants and nuclear families were packed into rows of narrow, decrepit, one-story wooden tenements (back-street *nagaya*) where poor housing conditions facilitated the spread of epidemics and where the danger of fires becoming general conflagrations was particularly great. Slum inhabitants used a special argot among themselves and in some instances regarded non-slum dwellers with suspicion and dislike. However, even where all of these conditions were not met, one could still speak of any over-populated area characterized by poorly constructed wood dwellings as a slum.

It was during the period of industrialization that the urban slum in Tokyo began to transform itself into the *himminkutsu*, or urban ghetto, which was being populated by emerging wage laborers. The major ghetto areas included, in addition to the center city, certain of the so-called “new towns” (*shin-machi*) or “fringe towns” (*basue-machi*) which provided points of contact between the urban core and peri-urban farm villages, a fact that can be inferred from the regional distribution of slums shown in Figure 1. In the “new towns” or “fringe towns,” lower-class dwellings tended to be clustered together some distance away from ordinary, non-slum habitations. These out-of-the-way places were generally found in areas of obscure usefulness near seashores and rivers or in close proximity to back-street military installations, in damp lowland areas, or near isolation centers for infectious diseases, graveyards, and crematoriums. Other typical slum sites were outlying areas near temple complexes and regions of ready access where transportation was good and earning a living relatively easy such as those close to the old highways (*kaidō*) of the Edo period and their way stations.

In 1881, Finance Minister Masayoshi Matsukata launched his deflationary program to restrict the currency supply which had been over inflated by the government spending on industrial development. His tight money measures made sound sense in many respects for a country which had already accumulated enough capital to fuel the first phase of industrialization. However, its effects on petty industrialists, merchants, and farmers were severe. The bankruptcies of small industrialists and merchants grew rapidly, and the number of tenant farmers and poor peasants dispossessed through this process reached truly dramatic proportions. The ruined and dispossessed spilt over into the cities, and the urban population of Tokyo swelled quickly. It was at this time that the slums dating from the Edo period were transformed from collections of back-street dwellings for the poor into full-fledged urban ghettos inhabited by unemployed laborers. An extremely poor, urban, lower-class society greatly took root there. These slums further expanded as industrial capital consolidated its hold on the economy and proceeded to the next advanced stage of industrial development.

At this point I would like to focus more closely on the living conditions of Tokyo's poor, paying particular attention to household composition, employment, family budgets, and the state of their housing during the formation of industrial capital. In the middle Meiji period, the households of the poor varied in size from two to several members, and most of these were composite households which included a man, his wife, and their adult children. Thus, a typical one-room *nagaya* tenement was not necessarily occupied by a single family; it was often shared by extended families with an occasional lodger or two. There were also incomplete households with children and single tenants.

Past research on the subject has distinguished between three types of urban poor on an occupational basis: *himmin*, or unskilled manual laborers; *saimin*, lower-class people who, by relying on family labor, managed to support themselves and their families; and *kyūmin* who survived mainly by working at odd jobs [25, pp. 108-11]. The work at which slum inhabitants were employed was extremely varied but may be divided into two broad categories: jobs requiring physical labor and depending upon the demand for manual work (e.g., rickshaw pulling, day labor, and similar work suitable for *himmin*) and miscellaneous work such as that performed by craftsmen, small merchants, and street vendors and taken mainly by *saimin* and *kyūmin*. Most married women engaged in the manufacture of small goods or handicrafts which was done at home. Even young children were forced to seek outside employment to help support their parents. In the case of single persons, outside work was necessary for their own maintenance. Often enough, included among them were beggars, ruffians, and criminals.

Rickshaw pulling was one of the typical lower-class activities in which slum dwellers engaged. Rickshaws were invented and first produced in large numbers in the early Meiji period as an inexpensive means of intra-urban transport. Operating rickshaws was a form of employment well suited to slum inhabitants who generally lacked manual skills. This work was also an important source of income for aspiring young men who came to Tokyo to study (see [23, Chap.

6]). Most operators pulled rented vehicles. By the time of the Sino-Japanese War, their numbers had grown to more than 40,000 in Tokyo alone. It should be pointed out, however, that while poor, rickshaw operators received a level of earnings somewhat higher than that of other slum workers.

Another common ghetto occupation was that of craftsman. Craftsmen fell into one of two categories: domestic producers working under contract for large wholesale dealers and shipping brokers, and those who, owning their own tools, worked away from home. In Tokyo, the first type of artisan included many who, organized on the master-apprentice principle, specialized in producing the small, handcrafted sundry goods essential to the daily life of city people. The second category consisted mainly of workers in the construction trades and included carpenters, plasterers, and stone masons, each trade being organized into masters, journeymen, and apprentices (the large number of construction workers is explained by the frequent occurrence of fires). With the development of capitalist production, however, the traditional guild organizations were slowly dissolved and their members increasingly transformed into wage laborers.

Day laborers and coolies of every description as well as peddlers and colorful "street artists," also inhabited the side-street *nagaya*. Living among them, however, were also many factory workers. Large-scale factories equipped with modern machinery such as the Tokyo Artillery Arsenal and the Shibaura Manufacturing Co., spinning mills such as the Kanegafuchi Spinning Mill and the Tokyo Spinning Mill, and printing and match factories appeared as industrial capital took hold. The new factories sought industrial sites close to these areas in order to take advantage of the lower-class labor force housed there, and slum inhabitants gradually began to find jobs as industrial workers. The average wages for male workers at the time of the Russo-Japanese War were on a level with those paid to lower-class manual laborers. Thereafter, however, the growth of heavy industry caused the living standard of industrial workers to rise, and toward 1910, many of these laborers were propelled upward and out of the urban lower class. Table II shows the wage structure by occupation for lower-class workers at this stage of industrial development.

I should next like to examine housing conditions among the poor. In the Edo period, with the exception of the Nihombashi area (the central ward in Tokyo) where wholesale merchants lived in close quarters, the proportion of rentals in each district was, on average, very high, for both rich and poor, ranging from 50 to 70 per cent of available housing units. This situation continued unchanged after the Meiji Restoration. Virtually all slum dwellings on side streets and in back alleys were, needless to say, rentals reserved for the poor.

Every year, a series of fires had swept through Tokyo since the Edo period. When combined with certain natural conditions such as high winds, these fires were capable of destroying between 500 and 1,000 habitations at a time. A particularly large conflagration could raze more than 10,000 dwellings. The fire-prevention legislation enacted to deal with these contingencies was based on the application of traditional fire countermeasures, such as the construction of thoroughfares and firebreaks, and on the fireproofing of wooden structures.

TABLE II  
AVERAGE INCOMES OF SLUM DWELLERS IN HONJO AND FUKAGAWA WARDS,  
EASTERN TOKYO (1912)

Occupation	(Yen)			
	Monthly Income		Annual Income	
	Honjo	Fukagawa	Honjo	Fukagawa
Metal factory workers: tin and galvanized iron workers, blacksmiths	14.01	15.26	168	183
Wood and bamboo craftsmen: coopers, furnishings makers, rattan and straw craftsmen	13.45	13.99	161	168
Construction workers: laborers, carpenters, plasterers	13.41	13.28	161	159
Rickshaw operators	13.16	13.05	158	157
Carters	13.50	13.95	162	167
Day laborers, errand runners	11.45	11.03	137	132
Salaried officials:				
Tokyo prefectural government			329	
Tokyo municipal government			426	

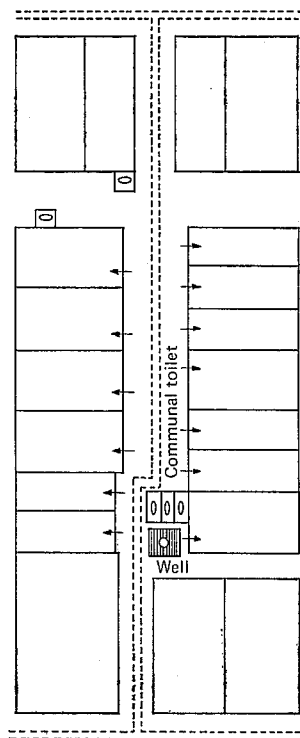
Sources: Incomes for workers are from Masumi Tsuda, *Nihon no toshi kasō shakai* [Urban lower-class society in Japan] (Kyoto: Mineruba-shobō, 1972); original source is *Saimin chōsa tōkeihyō tekiyō* [Extracts from the poor people's survey statistics] (Tokyo: Ministry of Interior, 1912) (the investigation was carried out in 1912). Incomes for officials are given in *Tokyo-fu tōkeisho* [Statistics of Tokyo Prefecture] (1909).

However, the failure to complete Brick Street in Ginza as originally planned meant that this latter measure was never extended to other parts of the city, and ordinary inhabitants were left without adequate protection from fire.

Given these circumstances, landlords building new houses or tenements to let could count on losing their entire property to fire every three to five years. In order to recover and fructify their investment within this short period, they resorted to building low-cost wooden structures for which they charged exorbitant rents (in the case of *nagaya*, however, there was a limit beyond which rents could not rise). In other words, included as part of the rent paid by the poor for lodgings no better than wooden barracks was a charge corresponding to "fire insurance."<sup>5</sup> However, the crudely constructed wood- and bark-roofed buildings put up by landlords were extremely vulnerable to fire, thus assuring that the vicious cycle would repeat itself.

The *nagaya* were inexpensive wooden row houses built on narrow plots of land; they constituted the basic type of urban rented structure in Tokyo. Figure 2 shows the layout of a typical *nagaya*. Built around a well and communal toilet (the proximity of water supply and sewage system was a major factor in the

<sup>5</sup> Yokokawa-chō in Honjo Ward was a typical Tokyo slum. In 1913, a dwelling of 3.3 square meters built at a cost of 5 yen (i.e., 12.5 yen for a 4.5 mat room) rented for 0.6 yen per day. A year's rent came to 21.6 yen. However, according to Ikue, nearly half of all tenants either failed to make rent payments or were late in doing so (see Ikue [7]).

Fig. 2. Layout of a Back-Street Tenement (Ordinary *Nagaya*)

Source: Nihon-fūzoku-gakkai, ed., *Kindai Nihon fūzokushi* [History of modern Japanese folklore], Vol. 4.

Notes: 1. Example taken from Kobiki-chō in Kyōbashi Ward, Edo period.

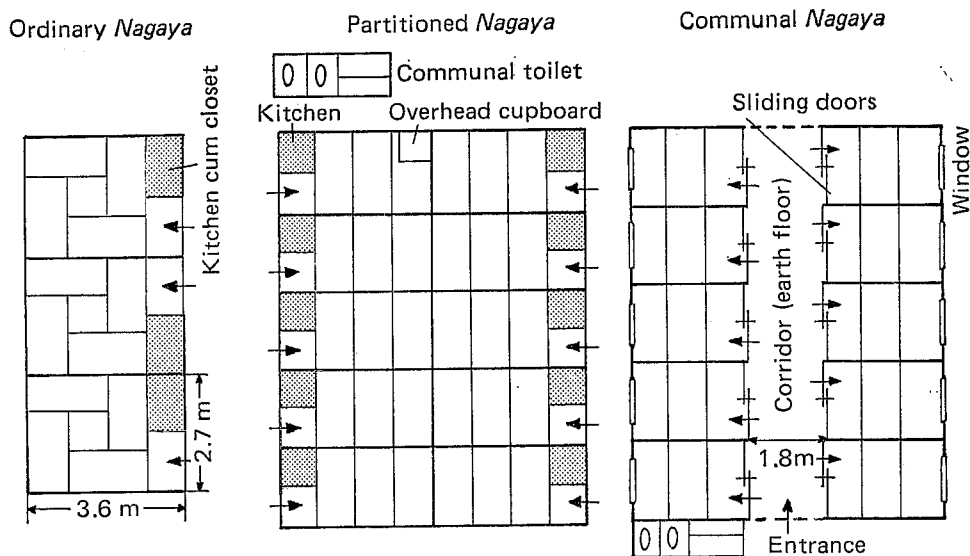
2. Arrows show entrances. Dotted lines show sewage ditch.

spread of cholera and other contagious diseases), *nagaya* were normally composed of two or more buildings with separate roofs set on either side of a sewage ditch, each of which was subdivided into several rooms.

The "ordinary *nagaya*" depicted in Figure 3 shows the standard interior arrangement of the rooms.<sup>6</sup> The most common layout was a room which measured about 10 square meters and included a 4.5-*tatami* mat living room with a kitchen space and entrance. The room constituted one housing unit, or "dwelling," and often housed family as well as non-family members. Room sizes varied, however, ranging from the smallest, a single 3.3 square meter, 2-mat room, to large double rooms of more than 10 mats. Some families are known to have rented as many as three rooms at one time. (Later, the 1911 statistics on the structure of slum housing indicate that people renting average-size rooms [4-4.5 *tatami* mats] grew to include 80 per cent of all tenants in

<sup>6</sup> As of 1912, ordinary *nagaya* accounted for just under 90 per cent of all such tenements; "partitioned" and "communal" *nagaya* represented a little over 10 per cent.

Fig. 3. Floor Plan of a Slum Tenement



Source: Tokyo-shi, Shakai-kyoku, *Tokyo shinai no saimin ni kansuru chōsa* [Research on poor people living in Tokyo] (Tokyo, 1921).

Note: Arrows show entrances.

Kanasugi-Shitamachi and to more than 40 per cent in Mannen-chō. These were typical slums. In the latter area, tenants renting fairly larger one- or two-room dwellings occupied the majority of the remaining 60 per cent. The above statistics infer that, by the time the industrial revolution was over, the housing conditions of the poor, had generally been improved to some extent, probably due to rising wages.) Another type of *nagaya* was the “communal *nagaya*” shown in Figure 3, a new type of tenement that appeared as a result of the Inn-Business Control Regulation of 1887.

Normally, the rent relation involved three different social groups: landlords (houseowners), caretakers or managers, and tenants. *Nagaya* managers, known as *ōya* (the name was changed to *jisho-sahainin*, or “house agent,” in the early Meiji period), were responsible for managing a building and renting it out to tenants. Since the Edo period, the *ōya* exercised a broad range of powers, receiving in exchange for his duties a rent-free room (one “dwelling”) which was usually located at the front entrance of the building. By virtue of his authority, the *ōya* played a leading role in organizing the *nagaya* “community” and, in effect, ruled over it, going so far as to intervene in the private affairs of individual tenants when he thought it necessary.

Rents were normally settled on a day-to-day basis in the middle Meiji period, but by the end of this period (around 1910), the number of tenants paying daily rents had dropped to 20 per cent while those paying by the month had risen to 60 per cent. Thus, the proportion of permanent lower-class *nagaya* residents increased, displacing a transient population which often defaulted on or deferred

rent payments. Inside the tenements, daily life revolved around the well where wives gathered to cook, tend after their children, and do their washing while exchanging news. A *nagaya* community could be regarded as a basic social unit of lower-class society. When combined with other *nagaya* groups in the neighborhood, it formed the basis of a wider community which centered around the bathhouse and barbershop where people gathered and interacted with each other.

### III. THE TRANSFORMATION OF LOWER-CLASS SOCIETY

#### A. *Changes in the Structure of Urban Slums*

The growth of modern industry in the Tokyo region after the early Meiji period was mainly due to the state's national development policies. These policies fostered government-managed industries and military production with heavy infusions of state capital. As a result, the state-run industries in the major branches of production came to play a leading role in the early stage of industrialization. Thereafter, the government advocated the development of private industrial capital by transferring many of the factories it managed to the private sector. Private capital took full advantage of this shift and subsequently grew very rapidly, transforming itself into monopoly capital as exemplified by the formation of the *zaibatsu*, or financial groups. This is the advanced stage of industrialization reached in the early twentieth century during and after two big wars, the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) and World War I (1914–18). The enormous capital holdings of the newly established companies and banks were concentrated in Tokyo and indicate the dominant position this city had come to occupy in the national economy by this date.

Tokyo collected not only highly concentrated industrial and financial capital but also large numbers of ruined smallholders and tenants who had been forced out of farm villages in the process of nation-wide urbanization and funneled into city slums. Now a portion of these were turned into industrial workers. The political, economic, and cultural functions of the nation became concentrated in Tokyo to an even greater extent. Indeed, Tokyo was fast becoming a big city in which the social contradictions produced by bigness had begun to intensify and manifest themselves as urban problems. The urban problem in this period was certainly felt much more keenly than during the previous period. How, then, does one define a "big city"? Past research has pointed to the general characteristics of bigness, such as high population density, political and cultural supremacy over the countryside, and economic hegemony [22] [18, pp. 65–67]. However, there are two basic features, I feel, that best account for the social specificity of large urban centers: the concentration there of capital and of labor power. The progress of large-scale urbanization also brought about an extension of the city limits, resulting in the transfer or dispersal of urban slums to other areas.

The Russo-Japanese War marked the first important changes in urban lower-



class society. "Poor people's districts" were affected by steep rises in land prices and rents, and those who could not afford the rent increases were expelled from the district; a growth in the number of miscellaneous workers living in slums located at the urban periphery was observed; there was a boom in the construction of new "communal *nagaya*"; and industrial zones were formed in the wards of Fukagawa and Honjo where a number of factories utilizing cheap labor power were concentrated.

From this period until the end of World War I, slums in each part of Tokyo underwent profound changes. This trend is reflected in the decline of the slum population residing in the center city due to improved housing conditions (a resultant rise in rents was responsible for this) and a shift in lower-class habitations from the city proper to suburban areas. One may see here a gathering exodus of lower-class slum dwellers from the city core to the outskirts of Tokyo, which were then expanding under the influence of urban sprawl.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the expansion of modern manufacturing industries in Tokyo during World War I gave rise to the Shibaura Littoral Industrial Zone (later to become part of the Keihin Industrial Zone), which was built on a landfill in the Shibaura offing. (The mud dredged from the river during the Sumida River conservancy project was used to build the site.) This was followed by the creation of the Kōtō Industrial Zone. Densely populated residential districts sprang up in these areas to house the factory laborers who came to work there. Housing consisted primarily of company dormitories for female textile workers and of *nagaya* for male laborers who lived apart from the factories in which they worked. Table III shows how this population was lodged.

The changes in the composition of the urban lower class that occurred at this time, while leading to the differentiation and greater independence of the working class, also precipitated a shift in the occupation structure of slum dwellers. The most important of these changes was that affecting the largest occupational category in slum districts, rickshaw operators, whose numbers fell dramatically with the development and installation of electrically powered city transport. Part of the displaced operators were transformed into ordinary manual laborers or took up miscellaneous jobs.

The sudden disappearance of rickshaw pullers and their diversion into new forms of employment produced an important modification in the composition of urban slums: the number of those who were engaged in manual labor, such as coolies, construction workers, and carters, increased, and new types of "miscellaneous workers" appeared. This category included chimney sweeps, morticians' assistants, milk delivery men, and scrap metal collectors [10, pp. 248-49].

With respect to slum dwellings, a battery of legal restrictions was enacted for purposes of fire prevention. Among these were the 1881 Firebreak and Roof

<sup>7</sup> A survey taken at that time depicts the hardships endured by *nagaya* dwellers; according to the survey, as many as 90 per cent of all workers were hard hit by the high price of rice. The survey records the condition of the urban poor at the time of the 1918 rice riots (see [9]).

TABLE III  
HOUSING CONDITIONS OF FACTORY WORKERS IN TOKYO (1912)

Factory	Sex	Dormitory	Company Housing	Commuters	Total
Kanegafuchi Spinning Mill, Tokyo Branch	Male		217(29.1)	528( 70.9)	745
	Female	2,498(75.5)	168( 5.1)	643( 19.4)	3,309
	Total	2,498(61.6)	385( 9.5)	1,171( 28.9)	4,054
Fuji Cotton Spinning Mill, Oshiage Factory	Male		( —)	400(100.0)	400
	Female	2,016(87.3)	( —)	292( 12.7)	2,308
	Total	2,016(74.4)	( —)	692( 25.6)	2,708
Nisshin Spinning Mill, Kameido Main Factory	Male		206(60.2)	136( 39.8)	342
	Female	2,111(90.0)	136( 5.8)	99( 4.2)	2,346
	Total	2,111(78.6)	342(12.7)	235( 8.7)	2,688
Tokyo Spinning Mill, Main Factory	Male		87(13.9)	539( 86.1)	626
	Female	1,216(61.2)	215(10.8)	555( 28.0)	1,986
	Total	1,216(46.6)	302(11.5)	1,094( 41.9)	2,612

Source: Toshiuemon Uno, ed., *Shokkō mondai shiryō* [A document on the problem of factory laborers] (1912).

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages.

Control Regulation and the 1907 Regulation concerning the Structural Control of Row Tenements.<sup>8</sup> As a direct consequence of the 1881 legislation, the city decided to renovate in brick or stone, or turn into fireproof *kura* buildings, slum tenements on both sides of the street running between Nihombashi and Shimbashi and to enlarge the back-streets of this district to a width of 1.8 meters. The 1907 act, recognizing the need for a public health policy capable of stopping the spread of contagious diseases, was the first piece of legislation to impose general restrictions on the construction of "poor people's" *nagaya*. Comprehensive in scope, the law limited the number of dwellings per building to twelve; called for improvements in the ventilation and lighting of rooms, in water disposal, and in communal toilets; and provided for legal sanctions against offenders.

Japanese capitalism entered a stage of rapid expansion during World War I, creating at this time the need for a new type of industrial laborer: the "middle-class" worker or technician who could perform managerial functions requiring administrative competence or specialized professional knowledge. The new type

<sup>8</sup> After early Meiji, the Tokyo government enacted several regulations in response to the recurring fires that plagued the city. These included the Fire Prevention Building Control Regulation (1870), the Rental Inspection Regulation (1872), and the Housing Regulation for Districts Affected by Fires (1873). However, the Firebreak and Roof Control Regulation of 1881 was the first systematic fire-control ordinance of its kind and formed the basis for the building code enacted in the Taishō period (1912–25). In 1894, a Tokyo city building ordinance was put under study but was never voted into law. The Regulation concerning the Structural Control of Row Tenements of 1907 was important as a comprehensive law affecting *nagaya*. Later, the 1919 City Building Code became the first piece of legislation to go beyond the level of local government and achieve the status of national law.

of employee was the "salaried man." "Salaried men" were synonymous with the new middle class and included lower-level bureaucrats, company employees, military men, policemen, and teachers. However, if this class was conscious of itself as being a mark above lower-class slum inhabitants, a comparison of income levels reveals no discernable difference between the two groups.<sup>9</sup>

According to the first national census held in 1920, most of the estimated 200,000 "small (i.e., low-class) salaried men" in Tokyo lived and worked in two different places, commuting regularly from the suburbs to the city center. Table IV shows that these workers tended to live together in special districts defined by type of occupation and that a very high proportion, between 60 and 90 per cent, continued to depend upon rented housing.

In Tokyo, the commercial rental business that grew up in response to the new housing demand created by small salaried employees was first established after the rise of industrial capitalism. But the number of detached houses built for rental grew most rapidly following World War I. These structures, consisting of a gate, an enclosing wall, and a "free-standing" house built in the front yard, continued the "warrior residential style" of the Edo period, but on a smaller scale. Here, the superior-subordinate roles crystallized in the agent-tenant relation characteristic of the *nagaya* had disappeared and been replaced by the equalitarian lease contract. Alongside these rentals, new standard "middle-class homes" for owner-residents began to appear, incorporating into their design foreign as well as traditional Japanese features (partitioned private rooms, Western-type parlors, central hallways, etc.).

As these changes were occurring, the continuing influx of people into Tokyo produced a new and pressing urban problem: the housing shortage. The growing dimensions of this problem are accurately reflected in the "housing disputes" (in reality, tenants' movements) which set rental agents against tenants and which were sparked by frequent rent hikes and the chronic shortage of housing units.

#### B. *Urban Planning and Poor People's Housing*

The term "slum dweller" applied to that class in which household heads earned less than twenty yen per month and paid rents of less than three yen per month, according to a survey of the poor conducted by the Ministry of Interior in 1912. It is assumed that these people numbered nearly 200,000 in Tokyo alone in 1910. Another segment of the lower-class population was composed of "small salaried employees," known popularly as "poor people in Western attire" (*yōfuku-saimin*), who spent nearly 60 per cent of their family budgets on food (expressed here as an Engel coefficient) out of a total average expenditure of about thirty yen. They were estimated by the first national census conducted in 1920 to have numbered close to 200,000. Adding this population to "slum dwellers," one arrives at a very large figure for the whole of urban lower-class society. This class accounted for nearly 20 per cent of the entire Tokyo prefectural population, which had reached 2 million by the early twentieth century.

<sup>9</sup> In 1919, the household budgets of manual laborers were 80 per cent of those of "salaried employees" [4].

TABLE IV  
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF HOUSE RENTALS IN TOKYO AND SUBURBS AND COMMUTING POPULATION (1919/20)

County	Town	Number of House-holds (A)	Number of House-holds Renting Dwellings (B)	B/A (%)	Numbers Working (C)	Numbers Commuting to Tokyo (D)	D/C (%)	Main Type of Work for Those Commuting to Tokyo (Person)
Ebara	Shinagawa	9,044	5,985	66.2	5,867	2,374	40.5	Company or bank employees (1,500)
Toyotama	Yodobashi	9,140	7,034	77.0	5,639	1,176	20.9	Company or bank employees (614)
	Shibuya	17,500	12,360	70.6	8,173	3,897	47.7	Company or bank employees (2,170)
Minami Adachi	Minami Senju	7,134	5,160	72.3	6,307	245	3.9	Factory workers (168)
Kita Toshima	Sugamo	6,481	6,369	98.3	7,138	6,257	87.7	Company or bank employees (5,000)
	Ōji	9,181	7,459	81.2	13,201	442	3.3	Factory workers (350)
	Nishi Sugamo	11,519	9,295	80.7	12,554	9,082	72.3	Government official (5,499)
Minami Katsushika	Ōjima	4,849	4,158	85.7	6,058	23	0.4	Merchants and small factory owners (18)
	Azuma	6,063	544	9.0	5,692	228	4.0	Factory workers (155)
	Sumida Village	2,868	2,350	81.9	5,007	1,132	22.6	Factory workers (1,101)

Sources: Dai-Tokyo kōgai shirabe [Research on the suburbs of Greater Tokyo] (1920), Kenjirō Suzuki Collection, Tokyo Metropolitan Congress Library; Shōichi Kirishima, *Tokyo-shi setsuzoku chōson chōsa shiryō* [A research document concerning Tokyo's suburban towns and villages] (1919).

Note: Towns and villages listed are limited to those having more than 5,000 active workers.

The theory of "poor people's" housing developed in the early Meiji period in response to the existence of back-street tenements and advocated fireproofing the city by clearing the city center of slums. In the early twentieth century, the housing question was examined and analyzed from an architectural perspective (urban renewal, city planning) and from the standpoints of public health and social welfare. The broad outlines of the most representative of these views and their relation to theories of urban renewal are summarized below.

(1) The Architectural Society Debate

The Urban Planning Act and City Building Code were enacted in April 1919. To mark this event, the Architectural Society of Tokyo convened a special lecture series that year on the subject of "Cities and Housing." This was not the first time architects had stressed the importance of improving city housing in connection with urban renewal [16], but the 1919 debate provides us with a good general account of the ideas current at that time.

The housing question as discussed by the Architectural Society centered around rented dwellings which were recognized as an important urban problem concerning both state and society. Each lecture therefore presented a number of concrete proposals for dealing with the issue. The need to enact building ordinances to regulate the structural design of houses and limit their height was discussed from the perspective of urban planning, as was the importance of creating designated housing districts, delimiting building zones, and regulating site layouts [12, pp. 6 ff.]. In light of the scarcity of housing (and a corresponding rise in rents), problems which became increasingly acute as the cost of land, building materials, and labor soared, it was recommended that a public investment body be set up to build large numbers of low-cost housing units to be put at the disposition of low-class workers and small salaried employees [13, pp. 34 ff.] [24, p. 76]. To resolve the housing problem, many architects called for positive action and the elaboration of a comprehensive and systematic housing policy. Underlying the debate was a general recognition of the need to stabilize the housing and living conditions of city dwellers. It is clear, however, that this awareness was forced upon planners by the upsurge of people's movements during the period of "Taishō Democracy" of which the rice riots of 1918, then at their height, were the most dramatic example.

(2) Public Health

In the cheaply constructed row tenements of the poor, epidemics of cholera, dysentery, typhoid fever, and other infectious diseases were frequent occurrences. In view of the juxtaposition of water supplies and sewage facilities that characterized the *nagaya*, it is not surprising that the victims of these outbreaks were overwhelmingly counted among the lower-class inhabitants of crowded city slums. As early as 1885, the medical doctor Tōan Matsuyama, an advocate of urban renewal, emphasized that it was more urgent to improve the health conditions of the lower social class than to undertake harbor improvement works. In a similar vein, Yasushi Hasegawa firmly pointed to the necessity of ameliorating water and sewage systems, particularly the latter, as a means of improving the state of public health and eradicating cholera and other epidemic diseases

[15, pp. 29–30] [5, p. 730]. Sensai Nagayo, a public health expert, proposed to improve Japanese housing in general by Westernizing it and recommended the construction of “middle- and upper-class Western-style rentals,” the creation of a new fire insurance system, and the enactment of building ordinances [19, p. 31]. At the 1919 congress of the Architectural Society, Chinkichi Tōyama, a public health specialist, presented a statistical analysis of the housing situation in Japan by comparing the relationship between the length of hours that a dwelling is exposed to sunshine each day and the incidence of tuberculosis and other contagious diseases in both Western and Japanese cities (see [28]). In view of the fact that in 1918, the death rate due to tuberculosis in Japan reached a national high of 25 deaths per 10,000 people (the corresponding figure for Tokyo was as high as 43.6 deaths per 10,000 people in 1919), Tōyama’s attempt to approach the question of urban housing from this angle must be seen as particularly significant.<sup>10</sup> It should be added here that, during this period, a deterioration in the living environment conducive to the spread of various diseases had already severely affected factory workers residing in the industrial zones. Certain forms of industrial pollution which occurred as heavy industry developed in this area were responsible for this.

### (3) Social Welfare

In December 1874, following a series of government initiatives to create new jobs and promote production among the poor, the state proclaimed the Relief Order. The regulations were limited, however, to “single persons, the elderly, juveniles, the lame, and the ill.” Like other measures before it, the Relief Order left general assistance for the poor to “mutual aid and friendship among the people,” that is, to traditional forms of family and community-based support, a rather clear expression of government policy toward the indigent (“‘poor relief’ is not the government’s job”) [21, pp. 61–63]. Indeed, the widespread existence of ghettos and urban paupers was acknowledged by the state as a convenient tool to be utilized for realizing its rich-country, strong-army policy. In December 1890, during the first session of the new Imperial Diet, a high state official, considering a relief bill for the destitute, declared that “poor people constitute the legs and arms of our industrial development strategy” [2, pp. 471, 480, 578].

The essence of the government’s poor relief policy did not subsequently change thereafter in any fundamental sense. However, once industrial capital had been established, the Ministry of Interior and local governments were forced to take into account, and devise countermeasures to deal with, the continuing influx of population to the cities, the expansion of urban slums, and the growing concentrations of the poor. To this end, official surveys of urban poverty pockets were begun and general data on social conditions compiled.

Earlier it was mentioned that the Tokyo slums in certain areas began to contract and recede during this period, shifting to the periphery of the city. Among the problems then seriously affecting the livelihoods and well-being of

<sup>10</sup> Concerning the relation between public health and urban renewal, see Imai [8, pp. 343 ff.].

poor people was the steady rise in housing rents. City land prices had begun to mount as the industrial revolution progressed; together with a corresponding increase in rents, they conspired to increase rather considerably the burden of housing costs carried by the indigent.

A publication appearing in 1913, *Jizen* [Charity], carried a penetrating analysis of the problem of land prices and housing rents. According to this survey, high house rents were linked to the mechanism of the "unilateral contract" customary in Tokyo between landlords and homeowners which enabled the former to raise ground rents as they pleased (see, for example, Adachi [1]). The article pointed to tenants as the real victims of this practice and noted the injustice of the fact that in ten years' time rents had increased tenfold. Takayuki Ikue, a social critic, also took up the problem of poor people's housing, analyzing the management system of house rentals [7, pp. 30 ff.]. In his essay, he noted that in one year's time, a homeowner was able to recover his building costs and realize a clear profit of about 40 per cent on each transaction. To remedy this situation, he proposed improving the quality of housing, restricting the number of lodgers per room, and building new housing units (here Ikue urged the construction of new tenements by public housing corporations and private companies). This emphasis converged with the concerns of architects and public health experts, and, at this point, the theory of poor people's housing became at last a subject of serious debate.

I have presented here the theory of poor people's housing and its interpretations from a number of different angles. Many of the proposals for dealing with this problem were substantially different, and those who took part in the debate did not always argue their case from the same standpoint. However, there was by this time in Japan broad agreement that the housing conditions of the lower class had become a problem of major proportions whose solution was linked to that of the larger urban problem and could no longer be ignored.

The Urban Planning Act and City Building Code enacted in 1919, six months after the rice riots had spread throughout Japan, represented a major turning point in urban legislation, but in one important respect, these ordinances preserved the character of the Tokyo urban renewal projects of the past: the need for working-class housing (i.e., dwellings for the lower class) continued to be disregarded, and emphasis was placed on the construction of roads.

Japan's urban planning law did not emerge "from below" as was the case in advanced capitalist countries such as England where public health legislation led to the enactment of housing measures which in turn generated urban planning laws; rather urban planning (particularly Tokyo's urban renewal legislation) was simply placed on the agenda and voted into law. The problem of urban housing was not addressed until later.

The Urban Planning Act thereafter ran counter to the tenets of urban theory and policy of the intellectuals and restricted their development to a large extent. Moreover, with the militaristic policies of the 1930s, the system of urban planning erected under the "Taishō Democracy" was downgraded.

It may be said in retrospect that the social and economic conditions giving rise to the present-day "housing poverty culture" [6, p. 194] cannot be explained by the contradictions caused by the high growth policies of 1960s alone; rather one must seek their origins in the historical specificity of the housing problem, a problem which dates from the Edo period and which has affected the structure of city housing and urban policy in Japan for more than a century.

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