



Progressivism for the Pacific world: Urban social policymaking in modern Osaka

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores the roots of modern urban social policymaking in Osaka. It rejects the conventional historical narrative, which characterizes these new policies as a simple response to the Rice Riots of 1918, contending by contrast that the city's pioneering policies were part and parcel of a preexisting scheme to promote urban social progress. In recognition of the social problems that plagued the working classes of Osaka, whose numbers expanded exponentially in the early 20th century, Mayor Ikegami Shirô took the unprecedented position that social relief (treatment) should be superseded by social policy (prevention). Ikegami's right hand man was a scholar-official named Seki Hajime, whose intellectual and ideological affiliation with the transnational movement of Social Progressivism identified him as a true believer in the power of social "principle" to inform social "practice" in the cause of positive change. Appointed Deputy Mayor of Osaka in 1914, Seki was placed in charge of the newly-formed Urban Reform Research Association. In the interest of harmonizing the city's goals of economic development and social stability, Seki set his sights on the creation of new urban facilities—and, more specifically, social services. By 1920, the City of Osaka had created a new Social Department that erected lunch stands, employment offices, public housing projects, nursery schools, medical clinics, public baths, counseling centers, barbershops, lodging houses, youth centers, maternity hospitals, and public markets across the city. By 1929, the city counted 135 different facilities that established Osaka as a paragon of urban progressivism.

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Introduction

The Capital of Smoke (Kemuri no Miyako), as Osaka was called in the early twentieth century, was a city of stark social contrasts. As the largest and most important industrial city in modern Japan, Osaka was home to both the captains of industry and to the laborers who toiled in their factories. My concern in this article is with the plight of the latter, and the city's path breaking response to it from the late 1910s.

In 1911, the Japanese state produced a Factory Law that addressed the *working* conditions of factory laborers; but the *living* conditions of these laborers and their families went largely unaddressed until the Taisho Period (1912–1926). One of the first labor reformers to seize on this issue and to reassess the "worker problem" (*rôdôsha mondai*) as a "social problem" (*shakai mondai*) that affected both the workplace and the home was the political economist Seki Hajime (1873–1935). As a social reformer affiliated with

the Shakai Seisaku Gakkai—the Japanese branch of the Verein für Sozialpolitik (Association for Social Policy)—Seki established his credentials as a powerful proponent of Social Progressivism. In the same spirit as the European and North American intellectuals and policymakers who made what Daniel Rodgers has described as "Atlantic Crossings," in search of adoptable and adaptable progressivist ideas and social policies, Seki made "Pacific Crossings" (Hanes, 2002; Rodgers, 1998). Appointed Senior Deputy Mayor of Osaka in 1914, he assumed his new position with a broad mandate to assess the city's needs and create new "facilities" (*shisetsu*) to meet them (Hanes, 2002, p. 171). Following the Rice Riots of August 1918, Seki moved into high gear. In keeping with his subsequent reputation as a visionary urban administrator who carried "principle" (*רון*) into "practice" (*jissai*), he introduced a pioneering array of urban social policies in Osaka that distinguished the city as the most progressive in Japan—and arguably one of the most progressive in the world.

While the innovative nature of Seki's urban social policymaking in Osaka has long been acknowledged, as the foregoing narrative suggests, its origins have been

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misunderstood and misrepresented. As the story has generally been told, by myself included, Osaka's urban social policies were the direct outcome of two successive historical factors: the Rice Riots of 1918, whose destabilizing scope and violence awakened the city's leadership to the looming threat of Osaka's deepening "social problems," and the subsequent administrative intervention of Senior Deputy Mayor Seki Hajime, who was given the green light to translate his reformist ideas into action (Hanes, 2002, pp. 200–203). While this is a compelling story, it is also a misleading one that portrays urban social policymaking in Osaka as a *reactive*, rather than a *proactive*, enterprise.

The fact is: When the Rice Riots broke out, Osaka had long been preparing the ground for active urban social policymaking. Mayor Ikegami Shirô (1857–1929), who had been an ardent advocate of social relief since his days as Chief of Police for Osaka Prefecture, signaled his intention to press the issue with his appointment of Seki Hajime as Senior Deputy Mayor (Shibata, 1978, p. 38). Seki Hajime was uniquely qualified to move this new social agenda forward. Well before he was appointed Senior Deputy Mayor of Osaka, he had articulated the basic premises of a pioneering new program of urban social policymaking (Hanes, 2002, pp. 162–166). Educated in Europe at the height of Progressivism—that prodigiously transnational movement of the early 20th century, whose European and North American proponents famously made "Atlantic Crossings" in search of adaptable models of social reform (Rodgers, 1998)—Seki was a true believer who promoted the universal exportability of its ideas and policies.

Seki made multiple "Pacific Crossings," once he returned to Japan, as a prodigious reader and researcher of the latest news and scholarship from the industrialized West (Hanes, 2008). In recognition of what Rodgers terms the common "landscapes of fact" that linked the nations of the modern world—most importantly, factories and cities—Seki searched out and applied lessons gleaned from the experience of other industrialized nations (Rodgers, 1998, pp. 33–34). More than this, however, he also applied a rigorous empirical standard to the lessons he embraced, making certain to match them to the socioeconomic challenges facing Japan. In sharp contradistinction to the nagging stereotype of Japanese as "imitators," Seki was an "innovator" whose forward-looking ideas and policies placed Osaka on a pioneering trajectory of social reform.

Months before the Rice Riots broke out in August 1918, in a presentation to Japan's Social Relief Research Association (Kyûsai Kenkyûkai), Seki laid out a reformist agenda that anticipated the policy priorities he would introduce to Osaka in the immediate aftermath of the Rice Riots (Seki, 1918a, 1918b). Moving steadily from "principle" (*riron*) to "practice" (*jissai*), he brought his knowledge of European urban affairs to bear on his reading of social conditions in Osaka. The Rice Riots, in this revisionist scenario, were not the *trigger* that sparked urban social policymaking in Osaka, but rather the *catalyst* that touched off a chain reaction of policy initiatives that had been smoldering in Osaka for some time.

This revised interpretation of the origins of urban social policymaking in Osaka draws a distinction with a difference—one that helps us make sense of what happened next: that is, the virtual explosion of new administrative

initiatives in Osaka related to social reform. Equally important, it challenges the stereotypical image of modern Japan as a late modernizing nation whose policymaking was invariably modeled on precedents set in the putatively "advanced" nations of Western Europe and North America. As I will argue below, Seki Hajime epitomized the progressivist approach to urban social reform. Conducting a combination of international comparative research and domestic survey research, he also brought to bear his 4 years of experience as a city administrator as he launched an innovative array of urban social policies in Osaka. In the process, Seki distinguished Osaka not merely as a *national* pioneer, but as a *global* one.

The poor of Osaka

The laborers who migrated to Osaka in the Meiji (1868–1912) and Taisho (1912–1926) Periods came from near and far: some from neighboring prefectures, many from as far away as Kyushu and Okinawa, and many more from Japan's colonial possessions, especially Korea (Kawashima, 2009; Sugihara, 1998). The social immiseration these laborers experienced in Osaka will be addressed here in some detail; but it is important to note at the outset that Osaka was no stranger to poverty. During the Edo Period (1615–1868), when Osaka was the central commercial entrepôt of the Tokugawa regime, Osaka was home to day laborers, servants, *eta/kawata*, *hinin*, and other urban poor of various descriptions. The living conditions of these poor Osakans varied widely, according to their circumstances. Servants, for example, "worked, ate, and slept in close proximity to master and family members," while more menial servants occupied "tiny rented lodgings in backstreet tenements (*nagaya*)." The legions of casual laborers who lived and worked in Osaka are harder to pin down, but many appear to have inhabited crowded working-class neighborhoods such as Nagamachi (Leupp, 1992, pp. 113 and 149).

At the bottom of the social hierarchy of Japan's status-conscious early modern society—set apart from the warriors, peasants, artisans, and merchants collectively known as the "good people" (*ryômin*)—were the *eta/kawata* ("much polluted") and *hinin* ("non-humans") who comprised the so-called "base people" (*senmin*). The latter two social groups, located "outside and below" the formal status hierarchy established by the Tokugawa rulers, lived in residentially segregated slum neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city (Hermansen, 2001, pp. 47–49). The former were set apart as hereditary outcasts, "polluted" by occupations such as tanning, which were proscribed by social custom; the latter were a bit harder to categorize definitively, but "included some of the poor, the sick, those who had nowhere else to turn, but also street entertainers, actors, descendants of Christians (*korobi kirishitan*), some master-less samurai (*rônin*) and criminals" (Hermansen, 2001, p. 50). The largest concentration of *eta/kawata* lived on the southern edge of Osaka in Watanabe-mura; and *hinin* were located in four far-flung slum districts "outside the walls" (*kaito*) of the city at Tobita, Tennôji, Dôtonbori, and Tenma (Tsukada, 2002, pp. 165–187).

As poor laborers poured into industrializing Osaka in the Meiji Period, some existing slums grew larger. For example, the *eta/kawata* community at Watanabe-mura—known as

Nishi Hama during the Meiji Period—expanded rapidly in both population and territory (Mihara, 1996, pp. 171–172). Other slum neighborhoods simply grew more crowded as they were enveloped by the rapidly expanding modern city. The early modern tenement district of Nagomachi (later known as Nagomachi), for example, was inundated with new arrivals who were crammed into cheap lodging houses (*kitchin yado*) and back-alley tenements (*uranagaya*) thrown up by local landlords. As exposed in 1888 by a muckraking local newspaper reporter named Suzuki Umeshirō, Nagomachi revealed the dark social underbelly of urban industrialization. Here, in Suzuki's words, "one encountered people turned toward the posts of [the] crumbling walls [of their dwellings], crying aloud from hunger and cold" (Suzuki, 1888, p. 125). Although Osaka did acknowledge some social responsibility for the poor once the city was incorporated in 1889, its approach was palliative rather than prophylactic. Poor relief was largely restricted to the indigent, and initially engendered three services: free medical treatment, welfare payments, and orphanages (Shibata, 1978, p. 3).

As Osaka grew and changed as a rapidly industrializing city in the Meiji Period, concern over slums like Nishi Hama and Nagomachi increased. But far from getting at the root of the social problems that had created these slums in the first place—that is, prejudice and poverty—the city instead implemented slum clearance plans that amounted in essence to poor removal. In the case of Nagomachi, nearly 5000 households were displaced in the early 1890s, dispersed to four different locations on the edge (*basue*) of the city; and in 1900, "cottages" (*waioku*) considered eyesores from the same neighborhood were torn down in anticipation of the National Industrial Exposition of 1903 (Katō, 2002, pp. 84–89). Slum clearance, in the end, accomplished little more than the relocation of the poor. While the local authorities were clearing old slums in Osaka, new ones were springing up all over the city—most of them in factory districts flooded by day laborers and other poor workers derisively referred to as "frogfish" (*ankō*). By the Taisho Period, Osaka exhibited a "characteristic scattering" (*sanzaisei*) of slums across its urban landscape (Sugihara & Tamai, 1986, pp. 11–13 and 21).

As Osaka witnessed a precipitous rise in social problems around the turn of the 20th century, under the impact of urban industrialization, local authorities became increasingly concerned to confront them. Not surprisingly, their attention was focused on class rather than ethnicity—which is to say that their emerging social reformism confronted the problems faced by the industrial working classes generally rather than those faced by Korean, Okinawan, and outcaste workers more specifically. By the 1910s, more and more local leaders evinced an awareness of the pressing need to find solutions to Osaka's working class social problems. But how they translated their concern into action—making the radical shift from social relief (passive treatment) to social policy (active prevention)—continues to be misunderstood. Typically, historians have traced the introduction of urban social policymaking in Osaka to historical circumstance: that is, the wake-up call provided by the Rice Riots. Among those who have unknowingly contributed to this facile and misleading interpretation is Tamai Kingo, one of the leading authorities on social policy

in Osaka. While Tamai has cast himself as a revisionist, out to correct the misimpression of Japan as a follower nation that simply imitated social policies pioneered in the West, he has not quite escaped the stereotypes he claims to abhor. His revisionism provides us instead with an instructive object lesson concerning the mesmerizing effects of interpretive frameworks and the complexities of causal analysis.

For a path breaking collection of essays on the slums of Taisho Osaka first published in the mid-1980s, Tamai proposed to demonstrate that urban social policymaking in Japan was anything but backward and imitative. He began his essay by challenging the conventional characterization of modern Japan as economically backward compared to the industrialized West. "In the prototypical prewar commercial-industrial city of Osaka, urban problems spewed forth uncontrollably," argued Tamai, making the plight of the poor in Taisho Osaka little different than that of the urban poor in the "advanced nations" of early 20th century Europe. In Tamai's revisionist interpretation, significantly, Osaka's deepening social problems in the 1910s were proof positive not of Japan's *relative backwardness*, but of its *relative advancement* as an industrial power (Tamai, 1986, p. 253). Going on to observe that all previous "histor[ies] of Japanese social policy" had been based on the false assumption of Japanese economic backwardness, Tamai unceremoniously remanded them to the "chopping block" and set about rewriting the history of social policy based on evidence of Japan's relative economic advancement. While his new narrative celebrated Osaka's significance as an urban social policymaking pioneer, however, it did so in a way that inadvertently undervalued the epoch-making significance of the contribution (Tamai, 1986, p. 252).

Tamai set the stage for his new narrative with a nebulous assessment of Meiji-Taisho Japan's developmental status, locating it on the "semi-periphery" between the First World and the Third World, with a "moderately advanced capitalist economy" (Tamai, 1986, p. 252). In this structuralist scenario, Osaka could hardly be imagined as a global pioneer, but it could easily be characterized as a domestic one. Accordingly, in Tamai's retelling of the "history of [Japanese] social policy," the social problems that afflicted Japan's leading industrial metropolis (Osaka) exploded during the "pivotal turning point" of the Rice Riots of 1918, impelling the city's leadership to seek the "systematization of social services" (Tamai, 1986, p. 254).

In his revisionist interpretation, curiously, Tamai elaborated Osaka's new "system of social services" before even mentioning its architects (Tamai, 1986, pp. 254–284). And when he did get to the principal architect, Seki Hajime, he cast him essentially as a responsive scholar-official whose previous "interrogation of 'urban' social policy thought" had led him to hatch a "narrowly conceived, but evolving, notion of 'urban' social policy" that made him receptive to innovation (Tamai, 1986, pp. 284–285). Tamai went on to commend Seki for "articulating the overarching theory (*sōron*) of Osaka's municipal social service system" by the early 1920s—offering as evidence of that accomplishment a presentation he had made to the Japanese Social Services Conference in 1921. That presentation, whose title Tamai inexplicably misidentifies as "On Urban Social Policy" (rather than "On Urban Policy"), is presented as

proof positive of Seki's nimble mind and decisive action (Tamai, 1986, pp. 284–286; Seki Hajime, 1921). In sum, according to Tamai, Osaka's pioneering urban social policy-making owed to the fortuitous intervention of a smart and motivated scholar-official in the wake of an epochal historical event.

Causal analysis is a tricky business, as every historian knows, and my point here accordingly is not to dismiss Tamai's analysis, but to interrogate it. Ironically, Seki did publish a lecture entitled "On Urban Social Policy"—in the same journal, in fact, as the lecture of 1921 (mis-)cited by Tamai; but, significantly, that lecture was not delivered 3 years after the Rice Riots of 1918, but 3 months before them (Seki, 1918a, 1918b). The fact is: Osaka was just as developmentally advanced as the industrialized cities of the West by 1918, and its Senior Deputy Mayor was a proven social reformer who had been recruited as a city official because he understood that fact and was prepared to confront the challenges that went with it. With his appointment of Seki in 1914, Mayor Ikegami signaled a seminal shift in Osaka's approach to urban social policymaking, from treatment (social relief) to prevention (social policy). By the time the Rice Riots rocked Osaka's boat in 1918, Seki had already laid down the conceptual and administrative groundwork for pioneering urban social policymaking in Osaka. The formation and implementation of urban social policy in modern Osaka, viewed from this perspective, was not a *reactive process*, but a *proactive one*—so proactive, indeed, that it placed Osaka on the cutting edge of urban social policymaking world-wide.

The roots of urban social policy

Before he was appointed Senior Deputy Mayor of the City of Osaka in 1914, Seki Hajime was a professor of political economics. He was educated at the Tokyo Commercial College—now Hitotsubashi University—but also spent 2 years studying abroad in Belgium and Germany at the turn of the 20th century. That experience, as it happens, changed Seki's life. In Germany, he studied with three of the most famous political economists of the day—Adolf Wagner, Gustav Schmoller, and Lujo Brentano—and became an ardent advocate of their principles and methods. These scholars of the so-called Younger Historical School believed that national progress was dictated by the operation of universal historical laws; but unlike their predecessors of the Older Historical School—namely, Friedrich List and Wilhelm Roscher—they identified national progress not just with the steady accumulation of wealth, but with the equitable social distribution of that wealth. As a young man, Seki Hajime embraced this socio-economic creed of

progress, and along with it the conviction that "class conflict" was the greatest obstacle to success.

With this last thought in mind, Seki initially focused his attention as a political economist on the industrial "worker problem" (*rôdôsha mondai*) that had raised its ugly head high in early 20th century Japan. Unlike the legions of naïve national exceptionalists who argued that Japan was fundamentally different than all other industrialized nations, Seki insisted Japan was a late modernizer that could learn from the experience of more advanced nations. He scoffed at the Japanese industrialists who militated against labor legislation on the spurious argument that Japan's "beautiful social customs" would short-circuit class conflict. Like his European counterparts, who by this time had banded together for social reform under the banner of the Association for Social Policy (Verein für Sozialpolitik), Seki put great faith in the national state to mediate and thus defuse the inevitable conflict between industrialists and workers. His books on "industrial policy" (*kôgyô seisaku*) and "worker protection" (*rôdôsha hogo*) hammered this message home, bringing him critical acclaim as a political economist and also bringing him into the public limelight as what Oka Minoru called the "godfather" (*onjin*) of Japan's Factory Law of 1911 (Hanes, 2002, p. 123).

While the expanding "worker problems" (*rôdôsha mondai*) of industrializing Japan continued to loom large in Seki's mind, his investigation of those issues alerted him as well to a larger "social problem" (*shakai mondai*) that had gone unaddressed. Noting that the lives of industrial workers were hardly restricted to the workplace, he steadily began to shift his attention to their urban homes—where the substandard living conditions of workers and their families posed a clear threat to the modern moral economy and potentially to the social order of modern Japan (Hanes, 2002, pp. 163–166). In this abiding concern with the plight of the working poor, Seki found common cause with urban social progressives in Western Europe and North America who were making what Rodgers calls "Atlantic Crossings" at the beginning of the 20th century in search of urban models to emulate. "As progressives throughout the Atlantic economy rummaged more and more actively through each others' experiences and inventions," writes Rodgers, "there were visitors everywhere, eagerly reading city forms for their underlying social meaning" (Rodgers, 1998, p. 161).

By the time Seki Hajime embraced urban social reform as his *idée fixe*, the visits he had made to Brussels, Berlin, Vienna, Paris, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and other modern western cities were long behind him; but this did not prevent him from making his own unique "Pacific Crossings" through the printed word. Seki's writings on Japan's urban social problems were replete with references to European and North American theory and practice, from municipal socialism to garden cities, and he channeled these examples into policy proposals. More prominently and passionately than most of his contemporaries, Seki carried the message of urban social progressivism from the North Atlantic to the North Pacific—maintaining that modern Japanese industrial cities especially faced the very same problems and challenges as their European and American counterparts.

At the time Osaka Mayor Ikegami Shirô caught wind of this powerful, new urban progressivism, Seki had estab-



lished himself as much more than a scholarly professor of political economy. His policy-oriented work in labor reform had exerted a profound impact on national labor policy-making, as mentioned earlier, and there is every reason to believe that Mayor Ikegami expected him to make a similar splash in the arena of urban social reform. And Seki himself, it seems, embraced the professional challenge proffered by his new appointment. On the eve of his swearing in as Senior Deputy Mayor of Osaka, he confided to his diary a desire “to open up to a different universe of action” whereby he might “fulfill [his] duty to the nation” (Quoted in Hanes, 2002, pp. 171 and 172). Soon, Mayor Ikegami would appoint him chair of the city’s newly-formed Urban Reform Research Association (Toshi Kairyō Chōsakai), with a brief that was both broad and searching: to lay the groundwork for urban reforms, including social policies administered through the city bureaucracy, that would ensure the sustained development of the industrial metropolis (Hanes, 2002, p. 206).

The city that Seki encountered upon his arrival in Osaka was exploding with growth. As the primary urban beneficiary of the economic boom that accompanied World War One, Osaka was witnessing dramatic industrial development. So-called *narikin* (nouveaux riches) millionaires were made virtually overnight, as they opened new factories and expanded their commercial reach, and the numbers of industrial workers reputedly doubled between 1914 and 1918. With its forest of smokestacks and army of factory workers, Osaka was rapidly becoming an urban industrial juggernaut. If Osaka could be proud of its rise to urban prominence, as what some called the “Manchester of the Orient” (Tōyō no Manchiesutā), its parallel reputation as the “Capital of Smoke” (Kemuri no Miyako) carried a more complex connotation. In 1918, as World War One was winding down and with it Japan’s booming wartime economy, Seki pointed on the one hand to the national challenge of “protecting industry,” but he then placed this challenge immediately in social perspective. “As we are looking up and counting all the smokestacks,” he reminded his readers, “we must also look down and take a close look at the [poor] living conditions of lower class workers” (Murashima, 1918, pp. 3–4). Significantly, Seki wrote these words for the preface of a journalistic exposé of slum life in modern Osaka. Soon afterward, he would follow up with research all his own—and a set of policy proposals for Japan’s industrial cities.

In the spring of 1918, 3 months before Rice Riots rocked Osaka, Seki addressed the members of Japan’s Social Relief Research Association on the subject of initiating “urban social policy” (*toshi shakai seisaku*) in Japan. He began by taking one step backward and reminding his audience of the origins of “social policy” (*shakai seisaku*) as a reformist strategy. Recalling that social policy had been falsely identified with “socialism” (*shakaishugi*), and that this had impelled some critics to suggest that people “avoid the term ‘society’ [*shakai*] altogether,” Seki observed that the term had lost its meaning. He suggested a return to basics—whereby the initial orientation of “social policy” to “the social problems” associated with the industrial “worker problem” would be revived. The proper focus of social policy, he argued, was “conciliation of the [respective] interests” of the capitalist and landowning classes with those of the

wage-earning working classes. Casting this not merely as a socioeconomic issue, but an ethical one as well, Seki argued that the point of social policy was to ensure the “just distribution of wealth” between the “propertied capitalist classes” and the “property-less working classes.” In short, social policy was the means of maintaining a just and equitable moral economy (Seki, 1918a, pp. 519–521).

Seki was hardly oblivious to the controversial social implications of this new model of social policy. No sooner did he set out its parameters than he hastened to explain why it was important to do so. Drawing a clear distinction between “the poor” (*hinmin*) and “workers” (*rôdôsha*), he set the foundation for the equally important distinction between the “poor relief problem” (*kyûhin mondai*) and the “worker problem” (*rôdôsha mondai*): “There are clearly many who think that it is impossible to distinguish ‘the poor’ from ‘workers’ based on their living conditions. But while the living conditions [of these two groups] may look superficially similar, in most cases their psychology (*shinri jôtai*) cannot be compared” (Seki, 1918a, p. 521). Employability, Seki believed, was the key element that distinguished the two groups. Seizing on the “unemployment issue” (*shitsugyôsha mondai*), which had raised its ugly head in Japan during the recession that followed World War One, Seki argued that the working poor were only “unemployed” due to circumstance, but that the endemically poor were actually “unemployable.” In the case of the latter, Seki sadly observed that any number of problems might be at fault, from “lack of ability” to “lack of the will to work.” Accordingly, Seki insisted that the unemployable required social services in the spirit of public “charity” (*jihî*), and not social policy (Seki, 1918a, pp. 522–523).

With his eyes trained now on social policy for the working classes, including the unemployed, Seki shared his perspective on how best to implement it. While Seki acknowledged that social policymaking was a state prerogative, he complicated the issue significantly by observing that “public bodies” (*kôkyô dantai*) other than the “nation” (*kokka*), such as cities, were better equipped to create urban social policy (Seki, 1918a, pp. 523–525). Seki noted that “states (*kokka*) can compel certain actions by individuals through the rule of law and achieve uniform enforcement across an entire nation under the law,” but that “coercion under the law” was hardly a substitute for other, equally essential, forms of action. It was equally important, Seki insisted, to promulgate other public policies that offered the working classes different forms of “assistance,” “guidance,” and “education.” And these things fell properly under the purview of local authorities. Equipped with the local knowledge to identify and respond to the various challenges faced by the industrial working classes, “urban social policy” represented an opportunity to deal with pressing problems on the ground (Seki, 1918a, pp. 530–531).

After setting out the parameters and the goals of social policy in the first part of his presentation, Seki got down to brass tacks in the second. He scoured Western Europe especially for examples of the sorts of social policies that Osaka might implement in answer to the needs of the working classes. Seki glossed Great Britain’s so-called “Liberal Reforms,” including the National Insurance Act, which provided worker relief in the event of accident or illness, as well as its pioneering Unemployment Insurance Act; and

he took stock of the innovative Belgian system of offering state subsidies to labor unions that provided assistance to the unemployed (Seki, 1918a, p. 526; Seki, 1918b, p. 649). In the end, however, Seki identified four key areas in which urban social policy promised to make an immediate difference: (1) creating employment opportunities through the creation of employment offices; (2) blunting the impact of unemployment with unemployment insurance; (3) enhancing working conditions through the approval of municipal ordinances regulating such things as store hours; and (4) addressing the “residential problem” (*jūkyō mon-dai*) by “eradicating substandard residential conditions” and “supplying decent housing at reasonable cost” (Seki, 1918b, p. 651).

While such social policies powerfully projected positive social change, they also demanded substantial funding. Here, too, Seki had a proposal to make. He noted that cities in Europe and North America had raised the urban standard of living by managing essential services such as water, electricity, and transportation as municipal enterprises (*shiei jigyo*) and using the profits to fund social programs. Rejecting the municipal socialist model of free city services (*mushōshugi*) as a budgetary “pipe dream” (*kūron*) that would simply make municipal enterprises into budget-draining “welfare enterprises” (*kyūsai jigyo*), he proposed a profit-based model (*yūshōshugi*) of fees and fares that promised one particularly efficacious byproduct. Even as these services helped raise the standard of living for the “urban community as a whole,” opined Seki, they also promised to yield “profits” (*ekikin*) that could be used “as a source of revenue for all the different social policies” that cities had in mind (Seki, 1918b, p. 660).

Urban social policymaking in modern Osaka

In August 1918, the City of Osaka was engulfed in social rebellion. The Rice Riots, whose proximate cause was a steep rise in rice prices, was the straw that broke the back of Osaka’s poor. The fuse was set in the slum of Imamiya on August 11, when several hundred people who had gathered at a public hall in Tennōji attacked the storehouses of rice merchants in the slums of Imamiya and Nihonbashi. Ultimately, over 230,000 Osakans participated in riots across the city over the following week, as consumers fought 50 percent price increases on their most important staple. If rising consumer prices triggered the Rice Riots, however, they were fueled by poverty and social discontent (Inoue & Watanabe, 1959, pp. 4–9). While the prefecture prepared to deal with Osaka’s social problems by setting up a district-commis-

sioner system (*hōmen iin seido*) in 1918—under which local elites would take “social and moral” responsibility for the welfare of the indigent—the city established a Social Relief Bureau (Kyūsaika) in July 1918 to administer a wide array of social policies aimed at addressing the root causes of distress among the working poor (Osaka-fu Shakaika, 1919; Shibata, 1978, pp. 13–16 and pp. 40–42).

Echoing the sentiments expressed by Seki Hajime before the Rice Riots began, the City of Osaka worked with dizzying speed and effectiveness to assemble a municipal network of social services that was soon the envy of urban leaders across Japan. Between 1918 and 1920, the city budget for social services was doubled, as Seki accelerated the creation of a new department of the city government, the Social Relief Section (Kyūsaika), which had been in the works since July 1918. This new section was up and running by November, and by 1919, Seki had also formed a Labor Research Section (Rōdō Chōsaka). The latter would go on to conduct a stunning series of studies of working class labor and life whose findings were used to channel the city’s social policies throughout the prewar period—and which remains a major source of information on working class life in prewar Japan.

By January 1920, when the city published a “Summary of the Social Services of the City of Osaka,” the Welfare Section had been upgraded, renamed, and retooled. The new Social Department (Shakaibu), which echoed Seki’s convictions about the difference between welfare and social policy, reoriented Osaka from “relief-centered” to “proactive poverty prevention-centered” operations (Osaka-shi Shakaibu, 1924, p. 179). By this time, Osaka’s urban landscape was dotted with public monuments to its commitment to far-reaching social reform: six lunch stands, 12 employment offices, two public housing projects, two nursery schools, two medical clinics, two public baths, four counseling centers, four barbershops, three lodging houses, one youth counseling center, one youth employment office, one maternity hospital, and 10 public markets (Osaka-shi, 1920, pp. 10–13).

By 1924, when the city published a “History of Social Services,” the organizational chart of Osaka’s Social Department revealed a robust administrative hierarchy that reflected its expanding social reach. Six sections reported to the department head: youth counseling services, town halls, municipal hospitals, survey research, social services, and general affairs. Between 1920 and 1924, the social services offered by Osaka had virtually exploded in both quantity and quality. The city had more than doubled the number of public markets; added four new employment offices; built a tuberculosis sanitarium and a municipal hospital; and expanded and refined public housing to include new municipal housing, loan services, and lodgings for youth, among other things (Osaka-shi Shakaibu, 1924). In 1929, the Shakaibu proudly quantified the city’s accomplishments: Between 1918 and 1929, the city had opened 135 different facilities offering a huge range of social services. Over the same period, Osaka Prefecture had opened only four new facilities, while various private entities had opened 76 (Osaka-shi Shakaibu, 1929, p. 6).

Seki Hajime’s influence on social policymaking in Osaka was evident from the start—and only intensified once he was appointed Mayor of Osaka in 1924. Echoing the philos-



ophy Seki had articulated in the mid-1910s, the Research Bureau of the Social Department declared in 1929 that the city's "social facilities were not conceived to rescue people from defects in social structure that owed [simply] to poverty." Against such a "passive" (*shôkyokuteki*) approach to urban social policymaking, the Social Department endorsed a "constructive and foundational" (*sekkyokuteki*, *konponteki*) one: "In the final analysis, the purpose of social services is to enhance the social welfare. Thus, needless to say, it is necessary to conceive a whole variety of facilities related to the alleviation and prevention of poverty" (*Osaka-shi Shakaibu Chôsaka*, 1929, pp. 1 and 10).

Whether this model of urban social policymaking was truly "constructive and foundational" as the Social Department claimed, has been questioned by several historians, including Harada Keiichi and Kojita Yasunao: Harada contends that Seki practiced "social policy from above, cultivating the middle class and pacifying the lower classes," while Kojita maintains that he never meant to empower workers, but simply to stabilize the class divisions of modern urban society in the interest of making Japan into "an advanced culture" (Harada, 1997, p. 30; Kojita, 1991, pp. 186–188). While it is certainly arguable that Seki set goals for the working classes that blurred the distinction between them and the bourgeoisie—including home ownership—this hardly made him a running dog of capitalism. The urban reformer Gotô Shimpei described Seki to the renowned Urban Progressive Charles A. Beard as "Japan's first-rate authority on civics," and there is ample evidence to show that he practiced what he preached. (Beard, 1955, p. 52) Under Seki's leadership, urban social policymaking became a hallmark of Osaka's aspirational identity as a "Livable City" (Sumigokochiyoki Toshi). Were it not for the geographical and cultural distances involved in making "Pacific Crossings"—including, of course, the cultural distance created by Orientalism—there is little doubt that the same social progressives who made "Atlantic Crossings" into the 1920s would have named Osaka one of the destinations on what Rodgers calls "The Sociological Grand Tour" (Rodgers, 1998, p. 208).

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