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Enjo-kōsai (compensated dating) in Contemporary Japanese Society as Seen through the Lens of the Play *Call Me Komachi*

Abstract

The practice of *enjo-kōsai* (‘compensated dating’) arose in the mid-1990s in Japan. It is a trend where an older, wealthy man sponsors attractive and significantly younger women (often high school girls) for their companionship and sometimes sexual services. Those young girls, by becoming involved in an *enjo-kōsai* relationship, are trying to make money to purchase brand clothes and accessories. *Call Me Komachi* (2003) is a play which deals with the *enjo-kōsai* problem. The main protagonist is a high school girl named Reika, who has an older sponsor. Ono no Komachi, who is mentioned in the title of a play, was a famous Japanese poet of the early Heian Period. Why is a poet from ancient Japan mentioned in the title of a play about a problem of modern Japanese society?

Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, the phenomenon called *enjo-kōsai* 援助交際 (compensated dating)¹ has become quite common practice in the contemporary Japanese society. According to the *Hyakkajiten Maipedia* (Encyclopedia Maipedia), the term *enjo-kōsai* generally refers to a situation in which female students from junior and senior high schools try to make extra money by dating older men. Then, the girls can spend the extra money on brand clothes and accessories.² The man engaged in sponsoring attractive and significantly younger women (in the form of financial support or luxurious gifts) in exchange for their companionship is often called a “sugar daddy” (*shugā dadī*).³ The *Genius Japanese-English Dictionary*, besides translating the term *enjo-kōsai* as “compensated dating”, also presents two additional meanings for it: “schoolgirl prostitution” and “sugar daddy business”.⁴

¹ The term *enjo-kōsai* literally means a ‘mutually-beneficial relationship’. See Mamoru Fukutomi, ‘An Analytical Study on the Causes of and Attitudes toward «Enjo-Kōsai» among Female High School Students in Japan’, Asian Women’s Fund, 1997, p. 4.

² *Hyakkajiten Maipedia* [Encyclopedia Maipedia], Hitachi Shisutemu Indosaabisu, electronic dictionary.

³ *Pāsonaru katakana go jiten* [Personal Dictionary of *katakana*], Gakken, electronic dictionary.

⁴ *Jīniasu waei jiten dai ni han* [Genius Japanese-English Dictionary, 2nd edition], Taishukan, electronic dictionary.

The *enjo-kōsai* phenomenon received relatively wide coverage in the major Japanese media seventeen years ago.⁵ In fact, this type of ‘compensated dating’ was mostly considered to be a form of child prostitution, which by definition always involves some forms of sexual activity.⁶ Probably due to the media focus on the *enjo-kōsai* phenomenon, it has been researched in both Japan and in the West. The sociologist Kōji Maruta explored the case of *enjo-kōsai* from the point of view of gender, love and communication.⁷ In a publication entitled *Sei no jiko kettei genron* (Theories of Sexual Self-determination) from 1998, there is a whole chapter presenting the practice of *enjo-kōsai*.⁸ The phenomenon of ‘compensated dating’ in Japan has also been researched by Western scholars; one such publication is entitled *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan* by Sharon Kinsella (2014), which explores the history and politics underlying the cult of girls in contemporary Japanese media and culture. Kinsella attempts to present a picture of contemporary Japanese society from the 1990s to the start of the 2010s.⁹ Here, it ought to be emphasized that I have not carried out any practical research specifically into the case of *enjo-kōsai*, and so I will base my analysis on publications and research reports connected to ‘compensated dating’. Most of the sources I will present or quote in this paper were published between 1997 and 2007, since within that period of time *enjo-kōsai* was an important feature of academic works and media content in Japan.¹⁰

Finally, literature, films and popular culture dealt with the *enjo-kōsai* problem by tending to present it in a rather negative light. One example of this is a modern play entitled *Call Me Komachi* (2003). It is a one-woman play co-authored by Christie Nieman, an Australian writer; Kaori Hamamoto, a Japanese actress; and Miki Ogawa, a Japanese theatre director. The genesis of this play originated during one of

⁵ The peak of media focus on *enjo-kōsai* was in 1997, when the term ‘compensated dating’ was used almost 60 times in articles, titles and headlines in Japanese media. See Sharon Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan*, New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 11.

⁶ There are different definitions of ‘prostitution’ in various sources. It is believed that the term derives from the Latin word *prostitutio*, which describes a person engaged in sexual intercourse for financial gain. Other sources explain that the term ‘prostitution’ derives from Latin verb *pro stare*, which can be translated as ‘to place forward’, ‘to put up front for sale’. The Polish sexologist Prof. Zbigniew Lew-Starowicz defines prostitution as an act of sexual intercourse (hetero- or homosexual) for financial reward. He considers prostitution to be a kind of ‘service’, where the body of a prostituting person is a ‘product’ being bought by a client. There is no emotional bond. Renata Gardian-Miałkowska, a pedagogue from the Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education, emphasizes that nowadays prostitution has various forms. One of them is called ‘sponsoring’, which is a trend, when young and educated women offer sexual services in exchange for financial support or luxurious gifts. See Katarzyna Charkowska, *Zjawisko prostytucji w doświadczeniach prostytuujących się kobiet* [The Case of Prostitution through Experiences of Female Prostitutes], Kraków: Impuls, 2012, pp. 11–16.

⁷ See Kōji Maruta, *Dare ga dare ni nani wo uru no ka?* [Who Sells What to Whom?], Nishinomiya: Kwansai Gakuin University Press, 2001.

⁸ See Yukiko Hayami, ‘Enjo-kōsai wo sentaku suru shōjo tachi’ [Girls Who Choose *enjo-kōsai*], in *Sei no jiko kettei genron* [Theories of Sexual Self-determination], Shinji Miyadai, Yukiko Hayami, Naohide Yamamoto (eds.), Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten, 1998, pp. 15–38.

⁹ See Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion...*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

Hamamoto's¹¹ frequent trips to Japan, during which she noticed that adolescent girls were in the habit of dressing in a sexy and childlike manner. Thus, the main subjects of the play are teenage females, one of whom, named Reika, is making money by acquiring an older man, who agrees to sponsor her. Two other characters in the play are geishas¹², since Hamamoto compares the trend of 'compensated dating' to the subservience of geishas from the pre-World War II period. Moreover, the title of a play contains the name 'Komachi', a clear reference to Ono no Komachi (c. 825–c. 900), who was a famous court female poet of the early Heian Period (8th–12th centuries), renowned for her beauty. Representations of Ono no Komachi in a number of literary works often combine a strong image of a seductive *femme fatale* notorious for rejecting her suitors, which likely has its origin in the fact that it is believed that when Ono no Komachi became old she lost her beauty, and she ended her life as a lonely and insane woman, because she did not get married.

Although Ono no Komachi lived more than a thousand years ago, she is still present in Japanese culture. It is thus crucial to explore why her name is utilized in the title of a play about 'compensated dating'. I will argue that the image of Ono no Komachi in the play *Call me Komachi* is an extreme example of medievalization¹³ and marginalization¹⁴, since she is often connected with improper behavior, and she appears in Japanese medieval¹⁵ didactic works as an example of a 'fallen woman'. In this paper I will demonstrate that her constructed representation is the very reason why she was included in the title of the play *Call Me Komachi*. What does 'Komachi' mean? Call me who? A beauty? Or a fallen lady? What kind of connection links Ono no Komachi, a poet from the Heian period, with girls engaged in *enjo-kosai*?

This article is an attempt to clarify possible reasons for which the name of Ono no Komachi is mentioned not only in the title, but also in the text of the play. I begin my analysis with a definition of the *enjo-kōsai* practice. Then, I will present some facts about the historical figure known as Ono no Komachi, as well as some information about her

¹¹ Kaori Hamamoto has lived in Australia since 1992.

¹² Geisha (*geigi* or *geiko*) is a traditional Japanese female entertainer, whose skills include various arts like dancing, singing and playing music. Geishas as male companions at banquets were specialized only in traditional Japanese arts in opposite to courtesans (*yujō*). The origins of the geisha's profession are located in the Hōreki Era (1751–1764). See *Hyakkajiten Maipedia...*

¹³ Medievalization is a process of legendarization made according and due to certain notions characteristic for the Japanese medieval period. According to Susan Matisoff's research, people from medieval times learned about the aristocratic culture of Heian Period through literature and drama. It seems that much information was added to legends about earlier poets and writers to attract the attention of the audience. Ono no Komachi was not the only one who underwent the medievalization process. Other poets whose famous lives were described in legends are Ariwara Narihira (825–880), Semimaru (early Heian Period) or Izumi Shikibu (mid-Heian Period). See Susan Matisoff, *The Legend of Semimaru. Blind Musician of Japan*, Boston: Cheng & Tsui Company, 2006, pp. 11–19.

¹⁴ Terry Kawashima defines the 'margin' as an unstable and negotiable result of textual effects generated by authors and compilers who desire to promote certain ideas and practices at the expense of the targets of marginalization. See Terry Kawashima, *Writing Margins: The Textual Construction of Gender in Heian and Kamakura Japan*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 1–23.

constructed representations. Since the image of a misbehaving woman is often attached to Ono no Komachi, I consider that her name is used in a play rather negatively. Christie Nieman, one of the play's coauthors, noted that girls involved in *enjo-kōsai* are usually considered to be evil villains by the Japanese media.¹⁶ Subsequently, I analyze the text of the play *Call Me Komachi* in order to determine how the trend of 'compensated dating' is presented, and how the name of Ono no Komachi became attached to it. Finally, this article also attempts to answer the question of whether *enjo-kōsai* is only a Japanese phenomenon.

Enjo-kōsai – girlhood for sale

The term *enjo-kōsai* was recognized in Japanese society at the beginning of the 1980s. At that time, it was used to refer to long-term 'contractual' relationships between women working in the sex industry and male customers.¹⁷ In the early 1990s the phrase was picked up by women who used so-called telephone clubs (*terekura*). Telephone clubs were places where men could leave messages and wait for calls back from women interested in meeting them. Finally, from 1994, the term *enjo-kōsai* started refer to paid dates with high school girls. It seems that in the mid-1990s most school girls were using the phrase to mean payment for sexual intercourse.¹⁸ It seems that the problem of 'compensated dating' is related to the materialistic culture that values brand-name clothes higher than ethics. The mainstream mass media and advertising tycoons encouraged young women to appreciate commodities by famous designers like Dior, Prada or Chanel. Adolescent girls are usually susceptible to such influential media, so the urge to purchase expensive brand-name clothes often becomes the main goal of their lives. In the case of middle-class teenagers, their pocket money is usually not enough to buy all the things they desire. Thus, a lot of them decide to start an *enjo-kōsai* relationship with an older man who pays for their companionship.

Jennifer Liddy, who worked as an English teacher at high school in Asahimura (Niigata prefecture), noticed girls involved in *enjo-kōsai* practice in her school, and she described them in the article 'Name Brand Beauties for Sale' for freezerbox.com in the following manner:

Two girls spread out on the sidewalk in front of the 7-Eleven 24-hour convenience store. It's past midnight but the air is balmy and smells of sea breeze, grilled meat and train exhaust. The girl on the left is named Mariko. She wears a Gucci, triangle-cut, tight, short-sleeved, powder-blue T-shirt with psychedelic butterfly decals. Her friend, Yumi, looks identical, except for her hair, which is clipped up in a knot and held by a

¹⁵ In addition to popularizing the court literature from the Heian Period among lower social classes, another characteristic for the Japanese medieval period is the idea of *mappō* (the age in which the Buddha's law will degenerate) and the generally strong influence of Buddhism. See Barbara Ruch, 'Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of National Literature', in *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, John W. Hall and Takeshi Toyoda (eds.), Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1977, pp. 279–309.

¹⁶ Jacqueline Maley, 'Who's Your Sugar Daddy?', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 9, 2004, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/07/08/1089000287054.html> (accessed 29.06.2013).

¹⁷ Fukutomi, 'An Analytical Study on...', p. 4.

¹⁸ Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion...*, pp. 27–28.

Burberry's barrette. They both carry Fendi bags that match the black DKNY jeans they have cut down into short-shorts. They're cute as in Hello Kitty cute, not the sexy nymphs they think they are with their expensive name brand clothes. They look comic with smudges of Chanel purple metallic lipstick on their front teeth. Their Dior sapphire-blue eye shadow drives their eyes inward, making them look a little like cross-eyed circus clown. They clutch their Peace brand cigarettes, letting the smoke pour out their mouths, suggesting to anyone who takes a second look that they're just normal, average Japanese teenagers.¹⁹

Mariko and Yumi are typical examples of high school girls who are engaged in *enjo-kōsai*. During the daytime, they are high school students dressed in school uniforms, dreaming of Brad Pitt and thinking about attending the university after graduation.²⁰ But Mariko and Yumi are not troublemakers, they help their ageing grandparents and parents with their younger siblings. They listen to their teachers and they appear to be smart students. However, in the evening or at the weekend the same girls put on brand-name clothes and they go out for a date with older men. Mariko and Yumi usually arrange their dates at an agreed place, where they are picked up by their 'dates'. They all go to a restaurant, pub or karaoke bar for several hours. After that, the girls are paid for their time. During one of those 'dates' each of them could earn up to 8000 yen²¹(c. US\$82).

The *enjo-kōsai* practice is strongly connected, like everything in Japan, to the development of technology. In the mid-1990s, teenage girls began to use telephone clubs. Then, some girls started meeting the callers in person.²² For example, Reika, a protagonist in the play *Call Me Komachi*, joins a telephone club, where she leaves a message saying that she is looking for a relationship with a man, and that she likes Walt Disney and fluffy things.²³ That is how she eventually finds her 'date' and later sponsor.

Another way to arrange *enjo-kōsai* meetings in Japan nowadays is via cell phones, which Japanese young people use literally everywhere at all times.²⁴ Firstly, girls register their mobile phone numbers on a special website called *deai kei saito* (the 'match making' website). Then, they wait for calls from men who are looking for dates, conversation, dinner and sometimes something more, in other words for sexual intercourse. That is probably why in Jennifer Liddy's opinion, *enjo-kōsai* is an euphemism for teenage prostitution:

The Japanese call what Yumi and Mariko 'do' *enjosai*. [...] *Enjosai* is a touchy and sometimes embarrassing subject to discuss. Many Japanese choose to ignore the fact that it provides more money than a female adolescent will ever earn at a part time job. [...]

¹⁹ Jennifer Liddy, 'Name Brand Beauties for Sale', freezerbox.com, March 14, 2002, <http://www.freezerbox.com/archive/article.php?id=188> (accessed 29.06.2013).

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Laura Miller, 'Those Naughty Teenage Girls: Japanese Kogals, Slang and Media Assessments', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, Vol. 14, Issue 2, American Anthropological Association, 2004, p. 239.

²³ Christie Nieman, *Call Me Komachi*, Melbourne: Lemon Tart Productions and Playworks, 2003, pp. 3–4.

²⁴ According to the Nomura Research Institute, in 2003 95.7% of Japanese women under the age of 20 had a cell phone or a pager. See Miller, 'Those Naughty Teenage Girls...', p. 229.

Enjokosai is a hush-hush style of teenage prostitution. Unlike the horror stories of chained-up, child prostitutes, enjokosai doesn't happen in back alleys. These girls don't hustle on the streets. There's no Pimp-san lurking in the shadows.²⁵

Due to the increase in 'match making' websites and the number of girls engaged in 'compensated dating', in the 1990s *enjo-kōsai* became a hot topic in the major Japanese media, since it was considered to be a form of teenage prostitution. The public opinion was shocked, because the men who were 'buying sex' included people of high public trust, such as teachers, police officers and even court judges.²⁶ In 1997 the Asian Women's Fund²⁷ asked Mamoru Fukutomi, a psychology professor from Tokyo Gakugei University, to conduct a survey on *enjo-kōsai*. Firstly, he randomly selected about 960 high school female students between the ages of 15 to 18 to poll. About 63% of them (600) responded to his survey. Fukutomi found out that 2.3% of girls who had experienced *enjo-kōsai* had had sex, another 2.3% of respondents had engaged in other sexual activities (like kissing or oral sex), and 4.8% of girls had merely talked or had drinks with their 'dates'.²⁸ When the girls were asked about the reasons that caused them to have sex with older men, they responded as follows:

[...] 13 girls said they wanted money. Four did it because a man suggested it. Three girls thought it caused no problems with anyone else. Three did it for fun. Two did it because they knew they could quit at any time. One girl said she wanted stimulation, another was lonely, and another just let it happen without much thought, while another said she needed to blow off some steam and another girl wanted to have sex.²⁹

Fukutomi argues that these young girls are victimized by men. He believes that girls need brand-name clothes and accessories because they provide them with a good reputation at school. Moreover, Fukutomi emphasizes that Japan's sex culture is peculiar and that men's views on sexuality are highly influenced by the mass media, which create a widespread image of younger partners as more attractive:

[...] we can see that the images of 'enjo-kōsai' which appear in the media are not portrayed with sensitivity to the humans rights of women. This reflects the common attitude in Japan that school girls are sexual objects.

²⁵ Liddy, 'Name Brand Beauties...'

²⁶ Ibidem.

In May 1999, Satō Toshiyuki, a senior official in the Foreign Ministry, was arrested for paying junior high school girls to watch him perform indecent acts. See Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion...*, p. 43.

²⁷ The Asian Women's Fund (*zaidan hojin josei no tame no ajia heiwa kokumin kikin*; also abbreviated to *ajia josei kikin*) was a fund set up by the Japanese government in 1994 to distribute compensation to 'comfort women' (a.k.a. 'wartime comfort women' (*ianfu*), who were taken to former Japanese military comfort stations for a certain period during wartime and forced to provide sexual services to officers and soldiers) in South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, the Netherlands and Indonesia. The fund was dissolved on March 21, 2007. See 'Digital Museum: The Comfort Women Issue and the Asian Women's Fund', www.awf.or.jp/index.html (accessed 13.10.2013).

²⁸ Mamoru Fukutomi, '*Enjo-kōsai ni tai suru joshi kōkōsei no ishiki to haikai yōin – hōkokusho* [Environmental Factors Influencing High School Girls and Their Consciousness in Relation to Compensated Dating – Report], Asian Women's Fund, 1998, p. 13.

²⁹ Liddy, 'Name Brand Beauties...'

In pornographic magazines, comics, and videos, female students are exploited as sexual subjects. However, the mainstream media, whilst occasionally discussing 'enjo-kōsai' in serious terms, does not pay enough attention to the human rights of female high school girls. Sexual images of female students in the media are pervasive. These influence the students' own self-image, which in turn leads to their secondly and tertiary sexual exploitation.³⁰

Sharon Kinsella also discusses 'compensated dating' as a media phenomenon, attempting to present how the image of the 'deviant girls subculture' was created by weekly magazines written by and for older male readers. Moreover, she points out that about 30% of porn movies produced in 1996 were about high school girls, increasing to about 60% in 1997.³¹ Liddy, like Fukutomi, describes the girls involved in *enjo-kōsai* as victims of men. Furthermore, she calls the men buying time and sex from young girls paedophiles who are escaping justice.³² Liddy noticed that the majority of Japanese people blame the young girls when a criminal case of *enjo-kōsai* involves sexual abuse, rape, assault and battery etc. Then those girls are considered to be law-breakers, who themselves solicited dates with older men. Usually, nobody thinks about men's guilt or asks why older men want to spend time with a girl who could be their daughter's age.³³ Although Japan is considered to be one of the safest countries in the world, there are cases when a man abuses his power in a relationship with the teenager he is 'dating'. Liddy gives an example of such a case in her article:

Before I came to Asahi Mura there was a horrible case of *enjokosai* that caused national attention. [...] one very lost girl, whom we will call Girl X, became involved in *enjokosai* but couldn't keep herself together. Two years ago during the summer, Girl X had a 'fling' with a 38-year-old big paedophile. From a town 2 hours away, he was practically unknown. He was good looking, a big spender, and moved slow. Slow enough that when he did ask for sexual favors, Girl X couldn't say no. He wanted a threesome; he got it. He wanted to watch as she masturbated, fine. He wanted [anal sex], he did. By that November, the girl had a confirmed diagnosis of an STD, a pregnancy scare, and a black eye. Then she ran away to Tokyo. Her family can only guess what has happened to her.³⁴

Even Mariko and Yumi consider Girl X as the one who got involved too much and forgot who she was. Like other girls who are experiencing *enjo-kōsai*, they are not afraid of being raped or hurt by a 'date'. Those girls often argue that 'selling sex to adults for money is a personal affair'.³⁵ Concern about being raped is nothing in comparison with money they can earn. It may be concluded that what those young girls do might be called transforming their sexuality into financial benefits.

³⁰ Fukutomi, 'An Analytical Study on...', pp. 5–6.

³¹ Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion...*, pp. 39–59.

³² Liddy, 'Name Brand Beauties...'

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Jamie Smyth, 'Enjo-kōsai: Teen Prostitution, a Reflection of Society's Ills', *The Tokyo Weekender*, September 4, 1998, http://flatrock.org.nz/topics/men/name_brand_beauties_on_sale.htm (accessed 29.06.2013).

However, there are also perspectives in Japan which underline the ‘empowerment’ and ‘financial independence’ of the girls involved in ‘compensated dating’. A number of Japanese feminist scholars, such as Chizuko Ueno and Yukiko Hayami, see the girls’ choice to engage in *enjo-kōsai* relationships as acts of resistance, rather than a reflection of Japanese society’s problems. Ueno argues that schoolgirls derive a sense of power, independence and control of their bodies from the practice of ‘compensated dating’. Hayami also suggests that the behavior of these girls should be understood as a rejection of control on girls and women in Japan.³⁶ Ueno, as a member of the Sexual Rights Legislation Society³⁷, campaigns for the end to all restrictions on female sexual autonomy. She considers ‘compensated dating’ to be a form of revenge taken by girls against their parents, as she explains that upon seeing the hypocrisy of their parents, the girls ‘go on to exercise their right to sexual autonomy as an act of retaliation’.³⁸

As mentioned above, *enjo-kōsai* attracted national attention in Japan in the 1990s, and started to concern Japanese policy makers. Due to the pressure to crack down on ‘compensated dating’ and other forms of juvenile misbehavior, the Law for Punishing Acts Related to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and for Protecting Children (*jidō baishun jidō poruno ni kakeru kōitō no shobatsu oyobi jidō no hogotō ni kan suru hōritsu*) was passed in 1999. This law prohibited an adult from paying a person under the age of eighteen for obscene acts. Despite that, David Leheny points out that Japanese policymakers viewed girls involved in *enjo-kōsai* as ‘symbols of a society gone astray’ while their ‘male customers’ were not blamed at all.³⁹ Conservative members of the Diet and the police believed that stricter punishment of youth misdemeanors was required. As a result, the New Youth Law (*shin shonen hō*) was established in 2000. This new law stipulated that juveniles between the ages of 14 and 20 would be responsible parties liable to criminal punishment if caught in the act of voluntary prostitution, indecent proposals or pimping. In 2007 the Youth Law was updated, changing the age of criminal liability to the ages of 11 to 18 years old.⁴⁰

Finally, preventing adolescent females from getting involved in *enjo-kōsai* and prostitution is a long and difficult process, which necessitates the implementation of many more laws and sex education at schools. Japanese liberal and feminist authors consider sex education to be the real solution allowing juveniles to avoid sexual abuse.⁴¹ Care should be taken not to ostracize the girls, but instead to give them assistance and advice to steer them away from ‘compensated dating’. Fukutomi also indicates that parents should talk to their daughters about men’s and women’s positions in society, and should explain to them that there are other ways to earn money, such as part-time

³⁶ David Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local: Sex Violence and Anxiety in Contemporary Japan*, New York: Cornell University Press, 2009, p. 79.

³⁷ The Sexual Rights Legislation Society (*sei no kenri hōron kai*) was founded in 1996 by the sociologist Shinji Miyadai, the journalist Seiji Fuji, and the children’s rights activist Yūji Hirano. The Society argued that prostitution should be considered an issue for personal discretion. See Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion...*, p. 35.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local...*, p. 72.

⁴⁰ Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion...*, p. 36.

⁴¹ Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local...*, p. 79.

jobs.⁴² Moreover, the sex education specialist Yukihiro Murase argues that young girls should be taught the value of their own bodies and that sexual intercourse should be connected with emotions.⁴³ Then it should become easier for them to understand why being involved in *enjo-kōsai* relationships could be destructive for their future lives and professional careers.

Who was Ono no Komachi?

The female poet Ono no Komachi was a court poet of the early Heian period, who is frequently defined as a great example of female excellence in the area of poetry.⁴⁴ Strangely enough, little is known about Ono no Komachi's life, and even the place and dates of her birth and death are uncertain. Her real name is also unknown, even though it has been argued that it could have been Ono no Yoshiko.⁴⁵ It is believed that the female historical figure whom we currently know as Ono no Komachi was a granddaughter of Ono no Takamura (802–852), who was a great scholar and poet. Possibly, the father of Ono no Komachi was the governor of Dewa, who served there in 818–823.⁴⁶ There are many theories about her possible place of birth and death (Yamagata prefecture, Fukushima prefecture, Akita prefecture)⁴⁷, but the lack of extant reliable historical data prevents scholars from confirming any of those hypotheses. Moreover, it is believed that she was a lady-in-waiting at the imperial court, and that she could have even been the Emperor's consort. In a historical chronicle entitled *Shokunihonkōki* (Continued Late Chronicles of Japan) compiled in 869, among Emperor Ninmyō's (r. 833–850)⁴⁸ consorts and concubines, a consort named Ono no Yoshiko⁴⁹ is mentioned. Since she likely lived at the imperial court, Ono no Komachi is believed to have been an excellent court poet who possessed an extraordinary skill in composing poetry. In my opinion, however, this representation of Ono no Komachi is a well-constructed image; it seems that the details of her life, which were unknown, were filled with various imaginative guesses throughout the centuries according to the liking and needs of every society that Ono no Komachi was examined by.

⁴² 'Slanted Sex Culture Stoking Deviant Desire in Schoolgirls', *Mainichi Shinbun*, August 29, 2002, http://flatrock.org.nz/topics/men/name_brand_beauties_on_sale.htm (accessed 29.06.2013).

⁴³ Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local...*, p. 79.

⁴⁴ Yōichi Katagiri, *Tensai sakka no kyozō to jitsuzō: Ariwara no Narihira, Ono no Komachi* [True and False Image of Genius Poets: Ariwara no Narihira and Ono no Komachi], Tokyo: Shintensha, 1991, p. 122.

⁴⁵ Felice R. Fischer, *Ono no Komachi – A Ninth Century Poetess of Heian Japan*, PhD dissertation, Columbia University 1972, pp. 14–15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9–11.

⁴⁷ Hitoshi Nishiki deals with the legends related to Ono no Komachi's alleged places of birth and death. See Hitoshi Nishiki, *Komachi densetsu no tanjō* [Origins of the Legend of Komachi], Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 2004, pp. 8–12.

⁴⁸ Emperor Ninmyō (810–850) was an Emperor of Japan from the early Heian Period. He was a son of Emperor Saga (r. 809–823) and Empress Danrin (Tachibana no Kachiko, 786–850). Ninmyō's reign lasted from 833 to 850. See *Hyakkajiten Maipedia...*

⁴⁹ Fischer, *Ono no Komachi – A Ninth Century...*, p. 15.

There is one feature attributed to the historical Ono no Komachi that appears credible, which is her poetic talent. Ono no Komachi is one of the *rokkasen*⁵⁰ – the six best *waka* poets of the early Heian Period, who were defined as such by Ki no Tsurayuki (ca. 872–945)⁵¹ in the Japanese preface (*kanajo*) to the first Japanese imperial poetic anthology, the *Kokin wakashū* (Collected Japanese Poems of Ancient and Modern Times, ca. 920). There are currently about 100 poems attributed to Ono no Komachi, but it is believed that she specialized in love poetry expressing a variety of human emotions. Unsurprisingly, her poetry is often interpreted as deeply subjective, passionate and complex.⁵²

Besides her poetic talent, another intriguing feature of ‘Ono no Komachi’ is her *femme fatale*-like image. She has often been called the Japanese Cleopatra (69 BC–30 BC) and Princess Yōkihi (719–756).⁵³ Most of the legends about Ono no Komachi present her as a lady-in-waiting of indescribable beauty who attracted the attention of numerous men. However, she is also depicted as a coldhearted lady who rejected many of her suitors, and as a result, she became an old and lonely beggar, who lost her beauty and had many regrets about her life. I believe that this *femme fatale*-like image of Ono Komachi was likely created during the medieval era in Japan. In fact, she became the protagonist of five *nō* theatre plays: *Sotoba Komachi* (Komachi on the Stupa, 14th c.), *Sekidera Komachi* (Komachi at Sekidera, ca. 15th c.), *Ōmu Komachi* (Komachi’s Parrot-Answer Poem, ca. 14th–16th c.), *Sōshi Arai Komachi* (Komachi Clears Her Name, ca. 14th–15th c.), and *Kayoi Komachi* (The Nightly Courting of Komachi, ca. 14th–15th c.)⁵⁴, which presented her in a

⁵⁰ The *Rokkasen* poets are Ono no Komachi, Ariwara no Narihira (825–880), Ōtomo no Kuronushi (died 923), Kisen Hōshi (died c. 909), Sōjō Henjō (816–890) and Fun’ya no Yasuhide (died 885). See *Hyakkajiten Maipedia*...

⁵¹ Ki no Tsurayuki was a poet and courtier of the Heian Period. Under the order of Emperor Daigo (r. 897–930), he was one of four poets chosen to compile the *Kokin wakashū* anthology. He wrote a *kanajo* preface to the anthology. Tsurayuki is also the author of the *Tosa nikki* [Tosa Diary, 935], where he described his return journey to Kyoto from Tosa province. See Ayao Yasuda, *Ōchō no kajintachi* [Poets of the Imperial Court], Tokyo: Nihon hōsō shuppan kyōkai, 1975, pp. 59–64.

⁵² Steven D. Carter, *Traditional Japanese Poetry. An Anthology*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991, p. 84.

⁵³ Princess Yōkihi (in Chinese, Yang Guifei) was the beloved consort of Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756) of Tang dynasty (618–907). It is believed that she was a very beautiful and brilliant woman. See *Hyakkajiten Maipedia*...

Masahi Nishizawa (ed.), *Koden bugaku ni miru: josei no ikikata jiten* (Encyclopedia of Women: Heroines and Authors in Japanese Classical Literature), Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 2008, p. 167.

⁵⁴ *Sotoba Komachi* by Kan’ami Kiyotsugu (1333–1384) tells the story of 100-year old Komachi, who is discussing Buddhist doctrine with two priests from Mt. Koya. She also reminisces about her youth and her suitors.

I will discuss the plot of *Sekidera Komachi* by Zeami Motokiyo (1363–1443) later in this article.

Ōmu Komachi by Zeami Motokiyo. The play depicts Komachi as an old poet, who is living in Sekidera Temple. She receives a poem sent to her by Emperor Yōzei.

Sōshi Arai Komachi (author unknown) does not present Komachi as a *femme fatale*. She is the winner of Imperial poetry contest.

Kayoi Komachi by Kan’ami Kiyotsugu. Komachi is represented as an arrogant beauty who was courted by Fukakusa no Shōshō. He attempted to visit her for 100 nights to earn her love, but he died after his 99th visit.

rather negative light. Moreover, the marginalization of her image in the mid-Kamakura Period (1185–1333) led to the creation of a scroll entitled *Ono no Komachi sōsui emaki* (The Picture Scroll of the Rise and Fall of Ono no Komachi), which presented images of Ono no Komachi's body in successive stages of postmortem decomposition. Those kinds of images were being used during Buddhist meditation and were meant to discourage sexual desire in men.⁵⁵ Thus, Ono no Komachi became a tool for didactic education in some classes of Japanese society. She is also undeniably one of the most legendary figures of Japanese literature, but above all a mystery that a lot of scholars tried to unnecessarily resolve. Ono no Komachi is still present in Japanese culture, and her constructed representations frequently serve as models for female protagonists in contemporary prose, theatre and popular culture. One such literary work is the modern theatre play *Call me Komachi*.

The play *Call Me Komachi*

1. The archetype of Little Red Riding Hood

Little Red Riding Hood
Went walking through a wood
She met a wolf and stopped to chat.
Don't ask what happened after that!
 Armand T. Ringer⁵⁶

First of all, I will consider the first act of *Call Me Komachi*, where the main protagonists are two high school girls named Kinu and Reika, who have their own monologues. Kinu is a naive and sensitive young girl. She has just moved from the countryside to Tokyo. She finds the city too big and overcrowded. Her only friend is Reika, but she often criticizes Kinu for romanticizing the past. Another thing that makes Kinu feel uncomfortable is her mother, who wants to introduce her daughter to a friend's son because he is a good match.

Reika takes Kinu to the shopping mall, because, in her opinion, the 'Right Thing' to feel good is purchasing brand-name clothes. However, Kinu prefers visiting galleries to going shopping. She is also very surprised while watching Reika buying luxurious clothes and accessories. During the shopping, Kinu finds herself fascinated with diamond jewelry. Reika wants to buy Kinu a diamond ring, but Kinu cannot afford such an expensive purchase. Kinu finds out quite soon how her friend earns the money for her pricy shopping. When Reika leaves Kinu alone in the mall, it turns out that she is about to meet her sponsor, Mr. Takaaki. In Reika's eyes, Kinu has great potential to find a sponsor too. Reika decides to protect her against boys from the school and encourages her to engage in a relationship with an older man, because she can earn a lot of money. Kinu is terrified because she considers Reika to be her best friend and she just wants to spend some time with her. She thinks that the diamond ring is beautiful and would probably suit her, but it is not worth selling her time.

⁵⁵ Terry Kawashima, *Writing Margins: The Textual Construction ...*, p. 198.

⁵⁶ Armand T. Ringer (Martin Gardner), *Are Universes Thicker Than Blackberries?: Discourses on Gödel, Magic Hexagrams, Little Red Riding Hood and Other Mathematical and Pseudoscientific Topics*, <http://knightofswords.wordpress.com/2013/03/21/how-could-red-riding-hood-have-been-so-very-good/> (accessed 9.10.2013).

Next, Reika starts her monologue by introducing herself as a ‘real businesswoman’ because her time is her sponsor’s money.⁵⁷ Reika is a shopaholic, her need to buy new clothes is like a drug and it consumes a lot of money. Unfortunately, her pocket money is not enough to purchase the things she thinks she really needs. As a resourceful girl, she finds a sponsor, Mr. Takaaki, who spends his money on her. Still, Reika emphasizes that she and Mr. Takaaki do not engage in sexual intercourse, because she has only agreed to sell her time, not her body. Reika is evidently releasing her repressed emotions through shopping. Her parents are overprotective and want her to remain a virgin until she gets married. Moreover, they do not want her to attend the university because they are looking for a husband-to-be for her. Their behavior makes Reika feel like a product which they want to sell. When she was younger, she was her father’s favorite daughter. He used to call her ‘Komachi’ – ‘the most beautiful girl in the world’.⁵⁸ However, Reika’s mother did not like this nickname, as in her opinion it was inappropriate to call a young girl ‘Komachi’, after the poet who engaged in many love affairs. The mother finally concludes that ‘Komachi’ is a ‘name for a prostitute’. She thinks that prostitutes are filthy and should not be visible to other people’s eyes.⁵⁹ This is the first time when we see a reference to Ono no Komachi in the play. The way in which her name is mentioned presents the duality of this poet’s image. At first, Reika’s father uses the nickname ‘Komachi’ as a synonym for a ‘beautiful girl’. The implication of this nickname is thus positive. But then Reika’s mother, unlike her father, does not appreciate the way her husband nicknames their daughter. The mother considers the name ‘Komachi’ to be suitable for a prostitute. According to her, Ono no Komachi is branded as a lawless woman. Thus we find two opposing images of Ono no Komachi – beauty and prostitute. Although Kaori Hamamoto, one of the co-authors of *Call Me Komachi*, claims that schoolgirls ‘have power’ because they are young and beautiful⁶⁰, it is clear that the nickname ‘Komachi’ is utilized in a play not only as a synonym of ‘beauty’, but also of a girl engaged in an *enjo-kōsai* relationship.

Reika despises her parents and she probably becomes involved in the affair with an older man as a form of revenge. Her parents are, however, not Reika’s only family problem. She has a difficult relationship with her sister, who is jealous of all the admiration Reika was getting from their father. Mamoru Fukutomi explained such behavior in the following way in a *Mainichi Shinbun* interview:

Many teen-age girls involved in prostitution (*enjo-kōsai*) have family problems. They tend to be unable to exercise self-restraint, act impulsively and feel lonely. Many of them either have few chances to talk with their parents or are overprotected by their parents. The looser their relations with their parents, the less reluctant they are to prostitute themselves. However, they are victims in a way, and the men who buy them are to blame.⁶¹

Finally, Reika gets into an argument with her sister, during which it turns out that she knows about Reika’s sponsor. Moreover, the sister even suspects that their father has also

⁵⁷ Nieman, *Call Me Komachi...*, p. 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁰ Maley, ‘Who’s Your Sugar Daddy...’.

⁶¹ ‘Slanted Sex Culture Stoking...’.

found a ‘new Komachi’ of his own – a girl he is dating. Once again, the name of Ono no Komachi is mentioned in the case of a girl involved in a relationship with an older man. Even though Reika’s father wants her to remain a virgin and behave properly, he is probably sponsoring a girl who is possibly the same age as his daughters. Such complexity in the relationships makes it truly difficult to identify and define the problem of *enjo-kōsai*, since any man walking in the street or eating lunch with a young girl could be involved in ‘compensated dating’ – but could also be just a father spending time with his daughter.

Reika’s sponsor, whose name is Mr. Takaaki, is a wealthy middle-aged man. His profession is not specified, and he could be anybody – a salaryman⁶², teacher, police officer or mailman. Reika firmly believes that she can get out of this affair at any time. Mr. Takaaki wants more and he suggests that they should start meeting at love hotels. Reika is confused but she realizes that ending the *enjo-kōsai* relationship means no income for purchasing brand clothes. Finally, she decides to spend some time with Mr. Takaaki in a love hotel. Interestingly, Mr. Takaaki is nicknamed ‘Big Bad Wolf’⁶³ by Reika, a clear reference to the tale of Little Red Riding Hood. According to Bruno Bettelheim’s analysis of the LRRH story, the girl is not as innocent as she seems to be.⁶⁴ Reika, alike Little Red Riding Hood, is at the nymphet stage and her sexuality is being created. She is experiencing unconscious sexual impulses and wants to be seduced by a male. Then, she meets a wolf (Mr. Takaaki), who is a metaphor for a sexually predatory man. Bettelheim argues that ‘by giving [Little Red Riding Hood] a red hood, the grandmother is transferring sexual attractiveness to her [...]’⁶⁵. Red is a sexually vibrant and suggestive color, and often symbolizes feelings related with sexuality. Red is also the color of blood with all of its connotations of female physical maturity. In my opinion, Reika is a modern Japanese incarnation of Little Red Riding Hood, but in this case the ‘red hood’ is replaced by the nickname ‘Komachi’.

In conclusion, we see that in the first act of the play, the name ‘Komachi’ is given three different meanings. Firstly, ‘Komachi’ is a synonym for a beautiful girl. It is a reference to all the legends about Ono no Komachi where she appears as an indescribable beauty, even though there are no extant reliable portraits of her. Perhaps this name is simply a word describing beautiful women, but it is also full of incompatibilities. Thus, the image of Ono no Komachi is introduced in a fundamentally negative manner. This is exactly how the name of Ono no Komachi is presented in the second meaning in the play, when it is used as a label for girls engaged in *enjo-kōsai* relationships. In fact, the nickname ‘Komachi’ explicitly refers to a prostitute. Reika’s mother considers prostitutes to be fallen women, with whom no one wants to be associated. In fact, the image of the evil woman (*akujo*) in Japanese iconography has been very popular since medieval times. Thus, representations of Ono no

⁶² Salaryman (*sararīman*) is a member of the Japanese ‘new middle class’, who bases his family’s lives on stable, salaried, white-collar employment at large-scale business organisations. His status is based on educational qualifications earned through the national school and higher-education system. See Penelope Francks, *The Japanese Consumer. An Alternative Economic History of Modern Japan*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 111.

⁶³ Nieman, *Call Me Komachi...*, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Bruno Bettelheim, *Cudowne i pożyteczne. O znaczeniach i wartościach baśni* [The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2010, pp. 264–287.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 272–273.

Komachi often combine a strong image of a seductive *femme fatale*.⁶⁶ Finally, the third meaning of the nickname 'Komachi' has strong connotations to female sexuality. Considering Bettelheim's analysis of the Little Red Riding Hood story, we may conclude that in the play *Call Me Komachi* the red hood is replaced by the nickname 'Komachi'. Reika's father by calling her 'Komachi', in the manner of Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother who gives her a red hood, transfers sexual attractiveness to his adolescent daughter. Yet Reika is too young to understand the sexual meaning of Komachi's name. She is still emotionally immature and her own sexuality is a source of danger to her. Moreover, she tries to convince her friend Kinu that it is her desire for financial independence that involves her in a *enjo-kōsai* relationship for the sake of her own empowerment. However, she is sad and lost in the search for her own identity.

2. Geisha and *danna*

Two other characters in the play *Call Me Komachi* are Satoyuki and Mameyoshi, *geisha* or women practitioners of the classical Japanese arts (dance and music). They are unmarried⁶⁷ companions to Japanese men. Nowadays, geishas are usually considered to be exclusively prostitutes, which is a common misconception. Although chatting, joking, pouring alcohol or tea into the man's cup may not seem to be difficult tasks, the profession of geisha is hard work. There is a great deal of training involved, including arts of classical music and dance, the traditional Japanese tea ceremony *chanoyu*, and proper conversation, in order to become a geisha. It is commonly believed that geishas as men's companions should be attractive, witty and glamorous in everything they do. During the 1860s the popularity of geishas increased to the level where they became role models in fashion for the Japanese society. Their sophisticated style of dressing greatly affected the arts, music and literature of 19th-century Japan.⁶⁸ Satoyuki from the play *Call Me Komachi* recalls that era as a 'great time', when the culture of geishas was less about money and more about art, beauty and elegance. Before her monologue, Satoyuki has been performing for the Komachitek Corporation to celebrate its tenth anniversary. However, it is not the same as in the old days, since it is the performance that the company paid for, not Satoyuki's companionship. With nostalgia Satoyuki recollects the time when geishas were supposed to be able to conduct witty and eloquent conversations. Men paid for their company and professional, state-of-the-art companionship, not for front-row tickets.⁶⁹ Satoyuki has put much effort into becoming a geisha, who in her opinion should be a moving piece of art, and not the tourist attraction that she is considered to be. Clients pay for her show, and when she performs they take photos. She is an artist, but she believes that there is no manner and art in what she does any more; it is all about money. Finally, Satoyuki bitterly concludes that she was born a hundred years too late.

In Satoyuki's case, the name 'Komachi' appears in the name of the company that paid for the geisha show. Once again, the name of the poet is used to represent something

⁶⁶ Daniela Moro, 'Evil and Abject Women of the Traditional Japanese Theatre through the Reading of Enchi Fumiko's Literary Works', <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/moroevilpaper.pdf> (accessed 29.06.2013).

⁶⁷ If a geisha gets married, she automatically quits her profession. See Liza C. Dalby, *Byłam gejszą* (Geisha), Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, 1992, p. 6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 57–59.

⁶⁹ Nieman, *Call Me Komachi*..., p. 19.

negative. Satoyuki criticizes the clients from the Komachitek Corporation who attended her performance. She finds them to be ignoramuses without any artistic taste, who are unable to appreciate her skills. In this part of the play, it is difficult to find any direct references to any legends about Ono no Komachi. However, I conclude that the authors of the play used the name 'Komachi' with a pejorative overtone to emphasize the negative image of Satoyuki's clients, and the commonly accepted opinion that geishas are prostitutes.

The second geisha from the second act of the play is named Mameyoshi and lives in 1900. She is reading the text of a *nō* play entitled *Sekidera Komachi*. The play depicts Ono no Komachi at the end of her life, when her beauty has already faded and she is living in great poverty. During the evening of the Tanabata Festival⁷⁰, the abbot of the Sekidera temple⁷¹ visits an old woman in her hut, taking two priests and a child, to talk about poetry. During their conversation, the abbot realizes that he is discussing poetry with the famous Ono no Komachi. Astonished, he invites her to come with them to the Tanabata festival, but she refuses to accept his invitation. Then, a child starts to dance for her, and, inspired by his dance, Ono no Komachi begins to dance herself, and does so until dawn. In the morning, she ponders on the transience of life and her shame over what she has become. Mameyoshi tries to understand why Ono no Komachi became such a ruin of a woman. She wonders how such a 'paragon of beauty' turned into an ugly and lonely beggar. Eventually, she finds out that the passing of time is the reason for Komachi's fall. This point of view is probably related to the marginalization of old women's sexuality, a process which was most likely started in the *Shinsarugakuki* (A Record of New Monkey Music, ca. 1065) by Fujiwara no Akihira (989–1066). This text states that an old woman must deprive herself of sexual desire, take Buddhist vows, and become a nun.⁷² An old woman is not an object of men's desire anymore. She can have no expectations of life and love. Thus, the history of the old Ono no Komachi was the source of fear of old age and loneliness in Mameyoshi. Even Mamoru Fukutomi concludes that many girls start relationships with men very early in their lives because they are afraid of getting old and losing their beauty.⁷³

The story about Mameyoshi is a love story without a happy-end. Mameyoshi falls in love with her *danna*, a man that financially supports a geisha he is particularly fond of. If he is rich enough, he can rent an apartment or house for his geisha. The geisha and her *danna* can be involved in a sexual relationship.⁷⁴ Mameyoshi adores her *danna* because

⁷⁰ The Tanabata Festival is one of the *gosekku* festivals (five seasonal festivals), which celebrates the meeting of the deity-lovers Orihime (the star Vega) and Hikoboshi (Altair). According to the legend, the lovers are separated by the Milky Way and they are allowed to meet only once a year on the seventh day of the seventh month. See *Kōjien* [Grand Dictionary of Japanese Language], Iwanami Shoten 1998–2004, electronic dictionary.

⁷¹ The foundation date of the Sekidera Temple is unknown, but it was destroyed in 976 during an earthquake. At the beginning of the 11th century the temple was reconstructed by Minamoto no Makoto (942–1017). It still exists in Ōtsu (Shiga prefecture), but since its reconstruction it has been called Chōanji Temple. See *Kōjien*....

⁷² See Kawashima, *Writing Margins: The Textual Construction* ..., p. 148.

⁷³ 'Slanted Sex Culture Stoking...'

⁷⁴ It is said that geishas are paid for their company, not for sex. Dalby concludes that geishas could have sexual intercourse with men they had affairs with. See Liza Dalby, *Geisha and Sex*, http://www.lizadalby.com/LD/ng_geisha_sex.html (accessed 20.10.2013).

she believes he is a man with a great sense of style and sensitivity for art. Moreover, he likes her too. Eventually, Mameyoshi becomes pregnant, and when her *danna* asks her what she would like to do about it, she cannot answer because ‘what she want does not count’.⁷⁵ Then, he sends a woman who cooks a special brew for Mameyoshi, after the consumption of which she loses her child and her *danna* never visits her again. The rejected geisha suffers from physical and mental pain. According to some legends, Ono no Komachi also went insane when she lost her beauty and men’s attention. Furthermore, the heroine of the *Tamatsukuri Komachishi sōsuisho* (The Chronicle of the Rise and Fall of Komachi from Tamatsukuri, 12th c.)⁷⁶, who is believed to be Ono no Komachi, also loses her child, and living in great poverty causes her insanity. However, there is no evidence that the story about Komachi from *Tamatsukuri Komachishi sōsuisho* is based on the biography of the historical Ono no Komachi. This is therefore one of the first constructs of her image perpetuated in Japanese literature.⁷⁷

Kaori Hamomoto, the co-author of *Call Me Komachi*, argues that teenagers involved in *enjo-kōsai* are reincarnations of geishas⁷⁸, which suggests that she sees a parallel pattern in the female-sponsor interaction in both of those relationships. I do not necessarily agree with her comparison. It is perhaps true that nowadays high school girls, just like geishas in the past, have sponsors who support them financially. However, I think that adolescent females may become engaged in *enjo-kōsai* relationships because they find it an easy and fast method to earn money, and above all it is usually their own choice to engage in a relationship with an older man.⁷⁹ On the other hand, geishas work as men’s companions. Spending time with clients, conducting conversations appropriately and entertaining them are the duties of a geisha. Moreover, in the long history of the geisha’s profession, there were cases of girls who were sold to geisha’s houses (*okiya* or *kokataya*) because their parents were not financially stable enough to support them. Chiyo, the heroine of the famous novel *Memoirs of Geisha* by Arthur Golden, was sold to an *okiya* in Kyoto because

⁷⁵ Nieman, *Call Me Komachi*..., p. 22.

⁷⁶ *Tamatsukuri Komachishi sōsuisho* is a Chinese-style poem with a prose introduction. The authorship was attributed to the monk Kūkai (774–835), the founder of the Shingon School. Nowadays this attribution is heavily questioned and mostly rejected. But there is no doubt that the author could be a Buddhist monk, because the Buddhist influence is obvious. The whole text is permeated by the ideology of the Pure Land (*jōdo*) and the paradigm of Four Sufferings (*shiku*): birth, old age, sickness and death. Chinese influences also can be noted in *Tamatsukuri*..., especially references to Bai Juyi’s (772–846) poem entitled *Qinzhong yin* (Lament of Qin, ca. 810). The oldest manuscript of *Tamatsukuri*... is dated to 1219. The central figure of the text is an old female beggar, who is considered to be Ono no Komachi, but the name ‘Komachi’ is not mentioned in the whole text, only in the title. She tells the story of her life to a wandering monk she met. See Takeshi Tochio (an.), *Tamatsukuri Komachishi sōsuisho. Ono no Komachi monogatari* [The Chronicle of the Rise and Fall of Komachi from Tamatsukuri. The Tale of Ono no Komachi], Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009, pp. 11–24.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁸ Maley, ‘Who’s Your Sugar Daddy...’.

⁷⁹ Leheny points out that one of the reasons why teenage girls began to involve in *enjo-kōsai* relationships could be material factors, since uniformed schoolgirls in Japan had been seen as sexual objects, they could generally command much higher prices for their companionship than housewives or twenty-something office ladies. See Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local*..., p. 70.

her father was a poverty-stricken fisherman in a small village on the coast of the Sea of Japan. Geishas were thus sometimes forced into their profession, which is a significant difference between them and the under-aged girls engaging in *enjo-kōsai* relationships.

Finally, the reference to Ono no Komachi in the part about Mameyoshi presents another duality of this female poet's image, since her beauty during her youth is often contrasted with the poverty and ugliness of her old age. In fact, we can see this contrast as a pattern in the representations of a protagonist in the *Tamatsukuri Komachishi sōsuisho*, as well as in the later play *Sekidera Komachi*. In both of those works, Ono no Komachi at first appears as a beautiful and young lady, who is living in splendor and is courted by numerous men. Then, when her beauty passes away and her father and brothers die, she becomes an ageing and poverty-stricken woman living in a crumbling residence, and is rejected by court society. Thus, the protagonists in both the *Tamatsukuri Komachishi sōsuisho* and *Sekidera Komachi* are representations of a fallen woman. These kinds of works are didactic tools utilized to warn women off being amorous and sexually indulgent. Ono no Komachi, as opposed to an 'ideal woman', arrogantly refused to meet with many of her suitors, yet with time she lost her beauty. As she grew older, her reputation became destroyed, the suitors stopped visiting her, and finally she ended her life in solitude. It is clear that Mameyoshi from the *Call Me Komachi* is afraid of losing her beauty and ending her life in the manner of Ono no Komachi.

***Enjo-kōsai* – a Japanese phenomenon or not?**

The problem of so-called 'teenage prostitution', sparked by young girls wanting money for fashionable clothes, is unfortunately not exclusive to Japan. Christie Nieman, the co-author of *Call Me Komachi*, admits that although geishas and *enjo-kōsai* are elements of Japanese culture, sexually active young girls also appear in Western culture.⁸⁰ This trend has been noted in Poland too. In 2009, the Polish film director Katarzyna Rosłaniec⁸¹ created a movie entitled *Galerianki* (Mall Girls) about junior female high-school students who are searching for sponsors in shopping malls. The movie's main character is a 14-year-old girl named Ala. She has just moved to Warsaw and she is meeting new friends, but she still feels uncomfortable with changes in her life. Very quickly Ala befriends Milena, whose main motto is 'if you have money, you party, you live'. She wears mini-skirts, high white boots and vivid make up. Milena also behaves in a noisy and sexy manner. She and some other girls spend their free time in the shopping malls. Firstly, they look for the clients who look prosperous. Then, they offer sex in exchange for buying clothes, small electronics

⁸⁰ Maley, 'Who's Your Sugar Daddy...'

⁸¹ Katarzyna Rosłaniec (born November 23, 1980 in Malbork, Poland) graduated from the Faculty of Economics of University of Gdansk and directing course at Warsaw Film School (Art Vocational College). *Galerianki* was her controversial debut, despite which she won an Individual Award for Directing Debut at the 34th Gdynia Film Festival (Sept. 14–19, 2009), which is the biggest Polish film festival. Her second film entitled *Bejbi Blues* (Baby Blues, 2012) is about a 17-year old mother, who had her son because she wanted to, as she considers having a baby to be cool because all celebrities have children. The film has been criticized as a worthless fairytale for adults. See Olga Świącicka, 'Katarzyna Rosłaniec: reżyserka, która nie potrafi dojrzeć' [Katarzyna Rosłaniec: a Female Director who Can't Grow up], NaTemat.pl, January 10, 2013, <http://natemat.pl/46329,katarzyna-rosłaniec-rezyserka-ktora-nie-potrafi-dojrzec> (accessed 20.10.2013).

or money. It appears that this is an easy way to access cash without the involvement of their parents. Milena wants to teach Ala how to be able to live in 'high quality standard'. Soon, Ala starts to have sex with older men for financial gain. A problem occurs when her classmate named Michał falls in love with her. She also likes him, but he does not know what she is doing in the malls. To make things more complicated, Milena does not approve of his feelings for her. Even though she is so young, she believes that love does not exist, which could be considered to be quite shocking. Milena does not care about love and believes that only money and high status are important in life. Unfortunately, a tragic accident has to occur to make Ala understand that she does not want to be a 'mall girl' anymore.

After the premiere of *Galerianki* in 2009, the so-called 'mall girls' became a hot topic in the Polish mass media, and security guards in shopping centers started to chase them out.⁸² However, it seems that under-aged girls found another way to earn their pocket money. 'Mall girls' are not the only problem in the grey zone of Polish society. There is a new trend in Poland called *seksing* (sexting), which is a practice of young people (mainly between 13–19 years old⁸³) selling nude photos of themselves online. Adolescent females leave messages on website pages, where they offer nude photos for topping up their mobile phones (the cost varies from US\$8 to US\$35). It also seems that not only girls have become involved in *sexting*:

There was a case of two boys, who needed money to upgrade the skills of their characters in a payable on-line game. They registered on a chat room for gay men, where they advertised striptease services in exchange for charging up their accounts in a game.⁸⁴

Professor Elżbieta Michałowska from the Institute of Sociology at University of Lodz deals with the problem of teenage prostitution in Poland.⁸⁵ She finds the phenomenon of 'mall girls' very alarming, because she admits that this trend is only 'the tip of the iceberg', as there are other forms of teenage prostitution in Poland.⁸⁶ Michałowska considers 'mall girls' to be prostitutes who treat their bodies as a product to sell. For them, sexual intercourse is not connected with emotions.⁸⁷ Prof. Michałowska signals two important factors that have likely deeply influenced the development of such trends among Polish youth. Firstly, she blames the mass media and pop culture, which often use sexuality as a tool to gain an audience. Secondly, she points out that due to Catholic-based behavior patterns and a lack

⁸² See 'Nagie zdjęcia za doładowanie telefonu – nowa «moda» nastolatków' [Naked Photos in Exchange for Topping-up Mobile Phone – the Latest Teenagers' 'trend'], *nasygnale.pl*, August 26, 2011, <http://nasygnale.pl/kat,1025343,title,Nagie-zdjecia-za-doladowanie-telefonu-nowa-moda-nastolatkow,wid,13718250,wiadomosc.html> (accessed 29.06.2013).

⁸³ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁵ Her major research specialization is social pathology among Polish youth.

⁸⁶ Joanna Podgórska, An interview about mall girls with Prof. Elżbieta Michałowska from the Institute of Sociology at University of Lodz, *Polityka.pl*, September 29, 2009, <http://www.polityka.pl/spoleczenstwo/artykuly/302472,1.galerianki-to-wierzcholek-gory-lodowej.read> (accessed 20.10.2013).

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

of sex education at schools, sexuality is often a taboo which is not discussed openly. As a result, teenagers educate themselves by watching TV, music videos or surfing the Internet.⁸⁸ Although Prof. Michałowska presents her opinion about ‘mall girls’ quite judgmentally, she emphasizes that adults are responsible for this situation, mostly because there are still men who accept sexual offers from teenage girls. Moreover, those under-aged boys and girls usually do not realize that their actions are actually prohibited by Polish law. The consequences of sexting or prostituting could be very serious. If a 15-year-old girl prostitutes herself, she is committing an act of ‘demoralization’ according to Polish law. The girl is subject to the provisions of the Act on Juvenile Delinquency Proceedings, but an adult who takes on her services is not to be blamed.⁸⁹ Monika Sajkowska, who is the director of the *Dzieci Nikyże* (Nobody’s Children) Foundation, argues that the adult should be always punished for his sexual contacts with under-aged boys and girls. Children and teenagers are the ones who are victimized, even though they behave in a provocative manner or offer sexual services in exchange for financial support. Sajkowska admits that the phenomenon of adolescents offering sexual services with adults for money, mobile phones or clothes is shocking. However, she also emphasizes that it is the adult who decides how and whether to accept such offers.⁹⁰

Polish psychologists and teachers suggest that there is a necessity to implement sex education classes not only for children but also for their parents. Unfortunately, parents’ knowledge of their children’s sexuality in Poland is often very fragmentary because there are many factors that may influence and change the teenagers’ awareness, such as easy access to the Internet, TV reality shows, music videos, etc. I personally think that this problem is much more complex, but this subject deserves a separate study conducted by specialists of sociology, sexology and psychology.

Thus, we see that the problem of teenage prostitution is not only a Japanese phenomenon. This trend has been present in many societies all over the world, even though it has different names. In Japan, it is called *enjo-kōsai*, in Poland it is named ‘mall girls’ or ‘sponsoring’, but it may be found in other countries. In May 2013, a film by the French director François Ozon entitled *Jeune & Jolie* (Young & Beautiful) was released. It is a portrait of a 17-year-old girl named Isabelle who works as exclusive call-girl.⁹¹ Another

⁸⁸ Ibidem.

⁸⁹ In accordance with the Act on Juvenile Delinquency Proceedings, persons from the age of 13 to 18 years can be in charge of ‘demoralization’. When the person is under 15 years old, an adult is charged with pedophilia. When the person is between the ages of 15 to 18 is accused of harlotry. Then the adult is not charged, because sexual relations with a person over the age of consent are not a crime. If a person is over 18 years old (reach the age of majority), nobody is brought to justice. See *Ustawa z dnia 26 października 1982 r. o postępowaniu w sprawach nieletnich (Dz.U. 1982 nr 35 poz. 228)* [Act on Juvenile Delinquency Proceedings of October 26, 1982 (Journal of Laws from 1982, No. 35, item 228)] <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19820350228> (accessed 10.10.2013).

⁹⁰ Monika Sajkowska, ‘Dziecko zawsze jest ofiarą’ [The Child Is always a Victim], *Natemat.pl*, October 9, 2013 <http://monikasajkowska.natemat.pl/77557,dziecko-zawsze-jest-ofiara> (accessed 10.10.2013).

⁹¹ After her first sexual experience on holiday, Isabelle starts exploring her sexuality by working as prostitute for rich, older men. The movie attempts to pose questions such as why Isabelle is doing this (a need of excitement? money factors?), but there is no clear answer or moral conclusion.

movie set in France is entitled *Elles* (2011), and concerns the issue of prostitution run by university female students.⁹² The trend of sexting has also become a growing problem in the United States and United Kingdom, since it is considered as a common practice among teens.⁹³ In 2008, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy in the United States surveyed 653 teens (ages 13–19) and 627 young adults (ages 20–26). Even though 75% of teens and 71% of young adults believe that sending sexually suggestive content ‘can have serious negative consequences’, according to the survey’s results 20% of teens and 33% of young adults have sent or posted nude or semi-nude images of themselves.⁹⁴ Holly Baxter from *The Guardian* named sexting a ‘rite of passage of the digital age’, while she describes a new campaign tackling sexting produced by the British National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).⁹⁵ The Swedish TV crime series *Maria Wern* (2008–2011) also dealt with the problem of sexting in episode entitled *Drömmar ur snö* (Dreams from snow, 2011).⁹⁶ Literature, films, mass media and governments are trying to combat such practices, but it is a very difficult problem to resolve. Many teenagers do not consider their actions to be improper. While researching about *enjo-kōsai*, I found an article on a Polish website devoted to the problem of compensated dating⁹⁷ and some commentaries below, which judged this problem of Japanese society in a very negative manner. I strongly disagree with such judgmental opinions about Japanese society, since teenage prostitution has become a trend in many contemporary societies all over the world, and no matter whether it is named *enjo-kōsai*, ‘mall girls’ or ‘sexting’, it is still a similar practice.

Conclusions

In my analysis of the play *Call Me Komachi*, I placed the strongest emphasis on presenting and analyzing the constructed representations of the historical figure named Ono no Komachi. I believe that Ono no Komachi is mentioned in the title of a play about *enjo-kōsai* and geisha culture due to the existence of the stereotypes attributed to her.

⁹² The movie tells the story of a journalist for *Elle* magazine called Anne, who is writing an article about female students in France financing their studies from prostitution. Then, Anne starts to interview two girls Charlotte and Alice. While listening to how the girls detail their lifestyles and sexual experiences, Anne realizes how routine her life is.

⁹³ Holly Baxter, ‘Hollyoaks Sexting Storyline Highlights Dangers for Teenagers’, *The Guardian*, November 18, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/nov/18/hollyoaks-sexting-storyline-dangers-teenagers-nspcc> (accessed 22.03.2014).

⁹⁴ *Sex and Tech: Results from a Survey of Teens and Young Adults*, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008, pp. 1–3.

⁹⁵ Baxter, ‘Hollyoaks Sexting Storyline Highlights...’.

⁹⁶ At Christmastime, Gotland is struck by tragedy. A high school girl is found dead in the middle of a country road. At first it appears to be a suicide, but soon it turns out that the deceased girl and two of her friends were selling their naked photos on a special website. During the investigation, the detectives find out that the girls had been receiving threatening emails, probably from a website’s client.

⁹⁷ David Courso, ‘Enjo Kosai, czyli Kogal – japońskie uczennice’ [Enjo Kosai, a.k.a. Kogal – the Japanese Schoolgirls], [eioba.pl](http://www.eioba.pl/a/1125/enjo-kosai-czyli-kogal-japonskie-uczennice), June 25, 2007 <http://www.eioba.pl/a/1125/enjo-kosai-czyli-kogal-japonskie-uczennice> (accessed 29.06.2013).

This stereotype allows, or even forces, the public to comprehend and perpetuate the image of Ono no Komachi as a beautiful lady-in-waiting, who was a seductive *femme fatale* but ended her life as an ugly, insane beggar abandoned by everyone. Some of Ono no Komachi's representations in Japanese culture are quite positive, e.g. a beautiful and talented poet. However, the majority of her constructed images present her in a rather negative light, e.g. a *femme fatale* or harlot. In fact, the usage of the name 'Komachi' in the play's title is an example of that. Specifically, the image of Ono no Komachi in this play is presented in three different manners that are all included in her constructed representations. Firstly, 'Ono no Komachi' is a synonym for a beautiful girl. However, it is emphasized that even the most beautiful woman can become repulsive in the end. Secondly, the name 'Komachi' is used as a brand for girls engaged in *enjo-kōsai* relationships. And finally, the play presents the didactic of Ono no Komachi's image created by medieval legends and *nō* plays. A beautiful young lady is notorious for rejecting lovers, but she is punished for her arrogance and she ends up her life as an ugly and lonely beggar.

Ono no Komachi is a great example of a construct that has undergone numerous processes of legendarization throughout the centuries. Her *femme fatale*-like image became so popular and strong in the medieval era that it survived until contemporary times. Even though the authors of the play *Call Me Komachi* do not want to criticize girls engaged in compensated dating, we may confirm by reading and analyzing the play that it definitely presents quite a negative side of Ono no Komachi. It seems that for the authors of this play, the name 'Komachi' is still an equivalent for a fallen woman or a prostitute, even if a beautiful one.

Enjo-kōsai, which is the main topic of the play, is undeniably a very complex and delicate problem of contemporary Japanese society. In this paper, I have attempted to define *enjo-kōsai* without judging it. By analyzing the text of the play, we can see that the name of Ono no Komachi, a poet from the Heian period, is utilized as a label for teenage prostitution in modern Japanese society. Moreover, I demonstrated that 'compensated dating' is not only a Japanese phenomenon, but a trend of numerous contemporary societies, including Poland, where we find practices like 'mall girls' or sexting.

