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I consider problems in the references to the history of Buraku in J. M. Ramseyer’s article, “On the Invention of Identity Politics: The Buraku Outcastes in Japan”, published in Review of Law and Economics in 2019. As a researcher on the history of those who had been subjected to discrimination in the early-modern era, mainly in East Japan, I would like to point out problems in the article, focusing on its references to and quotations from previous works.

The author calls the Suiheisha an organization that advocated for Buraku liberation, a “nominal human rights organization”, stating that he would trace “the creation of a largely fictive identity for Japan’s putative outcastes” and that “most burakumin are descended not from leather-workers, but from poor farmers” (1). And in chapter IV Pre-modern antecedents, he describes the history of Buraku by referring to and quoting from a number of previous works.

In the references to and quotations from the works of different Japanese researchers on the history of Buraku in this chapter, however, the author pulls out parts of the descriptions that suit his arguments ignoring their context including what these works shed light on in their totality and how they viewed the history of Buraku.

This kind of reference to previous works is, in my opinion, academically unfaithful and inappropriate. The author’s arguments, based on inappropriate references and quotations, hardly hold true. In the following, I comment on particularly problematic parts of inappropriate references to and quotations from previous works.

In his “Introduction” (30-31) to the chapter IV Pre-modern antecedents, the author states, “the vast majority of the ancestors of the modern burakumin never dealt with dead animals at all. Instead, they farmed” and quotes from Usui Hisamitsu (Usui 1991, 20):

“In Hyogo, the business of the buraku was agriculture. Overwhelmingly, the members of the buraku did the same work as the other townspeople and farmers.”
He also quotes from Fujisawa Seisuke, (Fujisawa 2018, 115):

“The earlier theory [that chōri and kawata were prohibited from being involved in farming] is clearly wrong.”

Both Usui and Fujisawa discuss, however, why chōri / kawata had status-specific duties, including the disposal of dead cattle and horses and had been subjected to discrimination in spite of the fact that they were involved in farming and had living conditions similar to farmers in some respects. Both thus stress that there must be a clear distinction made between how they earn their livelihood and their duties deriving from their status. On the same page from which the author makes the above-mentioned quotation, Usui states:

It is impossible to write a realistic history of Buraku (...) without providing historical descriptions on the basis of strict distinctions between their duties, which were imposed on them due to their status as outcasts and led to unique treatment with contempt and antagonism, and their actual businesses for livelihood. (Usui 1991 20)

In the article quoted by the author, Fujisawa also criticized previous work on Buraku history, in which “the involvement of chōri / kawata in productive pursuits including leather work has been regarded passively and negatively” and sought “to identify historical characteristics of the businesses and duties of chōri / kawata, with a view to considering their social positions in society”, having confirmed that those people were involved in different kinds of productive activities, including farming (Fujisawa 2018 115). The author ignores the academic intention of Usui and Fujisawa, simply picking up the parts that can conveniently be “utilized” for his argument that “kawata were poor farmers”. Although it is necessary, as Usui and Fujisawa emphasize, to make “strict distinctions between those duties, which were imposed on them due to their status as outcasts and led to unique treatment with contempt and to antagonism, and their actual businesses for livelihood”, the author lacks such a perspective. Although some chōri / kawata were involved in agricultural management at a level comparable to farmers, they were nevertheless not regarded as being equal to farmers and were subjected to discrimination. This problem, which should be explored further, is completely ignored by the author.

In addition, the author argues that “[t]he pre-modern antecedents to the buraku were not a guild of leather workers” (31) on the basis of an erroneous premise. While the author uses the word “guild” in general terms without indicating particular definitions, the concept of “guild” has been addressed in academic studies of Buraku history in the context of the exploration of how chōri / kawata in pre-modern times were theoretically conceptualized in relation to Marx and Engels, The German Ideology. This is pointed out in the work of Minegishi Kentarō (Minegishi 1996, 224-229), which is quoted by the author in his article. The group of chōri / kawata in pre-modern times cannot be seen simply as a “guild”, or a craft association involved in leather work. However, leather work (in particular, skinning of dead cattle and horses for the production of the hide) was only undertaken by chōri / kawata, and farmers in general were not involved in such work.

The author attempts to regard the relationship between chōri / kawata and the leather industry as extremely weak, linking with his argument that “[t]he pre-modern antecedents to the buraku were not a guild of leather workers” (italics added). Building on this point,
he states that skinning rights did not inhere to the chōri / kawata as a group but was bought, sold and pledged as “shares” (34). This is not wrong in itself. The author also states, however, that “shares could be - and occasionally were - transferred to commoner villagers” (34). Could commoner villagers have obtained skinning rights?

One of the sources relied upon by the author on this issue is Usui Hisamitsu (Usui 1991, 205). While Usui states that “in this period between the end of the medieval and early modern ages (...), the right to [danna-ba] (an area under the charge of a group of chōri / kawata where they perform their status-specific duties) was widely bought and sold across social status”, he also writes, immediately before this sentence, “In the early modern ages, this right to [danna-ba] was uniquely attributed to kawata and never transferred to those belonging to other statuses”. In other words, Usui states that the transfer of the right to danna-ba to those who were not kawata occurred only in the period between the end of the medieval and early modern ages. In addition, Minegishi Kentarō and Nobi Shōji point out that there is room for consideration as to what constituted “the right to danna-ba” that was bought and sold in this particular period (Minegishi 1996, 250; Nobi 2007, 48-56). “The right to danna-ba” did not consist only of the skinning right. Attention should be paid to this aspect, which the author does not do.

The author refers to several studies other than Usui 1991 as sources for his argument. These works do not state, however, that “the shares [to the skinning right] could be - and occasionally were - transferred to commoner villagers”. One of the sources relied upon by the author, Matsuoka Hideo (Matsuoka 1975, 24-25), does not substantiate the author’s argument. Matsuoka states, “Kyūemon [who pledged his shares of danna-ba as security for a loan] did not relinquish his shares of the skinning rights; he kept his shares, continued to dispose of dead cattle and horses and gave all the products to the lender”. Kyūemon thus kept his shares of danna-ba. In addition, his lender was “Ikeda Tōgorō, of a kawata village called Watanabe Village”, who was a trader of leather products made in kawata villages and not one of the “commoner villagers”. Skinning of dead cattle and horses as well as sales of the disposed skins were duties uniquely attributed to chōri / kawata, and farmers in general did not and could not take part in this business. Proof to the contrary has not been submitted in the academic works on Buraku history so far; the author is not successful in providing counterevidence to the common view on this issue, either. The author’s argument does not hold water.

The non-involvement of “commoner villagers in the skinning of dead cattle and horses and hide production was related to the issue of “ritual uncleanness” (31), a concept denied by the author. In Hyōgo no Burakushi 1, which is often quoted by the author, Usui Hisamitsu refers to the “intensive perception of uncleanness”, which had continued since before the early-modern age, as the reason why kawata were regarded as outcasts, distinct from common craftsmen, even though the former had many characteristics in common with the latter (Usui 1991, 442-443). The author’s argument that “[t]he pre-modern antecedents to the buraku were not a guild of leather workers” and that they were “farmers” thus does not hold water, because it is a misdirected response to an out-of-focus question by way of inappropriate references to and quotations from previous works.

Moreover, the author apparently does not pay particular attention to “danna-ba” when he discusses the rights of chōri / kawata with regard to the skinning of dead cattle and horses and hide production. “Danna-ba” is “an area under the charge” of a group of chōri / kawata when they perform their status-specific duties. Status-specific “duties” of chōri /
kawata, such as disposal of dead cattle and horses, execution-related works, prison guards and village guards, were performed in specific areas called “danna-ba”. This is an important issue in the examination of the social character of chōri / kawata in the pre-modern age, which cannot be ignored. The author makes few references to “danna-ba”, however, and apparently has not consulted recent academic works (for example, Okuma Tetsuo et al, Danna-ba (Okuma et al. 2011). While the phrase “a designated area” (34) seems to refer to “danna-ba”, this expression is not appropriate because “danna-ba” were not “designated” by farmers or rulers.

The author argues that it was possible for chōri / kawata to become farmers or commoners and vice versa (“commoners could acquire kawata status” and “some kawata exited their status and became commoners”, 32), implying that there was mobility in social status in the Edo period (the Tokugawa period). Is this a sound argument?

In this regard, the author relies upon Hatanaka Toshiyuki, (1977, 110-111), in which he takes up a case in which a commoner in an Osaka town moved into a kawata village. Nobi Shōji criticized Hatanaka’s interpretation of the case (Nobi 1997), pointing out that the commoner who moved into a kawata village in this case lived in a rented house and was involved in the setta [leather-soled sandals] industry in Osaka, where the production and sale of setta developed in the late pre-modern period. Given the fact that setta workers in general were treated with contempt, Nobi continues, the case cannot be treated as a basis for the argument that there was mobility in pre-modern social status in general and that there were no obstacles to a change of status. Other sources cited by Hatanaka (1977, 69-80) and Watanabe Hiroshi (1977, 127) do not substantiate the author’s argument. Hatanaka (1977 69-80) cites a case in a kawata village, which had been annexed to a farming village and sought independence from that village; this is not a case of status mobility. Watanabe (1977, 127) discusses how pre-modern disadvantaged social status was formulated and, in this context, refers to reports in the Zenkoku Minji Kanrei Ruishū [National Compilation of Civil Customs], compiled in 1880 by the Ministry of Justice (based on hearings concerning local civil customs across the country, which were relied upon in the absence of the national civil code), indicating that some local customs permitted “eta” to become commoners if they had not been involved in skinning for three generations or there were areas composed of hinin only in the absence of people called “eta”. These are exceptional cases and cannot be generalized. The author’s argument that there were no obstacles to a change of status is thus groundless.

Relying primarily upon Saitō and Ōishi (1995), the author argues that it is not correct to talk of the pre-modern “class hierarchy” in terms of the “four-plus-outcaste class structure” (samurai, farmer, artisan, merchant, and etainin, 36).

Saitō and Ōishi criticized the expression “samurai, farmer, artisan, merchant, and etainin” as a way of explaining the social status system in the Edo period because they consider it “inadequate to perceive the social status system in the Edo period simply through a form of hierarchy” in order to understand why disadvantaged groups in the Edo period, including chōri / kawata, were subject to serious forms of discrimination (1995, 40). Saitō and Ōishi also state that, in the Edo period, “discrimination penetrated the society as a whole” and “no one could be free from discrimination” (ibid, 48). The Edo period was characterized as “the status-discrimination society”, where differences in social status and the hierarchy of family status were highlighted in different settings. Saitō and Ōishi seek to shed light on these forms of discrimination,
prevalent in every nook and cranny of society in the Edo period, focusing on those who were subject to status-based discrimination. They criticize the expression “four-plus-outcaste class structure” because they consider it impossible to have an accurate understanding of the “truth of the status-discrimination society” on the basis of terms that do not reflect reality. (This is the implication of the title of their book.) They do not argue that the class hierarchy was not a major issue and there was no discrimination in the Edo period or that outcastes did not exist in the Edo period.

The author ignores the academic intention of Saitō and Ōishi and simply “utilizes” their argument that the pre-modern “class hierarchy” composed of the “four-plus-outcaste class structure” lacked substance for his own argument that the antecedents to Burakumin were not “outcastes”.

In the section “Making sense of kawata” (38), the author states that “kawa” in kawata might come from “river” instead of “hide” or “leather” (all of which are pronounced “kawa” in Japanese) on the basis of his argument that the antecedents to Burakumin were “poor farmers”. He goes on to state, “several Tokugawa era impoverished families decided to leave their homes. … Migrants looking for unclaimed land … would have found it on the river banks. … As the migrants settled in the dry river bed (called kawara) or along the river banks, they became “kawara mono” – people of the river bed”. The term “kawara mono” refers to leather workers in the medieval ages, however, and the references relied upon by the author (Watanabe 1977, 257-258; Usui 1991, 63; Saitō and Ōishi 1995, 64-66) do not discuss the Edo period. The author’s descriptions are totally groundless.

In addition, the author states that seventeenth century peasants were rarely able to write and that “kawata” was not a written term for them, also suggesting that the description of the word “eta” in the Chinese characters indicating “uncleanliness” was not common by referring to Kida Sadakichi, (1919). In his article, Kida discusses different peoples who had been discriminated against in the medieval ages and who might have links to eta (chōri / kawata) in later ages. While he states at the beginning that “I feel very uncomfortable about the use of the characters indicating ‘uncleanliness’ when the word ‘eta’ is written in Chinese characters”, Kida does not question the use of “an obscure 18-stroke character” by farmers in the 17th century as the author argues.

The author’s claim that “Seventeenth century peasants were rarely able to write” raises a suspicion that he might have developed his historical views without reading historical documents written by commoners of those days at all. It is well-known that the literacy rate was high among commoners in the Edo period. Yoshida Tsutomu highlights the fact that some chōri had not only literacy but also high levels of culture and education in a volume JMR claims to have read (Yoshida 2018). It is incomprehensible that the author appears to ignore this and other academic findings.

I have to say that the author’s argument in the section “Making sense of kawata” is nothing but groundless casual notions. Although one may be free to say such things in literary jottings or chatting while drinking, I do not think it appropriate that they constitute part of an academic article.

In light of what I have pointed out above, I have to say that the author’s argument about Buraku history is not developed on the basis of sufficient understanding of the previous works or reliable historical documents; rather, the author arranged his loose notions into an academic format by arbitrarily quoting parts of previous works that seem to fit his own views. Such an approach raises doubts not only about the reliability of the author’s work in his primary specialty but also about the academic
journal that published it in terms of a peer review process which may impair its authority.

References

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Hatanaka, Toshiyuki 1997 “Kawata” to Heinin [“Burakumin” and commoners] Kyoto : Kamogawa Shuppan


Nobi, Shoji 2007 Hisabetsumintachi no Osaka [Osaka, the city of Discriminated-Against People ] Osaka: Kaihō Shuppan


Watanabe, Hiroshi. 1977 Mikaihō buraku no keisei to tenkai [The Structure and Development of the Unliberated Villages] Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan

べる（p.1）。そして，IV Pre-modern antecedents（30-39）において，被差別部落の歴史について，多くの先行研究を参照・引用しつつ叙述されている。

しかし，この節におけるさまざまな日本の部落史研究者の業績の参照・引用は，それらの先行研究が全体としてどのようなことを明らかにしているか，また，その研究が部落史研究の中でどのような位置づけにあるか，といった文脈を無視して，自分の主張に都合のよい記述だけを部分的に抜き出している

このような先行研究の参照の仕方は，研究者の姿勢として誠実さを欠き，不適切なものであると考える。そして，不適切な参照・引用によってつく著者の主張はなり立ちがたいものである。

以下，こうした問題のある先行研究の参照・引用につき，特に問題があると考えられる部分について，具体的に述べる。

IV Pre-modern antecedentsの冒頭のA Introduction（30-31）において，「近世の部落民の圧倒的多数の先祖は死んだ動物を取り扱っていなかった。そうではなく彼らは農業をおこしていた。」と述べ，臼井寿光『兵庫の部落史』1（Usui 1991 20）を引用する

兵庫県域では，部落の生業は何よりも農業であり，他の町人・百姓と類似のものが圧倒的だったのである。

"In Hyōgo, the business of the buraku was agriculture. Overwhelmingly, the member of the buraku did the same work as the other townspeople and farmers."

また，藤澤に藤澤靖介「長吏・かわたの生業と役割」（『東日本部落史』III・Higashi 2018 115）も引用されている。

「今日では（長吏・かわたは農業を禁じられたという）旧説の間違いは明瞭になっている。」

"The earlier theory is clearly wrong"
の著書でも述べられている（Minegishi 1996 224-229）。前近代の長吏・かわた集団を、単純に「ギルド」すなわち、皮革業にかかわる同業者の組合と見なすことはできない。しかし、皮革業、特に死んだ牛馬の皮を剥いて原皮を生産することは、長吏・かわただけがおこなった仕事であり、一般の百姓たちはそれをおこなわなかった。

著者は、「前近代における部落の先祖は皮革業者の「ギルド」ではなかった」という主張に関連させて、長吏・かわたと皮革業の関係を非常に小さいものと評価しようとしているようである。そのような観点から、長吏・かわた集団の全員が、死牛馬の皮を剥く権利を持っていたのではなく、その権利は「株（"shares"）」として賃入れや売買されたと述べる（34）。このこと自体は誤りではない。だが著者は「一般の百姓身分の者に（皮革を扱う権利である）株が移動することがあった（the shares could be - and occasionally were - transferred to commoner villagers）」とも述べる（p.34）。

死牛馬の皮を剥く権利は、一般の村の住人も持つことができたのだろうか。

このことについて、著者が典拠とする文献のひとつは、臼井寿光『兵庫の部落史』1（Usui 1991 205）である。臼井は、ここで、「中世末〜近世初頭のこの時期には（略）、（旦那場の）権利は身分を超えて広く売買されていた。」と述べている。この文のすぐ前の部分では、「「世世ではこの（旦那場の）権利は皮田独自の所有として、決して他人身に渡ることがなかった」と書いている。臼井はここで、かわった以外の身分の者が旦那場の権利を手に入れることがあれば、中世末〜近世初頭に限定された、と述べている。また、この時期に売買される「旦那場の権利」の内容が何か、検討の余地があるに至っては見落としがしょうじの指摘がある（Minegishi1996250・Nobi200748-56）。

「旦那場の権利」は、死牛馬の皮を剥く権利だけではない。このことは注意が必要であるが、著者はこの点についての配慮が欠けている。

著者はUsui 1991 のほかにも複数の文献を自分の主張の典拠としてあげている。しかし、これらの文献は「一般の百姓身分の者に株（皮革を扱う権利）が移動することがあった（the shares could be - and occasionally were - transferred to commoner villagers）」、とは述べていない。著者が典拠とした文献の一つ、松岡秀夫『部落保護政策批判』が引用する旦那場の株の質入れについての史料（Matsuoka 1975 24-25）は、著者の主張を裏付けるものではない。

著者は、「（旦那場の株を担保に借金をした）久右衛門は斃牛馬処理の権利株を手離した訳ではなく、株を所有して斃牛馬の処理は行ないながらその製品はすべて貸主へ差し出す」としたものの、と述べている。旦那場の株は、久右衛門が保持し続けている。また、久右衛門に金を貸したのは「渡辺村 池田屋藤五郎」つまり、かわたの村の皮革を扱う商人であり、「一般の百姓身分の者 "commoner villager"」ではない。死牛馬の皮を剥くこと、剥いた皮を売買することは、長吏・かわたの身分に固有の役割であり、一般の百姓は手出さない・出せない領域であった。このことに対する反証は、現在までの部落史研究成果の中では提出されていない。また、著者もこの問題について通説への反証を提示できていはない。著者の主張は成り立たない。

そして、一般の百姓身分の者たち“commoner villagers”が、死牛馬の皮剥ぎ、原皮の生産にかかわらなかったことは、著者が否定する「ケガレ“ritual uncleanness”」の問題（31）とかかわっている。臼井寿光は、著者が度々引用する『兵庫の部落史』1 において、かわた身分の者たちが職人と多くの共通点をもちながら、一般の職人と異なる賤民と見なされた理由を、近世より以前から続く「強烈な不浄観」であった、と述べている（Usui 1991 442-443）。著者の『部落民の先祖は皮革業のギルドではなく、農民である』という主張は、先行研究を不適切に参照・引用しながら、誤った設問的に外れに答えているものであり、成り立たない。

また、著者は長吏・かわたの死牛馬の皮剥ぎ、原皮の生産にかかわる権利について論じる際、「旦那場」特に注意を払っていないようである。「旦那場」は、長吏・かわたが身分に固有の役を務める際の「受持ち区域」である。長吏・かわたが行う身分にともなう「役」、すなわち死牛馬の処理や処刑にかかわる業務、牢屋の番、村の警備といったことは、「旦那場」という区域を限って行われた。「旦那場」は、近世における長吏・かわたの社会的性格を検討するときに、重要な論点であり、無視することはできない。しかし、著者は「旦那場」について特に言及せず、最近の研究成果（例えば、大熊哲雄ほか『旦那場』Ookuma et al 2007 1-113）も参照していな
いうである。34ページにおいて“a designated area”と書いているのが「旦那場」を意味していると思われるが、「旦那場」は百姓や支配者から「指定される」ものではない。この表現は不適切である。

著者は、長吏・かわたが百姓・町人になることも、その逆も可能であった（“commoners could acquire kawata status.” “some kawata exited their status and become commoners” 32）、と述べ、江戸時代の身分は流動的であったかのように述べている。この指摘は妥当だろうか。

身分の移動に関して著者が依拠している畑中敏之『「かわた」と平人』（Hatanaka 1977 110-111）があげている。大坂で町人がかわたした村に移住している事例の解釈については、のびとり秀一の批判がある（Nobi 1997）。近世後期、雪駄の製造販売業が展開した大坂で、雪駄にかかわる仕事をしていた借家住まいの町人がかわたった村内に移住したという事例であり、雪駄職全体が賃賃されていたという状況があったことをふまえると、これによって一般的に近世の身分は流動的で身分の変更に障害はなかったことの根拠にはできない、という批判である。また、このほかに、典拠としてあげている畑中（Hatanaka 69-80）と、渡辺広『未解放部落の形成と展開』（Watanabe 1977 127）には、著者の主張の裏付けとなるようなことは書かれていない。

Hatanaka 1977 69-80 で検討されているのは、百姓の村落の「枝村」となっていたかわたた村が、百姓村からの独立を求める事例で、身分の移動の問題ではない。Watanabe 1977 127では、近世の被差別身分がどのように形成されてきたかを論じる中で、1880（明治13）年に、政府の司法省が編纂した『全国民事慣例類集』（民法に代わるもので、全国各地の民事にかかわる慣例を聞き取り調査し、まとめた書物）の中に、「かわたが三代にわたって皮削ぎの仕事をしなかった場合に平民となることを認める慣例のある地域や、「かわた」と呼ばれる人々が存在せず非人ばかりであった地方がある、という報告があることに触れているだけである。これらは、例外的な事例であり一般化はできない。「身分の変更に障害はなかった」という主張は、根拠のないもので成り立たない。

また、主に斎藤洋一と大石慎三郎『身分差別社会の真実』（Saitō and Oishi 1995）に依拠し、いわゆる「士農工商・えた一非人」という言葉で近世の身分の序列“class hierarchy”を表現することが正しくないと述べる（p.36）。

斎藤・大石が、「士農工商・えた一非人」という言葉で江戸時代の身分制度を表観することを批判したのは、長吏・かわたを始めとする江戸時代の被差別民がきびしく差別された理由を明らかにするには、一つの序列だけで江戸時代の身分制度をとらえるのでは不十分（Saitō and Oishi 1995 40）と考えるからである。また、斎藤・大石は、江戸時代においては「社会全体が差別によってつらぬかれており、「差別から自由であることはだれにもできなかった」（ibid 48）と述べている。江戸時代は、さまざまな場面で身分の違いや家格の上下が問題にされる「身分差別社会“the status-discrimination society”」であった。斎藤・大石は、このような江戸時代の社会のあらゆるところにある差別について、被差別民とされた人々に焦点をあてつつ、明らかにしようとしている。斎藤・大石が「士農工商・えた一非人”four-plus-outcaste class structure”」という言葉を批判するのは、実態と異なる言葉を用いていっては、「身分差別社会の真実“the Truth about the Status-discrimination society”」を明らかにできないと考えるからである。（これが、斎藤・大石の著書のタイトルに込められた意味である。）斎藤・大石は、江戸時代において、身分の序列は大きな問題ではなく差別はなかった、とか、江戸時代にアウトカーストは存在しなかった、と言っているのではない。

著者は、斎藤・大石のこうした研究の意図を無視し、「士農工商・えた一非人」という近世の身分の序列“class hierarchy”が実体をもたらしたものでないと述べ、部落民の先祖は「アウトカースト」ではないという、自分の主張の論拠に「流用」しているにすぎない。

著者は、「かわたの意味を理解する“Making sense of kawata”」という節（p.38）において、「部落民の先祖は貧しい農民であった」という自説を踏まえ、「かわた」の「かわ」は「皮・革」ではなく「川」に由来するのではないか、と述べる（日本語では、「皮・革」も「川」も、"Kawa"と発音する）。江戸時代に貧困に陥った家族は家を捨てることを決意した、移住者は河原に持ち主のない土地を見つけた、河原に住んだ者たちは「河原者」と呼ばれた“several Tokugawa era impoverished families
decided to leave their homes. ...Migrants looking for unclaimed land...would have found it on the river banks. ...As the migrants settled in the dry river bed (called kawara) or along the river banks, they became “kawara mono”—people of the river bed.”}等と書いている。だが、「河原者」とは中世皮鞭の生産をおこなった者たちをさす言葉で、著者が依拠している文献（Watanabe 1977 257-258, Usui 1991 63, Saitō・Oishi 1995 64-66）も、江戸時代について述べたものではない。著者の記述は、まったく根拠がない。

さらに、17世紀の農民たちは、めったに文字を書くことはなく、「かわた」という言葉は書き言葉でなかったとはいえ、さらに喜田貞吉「エタ源流考」（Kida1919）を参照しつつ、「職多」という漢字表記も一般的ではなかったのではないか、とも述べる。喜田貞吉の論考は、えた（長吏・かわた）につながるさまざまな中世の被差別民について検討したもので、冒頭で「えた漢字で表記する際には「けがれ」を表す漢字が用いられることは大変に不快である」と述べているが、著者が言うように、17世紀の農民が「18画もあるよくわからない漢字”an obscure 18-stroke character”」を用いたことに疑問を呈しているわけではない。

「17世紀の農民は、めったに文字を書くことはなかった（Seventeenth century peasants rarely wrote.）」という記述からは、著者は当時の庶民が書き残した史料（古文書）を全く読まずに歴史に関する自説を組み立てたのではないか、という疑念を生じさせる。江戸時代の庶民の識字率の高さはよく知られおり、著者が藤沢清介のことを引用した『東日本部落史』（Hiyashi 2018）には、吉田勉の論考「長吏・非人の村落文化と手習い・学問・教養」（Yoshida 2018）も収録されている。吉田は、長吏たちの中には識字能力だけでなく、高い文化・教養を身に着けていた者がいたことを紹介している。著者が、こうした研究成果を無視しているように見えるのは不可解である。

この「かわたの意味を理解する“Making sense of kawata”」という節における著者の主張は、根拠のない思い付きと言わざるを得ない。こうした議論はエッセイや酒でも飲みながらの雑談であればともかく、学術論文の一部を構成することが適切とは思われない。

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This article is part of Japan’s Burakumin (Outcastes) Reconsidered: A Special Issue Assessing and Refuting Ramseyer’s Interpretation. Please see the Table of Contents.

Please also see our previous special issues on The Ramseyer controversy on the 'Comfort Women' edited by Alexis Dudden, Supplement to Special Issue: Academic Integrity at Stake: The Ramseyer Article - Four Letters.

See also, a special issue on The 'Comfort Women' as Public History edited by Edward Vickers and Mark R. Frost.

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