

3-31-2022

Human Rights and Professions Museums as Interlocutors of Buraku Identity in Japan

Lisa Mueller

Florida International University, lisbrown@fiu.edu

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROFESSIONS MUSEUMS AS INTERLOCUTORS OF BURAKU
IDENTITY IN JAPAN

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

GLOBAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL STUDIES

by

Lisa Mueller

2022

258

To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Lisa Mueller, and entitled Human Rights and Professions Museums as Interlocutors of Buraku Identity in Japan, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Mitzi Carter

Sukumar Ganapati

Dennis Wiedman

Matthew Marr, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 28, 2022

The dissertation of Lisa Mueller is approved.

Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Matthew Marr, for his indispensable wisdom and guidance throughout the process of writing this dissertation. Thank you to the Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies at Florida International University for providing me with a teaching assistantship to fund my studies, and thank you to the School of International and Public Affairs for awarding me the Morris and Anita Broad Fellowship. I am also indebted to the American Council and the United States Department of State for the Critical Language Scholarship, which provided language training that was integral to the success of this research.

Thanks are also in order to my committee members, Mitzi Carter, Dennis Wiedman, and Sukumar Ganapati for their invaluable feedback. Christopher Bondy was very helpful in the preliminary research leading to this dissertation. Steven Heine, Guillermo Grenier, and Roderick Neumann also provided very helpful input at various stages of the process. Natalia Marques da Silva had great advice on how to think about museums and memory. My *senpai*, especially Rayna Rusenko, Rebecca Young, and Jacquelyn Johnston, were generous in their help with the literature review.

I am grateful for the cooperation of those in Japanese museums who assisted me with this project, particularly Mr. Iwata, Ms. Ohara, Mr. Terachi, and Mr. Tomita.

Special thanks to my husband, Michael Mueller, for taking care of our son when I needed uninterrupted time, patiently helping with technology whenever it flustered me, and being amazing in general. Thanks to my parents, Roger and Linda Brown, for showing me what hard work looks like.

And very special thanks to my son, Kai. How lucky I am to be your mommy.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROFESSIONS MUSEUMS AS INTERLOCUTORS OF BURAKU IDENTITY IN
JAPAN

by

Lisa Mueller

Florida International University, 2022

Miami, Florida

Professor Matthew Marr, Major Professor

Members of the Buraku minority group in contemporary Japan are traditionally perceived as descendants of outcaste communities who performed work deemed impure according to Shinto and Buddhist taboos in Japan's caste system during the Tokugawa Era (1603-1867). After receiving emancipation in 1871, they continued to experience severe discrimination. Following successful activism culminating in government-issued affirmative action "special measures" funding beginning in 1969, Buraku people have now approached social and economic parity with mainstream Japanese. Partially due to these successes, the Buraku Liberation League, the largest Buraku rights organization in the country, has now embraced a new globalized, UN-centric Buraku identity that situates the Buraku equality movement amongst those of other caste-based minorities.

During the special measures programs of the 1990s, many Buraku communities established human rights and/or professions museums to educate the populace on Buraku discrimination while performing a reclaimed Buraku identity centering on pride in the role of Buraku professions in Japanese state-building. This project examines how Buraku identity is

currently performed in those museums in light of the evolving globalized Buraku collective memory.

A qualitative content analysis was performed on the websites, handouts, and publications of five different museums in various regions of Japan. Data were triangulated through fieldwork and interviews. Three main themes emerged from this analysis. First, all five museums were strongly rooted in their local communities but engaged with these communities using different mechanisms. Second, while two museums demonstrated evidence of embracing the global turn in the Buraku movement, three museums appeared to have not adopted this global turn. Finally, while all of the museums discuss discrimination as a salient aspect of Buraku identity, the museums in western Japan locate the root of the discrimination as stigmatized space while those in Tokyo identify pollution ideology associated with traditional Buraku professions as the source of the discrimination.

This study assists in elucidating for museums some of the challenges inherent in constructing a cohesive narrative within a social minority group with an uncertain and contested master narrative. In addition, this dissertation adds to research methodology literature by synthesizing the qualitative content analysis literature and creating stepwise instructions for its use.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

The neighborhood of Kashihara (population 2,500) in Gose City (population 31,000), Nara Prefecture in Japan seems an unlikely candidate for the moniker “Homeland of Human Rights.” Arriving in Kashihara itself is not unlike a pilgrimage, as I discovered when I visited the little neighborhood in the summer of 2018. After a 55-minute train ride from Nara Station, I arrived at Wakigami Station, an unmanned station surrounded by rice paddies. A 1.5-kilometer walk later found me at the Suiheisha History Museum, where I picked up my free “Homeland of Human Rights Map and Fieldwork Commentary.” The map contains explanations of 14 sites within a short walking distance of the museum, and almost all of these sites bear some connection to the founding of the Suiheisha (later reformed as the Buraku Liberation League), an organization that fought against the discrimination of the Buraku people¹, a former outcaste minority in Japan.

¹ In pre-millennial English-language research (and to some extent still today), the Buraku people were referred to as *Burakumin* or (lowercase) *burakumin*, a Japanese euphemism for the group. *Buraku* (部落) simply means “village”, while *min* (民) refers to “people”. However, in Japan, the term has fallen somewhat out of fashion, with most scholars preferring the term *hisabetsumin* (被差別民), meaning “discriminated people” (Amos 2011). English-language scholars have recently begun using the term “Buraku people” in part because of the stigma that gradually became associated with the term *Burakumin* and in part because of the term’s technical incorrectness -- *min* often refers to an ethnicity or nationality, while Buraku activists are for the most part fiercely defensive of their Japanese ethnicity (Hankins 2014). Moreover, the International Movement for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), the Buraku Liberation League’s international NGO, uses the term “Buraku people” in its English-language publications. Therefore, throughout this dissertation, I will use the term Buraku people to refer to the Buraku minority. In her writing about Dalits, Anupama Rao (2009) notes that she capitalizes the word Dalit because she believes that “165 million Indians deserve a capital letter” (p. xxi). I intend to give the same respect to the 2 million Buraku people. It should also be noted that the word *buraku* (lowercase) in western and southern Japan often refers to the neighborhoods in which Buraku people live. Therefore, when the word *buraku* is used in the lowercase in this paper, it will refer to Buraku neighborhoods. (In other areas, particularly in northern Japan, the word *buraku* is still used more generically to refer to a village or hamlet in accordance with the word’s original meaning.)

Within Human Rights Park across the street from the museum, one could visit the “Life’s Brilliance” monument memorializing the 90th anniversary of the establishment of the Suiheisha as well as the aptly named “50,000th Day from the Emancipation Edict” monument, which celebrates the legal liberation of the Buraku people in 1871. Also in the park are the scattered ruins of the residences of various members of the Sakamoto family, favorite local sons who worked toward the establishment of the Suiheisha. If one were to venture outside the park, one could visit Tsubame Shrine (where, according to the map, various youths used to gather to discuss Buraku discrimination) or Saikouji Temple, the birthplace of the drafter of the Suiheisha Declaration, Mankichi Saikou.

Conspicuously absent from the map is any mention of human rights struggles other than those of the Buraku people, so much so that someone unfamiliar with the Japanese word for human rights (*jinken*, or 人権) might very logically conclude erroneously that *jinken* applies only to the Buraku struggle. Indeed, Amos (2011) has noted that the term *jinken* in certain neighborhoods in Osaka has become a byword for Buraku rights. It goes without saying that other human rights struggles around the world -- indeed, even in Japan -- were undertaken before the founding of the Suiheisha in 1922², so what in particular makes Kashihara the “Homeland of Human Rights”? Would it not be more accurate to refer to the neighborhood as the “Homeland of the Suiheisha”?

As I would discover during my research, while the “Homeland of the Suiheisha” would have been more historically accurate, the “Homeland of Human Rights” was crafted with precision to evoke an evolving Buraku narrative wrapped in UN-centered globalization. Tsutsui

² See, for example, the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement (自由民権運動) which fought for an elected legislature and civil rights in the 1880s.

(2017, 2018) detailed the history of Buraku Liberation League movement orientation, demonstrating a decisive global turn in Buraku movement actorhood. Rather than viewing Buraku discrimination as the result of a unique unfortunate idiosyncrasy of the Japanese status system in the Tokugawa Era (1603-1867), the Buraku liberation movement began situating Burakuness in a global context with other discriminated minorities, particularly those who had been discriminated against due to profession or lineage. In this context, it made perfect sense that the museum³ would leverage the globally relevant term “human rights,” with its inherent connotation of UN-centered rights talk (Pan 2021), rather than the nationally bounded phenomenon of the Suiheisha movement.

This explanation feels like settled science until one travels only about twenty miles northwest of the Suiheisha History Museum to the Henomatsu Human Rights History Museum in Sakai City, Osaka. This museum, housed inside the Sakai City Human Rights Community Center, describes the hardscrabble history of the Buraku neighborhood around it in unflinching but tender detail, with a painstakingly recreated narrow alleyway like those that would have been found in the area sixty years ago. The education, work, and daily life of the old buraku are described, along with heartbreaking memories of the cruelty of discrimination leading to local efforts to organize advocacy for equality. Besides a brief mention of a Portuguese missionary who visited the area during the sixteenth century, there is almost no mention of the world outside of the buraku, let alone outside of the country. If the global turn has had such a profound influence on Buraku identity, why was there no evidence of it within the Henomatsu Museum?

³ Throughout this dissertation, there will be instances such as this one in which museums are described as having human agency (e.g., “the museum would leverage the term human rights” or “the museum considered whether or not to display the object”). In these cases, the word “museum” functions as shorthand for the curators, directors, trustees, boards, consultants, and experts who make such decisions.

When Buraku people were emancipated from outcaste status in 1871, they lost their monopolies on professions deemed impure according to Shinto and Buddhist purity taboos (e.g., as leather tanners, undertakers, executioners, butchers, etc.). Buraku identity had previously been centered around these professions for centuries. After the Emancipation Edict, this collective memory vacuum was filled by an almost 100-year-long struggle to garner financial and legislative resources from the government to counteract the discriminatory practices that had kept Buraku people from reaching social and economic parity with their mainstream Japanese counterparts. The 1969 Special Measures Law for Dōwa Projects finally provided such aid, and when the funding measures finally expired in 2002, Buraku communities had improved markedly according to many socioeconomic measures. Individual communities had been given a substantial amount of control to allocate the funding in the ways that they deemed most beneficial, resulting in a fair amount of diversity among communities as to which types of amenities and services they added; some communities also chose to disburse Special Measures funds solely on an individual or family basis. The success of the law, then, created a second vacuum in Buraku identity, as social inequality was no longer seen by many as a pressing concern. The fragmentation of Burakuness grew until the point where some scholars wondered how much longer Buraku heritage would remain a salient identifier in Japanese society (e.g., Neary 2003; Davis 2000).

For now, at least, Buraku identity remains relevant, however indeterminately it might be defined. Also remaining are the many human rights and professions museums established in Buraku neighborhoods during the 1990s; they continue to stake claims on Buraku identity by performing that identity every day through exhibitions that focus on Buraku alterity. This dissertation, then, sought to answer the question following questions:

- 1) How is Buraku identity being performed in museums that engage with Burakuness throughout Japan?
- 2) How do the various localities in which the museums are situated influence this identity performance?
- 3) What implications does this identity performance have for Buraku collective memory?

Procedures

In order to illuminate how identity is performed in Buraku museums, it necessary to analyze their content in depth. Five museums that engage with Buraku issues were selected for this purpose, two of which are in the Kansai region: the Suiheisha History Museum and the Henomatsu Human Rights History Museum. These museums were selected because they are among the most well-known Buraku museums in the Kansai region, which has historically been the heart of Buraku collective memory and culture (DeVos and Wagatsuma 1966), contributing to the strong Buraku identity expression that can be found in this area (Amos 2011). It is perhaps no surprise, then, that the Kansai region by far has the highest concentration of Buraku museums. In contrast, Buraku identity expression in other areas of Japan tends to be more subdued. Therefore, to provide regional contrast, the remaining museums in the study are some of the few Buraku-focused museums that exist outside of the Kansai area. They are the Archives Kinogawa and Meat Information Museum in Tokyo and the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum in western Japan.

The contents of each museum's website, brochures, newsletters, and handouts were transcribed and uploaded into NVivo qualitative analysis software. This textual information was

analyzed using qualitative content analysis, a form of content analysis that involves examining text for its underlying meaning rather than simply counting words using traditional quantitative content analysis (Kracauer 1952). Qualitative analysis uses systematic coding to identify themes, which helps to ensure that the data are empirically grounded (Krippendorff 2013; Mayring 2000; Prasad 2019). Before entering the texts into NVivo, I translated them from Japanese to English to ensure close reading and allow for ease of coding. I then open coded the museum's textual information based upon the themes that arose during this process (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Finally, I analyzed the results based on the themes. For triangulation, additional museum texts were consulted as available, and curatorial staff at the museums was consulted. I also conducted fieldwork in four of the five museums, the exception being the Meat Information Museum.

Emerging Themes

During data analysis, three main themes arose in the research. Each theme will be discussed briefly below:

1) *Local rootedness*. All five museums were strongly rooted in their local communities, but they engaged with these communities using different mechanisms. The Suiheisha History Museum's relationship with its locality was characterized by the Japanese concept of *furusato*, or homeland, as described in the opening anecdote. For the Fukuyama City Human Rights and Peace Museum, *machizukuri*, or grass-roots community development, proved to be an effective tool for channeling Buraku issues into local human rights discourse. In the Henomatsu Museum, *fureai*, or touch-based connection, was leveraged as a counteraction to Buraku purity taboos. Finally, the Archives Kinogawa and Meat Information both highlighted their *meisanhin*, or locally

produced specialty items of leather and meat, respectively, to imbue Buraku professions, traditionally seen as low-brow, with a sense of opulence.

2) *Acceptance of the global turn in Buraku identity discourse.* If Tsutsui's (2017, 2018) description of a feedback loop between the local and global Buraku liberation movement is accurate, then there should be evidence of the UN-centered activism characterized by 21st-century Buraku human rights talk being communicated at the local level. This study found that while two museums (the Suiheisha History Museum and the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum) wholeheartedly embraced this UN-centered globalized identity reorientation, the other three appear to have thus far been reluctant to adhere to the global turn in the Buraku movement. The study explores nuances in the museums' philosophies to hypothesize why this is so.

3) *Space-based discrimination vs. profession-based discrimination.* While all of the museums discuss discrimination as a salient aspect of Buraku collective memory, the museums in western Japan locate the root of discrimination as stemming from stigmatized space (i.e., the buraku), while the museums in Tokyo identify pollution ideology associated with traditional Buraku professions as the source of this discrimination. While all of the museums identify education as the key to eliminating discrimination, this nationally fragmented interpretation of discrimination, which remains a salient aspect of Buraku self-perception, has led to regionally inconsistent messaging that focuses on reframing and purifying different aspects of Burakuness.

Significance of the Study

The concept of a human rights museum is relatively new within museology, the museums themselves having been mostly established within the past two decades (Busby et al 2015; Carter 2015). Because of the newness of the concept, as Failler and Simon (2015) point

out, there is still, unsurprisingly, much debate over what constitutes strong curatorial practices in human rights museums (e.g. Orange 2016). How does one tell the story of a historically disenfranchised group? When identity is fractured and disparate among a community, whose narrative of identity -- in this case, "Burakuness" -- is presented in the museum? When contradictory interpretations of collective memory are shared by autonomous institutions devoted to what is theoretically the same shared history, is cacophony and further fragmentation the inevitable result?

In Lisa Yoneyama's (1999) exploration of the peace museums of Hiroshima, she coined the term "dialectics of memory" to describe how culture is interrogated to create shared memory. As in the case of the Hiroshima bombing, because Buraku issues are fraught with political conflict and painful history, one cannot separate politics when making curatorial decisions about what will be displayed in human rights museums. Relatedly, Gledhill (2017) found that museums are sometimes pressured by neoliberal state forces to promote a brand of multiculturalism that embraces identity politics. However, no scholar has yet addressed how memory and state ideologies of racial hierarchies are challenged in Buraku human rights museums, which face less pressure from state forces due to their local funding models (Carter 2015).

Japanese human rights museums, with their competing narratives of Burakuness, serve as an effective case study of how identity fragmentation influences curator decisions, which can further entrench balkanized perceptions of "authentic" collective memory. This study will assist in elucidating some of the challenges inherent in constructing a cohesive narrative within a social minority group with an uncertain and contested master narrative. As identity becomes increasingly fragmented – a hallmark of the postmodern condition (Harvey 1989) – museums, as

interlocutors of collective memory and thus identity, will need to develop strategies to adapt these new norms.

In addition, this dissertation adds to research methodology literature by synthesizing the qualitative content analysis literature and creating a stepwise instruction guide for its use. Qualitative content analysis invokes hermeneutics, reflexivity, and grounded theory to interpret textual information. While continental European scholars have employed qualitative content analysis in the social sciences for many decades, it has been widely underutilized in the United Kingdom and the western hemisphere in part due to a preference for ethnographic research and in part due to a lack of a clear, cohesive methodology. However, this dissertation demonstrates that ethnohistorical methods need not be used solely for triangulation, but they are powerful methods in their own right, capable of illuminating aspects of the human experience that other methods cannot. When researching institutions as labyrinthine and historically fluctuating as museums, methods that can manage complexity are necessary. As this dissertation shows, qualitative content analysis, when performed correctly, is such a method.

Positionality Statement

One of the strengths of qualitative content analysis, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, is that it allows the researcher to be less intrusive than in the case of ethnography. Because the texts studied have already been produced, the researcher theoretically has no influence over their contents, therefore allowing the texts to be an authentic, unimpeded communication between their composers and their intended audiences. However, because qualitative content analysis requires uncovering the latent content of the text, judgment and reflexivity remain intrinsic to the method, meaning that an analyst's bias or misunderstanding can skew results.

Therefore, when a qualitative content analyst is working within a culture and/or language in which she is not a native, both of which are the case in this research, it is generally imperative that the analyst have years of high-quality immersive training in the target culture.

My status as a non-native Japanese speaker currently living in the United States, then, presents challenges in ensuring that the latent content of museum texts is accurately interpreted. However, I have been a Japanese speaker for over twenty years, and I have spent a total of three years living in three different Japanese cities as a student of language and culture as well as a Japanese company employee. I have earned a bachelor's degree in Asian Studies and Japanese language as well as a master's degree in Asian Studies. These experiences have given me a solid foundation for linguistic and cultural interpretation, including that of what is left unsaid.

To ensure that my biases or preconceived notions did not interfere with the research findings, I included in my results only themes that arose repeatedly throughout the analysis. This way, I could insure consistent internal validity within the findings. Whenever possible, data were triangulated through interviews with museum curators or previously published research by other scholars of the Buraku.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapters Two through Four position the research in two main bodies of literature. Chapters Two and Three are dedicated to discussing global conceptions of race and caste in order to situate Burakuness in race- and caste-related discourses. Chapter Two first reviews concepts of race and caste as they have been theorized within the social sciences, ultimately pinpointing working definitions of these identifiers for the purpose of this research. The chapter

then details the historical context of Buraku discrimination and activism as well as how Buraku people were variously classified into Japanese racial imaginaries at different points in the past, ending with a description of how Burakuness is performed in contemporary Japan. Chapter Three then places Buraku identity in a comparative context, first with other Japanese racial/ethnic minority groups and then with other caste-based minorities throughout the world. In Chapter Four, literature on how museums function as arbiters of collective memory is addressed, with special attention given to how human rights museums and Japanese museums have shaped mnemonic communities.

Chapter Five discusses the methodology of qualitative content analysis, the method selected for this study, synthesizing the literature into a stepwise instruction guide to performing qualitative content analysis on a set of texts. The methods used in this study are then detailed, with attention given to reasoning behind sample selection and limitations of the study.

Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight are then dedicated to discussing the findings of the research, with focuses on the three themes of expressions of local rootedness, degree of acceptance of the global turn, and paradigms of space-based versus profession-based discrimination, respectively. Chapter Nine contains concluding observations, recommendations for practice, and suggestions for further study.

Chapter Two: Buraku Positionality in Japanese Race and Caste Imaginaries

“Tokushu Burakumin throughout the country: Unite!

Long-suffering brothers! Over the past half century, the movements on our behalf by so many people and in such varied ways have yielded no appreciable results. This failure is the punishment we have incurred for permitting ourselves as well as others to debase our own human dignity. Previous movements, though seemingly motivated by compassion, actually corrupted many of our brothers. Thus, it is imperative that we now organize a new collective movement to emancipate ourselves by promoting respect for human dignity.

Brothers! Our ancestors pursued and practiced freedom and equality. They were the victims of base, contemptible class policies and they were the manly martyrs of industry. As a reward for skinning animals, they were stripped of their own living flesh; in return for tearing out the hearts of animals, their own warm human hearts were ripped apart. They were even spat upon with ridicule. Yet, all through these cursed nightmares, their human pride ran deep in their blood. Now, the time has come when we human beings, pulsing with this blood, are soon to regain our divine dignity. The time has come for the victims to throw off their stigma. The time has come for the blessing of the martyrs' crown of thorns.

The time has come when we can be proud of being *Eta*.

We must never again shame our ancestors and profane humanity through servile words and cowardly deeds. We, who know just how cold human society can be, who know what it is to be pitied, do fervently seek and adore the warmth and light of human life from deep within our hearts.

Thus is the *Suiheisha* born.

Let there be warmth in human society, let there be light in all human beings.”⁴

The Suiheisha Declaration, written in March of 1922, is without question a document that is worthy of being quoted in its entirety, as it is above. Often proclaimed as the first human rights declaration in Japan, it was written on the occasion of the founding of the Suiheisha, or Levellers Association, which fought for the equality of Japan’s Buraku minority group. The Buraku people, who currently number about two million throughout mostly western and southern Japan, are the perceived descendants of feudal outcastes and those who subsequently moved to known Buraku neighborhoods during Japan’s modernization in the Meiji Era. Though they have in the last fifty years made great strides toward parity with mainstream Japanese, they have historically been subject to severe discrimination.

Like other racialized minority groups, the Buraku people were indeed “the victims of base, contemptible class policies” as the Suiheisha Declaration claims. However, they are both phenotypically and genotypically identical to their mainstream Japanese counterparts. Buraku people and mainstream Japanese are both fully protected under the same Japanese constitution, as both groups are Japanese citizens. How, then, did Buraku people come to be a discriminated minority population? The answer to this question involves a complex history including a feudal caste system, stigmatized geographic space, government policies informed by Western eugenics theory, militant advocacy, and self-placement within a global understanding of universal human rights.

This chapter aims to explicate the racialized status of the Buraku people. In order to lay the groundwork for this, I will begin with a history of the Buraku people, focusing on social

⁴ Suiheisha Declaration as translated by the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism: <https://imadr.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/SuiheishaDeclaration-English.pdf>. All portions of the declaration italicized here are italicized in the original translation.

status and political activism. Next, I will describe the philosophical backdrop against which this activism occurred – namely, the formation and evolution of racial self-concepts and Othering within Japan.

Race, Ethnicity, and Caste

Many volumes have been written on the very complex social phenomena of race, ethnicity, and caste, and full literature reviews of this work have filled entire encyclopedias. However, for this dissertation, it is important to at least provide working definitions in order to ground the research. According to Barnshaw (2008), who took on the momentous feat of writing the “Race” article in SAGE’s *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society*, race is “a social grouping of people who have similar physical or social characteristics that are generally considered by society as forming a distinct group” (p. 1091). Notable within this definition, in opposition to common parlance, is that it is not necessary for a group to have specific similar physical characteristics; a group with similar social characteristics may be considered a race as well. Barnshaw noted four main qualities that characterize race: its social (as opposed to biological) construction, its attribution of physical characteristics to social categorization, a perception of shared history and culture, and self-identification, which is often achieved through a majority racial grouping exerting authority over a minority racial grouping. Key here is the quality of race as an “invented taxonomy” (Koshiro 1999: 2) that is perpetuated within social systems. Omi and Winant (1986) have referred to this invention of racial taxonomies as *racialization*.

Much of the contemporary understanding of race within the social sciences can be attributed to Critical Race Theory (CRT), a theoretical framework that began in the 1970s as an

intersection between race and law (Ansell 2008). CRT posits that racism is embedded within the power structures of American society; that race intersects with other social markers such as class, national origin, and sexual orientation; that race consciousness is preferable to colorblindness; and that an unconscious racial structural determinism exists within the law, leading to institutionalized racism (Delgado & Stefancic 1993; 2012). While CRT was developed within the distinctive racial context of the United States, insights from CRT have been borrowed in analysis of institutionalized racism around the world, including in Japan (e.g. Yamada & Yusa 2014).

While notions of race were originally popularized by now-debunked theories of folk biological science (American Anthropological Association 1997), the concept of ethnicity finds its origins in sociology, particularly Robert Park and the early twentieth century Chicago school, though the word “ethnic” was not used widely until the 1960s (Sekulic 2008). Gordon (1964) defined ethnicity as a “group of individuals with a shared sense of peoplehood” (p. 24) – a sense that of peoplehood that DeVos (1975) specified may be based on language, religion, culture, appearance, ancestry, or region. When race and ethnicity are defined separately, as they are on the American Sociological Association website, they are often contrasted with one another:

Sociology uses and critiques the concepts of race and ethnicity, connecting them to the idea of majority and minority groups and social structures of inequality, power, and stratification. “Race” refers to physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant, while “ethnicity” refers to shared culture, such as language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs. (American Sociological Association, n.d.)

When we look at the concepts of race and ethnicity previously reviewed, we see that drawing a line between the two concepts can be problematic. If race refers to physical differences, then

why does DeVos refer to “appearance” as one basis of ethnicity? And why does Barnshaw devote precious encyclopedia real estate to including “social differences” in his definition of race? In fact, the American Anthropological Association in 1997 recommended that the United States Census Bureau stop referring to race and ethnicity in two different questions and instead consolidate them into one “Race/Ethnicity” question, citing the Office of Management and Budget’s inability to establish clear, distinctive definitions of the two terms (American Anthropological Association 1997). Ifekwunigwe and colleagues (2017) found that among the 3,286 anthropologists affiliated with the American Anthropological Association who answered a survey regarding race, there was considerable variation in how anthropologists defined race. While almost all acknowledged race as an invented historical artifact, the anthropologists differed in their analyses as to how profound race’s effects are on society and identity and the extent to which biology informs and is informed by race, if at all.

Race and ethnicity, then, currently co-exist in a somewhat uncomfortable state of overlap. I will not attempt in this chapter to resolve these competing conceptions of the two terms. Instead, as appropriate for a literature review, I will use the same term used by the author whose work is being discussed whenever possible. In other scenarios, I will default toward the term “ethnicity” as a generally more inclusive term.

The semantic boundaries of the concept of caste have also been subject to debate. Kroeber (1930) defined caste as “an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem in comparison with other such subdivisions” (p. 254). Berreman (1968) emphasized that caste systems are characterized by unusually rigid ranked hierarchies of groups of people that are part of a larger society. Status within caste systems is generally ascribed at birth, with no opportunity to advance within the

hierarchy. The system is perpetuated through strict endogamy, thereby curtailing opportunities for members of heterogenous castes to understand and empathize with one another (Yengde 2019). Gupta (2008) contrasted race and caste by emphasizing that physical markers of caste are invisible; instead, intangible and culturally coded “bodily substances” are believed to be able to be transferred through touch (p. 247). Hence, caste systems are often preoccupied with concepts of purity/impurity, with endogamy serving as the guardian of purity.

Scholars generally agree on the accuracy of the description of caste above. Their disagreement, however, concerns whether or not caste is unique to South Asia. Scholars holding the narrower viewpoint would add to the preceding paragraph that caste must be defined in relation to Hinduism (Berreman 1968). Gupta (2008) holds this view, stating in his article on “Caste” for the aforementioned *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society* that “[w]hat makes Indian society *unique* is the phenomenon of caste. Economic, religious, and linguistic differentiations, even race-based discrimination, are known elsewhere, but *nowhere else does one see caste but in India* (and, by extension, the subcontinent)” (p. 246, emphasis added). Interestingly, just a few pages previously in the same volume, Bondy’s (2008) entry on “Burakumin” describes the Buraku people (in a historical context) as “an outcast group” (p. 214). Berreman (1968) notes that while some scholars work from the more rigid definition of caste exemplified by Gupta, other scholars note that the conditions delineated in the previous paragraph also can be applied to other current and historical societies, noting that “[e]ither position is tenable; which is preferable depends upon one’s interests and purposes.” Indeed, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, Alexander (2010) and Wilkerson (2020) have, in their respective bestselling books *The New Jim Crow* and *Caste* made arguments that a racial caste

system exists in the United States. For the Buraku activists who have allied themselves with Dalit movements in India, it is much more instructive to take the latter view.

Racialization and Space: Buraku as Ghetto?

Because the Buraku story is characterized by a preoccupation with a stigmatized physical space – the buraku – it may prove helpful to explore how space, ethnicity, and stigma have historically intersected. Wirth (1928), in his pioneering work *The Ghetto*, insightfully described the ghetto as not just a physical location but also a state of mind and an instrument of control. However, he rather loosely included virtually all ethnic enclaves under the ghetto umbrella, referring to the “Little Sicilies, Chinatowns, Little Polands, and Black Belts of our large cities... Bohemias and Hobohemias, slums and Gold Coasts, vice areas and Rialtos” (p. 6).

Wacquant (2013) decried this conflation of ghettos and ethnic clusters, arguing that a ghetto is not characterized merely by ethnic homogeneity but also by stigma, institutional control, and clear boundaries. The goal of the state is “*economic extraction cum social ostracization*” (p. 22, emphasis in original), and this economic extraction often takes the form of prescribed and proscribed occupations. While for the dominant group the ghetto is a form of control, for the ghettoized it performs a protective function. Therefore, a ghetto may or may not be impoverished depending on the labor that is being performed. Wacquant’s examples include the heavily regulated Jewish quarters of 16th century Europe, African-Americans recruited to provide unskilled labor in northern cities after World War II, and Japanese buraku.

However, one can argue that while the historical buraku certainly falls neatly within Wacquant’s definition of a ghetto, the (post)modern buraku of today evades this categorization. Wacquant’s ghetto

is homogeneous; by way of example, he explained why Chicago's Bronzeville and Little Ireland neighborhoods did and did not meet the definition of "ghetto", respectively:

In 1930, when the all-black Bronzeville harbored 92% of the city's African-American population, Chicago's Little Ireland was "an ethnic hodge-podge" of 25 nationalities composed of only one-third Irish persons and containing a paltry 3% of the city's denizens of Irish ancestry. (Wacquant, 2013: 36-37).

While the buraku of Tokugawa Japan resembled Bronzeville, today the composition of most buraku is much more like that of Little Ireland. Therefore, while (post)modern buraku do maintain some characteristics of the ghetto,⁵ it may be more accurate to refer to them as post-ghetto stigmatized spaces.

A Brief Buraku History

Origins

Though it is unclear precisely when severe and systematic discrimination against the presumed ancestors of today's Buraku people began, the religious taboos that prompted this discrimination are ancient. Neary (1989) pointed out that the location of the Japanese imperial capital would move frequently prior to the Nara Period (CE 645-794) because the new court attempted to avoid the pollution of death that would attach itself to a city whenever an emperor died. This concept of pollution, or *kegare* (汚れ), began with indigenous Shinto purity taboos; however, when Buddhism made its way to Japan in the sixth century, taboos against meat-eating and animal slaughter compounded perceptions of pollution associated with death

⁵ For example, many *yoseba* – areas where day laborers congregate in the hopes to receive work from labor brokers – are located in buraku or areas historically associated with Buraku people (Fowler 1996).

(Botsman 2005). Whereas Shinto-associated pollution could theoretically be cleansed during one's lifetime, pollution associated with Buddhism was seen as the result of sin committed in this life or a previous one, and it could only be cleansed by re-entering the karmic cycle upon one's death (Neary 2003).

Historical evidence exists that during Japan's feudal Middle Ages, societies of two outcaste groups began to form on the edges of settlements. One group were referred to as the *eta* (穢多, or "abundance of filth"), and this group held occupations generally associated with the aforementioned purity taboos, e.g. leather workers, butchers, and (for reasons that remain unclear) bamboo workers (Neary 1989). The other group were referred to as the *hinin* (非人, or "non-humans"), and this group held occupations generally associated with the fringes of society, e.g. prostitutes, beggars, actors, and other performers (Amos 2011; Neary 2009). Eta status was considered absolutely hereditary, while there was some very rare movement in and out of hinin status across generations (Amos 2011; Davis 2000). If a non-eta or non-hinin came in contact with a member of one of the polluted groups, the pollution was believed to be transferrable, requiring spiritual cleaning (Neary 1989). However, these social structures were not uniformly enforced throughout time and space. During the frequent times of war, eta saw their status increase, as leather armor and bowstrings were vital to war efforts (Neary 2009, 2013). Sumptuary laws were weaker during these times, allowing some escape in and out of these communities. Therefore, any genealogical continuity from the Middle Ages to current Buraku communities is rather piecemeal (Neary 2009; Amos 2011).

Any flexibility in the system, however, generally came to a halt in the Tokugawa era (1603-1868), when the Japanese shogunate famously implemented its isolationist *sakoku* (鎖国,

or “closed country”) policy, severely curtailing international relations. Citizens were closely surveilled by requiring all families to register with local Buddhist temples, and divisions within a class/caste hybrid system became further entrenched (Ooms 1996; Amos 2020a). As Amos (2011) noted, “Widespread mercantilism, peasant bankruptcy and desertion, urban drift, increased vagrancy, and a perceived decline in public morality... were interpreted as ripping apart the moral and social fabric of Tokugawa society” (p. 41).

Therefore, the shogunate responded by creating neat classes of people with prescribed occupations. At the top of hierarchy sat the emperor, whose power was mostly symbolic, followed by the shogun, who was responsible for most decisions of executive governance. Below him were the samurai, who, in this time of relative peace, exchanged their swords for pens as government bureaucrats. Below the samurai were the three lower classes -- the (taxpaying) peasants, the artisans, and the merchants, in order from highest to lowest (Heine 2011). Within this hierarchy, statuses were generally inherited; if your father was an artisan, you would usually learn his craft from him (if you were his son) or marry into another artisan family (if you were his daughter). While there was a theoretical possibility of movement, such cases were rare (Hane 1982; Amos 2020a). Occasionally an ambitious peasant could be elevated to a samurai, or a successful artisan could earn enough money to buy a plot of land and take up peasant farming. Because such cases were extraordinarily exceptional, however, Amos (2020a) argued that these “classes” functioned more like castes than classes.⁶

⁶ Amos (2020a) drew heavily from the work of Takashi Tsukada when making this claim. Tsukada (2004; 2012) argued that scholars of class/caste in Japan have inaccurately described the social structure of early modern Japan as a discrimination/non-discrimination binary, while in fact the concept of *mibun* (身分, or status) pervaded the entire social system. Amos (2020a) referred to this influence of *mibun* as a “reconstituted caste form” (p. 8), even providing evidence that the medieval Japanese intelligentsia were not only aware of the Indian caste system but drew parallels between the eta/hinin and Indian

If movement was exceptional for the other classes/castes, it was virtually unheard of for the two outcaste groups, the eta and hinin. Hinin and especially eta statuses⁷ were almost always considered to be lifelong and hereditary, and this distinction began to be codified legally during Tokugawa era.⁸ While the eta and hinin were not counted in censuses due to their status as “non-people”, one estimate from 1710 put their population at 145,000 (Neary 1989). Progressively strict laws were established throughout the Tokugawa Era regarding the clothes the eta and hinin were permitted to wear, the areas in which they were permitted to live, the styles in which they could wear their hair, and even the value of their lives.⁹ They were forbidden from traveling to town at night, entering religious sites, marrying outside their caste, and constructing homes with windows facing the road (Amos 2011; Neary 2009; Amos 2020a; Hane 1982). This racialization of outcaste status reflected centuries of ingrained mainstream repulsion toward professions associated with *kegare*. Legally proscribed status indicators

untouchables in their literary works, just as Western observers did in travelogues from the era (Amos 2017).

⁷ Some scholars have noted that while there have been some documented cases of hinin status being shed, eta status could not be, though there were some cases of people absconding from eta communities (Amos 2011; Davis 2000). Neary (1989, 2009) notes that *ashiarai*, the process by which an individual or a family could be cleansed of polluted status, had all but ended by 1715 with the exception of a few hinin. This is reflective of an overall shift of the source of pollution from occupation to bloodline, though the historical record does not make entirely clear why this shift took place.

⁸ It is important to note that there are significant regional differences within Japan regarding the extent of eta and hinin ghettoization. Eta and hinin generally faced the most severe discrimination in the south and west of Japan, including the Kansai (Osaka/Kyoto/Nara) area and the islands of Shikoku and Kyushu. Hokkaido and Okinawa were not under full Japanese control at this time, and hence there are no records of outcaste communities in these areas. Nor were there communities in northeastern Japan, where recent research suggests the concept of *kegare* may have been less prevalent or non-existent (Amos 2011). In Edo (Tokyo), the capital, there were eta and hinin communities, but they seem to have received less discrimination than those in the west. This may be due to the fact that while the west was considered the breadbasket of the nation, meat-eating was generally more necessary to the Edo diet and hence professions associated with meat production were less stigmatized (Sugimoto 2014; Amos 2020a).

⁹ One local ruling claimed that the life of an eta was worth one-seventh of that of a commoner (Amos 2011). In other areas, eta and hinin could be killed by samurai with virtual impunity.

compensated for the lack of visual distinction between eta/hinin and the lower classes (Morgan 2007; Groemer 2001), and it is likely not coincidental that social discrimination coalesced into legal discrimination just as the relative peace of the Tokugawa era made leatherwork less vital to state interests (Neary 2009). The existence of evidence such as this has led Amos (2020) to include that caste is a word that “can and should be applied to Japan” (p. 1).

Neary (1989) and Amos (2020a) noted very little resistance to these regulations. Perhaps this was in part due to the fact that despite their lowly status, the eta and hinin sometimes were able to accumulate great wealth¹⁰ due to the monopolization of their professions (Amos 2011, 2020a). This relative prosperity is evidenced by records that show that while the mainstream Japanese population remained relatively stable throughout the period of 1720-1850, the eta/hinin population tripled, with some communities recording sixfold growth (Neary 2009; Nobuaki and Toshikazu 2021)¹¹. Those communities who did try to flout local laws were generally compensated with the promulgation of even more rigid regulation; therefore, discrimination against the eta and hinin peaked just before the Meiji Restoration.

Mainstream Modernization, Buraku Activism, and a Country at War

In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry’s black ships sailed into Tokyo Bay and forced Japan to open for trade, ending the long period of sakoku. His arrival also heralded a new

¹⁰ See, for example, the Danzaemon rulers in Edo, whose political and economic power was documented extensively by Amos (2020a). Like other contemporary wealthy Japanese, they had sandal bearers and traveled with an entourage. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Amos claimed, one might have mistaken the last Danzaemon for a member of the samurai caste (p. 71). Similar patterns of conspicuous consumption among outcaste communities were also observed in the Kansai region.

¹¹ Neary (2009) noted that part of this growth can also be attributed to movement into outcaste communities as some lower-class members lost their fortunes due to bad luck and/or conviction of crimes.

system of governance. The shogunate was no more, and the Meiji emperor was restored, at least nominally, to his former glory as head of government.

The Meiji (1868-1912), Taisho (1912-1926), and early Showa (1926-1989)¹² eras were characterized by a fever to modernize Japan in order to claim its status as equal to or superior to the West. To achieve this, various anti-feudal laws were passed at the beginning of the Meiji era, including those allowing commoners to take on surnames (1870) and marry nobles (1871) as well as those prohibiting the wearing of swords (1876) and the trafficking of women into sex work (1872) (Amos 2011). Through a series of taxation measures, the samurai class/caste was abolished with former samurai becoming integrated into Japanese society, often in government bureaucracy (Harootunian 1960).

As it was also rather embarrassing to the Meiji government to have a backward caste of people who were perceived to be eyesores under the gaze of Western powers, the Emancipation Edict of 1871 declared an end to the separation between *senmin* (賤民, or abject classes, i.e. the eta and hinin) and *heimin* (平民, or commoners). With this act, the eta and hinin officially ceased to exist; instead they were granted the appellation of *shin heimin* (新平民, or new commoners) (Hankins 2014). This designation, noted on the new secular family registers that replaced the temple registration system, simultaneously marked the alterity of the Buraku people while also offering them a place within the nation (Mutafchieva 2009). Upon its promulgation, the Emancipation Edict was celebrated by the *shin heimin*, though it took many

¹² These eras correspond to the reigns of Emperor Meiji (Mutsuhito), Emperor Taisho (Yoshihito), and Emperor Showa (Hirohito), respectively.

months in some cases for the news to reach rural areas (Bayliss 2013). The former eta and hinin were now free to pursue the occupations, spouses, residences, and clothing of their choosing.

However, they quickly learned that their emancipation was often freedom in name only. While the secularizing Meiji government may have decreed that people of the buraku were no longer polluted, mainstream Japanese were more than willing to continue the tradition of discrimination. Rare was a mainstream Japanese who wanted to rent a home to or hire a Buraku person. Marrying a Buraku person, or allowing one to marry one's daughter, was simply out the question. Buraku people were perceived by mainstream Japanese as slothful, lecherous, cowardly, unhygienic, and untrustworthy (Bayliss 2013; Neary 2009). Ooms (1996) has noted some of the more outlandish beliefs that were propagated concerning Buraku people in the early twentieth century: they had "one rib bone lacking; they have one dog's bone in them; they have distorted sexual organs; they have defective excretory systems; if they walk in moonlight their neck will not cast shadows; and, they being animals, dirt does not stick to their feet when they walk barefooted" (p. 303). Neary (1989) noted that shopkeepers would refuse to take money directly from Buraku customers, instead insisting that they place their coins in water-filled boxes. Compounding these difficulties was the other side of double-edged sword of the Emancipation Edict: now that they were "free", the Buraku people had lost their monopolies on their traditional industries, and many quickly saw their fortunes begin to melt away as state-owned tanneries and venture capitalists carved out large chunks of the leather and meat-processing markets (Amos 2011; Hankins 2014).

As a result, the Buraku people began to pursue cheap wage labor (Amos 2011), for which they were paid significantly less than mainstream Japanese (Bayliss 2013) for some of the most dangerous and dirty jobs, such as coal mining (Hane 1982; Neary 2009). Others set up shop

as rickshaw drivers or shoe shiners in rickety portable stands on the street (Mizuuchi and Jeon 2010). When Buraku men struggled to find work, Buraku women often found themselves to be the sole family breadwinners; many factories preferred to hire Buraku women (along with Okinawan and Korean women) because the women did not expect to be compensated if a fire or accident were to occur at the factory (Bayliss 2013; Rabson 2012). New Buraku ghettos were therefore formed in industrial areas, and stigma began to be associated with geographical space more than bloodline or occupation (Morris-Suzuki 2015).

After living a somewhat sheltered existence in their own endogamous communities, many Buraku children first became aware of the stigma against them when they began attending public schools, if their families were able to afford the nominal fees (Hane 1982). Buraku children were often bullied severely not only by their classmates, but also by their teachers. Play groups were often organized so that Buraku children did not have to come into contact with their non-Buraku peers, and separate toilet and eating facilities were also maintained (Neary 1989). However, as public education is one of the most powerful assimilation tools available to the state, over the decades of the Meiji and Taisho eras Buraku people gradually saw their values and concerns conform to those of the nation. As Bayliss (2013) noted, “Whatever they felt about the way the majority treated them, most burakumin viewed the world through essentially ‘Japanese eyes’” (p. 122).

In eyes of the Meiji government, however, the Buraku people were still a problem that needed solving. As would be the case with other minorities in the country, the state took a paternalistic approach to solving “the Buraku problem.” In 1907, the central government established a “Buraku Improvement Policy” (部落改善政策) that aimed to improve sanitation, “educate” Buraku people regarding the importance of taxes and savings, and eradicate criminal

elements through the promotion of schooling and vocational programs (Bayliss 2013). This policy followed the 1903 formation of the first nationwide Buraku organization, the Dai Nippon Dōhō Yūwa Kai (大日本同胞融和会, Greater Japan Fraternal Reconciliation Society; hereafter “Yūwa movement”), which aimed to eliminate discrimination against Buraku people through self-improvement. The group engaged in a good deal of self-flagellation, denouncing the behavior of fellow Buraku people as lazy, selfish, and dirty, characteristics which were believed to contribute to their poverty and unhygienic living conditions (Bayliss 2013). The government contributed token amounts of money toward the Yūwa movement, mostly to fix roads and improve sanitation.

As conditions in the buraku continued to deteriorate, Buraku people became dissatisfied with the Yūwa movement, believing it (with some degree of accuracy) to be a puppet organization of the state. After a series of steep increases in the cost of rice, some impoverished communities, including many of those with a high percentage of Buraku residents, began to riot, loot, and firebomb police stations in a series of incidents known as the Rice Riots of 1918. While the majority of these demonstrations took place in non-Buraku neighborhoods, some of the largest and most violent took place within Buraku communities (Bayliss 2013). Although the Buraku people represented about 2% of the overall population, they comprised 10% of the 8,200 people arrested as a result of the Rice Riots (Neary 1989). Around this time, tenants’ rights groups and labor unions were also beginning to gain power, emboldened by newly imported socialist ideas (Neary 2009). Despite the growing frustration and activist spirit among the Buraku, Yūwa movement leaders stubbornly continued to insist that the responsibility of solving the Buraku discrimination problem lie within the Buraku community, who should work to make themselves acceptable to non-Buraku.

Against the backdrop of this politically vibrant context in 1922 arose the Suiheisha (水平社, or “Levellers Association”), the predecessor organization to the Buraku Liberation League, which remains the most powerful Buraku activist organization today. As evidenced by the declaration printed at the outset of this paper, the Suiheisha took a much more militant strategy toward liberation, citing the failure of Yūwa strategies. In addition to denouncing capitalist exploitation of Buraku people and their ancestors, the declaration exhorts Buraku people to take pride in their heritage – a radical idea at a time when stigma still clung heavily to the Buraku/buraku. While the leaders of the Suiheisha and the Yūwa movements came from highly educated and relatively wealthy backgrounds, the rank-and-file members of the Suiheisha, as opposed to those of the Yūwa movement, consisted mainly of poorer Buraku people (Bayliss 2013). The Suiheisha in effect reversed the Yūwa movement’s contention that the poor living conditions of the Buraku people led to their discrimination, claiming that in fact their discrimination led to their poor living conditions (Davis 2000).

One of the most notable aspects of the Suiheisha playbook is the *kyūdan* (糾弾, or denunciation session). During *kyūdan*, a person or organization accused of Buraku discrimination is forced to listen to hours of “liberation education” until an apology is issued for the offending behavior. Depending on the incident, some sort of penance (such as a donation to Buraku causes or a public apology printed in a newspaper) might also be exacted. Pre-war *kyūdan* tended to be focused on individual acts of discrimination – often spurring from incidents in which individuals referred to Buraku people with slurs such as *eta* – and they were rarely violent (Neary 1989; Hankins 2014). Neary (1989) gives an example of an apology considered acceptable by Buraku *kyūdan* initiators:

“I have no words (good enough) to apologize to the Emperor and all the members of the Suiheisha for my having neglected the Imperial edict, issued by the Emperor Meiji on August 28, 1871, for having used discriminatory language. I have been impressed with the kind lesson taught me by the honourable members of the Suiheisha, and I would like to express here my appreciation.” (p. 89)

Note in the above apology the association drawn between respect for Buraku people and loyalty to the empire. The Suiheisha’s relationship with the state was ambivalent and complex. Although the Suiheisha barred non-Buraku from joining the organization, they often appealed to members’ patriotism and positioned the Buraku narrative as one that served nationalist interests. The more aggressive Japanese colonialism became, the more they fervently supported the emperor (Bayliss 2013). Because the Suiheisha, like their non-Buraku compatriots, looked at race through a social Darwinist lens (as will be discussed further in the next section), they were unable to build a coherent philosophy toward non-discrimination. They tended to view themselves as ethnically Japanese, not as a separate ethnicity or racialized minority.

By the mid-1920s, the Suiheisha had joined forces with the newly christened Japanese Communist Party (JCP) in viewing Buraku discrimination, in accordance with Marxist philosophy, as a result of oppressive feudal and capitalist systems (Bayliss 2013). As the global depression in the 1930s hit Buraku communities particularly hard, this interpretation seemed particularly prescient; throughout this decade Buraku households earned about half the average salary of their mainstream Japanese counterparts (Neary 1989). Many of the Buraku craftsmen who had so valiantly struggled since the Emancipation Edict to keep a foothold in the leather industry lost their businesses as the Japanese government in the late 1930s tightened its grip on military

supply chains and relocated leather manufacturing operations to the colonies. Despite the war economy's lack of contribution to Buraku fortunes, the Suiheisha for the most part remained committed to the war effort (Bayliss 2013). This may be why the Suiheisha managed to survive as long as they did under the strict censorship of what became a de facto military dictatorship in Japan. In 1942, however, the group was finally forced by the government to disband.

After the war, however, it did not take long for the group to reform, which they did in 1946 as the National Committee for Buraku Liberation (部落解放全国委員会; hereafter NCBL). The NCBL's goals were much the same as those of the Suiheisha; with the ultimate objective of attaining Buraku liberation, they sought government funding to improve their living conditions, educational awareness of Buraku issues, and the outlawing of Buraku discrimination (Bondy 2015). In 1955, they changed their name to its current incarnation as the Buraku Liberation League or BLL (部落解放同盟, or *buraku kaihō dōmei*). As they reformed, their political leanings began to subtly and slowly change. Matsumoto Jiichirō, a Buraku reformer who assisted in the founding of the Suiheisha¹³ and served in the pre-war Diet as a member of the JCP, began to collaborate with the Liberal Democratic Party (Japan's confusingly named conservative party, also known as the LDP) in order to advocate for Buraku privileges (Mutafchieva 2009).

As Japan rebuilt after the war, Buraku living conditions remained meager. There were often no sewage systems in the buraku, and up to fifteen families would share one toilet. Roads and alleyways were narrow, and they often flooded with sewage during the rainy season, causing diseases such as tuberculosis and trachoma to run rampant (Mutafchieva 2009; Neary

¹³ Matsumoto, however, did not attend the founding meeting of the Suiheisha as he was in prison at the time on what many historians believe to be trumped-up charges levied in an attempt to obstruct the founding of the Suiheisha (Neary 1989; Hane 1982). Matsumoto remained a leading figure in the Buraku Liberation League until his death in 1966.

2009). Fire was an ever-present threat, as fire hydrants and adequate water were lacking and the roads were much too narrow for a fire pump to maneuver through (Neary 2009). These conditions persisted through the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. As Japan's modernization led to explosive economic growth, most Buraku people continued to be left behind in their pre-modern neighborhoods. It soon became clear to all concerned that a tipping point was about to be reached.

The Special Measures Law and Buraku Modernization

By the late 1950s, factions within the ruling LDP had become sympathetic to Buraku arguments that massive government support would be needed for them to reach educational and economic parity with mainstream Japanese. A bill to create a council to investigate Buraku complaints was passed in 1960, and when the council's report was published in 1965, it declared that providing "special measures" to improve the Buraku situation was indeed the state's responsibility (Neary 2020).

In 1969, the government passed the Special Measures Law for Dōwa Projects (同和対策事業特別措置法, hereafter Special Measures Law or SML). "Dōwa" (同和), meaning "harmony", had become the new euphemism used to discuss Buraku issues.¹⁴ The SML offered massive amounts of funding – and a good deal of discretion as to how the funding could be spent – to Buraku neighborhoods that were willing to take on the designation of "Dōwa district". Consequently, neighborhoods with large Buraku populations needed to decide whether they

¹⁴ The term is derived from the World War II-era expression "Dōhō Ichiwa", or "Brothers United", which was used to refer to Buraku people as being included as loyal imperial subjects in the war effort (Tsutsui 2018).

were willing to absorb the stigma of labelling themselves as such, and some (particularly in the Tokyo area) chose not to (Hankins 2014). The BLL has estimated that about 1,000 of these *mikaihō buraku* (未開放部落, or “unliberated buraku”) still exist (Davis 2000). For those that did accept the Dōwa designation and associated funding, one consequence was the drawing of specific boundaries between Buraku and non-Buraku areas, further strengthening the association of Buraku people to stigmatized space and therefore making such spaces more visible to would-be discriminators (Mutafchieva 2009). In most cases, the money for improvement projects was managed by local governments who worked closely with a Buraku advisory board (often mainly comprised of BLL members). Neary (2009) pointed out that “[r]ather than being co-opted of the BLL into the state structure, this was regarded as being the only way of guaranteeing that burakumin were not co-opted” (p. 72).

As one would hope for a project that cost roughly \$100 billion US between 1969 and 2002 (Amos et al. 2021), the difference made by SML projects is difficult to overstate. Sleek, new residential communities with wide roads were built. Sewage, water, and irrigation systems were upgraded. Neighborhoods received new hospitals, parks, job training programs, and community centers. Flagging small and medium enterprises were revitalized through grant and loan programs. Children received scholarships and financial aid to attend high school and college. In fact, when walking through Buraku neighborhoods today, if they stand out at all, it is often because they contain *more* amenities than their mainstream counterparts (Davis 2000; Amos 2011). Most of this improvement can be directly attributed to the implementation of the SML. However, very little of the funding was designated toward projects aimed specifically at anti-discrimination educational programs for non-Buraku Japanese, even though human rights protection was a stated goal of the SML (Mutafchieva 2009; Neary 2020).

The SML also represented the final nail in the coffin in the relationship between the BLL and the JCP. The JCP still felt strongly that Buraku discrimination was rooted in feudal labor exploitation perpetuated through capitalism – a type of structural violence of which the Buraku people were not the only victims (Neary 2009). As Amos (2020a) noted, to the JCP, the salient identity was the Japanese working-class identity; to cling to the Buraku identity was to claim an anachronistic societal position. For many Buraku, however, giving up their Buraku identity was tantamount to self-loathing and betrayal of their Suiheisha forbears who claimed in their declaration that “the time has come when we can be proud of being eta.” While the JCP advocated for SML funding to be distributed to both Buraku and non-Buraku impoverished areas, the BLL argued that their historical circumstances as a group singled out for state-sponsored discrimination required the state to make special reparations for this wrong. A holdout within the BLL was none other than Matsumoto Jiichirō, who questioned the wisdom of special privileges that would continue to serve as a marker of Buraku alterity (Neary 2009). Indeed, the implementation of the SML has led to allegations of unfair preference and “reverse discrimination” among non-Buraku Japanese up to and including the present day. When Matsumoto died in 1966, he was succeeded by Asada Zennosuke, a leader who strongly believed that Buraku inequality was established by an exceptional set of historical circumstances (Tsutsui 2018). Therefore, the alliance continued to deteriorate until its eventual rupture with the passage of the SML.

In 1979, the JCP formed its own Buraku advocacy group, the National Buraku Liberation Alliance (Zenkoku Buraku Kaiho Rengokai or 全国部落解放連合会), usually referred to by the acronym *Zenkairen*. *Zenkairen* complained accurately – but generally to no avail – that BLL access to the administrative process controlling SML funds gave it unfair oversight of the use of

the funds, making BLL applicants to SML funds much more likely to be successful than Zenkai-aren applicants (Upham 1987). They also pointed to instances of corrupt misuse of these funds.¹⁵

Although the SML was originally designed as a ten-year plan, it was renewed several times until it was eventually allowed to expire in 2002. While the passage, renewal, and administration of the SML can doubtlessly be considered the most important accomplishment in the Buraku liberation movement between 1969 and 2002, other aspects of the movement were also important in the fight against discrimination. Kyūdan campaigns continued, arguably the most important of which was against the Ministry of Justice and led to the passage of a 1976 law requiring the privacy of Japanese family registers. Before this time, potential employers and marriage partners would routinely check family registers to ensure that candidates in question were not from Buraku neighborhoods. Closing the family registers led to more equal employment opportunities and gave Buraku people the freedom to disclose their Buraku identities – or not – as they saw fit.¹⁶

During this time a global turn within the Buraku Liberation League's mission also became evident. Historically, the BLL had focused on domestic issues, in part because of the desperate living situations of their constituents and in part due to a suspicious attitude toward the United Nations, who they viewed as a puppet organization of the United States and other world powers (Tsutsui 2017). However, as Buraku people inched ever closer to economic and

¹⁵ Neary (2009) diplomatically pointed out that while Zenkai-aren and the JCP are right to expose these instances of corruption, it is somewhat questionable as to whether corruption is more common in Dōwa projects than in the Japanese construction industry in general. When such allegations are sensationalized by the news media, as they often are, they may contribute unfairly to public stereotypes of Buraku people as criminal or untrustworthy.

¹⁶ However, the law allows certain individuals (e.g. attorneys seeking evidence, debt collectors, etc.) access to family registers, and occasionally there are cases wherein an unscrupulous person with access to a register sells the information to a private investigator (Hankins 2014).

educational equality with non-Buraku Japanese, the BLL began to consider their next steps. At the same time, they also noticed how the success of the Ainu movement¹⁷ grew as UN programs allowed them to connect and share resources with indigenous groups around the globe. The BLL became heavily invested in United Nations advocacy, lobbying forcefully for the Japanese government to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which they did in 1979, making these covenants enforceable in Japanese courts (Tsutsui 2017, 2018).

While their entrée into international politics was at first spurred by a desire to garner more support for domestic issues, the BLL gradually came to embrace a more inclusive global view of human rights. In 1988, the BLL formed a daughter organization, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), which gained UN consultative status in 1993 and works toward various anti-discrimination campaigns around the world. At the time of IMADR's formation, there were just five Japanese NGOs with consultative status, and none of them focused on discrimination. In order to achieve consultative status, IMADR had to show that it represented multiple countries and therefore went about recruiting board members from Austria, Belgium, Ecuador, England, France, Sierra Leone South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, and the United States (Tsutsui 2018). While the formation of IMADR represented a sharp change in focus for the BLL, there was virtually no internal opposition to the move (Tsutsui 2018). Considering the BLL's heavy emphasis on Buraku exceptionalism while advocating for the passage of the SML, this turn toward positioning the Buraku narrative within a global context of human rights advocacy represents a remarkable change in values, mission, and philosophy.

¹⁷ The Ainu are the indigenous people of Northern Japan. The Ainu movement will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The Buraku Today

Now that the SML has ended, who are the 21st-century Buraku people? This turns out to be a very complex question. Even counting them accurately is difficult, as information about Buraku lineage is not collected on the Japanese census. The BLL numbers Buraku people at about 3 million, a figure they derived from looking at Tokugawa Era census data and extrapolating to the present day. However, many scholars of the Buraku find this method problematic due to the geographic shift of Buraku communities and the movement in and out of them after the Emancipation Edict. These scholars prefer to use the Japanese government's estimate of around 1.2 million people who self-identified as Buraku in a 1993 survey of Dōwa districts (Hankins 2014)¹⁸. As was the case throughout their long history, they are not evenly distributed across Japan. Buraku communities, in line with historical patterns discussed previously, are much more concentrated in western Japan, Shikoku, the Kanto (Tokyo) area, and northern Kyushu (Neary 1989). North of Tokyo, there are very few Buraku communities.

The above numbers do not include non-Buraku people who live in buraku, which are not nearly as ghettoized as they once were. In fact, only about 50% (or perhaps less) of today's buraku residents claim any outcaste lineage (Amos 2011; Davis 2000). While some mainstream Japanese are still repelled by the stigma of living in a buraku, others are attracted by sleek, amenity-rich neighborhoods with low housing costs. These conditions are also attractive to

¹⁸ The BLL argues that this number is problematic because it does not include Buraku people who do not live in Dōwa districts. Neary (2021) noted that if we count every person who might be vulnerable to discrimination due to their background, regardless of whether or not they currently live in a buraku, the number might be closer to 3 million. Noguchi (2000) went even farther, suggesting that the number should include anyone currently living in historic buraku and anyone working in a discriminated profession, regardless of background.

immigrants, who often have little concern about the history of such neighborhoods.¹⁹ Hence, several scholars have remarked about the international character of today's buraku.

Mutafchieva (2009) reported seeing many South Asian and African immigrants, some of whom have established families with Buraku and non-Buraku Japanese, in Buraku neighborhoods. She also noted that many neighborhoods have a large Korean population; in fact, Korean dances are sometimes included in Buraku cultural festivals.

In some segments of the Buraku population, there have been efforts to claim a distinctive Buraku cultural pride. Some areas have done this through human rights festivals and museums. Others promote their traditional professions through a narrative of Japanese statehood (Davis 2000; Bondy 2015); for example, virtually all taiko drums, ubiquitous at Japanese festivals, are still made by Buraku families (Bender 2012). Taiko drumming groups with the purpose of promoting awareness of Buraku issues have formed, and some have been successful enough to play throughout Japan or even internationally. Bondy (2015) also described a Buraku Children's Club which he observed during his fieldwork at an elementary school. Citing Amos (2011), he problematized the invention of an unbroken genealogical chain between the traditional occupations of Tokugawa outcastes and today's Buraku people:

[T]he students were taught that much of what is now considered "high" culture in Japan,

including calligraphy, taiko drums at festivals, and the bamboo tools for the tea ceremony, was all based on the work of outcaste groups during this era. Whether this was true or not is secondary to the fact that the teachers were attempting to instill a

¹⁹ A survey taken in one buraku found that 40% of the residents were unaware that it was a Buraku neighborhood before they bought their property (Mutafchieva 2009). Okubo (2013) also noted that many of the younger generation in her buraku field site were unaware that they lived in a buraku.

sense of historical pride for the students. Many internalize these lessons and carry that pride for years to come. As one adult informant claimed to me, “Japanese culture would not exist if it were not for burakumin.” Yet, as Amos (2011) has eloquently argued, such framing attempts to connect disparate groups and experiences into an unbroken narrative highlighting a simple historical experience when the reality is much more complex. (p. 75)

Other neighborhoods promote “Buraku cuisine,” which consists of dishes such as *abura yaki* (oil pancakes), *saiboshi* (smoked horse meat), *aburakasu* (sausages made from animal by-products), and *kogori* (innards cooked in gelatin) -- in essence, foods associated with poverty in early Showa Japan (Mutafchieva 2009; Nishimura 2010). One neighborhood has published a book of old Buraku slang, now rarely used (Mutafchieva 2009). However, Hankins (2014) has noted a backlash against this consumption of Burakuness as some have protested that this so-called “Buraku cuisine” is a mere cultural artifact with no salience in everyday Buraku life.

Not all Buraku people are so “out and proud” with their Buraku identities, however; nor is it always perceived as advantageous to display such transparency. Davis (2000) has noted several factors that have complicated the very category of Buraku: the decline of the traditional Buraku professions, the disappearance of slum conditions in Buraku neighborhoods, a decrease in prejudicial attitudes toward Buraku people, and the decrease of ghettoization described above (p. 112). In addition, as alluded to previously, Buraku people have historically emphasized their ethnic “sameness” with mainstream Japanese in an effort to combat prejudice (Tsutsui 2018). These conditions have made it easier for Buraku people to choose to pass as mainstream Japanese or reject their Buraku identity altogether, and some have chosen to do so.

After Matsushita (2003) conducted in-depth interviews with seven men and 11 women between the ages of 15 and 25 in eight different buraku, he created a typology of four different identity types among Buraku young people. While the *Buraku identity-oriented type* might take a very open and activist approach to her Buraku identity, the *multiple identity-oriented type* will see her Burakuness as just one facet of her identity. For the *moratorium identity type*, her Buraku identity is not a salient aspect of herself; she simply does not give it much thought and feels no conflict about it. In contrast, the *identity conflict type* struggles to define what her Buraku identity means within her life. Matsushita listed many factors that can affect Buraku identity types, including past experiences (or lack thereof) with discrimination, participation in movements, relationships both in and outside of the buraku, the family's Buraku identity, and relationships with teachers and guidance counselors. It should again be noted that despite eloquent arguments that Buraku people are an ethnic group in Japan²⁰, Buraku people themselves tend to be uncomfortable with that label, seeing themselves as ethnically Japanese. As Mutafchieva (2009) stated, "The question of their status today is therefore not so much one for them of whether they are Japanese or not, but one of how they will work through their unusual position within Japan" (p. 180).

As mentioned previously in this paper, Buraku people have indeed made strides toward parity with non-Buraku Japanese, so much so that Neary noted in 2013 that some have wondered if we might perhaps be approaching "the end of buraku history in the sense that the problem is almost resolved, but that we have also reached a time when it is no longer useful to know about buraku history" (pp. 281-282). Unfortunately, scholars seeking nationwide data on Buraku conditions must look all the way back to 1993, the last year in which a government

²⁰ See, for example, Lie (2009) and Nemoto (2008).

survey was taken. However, evidence of improved status can be seen even that early. Inter-marriage between Buraku and non-Buraku Japanese, once considered the ultimate taboo, has become commonplace. While 78% of married couples above the age of 70 in this 1993 survey were both Buraku, this was only true for 32% of couples below the age of 30 (Morgan 2007). Great strides have also been made in the realm of education. Davis (2000) noted that while only 30.3% of Buraku youth advanced to high school compared to a national average of 66.8% in 1963, 92% of Buraku youth advanced to high school in 1993 compared to the national average of 96.5%, closing the gap considerably.

Even after SML funds dried up, Buraku people continued improving their neighborhoods using the LDP-championed machizukuri or “town-building” process. Machizukuri is a neoliberal process characterized by bottom-up town planning initiatives in which local citizens participate in order to create their ideal living spaces, thereby eliminating the need for urban planning to be a state function. Because machizukuri has generally tended to take place in areas of affluence, the Buraku case is somewhat exceptional (Sorensen and Funck 2007). Nishimura (2010) went so far as to label the Buraku incarnation of “human rights machizukuri” one of the most successful examples of machizukuri in the country. This is certainly in large part due to the many years of Buraku experience working with the government on bottom-up initiatives to utilize SML funding as well as the BLL’s experience as an intercessor between communities and government funds (Mizuuchi and Jeon 2010).

In this way, the machizukuri process has been leveraged to continue the work of the SML in developing public housing, parks, museums, festivals, commercial spaces, hospitals, nursing homes, community centers, and job training facilities. Using machizukuri for their own ends has allowed Buraku people to, as Mutafchieva (2009) described, pursue

a much more complex relationship with the state—one that goes beyond welfare but also resists the neoliberal agenda. In other words, burakumin are now finding possibilities to challenge the power structures which have simultaneously constricted and liberated them through time, without necessarily rejecting those structures. (p. 134)

This example of a minority group appropriating a neoliberal process in order to preserve their culture, attract tourists, and perform their identity is particularly central for one of the museums discussed in this research, the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum.

Despite these bright spots, there is still ample evidence that Buraku discrimination is alive and well and that more work is necessary for Buraku people to reach equality with their non-Buraku compatriots. For example, while the data on intermarriage listed above indicate a lessening of discriminatory attitudes, other data on intermarriage point to plenty of existing prejudice against this practice. Morgan (2007) cited a statistic that more than one-third of all Buraku people below the age of 39 have experienced some act of marriage discrimination, with 42% of Buraku people and 18% of mainstream Japanese living in Buraku districts reporting Buraku issues as having contributed to the breakup of a romantic relationship. In Morgan's own research of 37 Buraku/non-Buraku mixed couples, 21 of them reported receiving some sort of sanction or negative opinion from their non-Buraku family members. A survey of 5,000 people in Osaka in 2001 showed that four out of ten people believed that it was "only natural" to consider a potential spouse's family lineage (Tomonaga 2008).

Despite the BLL's exhortations to its members that they should be proud of their Buraku heritage, Burakuness is still very rarely openly discussed in Japan, even among the younger generation. Bondy (2015), in his analysis of the centrality of silence in Buraku milieux, has written extensively on this lack of dialogue on Buraku issues in Japan, which leads to young

Buraku struggling to find a voice with which to express their Buraku identities. The Japanese media rarely discuss Buraku issues. Students are seldom taught about Buraku issues in school, and when they are, it tends to be in a shallow, mostly historical context. In fact, when Bondy (2015) was doing his fieldwork at a public school in Shikoku with a large Buraku population, he was instructed never to use the words Buraku, Burakumin, or Dōwa when speaking with the students, and he only rarely heard the word Dōwa spoken among teachers, usually in hushed tones.

Income disparities and disproportionate rates of welfare reliance between Buraku and non-Buraku Japanese are also somewhat worrisome. According to a survey carried out in Tottori prefecture in 2005, 19.7 percent of Buraku families received public assistance – three times higher than the average rate for all municipalities in Tottori. Twice as many Buraku people as the municipal average had unstable employment (Tomonaga 2008). The last national survey in 1993 showed that reliance on public assistance was twice as high for Buraku people than for non-Buraku Japanese living in the same ward (Neary 2013). The same survey showed that while 23.3% of working-age Japanese worked for firms with over 300 employees²¹, only 10.6% of Buraku workers did. This may be largely due to the significant university education gap between Buraku and non-Buraku Japanese, which in turn is affected by the low rankings of high schools with large Buraku populations (Davis 2000; Okano 2000). Gradually, the widening gap between rich and poor has become of greater concern within Buraku neighborhoods (Davis 2000), reflecting an overall pattern of increasing neoliberalization throughout Japan.

In his study of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Buraku districts in Osaka, Tanaka (2007) reported that about half of business operators in Buraku neighborhoods related that

²¹ Because they tend to offer higher salaries, better benefits, and greater job security, jobs at large companies are highly sought after in Japan.

business was declining. Buraku industries tended to be mostly blue-collar, as the following descriptions would indicate:

Examination of small-sized Industries reveals that many people in Dōwa districts are engaged in renting houses or rooms and running meat retail businesses. In comparison with the entire prefecture of Osaka in terms of percentage, Dōwa districts have more than 10 times more people engaged in the following businesses: production of leather shoes and related accessories, truck and transportation businesses, wholesale of agricultural products, wholesale of meat, fish and recycled materials, meat retail, household waste disposal, and tanned leather good production. (Tanaka, 2007, 646-647)

He reported that these companies struggle with a lack of innovation, as fewer than 10% of these businesses had introduced computers into their operations by 2007 – a figure that showed no improvement from a 1995 survey. Buraku SMEs in Nara, which relied heavily on the production of leather goods such as baseball mitts and shoes, were on the edge of collapse due to overseas production of these goods.

Though in 1997 they opened their membership rolls to anyone living in a buraku (Hankins 2014), the BLL has struggled to maintain membership numbers, and scholars have noticed a drop in youth activism in the Buraku liberation movement (Htun 2012; Bondy 2015; Amos 2011). Young people who are interested in Buraku liberation have tended toward more recently formed locally-based organizations such as Buraku Heritage (Bondy 2020) and Fukinotō (Mutafchieva 2009).²² The BLL also continues to face regular accusations of corruption and ties with organized crime from the JCP in their newspaper *Akahata* (Neary 2009, 2013). Despite

²² Zenkairen disbanded in 2002 with the end of the SML (Amos 2020b).

these challenges, the BLL has remained the most politically active and powerful Buraku organization in Japan. Their daughter organization, IMADR, successfully lobbied the UN in 2002 to introduce a new category of discrimination termed “Discrimination Based on Work and Descent” that has proved a helpful frame of reference for Dalits and other caste-based groups. This marked the first time that a new human rights issue had been proposed by a Japanese group (Tsutsui 2017)²³. IMADR has also issued reports and statements on ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, Dalit women in India, violence against indigenous populations in South America, and discrimination against the Roma in Europe (Tsutsui 2017).

Aside from their international endeavors, the greatest domestic success of the BLL since the end of the SML has undoubtedly been the passage of the Act for the Promotion of the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination (APEBD) in December 2016. This is the first law in Japan specifically aimed at combatting Buraku discrimination, and the placement of the word “Buraku” in the title is a symbolic act that matters in a country in which Buraku issues are routinely silenced (Bondy 2020). As Amos (2020b) pointed out, part of the reason that the SML was allowed to expire was a perception among lawmakers that the Buraku problem was “solved”, but the passing of the APEBD served as an admission that equality was yet to be realized. Several factors spurred the enactment of the law, including outside pressure on the Japanese government from the UN to enact more legal protections for minorities (Amos 2020b; Neary 2020) and the appearance of a list of Buraku place names for sale on Amazon.com in early 2016²⁴ (Bondy 2020). The aim of the APEBD is stated as follows: “In accordance with the basic

²³ Ironically, the Japanese government continues to this day to insist that Buraku people do not fall under this category (Tsutsui 2018).

²⁴ Such lists have historically been used to discriminate against Buraku people by outing them as living in Buraku neighborhoods. After protest from Buraku rights groups, the 2016 list was removed for sale from

principle set out in the preceding Article, the State shall be responsible for taking measures concerning the elimination of Buraku discrimination as well as for providing necessary information, guidance and advice for the promotion of such measures by local governments.”²⁵ The act puts the onus on local governments and the state to provide education and awareness campaigns to this end, and it also commits the state to performing surveys of “the actual situation of Buraku discrimination”. Considering the last such survey occurred 27 years ago, this promise of more current broad data on Buraku conditions is sorely needed.

However, the law is not without its problems. The APEBD is a type of law referred to in Japanese as a *rinenhō* (理念法, or “principle law”), a toothless law with no penalties in case of failure to comply (Bondy 2020; Kotani 2018). The APEBD also contains no clear definition of what, exactly, Buraku discrimination entails (Bondy 2020). The JCP, unsurprisingly, was critical of the law, referring to it as an anachronistic piece of legislation that would only further cement discrimination (Amos 2020b). Scholars of the Buraku (Amos 2020b; Bondy 2020; Neary 2020) tend to agree with one another that the APEBD is unlikely to represent a major turning point in how Buraku issues are handled by the Japanese government. However, the law represents a significant success in collaboration between the BLL and major political parties. The fact that the law passed 220-14 (with the JCP being the only coalition to vote against it) is remarkable. As Neary (2020), who just seven years prior had discussed a possible end to Buraku history, wrote in regards to the law:

Amazon after ten days and 52 pre-orders; however, the information contained therein was later posted online. Those running the websites also tried to connect certain family names to places contained in the list (Bondy 2020).

²⁵ An English translation of the full text of the law can be found at <https://imadr.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Act-on-the-Promotion-of-the-Elimination-of-Buraku-Discrimination-2.pdf> (accessed 7/5/2020).

At the very least the existence of this continuing conversation between state and UN committees will keep that possibility alive and give domestic advocacy groups such as the BLL a point from which they can exercise leverage on their government. (p. 220)

It seems, then, that we can expect Buraku issues, even as they are placed in a more globalized context, to remain relevant in Japan in the coming years.

Perceptions of Racial(ized) Hierarchy in Japan

From Meiji to World War II: Social Darwinism, Eugenics, and Ultrationalism

Of course, the evolution of Buraku identity and activism did not occur in a vacuum. Mainstream Japanese attitudes toward alterity strongly affected the course of the Buraku movement that began in the Meiji era. Before the Meiji Restoration, Japanese self-perceptions were highly localized and disjointed, as most Japanese directed their loyalty to their *han*²⁶ rather than the Japanese state (Lie 2009). Most of the populace was illiterate and unschooled in nationalist ideology. Those that were educated were subject to the *kokugaku* national learning system, which was characterized by a stress on the centrality of the emperor and comparison with China (Befu 2001). However, Lie (2009) observed that even as late as the mid-nineteenth century, the educated samurai were more han-conscious than nation-conscious.

After the Meiji Restoration, however, the point of comparison pivoted from China to the West (Befu 2001). Seeing the vast differences with the West in manner, behavior, goods, and ideas sparked a sense of cohesion among the Japanese, who began to see themselves as a unified people who had more in common than they had previously thought. It is at this juncture that we begin to see the state creating subjects of the nation through public education,

²⁶ During the Tokugawa Era, the han was the estate of an individual *daimyo*, or feudal lord.

communications, and transportation (Lie 2009). Intellectuals and journalists helped the state to achieve this new sense of unity (Weiner 2009).

One of these intellectuals was Fukuzawa Yukichi, whose bust has graced the 10,000 yen note since 1984. In his book *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (Bunmeiron no Gairyaku, 文明論の概略), published in 1875, he borrowed heavily from social Darwinism and Western eugenics to create his own hierarchy of race. He posited that people with white skin (i.e., the US and Europe) had achieved the highest level of civilization, followed by those in “semi-civilized” Asian countries (Turkey, China, and Japan – with Japan ranked the highest), followed by the lowest rung, the black-skinned peoples of Africa and Australia (Kawai 2015). The concept of social Darwinism was considered cutting edge science in Japan at this time, as Darwinism itself had only recently been brought to the University of Tokyo by the American zoologist Edward Morse in 1870 (Russell 2009).

The racialized hierarchies therein served the Japanese state well as Japan sought to become a colonial power, for there was now a “scientific” basis for them to “civilize” their Asian neighbors – and their own minorities. One University of Tokyo intellectual, Kume Kunitake, drew a direct “physiological” comparison between Native Americans and the eta and hinin populations of Japan, concluding that the eta and hinin were fated to undergo a decline much as the Native Americans had (Weiner 2009). Similarly, social Darwinist principles were also used to judge the Ainu and Okinawans as inferior races that needed to be civilized, i.e., forcefully assimilated (Siddle 2009), as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Part of the discussion surrounding eugenics in Japan was whether or not the Japanese race could be “improved” through intermarriage. While there were some who advocated marriage to Europeans, particularly before 1900, eventually this idea was mostly discarded in

favor of Fukuzawa's view that the Japanese could improve their place in the racial hierarchy through self-improvement, including diet, physical exercise, and education (Koshiro 1999).

While "mixed-blood" (*konketsu*, or 混血) children with European or American and Japanese parentage did exist in the Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa eras, they tended to be the offspring of well-to-do bureaucrats, and according to Fish (2009), they were few enough in number to avoid being "Othered" en masse.

Japan saw itself as the most advanced among Asian nations, and it was widely believed among Japan's intelligentsia that other Asian nations were scientifically incapable of lifting themselves up (Koshiro 1999). Koshiro (1999) noted that at the turn of the 20th century, the US saw Japan as a sort of "junior police force overseeing the stability of the Far East" (p. 92). She continued:

Under the terms of Taft-Katsura Agreement of 1905, for example, the United States recognized Japan's authority in Korea in exchange for Japan's recognition of American predominance in the Philippines. Japan and the United States acknowledged mutual responsibilities for elevating the level of civilization in Korea and the Philippines under their separate tutelage. Japan's responsibility toward Korea and America's "White Man's Burden" toward the Philippines coexisted in Asia and the Pacific. (p. 92)

Kawai (2015) wrote eloquently about how Japan's place in the hierarchy was reflected linguistically. The Japanese word for race, *jinshu* (人種, or "type of human"), first came into popular use with Fukuzawa's early Meiji writings on Blumenbach's taxonomy of the five races, which was taught in Japan until the early 1920s. Because the Japanese were the same *jinshu* as other Asians, there was a sense of shared history or fate – a camaraderie that could obviously become problematic when trying to make a case for colonizing those of the same *jinshu*.

Therefore, self-description of the Japanese as part of the Asian jinshu gradually started to be replaced with a description of the Japanese people as a *minzoku* (民族, or “family of folks”).

Based on the German concept of *Volk*, *minzoku* came to represent

a group of people who share “traditions” based on natural environment, history, and culture, which were regarded as eternal, fixed entities constitutive to the essence of Japaneseness.... The notion of *minzoku* is epitomized in the three unities, in which the Japanese are defined as a people who share “spiritual” (i.e., language) and “physical” (i.e., “children” of the emperor)²⁷ blood ties, equating nation with state, culture (or ethnicity), and race. (Kawai 2015: 31-33).

This perception of the Japanese as their *own* race allowed them more leeway to exploit the labor of their “inferior” colonists. While those in Korea and Taiwan, for example, may have been Japanese citizens after annexation, they were by no means part of the Japanese *minzoku*. To clarify this hierarchical separation, Japan began dividing its territory into *naichi* (内地, or mainland Japan) and *gaichi* (外地, or the colonies). This bifurcation left the Buraku people, along with the Ainu and Okinawans, dislocated on the racial hierarchy; they could not be classified as *gaichi*, but neither were they completely *naichi*.

While Japan viewed itself as racially superior to other Asian countries, the Japanese state also began to make a case that Japan, as the first non-White imperial power, had achieved parity with White Western countries. In 1919 Japanese representatives to the League of Nations advocated (unsuccessfully) for a racial equality clause in the league’s covenant. However, it is

²⁷ It is important to remember that at this time, the Japanese emperor was still considered a living deity by the Japanese (Kitayama 2018). Thus, by virtue of being his “children”, the Japanese could claim that their bloodline was marked with divinity.

important to note that this “equality” clause only applied to “civilized” nations (Russell 2009). Thus, it would have allowed Japan to claim equality with Western colonial powers while maintaining dominance over its own colonies. According to Itagaki (2015), this move toward international “equality” was sparked by anti-Japanese immigration movements in the US, Canada, and Australia. As these anti-Japanese feelings intensified in the US, they led to the 1924 Johnson-Reed Anti-Immigration Act, which effectively barred Japanese immigration to the United States. Some scholars claim that it was the passage of this act, which betrayed both the Gentleman’s Agreement of 1907²⁸ and the Japanese sense of self, that spurred Japan’s disengagement with the West toward the creation of a new Asian racial order that would soon characterize the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (Koshiro 1999).

In the West, biologists, anthropologists, and sociologists began questioning the science of eugenics in the 1920s and 1930s (Barnshaw 2008; Kawai 2015). Japan, however, like its ally Germany clung to eugenics as a social control mechanism until the end of World War II. In 1940, Japan passed a National Eugenic Law allowing the forced sterilization of alcoholics, drug addicts, certain criminals, and those with hereditary diseases (Morris-Suzuki 2015). Not coincidentally, wartime Japan was also characterized by ultranationalist discourse in which “at its extreme, everything of worth, including the Buddha and Jesus, was said to hail from Japan” (Lie 2009, p. 122). With patriotism at a fever pitch, the national flag and national anthem, symbols of Japan’s imperial dominance, became ubiquitous; when Japan ultimately lost the war, then, these

²⁸ In 1907, the Japanese voluntarily limited immigration to the United States in what was widely known as the Gentleman’s Agreement. Because of this, the Japanese were not barred from immigration to the United States when the first restrictive immigration act was passed in 1917, though the act barred immigration from every other Asiatic race besides Filipinos, who at the time held US citizenship and could travel to the continent freely. While the 1917 act supported the idea of Japanese exceptionalism, the 1924 act lumped the Japanese together with other Asians, a grave insult to the Japanese minzoku-oriented psyche.

symbols were tainted with shame, leaving the Japanese without clear national symbols to which they could cling (Befu 2001).

After the War: Nihonjinron, Multiculturalism, and the Return of Ultranationalism

At the beginning of the American-led Allied Occupation, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) General Douglas MacArthur's administration was perfectly content with this racial philosophy vacuum. In fact, within the first months of the Occupation, censors had prohibited all mentions of race in the Japanese media (Koshiro 1999). Gradually, however, the occupiers and the Japanese found a common interest in their mutual racism against Japan's minorities. Because of both forced and voluntary movement to the mainland, Japan's *gaijin* minority populations, particularly Koreans, had grown immensely during the war. With the approval of SCAP, Japan's pan-Asian racial hierarchy that characterized the war continued afterward, only this time it was focused inward rather than outward (Koshiro 1999). Ultimately, this led to serious consequences for the minorities from the former colonies, who lost their Japanese citizenship and thereby faced severe sanctions on their socioeconomic and cultural status within Japan. Once again, the Japanese were restored to their position as an "honorary Western race" who would take on the duty to lead the "inferior" non-Western races. Social Darwinism lived on in Japan through the mutual racist worldviews of the Japanese and the Americans.

According to Befu (2001), the war-related tarnishing of more tangible symbols of Japanese hegemony (such as the national flag, anthem, monuments, and emblem) led to the rise of *nihonjinron*. *Nihonjinron*, literally "theory of Japanese people" (日本人論) is a genre of popular, academic, and pseudo-academic writing that aims to explain the cultural and racial uniqueness of the Japanese. While most *nihonjinron* is written by Japanese academics and

pseudo-academics, some best-selling Western-authored books that were translated into Japanese have also been labeled nihonjinron.²⁹ According to Lie (2009),

...what unifies all Nihonjinron writings are their fundamental assumption and central conclusion that Japanese people are different and even unique. The sine qua non of Nihonjinron is the salience of the category of Japaneseness; the only taboos are to say that Japanese are just like other people or to question the category itself. (p. 151)

Befu (2001) pointed out that while the character *ron* (論) in nihonjinron generally means “theory,” it can also simply mean “comment” or “essay”. This ambiguity sometimes allows impressionistic essays with little or no scientific merit to be passed off as academic theory. The comparative Other in nihonjinron is occasionally Korean or Chinese, but it is much more often the West.

Often, nihonjinron begins with an “untranslatable” Japanese word and explains how the existence of that word explains something about Japanese culture. Examples of such “untranslatable” words (and their translations) include *ki* (energy or life force), *wabi* (rustic simplicity), *sabi* (beauty in imperfection), or *mono no aware* (impermanence). Psychoanalyst Takeo Doi has made his career by claiming that the concept of *amae*, or dependence on others rooted in the mother-child relationship, is unique to the Japanese (see Doi 1971, 1985). As Befu (2001) noted:

What fuels the fire of the linguistic uniqueness argument is that the Japanese language is natively spoken only by Japanese in Japan and that all Japanese in Japan speak it

²⁹ Some commonly cited examples of nihonjinron written by non-Japanese are the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict’s *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) and American social scientist Ezra Vogel’s *Japan as Number One* (1979).

natively. This one-to-one correspondence... enables advocates of Nihonjinron to exploit the language to the maximum. (p. 35)

Other nihonjinron writers take an aspect of Japanese history or geography and draw conclusions as to how that aspect has uniquely shaped modern Japan. For example, Befu (2001) cited the philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō's theory that the temperate monsoon climate of Japan led to housing with open floor plans which in turn led to the absence of privacy and collectivist culture of Japan. Many of the so-called striking and unique features of the Japanese as named in nihonjinron are clichés (e.g. harmony, nonverbal communication, group orientation, preoccupation with nature) and examples to the contrary (peasant uprisings, verbosity, individual actors, mass urbanization and construction) are routinely ignored (Befu 2001).

The popularity of nihonjinron carries with it several dangers.³⁰ First, because it characterizes the Japanese as positively unique, it spurs race thinking that differentiates mainstream Japanese from minorities, usually to the end of placing these minorities – albeit often not consciously – in an inferior position (Yoshino 1992; Kim 2011). Second, because it does not allow for exceptions to the “rules” of so-called Japanese behavior, it is inherently

³⁰ Despite these worrisome observations, a minority of social scientists find a degree of academic value in nihonjinron. The anthropologist Takie Sugiyama Lebra, for example, published an essay in 2004 provocatively titled “In Defense of Nihonjinron.” In it, she describes the uniqueness of Japanese society as that which makes it worthy of study: “The anti-[nihonjinron] lobby tends to identify [nihonjinron] as an exaggerated, mystified, stereotypic, sometimes overidealized—and thus highly objectionable—representation of Japanese culture. I would counter, if there is nothing unique about Japan, nothing that distinguishes Japan from other countries or cultures, how can we talk about Japan and why do we study it at all? The ultimate verdict would be that we can no longer mention ‘Japan’ or ‘Japanese culture’ because ‘there is no such thing’” (p. 256). She therefore recommended looking at constructs such as *amae* or group orientation as continuous variables rather than binary ones; i.e., though all cultures may indeed have some trace of *amae*, if the concept tends to be *more* prevalent in Japan than elsewhere, that concept has a degree of salience and meaning in Japan.

prescriptive, and as Befu (2001) pointed out, “it is only a short step from nihonjinron as prescriptive model to nihonjinron as ideology” (p. 80). Nihonjinron provides the state with an “academic” basis to define what it is to be Japanese, and this image is promoted to the world through vehicles such as the Japan Foundation and the Cool Japan initiative. The problem is that this rigid definition of Japaneseness inherently excludes minorities and ignores their contributions to Japanese society (Befu 2001).

Because of its assumption of the congruence of land, race, history, language, and culture, nihonjinron has played an important role in upholding the myth of Japan as a monoethnic society, repeating wartime claims of Japanese exceptionalism while divorcing these claims from their militaristic connotations (Befu 2001; Htun 2012; Lie 2009). By the 1960s, *tan’itsu minzoku* (単一民族, or “racially homogenous people”) had become the term by which the Japanese described themselves (Kawai 2015), even though it is an untruth that has continued to erase Japan’s minority populations to the present day (Lie 2009). Murphy-Shigematsu (1993) referred to this as Japan’s “monoethnic myth,” which allows Japan to hide discrimination and racism by simply denying the existence of minorities. McVeigh (2000) described the monoethnic myth as follows:

Japaneseness is built by essentializing and confusing one’s political affiliation (statism), nation (ethnocultural heritage), and “race” (biological traits that are assumed to be common to a group). The merging of these concepts forms a logic of tautological equivalencies: “one looks Japanese because one is ethnically Japanese because one possesses Japanese citizenship.” (p. 91)

The monoethnic myth is able to survive in part because many Japanese minorities are not immediately phenotypically distinguishable from mainstream Japanese. In addition to Buraku

people, many members of the groups to be discussed in the following chapter – including Ainu, Okinawans, Zainichi Koreans, and Nikkeijin – can often pass as mainstream Japanese (Morris-Suzuki 1998).

The existence of *nihonjinron* alone is not powerful enough to sustain the monoethnic myth; many arms of state and society work together to accomplish this. Many scholars (e.g. Lie 2009; Yamamoto 2012) have pointed to the role of the Japanese census, which asks for nationality but not ethnicity, in obscuring Japan's diversity. If Japan's ethnic minorities are literally not counted, do they really count? Others have charged Japan's Ministry of Education with (intentionally or not) indoctrinating students with the monoethnic myth by failing to promote civic inclusion of Japanese minorities and instead focusing on superficial othering (Lie 2009; Tai 2007; Okubo 2013). Lie (2009) named Japan's Tokyo-centric media as a contributing factor. Osaka has large populations of Buraku people and Koreans, Hokkaido is heavily influenced by Ainu culture, and Okinawa obviously has the largest population of Okinawans. Tokyo, however, has a smaller population of these "invisible" minorities, leading to a skewed portrayal of Japan's true diversity.

Japanese politicians have also been known to occasionally brag of Japan's supposed homogeneity. Perhaps the most notorious for making such outrageous claims was Yasuhiro Nakasone, who served as Prime Minister from 1982 to 1987. During and following his stint as Prime Minister, he repeatedly attributed Japan's economic success to the country's monoethnicity and the superiority of "Japanese DNA"; he once even famously blamed America's lower educational performance on its Black and Puerto Rican populations (Koshiro 1999; McVeigh 2000). In a 1980 report to the United Nations, the Japanese government went so far as to make the preposterous claim that no minority groups existed in Japan (Webster 2011).

Western academics have also shown themselves to be complicit in the effort to promote the monoethnic myth. In 1988, Edwin Reischauer, then America's leading Japanologist, referred to the Japanese as "the most thoroughly unified and culturally homogeneous large bloc of people in the world" (p. 33).

If a nation is monoracial, then, how can racism possibly exist therein? If a Japanese accepts the monoethnic myth, it is then natural for her to see racism as a foreign, rather than domestic, issue. Kawai (2015) has claimed that this is indeed the dominant view in Japan, as the Japanese word for racial discrimination, *jinshu sabetsu* (人種差別), is generally associated with White racism against Black people. For example, when a Greek Olympic athlete tweeted in 2012 that "with so many Africans in Greece, at least the mosquitoes of the West Nile will eat homemade food", the mainstream Japanese media immediately denounced this statement as racist. In contrast, when a right-wing politician in the Lower House claimed in 2013 that there were "swarms of South Korean prostitutes in Japan", the media criticized this statement as inappropriate but avoided the word "racist" (Kawai 2015).

Although some Japanese are aware of the existence of racism in Japan, the monoethnic myth has proven stubbornly persistent. When Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka, whose father is Haitian, sent a tweet encouraging Japanese to participate in Black Lives Matter protests in Tokyo and Osaka following the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police in 2020, she faced an immediate backlash, including responses denying the existence of racism in Japan. These responses came despite the fact that one focus of the Japanese protests was a recent incident in which a Kurdish man claimed that he was stopped by Japanese police without cause and shoved to the ground (Denyer 2020). When the existence of minorities is repeatedly

denied, it becomes much less likely that they will be provided social, cultural, and legal rights (Nagayoshi 2011).

With the exception of slurs spouted at ultranationalist rallies and online discussion boards (to be discussed later in this section), aggressive acts of racism tend to not be seen on an everyday basis in Japan (Yamada & Yusa 2014). Instead, Japanese racism is characterized more by unconscious bias (Arudou 2015), systemic policies that privilege those with “Japanese blood” (Arudou 2014), and microaggressions (Yamada & Yusa 2014), which together make up that which Lie (2009) referred to as “passive racism”. Lie cited residential discrimination in Japan as an example of passive racism with the following anecdote:

When I looked for an apartment for a South Korean scholar near the University of Tokyo, eight brokers simply refused to consider renting to foreigners. All of them blamed either landlords or neighbors for disliking foreigners. In castigating someone else, the structure of irresponsibility assured the perpetuation of residential segregation. (p. 175)

Arudou (2014, 2015) has written extensively about how Japan’s foreign resident registration systems penalize non-citizens, who must carry their identification cards with them at all times to avoid arrest and fines.³¹ More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan faced heavy criticism for being the only G7 nation to deny entry to its long-term and permanent residents (Osumi 2020). Even as COVID cases decreased, Japan continued to have some of the strictest entry requirements in the world, as Prime Minister Kishida Fumio noted with pride. Though he

³¹ Lie (2009) has pointed out that although Japan’s long-term and permanent residents understandably object to this practice and often feel overly surveilled, police surveillance is not limited to foreign residents and often extends to Japanese citizens as well. Bestor (1989) has also written persuasively about the powerful surveillance role of Japan’s neighborhood associations.

faced some opposition from academic and business leaders, Kishida's isolationist COVID strategy was largely supported by the Japanese populace (Inada 2022).

Although it can be easier for the state to ignore the existence so-called "invisible" minorities (e.g., Koreans, Ainu, Buraku people, and Okinawans), for the past thirty or so years it has gotten more and more difficult to ignore the more visible minorities in Japanese society – namely, the country's growing immigrant population. As Japan's population has continued to age and its birth rate has continued to decline, the country has become increasingly reliant on immigrant labor to perform low-wage, manual labor, service sector, and health care jobs (OECD 2019). By the 1980s, then, movements had begun to form around the promotion of multiculturalism in Japanese society (Lie 2009). Efforts such as including more English signage were undertaken to "internationalize" Japan, and school textbooks began to incorporate more diversity (Ishiwata 2011). *Tabunka kyōsei* (多文化共生), or "many cultures living together", became the new catchphrase of the movement, and in 2005, the Japanese government established a committee for the promotion of *tabunka kyōsei*. However, it is important to note that the committee does not focus on cultural rights, but rather on practical matters such as encouraging municipal governments to provide necessary information in a variety of languages (Nagayoshi 2011).

While *tabunka kyōsei* is generally popular among the Japanese population in general, many scholars have criticized it for being a shallow series of measures that only serves to reify difference (Ishiwata 2011; Kitayama 2018; Nagayoshi 2011; Okubo 2013; Tai 2007). While some efforts at *tabunka kyōsei* (e.g. festivals and museum displays) allow Japanese more contact with immigrant populations, insider/outsider distinctions are rarely complicated and instead are emphasized (Ishiwata 2011). Cultural differences are commonly discussed, while injustices are

rarely examined (Kitayama 2018). Foreign residents are conceptualized as primarily those who struggle to speak Japanese, a notion that reifies the nihonjinron conflation of language and race (Okubo 2013). Groups who do not fit neatly into an insider/outsider dichotomy, such as Buraku people and konketsu children, are routinely left out of tabunka kyōsei discourse (Hankins 2014; Koshiro 1999).

Not all Japanese wish for Japan to be a nation of “many cultures living together”. Many ex-colonial powers in the West have recently seen a rise in the formation and political influence of ultranationalist groups, and unfortunately the major ex-colonial power in the East has as well. The advent of the ultranationalist movement in Japan can be traced from both a top-down perspective in consideration of nationalist policies promoting patriotism³² as well as from a bottom-up perspective as a grass-roots collective of far-right movements, many of which found their beginnings by connecting like-minded individuals on online message boards (Kitayama 2018). Itagaki (2015) also named the historical revisionist backlash against mid-1990s apologies for Japanese military atrocities as a contributing factor.

This rise of ultranationalism has accompanied a significant shift to the right in Japanese politics over the past decade and a half (Nakano 2016; Kitayama 2018). Therefore, rather than being characterized by the antiestablishment worldviews associated with their Western counterparts, the Japanese ultranationalist movement generally has tended to be sympathetic to the establishment. Perhaps the most powerful of these ultranationalist groups is Zainichi Tokken o Yurusanai Shimin no Kai (在日特権を許さない市民の会, or “Association of Citizens Against Special Privileges for Koreans Born in Japan”), usually abbreviated Zaitokukai. Zaitokukai

³² Examples of this include the ruling LDP’s advocacy of expanding Japanese military powers and the Abe administration’s recent inclusion of “fostering patriotism” in the goals listed in the Basic Law on Education.

members see mainstream Japanese as victims of “reverse racism” in which Japanese-born Koreans are granted state welfare at the expense of Japanese taxpayers. They see Zainichi Koreans as enemies and invaders, and often refer to them in rhetoric as *gokiburi* (cockroaches) and *chon* (a pejorative word for Koreans). As net denizens, they have popularized patently false narratives in which Koreans came to Japan by choice during the war, including comfort women, who they claim worked voluntarily as sex workers (Ogasawara 2019). They have been fined for performing loud protests at Korean schools, and members have been arrested for anti-Korean violence (Hatano 2018). While Japanese-born Koreans are the main target of their ire, Zaitokukai members have also participated in such mission-expanding activities as stalking a Filipina girl who had overstayed her visa and protesting screenings of *The Cove*, an American documentary film that exposed the government-sanctioned mass killings of dolphins in Japan.

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the Zaitokukai phenomenon is that despite their appalling behavior, they have been able to garner sympathy from Japanese politicians. In 2010, Prime Minister Abe along with his Minister of Education attended a conference held by a branch of Zaitokukai, while the mayor of Osaka, Hashimoto Toru³³, accepted a meeting with the president of Zaitokukai. After this meeting, Hashimoto stated that the government of Japan needed to reconsider the issue of special permanent residency for Koreans (Park 2017).

With such overt animosity displayed by Japanese ultranationalists toward Koreans and others, how can racism in Japan possibly continue to be denied? Of course, many Japanese are very concerned about these incidents. Social scientists in Japan in particular take these acts very

³³ Hashimoto, who has served as both mayor of the city of Osaka and governor of Osaka prefecture, is famous for taking far right nationalist positions. In the past, he has also denied the existence of Korean “comfort women” (sex slaves forced to serve Japanese soldiers during World War II), excused the rape of locals by US forces stationed in Okinawa, attempted to create a law that would require teachers to stand during the national anthem, and defunded Buraku-related projects such as the Liberty Osaka Human Rights Museum.

seriously; for example, in 2014 the Kansai Sociological Association held a symposium titled “Nationalism, Hate, and Phobias in Contemporary Japan”. The word “phobia”, in this case, is telling – it refers to xenophobia. Also in 2014, the World Congress of the International Sociological Association held a session titled “Upsurge in Xenophobia in Contemporary Japan: Its Causes and Uniqueness.” Racist vitriol against Zainichi Koreans in Japan is often referred to as “xenophobic” despite the fact that many of the Koreans being targeted are the fourth or fifth generation of their families to live in Japan. Park (2017) argued that this distinction reflects the insider/outsider dichotomy and therefore reifies racial difference. To confront this racism, Park contended, would require Japan to come to terms with its colonial past as well as its *jus sanguinis* immigration system, which labels former colonial subjects, including those born in Japan both before and after World War II, as “foreigners”. The drastic differences between how the political Left and Right have viewed Japan’s past has continued to drive a wedge between the two sides, resulting in unclear international messages in international diplomacy, particularly in Japan’s relations with its Asian neighbors (Hatch 2014).

This is not to say that the Japanese state is deaf to criticism of its racial policies. Since the end of World War II, there has at least been a vague acknowledgement of the importance of protecting Japanese citizens from racial discrimination, narrow interpretation of race notwithstanding. Article 14 of the Japanese Constitution, which was imposed during the Occupation, prohibits discrimination on the basis of race (*jinshu*). As Koshiro (1999) pointed out, however, “the ‘race’ [*jinshu*]’ provision changed virtually nothing since there was no clue as to whose racial status was being protected, in what ways, and by what means” (p. 107). Kawai (2015) claimed that the use of the word *jinshu* in the constitution was intentional and convenient for Japanese officials, as it tended to imply White racism. Had the word *minzoku*

been used instead, the Japanese might have had to reconsider their own racism against other Asians.

Internal pressures from minority groups (such as the BLL) and external pressures, particularly from the United Nations, have spurred the Japanese government to create some more specific protections. As a signatory to ICESCR, ICCPR, and ICERD (the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination), Japan is held to some degree of accountability as to whether or not strides are being made toward equality. A 2006 report from the UN's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination proved particularly scathing and internationally embarrassing to Japan. Doudou Diène, the rapporteur, concluded that both racism and xenophobia were prevalent in Japan, affecting national minorities (such as the Buraku people and Ainu), descendants of former colonial subjects (such as Zainichi Koreans and Chinese), and later immigrants (such as Filipinos and Brazilian Nikkeijin) (Diène 2006). From his findings, Diène (2006) made the following four recommendations:

- 1) that domestic laws be passed which provide penalties for racial discrimination in employment, housing, and marriage, as none currently existed at the time of the report;
- 2) that an effort be made to include more minorities in government representation;
- 3) that Japan's history textbooks be revised to "better reflect, with objectivity and accuracy, the history of minorities and relations with neighbouring countries"; and
- 4) that the national government officially address the "historical and cultural roots of racial discrimination and xenophobia" in an effort to promote "the complex but profound process of multiculturalism in Japanese society". (p. 19)

While some scholars have criticized these recommendations as being too minimal (e.g. Ishiwata 2011), the Japanese government has struggled somewhat with implementing them effectively. For example, while discriminatory acts against an *individual* can be punished under tort law (or, in some cases, prosecuted under criminal law), there are often no consequences for hateful speech or actions toward a group of people; Japan, like its former occupier the United States, strongly protects freedom of speech, making meaningful hate speech legislation difficult (Amos 2020b, Hatano 2018). Although Japan did pass an anti-hate speech law in 2016 to some fanfare (Kitayama 2018), this law, like its cousin the APEBD, is another rinenhō, or toothless law. As Martin (2018) has stated, this is not surprising for Japan, which has a history of “pass[ing] toothless legislation in response to civic unrest and social rights litigation, as a means of diffusing the situation and dividing the opposition” (p. 465). In the future, it may prove interesting to see whether these token efforts prove satisfactory to the CERD, and if not, what consequences, if any, there may be for Japan. If history is any guide, the most serious penalty may be more international embarrassment – followed by more rinenhō.

Chapter Three: Parallels and Perpendicularities: How the Buraku Narrative Intersects with and Departs from Those of Other Marginalized Groups

Introduction

As the previous chapter insinuates, Buraku people are not the only racialized minority whose history and contemporary identity has been shaped by Japan's shifting ideological contexts. This chapter will now compare the Buraku narrative with that of other minorities in Japan, namely, Ainu, Okinawans, Zainichi Koreans, Nikkeijin, and other immigrant groups. It is necessary to state two caveats at this juncture. First, this is by no means meant to be an exhaustive list of all of Japan's discriminated minority groups; to that end, one could easily include LGBTQ+ populations, those with physical and/or mental disabilities, sufferers of Minamata disease, those with Hansen's disease, *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivors), and many others. Because of this dissertation's focus on race and caste, I have chosen to highlight other ethnic groups. Second, the brief background sketches of the case study subject minorities chosen are not meant to represent all of the nuances and complexities of their histories. Rather, the purpose of these sketches is to provide just enough information to draw meaningful comparisons. I am therefore greatly indebted to the scholars cited in this section, as their in-depth expertise on these communities has provided me with the breadth of information necessary to do so.

Clarity Begins at Home: Buraku Intersections with Other Japanese Minority Collective Memory

"We Must Never Again Shame Our Ancestors... Through Servile Deeds": The Ainu

The Ainu are the indigenous people of Northern Japan, having inhabited the present-day areas of northern Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands since the beginning of recorded

history (Lie 2009). Lie (2009) compares them to the Inuit tribes of North America in the sense that until the 15th century, there was little sense of a cohesive Ainu ethnicity; instead, the Ainu were a geographically dispersed collection of tribes. Daily life tended to be structured around the *kotan*, small organized hunting and fishing communities (Morris-Suzuki 1998) with animistic religious beliefs that differed starkly from those of mainstream Japanese (Siddle 2009). The 15th century marked the beginning of the encroachment of the Matsumae domain into Ezochi – present-day northern Honshu and Hokkaido – which had theretofore been considered the autonomous territory of the Ainu and other northern tribes. Although the Ainu continued to live in northern Hokkaido after the intrusion of the Matsumae, they saw their fortunes decline as the invasion of the Japanese came part and parcel with the usurpation of profitable trade routes for fish and goods (Lie 2009).

Until the Meiji period, the Matsumae sought to maintain strict social boundaries between the Ainu and themselves; the Ainu were not permitted to speak Japanese or wear Japanese clothing. However, the Matsumae were happy to exploit their labor as low-wage workers in contract fisheries, which increased in number significantly in the 19th century. When Japan was opened for trading with the arrival of the black ships, many Ainu societies had already been decimated by dependence on the alcohol and tobacco products (Lie 2009) and previously unencountered diseases (Siddle 2009), both of which were brought to them by the Japanese.

With the Meiji Restoration, Japan renamed Ezochi as Hokkaido in 1869 and formally claimed it as part of Japan in 1873, mostly for the purpose of forming a national security buffer against Russia (Lie 2009). The Japanese saw Hokkaido as a mostly empty land waiting to be exploited for economic development, and “civilizing” the Ainu would be a prerequisite for this (Siddle 2009). Therefore, the state embarked upon a massive forced integration program in

which the Ainu were forced to become farmers and take Japanese names while also being forbidden to speak Ainu, fish, and cut down trees (Morris-Suzuki 2015, Lie 2009). They were encouraged to intermarry with mainstream Japanese (who not infrequently abused their Ainu wives), the ultimate aim of which was to bring the Ainu to extinction (Siddle 2009). Numerically, this plan had some degree of success, as the population of Ainu in 1900 was estimated to be about 17,000 – only 6,000 less than the 23,000 Ainu who live in Hokkaido today (Siddle 2009; Htun 2012).

During the Meiji era, the Ainu were generally considered the lowest of the low on Japan's social Darwinist ladder, a notion used to justify their subjugation (Russell 2009; Siddle 2009). On family registers, they were marked as *kyōdojin* (郷土人, or former natives) (Siddle 2009). An example of the disdain held toward the Ainu can be seen in the Osaka 1903 manifestation of another Western import, the “human pavilion”, which, in the name of science, displayed various peoples in a zoo-like fashion for curious onlookers as a man dressed like a zookeeper walked back and forth while holding a whip and derisively pointing out the “distinguishing features” of the human exhibits. Visitors to the Osaka human pavilion, for the price of 10 *sen*³⁴, were able to view five Ainu, four Taiwanese, two Koreans, three Chinese, three (Asian) Indians, one Javanese, one Bulgarian, and two Okinawans (Rabson 2012). The Okinawans were removed from the exhibit at the protests of the Okinawan community in Osaka – protests not against the concept of human pavilions per se, but rather against the notion of placing Okinawans at the same level as the Ainu. One editorial in an Okinawan newspaper protested that “[I]ining up Japanese citizens of Okinawa Prefecture with Taiwanese barbarians (seiban) and Hokkaido Ainu is to view Okinawans as one of these. [We are] being portrayed as an

³⁴ One hundred *sen* are equal to one yen.

‘inferior race’ (rettō shuzoku)” (as quoted by Rabson 2012). There was very little activism among the Ainu before the war, though there was a small “self-help” movement led by the “official” Ainu organization, the Utari Kyōkai (Siddle 2009).

Ainu activism did not become truly organized until the late 1960s, a time when citizen protest was particularly active in Japan (and the world). Young Ainu began to notice indigenous movements around the world and were particularly impressed with the 1972 American Indian siege at Wounded Knee. They began to challenge the conservative leadership of the Utari Kyōkai and in 1974 successfully lobbied the government for a much-needed welfare program based on the Buraku SML (Rabson 2012; Siddle 2012; Tsunemoto 2001). They also sought out alternative histories and created new ceremonies to challenge the master narrative of the state “development” of Hokkaido. In order to accomplish these aims, they borrowed heavily from the Buraku kyūdan tactic, with which they became familiar after Ainu leaders began visiting Buraku communities in the Kansai area in the late 1970s (Rabson 2012; Tsutsui 2018). However, they also were very successful in leveraging another tactic which Buraku people would borrow later – that of engaging international organizations in their struggle for rights. They contributed to the drafting of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as one of the first recognized indigenous groups who were not colonized by Westerners, destroying old stereotypes of indigeneity and giving inspiration to indigenous groups from Africa and Asia (Tsutsui 2017). Domestically, they were able to successfully lobby the government to pass the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act in 1997 (Tsutsui 2017) and receive acknowledgement from the Japanese government as an indigenous group, first by the Supreme Court in 1997 and later by the Japanese Diet in 2008 (McGrogan 2010; Tsutsui 2018).

Like today's Buraku people, contemporary Ainu fall on a spectrum regarding the extent to which they claim their Ainuness; some prefer to deny it completely, others may claim it only when they deem it advantageous to do so (such as filing for welfare benefits or securing employment in tourism), and still others positively claim their Ainu roots at all times (Siddle 2009). As more and more Ainu are marrying mainstream Japanese, however, the movement has turned toward preserving and promoting Ainu culture, language, and traditions (Htun 2012; Siddle 2009; Tsutsui 2007). While these efforts at preservation are worthy, they may also be an uphill battle. For example, the most recent estimate puts the number of native Ainu speakers at around 15 people (Moseley 2010), and around 60 percent of Ainu reported in a 2008 survey that they had no experience working to hand down their language, culture, and songs (Hirano 2009). This may be because they have more pressing concerns, as less than 70 percent of Ainu attend high school³⁵ and the average Ainu household salary is about 60 percent of the national average (Htun 2012).

From the above narrative, it is clear that the Buraku and Ainu stories have several areas of overlap but also points of departure. While the Buraku people were never “colonized” like the Ainu, both groups were until the Meiji Restoration considered a breed apart from mainstream Japanese and therefore segregated into their own communities – the *kotan* and the *buraku*. After the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese state made efforts to “civilize” both of these “less evolved” groups – through forced assimilation programs for the Ainu and *Yūwa* programs for the Buraku – but retained markers of alterity on both groups’ family registers. While the Ainu got a later start than the Buraku in activist efforts, both groups borrowed liberally from the other’s playbook and consequently received similar results in affirmative action programs and

³⁵ In Japan, schooling is compulsory until high school. However, for the past 30 years, the high school graduation rate in Japan has consistently been over 95% (MEXT, n.d.).

opportunities to preserve their cultures. However, while the contemporary Buraku activist mission has *fostered* local Buraku identity claims by situating the Buraku story amongst a global human rights agenda, the contemporary Ainu activist mission has *channeled* local Ainu identity claims into the global indigenous movement (Htun 2012; Tsutsui 2017).

“The Time Has Come for the Blessing of the Martyrs' Crown of Thorns”: Okinawans

According to fossil records, Okinawa has been inhabited by people for at least 30,000 years, leading some Japanese academics to conclude that Okinawans, along with the Ainu, were the original descendants of the prehistoric Jōmon people who inhabited Japan. This supposition thus provides Okinawans with a claim to indigeneity (Rabson 2012; McGrogan 2010). However, the history of Okinawa has always been characterized by migration, variously to and from China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia. Okinawa became independent as the Ryūkyū Kingdom in 1429, albeit as a tributary of Ming China. At this time, the islands in the Ryūkyū chain became united, and influences of both Chinese and Japanese³⁶ culture could be seen in what is now referred to as Okinawa’s “Golden Age”, characterized by a flourishing of art, trade, religion, and culture (Lie 2009; Rabson 2012).

Diplomacy during the Tokugawa Era was characterized by a delicate dance between the Ryūkyūs and Japan and China, both of whom at various times claimed the Ryūkyū Kingdom as a tributary. In the end, Japan took control of the Ryūkyūs shortly after the Meiji Restoration, as the islands had already been severely weakened economically by the constant siphoning of tribute from the Satsuma domain. Unlike in Hokkaido, there was resistance on the part of the

³⁶ By the Middle Ages, travel between Japan and the Ryūkyūs had been occurring for many centuries. The Japanese first visited the Ryūkyūs in the seventh century for the purpose of establishing relations, and the Ryūkyūs followed this visit by sending envoys to Nara in 714 (Rabson 2012).

Ryūkyū people to this usurpation of power, but in the end the small kingdom was outmatched and became a province of Japan dubbed Okinawa in 1879 (Lie 2009; Befu 2001). However, this did not give them equal rights with mainland Japanese; Okinawans were not included in the family register system until 1886, and they did not receive Diet representation until 1911 (Morris-Suzuki 2015). Like the Ainu, Okinawans were subject to a strict assimilation regime in which they were forbidden to speak the Okinawan language, receive spiritual healing from Okinawan shamans, or practice the tradition of tattooing women's hands (Rabson 2012). While this began as a top-down approach, it later became a bottom-up approach, as Okinawans themselves began to identify with Japan and surveil each other to ensure that they were not following these "harmful customs" (悪習/*akushū*) (Rabson 2012).

Japan's accession of Okinawa did not end the island's history of migration; rather, it simply changed the direction. Thousands of Okinawans began relocating to the mainland to search for work, a situation that was only exacerbated by a precipitous drop in the global price of sugar, Okinawa's primary cash crop, in the 1920s. As the Japanese government looked on (and imported sugar from their new colonies), Okinawans starved to death. Out of desperation, they began to eat a bitter plant called the palm fern, which prompted the name "palm fern hell" among Okinawans to describe this dark period in history. Migrants to the mainland fared better, but only in a matter of degree; paid less than mainstream Japanese to work at the most dangerous jobs, many quickly succumbed to workplace accidents (Rabson 2012). Just as in Okinawa, Okinawans who migrated to the mainland were pressured to assimilate to mainstream Japanese culture, as their long hairstyles and traditional clothing were banned (Lie 2009). Leaders of Okinawan organizations in Osaka urged Okinawans to abandon Okinawan dialect,

traditional dances, and religious practices. Many also changed their family names to sound more “Japanese” (Rabson 2012; Shimabuku 2018).

The worst, however, was yet to come, as World War II was to bring an enormous amount of suffering both to Okinawa and, to a lesser degree, Okinawans working on the mainland. Mainland Okinawans who were not conscripted into the army often went to work (either by choice or as forced labor) in munitions factories, which were heavily targeted by Allied bombers. Many mainland Okinawans died in these bombings, and those who survived often saw their homes turned into rubble (Rabson 2012). Meanwhile in Okinawa, 120,000 people – a quarter to a third of the prefecture’s residents – lost their lives in the Battle of Okinawa, which was the only site of armed combat in Japan (Lie 2009). While most of the deaths were from Allied attacks, plenty of others were from Japanese “friendly fire” or starvation caused by the seizure of rations (Rabson 2012). Imperial propaganda campaigns also led to the deaths of many civilians, as described by Rabson (2012):

To prevent civilians from being captured, Japanese soldiers distributed hand grenades to local residents with orders to kill themselves and their families. Inside crowded cave shelters, mothers strangled infants at gunpoint because soldiers wanted to prevent a baby’s crying from revealing their location. Japanese soldiers killed hundreds of Okinawan civilians accused as spies simply for speaking in their local dialect. Long-standing prejudices surfaced in the decisions of military commanders, and in the acts of individual soldiers, who viewed Okinawans as inferior and therefore expendable. (p. 136)

The Japanese government also set up 130 Okinawan “comfort stations” in which Okinawan and colonial subject women were forced into sexual slavery, ostensibly to prevent the rape of civilians (Shimabuku 2018).

The Battle of Okinawa was neither the first nor the last time that Japan was to use Okinawa as a pawn to be sacrificed. In order to regain sovereignty over the archipelago, Japan agreed to cede Okinawa to continued US occupation in 1951 (Rabson 2012). The American occupation of Okinawa, which lasted until 1972, had wide-ranging consequences for the island. First, because of its geographical strategic importance, it was heavily militarized; by 1954, 20% of Okinawa’s arable land (12% of the total land) had been seized for military purposes, with the US government paying nominal fees to the former owners of the land (Lie 2009; Rabson 2012; Shimabuku 2018). Jobs and incomes became dependent on serving the military bases and the communities of soldiers around them. Second, since the US did not know how long they would be occupying Okinawa, they did not undertake many development projects unrelated to military purposes (Lie 2009). Rising incomes, pension plans, and national health insurance were just some of the benefits gained by mainlanders but denied to Okinawans (Rabson 2012). As many men were killed during the war, women became responsible for supporting their families, and some were left with little choice but to become sex workers. By 1970, sex work had become Okinawa’s largest off-base industry (Shimabuku 2018). Third, the ethnic makeup of Okinawa changed as relationships and marriages occurred between US soldiers and Okinawan women. By 1980, 4,000 children, often referred to as “half” or *haafu*, had resulted from these relationships (Lie 2009). These children were sometimes treated with scorn in part because of assumptions that their mothers were sex workers (Shimabuku 2018). Dissatisfaction with American rule rose to a crescendo with riots in 1970, and eventually the active reversion movement was successful

in convincing Prime Minister Satō to meet with President Nixon to arrange the return of Okinawa to Japan.

Notwithstanding Prime Minister Satō's assurances that reversion meant that Okinawa would be militarized at the same level as the mainland, today fully 75 percent of the US military bases in Japan are in Okinawa, despite the fact that the prefecture only comprises 0.6 percent of the total land area of Japan (Rabson 2012). Anti-base sentiment is understandably strong in Okinawa, as locals are burdened disproportionately with base-related problems including crimes committed by US servicemen, noise pollution, and environmental degradation (McGrogan 2010). Both the US and Japan, however, have made it clear to Okinawans that the decision to place the bases in Okinawa is not a matter of democracy. Although in a 1996 referendum almost 90% of Okinawan voters³⁷ voted to reduce the American military presence in Okinawa, the Japanese government has consistently threatened to withhold public works program funding if Okinawans vote for anti-base politicians, a severe punishment for the prefecture in Japan with the lowest income and highest unemployment rate (Rabson 2012). However, the Japanese government did agree to sextuple the land rental payments the US government had been making to Okinawan farmers, and reversion also made it possible for Okinawans to travel to the mainland without travel documents (Rabson 2012). Easier travel from the mainland to Okinawa has allowed Okinawa's tourism industry to blossom, as mainstream Japanese often visit the island in order to take advantage of the warm climate and the "exotic culture" marketed constantly by the Japanese media.

The contemporary Okinawan self-image, then, is complex. Some Okinawans "single themselves out as occupying a special and tragic place in contemporary Japanese history" (Befu

³⁷ Voter turnout for the referendum was almost 60 percent.

2001:90) and perhaps therefore are reluctant to label themselves firstly as “Japanese”.

According to a 2006 poll cited by McGrogan (2010), 40.6 percent of respondents in Okinawa prefecture saw themselves as exclusively Okinawan, while 36.5 percent classified themselves as “Okinawan-Japanese”. Only 21.3 percent labelled themselves as “Japanese”. However, in the same poll, 75% of respondents did not express a desire for independence from Japan. So-called “Okinawa booms”, periods in which elements of Okinawan culture (e.g. food, music, dancing, etc.) become fashionable, have occurred at various times in post-war Japan, producing cultural pride for some Okinawans while eliciting criticisms of shallow overconsumption from others (Rabson 2012).

While some Okinawans have sought to pass as mainlanders, others have been motivated to embrace and discover their roots and speak out against injustices. Haafu Okinawans often find themselves in the challenging position of navigating their “in-between” identities in a society that does not always know how to process mixed races, particularly as the very existence of haafu serves as a reminder of the complexities of the presence of the bases (Carter 2014; see also Shimabuku 2018). Discrimination and stereotyping against Okinawans still exist in Japan, most obviously on the mainland, where there are still incidents of housing discrimination (“Okinawans live with too many relatives”) and hiring discrimination (“Okinawans are too laid back on the job”) (Rabson 2012; McGrogan 2010). While such stereotypes and behaviors evoke the occasional scowl from the UN (Htun 2012), Okinawans have received little attention from the CERD when compared with other Japanese minorities (McGrogan 2010). Despite this, Okinawans have maintained fervent activist organizations both within Okinawa and on the mainland (Rabson 2012).

Though this history of activism is a point in common between Buraku people and Okinawans, there has been some tension between Buraku and Okinawan activist groups – particularly the Osaka League, an older, more conservative-leaning³⁸ Okinawan activist group. One activist from the Osaka League insisted in November 2000 that Okinawans should not be compared to Buraku people because “we’ve made it on our own,” a dig at Buraku reliance on SML funding. The Osaka League has also angered Buraku people by opposing the distribution of middle school textbooks that describe both Buraku people and Okinawans as discriminated minorities (Rabson 2012). However, Buraku people have joined other Okinawan groups as allies in anti-base protests and in advocacy for the rights of Zainichi Koreans (Rabson 2012). Buraku people and Okinawans share a common generation gap between the “old guard” activists, represented by the BLL and the Osaka League, respectively, and a younger generation that feels some disconnect from the aims of these groups.

Rabson (2012) has argued that

[t]he Okinawan experience differs most significantly from that of other minorities in Japan because Okinawans have an “internal homeland” of approximately 1.3 million inhabitants where, as the “majority,” they can shape their society, practice their culture without being gazed on as “different,” and exercise the legal right to choose their local political leaders. (pp. 219-220)

However, it can also be argued that Buraku people share a similar “homeland” in the buraku. Within those geographic bounds, regardless of whether they are numerically in the majority, they are able to have a good deal of control over the cultural narrative and political power. The

³⁸ For example, the Osaka League has been relatively silent about the issue of US military bases, in part because many members receive large rental payments for the lease of their land in Okinawa (Rabson 2012).

troubled pasts associated with both spaces, the buraku and Okinawa, make them a sacred site of sacrifice in the hearts and minds of their residents. This collective memory associated with space may be the most striking common thread uniting the two minorities.

“They Were Even Spat Upon with Ridicule”: Zainichi Koreans

Many of Japan’s ethnic Koreans are the second, third, fourth, or even fifth generation in their families to be born on Japanese soil. Despite this, they are referred to in Japanese as *zainichi chosonjin* (在日朝鮮人) or *zainichi kankokujin* (在日韓国人), “Koreans staying in Japan”, a term that carries the illusion of impermanence. Koreans first began migrating to Japan in large numbers after Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910. In 1909, only 790 Koreans lived in Japan, compared to the two million Koreans living in Japan by the end of World War II in 1945 (Itagaki 2015). The seizure of Korea was based on a philosophy of racial hierarchy which concluded that the only way to transform Korea into an industrial society was through the guidance of the superior Japanese (Weiner 2009). Following this premise to its logical extreme, the Japanese embarked on the now familiar path of forcing Koreans to learn Japanese language, take Japanese names, and worship at Japanese shrines (Htun 2012; Rabson 2012).

By 1922, Koreans were able to travel freely to the mainland as imperial citizens, and many left the desperate economic conditions of Korea in order to find work in Japanese mines and factories. While they were paid an average of 25% less than Japanese workers despite being assigned the dirtiest tasks, many had no choice but to accept poverty in Japan as preferable to starvation in Korea (Weiner 2009; Kim 2011b; Rabson 2012). In official documents Koreans living in Japan were described as lazy drunkards who gambled incessantly (Koshiro 1999), and in 1923 many were murdered after Koreans were falsely blamed for poisoning wells following the Great

Kanto Earthquake (Lie 2009). Itagaki (2015) observed that because Koreans were often physically indistinguishable from Japanese, racism was usually expressed in appeals to other senses, describing Koreans as “unclean” or “stinking of garlic”.

With the advent of World War II, voluntary Korean labor ceased to fill the expanding needs of the Japanese military. Somewhere between 810,000 and 940,000 Korean laborers were conscripted to work in mining, construction, and other kinds of manual labor in Japan between 1939 and 1945 (Lie 2009). About 200,000 Korean “comfort women” were also forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese military, while over 250,000 Koreans were assigned to Japanese military duty after 1943 (Rabson 2012). When the war ended in 1945, well over half of the two million Koreans on the archipelago elected to return to Korea, resulting in a Zainichi Korean population of about 600,000 by the following year (Itagaki 2015; Tsutsui 2018). However, others living on the Korean peninsula fled to Japan soon thereafter with the dawn of the Korean War (Park 2017). Neither the Japanese nor the Occupation government recognized Koreans as an ethnic minority in the country, and those who came to Japan after the end of the war were regarded as illegal entrants (Park 2017).

Life was not easy for Koreans in Japan during the Occupation, as employment opportunities were extremely scarce due to 6.6 million Japanese soldiers returning to the labor force. Koreans, then, often had no choice but to take jobs that were associated with the fringes of society, such as junk dealing, working in Korean restaurants, and staffing pachinko parlors (Kim 2011b). Many Japanese saw Zainichi Koreans at best as a social burden and at worst as criminals leeching off Japanese society (Koshiro 1999; Park 2017). Finally, in 1950, all Koreans residing in Japan were summarily stripped of their Japanese citizenship with nine days’ notice, reflecting SCAP and the Japanese government’s shared priority of creating a racially “pure”

Japan (Koshiro 1999; Tsunemoto 2001). Koreans were then forced to choose between South Korean or simply “Korean”³⁹ citizenship (Morris-Suzuki 2015), and all of these new non-citizens were forced to be fingerprinted and surveilled by the Japanese government (Strausz 2006).

From that point forward, then, Zainichi Koreans, of whom there are currently approximately 700,000⁴⁰ (Kitayama 2018), have been officially classified as resident aliens until they elect to undertake the process of naturalization to become a Japanese citizen. Because, as mentioned previously, Japanese citizenship is conferred on a *jus sanguinis* (law of the blood) rather than a *jus solis* (law of the soil) basis, Zainichi Koreans without one or more Japanese citizen parents retain their Korean citizenship at birth. Should they wish to obtain Japanese citizenship, they have to apply for it, which can be a complicated decision that in some circles is equated to giving up one’s “Koreanness”. However, after pressure from Zainichi activists and global human rights organizations, Koreans in Japan have been granted “special residency status” which carries certain rights and benefits; for example, they have access to national health care and pension programs, and they are eligible to work in local government (Kim 2011a). However, they are not permitted to hold management roles in the government, including as public-school administrators (Kitayama 2018) and certain types of health care

³⁹ Many Koreans in Japan sympathized with North Korea at this time; however, because Japan did not have diplomatic relations with North Korea, there was no mechanism to grant them North Korean citizenship. Therefore, a new “Korean” citizenship (*Chosenseki* or 朝鮮籍) was manufactured (Morris-Suzuki 2015). In 1950, only 14.2 percent of Koreans in Japan were South Korean citizens, in part because Syngman Rhee refused to accept returnees from Japan as part of a strategy to gain leverage in postwar diplomacy with Japan (Ryang 2021). By 1994, 67 percent of them were South Korean citizens (Htun 2012). The increase in Chosenseki citizens choosing to switch their citizenship to South Korea reflects multiple factors, including changed political ideologies, deteriorating relations between North Korea and Japan, economic growth in South Korea, and the desire to travel internationally on a South Korean passport (Htun 2012; Itagaki 2015).

⁴⁰ This estimate includes ethnic Zainichi Koreans both with and without Japanese citizenship.

workers in public hospitals (Webster 2011). They also cannot vote in elections, and they do not have freedom of entry into Japan (Kim 2011a).

Faced with the focused ire of Zaitokukai and similar hate groups, Koreans arguably face more open vitriol than any other Japanese minority. Unfortunately, this overt racism can also be extended to statements made by politicians, such as the LDP's 2010 claim that Korean schools were little more than hotbeds of ideology used as arms of North Korean intelligence and Hashimoto Toru's unfounded claim the same year that the schools were affiliated with the yakuza (Itagaki 2015). Anti-Korean demonstrations often become showcases of particularly ugly sentiment, such as one newsworthy case in 2013 in which a schoolgirl shouted that all Koreans in Japan should be killed as in the Nanking massacre (Amos 2020; Kitayama 2018). At least 1,152 of these hate-filled demonstrations occurred between April 2012 and September 2015 (Hatano 2018). Occasionally, Zaitokukai receives a mild sanction for crossing one legal line or another, such as was the case with their protest at the Korean elementary school mentioned previously, and Zaitokukai also receives its fair share of counter-protesters, most notably from the organization Counter Racist Action Collective (CRAC) (Park 2017).

Advocacy for Korean rights in Japan is significantly hampered, however, by the fact that the two largest organizations for Zainichi Koreans rarely work together and in fact have a history of animosity toward one another. Chongryon, the organization affiliated with North Korea, has chosen to focus its mission on cultural pride and education, while Mindan, the organization affiliated with South Korea, has chosen to focus on advocacy for Korean rights and benefits in Japan. When representatives from Japanese NGOs visited the UN in 2014 to advocate for human rights issues in Japan, the two groups attended separately (Lim 2018). Chongryon has irked Mindan by refusing to join the group in its anti-fingerprinting and pro-suffrage campaigns, while

Mindan has angered Chongryon by supporting state investigations into Chongryon-supported schools (Lim 2018). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Htun (2012) found that young Zainichi were increasingly dissatisfied with both organizations, whose memberships have been declining since the late 1980s (Lim 2018).

Some young Zainichi Koreans prefer instead to pass as Japanese (Htun 2012; Lie 2009; Rabson 2012). Even those who elect not to pass are often quite assimilated into Japanese society. Ninety percent of Zainichi have been educated in Japanese schools (Htun 2012), which is not surprising when one considers that by the mid-1970s over 75 percent of Zainichi Koreans were born in Japan (Lie 2009). About 10,000 Zainichi Koreans naturalize each year, and 80 percent of Zainichi Koreans have Japanese spouses (Rabson 2012). Like Buraku people as well as the other groups discussed thus far, the salience of Zainichi Korean identity varies significantly from person to person (Rabson 2012). Just as some Okinawans have benefited from periodic “Okinawa booms,” some Koreans in Japan have benefited from the positive media images associated with the “Korean wave,” beginning in 2003, in which Korean popular culture became trendy in Japan (Kim 2011a). However, this wave also came with a backlash, such as when a Japanese TV studio was picketed in 2011 by those with anti-Korean sentiment (Cain 2013). Although Zainichi Koreans have on average a slightly higher income than mainstream Japanese, that difference can be attributed to the higher incidence of business ownership among Zainichi Koreans, as Zainichi educational attainment still lags somewhat behind that of mainstream Japanese (Kim 2003; Gill 2000). As with Buraku people, there is also evidence of a widening income gap among Zainichi Koreans (Kim 2011b).

As the brief outline above shows, the histories of Buraku people and Zainichi Koreans have had many common elements such as organized activism, complexities with the Japanese

legal systems, widespread discrimination, and discussions of passing. However, despite these commonalities, they have rarely combined forces to address human rights issues. Bayliss (2013) cited a number of reasons for this, including the tendency of each group to focus on the specific rights of their constituents rather than broader patterns of social justice and conflicting experiences with Japanese imperialism. While Buraku people almost to a person supported the goals of the Japanese empire, Korean culture and statehood were devastatingly uprooted by the Japanese annexation of the peninsula. On the other hand, Buraku activists resented the displacement of Buraku labor by Koreans in the decades prior to and following the war. When the BLL, Mindan, and Chongryon were (re)formed shortly after World War II, the wounds from this history were still raw, precluding cooperative spirit. More recently, the Buraku insistence on viewing themselves not as an ethnic group but as mainstream Japanese runs counter to the Korean embrace of the tabunka kyōsei multiculturalism movement (Davis 2000). On the other hand, Korean families have increasingly become more prevalent in Buraku neighborhoods, which has led to Buraku and Korean children attending the same schools and Korean traditions being incorporated into local Buraku festivals (Mutafchieva 2009). In the coming decades, it will prove interesting to see whether this everyday proximity will inspire more partnership between the two groups.

“They Were the Manly Martyrs of Industry”: Immigrants

As is the case with almost all modern industrialized nations, Japan’s immigrants are placed on a generally unspoken racialized hierarchy of desirability. The Japanese state has implemented a variety of legal apparatuses to ensure that immigrants retain their place on a lower rung than mainstream Japanese. The most commonly cited of these is Japan’s family

register system, which continues its historical function as a marker of alterity by allowing non-citizens to be listed on the family register of their citizen spouses but forbidding the creation of registers for non-citizens (Ministry of Justice 2015), a distinction that helps to maintain the intertwining of “family” and “Japanese nationality” (Arudou 2014). As noted in the previous section, there is a wide variety of jobs which non-citizens are precluded from obtaining, and it is not uncommon for Japanese employers to restrict openings to Japanese applicants only (Abraham 2011). These laws have generally been supported by Japanese citizens, only 15% of whom have indicated in opinion polls that they believe that non-citizens should have the same rights as citizens, and 60% of whom feel that Japanese applicants should be prioritized in hiring decisions (Nagayoshi 2011).

Although Japan’s immigration system has been famously tightly regulated, many scholars – and, increasingly, Japanese politicians and citizens – believe this system is untenable, as Japan’s declining birth rate has created a labor shortage, particularly in jobs referred to as 3K – *kitanai, kiken, kitsui* (dirty, dangerous, difficult) (Ishiwata 2011; Lie 2009; Roth 2002). In fact, the number of immigrants registered in Japan in 2018, while a record-breaking 2.82 million, is still less than 2 percent of the population of the nation (Kyodo News 2019). The Ministry of Justice estimated in 2019 that the population of irregular migrants was around 75,000, down from a peak of 300,000+ in the mid-1990s due to stricter immigration controls (Ministry of Justice 2019).

By far, the majority of immigrants in Japan are citizens of other Asian nations. At the end of 2018, there were 764,720 residents of Chinese nationality in Japan, accounting for 28% of the total. Rounding out the top four nationalities were South Korea (449,634), Vietnam (330,835), and the Philippines (271,289) (Ministry of Justice 2019). Many Asian immigrants come to Japan

on one-year extendable “trainee” visas in order to seek work in unskilled factory and entertainment jobs in which they are not protected by Japanese employment laws (Rabson 2012). Unlike many South Korean immigrants, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipinx residents are often phenotypically unable to pass as Japanese, which eliminates passing as an option to avoid discrimination.

Chinese immigrants in particular have historically been subject to racist attitudes and heightened surveillance; in fact, the first immigration control law in Japan was established to curtail Chinese immigration shortly after the Meiji Restoration (Morris-Suzuki 2015). In 2000, two branch police offices distributed flyers to local police boxes, apartment managers, and neighborhood association leaders instructing them to call the police if they see a Chinese person or hear someone speaking Chinese (Kawai 2015). In 2001 the governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintarō, published an essay in the *Sankei Shimbun* in which he claimed that Chinese people had criminal DNA (Kawai 2015).

Filipinx women, on the other hand, are often stereotyped as passive brides or prostitutes, and many have come to Japan on “entertainer visas” to either knowingly or unknowingly work in the sex industry (Nemoto 2008). Unscrupulous brokers have been known to confiscate their passports and/or force them to work without pay (Rabson 2012). The media has been an active participant in furthering these stereotypes; television shows often portray, for example, Filipinx dancers, South Korean hostesses, Thai masseuses, and Bangladeshi construction workers. As Lie (2009) noted: “Never mind that a Bangladeshi construction worker may be a college graduate, a Filipina bar maid a professionally certified nurse...: upper class and lower class, college educated and illiterate are all lumped into the category of foreign workers, who assume manual and menial jobs” (p. 32).

The fifth largest Japanese resident citizen group consists of the 201,985 people from Brazil (Ministry of Justice 2019). This reflects an attempt by the Japanese government to fill a labor shortage in the 1980s by granting immigration privileges to people with Japanese ancestry, of which there were many living in Brazil⁴¹. The blatantly racist reasoning behind this decision was an assumption that immigrants who were of Japanese heritage, referred to as “Nikkeijin”, would be more likely to have cultural practices and values similar to those of the Japanese, less likely to commit crimes, and more able to blend into Japanese society than the South Asians, Southeast Asians, and East Asians who had been previously been filling this labor demand (Gunde 2004; Maeda 2006; Webster 2011). However, this thinking has proven to be misguided. Not only do these immigrants experience many of the same adjustment issues as those without Japanese heritage, but they also face challenges that other immigrants do not as they are generally expected to suddenly begin to speak and “act” Japanese (Rabson 2012; Roth 2002).

Nikkeijin have tended to live in communities with other Nikkeijin (Maeda 2006), and their national /citizenship identity has generally tended to be more salient in Japan than their Japanese heritage. For example, Tsuda (2003) and Roth (2002) both observed that many Nikkeijin participate in samba festivals in Japan, even though this is an activity that for many would be considered beneath their socio-economic status in Brazil. Despite their middle-class, educated backgrounds in South America, most Nikkeijin work at unskilled jobs in Japan, as doing so allows them to earn five- to tenfold what they would earn doing white collar labor in South America (Yamashiro 2008; Roth 2002). Despite their challenges in Japan, Maeda (2006) found that generally Nikkeijin reported having positive experiences and impressions of Japan. On the

⁴¹ Sizeable numbers of Japanese-Peruvians and Japanese-Americans have also taken advantage of the Nikkeijin visa category (Webster 2011).

other hand, Roth (2002) noted increased attachment to and longing (*saudade*) for Brazil among Nikkei workers in Japan.

In contrast, White immigrants to Japan have generally been treated with a certain degree of deference and privilege, a contemporary vestige of the social Darwinist racial hierarchies popularized in the Meiji era (Befu 2001; Koshiro 1999). Still, though, they have been denied full participation in Japanese society by virtue of their status as foreigners (Befu 2001). Because they are visibly identifiable, they are often denied entrance to “Japanese-only” establishments due to their race (Morita 2015)⁴². While White immigrants to Japan have benefited from their position at the top of the social Darwinist racial hierarchy, Black immigrants to Japan have been subject to discrimination based on their position at the bottom (Russell 2009; Befu 2001). However, Russell (2009) is quick to point out that it was not only pseudo-scientific ideas about race that contributed to Japanese caricatures of Blackness, but also racist media portrayals of Black Americans imported from the West. He observed:

Hollywood provided [the Japanese] with its version not only of modernity but of primitivism as well, reproducing in a more palpable form the racist hierarchies of the social sciences while providing an iconography upon which Japanese could elaborate their own vision of ineffable black alterity. For if Hollywood offered Taisho Japanese – and the world – images of privileged, affluent, sophisticated whiteness, it juxtaposed them against those of black buffoonery and primitivism, images whose impact on Japanese popular culture and perceptions of blacks – and of themselves – would leave an indelible imprint on the Japanese imagination. (pp. 98-99)

⁴² Debito Arudou, a White naturalized Japanese citizen, famously once successfully sued a “Japanese-only” public bath in Hokkaido when they refused him entrance, stating that although they accepted that he was a Japanese national, his appearance might drive customers elsewhere (Webster 2008).

As miscegenation between Black soldiers and Japanese women began to occur during the Occupation, the predominant responses from mainstream Japanese were either to feel sorry for the children produced in these relationships or to fear their pollution of the Japanese race (Koshiro 1999; Fish 2009). Because Black immigration to Japan today is relatively low, Japanese experiences with Blackness today are often associated with sports figures, young Black GIs, and the *kakko ii* (“cool”) hip-hop culture (Russell 2009). In summary, Black immigrants – and their haafu children – are often left to navigate a tricky landscape of stereotypes in Japan (Fish 2009).

Buraku activists have been mostly quiet on immigration issues, which may reflect their recent informal alliances with the Liberal Democratic Party. However, one interesting note is that the tabunka kyōsei multiculturalism programs added by schools to address the needs of immigrant children were partially based on anti-discrimination education previously introduced into schools by Buraku activists (Okubo 2013). Ironically, Buraku people have generally been uncomfortable with positioning themselves within a context of multiculturalism as they have tended to view themselves as “purely” Japanese. There has even been some resentment towards immigrant communities because of a belief by some Buraku people that funds have been diverted from Buraku programs to tabunka kyōsei programs (Okubo 2013). As the Buraku community continues to become more active with international organizations and Buraku neighborhoods grow increasingly multicultural, it should prove interesting to see how these developments affect Buraku opinions on immigrants and immigration.

Cast(e)ing a Wider Net: Other Caste-Based Underprivileged Minorities and the Buraku

To reiterate, this dissertation assumes a broad definition of caste as an immutable social status based on an endogamous and hereditary hierarchical system. In the minds of most the

phrase “outcaste group” has generally been associated with the Dalits of South Asia, and for a good reason: with a population of approximately 165 million, Dalits dwarf other caste-based minority populations. In this section, I will compare and contrast the Buraku situation not only with that of the Dalits, but also with the Baekjeong, an outcaste community in South Korea which existed for thousands of years until the first half of the twentieth century. The civil rights lawyer and writer Michelle Alexander has also made a compelling case in her 2010 book *The New Jim Crow* that the United States has a racial caste system and that African-Americans occupy the bottom rung of the hierarchy. Wilkerson (2020) expanded on Alexander’s arguments by analyzing the characteristics of this racialized caste system. Therefore, this section will also engage with Alexander and Wilkerson’s arguments by comparing and contrasting the social circumstances of the African-Americans with those of the Buraku. As was the case with the previous section, the background given on these three caste-based minorities is by no means meant to be exhaustive but rather sufficient to provide enough information for accurate comparison and contrast.

“As a Reward for Skinning Animals, They Were Stripped of Their Own Living Flesh”: The Baekjeong

Although historians have not found any evidence of clear connections between the pre-modern histories of the two, the Baekjeong of South Korea and the Buraku people of Japan have uncannily similar narratives. It should be noted, though, that the Baekjeong have been woefully understudied, particularly in the English-speaking world, making the triangulation of sources very difficult (Duechler 2004). As a result of this paucity of sources, the main academic source for information on the early history of the Baekjeong is still a 1956 journal article by the

American sociologist Herbert Passin. Passin's research was based on the testimony of those he met while working for the US government in Japan during the Occupation; he did not set foot in South Korea. In 1989, Joong-Seop Kim wrote his doctoral dissertation at the University of Hull on the Hyeongpyeongsa Baekjeong activist movement. To collect his data, Kim painstakingly pored over 2,000 late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century newspaper articles from both Japan and Korea, and he also interviewed a handful of elderly former Hyeongpyeongsa members and their descendants. Kim's dissertation remains the only in-depth English-language study of the Baekjeong, and it focuses primarily on the Japanese colonial era. For this reason, it is safe to assume that there are still plenty of yet to be uncovered insights about the Baekjeong, so any conclusions about their comparative history vis-à-vis that of the Buraku people should be drawn tentatively.

The outcaste status of the Baekjeong can be traced back thousands of years (Kim 1989). However, the Korean caste system seems to have been codified during the Joseon Dynasty (1392 – 1910), which was characterized by the enforcement of rigid Confucian ideals (Kim 1989). Simply put, Korean society was divided into four groups: the Yangban (aristocrats), Jung-in (the middle class), Sangmin (common people), and Cheonmin (despised people). The Cheonmin were further divided into the Nobi (slaves and serfs) and Baekjeong (untouchables). The Baekjeong consisted of two groups divided by occupation, closely corresponding to the hinin (Chaein – actors, jugglers, magicians, etc.) and eta (Baekjeong proper – butchers, leatherworkers, and basketmakers) (Passin 1956). As was the case in Japan, the Baekjeong maintained a monopoly over these stigmatized professions (Kim 1989). As a “public duty,” they were also responsible for executions and dog catching throughout the Joseon Dynasty (Passin 1956).

The Baekjeong were separated into endogamous communities much like the Buraku people; they also were legally required to wear distinctive clothing marking their status, and they were buried in separate cemeteries. They were required to use deferential language to other castes, and they were not permitted to enter other caste members' homes (Passin 1956; Kim 1989). Despite these similarities to Buraku history and the two groups' geographical proximity, theories for the origins of the Baekjeong's polluted status differ somewhat from those of the Buraku people. Though the Buddhist stigma against meat-eating was much weaker in Korea than in Japan, there was still a sense that the slaughter of animals carried impurity. Even after Buddhism was mostly replaced by Confucianism, the concept of pollution stubbornly persisted. As Passin (1956) explained, "Once such an idea of pollution takes firm hold, then the people who are identified with it are considered polluted, no matter what they do. Instead of people being polluted by the kind of work they do, the work is polluted by the kind of people who do it" (p. 214). The Baekjeong themselves had several legends regarding their origin, including one that they are the descendants of Koryo rebels and another that they are the descendant of noble animal slaughterers from Korea's first kingdom (2333 BCE). Neither of these legends are supported by documentary evidence (Kim 1989). Today, virtually no one in Korea identifies as Baekjeong, just as no one identifies as Yangban, though Passin recorded that some remnant communities of Baekjeong still existed at the time of his writing in 1956.

The Baekjeong advocacy organization Hyeongpyeongsa, or Great Equity Society, was officially launched in April of 1923, just a little over a year after the formation of the Suiheisha. Though the organizations were formed under differing national contexts, similarities can be found in the social circumstances surrounding their respective formations. In 1894-1896, after a series of peasant revolts, Emperor Gojong released a series of proclamations known collectively

as the Gabo reforms, some of the provisions of which seriously weakened, and ultimately led to the abolition of, the Korean caste system and its strict social, residential, and professional strictures (Passin 1956; Kim 1989). Like the Emancipation Edict did with the Buraku, this caused the Baekjeong to lose their monopolies on their traditional professions but did not erase stigma against them. Testimonies from the time show a general disdain for and avoidance of Baekjeong, and when their children were able to attend school, they were often bullied (Passin 1956; Kim 1989). Even Christians, who were considered liberal by Korean social standards, did not accept Baekjeong in their congregations (Kim 1989).

Although the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910 was considered a blow to all Koreans, it was particularly harmful to the Baekjeong, as the Japanese took control of their slaughterhouses and paid them meager wages to work in them (Kim 1989). By the end of the 1910s, widespread dissatisfaction with Japanese rule had culminated in two million Koreans (about one tenth of the population) participating in over 1,500 separate anti-Japanese demonstrations. While these revolts were eventually quashed by the Japanese, they were followed by a flowering of new civil rights organizations variously dedicated to labor reform, education, peasant rights, and religious social justice issues (Kim 1989).

It was in this climate of explosive social activism and protest that the Hyeongpyeongsa was founded in Jinju (South Central Korea) with the expressed aim of liberating the Baekjeong. From there, it expanded throughout Korea – though branches were concentrated mainly in the south – to a peak membership of 400,000⁴³ (Kim 1989). Part of the organization's stated mission was the enlightenment of its members, and to do this, they opened schools throughout Korea. At the time, less than one-fifth of all Korean children were receiving formal education, and the

⁴³ In contrast to the BLL, anyone who allied themselves with the Hyeongpyeongsa's mission could join the organization, not just Baekjeong. In practice, however, most members were Baekjeong (Kim 1989).

percentage was undoubtedly much lower for Baekjeong. By the 1930s, however, public schools were enrolling regularly enrolling Baekjeong (Kim 1989). The Hyeongpyeongsa also advocated for more control over the animal slaughter and leather industries, and like their Japanese counterparts the Suiheisha, they harshly denounced any openly discriminatory remarks that came to their attention. Though these confrontations occasionally erupted into violence, by and large the group's activities were peaceful (Kim 1989).

However, in the early 1930s, the group was ultimately beset by internal conflict, with endless bickering between radical and conservative elements within the organization. Japanese authorities began to crack down on the group, and after a half-hearted attempt to reform the group under a different name in 1935, it disbanded (Kim 1989; Passin 1956). However, the improvements in the societal position of the Baekjeong had improved markedly by this time. In addition to gains in education, Baekjeong were no longer identified as such in government registers, and symbols identifying Baekjeong status were no longer worn, allowing Baekjeong for the first time the privilege of passing as mainstream Koreans (Kim 1989). According to Kim (1989), "institutional discrimination against the paekchong⁴⁴ no longer existed in principle and had in practice become unacceptable to many members of the wider society" (p. 366).

Perhaps the most burning question, then, is why Baekjeong status has so thoroughly disappeared in Korea while Buraku status remains relevant in Japan. Passin (1956) pointed out that the Hyeongpyeongsa never had quite the influence in Korea as the Suiheisha (and later the BLL) had in Japan, partly because of the short lifespan of the former. By advocating for desperately needed funding and cultural markers such as human rights museums, the BLL has

⁴⁴ The rules for romanizing Korean characters were changed by the National Academy of Korean Language in 2000. Therefore, Kim's 1989 dissertation and Passin's 1956 article still use the old McCune-Reischauer romanization rules; hence, some of their spellings of Korean words differ slightly from the ones used in this paper.

helped to ensure that Buraku identity remains salient. However, because this salience is inextricably bound with alterity, one response by mainstream Japanese has been discrimination on the basis of this alterity. Such is the double-edged sword of identity-focused movements like those espoused by the BLL.

When Kim interviewed Baekjeong people in the 1980s, he found that most were reluctant to talk about the past and wished for him to conceal their names, causing Kim himself to wonder if it is was a good idea to risk dredging up painful historical memories by writing about Baekjeong status. Such “let sleeping dogs lie” attitudes are also regularly expressed by Buraku people in surveys, and BLL activists are always quick to rebut such views with assertions that Buraku discrimination should not be hidden because such a response causes Buraku people to feel ashamed of their Buraku identities. In other words, while the Hyeongpyeongsa fought for *assimilation* of Baekjeong, the BLL continues to fight for *acceptance* and *equality* of Buraku people. Especially with invisible minorities (those who are able to pass as mainstream members of society), the latter generally requires a much longer fight.

Also, the importance of the differing national contexts of the two groups should not be underestimated. While both Japan and Korea experienced tremendous geopolitical upheaval in the first half of the twentieth century, Japan entered the 1950s with an extraordinary period of rebuilding while Korea remained at war. Therefore, Buraku communities in Japan generally stayed in the same ghettos as they had before the Occupation, while Baekjeong ghettos were mostly destroyed by decades of war. This disruption of settlement patterns, destruction of social infrastructure, and fracturing of networks thus caused many former Baekjeong to flee their former lives and settle among others who had been similarly impoverished by the war (Passin

1956). Amid this immense upheaval, using the limited resources available to sustain a communal identity may have proven disadvantageous or even impossible.

A final point worth mentioning is that during the Hyeongpyeongsa's brief existence, there is documentary evidence of some collaboration with the Suiheisha. Kim (1989) found congratulatory postcards that were sent to the Hyeongpyeongsa from the Suiheisha on the occasion of the Hyeongpyeongsa's founding. Among the holdings of the Suiheisha Museum in Nara is a series of documents and objects from the correspondence of the two groups. One of these is a 1924 agenda from the third annual meeting of the Suiheisha showing a motion to support the Hyeongpyeongsa in their efforts to end discrimination against the Baekjeong in South Korea. Another is a prospectus of the Hyeongpyeongsa, issued in 1929, which noted that the success achieved in the Hyeongpyeongsa movement was achieved by following in the footsteps of the Suiheisha. These items were listed by UNESCO on their Memory of the World – Asia-Pacific Region register in 2015. These documents will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

“They Were the Victims of Base, Contemptible Class Policies”: The Dalits

Researching the Dalits of South Asia carries the risk of the opposite pitfall of researching the Baekjeong: when it comes to the Dalits, there is so much information and analysis of their (hi)story that one cannot possibly tell it in its entirety in a few short paragraphs. An entire field of inquiry around the topic, Dalit Studies, has grown significantly in recent years, contributing many scholarly insights on the sociohistory of the Dalits (Rao 2009; Singh 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to share a different caveat. The Nobel-prize winning Indian economist Amartya Sen once famously quoted his Cambridge University professor Joan Robinson as claiming, “The frustrating thing about India is that whatever you can rightly say about India, the opposite is also

true” (Sen 2005). The story of the Dalits proves to be no exception to this claim. Hence, a wise reader of the following paragraphs would keep in mind that no matter what one Dalit Studies scholar accepts as gospel, there is likely another who believes just as fervently in the opposite.

The roots of the Indian caste system were first recorded in the Rig Veda, the oldest of the Hindu texts (written circa 1500 BCE). The fourfold caste system, called the *varna*, divided people into four castes; from highest to lowest in status, they were the Brahmin (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaisyas (commoners), and Shudras (serfs). A fifth (out)caste consisting of the untouchables (ancestors of today’s Dalits) was added around the first or second century AD. Later, the caste system gradually became much more complex as the castes were further broken into hundreds of endogamous regional groups called *jatis*. No jati exists throughout all of India. Most have a 200- to 300-mile radius; therefore, contemporary Dalits are a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous group consisting of 1,200 sub-castes and approximately 4,000 sub-sub-castes (Gupta 2008; Waughray 2010; Yengde 2019). As such, Dalits believe a variety of explanations for their own origins. Some believe their outcaste status was the result of lost war, while others blame the hot tempers of Hindu gods, while yet others share cautionary tales of ancestors being tricked into giving up their higher statuses (Gupta 2008).

As will be discussed shortly, however, most modern scholars relate the advent of the caste system to a complex intermingling of religious and economic factors, which were later further complicated by colonialism (Singh 2014). Some outcaste groups have traditionally been associated with defiling professions involving dead bodies or cow slaughter (Kapoor 2018), but perhaps the majority have simply been manual laborers (Sharma 1990). Today, however, outcaste status is less associated with profession than with an identity (Gupta 2018) that is considered inherited and immutable despite a variety of recent legal protections (Waughray

2010). The 165 million Dalits who comprise one-sixth of India's population still primarily marry within their jatis, ensuring the maintenance of the system (Waughray 2010; Gupta 2008). The word *Dalit*, which means "ground down" or "broken to pieces" in Marathi and Hindi, was popularized by the Dalit revolutionary Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (Rao 2009).

It would be almost impossible to discuss Dalit activism without mentioning B. R. Ambedkar. Born in 1891 in a well-to-do Mahar outcaste family⁴⁵, Ambedkar received advanced degrees from Columbia University and the London School of Economics, ultimately serving as a lawyer, scholar, activist, and statesman. He played a role in drafting India's Constitution and later served as India's law minister (Rao 2009; Waughray 2010). His years of activism for Dalit equality followed other 19th- and early 20th-century critiques of caste that led to a nascent Mahar civil rights movement. Ambedkar ultimately came to believe that caste served as a tool of debasement wielded by Hindus and that equality within Hinduism was impossible as the Hindu religion and caste were inextricably entangled – a belief that culminated in his conversion to Buddhism (Rao 2009). Many Dalits throughout India proceeded him in this step.

The idea that Dalits were a distinct minority separate from the Hindus and entitled to recognition as such was a radical one that was opposed by independence-minded Hindu thinkers of the time, particularly M. K. Gandhi, with whom Ambedkar not infrequently clashed (Waughray 2010). Until his death in 1956, Ambedkar led various campaigns for Dalit access to education, temples, and public space (Rao 2009). Perhaps his most important contribution, however, was ensuring that Dalits have a place in the 1949 Indian constitution, Article 17 of which abolished the practice of untouchability. Over the following decades, various affirmative action-style reforms, referred to as reservations, were enacted to address inequalities. For

⁴⁵ The Ambedkar family had long been associated with the British Army, thus affording them a higher status than most Mahar families (Rao 2009).

example, Articles 330 and 332 require that Scheduled Castes (an official term for Dalits) hold a certain percentage of seats in national and state lawmaking bodies, and the 1989 Prevention of Atrocities Act prohibited not just the denial of access to physical space but also the humiliation of Dalits (including caste-related insults) (Rao 2009; Waughray 2010). UN conventions such as ICERD have also been leveraged periodically in Dalit struggles for equality (Waughray 2010). However, it is important to note that unlike the post-war Buraku equality movement in Japan, disagreements between stakeholders in the Dalit equality movement have sporadically turned violent, especially between militant groups such as the Dalit Panthers and Hindu nationalists such as the Shiv Sena party (Rao 2009). Philosophically, Dalit activists have historically disagreed with Gandhian policies of nonviolence; while Ambedkar did not believe in gratuitous violence, he strongly endorsed its place in self-defense (Rao 2009). Gratuitous violence sometimes disguised as self-defense, however, has developed into a key component of Dalit Panther self-conceptions of masculinity. Rao (2009) has documented a troubling upswing in caste-related violence, particularly economic violence against well-to-do Dalits, sexual humiliation of Dalit women, and ritual murders. Indeed, the Dalit scholar Suraj Yendge (2019) has referred to reports of rape and violence as “the archetype of contemporary Dalit identity” (p. 41).

Many scholars have pointed out that the modern Dalit identity, like the modern Buraku identity, has been primarily defined through a history of struggle with oppression (Fuchs & Fuchs 2019; Waughray 2010; Rao 2009). However, there is some disagreement as to whether this oppression is rooted in Hindu supremacy or Marxist notions of state labor control. In defense of the former position stands Louis Dumont’s 1970 book *Homo Hierarchicus*, considered this day to be the most influential sociological work on the topic of caste (Singh 2014). In *Homo Hierarchicus*, Dumont (1970) pointed to the religious concept of purity-impurity as the dominant

driver of caste and the catalyst for occupation-related segregation. Indeed, purity-impurity serves as a dominant motif throughout the history of Dalit – non-Dalit relations. Caste Hindus have historically cited ritual pollution as the reason for their avoidance of Dalits, a custom that Ambedkar (1916) referred to as “a cordon sanitaire putting the impure people inside a barbed wire into a sort of cage” (p. 187). Ambedkar so believed in the intractability of caste from Hinduism that he famously claimed in his 1936 text *The Annihilation of Caste* that “there can be a better Hindu or a worse Hindu, but a good Hindu there cannot be” (p. 89).⁴⁶

In fact, this idea of ritual pollution comes straight from the Hindu scriptures – particularly the Manusmriti, which defined lower castes as polluting and in need of supervision (Rao 2009). This scripturally prescribed societal regulation was undoubtedly exacerbated by colonialism, as colonial rulers could reap the benefits of social control under the guise of respect for the local religion (Rao 2009; Singh 2014). Post-colonial Dalit activism has also tended toward anti-Hindu sentiment, as seen in acts such as dumping cow carcasses in public areas (Kapoor 2018) and the destruction of Hindu statuary (Rao 2009).

Singh (2014), however, has argued that this cause-and-effect explanation for caste is too simplistic, asserting that “the two most persistent myths about the caste system are: first, that caste is a creation of Hinduism and second, that caste is essential to Hinduism” (p. 15). While Singh did not deny that religion plays a role in the Indian caste system, he made the distinction that religion served not as the *cause* of the caste system but rather as the *legitimizer*. Instead, he argued, the basis for caste was a hunger for land monopolization combined with political power, which encouraged a system that created psychological boundaries ideal for worker

⁴⁶However, Yendge (2019) claimed that in the modern Indian context, Ambedkar’s more radical and harsh criticisms of Hinduism have been underemphasized in favor of the more nationalistic sentiments he sometimes also expressed. Indeed, claims to accordance with Ambedkar have become hotly contested within Dalit rights movements.

exploitation. It was not the priestly Brahmins that held the power, claimed Singh; they were mere puppets of those who held the real state power: first the kings and subsequently the colonizers. Viswanath (2014) referred to this reproduction of coercion as the caste-state nexus.

As India throughout its long history was primarily an agrarian economy requiring massive amounts of manual labor, caste was a convenient way to ensure that those responsible for completing this labor did not try to usurp the status of others (Butt 2019; Gupta 2008; Singh 2014). Singh (2014) presented a variety of evidence for the minimization of the role of Hinduism in caste strictures. First, he noted that many outcaste markers – for example, the proscription against wearing gold jewelry – had nothing to do with religion per se but rather served to mark economic status. Secondly, he pointed to the fact that many, if not most, Untouchables did not work in ritually defiling professions but were agricultural manual laborers. Finally, his most interesting and convincing argument involves his own research among the descendants of indentured Indians in South Africa. Between 1834 and the end of World War I, over 1.3 million Indians were transported to British colonies in South Africa, South America, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific (Pool & Singh 1999). Regardless of their caste in India, the indentured workers were all reduced to the label of “coolie” and forced to work together in close quarters. In his fieldwork among the descendants of these workers, Singh found no evidence of the existence of caste; after several generations of intermixing, most had no idea what their ancestral castes were. When faced with little choice but to eat and drink with other indentures and to marry whomever might be available due to a persistent gender imbalance, caste simply collapsed (Singh 2014). Despite this, most descendants of indentured Indians were devout Hindus who kept household shrines and participated in daily *puja*. Singh summarized his findings by asserting that “this is not to deny the role of religion and religious ideas in caste, rather to argue

that religious ideas played (and continue to play) the role they did in the context of a particular economic-political structure” (p. 260).

This decoupling of caste and Hinduism becomes yet more apparent when other South Asian contexts are examined. It is important to remember that although caste is popularly associated with India, vestiges of the South Asian caste system still exist to various extents in Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan (Waughray 2010). In the case of Pakistan, Hindus comprise only about 4% of the population, yet caste associations remain, as demonstrated in Butt’s 2019 account of Dalit waste workers in Lahore. Most of Butt’s outcaste waste workers were Christians; indeed, a large majority of Christians throughout Pakistan are converts from low-caste or outcaste backgrounds (Fuchs & Fuchs 2019). Although the overwhelming majority of Pakistanis are aware of caste and its implications, it is considered un-Islamic to discriminate based on caste, a supposedly Hindu concept. Therefore, religion sometimes serves as a stand-in for caste, as Pakistani Muslims internalize caste alterity and project it outward toward other religions (Fuchs & Fuchs 2019). This allows caste, in the guise of religion, to function as social stratification in a non-Hindu state (Butt 2019; Fuchs & Fuchs 2019). Case studies such as those of South African descendants of indentured Indians and Pakistani waste workers effectively problematize the surface-level simplicity of a cause-and-effect relationship between Hinduism and caste.

Whether religion is foregrounded or backgrounded, there is no question that it still plays an important role in the reproduction of the South Asian caste system. This stands in marked contrast to the discrimination currently faced by the Buraku people. For instance, while inter-caste marriage in India may still commonly be rejected due to religious objections, objections to Buraku/non-Buraku marriages (when they occur at all) tend to be more secular in nature. For

example, mainstream Japanese parents may object to their children marrying a Buraku person if doing so means that they will live in a stigmatized neighborhood with lower property values and less prestigious schools; they also may express concern that their neighbors may gossip or that their future grandchildren will experience discrimination (Morgan 2007). The strength of the religious taboos, particularly against inter-caste miscegenation, may help to explain inter-caste violence in India, which has all but disappeared in Japan.

Hankins (2014) reported traveling to India with a group of Buraku people as part of his fieldwork with IMADR. While the purpose of the trip was to establish relationships and find commonalities among Dalits and Buraku people, both of whom fall under the UN category of groups who experience discrimination based on work and descent, Hankins observed that more often the Buraku people were impressed by their differences. As an example, he related an anecdote of a meeting at which a Dalit shared that he had killed a man who had hurled caste-related insults at him. According to Hankins, the Buraku people were shocked into silence: “While the Buraku group saw itself as facing a similar form of discrimination, strained though that similarity might at times be, it had a much harder time asserting itself as being similar to a group that would so nonchalantly, with pride even, report the killing of another person” (Hankins 2014:211). Despite these differences, Buraku people and Dalits have worked together at the UN level on various projects relating to discrimination among caste-related minorities (Tsutsui 2017; Waughray 2010). Dalit-related discrimination remains the top listed issue on the IMADR website (www.imadr.org), and the organization maintains a strong relationship with the Feminist Dalit Organisation, the founding president of which sits on IMADR’s board of directors (<http://imadr.org/about/staff>). While the two minority groups may still be working through

some philosophical differences, it appears for now at least that both find their collaboration to be worth pursuing.

“Their Own Warm Human Hearts Were Ripped Apart”: African Americans

In her best-selling 2010 book *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander made the claim that a racial caste system exists in the US. She shied away from using a social scientific definition of caste, instead preferring a somewhat folksier definition of the word:

The aim of this book is not to venture into the long-running, vigorous debate in the scholarly literature regarding what does and does not constitute a caste system. I use the term racial caste in this book the way it is used in common parlance to denote a stigmatized racial group locked into an inferior position by law and custom. Jim Crow and slavery were caste systems. So is our current system of mass incarceration.

(Alexander 2010: 12)

Although an exegesis of the caste literature and the appropriateness of caste to describe race in the United States might not have fit Alexander’s purpose, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Isabel Wilkerson picked up where Alexander left off in another bestseller, 2020’s *Caste: The Origin of our Discontents*. In *Caste*, Wilkerson delineated eight features of caste (appeal to divine will, preoccupation with purity, endogamy, immutability, inheritability, occupational constraints, stigma, coercion, and notions of inherent superiority) and described how each of these “pillars” of caste could be attributed to African Americans. All of these characteristics can be subsumed into the previous chapter’s working definition of caste.⁴⁷ Therefore, this section

⁴⁷ It should be noted that Alexander and Wilkerson are far from the only writers to refer to America’s racial hierarchy as a caste system; they are simply the most prominent and recent. In *Caste*, Wilkerson drew heavily from the works of Gunnar Myrdal, Ashley Montagu, and Kenneth Stampp. Myrdal (1944), in

will delve into our working definition of caste and critically discuss whether or not “racial caste system” is an appropriate descriptor of racial landscape of the United States.

Caste is hereditary. Buraku people, Dalits, and Baekjeong are/were assigned their position on the lowest rung of society at birth by virtue of their parents’ outcaste status. The lower-caste status of African Americans in American society, as Alexander describes, is certainly one that has lasted for many generations. After 400 years of slavery and another 150 years of Jim Crow, African Americans today are born into a “racial state” (Webster 2011) that severely limits their opportunities for personal success and upward mobility. Alexander convincingly demonstrated that this is largely due to mass incarceration and a criminal justice system that restricts African American self-determination from birth. As she summarized:

Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color “criminals” and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways that it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you’re labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination— employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, denial of educational opportunity, denial of food stamps and other public benefits, and exclusion from jury service—are suddenly legal. As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a black man living in Alabama

his 2800-page study on race in America, concluded that a racial caste system existed in America, and this claim was echoed a year later by the anthropologist Montagu (1945). The historian Stamp (1956) described the US under slavery and Jim Crow as a racial caste system, a claim echoed later by Weiner (2004). However, it should be noted that critics of *Caste* have accused Wilkerson of ascribing a dogmatic rigidity to caste in the Western hemisphere – a rigidity that the scholars upon which she has drawn may not have intended (see for example, Carby 2021). Indeed, Weiner (2004) claimed that after the civil rights movement, the caste system was effectively dismantled, creating a new racial order with a permeability that is not characteristic of caste (p. 244; p. 331)

at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it. (Alexander 2010: 2)

Due to a complex web of factors such as unconscious racial bias, jury exclusion, racial profiling in policing, and an overzealous war on drugs, African Americans are sent to prison at a much higher rate than other races. In some cities, as many as 80% of African American men have criminal records, a higher rate than in South Africa at the peak of apartheid. Among youth who have never been sentenced to a juvenile prison, African Americans are six times likelier than Whites to be sent to prison for the same crime (Alexander 2010). Such statistics suggest that by virtue of their status at birth, African American children are much more likely to be labeled as criminals and therefore suffer permanent social consequences. For example, Wilkerson (2020) pointed out, many African Americans are still languishing in prison from possession of cannabis while White businessmen rake in profits from the sale of CBD products from the very same plant.

More broadly speaking, Wilkerson asserted that Black Americans' societal positions are defined by their racial phenotype, which they inherit from their parents. She described race as: the historic flash card to the public of how they are to be treated, where they are expected to live, what positions they are expected to hold, whether they should be expected to speak with authority on this or that subject, whether they will be administered pain relief in a hospital, whether their neighborhood is likely to adjoin a toxic waste site or to have contaminated water flowing from their taps, whether they are more or less likely to survive childbirth in the most advanced nation in the world, whether they may be shot by authorities with impunity. (Wilkerson 2020:18).

This “historic flash card”, as in the case of the other caste-based minorities discussed previously, has been defined, proscribed, and condoned through the use of religious texts. After all, since the Middle Ages some Old Testament theologians have described Noah’s son Ham as “black-skinned” and interpreted Noah’s curse of Ham and his descendants as a curse against the Black races (Wilkerson 2020:102).

Caste is immutable. Perhaps the most tragic conclusion reached by Alexander (2010) is that once the criminal label is applied, it sticks for life. Black men with criminal records are the least likely demographic group in the United States to receive job offers, particularly among suburban employers. Even though the Equal Employment Opportunity Center prohibits blanket hiring bans, employers routinely screen candidates for criminal offenses and eliminate those with records without even an interview. If an ex-offender finds it difficult to find a job, he often cannot rely on the social safety net either, as benefits such as public welfare, food stamps, and student loans are often denied even to petty drug offenders. He will also be ineligible to serve in the military.

Despite these challenges to socioeconomic relief, ex-offenders are often expected to pay enormous fees upon their release from prison to a variety of agencies, including probation departments and courts. Some are expected to pay for the drug treatment that they agreed to as a condition for parole. If they fail to make these payments in a timely manner, late fees and interest begin to pile up. Because their paychecks can be garnished up to 65% for child support and an additional 35% for court fines, ex-offenders sometimes make the not irrational decision to return to the illegal economy. Trapped in a cycle of debt that enriches private loan collectors, they are often unable to provide for their children or avoid returning to prison⁴⁸, reproducing an

⁴⁸ While debtors’ prisons are illegal in the United States, revocation of parole is sometimes imposed as a punishment for failure to pay fines (Alexander 2010).

environment of want that may ultimately induce their children to participate in the illegal economy as well. As Alexander eloquently put it, “What is key to America’s understanding of class is the persistent belief – despite all evidence to the contrary – that anyone, with the proper discipline and drive, can move from a lower class to a higher class” (2010: 13). The immutability of the criminal label – like the immutability of Jim Crow and slavery before it – contributes to the caste-like nature of the American racial state.

Wilkerson (2020) pointed out that while caste is fixed, race is fluid; in the United States context, for example, there have been periodic reallocations of Whiteness. While boundaries surrounding who can be identified as White have shifted over the centuries, however, those who have been able to claim Whiteness have consistently been granted and legal and social privileges over those who cannot. Whiteness, then, has been ascribed to the dominant caste in America. This realization did not escape earlier Black liberation activists. Wilkerson (2020) recounted a trip that Martin Luther King made to Kerala, India in which King introduced himself as a “fellow untouchable from the United States of America” (pp. 21-22). More famously, W.E.B. DuBois, who would later correspond with B.R. Ambedkar, drew on conceptions of caste when he lamented “Why did God make me a stranger and an outcast in mine own house?” in an 1897 op-ed in *The Atlantic*.

Caste notions of purity are reproduced through endogamy. As Alexander’s primary concern was the reproduction of racial injustice through mass incarceration, she did not address issues of purity and endogamy within the US racial state. However, other scholars, including Wilkerson, have taken up these topics. Wilkerson (2020) highlighted endogamy as key to the success of a caste system, as endogamy

builds a firewall between castes and becomes the primary means of keeping resources and affinity within each tier of the caste system. Endogamy, by closing off legal family connection, blocks the chance for empathy or a shared sense of destiny between the castes. It makes it less likely that someone in the dominant caste will have a personal stake in the happiness, fulfillment, or well-being of anyone deemed beneath them or personally identify with them or their plight. (p.109)

Wilkerson pointed out that at one time or another, 41 states had laws declaring intermarriage a crime. While those these laws have since been overturned by the Supreme Court, their legacy has been continued success in maintaining racial endogamy in the United States. Weiner (2004) asserted that it was not just anti-miscegenation laws that buttressed the caste system but rather informal and extralegal enforcement of interracial transgression, particularly the frequent lynching of African American men who were perceived to have overstepped racial sexual boundaries. According to Rosenfeld (2008), African Americans are the most endogamous group in the United States, and this has been the case as demonstrated by every census since the 1880s, without exception. By the end of the 20th century, 90% of marriages in the United States were still racially endogamous (Rosenfeld 2008). This is much higher than the rate of endogamy seen with Buraku people, in part due to the continuing de facto racial segregation in the US (Morgan 2007).

While overt talk of “racial purity” has mostly been associated with extremist viewpoints in the US in the last several decades, it is important to remember that the social Darwinist views that so effected the development of race relations in Japan were mostly imported from the US, which has a long history of eschewing miscegenation. In fact, racist sentiments in post-war America were so strong that Berreman (1966) claimed that caste stratification and racial

stratification systems were one and the same, while DeVos (1966) argued that racism was “a particular form of caste ideology” (p. 325). While the racial landscape in the US has certainly changed over the years, a recent Pew research poll shows that a majority of both Black and White Americans agree that race relations in the US are generally bad and that the legacy of slavery still affects African Americans a great deal. In the same poll, half of African Americans opined that it was unlikely that Black people will eventually have equal rights (Horowitz, Brown, and Cox 2019). In Japan, the Emancipation Edict officially ended the caste system in 1871. In the US, the Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery six years earlier. However, because the racial caste system was never officially acknowledged, it was never abolished, and it has survived through Jim Crow in both of its iterations: segregation and mass incarceration.

Conclusion

Just what sort of business is it, to become “a Japanese”? Given that “the Japanese” exist as an outcome of imagining, it is necessary to examine how they are concretely enacted as an “imagined community”. Without such an examination, we cannot critique the “myth of the mono-ethnic nation”. For, merely to propose the existence of “minority groups”, including the Ainu people, Okinawan people, Korean people and “foreign people”, thereby to point to the “diversity” of Japanese society, leaves intact the “ethnic myth” that there exist “the Japanese”, merely restating it into the gentler language of “we ‘Japanese people’ who are the majority group in Japanese society”. (Tomiyaama 2005: 1).

In the passage above, the postcolonial scholar Ichiro Tomiyama leverages Benedict Anderson’s concept of the nation as an imagined community. Anderson (1983) described the community as

“imagined” because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). This idea of an imaginary fellowship with strangers applies to every group highlighted in this chapter – Buraku people, Ainu, Okinawans, Zainichi Koreans, immigrants to Japan, Baekjeong, Dalits, and African Americans – yet none of the groups can claim the second characteristic that Anderson requires of a nation: sovereignty. All of them exist as minorities within a separate sovereign national context.

Returning to Tomiyama’s question, then, what sort of business *is* it to become a Japanese? If Japanese are defined by what they are *not* – i.e., not minorities – then no room is left for alterity within Japan, and the myth of monoethnicity survives. To break down this myth, then, requires acknowledgement that Japan is and has always been multiethnic, as Lie (2009) claims. It requires a new understanding of the history of Japanese society that goes beyond the surface-level differences espoused by tabunka kyōsei proponents. It requires complete abandonment of the vestiges of the social Darwinist principles responsible for creating racialized hierarchies.

The centralized nature of the Japanese education system – alongside its virtually universal reach within Japan – could provide one of the best opportunities for rethinking Japanese nationhood. Minority voices should be included in history textbooks as more than just an afterthought, and diverse perspectives should be sought when curriculum decisions are made. Hiring laws should be adjusted to allow more flexibility for non-Japanese citizens to hold decision-making positions within schools. Perhaps the most challenging roadblock may be the tradition of silence and taboo around minority issues (Bondy 2015). However, in order for multiethnicity to become a characteristic of the Japanese imagined community, ethnicity must

be discussed openly. To maintain brief, whispered conversations as the milieu of ethnic dialogue marks ethnic alterity as a source of embarrassment or shame.

Unfortunately, then, the Suiheisha Declaration's nearly century-old claim that the "the time has come when we can be proud of being Eta" has not yet ripened to its full potential. However, as racial and ethnic groups from around Japan and the world are increasingly exchanging ideas in pursuit of the elimination of discrimination, new opportunities are being created for global dialogue and understanding that can be applied to various local contexts (Tsutsui 2017, 2018). Even with the menace of ultranationalism looming in the background, then, perhaps the day may be approaching when Japan – and the world – can realize the Suiheisha's hope of finding warmth and light in all human beings.

Chapter Four: Museums and Memory in the Buraku

The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations. (Baldwin 1965, p. 723)

Scholars have generally agreed that museums are implicated in the construction, preservation, reconstruction, and politicization of memory (Anderson 1983; Bennett 1995; Boudieu and Darbel 1991; Boyarin 1994; Crane 2000; Crooke 2007; Ernst 2000; Fyfe and Ross 1996; Macdonald 2003; Misztal 2007; Orange 2016; Petrusek 2015; Prosser 1996; Reid 2015; Sandell 2007; Trouillot 1995; Watson 2007). Less obvious, however, are the mechanisms and effects of this implication, particularly in the relatively recent scholarship on human rights museums. This chapter aims to summarize scholarship on this intertwining of museums and memory, including areas of dissent among museums and memory scholars.

Halbwachs and the Nature of Memory

While memory can intuitively be defined as that which I, as an individual, remember, philosophical treatment reveals that memory is a distinctively social concept. While I remember almost drowning during a vacation to Hilton Head that I took with my family as a young child, I cannot remember anything that we ate during this vacation. I also remember, for example, that the American Civil War lasted from 1861 to 1865, though I myself was not alive to witness the war. I “remember” this fact because another human shared this fact with me -- another human who, likely, had also not experienced the war firsthand. Without the aid of research tools, I cannot remember the dates of the Ming Dynasty, although I remember that I needed to know

these dates for a course I took 18 years ago on Asian civilizations. Why do I remember the dates of the Civil War while I have forgotten those of the Ming Dynasty? It could be that the dates for the Civil War have been repeated to me much more often by those around me and in the media, all of whom evidently believe that the dates of the Civil War are something important for me to know. It could also be that the dates of the Civil War had or could have much more effect on my life than those of the Ming Dynasty, whether it be because of the repercussions of slavery that still reverberate throughout American society or because knowledge of the Civil War is more likely to be necessary to answer questions at the weekly pub trivia in which I participate. Either way, that which I remember as well as that which I have forgotten has been closely shaped by my society and culture. This nexus between sociality and memory makes an understanding of memory an indispensable tool in the social scientist's toolkit. As the editors of *The Collective Memory Reader* note in the book's introduction:

Studying (and theorizing) memory allows us to shift our focus from time to temporalities, and thus to understand what categories people, groups, and cultures employ to make sense of their lives, their social, cultural, and political attachments, and the concomitant ideals that are validated – in short, the political, cultural, and social theories that command normative action (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Levy 2011:37.)

Olick and colleagues, like most social scientists of memory, acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Maurice Halbwachs for his foundational observations in memory studies.

The French philosopher Halbwachs (1950) is considered to be among the first to address the social aspects of memory as they relate to constructed histories. For certain memories, Halbwachs posited, we have no direct experience and must rely on the recollections of others. Halbwachs referred to this phenomenon as *collective memory*. Collective memory also includes

the mind's tendency to fill in the gaps of our recollections with those impressions relayed to us by others. Collective memory erodes and fades as group members scatter and die out, but traces of the collective memory often remain within the scattered members. Halbwachs argued that since memory is affected strongly by time, space, and group membership, it is possible for contradictory collective memories to circulate at the same time. This distinguishes collective memory from history, which, in Halbwachs' dichotomy, is unitary.

Scholars from across the social science spectrum have both expanded and refined the Halbwachsian conception of collective memory throughout the past 70+ years, particularly within the so-called "memory boom" that has occurred within social science over the past few decades. Bastide (1960) criticized Halbwachs by accusing him of replicating the mistakes of his mentor, Emile Durkheim, by focusing on the group to the exclusion of the individual. As groups are constantly forming, dissolving, and reconstituting, Bastide claimed, a robust conception of collective memory must account for the shapeshifting qualities of social groups. Similarly, Megill (1998) pointed out that while Halbwachs' model assumes a fixity of identity associated with group membership, postmodern theory asserts that a *lack* of fixity of identity is a salient feature of contemporary society. After all, as Eviatar Zerubavel (1996) pointed out, the socialization of our memories does not end with the family; it continues whenever we take on a new job, get married, convert to a new religion, etc. Whenever the world is reinterpreted in light of our new circumstances, our memories, and thus our identities, evolve. This is not a one-time interaction, but a constant, dynamic, additive process (Olick 2007).

The Dutch Egyptologists Jan and Aleida Assmann attempted to bridge the gaps in Halbwachsian mnemonic theory by distinguishing between communicative and cultural collective memory. Communicative memory, as the name suggests, relates to personal

memories that are formed by and informed by direct communication with others. Cultural memory, on the other hand, is institutional and used to indoctrinate and establish norms among members of the institution (J. Assmann 1995). The archive is one mode of the storage and cultivation of cultural memory. Olick (2007) pointed out that this institutional collective memory can act in both prescriptive and proscriptive ways through the creation of duties and taboos, respectively (p. 40).

It is also important to note that within every institution one finds those who do not accept the master commemorative narrative. Instead, as Yael Zerubavel (1995) has written, their collective identities are formed through counter-memories, which struggle against the hegemony of the master narrative while at the same time functioning under it. While the master commemorative narrative reflects the values and interests of the political elite, counter-memories serve as a challenge to their views. In some cases, counter-memories can usurp the master commemorative narrative and transform collective memory. As Olick (2007) warns, when discussing collective memory, it is also important to consider that groups are made up of individuals and we therefore “need as always to be wary of transcendentalist temptations that inhere in collectivism taken too literally.” In this complex dance between the individual and the group, collective memory serves as the music.

Mnemonic Sites and Commemoration: History and Memory

Almost 40 years after Halbwachs’ groundbreaking work, his compatriot Pierre Nora expounded on Halbwachs’ philosophy by coining the term *lieux de memoire*, or sites of memory (Nora 1989). Like Halbwachs, Nora claimed that history is universal while collective memory is contextual, but he further posited that sites of memory (such as anniversary celebrations and

archives) are created as mechanisms for maintaining memory. They are, at once, material, symbolic, and functional (pp. 18-19). They are distinguished from history in that “memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events”. Nora explained as follows:

Memory is blind to all but the group it binds--which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. (p. 9)

The Civil War is history. A civil war battle reenactment, intimately bound with the life experiences of the reenactors and their social circles, is a site of memory. The interpretation of the battle -- its importance, which side suffered more, and even the very fact of who won -- may change according to prevailing wisdom of the time. Yael Zerubavel wrote extensively on such interpretation of events in her 1995 analysis of Israel cultural tradition, noting that historical events are often singled out as “beginnings” or “turning points” in establishing insider-outsider dynamics in groups. These events are often commemorated, often in elaborate ways, continually refreshing the collective memory. Olick (2007) defined commemoration as “a way of claiming that the past has something to offer the present, be it a warning or a model” (p. 55). This presentist orientation separates memory from history.

While Trouillot proclaimed the word “history” as variously meaning “what happened” and “that which is said to have happened” (1995, p. 2), Halbwachs and his followers might instead proclaim “what happened” as history and “that which is said to have happened” as memory. However, Trouillot questioned whether “what happened” can truly exist without a tinge of “that what is said to have happened.” In other words, history is always framed by who is telling the story. Yoneyama (1999) echoed this criticism in her research of memory in the

context of the Hiroshima bombings, objecting to a dichotomy of memory and history and instead suggesting that memory is “deeply embedded in and hopelessly complicitous with history in fashioning an official and authoritative account about the past” (p. 27).

Eviatar Zerubavel (1996) coined the term *mnemonic communities* to refer to those social circles from which we construct our recollections. Much of memory creation is, according to Zerubavel, mediated by linguistic communication with significant others, a claim echoed by French (2012). In this way, language also finds itself inextricably bound with memory construction (Y. Zerubavel 1995).

More recently, memory creation has been increasingly mediated electronically – the impacts of which social scientists have begun to study. Many have expressed concern about how internet filtering and personalization capabilities have led to increased social amnesia through a perpetual cycle of writing and overwriting (Ogasawara 2019; Parisier 2011; Manovich 2001; A. Assmann 2011). Cognitive science teaches us that constant immediate access to information is effectively rewiring our brain (Olick Venitsky-Seroussi & Levy 2011). When one takes seriously the reminder from Olick and colleagues (2011) that our brain is also a technology of memory, it certainly seems possible that the invention of the Internet may ultimately prove to be as seminal as the printing press in driving the machinations of collective memory. All of our collective memory institutions, including museums, will be forced to reckon with how these new neural networks will change their strategies in collective memory cultivation.

The Role of Museums in the Production and Preservation of Memory

As Crane (2000) has astutely observed, the nexus between museums and memory is a rich area of inquiry. Museums serve as this type of nexus because of their status as a collection

of objects, which can trigger memory (Crane 2000; Warnock 1987; Schudson 1997), making the museum a quintessential *lieu de memoire*. Because museums are commonly visited with companions, the social nature of the memory is magnified. As Kavanagh (2000) stated:

People visit museums on their own, but more often than not visit in groups of kin or friends. They are equipped with the basic elements required for sympathetic remembering. These include a suite of triggers (visual and tactile stimuli and the conversation of others), narrators (one or several) and audiences (one or several) (p. 148).

For this reason, Macdonald (1996) has referred to museums as sites in which culturally embedded theories are manifested, making them ripe for anthropological analysis.

Handler (1993) attempted an anthropological definition of a museum: "A museum is an institution in which social relationships are oriented in terms of a collection of objects which are made meaningful by those relationships—though these objects are often understood by museum natives to be meaningful independently of those social relationships" (p. 33). By "museum natives," he refers to curators, who traditionally selected items for display based on some intrinsic value without consideration of how the items might affect social relationships.

These relationships, though, are crucial to the very existence of museums, especially once memory is understood as distinctively social in nature, developed and preserved in network with our mnemonic communities. According to Myszal (2007), who applied Zerubavel's concept of the mnemonic community to the museum, the main mnemonic community is the nation, so it is no surprise that Benedict Anderson (1983) in his landmark book *Imagined Communities* cited museums as vital cogs in the machinery that produces national memory. "Museums," he stated, "and the museumizing imagination, are both profoundly political" (p.

178). Derrida (1995) concisely echoed Anderson's assertion twelve years later: "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory" (p. 11).

Historically, museums and anthropology have been inextricably bound. The armchair anthropologists so shunned by Malinowski often worked very closely with museums, developing methodological and theoretical premises that served as the (shaky) foundation of the discipline (Sera-Shriar 2012). Their early collections were integral in attracting interest to the field of human diversity (Bell 2012). Museums provided Franz Boas with a conduit to more fully explore and articulate his nascent views on cultural relativism (Glass 2017). Underneath these activities, though, flowed the insidious stream of colonialism and the damaging hierarchies of race and technology inspired by the confluence of museums and early anthropology -- the shackles of which modern museums are still struggling to shake (Smith 1999; Bell 2012; Bennett 1995). Museums in Europe initially proliferated in part as a way for states to showcase their power over colonies by displaying objects that were often plundered during the colonization process (Bennett 1995). In this way, museums held – and still hold to some extent – tremendous symbolic power (Thompson 1995).

Of course, not all museums are currently directly administered by nations; for example, all of the Japanese human rights museums in this study are predominantly administered and funded locally or prefecturally. However, Macdonald (2003) suggested that even if museums are not administered directly by the state, they are affected by traditional nationalist narratives of museum purpose and power. Graburn (2007) also pointed out that great cities often use their museums to vie for symbolic power. On an individual level, Bourdieu and Darbel (1979) wrote that museum visiting reproduces the social order, as visits to museums correlate with symbolic capital. Watson (2007) agreed, stating that "museums are understood to represent those who

have privileges in society, i.e., the educated, the relatively wealthy, those who are in control...” (p. 10). However, Fyfe and Ross (1996) pointed out that accumulation of social capital from museum visitation is mediated by class, with lower class members who visit museums seeing smaller gains than those in the middle and upper classes. Hence, class plays a role in the prevalence of museums as preservers and interpreters of memory in mnemonic communities.

As museums cannot possibly display all extant objects associated with most topics, decisions must be made, usually by curators and administrators, regarding which objects to display and how to display them. Therefore, there has traditionally been an inherent imbalance of power between curators and visitors, as decisions regarding which objects are displayed either directly or indirectly affect how a story is told and therefore remembered by the visitor. In other words, museums become deciders of that which is remembered and that which is forgotten; in addition, curators’ wisdom in these decisions has until relatively been rarely contested (Watson 2007). As museums through their displays create epistemological maps for visitors that are then transmitted into the zeitgeist of the mnemonic communities, curator decisions can reach far beyond the museum walls (Ernst 2000; see also Crane 2000). As Prosler succinctly stated, the museum is “a space in which the *world is ordered*” (p. 53, emphasis in original). The fact of its display confirms the object’s significance (Bal 1996). Seemingly small factors such as how, when, and where an object is exhibited can highlight nuances in meaning-making (Hamlisch 2000). As Trouillot (1995) stated:

In short, the making of archives involves a number of selective operations: selection of producers, selection of evidence, selection of themes, selection of procedures -- which means, at best, the differential ranking and, at worst, the exclusion of some producers, some evidence, some themes, some procedures. (p. 53)

Even the most well-intentioned curator, therefore, can sometimes inadvertently omit some important viewpoints from events. According to Watson (2007), when curator knowledge is challenged, as sometimes happens in the postmodern era, it is usually from within the museum profession or the academy rather than from visitors.

However, there have been efforts within the museum community to include more stakeholders in curatorship decisions (Weil 2007, Appleton 2007, Hooper-Greenhill 2007, Macdonald 2007; Thomas 2010). This is particularly the case in locally or tribally administered museums, who are less beholden to state funding and therefore are less bound to state agendas (Peers & Brown 2003, Orange 2016; Silverman 2006). These efforts have come alongside attempts to make museum exhibits more interactive and encourage two-way communication between museum visitors and museum staff. Such efforts have collectively been referred to as the “new museology” movement (Witcomb 2007, Orange 2016), and they have created a new balance of power between museums and their communities. One outcome of this has been the transition of museums from uncontested to contested terrain (Crooke 2007), “boundary objects” (Star & Griesemer 1989) or “contact zones” (Peers & Brown 2003) in which intercultural dialogues are encouraged. All of this has led Bell (2012) to advocate “understanding museums as processes and emergent institutions that are formed by the dynamic interactions of people with the objects” (p. 72). In other words, it is no longer clear that the curators are the fount of all knowledge.⁴⁹

Macdonald (2007) has described the role of science museums as occurring in three stages: the early modern, focusing on collecting and knowing; the modern, focusing on progress

⁴⁹ However, Geismar (2012) has written persuasively about how these idealistic intentions are often not fully realized in practice. In many cases, while museums see themselves as bastions of democracy, insider voices are privileged over those of outsiders.

and the public; and the late modern, focused on interactivity and consumers. Although Macdonald's schematic specifically focuses on science museums, a similar trajectory can be observed in many other museum genres. Human rights museums, the subject of my research as well as the next section, have also seen a decisive trend toward interactivity.

Human Rights Museums

The manner in which memory and museum interface of course depends in part on the purpose of the museum. The memory spurred by a visit to a European art museum will likely differ significantly to that spurred by a visit to an American history museum, for example, for any given visitor. In the context of this research, it is therefore important to address the particularities of human rights museums.

The concept of a human rights museum is relatively new within museology, the museums themselves having been mostly established within the past two decades (Busby et al 2015; Carter 2015) in part due to a postmodernist tendency to focus on heritage that is intangible (Hooper-Greenhill 2007). As Busby and colleagues (2015) explained:

The specific missions of these institutions range from social reconciliation, reparation, symbolic memorialization, calling to action, or providing the opportunity for what Piotr Cywinski, director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, describes... as a "deep private individual experience." These missions can shift in response to the evolving concerns of an ever-changing present. (pp. 1-2)

In the realm of museology, this places them within the category of idea museums. Petrasek (2015) defined an idea museum as follows:

These public buildings exist primarily not to display artifacts or art or objects with either some intrinsic value or value derived from their historical use or importance. Rather, though they might include artifacts, the goal is to showcase and win interest in and support for ideas that have some transcendent moral appeal – tolerance or peace, for example. (p. 87)

This inherently social focus has profound implications for the relationship between human rights museums and memory. As Kavanagh noted in 2000, when human rights museums were beginning their expansion around the world, “As museums have developed an increasingly close relationship with social histories, they have also developed a relationship with people’s memories of events, processes, and episodes” (p. 7). Idea museums also complicate the association between museums and objects; while much of museum practice is still heavily influenced by 19th-century practices of cataloguing tangible materials (Geismar 2012; Horst and Miller 2012), idea museums – as well as digital collections – propose the question as to whether museums still need objects at all (Conn 2010).

Because their mission often skews more toward education as opposed to archiving tangible objects, it is all the more important for an idea museum to establish strong curatorial practices. If the information at an idea museum is simply presented in a didactic, one-sided manner, for example, such a museum will find itself in competition with World Wide Web information platforms. Because of the web’s constant expansion, this would be a competition that the museum would be sure to lose (Jacob 2015). Rather, Ernst (2000) claimed that the task of the postmodern museum is not so much to present a cornucopia of information, but rather to teach visitors how to cope with information overload.

As Failler and Simon (2015) pointed out, there is still, unsurprisingly, much debate over what constitutes strong curatorial practices in human rights museums. In general, though, it is agreed that

curatorial staff must also devise frameworks that assemble people so that, through interactions with exhibits and each other, they deepen their awareness of their situations in the world and elaborate not only their own viewpoints or those of the museum but also a collective vision of a more just society (Failler and Simon 2015, p. 165).

This type of interactivity, with its focus on reflexive critical thinking on the part of the visitor, is a hallmark of the new museology movement. Considering the highly politicized nature of human rights as a concept, reflexivity and adaptability are vital in the resultant ethical conundrums.

For example, as Petrasek (2015) and Reid (2015) pointed out, museums often portray sanitized versions of issues, minimizing conflict in order to ensure a pleasant visitor experience. How, then, can curators show the many sides of human rights controversy while still attracting visitors? Failler and Simon (2015) noted the inherent difficulties in wishing to create analogical thinking in visitors (i.e., “This is how I apply this information to my life”) while avoiding oversimplification and overgeneralization. Petrasek (2015) similarly warned against oversimplifying the trajectory of human rights attainment, as the tendency is to portray the history of human rights as a straight line of progress (i.e., “We used to not have human rights, but now we have them”), while the reality is much more complex. Walsh (2007) also worried that displays of past human rights atrocities might imply that such atrocities are safely left in the past. Instead, Lubar (2007) argued for a curatorial practice that will

move people from the ideas and information that they bring with them to the exhibit to a more complex, problematized, and nuanced view of the past. Exhibits should not be limited to reminiscence or commemoration; they should add perspective by aspiring to a great critical distance and by putting the artefacts in context. (p. 398)

Orange (2016) highlighted several other ethical challenges, including the decision that each museum must continue to make regarding how civically engaged in activist causes it wishes to be. Indeed, she has made a convincing case that activism by human rights museums has actually affected the course of human rights development in several countries. Sandell (2007) similarly asserted that museums have a responsibility toward activism and social equality since from their beginning they have been implicated in the unequal power dynamics discussed earlier in this paper. Finally, Orange (2016) perceptively noted a conflict of interest, as many human rights museums are funded by the state. Since the state traditionally has the responsibility of ensuring human rights to citizens, might human rights museums be hesitant to bite the hand that feeds them? As Witcomb (2007) warned, “local museums need to be aware that in accepting grants they are also making a choice to ‘reform and to become part of a governmentalized public culture” (p. 153).

Human Rights Museums in the Buraku

As mentioned in the previous section, human rights museums are by and large a postmillennial concept. This makes the Japanese case, in which a large number of human rights museums were established in the 1980s and 1990s, rather exceptional and ahead of the curve

(Carter 2015). It is common for these museums to have large exhibits dedicated to Buraku issues; in some cases, the entire museum is dedicated to Buraku issues.

In 1996, human rights museums in Japan formed a network, housed in the government's Agency for Cultural Affairs, called The National Network for Collection and Exhibition of Human Rights Materials (hereafter NNCEHRM). As of 2015, there were 32 member museums, 22 of which focus solely or mostly on Buraku issues (NNCEHRM 2015).⁵⁰ Most human rights museums in Japan belong to this national network rather than the international network for human rights museums, the Federation of International Human Rights Museums (FIHRM). In fact, only one human rights museum in Japan -- the Suiheisha History Museum in Nara -- belongs to a FIHRM, a fact which is touted in the Suiheisha History Museum's website and brochure. As the Suiheisha History Museum joined FIHRM in 2015, it may be too early to judge whether the museum is a trendsetter or an outlier by joining this international professional organization.

Another unique point regarding Japan's human rights museums is that they are often funded by the city or the prefecture rather than the national government (Carter 2015). Because human rights are generally guaranteed by national governments, this funding model allows human rights museums in Japan some leverage in addressing an important ethical conundrum faced by human rights museums in other countries, that of balancing the desire to criticize governments on human rights records while receiving funding from the same (Orange 2016). Carter (2015) has therefore cited Japan's locally funded model as one worth emulation.

⁵⁰ The remaining 10 consist of 3 museums dedicated to Ainu issues, 3 museums dedicated to Korean and/or multicultural issues, 1 museum dedicated to Minamata disease, and 3 museums dedicated to various human rights issues.

All of the human rights museums that focus exclusively or in part on Buraku issues are concentrated in western and southern Japan; there are none in Kanto (the area around Tokyo), northern Japan, or Hokkaido. Of the 22 Buraku-focused member museums of the NNCEHRM, 15 are in Kansai (1 in Mie, 3 in Shiga, 5 in Kyoto, 3 in Osaka, and 3 in Nara), 5 are on Kyushu (4 in Fukuoka and 1 in Oita), 1 is in Fukuyama in Western Japan, and 1 is in Tokushima on Shikoku. This stark geographical concentration is a reflection of historic patterns in Buraku discrimination as explicated previously in this dissertation.

Chapter Five: Methods

“A canoe is an item of material culture, and as such it can be described, photographed and even bodily transported into a museum. But... the ethnographic reality of the canoe would not be brought much nearer to a student at home, even by placing a perfect specimen right before him. The canoe is made for a certain use, and with a definitive purpose; it is a means to an end, and we, who study native life, must not reverse this relationship, and make a fetish of the object itself.” (Malinowski 1922:105)

With these century-old words, Bronislaw Malinowski made the argument, accepted as gospel by many in the community of anthropologists to come after him, that ethnography – the practice of living and writing amongst the people one is researching – is an indispensable aspect of anthropological research. The canoe is meaningless without the narratives of the people behind it, and in order to delve into the heart of these stories, one must ideally “live without other white men, right among the natives” (Malinowski 1922:210). Grimshaw (2001:4) referred to this as a “radical break between the past and the present” and a “revolution”, referring to the seemingly opposite methodological standpoints of the previous generations of the so-called “armchair anthropologists” who constructed grandiose, over-simplistic typologies of races and societies based on secondhand accounts from those visiting the colonies versus those of Malinowski and his ethnographic disciples.

Revolutions are rarely as cut-and-dried as they seem at first glance, however, and therefore Sera-Shriar (2012) warned us that drawing a stark distinction between pre-/post-Malinowski anthropology is problematic, as doing so diminishes the connections that exist between 19th- and 20th- century anthropological methods. Citing early practitioners such as Thomas Huxley (1825-92) and Richard King (1811-76), both of whom had traveled extensively,

Sera-Shriar demonstrated that many early anthropologists were not as divorced from their research subjects as previously thought. In addition, many other others who had not traveled as extensively showed a preoccupation with refining analysis and methodology that has continued in to the modern and postmodern eras. On the other hand, ethnohistorical methods, which utilize as units of analysis the secondhand documentary evidence associated with the armchair anthropologists, have continued to be used in modern anthropological research (Wiedman 1988, Barber and Berdan 1999, Riehm and colleagues 2019; Postill 2016).

Is it impossible, then, to untangle secondhand analysis from its racist, colonial roots? Or, is it possible that documentary data analysis can shed light on institutions, cultures, and societies in ways that are not counter but rather complementary to ethnographic analysis? Perhaps just as Malinowski, as a product of his time, struggled to envision an anthropologist as anything but a “white man”, he also struggled to view the discipline as one in which both methodologies counterbalance each other to form a more complete anthropology. This chapter will argue that ethnohistorical methods, particularly qualitative content analysis, serve alongside ethnography as an indispensable tool in the anthropologist’s toolkit. It will also provide an outline of the specific methods that will be used to undertake this project.

Ethnohistorical Methods

Barber and Berdan (1999) defined ethnohistory as:

an interdisciplinary field that studies past human behavior and is characterized by a methodology based primarily on documents, the use of input from other data sources when available, and the incorporation of historiography and cultural relativism. (pp. 11-12)

Notably, the predominant source of data is documentary, generally consisting of historical and official documents as well as ethnographic data (Riehm and colleagues 2019). However, other materials – objects, maps, recordings, photos, etc. – can also be scrutinized using ethnohistorical methods (Barber and Berdan 1999). “Past” human behavior is defined quite liberally, as “current” events are sometimes analyzed with ethnohistorical methods with the understanding that many events we consider “current” in fact occurred in the very recent past (Barber and Berdan 1999). This inclusive paradigm of history is one that has been shared by anthropologists since the before the turn of the 20th century, as the anthropologist Franz Boas’s writings were also reflective of an understanding of history that included his contemporary informants (Glass 2017).

“The incorporation of historiography and cultural relativism” implies a particular analytical and disciplinary framework. Wiedman (1988) cited Gottschalk’s (1950) four essential elements of the historical method as crucial to ethnohistory. Those elements are as follows:

1. The collection of the surviving materials and of the printed, written, and oral materials that may be relevant
 2. The exclusion of those materials (or parts thereof) that are unauthentic
 3. The extraction from the authentic material of testimony that is credible
 4. The organization of that reliable testimony into a meaningful narrative or exposition
- (Gottschalk 1950:28 as cited in Wiedman 1988:xii)

These elements are combined with anthropological theory to make meaning of historical documentation. As Wiedman (1988) stated, “As a scientific discipline, anthropology includes three major components: theory, method, and data... Considering these three components, Ethnohistory has in common with traditional anthropology ‘theory’ and ‘data’ but its ‘method’ is

borrowed from history” (p. xii). Riehm and colleagues (2019) went even further, describing ethnohistory as a “super-discipline” (p. 160) that can contain elements of not only history and cultural anthropology but also linguistics, archaeology, ecology, and more. For example, ethnohistorians often borrow the archeological concept of the *chaine operateire* (Martinon-Torres 2002; Coupaye 2013) to explain the series of actions and contextual elements in the making, use, and afterlife of an object or document. Barber and Berdan (1999) described the analogous process of *deconstruction* when working with texts, which they define as “the process of identifying the conscious choices and unconscious consequences of the author’s mind-set that help shape a document or other account” (p. 44). The purpose of deconstruction is to uncover subtexts such as the author’s biases, beliefs, and motives. While there are certainly times in the ethnohistorian’s work in which understanding the context the documentary evidence requires a journey beyond one’s disciplinary boundaries, the basic *methodological* approach is generally conceived of as one that combines cultural anthropology and history. Wiedman (1988) pointed out that ethnohistorical methods are often used in conjunction with other methods in order to validate data or provide data that cannot be obtained through other methods.

While evidence of something approximating ethnohistorical methods can be found in the works of ancient historians such as Herodotus and Xenophon – as well as in the secondhand research of the aforementioned “armchair” anthropologists – the beginning of ethnohistory as an established discipline can be traced to the mid-20th century (Barber and Berdan 1999) with the 1954 founding of the academic journal *Ethnohistory* (Riehm and colleagues 2019). At around this same moment in history, content analysis was beginning to be widely recognized as a quantitative method for analyzing texts. It was not until several decades later, however, that a

methodology for qualitative content analysis began to be established, borrowing pieces from both ethnohistory and quantitative content analysis.

The Evolution of Qualitative Content Analysis from its Quantitative Roots

In 1952, two years before the initial publication of the journal *Ethnohistory*, Bernard Berelson published the first widely used methodological textbook focusing on content analysis, *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. While content analysis had been utilized in the social sciences since the beginning of the 20th century – particularly in reference to media analysis – it became more widely used during World War II, when it was employed to extract information from propaganda (Krippendorff, 2013). Berelson’s textbook took a purely quantitative “word count” approach to content analysis, which was in line with the positivistic scientific paradigms of his time (Graneheim, Lindgren & Lundman 2017; Kuckartz 2019).

Almost immediately, other scholars – particularly European scholars from the hermeneutic tradition – began to question the effectiveness of a purely quantitative approach toward text, calling it an overly simplistic reliance on counting (George 1959) or an “immaturity of science” (Smythe 1954:17). However, it was the German sociologist Siegfried Kracauer (1952), claiming that “quantitative analysis is in effect not as objective and reliable as they believe it to be” (p. 637), who first called for what he termed “qualitative content analysis”. Qualitative content analysis – which he envisioned as an improvement of the existing quantitative content analysis – would involve thick analysis that takes into consideration the latent meanings and subtexts of the text, not just its manifest content. In Barber and Berdan’s (1999) words, he called upon content analysts to deconstruct the text. To undertake qualitative content analysis, claimed Kracauer, requires reflexivity, as meanings and interpretations of text

will differ for the author, the intended reader, and the analyst. Simply using numbers and frequencies oversimplifies the text to point of meaninglessness. As Berelson (1952) himself reflected, what would Martians think of the frequency with which love and sex are mentioned in Earth's mass media? Would they think we are promiscuous, or would they think we are repressed? Without attempting to delve into the latent meanings of the text, there is no way to draw conclusions from these data. Markoff et al (1975) referred to Berelson's contention that latent content could not be inferred from the text as one that is "arbitrary and would paralyze scientific work in a conservative spirit of pusillanimity" (p. 12). Kuckartz (2014); summarized the difference between the two methodologies as follows:

In... quantitative content analysis, texts are coded automatically using a dictionary, whereby the ambiguity and importance of the words is largely ignored. In contrast, qualitative content analysis presents an interpretive form of analysis in which the codings are completed based on interpretation, classification, and analysis. Moreover, text analysis and coding are not done exclusively by computer, so they are linked to human understanding and interpretation. (p. 34)

While various scholars around the world began developing methodologies for qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff 1980; Altheide 1987; Roberts 1989; Mayring 2000; Kuckartz 2014), perceptions of content analysis as a purely quantitative pursuit stubbornly persisted throughout the decades; to a lesser extent, such perceptions still exist today. Merton (1968) pointed out that the quantitative-manifest content / qualitative-latent content divide is somewhat reflective of English-speaking versus continental intellectual traditions, as the German hermeneutical approach has tended to focus on meta-analyses of problems. Prasad (2019) also pointed to the preference for qualitative over quantitative research in Sweden and

Germany compared to the United States and the United Kingdom. Kuckartz (2019) reflected that when he translated his German-language textbook on qualitative content analysis into English in 2014, he was strongly advised by his American colleagues to title it *Qualitative Text Analysis*, as they felt that qualitative content analysis would sound oxymoronic to the American ear.

Indeed, one of the popular content analysis textbooks in the United States, Neuendorf's (2017) *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, defined content analysis on its first page as "the systematic, objective, *quantitative* analysis of message characteristics" (p. 1, emphasis added). While Neuendorf acknowledged the importance of qualitative data analysis in providing deep information about a text (p. 22), she insisted that such analysis falls outside of the confines of content analysis, ignoring arguments to the contrary from scholars such as Udo Kuckartz and Siegfried Kracauer, who are never mentioned in her book. Ironically, the book opens with an example that very clearly highlights the weaknesses of a purely quantitative content analysis. Intending to show the increasing usage of (quantitative) content analysis over time, Neuendorf presented a timeline of the number of academic publications utilizing content analysis, showing that the number has increased steadily since the 1960. Her method consisted of searching for the term "content analysis" in the titles, subjects, and abstracts of articles in various databases (p. 4). Unsurprisingly, Neuendorf's simplistic "counting" method required her to list a series of caveats about the findings:

The graphed lines should be viewed cautiously and interpreted as the outcome of simple searches for a term in publications available since 1960, without contextual information about how the term has been used by the researchers. That is, a number of studies labeled "content analyses" are actually qualitative text analyses or other studies that do not fit the definition of content analysis assumed in this book. Further, a portion

of the articles counted by the Science Citation Index are actually “content analyses” of chemical compounds. (p. 4)

In other words, the only conclusion that can be drawn empirically from Neuendorf’s quantitative search is that the *phrase* “content analysis” has been used more widely in the titles, subjects, and abstracts of academic articles since the 1960s. Discovery of whether more quantitative content analyses have been performed, as Neuendorf claimed, requires an understanding of the text and context of these articles. That is, it requires *qualitative* content analysis, which emphasizes the *relationship* among the words in the text rather than meaningless frequencies (Markoff et al 1975). As Kuckartz (2014) summarized, “The crucial point is that quantitative approaches are not as precise as interpretive approaches when it comes to understanding communication” (p. 34).

Of course, not all methodologists consider quantitative and qualitative content analysis to be a never-the-twain-shall-meet proposition. Krippendorff (2013/1980) referred to a purely quantitative content analysis as a “shallow counting game” and suggested that content analysts should “redirect [their] attention to social phenomena that are both generated by and constituted in texts and images and, hence, need to be understood through their written and pictorial constituents” (p. xii). Despite this strong language in favor of qualitative content analysis, he insists that numbers still have a place in content analysis, albeit in conjunction with qualitative analysis:

I question the validity and usefulness of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Ultimately, all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of a text are later converted into numbers. (p. 22)

Roberts (1989) also advocated for a balance between qualitative and quantitative methods in content analysis.

After Krippendorff's mixed methods textbook (currently in its fourth edition) was published in 1980, three years later a methodological textbook dedicated solely to qualitative content analysis was published – in German. However, almost thirty years following the publication of this book – Philipp Mayring's *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen und Techniken*, which, despite currently being in its seventh edition, has never been translated into English – other scholars began to offer up their own attempts at methodologies for qualitative content analysis, including Kuckartz's (2014) aforementioned *Qualitative Text Analysis* and Shreier's (2012) *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. Along the way, other scholars also offered their methodological philosophies toward content analysis in published articles (Markoff, Shapiro, & Weitman 1975; Altheide 1987; Potter and Levine-Donnerstein 1999; Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Bengtsson 2016; Graneheim et al 2017). Therefore, while some attempts at describing a methodology were undertaken in the 1980s and 1990s, it is fair to state that qualitative content analysis as a coherent research strategy in the United States has by and large been a mostly postmillennial phenomenon.

Toward a Cohesive Methodology of Qualitative Content Analysis

Because it is a relatively new method, perhaps it should not be surprising that there is some disagreement among scholars regarding the finer points of qualitative content analysis methodology. Prasad (2019) very recently referred to methodological uncertainty as a deciding factor in answering the titular question of his essay "Qualitative Content Analysis: Why is it Still a Path Less Taken?" Indeed, for a scholar interested in the method, just making sense of the

disparate vocabulary can off-putting. For example, depending on the source, qualitative content analysis has been variously referred to as qualitative text analysis (Kuckartz 2014; Neuendorf 2014), ethnographic content analysis (Altheide 1987), linguistic content analysis (Roberts 1989), or non-frequency content analysis (George 1959) with very little variation among the actual methodologies described therein. An approach to content analysis using inductive logic may be simply referred to as inductive (Graneheim et al 2017), or it may be referred to as data-driven (Shreier 2012), text-driven (Krippendorff 2013), or conventional (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). However, if one has the patience to sift through the terminology, one may find a mostly consistent methodology that is very useful in the ethnohistorical analysis of documentary data. In this section I will attempt to synthesize the literature on qualitative content analysis to move toward a consistent methodology.

Defining Qualitative Content Analysis

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) defined qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278). *Subjective interpretation* is the aspect of this definition that causes qualitative content analysis to differ most sharply from its quantitative parent. Whereas in quantitative content analysis the analyst must avoid interpreting the text, in qualitative content analysis it is *imperative* that the reader interpret the text. In fact, Krippendorff (2013) claimed that this analysis of texts in their contexts is the one single factor that distinguishes (qualitative) content analysis from other modes of inquiry (p. xii). Prasad (2019) cited the emphasis in the analysis as shifting from counting the physical characteristics of the text – the key aspect of quantitative content analysis – to examining the

themes, meanings and patterns of the text. In this sense, the product of a qualitative content analysis may be very different from that of a quantitative content analysis of the same text.

Like quantitative content analysis, however, qualitative content analysis uses systematic coding to identify themes, and when done correctly, this process allows for checks and balances to ensure that the data are empirically grounded (Krippendorff 2013; Mayring 2000; Prasad 2019). For this reason, as Markoff et al (1975) noted, a researcher who reports using content analysis as a method is generally staking a claim to participation in a scientific endeavor. Therefore, they continue, in order for a researcher to lay legitimate claim to the use of content analysis, the scientific method must be employed: “It seems to follow, then, that operational specification and the attendant replicability are criteria of content analysis” (p. 20). While methodologists differ somewhat on the nuances of the logistical steps to be followed to obtain this claim to scientific rigor, there is in the main general agreement on the required components.

Key Components of Qualitative Content Analysis

Unlike some other methodologies – for example, Foucauldian discourse analysis – qualitative content analysis carries no particular ontological stance and can therefore be open to that of the researcher (Graneheim et al 2017; Kuckartz 2019). As outlined above, qualitative content analysis has inherited many aspects of its quantitative parent. Much of its philosophical and methodological foundations, however, are borrowed from many of the same sources as other qualitative methods; namely, grounded theory, hermeneutics, and reflexivity.

Grounded Theory

Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined grounded theory as “theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered, and analyzed through the research process” (p. 12). In other words, unlike the hypothetico-deductive scientific method, which produces results *deductively* beginning with a theory, in grounded theory the theory is arrived at *inductively* by examining themes and patterns. This is accomplished primarily through *coding*, assigning specific codes to phenomena observed through careful reading of the text, often line by line or segment by segment (Strauss 1987; Saldaña 2021).

This is not to say that qualitative content analysis cannot begin deductively with a theory; such models are not uncommon within the method (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Krippendorff 2013; Kuckartz 2014; Shreier 2012). What qualitative content analysis borrows from grounded theory, though, is its reliance on coding (and hence, inter-rater reliability) for validity (Krippendorff 2013) and its acceptance of iterations, regressions, and feedback loops in theory generation or refinement (Kuckartz 2014; Altheide 1987; Mayring 2000; Hsieh & Shannon 2005). In other words, when undertaking deductive qualitative content analysis, many analysts discover data in the text that does not correspond to their guiding theoretical model. Therefore, it is incumbent on them to adjust their coding – and perhaps their theoretical orientation – to the results produced by the data (Graneheim et al 2017; Hsieh & Shannon 2005). In qualitative content analysis, as in grounded theory, it is always the data that guides the theory, rather than the other way around.

Hermeneutics

While an in-depth discussion of hermeneutics – a discipline unto itself – is beyond the scope of this dissertation, a simple definition of hermeneutics will suffice for the purpose of discussing its relationship to qualitative content analysis:

Hermeneutics as the methodology of interpretation is concerned with problems that arise when dealing with meaningful human actions and the products of such actions, most importantly texts. As a methodological discipline, it offers a toolbox for efficiently treating problems of the interpretation of human actions, texts and other meaningful material. (Mantzavinos, 2016)

Familiarity and connection with the context in which a text is produced is thus absolutely critical, as any text is an object with conscious historical intention but also an unconscious cultural artifact (Gadamer 1975; Kuckartz 2014). Kuckartz (2014) provides an analogy that illustrates the discipline's importance to qualitative content analysis:

It is impossible to gain an inductive understanding of a text by itself. Middle Age Biblical illustrations serve as a good example of this: The more you know about the iconography of the time and the better your knowledge of Christian symbolism, the better you will understand a given illustration. (p. 17)

A central premise in hermeneutics is that the entirety of a text cannot be understood without understanding its individual parts, while the individual parts cannot be understood without understanding the entirety. Qualitative content analysis's hallmark appreciation for the close reading of a text, including understanding its context, borrows heavily from the German hermeneutical tradition in which the method's early founders were educated (Kuckartz 2014; Prasad 2019; Krippendorff 2013). By treating the text as a research subject requiring thick

description, the researcher takes a Geertzian approach that eschews reductionist scientific approaches in favor of the rich complexity that can be explored more thoroughly through an interpretative lens (Geertz 1973; Guest, Namey, & Mitchell 2013).

Even when qualitative content analysis methodologists do not mention the discipline of hermeneutics, its spirit lies in their texts. Graneheim et al (2017) described qualitative content analysis as the search for the invisible “red threads” that lie between the lines of the text (pp. 29-30). Krippendorff (2013) advised that “content analyses are most likely to succeed when analysts address linguistically constituted social realities that are rooted in the kinds of conversations that produced the texts being analyzed” (p. 80). Kracauer, in his 1952 indictment of quantitative content analysis, posited that “[the content of text documents] is no longer their content if it is detached from the texture of intimations and implications to which it belongs [...] They challenge the reader or the analyst to absorb them and react to them” (p. 641). Careful, interpretive, hermeneutical reading has been a cornerstone of qualitative content analysis since its beginnings. For this reason, it has heretofore proven impossible to perform qualitative content analysis solely by computers; the sound judgment of trained, knowledgeable coders is required (Kuckartz 2014; Krippendorff 2013; Franzosi 2003).

Reflexivity

Just as the ethnographer brings her preconceived notions to the field, so does the qualitative content analyst bring hers to the text. While qualitative content analysis is in many ways less intrusive than ethnography in that the presence of the ethnographer may alter the behavior of her respondents while the content analyst’s texts remain unchanged (Krippendorff 2013; Kuckartz 2014), biases and beliefs may still affect the *interpretation* of the texts.

Therefore, an attitude of cultural relativism and an accompanying acknowledgement of reflexivity is as important for the qualitative content analyst anthropologist as it is for the ethnographer.

After all, said Krippendorff (2013), it is the content analysts who construct the contexts for their texts, just like the ethnographer “who believe[s] that they can delegate the definition of the context to their informants’ world conceptions”. It is the content analysts who pose the research questions, “acknowledging the worlds of others, in the pursuit of their own research questions and in the adoption of analytical constructs based on available literature or prior knowledge about the contexts of given texts” (p. 90). Altheide (1987) noted that in unlike quantitative content analysis, in which protocol is central, the judgment of the analyst is continually central in qualitative content analysis. Therefore, it is important for qualitative content analysts to acknowledge multiple perspectives on the text, which they do by considering the diverse voices of the text’s readers, differing ideological ontologies, and/or the various uses of the text. Kracauer (1952) referred to texts in qualitative content analyses as organic co-creations of the author and the analyst – a co-creation which is not independent of cultural and historical contexts of both parties (see also Prasad 2019).

Doing Qualitative Content Analysis

Various methodologists have assembled stepwise instructions for performing qualitative content analysis (Bernard et al 2017; Kuckartz 2014; Krippendorff 2013; Kaid 1989; Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Altheide 1987; Roberts 1989; Markoff et al 1975). Once one synthesizes the disparate vocabulary, the steps involved in each set of instructions are relatively consistent and easy to follow. Many of the processes involved are quite similar to those of quantitative content

analysis, with the largest differences found in the coding and analytical steps. Below is a summary of the steps involved in performing qualitative content analysis on a given set of texts.

1. *Formulate a research question or hypothesis.* Of the methodologists, Krippendorff (2013) devoted the most space to this very important first step. Perhaps most obviously, the research question should be one that is appropriate for the method of qualitative content analysis. The point of content analysis, claimed Krippendorff, is to answer questions about events that are either not accessible at the time, may not be perceived by an individual's perceptions, or are otherwise difficult to attain by other methods. "If the questions that content analysts are asking could be answered through direct observation or interviewing subjects," he noted, "content analysis would be superfluous" (p. 178). In fact, it is often the inability to directly observe the phenomena in question that leads a researcher to pursue content analysis as a mode of inquiry. Of course, it is important here to note that qualitative content analysis is often performed in conjunction with ethnographic or other methods. In these cases, the purpose is to provide a different angle on the research question that cannot be provided by the other method(s) alone. In addition, Krippendorff added, a strong research question should be believed to be answerable from the texts provided and should allow for validation or invalidation, at least theoretically.

2. *Select a set of texts (sampling).* Krippendorff (2013) helpfully delineated the sampling process to include what he refers to as *sampling units* and *recording units*. In traditional sampling theory, he points out, the units sampled are the units counted. This is not so in content analysis, wherein the units sampled might be specific texts, issues of newspapers, letters, but the units *counted* (i.e., the places from which qualitative content analysts find the answers to their research questions) may be words, phrases, lines, paragraphs, etc. The former are defined

as sampling units while the latter are defined as recording or coding units. In this particular step, the content analyst must choose her sampling units.

There are various accepted methods for selecting sampling units among a given corpus of text, and a good qualitative content analysis textbook will assist in describing these strategies (Krippendorff 2013; Kuckartz 2014; Shreier 2012). In general, though, Krippendorff (2013) listed two key principles to keep in mind:

Content analysts must define sampling units so that (a) connections across sampling units, if they exist, do not bias the analysis; and (b) all relevant information is contained in individual sampling units, or, if it is not, the omissions do not impoverish the analysis.

(p. 100)

In other words, both the sampling corpus and the individual sampling units must not be too narrow to answer the research question(s). For this reason, Markoff et al (1975) recommended selecting sampling units that “semantically rich, relatively complex, and varied” (p. 2), yet they should be sufficiently standardized in their function so as to allow for comparison. Choosing the appropriate sampling method, then, requires a clear holistic understanding of the text corpus (Franzosi 2003).

Another important characteristic regarding sampling in qualitative content analysis is that all sampling units are not necessarily considered to be of equal value, as might be the case in other methods. For example, when structured interviews are performed, each participant is asked the same questions, and their responses are assumed to contribute equally to the ultimate findings. In content analysis, however, the sampling units were not created for the researcher but rather for some other purpose and for some other audience. Therefore, it is to

be expected that certain sampling units may contribute more to the researchers' question(s) than others (Krippendorff 2013).

3. *Perform an initial reading of the sample text corpus.* Interestingly, the only methodologist who specifically recommended this step is Kuckartz (2014), but the wisdom of the step seems self-evidently in line with hermeneutical principles: in order to create an initial set of codes, one must familiarize oneself with the overall contexts of the texts to be analyzed. For large volumes of text, a sample of the sample may suffice.

4. *Create an initial set of codes.* Coding is perhaps the most important step in qualitative content analysis – so much so, in fact, that Markoff et al (1975) suggested that qualitative content analysis might be more aptly referred to as “content coding” or “textual coding” (p. 6). While Berelson (1952) was referring to quantitative content analysis when he stated that “[c]ontent analysis stands or falls by its categories... since the categories contain the substance of the of the investigation, a content analysis can be no better than its system of categories” (p. 37), this assertion certainly applies to qualitative content analysis as well.

This centrality of coding is shared by other qualitative methods, including grounded theory, thematic analysis, discourse analysis, and thematic analysis (Kuckartz 2014). Because codes are tailored to individual research questions, there are no universal coding schemes (Franzosi 2003). However, various qualitative methodologists have given suggestions of properties to look for when selecting codes. For example, Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggested looking for repetitions, indigenous typologies (referred to by grounded theorists as *in vivo* coding), similarities, differences, missing data, theory-related data, and so on. Krippendorff (2013) added the presence or absence of a concept, the frequency of a concept, qualifications made about a concept, favorable/unfavorable adjectives associated with a concept, and the co-

occurrence of two concepts. Kuckartz (2014) divided codes into five categories: factual (objective), thematic (referring to specific topics), evaluative (e.g. “little”, “strong”, or “none”), formal (data about the document itself, such as the number of pages), and analytical (subtextual). When working deductively from an existing theory, the development of codes may proceed naturally from the theory (Kuckartz 2014; Hsieh and Shannon 2003; Mayring 2000; Graneheim et al 2017; Kuckartz 2014). It is also important to note that in qualitative content analysis, an individual recording unit can receive multiple codes (Kuckartz 2014).

Because coding is often performed by multiple researchers working on the same project, it is important to ensure that all analysts have the same understanding of the codes. Therefore, each code should be described clearly within a codebook, with the inclusion of indicators that will allow coders to ascribe codes quickly, confidently, and accurately (Kuckartz 2014). This is especially important when codes are more abstract or serve as indices (Krippendorff 2013). Even with these preparations, because of the complex nature of language, there will still be times when coders need to make judgments as to how to code specific recording units. For this reason, it is vital that all coders have the appropriate background knowledge of the topic (Krippendorff 2013). If possible, they should be co-researchers on the product, not employees trained specifically for a certain task (as is often the case with quantitative content analysis, which requires less judgment) (Kuckartz 2014). Whatever the rules for coding may be, it is important that they are consistently followed by all involved in the project (Prasad 2019).

5. *Record / apply the codes. Revise the codes, then re-record as needed.* Once the codes have been established, it is possible for the coder(s) to dive into the texts and begin assigning codes. Data that do not fit into the coding scheme should be noted for later scrutiny, as they

may represent either a new code or a subcategory (Hsieh and Shannon 2003). As mentioned earlier, one of the advantages of qualitative content analysis is that it is forgiving of multiple iterations; if the code needs to be revised (and it probably will), the content analyst should return to the data to apply the new codes. Many methodologists recommend an initial round of coding that pretests the initial codes (Bernard et al 2017; Franzosi 2003). Kuckartz (2014) recommended borrowing Strauss and Corbin's (1998) model of grounded theory coding, which first utilizes open coding, then proceeds to axial coding (drawing relationships between the codes), and finishing with selective coding, which integrates all of the codes together. He was quick to point out that this iterative process can be challenging and requires the content analyst to be a "master craftsman": "it is a mix of intuition, hard work, creativity, solid previous knowledge, and last but not least, coincidence and luck" (p. 26). Comfort within, or at least tolerance of, ambiguity is a required quality when working with grounded theory coding.

Unlike in quantitative content analysis, coding in qualitative content analysis cannot be completed entirely by computer; it requires close line-by-line reading and the judgment of the content analyst. This is not to say that computing does not have a role in qualitative content analysis; in fact, a robust qualitative data analysis computing program such as NVivo can be very helpful in completing some of the repetitive clerical tasks associated with content analysis. These include sorting, cutting, counting, searching, and listing (Krippendorff 2013; Bazeley & Jackson 2013). Such programs also aid in speedy data recall and revision. As Marshall (2002) put it, "When an obediently stupid machine cuts and pastes, it is easier to approach data with curiosity – asking 'what if I cut it this way?', knowing that changes can be made quickly" (p. 67).

6. *Test for inter-rater reliability.* If qualitative content analysis is performed by multiple coders, it must be ascertained that the judgments regarding coding are in agreement with one

another. This can be accomplished using mathematical formulas, several of which exist, including Cohen's kappa, Krippendorff's alpha, and Scott's pi (Krippendorff 2013). Alternatively, researchers can locate coding differences and bridge them through discussion as a research team, a process known as "consensual coding" (Kuckartz 2014).

7. *Analyze and present the results.* The logistics of the analysis are left somewhat to the discretion of the analyst and may vary depending on the research question and type of material sampled. Bernard et al. (2017) recommended creating a case-by-variable matrix and analyzing the matrix using the appropriate level of analysis, an approach borrowed from quantitative content analysis. Krippendorff (2013) recommended undertaking the following three-step strategy:

1. Summarize the inferences from text so that they are easily understood, interpreted, or related to intended decisions.
2. Discover patterns and relationships within findings that an unaided observer would otherwise easily overlook, to test hypotheses concerning various relationships.
3. Compare the findings with data obtained by other means or from other situations to support conclusions drawn from other research (multiple operationalism), to gain confidence in the validity of the content analysis at hand, to add another dimension to the intended inferences, or to provide missing information. (p. 188)

When looking for these patterns and relationships, Krippendorff (2013) advocated focusing on facts that are situated in language, which he defines as belonging to four categories: attributions (beliefs, attitudes, feelings), social relationships (power, inequalities), public behaviors, and institutional realities. These phenomena are rarely stated directly in texts and instead need to be inferred abductively through the subtext. In the end, the content reaches the answer to the

research question by inference, and as Krippendorff claimed, “[content analysts’] inferences are merely more systematic, explicitly informed, and verifiable – ideally – than what ordinary readers do with texts” (pp. 30-31). Validity for these inferences can (at least theoretically) be established if the inferences stand in the face of new evidence, additional texts, and competing theories.

Finally, it should be noted that there is still a place for word frequency counts within qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff 2013; Hsieh and Shannon 2003; Potter and Levine-Donnerstein 1999). While often they are used as a tool by the researcher simply to inform the creation of codes, at times they may be included in the final analysis. However, as word counts in and of themselves say little, it is important for the content analyst to provide the appropriate contextual information in order for the reader to draw the correct conclusions from the data (Krippendorff 2013; Prasad 2019).

Advantages of Qualitative Content Analysis as an Anthropological / Ethnohistorical Method

With a solid overall understanding of the philosophy of qualitative content analysis and the steps involved in performing it, we can begin to see some of the advantages it holds as an anthropological / ethnohistorical method. The advantages of qualitative content analysis over quantitative content analysis have already been discussed at length and therefore will not be rehashed in this section. Rather, below I will discuss some of qualitative content analysis’s many additional merits.

Qualitative content analysis allows for a degree of researcher flexibility while maintaining standards of reproducibility. Because of the heterogeneity of text-based sources, it is necessary for researchers to adapt coding schemes and analytical construct-building to the

individual project in question. Qualitative content analysis allows content analysts to create their own codes and concepts while still providing the structure required to validate the data. In other words, it bridges the gap between hermeneutical understanding and rule-governed coding (Kuckartz 2014).

Qualitative content analysis is less intrusive than ethnography. Ethnographers have the advantage of being able to interact with their informants in ways that content analysts cannot. However, ethnographers have the disadvantage of influencing their informants' responses, even when they are as careful as possible not to (Krippendorff 2013; Padgett 2008); the very existence of the ethnographer in the population being studied represents an intrusion. Content analysts avoid this by working with documents that have been prepared for some other purpose and some other audience, thereby preserving the original cultural context. Creswell and Creswell (2018) point out that because documentary data is created prior to its retrieval by the researcher, this can assist with speedier data procurement than methods that rely on interviewing.

Qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to retain the exact wording of the participants. While ethnographers are often able to capture exact wording by tape-recording and transcribing interviews, it is not uncommon for them to face situations in participant-observation in which recording is either not possible or prohibitively intrusive, forcing them to count on the notoriously unreliable human memory. When working with text-based sources, the words as the writer intended them are preserved. Additionally, they are words to which the participants presumably gave some degree of attention while writing them down (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018). In real-time interviews, it is easier for an interviewee to misspeak or forget to relay a crucial point.⁵¹

Qualitative content analysis can handle both unstructured data as well as large volumes of data (Krippendorff 2013; Kuckartz 2014). While surveys with pre-defined selections (and to a lesser extent, structured interviews) present researchers with an efficient way to process and compare data, they are heavily researcher-guided and therefore sometimes lose the voices of the participants. The rule-guided coding process of qualitative content analysis allows for data in various formats to be coded as efficiently as possible. This efficiency combined with human judgment also allows for large amounts of data to be coded, though doing so may require multiple researchers.

Qualitative content analysis retains the ethnographic perspective. Philosophically, qualitative content analysis has much in common with ethnography, including emphases on reflexivity and cultural relativism. Therefore, a high degree of cultural knowledge and experience is generally necessary to perform content analysis well. For this reason, many qualitative content analysts have spent large volumes of time interacting with the populations being studied. Altheide (1987) recommended that content analysis be undertaken in the same spirit as ethnographic fieldwork, as this can help the analyst delineate patterns of behavior:

A rationale for an ethnographic and reflexive approach to documents is similar to the rationale of ethnographic research in general. Sampling procedures are informed by theory while constant comparison and discovery are used to delineate specific categories as well as narrative description. (p. 74)

⁵¹ On the other hand, though, there are certainly times when an ethnographer is able to garner a crucial piece of data through an off-the-cuff comment made by an interviewee. Because writing texts allows the writer to edit throughout, it is much rarer for a quantitative analyst to experience one of these “happy accidents”.

For these reasons, ethnography and qualitative content analysis often work quite complementarily with one another, and a combination of the two methods can be used to provide new insights or triangulate data. This possibility will be discussed in more detail later in this paper.

Qualitative content analysis can handle objects and images as well as text. While this paper has focused on text as the primary data source for qualitative data analysis, it is worth mentioning here that because of the element of human judgment, images and objects can also be described and analyzed through qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz 2014). In the case of museum contents, for example, images and objects are often included in content analysis. Examples of such research will be presented in a later section.

Criticisms of Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis, while a very powerful method, is not without its limitations. It is not appropriate for all projects, and it sometimes requires triangulation with other methods. As mentioned previously, qualitative content analysis is often used alongside ethnography when possible, as the two make excellent bedfellows. Altheide (1987) recommended combining qualitative content analysis with ethnographic field notes, a strategy echoed by Kuckartz (2014). Wiedman (1988) went further, referring to the combination of ethnohistorical methods and ethnography as an ideal mix:

When documentary data is used with traditional ethnographic data new realms of understanding are reached. Together, these types of data offer the possibility of answering questions that heretofore have been unanswerable. (p. xvii)

This section will address criticisms of qualitative content analysis that have appeared in the literature.

Not all people are equally represented by documentary evidence. The production of a document at the very least requires that the producer be literate, which immediately eliminates 14% of the world's population (UNESCO, 2017). There is also the consideration that some people, as Creswell and Creswell (2018) pointed out, are simply more articulate than others. Even in societies with very high literacy rates, the publication of a document is associated with power and influence. For example, when I perform qualitative content analysis on brochures for human rights museums in Japan in an effort to gauge how Buraku identity is reflected in these museums, it is important for me to remember that the people who produced the brochures were very likely the same people who prevailed in any conflict over how Buraku identity *should be* reflected in the museums. The qualitative content analysis might describe the present state quite well, but it may be difficult or impossible to infer the backstory. In other words, as Corley and Young (2018) noted, content analysis excels when presenting the “what” but cannot always explain the “why” (p. 324) and one obviously cannot ask clarifying questions to a text. Therefore, a content analyst who seeks to understand the “why” in such situations may find herself needing to turn to other methods.

Qualitative content analysis requires a solid understanding of context (Kuckartz 2014; Postill 2016). For this reason, in cross-cultural settings, it is crucial that the content analyst have a strong background in the population who has produced the documents she has studied. Without this, it will be impossible for her to understand the subtext, leading to judgments that are simply impressionistic and not holistic (Prasad 2019), causing the analysis to fall apart (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). In other words, while the steps of qualitative content analysis can be

performed from the comfort of one's computer, it is not a method that is accessible to anyone with a research question and a computer. Years of background knowledge are required for a proper hermeneutical interpretation.

It is more difficult to prove the validity of the results with only one researcher on the project. Generally, as mentioned above, the validity of qualitative content analysis results is tested either through mathematical inter-rater reliability or consensual coding, both of which require at least two people to code any given texts. Indeed, most qualitative content analysis textbooks assume more than one coder per project. Kuckartz (2014), however, conceded that while working alone on qualitative content analysis should generally be avoided, there may be situations (such as dissertations or theses) in which the researcher must work alone. In this case, it is incumbent upon the content analyst to triangulate the data through the provision of copious background information, congruence with previous studies, and/or additional methods such as ethnography.

Qualitative Content Analysis at the Museum

Despite their ideal make-up for qualitative content analysis and fascinating position as arbiters of identity, a qualitative content analysis on the topic of museums and identity has not yet been performed, aside from my master's thesis on Japanese human rights museums and Buraku identity. However, qualitative content analysis is beginning to appear in other studies of museums. Bernnard (2015) performed a qualitative content analysis of wall texts in art museums in order to determine how much the wall texts attempted to influence visitor interpretations of the works. Budge (2017) used Rose's (2015) visual content analysis method to examine Instagram posts with the goal of determining what museum visitors emphasize when

posting about a visit to a temporary museum exhibit. Zanibellato, Rosin, and Casasrin (2018) and also Evangelista and Ferrari (2018) performed qualitative content analyses on TripAdvisor posts to determine how various facets of a museum visit influenced visitor satisfaction. Kazama and Ogawa (2015) performed a qualitative content analysis of Japanese science museums exhibits for the purpose of determining how these museums reflected (or did not reflect) the Japanese *shizen* concept of nature. Finally, Saiki (2010) performed a qualitative content analysis of museum websites to assess their degree of user interaction.

When examining these studies together, several aspects are remarkable. First, the heterogeneity of the “texts” utilized – TripAdvisor reviews, wall texts, exhibit contents, museum websites, Instagram posts – demonstrates both the adaptability of qualitative content analysis as a method as well as the variety of indices by which aspects of museums can be measured. Secondly, it is noteworthy that all of these studies were undertaken in the past ten years. While research on museums is not a novel endeavor, the idea of applying qualitative content analysis to museums is quite recent.

With this recency on my side, I hope that this doctoral dissertation may in fact prove to be the first that examines museums and identity using qualitative content analysis as the primary method. Applying a relatively new method to an area of research that is in the midst of a massive paradigm shift is not only exciting, but it also carries the possibility of challenging preconceptions about the place of ethnohistorical methods in the field of anthropology. Qualitative content analysis exemplifies the truism that such methods need not be used solely for triangulation, but that they are powerful methods in their own right, capable of illuminating aspects of the human experience that other methods cannot. When researching concepts as complex as identity and as historically fluctuating as museums, methods that can manage

complexity are necessary. Qualitative content analysis, when performed correctly, is such a method, provided anthropologists can move past what Postill (2016) referred to as “the ethnographic fear of missing out” (p. 66).

The Anthropology of Cyberspace

Machines have possibly always coexisted with the trope that their existence makes us less human. Zhuangzi, considered one of the founders of Taoism, wrote

Where there are machines, there are bound to be machine worries; where there are machine worries, there are bound to be machine hearts. With a machine heart in your breast, you’ve spoiled what was pure and simple; and without the pure and simple, the life of the spirit knows no rest. (p. 134)

These words, still widely shared among those who espouse a “simple” life, however nebulously defined that might be, were written in the fourth century BCE.

Despite the warnings of Zhuangzi and others, however, humans have not cast off our machine hearts and machine worries; instead, we have gradually fused our very selves, body and soul, into machines. As Donna Haraway put it, we are now cyborgs:

Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert (Haraway 1991: 152).

Not only do we have machine hearts, we also have machine memories. Landsburg (2004) and Olick (2007) have both noted how technologies of memory – the ability to write notes and store them for perpetuity in cyberspace – have allowed to developed prosthetic memories.

Coming to terms with our cyborgness, then, means that writing about machines is not just the territory of the engineer, but also that of the anthropologist. If primitive farm equipment served as a reflection of the human condition in the time of Zhuangzi, how much more so the online world in which we create avatars of ourselves and facsimiles of our material existence.

It is therefore imperative for anthropologists to investigate machines in order to produce a more complete understanding of what it means to be human (Miller and colleagues, 2016; Hine 2016; Hsu 2016; Postill 2016; Peterson 2003; Gray 2016; Ortner 1998; Horst and Miller 2012; Geismar 2012). When we accept our cyborg nature, distinctions between “real” and “online” life become meaningless; as Horst and Miller (2012) note, “every time we use the word real analytically, as opposed to colloquially, we undermine the project of digital anthropology, fetishizing predigital culture as a site of retained authenticity” (p. 13).

In fact, technology has always been inherently social (MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985), both in its production and use. Communication online is not any less mediated than face-to-face communication, which is always performative (Goffman 1959, 1975; Schechner 2003); unmediated communication does not exist. From this understanding arose media anthropology (Miller and colleagues, 2016), one facet of which is the study of cyberspace.

Museums around the world are by no means exception to the machine heart phenomenon. On the contrary, they have continued to digitize their collections, bring more functionality to their websites, and increase their presence on social media. As subjects,

museums are also cyborgs, a mix of material and digital, and a full understanding of their social importance cannot be undertaken without studying their machine hearts and machine worries. By analyzing museum websites, this research aims to elucidate how these museums serve as interlocutors of Buraku identity.

Methods and Site Selection

Methods

In order to determine how Buraku identity is reflected in Japanese human rights museums, a comprehensive qualitative content analysis was performed on five museums' websites and brochures. When available, additional publications were utilized as well. For the Fukuyama City Human Rights and Peace Museums, this included 11 years of their newsletter *Human Rights and Peace*. For the Henomatsu Museum, this included their Facebook posts and YouTube videos. In the case of the archives Kinogawa, a set of essays written by Kinogawa Elementary School students (1st grade to 6th grade) between 1957 and 1986⁵² was also included.

Once the five museums were selected (a which process will be described in the next sub-section), four of the five museums were visited to gain a comprehensive view of their permanent exhibitions and the localities in which they were situated. Of the five museums, I was unable to visit only the Meat Information Museum due to COVID precautions during my February 2020 visit to Tokyo. At each museum, I took many photographs of the surrounding area and, when permitted, the exhibits. I took plentiful fieldnotes, which I transcribed on the evenings when visits occurred. When possible, I met with curators, docents, and other museum staff.

⁵² For the first grade only, essays from 1957 to 2002 were available.

During my visits to the museums, I collected all Japanese- and English-language brochures and promotional materials that were available for visitors to take home. In addition to promotional brochures, other handouts also included museum newsletters, event announcements, maps of the area with areas of human rights significance highlighted, explanatory details for special and/or permanent exhibitions, and in one case, a small commemorative gift with an attached explanation of its symbolism. A total of 33 printed materials were included in this study.

Although some of the selected museums have few human resources, all five of them currently actively maintain their websites as evidenced by recently posted dated news and announcements. In order to include website information in this study, I first completed a sitemap that included addresses for all public-facing pages on each website, including PDFs, Microsoft Office files, and images. Each web page was copied into a document file and translated into English. For the Suiheisha History Museum, which has an abbreviated English version of its website, only the Japanese website was included. For the Henomatsu History Museum and the Meat Information Museum, whose web presences are housed in the larger websites of the Sakai City Human Rights Fureai Center and the Tokyo Central Wholesale Meat Market and Slaughterhouse, respectively, I transcribed and translated only those web pages that referred to the museums. For the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum, web pages that only referred to peace initiatives were not included in the analysis. For the Archives Kinewawa, the entire website was relevant and was therefore included. In the end, 117 web pages were included as texts in the study.

The other texts named previously – the 166 essays, 81 newsletters, 51 Facebook posts, and one YouTube video transcript – were transcribed and translated to be included in the study as well. In total, 449 museum texts were included in this research.

Because museums are usually unable to include every item on display in their permanent and special exhibitions in their brochures, decisions are generally made with some care regarding which items to include in their brochures and how these items are described. This makes brochures a good index of what the museum deems important for guests and prospective guests to know about their collections. While changing museum exhibits -- particularly permanent exhibitions -- is costly and often fraught with bureaucracy, updating a brochure is a relatively inexpensive and streamlined process. In this way, it can be argued that brochures are a more up-to-date reflection of museum values and philosophy than the contents of the museums themselves. Websites, like brochures, often have the advantage of easy and low-cost updatability compared to museum exhibits. Unlike brochures, however, space limitations are usually generous or virtually non-existent. This often makes them a better reflection of the breadth of the museum's collection, as detailed elaboration on more items can be included.

That eleven years of newsletters were available from the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum was helpful in providing longitudinal data, particularly regarding the museum's temporary exhibitions. The 166 children's essays provided helpful context for understanding day-to-day life in post-SML Kinogawa. The social media posts assisted in providing information about the Henomatsu Museum's temporary exhibits as well as anecdotes that occurred during the daily operations of the museum.

Qualitative content analysis was performed on all 449 text items using the methodology described previously in this chapter. After forming the research questions (see Chapter One) I selected the museums I wished to sample. Websites, newsletters, and brochures were selected as primarily sampling units based on the reasoning described above. When other texts that might shed light on the research question became available (e.g., the children's essays and the social media posts), these were added to the sample. As I translated all of the materials myself, an initial close reading of the text corpus was automatically performed, allowing me to create an initial set of codes. Some codes were applied to the entire text corpus, while others were applied to specific sampling units. Word frequency counts performed for individual museums as well as for selected groupings of museums (see Appendix) also assisted in identifying themes and codes. All of the texts were uploaded into NVivo and coded using the initial set of codes. While coding, additional themes were discovered and added to the codebook⁵³. The coded text was then analyzed for language patterns, relationships between themes, and comparison/contrast of identity-related paradigmatic subject matter. Data were triangulated through fieldwork at the museums and, when available, interviews with museum staff.

Site Selection: Western Japan

Five museums were selected for primary analysis, three of which are human rights museums in western Japan. The museums were the Suiheisha History Museum in Nara

⁵³ The final code list included the following codes across all of the material: connection and fureai, discrimination, global connection, human rights, local rootedness, machizukuri, mission statement, pride, professions-butchery, professions-coal, professions-leather, professions-oil and fats, professions-paulownia wood, professions-shoemaking, professions-wicker work, professions-entertainment, and stigmatized space. Each Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum newsletter was identified as either pertaining to peace, human rights, or both themes. The children's essays were coded for references to middle class, poverty, Kinogawa, and women's labor.

Prefecture, the Henomatsu Museum in Osaka Prefecture, and the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum in Hiroshima Prefecture. Choosing two museums in the Kansai area acknowledges the concentration of human rights museums in the area, while choosing one from outside the area allows for regional diversity. The three museums chosen are three of the largest and most heavily advertised Buraku-focused museums in the National Network for Collection and Exhibition of Human Rights Issues. Despite their prominence within the Japanese human rights museum sphere, very little has been written about them in academic circles either in Japan or abroad.⁵⁴ Choosing museums with a stronger orientation toward Buraku issues allows more opportunity for analysis than those with, for example, only one exhibit dedicated to Buraku issues.

Suiheisha History Museum

The Suiheisha History Museum is a two-story, free-standing building located in the rural (by Japanese standards) area of Kashihara, Gose City in Nara Prefecture. According to the museum's website, it was established in 1998 in order to preserve the history of the area after an urban development project begun in 1986 spurred concerns from local residents about the drastic changes taking place in the landscape which, in the words of the founders of the museum, "decreased the Suiheisha spirit among the people." Three founders of the Suiheisha

⁵⁴ By far the most academic and journalistic attention has been bestowed upon the Liberty Osaka human rights museum, which is easily accessible in Naniwa and has received 1.22 million visitors since its inception in 1984 (www.liberty.or.jp). Although I visited the museum, it was ultimately not included in this study for three reasons. First, only about 15% of the museum is dedicated to Buraku issues; there are also sections on Ainu, Zainichi Koreans, people with disabilities, LGBTQ populations, etc. Second, when I visited, no handouts or brochures were available for visitors. Third, because the Liberty Osaka museum has received so much coverage by both academics and journalists, it may not be representative of how other, less-known human rights museums interface with their communities and the globe.

organization -- Matsumoto Seiichirō, Komai Masato, and Saikō Mankichi -- claimed this tiny village as their home, a source of pride for local residents. Since opening, the museum has received 335,000 visitors.

As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, the museum has branded the area surrounding the museum as “The Homeland of Human Rights,” and this phrase (人権のふるさと) adorns all of its promotional materials. *Furusato*, the word translated here as “homeland”, literally means *old village* and carries with it the connotation of recollecting or reliving bygone days. Ivy (1995) wrote that *furusato* connotes a desire “to discover an authentically Japanese Japan that is disappearing yet still present” (p. 105). Robertson (1991) traced the resurgence of the word *furusato* back to the 1970s and argues that the term carries the nostalgia of “achieved dominance” (p. 5) and notes that although Chinese characters exist for the term (古里), it is much more commonly written in the Japanese hiragana script, giving it an aura of soft nationalism. By using the term *furusato*, the museum, and by proxy the village whose history it ostensibly represents, stake a claim on the area. It is a show of defiance to would-be urban developers: “This land belongs to human rights.”

The first floor of the museum is dedicated mostly to administrative space, but there is also an interactive video map of The Homeland of Human Rights. The second floor of the museum details the formation of the Suiheisha, explaining historical discrimination, liberation groups formed before the Suiheisha, how the Suiheisha developed, and profiles of people involved in the movement. There is a holographic presentation meant to allow visitors to feel as if they are present at the Suiheisha’s formation, and there is also a hands-on “epilogue” section (seemingly aimed at children) with various optical illusions with some kind of message relating to human rights or the Suiheisha. For example, a column of mirrors in the center of the room

allows visitors to look up and see, through a series of reflections, a painting made by Saikō Mankichi. There is also a balcony on the second floor from which visitors are directed to look at various sites on The Homeland of Human Rights map.

The Suiheisha History Museum focuses primarily on the historical particularities of the formation of the Suiheisha. Other than the epilogue section, little connection is drawn to present-day Buraku or other human rights issues. As the only museum to join FIHRM, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Suiheisha History Museum has more English-language information on hand than the other museums; while the exhibits themselves are in Japanese only, a book translating the main points of the exhibits is available upon request. It is also the only museum to include *furigana*, a type of subscript used to assist beginning native Japanese readers or Japanese language learners, throughout the actual exhibits. In other words, while the location of the museum makes access difficult, the museum's contents are in many ways more accessible than those of other museums.

Henomatsu Human Rights History Museum and Sakata Sankichi Memorial Room

The Henomatsu Human Rights History Museum and Sakata Sankichi Memorial Room (affectionately known as the Henomatsu Museum) was established in Sakai City, Osaka in 1988 as the Henomatsu History Museum. It received its current name in 2006, when it moved to the 7th floor of the Sakai City Human Rights Community Center (BHLRRI, 2006). In 2015, it moved once more to its more visible current location on the first floor of the (newly rebuilt) Sakai City Human Rights Community Center. It shares this floor with a post office, a busy public library, and some general office space. However, the community center is quite large, and the museum did not feel cramped when I visited. Because admission to the museum is free and people are

constantly wandering in and out, it is difficult to measure how many people have visited the museum.

The museum is located in an area historically occupied by Buraku people, in a neighborhood formerly called Henomatsu, from which the museum derives its name. After finding myself the only visitor at many of the museums I visited, I was pleasantly surprised by the vibrant atmosphere at the community center. When I arrived at the museum, I noted the following activities happening concurrently: high school students were studying at the picnic tables outside, senior citizens were waiting in line at the post office, young children and their mothers were listening to a story in the library, and a group of 15 or so men from a local company was finishing up an educational tour of the museum. Despite his having just finished a tour, the museum guide provided me a private tour of the museum that lasted for about an hour, interspersing explanations of the exhibits with vignettes from his own childhood in the area and his opinions on Buraku issues. Meanwhile, others also wandered through the exhibits as they returned from other activities; the community center also has sports leagues, cooking classes, cultural activities, educational events, and career and education consultation.

The museum's first exhibit, called "Life", is a life-size reproduction of a narrow alleyway in Henomatsu before the Special Measures Law. Attention is drawn to the small living quarters and poor sanitation. The second section, "Work", focuses on the area's traditional occupations of shoe repairing, meat processing, and junk collecting. The third section, "History", begins with a 16th-century Portuguese missionary's description of the discrimination in the area and provides an overview of liberation activities and progress, including the founding of the Suiheisha and Buraku Liberation League to the passage of the Special Measures Law. The fourth section, "Enlightenment", details past and present incidents of discrimination with a special

focus on internet discrimination. The results of surveys asking questions such as “Would you avoid buying a house in a Buraku area?” are presented in posters on the wall. Finally, a small area in the back of the museum is devoted to Sakata Sankichi (1870 - 1946), a self-taught shogi grandmaster born in Henomatsu.

Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum

The Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum was established in 1994 in what is inarguably some of the most coveted real estate in Fukuyama City. The museum is located in Fukuyama Castle Park, which in addition to the eponymous castle also contains the Fukuyama Literature Museum, the Fukuyama Museum of Art, and the Hiroshima Prefecture History Museum. The park is directly across the street from Fukuyama Station, a bullet train stop. The museum occasionally publishes in its newsletter the number of visitors it has received when a milestone visitor number is reached; most recently, this occurred in November of 2014 when the museum welcomed its 240,000th visitor. This comes out to an average of about 40 to 50 visitors per day, including field trips and company visits. It must be noted, however, that I found myself to be the only visitor in the museum on both of the hour-long occasions in which I visited it -- first in the summer of 2015, and again in the summer of 2018.

In its Japanese-language brochure (excerpted below), the museum attempts to bridge the two halves of its mission, the promotion of peace and the promotion of human rights:

We will continue to learn together with many of you through the exhibition of materials on the establishment of human rights, including the resolution of the Dōwa issue, and the realization of permanent peace -- the most fundamental and important things in life.

In fact, the first printed words in the brochure (after the museum name) are a proclamation that human rights and peace are two sides of the same coin (人権尊重と平和の確立は表裏一体). However, in the physical layout, the museum takes a never-the-twain-shall-meet approach to these two topics. The exhibition titled “Peace: The Air Raids in Fukuyama and Life Under Wartime Conditions” is located in a different room from that of the exhibition titled “Human Rights: History of the Buraku Community and their Liberation”, which focuses mainly on Buraku people in Fukuyama and their liberation. A temporary exhibition room alternates between the two topics. On my first visit, the museum was in the midst of a “peace” temporary exhibition – that of paintings made by air raid survivors. On my second visit, however, the temporary exhibition was about the fight for free textbooks in public schools, which was an important aspect of the Buraku equality movement. The museum’s deputy director, Terachi Yasuhito, told me that these exhibits stem from the founders’ vision of communicating the importance of human rights and peace through concrete issues. As an example, he cited current plans the museum has for creating an exhibit on the war in Ukraine.

Exhibition Room I, the “Peace” room, contains exhibits on various anti-nuclear declarations the city and prefecture have made, the air raids in Fukuyama, and life during the war. These exhibits are arranged in a loop along the periphery of the room, ending with a promise never to repeat the evils of war. In the center of the room is a sculpture of a mother found dead in a paddy field after the air raid clutching her two children. Exhibition Room II, the “Human Rights” room, is arranged similarly with informational exhibits around the periphery and a center focal point. The exhibits are titled History of the Buraku Community and their Liberation, Realities of Discrimination and Challenges to be Made, Realizing a Society with Human Rights Culture, and Seeking an Affluent Tomorrow (about the Citizens Charter of

Fukuyama City, which affirms the dignity of human beings.) The center focal point is a preserved rickshaw-powered fire-fighting pump purchased by a Buraku community in 1914 from contributions given by local people.

Site Selection: Tokyo Professions Museums

Perhaps the most striking fact about the geographical distribution of NNCEHRM member museums is that there are none in Tokyo or the Kanto region. In part, this lack of human rights museums can be traced to the geographic patterns in historical Buraku discrimination mentioned earlier. There are, however, museums in Tokyo that engage with Buraku discrimination, and they do so by showcasing two traditional Buraku professions, leather tanning and meat processing. These two museums, the Archives Kinogawa and the Meat Information Museum, were selected in order to determine how Buraku identity was performed in museums in Tokyo in comparison to those in Western Japan.

Archives Kinogawa

The modest Archives Kinogawa in the Higashi Sumida neighborhood of Tokyo cuts a striking contrast to the human rights museums in Western Japan. Founded in 2004 by a machizukuri project, the museum is currently located inside the Higashi Sumida public hall. It moved there from its previous location in a former elementary school which was shuttered in 2003 due to discriminatory attacks against students and the practice of *ekkyō*, or sending one's children to schools outside the district in order to avoid the stigma of having attended school in a Buraku neighborhood (Cangia 2013)⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ The former elementary school is now a home for the aged.

The Archives Kinogawa once held a lecture titled “There is No Leather Without a Smell,” referring to powerful olfactory experience of being near a leather factory. Upon entering Higashi Sumida, one immediately notices this smell – a kind of chemical-laden organic decay. Joseph Hankins (2017), an anthropologist who worked as a tanner in a Higashi Sumida leather factory as part of his anthropological fieldwork on the area, noted that mostly untreated industrial effluvium from leather-making in Higashi Sumida has run into the Tokyo sewage system every day for the past 90 years – and the Tokyo sewage system is not equipped to treat it. “During my fieldwork,” he wrote, “I interviewed many people who had lived near to but not in the Buraku tannery districts. Without fail, every one of them commented on the characteristically bad odor of the area and its residents” (p. 113).

Smell is powerful. Fostering pride in an area with a reputation for its foul odor is a tall order indeed, but it is one that the Archives Kinogawa takes on with gusto. The museum has three main foci: first, on the leather-making industry that defines Higashi Sumida; second, on the daily life diaries produced by the children who attended the elementary school from its founding in 1936 to its close; and third, on the history of Kinogawa, as the area was known before its current appellation of Higashi Sumida. The leather-making exhibits are by far the largest and most extensive. Leather-tanning tools, including a small drum, are exhibited alongside placards and photos describing the leather production process. Samples of the leather from various factories in town are displayed for visitors to view and touch. In the corner of the room is a seating area with tables, where guests can make leather bookmarks or pencil cases for a modest materials charge, and a TV for watching DVDs on leather-making and the Kinogawa area. One handout from the museum boasts a visitor count exceeding 2,000 people per year.

Meat Information Museum

The Meat Information Museum is located on the sixth floor of the Tokyo Central Wholesale Meat Market and Shibaura Slaughterhouse. It is a very short walk from Shinagawa Station, one of only two bullet train stops in Tokyo. The museum was added to the meat market and slaughterhouse when the building was renovated in 2002, and it is the only part of the building that the public can visit without an appointment.

Other than a cordoned off AV room, the entirety of the museum is in one large, airy room with clean, perfectly white walls and neat, professional exhibits. While the Archives Kinogawa is cluttered with fading hand-printed signs, the Meat Information Museum is organized and expertly designed. While the Archives Kinogawa is cozy and homey, the Meat Information Museum is corporate and antiseptic. The Meat Information Museum is divided into nine sections with the following titles: 1) The History of the Tokyo Meat Market and Shibaura Slaughterhouse, 2) Production (From Fattening to Transporting), 3) The Flow of Slaughtering Work, 4) The Flow of Market Transactions, 5) Sanitary Inspection of Meat, 6) Models of Dressed Carcasses of Cows and Pigs / Cow Pelts, 7) History of Meat and Human Rights, 8) Ratings of Carcasses, Meat, and Internal Organs, and 9) Preparing for Leather Making.

Section 7, History of Meat and Human Rights, is the most relevant to the purpose of this research. After delineating the history of meat-eating in Japan, the exhibit presents a display of discriminatory mail that the slaughterhouse has received. According to the brochure, “this exhibit aims to realize a society without discrimination while also understanding history and the present.”

Limitations of the Study

As noted earlier in the chapter, qualitative content analysis excels at describing the “what” but often cannot provide the “why” without triangulation. Therefore, while this dissertation will describe in great detail how Buraku identity is performed at the museums being examined, it cannot provide *definitive* explanations as to the reasons behind variations in this identity expression. Whenever possible, triangulating evidence was pursued either through querying museum staff or consulting previous research. Because longitudinal data was limited, this research provides a snapshot of how Buraku identity was being performed through the museums at the point in time in which the research was conducted. The research does not thoroughly address temporal variations in how the museums have served as interlocutors of Buraku identity.

As the research was performed by me alone for the purposes of this dissertation, textual interpretation is subject to my own personal biases. For this reason, I took care to ensure that the themes discussed in this dissertation were recurring and concordant, with exceptions being minimal and explainable. As most of the texts for this study were in Japanese and I am not a native speaker, uncovering latent meaning presented an extra degree of difficulty, and it is possible and even likely that some interesting themes were missed.

However, qualitative content analysis overall proved to be a very powerful tool in exploring how Buraku identity is performed in these museums. Three strong themes emerged from the data. First, the museums presented a view of Buraku identity that is very strongly rooted in their respective local communities. Second, while some museums reflected the UN-centered global turn in the Buraku liberation movement, others have been slower to adopt this movement reorientation. Third, while museums in western Japan tended to view Buraku

discrimination as stemming from association with stigmatized physical space, museums in Tokyo portrayed discrimination as arising from stigmatized professions. These three themes will each be explored in the following three chapters.

Chapter Six: Warmth and Light at Home: Engaging with Burakuness in Museum Localities

From the previous chapter's descriptions, it may be somewhat obvious that all five museums are strongly rooted in their local communities. Considering the ghettoized history of Buraku discrimination as well as the locally based funding sources for the museums, this is hardly surprising. However, the museums' publications and exhibits reflect that this emphasis is expressed slightly differently at each of these museums. While as previously mentioned the Suiheisha History Museum claims a strong association with the word *furusato*, or homeland, the other two western human rights museums express their connections to their respective localities with other Japanese cultural concepts: the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum with *machizukuri* (town-building) and the Henomatsu Museum with *fureai* (connection). The two Tokyo museums, however, take a different tack, connecting with their locally produced commercial specialties, or *meisanhin*.

The Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum and *Machizukuri*

At this juncture, it may be worthwhile to review the definition of *machizukuri*. *Machizukuri* is not an easy word to accurately translate, with scholars variously choosing the terms "town-making" (Cangia 2013), "community initiative" (Mutafchieva 2009), "community-building" (Mutafchieva 2009; Nishimura 2010), and "community development" (Cangia 2013, Mutafchieva 2009; Horita 2017; Nishimura 2010; Mizuuchi and Jeon 2010). As a full discussion of the various uses of the word *machizukuri* is beyond the scope of this research⁵⁶, I have instead settled on a working definition. For the purposes of this discussion, *machizukuri* is

⁵⁶ Instead, see Andre Sorenson and Carolin Funck's excellent edited volume *Living Cities in Japan: Citizens' Movements, Machizukuri, and Local Environments*, 2007.

defined as bottom-up community development that relies on resident participation to create and maintain comfortable, attractive, and sustainable living spaces. It is also characterized by a sense of historical awareness and preservation (Nunokawa 2007).

The Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum mentions machizukuri in several of its printed materials, especially in its Japanese-language brochure, generally in the context of spreading “human rights culture” (人権文化) throughout the local community. In its “Greetings” section, the brochure makes the following claim: “As a core city of the Bingo province based on its long history and tradition, this city has established the basic philosophy of town development as a ‘human environment city’.” The concept of a “human environment city” (人間環境都市) is explained later in the brochure to be directly connected to Buraku issues: “Fukuyama City aims to create a city that can be said to be alive for all people by solving all human rights issues, including the Dowa issue. This is the human environment city that Fukuyama City aims for.”

Although the museum was established in 1994, this emphasis on locality seems to have been strengthened recently. According to the brochure, when the museum was renovated in 2014, “The contents of the exhibition were partially renewed, with an emphasis on ‘Progress in Fukuyama’ and ‘Machizukuri based on human rights culture’.” Of what exactly this machizukuri consists, however, is generally not clear in the handouts. The one exception to this vagueness occurs toward the end of the Japanese-language brochure, which explains an exhibit on a system that the City of Fukuyama established in 2013 to notify someone if attempts are made to look at the person’s family register.⁵⁷ The brochure notes that “Establishing the ‘personal

⁵⁷ In Japan, the family register, or *koseki*, includes address information that might allow an investigator to infer whether someone lives in or is from a Buraku neighborhood. Because of extensive lobbying by the

notification system' is a measure of 'machizukuri' that respects human rights". Throughout the handouts, refrains such as "Fukuyama was named an anti-nuclear peace city" and "Fukuyama was named a human environment city" abound, emphasizing the values of the city as they are proclaimed in statutes and declarations rather than the details of what those proclamations mean.

To capture the details of this emphasis on machizukuri, then, would require one to travel back in time to 2013, when the newsletter held a two-part special exhibition titled "Machizukuri that Respects Human Rights". Should one's time machine be out of commission, however, one could instead refer to the newsletter issues (211 and 216) that address the exhibit to infer its contents. The exhibit consisted mainly of charts and graphs comparing the 2003 and 2010 results of surveys undertaken in order to gauge the area residents' awareness of the Dōwa issue and pointing toward perceived deficiencies. First, although area study groups have been held since 1979 to educate residents on Buraku discrimination, about 50% of residents said that they had never participated in these groups. About 60% of these non-participants claimed as their reason for nonparticipation that they didn't know the groups existed. In addition, it was discovered that adults in their 20s were much more likely to have never heard of Buraku discrimination compared to adults in their 40s (21.3% to 3.2%, respectively). The fact that so many people were learning about the Dōwa issue later in life was concerning to the museum, which described this silence in Issue 211 as "a route that is prone to misunderstandings and prejudice in families, workplaces, and communities". Even more concerning was a deep decrease between 2003 (81.8%) and 2010 (51.3%) among those who believed that Buraku

Buraku Liberation League, access to the koseki has been restricted in Japan since 1976 to those with who can demonstrate a legally permitted need to access address information, such as debt collectors and executors of wills.

discrimination was an existing human rights issue. The younger a survey respondent, the more likely she would report that Buraku discrimination is not an issue. Issue 216 also reported that about half of the unmarried people in the 2010 survey would want to persuade their relatives to let them marry according to their will if their parents opposed their marriage partner, representing a decrease of 16 percentage points from 2003. These noticeably more conservative attitudes reflect the pattern of increasing ultra-right nationalism seeping into the Japanese master narrative as demonstrated in an earlier chapter.

Conclusions as to how to face this conundrum are left to visitors who view the exhibit, as direct suggestions are never given. Both newsletter issues note that participation in the residents' study group corresponds to a willingness to "explain others' mistakes [in understanding of Buraku issues]" when such mistaken ideas are expressed, making the resident group "an important forum for discussions in promoting machizukuri that respects human rights". The implication seems obvious: more residents should participate in these study groups. Never does the museum directly encourage participation in the groups, however, and no tactics for increasing participation are suggested.

Instructive here is the museum's fuzzy and indirect definition of "machizukuri that respects human rights". The term machizukuri, in common parlance, is often used as a counterpoint to the more bureaucratic term *toshi keikaku*, or statutory urban planning. Implied is that machizukuri and *toshi keikaku* are two opposite strategies – bottom-up and top-down, respectively - that aim for the same outcome of improved living space. The creation of hospitals and parks, the removal of unsightly telephone poles, the refurbishment of places of touristic importance, and the establishment or revival of local festivals are all processes that can be

accomplished by either machizukuri or toshi keikaku depending upon how the local area is administered.

Telephone poles and hospital buildings are obviously incapable of respecting human rights; only people can do this. Therefore, to build a town that respects human rights one must aim to change not the physical environment (at least not primarily) but the hearts and minds of the people living therein. In this way, the term machizukuri as defined by the museum requires not just physical engineering but a type of democratic social engineering (Popper 1945).

Just as it is clear that the museum sees the importance of this type of social engineering, it is also apparent that the museum does not see its role as facilitating it – at least, not beyond the museum walls. This is in sharp contrast to its peace-related efforts, with which it has taken a decidedly evangelical route. In the past, the museum has offered the Fukuyama Peace Lab program, aimed at high school and college students, to promote the dissemination of peace-related information among young people. For the general population, the museum has offered the Fukuyama Peace Navi program, a lecture-based training course on Fukuyama’s wartime activities. The museum also regularly offers a bus tour of local war ruins – at times offering both an adults-only version and a parent-child version.

Due to privacy concerns among Buraku communities, an analogous “human rights” bus tour may prove problematic. However, why not recruit young people for a Human Rights Lab? Why not have a Fukuyama Human Rights Navi training program for adults? At least in part, this lack of hands-on, practical training for “machizukuri that respects human rights” may be reflective of the taboo against frankly discussing Buraku discrimination. Until quite recently, the pacifism enshrined in the Japanese constitution has gone mostly uncontested; the importance of peace is often painfully inscribed into the collective memories of nations that practice a

“politics of regret” in relation to wartime atrocities (see Olick 2007). As the above survey results reflect, there is much more diversity of opinion regarding Buraku issues, and as Bondy (2015) has effectively shown, mainstream Japanese are much more reluctant to discuss Buraku-related topics. Walking the line between promoting “machizukuri that respects human rights” and alienating those who may be less sympathetic to Buraku causes, then, becomes much more complex. In order to realize the promise of machizukuri that respects human rights, though, it is evident from the comparisons of the two surveys that more work needs to be done.

“Machizukuri that respects human rights” is not the only brand of machizukuri previously espoused by an exhibit at the Fukuyama City Human Rights and Peace Museum. One 2003 exhibit listed as available for loan (to local organizations who wish to display it) is titled Universal Design Machizukuri. Universal design is a term coined in 1985 which refers to “a way of designing a building at little or no extra cost so it is both attractive and functional for all people disabled or not” (Mace 1985:147). The concept of universal design has since been elaborated into the seven principles of universal design, which have become a staple of architecture and urban planning training programs and occasionally codified into disability law. The exhibit describes universal design machizukuri as a type of machizukuri that “recognizes individuality and cherishes people’s differences” – words that would also seem appropriate to describe machizukuri that respects human rights. Unlike machizukuri that respects human rights, however, universal design machizukuri has a clear connection to the environmental town-building programs usually associated with machizukuri.

When reviewing exhibits and publications at the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum, one notices a preoccupation with local laws and ordinances that is not present with the other museums. One temporary human rights exhibit in 2019 focused on a sign language

ordinance passed by the city. Another 2013 exhibit on illegal family register checks, a practice sometimes undertaken to determine someone's Buraku/non-Buraku origin, explained in great detail the Fukuyama city law that requires notification of the target individual whenever a copy of the individual's family register is requested by a third party. Less detailed information on this process is also included in the museum's permanent exhibit.

This technocratic focus follows logically from the museum's stated goal of *machizukuri*. Because *machizukuri* includes traditional government functions such as telephone pole removal and park construction, it takes on an urban planning resonance that couples it with local governance in the popular imagination. "Machizukuri that respects human rights," then, can somewhat counterintuitively imply a certain top-down endorsement – or, at the very least, condonation – of anti-discrimination values. It therefore seems a natural fit for the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum; because the museum already focuses on legislative activism through its anti-nuclear peace-related efforts, it seems a logical step to utilize the formalized but still accessible *machizukuri* process in order to work within the community.

The Henomatsu Museum and *Fureai*

Various words in Japanese are used to refer to community centers. *Kouminkan* (公民館, literally public citizen hall) is perhaps most commonly used, while others use the anglicized *komyunitii sentaa* (コミュニティー・センター). The community center in which the Henomatsu Museum is housed, however, is called a *fureai* center. The word "fureai" (ふれあい) implies a sense of connection or physical touch. While it can be simply defined as "touching each other" or "getting in touch", it also carries the nuance of spontaneity, or the sense of two

elements meeting in a kind of happy accident. As Ivy (1995) more eloquently put it, “fureai is defined aesthetically and sensually as a fleeting, treasured chance encounter that captures ‘the moment when different worlds touched,’ such as the fureai of the present and the past, the artificial and the natural, the modern and the traditional.” (p. 43)

The “different worlds” that are designed to “touch” through the community center are explicitly named as Buraku people and non-Buraku people, and the purpose of this connection is to decrease the stigma of association with Buraku areas. As their newsletter states:

To eliminate Buraku discrimination, it is important to interact with people living in the Dōwa district. For example, some people who think the Dōwa district is scary have never visited the Dōwa district; believing only prejudice, misinformation, and rumor, they think the Dōwa district is scary. There are many such cases. Sakai City conducts sports and cultural exchange courses at Sakai City Human Rights Community Center in order to promote exchange between Dōwa residents and those outside the Dōwa district. In addition, the “Fureai Fair” is held every November.

Because the museum is located on the first floor of the community center, those who wish to avail themselves of the community center’s programming are automatically made aware of its existence.

In its mission statement, the community center lists “civic exchange” as one of its priorities and explicitly states, “Any city resident (市民) can feel free to use this facility.” The community center therefore rents out its newly renovated spaces at a very reasonable cost to groups who want to host meetings there. There is no requirement that such meetings have a human rights-related component, though the community center provides a discount if they do. As mentioned previously, the community center does not limit itself to human rights awareness

activities. As I type these words, the event section on the front page of the community center's website is advertising an athletic training course, a bento-making class, a glitter accessory case craft activity, a double dutch jump rope event for children, a winter constellation observation session, and a dietary education lecture for senior citizens. A "chatting party" is also held on the last Saturday of each month, though it currently is often canceled due to coronavirus precautions. None of these events are directly related to human rights, but they all provide ample opportunity for fureai.

Perhaps it is unsurprising, then, that the Henomatsu Museum is the most locally focused of the three museums. Sections on work, daily life, education, and liberation all focus on the local, as opposed to the national, context of these aspects of Buraku life. For example, the "Liberation" section of the brochure focuses on a local group called the Isseikai that was later assumed into the Suiheisha. The history section is titled "History of Henomatsu", while the education section is titled "Education in Henomatsu". Results of Sakai City surveys relating to Buraku issues form a large part of the information on "Enlightenment", but there is no hint as to how these survey results compare nationally or even regionally.

This local orientation can also be seen in the temporary exhibits the museum has held at various points in the past. In 2013 and 2014, before moving to its new location, the museum held a popular exhibition titled "Henomatsu's Wedding and Reception Hall Kimatsukaku." Displayed were wedding attire from the 1950s and 1960s along with photos and recollections of the wedding hall in the old buraku. A post from October 9, 2014, on the community center's Facebook page quoted a senior visitor to the exhibit who reminisced about his own wedding in the buraku, a lively affair with shamisen and drumming. "I tied my hair in a topknot. I walked to my bride's house to get her. The wedding meal was sukiyaki, prepared by our neighbors." This

exchange with a local elder, made prominent through its inclusion on the community center's social media, represents an ideal fureai interaction, a "happy accidental meeting" (albeit facilitated by the museum) in which both parties depart feeling enriched by the encounter.

Other temporary exhibits in the new community center prove to be just as locally focused. Several temporary exhibits featured various shogi ephemera associated with local shogi hero Sankata Sankichi. A 2020 exhibit featured maps from 1689 which depicted the area as an untouchable leather-processing backwater called Shioana. Other post-move exhibits included exhibits on meat production in Henomatsu, the history of the community center, and literacy classes in Sakai City. Interestingly, when I asked the museum staff if they had ever held any exhibits on other discriminated minorities or human rights issues in Japan or around the world, they pointed to the exhibit on literacy classes, the title of which includes "Sakai City". It is clear that in contrast to some of the other museums in this study, the boundaries of the Henomatsu Museum's exhibitions do not extend very far outside of the old Henomatsu buraku. There seems to be no plans to change this local focus. When I asked museum staff about future directions for the museum, they replied:

A major challenge is to dig up the history of the region. As people who know the old days of the region are aging and dying one after another, it is an urgent task to promote fieldwork (listening) while talking about the old days.

In other words, the Henomatsu Museum aims to increase its depth, not breadth. Also instructive is their description of fieldwork (フィールドワーク) as listening to others talk about the old days. Fureai thus remains the top priority even in the museum's curatorial practices.

The grass-roots, hands-on nature of the Henomatsu Museum's engagement with the local community contrasts with the statutory, urban planning posture adopted by the Fukuyama

Human Rights and Peace Museum. Like its counterpart in Fukuyama, though, the Henomatsu Museum symbolically claims the city (in this case, Sakai) as a place where respect for human rights should flourish. The cover of the brochure for the community center proudly proclaims, “For my town, Sakai / let the flowers of human rights bloom” (私たちのまち堺から人権文化の花を咲かせよう).

The Suiheisha Museum and *Furusato*

Although the Suiheisha ultimately became a national organization, its local roots in Kashihara are strongly emphasized throughout all of the museum’s communications. The museum’s longest document available for visitors to take home, the 35-page English translation of museum information, contains the word “Kashihara” 50 times; for reference, the words “Suiheisha”, “history”, and “museum” are used 121, 16, and 11 times, respectively.

The three founders from the area – Komai, Sakamoto, and Saiko – are repeatedly referred to as “the three young men of Kashihara” in the museum’s exhibits, website, and publications. In fact, before the museum closed for renovations at the end of 2021, its last temporary exhibit was titled “The Three Young Men of Kashihara: Their Warmth and Light.” Previous temporary exhibitions also point to the museum’s rootedness in the local community; see, for example “Buraku Liberation League Nara Prefectural Federation 60th Anniversary” (2018-2020), “Nara Prefectural Suiheisha Movement – Universality and Uniqueness” (2012-2013), “100 Years of History: Wakigami Elementary School” (2000), and “Breath of Resurrected Ancestors: Pre-modern Kashihara” (1998).

At times the museum’s texts can wax quite poetic regarding Kashihara, with the area taking on a mythical quality. The section of the permanent exhibit titled “Faint Fetal

Movements,” which describes grass-roots local organizations that served as precursors to the Suiheisha, opens with the following poem (which is also included on the museum’s website):

From the days of facing discrimination
Something is about to be formed
Fetal movement that is faint but certainly detected
If a heart craving freedom is the father
Bountiful⁵⁸ village Kashihara is the mother

This personification of Kashihara as a “mother” giving birth to the equality movement endows the village with a goddess-like quality, making her an important character in the modern-day creation myth of the Suiheisha.

Similarly, the “Homeland of Human Rights Song,” which was composed with help from the local Wakigami Elementary School and is included the Suiheisha History Museum website, begins with the following lyrics:

Lucifer’s star is shining
Guiding us to justice
Becoming a leader of the three brave young men
The crown of thorns flag fluttered on Hohomanooka
I can hear a lively voice sing:
Here is the Homeland of Human Rights
Where the Suiheisha was born

⁵⁸ Although Kashihara was a buraku, its plentiful forests of coveted paulownia wood meant that villagers lived a comparatively comfortable life; some even achieved levels of wealth generally associated with the upper-middle classes.

While the image of Lucifer guiding the young men to justice may seem jarring to readers from a Judeo-Christian context, it is important to remember that Lucifer had a rich and illustrious past in Roman folklore before he became synonymous with the devil in Christian theology. Lucifer, meaning “light-bringer,” was the personification of the planet Venus, and he was often portrayed as a man holding a torch or a child pouring out a jar of light. It is this mythical figure – not the devil – who made his way to Mt. Honma (formerly called Hohomanooka), the inaccessible cherry-blossom covered peak that overlooks Kashihara, to bring the light to three brave young men whose hearts yearned for justice. Not coincidentally, this was not Mt. Honma’s first brush with divinity; it has been suggested that Mt. Honma may be the mountain that the mythical Emperor Jimmu climbed in the *Nihon Shoki* to overlook his newly established country. Because the mountain is inaccessible, it is doubtful that the Suiheisha’s crown of thorns flag ever fluttered from its peak. The metaphor, though, would not be lost on anyone from Kashihara; by “birthing” the human rights movement, the town had finally fulfilled its mythical destiny as the homeland for human rights.⁵⁹

Of course, the bundling of local landmarks into this distinctive “homeland” (*furusato*) for human rights is the museum’s most outstanding characteristic of its engagement in the local community. The museum’s Homeland of Human Rights Map lists Saikouji Temple as follows:

Saikou-ji Temple is a branch temple of the Jodo Shinshu Honganji Temple, and is the birthplace of Mankichi Saikou (real name, Kiyohara Kazutaka), the drafter of the declaration of the establishment of the Zenkoku Suiheisha. Saikouji was established in 1748, when the village had 38 households to support it.

Not only does the map explanation connect the Tokugawa-era temple to the birth of the

⁵⁹ Just in case one did miss the connection, however, a description of the mountain’s mythical connections is also included on the museum’s fieldwork map.

Suiheisha almost 200 years later, but it also hearkens back to a time of community spirit when 38 households banded together to support the temple. In this way, the museum writes the history of the area as one of collective values. While the museum's texts and exhibits describe in great length those who supported the Suiheisha movement, there is no mention of any dissenting opinions within the community.

Standing on the balcony at the Suiheisha History Museum, it is possible to see a monument called "Life's Brilliance," which was erected across the street in 2012. The museum's website describes the design of the monument as follows:

The two thick stone pillars represent the Yamato Doshikai and the Suiheisha.

From the cavity in the stone on top, it is designed so that one can see the sun rising from the east on March 3, the anniversary of the founding of Zenkoku Suiheisha... It expresses the sunrise of Buraku liberation, which is the purpose of the founding of Zenkoku Suiheisha.

The erection of the monument occurred after the Homeland of Human Rights machizukuri occurred, as evidenced by the inscription on the monument's west face, which reads:

I have an ambition, not a dream

Someday at the Human Rights Homeland Park, Hohomanooka

Our descendants end evil practices

May the good day come of brothers and sisters loving one another at the same table

I'm certain – this is not a dream

Shōshi Kawaguchi on the day of the 90th anniversary of Zenkoku Suiheisha

There is quite a bit to unpack in this inscription. Contextually, it may be helpful to begin with Mr. Kawaguchi's background. Although he is 92 years old (and, at his own admission, a

regular consumer of Kentucky Fried Chicken) at the time of writing this paper, he is still a very prominent figure in the Buraku liberation movement, particularly in Nara Prefecture. After the Nara Prefectural Buraku Liberation League was formed in 1957, he served as a full-time secretary under Sakamoto Seiichirō. He then became Secretary General of the organization in 1962 with Sakamoto's support. He later went on to serve on Gose City Council and in the Nara Prefectural Assembly. Since 1982 he has been the Deputy Executive Committee Chair of the Buraku Liberation League Central Headquarters and the chair of the Buraku Liberation League Nara Prefectural Federation. According to his official website (www.shoshi-kawaguchi.com), he is the godson of Saikou Mankichi. Among his many responsibilities in the community, he is also chairman of the Suiheisha History Museum. He appears to also be a poet at heart, as he also penned the lyrics of the "Homeland of Human Rights Song" quoted earlier.

The inscription here quite obviously draws on Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. The same syntax that is used in Japanese translations of King's speech (私には夢がある) is used in Kawaguchi's inscription (私には夢ではなく志がある). The metaphor of "brothers and sisters loving one another at the same table" is also drawn from the same speech. *Kokorozashi*, the word translated here as "ambition", has a strong connotation of deliberateness; it is sometimes translated as "will", "intention", or "resolution". It stands in contrast to the more passive connotations of "dream". Even in Japan, it is quite bold to assert that you will improve upon the work Dr. King. However, with the divine on your side, nothing is impossible, and by appealing once again to the imposing image of Hohomanooka, Kawaguchi assures us that this is so. Notice also that the inscription situates the Homeland of Human Rights Park alongside the mountain, thereby imbuing it with the mythical properties associated with mountain by proximity. The implication is that the fight for human rights is a sacred one, and it

is no coincidence that the “faint fetal movements” of this fight formed in Kashihara, the Homeland of Human Rights.

By providing a schematic of these “sacred sites” in the form of the Homeland of Human Rights map, the museum makes the surrounding community into an extension of its building, inviting museum visitors to venture out into the community to view these historically significant places themselves. Several of the museum’s publications mention the ability for guests to participate in “fieldwork” (フィールドワーク), with guides from local NPOs available for hire for private fieldwork tours. The English-language brochure includes the following exhortation:

The Suiheisha History Museum is surrounded by some historical landmarks in connection with the Suiheisha. Why don’t you look around with the map of the surrounding area given to you when you visit the Museum?

By emphasizing the surrounding area as the homeland (*furusato*) of human rights, the museum attempts to erase the boundaries between the physical building and the surrounding locality. The entire area is transformed into a lieu de memoire (Nora 1989) as a pilgrimage site defined by human rights, represented by the founding of the Suiheisha.

The Tokyo Museums and *Meisanhin*

The two Tokyo museums, Archives Kinogawa and the Meat Information Museum, also clearly ground themselves in the local community. This is particularly the case for the Archives Kinogawa, for which the second most commonly appearing word on their website is “Kinogawa”. Of course, this is unsurprising, considering that the word “Kinogawa” appears in both the name of the museum and the name of the elementary school whose history the museum is aimed at preserving. The one word with a higher appearance frequency than

“Kinogawa”, however, would be just as unsurprising to anyone familiar with the area. That word is “leather”, which appears on the website 88 times (compared to 78 for “Kinogawa”).)

Indeed, on the front page of Archives Kinogawa’s website, Kinogawa is immediately introduced as a “town of leather and oils,” and the museum lists one of its self-imposed tasks as the preservation of the town’s “precious industrial materials.” After all, without the famous Kinogawa leather factories, there would be no Kinogawa Elementary School to speak of – or, at least, it would have had quite a different existence. It was the leather and oil factories that pulled the community into a comfortable middle-class existence and ultimately became a point of pride. Leather became Kinogawa’s *meisanhin*, or local specialty, that defined the town’s *raison d’etre*. Indeed, after my own visit to the museum, I headed to the Tokyo Sky Tree, a nearby tourist attraction visited by millions of people each year, and discovered that keychains and other small accessories made from “Kinogawa leather” were available for purchase in the gift shop. The accessories were placed on a stand with a plaque noting their local connections. With the town’s identity so intertwined with its *meisanhin*, it is no surprise that the museum would express its local rootedness through the story of the leather industry.

A signature annual event co-sponsored by the Archives Kinogawa is the Kinogawa stamp rally, an event that has been held at the Sumida Ward Social Welfare Hall since 2015. Upon entrance to a stamp rally – a common type of event in Japan – participants are generally given some type of passport or booklet on which they receive stamps from various vendors or participants. Once enough stamps are collected, the participant can usually exchange the booklet for some type of present. Although the Kinogawa stamp rally was canceled due to COVID-19 in 2020, it returned in December 2021, maintaining its original goals to “revitalize the Higashisumida area and raise awareness of human rights, as well as to promote the local leather

and oil industry,” according to a flyer advertising the event posted on the Archives Kinogawa website. The front of the flyer (Figure 1) features an old-fashioned leather drum out of which are flowing various leather goods, including a jacket, baseball, shoes, gloves, a keychain, various handbags, and a traditional Japanese school backpack. The font utilized for the words “Kinogawa Stamp Rally Exhibition 2021” is meant to mimic folksy hand-painted Japanese calligraphy, such as the type used to advertise retro-style traditional festival booths. This, along with the smiling cartoon family and bright flowers, lets the audience know that the stamp rally is an accessible, family-friendly event.



Figure 1: Kinogawa Stamp Rally Flyer (front)

The back of the flyer contains a large brown badge with the words “Kinégawa Stamp Rally – Kinégawa: Japan’s Number One Pig Leather Producer.” Under a heading reading “In fact, this is a great town,” the virtues of Kinégawa’s meisanhin are extolled:

Two-thirds of the elementary schools in Sumida Ward come to this town on field trips, and the town merits these field trips. It is an area where traders who process leather from raw skin received from living things are gathered. We make leather from various animals, including exotic leather (so-called reptile leather). Especially for pig leather, it is the number one town in Japan, manufacturing about 90% of the domestic production... The stamp rally has conveyed to many people the charm of the leather and oil-and-fat town Kinégawa.

That the leather industry is what makes Kinégawa “a great town” is clear from this description.

A homey corner of the museum, complete with sofas and a coffee table, is set aside for the viewing of a selection of DVDs. The DVDs available to view are listed on the website, and all are related to leather. One of these is a 2015 episode of the NHK Premium show “Masterpiece” hosted by the actress Yuka Nomura. The episode is titled “Soft! Durable! Versatile Pig Leather: Tokyo Sumida Leather Products.” The episode focuses on the various technologies used to produce Sumida pig leather, with much attention paid to the fact that the soft leather is in fact so hardy that it can be washed. Nomura interviews various people around Kinégawa involved with leather manufacturing and trading. When I visited the museum, I sat on the sofa across from the museum’s curator, Iwata Akio, and together we watched Resurrected Kurobee, an animated story of a bull named Kurobee who “gives his life” to be slaughtered in order to become meat to nourish bodies, a candle to light the way, and leather for a samurai’s saddle.

The video is based on a children's book compiled by the children at the former Kinogawa Elementary School.

The theme of giving and taking life in Buraku professions is one that comes up repeatedly in the texts of the Tokyo museums, and it will be explored in detail in a later chapter. For the purposes of this discussion, it is noteworthy that Kurobee becomes leather for the samurai's saddle as opposed to, say, leather for shoes or a farming implement. The samurai conjures imagery of masculinity and state power – and to the children to whom the video is aimed, “coolness” – thereby linking leather to the master commemorative narrative (Y. Zerubavel 1995). If there were no leather, there would be no dashing, intrepid samurai on horseback.

Neither, the museum's website claims, would there be a modern Japan. After the formation of the army in 1872, “leather was absolutely necessary for soldiers' shoes, back armor, bands, horses, and so on.” As Japan's wars increased, so did the leather. In fact, the tanning of Kinogawa's famous pig skins began when there was a shortage of cow skins during the Sino-Japanese (1894-1895) and Russo-Japanese Wars. (1904-1905). Leather factories continued to spring up to feed the increasing militarization of Japan's operations in Asia. One remarkable statistic from the Archives Kinogawa website states that the number of leather factories increased from 57 in 1934 to 91 in 1937 – 34 additional factories in only three years. The book *The Post War History of the Kinogawa Area: Leather Workers and Oil and Fat Industry Workers*, published by the Kinogawa History Research Association, repeatedly emphasizes leather's connection to Japan's modernization:

This type of work was so severe and labor-intensive that it sometimes became included among those industries called “the bitter experience industries [苦汁産業]”. However,

at the same time, since leather is an indispensable resource for munitions and urban life, we must not forget that the leather industry has been listed as a modern industry that supports the modernization and urbanization of Japanese life (Kinogawa Enkakushi Kenkyūkai 2005:13-14).

That working people suffered for the success of the leather industry (and, by proxy, the success of Japan) gives it a kind of nationalistic dignity. The Archives Kinogawa does not shy away from describing the hardship and sacrifices associated with working in the leather industry before the advent of labor-saving leather-making technology. The following anecdote from a leather factory employee before the invention of the mechanical leather drum is shared on the museum's website:

"I wore clogs when stepping on the skin in the barrel, but it was cold in the winter and my feet seemed to freeze." Thinking about this, leather-making today seems so easy I can't believe it." This is the story of an old woman, who woke up around 5:00 in the morning and stuck her feet in the barrels and stomped on the skins until around 7:00 in the evening.

That the person performing this work is a woman – who, according to stereotype – should have been living a comfortable existence as a doting Shōwa-Era housewife, adds to the sense of self-sacrifice. In fact, in the collection of Kinogawa Elementary School essays collected on the museum's website, the children often wrote of mothers working outside the home to help make ends meet. A second-grader in 1971 wrote the following:

My mother is always working. When she's free, she only takes naps. Sometimes she plays badminton or reads books. But on her vacation days, she listens to the things I say. On those days, there is a smile on her face. When she's not resting, I go into the kitchen

and she gets angry, saying, “You’re interrupting me. Go outside.” So every night I watch television with my little sister. When night arrives, my mother comes home. I think it must be so difficult for my mother to work all day every day. I like when she eats snacks with me at the *kotatsu* at home... Sometimes she says, “I can’t even move my hands right now so I brought home sushi.” I don’t like those times. I don’t know how my mom feels about it, but she must be so busy if she can’t even move her hands. My mother is a careless person like me, so I don’t know when she’s going to get injured.

Her mother’s sacrifices not only provided a comfortable life for her children – complete with a television, *kotatsu*, and store-bought sushi – but also contributed to the modernization and economic growth of postwar Shōwa Japan.

From the curated visitor comments posted on the museum’s website, it is clear that encouraging visitors, many of whom are local, to take pride in the area’s *meisanhin* is one of the museum’s major goals. One visitor from Sumida was quoted as saying, “I was able to experience the local industry. I hope that this valuable industry will continue to be inherited.” During Cangia’s (2003:46) fieldwork at the museum, she quoted one local fifth-grade visitor as saying, “I was very surprised when I heard that the samurai’s saddle is made of cow leather. It is really interesting. I also thought that the leather that my mom produces is very nice.” By visiting the museum, this student was able to make a connection between the stigmatized occupation of her mother and this occupation’s role in the history of the Japanese nation-state. In other words, that which was once ghettoized has now become, in her mind, an integral part of the whole. As Tanaka & Tanaka (2009) demonstrated in their positive feedback model, “the joint possession of particular city images by residents, promoted by positive feedback mechanisms through intra- and intercity communications, accelerates the establishment of a city identity

strongly associated with citizens' community spirit or 'we-feeling' (p. 107).” In other words, a consistent, positive vision of identity shared by residents and those involved in the city planning process can lead to a more united, vibrant community. Through the leather *meisanhin*, the museum aims to foster this sense of pride in the community.

The Meat Information Museum also roots itself in its locality through its *meisanhin* of high-quality beef, though it does so to a much lesser extent than the Archives Kinogawa. This is reflective at least in part of their very different origin stories. On the front page of its website, the Archives Kinogawa is referred to as a “handmade” (手作り) archive, and while one does not often hear the adjective handmade applied to museums, it does in fact seem like an apt descriptor of the Archives Kinogawa. Much of the museum was cobbled together by the efforts of its curator Iwata, who was a teacher at the former elementary school. Preserving the history of the town has been the most grassroots of grassroots endeavors, and often when museums are developed from the ground their curators turn to the local communities to build their collections. By contrast, the Meat Information Museum was added to the Tokyo Central Wholesale Meat Market when the building was renovated in 2002 in order to, according to its brochure, revitalize the market and open the building to outsiders.⁶⁰ With government resources at their disposal, there was much less need for museum curators to embed themselves deeply in the community to build the museum's collection.

There is also a major difference in how the two museums delineate their localities.

While in the Archives Kinogawa the local area is clearly defined at the neighborhood level as

⁶⁰The Meat Information Museum is the only part of the Tokyo Central Wholesale Meat Market and Shibaura Slaughterhouse that is open to the public. Tours of the slaughterhouse are available to elementary through high school groups by appointment. There are no regular retail sales of meat in the market, though the meat market does hold a “Meat Festival” each year in which the public is welcomed to buy certain meat products directed from the vendors.

Kinegawa/Higashi-Sumida, the Meat Information Museum's situates itself not in the Shibaura neighborhood for which the slaughterhouse is named, but rather the entire city of Tokyo. This positionality difference can also be explained at least in part by the disparate histories of leather-making and meat processing in Tokyo.

Leather-tanning is a malodorous endeavor; even with the significant improvements provided by modern technology, one notices the smell of the tanneries still today upon arriving in Kinegawa. While the leather-tanning industry in Tokyo in the Edo Period was located in the Asakusa district, Meiji urban planners wished to move the leather factories and associated odors (and dubious disposal practices) to the city's outer environs. The location of the current Higashi Sumida / Kinegawa area seemed a promising choice, as it was an ever-flooding backwater that could not be used for any other purpose. The leather tanners quite understandably were not pleased with the constant floods, and according to the Archives Kinegawa's website, it was said around the turn of the 20th century that anyone who wanted to go into leather-tanning had better learn to swim first. The leather tanners by necessity put up with the floods until 1930 when the Arakawa Flood Bypass was completed, thereby significantly improving the area's drainage. As the city's boundaries continued to sprawl and environmental issues in Kinegawa worsened due to years of industrial pollution, administrative guidance in 1925 attempted to relocate the leather-tanning district again. However, this time the tanners fought back, and the Tokyo Industry Association submitted a petition to the government to reverse the administrative guidance in 1930. As the industry movement was able to win over much of the National Diet, Ministry of Home Affairs, and Metropolitan Police Force, the directive to move the district was dropped in 1934, and the leather-tanning district has remained in Kinegawa ever since.

Slaughtering work has its own set of environmental pitfalls, so it is no surprise that the Tokyo slaughterhouse also moved many times in response to public outcry and government regulation throughout its history. The first slaughterhouse law, designed to prevent future occurrences of previous environmental misadventures (i.e., angry farmers with bamboo swords protesting manure and blood draining into their water sources), was passed in 1907, and four slaughterhouses were licensed in the city of Tokyo. Another two slaughterhouses were opened in 1927 and 1928, but ultimately it was decided to consolidate the meat processing industry into one large local slaughterhouse, and Shibaura was selected for the location in 1936. In 1966, the slaughterhouse was integrated into the operations of the central wholesale meat market.

The word “central” is by no means a misnomer. The Tokyo Central Wholesale Meat Market and Shibaura Slaughterhouse is located near the south exit of Shinagawa Station, one of only two bullet train stations in the city of Tokyo. It is in the heart of Minato Ward, an area characterized by skyscrapers and embassies. The headquarters of Honda, Mitsubishi, Sony, All Nippon Airways, Fujitsu and Nikon are here, along with the Japanese headquarters of Apple and Goldman Sachs. In Minato can also be found Tokyo Tower, the Rainbow Bridge, Roppongi Hills, the Akasaka palace complex, Keio University, and the Tokyo University science campus. The location of the Tokyo Central Wholesale Meat Market, along with those of the other ten central wholesale markets in Tokyo, was selected for commerce, not manufacturing, in contrast to that of the leather-processing industry. Minato straddles the Yamanote “high city” poshness that epitomizes the Tokyo elite as well as the working-class Shitamachi “low city” much beloved in the Japanese popular imagination (Heine 2011). Minato, to many, *is* quintessential Tokyo. It is therefore logical that the Meat Information Museum situates itself as being part of the city of

Tokyo rather than the neighborhood of Shibaura or the ward of Minato; it is the only slaughterhouse in the city by statute, and it serves the entire city.

As the English-language brochure on the Meat Information Museum's website concisely claims, "We have more better things." The "we", in this case, is the Tokyo region. The "more" are the 125,000 hogs and 55,000 cattle which are sourced annually by the slaughterhouse, numbers which dwarf those of other regions. "Better" refers to the quality of the meat; the brochure claims that Tokyo consumes a higher proportion of high-grade meat. In Japan, as well as worldwide, high-quality beef tends to be synonymous with the city of Kobe, but any reference to Kobe beef appears to be verboten in the Meat Information Museum brochures. The focus is purely on the meat processed and consumed in Tokyo. What is it, then, that makes Tokyo meat so special? According to the English-language brochure, it is the very fact that it is prepared and traded in Tokyo. To quote directly (*italics added*):

The major characteristic of our market is that we prepare and trade the meat right in the middle of Tokyo, a huge center of consumption. As the process takes place in the middle of a megalopolis, we organize facilities that take the urban environment into account and enhance interactions with local communities through events such as a [sic] Meat Market festival. We will continue to support Tokyo's meat consumption with the cooperation of local communities.

Certainly, the Meat Information Museum is less locally rooted than the Archives Kinogawa. When the museum does connect with its locality, though, it does so in the same way – through its *meisanhin* of high-quality locally produced meat.

Discussion and Conclusion

Returning to Kashihara, directly in front of the Suiheisha History Museum one finds a large rock with an inscription of the Emancipation Edict on it. The Emancipation Edict will likely survive throughout the remainder of human existence, its words already stored in countless electronic files throughout the world. Why, then, do humans still feel the need to inscribe texts like the Emancipation Edict in rock? The Suiheisha History Museum explains on their website:

In Kashihara, the birthplace of Zenkoku Suiheisha, there is an oral tradition that “the day of the Emancipation Edict became The Day of 50,000 Days” immediately after it was promulgated. The 50,000th day was September 3, 2008, so we have engraved it on the monument to use as nourishment for tomorrow.

It is a quirk of human existence that 50,000 days can pass, one much like the other, until one day everything changes in an instant. For many Buraku people, the day of the promulgation of the Emancipation Edict is such a day. With newfound freedom, they were now able to begin the long and arduous fight for their equality. It is a turning point in their collective memory, a point at what it meant to be Buraku was redefined. So why inscribe it on a rock? As the museum says, to use as nourishment for tomorrow. Our collective memory is strengthened through time, connection, and space. A location can trigger memory just as easily as a story or a song or a smell. By inscribing the Emancipation Edict on a rock and displaying it in open space, the museum hopes to trigger the collective memory of those who pass by it, reminding them of the town’s values and nourishing them with hope for tomorrow.

A common bond between the four terms discussed in this chapter— furusato, machizukuri, fureai, and meisanhin – is that they are all manifestations of group identity and, thus, collective memory. If spaces can serve as lieux de memoire to reinvigorate our collective

memories, it follows logically that museums, as socially appointed memory keepers, would interact in their communities in ways that cultivate these memories. Because the master commemorative narratives in the communities in which these museums are situated all differ slightly from one another, the museums' connections to their communities differ as well.

Of the four terms, the machizukuri town-building espoused by the Fukuyama City Peace and Human Rights Museum might seem the least concerned with memory. After all, what is machizukuri besides looking to the future, not to the past, to describe the kind of place we in which we hope to live? Referring back to the definition of machizukuri espoused by Nunokawa (2007), cited at the beginning of the chapter, historical awareness and preservation is very much a part of the machizukuri philosophy. When we think about the type of community in which we wish to live, we inevitably rely upon our memories of past experiences, images, and communications. "Machizukuri that respects human rights" connotes the possibility of machizukuri that does *not* respect human rights. For much of Buraku history, this was very much the reality.

We see an example of this in a "mini" special exhibition held by the museum held in early 2014. The title of the exhibition is "Don't Forgive It! Unauthorized Acquisition of Family Registers." As we saw earlier in this chapter, the 2013 Fukuyama city law requiring notification of the target when his or her family register is requested is perhaps one of the only manifestations of "machizukuri that respects human rights" that can be claimed as a concrete benefit to the Buraku community in Fukuyama. The mini special exhibition here explains the harm created by illegal background checks and how the law can assist in thwarting such attempts. The title, "Don't Forgive It!", is directly tied to memory. If I forgive a trespass, it is possible that I may one day forget it. Choosing not to forgive, however, precludes forgetting; the

memory of the trespass stays with me and informs my actions in the future. These collective memories of trespass, then, can be used at the community level to inform social norms, thus building a town “that respects human rights”.

Interestingly, this is not the only exhibit at the museum that includes an exhortation to avoid forgiveness in the title. The following year, the museum also held an exhibit titled “Don’t Forgive the Atomic Bomb: An Exhibition of Tsutomu Masuda’s Paintings.” A *kamishibai*⁶¹ show held in conjunction with the exhibit was titled “Travel Through Time: Children’s August 6” and was advertised in the newsletter as follows (italics added): “Young life was lost due to the dropping of the atomic bomb. Let’s *remind ourselves* of the dreams and thoughts of children 70 years ago.” Through such exhibits, the museum takes the stance that the atomic bomb and Buraku human rights violations cannot be forgiven because forgiving opens the door to forgetting, and collective remembrance is necessary in order to foster *machizukuri* that respects human rights.

Such collective remembrance can be facilitated through *fureai*, such as that emphasized by the Henomatsu Museum in their local relationships. Residents of the old Henomatsu buraku in Sakai City – both today and in the past – form a quintessential mnemonic community as theorized by E. Zerubavel (1996). Mediated through intergenerational communication, memories of “the old days” (i.e., before the Special Measures Law and subsequent neighborhood improvements) are inherited and subsumed into an ever-evolving Buraku identity. The reconstructed alleyway that forms the heart of the Henomatsu Museum’s permanent exhibition allows local youth, almost all of whom have been raised in modern, comfortable housing, to “get in touch with” the environs of their ancestors. By providing

⁶¹ Kamishibai is a traditional Japanese storytelling art, often aimed at children, in which an entertainer shares traditional tales accompanied by paper drawings.

activities that are enticing to all age groups, the museum creates opportunities for intergenerational *fureai*, as demonstrated by the variety of ages I observed in other visitors to the community center during my visit. In addition, the wide appeal of the various classes, sports groups, and services is meant to attract non-Buraku visitors as well, thus providing opportunities to share the counter-memory of the Buraku experience with those who may be more familiar with the state master narrative (c.f. Y. Zerubavel 1995).

As alluded to in the opening of this section, the Suiheisha History Museum places a great deal of emphasis on commemoration through its transformation of the entire town into a site of memory. As Y. Zerubavel (1995) has shown in her work on commemoration, many commemorative processes focus on beginnings or turning points to set up insider/outsider dichotomies. The promulgation of the Emancipation Edict, as shown above, is one such turning point. Another, however, is the advent of the Suiheisha. This is made clear through the museum's many allusions to "birth" in their exhibitions and publications. The Homeland of Human Rights song, after all, does not name Kashihara as the place where the Suiheisha was founded, but rather the place where the Suiheisha was *born* (生まれた). The repeated inclusion of Mt. Honma in the narrative ensures that visitors understand the mythical nature of this birth.

In the collective memory espoused by the Suiheisha History Museum, the birth of the Suiheisha marks the beginning of an insider/outsider dichotomy. This consists not of Buraku/non-Buraku but rather those who support(ed) the Suiheisha/discriminators. As noted previously, internal strife within the Suiheisha is markedly absent from the museum's narrative even though the historical record shows that disagreement within the organization was lively and sometimes heated. An exhibit in the museum and a section on the website titled "Sun in the Expansive Sky: People Who Supported the Suiheisha" explains that

Zenkoku Suiheisha originated from the Buraku people, but the movement was supported by people outside the buraku such as those involved in religion, the press, law, and politics. A variety of supporters have enabled a wide range of movements by the Zenkoku Suiheisha.

The insiders, then, are those who support(ed) the Suiheisha movement, even if they have no Buraku heritage.

And what of anti-discrimination activists who disagreed with the Suiheisha philosophy? They simply do not exist in the Suiheisha birth narrative as told by the museum. The above exhibit on those who supported the Suiheisha begins with the following poem:

A cold era
Activists who acted as one
The right and the weak protect themselves
Because there is only unity

In this narrative, there are only two options: you may support the Suiheisha, or you are counted among the discriminators. Among those who do not discriminate, there is only unity.

The Suiheisha History Museum, then, has ensured that the town of Kashihara chooses the “right” side of history through their furusato-making project of the creation of the Homeland of Human Rights. With sacred Mt. Honma watching over their town, the entirety of which has been transformed into a lieu de memoire, the people of Kashihara are reminded every day of the Suiheisha’s birth story, a point of pride and identity for the community. Wherever they go in the world, they do so with the assurance that if they return to their “homeland” of Kashihara, it will be defined by human rights.

In the case of the Archives Kinogawa and Meat Information Museum, their focus on Buraku-associated professions means that they connect with their localities through their *meisanhin* of leather and meat, respectively. Globally, this is not uncommon with museums dedicated to commercial products; the same patterns can also be seen everywhere from the Louisville Slugger Museum in Louisville, Kentucky to the Guinness Storehouse in Dublin, Ireland to the Chocolate Museum in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, Canada. The difference, though, between the former two museums and the latter three is that working with leather and meat were once associated with defilement in the Japanese context. Therefore, in order to counter remaining stigma (and both museums argue that quite a bit of stigma still exists, as I will explore in detail in a Chapter Eight) the museums need to transform once polluted products into local artisanship of which residents can feel pride. To use Y. Zerubavel's (1995) term, they need to create a counter-memory.

As previously discussed, the Archives Kinogawa has been somewhat successful with emphasizing both the high quality of its (soft! durable!) pigskin leather as well as its contribution to the development of the Japanese state. The Meat Information Museum also emphasizes the quality of its products, but rather than claiming that meat was essential to the Japanese state, it instead points to the prevalence of meat in the modern Japanese diet. In one Meat Information Museum anti-discrimination pamphlet titled "How Do You Make Meat at the Meat Market and Shibaura Slaughterhouse? For Correct Understanding", there is a multi-page comic strip in which three elementary school students talk to their teacher about the meat processing business. The teacher, who is portrayed as wise and all-knowing, at one point lectures the students about the importance of the slaughterhouse:

Humans have to get the nutrition they need to survive by eating meat, fish, vegetables and much more. Meat, fish, and vegetables are essential foods for humans, and they are equally important. So, just like catching fish and growing vegetables, the job of processing meat is indispensable for our survival.

The fact that a great many people have lived long and healthy lives without meat in their diets is conveniently omitted from the conversation.

Instead, mouth-watering references to pork katsu, yakiniku, hamburgers and other meat-based dishes are sprinkled throughout the museum's publications as if they are intractable parts of the Japanese diet, and, to be fair, such dishes are quite beloved by many Japanese diners. That the museum emphasizes the hypocrisy of indulging in such foods while looking down on those who produce them seems a fair and reasonable position. The Meat Information Museum repeatedly sings the praises of the professionals whose specialized knowledge makes a critical contribution to "one of the richest food cultures in the world." Just as a person from Shizuoka would take pride in green tea and a Saga resident would take pride in the local pottery, why shouldn't a person from Tokyo feel proud of the high-grade meat available there? Why shouldn't a person from Kinogawa boast about leather that can be washed in a washing machine?

By focusing on the quality of the products made in former Buraku professions, the Tokyo museums encourage their localities to see them as a point of pride rather than a source of shame. In doing so, they augment a growing countermemory of Buraku production that draws from the national master narrative in which Japan is a powerful nation whose clout is bolstered by its status as a strong producer of quality goods.

What happens, then, when these strongly locally rooted museums are faced with a national Buraku Liberation League agenda to internationalize the Buraku human rights struggle? Do they take on the challenge with gusto, or do they retreat further into the local positionalities in which they have already become entrenched? This question will be addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: Going Global? Acceptance of the UN-Centered Turn in Buraku Activism

While Tsutsui's (2017, 2018) local-global feedback loop serves as an insightful model for how global and local forces interact in the Buraku human rights movement, it was beyond the scope of his research to write about the specific manifestations of the new global movement reorientation as it has spread within local movements. Two of the human rights museums in this study – the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum and the Suiheisha History Museum – shed some light on how these processes occur. The other three museums have thus far been slower to adopt this UN-centered globalization of their Buraku identities, consciously choosing to focus on Buraku rights struggles as they relate to their local communities.

To review, Tsutsui (2017, 2018) painstakingly outlined the recent history of the Buraku liberation movement, describing what he refers to as a feedback loop between local movements and global human rights struggles. While Buraku liberation activists were originally distrustful of international organizations like the United Nations, suspecting them to be little more than puppets of the US and other world powers, they ultimately began to see promise in engaging an international audience in their struggle after seeing the successes of their Ainu counterparts. In the pursuit of this aim, they began organizing symposia and networking with international human rights scholars. Ultimately, Buraku activists began working more closely with international activists, and in 1993 their daughter organization, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) received UN-consultative status. Tsutsui (2017, 2018) referred to this as a “movement reorientation” from the insular local to the broad global. As a feedback loop, however, the success in the global human rights movement also affects how localities see themselves as part of a global human rights struggle.

Since UN participation has been the centerpiece of the globalization of Buraku movement actorhood, we should see UN-related discourse in local Buraku projects if Tsutsui's feedback loop theory holds water. An examination of the case studies of the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum and the Suiheisha History Museum shows Tsutsui's theory to be perceptive; both museums' missions and educational endeavors reflect a strong commitment to UN projects. This chapter will first describe how the two museums have engaged with UN-related ventures as the heart of their international engagement while also discussing how the two museums position Buraku issues within a global human rights struggle. Then, it will address the fact that the other three museums – the Henomatsu Museum, the Archives Kinogawa, and the Meat Information Museum – have opted out of this globalizing development by discussing contextual factors that may provide clues as to why this is so.

Suiheisha History Museum

On May 1, 1998, the Suiheisha History Museum posted a brief document on their website that reflected on the museum's founding and mission. The final two paragraphs of the four-paragraph reflection clearly and concisely reveal how the museum sees its position within the Buraku globalized agenda:

Fifty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations; ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the resolution of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education; as well as the Law of Promotion of Measures for Human Rights Protection and the New Ainu Law in Japan, international interest in human rights is increasing. Taking this uplifting opportunity, we positioned the 21st century as the century of human rights and at the

same time grasped the significance of Suiheisha, which played a pioneering role in world history. We made Kashihara, Gose City – the birthplace of the Suiheisha – into the Homeland of Human Rights. Here we established the Suiheisha History Museum. The Suiheisha History Museum plays a role as a human rights information transmission base and aims to be a facility that transmits information for the elimination of all discrimination.

Here we see “increasing international interest in human rights” gauged rather technocratically through the reference to three international covenants and two national laws. The first Japanese law mentioned, the Law of Promotion of Measures for Human Rights Protection, established that the government is ultimately responsible for the task of eliminating discrimination and called for the creation of the Council of Human Rights Promotion, which in turn was tasked with researching matters related to human rights education. The law referred to as the “New Ainu Law” here is the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act, which requires the government to ban discrimination against the Ainu and take measures to spread understanding and appreciation of Ainu culture.

By situating the “century of human rights” within a context of international and national law, the museum unambiguously reproduces the global turn in the Buraku human rights agenda. The inclusion of the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act is particularly striking, as this is a measure from which Buraku communities would presumably gain no direct benefit. The implication, then, is that everyone benefits when others receive their human rights – a sentiment echoed in the first sentence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “...recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...”

After providing this global context, the museum goes on to sing the praises of the local context, claiming that the Suiheisha played a pioneering role in world history; presumably, this is in reference to the Suiheisha Declaration, which earlier in this reflection is dubiously asserted to be the first human rights declaration in Japan.⁶² It is this pioneering role in world history which allows the museum to substantiate its claim that Kashihara is the Homeland of Human Rights. In other words, even while emphasizing the museum's local roots, the reflection manages to position these local roots in a global human rights context. Therefore, the museum can claim to be a "human rights information transmission base" (人権情報発信基地) that by its educational programming works toward the elimination of discrimination. The word "base" (*kichi*) is not one typically used to refer to museums. More commonly, when used to describe a physical location, it refers to a military base, storage base, research base, or an expedition base camp. In other words, it is a place from which people and/or things "go out" into the world. Any purpose it might hold as a destination in and of itself is secondary to its primary mission of dispatch. The museum, therefore, by labelling itself as a human rights information transmission base expresses its desire that visitors will not simply keep what they have learned in their own hearts but rather be invigorated by the "warmth and light" of the Suiheisha spirit to go out and share with others what they have learned. In this way, the museum in Kashihara is perceived to perform its duty in a globalized, UN-centered vision to end *all* discrimination, not just discrimination against Buraku people.

⁶² In fact, plenty of insightful writing on human rights was produced in Japan during the Freedom and People's Rights Movement in the 1880s, culminating in many hard-fought rights being delineated in the Meiji Constitution in 1890. For more information on the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, see Buruma (2003).

Not only does the Suiheisha History Museum appeal to UN covenants when describing its mission, it also participates directly in UN missions through its repeated nomination of pieces of its collection for inclusion in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. The Memory of the World Register facilitates preservation of documentary heritage that has “world significance and outstanding universal value” (UNESCO, n.d.). Examples of items included are the Bayeux Tapestry (France), documentary evidence of the Nanjing Massacre (China), Nelson Mandela’s criminal court case documents (South Africa) and the original Technicolor 3-strip nitrate negatives for the film *The Wizard of Oz* (US). It is also possible for countries to collaborate for registry; for example, the Dutch East India Company archives were registered after nomination by the Netherlands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, India, and Indonesia. Items submitted by Japan include the handwritten diary of the powerful 11th-century statesman Fujiwara no Michinaga and the archives of Tōji Temple.

The Suiheisha History Museum has twice nominated the Suiheisha Declaration for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2015 and 2017, and both nominations were unsuccessful. Inclusion in the register is quite a competitive process, as each country can only recommend two items every two years. Therefore, many countries, such as Japan, have an internal nomination process to determine which items will be recommended. For 2017 inclusion, for example, the Japanese committee received 16 nominations.

The museum’s failed nominations certainly cannot be attributed to a lack of effort. After the first failed nomination for 2015 inclusion, the museum undertook a persistent campaign to persuade the committee to approve the Suiheisha Declaration’s nomination for 2017 inclusion. The Nara Foundation for Culture of Human Rights, which runs the Suiheisha Museum, partnered with Sujin Self-Government Association in Kyoto, which runs the Bank of Yanagihara Memorial

Museum.⁶³ Representing the nominators was Mushakoji Kinhide, the former Vice President of the United Nations University and the current Vice President of IMADR. The nomination was supported by the Headquarters of the BLL, the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, the Fukuoka Human Rights Research Institute, the Osaka Human Rights Museum, and IMADR. The Fukuyama City Human Rights and Peace Museum also included a strong endorsement of the Suiheisha Declaration's nomination in its newsletter. In addition, the nominators collected signatures by 154,685 individuals and 539 organizations supporting the petition. The museum even held a temporary exhibit from May to September 2015 titled "The Zenkoku Suiheisha Founding Declaration in the Memory of the World." The exhibit was scheduled to end on September 13, just before the results of the selection committee meeting were announced on September 24.

Despite this earnest effort, the Suiheisha Declaration was again not selected by the committee.⁶⁴ Kawaguchi Shōshi, the chief director of the Nara Foundation for Culture of Human Rights, released a statement in English which, although it expressed support for the two items nominated, did not attempt to hide the nominators' ire at not being selected:

It is very regrettable for us that the items we have applied were not nominated at the national level, having not been able to live up to the expectations reflected in tremendous support from all over the country. Although we are convinced that the

⁶³ The Bank of Yanagihara Memorial Museum, located in Kyoto, is also a member of the National Network for the Collection and Exhibition of Human Rights Materials. The preserved building was established in the former Sujin buraku in 1899 when Buraku people in the area pooled their money together in order to provide a banking option for the community.

⁶⁴ The two items selected were "Documents on Joseon Tongsinsha/Chosen Tsushinshi: The History of Peace Building and Cultural Exchanges between Korea and Japan from the 17th to 19th Century," which was a joint submission by Japan and the Republic of Korea, and "Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke," Gunma Prefecture statues that contain some of the oldest usage of Chinese characters used in Japanese grammar.

Founding Declaration of the Zenkoku Suiheisha, being the first declaration of human rights in the world sent out by the disadvantaged minority, is worth being acknowledged as the Memory of the World, we would like to discuss what to do in the future with the co-sponsor, the Sujin Self-Government Association.

The result of this discussion seems to have been a decision not to nominate the Suiheisha Declaration again, as it was not nominated for either the 2019 or 2021 cycles.

The Suiheisha History Museum can at least partially console itself, however, with the knowledge that one of its collections was listed in a regional UNESCO Memory of the World register, the Memory of the World Committee for Asia-Pacific (MOWCAP) register, in 2016. While earning a spot on the MOWCAP registry is certainly a feather in the Suiheisha History Museum's cap, it is not as prestigious as a highly sought-after spot on the international register. Rather than demonstrating that a collection has universal significance, a nominator need only demonstrate that the collection has regional significance. Other items on the regional register include the presidential papers of Manuel Luis Quezon (Philippines), stone stele records of royal examinations of the Le and Mac Dynasties 1442-1779 (Vietnam), and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archive (Cambodia). The nomination process is less competitive, in part because of spots are less coveted and in part because each country can submit up to three nominations. However, even though nominations have been accepted every two years since 2008, the Suiheisha History Museum's nominated collection is thus far the only one from Japan. In comparison, two international register nominations have been submitted by Japan every year since the register's inception.

The collection registered by the Suiheisha History Museum is one that emphasizes Buraku positionality in the global human rights struggle. Titled "Suiheisha and Hyeongpyengsa

[sic]: The Records of Cross-Border Solidarity Between Minorities,” the collection demonstrates cooperation between the Hyeongpyeonga organization, which advocated for the Baekjeong former outcaste community in Japanese-occupied Korea, and the Suiheisha. The collection contains the following five items: 1) an agenda from the Third National Suiheisha Congress, which recommended cooperation between the groups; 2) a notebook belonging to Yoneda Tomi, a Suiheisha founder, in which he jotted notes regarding the status of the Hyeongpyeongsa; 3) Yoneda’s business card; 4) the Hyeongpyeongsa Prospectus, which was printed in the Oshima Suiheisha bulletin *Fire*; and 5) the business card of Ihara Hiseshige, a disciple of Matsumoto Jiichiro who assisted the Hyeongpyeongsa movement while residing in Seoul.

The description of the items on the Suiheisha History Museum website is as follows:

The Suiheisha was created in 1922 in Japan and the Hyeongpyeongsa in 1923 in Korea by the minorities in the respective countries. The two organizations started to collaborate with each other in 1924. The nominated items, which were compiled in the midst of serious discrimination against the minorities in the two countries, represent the universal principles of the humanity (human rights, liberty, equality, fraternity and democracy), making them worthy to be included in the Asia/Pacific MOW Register.

The idea that Buraku discrimination is a violation of *universal* principles of humanity, rather than an exceptional quirk of Japanese political history, reflects the Buraku Liberation League’s renewed global paradigm, which, in contrast to the insular Asada years, hearkens back to the more inclusive leadership of Matsumoto.

That the museum takes pride in this distinction is clear from their website, as the announcement that the items were accepted to the MOWCAP register is still listed as a news

story on the front page even though the honor was bestowed six years ago. 2016 was somewhat of a banner year for the Suiheisha History Museum's international efforts, as this is also the year that the museum became the first (and only) Japanese museum to join FIHRM, the Federation of International Human Rights Museums – also still listed as news on the museum's front page. That the museum wishes to be seen as globally relevant is evident not only in their decision to join FIHRM but also in their involvement in the International Council of Museums (ICOM), an NGO with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council; the other news item deemed important enough to make the front page of the website is a (currently non-functioning) link to a YouTube video of the museum's director, Komai Tadayuki, participating in a panel discussion titled "Thinking About Diversity and Inclusion at Museums" at the ICOM Japan conference.

Despite this focus on deepening international connections, the museum's permanent exhibit is very Buraku-centered. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Kashihara is mentioned repeatedly, and mentions of human rights struggles outside the buraku – let alone outside the country – are rare and tangential. Since 2017, the museum's temporary exhibit space has been filled with the Suiheisha-Hyeongpyeongsa Memory of the World collection, but before that, the museum regularly held temporary exhibits on various themes. Other than a 2003 exhibit also on the Hyeongpyeongsa, there is no record of any other globally focused temporary exhibit there. However, it is instructive that every single connection the museum draws between the Buraku human rights struggle and the outside world, no matter how peripheral, is mentioned in the museum's brochure, despite the brochure's limited space.

The Suiheisha History Museum's promotional brochures are two-sided A4-sized trifolds with 2-3 photos and/or other visual images on each ⅓ page. The English-language brochure,

which is virtually a direct translation of the Japanese language brochure, contains just 1,000 words to describe the entirety of the museum, including a page dedicated to practical information (admission fees, traffic access, etc.) and an “invitation to fieldwork” (a guided tour of various Homeland of Human Rights historic sites). Therefore, the decision to include certain exhibits (and, equally importantly, to exclude others) required deliberation over what the museum wished to emphasize in relation to its mission along with what potential visitors might deem compelling.

. On the front page of the brochure, in addition to touting its membership in FIHRM, the museum confidently takes its argument that the Suiheisha Declaration is the first human rights declaration in Japan a step further, making the head-scratchingly farfetched claim that the 1922 Suiheisha Declaration is the first human rights declaration made by a discriminated minority *in the world*. While the Epilogue features a variety of interactive exhibits designed for children, the only one described in the brochure is also the only internationally focused one, which allows participants to “sit among the audience” via virtual reality to watch Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. The exhibit featuring correspondence between officials in Suiheisha and their counterparts in Hyeongpyeongsa is also highlighted, as is its status as part of the UNESCO MOWCAP program. The international symbolism behind the Buraku flag is also explained thusly:

The Crown of Thorns was put on Jesus Christ when he was crucified. The Flag compared those who struggled against discrimination for liberation to “martyrs”.

The brochure even uses some of its precious space to explain that “The outside wall of the theater features the horizons (suihei-sen) in different parts of the world.”

It is instructive to note that while the brochure included each one of the museum's few references to the outside world, other extensive exhibits (e.g. exhibits on glue making, the Tsubame Kai, labor unions, etc.) received barely a word. Recalling Trouillot's (1995) assertion that the making of an archive inherently requires the inclusion of some material and exclusion of others – all of which is a reflection of the power of the decision maker – I assert that the items highlighted in the museum's brochure reflect a similar process, which in this case reflects an emphasis on the importance of global human rights connections.



Figure 2: Globe seed paper

Source: www.greensticks.jp

Coincidental to the timing of my visit to the Suiheisha History Museum, all May 2018 visitors were given the gift of a “seed paper,” a 54-millimeter piece of paper that when planted becomes a flower, in celebration of the museum's 20th anniversary (Figure 2). This seed paper was presented with a letter, coauthored by Komai and Kawaguchi, explaining the symbolism behind the gift:

This anniversary gift is a seed paper with a globe motif, symbolizing our hope for the respect of all human beings as well as equality in society and peace and happiness in the

world. It has seeds from the alyssum flower inside of it. Alyssum's flower meaning is "peace," "happiness," etc., carrying the image of the Suiheisha's philosophy and ambition and the future of human rights culture in the form of tiny flowers that bloom densely and spread like a carpet.

The manufacturer of the seed paper, a company called Greensticks, has according to their website 69 different shapes of seed paper available at an equal or lower price point than that of the globe shape, and some of these shapes might seem at first glance to be a better fit for representing the mission of the museum. For example, since the Suiheisha Declaration's opening words are "Let there be light in all humanity," a phrase that is quoted often throughout the museum and even in the very letter presenting the seed paper, the candle shape might seem a logical choice. However, this letter shows that much thought was clearly put into the symbolism behind both the design and flower choice of the seed paper, and the symbolism of human rights throughout the world "like a carpet of flowers" was deemed to be the message to send on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the museum.

The Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum

To observe the UN-centrism of the Fukuyama City Human Rights and Peace Museum, one need not even step inside the building – a quick glance at its logo (Figure 3), which incorporates the olive branch of the UN logo (Figure 4), will demonstrate the connection. Should there be any doubt, the museum's brochure explains the logo as follows:

The symbol at the front of the entrance is a mark to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which revealed that "respect for human

rights is the basis of world peace”. The outer ring is shaped like an olive leaf. In Europe, olive leaves have long been considered to represent “peace and harvest”, and the UN mark has the earth drawn in this circle. The flame in the circle represents "life" and symbolizes the "world peace and dignity of life" as defined by the Human Rights Declaration.

Although many Buraku organizations use fire symbology in their logos and organizations to represent the “warmth and light” of humanity as described in the Suiheisha Declaration, here the museum claims no direct connection to Burakuness in its description of its logo. Instead, the flame is said to symbolize “world peace and dignity of life.” Why a flame was chosen to represent these concepts is not explained, as it is with the olive branch symbol. In this explanation of the logo, the museum’s Buraku collection – which makes up one half of the entire permanent exhibition – is subsumed under the larger umbrella of human rights, which are in turn safeguarded through UN protection.



Figure 3: Fukuyama Human Rights and History Museum Logo



Figure 4: UN Emblem

As described previously, the Fukuyama City Human Rights and Peace Museum has three exhibition spaces of approximately equal size. The first is dedicated to the permanent exhibition on peace, which is discussed primarily through the city’s experience as an air raid target in

World War II. The second is dedicated to the permanent exhibition on human rights, which is discussed almost exclusively through the lens of the Buraku equality movement. The third room is used for temporary exhibitions, which alternate between themes of “peace” and “human rights”. The temporary human rights exhibits are not always about aspects of the Buraku movement; in fact, more often than not they are about other topics. From April 2010 to November 2021, the museum held 69 permanent exhibitions, 32 of which focused on human rights.⁶⁵ Of these 32 exhibitions, only 12 were on topics that directly related to Buraku issues.

Almost all of the human rights-focused temporary exhibitions were directly connected in some way to UN covenants and directives, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One temporary exhibition focused solely on delineating the rights enumerated in the Declaration, while another, titled “Drawing Human Rights in Manga,” featured drawings by thirty manga artists commissioned on the 60th anniversary of the UDHR. The museum then marked the 70th anniversary of the UDHR by partnering with the Holocaust Memorial Center (also located in Fukuyama) for the exhibition “Human Rights and the Holocaust” in 2018. In a newsletter article advertising the exhibition, the museum drew a clear-cut line to the present-day sociopolitical human rights context:

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the Third General Assembly of the United Nations. The UDHR was born out of bitter remorse for World War II, which caused a great deal of tragedy to humankind.

Therefore, the importance of the spirit of solidarity in the spirit of the Declaration – to establish that “eliminating discrimination and establishing human rights is a sure way to achieve permanent peace” internationally – is increasing. However, looking at the world

⁶⁵ Twenty-two of the exhibits focused on peace while the remaining fifteen contained substantial elements of both themes.

situation today, we are seeing policies that prioritize the interests of one's own country and movements to concentrate power in national leaders for that purpose. Let us once again look back on the Nazi Holocaust, the beginning of the UDHR, and think together about the human rights that everyone should have on equal footing.

Every year, the museum also holds a photo contest in celebration of Human Rights Week, which falls around December 10, the anniversary of the day the UDHR was adopted. This repeated commemoration of a watershed moment in the international human rights movement reshapes and resituates Burakuness into a global framework; in this way, the museum reifies the global turn in Buraku identity by performing it in the local context.

At the beginning of the Japanese school year in April, the museum receives many groups of schoolchildren on field trips and therefore usually plans a temporary exhibit appropriate for and interesting to children. The aforementioned "Drawing Human Rights in Manga" exhibition is one such example. Moreover, when human rights-themed exhibitions are selected for this annual tradition, they often refer to UN children's initiatives. Two UNICEF photo exhibitions were held, one on children surviving in precarious situations in Iraq and Moldova and the other a photo essay on the sacrifices that children around the world make in order to go to school. Another exhibit was a collection of picture diaries drawn by children from various countries in Asia for a UNESCO project.

The UN Covenant on the Rights of the Child is also referenced in temporary exhibitions on child abuse, bullying, and child poverty. A newsletter description of a mini-exhibition titled "Human Rights of Children: Abuse, Bullying, and Problem Behavior" is as follows:

In November 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was passed by the United Nations. However, in the world, even the "right to life" of children is threatened, and

the human rights of children are under threat. Even Japanese children, who are considered economically affluent, are in a serious human rights situation, due to issues such as abuse, bullying, and problem behavior. We gathered these issues into teaching materials to think about and discuss with children in schools, communities, and homes. Noteworthy here is that the description starts at the global UN level, zooms in to national level, and then zeroes in on individual homes. The implication that UN-level initiatives facilitate cultural diffusion that ultimately affects how nations, subnations, and individuals perceive human rights is one that permeates throughout Fukuyama City Human Rights and Peace Museum exhibits.

Therefore, when exhibitions on Buraku issues are held, these issues are often accompanied by events that place them into a global context. In 2015, the museum held a temporary exhibition on the movement for free textbooks in Japanese public schools, an initiative that sprang out of Buraku communities in 1961 in the city of Kochi. Although the Japanese constitution guarantees free public education through junior high school, many Buraku families were unable to afford textbooks and therefore either did not send their children to school or used battered out-of-date, hand-me-down textbooks. The movement was successful in garnering the attention of lawmakers, and free textbooks were phased in nationally beginning in 1963. In conjunction with this exhibit, the museum held a screening of the documentary *I Am Malala*, based on the autobiography of Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, who survived an assassination attempt while fighting for the right to educate girls in her native Pakistan.

Conversely, temporary exhibits about a broader human rights topic are often coupled with events that center on Buraku issues. The aforementioned exhibit on the 70th anniversary of

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was accompanied by a lecture from Mariko Akuzawa, an Osaka City University professor and imminent scholar of Buraku issues. An exhibit of Yamamoto Sakubei's coal mining paintings, which were selected by Japan for the international UNESCO Memory of the World register in 2008, was accompanied by a handout explaining the role of Buraku people in the development of the mining industry in western Japan. The handout contains a firsthand account of a man whose grandfather was a coal miner in the Chikuhō mine in northern Kyushu:

In the middle of the Meiji Era, my grandfather, the third son of a farmer in Kochi, decided to work at the Chikuhō coal mine because his eldest brother worked there. He worked hard and saved a little, so he wanted to get some land and farm, but no one was selling land. So he decided to clear the nearby wilderness with fellow coal miners who had the same feelings, and he used all his time between mining jobs to clear it. It took my grandfather, my father, and me – three generations – to have a rice field of three hectares in the mountains. However, as people became aware of it, I was discriminated against by the locals as a Buraku person when I married a Buraku daughter. There are many people in Chikuhō who are in the same situation as me.

Another handout describes the conditions of immigrant workers who came from various places in Asia – mainly Korea – to work in the mines. The dangerous conditions under which the pre-SML Buraku people labored, then, are removed from the insular vacuum of Asada-era Buraku liberation theory and placed in a complicated global web in which many others suffer alongside them.

Considering the discussion in the previous chapter regarding the Fukuyama Peace and Human Rights Museum's tendency toward connecting with city-wide statutes and declarations,

it is not surprising that the museum emphasizes UN resolutions and programs when engaging with global human rights issues. This may also in part be a reflection of the museum's second mission as a peace museum. The museum holds staunchly anti-nuclear weapon views, and it does so in a country that has no nuclear weapons and a constitution that renounces war. Therefore, in order to engage with anti-nuclear issues, the museum must do so with the UN as the gatekeeper of global nuclear policy. Since the museum ostensibly sees human rights and peace as two sides of the same coin, it follows logically that the museum would also engage with the UN on the subject of global human rights.

Rejection of a New Norm? The Centrality of the Local at Three Museums

While the data showed a clear and unquestionable trend toward a globalized, UN-centric Buraku human rights movement in the texts of the Suiheisha History Museum and Fukuyama City Human Rights and Peace Museum, the same cannot be said for those of the other three museums in this study, the Henomatsu Museum, the Archives Kinogawa, and the Meat Information Museum. While Tsutsui's (2017, 2018) research showed distinct and sound evidence of the Buraku global turn at the macro level, local machinations of social movements are complex and diverse, and the Buraku liberation movement is no exception. When the mission statements and contextual characteristics of each of the three institutions are examined, however, their diverse reasons for choosing not to subscribe to the UN-centered global turn begin to become clearer.

Because of its location within Osaka prefecture, an area characterized by a strong Buraku Liberation League presence, the Henomatsu Museum is perhaps the most notable of the three in its lack of participation in this global movement reorientation. Other than a globe

background on a flyer promoting an exhibit about discriminatory comments posted on the internet (which may very well represent the “world wide web” rather than the world itself) and a brief mention of a Portuguese missionary who visited the area in the 16th century, the museum’s texts make no mention of the outside world. As mentioned in the previous chapter, when asked about future plans, the museum concentrated on fieldwork in the local community to record oral heritage. The Sakai City Human Rights Fureai Center, the community center that houses the Henomatsu Museum, lists its mission on its website as follows:

The Sakai City Human Rights Fureai Center promotes human rights education, human rights enlightenment, and civic exchange in order to contribute to the prompt resolution of all human rights issues, including the Dōwa issue, in accordance with the principles of the Constitution of Japan, which guarantees the enjoyment of basic human rights. It has been set up as a comprehensive facility to improve the welfare of citizens.

Despite appealing to the Japanese Constitution to validate its mission of education aimed at ending discrimination, it does not mention any of the UN covenants under which Japan is beholden to work toward equality. The word translated here as “citizen” is *shimin* (市民) and refers to people who live in the city of Sakai.

That the Henomatsu Museum is situated in the Sakai City Human Rights Fureai Center is central to its institutional identity. It does not have its own website or social media presence but exists in cyberspace as part of the Fureai Center website and in posts on the Fureai Center Facebook page. It is perhaps due to its location within that community center, with its hands-on fureai approach, that the museum has remained true to its mission of “citizen exchange,” which again refers to exchange among the *shimin*. Fureai, with its connotations of close contact and happenstance connection, is not a concept that generally comes to mind as associated with the

United Nations. The central tenet of the Fureai Center's worldview is that in order to end discrimination against the Buraku/buraku, one must start *within* the buraku, one heart at a time, by creating opportunities for one-on-one interaction and cooperation. It is an approach that is antithetical to top-down, technocratic approaches associated with massive bureaucracies like the United Nations, so it is not surprising that the Fureai Center, and by extension the Henomatsu Museum, have chosen not to embrace this new paradigm within the Buraku liberation movement.

The Meat Information Museum is also located within another organization, the Tokyo Central Wholesale Meat Market and Shibaura Slaughterhouse. Therefore, just as the Henomatsu Museum's mission is dependent upon that of the Fureai Center, the Meat Information Museum's mission is dependent upon that of the meat market. While the meat market does not specifically list a mission on its website, a refrain in its texts is that it exists to enrich the diets of the citizens of Tokyo by delivering safe and fresh meat – its *meisanhin*. The museum, then, presumably exists to support this broader mission of the meat market. Conveniently, it is not necessary to guess how the museum supports this mission because the connection is already elucidated on the museum's website:

The meat market and slaughterhouse play an important role in providing a stable supply of fresh and safe meat and enriching the eating habits of the citizens of Tokyo.

Therefore, in order to get to know the meat market, including (1) introduction of the business and role of the slaughterhouse, (2) introduction of meat production and distribution, (3) elimination of bias and discrimination against the meat market and slaughterhouse, the museum was opened in the market in December 2002.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the meat market conducts only wholesale business and is generally not open to the public. The combination of housing a stigmatized profession and also being closed to outsiders sounds like a formula for creating misinformation and rumor, and as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, this has unfortunately been the case at times for the meat market. Opening the museum, then, created a space for the public to be welcomed in the building and provided transparency regarding the slaughtering process. The museum consequently functions as a kind of intercessor between the business of the slaughterhouse and the anxieties of the public.

Just as the Henomatsu Museum through its general interest programming invites outsiders into the buraku, the Meat Information Museum invites outsiders into the slaughterhouse. Hence, this drawing inward is in some ways at odds with a globalized agenda of expanding out into the world. A closed building housing a stigmatized profession can logically be perceived as local problem requiring a local solution; the need to cite UN conventions is not readily apparent.

Though the founding and background of the other meisanhin museum, Archives Kinogawa, has already been shown to differ greatly from that of the Meat Information Museum, its mission statement also conveys the same theme of citizen exchange and inviting in (italics added):

The Industrial/Educational Archives Kinogawa collects, preserves, organizes, and displays local industrial materials and children's activities of Kinogawa Elementary School... We hope that this museum will be *a place for interaction between the residents of Kinogawa and people in other areas*, and a place for disseminating human rights learning.

Rather than be repelled by the smell of the leather factories, the museum exhorts outsiders to come into the neighborhood and learn how wonderful, soft, and durable pig leather is.

Resources may also play a role in keeping the museum's operations at a more localized scale. As the Archives Kinogawa is a museum that was "handmade" in large part by one man who spent his life in the community and has already retired from one vocation, simply operating the life support machinery that allows Kinogawa's collective memory to live on while gasping for breath is enough of a challenge. Applying for the small museum's global citizenship may not be the highest item on the director's priority list.

Most importantly, however, even if the museum had extra resources, it is unlikely that the museum would use those resources in accordance with a global Buraku liberation ideology because the Archives Kinogawa's identity as described by its founders is not primarily a Buraku one. Discrimination is certainly discussed in the museum, but it is always discussed in the context of the leather-tanning profession. This distinction is a subtle but important one. If leather tanning is seen as a polluted or stigmatized profession, those who perform it may be the target of discrimination regardless of whether or not they have Buraku lineage and/or identify as Buraku. The Archives Kinogawa does not deny that Buraku people receive discrimination for their Burakuness *eo ipso*; however, fighting such discrimination is not perceived as the museum's mission. The museum works to destigmatize leather tanning. While this particular goal may have some overlap with Buraku liberation ideology, one should not assume this is because all of their values and perceptions are congruent.

This preoccupation with stigmatized professions is one that the Archives Kinogawa shares with the Meat Information Museum. However, while in the Tokyo museum paradigm the profession bears the stigma, in the Western Japan museum paradigm it is the physical *space*

that bears the stigma. This stark distinction, which has important implications for how Buraku identity is performed in the two regions, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight: The Heart of the Matter: Regional Perceptions of Root Causes of Buraku

Discrimination

In the Epilogue section at the Suiheisha History Museum, there is a holographic exhibit that creates an optical illusion in which it appears that visitors are sitting among the audience during Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. The brochure for the museum encourages visitors to participate in the exhibit by suggesting, "Maybe you will hear from the audience the speech of Pastor King who calls for the elimination of racism."

This brief description is notable in that it contains the only reference to racism (*jinshu sabetsu*) in all of the texts available for all five museums, and it is not in reference to Japanese society. As examples from other chapters have made clear, the museums are not at all reticent on the subject of discrimination. In fact, the word "discrimination" appears 633 times in the museum brochures, newsletters, and websites. It is one of the top ten most common words in the texts for all of the museums except for the Archives Kinegawa. In the most extreme case of the Henomatsu Human Rights Museum, once words that appear in the name of the museum are eliminated, "discrimination" is actually the most common word. When I emailed a Henomatsu Museum staff member and asked her what she saw as the unique points of the past and present of the Henomatsu area, she responded with a concise 125-word reply in which the word "discrimination" was used six times.

Clearly, then, the museums must be discussing a type of discrimination that is not perceived as being based on race. It is also not perceived as being based on caste. The word caste only appears once in all of the museums' texts, in an English-language handout from the Suiheisha History Museum that explains the context of the Suiheisha Declaration. A footnote on the word "eta" explains that "this highly discriminatory word, meaning full of filth, came to be

commonly used in the caste-like class system of Japan's Edo period (AD 1603-1867)." It is striking that the museum stops short of using the word caste to describe even the Edo period so characterized by the rigidly defined social roles of the *mibun* system. At any rate, though, the passage refers to a bygone era, not the discrimination faced by Buraku people today.

So what kind of discrimination is it, then? The answer differs depending on which museum one consults. In both the Suiheisha History Museum and the Henomatsu Museum, it is generally agreed that the discrimination is associated with Burakuness, which is conferred upon those who reside in or have resided in a *stigmatized space*. In the paradigm adopted by Meat Information Museum and the Archives Kinogawa, while discrimination has arisen from the *historical* maltreatment of Buraku people who worked in "polluted" professions, today the stigma is attached to *anyone working in polluted professions whether they claim Buraku identity or not*. The Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum tends to adhere to the same space-based and Buraku-centric philosophy espoused by its counterparts in western Japan but occasionally also displays a more complex worldview that also reflects the Tokyo viewpoint. This chapter will present evidence of these varied discrimination paradigms and discuss how they relate to notions of Buraku identity.

Human Rights Museums in Western Japan and Space-Based Buraku Discrimination

As a museum that aspires to be globally relevant, the Suiheisha History Museum wisely makes no assumptions that visitors to the museum will have any previous understanding of Buraku discrimination and therefore provides a definition of it in both its Japanese and English brochures. The definition is as follows (italics added):

What is Buraku discrimination?

Buraku discrimination is made on the grounds that one is *from a discriminated buraku village*, and various inequalities have arisen in marriage and employment. Even now it cannot be said that the right to live freely and equally is fully guaranteed, and it is a major issue that Japanese society will continue to solve.

Buraku discrimination, in this definition, is based on one's town of origin, and all other "various inequalities" grow from the soil of this place-based discrimination.

The Henomatsu Human Rights History Museum also ascribes to a spatially oriented definition of Burakuness. Unlike many other contemporary Dōwa neighborhoods, the historic Henomatsu area can trace its lineage through the Edo period, when residents of the Shioana (as it was known at the time) ghetto were tasked with carcass disposal, slaughter work, and leather tanning. In fact, the museum recently held a temporary exhibit of Edo-period maps of the era in which Shioana was referred to as "Eta Village" – a name that despite its taboo nature, the Fureai Center included on its Facebook page to advertise the event: "In this special exhibition, we will exhibit provincial maps with Shioana Village and think about the significance of 'Eta Village'. It will also be an opportunity for us to think about what we can do to resolve the still persistent Buraku discrimination."

An article in the museum's newsletter notes that "there is still discrimination and prejudice against the Dōwa district." As evidence for this claim, the newsletter cites a 2015 Sakai City Human Rights Awareness survey which found that 42.3% of respondents answered that they would avoid the Dōwa district when choosing where to live. Of those who answered that they would avoid the Dōwa district, a 37.7% plurality gave their reasoning as "Because the area has a scary image." When I toured the museum, my docent emphasized this viewpoint, telling me that many people are scared to come into the neighborhood, so they do not know that it is

actually a quite pleasant place. It is for this reason, as previously detailed, the museum takes its fureai-style approach of inviting people into the Dōwa district. Since the discrimination is perceived to be against those residing in or associated with the stigmatized space, interaction with people who live in the buraku is seen as key to counteracting misinformation and stereotypes.

The Fukuyama Peace and Human Rights Museum usually seems to ascribe to this philosophy of discrimination as well. The way that the local survey questions for their exhibit on human rights machizukuri were constructed is instructive, as they imply a spatially oriented paradigm of Buraku discrimination. For example, one reported result (*italics added*) was that “51.3% of the respondents think that there is a human rights issue (Buraku discrimination) related to people *from the Dōwa area.*” Herein, Buraku discrimination is clearly defined as being related to a stigmatized place of origin, i.e., the Dōwa district.

Also helpful in determining the museum’s philosophy is its temporary exhibit on coal mining, which described how the coal mining area of Chikuhō developed:

The development of the coal industry created new Buraku people and reproduced discrimination.

The development of coal mines increased the population of Buraku people.

Many coal mines were built in and around the affected village, and as the number of affiliated facilities increased, the number of people working there also increased, so coal mine housing was built. When people started to live there, shops and communal baths were opened, and eventually it developed into a coal mining town.

At that time, the Buraku people were divided or moved to places with worse

conditions, and their numbers increased. In addition, the people of Chikuhō, who had lost their land and were in financial distress, had no place to work other than coal mines.

Also, as the coal mine developed, many people came from other areas in search of work. Buraku people were able to get married and the population increased.

Of note here is that as more people moved to the area and intermarried with Buraku people, the population of Buraku people increased, thereby “blurring the boundaries” of who was considered Buraku (Davis 2000). The “dirty, dangerous, and difficult” occupation of coal mining was not the driver of stigma; rather it was association with an area in which many Buraku people lived that served as the stigmatizing force. Therefore, as the town grew, the number of people associated with the stigma of the town grew as well.

Tokyo Museums and Profession-Based Discrimination

The curator and founder of Archives Kinogawa, Iwada Akio, was once interviewed by a publication titled *Toward Tomorrow*, and copies of the resulting story are available for visitors to the Archives Kinogawa. In the article, Mr. Iwata is quoted as saying, “I don’t want to portray [Kinogawa] as an area of discrimination, but as an area of high technology and value.” Mr. Iwata is true to his word, as discrimination, while always hovering in the background, is not discussed directly in Archives Kinogawa texts nearly as often as the other museums. In fact, the word “discrimination” appears only four times in all of the texts analyzed for this study – and one of those four times is in the quote above. Therefore, getting a sense of how the museum views discrimination in the context of Kinogawa requires one to read closely between the lines. In other words, it is an ideal task for qualitative content analysis.

To get a sense of the shame surrounding the leather-working professions, it is helpful to look at the essays of the Kinogawa Elementary School children housed in the Archives Kinogawa. When first- and second-grade students write about leather-working, they do so with a sense of pride, as in the examples below:

I explored the town of Kinogawa. I saw nine leather shops. This was my first time at taiko shops and leather shops. The taiko were very big and I didn't know how they turned them around. But I thought maybe it would take men working very hard to move them. Everyone was nice, so it was good. (First grade, 2001)

Our family are leather tanners. The leather we tan comes from people in the country who raise and fatten cows, pigs, horses and such, then remove their skins at the slaughterhouse and send them to our place.... "What are these goods we make used for?" I asked my dad. He said, "For shoe leather and such." These well-made things are sold to far-off countries. When I see my father and the factory workers doing this work every day, I think it seems so difficult. (Second grade, 1964)

In the children's own impressions, the leather industry is associated with producing useful items and providing a comfortable lifestyle for their family. As another first grader noted in 1964,

My dad went to Kinogawa Elementary School a long time ago. Since he's big now, he is a leather worker. Every day my father does leather work and receives a salary. One day he bought a cake for us. I happily ate it.

Unfortunately, however, the children cannot have their cake and eat it too, so to speak, throughout the duration of the childhood. Around third or fourth grade, the children's perspectives of leather work appear to change as they become aware of how others perceive the profession, as in the two examples below:

When my relatives come to my house, they take the bus. They said they know the location of the bus stop near my house, but they don't know the name. But when you get close to my house, you can tell immediately because of the smell. I don't think we smell it that much as a result of being accustomed to living here. But occasionally, woo! It smells so bad you can't even describe it. This is because our town has a lot of leather tanners... But sometimes, when I go to school, something like pigskin residue happens to fall in the corners of the road or in the middle of the road... This makes me sick and I start running. (Fifth grade, 1965)

Kinegawa is very dirty because the whole town is dirty, and when other people come to this town, it is usually said to be stinky... It's hard to hear strangers say "stinky, stinky" when they come. (Sixth grade, 1969)

The children begin to perceive Kinegawa as stigmatized because of the leather factories, which cause the town to smell. Discrimination and shame are never associated with Kinegawa without implicating the leather industry. If the physical space in Kinegawa is stigmatized, then, it is due to the presence of the leather industry. This is in stark contrast, to, for example, the former Henomatsu buraku, which continues to bear stigma even though it no longer has any association with Buraku professions. In Kinegawa, the profession is the salient catalyst of discrimination; in the Western Japan museums, it is the physical space that is salient.

Another reference to discrimination appears in the description of the video "Resurrected Kurobee," the children's animation film described in the previous chapter. Not only does the description of the video contain one of the museum's four references to discrimination, but it also contains its only direct reference to "Buraku discrimination". According to the description, the story of Kurobee portrays "the greatness of the activities of the

‘villagers’ who make skin into leather” and “the foolishness of Buraku discrimination and pollution ideology.” An important consideration in analysis here is the time period of the story of Kurobee. Although it is not overtly stated, the story appears to take place at some point in the middle to late Tokugawa/Edo period, which can be inferred due to the story’s premises that Buraku discrimination was already entrenched but samurai still existed as high-status bureaucrats. At this point in Japanese history, all leather workers were Buraku people, as they held monopolies on the leather industry. Any discrimination toward leather workers, then, automatically fell under the umbrella of Buraku discrimination.

The Archives Kinogawa only uses the word Buraku on one other occasion, and it is also in a historical context, in reference to historical discrimination during the planning for the (canceled) 1940 Tokyo Olympics:

Three months prior to Tokyo’s 1940 “phantom” Olympics, a certain newspaper published that “the ugliness of the Buraku [areas] shows that these are not cultured citizens of Tokyo.” In response to this, some protests took place.

During the Pacific War, when this newspaper article was written, the leather industry would have been at its peak, manufacturing military products day and night to keep up with Japan’s increasing colonial aggression. The smell of the constant tanning of the leather factories would likely have been practically unbearable for an outsider journalist who happened to find himself within the boundaries of Kinogawa. At this juncture, Burakuness was still bound up with leather tanning in Kinogawa.

However, as was the case for Buraku communities all over Japan, the Special Measures Law had a profound impact on Tokyo Buraku identity. However, unlike most other parts of Japan, the Tokyo area elected to designate none of its areas as Dōwa districts, preferring a more

assimilationist approach of allowing the makeup of Buraku neighborhoods to change organically. Instead, Dōwa funding in Tokyo was allocated on an individual basis to those who claimed a need and Buraku heritage during an interview process (McCormack 2018). Tokyo buraku, then, simply evolved into neighborhoods that appeared shabbier than average (Hankins 2017), and Tokyo Buraku people became Buraku without buraku. The Buraku Liberation League refers to such neighborhoods as “unliberated buraku” and claims that there are about 1,000 of them in Japan.

This decoupling of Burakuness and the stigmatized buraku left a vacuum in Tokyo Buraku identity (self-)perception. To some extent, the assimilationist approach has been successful in its aims; it is not uncommon for mainstream Japanese in Tokyo to be unaware that Buraku people still live in Tokyo (Gordon 2008). However, stigma often clings stubbornly, and as the case of waste workers in Pakistan demonstrates, oftentimes one form of stigma is exchanged for another. In Tokyo, as the case studies of Archives Kinogawa and the Meat Information Museum demonstrate, the stigma clung to the still “polluted” professions of leather-working and animal slaughter. Note again the purpose of the video “Resurrected Kurobee”: to teach children about “the foolishness of Buraku discrimination and pollution ideology.” The implication is that this pollution ideology still exists. Whether such beliefs are still prevalent or not, the museums perceive them to be and create messaging as if they are.

The Meat Information Museum describes in English the discrimination it seeks to combat thusly: “The prejudice and discrimination against meat processing stem from the history of discriminated groups and are still an unresolved issue.” In a Japanese-language brochure titled “For Correct Understanding,” a somewhat lengthy comic is included in which a teacher chats with three children about the work of the slaughterhouse. The children are portrayed as

naïve and well-meaning but guided by prejudice, while the teacher is depicted as wise and all-knowing. When one student asks the teacher why some people have “wrong thoughts and feelings about the slaughterhouse,” the teacher responds by explaining Edo-period Buddhist purity taboos:

It has a lot to do with history. A long time ago, after Buddhism was introduced, it was said that eating meat was bad for one’s body so it should not be eaten. Also, in the Edo period, there was a mechanism in which one’s work and status were decided from the time of birth, and it was decided that the job of the Buraku people who are discriminated against was to process dead cows and horses and make tools using leather. Therefore, the Buraku people have become deeply involved in the work of producing various things from animals including meat. Even in an age where eating meat is normal, wrong thoughts and feelings toward the people who make meat still remain.

While this is clearly meant to be a simplified explanation of a complex historical entanglement, it is noteworthy here that teacher says that wrong thoughts and feelings toward *the people who make meat*, rather than Buraku people, remain. While the museum acknowledges Buraku discrimination as being embedded in discrimination against slaughterhouse workers, great care is taken to clarify the non-tautological relationship between the two.

A search of the phrase “discriminated/discrimination against” pulls up 13 instances in the Meat Information Market material. The object of the preposition “against” is most often “the meat market,” with six separate instances. Coming in at a distant second is “meat processing” with two instances. Other single instances are “the staff and employees,” “this business,” “this job,” “this work,” “meat market workers,” and “the injured side.” The

discrimination of concern to the Meat Information Museum is quite clearly tied directly to slaughter work. The phrase “Buraku discrimination,” so common in the western Japan human rights museums, never appears.

As mentioned previously, the slaughterhouse has received hate mail which is displayed in the Meat Information Museum as evidence of lingering discrimination. The museum describes this mail thusly on its website:

There are maliciously intended words such as “cruel slaughter”, “non-humans”, “not a human job”, and “you have no human rights or nobility” against those who work in the meat market and slaughterhouse. Post cards and letters with these contents are continuously sent directly to the meat market or written on the internet.... Until even now, leaflets that discriminate against the meat market and slaughterhouse have been delivered.

It is clear that the Meat Information Museum has no intention of mincing words when it comes to denouncing those who write or say discriminatory comments. However, it is also clear that the targets of this discrimination, as the Meat Information Museum perceives it, are slaughterhouse workers – who may or may not claim Buraku ancestry.

As alluded to previously, the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum, while overall adhering mostly to the western Japan worldview connecting Buraku discrimination with stigmatized space, occasionally straddles both this perspective and the Tokyo perspective in a thoughtful and nuanced manner in its temporary exhibitions. Of particular note is the early 2016 exhibition on discrimination against slaughterhouse workers. In the newsletter, the museum explains:

In Japanese food culture, it can be said that the consciousness of discrimination against the slaughter industry has become stronger from the killing taboo based on the idea of slaughter brought in by the traditional national Buddhism. [During the Edo Period] dead horses and cows were sold only to the Buraku people, and the processing of these carcasses as well as leather production were permitted only to them. Due to these historical circumstances, in modern Japan, despite the encouragement to eat meat under the policy of “civilization,” slaughterhouse work is called “cruel work by Burakumin.” The image of prejudice has become persistent. Here you can see the unfortunate layers of Buraku discrimination and occupational discrimination.

The image of layers of discrimination concisely and aptly describes the complexity of modern-day discrimination of both Buraku and non-Buraku slaughterhouse workers. The museum does not deny or downplay the connection of traditional professions to modern-day Buraku discrimination, but neither does it deny or downplay the inherent Buraku discrimination embedded in discrimination against the slaughterhouse.

Reclaiming Buraku Dignity: Education and 21st-Century Purification Rituals

It is hardly a revelation to learn that the museums are all in agreement that the best way to combat discrimination is with education. Since their inception, museums have been conceived of as educational institutions. Otherwise, why would the late 19th- and early 20th-century European and American museums not lock their plundered colonial treasure in safe-deposit boxes? At least ostensibly, precious objects were displayed to educate and entertain the general public. This is even more so the case in idea museums, which are not object-focused.

“When not knowing, one is driven by prejudice and discrimination,” proclaims the Fukuyama Peace and Human Rights Museum in a temporary exhibit on the formation of the Hiroshima Prefecture branch of the Zenkoku Suiheisha. The Henomatsu Museum agrees, “Buraku discrimination will disappear when no one discriminates. To that end, as many people as possible must understand the Dōwa issue correctly and interact with people in the Dōwa district.” All of the museums strongly encourage school field trips to their institutions, and all that charge admission offer a student discount. In the case of the Meat Information Museum, *only* groups of schoolchildren are permitted to tour the slaughterhouse. The Suiheisha History Museum even provides worksheets for students of all grade levels who visit the museum to help ensure control of the pedagogical narrative.

Many of the museums express alarm at what they perceive as growing ignorance of Buraku issues in their community. In a 2015 Sakai City human rights survey cited by the Henomatsu Museum, over 60% of respondents agreed with the premise that “in order to eliminate Buraku discrimination, it is better to be quiet about it.” The museum expressed concern that some respondents indicated that they learned about Buraku discrimination through informal routes such as family members or the internet, in which case “false knowledge based on discrimination or prejudice may be conveyed.” The Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum shared this exact concern in their exhibition on human rights machizukuri: “It is feared that children’s encounters with the Dōwa problem are not from learning at school, but rather a route that is prone to misunderstandings and prejudices, such a family and community rumors.”

While all of the museums contain an abundance of excellent educational materials designed to combat discrimination, they face an inherent predicament: if their potential targets

for reeducation already hold discriminatory views, why would they choose to come to a museum to challenge those views? The museums use a number of tactics to solve this problem. In addition to wooing schools for field trip learning, they also promote their services to local businesses to bring groups of employees for multicultural learning, a not uncommon practice in the Japanese workplace. The Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum also hosts many groups from homes for the aged, many residents of which either remember the bombing of Fukuyama or grew up hearing stories about it and therefore have an interest in the “Peace” side of the museum. The Henomatsu Museum, as discussed previously, is housed in within a community center that hosts sports leagues, classes, services, and other events designed to be of general interest. The Suiheisha History Museum has sought to increase its national and international profile by joining professional organizations and submitting parts of its collection for UNESCO consideration.

In western Japan, where space is stigmatized, the museums have engaged in efforts in rebranding Buraku space, a sort of 21st-century purification ritual in which public relations and urban development take the place of incense and salt. When a group whose human rights have historically not been respected gains the opportunity to participate in town development and elects to dub their philosophy “machizukuri that respects human rights,” it is understood that respect for human rights means confronting and redressing past wrongs. The historian Keyao Pan, who painstakingly traced the use of the term *jinken* (human rights) in Japanese discourse, concluded that “[early postwar] *jinken* promotion is in fact a modernization project, one that transplants the advanced and more realized idea of *jinken* from America to Japan” (Pan 2021:54). Subsequently, Pan wrote, because of its literal translation as *human rights*, the word *jinken* began to incorporate UN human rights talk, which was actually quite different from the

early postwar jinken that bore a closer resemblance to the American concept of civil liberties. By using the term jinken, the human rights machizukuri espoused by the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum, then, invokes globalized norms of equality and non-discrimination, bestowing dignity and humanity upon formerly stigmatized areas.

Similarly, by hailing Kashihara as a furusato, with its connotations of pleasant nostalgia, the Suiheisha History Museum gives the former scorned buraku a noble reincarnation, calling on sacred Mt. Honma and the light-bearing Lucifer to sanctify the ground. The English exhibit translation describes Kashihara as an area with abundant natural beauty, the Garden of Eden in the Suiheisha creation myth:

The village of Kashihara (Gose City, Nara Prefecture), which is adorned beautifully with paulownia flowers every spring, is known as the birthplace of the Zenkoku Suiheisha.

The Suiheisha movement was born in this village with the determination of Buraku people to stand up, be united and fight on their own in order to be liberated from discrimination, and then spread out across the country like wildfire. At the foot of a small mountain overtopping the village of Kashihara stands the Saikoji temple, where one of the founding members of the Suiheisha, Saiko Mankichi, was born and brought up.

As Jennifer Robertson, the predominant scholar of the concept of furusato explained, “As a landscape the quintessential features of furusato include forested mountains, fields cut by a meandering river, and a cluster of thatch-roof farmhouses” (1988:494). Associated with pristineness, mother love, and purity, it is the antithesis of pollution ideology. By branding the area as the furusato of human rights, the museum implies that respect for human rights is the natural, pristine, unadulterated condition; it is discrimination which pollutes. This, of course,

turns on its head the values of the Edo-period mibun caste system, which only functioned by placing Buraku people on the lowest rung of the hierarchy.

As was/remains the case in South Asian caste system, touching a Buraku person under the Tokugawa mibun system was taboo and would make someone ritually polluted, even if the touch was accidental. It is act of subversion, then, for the Sakai City Community Center to refer to itself as a Fureai Center, which carries connotations of literal touch. Fureai cannot occur over computer keyboards or phone screens; it requires face-to-face contact. It requires what would have been unthinkable when the area was called Henomatsu and what would have been impossible when the area was Shioana. Interaction is not forbidden; it is compulsory. It should be noted, though, that unlike machizukuri and furusato, fureai takes place on an individual, rather than a neighborhood- or city-wide level. A city cannot experience fureai. Only individuals can experience fureai. This destigmatizing tactic is consistent with the one-heart-at-a-time philosophy of education espoused by the Henomatsu Museum.

In the cases of the Archives Kinogawa and Meat Information Museum, however, it is not the localities but the professions that bear the stigma. Therefore, it is the professions that require purification. Both Tokyo museums attempt this purification, using more overtly spiritual language than even the Suiheisha History Museum in its appeals to Lucifer and Mt. Honma.

References of “resurrection” and receiving the “life force” (*inochi*, or 命) of animals abound in the texts of the Tokyo museums. In the movie “Resurrected Kurobee” available for viewing at the Archives Kinogawa, the bull Kurobee gives his life force so that humans of all mibun can benefit from his hide, meat, and oil. The bigoted samurai who originally would not allow Kurobee’s human steward to enter the temple realizes the error of his ways and decides

to become a farmer. The moral of the story, as stated by the video and accompanying book, is that “we all carry part of Kurobee, so why would we discriminate? We should think about it.”

The texts of the Meat Information Museum make no attempt to gloss over the more unpleasant aspects of slaughter work. The inner workings of the abattoir are described in grisly detail that would make a vegetarian’s stomach turn:

Specifically, imagine the flow of slaughter dismantling work opposite to the production process of industrial products, where each part is assembled. After cows and pigs are stunned, they are quickly exsanguinated, their internal organs are removed, their skins are peeled off, and so on. It is the same work procedure as cutting fish into three pieces.

Despite this pointblank description, the museum presents this earthy profession as a spiritually important one. “In order for us to live,” explains the teacher in the aforementioned comic, “it is very important to understand that it is natural for us to receive the lives of other creatures...We can eat meat because of the work done by various people.”

The Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum exhibit on slaughter work reiterates these spiritual connections. The centerpiece of the exhibit was a kamishibai show called “Receiving the Life Force” that shared many of the same themes as “Resurrected Kurobee.” In the story, a little girl raises a cow named Mii-chan whose ultimate fate was the slaughterhouse where her father and grandfather work. The little girl grows fond of Mii-chan and asks her father not to butcher the cow. Her father replies, “If my father does not slaughter this cow, someone else will do it and suffer in their hearts.” In this way, the slaughtering of Mii-chan is portrayed as an act of care and self-sacrifice for the greater good of humanity. Later in the newsletter, slaughterhouse workers are given quite high praise: “The [slaughterhouse workers] who carry the Japanese culture say, ‘Face life and receive life’ because they know the preciousness of life

more than anyone else.” Through this specialized work that involves stewardship of the life force, the Japanese dietary culture survives. Screened in conjunction with the exhibit is a documentary titled “Tale of a Butcher Shop” in which, it is described, “A person lives by eating the cow’s life force. [It is] a documentary film of a family who has been observing the nature of ‘life’”.

In later editions of the newsletter, we learn that a second-grader who visited the museum was so touched by Mii-chan’s story that he used his pocket money to donate ten copies of the book version of the Mii-chan kamishibai to the public library. An essay of his impressions was included in an issue of the newsletter:

The part that touched my heart the most was when Mii-chan the Cow cried. Mr. Sakamoto, whose job was to take the life force, said “Be still, Mii-chan. Be still.” Without moving, Mii-chan shed a tear. This was the first time I’d heard about a cow crying. I knew that I shed tears when I cry, but this was the first time I’d heard that animals did as well. I cried in empathy when I read this story. I have eaten a lot of meat up to this point, and I realize that receiving the life force is an important thing. In moral education we learned about saying “Itadakimasu” and bringing our hands together, and I understood that the life force is important. From now on, I’m going to have empathy when I bring my hands together to receive the life force when I eat meat and fish. I am thankful that they will become my bones and muscles.

In this retelling, while it is Mii-chan who makes the ultimate sacrifice, it is the steadfast Mr. Sakamoto who acts as intercessor, allowing Mii-chan to meet her fate and live on in the bones and muscles of others.

Rather than simply emphasizing the mundane “necessity” of leather products and meat eating in everyday life, the museums choose to ritualize the professions, transforming the once profane and polluted into the sacred and self-sacrificing. Of note is that nowhere in the texts is there an acknowledgment that meat is not strictly necessary to the human diet and that many people, including many Japanese, have lived long and healthful lives as vegetarians. A sacrifice for what is in fact a luxury item would seem hardly as noble. The scientifically suspect claim that “humans have to get the nutrition they need to survive by eating meat,” as the Meat Information Museum’s sage teacher pronounces, is necessary to life force discourse.

Not acknowledging the viewpoints of those who follow plant-based diets also confuses the issue of discrimination. Since the Meat Information Museum was aggrieved by discriminatory posts on the internet, I tried to verify the existence of such posts. I was not able to produce any posts referring to slaughterhouse workers as “non-humans”, a well-known Buraku slur – likely because the referenced posts were removed shortly after they were posted. However, I did discover language that referred to the work of the Shibaura Slaughterhouse as “cruel slaughter” on posts by animal rights groups. While such posts may indeed be disheartening to those who work at the slaughterhouse, they are unrelated to pollution ideology, and it requires a very generous interpretation of the word “discrimination” to classify them as such. As increasing numbers of young Japanese gravitate toward vegetarian and vegan diets, it will prove interesting to see whether the meat processing industry – using museums as interlocutors – continues the “receiving the life force” tactic.

Conclusion

While the museums all seem to agree that education is the best antidote to discrimination, it can be hard to produce a congruent educational narrative when there is disagreement as to where that discrimination is rooted. Therefore, we observe the museums taking disparate approaches to counteracting discrimination. In western Japan, where stigmatized space is considered the root of discrimination, stigmatized spaces are rebranded into forward-thinking oases in which human rights are respected and meaningful personal relationships are forged. In Tokyo, where no Buraku neighborhoods are said to exist, the stigma remains attached to traditional Buraku professions such as slaughter work and leather-making. The museums serve to purify these “polluted” professions, recasting them as noble, even spiritual, endeavors that are respectful of life.

To create a more cohesive narrative, perhaps an approach like that espoused by the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum might be effective. By referring to both space-based discrimination and profession-based discrimination as “layers of discrimination,” the museum acknowledges both viewpoints as well as complex entanglements with history, status, profession, space, time, and region. Perhaps rather than nailing down the definition of Buraku discrimination as if it were an answer to a multiple-choice question, it is time an intersectional understanding of Burakuness. Time will tell whether Buraku identity continues to fragment under the waning influence of the Buraku Liberation League, or whether a more unified understanding of Burakuness develops.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

I think I'd like to make the town where I live now, Kinogawa, into a really nice town. First, there's the stinky smell. Putting lids on the drains would help. Also, presently Kinogawa has crowded wooden houses that can easily catch fire and turn into a great fire. Therefore, they need to make rebar-enforced houses that don't burn easily. We can easily understand this from the recent big fire.⁶⁶ Kinogawa Elementary School should also be made into a beautiful, comfortable school. When I walk on the road, I see trash on both sides of the street. Everyone should be more careful to keep their houses clean. The next thing I want is for them to make a playground for us. I want then to make a children's park. I want a fun park where only children can play. Since Kinogawa has few green trees, they should plant trees and various grasses and flowers to make the town pretty. They should make the smokestacks not be damaging. Also, I think they should build a library and community center and such. A Kinogawa such as this would be a bright and pleasant place to live. (Third grader at Kinogawa Elementary School, 1965)

The words in this description of pre-SML Kinogawa, lovingly preserved at the Archives Kinogawa, could easily have been used to describe the pre-SML buraku of Henomatsu or the pre-SML Naniwa taiko drum district in Osaka. All of these neighborhoods were overcrowded with wooden dwellings that could easily catch fire. Refuse was ubiquitous, and resources such as parks, playgrounds, and community centers were absent. Those who lived in these communities did so with the knowledge that their standard of living was much lower than that of their mainstream Japanese counterparts, but they had few options to improve their fortunes.

⁶⁶ In November 1964, a large fire broke out at a theater in Asakusa, which is located across the Sumida River from Kinogawa. Eleven buildings were razed, and seven people, including three actors, burned to death (United Press International, 1964).

If this third grader had been able to see into the future, she would have noticed that her vision has virtually come completely to fruition. Kinégawa is now a lovely little neighborhood complete with plentiful green space. The Arakawa Yotsugi Bridge Greens, which line the river, include a baseball field and multiple soccer fields. The neighborhood has its own tennis courts and indoor swimming complex. There is a community center (which houses the museum), and a public library is next to the train station, about a 15-minute walk from the community center. The young author of this description would have been overjoyed to note that she even got her wish for a playground – several of them, in fact. The condition of housing in Kinégawa varies from shabby to brand new, but there is no longer a real danger of another great fire engulfing an entire block. The Kinégawa Elementary School has been renovated multiple times, and while the girl might not have foreseen that it would function as a home for the aged today, such is the reality all over the country due to Japan’s rapidly aging society.

Such drastic changes are evidence of the massive impact special measures funding has had on the buraku, even in cases such as that of Kinégawa in which the funding was distributed in a piecemeal manner. An unanticipated by-product of the localized disbursement and administration of special measures funding, though, has been fragmentation of Buraku identity as the newly refurbished communities seek and perform their own interpretations of Burakuness. The waning influence of the largest national Buraku activist organization, the Buraku Liberation League, has also meant less inter-buraku standardized messaging. The diverse expressions of Burakuness performed by the museums in this study are evidence of this fragmentation.

This study aimed to answer three questions. The first question was, how is Buraku identity being performed in museums that engage with Burakuness throughout Japan? To

answer this question, Chapter Six described the mechanisms by which the museums engage with and express Buraku identity in their local communities. The Suiheisha History Museum, with its emphasis on furusato (hometown), has extended the museum walls into the community to redefine the neighborhood of Kashihara as a pilgrimage site at which human rights were birthed in Japan. The Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum has leveraged the concept of machizukuri, grass-roots community building, to engage with technocratic processes to improve the everyday experiences of Buraku people living in the Fukuyama area. The Henomatsu Human Rights History Museum emphasizes fureai, or touch-based connection, to encourage Buraku/non-Buraku exchange and combat stigma. The Archives Kinogawa and the Meat Information Museum use their meisanhin (locally produced specialty goods) to increase their prestige and locate Buraku professions within a narrative of nationalistic pride.

Chapter Seven addressed this question by analyzing the extent to which the museums adopted the globalist UN-centered turn as reflected in the Buraku Liberation League agenda. While two of the museums, the Suiheisha History Museum and the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum, embraced the global turn wholeheartedly, little to no evidence of the global turn could be seen in the texts of the Henomatsu Museum, the Archives Kinogawa, or the Meat Information Museum. In the case of the Henomatsu Museum, this seemed to be a reflection of their mission of community exchange and one-heart-at-a-time strategy of eliminating discrimination. The Archives Kinogawa and the Meat Information Museum, though, because of their presupposition that discrimination takes place due to pollution ideology associated with certain professions regardless of one's Buraku heritage, do not feel compelled to adhere to an agenda espoused by the Buraku liberation movement.

This distinction also informs the findings pertaining to the second question, which seeks to uncover how the various localities in which the museums are situated influence their identity performance. Because no neighborhoods in Tokyo elected to be recognized as Dōwa communities after the passing of the Special Measures Law, stigma associated with professions was not perceived to have transferred to the space (i.e., the buraku) as it was in western Japan. Therefore, the stigma was perceived to have clung to these professions, which were still seen as needing to be “purified” in the eyes of mainstream Japanese. While the museums in Tokyo set about purifying their professions through references to rebirth and noble sacrifice, the museums in western Japan attempted to purify their space through ascribing dignity and imminence to the historical and present-day neighborhoods in which they are located.

The third question sought to identify the implications this identity performance has for Buraku collective identity. If the conflicting performances of Burakuness found within the museums continue, further entrenchment of regionalized identity fragmentation seems a likely outcome. However, there is some evidence that including both perspectives in museum texts may be a way to complicate simplistic interpretations of stigma attachment within the buraku. The Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum’s exhibit on slaughterhouse workers, which discussed “layers of oppression,” is an example of a more multifaceted approach to performing Burakuness.

It also may be time for a frank discussion within Japan about its past caste system. While the Japanese have been reluctant to refer to the Tokugawa Era mibun system as one of caste, historians have made very strong cases that the mibun system functioned as a caste system due to its incorporation of pollution ideology, strict endogamy, and residential segregation (Tsukada 2004, 2012; Amos 2020a). If contemporary Burakuness can be described as the remnants of the

Tokugawa caste system, then there is room to incorporate both stigmatized professions and stigmatized space as drivers of present-day discrimination. By insisting that Burakuness evolved from some other kind of hazily defined semi-caste system, there is more room for impressionistic interpretation – and downplaying of the historical severity of Buraku exclusion – by Buraku and non-Buraku Japanese alike. Pollution associated with caste ideology is notoriously sticky, and earnest consideration of the mnemonic traces of kegare could lead to a more nuanced understanding of not only Buraku discrimination but also historical and/or present-day harsh treatment of immigrants, atomic bomb survivors, Hansen’s disease patients, and COVID-19 health workers.

More collaboration between the museums could also result in productive dialog and exhibits that incorporate a wider diversity of Buraku viewpoints. Both the Suiheisha History Museum and the Fukuyama Peace and Human Rights Museums have collaborated with other human rights museums in their institutional endeavors. The Suiheisha History Museum partnered with the Bank of Yanagihara Memorial Museum in Kyoto to submit the Suiheisha Declaration for consideration in the UNESCO Memory of the World registry, while the Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum partnered with the Tagawa District Human Rights Center in Fukuoka to provide information on Buraku/buraku entanglements with the history of coal mining. The texts of the Henomatsu Museum do not show any evidence of collaboration with other museums in their exhibits, though the museum is a member of the National Network for the Collection and Exhibit of Human Rights Materials along with its western Japan counterparts in this study. The Archives Kinogawa and Meat Information Museum provide each other’s brochures in their museums, but they do not collaborate with NNCEHRM museums. If the Tokyo

museums and NNCEHRM museums were open to dialog with one another, perhaps a more nuanced understanding of Burakuness could be reflected in all five museums.

While this qualitative content analysis has uncovered interesting nuances of Buraku identity performance in Japanese professions and human rights museums, it has only skimmed the surface of the visitor experience as well as the experiences of staff working at the museums. An ethnographic study that embeds an identity researcher in a museum could shed additional light on the administrative challenges and opportunities of these museums. Also, it may also prove interesting to look at the museums from a comparative perspective. Do the three NNCEHRM museums focusing on the Ainu, for example, reflect similar patterns of identity fragmentation among Ainu communities?

In Chapter Three, a passage from Ichiro Tomiyama (2005) was quoted in which Tomiyama pondered the question, “What sort of business is it, to become a ‘Japanese’?” Tomiyama wondered what it meant for the Japanese self-concept to acknowledge the existence of minorities when doing so, as he pointed out, in some ways reified racist concepts of Japaneseness by classifying those living in the Japanese nation as Ainu, Buraku, Korean, Okinawan, and so on as opposed to those who are simply “Japanese.” By extension, those who identify as a minority category are somehow less Japanese. To a certain extent, we find the same well-intentioned but nonetheless troubling logic within the buraku. According to the BLL, there are Buraku who accept Buraku Liberation League dogma, and then there are Buraku who are “unliberated.” Studies such as Matsushita’s (2003) typology of Buraku youth identity are helpful in broadening the understanding of what can be included under the umbrella of “authentic” Buraku experiences. What sort of business is it, to become a Buraku? Museums, as keepers of collective memory, have always been involved in the framing national

and racial narratives. In Japan, then, whether intentionally or not, museums contribute to the understanding of the business of Burakuness. This is particularly the case when one considers that these museums are one of the few milieus in which it is not considered taboo to discuss Buraku issues. As these museums shape their mission statements, craft their exhibits, and work within their communities, it is vital that they consider how their decisions may affect these communities in the future.

Appendix

Ten Most Frequently Appearing Words in Museum Texts

Word frequency counts were performed on the texts of all museums individually as well as a combined word frequency count for the three museums in western Japan and a combined word frequency count for the two museums. NVivo's stemmed word frequency count was utilized so that words with the same stem (e.g., "discrimination" and "discriminate") would not be counted separately. Default stop words were not included.

Fukuyama Human Rights and Peace Museum⁶⁷

1. Photo
2. Exhibit
3. People
4. War
5. Children
6. Time
7. Year
8. School
9. Work
10. Discriminate

Henomatsu Human Rights History Museum⁶⁸

1. Discrimination
2. Buraku
3. Exhibit
4. People
5. Sakai
6. Dōwa
7. Photo
8. City
9. Room
10. Center

⁶⁷ In addition to the default stop words, words in the name of the museum ("human", "right", "peace", "Fukuyama", and "museum") were eliminated from the list. Also eliminated were the following words: "city" (included in the museum's email address), "924" (included in the museum's phone number), and "issue" (appears in each newsletter to announce the issue number).

⁶⁸ In addition to default stop words, words in the name of the museum ("right", "human", "museum", "Henomatsu", and "history") were eliminated from the list.

Suiheisha History Museum⁶⁹

1. Human
2. Prefecture
3. Rights
4. Zenkoku
5. Discrimination
6. Exhibition
7. Movement
8. Yoneda
9. Notebook
10. Tomi

Archives Kinegawa⁷⁰

1. Leather
2. School
3. Industry
4. Sumida
5. Elementary
6. Tanning
7. Years
8. Town
9. Tokyo
10. Photo

Meat Information Museum⁷¹

1. Market
2. Slaughterhouse
3. Tokyo
4. Processing
5. Discrimination
6. Working
7. People
8. Wholesalers
9. Carcass
10. Cattle

⁶⁹ In addition to the default stop words, words in the name of the museum (“Suiheisha” and “museum”) were eliminated from the list. In addition, the detailed financial ledgers posted by the museum were not included in this count.

⁷⁰ In addition to the default stop words, “Kinogawa” was also eliminated from the list. The children’s essays preserved by the museum were not included in this count.

⁷¹ In addition to the default stop words, “meat” was also eliminated from the list.

Combined Word Count for Fukuyama, Henomatsu, and Suiheisha Museums⁷²

1. Exhibits
2. Photos
3. People
4. Discrimination
5. Times
6. Buraku
7. Year
8. Schools
9. Special
10. Wars

Combined Word Count for Archives Kinogawa and Meat Information Museum

1. Leather
2. Market
3. Tokyo
4. School
5. People
6. Works
7. Slaughterhouse
8. Years
9. Industry
10. Photo

⁷² Caveats that apply to the individual word counts also apply to the combined word counts.

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VITA

LISA MUELLER

Born, Akron, Ohio

- 2000-2004 B.A., Non-Western Studies and Japanese
Mount Union College
Alliance, Ohio
- 2004-2005 Instructor of English Conversation
GEOS Language Corporation
Fukuoka, Japan
- 2004-2009 Lecturer, English Language Institute
Lecturer, Franco-American Teachers in Training Institute
University of Akron
Akron, Ohio
- 2006-2008 M.Ed., Higher Education Administration
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio
- 2009-2011 Study Abroad Coordinator
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois
- 2011-2014 Study Abroad Advisor
Case Western Reserve University
Cleveland, Ohio
- 2014-2017 Assistant Director of Civic and Global Engagement
Adjunct Faculty, Department of English
Adjunct Faculty, Department of Foreign Languages
Adjunct Faculty, Department of Asian Studies
Mary Baldwin University
Staunton, Virginia
- 2017-2022 M.A., Asian Studies
Ph.D. Candidate, Global and Sociocultural Studies
Florida International University

FELLOWSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

2000-2004	Trustees Scholarship, National Merit Scholarship, Mount Union College
2002	George Weimer Prize in Japanese, Mount Union College
2006-2007	Graduate Assistantship, Kent State University
2016	National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Program “Tokyo High City and Low City” at Florida International University
2019	Critical Language Scholarship, University of Okayama
2021	Broad Fellowship for Research Support, Florida International University
2017-2022	Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Florida International University

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Brown, L. “日本の少子高齢 [The Graying of Japan].” Critical Language Scholarship, Okayama, Japan, 2019.

Brown, L. “Buraku Rights are Human Rights: Japan’s Human Rights Museums as Reflections of the Global Turn in the Buraku Liberation League Mission.” Society for East Asian Anthropology, Tokyo, Japan, 2019.

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Mueller, L. “Global Themes in Local Context: A Case Study of Japanese Human Rights Museum.” American Anthropological Association, online, 2021.

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