



# The *hinin* and city wards of nineteenth-century Osaka

Takashi Tsukada

Graduate School of Literature and Human Sciences, Osaka City University, 3-3-138 Sugimoto Sumiyoshi-ku, Osaka-shi, Japan

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## ABSTRACT

From the mid-seventeenth century, with the formation of Osaka city, members of the *hinin* status group, an organization originally composed of beggars and indigents alienated from all forms of ownership, became established in urban society within an organization called the “kaito fraternity of the four places.” Over time, members of Osaka’s *hinin* fraternity secured the right to beg as a means of survival and were entrusted with the duty of policing and providing relief to the “new *hinin*” and “wild *hinin*” who emerged on the margins of the *hinin* status group. As an extension of those activities, the *hinin* fraternity also came to perform a range of official police duties under the authority of the City Magistrate’s Office. While members of the *hinin* fraternity possessed specialized begging rights and official duties, those rights and duties existed inside a broader network of social relationships. Namely, members of the fraternity were only able to survive by begging because they maintained relationships with city neighborhoods and townspeople that provided alms. Similarly, members of the *hinin* fraternity were only able to perform official duties because they maintained a relationship with the magistrate’s office, which ordered them to perform those duties, and with the individual neighborhoods that employed “*hinin* watchmen.” In this paper, I focus on how the will of Osaka’s townspeople restricted efforts by members of the *hinin* fraternity to redistribute begging rights during the nineteenth-century. By doing so, this paper highlights the stratified and composite nature of early modern Japan’s status society.

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## Introduction

From the mid-seventeenth century, in parallel with the formation of the city of Osaka, persons of the *hinin* status, a status group originally composed of beggars and indigents alienated from all forms of ownership, became firmly established in urban society as the members of an organization known as the “*kaito* fraternity of the four places”. Over time, the members of Osaka’s *hinin* fraternity secured the right to beg as a means of survival and were entrusted with the duty of policing and providing relief to “new *hinin*” (*shinhinin*) and “wild *hinin*” (*nohinin*) who emerged on the margins of the *hinin* status group. As an extension of those activities, members of Osaka’s *hinin* fraternity also came to perform official police duties under the authority of the City Magistrate’s Office (*machi bugyō*).

While persons of the *hinin* status became firmly established in urban society as the members of a fraternity possessing specialized begging rights and official duties, those

rights and duties were only able to exist inside of a broader network of urban social relationships. Namely, members of Osaka’s *hinin* fraternity were only able to survive by begging because they maintained relationships with the city neighborhoods and townspeople that provided alms. Similarly, members of the *hinin* fraternity were only able to perform official duties because they maintained a relationship with the City Magistrate’s Office, which ordered them to perform those duties, and with the individual neighborhood’s that employed “*hinin* watchmen” (*kaitoban*).

In this paper, I will focus on the manner in which the will of the city neighborhoods and townspeople who provided alms influenced the relationship between Osaka’s townspeople and members of the *hinin* fraternity with regards to begging during the nineteenth-century, despite the fact that by that time begging rights in city neighborhoods had been established as the collective possession of the *hinin* fraternity. By doing so, this paper is able to highlight the stratified and composite nature of early modern Japan’s status society (Tsukada, 2010b).

Furthermore, in Osaka, there were more than 600 city neighborhoods (*chō*), which served as the basic unit of life for the urban masses. These 600 neighborhoods were

E-mail address: [tsukada@lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp](mailto:tsukada@lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp)

aggregated into three large administrative districts—Kita district, Tenma district, and Minami district.<sup>1</sup>

### The buying and selling of *kaitoban* rights and the *kaito* fraternity

Each of Osaka's four *hinin* communities, or "*kaito*"—Tennōji, Tobita, Dōtonbori, and Tenma—had a three-tiered hierarchical structure. At the top, there was a single chief (*chōri*). Under the chief, there were a small number of sub-bosses or lieutenants (*kogashira*) (Tsukada, 2010b). Under the *kogashira*, there was a larger group of ordinary "hut-owning *hinin*" known as *wakakimono*. The members of these three strata formed families and employed one or more unmarried "new *hinin*" as subordinates, or *deshi*. These subordinates were dispatched to individual city neighborhoods and large merchant houses where they served as watchmen (*kaitoban*). However, *wakakimono* and other "hut-owning *hinin*" rather than the watchmen themselves held the authority to decide who was dispatched where. That authority crystallized in the form of "*kaitoban kabu*," or officially recognized rights to dispatch watchmen to specific city neighborhoods and merchant houses (Tsukada, 2001).

In the nineteenth-century, the Osaka City Magistrate's Office provided rewards to city residents who performed other acts of public service, such as apprehending criminals. Included among these individuals were a number of *hinin* watchmen. In fact, from extant records, we can identify 144 such watchmen.<sup>2</sup> On Map 1, I have indicated all of the *hinin* watchman for whom we can determine the *kaito* of origin of the sub-boss or *wakakimono* they served. As the distribution in the map indicates, while we can discern a definite concentration of subordinates of the Tenma *kaito* in the vicinity of Tenma district and a definite concentration of subordinates of the Dōtonbori *kaito* in the vicinity of the Shimanouchi area, as a whole, the territories controlled by each *kaito* overlapped. This territorial overlap is a product of the distinctive process whereby *hinin* watchmen became firmly established in urban society; however, I will not discuss it here.

Members of the *hinin* fraternity bought, sold, and pawned *kaitoban* rights. Let us begin by examining one example of a transaction of *kaitoban* rights. On the final day of the fourth month of Kyōhō 3 (1803), because he had just purchased "the right to dispatch a night watchman to the Surugamachi neighborhood" and the "right to dispatch a watchman to the Rikuraya *sake* merchant house in Kanzakichō" from *wakakimono* Genshichi, *wakakimono* Rokurōbē of the Tennōji *kaito* sent a petition to the honorable brotherhood of the Tennōji *kaito* in which he asked for approval of the transaction and requested that the "register of rights" (*kabu gochōmen*) be revised to reflect the change in ownership (*Hidden'in chōri monjo*, p. 551, Chōri monjo kenkyūka (2008)).

From this example, we can see that the right to dispatch watchmen was granted as the right to a single city neighborhood, as in the case of Surugamachi, or as the right to a single merchant house, as in the case of the Rikuraya mer-

chant house. Also, we can see that day and night watchmen were differentiated. Furthermore, within the *hinin* fraternity, *kaitoban* rights were also known as "neighborhood rights." The fact that they were referred to as such clearly indicates that the client relationships that individual *wakakimono* developed with specific city neighborhoods and townspeople came to be treated as a form of right. Furthermore, once a *wakakimono* had established a client relationship with a specific neighborhood, they received the exclusive right to beg there.

We know that the *kaitoban* rights mentioned in the example above were owned by *wakakimono* Genshichi and then purchased by another *wakakimono* named Rokurōbē. In addition, we know that the process whereby those rights were transacted was completed with a revision of the register of rights maintained by the "honorable brotherhood," or *onchū*, of the Tennōji *kaito*.<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that no residents of Surugamachi or persons affiliated with the Rikuraya merchant house intervened at all in the transaction process. In a previous essay, I demonstrated that during the early modern period a tendency was widely observed whereby individuals established their rank or official position in the form of *kabu*, or rights, and then extricated themselves from the control of their employers or masters. This is a classic example of that tendency (Tsukada, 1997). Also, this fact itself can be considered one that displays the distinctive character of early modern status society.

This is one example, but similar types of records began to appear frequently between the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. The following document should help us to understand why that was the case (*Hidden'in monjo*, pp. 108–109, Okamoto Ryōichi and Uchida Kusuo (1987)). The document in question is an order issued by the leadership stratum of the Tennōji *kaito* to the *kaito*'s *wakakimono* in the seventh month of Kansei 2 (1790). It also includes a pledge from the *kaito*'s sub-bosses indicating that they will strictly observe the terms of the order. According to the document, the order mandated that from now on the buying, selling, and pawning of *kaitoban* rights would not be permitted. It stipulated, however, that when circumstances made a transaction unavoidable, the buyer and the seller should both submit a statement in writing to the "on-duty official" (*tōban*) and should have the register of rights revised in accordance with the terms of the transaction. In addition, it stipulated that when rights were being pawned, the pawner and pawnee should each submit written acknowledgments. The term "on-duty official" mentioned above refers to the member of the *kaito*'s leadership stratum who was on-duty at the time that the transaction took place. Essentially, it means that written acknowledgments were submitted to the *kaito*'s leadership stratum. In addition, the order's final clause stressed that members of the *kaito* should strictly observe this order because from now when it was discovered after the fact that rights had been privately exchanged or pawned, the *kaito*'s leadership stratum would confiscate those rights. It should be noted that the procedures governing the buying and selling of rights differed slightly from the procedures governing the pawning of rights. Whereas in cases in which rights were bought

<sup>1</sup> For more on this, please refer to Tsukada (2002).

<sup>2</sup> For more on this topic, please refer to the addendum to chapter five of Tsukada (2007).

<sup>3</sup> Each of early-modern Osaka's *kaito* was governed by its own "honorable brotherhood." Each brotherhood was composed of the *kaito*'s chief and sub-bosses.

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