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Discussant's Comments

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The dismantling of the Tokugawa status order is currently being reconsidered in the light of new research on the nature of the status order that has appeared in the past thirty years. One aspect that has become clear is that the status order, rather than gradually becoming obsolete, evolved over the course of the Tokugawa period and by the 1860s looked rather different from what it had been like in the seventeenth century. In addition, research by Yokoyama Yuriko and others on the dismantling process has shown that the shogunate had been making some reform attempts before the Meiji Restoration, and that this reform process continued beyond 1868 and involved many contingent decisions and unintended consequences.

The four papers cover a lot of ground. Two focus on western and two on eastern Japan. They deal not only with outcastes, who are frequently discussed in the context of status abolition alongside the samurai, but also with medical doctors, farmers, and rural oil manufacturers. What they all share is a sensitivity to the social complexity and economic differentiation within status groups, as well as to the relationships between groups, without which none of these groups would have been able to exercise their status-based privileges and duties. This complexity matters because different subgroups within larger communities experienced the dismantling of the status order in different ways. Michael Abele's outcaste cattle traders, for example, came out on top during this transformation, whereas the *kawata* village as a village community saw its importance reduced by the construction of a knackery outside the village. Notably, it was not the skilled laborers who received renderers' licenses from the new state, but longstanding cattle traders, who had access to the raw material.

A common theme seems to emerge for certain subgroups that had been deeply involved with governmental service in Tokugawa days. Waka Hirokawa, for example, points out that former domain doctors were particularly likely to take up new roles as health administrators on behalf of the new state, and John Porter notes that *hinin* who had performed the duty of transporting criminal offenders continued to be used for that purpose after the Restoration. It seems that this transition was facilitated not only by their skills, but also by the social connections they had forged as a result of their placement in the status order.

The four papers take different positions on the question of continuity versus discontinuity across the Meiji Restoration. Porter and Abele emphasize disruption and the lack of continuity in the case of outcaste groups. Among *hinin*, disruption was even greater than among *kawata* because their communities almost completely unraveled. One factor in this unraveling was the nature of the *hinin*'s status property. Unlike *kawata*, *hinin* rarely owned any land. Their most significant property consisted of begging turfs, but their occupational identity as beggars was declared illegitimate after the Meiji Restoration. The case of Edo, however, was somewhat distinct from Osaka's, for example, where *hinin* in the late Tokugawa period had started to build a new occupational identity around their duty as policemen for the city authorities and continued to serve as policemen for some time after the Meiji Restoration. As Edo's *hinin* were not used for police-related tasks, it would be interesting to contrast these findings with John Porter's other work about Osaka's *hinin* after the fall of the shogunate.

Hirokawa emphasizes continuity, or rather, the gradual nature of change between the Meiji Restoration and the 1920s. She makes several notable points: the enduring importance of specialists of Chinese medicine; their willingness to gradually transition to new treatments rather than stick to old methods; and the high level of medical coverage achieved by their presence, which was later lost when these practitioners retired from the profession. Although

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Mio Shimazaki also highlights continuity, she focuses on the gradual nature of change before the Meiji Restoration. Her paper reaches back to the 1780s—which are often regarded as the beginning of the end of the Tokugawa order—, but it would be instructive to also learn how the Meiji Restoration affected the Kadobayashi family, as well as manual laborers in oil production.

All four papers suggest the need to be more mindful of micro-timelines of change. When did the dismantling of the status order end and the construction of a new order begin? Did the two occur at the same time, or was there a gap between the two? Abele's and Porter's case studies on outcastes show that the Meiji state did not replace one regulatory regime with another right away. It first removed the outcastes' privileges, pushing them out of their regulatory role, and only introduced new control mechanisms after problems had begun to surface in the new unregulated environment. The question is whether officials did so because they underestimated the importance of the outcastes' public contributions; because they did not regard such regulation a priority at a politically unstable moment; or because they were consciously experimenting and waiting for problems to reveal themselves.

The Meiji government used the abolition of the status order to introduce a new regulatory regime that transferred power from self-governing status communities to the centralizing state. However, this transfer seems to have been smoothest in cases in which the state could rely on existing social relationships, whether mediated by former status groups or not. It did not work out well in the case of Tokyo's *hinin*, in which the government eliminated the entire association and actively severed *hinin*'s existing social ties with their client neighborhoods (no other group under discussion was subjected to such radical dismantling). According to Porter, this measure caused the begging problem in Tokyo to worsen and blurred the distinction between beggars and day laborers, which had been so carefully maintained by the Tokugawa shogunate. Although the transfer of beggar control to a day labor agency made some sense under these circumstances, Tokyo's city government also had to develop a new concept for beggars who were unable to work and appears to have been overwhelmed by its administrative responsibility for so many new and costly institutions. This is probably the reason we see so much outsourcing of state functions in this case.

A more positive outcome was achieved, it seems, in the case of Abele's cattle traders, who continued to rely on their customary relationships with cattle-holding farmers and were thus well positioned to supervise the production of leather and meat. As Hirokawa shows, the Meiji state also benefited from the social ties that already existed between local doctors and wealthy community members in the building of hospitals and the implementation of vaccinations and other public health measures. Shimazaki's research reminds us of the importance of kinship ties in achieving economic success. These kinds of ties might also have contributed to collaborations between doctors in the Utsunomiya area, who also relied on adoption to perpetuate their lineages.

As Porter's paper shows, the city authorities of early-Meiji Osaka and Tokyo continued to rely on the town neighborhoods (*chō*) as self-regulating communities in beggar control and poverty relief. Although the continued importance of villages and *chō* in the Meiji period has long been recognized in a general sense, historians have only recently begun to focus more directly on the internal workings of these communities in the early Meiji period.

While some structures and regulatory strategies thus persisted long after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate, the decades before the Meiji Restoration were also marked by a slow erosion of the status order that became apparent as such only in retrospect. Two factors emerge as particularly relevant from the papers in this panel.

The first factor is the commercial economy, which reduced the importance of status privilege for achieving economic success, as demonstrated by Abele's and Shimazaki's papers. By increasing economic risk, the market also generated a need for new methods of controlling poverty and suppressing labor unrest. This is not to say that the status order was entirely unable to accommodate commercialization; the heads of the Kadobayashi household, for example, were most certainly part of some sort of self-governing oil-producers' association. But the capacity of the status order for containing economic dynamism was limited.

The second factor seems to have been the nation's increased contact with the West, which changed, for example, the notion of what counted as a tradable commodity, as seen in Abele's paper. It also created new regulatory challenges, such as the need to keep begging people from the streets to save the country from international embarrassment. The unequal treaties caused inflation and thus increased the need for more effective methods of organizing poverty relief.

After the Meiji Restoration, the new state's strong interest in public health and education helped undermine self-governing occupational groups because the government no longer allowed groups to regulate themselves and disregarded their roles in imparting professional knowledge and skills. But the establishment of hospitals and schools was costly and could not be achieved overnight. Hirokawa's paper presents the interesting case of a new occupational association—the Association of Medical Practitioners—that was engineered by the state and played a huge role in spreading knowledge of modern medical treatments. Although the doctors did cede control to the state in that area, they also used this association to influence state policy and local implementation.

I would like to conclude by linking the four papers to a presentation given by Daniel Botsman on a separate panel earlier at this conference. Botsman examined the extent to which the abolition of outcaste status can be regarded as an emancipatory event. He showed that the outcaste emancipation edict of 1871 was greeted with excitement by many former *kawata* and encouraged them to fight for better conditions, including through the emerging judicial system. Although Botsman cautions us that the Meiji government's motivation in issuing this edict was administrative rather than emancipatory, he argues that the enthusiasm it sparked among former outcastes mattered for the development of their political activism. Botsman's perspective highlights an important aspect of the dismantling of the status order that complements the perspectives combined in this panel. But the four papers demonstrate that without an in-depth analysis of livelihoods and social structures, our understanding of this transition would remain blind to its ambivalent character for many kinds of people, especially the most marginalized, and disregard the varying outcomes for different members of one and the same status community.