
The Dissolution of Outcast Status and Outcast Property in Meiji Japan

Michael ABELE*

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Abstract

This article analyzes Meiji government efforts to regulate the beef and rendering trades alongside the local response of the former *kawata* outcastes of Saraike Village (today Osaka Prefecture). In 1872, Sakai Prefecture, (now Osaka and Nara prefectures), issued new regulations for slaughterhouses and rendering facilities. As part of the implantation of these regulations, prefectural authorities investigated established rendering and beef production activities in former *kawata* communities within the prefecture. In the ninth month of Meiji 5 (1872), a prefectural official investigated the butchers and renderers of Saraike Village. When some among the former *kawata* community were discovered to be violating the prohibitions on mixing the meat of health cattle and already-dead animals, several villagers were arrested and all villagers prohibited from these trades until they could demonstrate compliance with new regulations. The extensive documentation this case left behind allows us to catch a glimpse into how the abolition of status-based property was navigated by rural *kawata* villagers. By focusing on the village level, I will show that those *kawata* that took over the rendering and butchering trades after the abolition of *kawata* status were in fact the same men who were circumventing status-based property in the Tokugawa period.

Three years after the Meiji Restoration, the *kawata* outcasts of Japan faced a simultaneous liberation from their dishonorable status and status-based property. During the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), *kawata* villages were tasked with the disposal of dead draft animals from their local communities. Once a farmer's animal died, ownership rights over the carcass shifted to members of the local *kawata* village with no compensation to the original owner. Though this dirty trade was a source of stigma for the *kawata*, it ensured the daily survival of many in their community by granting them an effective monopoly over trades like skinning, tanning, and the manufacture of leather goods. In 1871 the Meiji government abolished both *kawata* status and *kawata* property, simultaneously liberating the *kawata* from their legal status as "base people" and threatening their livelihood.

The liberation of *kawata* from the status system is usually dismissed as a half-hearted attempt by the Meiji state that never addressed the root cause of *kawata* discrimination. However, as Mita Satoko and others have pointed out, a focus on the question of discrimination overlooks the reality of social relations at the local level.¹ How *kawata* communities experienced the Meiji Restoration depended on conditions particular to a given region. This article explores how former *kawata* in Saraike Village (now part of Osaka prefecture) were reorganized into local society after the abolition of the status system. Specifically, I focus on the changing legal and property relations surrounding livestock carcasses. I show that while there was a degree of continuity between the Tokugawa and Meiji periods, the abolition of the status society represented a dramatic change for property relations in former *kawata* villages. Groups like the *kawata* cattle traders that had illegally circumvented status-based property in the Tokugawa period managed to successfully transition to a regime of private property following the Meiji Restoration.

1. Mita 2018.

* Postdoctoral Fellow, Reischauer Institute for Japanese Studies, Harvard University
E-mail: mabele@fas.harvard.edu

Dismantling Status and Regulating Beef

Japanese society under the Tokugawa was defined by status (*mibun*).² More than a legal and social identity, status also determined access to the means of production. Status-based property does not refer to a single form of property, nor is it meant to suggest that each status group had their own original form of property. Instead, it refers to the relationship between status and ownership; during most of the Tokugawa period, ownership of land, tools, or raw materials was impossible outside of status-group membership. We can think of status-based property having two characteristics.³ The first is that status-based property represented the direct possession of the objective means of labor by the laborer; peasant villagers, as farmers, owned their farmland, while the *kawata* outcast skinners owned carcasses because they were skinners. The second principle was that individuals did not own property directly, but had their ownership mediated by the status group. That is, one has access to property only as a member of a village or guild.⁴ Moreover, it was the status group that determined distribution of property within the group.

Ownership of draft animal carcasses, as a form of raw material, operated along status lines. The *kawata*, as skinners and knackers, owned equine and bovine carcasses as a status-based right. The Tokugawa shogunate guaranteed this right in exchange for *kawata* providing leather and acting as executioners.⁵ Ownership of carcasses was not a communal right in the sense that all *kawata* villagers enjoyed an equal share of the profits from the sale of animal hides. Instead, the village mediated ownership, limiting the right to buy and sell carcasses to those households with the hereditary rights to carcasses, or *kabu*. Each *kawata* community had a territory within which it exercised ownership of carcasses, normally called *kusaba*. The boundaries of each *kawata* village's territory was determined on a village by village basis. The *kawata* village leadership handled territorial disputes between neighboring communities, while no *kawata* could own property rights over carcasses and not belong to a *kawata* village.

In 1871, the new Meiji government rejected this old view of property relations when they promulgated an edict declaring that dead livestock could now be freely sold at the former owner's discretion. Carcass ownership was disconnected from status, and former owners could now sell their draft animal carcasses as private property. In practice, carcasses continued to be handled by the former *kawata* communities, as few other people knew how to dismantle dead animals, and even fewer were willing to learn. Thus, the immediate effects of the end of the *kusaba* system was a loss of capital for former *kawata* communities, as former owners could now demand payment for their dead property. But it also marked an end to what little regulation had existed over the trade in livestock carcasses. Where only a handful of *kawata* villagers were permitted to purchase and sell carcasses under the status system, anyone with the means and knowledge to dismantle a carcass could participate in this trade after *kawata* status was abolished. As Fujimoto Seijirō has pointed out, the Meiji government was quickly forced to confront the implications of such an unrestricted trade for public health, specifically in regard to meat eating.⁶

During the Tokugawa period, beef eating in Japan had been relatively rare. The slaughter of cattle was prohibited by law and beef eating considered taboo.⁷ But after the Meiji Restoration, beef eating quickly became popular as a sign of westernization and progress. This prompted the Meiji government to promote and regulate domestic beef production. In the Kanto region, former samurai or commoner entrepreneurs took up the call to construct slaughterhouses.⁸ Meanwhile, the Meiji government sought to regulate a heretofore unregulated industry. One early edict from mid-September 1871 (Meiji 4.8) stated that only healthy cattle could be handled at slaughterhouses and

2. Tsukada 1987, pp. 128-137 and Ehlers 2018, pp. 2-23.

3. Abele 2018, pp. 26-31.

4. Yoshida 2003, pp. 17-25.

5. The logic by which *kawata* owned rights over draft animal carcasses was never uniform across Japan. Many Kinai area *kawata* villages, such as Saraike, never provided leather to samurai authorities. Instead, their ownership over carcasses was due to the services they provided local peasant villages, most notably, cleaning the pollution from dead animals.

6. Fujimoto 1977, pp. 26-7.

7. Nobi 1998, pp. 21-23 and Botsman 2014, pp. 7-10.

8. Yokoyama 2006, pp. 56-63.

specifically prohibited handling the meat of sick or already-dead cattle.⁹ Slaughterhouses were also to be built away from residential areas, though the edict did not specify how far. However, enforcement of these regulations and the issuing of licenses was left to the prefectures and local municipalities.

In the Kinai region, further steps were necessary to ensure food safety. This was because many Kinai *kawata* villages had begun slaughtering cattle for their skins in the late eighteenth century.¹⁰ At some point, the *kawata* realized they could also sell the meat from these animals, and we can confirm that some villages began selling beef for human consumption as early as 1850.¹¹ In 1871, the rendering of dead cattle for hides and the slaughter of “live” cattle for food was still performed in the same location, usually by the same individuals. Sakai Prefecture, which after 1871 was home to several former *kawata* communities, set out to separate the rendering and butchering industries. It did so with three regulations, separating cattle trading, beef production, and rendering.

Sakai Prefecture issued its new regulations in October 1872 (Meiji 5.9).¹² Of these three, the regulations for rendering facilities (*shigyūba atsukai-sho*) were the most significant. The slaughterhouse regulations were essentially the same as those promulgated by the Meiji government the previous year, but with added emphasis that the slaughter of live animals could not take place at the same location where dead animals were rendered. Sakai Prefecture stated that there would eventually be only two rendering facilities for all of Kawachi and Izumi provinces, but placed no limit on the number of slaughterhouses that could be constructed. Clearly, the prefecture was aware of how most former-*kawata* acquired cattle hides by this point.

The regulations for rendering facilities were targeted at both the owners of carcasses and the individuals who processed them.¹³ For the owners, the most significant regulation placed restrictions on who was able to buy carcasses. Dead cattle could now only be sold to an individual who held a government rendering license (*shigyūba toriatsukai kansatsu*). If anyone could purchase a carcass, it made tracking the illegal sale of meat nearly impossible. But while a government license was now required to purchase and sell the carcasses, one was not needed to actually handle them. The regulations also specified that only dead animals could be processed at a rendering facility; live cattle were only to be processed at slaughterhouses. Exceptions would be made if the animal was very old or near death, but it was assumed that most carcasses would be taken to the rendering facility by the renderers. This points to the continuation of Tokugawa period practices of disposing of dead cattle, when a former owner would place his dead property near a riverbed or vacant lot outside of the village proper, then notify the local *kawata* community.

The last four items were targeted at those who handled dead livestock. Though rendering licenses were open to all regardless of social background, it is clear that former *kawata* were the target of the regulations. For example, licensed renderers were instructed to pay the appropriate price for a carcass. In other words, they could not demand the carcass without providing compensation to the former owner. Additionally, the regulations stated that carcasses could be processed for oil or fertilizer, but selling the meat for human consumption was strictly prohibited. The unstated assumption was that the most valuable commodity taken from the animals was their hide; this had been the key to daily survival for many former *kawata* villagers.

The final article required renderers to report on the number of carcasses processed each month, and to pay a tax commensurate with the reported figures. In this way, control over dead livestock transitioned from a privilege bestowed in exchange for feudal duty to a trade contingent on government regulation and tax payments. Licenses were acquired directly from the prefectural government and in theory open to anyone. At the same time, the prefecture realized that the disposal of dead livestock was still being handled by the same men who performed it during the Tokugawa period – i.e., former *kawata*. After all, this trade had been closed off to any non-*kawata* for over 250 years, and very few former peasants possessed the necessary technical knowledge required to dismember dead oxen. Nor would most former peasants want to engage in this debasing trade. Still, these regulations would mean nothing

9. Fujimoto 1977, p. 26 and Yokoyama, 2006, pp. 55-56.

10. For a few examples of this trend see Abele 2018, pp. 192-9, Machida 2013, pp. 2-48, and Fujimoto 1977, pp. 7-12.

11. Abele 2018, pp. 256-64.

12. Doc.236-238 [1872; Meiji 5.9] in Sakai-ken hōrei shū, v. 1, pp. 392-5.

13. Ibid, p. 392.

in practice if they were not enforced.

Regulating Carcasses at the Village Level

Saraike Village was a small 163 *koku* village located in west-central Kawachi Province, and home to both a peasant and *kawata* community. During the Tokugawa period, the Saraike *kawata* collected carcasses from seventy-six nearby peasant villages. As mentioned above, only those *kawata* households with the hereditary right (*kabu*) could buy and sell dead draft animals. But around the turn of the nineteenth century, a growing number of *kawata* villagers sought to circumvent this system and claim the profits of the leather trade for themselves.¹⁴ These *kawata* would acquire sick or old animals at a low price, slaughter the animal in secret, then sell the hides as one's own property. To better facilitate the acquisition of sick and old animals, some *kawata* sought licenses as *kawata* cattle traders. This was because *kawata* cattle traders were permitted to buy sick and old animals in order to provide veterinary care. In the late Tokugawa period, Saraike Village was notable for the size of its *kawata* cattle trader organization. Between 1860 and 1868, the eleven households of the licensed Saraike *kawata* cattle traders handled over 350 head of cattle annually.¹⁵

With this in mind, we can return to the 1872 attempts of Sakai Prefecture to regulate beef production. Two days before the Sakai Prefectural authorities issued the regulations for rendering facilities, the mayor (*kochō*) of Saraike Village received an inquiry from the prefecture regarding the number of butchers in the village.¹⁶ He identified twenty-one men, all former *kawata*, who handled around three thousand carcasses annually.¹⁷ After receiving this information, the prefectural authorities announced their intention to investigate the village's rendering and slaughterhouse activities. The officer dispatched to conduct the investigation was a police official, indicating that the prefecture already suspected that the former *kawata* of Saraike had yet to separate the rendering of dead cattle from beef production.

The officer arrived three days after the Saraike mayor issued his reply, and summoned for interrogation all those who processed dead livestock. Evidently, the officer limited this demand to former *kawata*.¹⁸ The officer determined that thirty-one villagers were guilty of selling illegal beef (that is, meat from already-dead animals). Of those, seventeen villagers were arrested and held in the Sakai city jail for two weeks and the other fourteen were sentenced to house arrest. The different punishments were based on the severity of each group's respective crimes. Those placed in jail handled carcasses as renderers and butchers, and were thus responsible for ensuring that the meat of diseased animals was not sold for human consumption. Meanwhile, those placed under house arrest had purchased the meat, skins, and other parts from the first group, then sold them outside the village.

After the investigation, the Saraike villagers were prohibited from handling carcasses until they received government licenses, prompting seven Saraike villagers to petition Sakai Prefecture.¹⁹ In their petition, these seven villagers – all former *kawata* – promised to abide by the new regulations and to construct a new facility for processing dead cattle. They requested permission to build this facility within Saraike, where they were accustomed to handling carcasses. While the seven petitioners were granted renderers' licenses, the request to build a rendering facility inside Saraike was denied. Instead, the petitioners were told to combine their operations with that of Jōrenji Village, three kilometers north of Saraike. The object was clear: former *kawata* would continue to handle dead livestock, but only with state licenses, and no longer on a village-by-village basis.

The impetus behind the regulations promulgated by Sakai Prefecture was public health. The prefectural government sought to regulate and tax the rendering and beef industries without relying on the old status groups, while

14. Abele 2018, pp. 192-9.

15. Abele 2018, pp. 219-221 and Yagi 1999, p. 54-6.

16. Doc.143 [1872; Meiji 5.8.28] in Saraike-mura Monjo, vol. 2, p. 589-90. Hereafter SIMM.

17. However, this number likely referred to the number of cattle, live and dead, that the former *kawata* handled.

18. Doc.143 [1872; Meiji 5.8.28] in SIMM, vol. 2, pp. 590-91.

19. Ibid, pp. 591-92.

also recognizing the continuity of local practices. It was assumed that local farmers would continue to hand their dead livestock to local *kawata* communities. Yet because *kawata* status was now abolished along with the status system, the government needed to find a new means to regulate the handling of dead animals. This was achieved by mandating that only those in possession of a government license could purchase dead livestock. These license holders were registered and taxed, and responsible for ensuring that health regulations were obeyed. At the same time, the number of rendering facilities was substantially reduced as the operations of various former *kawata* communities were consolidated. At this point, the *kawata* status group no longer existed as a corporate unit that mediated between individual households and the state.

Knackers and Cattle Traders

To understand the significance of these events for the former *kawata*, we must turn to a closer examination of the villagers involved in the arrest of 1872. Table 1 lists the names of those who were arrested, those who were placed under house arrest, and those who later petitioned to receive renderers' licenses. It also lists supplemental information on the background on each individual. A quick glance at Table 1 shows the prevalence of two groups: butchers and cattle traders. Those labeled as "butchers" were identified as such in the Saraike mayor's response to the Sakai Prefecture inquiry (Table 2). Those labeled as cattle traders were households that were part of the longstanding *kawata* cattle trader organization (Table 3). The presence of butchers on this list should come as no surprise; yet cattle traders, too, had long been involved in the slaughter of cattle, as mentioned above. Additionally, there is more overlap between these two groups than the butcher/cattle trader division suggests.

Table 1: TWO GROUPS OF CATTLE TRADERS IN SARAIKE

Group One: Established Cattle Traders

Number	Lifespan	Man'en 2		Meiji 2	Meiji 4	Meiji5
		1861		1869	1871	1872
①	1814~?	Rihachi	Head	Rihachi	Rihachi	Hashimoto Rihachi
②	1811~1867*	Chūsaburō	Head	Chūsaburō	Chūsaburō	Nakai Chūsaburō
③	1831~?	Jirōkichi		Jirōkichi	Jirōkichi	Yamamoto Jirōkichi
④	1801~1864*	Isaburō		Isaburō	Isaburō	Yamamoto Isaburō
⑤	1828~?	Uemon		Uemon	Uhachi	Yamada Uhachi
⑥	1815~?	Rikizō		Rikizō	Rikizō	Kishimoto Rikizō
⑦	1818~?	Moemon		Moemon	Komashichi	Ishida Komashichi
⑧	1827~?	Kisuke		Kisuke	Tokijirō	Kuroda Tokijirō
⑨	1804~1861*	Shirōbei		—	—	—
⑩	?~?	Zenjirō		—	—	—
⑪	1830~?	Yoemon		—	—	—
⑫	1828~?			Eizaburō	Eizaburō	Yamaguchi Eizaburō
⑬	1820~?			Yasaburō	Yasaburō	Sumimura Yasaburō
⑭	1817~?			Sasuke	Tsurukichi	Shibamoto Tsurukichi
⑮	1834~?					Fujita Jūkichi
⑯	1833~?					Ishida Seijirō
Reference		石橋家文書の商45		SIMM141	SIMM 142	SIMM143

*Heir took over after the death of household head

Group Two: New Cattle Traders

Number	Name	Number	Name	Number	Name	Number	Name
①	Kitada Miyokichi	⑦	Matsumoto Isōkichi	⑬	Yamaguchi Kanematsu	⑲	Matsumoto Isōjirō
②	Yoshida Tsurukichi	⑧	Matsumoto Yoroku	⑭	Yasui Harukichi	⑳	Nishida Heizō
③	Kitano Isojirō	⑨	Okamoto Komashichi	⑮	Kimoto Kichimatsu	㉑	Kitada Seizō
④	Nishida Shinkichi	⑩	Ikedo Tsuruzō	⑯	Hashimoto Shōkichi		
⑤	Nishii Seikichi	⑪	Himoto Yasukichi	⑰	Kitada Inomatsu		
⑥	Yamamoto Otokichi	⑫	Yoshida Kanekichi	⑱	Kitada Toyokichi		

Table 2: those identified as butchers in 1872

Group Two - Those who "From time to time, acquire cattle at a low price then slaughter them"

Group One - "Professional" Butchers

Number	Name	Notes
①	Nishida Shinkichi	New Cattle Trader ④
②	Nishii Seikichi	New Cattle Trader ⑤
③	Yoshida Kōsaborō	
④	Matsumoto Isōkichi	New Cattle Trader ⑦
⑤	Yamamoto Inokichi	
⑥	Akita Tsurukichi	
⑦	Kitada Seizō	New Cattle Trader ⑫

Number	Name	Notes
⑧	Inui Otokichi	
⑨	Fujita Tōkichi	Older Brother of Cattle Trader ⑮
⑩	Yamamoto Otokichi	New Cattle Trader ⑥
⑪	Nishida Umekichi	
⑫	Nakasuji Kazō	
⑬	Matsumoto Isōjirō	New Cattle Trader ⑱
⑭	Kitano Isojirō	New Cattle Trader ③
⑮	Toyoda Sōjirō	Cattle Driver
⑯	Kinoshita Kichimatsu	New Cattle Trader ⑮
⑰	Nishida Heikichi	
⑱	Himoto Yasukichi	New Cattle Trader ⑪
⑲	Ikemoto Zenkichi	
⑳	Ishikawa Chūshirō	
㉑	Yamaguchi Tōkichi	

Table 3: those arrested in 1872

Arrested

Number	Name	Notes	Number	Name	Notes
①	Yoshida Kosaborō	Butcher ③	⑩	Yamamoto Otokichi	Butcher ⑩
②	Kitaguchi Yasujirō		⑪	Nishida Tōkichi	
③	Yamada Uhachi	Cattle Trader ⑤	⑫	Kitada Seizō	Butcher ⑦
④	Nishida Shinkichi	Butcher ①	⑬	Yoshida Jūjirō	Yoshida Kosaburo's Father
⑤	Yamamoto Jirokichi	Cattle Trader ③	⑭	Wakita Kichimatsu	
⑥	Shibamoto Tsurushichi	Cattle Trader ⑭	⑮	Toyo	Nishida Tōkichi's Wife
⑦	Okada Yasōhachi		⑯	Ishida Hanshichi	Son of Cattle Trader ⑦
⑧	Ikemoto Zenkichi	Butcher ⑱	⑰	Ikawa Shinsaborō	
⑨	Kitano Kitarō	Cattle Driver			

House Arrest

Number	Name	Notes	Number	Name	Notes
①	Sumimura Yasaborō	Cattle Trader ⑬	⑧	Matsumoto Tsunematsu	
②	Sakai Fumikichi		⑨	Kishimoto Rikizo	Cattle Trader ⑥
③	Sakamoto Seigoro		⑩	Katsuda Takejiro	
④	Nakada Seishichi		⑪	Nakagawa Sogoro	
⑤	Nishida Hanshichi		⑫	Matsumoto Asagoro	
⑥	Nishino Yojuro		⑬	Matsumoto Asakichi	
⑦	Nishigaki Yoshimatsu		⑭	Morikawa Kishikichi	

Petitioners

Number	Name	Notes
①	Ishida Komakichi	Cattle Trader ⑦
②	Hashimoto Rihachi	Cattle Trader ①
③	Matsumoto Isōkichi	Butcher ④
④	Ishida Seijirō	Cattle Trader ⑯
⑤	Sugimoto Eisaborō	
⑥	Nakai Chūsaborō	Cattle Trader ②
⑦	Shibamoto Tsurukichi	Cattle Trader ⑭

Table 3 lists all cattle traders in the former *kawata* community of Saraike Village, divided into two groups. The first group were those households who held cattle trader licenses at some point before 1872. In the late Tokugawa period, cattle traders in the Kinai were licensed by the Tennōji cattle market, a trade association tasked by the shogunate with regulating and taxing the Kinai cattle trade.²⁰ At the time, only those households with a license could legally buy and sell cattle. But the Tennōji cattle market lost its ability to regulate the cattle trade after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate, and responsibility for licensing cattle traders fell to individual prefectures or daimyo. Shortly after Saraike Village fell under the jurisdiction of Sakai Prefecture in late 1871, all previously-licensed cattle traders were required to petition for new licenses from the prefecture. Thirteen former *kawata* households responded to this demand, including the eleven original members of the *kawata* cattle trader organization; the other two had evidently joined the organization after 1870. It was this group of earlier cattle traders that had facilitated the purchase and sale of carcasses in secret during the late Tokugawa period.

In addition to the group of already-practicing cattle traders, another twenty-one households petitioned for licenses as “new cattle traders” (*shinki bakurō*). Ostensibly, these “new cattle traders” sought licenses in order to buy and sell cattle; under prefectural regulations, those trading cattle without a license were liable to the confiscation of their animal property.²¹ However, none of these “new cattle traders” likely had any intention of buying and selling draft animals. Instead, they petitioned for licenses in order to buy animals, or animal carcasses, to process for hides, bones, and meat. If we compare Table 3 with Table 2, we see that several households identified as butchers were among those that petitioned for licenses as “new cattle traders.” Moreover, we can confirm that at least one of these “new cattle traders,” Matsumoto Yoroku (Number 8), was involved in an incident of illegal cattle slaughter in the late Tokugawa period.²²

The reason these households petitioned for cattle trader licenses is simple: after the abolition of *kawata* status-based property in early 1871, ownership of draft animal carcasses no longer automatically passed to the *kawata* after death. Instead, peasant farmers were free to sell their dead draft animals to the highest bidder, or bury the animal if they wished. The licensed cattle traders of the first group – those that had been active prior to the Meiji Restoration – had already been buying old or dead cattle (under the name of “sick cattle”) for years prior to the abolition of *kawata* status-based property. Naturally, this older group of cattle traders was able to seamlessly transition to a new property regime that saw carcass as the private household property of the former owner. In order to operate alongside this group of cattle traders, the butchers and knackers of Saraike petitioned for their own cattle trader licenses so as to more readily acquire the raw material needed for their trades.

Turning now to the butchers, the Saraike mayor’s list from 1872 identified twenty-one men as engaged in some kind of cattle slaughter (Table 2). But within this group there were two important subdivisions. The first seven households were listed as “*togyū tosei no mono*,” which can be translated as full-time butchers. However, it is likely that this group both slaughtered live cattle and dismembered already-dead animals. The key issue is the use of the character 屠, used to describe the “butchers” in the village (*togyū tosei no mono*). In modern Japanese, this character refers to the slaughter of live animals, but in the nineteenth century it could also mean “to dismember” or “take apart.” For example, when Sakai Prefecture issued its regulation on rendering facilities, it used this character in reference to “those who dismember dead animals” (*shigyūba o hofuri baibai no mono*). Thus, “*togyū tosei no mono*” could mean both “those who slaughter cattle” and “those who dismember cattle.” Moreover, there was not yet a conceptual distinction in the former *kawata* villages between the slaughter of live cattle for beef and the disposal of dead cattle for industrial purposes. Both were simply different means of acquiring the same raw material.

In addition to the seven “full-time” butchers, the mayor identified fourteen other households involved in slaughtering cattle. These fourteen had no title; instead, the mayor noted that they “From time to time, acquire cattle at a low price then slaughter them” (*oriori ushi yasune nite te ni iri sōrō setsu hofuri sōrō*).²³ Each household in the first

20. For an overview of the Tennōji cattle market, see Yagi 1999, pp. 38-74.

21. Doc.238 [1872; Meiji 5.9] in Sakai-ken hōrei shū, v. 1, pp. 395.

22. Doc.354 [ca. 1860] in SIMM, v. 2, p. 987.

23. Doc.143 [1872; Meiji 5.8.28] in SIMM, v. 2, p. 589.

group of seven butchers was said to be able to process, on average, one head of cattle per day. Meanwhile, the second group could process between one to two cattle per day, but only as a group of fourteen households. We can deduce that the relative efficiency of the first group of renderers/butchers meant that they had other individuals acquire their animal raw material for them. In contrast, the second group of fourteen men both purchased and slaughtered cattle, and likely at an irregular rate.

Arrest and Implications

Returning now to Table 1, we see the individuals involved divided into three groups: those arrested and taken to the Sakai jail, those sentenced to house arrest, and those who applied for renderer's licenses. As mentioned above, the different punishments reflected the degree of responsibility for violating prefectural regulations. Those arrested were deemed most responsible for handling beef; as we can see, this group included five men identified as butchers in the mayor's earlier report. Yet there were more individuals engaged in butchering and rendering than just those twenty-one men identified in Table 2. For example, Yoshida Jūjirō (Number 13) was not listed as a butcher himself, but he was the father of Yoshida Kosaburō (Number 1), who was recorded as a butcher.²⁴ The presence of the elder Yoshida among those arrested indicates that the butchering and rendering trades extended beyond those officially recognized as butchers.

In contrast to the first group, the second group – those sentenced to house arrest – contained no butchers. During Sakai Prefecture's investigation, those in the second group were interrogated regarding where, and to whom, they had sold the beef, hides, and other animal products acquired from the first group.²⁵ Because this group had no direct role in beef production, they were sentenced to the lighter punishment of house arrest, rather than taken to the Sakai jail. Important here is the presence of two cattle traders, Sumimura Yasaburō and Kishimoto Rikizo. Documents from the late Tokugawa period confirm that both Sumimura Yasaburō and Kishimoto Rikizo were involved in selling animal products outside of Saraike Village, suggesting that this group of petty merchants had formed prior to the Meiji Restoration.²⁶

The final group consists of those who petitioned Sakai Prefecture for renderer's licenses. Interestingly, only one, Matsumoto Isokichi (Number 3), was listed as a butcher/renderer in the mayor's earlier report. Five others were core members of the longstanding cattle trader organization, including Hashimoto Rihachi and Nakai Chūsaburō, the leaders of the organization. Recall that, under Sakai Prefecture's new regulations, renderer licenses only determined who could legally purchase livestock carcasses; the regulations said nothing about those who worked in the rendering facility. As licensed renderers, these seven petitioners would facilitate the purchase and sale of carcasses and the products obtained therein, and were also responsible for enforcing the regulations promulgated by Sakai Prefecture. With the exception of Matsumoto Isokichi, it is doubtful that these licensed "renderers" actually handled dead animals.

Together, the various groups involved in the arrests of 1872 formed a larger organization that handled rendering, butchering, and various associated trades in the former *kawata* village. This organization was centered around the former *kawata* cattle traders. The core of this group were the licensed *kawata* cattle traders, who had been operating as a group since the 1850s. Some cattle traders like Hashimoto Rihachi and Nakai Chūsaburō managed the acquisition of cattle, both living and dead, from their former owners, as well as the transportation of the animal raw material to the village. Others, like Sumimura Yasaburō, managed the sale of the hides, bones, and meat harvested from the carcasses. Additionally, there were those that actually slaughtered and dismembered the draft animals acquired by the cattle traders.

Conclusion

24. Doc.84 [1872; Meiji 5.3] in SIMM, v. 1, pp. 939-989.

25. Doc.143 [1872; Meiji 5.8.28] in SIMM, v. 2, p. 591.

26. Doc.355 [1867; Keiō 3] in SIMM, v. 2, p. 987.

The impetus behind the regulations promulgated by Sakai Prefecture was public health. The prefecture sought to regulate and tax the rendering and beef industries without relying on the old status groups, while at the same time recognizing the continuity of local practices. It was assumed that local farmers would continue to hand their dead livestock to the former *kawata* communities. Yet because *kawata* status was now abolished along with the status system, the Meiji government needed to find a new way to regulate the handling of dead animals. This was achieved by mandating that only those in possession of a government license could purchase dead livestock. These license holders were catalogued and taxed, and responsible for ensuring that health regulations were obeyed. At the same time the number of rendering facilities was substantially reduced as the operations of various former *kawata* communities were consolidated.

There was of course a degree of continuity between the Tokugawa and Meiji periods. Men of former *kawata* status continued to collect dead livestock from their local communities. Former owners were prohibited from handing over their dead property to anyone without the proper license, which just happened to be former *kawata*. In other words, the same individuals were still performing the same trade. However, the end of the status society meant that the former *kawata* worked under very different circumstances. Their place of work was moved outside of the village and their operations consolidated with men with whom they shared a common status but not necessarily much else. The knackers as a profession were directly managed by the prefectural government and police, rather than having the village and status group act as mediators. And crucially, the change in property relations allowed a formerly peripheral group to move to the center of not just village life, but of the new regulatory system established by the Meiji government.

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