

< Research Note >

Buraku Immigrants in the American Westⁱ

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【Keywords】 Buraku Immigrants, Nuclear Labor, Article 14 of the Constitution of Japan

Introduction

Alongside a large number of Japanese who immigrated to Hawaii or the United States during the late 19th to the early 20th century, not a few Buraku people moved to the new world.[□] This paper aims to provide a brief outline of the Buraku immigrants to the United States, by focusing on the people who migrated from Wakasa Bay areas in Fukui Prefecture. Since there are four nuclear plants located in the bay area, Tsuruga, Mihama, Oi, and Takahama, as much as other residents and communities, the local economy of the Buraku communities neighboring the plants have been determined by the economies of those plants. Actually it is no exaggeration to say that work for Buraku people in those areas mainly concentrate on activities related to nuclear plants. However, before work in the nuclear plants became a major source of income, migration abroad used to be a common tendency for them. It demonstrates the distressed situation of Buraku people in modern history who have been forced into hazardous labor because of historically accumulated negative conditions.

At the same time, the Buraku immigrants in the American West has been raised another issue. In the historical study of Buraku, the relation with the writing of the post war Constitution of Japan had been focused on, especially with the article 14. Article 14 mentions that “all people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, gender, social status or family origin.” In Article 14, it prohibits any discriminatory practices based on “social status or family origin,” which is regarded to include discrimination against Buraku. In these terms, the fact that Matsumoto Jiichiro [1887-1966], a prominent leader of the Buraku emancipation movement during the pre and post war period, who used to be a member of Parliament just after Japan’s defeat, took part in the writing process of the Constitution and tried to reflect the issue in its draft, is well known. At the same time, Habert Passin [1916-2003], a distinguished Japan scholar and former professor of Columbia University, who worked in Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s headquarters as chief of the Public Opinion and Sociological Research Division, and involved in land reform and labor policy then, looked back at the days of the occupation period of Japan, mentioned that he first recognized the Buraku issue when he encountered a discriminatory case of marriage at the Japanese internment camp during the war time, in his interview published in 1984 [Passin and Isomura, 1984]. In this sense, it is speculated

that some attitudes or actions involved with Japanese immigrants in the internment camp directly or indirectly related to the draft of Japan's post war Constitution. Our aim for this research is stimulated not only by the trajectory of Buraku immigrants in the American West but also by Buraku people's involvement in the history of Japan's Constitution, in a word, a relation to the post war political history from the perspective of Buraku issues.

Outlines of Japanese Immigrants in the United States and the Cases of Buraku

Eiichiro Azuma, historian of Asian American Studies, especially on Japanese immigrants in the United States, describes historical stages and the background of Japanese immigrants known as *Dekasegi* during the late 19th to the early 20th century as follows:

The departure of *dekasegi* laborers for Hawaii and the United States between 1885 and 1908 signified the zenith of popular pragmatism among ordinary Japanese. In the context of the nation's incorporation into the international network of capitalist economies, the decade of the 1880s ushered in a drastic reconfiguration of its rural economy. What helped to encourage the farming population to emigrate was the overarching effect of commercial agriculture, which alienated so many villages from their chief means of production, the farmland. These displaced peasants formed a pool of working-class people in need of wage labor. At the same time, the intrusion of market forces into villages opened up the world view of rural residents, allowing some to dream of upward mobility beyond what they could have had under the feudal regime. [...] The resultant emigrants divide into two major types: distressed contract laborers and entrepreneurial laborers. [Azuma, 2005: 27]

Azuma shows the process in which an inevitable consequence of modernization and industrialization, and so-called primitive accumulation, to use Marx's term, after the Meiji restoration, produced a modern working class by changing peasants to laborers. And at the same time this process promoted lower peasants to immigrate to the abroad to earn cash income. He also defines the former type of resultant immigration as "government-contract emigrants" (1885-1894), and later as "private-contract emigrants" (1894-1899), both conditioned by "landless or small landowning farming households." During this process, the Japanese government was in charge of recruitment until 1894, concentrating on southwestern prefectures such as Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, and Kumamoto [ibid]. In contrast to former immigrants, the latter, the entrepreneurial laborers during 1895 to 1908, amount to more than 130,000 Japanese.

In order to show the historical documents of the Buraku immigrants as priority, this paper must avoid describing detailed topics of Japanese immigrants in the early 20th century, which were determined by the Japanese government's diplomatic agenda, emigration policies of the United States,

and ethnic conflicts between Chinese and white Americans. However, it is certain that Azuma's summary of Japanese emigration corresponds to the cases of the Buraku. The characteristics of the Buraku immigrants have both distressed economic conditions and entrepreneurial mind more or less.

Although they had actual conditions for immigration such as landless-ness, small landowning, governmental or private contract agencies, however, peasants or local residents had not chosen immigration even if there were some neighboring villages in which immigration were popular. Good examples are the villages of Ama and Tsushima areas in Aichi Prefecture, where Azuma did research as a main case study in his work. From Ama and Tsushima areas, during 1889 to 1925, 1,875 Japanese moved to the American West (including Canada and Mexico). Tadashi Tsutsui summarizes that the causes of the immigration could have been natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, frequently occurred in 1890s, and a drastic deterioration of local industry of woolen textile or production of indigo dye [Tsutsui, 61-76, 172]. In contrast to these villages of letting-off immigrants, in the Buraku areas, an immigration to the American West was not dominant at all, based on our research and interviews of historians of Ama and Tsushima areas [interviews by Hirooka and Tomotsune, January 4, 2018]. The Buraku communities in the areas had had their own means of livelihood, such as sandal or shoe industry, leather and tanning industries which became flourishing in the Edo period, and Tsushima used to be one of the agglomeration centers of leather and animal skins then [RIABLHR:2015]. As women of the Buraku worked in the woolen textile factories, for example, the Buraku economy was determined by the local industry. However, the Buraku people in these areas were basically affiliated with Buraku's own industry and relations, and they were not motivated by the immigration to the United States. There was also another reason why such an immigration did not prevail in the Buraku; it cost three hundred yen to travel, which was unaffordable for the Buraku people. We also heard that immigration to Manchuria in the 1930s wasn't popular in these Buraku communities, either. It is presumed that the Buraku could make efforts to relieve a famine and overcome extreme difficulties in those days.

The Cases of the Buraku in Wakasa Bay Areas

Comparing with Ama and Tsushima cases, the Buraku in Wakasa Bay areas seem to demonstrate a comprehensible example that social-economic distress results in immigration abroad. Following three documents show how the immigration from the area to the American West had begun and organized.

[1] A shorthand record of Saimin Buraku Kyogikai [Association for Improvement Measures of Distressed Buraku], November, 1912

Shiraoka Josuke, Head of the Official County of Mikaga-Gun [Mikata County], Fukui-Ken [Fukui Prefecture]

In my jurisdiction, Mimi Mura [Mimi Village], **, in Mikata County, has the number of 188 houses and 973 people, and the largest *Tokushu Buraku* in Fukui Prefecture, they all have a hard time to make their living in some way. I am going to omit referring to our efforts since it is meaningless. There had been around 120-130 people who immigrated to Hawaii and the American West as *dekasegi*. However, because of terrible expulsions of Japanese from there in recent years, it decreased to around 70 people. The earnings sent from America to our prefecture total to more than 100,000 yen, and more than 50,000 yen at least is provided to the Buraku. In terms of working funds for the immigration, there is a benefactor, who is an actual father of the head of the district. He thinks that the only way to improve this kind of distressed people is to immigrate abroad and make them their own best. Then he lends them 200 or 300 yen for traveling expenses and orders them to return it by way of monthly remittances. In the beginning, according to him, he lent some money to them, however, he became poor since they failed. Later, because for the future he continued to encourage them regardless of the outcome, nowadays they come to find pleasure to immigrate to America or Hawaii for *dekasegi*. [...] They say that they would be free from any discrimination associated with the professions they perform in Japan, thus they hope to go abroad at any cost. I am going to mention a bit what they do after they came back home. They all first build a house, a palace of a house which is far beyond one owned by a commoner. Since they experienced a new life in the abroad, they avoid living in a messy place after coming back to Japan and want to keep up their appearance with the neighbors. Anyhow they came back with 3,000 or 4,000 yen and spent all the money on their houses. They waste all the money on the houses, then they have to go abroad again. And recently the number of landowners is increasing, which is because of the blessings from working in America. Previously there were landowners who only had 5 ha. among 200 houses of this Buraku. But now they have 30 ha. of rice paddies and moreover, work as sharecroppers for 30 ha. Anyway it seems that going abroad has become as easy as going to the neighbors. However, if the process of obtaining a permit for traveling abroad becomes even easier, it should be a great benefit for those kind of people's society. [Akisada and Ogushi, 1986: 157-158]

[2] Viscount Goto Morimitsu, bachelor of laws, “Aonogo Mura [Aonogo Village] as an excellent village in Fukui Prefecture,” in Meiji no Hikari [Shining Light of Meiji], vol.3, January, 1914

While I was visiting Fukui Prefecture and observed various towns and villages, there was a *Tokushu Buraku* in Mitsumatsu, **, in Aonogo Village, Oi County. It was 37 houses and 270 people. In the Buraku, residents used to work with animal skins as well as other Buraku. However, after the Meiji restoration, they lost their businesses and most of the men work as sharecroppers and day laborers, in addition, in recent years, many of them go to America as *dekasegi*. Since

some of them send money back home, it is said that there are more than ten landowners who have 2 ha.in the Buraku. [ibid, 131-132]

[3] Unsigned, Fukui Tsushin [Fukui Correspondence], in Shakai Kaizen Kodo [Justice of Social Improvement], No.21, July 1920

It is said that a group of our fellows in the Mikata County in Fukui Prefecture immigrated to the United States and made great profits, and now they are trying to bring it back home and establish a bank with a million yen as funds. Originally a major part of the immigrants in this prefecture to the United States came from three counties of Reinan, and the pioneer among them was from Mimi village, Minami ichi, in Mikata County. Last year, almost 1,500 people moved to the United States and the average earning of each was 2,000 yen. In addition, there were individuals who accumulated 50,000 or 100,000 yen, and some of them earned 200,000 yen and returned home. Today these returnees have become wealthy and powerful persons who possess some 100,000 yen. The earnings of these migrants are deposited in branches of Japanese Banks in the United States. When they send their money back home, most of it, if not all, is spent by their families. Thus returnees always avoid sending money, rather they choose to bring it back themselves when they return home. As a result, the returnees' properties are now making our financial and industrial conditions active, and some successful persons among the new riches of the immigrants are trying to establish Reinan Bank at Minami saigo Mura, Kanayama, in Mikata County. Based on the Head of Mikata County, they already purchased Imada Bank in Hyogo Prefecture for 400,000 yen and are preparing for a transition of the bank with funds of a million yen. Also, the Head talked as follows;

“An immigration in Reinan Counties had begun to move to the United States by Minami ichi fellows who thought to open up a new world abroad rather than to lead insulting and painful lives. Although these immigrants were weak in the beginning, however, since they came back bringing 10,000 yen of saving as a souvenir with honors, they built house and behaved as new riches, which inspired fellows of other Buraku communities to rush to move to the United States. Now 1,025 people from Minami saigo Village alone in Mikata County moved to the United States, and in total among Reinan three counties, it will not be fewer than 1,500 or 1,600 people. That is something to be pleased with that these returnees from the United States also spend money on public projects and make great efforts to develop local communities. With increasing numbers of returnees, our less successful fellows are also improving gradually. It is difficult to change them without being improved them from outside. At this point, a project such as establishing Reinan Bank should be greatly welcomed. [ibid, 84-85]

Supplement and Conclusion

In this paper, we show a historical relation between the concentration around nuclear plant labor in the Buraku in the post war period and the history of immigration to Hawaii or the United States in the prewar time. It should be considered that the reason why the Buraku people in Wakasa Bay areas became the center of immigration, in contrast to those of Ama and Tsushima areas in which immigration was not the key choice for surviving during the modern period. Based on the document [1], one of the reasons is that there was a benefactor who support the immigration to improve the distressed condition of the Buraku then, which determined the difference between two cases, although it is not sufficient.

During this research, Hirooka visited some Buraku communities in Mihama Town and Obama City and interviewed local residents [Interviews by Hirooka, September 15, 2017]. Through the hearing investigation, there was a notable information that, during the occupation period, an interpreter who was born in the Buraku worked in a military government office located in Obama City. This is related to another incident that the Buraku people in Takahama Town in Reinan area, around Wakasa Bay areas once had petitioned about to the GHQ demanding for fishing rights, from which the Buraku people had been excluded by commoners for a long time. Presumably the military interpreter, who was born in the Buraku, and another one who worked at the moment of the petition would be the same since GHQ office would not hire an interpreter from local Japanese. Thus, the interpreter should be presumed to be a Nisei serviceman whose family would be one of the immigrants from the Buraku communities. At the same time, from the interview with a committee member on the board of education, Hirooka also got information that not only Buraku people, but also a lot of countrymen did immigrate to the abroad from Mihama Town. Considering the whole history of these areas is also necessary, in this sense. We are going to continue our research and make the details clearer.

*We wish to express our deepest appreciation to everyone who accepted an interview and helped our research.

[Cited documents in Japanese]

(1) 細民部落改善協議会速記録、1912年11月

福井県三方郡長（白男川譲助君） 私の所の三方郡東（ママ）村□□と云ふは丁度戸数百八十八戸人口九百七十三と云ふ福井県では一番大きな、特殊部落であります、此土地に於きましては、皆其点に苦心して居ります。吾々もやつて居りますが、烏澁しい話でありますからそれは略します。然し此土地からは亜米利加若くは布哇の方へ従来は百二三十名移住出稼に参つて居りましたが、近頃大分排斥が酷いので、七十名余に減りました訳であります。それで私の県に年々這入つて来る所の亜米利加からの送金は約十万円以上で、其中特殊部落には五万円位は優に這入るのであります。さうして基金はどうして行くかと云ふと、各区長

をして居る人のお父さんで、一人の篤志家があります。其人が如何にも是等の人間を發展させるには外国の渡航に限ると云ふ所から、非常に骨を折られたようであります。さうして向ふに行くには二百円なり、三百円なり旅費を出してやつて、さうして送金の中から月々戻させて居る。最初は金を貸してやつたが、成功しないで非常に失敗して貧乏になつたさうであります、併ながら其子弟の爲めと思つて非常に奨励されたことが原因になりまして今日では、亜米利加若くは布哇に出稼ぎすることは非常に喜んで出る様になりました。(中略) 布哇の方は名は忘れましたが、大した金持の養子になつて、内地に帰つて来た模様を聴きました、あの土地の人は亜米利加に渡航するならば、幾らでも向ふへ行つて職業上苦むことはないのてどうかして向ふに行きたいと云ふことを頻りに希望して居ります。それから尚ほ帰つて来たの状態をちよつと申しますが、帰つて来た人は先づ第一に家を先きに作ります。是は迎も普通民が及ばぬやうな立派な家を作ります。ところで是は多少向ふに生活して居つたものであるから、家へ帰つて汚ない所に住むことも困るであらうし、又一つは成功して帰つたものであるから皆の者に少しは顔を見せたいという云ふ所からでありませうが、大概三千円四千円持つて帰つて家に注込むものでありますから家の爲めに大概なくなりまして、又渡航する訳であります。然して此の部落の方々の所有権の殖えたことは、全く外国から這入つて金の余沢であります。丁度四五年前までは約二百戸の中で田地を所有している者が僅かに五町歩位でありました。ところが近年になつては三十町歩の所有田になつて、尚ほ其以上に三十町歩の小作をして居りますが、何しろ外国渡航と云ふことは亜米利加に行くにも隣に行くやうになつて居るのであります。でももう少し外国渡航の免状が自由に得られるやうになつたならばあの人達の社会の爲めに大変利益であらうと思つて居ります。(秋定嘉和、大串夏身共編『近代部落史資料集成』5、1986年、157-158頁)

(2) 法学士子爵五島盛光「福井県下の優良部落たる青郷村」『明治の光』第3巻1月号、1914年1月。

福井県青郷村字□□□

曩に福井県に参りまして種々の町村を見ましたが其中に大飯郡青郷村字三松小字□□□といふ一つの特殊部落がありました。此部落は、戸数が三十七戸で、人口二百七十余りでありまして、元は他の特殊部落と同様に、獣皮の取扱をして居りましたが、ご維新後は之が無くなりまして、大部分の男子は、外部民の小作や日雇を業としておりますが、近来に至りましては、壮丁の米国へ出稼ぎに行くものが多く、其儲けた金を送金して来るものもありますので、部民の中には二町歩も自作するものが十数戸もあるといふことです。(同前書、第6巻、131-132頁)

(3) (無署名)「福井通信」『社会改善公道』第21号、1920年7月。

本県下三方郡内少数同胞の一団は嘗て米国に移住して大に収益を爲したれば其収益金を持ち帰り百万円の資本にて銀行を設立せんとするよし、元来本県下に於ける米国移民の多くは

嶺南三郡にしてその魁をなせしは三方郡耳村南市の同胞なるが、昨年は三郡を通し約千五百名渡米し居りこれが一個年の収入は一人平均二千元にして中には五万十萬又は二十萬の蓄財を為して帰国するものあり、今日にては是等の帰国者にして数十萬の資産家数多を算し嶺南に於ける財界の一大勢力たるが、渡米者の収益金は米國に於ける内地銀行の支店に預け入れられ偶々之を郷里に送金するも全部家族に費消さるゝを以て渡米者は可成送金を手控へ帰朝期に際して携帯するを常とするに付是等帰国者の収益金の為め地方の金融界及産業界は好況を呈しつゝあり、而して今回渡米成金者中の成功者有志を以て三方郡南西郷村金山に嶺南銀行を設置すべく既に兵庫県の今田銀行を四萬圓にて買取目下之れが移転設置の準備中なるも資本金は百萬圓なりと、右に付稲葉三方郡長は語る「嶺南に於ける米國移民は三方郡南市の同胞が地方に在りて侮辱的生活を為し不快なる月日を送るよりも外國に新天地を開くを快しとして渡米したるに始まり是等渡米者が少くも一萬圓の貯金を土産として郷里に錦を飾り或は土地を買入れ或は家屋を改築する等成金振を發揮するに刺戟され、最初は少数同胞だけであつたが渡米者が他の部落にも及ぼし続々渡米する者が他の部落から出来た、今では三方郡南西郷村のみで千二十五人渡米し嶺南三郡を通して千五六百名を下らぬとのことである、是等米國よりの帰国者は公共事業にも出金し地方にも相當の力を尽して居るのは喜ぶべきことで少数同胞の如きも是等帰朝者の増加と共に漸次改善せられつゝあるが元より少数同胞に対しては外界から改造を促してやらぬと容易に改善されるものでない、此点に於て嶺南銀行の設置の如きは大に歓迎すべきものと思ふ」云々。(同前書、第9卷、84-85頁)

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[Interviews]

Hirooka, Kiyonobu, September 15, 2017, interviews with Yamashita Keitaro, at Mitsumatsu Center, in Takahama Town, Fukui Prefecture

Hirooka, Kiyonobu and Tomotsune, Tsutomu, January 4, 2018, interviews with Asai Atsushi, Ito Takuo, Ishida Yoshihiro, Kondo Hiroshi, and Sonoda Syunsuke at Asai Mimami Elementary School, Aichi prefecture

- i This paper is one of the results of Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C), project number: 26503017, principal investigator: Hirooka, Kiyonobu., titled "Politics of Denunciation Acts against Discriminatory Practice: Comparative Historical Study for Buraku Emancipation Movement as the Historical Experience."
- ii In terms of the number of the areas and population of the Buraku, based on the 1993 survey conducted by the Policy Office of Regional Improvement of the Management and Coordination Agency, the number of areas that have been covered by the Regional Improvement Projects, amounts to 4,442, with a total number of 298,385 households and a total population of 892,751 Buraku people. These figures represent the households and people designated as Buraku communities by the Japanese Government.

The term buraku here is an abbreviation. The term buraku itself just means a "district." Officially name is *Hisabetsu buraku*, a discriminated district. In the pre-modern period, they had various outcaste names, but after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, these names were abolished and instead *Hisabetu buraku* became popular, especially in the post war period. In addition, the government uses another name, Dowa, as an administrative term. However, the term is derived from assimilationism in the Meiji period, thus (human rights) activists tend to avoid using the term.

In 1965, after a long time petitioning by buraku people, an organization of the Japanese government, the Cabinet Dowa Policy Council submitted a report. It stated:

The so-called Dowa problem is a most serious and important social problem for Japan because of the fact that a segment of the people of Japan, owing to discrimination based on a class system that was formed in the process of the historical development of Japanese society, is placed in such an inferior position economically, socially, and culturally that their fundamental human rights are grossly violated even in present day society, and that, in particular, their civil rights and liberties, which are ensured to all people as a principle of modern society, are not fully guaranteed in reality. [Tomonaga, 2004]

Based on this report, in 1969, the Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects was enacted and continued until 2002. This project could be comparable with the policies of affirmative action in the United States and reservation system in India partially. Even its scale and idea of the law had been revised and reduced over the years compared with what was proposed at the outset, the project has resulted in solving the many difficulties of Buraku to some extent, such as the environmental circumstances, housing conditions, job opportunities, and a percentage of students who go on to higher stage of education increased, almost close to the average Japanese.

The end of legitimated projects supported by the Law raises the fundamental question, why and how discrimination against Buraku, derived from pre-modern regime, exists in contemporary Japan and what is the actual solution to this problem? It could be called The "Buraku question," which is often repeated in modern history of Japan. In addition, I would like to call the recent situation as "post-Dowa Project issues." While the situation of buraku communities drastically changed, Buraku youths tend to live outside Buraku and the aging proportion rapidly rose much faster than the average. Besides, discriminatory practices, such as breaking off of inter-class marriage, blackmail, and difficulty of getting jobs are reported every year.

<研究ノート>

被差別部落のアメリカ移民

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【キーワード】 被差別部落出身者のアメリカ移民、原発労働、日本国憲法 14 条

本稿は福井県若狭海岸の嶺南地方の被差別部落（以下、部落）における戦前のアメリカ移民（ハワイ、カナダを含む）の背景と歴史的経緯を検討する。戦後、嶺南地方の部落、とりわけ若狭湾岸の部落の仕事は、原発地帯の原発労働に集中してきた。こうした戦後の原発労働への集中は、戦前の移民労働という手段の途絶とのあいだに歴史的連関があるのではないかと推定する。そうした歴史的過程を浮き彫りにするために、比較対象として本稿は北米移民で知られている愛知県と、そこにおける部落の事例を参照する。愛知県の部落では、福井県の場合と異なり、アメリカへの移民はほとんど見られない。どのような条件の相違がこの差異を生み出したのか。ここには、部落のアメリカ移民というテーマがはらむ歴史的背景がある。その歴史的背景を明らかにすることが、原発労働に従事する部落を理解するための方途なのである。

さらにアメリカ移民の歴史研究を通して本稿が意識しているのは、戦後日本国憲法制定過程における部落問題のかかわりである。日本国憲法 14 条は、「すべて国民は、法の下に平等であつて、人種、信条、性別、社会的身分または門地により、政治的、経済的または社会的関係において、差別されない」と定めている。問題は「社会的身分または門地」という、部落差別の禁止を含意した条項がどのように憲法に反映されるにいたったかである。これにかかわって、占領期、GHQにおいて、マッカーサーとともに占領政策を担ったハーバート・パッシン [1916-2003] は、戦時期の日本人強制収容所における結婚差別が、部落問題を知るきっかけだったと述べている。このことから、被差別部落出身者に対する差別事件が強制収容所で注目を集めたことがあったことが推定される。それは戦前北米の日本人移民社会において、部落出身者の存在が意識されていたこと、部落差別事件もまた意識されていたことを示している。そして占領軍の執行官らによって意識されるにいたったこうした事情が、日本国憲法の 14 条の「出身または門地」という条項につながったのではないかと推定する。以上のことを踏まえて、本稿の問題意識は、部落出身者のアメリカ移民の歴史的経緯を追求すると同時に、日本国憲法制定過程における部落問題の位置を見定めることにある。