

Sanctions, Targetism, and Village Autonomy

Poor Relief in Early Modern Rural Japan

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Granting restricted relief and shaming the recipients before the community members are the symbols of poor relief in early modern rural Japan and the most notable facts in discussing worldwide poor relief history from a Japanese perspective. In this chapter, we use documents composed by village communities to examine who was in charge of assisting the poor in rural Tokugawa Japan, how it was managed, and why people were so eager to punish the relief recipients. While there were various types and providers of relief, both in urban and in rural parts of Japan,¹ we should focus foremost on the role of autonomous villages since they were the most important backbone of Tokugawa state and society.²

In premodern Japanese history, research on poor relief has not been as attractive a theme as in European scholarship,³ but one may easily find many documents concerning poor relief in rural Japan, particularly after the seventeenth century. However, this abundance compares unfavorably with that of Europe, as in the eyes of Japanese historians, the depth and detail of historical records and studies on poverty and poor relief in early modern Europe appear astonishing. In European studies, as shown in Robert Jütte's introductory textbook (Jütte 1994), counting the total number of recipients or the expenditure of poor relief and tracing its historical transition after the sixteenth century would be an ordinary research method. On the other hand, it is almost impossible to do the same for early modern Japan; only after the Tokugawa state system collapsed and the Meiji government enforced the first poor law in 1874 (*jukkyū-kisoku*) could a statistical table of the poor be constructed.⁴ In contrast to seventeenth-century England, there were no poor laws, poor rates, or regular doles in the era of Tokugawa Japan. Thus, the state system did not require regular censuses, accounts, or individual petitions of the

poor. As we see in the following chapters, poor relief documents in the Tokugawa period were mostly made not at the state level but at the village level, and not for constant relief but for ad hoc assistance. Therefore, qualitative rather than quantitative approaches are required when assessing the characteristics of poor relief in early modern rural Japan.

As statistical research does not fit the case of Tokugawa Japan, qualitative inquiries overcome differences in historical sources and pave the way for comparative discussions in the same dimension, especially concerning the quality of rural micropolitics in poor relief, which has already been emphasized in studies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England (Hindle 2004, Healey 2014). In discussing these points, this study first shows why statistical approaches are difficult to use in understanding the case of Tokugawa Japan, where these difficulties stem from, and how this connects to the characteristics of Tokugawa Japan's poor relief practices: village autonomy, ad hoc attitude, targetism, and social sanctions.

DIFFICULTIES IN CALCULATING THE POOR

In spite of the absence of research that specializes in the history of poverty, previous studies of early modern Japan often used the term *hinnō* (poor peasants) by setting the poverty line at five *tan* (0.5 ha) of crop field or five *koku*, a number of the tax base calculated by the Tokugawa land tax system called the *kokudakasei* (*kokudaka* system).⁵ However, neither the size of the cropland nor the amount of the tax base would prove suitable for quantifying the poor in rural Japan.

First, most peasants in the Tokugawa villages earned their livelihood by farming alongside several other types of work, such as wage labor, spinning, weaving, fishing, and selling firewood. Thus, their household income could not be easily estimated by the size of their crop fields alone. Second, the *kokudaka* system was not a tax based on the actual amount of each household's farm products. Previously, *kokudaka* (calculated by multiplying the size of cropland and its assessed value [*todayi*] per one *tan* [0.1 ha] together)⁶ was assumed to be equivalent or nearly equivalent to the real amount of agricultural produce. In recent studies, however, this assumption has been denied, and it is thought that through the medieval era to the early modern era, the estimated value of *todayi* always meant *nengu* (land tax) itself, rather than products; thus, *kokudaka* could not be anywhere near equivalent to the amount of farm products; it was a tax base that was not supported by product surveillance (Ikegami 2004).

With these apparent weaknesses in proving household income, previous studies contain additional problems of defining the precise positioning of the poverty line and how it should be set; the calculation of household expenditure, which is as essential a procedure as income research is in the definition of poverty, was totally overlooked. *Hinnō* has been a popular term in historiographies of rural Tokugawa Japan, but in these respects, the ability to prove the calculations has remained so

limited that the challenge persists as to how to investigate and quantify the poor in rural societies, or whether it is even possible given the scarcity of historical records that show the reality of peasants' household finances.

Currently, the only accessible document that indicates the real family budget is the account made by Tawara village in Yoshino county, Yamato province, in 1808.⁷ To entreat their lord for tax reduction by emphasizing their household deficits, Tawara villagers researched the 1807 annual income and expenditure of all the community members, who constituted a total of forty-one households. Income content ranged from cash crops and labor wages to crops for home use. Expenditure research covered tax, interest on loans, diet grain (rice and barley), wages for laborers, fertilizer, and even private expenses for each household member. From these detailed data, new images of Tokugawa village life emerge at the level of household realities. Household income was not at all proportionate to each family's *kokudaka*, proving that *kokudaka* was not an appropriate indicator of poverty. The tax burden ranged widely from 7% to 87%, and almost every household was in the red, but even those high-tax-rated families who were deeply in debt did not always become bankrupt. Household deficits were mostly brought about by diet grain and private expenses, not by tax and interest; this indicated people's lack of intention to alter their living standards even if they were suffering from severe income deficits.

As indicated earlier, the account of Tawara village is an epoch-making document for early modern Japan studies, but despite the excellence of this record, the poverty line cannot be easily set for these forty-one households. Equivalized household disposable income, which is the most trustworthy indicator for counting the poor, could be calculated from the 1808 Tawara account by using the amount of annual income, tax, interest, agricultural expenses, and number of household members. However, the figures are dispersed, and this makes it additionally hard to even clarify which households are normal or middle-class, let alone poor. In Tokugawa studies, a huge barrier exists in investigating who the real *hinno* are and how to quantify them through the calculation of peasants' household finances.

In contrast to the scarcity of family budget accounts, many villages documented the names and numbers of impoverished peasants, called *nanjūnin* or *konkyūnin*, in order to gain formal relief (*osukui*) from their lords. From these records, it seems that the total numbers and percentages of the poor in a given village could be easily calculated, but as shown in an example later, the matter is not so straightforward.

In 1866, rice prices skyrocketed in the Kinai district and villagers of the Odawara domain⁸ in Settsu and Kawachi provinces (seventy-two villages, population greater than twenty-one thousand), who were used to purchasing rice because of their tendency to grow cash crops like cotton, entreated their lord to provide subsidies in order to save the *koma-e-nanjūnin*, the impoverished peasants. Fortunately, 150 *kan* in silver was granted as *osukuigin*, and the domain ordered the petitioner's leaders

to have it allocated autonomously by each village. The Odawara domain did not give any instructions for provision standards, which left each village to decide for itself how and to whom benefits should be distributed. One village called Rokutan (Tanboku county, Kawachi province) divided the targets into three ranks: The first rank consisted of tenant households working hard in farming, but who were still in need of payments for diet grain and fertilizer; ten *monme* per person was given to seventy persons (12.5% of the total population of 556 persons in 131 households). The second rank consisted of tenants “in dire need” (*itatte-nanjū*), and 14.5 *monme* was given to each of these 172 persons (30.9%). The third rank consisted of “the destitute” (*goku-nanjū*), and 11 *monme* were given to each of 32.5 persons (5.8%). Among recipient households, household members who were working as servants for more than fifteen days a month were counted as half a person while those who were registered but apprenticed were not counted.⁹

While negotiating with their lord, the Settsu and Kawachi villages of the Odawara domain used the term *komae-nanjūnin*, a general word meaning “impoverished peasants.” However, at the level of actual distribution by village autonomy, not every impoverished peasant was considered deserving of relief, and in the Rokutan village case, the main target was set for tenants. Therefore, even if a landowning household was in dire need or even destitute, it was not counted. Moreover, as shown by the difference between the unit cost of ranks two and three, “the destitute” were rated lower than tenants “in dire need,” meaning that the real level of poverty was not the main standard for relief in Rokutan village at this time. Furthermore, the number of those who deserved relief in each rank was subject to change. The numbers shown earlier were the final result. In the documents submitted beforehand to the domain officers during negotiations, Rokutan village initially included twenty households (111 persons in real numbers, 19.9% of the total population) in the first rank, thirty-two households (116 persons, 20.8%) in the second rank, and thirty-four households (113 persons, 20.3%) in the third rank. In the actual relief provision, ten households, or fifty persons (42.5 persons at the allotment rate), were moved from rank one to rank two, and 16 households, or fifty-six persons (thirty-five persons), were moved from rank three to two. This indicates that the village tried to apply the highest unit cost, rank two, as much as possible to households in other ranks. How these decisions were made is not clear, but in any case, neither the documents drawn up before allocation nor those drawn up after allocation are reliable for measuring the total number of the poor or the degree of poverty in Rokutan village.

As the Rokutan village case shows, Tokugawa studies are blessed with documents counting the numbers of recipients for a certain relief case, but even those records would not be worthy of statistical analyses such as those being conducted in European studies. On the other hand, the difficulties associated with quantitative research reflect the characteristics of Tokugawa poor relief practices: who was thought to be the “deserving,” what level of relief was considered to be enough,

and who was in charge of assisting the poor. The discussion opens with where the primary responsibility of poor relief was laid in early modern Japan.

POOR RELIEF MANAGED BY VILLAGE AUTONOMY

Compared to the constancy, regularity, and legitimacy underlying the poor relief system of England after the seventeenth century, poor relief in early modern Japan could be characterized by its unsystematic and ad hoc nature. The position and attitude of lords were symbolic. As a compound state,¹⁰ neither the “states” in Tokugawa Japan, the shogunate (*bakufu*), nor the domains (*han*) attempted to enact a statute or form a permanent system to relieve the poor, and their basic policies toward poor relief were to leave it to the autonomy of villages and towns. In 1642, although the whole country had been suffering from famine since the previous year, the shogunate decreed that if a single peasant became sick and could not maintain his cropland, villagers in the same community should help that peasant with farming and making ends meet, especially with respect to tax payments.¹¹ The Tsu domain also ordered their subjects in 1643 to support hungry community members and, again in 1660, during a time of high crop prices in Yamashiro and Yamato provinces, ordered that each village had the responsibility to take care of those who were compelled to beg and keep them from seeking alms away from home.¹² Even when lords recognized their subjects’ economic hardships, the primary responsibility for subsistence was delegated to the people’s autonomy; as indicated by Keiko Yanagiya’s study, it was only after communities were overburdened with poor residents and implored for formal relief (*osukui*) that governmental aid from the shogunate or domain was granted.¹³ Some lords, such as the Nihonmatsu domain, introduced a subsidy system for newborns and the aged after the latter half of the eighteenth century,¹⁴ but even within these relief systems, village autonomy still owed the poor the basic duty of support.¹⁵

In the absence of systematic formal relief and the obligation required of them, rural people mobilized every possible way to cope with poverty. This ranged from informal help by kin, neighbors, and economic relations (e.g., landowners and tenants), to assistance provided by various autonomous bodies, such as the *goningumi* (a neighborhood unit comprising every five households), village headmen (*shōya* or *nanushi*), and the whole community. As in European poor relief history, these options were often combined, and support from autonomous communal bodies was recognized as actual formal and public relief by the villagers. This is why we can find so many documents concerning poor relief from archives kept by either the families of the headmen or the communities themselves.

Basically, the mobilization of these types of relief occurred in stages. First, households in hardship were expected to rely on their relatives, and if relatives became overburdened, communal formal support was enacted; *goningumi* bore

the first stage, and when their limits had been reached, assistance from the whole community finally appeared.

While this step-by-step policy formed the basis of poor relief practice, people often avoided the exercise of communal formal help, and tried to shift the relief responsibility to the field of personal relationship, and especially to family and relatives as much as possible. In 1669, when one individual from Hari village (Yamabe county, Yamato province) became bankrupt through his unpaid tax and debt, the village attempted to transfer the responsibility of repayment to the bankrupt villager's brother, whereas the previous local custom rules had dictated that the prime duty of repayment was held by *goningumi*, not by relatives; Akatsuka village of Ito county, Kii province, enacted a village law in 1771 that announced the abolition of absorbing members' unpaid tax by the whole community and that now one's kin and descendants owed the payment duty; a law from 1775 in Kubota village (Heguri county, Yamato province) divided the relief responsibility between the community and the sector of personal relationship, providing that the *goningumi* would take care of the impoverished household so as not to become bankrupt, but once they went bankrupt, the responsibility of payment was to be shifted onto their relatives.¹⁶ In the days of village autonomy, the rural societies of Tokugawa Japan vacillated between who should bear the final responsibility for poor relief: the public sector consisting of communal autonomous bodies, or the personal relationship sector including kin, descendants, and the indigents themselves.

AD HOC ATTITUDE DOMINATES

Poor relief, whether granted by lords or village autonomy, was provided on an ad hoc basis. In 1669, *Nara-bugyō*, the shogunal governor of Yamato province, intermittently bestowed rice porridge in alms (*kayu-segyō*) to beggars (*kojiki* or *hi'nin*) and starving people (*katsuebito*) in Nara city for about four months. While doing so, he did not forget to notify the people that this *osukui* would not be carried out often, and hence, they should take care of themselves so that they would not go hungry by their own actions.¹⁷ The amount of governmental aid fluctuated dramatically as well: in 1729, the shogunate lent twenty thousand *koku* of grain for diet and seeds to his domain subjects, and more than 107,000 *koku* in 1732, but after an announcement in 1734 that severely restricted the lending aid policy, the amount of aid soon shrunk drastically; in 1844, only 294 *ryō* in gold was disbursed from the shogunate treasury for the same aims, yet by 1863, it suddenly ballooned to 33,125 *ryō*.¹⁸ The childrearing subsidy system enacted by the Nihonmatsu domain in 1786 promised to grant a two- to three-year semiconstant allowance for third children, but first children were not eligible even if their parents were poor,¹⁹ meaning that poverty itself was not the central target of this relief policy, let alone a permanent and regular support for the impoverished. The expression used in the financial

accounts of the Matsue domain from 1767 to 1841 was more symbolic: expenditures for *osukui* were always classified as “extraordinary expenses” (*rinji-gonyūyō*).²⁰

In accordance with this ad hoc attitude, there was no guarantee that lords would offer formal relief every time it was requested, even if the economic situation of the petitioners seemed similar. As shown in the previous chapter, villagers of the Odawara domain in Settsu and Kawachi provinces got 150 *kan* of *osukuigin* from their lord in 1866, a year when prices were particularly high. The next year, however, even though prices were still high and peasants again petitioned for relief, the Odawara domain did not easily consent to provide aid and probably rejected the petition.²¹ Similar economic environments were not a sufficient condition to either grant or receive formal poor relief.

Thus, split decisions about *osukui* between domains were not unusual. Peasants of the Odawara domain in Settsu and Kawachi provinces succeeded in gaining formal relief in 1866, but that did not mean all residents in both provinces enjoyed the same benefits. While representatives of the petitioners were negotiating with Odawara domain officers in Osaka, one Kawachi village headman researched and reported on how other lords responded to people’s requests for *osukui*: the Tatebayashi domain chose not to grant relief, but instead to lend rice from granaries one month earlier than usual (the domain had been lending rice annually during the sixth lunar month); the Koga domain did nothing.²²

An ad hoc attitude also determined the shape and quality of the communal formal relief managed by village autonomy. The contents of financial statements for annual autonomous expenses (*muranyūyōchō*) reflect this trend. Poor relief expenditures rarely appear on these books, even if relief was provided through formally autonomous systems during a given year, which means that communal formal relief was not recognized as an essential running expense for daily self-governance.

The length and amount of relief was treated the same way. In 1801, when a peasant family headed by Kyūemon of Nonaka village (Tannan county, Kawachi province) fell into poverty due to sickness, his relatives and the *goningumi* paid for meals and assisted his family until they could earn their own living again. However, the burden soon surpassed the supporters’ capacities, so they petitioned the village officers for help from the community, and were permitted to rent one *kan* in copper for buying diet barley. Fortunately, Kyūemon was allowed not only to pay no interest, but also to render the sum whenever he could in the future (*shusse-barai*), though this one *kan* was calculated by an estimate of just thirty day’s consumption, four *gō* of barley a day for the whole family.²³ In addition, in 1866, when Rokutan village, one of the Odawara domain villages in Kawachi that received *osukuigin* that year, gave rice in alms to “the most destitute” residents (*gokugoku-nanjūnin*) in their community, the allowance was limited to sixty days and only one *gō* for each person per day.²⁴ The same amount of charity rice was allocated to “the destitute” (*goku-nanjūnin*) in 1867 at another Kawachi village called Wakabayashi, and

was prepared for just twenty days.²⁵ Because of the fact that most rural people ate four to five *gō* of mixed grain a day at that time,²⁶ communal formal relief provided an absolutely insufficient amount and was strictly restricted within a given period as well. This suggests that people considered a limited safety net sufficient in both quantity and length of time; permanent, sufficient assistance was not thought to be required, even for the most desperate neighbors. Though granary systems, such as those in the Qing dynasty of China,²⁷ were created in rural Japan especially after the eighteenth century, they did not promise a constant and regular relief for the poor either.²⁸ The ability to be self-supporting was strongly demanded in the rural society of Tokugawa Japan, while the attitude of only occasional relief dominated the nation.

Because of the ad hoc character of relief, targets for communal formal relief differed from time to time in each village. As in other areas and eras, the aged, disabled, and sick tended to be the primary subjects, but there was no basic principle as to who would receive relief, and the criteria for identifying the “deserving” changed often. As shown in the previous chapter, in 1866 Rokutan village established the main relief target as the tenants, excluded needy landowning households as eligible for relief, and treated the tenants “in dire need” (*itatte-nanjū*) more favorably than “the destitute” (*goku-nanjū*), who were supposed to be the most impoverished members in their community.

Given its ad hoc character, predictability, an important quality that Marjorie Keniston McIntosh perceived in institutionalized assistance to the poor in early modern England,²⁹ was not incorporated into poor relief in Tokugawa Japan. As the villagers of Odawara domain did in 1866, people often pleaded with their lords for *osukui* when they felt they could not make ends meet and expected their lords to be obligated to sustain their subject’s subsistence. However, these measures did not result in a constant, regularized poor relief system, either nationwide or in regional domains, and perhaps, as Yanagiya suggests, the people themselves did not consider whether such access to predictable assistance would be formally constructed.³⁰ The ad hoc attitude to poor relief penetrated the state and society of early modern Japan; occasional relief was enough and no formal system prevailed.³¹

Therefore, quantitative approaches, such as calculating annual expenditures of poor relief in a lord’s finances or those of an autonomous village, or counting the number and types of recipients continuously and systematically in a communal formal relief, are not only impossible but also meaningless in evaluating Tokugawa Japan’s poor relief practices. Qualitative analyses are required, and the most attractive viewpoint to consider is the quality of village autonomy that shaped the substance of poor relief in each rural society: that is, where the “deserving” line was established, who was counted out, and what sense of value was used by each village’s autonomous judgments concerning relief.

Although these standards were substantially set on a case-by-case basis, the way an individual worked seemed to be a key criterion in relief judgments. The

Rokutan village case in 1866 symbolizes this tendency: being a tenant was the primary concern, the laboring poor were treated lightly, and the actual condition of each household's living standard did not matter particularly. "Goodness" in everyday behavior seemed influential too. When Yamanobō village of Tōichi county, Yamato province, allocated seeds from its granary to the three ranks of the needy in 1800, households whose heads were regarded as "faithless" (*fujitsu*) or "selfish" (*wagamama*) were provided smaller amounts of relief than they should have been, even if their standards of living were ranked at the "destitute" (*goku-nan*) level.³² These attitudes in communal formal assistance lead us to a serious problem surrounding poor relief in early modern rural Japan: social sanctions directed toward relief targets.

TARGETISM AND SANCTIONS

Before discussing the sanctions thriving in poor relief, we should briefly trace the history of targetism in Japan, the precondition of social practices that brings shame on relief recipients.³³ In the field of poverty research, selecting and naming one by one those who deserve relief and those who do not is called targetism or selectivism, which are antonyms of universalism. Targetism requires listing the names, numbers, ages, earnings, and health of each household of recipients or applicants for relief; thus in the periods that targetism prevailed, many kinds of historical documents concerning poor relief were completed, and fortunately have remained extant until today. The abundance of poor relief documents in early modern Japan and England is owed to this principle of targetism.

In Japanese history, targetism first appears in the eighth century, a period of forming a centralized state ruled by the imported Chinese law system called *ritsuryō*. The central government decreed in 718 that the primary responsibility to relieve those who were not able to earn their own living, such as the aged, orphans, the disabled, or the economically destitute lay with their kin. If nobody was suitable, then the micro administrative unit in the capital Heijōkyō and rural areas, the *bō* and *ri*, would offer some formal help.³⁴ Clear evidence of this kind of formal assistance, if any, is rarely found and it seems that the *ritsuryō* state paid no attention to providing constant relief to the needy. On the other hand, the formal relief called *shingō* was bestowed temporarily at special times, such as the enthronement of the emperor, or bad times, involving famine, plague, and disasters (Terauchi 1982). Targetism appears in these *shingō* cases. In 739, when *shingō* was undertaken in Izumo province, the names of recipients, the aged, orphans, and the destitute, were listed one by one in each community unit *gō* and *eki*.³⁵ The basic policy of registering "all" nations for centralized taxation and conscription enabled targetism in this kind of occasional formal relief.

As the *ritsuryō* state system collapsed in the tenth century, the targetism principle was abandoned. Throughout the medieval era, formal poor relief was rarely

confirmed, apart from the almsgiving called *hi'nin-segyō*, which was temporarily provided by the shogunate or the imperial court in urban areas. However, even in this kind of charitable relief, alms were given to unspecified beggars (Mizuno 2013). Poor relief run by targetism vanished for centuries, both nationwide and at the community level.

Targetism reappeared in the seventeenth century as the Tokugawa shogunate began to govern the country and the family register system was introduced. Although we are rarely told about when targetism first started in Tokugawa Japan, the number of starving people during the years of famine from 1641 to 1642 was already minutely counted in formal documents,³⁶ which means that targetism was probably underway by that time. The histories afterward are shown in the previous chapters.

Poor relief managed by targetism seems to be more sophisticated than that directed toward unspecified individuals, but it inevitably brought harsh social sanctions against the recipients. The practice of shaming the recipients by coercing them to wear badges is well documented in studies of seventeenth- to eighteenth-century England,³⁷ but early modern rural Japan was no less eager than England to punish poor relief recipients. In 1837, a year when famine hit the whole country, eleven neighboring villages in Heguri county, Yamato province, made an agreement to take sanctions against the recipients of community almsgiving. For one generation, equivalent to about twenty to thirty years, recipients could not wear showy clothes, had to live a simple life, and were not permitted to wear *haori* (coat) and *setta* (high-grade sandals), a full dress for male adults, meaning that they had to attend community ceremonies, with shame, in ordinary clothes. Full members, including the children of each recipient household, were forced to sign their names to this agreement.³⁸

Wakabayashi village of Kawachi province went further. As noted in the previous section, Wakabayashi village gave rice in alms to the destitute in 1867, and drew up a book listing the names of those who donated the charity and those who received it. In the same document, they blamed the recipients, stating that their economic hardship was brought about by their idleness, and instead of providing alms, the village coerced the recipients to live in disgrace for five years: the names of recipients were openly posted at the barbershop (*kamiyuidoko*), where villagers gathered daily, as well as in front of each recipient's house; recipients could not wear or use *setta*, silks, or sunshades and were not allowed to drink a lot or go on trips, each of which symbolized a luxurious life; moreover, recipients had to assume an obsequious posture when they entered a donor's house.³⁹ Although the term of the sanctions was shorter than in the Yamato villages' case, having one's name conspicuously posted might have been a harsher stigma for the recipients, as harsh as the badges worn in early modern England. The price of depending on charity was not light in the age of targetism.

Furthermore, depending too much on your home community could cost you your right of residence: in 1699, Terada village of Kuze county, Yamashiro province,

became so overburdened with taking over a bankrupt member's heavy unpaid tax that they finally decided to expel him from their community.⁴⁰

In view of these facts, we may recognize why people in Tokugawa Japan endeavored to avoid depending on others' alms as much as possible and preferred to get relief through financial markets rather than almsgiving, even if they were in desperate need. When *osukuigin* was dispensed in 1866, Rokutan village also decided to lend or sell rice to the needy from the granary, either with no interest or at low prices. Low prices were set for each of the three ranks mentioned in the former chapter: rank one paid six hundred *monme* per one *koku*, rank two 550 *monme*, and rank three five hundred *monme*, while the market price was nine hundred to 950 *monme*. Moreover, the village suggested to "the most destitute" (*gokugoku-nanjūnin*) in rank three that the community was prepared to give in alms one *gō* of rice per person a day for sixty days. Three households accepted this suggestion, but most of the *gokugoku-nanjūnin* preferred to "buy" low-priced rice, so Rokutan village set their price at 450 *monme* for a maximum of two *gō* for each person per day.⁴¹ Even though others regarded the destitutes' living standard as miserable, it did not mean that the destitute would easily choose the "cheapest" way to survive.

A few more affluent people behaved similarly. In 1850, at Minamiōji village of Izumi county, Izumi province, the economic situation was so difficult that 60 wealthy households decided to allocate charity rice, barley, and cash in copper to "the destitute" (*goku-nan*) for a while. Meanwhile, the middle-class residents (*chūbun-no-mono*), about 170 households, were facing the same hardships and were in great need as well. However, the middle-class not only refused to accept alms from others, but also refused to go begging outside their community, so, as a substitute, the village officers distributed several kinds of reserved funds to these residents.⁴² In a sense of being "given" relief from others, accepting charity or reserved funds seems to be the same, but for the middle-class residents reserved funds were more acceptable since they themselves were investors of the funds; it relieved them of being haunted by the fear of being total "dependents" on their communities.

As in early modern Europe, seeking alms was not an unfamiliar choice to maintain subsistence in rural Japan, and begging was incorporated into the so-called economy of makeshifts, the household strategies for the survival of the indigent (Hufton 1974, King and Tomkins 2003). Nevertheless, there was a great difference between "buying," "renting," and being "given" when people decided to rely on others' help; the last was avoided as much as possible because it meant being labeled unequivocally as a dependent or burden on the community, and had a high chance of bringing social sanctions onto oneself as well.⁴³ A strong belief in evaluating highly the ability for self-support backed these judgments, and this attitude was so strong that it could force the poor to flee from home even if their community intended to continue supporting them. In Minamiōji village, in the middle of the nineteenth century, there was an impoverished household headed by a peasant

called Hanbei. His family was in so much need that not only were relief from kin and *goningumi* provided, but creditors also suspended demands for payment until his finances improved. The community showed a positive attitude to maintaining his subsistence but, at last, Hanbei's family fled their home in 1846. The reason for their moonlight flight was a painful one; they felt so ashamed that they could not bear anymore to depend on others' help. (The Hanbeis came back to Minamiōji village five years later and described the circumstances of why they fled and how they lived during their time away.)⁴⁴ For peasants living in rural Tokugawa Japan, feeling sorry for neighbors' burdens and pride in economic independence could outweigh the objective conditions of being offered relief in one's home community.

THE HISTORICAL POSITION OF TOKUGAWA JAPAN IN DOMESTIC CONTEXT

Poor relief in early modern rural Japan was substantially managed by the micropolitics of each autonomous village, which means numerous types of relief could be provided depending on duration, amount, and target. Thus, the quantitative approaches familiar in European poor relief studies are not useful for describing Tokugawa Japan, at either the state or the community level. On the other hand, even in these case-by-case circumstances, we are able to confirm the common attitudes held toward poor relief, which penetrated rural society in Japan. A stress on each household's ability for self-reliance, or "self-help," formed the core of communal formal relief policies; an ad hoc attitude prevailed, and limited assistance in both quantity and duration was thought to be enough for even the most impoverished members. While the village community did not completely desert their indigent fellows and tried to support them as much as possible so as not to allow them to become bankrupt or totally hungry, once the recipients were regarded as a burden to the community, and especially when they were "given" communal help, then with the backup of targetism, harsh sanctions were implemented, even if the assistance was provided only occasionally.

From these characteristics of rural poor relief practices, several new historical images of the state and society of Japan can be discussed. First, the ad hoc attitude confirmed in *osukui*, the formal relief granted by the lords, can change our conventional view toward state power in early modern Japan. In previous studies, both the shogunate and the domains were regarded as holding "interventional" powers toward public welfare, especially in the seventeenth century, and as lords' finances got worse after the eighteenth century, the attitude toward *osukui* retreated. Reluctance to provide funds for granaries or lend grain to the needy was recognized as typical proof of the retreat of *osukui* policy.⁴⁵

Certainly, as stressed in Masayuki Tanimoto's chapter in part 1, the interventionist attitude toward building large-scale infrastructure, such as irrigation and urban development, tended to shrink after the eighteenth century, but that does

not mean the political attitude toward public welfare, typified by poor relief, “retreated” as well. The facts were far different, and as this chapter indicates, the lords’ principles for formal relief were established on an ad hoc basis from the beginning. Therefore, as also shown in part 1, expenditures for public welfare in the lords’ finances remained low throughout the era of the Tokugawa shogunate. No evidence shows the historical transition from a “positive” attitude toward *osukui* to a “negative” one, and facts that had been recognized as showing this transition should be regarded as just a “ripple” in the vast ocean of occasional relief. Discussing whether the *osukui* policy “retreated” is out of the question in its historical context from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth.

Moreover, the lords and the shogunate in Tokugawa Japan are often said to have governed their subjects with the idea of a Confucian-style benevolent rule called *jinsei*, and the *osukui* policy has been described as the symbol of *jinsei* ideology.⁴⁶ Acceptance of *jinsei* thought may explain partly why early modern rulers granted more relief than their preceding medieval lords. However, considering the ad hoc attitude toward *osukui* policy, we should not emphasize the rulers’ benevolent ideas in discussing the characteristics of poor relief in Tokugawa Japan. Repeatedly stressed in this chapter, the core of poor relief in early modern Japan lies in the micropolitics carried out in each autonomous village. Villagers of Wakabayashi in 1867 shamed the recipients on their own and not because of their lord’s order.

The historical position of the attitude to self-reliance should also be afforded attention. Previously, the emergence of stressing the ability for self-support was thought to be a symptom of “modernization,” and it was assumed that premodern Japan was transformed from a society essentially underpinned by people’s mutual assistance to a “modern, competitive” society in which a strong belief in the ability for self-help existed.⁴⁷ However, as this study shows, self-supporting ability was strongly demanded from each peasant household from the beginning, and therefore, together with the combination of communal mutual assistance, Tokugawa villages vacillated throughout the era over which sector, personal or public, had the ultimate responsibility for saving the poor.

In the context of the Japanese history of poor relief, the Tokugawa era holds a unique and significant place. Even though an ad hoc attitude ruled poor relief in early modern Japan, both the lord and the communities did start to relieve impoverished households one by one, compared with the medieval era, when no active movement was made to assist the poor formally and individually for hundreds of years. On the other hand, the characteristics of poor relief in Tokugawa villages may have shaped the framework of the modern poor relief system, and even that of contemporary Japan. The modern poor relief system legitimated by the poor law *jukkyū-kisoku* of 1874 was known for its severe restrictiveness, shown in the extremely low ratio of recipients, compared with that of England under the Old Poor Law system.⁴⁸ Twenty-first-century Japan is not more accommodating of the poor than it was in the prewar era; although a new comprehensive relief system

was started after 1950, the system has only covered 20% of the truly needy,⁴⁹ and in spite of this low ratio and insufficient allowances, a harsh stigma that involves treating recipients as “lazy” occurs repeatedly. According to *The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2007 Survey*, the Japanese seem to now be the “coldest” nation in the world in terms of supportive attitudes toward a governmental safety net.⁵⁰ Behind the restrictiveness incorporated into the modern relief system, Yoshimasa Ikeda perceived a deep gap that existed between the Tokugawa mutual assistance practices managed by people’s autonomy and the modern relief system that imposed the poor law “from above” on the people as a blessing from the emperor and suppressed the former practices of development “from the bottom” into a nationwide public welfare system.⁵¹ Certainly, we should not overlook the differences between the early modern and modern era, such as having a nationwide poor law system or not; however, more attention must be paid to the legacy or tradition that has survived from the seventeenth century onward. It must be remembered that targetism, restrictiveness, sanctions, and a strong belief in self-help were the most significant elements of poor relief in rural Tokugawa Japan.

A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF JAPAN WITH ENGLAND, PRUSSIA, AND CHINA

As shown in the chapters in part 2, the characteristics of poor relief, as well as the types of historical documents concerning it, differed widely in early modern Japan, England, Prussia, and China. If the research areas are expanded, the differences will be diversified as well. Where numerous types of poor relief practices and systems might have prevailed, how can we compare them on the same dimension while not only mentioning the differences or varieties? An examination of how the vivid micropolitics at the communal level influenced the qualities of poor relief and whether sanctions were exercised against the recipients or not would be worth undertaking, because social sanctions and stigma surrounding poor relief, which made the welfare system work inefficiently, have been a big headache in several contemporary countries, and, therefore, research into the historical background to this problem is required acutely.

From this viewpoint, the historical experience of Tokugawa Japan would be a suitable benchmark for comparative discussions, as poor relief in early modern rural Japan was notably characterized by social sanctions and targetism implemented at the micropolitical level in autonomous villages. To conclude this chapter, we compare the characteristics of poor relief in Japan, England, Prussia, and China from the dimensions of micropolitics and social sanctions and then discuss the reason for the difference between areas where harsh sanctions were brought against the recipients and those that seemed to be not so eager about them.

From a Japanese perspective, the case of early modern England could be compared to that of Tokugawa Japan on the same dimension. As is well known, from

the late sixteenth century onward, England constructed a unique, permanent, and nationwide poor relief system based on poor laws, poor rates collected from each parish, regular doles allocated weekly to the indigent, and a juridical system accepting complaints from applicants and recipients whose applications or allowances had been rejected or cut off by the overseers (Slack 1988, 1990, King 2000, Hindle 2004, McIntosh 2012, Healey 2014).⁵²

It would seem that England was completely different from Japan, where no poor laws, poor rates, or regular doles existed in the same period.⁵³ However, if we adopt the viewpoint of targetism and sanctions, major commonalities surface: England's poor relief system was also well known for the severity of its distinction between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" and its harsh attitude in shaming the recipients by coercing them to wear badges.⁵⁴ While the two were differentiated by whether or not they had a systematic support structure for the poor, recipients of communal formal relief in both areas were treated in a similar way by the fellows of their own parish or village: as a burden on the community. As the sanctions in rural Tokugawa Japan were managed by the micropolitics in each autonomous village, so was England's badging policy determined by each parish and county's micropolitics, which consisted of negotiations and struggles between the poor, the ratepayers, the overseers, and the justices of the peace.

While, in Japan and England, the micropolitical method is suitable for looking inside each village or parish autonomy, in early modern Prussia under demesne lordship (*Gutsherrschaft*), the viewpoint of micropolitics is also useful in examining the personal relationships between the demesne lords and their subjects. The protection provided by the lords for the peasants (tenants), which was called *Konservation*,⁵⁵ is especially significant in discussing the history of poor relief from a comparative perspective.

In Prussia, in return for owning the peasant farm (the "upper ownership") and withholding the "lower ownership," lords accepted responsibility for their subjects' subsistence and had to protect their tenants' everyday lives. Demesne lords were required to provide farm equipment, livestock, seeds, and buildings when they first leased their farms to tenants, and, in some cases, even beds and kitchen utensils were prepared.⁵⁶ If tenants did not hold the lower ownership, lords were obligated to grant timber continuously in order to maintain tenants' buildings.⁵⁷ Moreover, as Takashi Iida's chapter in part 2 indicates, tenants could enjoy exemption from feudal rents in rebuilding their buildings, which were called "ordinary assistance." These protections by the lords were called *Konservation* and were not regarded as a "blessing" but as the lords' duty. Therefore, the cost of *Konservation* was not considered by the villagers to be a burden on their community, and would not provoke social sanctions against the recipients as well.

Of course, this does not mean that peasants in early modern Prussia lived peacefully under demesne lordship. Although providing timber allowance was the lords' duty, routine maintenance of farm equipment, livestock, and seeds was the

tenants' duty. If the tenants faced difficulties in performing this routine maintenance, they had an opportunity to receive "extraordinary assistance" from their lords. However, as Iida's case study shows, whether the extraordinary assistance would be granted or not depended on the negotiation between each lord and tenant, which was influenced by the availability of a worthy successor to maintain the farm, and if the lord judged a tenant incompetent and ineligible for extraordinary assistance, the tenant was evicted from his farm and downgraded to the status of a lodger, even if he held the lower ownership. In the context of Prussian lordship, targetism played a role in the bargaining for extraordinary assistance, which was affected by the micropolitics between the demesne lords and the tenants.

On the other hand, as the population of lodgers grew during the eighteenth century, poor relief for them became a political and public problem since they were not integrated completely into the demesne lords' personal protection. Thus, the Prussian state ordered each village to support their impoverished members, but, as shown in Iida's chapter, the villagers' reaction was rather negative: as in Japan and England, communal relief recipients were regarded as a burden on the community, and the Prussian villagers were so reluctant to relieve the poor that, in some cases, they even passed an impoverished lodger from one village to another to cut the cost of communal relief as much as possible. Although villagers in Prussia did not shame the recipients by revealing their names or coercing them to wear badges, probably indicating the differences in the level of communal autonomy between Japan and England and Prussia, harsh sanctions in all areas were underpinned by the micropolitics at the local community level.

In contrast to these cases, no social sanctions were imposed on the recipients of poor relief in Qing China. As shown in R. Bin Wong's chapter, Qing China developed a nationwide granary system which comprised "ever-normal granaries" set in county seats, "community granaries" in the countryside, and "charity granaries" in major towns (Hoshi 1985, Will and Wong 1991). The ever-normal granary was the core of the system and, in combination with the community and charity granary, its main aim was stabilizing grain prices and relieving the poor by giving, lending, and selling grain at reduced prices.

What is noteworthy about China's case is that, unlike Japan, where accepting communal alms was avoided as much as possible because it meant being labeled unequivocally as a dependent or burden on the community, no such stigma seemingly existed in China, and no social sanctions were imposed on the recipients of free grain from these granaries. This difference probably depended on the degree of "openness" to relief resources. While the substance of communal formal relief in rural Tokugawa Japan was its restrictiveness underpinned by targetism, China's granary system was actually open to anyone, including those who were not in real need but wanted to make an easy profit from it: merchants often bought up grain from the granaries for private resale, lowering the possibility of reduced-price sales reaching the truly needy; corruption of officials who maintained the

granary system was always a headache for the authorities. Drawing up a list of the poor was attempted in some areas in the 1730s to the 1750s, but that targetism was not for selecting or excluding severely the “deserving” and “undeserving” but for protecting those who were eligible for granary sales or loans. Nevertheless, even this kind of listing did not work well in China because of the difficulties in locating and registering the poor.⁵⁸

Previous studies have compiled detailed data on the holdings and balance of each type of granary in each area or the numbers of people fed by granary disbursements. On the other hand, investigating what kind of people required and utilized free grains, loans, or reduced-price sales is hard because of the scarcity of historical records, which means that applying the micropolitical method to Qing China is not so easy. However, though our inquiry faces these problems, we are still able to conclude that, thanks to the granary system’s “open access” and profitable characteristics, grain recipients in China did not face shame and sanctions, and, ironically, that merit itself could also be an obstacle to efficient relief of the poor.

By comparing poor relief cases of Japan, England, Prussia, and China from the viewpoints of social sanctions, targetism, and micropolitics, we can gain an insight into what kinds of historical mechanisms provoked harsh sanctions against the recipients of communal formal relief in early modern societies.

As the cases of Japan and England show, targetism, alongside an efficient register system, was a necessary condition to shame the recipients before their community members. The contrast was with China, where malfunctioning targetism and open granaries made sanctions less likely, though they simultaneously made relieving the truly needy less efficient.

However, as the negotiations with the extraordinary assistance between the Prussian lords and the peasants indicate, targetism alone would not bring about sanctions toward the recipients of relief at the community level. A decisive factor seems to have been a feeling of resentment against being burdened by the recipients of communal relief, among the communal charity donors in Tokugawa and Prussian villages and the ratepayers in England parishes. In order to provoke social sanctions, communal relief should be a “public” affair rather than just a “formal” action. Thus, a viewpoint that favors micropolitics at the community level becomes significant since participating in communal politics is necessary to make the relief resources “public.” Tokugawa Japan provides more interesting evidence that shows types of relief that were free from sanctions, which helps us to understand this mechanism. Whether the donors were all village members or only the wealthy villagers, once communal charity was provided through village autonomy, the almsgiving became a public affair and inevitably made the recipients a burden on the community. On the other hand, if the donor was a certain wealthy peasant and made the personal decision to grant charity, the almsgiving was regarded as a personal affair, which would not force the recipients to be a communal burden,

let alone be punished by their village fellows. Formal relief from the lords, the *osukui*, did not also provoke sanctions at the community level, even if it was allocated through village autonomy. Though the actual resources of *osukui* came from the land tax collected from the villages ruled by each lord, alms from the lords were treated by the villagers not as a financial burden but as a “blessing” by the lords. *Osukui* was certainly “formal” relief but was assumed not to be “public” assistance, whereas communal relief underpinned by people’s autonomy was regarded not only as actual formal help but also as a public service of one’s community. Furthermore, as Japan shifted from a lordship state to a centralized nation at the latter half of the nineteenth century, the stigma surrounding poor relief went from a communal level to a national level. Although popular desire for sanctions managed at the micropolitical level in autonomous villages might have receded, the historical stigmatizing of relief recipients and the poor as dependent or lazy has become nationwide, as the expenditure on poor relief has become a matter of national interest.

Our volume may be the first attempt to compare poor relief in early modern societies, including not only European areas but also Asian areas, from the viewpoint of social sanctions, targetism, and micropolitics. Only four areas are chosen, but even with those limited cases, we are able to obtain a great insight into the historical background and mechanism of shaming the recipients of formal and public relief, which, regrettably, still survives in our twenty-first-century societies. If we broaden our research areas, another historical path may appear. In continuing this approach, not only will a newer image of each early modern society become clearer, but we will also come to a deeper understanding of the characteristics of our contemporary world.

NOTES

1. For relief cases such as almsgiving in urban areas, see Yoshida 1991, Kitahara 1995. Beggars, called *hi'nin*, often formed their own autonomous status groups (Tsukada 1987, Ehlers 2018).
2. For details of the autonomy operated in village communities, see Masayuki Tanimoto’s and Kenichiro Aratake’s chapters in part 1.
3. There are only two historiographies that specialize in the Japanese history of poverty and welfare from a long-term perspective: Yoshida 1984, Ikeda 1986.
4. For tables: Ikeda 1986, 192, 194, 304–307, 310, 312, 539–541, 696–700, Garon 1997, 43.
5. For a survey on previous studies, see Kinoshita 2017, chap. 1.
6. If one crop field is ranked as *jōden* (a fertile rice paddy) and its *today* is set at 1.5 *koku* per 1 *tan*, the *kokudaka* of 5 *tan* of *jōden* will be 7.5 *koku*.
7. For details and analysis of each household’s data, see Kinoshita 2017, chap. 2, 3.
8. Regional lords (*han*) in early modern Japan are usually translated as “domains,” but considering Wenkai He’s strict definitions of the “domain state” and “fiscal (tax) state,” *han* should be considered as “tax state” as well, and a definite category for “domain (demesne)” should be applied in the same way to those such as *Gutsherrschaft* in Brandenburg-Prussia, as shown in Takashi Iida’s chapter. In this chapter, we will use the term “domain” for convenience. See He 2013, 1–23.

9. Kinoshita 2017, chap. 6.
10. The notion of characterizing early modern Japan as a compound state and regarding domains as “states’ within a ‘state’” is presented by Mark Ravina: Ravina 1999, 1–45.
11. *Tokugawa Kinreikō*, Zenshū 5, Sōbunsha, 1959, 154–155.
12. Fujita 1983, 51. *Tōdō-han Yamashiro-yamato-bugyō Kiroku*, Seibundō Shuppan, 1996, 62.
13. Yanagiya 2007, 254–255.
14. Drixler 2013, 158–169.
15. *Nihonmatsushishi*, 1, Nihonmatsu City, 1999, 706–720.
16. *Tōdō-han Yamashiro-yamato-bugyō Kiroku*, 380, *Hashimotoshishi*, Kinsei Shiryō 1, Hashimoto City, 2007, 94–95, *Andochōshi*, Shiryōhen Jōkan, Ando Town, 1990, 747–749.
17. *Nara-bugyōsho Kiroku*, Seibundō Shuppan, 1995, 163–174, 196.
18. Ōtomo 1982, 44, Ōguchi 1969, 37, Ōguchi 1981, 39, Ōno Mizuo, ed., *Edo-bakufu Zaisei Shiryō Shūsei*, Jōkan, Yoshikawakōbunkan, 2008, 368, *Edo-bakufu Zaisei Shiryō Shūsei*, Gekan, 39.
19. *Nihonmatsushishi*, 1, 718.
20. Yasuzawa Shūichi ed. *Matsue-han Deiri-shōran*, Hara Shobō, 1999, 33, 35, 57–67, 125, 165–171. Relief expenditures in the shogunate finance were also classified as “extraordinary expenses” (*rinji-gonyōyō* or *betsukuchi-haraikata*): *Edo-bakufu Zaisei Shiryō Shūsei*, Jōkan, 363–370.
21. Kinoshita 2017, 263, 271.
22. Kinoshita 2017, 261.
23. *Fujiiderashishi*, 8, Fujiidera City, 1989, 133–134.
24. Kinoshita 2017, 241–242, 252.
25. Kinoshita 2017, 244.
26. Kinoshita 2017, chap. 2.
27. Hoshi 1985, Will and Wong 1991. See R. Bin Wong’s chapter in part 2 as well.
28. Even in the case of Izumi province in 1803, where an allowance called “everlasting formal relief” (*ei-osukui*) was provided to an aged resident through the granary, “everlasting” in fact meant just one month’s supply: Saito 2014, 299–301.
29. McIntosh 2012, 1–4.
30. Yanagiya 2007, 254–255.
31. The only exception would be the relief system introduced in Edo city in the late eighteenth century, which granted a constant allowance called *jōshiki-osukui* to those living in hunger with no supporters, such as orphans under ten, single people older than seventy who were also sick, and single youth who were chronically ill. Indigent families bearing sick members were also eligible: Yoshida 1991, 3–38, Garon 1997, 30–31.
32. *Jintarō Ichidaiki*, Seibundō Shuppan, 1994, 65–68.
33. Kinoshita 2017, chap. 8.
34. *Nihon Shisō Taikei*, 3 Ritsuryō, Iwanami Shoten, 1976, 235.
35. *Dainihon Komonjo*, 2, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1901 (reproduced in 1968), 201–247.
36. Kikuchi 1997, 15–16.
37. Hindle 2004, 433–445.
38. *Ikarugachōshi*, Shiryōhen, Ikaruga Town, 1979, 493.
39. Kinoshita 2017, 244–245.
40. Okuda Shūzo, *Genroku Murakata Nikki: Minami-yamashiro “Ueda-shi Kyūki” wo yomu*, Bun-rikaku, 1988, 75.
41. Kinoshita 2017, 223–224, 241–242.
42. *Okudake-monjo*, 6, Osaka Prefectural Library, 1971, 740.
43. Avoiding being “given” help from others demonstrates how loan agreements in everyday life were important for Tokugawa villagers. For details of microcredit in early modern rural Japan, see Ōtsuka 1996.
44. *Okudake-monjo*, 5, Osaka Prefectural Library, 1971, 781–783.

45. Fukaya 1986, 63–97, Fukaya 1993, 15–66, Kikuchi 2003, 185–220.
46. Fukaya 1993, 15–66, Ehlers 2018, 1–32.
47. Yasumaru 1974, 4–55; Makihara 2006, vii–viii, 78–80, 88–91, 139, 201–202, Garon 1997, 31–32.
48. Ikeda 1986, 192–198.
49. Iwata 2007, 71–73.
50. Only 59% of Japanese people agree that taking care of the poor is the state's or government's responsibility, while most countries' consensus on this issue reaches 80% to 90%: *World Publics Welcome Global Trade—But Not Immigration: 47-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey*, Pew Research Center, 2007, 22, www.pewglobal.org/files/2007/10/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-October-4-2007-REVISED-UPDATED-5-27-14.pdf.
51. Ikeda 1986, 194–198.
52. See Jonathan Healey's chapter in part 2 as well.
53. As Jonathan Healey insists, England outperformed other European countries as well in constructing a nationwide safety net, but even such countries (especially their urban areas) as France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries had a history of enacting poor laws, surveying the poor, and allocating regular weekly or monthly doles to the indigent, which did not exist at all in Tokugawa Japan: Healey 2014, 4, Jütte 1994, 45–58, 100–142, 201–203.
54. In Steve Hindle's study, cases of badging policy are found in more than eighty parishes in England from 1677 to 1790: Hindle 2004, 438–440.
55. Eddie 2013, 29–67.
56. Eddie 2013, 46.
57. For details, see Takashi Iida's chapter in part 4.
58. Will and Wong 1991, 398–399, 408.

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