

Outcastes and *Ie*

The Case of Two Beggar Boss Associations

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Tokugawa society included a wide variety of outcaste groups that were organized around an occupation such as leather manufacturing or begging and that claimed monopoly rights on certain resources, usually on turfs that allowed for the collection of animal carcasses or alms from peasants and townspeople. Although the members of such groups did not intermarry with commoners and experienced social exclusion in many areas of life, they adopted one of the most mainstream institutions of Tokugawa society: the hereditary household. This chapter focuses on one of the most widespread types of outcaste status group—the *hinin* (beggar bosses)—and explores what kinds of households emerged within these groups, and what roles these households played both in the groups and for the *hinin* families themselves.

Groups of outcastes (*senmin*, or “base people”) had structurally much in common with other, more respected status groups. They used guild-like organizations to defend and manage the resources most central to their livelihood, and also relied on the framework of the guild to allocate the duties they were required to perform for the authorities in exchange for official protection of their privileges. In the case of the *hinin* guilds, the most important resource consisted of access to a begging turf, and the most common duties included beggar patrols, management of beggar hospices, and other services pertaining to the world of mendicants and outlaws. By the middle of the Tokugawa period, many *hinin* groups were dividing these rights and duties up among the households of full members. Because of the implications households held for the performance of public duties, they could become subject to intervention by the group’s leadership or even the warrior authorities if they failed to operate in the expected manner. At the same time, households also allowed *hinin* families to accumulate property and transmit

it to their descendants. Although property and begging privileges could turn the headship of a *hinin* household into a desirable asset, the position also came with significant obligations vis-à-vis the authorities and confined its holder to a life of both legal and customary discrimination. The tendency toward the formation of hereditary households among both commoners and outcastes alike made it difficult for base people to escape their lowly background and reinforced the idea of outcaste status as a hereditary condition. This chapter illustrates the difficulty of crossing the boundary to commoner status by introducing the case of a *hinin* family in the nineteenth century for whom the household became both a vehicle and an obstacle to its ambitions.

The historical literature on the institution of outcaste households is still miniscule, probably reflecting the sensitive nature of the subject. Even in the postwar era, the descendants of former outcastes could face discrimination from employers, neighbors, and potential marriage partners if their origins became known, and the Japanese government reacted in 1976 by restricting public access to the modern-era household registers.¹ Many public and private archives also removed relevant materials from the Tokugawa period such as population records (*ninbetsuchō*) and death registers of temples (*kakochō*) from circulation. In recent years, a wealth of new documents related to base people has become available because local historians and descendants have cleared them for publication, but very few of the studies drawing on these records have so far engaged in the reconstruction of *hinin* households and lineages.² The most significant contribution is Tsukada Takashi's work on the *hinin* associations of Osaka, Japan's second-largest city (after the mid-1700s). In this chapter, I pair Osaka's case with that of Ōno, a town of about six thousand residents in a mountainous part of central Honshu that served as the castle seat of a minor domain lord.³ Ōno town was home to a small but relatively well-documented *hinin* association, known as the Koshirō, whose households performed duties similar to those of Osaka's *hinin*. Urban *hinin* communities constitute the logical starting point for an investigation into *hinin* households because the *hinin* living in the countryside as village watchmen did not usually form communities of their own but existed under the wing of town-based groups of beggar bosses.

Osaka's four *hinin* compounds date back to the earliest years of Osaka as a warrior-governed castle town. They emerged when the new warrior authorities in the decades around 1600 granted four plots of tax-exempt residential land to homeless people, many of them immigrants from other parts of western Japan.⁴ The Tennōji compound (established in 1594), the Tobita compound (1609), and the Dōtonbori compound (1622) were located in villages along the southern border of Osaka's townspeople quarters, whereas the Tenma compound (1626) was situated on the northern periphery of the city. Each of the compounds constituted a self-governing guild of beggar bosses, but they also coordinated their mutual affairs through the so-called Takahara Office, originally a hospice for invalid prisoners that was

jointly administered by the four groups.⁵ By the end of the seventeenth century, the Tennōji compound had a population of six hundred, including apprentices, family members, and subordinate groups of newcomers.⁶ Ōno's *hinin* community was much smaller, with between three and seven bosses (i.e., household heads) and a total population of forty or less including underlings and family members. Yet the *hinin* groups of Osaka and Ōno resembled each other in their independence from other local groups of base people, a feature that set them apart from beggar bosses in Edo and Wakayama, for example, who were both subordinate to groups of leatherworking outcastes.⁷ The history of Osaka's beggar bosses, especially in the Tennōji compound, is relatively well documented, thanks in part to the archives of village and warrior officials who were in charge of transmitting and receiving *hinin*-related communications.⁸ In Ōno, the two elders of the townspeople community frequently recorded their interactions with the Koshirō in their administrative journals. By their very nature, most of these records tend to focus on the beggar bosses' public duties rather than their family lives or group-internal affairs because town elders and commoner village headmen communicated with the *hinin* primarily on behalf of warrior governments or in the context of town or village rule.⁹ Yet some of them do convey information on the public functions and private interests of *hinin* households.

HININ HOUSEHOLD FORMATION IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The early history of Osaka's *hinin* households is much better documented than one might expect for a group of mostly illiterate beggars on the margins of society. Most of this paper trail resulted from the shogunate's harsh repression of Christianity. In the 1640s the Tokugawa regime, which governed the city of Osaka directly, required all residents of Osaka, including those in the beggar compounds, to register with a Buddhist temple as part of its bid to eradicate the Christian faith from Japanese society. All *hinin* had to report their religious affiliation by submitting registers of religious surveillance (so-called *shūmon ninbetsu aratamechō*) on a regular basis through the commoner village officials in charge of the tax-exempt land on which they lived. The oldest (and only) surviving register, created for the Tennōji beggar compound in 1698, lists 600 *hinin* in 189 households.¹⁰ Each of these household units included a head and often a few family members and apprentices. The majority of the households on the register were small; fifty-seven of them had only one member.

At the time this register was created, the Tennōji beggar compound had already been in existence for nearly a century. Its earliest members, at least those we know of, seem to have included many single, uprooted drifters who had migrated to Osaka from various parts of western Japan. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the Tennōji compound continued to absorb homeless beggars from

the streets of Osaka and its environs; but at the same time, a core group of *hinin* emerged that coalesced into a body of hereditary members.¹¹ Many of the adults who appear on the 1698 register were born inside the group to parents of *hinin* background, even though marriages between established members and newcomers were still fairly common at this point. For Ōno, no population registers exist that might shed light on the composition of local *hinin* households.¹² But the death register of a temple in the castle town notes “the mother of Koshirō Kahei” in 1668, and lists other deaths of Koshirō and their family members for the years 1674, 1685, 1692, and 1693. In 1850, a head priest marked one of these individuals as the ancestor of a Koshirō lineage still in existence.¹³ This death register demonstrates that by the second half of the seventeenth century, Ōno’s Koshirō, too, had established ties with a Buddhist temple and were receiving posthumous names for their deceased family members. Most likely, they had also begun to report their religious affiliation to the domain authorities. By this point, the beggar bosses clearly constituted a distinct social group within the castle town that was known under the name Koshirō. In fact, the death register represents the oldest piece of evidence we have for the existence of this group.

Reading Tennōji’s population register of 1698 in combination with lineage registers yields interesting insights into the development of Osaka’s *hinin* lineages over time. Lineage registers were another by-product of the shogunate’s persecution of Christianity. In 1687 the shogunate required all status communities in the country to track the offspring of Christian apostates over five generations for men and three generations for women. The Tennōji beggar compound created one such register in 1689 to record the descendants of seventeen *hinin* (including five couples) who had renounced Christianity in 1631.¹⁴ This register indicates that of the five guild leaders who signed off on Tennōji’s population register of 1698, four—the compound chief, the deputy elder, and three subbosses—were descendants of former Christians.¹⁵ Taken together, the two registers demonstrate that some of these leadership roles had turned into hereditary positions. Compound chief Tarōemon, for example, was the eldest son of the compound’s first boss, Heiji, who had abrogated Christianity in 1631 while still a minor. Tarōemon was succeeded by his third and then his fourth son and eventually by his nephew, whom he had adopted as a son-in-law. The compound’s sixth chief Kumanosuke, Tarōemon’s grandchild, married the daughter of Tarōemon’s nephew and was later succeeded by his own son, grandson, and grandson-in-law. This evidence suggests that the position of compound chief remained with Heiji’s lineage until the early eighteenth century. The preferred succession seems to have been from father to son, but chiefs could compensate for a lack of male offspring of appropriate age by appointing their sons-in-law, who were often the children of close relatives. There was at least one other *hinin* group in Osaka—the Dōtonbori compound—that also chose some of its leaders by hereditary succession at that time,¹⁶ and the same seems to have applied to the *hinin* community in the castle town of Wakayama south of Osaka.

In Wakayama, however, not all leadership positions were monopolized by a single family and rotated among a few distinguished lineages instead.¹⁷

With regard to leadership positions, at least, hereditary male succession was thus practiced from an early point within Osaka's *hinin* compounds. But if we widen the focus to the guilds as a whole, the *hinin* households in the seventeenth century still seem to have been fairly unstable. The larger *hinin* families in the Tennōji compound, which are the only ones for whom there are enough data, practiced a form of ultimogeniture, meaning that their older children all left the parental home upon reaching maturity and established their own family units, leaving only the last child behind to live with the elderly parents.¹⁸ In Wakayama, ultimogeniture also extended to leadership roles as it was usually the youngest son who succeeded his father in the position of guild chief.¹⁹ The reasons for this apparent preference for ultimogeniture are still unclear, but the beggar bosses' relative lack of property could have been a factor. The poorer the family, the less incentive children had to stay behind and claim an inheritance from their parents.²⁰ Another possible explanation is that the *hinin*'s begging turf was still expanding in the late seventeenth century in conjunction with Osaka's overall growth as a city. At that time, the children of established beggar bosses might still have encountered relatively favorable conditions for the establishment of new, self-supporting household units.

CRISIS AND INTERVENTION: *HININ* HOUSEHOLDS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TOKUGAWA PERIOD

By the late eighteenth century, the situation of *hinin* guilds in the two towns had changed considerably. In Osaka, the full guild members—the “young men” (*wakakimono*), as full members outside leadership positions were called irrespective of age—now maintained clearly identifiable households, which could be inherited and usually involved ownership of a physical building and the land on which it stood. The most important property of these *hinin* households, however, consisted of access rights to one or several town blocks (so-called *chō*, which were run by self-governing associations of house-owning townspeople) in the city of Osaka. In return for obtaining alms from the residents of these blocks, the “young men” dispatched their underlings to work there as watchmen—in other words, to patrol the neighborhood for unlicensed beggars and criminals.²¹ Such access rights to one or several blocks effectively represented begging rights and were registered as “watchman shares” within the group. Although each household was ideally associated with only one share, it was possible for one household to own several shares at once. According to the final Christian lineage register from the Tennōji compound, which dates to 1775, the majority of descendants of former Christians who still fell under the reporting requirement at that time belonged to the class of “young men,” and either dispatched underlings to blocks in the city of Osaka or worked as watchmen themselves for villages in Osaka's vicinity.²²

The social structure of the *hinin* compounds thus coalesced over time into professional guilds of beggar bosses with a core of hereditary members. But by the late eighteenth century, that structure was already showing signs of erosion. According to a guild-internal document from around 1800, the number of young-man households in Osaka's four *hinin* compounds had been declining for the past couple of years. A similar problem surfaced among Ōno's Koshirō in 1845, and the *hinin* communities in the cities of Kyoto and Sakai (both in the Kinai region near Osaka) likewise experienced significant losses of members in the late Tokugawa period, not only among underlings but also among full hereditary beggar bosses.²³ What were the causes of this apparently widespread trend, and how did the *hinin* guilds and the authorities react to the loss of active, duty-performing *hinin* households?

The case of Ōno domain shows that the domain administration perceived the shrinking of the local *hinin* guild as an urgent problem with public ramifications. A conversation on this issue took place in 1845 among the domain's town governor, one of the town elders, and one of the village group headmen (the equivalent of the town elders in the countryside).²⁴ The town governor informed the two commoner officials that the number of "town watchmen" (i.e., the Koshirō) had gradually dropped to four because the amounts of alms these watchmen were able to collect in the countryside were no longer sufficient for them to make a living. With a total of four, the governor suggested, the watchmen would be unable to perform their most important duty for the domain—the patrolling of the castle town against disruptive begging and crime. The governor instructed the town elders and village group headmen to help "increase the number of *hinin*" by reminding villagers to provide them with sufficient amounts of alms. Although this conversation dealt only with the behavior of villagers, it is possible that the almsgiving customs of the townspeople also received scrutiny at this time.

The number four brought up in this context did not refer to the total number of people of Koshirō status but to the number of Koshirō households, which was equivalent to the number of duty-performing watchmen. These households constituted economic units that provided their members with sustenance through begging rights, and Ōno's domain government condoned and even protected these begging rights because it wanted to mobilize the Koshirō for patrol duty. While the Koshirō had always been few in number, the group's membership dropped indeed quite noticeably in the course of the 1830s. In 1837, there had still been seven beggar bosses instead of four, and the total population of the Koshirō's settlement also fell from forty-five in 1815 to thirty-three in 1834 and shrank further in the 1840s.²⁵ The Tenpō famine in the 1830s probably had something to do with this decline. Whether any Koshirō died during this famine is unknown, but the crisis probably diminished the Koshirō's income by impoverishing or even eradicating households in town and villages, leading to the drop in almsgiving described by the town governor. Some Koshirō could have reacted to this loss of income by leaving Ōno town and trying to make a living elsewhere.

In Osaka, the surviving documentation reveals the *hinin*'s own perspective on the problem. In 1804 the "young men" of the Tennōji beggar compound submitted a petition to the guild leadership in which they declared that the number of households had dropped to 70, from about 120 households at an unspecified point in the past.²⁶ Of these 70, only 50 were regularly performing duties for the shogunal city authorities and paying their guild-internal dues; the remaining 20 were headed by widows or retirees and lacked an adult male head who would have fulfilled the household's labor obligations. While the petition did not give concrete reasons for this decline, it implied that in the case of the 20 nonperforming households, the former family head had left the compound to live in a townspeople's block or another beggar compound and either continued to derive income from the household's begging share (here referred to as *katoku*—literally, "estate") or had entrusted it to someone else. The petitioners complained that this practice had increased the burden on the households that remained. This petition and other related documents demonstrate that in Osaka, as in Ōno, every *hinin* household represented one duty-performing beggar boss. To improve the guild's ability to fulfill its duties, the "young men" petitioned the leadership of their compound to force absentee household heads or whoever else had been entrusted with a begging share to perform the concomitant duties on the group's behalf. Osaka's documents thus shine a bit more light on the process of guild decline than Ōno's. They show that Osaka's *hinin* often left the guild of their own accord and moved into another beggar compound or even a town block. It remains a matter of speculation whether beggar bosses had to hide their origins to live among townspeople, but by the latter half of the Tokugawa period, many blocks in Osaka and Edo had high rates of impoverished back-alley tenants who frequently moved from place to place, and tenements were often run by caretakers on behalf of absentee landowners. This situation discouraged block officials from implementing the checks on residency that the warrior authorities expected them to perform.²⁷

For the *hinin* in the Tennōji compound, one major motive for abandoning their households seems to have been a reluctance to perform the duties associated with the position of household head. There is some indication that the *hinin* might have perceived their duty burden as excessive. By the late eighteenth century, Osaka's town governors maintained the so-called Criminal Bureau (*tōzokukata*), which regularly called up the leaders of the city's *hinin* guilds for police work in Osaka and its surroundings. In addition, it also mobilized the guild's "young men" as supplementary staff for its town patrols.²⁸ The mobilization of the "young men" greatly increased the burden on the guilds because until the second half of the eighteenth century, Osaka's city authorities had mobilized only the *hinin*'s leaders for occasional detective work and arrests and left the bulk of guild members alone. It is possible that some of the "young men" felt compelled to escape this pressure by abandoning their shares and leaving the group. The growing duty burden must have felt particularly onerous to those "young men" whose turfs did not yield much in alms to begin with.

By the late eighteenth century, the income gap between members of Osaka's four *hinin* compounds was widening. Some of that development can be explained by the character and profitability of begging turfs, which ranged from prosperous commercial quarters to downtrodden neighborhoods. The *hinin* guilds thus reflected the increasing economic polarization of the city as a whole. According to petitions from the nineteenth century, so-called low-income turfs constituted a serious problem for certain "young man" households in the Tennōji beggar compound.²⁹ The commodification of begging shares further encouraged the concentration of wealth in the hands of relatively few *hinin* households. By the eighteenth century, as mentioned earlier, the relationship between a "young man" household and an almsgiving block association was being expressed through the notion of the share, and shares could be bought, sold, and pawned among *hinin*. Some *hinin* households accumulated considerable numbers of such shares, and there were even cases of shares ending up in the hands of people living outside the compounds who could or would not perform duties together with the other guild members. Even shareholders who had not moved out of their compound seem to have found ways to avoid duty, especially if they had accumulated more than one share. They still dispatched watchmen to the blocks associated with their shares to fulfill their bargain with the townspeople, but did not always participate in duties such as the daily town patrols that had been imposed on their guild by the shogunal city authorities.³⁰

In Osaka, the decline in *hinin* households proved difficult to reverse. Although in 1790 the leadership of the Tennōji compound prohibited its "young men" from selling or pawning their begging rights, it continued to make exceptions for parties that notified the guild leaders of these transactions and were deemed particularly needy.³¹ This halfhearted measure did little to halt the loss of duty labor, and in 1804 the "young men" felt compelled to submit the aforementioned petition. In 1845 the guild leaders of Tennōji finally implemented a reform that directly addressed the ability of *hinin* households to provide duty labor.³² They allowed households whose head was minor, sick, retired, or missing to let an apprentice or other person temporarily perform duty in his place. They also put pressure on households without a duty-performing male head to acquire one through marriage or adoption. Although the initial response to the measure seems to have been favorable, the problem resurfaced only two or three years after its implementation.³³ Apparently, the households with low-income begging shares were simply too poor to retain the young men they had appointed or adopted. Of the households that had adopted young males from other *hinin* lineages in and around Osaka in response to the new policy, many never got their adoptees to perform any duty, because the men in question bailed out of the arrangement upon reaching maturity. As the failure of the reform became apparent, some poorer households with more than one low-income share asked the guild leadership for permission to "merge" these shares, thus reducing the number of duty performers even further, insofar as

many shares were counted as the equivalent of one duty-performing household. While the situation in the other three compounds is unknown, the Tennōji compound never managed to reverse its loss of duty-performing households. Yet there continued to be a considerable number of households in that compound that did manage to perpetuate themselves through marriage or adoption, whether from one of Osaka's four compounds, *hinin* associations in other cities, or village guard households in the Kinai region around Osaka.³⁴

In Ōno, the domain government imposed a more lasting solution for the problem of unprofitable begging turfs. From about the mid-eighteenth century onward, the domain had been mobilizing the Koshirō for criminal investigations under the supervision of the domain's Criminal Bureau, an office named like its functional equivalent in Osaka. In the 1740s, the time of the first surviving town elders' journals, the Koshirō's police work was still limited to town patrols and guard work in the countryside, but by the 1830s the Koshirō were frequently performing duty as a quasi-police force, apprehending criminals and tracking down contraband in Ōno and other domains in collaboration with nearby *hinin* associations on an almost daily basis.³⁵ Clearly, a membership of four would not have sufficed to allow the group to continue with this kind of workload.

Ōno's domain officials chose a top-down approach to the problem and implemented it in a bureaucratic fashion. First, they ordered the village group headmen to undertake a survey of almsgiving customs as practiced in the villages up to the present. The survey demonstrated that the overall amount of alms had indeed dropped over time and that, moreover, the burden was distributed unevenly among the villages.³⁶ To remedy this situation, the domain government then asked the village group headmen to calculate precisely how much each village would need to contribute to enable the *hinin* guild to grow by at least two households. To do so, the village group headmen decided to apply a formula similar to those used to assess corvée burdens and other obligations borne by tax-paying commoners in the domain. They based one half of the alms burden on the number of full peasant households in each community, and the other half on the amount of productive land. Villagers were required to precollect these alms biannually and hand them over to the *hinin* through their village headman, though they were free to divide the burden internally among households however they pleased. After the reform of 1845, almsgiving for *hinin* in Ōno thus began to resemble the process of paying the annual rice tax on land, which was also precollected and submitted by the village headman on behalf of the entire village. Internally, many villages in Ōno regulated almsgiving by assigning different burdens to different classes of households, such as ordinary full peasants or peasants with the right of audience with the domain lord.³⁷

Unfortunately, no documentation survives to show how the order of 1845 was implemented, but the Koshirō do seem to have established new households in response. By 1847 the Koshirō's overall population including family members and

underlings had already recovered to thirty from a low around twenty-three, and in 1852 there were at least five households instead of four.³⁸ By 1860, the guild had expanded to eight households with thirty-three residents and six village guards under their control.³⁹ The town elders' journals of 1860 offer some clues as to how the Koshirō might have gone about establishing new households. In that year, the Koshirō revived the household known as Shirōbei (probably the name of a former household head) that had been abandoned for some time. The Koshirō themselves proposed the revival of this household to the domain authorities because "duty had become heavier these days."⁴⁰ The description of Shirōbei's household in the town elders' journals tells us much about the character of Koshirō households in general. In an entry written in the third month of 1860, the town elder on duty referred to the household as both "a Koshirō called Shirōbei" and "Shirōbei's household," using the Chinese character for *ie* (household) that was also used to refer to commoner households.⁴¹ In the same entry, he also used a term commonly associated with Buddhist temples without a priest, pointing out that "the Koshirō called Shirōbei has recently been without resident" (*mujū*).⁴² According to the town elders, the Koshirō had made up for Shirōbei's loss by distributing his duty burden among the remaining guild members.⁴³ A few months later, the town elders noted that "Koshirō Shirōbei had been in a state of collapse for a long time, but was recently rebuilt."⁴⁴

These entries show that in the context of the Koshirō guild, "Shirōbei" represented a duty-performing household rather than a particular lineage. The name continued to be used inside the beggar guild as a placeholder even after the original resident had disappeared and the building had collapsed. When Shirōbei's household was abandoned, the Koshirō "made up for it as a guild" and later chose to revive it rather than establish a new household from scratch. Perhaps they did so because the Shirōbei household was already associated with a specific piece of land and a carefully calibrated set of guild-based responsibilities and privileges. Its resurrection thus spared the Koshirō from making major changes to the structure of their group. It is also possible that the Koshirō had hoped from the outset that the loss of this household would be only temporary.

What steps did the Koshirō take to put the Shirōbei household back into operation? First, they "searched widely" for a successor and found one in the *hinin* watchman of Otomi, a village in Ōno domain, who had already been working under their control.⁴⁵ It was in fact quite rare for the Koshirō to integrate newcomers into their group, even though they regularly accepted begging paupers into the beggar hospice in the castle town, some of them long-term. Most occupants of the beggar hospice were probably not fit enough to undertake the job of underling or watchman, let alone beggar boss, which required a great deal of physical strength and resilience. Village watchmen, on the other hand, were experienced at performing police and patrol duty and were familiar with the customs of the guild. They often received visits from the town's beggar bosses and frequented the Koshirō's

settlement in return, sometimes staying there for extended periods.⁴⁶ The position of village watchman seems to have been a typical entry point for unregistered drifters who sought integration into the guild. Two village guards who appear in sources from the 1780s, for example, had come to Ōno domain from outside, one of them as a masterless samurai from Kaga domain.⁴⁷ In 1837 an unregistered man from the town of Kanazawa became the underling of a Koshirō and was later sent as a watchman to a village in a nearby shogunal territory.⁴⁸ Because the headship of the Shirōbei household was directly associated with duty performance, physical fitness was a critical requirement for any candidate hoping to fill this position.

Once the Koshirō had finalized their arrangement with the watchman of Otomi, they rebuilt Shirōbei's "residence" (*sumika*) with money they had borrowed from the domain government specifically for that purpose.⁴⁹ In the fourth month of 1860, the new "Shirōbei" arrived in the castle town to "inherit the hut of the person named Shirōbei,"⁵⁰ and by the seventh month, he was already performing duty for the guild under his new name.⁵¹ His example suggests that *hinin* households in Ōno came with a hereditary name as well as a homestead, and that the guild's need for a capable successor was at least as pressing as families' interests in passing the position from father to son. The town elders on one occasion referred to Shirōbei's home as a "hut" (*koya*). In eighteenth-century Osaka, the *hinin* described their houses as *ie yashiki*, the same term used for the houses of "respectable" townspeople. Although it is possible that the Koshirō's dwellings were indeed more humble than those of their Osaka counterparts, the Koshirō, too, might have spoken of their homes as *ie yashiki* in their group-internal documents and conversations, whereas the town elders might have expressed their disdain for people of beggar status by using the more disrespectful term "hut."

WEALTHY *HININ* HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR ASPIRATIONS

Shirōbei's case underscores the close association between *hinin* households and duty performance that had been established by the second half of the Tokugawa period in Osaka, Ōno, and likely other towns and cities as well. It seems safe to assume that begging rights in Ōno were also distributed among households, though there is hardly any evidence for this other than the fact that one Koshirō was once described as visiting "his turf."⁵² Unlike in Osaka, begging rights in Ōno do not seem to have been traded or pawned as shares. That is not to say, however, that Ōno's beggar guild did not develop a gap between rich and poor and that its members always subordinated their households' interests to those of the group. In the nineteenth century, one Koshirō household—represented by the Iemon-Isuke lineage—became notorious for its wealth and began to make occasional appearances in the town elders' journals. Its example illustrates both the ambitions of *hinin* in an age when social status was increasingly determined by financial success rather than birth, and the obstacles they continued to face because of their base background.

Iemon's name is first mentioned in the context of a criminal case in the town elders' journal of 1793.⁵³ When Iemon died around 1838, the headship passed to his son Isuke, who was succeeded by Isaburō, an adoptee from Kyoto, around the time of the Meiji Restoration.⁵⁴ The household seems to have been eager to shield its property from the other Koshirō. According to the first substantial entry on this lineage from 1837, the domain government ordered Iemon to provide hunger aid to the beggar bosses' "village," or "guild," in this year of acute famine.⁵⁵ When Iemon failed to obey that order, domain officials confiscated ten bales of rice from his storehouse and distributed them among the Koshirō, the beggars in the hospice, and even one of the leatherworking outcastes in Ōno town (here called *eta*, but popularly known as *kawaya*). All the beggar bosses except Iemon received the same amount of rice. In contrast to Iemon, who owned a plastered storehouse, all the remaining Koshirō households were suffering from the famine; one even tried to steal in order to survive.⁵⁶

It made sense for the domain to force Iemon to share some of his reserves at that time, because famished commoners could hardly be expected to supply the Koshirō with more alms. Generally speaking, all status communities in Tokugawa Japan were responsible for sharing resources between their richer and poorer members, with community headmen playing a leading role. The samurai authorities did not usually grant petitions for seigneurial relief to the poor unless they were convinced that the status group as a whole was too impoverished to help itself. Yet Iemon's case is remarkable because Iemon was not the leader of his guild, let alone of the outcaste population of Ōno. The household does not even appear in any sources dating from before 1793, at least not under this or similar names. Had Iemon been a hereditary leader such as the *eta* boss Danzaemon in Edo or the four *hinin* bosses who operated under Danzaemon's control, it would have been a matter of course for him to relieve his underlings and subordinate groups in a time of need, but Iemon was clearly reluctant to take on that role.⁵⁷ The domain government seems to have known of Iemon's resources and decided to single him out for certain guild-related responsibilities on account of his wealth.

What could have been the source of Iemon's prosperity? In towns with larger beggar associations, the leadership always lived more comfortably than ordinary members because they received special allowances and begging rights from the authorities,⁵⁸ but as mentioned, Iemon was not the leader of the Koshirō guild. One possible clue comes from a land register of 1872 that lists Iemon's descendant as the only household in the village that owned agricultural land, but it remains unclear whether this property was a cause or rather an effect of Iemon's wealth.⁵⁹ One might speculate that the household held a particularly profitable begging turf with a large number of well-to-do village or town households. From an early point, Iemon's family received an annual payment of 40 *monme* of silver from the domain for unknown (probably land-related) reasons.⁶⁰ But the household's most profitable activity appears to have been moneylending. Iemon's successor Isuke

made loans to townspeople, including those who engaged in shady business and would perhaps not have received credit elsewhere. In 1838, for example, he was placed under house arrest for transgressing status boundaries after doing business (“settling saké accounts”) with two townspeople whom the domain accused of engaging in violence and hosting prostitutes.⁶¹ In 1857 he was briefly jailed for taking profits from a gambling den and lending money to the players.⁶² Isuke’s behavior was probably the reason why the domain issued an order in 1843 against Koshirō moneylending to townspeople, but this ban was limited in scope and does not seem to have deterred the household from its financial dealings.⁶³ In 1853, for example, Isuke’s “old mother” (presumably Iemon’s widow) filed a petition with the town elders to enforce the repayment of a substantial loan she had made to a townsman, but instead of reporting her for punishment, the town elders simply asked both parties to resolve their conflict through mediation.⁶⁴

Women seem to have been able to both own and inherit the property accumulated by this beggar family. The situation of women in *hinin* groups and households is still largely unknown and cannot be discussed yet in general terms, but when the “old mother” in Ōno died in 1864, her children fought over her estate, which amounted to 3,082.5 *monme* of silver plus a house and furniture, an impressive sum for an ostensibly penniless beggar family.⁶⁵ The “old mother” seems to have been the legal owner of the household’s assets as long as she lived, while her son Isuke succeeded Iemon in the position of beggar boss. While it is possible that this arrangement was made specifically to guard the household against further orders from the domain to share its wealth with the other Koshirō, the family might indeed have considered the “old mother” as the legitimate heir of Iemon’s estate. After some mediation by guild members, Iemon’s younger son Bunkichi, who had returned from Edo to claim his inheritance, managed to secure one-third of the estate, leaving the remaining two-thirds to his brother Isuke and his two older sisters. In Osaka, too, the death of wealthier household heads could trigger conflict among family members. When, for example, the retired chief of the Tennōji compound died in 1768, a protracted conflict ensued among his relatives over his estate and the position of compound chief. Eventually, the chief’s successor consolidated the entire inheritance in his hands, including the residence, a storehouse, movable property, a document box, and watchman shares for a number of profitable begging turfs that included the wealthy merchant house Kōnoike.⁶⁶ While these two cases hardly suffice to support any general conclusions about inheritance customs among *hinin*, they both suggest that the children and relatives of wealthy *hinin* did not necessarily take the inheritance rights of duty-performing household heads for granted, but believed that they, too, had a right to claim part of the household’s assets.

In Ōno, the Iemon-Isuke lineage had found a way to make money without relying on the collective strength of the guild. It also tried to translate its money into social status by helping some of its children escape the stain of their base birth. In

1841, for example, Isuke's younger brother Bunkichi made a failed bid to establish himself as a townsman in Ōno by renting a flat in a temple precinct adjacent to one of the town blocks. When the people of that block association got wind of his origins, they protested his admission on the grounds that Bunkichi's presence would prevent them from interacting with the residents of the temple precinct at festivals and on other social occasions.⁶⁷ Bunkichi seems to have left Ōno shortly after this incident, but he returned in 1864 to claim a share of his mother's inheritance, this time as a townsman living in Edo. Apparently, he had succeeded in gaining admission to a town block in this large and anonymous metropolis.

Another Koshirō trying to pass as a commoner was Isuke's nephew Heikichi, the product of a liaison between Iemon's eldest daughter and a physician of commoner background living in Ōno town. In his youth, Heikichi was sent to the town of Fukui about thirty kilometers away to be raised in a town household, but in 1838 a townsman of Ōno attempted to adopt Heikichi as his son and heir. Unfortunately for Heikichi, the town elders hesitated to formally admit him to the town community after an anonymous informer approached them secretly to warn them about his outcaste background.⁶⁸ Although one of the two town elders initially argued in favor of overlooking the stain associated with Heikichi's maternal bloodline, he and his colleague, as well as the town governor, eventually decided to decline the petition because neither of them was ready to defend Heikichi's admission vis-à-vis the ordinary townspeople should the latter find out that the descendant of a Koshirō had been planted in their midst. Bunkichi's and Heikichi's experiences suggest that unlike their counterparts in Osaka, the members of Ōno's *hinin* community could not take up residence in a town block unless they obfuscated their origins or left their hometown for more anonymous places.

CONCLUSION

The *hinin* associations of Ōno and Osaka operated in towns of vastly different size but developed in remarkably similar ways. Both started out as groups of mendicants without any property to speak of, but gradually established themselves as an important presence in town life by providing services as beggar bosses. The performance of duties for the warrior authorities and commoners allowed the beggar bosses to consolidate their claim on begging turfs among townspeople and villagers, and enabled many of them to establish hereditary households that derived a regular income from one or more of these turfs. It seems that the development of stable households among *hinin* depended on the transformation of begging turfs into a form of property that could be passed down to the next generation. Eventually, the guilds of beggar bosses came to be structured around the institution of the household because each household head combined turf ownership and duty performance in his hands and was expected to do his part to help the guild fulfill its collective responsibilities vis-à-vis the authorities.

But the two cases also show that the guilds of beggar bosses came under strain in the second half of the Tokugawa period precisely because of their reliance on hereditary, property-owning households. One reason was that begging turfs proved a relatively unstable form of income as town society changed under the influence of commercialization. In Osaka, a gap was opening between richer and poorer *hinin* as a result of growing differences in the profitability of turfs in richer and poorer parts of the city. What is more, turf ownership itself became commodified among *hinin* and started to be pawned and traded as shares, resulting in the concentration of turf property in the hands of a few and the abandonment of low-income households. In Ōno, the Tenpō famine impoverished villagers and townspeople in the domain and indirectly affected the livelihoods of the beggar bosses who collected alms from these communities. In both towns, the overall result was a loss of duty-performing households, down to a point where the remaining members found it difficult to ensure the guild's collective obligations; in Ōno's case, the beggar guild's very survival seemed at stake. Ōno's Koshirō managed to reverse their temporary loss of households after the domain government intervened on its behalf and directly addressed the underlying cause of the problem, namely the profitability of the Koshirō's turfs. Osaka's *hinin* were less successful in that regard, perhaps because their decline was not extreme enough to spur the city authorities into action, or perhaps because their internal solution—the introduction of new options for households to provide duty-performing members—did not cut deeply enough to resolve the financial problems of poorer *hinin* households. In both towns, there was a growing disconnect between the resources of individual *hinin* households and the duties they were expected to perform. As the city and domain authorities increasingly relied on *hinin* for police work, it became less and less feasible to use household-based status groups of beggars for that purpose.

As base people, the members of *hinin* associations faced discrimination, and one might assume that some of them tried to escape their stigma by distancing themselves from their hereditary households. However, the sources on *hinin* groups in Osaka and Ōno hardly ever mention this problem, and we are left to believe that the loss of households among these guilds had ultimately more to do with financial pressures and the growing burden of duty than with the desire to escape discriminatory treatment. The case of the Iemon-Isuke household in Ōno does hint at the possibility that wealth might have helped some members of *hinin* households to gain a foothold in commoner society: commoners might have been more inclined to accept outcastes as adoptees, tenants, or employees if the latter were able to put money on the table. The bigger and more anonymous cities such as Edo and Osaka provided *hinin* with an outlet to overcome their origins and live as townspeople in commoner society. But as long as beggar boss households retained a claim on begging rights, they remained attractive enough for sufficient numbers of people to ensure the existence of *hinin* groups and the performance of *hinin* duty up until the Meiji Restoration.

NOTES

1. Ooms 1996, 307–8.
2. For a survey, see Yokoyama 2007.
3. See Ehlers 2018.
4. Tsukada 2001, 5–11.
5. Tsukada 2013, 25.
6. Tsukada 2013, 44–45.
7. See, for example, Fujimoto 2011; Tsukada 1987, 222–30.
8. Documents produced by the *hinin* of Tennōji have survived in the form of the so-called *Hiden'in monjo*. Village documents related to the Dōtonbori compound have been published in *Dōtonbori hinin kankei monjo*.
9. Some entries from these journals as well as from the journals of village headmen have been transcribed and published in *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*. For unpublished entries, see the original manuscripts of the town elders' journals preserved in a number of private local archives, primarily Saitō Suzuko-ke monjo, Nunokawa Genbei-ke monjo, and Adachi Hiromichi-ke monjo. Photographic reproductions of these journals are available at the Office for the Compilation of Ōno City History (Ōno-shi Shi Hensanshitsu).
10. Tsukada 2013, 44–47.
11. This can be surmised from the lineage registers of Christian apostates (described below in more detail); see Tsukada 2007, 15; Tsukada 2001, 5–36; Tsukada 2013, 24–74; Tsukada 2014. In 1683 and 1691, the group incorporated particularly large waves of newcomers because the Osaka town governor had ordered the removal of all homeless beggars from the streets; see Tsukada 2013, 37.
12. The Koshirō needed to submit one register every four years; see, for example, “Tsumekata oboegaki.”
13. No death registers have survived from this temple (whose name shall not be disclosed here) for the time between 1775 and 1868.
14. Tsukada 2013, 26–32.
15. Tsukada 2013, 70–73, 117.
16. Osaka's Dōtonbori compound was led by members of one and the same lineage (also descended from former Christians) until the 1720s, when another line began to monopolize the position; Tsukada 2001, 7–14.
17. In Fukiage, the *hinin* community of Wakayama town, the position of chief was hereditary until the end of the eighteenth century, and Fukiage's chiefs strove to reserve the position for their direct male descendants; Fujimoto 2014, 355–64.
18. Tsukada 2013, 66–70.
19. Fujimoto 2014, 355–64.
20. According to Mita Satoko's reconstruction of households in Minami Ōji, a village of leather-working outcastes in the Osaka hinterland, many residents practiced ultimogeniture in the eighteenth century, frequently establishing branch households or merging existing ones. While the logic of household formation in Minami Ōji is not yet fully understood, many of these households owned very little agricultural land and lived for rent in extremely cramped quarters. See Mita 2018, 135–214.
21. Tsukada 2007, 154–59.
22. Tsukada 2013, 104–14.

23. Sugahara 1977, 96; Yamamoto 2002, 77–79.
24. *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1845.8.10, no. 893, pp. 659–60.
25. See, for example, the Koshirō numbers reported on the occasion of the annual rice gruel handouts in the town elders' journals.
26. Tsukada 2007, 66–74; Tsukada 2013, 147–50.
27. See, for example, Yokoyama 2005, 27–61.
28. Tsukada 2013, 140–47.
29. Tsukada 2013, 168–85.
30. Tsukada 2007, 70–73; Tsukada 2013, 124–34.
31. Tsukada 2013, 132.
32. Tsukada 2013, 160–73.
33. Tsukada 2013, 173–85.
34. Tsukada 2013, 185–86.
35. See, for example, MT goyōdome 1740, 1741, 1834, 1836, 1837, 1838, 1840, 1841.
36. *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1845.11.26, no. 898, p. 661; 1845.12.10, 14, 16, 20, no. 900, pp. 663–66.
37. *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1845.8.10, no. 893, pp. 659–60.
38. See the records of the annual rice gruel handouts, as well as MT goyōdome, 1852.
39. *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1860.10.21, no. 1208, p. 865.
40. Goyōki (Nunokawa Genbei-ke), 1860.3.12.
41. Goyōki (Nunokawa Genbei-ke), 1860.3.12.
42. Goyōki (Nunokawa Genbei-ke), 1860.3.12. Shirōbei last appears as a beggar boss in 1789, but might still have been active in 1834; *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1789.12.26, no. 377, pp. 276–77; MT goyōdome, 1834.4.22 (date difficult to decipher).
43. Goyōki (Nunokawa Genbei-ke), 1860.3.12.
44. MT goyōdome, 1860.7.11.
45. Goyōki (Nunokawa Genbei-ke), 1860.3.12.
46. *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1781.3.2, no. 157, pp. 125–26. On the practice of mutual visits, see MT goyōdome, 1834.4.22, 1834.8.16, 19, 20, 1834.10.6 (date difficult to decipher).
47. *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1781.3.2, no. 157, pp. 125–26.
48. MT goyōdome, 1837.7.24. Once, in 1786, the domain government forced the group to integrate a thief who had been punished with degradation to beggar status, but the Koshirō protested this move and called it unprecedented; *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1786.4.28, no. 273, pp. 200–201.
49. Two hundred *monme* of silver were granted; see the petition in Goyōki (Nunokawa Genbei-ke), 1860.3.12; the disbursal in MT goyōdome, 1860.7.11; and the repayment procedure for this apparently interest-free loan in Goyōki (Nunokawa Genbei-ke), 1860.12.3.
50. Goyōki (Nunokawa Genbei-ke), 1860.4.25.
51. MT goyōdome, 1860.7.21.
52. *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1783.11.4, no. 173, pp. 134–35; 1787.5.21, no. 306, p. 225.
53. MT goyōdome, 1793.5.29.
54. “Yokomachi shirabechō.”
55. MT goyōdome, 1837.4.6, 1837.8.12.
56. Beggar boss Sōemon committed a burglary in 1834 and testified to having acted out of poverty; see MT goyōdome, 1834.4.22, 1834.8.16, 19, 20, 1834.10.6. The storehouse is mentioned in *ibid.*, 1837.7.24.

57. Danzaemon, for example, provided aid to the monkey trainers under his control in order to rescue them from famine and destitution; see Tsukada 1997, 274. In Kanazawa in 1829, one of the bosses of the *tōnai* beggar boss association relieved the people inside his compound and was rewarded for his charity by the lord; see “Iburaku ikkan,” 538.

58. Uchida 1987, 103; Asao 1995, 15–20, 29.

59. “Yokomachi shirabechō.”

60. In some records, this payment is labeled “substitute for land tax rice” (*chishimai-dai*); MT goyōdome, 1834.12.26, 1835.12.23, 1855.12.16; “Ōno-han goyōki,” 1865.1.11.

61. MT goyōdome 1838.6.1, 2, 3, 5, 6.

62. Goyōdome (Adachi Hiromichi-ke), 1857.11.21.

63. *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1843.7.12, no. 846, p. 627. This order threatened sanctions only in case the Koshirō were bold enough to have their debt quarrels adjudicated by the domain.

64. Goyōdome (Adachi Hiromichi-ke), 1853.5.2, 21.

65. MT goyōdome, 1864.5.16.

66. Tsukada 2013, 120–24.

67. *Ōno-shi shi yōdome-hen*, 1841.8.9, no. 818, pp. 593–94; MT goyōdome, 1864.5.16. It is not entirely clear whether Bunkichi was interested only in the money or was also in the position of beggar boss.

68. MT goyōdome, 1838.4.6.

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