

Hirata Hiroshi and the Buraku Question: Understanding *Bloody Stumps Samurai*

Ryan Holmberg

Hidden away in a nondescript office building, the flatly named Meat Information Center (O-niku no jōhōkan) occupies a large room on the sixth floor of the Metropolitan Central Wholesale Meat Market in Shinagawa, Tokyo's southern gateway. Though the premises also include auction floors for pork and beef and related administrative offices run by the Tokyo government, the place is commonly known as the Shibaura Slaughterhouse, after the facility that covers the bulk of the site, the largest such in Japan. While slaughterhouses are looked at askance in many countries, in Japan they are burdened with negative social connotations rooted in centuries-old history that, despite the best efforts of activists and officials to combat them, still have a hold on some sectors of the national imagination. Hence the truncation of *tosatsujō/tosatsuba* (slaughterhouse) as *tojō/toba* in public discourse, with one less character signifying killing, and the writing of the "to" in syllabic kana versus semantically rich kanji to obscure immediate relations to "slaughter." Hence the subordination of the slaughterhouse, the site's *raison d'être*, into the more encompassing "consumer meat market" (*shokuniku ichiba*) in the official renaming of the facility in the '80s.¹ And hence the Meat Information Center, which opened in 2002.

Through photographs, text-heavy diagrams, display cases with work tools, fiberglass models of animals and animal parts, pamphlets, and videos, the Center does not aim, as might be imagined from the perspective of food politics in the West, to persuade vegetarians or conscientious meat eaters of the ethical nature or economic

necessity of the killing that happens at Japanese slaughterhouses. Its primary goal, instead, is to affirm that the people who work there are regular men and women with families, who take pride in their jobs and are highly skilled at what they do, and that what they do provides an essential service to the vast majority of Japanese for whom animal flesh has become a dietary staple. Such explanations are necessary because of long-standing prejudices against slaughterhouse workers, tanners, shoemakers, and other people involved in occupations that involve the killing or handling of animal carcasses as not only being dirty and smelly, but existentially polluted and socially untouchable. Even a straightforward display panel about shop floor and food hygiene thus reverberates with identity politics, even though it only speaks explicitly about food safety.²

Since the early 20th century, this community has belonged to a larger category of outcaste peoples known as "burakumin," literally "hamlet people," so named because historically they have tended to live in segregated communities that host or are adjacent to these industries in the present or related trades in the past. Today, many people who work in these industries come from families that have nothing to do with historical outcasts. Yet the social taboo of *kegare* (death- and blood-related "impurities") in Japan is such that the "buraku" stigma tends to attach itself to anyone connected to those trades by occupation, marriage, or residential proximity.³

Inoko Gennosuke, the lead character of the manga you hold in your hands, is



Hirata Hiroshi, *Bloody Stumps Samurai*
(Osaka: Hinomaru Bunko, 1962)
dust jacket, image courtesy of Asakawa Mitsuhiro

“burakumin.” More specifically, he is “eta” – a derogatory name dating to the medieval period meaning literally “filth abundant.” While the livelihood of Gennosuke’s family and village is not described, one might surmise, based on the usual connotations of the term, that they were tenant farmers who engaged in sandal-making, tanning, the disposal of livestock carcasses, or related jobs on the side. The other major historical term for outcasts, “hinin” (literally, “non-person”), applied to itinerant performers, prostitutes, undertakers, executioners, and other people who had fallen out of the four main categories of the Tokugawa “status system” (*mibun seido*): samurai, peasant, craftsman, and merchant. The emperor and his family were secluded above, while “abject peoples” (*senmin*) subsisted at the bottom. Inscribed as law under the Tokugawa Shogunate, each caste was expected to conform to specific codes of dress, behavior, and occupation,

and intermingling between them, especially between high and low, was largely prohibited, at least officially.⁴

Wishing to better consolidate its citizenry and look civilized to the West, the new Meiji government officially abolished the social statuses “eta” and “hinin” with the Emancipation Edict of 1871. As members of this community are racially, linguistically, and ethnically indistinguishable from other Japanese, this allowed outcaste peoples to increasingly “pass” as non-outcaste, money and education allowing. Occupation, descent, and residence, however, continued to serve as markers of their identity, enabling exposure to hate speech, physical violence, and discriminatory profiling, and the subversion of job, marriage, and other opportunities. While “new commoners” (*shin heimin*) became polite society’s epithet of choice, the historical pejoratives “eta” and (to a lesser extent) “hinin” continued to be used

to degrade former outcasts in daily life, as documented in novels like Shimazaki Tōson's *The Broken Commandment* (*Hakai*, 1906) and Sumii Sué's *The River With No Bridge* (*Hashi no nai kawa*, 1961-73, '92), both of which have been translated (at least in part) into English.⁵ These terms, which are filled with as much hate as any racial, ethnic, sexual, or gender slur that you can imagine, are also everywhere in Hirata Hiroshi's (b. 1937) *Bloody Stumps Samurai* (*Chidaruma kenpō*, 1962), a work unmatched in its no-holds-barred representation of anti-buraku bigotry. But note that, while there were a number of cases of organized violence against buraku communities in the mid-late 19th century, they were by peasants disgruntled with the dissolution of the status system, not (as in *Bloody Stumps Samurai*) by samurai, and even the worst episode (the Mimasaka Riot of 1873 in Okayama) saw only 18 buraku residents killed and 300-some homes destroyed. To my knowledge, no such episodes are recorded from earlier centuries, including the early 17th century in which Hirata's manga is set.⁶

Fed up with systemic discrimination and the government's tepid efforts to undo it, buraku activists began organizing in the late 19th century, particularly in the Osaka-Kyoto-Nara, Seto Inland Sea, and Northern Kyushu regions, where the highest concentrations of buraku could be found. This culminated in 1922 in the formation of the Suiheisha (The Levelers Society), the first national buraku liberation organization. "Long-suffering brothers!" its founding manifesto declares, "Our ancestors pursued and practiced freedom and equality. They were the victims of base, contemptible class policies and they were the manly martyrs of industry. As a reward for skinning animals, they were stripped of their own living flesh; in return for tearing out the hearts of animals, their own warm human hearts were ripped apart. They were even spat upon with ridicule. Yet, all through these cursed nightmares, their human pride

ran deep in their blood. Now, the time has come when we human beings, pulsing with this blood, are soon to regain our divine dignity. The time has come for the victims to throw off their stigma. The time has come for the blessing of the martyrs' crown of thorns. The time has come when we can be proud of being Eta. We must never again shame our ancestors and profane humanity through servile words and cowardly deeds."⁷

With a mix of Marxist and Christian liberationist ideas, the Suiheisha advocated not just for the improvement of living conditions within buraku communities, but for the eradication of discriminatory sentiments throughout Japanese society and a platform upon which buraku people could proudly declare their identity as such. Though forcibly disbanded during World War II, the energy and personnel of prewar buraku activism quickly reconstituted itself after the war, culminating in the founding of the Buraku Liberation League (Buraku kaihō dōmei, hereafter BLL) in 1955. As you will read below, in this essay and the next, this is the organization whose outrage in 1962 turned *Bloody Stumps Samurai* into one of the most notorious works in the history of Japanese comics. It is also one of the organizations behind the Meat Information Center, which it helped set up in collaboration with the Shibaura Slaughterhouse Labor Union.

Like the Suiheisha before it, the BLL in its heyday was known for aggressive tactics that both got things done and gave the organization a bad public rap. Combining public consciousness-raising through publications and lectures, pressure groups engaged in "administrative struggles" (*gyōsei tōsō*) against the government, and "denunciation struggles" (*kyūdan tōsō*) against individuals, companies, publishers, and government institutions that (wittingly or unwittingly) express discriminatory sentiments or engage in discriminatory practices, the buraku liberation movement has radically improved life for its community over the past sixty-plus

years. While its political power has weakened significantly since the '00s, the BLL's efforts have succeeded in securing government grants to improve infrastructure and housing in buraku-designated communities, increase scholastic achievement and education opportunities among buraku youth, and enact anti-discrimination education in schools to ensure that teachers and students are sensitive to the issues regardless of whether or not they are buraku. Today, many people born into buraku families can live their whole lives without experiencing discrimination and, in some cases, without even knowing their family background – though this is also the result of buraku localities being diluted by outmigration and gentrification, and historically outcaste occupations being broken up and rearranged by globalization. Nonetheless, discrimination rears its head frequently enough that some buraku feel compelled to actively hide their identity, and to warrant the mounting of pedagogical displays concerning human rights inside exhibition spaces that are ostensibly dedicated to local history and trades, like that at Shibaura.⁸

Given the sensitivity of the issues, the “buraku question” (*buraku mondai*) is obviously not a topic to be broached carelessly, whether you are person of influence holding forth or a common citizen flapping your trap on the street. If a politician, journalist, or artist treats the matter with anything but utmost respect, they are likely to run into trouble. More specifically, they are bound to learn how central and effective extralegal “denunciation struggles” are within the arsenal of buraku politics. “The development of the *kyūdan tōsō*,” writes historian and social scientist Ian Neary, “became for the Suiheisha what the strike was to the labour unions and the rent-strike was for the tenants union: their weapon in the class struggle, or at least in the battle against discrimination.”⁹ What these denunciations most often targeted was language, spoken and written. In her study of what she calls “buraku rhetorical activism,”

Anne McKnight shows how “direct action against semantics” belonged to a broader struggle on the part of buraku activists to achieve “linguistic sovereignty”: the right and ability for the buraku community itself to determine how they were represented within law, political discourse, national historical narratives, and popular culture.¹⁰

Boosted by postwar democratic reforms and support from the Japan Socialist Party (which counted among its leaders Suiheisha and BLL co-founder Matsumoto Jiichirō), this movement became particularly strong after the '50s. Judging from surveys of the topic, between the early '60s and late '90s, practically every week a new writer, publisher, and/or editor was “denounced” somewhere in Japan, not to mention the companies, public officials, and private individuals that were subject to the same. Even works that were both highly sympathetic and artistically accomplished, like Tōson's *The Broken Commandment* and Sumii's *The River Without A Bridge*, were criticized by BLL-affiliated writers, leading to the redaction of problematic passages and the cancellation of filmic adaptations.¹¹ But as most of these disagreements were conducted in private or the pages of coterie periodicals, and the fearsomeness of the BLL was not widely known until the '70s, the 25-year-old Hirata can hardly be faulted for not knowing that he was stepping into a minefield. This does not, of course, excuse any implicit or explicit discriminatory sentiments reflected in the manga. It is only to say that the privilege of not understanding the stakes was widely shared by people outside the buraku community at this particular historical juncture.

Soon after its publication in June 1962, *Bloody Stumps Samurai* was denounced by activists of the BLL. As detailed in the essay that follows this one, they objected to Hirata's partially historically inaccurate representation of the origins of the buraku community, the lurid depiction of a buraku liberationist as violent, and the belittling of his gory death. The book was quickly forced out of circulation,

some copies were reportedly burned, and the artist and the publisher, Hinomaru Bunko (famous for its central role in the development of gekiga within the rental “kashihon” manga market in the ‘50s and early ‘60s) were forced to apologize both in person and in print (for the actual texts, see pages 148-9). Hirata not only lost out on payment for this particular manga, but was forced to travel between his home in Tenri (in Nara prefecture) and the BLL offices in Osaka three times (a 90 minute train ride each way) for admonitory talking-to and was blacklisted until the matter was resolved six months later – serious hardships for a young cartoonist whose mother and five siblings depended on his income from cartooning to live.¹² This despite the fact that the manga was written with the clear intent of expressing sympathy with the plight of buraku people and highlighting discrimination against them in the past and present.

Geography was also a factor. It is unlikely that Hirata would have thought to represent buraku discrimination and outrage had he not been from the Kansai area, where buraku issues are both ancient and contemporary history. Likewise, he may not have gotten into as much trouble if he and his publisher, which was in Osaka, were based in areas with smaller buraku populations or a weaker buraku activist presence. Much about this manga and its suppression is specific to western Japan and especially the Kansai region. This episode is practically unimaginable had kashihon manga publishing been centered in Tokyo.

The fact that it was a manga may or may not have mattered. Certainly the visuals are extreme and would have exacerbated offences taken at the level of words or the story. Manga in general in these years were seen as vulgar and corrupting trash, frequently subject to critique from parties on the Left and education and parents groups. The more lurid and violent imagery of kashihon manga were particularly seen as problematic, but so were action and humor comics from mainstream Tokyo publishers. When it came to BLL

denunciation, however, there was little cultural discrimination. Reprinted classic novels, short stories in top literary magazines, and movies from respected studios were also criticized in these years, and usually for much less. At this early juncture, the BLL did not have a proper department devoted to policing print and broadcast media. Many cases brought to its attention were through third parties, and if activists were scanning anything actively it was newspapers, mainstream magazines, and retail bookshelves. Kashihon’ya, the “rental bookstores” in which Hirata’s manga circulated at the time, were about as far from the dragnet as you can imagine. Indeed, according to a short article in the major daily newspaper *Mainichi Shinbun*, the BLL learned about *Bloody Stumps Samurai* rather randomly from a member who spotted it in a rental bookstore in Susaki, a fishing town outside of Kōchi on the far side of Shikoku¹³ – not exactly toponyms that rush to mind when thinking about postwar popular culture, but, as an area with a strong BLL and Nikkyōso (Japan Teachers Union) presence, precisely the kind of place where a manga of this sort might stand out. If Hirata was the victim of anything, it was probably bad luck.

In fact, what’s interesting about *Bloody Stumps Samurai* is that its failure as a political work – its damnation by the community it presumed to speak for – was a direct result of the artist’s attempt to meld high and low, bringing together inputs from literature, popular fiction, and pulp. On the one hand, the manga is strongly indebted to the fountainhead of buraku issues in artistic representation, *The Broken Commandment*. Inoko Gennosuke’s family name has been lifted from that of the proto-Suiheisha activist in Tōson’s novel, Inoko Rentarō (who similarly burns with the passion to fight for his people, though does not believe in violence), while the maddening conflict between strategic passing, proud self-identification, and bitter outing that tears Gennosuke apart riffs on protagonist Ushimatsu’s existential battles with the same.



Umezu Kazuo
 "Demon Man of Revenge"
Shōnen Magazine (May 28, 1967)

There is also a side character in Tōson's novel named Tsuchiya Ginnosuke, a non-buraku "commoner" who stands by Ushimatsu even after his identity is known, with a given name that is just one character different from Gennosuke.

On the other hand, Hirata partakes (perhaps unknowingly) in a tradition of popular fiction depicting buraku peoples as violent, animalistic, diseased, pathological, genetically other, and/or suspiciously attractive and articulate "despite" their abject status. Gennosuke's violence and beastly transformation are never described as natural expressions of outcaste "character" per se. However, while there are many men driven mad by vengeance and many scenes of grotesque bodily mutilation in Hirata's manga (motifs strongly influenced by the novels of Nanjō Norio), *Bloody Stumps Samurai* is

the only one to my knowledge in which the protagonist turns into a murderous freak. The closest analogue in manga are the many horror titles with half-human and half-animal (including snakes and reptiles) or half-yokai children that are so born because of karmic retribution upon parents who break taboos. It's also hard not to notice a family resemblance between Gennosuke's devolution and such anti-buraku slurs as "four-legged" (*yotsu*) and, yes, even "snake."¹⁴ It's a contradictory work to say the very, very least.

As is the ironic tendency with banned books, *Bloody Stumps Samurai* quickly achieved a cult reputation. Cartoonists as famous as Umezu Kazuo and Yamagami Tatsuhiko paid open homage to it in their work, while surveys of manga history cite it as a prime example of the general public's unthinking disdain of comics and/or the liberated extremes of expression possible in the medium. In his heyday, Hirata was arguably the most respected creator of samurai manga in Japan, with accolades from luminaries like the novelist Mishima Yukio and Akira's Ōtomo Katsuhiro, who helped design the eight-volume hardcover collected edition of Hirata's most famous short stories from Nihon Bungeisha in 1987. When an expensive, five-volume facsimile box set of some of his hard-to-find kashihon works from the early '60s was issued in 1998, *Bloody Stumps Samurai* was noticeably missing. Ohta Shuppan, famed for its subcultural tastes and reprints of obscure cult manga, looked into reissuing the title in the late '90s, but abandoned the idea after checking with the BLL and being told that they couldn't promise that there wouldn't be any problem from them.¹⁵ The artist, anyway, preferred to let sleeping dogs lie – at least until 2004, when not one but two different editions were set in motion.

That September, cartoonist and former editor at Hinomaru Bunko in the '60s Yamamatsu Yūichi caught a plane to Delhi with the goal of introducing manga to the



Hindi edition of *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, cover and interior page
(New Delhi: Ganga Yamato, 2005)
cover image courtesy of Braft Publications

Indian subcontinent (not knowing that they already had comics), had *Bloody Stumps Samurai* translated into Hindi (despite knowing that the people who can afford inessentials like books are likely to read them in English), and returned to Japan six months later deep in the hole after selling just 50 of the more than 1000 copies he had printed. Since most of the unsold copies were abandoned in Delhi, the Hindi edition, printed in January 2005 as presumably the first manga ever translated into that language, is a super rare item. Sample pages can be found in the back of Yamamatsu's rollicking graphic memoir, *Stupid Guy Goes to India* (*Indo e baka ga yatte kita*, 2008), which was published in English by Chennai's Braft Publications in 2012.¹⁶

Back in Japan, editor and manga scholar

Asakawa Mitsuhiro and critic Kure Tomofusa had been working on a Japanese edition. Based on an original copy of the book owned by Yamamatsu, the first edition of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* in over forty years was published by the Tokyo publisher Seirinkōgeisha, where Asakawa worked, in September 2004, just before Yamamatsu embarked for India. It was, by necessity, a compromise. Not only did it include a lengthy essay by Kure explaining the original context, the artist's good intentions, the BLL's complaints, and the motivations behind the reissue, but also a reprint of Hirata's 1968 rewrite of the story for *Comic Magazine*, "Hear Ye, Scoundrels!" ("Onorera ni tsugu"), wherein the lead character, still named Inoko Gennosuke, is the descendant of political exiles instead. Most significantly, the new edition was heavily redacted. Passages



Bloody Stumps Samurai / Hear Ye, Scoundrels!
(Tokyo: Seirinkōgeisha, 2004)
cover and bellyband



Hirata Hiroshi
"Hear Ye, Scoundrels!"
Comic Magazine (January 9, 1968)

in the manga with which the BLL had taken issue with in the past, or might take issue with in the present, were replaced with triangles, circles, and Xs. These were maintained when the manga was re-issued in 2012 by the publisher Laputa. Thus, still to this day, a complete edition of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* has yet to reappear in its home country.

A translation of Kure's essay follows the present one. The desirability of such extensive contextual material stems not so much from our collective obsession with the details of manga history and the lineaments of social movements, but rather the knowledge that a book like this, which was once despised by members of the community it presumptively claimed to fight for, can only be reissued ethically (and now introduced to a wider global audience) if one takes care to present it, not just as entertainment (though that is

certainly what it also is), but as a historical case study of the sensitive politics that surround representations of minority and oppressed peoples, especially when they are politically organized and militant. On one level, Kure's essay offers a sharp picture of the gravity and complexity of the "buraku question" and Hirata's run-in with it. On some points he defends Hirata, on others not. On another level, it also offers a rare opportunity – rare because most of the writing in English on buraku issues is by academic scholars who approach the topic with great deference for the buraku community – to see how, by the end of 20th century, many non-buraku Japanese had become ambivalent about, if not outright fed up with, the BLL's linguistic policing as well as with Japanese publishers' tendency to make things worse by quashing debate through self-censorship. One of the main motivations for

the 2004 Japanese reissue of Hirata's manga, states Kure, was to break the silence and facilitate informed and intelligent debate about buraku discrimination, at the very least among manga critics and historians.

But as Kure's essay was written for a Japanese audience, let me keep you for a little longer and turn your attention back to the Meat Information Center, where there is a pair of adjacent exhibits that draw in to focus some of the stakes involved and the way that imagery (including comics) and words (including those used in the present manga) remain sensitive subjects today. I would have liked to include images of the display itself, but the Center does not allow photography due to concerns that its message will be misappropriated by bigots and trolls.

Under the heading "Discriminatory Representations in Books and Related Media," on a back wall at the Center is a display panel describing the ways that slaughterhouses and slaughterhouse workers have been negatively portrayed in the media and entertainment in Japan. Among the examples are a pair of comics panels from two different editions of Yokoyama Mitsuteru's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sangokushi*, 1971-87). You may know Yokoyama as the creator of *Gigantor* (*Tetsujin 28-gō*, 1956-65) or *Giant Robo* (*Jaianto robo*, 1967-68), seminal works in the robot and mecha genres in manga and anime. His version of the classic Chinese epic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, which runs in some editions to sixty volumes, is not only a massive best-seller (totaling over 70 million books sold), but also one of the few manga that you can regularly find in school and public libraries.

The first panel from this manga on display at the Center (undated, but from 1974) shows He Jin, the brave and charismatic general who expedited the fall of the Han Dynasty in the late 2nd century, as a young man running the family butchering business in Luoyang. Dead pigs hang from the rafters. Ox skulls

and other bones litter the ground. Wooden buckets are filled with organs. Shirtless and smiling, he is shown slicing open another pig, its blood spilling to the floor. Behind him is a young woman handling a hide. The text above her reads, "He Jin, who worked in the slaughtering trade killing cows and pigs in the town of Luoyang, had a beautiful younger sister." Heavy hatch-marks accentuate the business's macabre squalor.

The second panel shows the same scene from a later edition of the manga. Instead of a space filled with signs of grisly death, we now see a neat room with only two dead birds hanging from their feet and a hint of another animal on a table under He Jin's hand, who is now considerably wearing a shirt for his readers. The young woman looks basically the same. Above her, the text reads, "There was a meat shop in the town of Luoyang. The owner, He Jin, had a beautiful younger sister." In rendering the room, instead of hatching, there is now lots of clean white and the angle has been raised so we have no view of the floor, what's in the vessels, or the animal under happy He Jin's hand.

Though this is not explained at the Center, this panel is one of many from the He Jin chapters of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* that were redrawn in 1991.¹⁷ I was not able to find any information about why the changes were made, but considering that edits on other pages relate to verbiage that describes He Jin as a "pig killer" (*butakoroshi*) from a "ignoble caste" (*iyashii mibun*), it is most likely that the manga was revised under pressure from the BLL. That would help explain its appearance at Shibaura, which, as mentioned earlier, was organized with the help of the local BLL chapter. Nineteen ninety-one was also the year that Yokoyama received a prestigious award for the series from the Japan Cartoonists Association, which means that there would have been added pressures to realign its content with prevailing standards of non-discriminatory speech and imagery. The standard textual version of *Romance of*



Original and revised 1991 artwork
Yokoyama Mitsuteru, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* vol. 3
(Tokyo: Ushio Shuppan, 1974)

the Three Kingdoms in Japanese also erased references to “pig killers” and other sensitive terms in these years.¹⁸

“How do you feel about these two images?” asks a didactic text placed between the two panels in the Meat Information Center’s display. While no concrete explanation is provided of what is wrong with the first image, it does preemptively frame what it believes to be the proper kind of answer with the aforementioned “Discriminatory Representations in Books and Related Media” at the top of the display, as well as a subheading directly above the pre-revised version of Yokoyama’s manga that reads “Examples that Depict Slaughterhouses and Their Workers as Bad.” That last word in Japanese is “*aku*,” which often connotes “evil.” Regardless of whether Yokoyama’s representation is historically accurate or not, regardless of whether the artist intended to malign slaughterhouse workers or not, regardless of the fact that this manga is set in China eighteen centuries ago – as a representation that circulated in Japan at a time when the BLL still commanded significant influence, the manga’s creator and publisher

were expected to conform to the sensitivities of buraku and slaughterhouse activists. The specificities of intent and context are less important – and arguably irrelevant from the BLL point of view – than the urgency of eliminating anti-buraku discrimination root and branch, like a radical surgery that not only targets malignant tissues but also all the passageways and neighboring zones where the cancer might be latent. Most non-buraku Japanese find such “word hunting” (*kotoba-gari*) – or in this case, “image hunting” – extreme, and say so with the same kind of dismissive attitude held by English speakers who use “politically correct” as a pejorative. But it is important to remember the greater good for which specific cases of suppression serve: the tempering of discrimination, the improving of life for minority peoples, and pressuring people who do not belong to that community to take greater responsibility for the words (and images) they use.

That a manga is featured at Shibaura is itself instructive. It is not the only visual example – there are also reproductions of sections of medieval picture scrolls, Edo and Meiji era woodblock prints, and early

20th century photographs – but it is the most recent. In his essay, Kure cites a case in which a nationally respected author of historical fiction and travel literature, Shiba Ryōtarō, wasn't censored (as many writers were) for using “slaughterhouse” as a metaphor in describing the aftermath of a battle, in this case in the medieval period. The reasons, he claims, is that Shiba commands cultural capital that creators of mass entertainment, pop culture, and pulp literature do not. But actually, on another occasion in 1983, Shiba was criticized by the BLL for using “slaughterer” (*tosatsujin*) in lieu of “assassin,” and graciously agreed to change the text.¹⁹ So already this line of argument is iffy. Likewise, if ever manga have been respected in Japan on a national level, Yokoyama's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was, but honors and accolades did not suffice to shield the work. As stated earlier, I personally don't get the sense that cultural hierarchy has been a major factor in buraku rhetorical politics. If anything, the more popular, vaunted, or visible a work is, the more likely it is to be targeted, regardless of medium. If the suppression of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* in 1962 offers an exception to this general rule, the relative uneventfulness of its reissue from a small manga publisher in 2004 (see below) probably proves it.

Note that Yokoyama wasn't even using slaughterhouses as a metaphor. Today the Shibaura Slaughterhouse is as sparkling hygienic as could be imagined for a factory of its sort, but that has only been the case since the place was rebuilt in 1985. It does not matter what slaughterhouses looked like or may have looked like in the past. It only matters how the depiction of slaughterhouses, wherever or whenever they are set, resonates with real and perceived discrimination in the present. Positive and anodyne are the only acceptable tones, at least for outsiders. In fact, just saying or writing “slaughterhouse” (*tosatsujō/tosatsuba*) has been deemed problematic. The ideographic kanji characters are

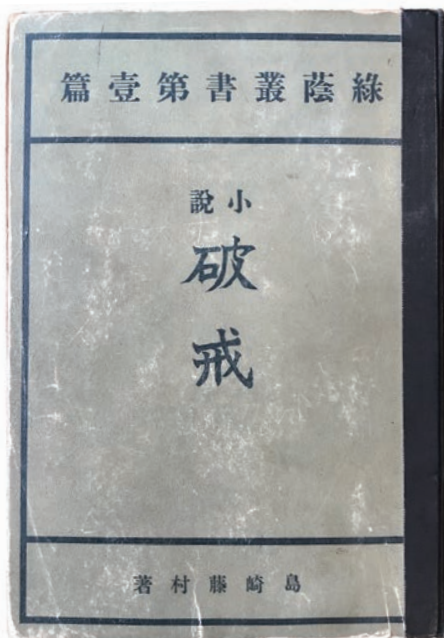
typically truncated to “*toba*” and written with syllabic kana to obfuscate their relationship to killing, and often the euphemisms “consumer meat market” (*shokuniku ichiba*) or “livestock dismantling facility” (*kachiku kaitaijō*) are used instead. However, even some slaughterhouse workers have voiced discomfort with so much political correctness, and think it better to work to change people's minds about what “slaughter” connotes (that it's not cruel and disgusting) rather than pander to discriminatory sentiments rooted in ignorance and unquestioned biases. Silence and euphemisms, in this view, simply leave prejudicial cognitive structures in place.²⁰

If such has been the political climate around a term like “slaughterhouse,” you can imagine how fraught the situation is around nomenclature for buraku peoples themselves, especially when it comes to names that are openly derogatory. Just below these two manga panels are a handful of letters and postcards in a display case. They are some of the many pieces of hate mail that Shibaura has received over the years. The most vicious one begins as follows: “Tokyo Consumer Meat Market sure sounds nice, but it's a slaughterhouse, plain and simple. Listen up, you stupid pig-killing work-eta (eta aren't human so they can't be workmen). You're nothing but cruel beasts [*zankoku na kimono*], with no blood and no tears. You murder pigs, though pigs are superior animals compared to you eta. Eta and hinin are single-celled organisms, lower than even fleas, maggots, cockroaches, flies, lice, and the SARS bacteria [sic]. Since you're not human, you have nothing as noble as human rights, therefore killing eta and hinin is not a crime and can't be tried as homicide under Article 199 of the Penal Code.” It goes on.²¹

With childish handwriting that suggests limited literacy or mental illness, more than 400 similar letters and postcards were sent to various buraku-related businesses, institutions, and individuals over an 18-month

period between 2003 and 2004 (the year the *Bloody Stumps Samurai* was reissued). The above to Shibaura was reportedly the first. The perpetrator, an unemployed man in his mid-thirties, was eventually arrested and imprisoned on charges of defamation, intimidation, and forgery.²² Though buraku discrimination is far less pervasive and intense now than it was even twenty years ago, some Japanese are still wary of hiring, marrying, or even living next to people marked as buraku. Instances of virulent hate, like these letters, are not particularly common, but nor can they be written off as exceptions. They feed off more passive discriminatory sentiments – I personally have heard Japanese describe buraku neighborhoods as dirty and dangerous and their residents as odd-looking – and serve to reinforce an atmosphere of alienation and terror felt by members of the community. The hate is crude and inexact – for example, not everyone who works at a slaughterhouse in Japan is descended from people with ties to that or other historically buraku-dominated trades – but nonetheless pointed and damaging.

What this letter also reveals, in its sloppy and belligerent way, is that “historical” terms like “eta” and “hinin” are often the first to be weaponized in hate speech, as is the casting of animal slaughter as the “cruel” work of subhuman “beasts.” When Hirata drew *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, this language of hate was still pervasive and thus far more cutting. Despite living in Nara prefecture, a heartland of Suiheisha activism and home to many old buraku communities, I doubt that Hirata understood the depth and magnitude of the problem. In an interview following the 2004 reissue of the manga, Hirata admitted that he first heard about buraku through bigoted hearsay in middle school (the early ‘50s) and only learned more when he came across a book about buraku history and discrimination in Tenri Central Library, which he frequented for research for his manga.²³



Shimazaki Tōson
The Broken Commandment (Rokuin Sōsho, 1906)
 cover of original edition held by Tenri Central Library

Even a seemingly small detail, like how he spells “eta,” gives away his ignorance. Writing it in kanji, as Hirata does, may have been historically accurate, but it was also semantically offensive. Since the term’s derogatory connotations of overwhelming defilement are immediately legible in the kanji, it became standard practice to write “eta” in syllabic katakana in the ‘20s. The Suiheisha, symbolically, spelled the word in katakana. Looking back on his youth in the ‘30s, one buraku activist described feeling “discomfort to the point of disgust,” “sick to my stomach with humiliation and rage,” when he saw that and similar slurs in print, as he recognized that they were designed for nothing less than “the utter destruction of me and my life.”²⁴ Even *The Broken Commandment*, which went out of print under Suiheisha pressure in 1929, was only reissued in 1939 after being heavily

redacted, with all instances of “eta” and numerous other words replaced with variants of “buraku” and “burakumin.” And though restored editions began appearing as pricey hardcovers in 1953 – Hirata would have had access to them, as well as the first edition from 1906, at Tenri Central Library – the most accessible paperback edition from Shinchōsha continued using the redacted text until 1971.²⁵

Likewise, all of the various television drama and theatrical movie adaptations of *The Broken Commandment* produced in the early postwar years avoid “eta” and other contentious words. The most famous movie version, directed by Ichikawa Kon, was released in April 1962; the indicia of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* states that it was published on July 1, 1962. The proximity of the dates can hardly be a coincidence, especially considering that the usual production time of a manga of this length was about two months, and that Hirata frequented the movies in these years and regularly appropriated motifs, characters, and even whole scenes and plot elements from the hottest new period features. Which is to say – and this is an important point for assessing Hirata’s intentions – not only is it highly likely that Hirata conceived and drew *Bloody Stumps Samurai* under the direct influence of Ichikawa’s film, but also that it is possible that he intentionally ignored its politically correct verbiage in favor of the rawness and historicity of the original text.

In sum, even before Hirata’s problematic explanation of the community’s origins or Gennosuke’s stereotypical rage – the features that the BLL took issue with – word choice and orthography in *Bloody Stumps Samurai* would have already set the stage for an unkind reception. The violent imagery and gruesome title would not have helped. Among activists and the community, there has been great debate about the best way to rid society of these words and the sentiments behind them. Some say they should remain unspoken and unwritten, for through silence and invisibility they will eventually be forgotten. Others say



Poster for Ichikawa Kon’s adaptation of
The Broken Commandment
(Daiei Film, April 1962).

they should be outed and openly interrogated, so that people are forced to come to terms with the bigotry that they represent and eventually only use them with the full weight of history surrounding them in scare quotes. Outside of the movement and community, many individuals and publishers choose to avoid, not just specific words, but addressing buraku issues altogether, sometimes out of respect to the buraku community, but more often because they are too lazy to do it in a conscientious manner, or because they are just plain scared. Unfortunately, over the course of the ‘70s and ‘80s, as denunciations became more frequent and more intense, sometimes turning violent, self-censorship overtook self-reckoning as the norm.²⁶

Distaste with this situation also increased, and became particularly vocal in the ‘90s. This can be felt keenly in Kure’s essay, written in 2004 by a sharp-tongued critic who frequently denounced censorship, the biases

of “word hunting,” and empty intonations of “human rights,” but who also stood up for the buraku and other minority communities and their experiences of discrimination, as well as for the legitimacy and effectiveness of “denunciation.” This was not an abstract debate for Kure. In the mid ‘90s, he had difficulty finding a publisher to reissue his classic *A Survey of Contemporary Manga* (*Gendai manga no zentaizō*, 1986) because they refused to reprint a couple of lines in which he proposes that the characters in a manga set in a working class neighborhood of south Osaka, Haruki Etsumi’s *Spunky Chie* (*Jarinko Chie*, 1978-97), were, given their lifestyle, dress, and distrust of both the police and yakuza, probably buraku or zainichi Korean.²⁷ When things get to this stage – when sympathetically suggesting that something might be related to minority issues based on commonsense markers is deemed unprintable – you could very well expect a backlash.

When *Bloody Stumps Samurai* was reissued in 2004, the tide was quickly turning. With the expiration of a Special Measures Law in 2002 that had directed money to buraku districts since 1969, the BLL lost one of its main sources of funding. Meanwhile, sensationalistic exposés about corruption and yakuza influence within this welfare system practically wiped out any public sympathies that still remained for the organization and the community. Inside and outside buraku circles, there was general agreement that the reigning philosophy of “don’t wake a sleeping child” (*neta ko o okusuna*) – referring to the belief that buraku issues were best left alone – was only pushing the “buraku question” into a closet where discrimination, corruption, and shame festered. But as there was no rulebook for how to be open in an acceptable way, Seirinkōgeisha assumed that it was taking a risk with the new Hirata book. In addition to extensive redactions, the edition’s editor, Asakawa Mitsuhiro, listed his name as the publisher so that, in the event of fallout, it would rain on him and not the actual owner

of the company. When, after publication, no complaints of any sort came the publisher’s way, Asakawa was understandably surprised. Surprised – but also vindicated.²⁸

The reissue received little press of real substance. Interestingly, the most positive and engaged of responses came from writers associated, in different ways, with the buraku community. Writing for *Human Rights and the Buraku Question* (*Jinken to buraku mondai*), a monthly journal published by the Buraku Problems Research Institute (Buraku mondai kenkyūjo) in Kyoto, manga critic Omote Tomoyuki (who does not, to my knowledge, identify as buraku) argues that, while Gennosuke’s bloodlust and gory demise was unlikely to do anything but reinforce angst and nihilism among a young buraku readership, a work’s message cannot merely be judged based on the internal needs of a political movement. There should be room for what it means to non-buraku readers, too. Furthermore, if a reader ends up identifying with the haters in Hirata’s manga, Omote adds, in reference to one of the BLL’s complaints, that is a reflection of their own prejudices, not Hirata’s, whose position on discrimination is clear. It is both wrong and meaningless to hold Hirata responsible if people misread his work.²⁹

Uehara Yoshihiro, one of the most popular writers today on buraku issues, who also proudly self-identifies as buraku, interviewed Hirata soon after the reissue. In his recap, first published in an occult and unsolved mysteries magazine, Uehara expresses nothing but sympathy for the young artist, who could have hardly been expected to be aware of the finer points of what was acceptable within buraku discourse. The BLL, on the other hand, come off as thugs (they reportedly showed up at Hinomaru Bunko in the back of a truck armed with “clubs”) with limited cultural literacy who unfairly scapegoated small fish like Hirata for what Uehara believes can only read today like trivial infractions. Apparently, after speaking

Though the situation in the early 2000s had liberalized enough to allow a reissue, as mentioned earlier the Seirinkōgeisha edition (like the currently available one from Laputa) still made concessions to the language politics and publishing ethics of the recent past. Not only were the passages with which the BLL took issue redacted (though cited or paraphrased more or less in full in Kure's essay), so were all thirty-two occurrences of "eta" and the five of "hinin," as well as the single instance of "katawamono" (cripple) – disability being another issue about which Japanese sensitivities have shifted since Hirata's time. About the circles and triangles that appear in their place, Uehara writes, "These are the unfortunate scars of misunderstanding between people forty years ago. Scars upon the human heart can heal over time, but those inflicted upon this manga remain there unhealed."³¹ With such laments from a buraku writer in mind, for this English edition we decided to provide a full translation with no redactions. As history books now regularly include the word "eta," as do editions of Tōson's novel since the '70s, including a popular manga adaptation from 2007 (currently in its 10th printing), we feel assured that this is an appropriate decision.³²

We also want readers to get a sense of the full force of this manga's strident language of expression, as a way to better understand what this manga attempted to achieve, as well as what it failed to achieve, as an anti-discrimination broadside in 1962. Besides, leaving things to the imagination can lead to

them seeming more fantastical and monstrous than they actually are – all the more so in a sensationalizing manga like this one. If you are of the opinion that this manga is irredeemable, an unredacted version also has the merit of providing a concrete object for a negative case study, examples of which, to my knowledge, are not readily available in English when it comes to buraku issues. If one can only appreciate Hirata's good intentions by refusing to give in to the taboos of censorship, the opposite also applies: one can best understand prejudice, whether it be pure or conflicted, by seeing it in action.

Whatever your persuasion, we do ask that you read this manga with the context outlined in this essay and the one following in mind. Most of all, we ask that you read it with respect for the buraku community, for whom discrimination has been a real and painful fact of life, and who surely read Gennosuke's trials in a far more personal way than you or I do or can. Hopefully, this volume will inspire you to learn more about buraku issues. If delving into the academic literature cited in the endnotes of this essay seems daunting, I recommend starting with works of fiction like Tōson's *The Broken Commandment*, Sumii's *The River with No Bridge*, or Nakagami Kenji's *The Cape* (Misaki, 1976). They will provide a deeper understanding of buraku history, identity, and discrimination, and a greater ability to intelligently judge Hirata's well-meaning misadventure into the battlefield of buraku politics.

The author would like to thank Emi Do, Matt Noyes, Christopher Bondy, Timothy Amos, and Asakawa Mitsuhiro for reading and commenting on drafts of this essay.

¹ For an overview of the history, inner workings, and politics of Japanese slaughterhouses, including Shibaura, see Kamata Satoshi, *Dokumento toba* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1998). On issues of nomenclature, see pp. 227-32. For an English-language introduction to Shibaura, see Rebecca Milner, "Wagyu: Processing pampered cows at Tokyo's last major slaughterhouse," *The Japan Times* (August 7, 2015) and "Wagyu: More at stake than craftsmanship for marginalized slaughterhouse workers," *The Japan Times* (August 14, 2015). The idea of framing this essay through Shibaura was inspired by an inside tour of the facilities and

an educational Q&A session with the Shibaura Slaughterhouse Labor Union in November 2018. Thank you to Yamasaki Seiichi and Oshida Gorō for inviting me to join this and other tours related to buraku history, discrimination, and labor run by the Tokyo Sanitation Workers Human Rights Committee (Seisō jinken kōryūkai), and to representatives of the Shibaura Union for meeting with me to talk about discrimination in June 2019.

² A basic statement of purpose and outline of exhibits at the Meat Information Center from the time of its opening can be found in Zen Shibaura Tojō Rōdō Kumiai, “Tojō rōdō o tadashiku shitte hoshii: ‘O-niku no jōhōkan’ ga oopun,” *Buraku kaihō* no. 515 (March 2003), pp. 72-4.

³ For a discussion of “buraku” as a mobile stigma, see Joseph D. Hankins, *Working Skin: Making Leather, Making a Multicultural Japan* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), pp. 11-2 and passim.

⁴ The English language scholarship on buraku peoples and their predecessors is extensive. For a simple introduction, see Ian J. Neary, “Burakumin in contemporary Japan,” in Michael Weiner, ed., *Japan’s Minorities: The illusion of homogeneity*, 2nd ed. (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 59-83. For a detailed historical and theoretical study, see Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011). For an overview closer to the date of *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, see George de Vos and Hiroshi Wagatsuma, ed., *Japan’s Invisible Race: Caste in Culture and Personality* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1966).

⁵ On discriminatory epithets and euphemisms for buraku peoples and their communities, and the politics around them, see Nanette Gottlieb, *Linguistic Stereotyping and Minority Groups in Japan* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 49-73.

⁶ See George O. Totten and Hiroshi Wagatsuma, “Emancipation: Growth and Transformation of a Political Movement,” in *Japan’s Invisible Race*, pp. 34-8; and David L. Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, & London: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 79-109. This kind of historical inaccuracy, however, unlike the others described below and in the next essay, would probably have been acceptable to buraku activists on ideological grounds.

⁷ “The Suiheisha Manifesto” (March 3, 1922), as translated in Neary, p. 67.

⁸ On the complicated dynamics of silence, invisibility, passing, and self-presentation within the buraku community, see Christopher Bondy, *Voice, Silence, and Self: Negotiations of Buraku Identity in Contemporary Japan* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 2015); and Hankins, *Working Skin*. For a highly readable account of the ambiguities of buraku identity at the end of the 20th century, see Kadooka Nobuhiko, *Hisabetsu buraku no seishun* [1999] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2003).

⁹ Neary, p. 68.

¹⁰ Anne McKnight, *Nakagami, Japan: Buraku and the Writing of Ethnicity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 17, 38.

¹¹ For print and broadcast media, especially since the ‘80s, see Kobayashi Kenji, *Buraku kaihō dōmei ‘kyūdan’ shi: media to sabetsu hyōgen* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2015). On films, see Kurokawa Midori, *Egakareta hisabetsu buraku: eiga no naka no jigazō to tashazō* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2011). On both and more, see Buraku kaihō dōmei chūō honbu, ed., *Sabetsu hyōgen to kyūdan* (Osaka: Kaihō shuppansha, 1988).

¹² For details about the suppression of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* beyond what is narrated in Kure Tomofusa’s text below, see Uehara Yoshihiro, *Igyō no nihonjin* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2010), pp. 27-41.

¹³ “Sabetsu, henken no manga: zasshi *Mazō* no bessatsu ni kōgi,” *Mainichi shinbun*, Osaka edition (August 2, 1962), p. 15. This article is reprinted in the 2004 and 2012 reissues of *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, as well as on page 157 of the present volume. It also appeared under the title “Sabetsu o oshieru manga” (A manga that teaches discrimination) in *Buraku* no. 151 (August 1962), p. 30, though with the artist’s name misspelled as Wada Hiroshi.

¹⁴ A fuller analysis of the manga, its suppression, and the relationship of both to buraku representations in the arts and buraku liberation politics in the ‘60s will be available in my tentatively-titled essay, “Filth Abundant: Hirata Hiroshi, *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, and the Buraku Question in Manga” (in-progress).

¹⁵ See Asakawa Mitsuhiro, interview with Akata Yūichi, “Nido ni wataru ‘kageki manga’ no butaiura,” in Akata and Barubora, *Teihon: kesareta manga* (Tokyo: Saizusha, 2016), p. 297.

¹⁶ On the artistic reception of *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, see Onoda Shō [Asakawa Mitsuhiro], “Kaidoku: Surugajō gozen jiai,” in Hirata Hiroshi and Nanjō Norio, *Surugajō gozen jiai*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Magazine Five, 2005), pp. 227-30; and Ryan Holmberg, “The Artistic Reception of Hirata Hiroshi’s *Bloody Stumps Samurai*,” *The Comics Journal* online (August 2019).

¹⁷ An overview of the changes in Yokoyama’s *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* can be found at: <https://niguruta.hatenablog.com/entry/20150520/1432127337>

¹⁸ Mentioned in Kure Tomofusa, *Kiken na shisōka* [1998] (Tokyo: Futabasha, 2000), p. 80.

¹⁹ Kobayashi, pp. 83-5. Kobayashi’s survey also lists two episodes (1982, 1996) in which manga were criticized by the BLL, though neither for the specific reasons discussed in the present essay (pp. 66-8; 165-6). In Kamata’s book on slaughterhouses, a union activist from the Yokohama Central Wholesale Meat Market complains about the use of “slaughterhouse” as a battlefield metaphor in Shinzato Kenshin’s *Okinawa kessen* (Gekkan Okinawa-sha, 1978), a non-fictional manga about the Battle of Okinawa. See Kamata, pp. 150-1.

²⁰ See Kamata, pp. 227-32; Sagawa Mitsuharu, “Seikatsu no sekkei” [2001], in *Niji o oikakeru otoko* (Tokyo: Futabasha, 2006), pp. 50-3; Sagawa, “Tosatsu wa, tosatsu de aru,” *Shinchō* (August 2001), pp. 212-5; Sagawa, *Ushi o hofuru* [2009] (Tokyo: Futabasha, 2014), pp. 13, 87-92. Kure’s argument about contradictions surrounding these terms, mentioned briefly in his essay, can be found in *Kiken na shisōka*, pp. 73-81. For a glimpse of what Japanese slaughterhouses looked like in the recent past, see Motohashi Seiichi’s photographs of the Matsubara Slaughterhouse (south of Osaka) from the mid ‘80s and 1999-2009, *Toba* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2011).

²¹ The full text of this letter can be read in Saitō Takao, “Shin seikatsu hoshushugi no mentaritei to ‘sabetsu no jidai,’” in *‘Dōwa riken no shinsō’ no shinsō* (Osaka & Tokyo: Kaihō shuppansha, 2004), p. 117.

²² Known as the Mass Serial Discriminatory Postcard Incident, this episode is discussed in Amos, pp. 17-9 and 191-6, and thoroughly in Uramoto Yoshifumi, *Renzoku tairyō sabetsu hagaki jiken: higaisha toshite no hokori o kaketa tataikai* (Osaka & Tokyo: Kaihō shuppansha, 2011).

²³ Uehara, *Igyō no nihonjin*, pp. 29-30.

²⁴ Cited in Kurokawa, pp. 18-9.

²⁵ Kitakōji Ken, “*Hakai* to sabetsu mondai” (1986), afterword to bunko edition of Shimazaki Tōson, *Hakai* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1987), pp. 454-94.

²⁶ See Gottlieb, *Linguistic Stereotyping and Minority Groups in Japan*, pp. 1-73, or the pithy overview in her essay, “Discriminatory Language in Japan: Burakumin, the Disabled and Women,” *Asian Studies Review* 22:2 (June 1988), pp. 157-73.

²⁷ Kure Tomofusa, interviewed by Kadooka Nobuhiko, “‘Jinken shinrikyō’ to sabetsu,” in *‘Dōwa riken no shinsō’ no shinsō*, pp. 139-41. The passage in question can be found on page 282 of the currently available bunko edition, *Gendai manga no zentaizō* (Tokyo: Futabasha, 1997).

²⁸ Asakawa and Akata, “Nido ni wataru ‘kageki manga’ no butaiura,” pp. 292-303.

²⁹ Omote Tomoyuki [2006-7], in Yoshimura Kazuma, Tanaka Satoshi, and Omote Tomoyuki, *Sabetsu to mukiau manga tachi* (Tokyo: Rinsen shoten, 2007), pp. 225-36. For an unsympathetic view of Hirata’s grotesque imagery and appropriation of buraku issues, see Takano Shinzō, *Kashihon manga to sengo no fūkei* (Tokyo: Ronsōsha, 2016), pp. 149-53.

³⁰ Uehara, pp. 27-41. Uehara’s article originally appeared in *Fushigi nakkuruzu* no. 3 (June 2005), pp. 44-6.

³¹ Uehara, p. 41.

³² Shimazaki Tōson and Variety Artworks, *Hakai: manga de dokuha* (Tokyo: East Press, 2007).

The *Bloody Stumps Samurai* Incident (2004)

Kure Tomofusa

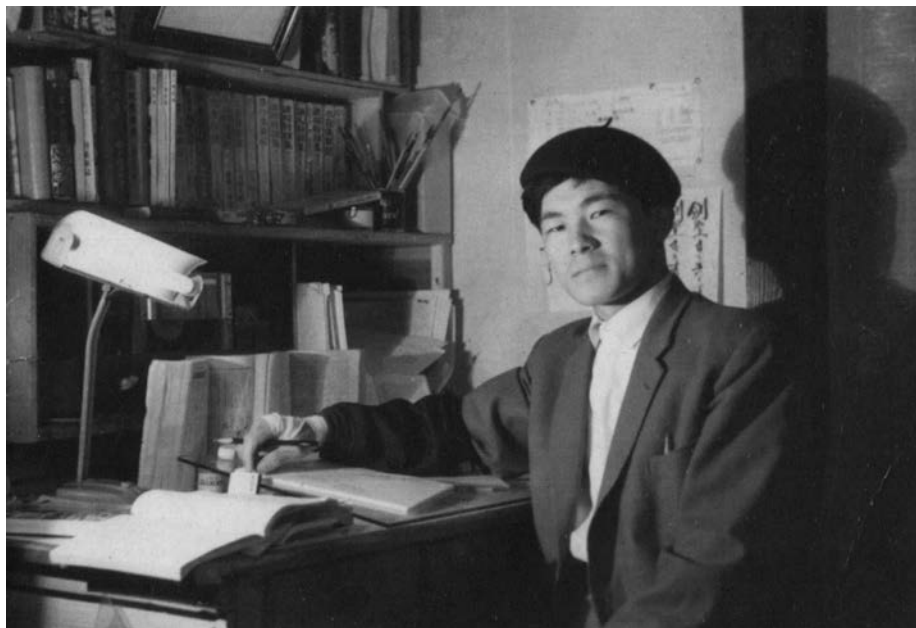
Hirata Hiroshi's *Bloody Stumps Samurai* was issued as a supplemental volume of *Mazō* (*The Face of Evil*), a kashihon (rental book) periodical dedicated to historical fiction published by Hinomaru Bunko in Osaka. Though the publication date is noted as July 1, 1962 in the indicia, the book was likely released in June, as per publishing conventions in the kashihon market at the time. About one month after the book's publication, Hinomaru Bunko received a strong objection from the Buraku Liberation League [hereafter BLL], leading to the book's recall and destruction and its removal from print. It has not been reissued for forty-two years since.

Due to this situation, it became very difficult to gain access to original copies of *Bloody Stumps Samurai*. Though the work was rumored to be one of Hirata's early masterpieces, confirming that for oneself was not easy. Even people who were fortunate enough to get to read the original at places like the Contemporary Manga Library (Gendai Manga Toshokan) in Tokyo still hesitated to publicly review the work using sample illustrations from the manga. As a result, assessment of both the work and the BLL's protests has been monopolized by guesswork and misunderstanding, which benefits neither the artist nor the buraku liberation movement, nor publishing or journalism at large. In fact, considering the subsequent course of Japanese publishing and journalism, the events surrounding *Bloody Stumps Samurai* cannot be dismissed as someone else's misfortune, as they speak directly to the ignorance and irresponsibility of publishers, editors, journalists, and intellectuals in Japan.

In the years following this incident, during the 1970s and '80s, anti-discrimination activism reached a near-abnormal intensity. Generally, it went unchallenged. Of course, some people complained and expressed dismay that movements to expose discrimination had gone too far. But real debate about the issue was rare, with most conversations conducted in a perfunctory, stopgap way. To understand the recall and reissuing of *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, it is essential to at least recognize some of the basic features of the resulting situation.

First of all, discriminatory language is permitted in Japan if it comes from nationally acclaimed authors and progressive publishers. Take, for example, respected writer Shiba Ryōtarō's historical travel series, *Walking Along History's Highways* (*Kaidō o yuku*, 1971-96), which was first serialized in *Weekly Asahi* (*Shūkan Asahi*) before being published as a series of hardcover books and then reissued as pocket paperbacks (bunko). In the April 8, 1977 installment of the series, Shiba writes the following about the attempted Mongol invasions of Japan: "It was the morning of October 19, 1274. With corpses of warriors of the Kamakura Shogunate strewn everywhere, the scene on the beach was truly horrifying, resembling a slaughterhouse run by the Mongol army. Some 900 Mongol ships, looming large like Chinese city gates, engulfed Hakata Harbor."

Shiba here describes the butchery of the Mongols by comparing it to a "slaughterhouse" (*tosatsujō*). Typically [due to the fact that the buraku community has strong ties to professional animal slaughter and meat processing], this would count as "discriminatory language" (*sabetsu hyōgen*) that the BLL does not tolerate under any circumstances. In this instance, however, no objections were lodged.



Hirata Hiroshi (circa 1959)

Nor were they lodged on the occasion of the series' hardcover edition. Nor on the occasion of its paperback edition. I pointed out this contradiction six years ago in my book *Dangerous Thinkers* (*Kiken na shisōka*, 1998), but I have yet to hear of either Shiba or his publisher, Asahi Shibunsha, being denounced on this count.

As discussed in more detail later, *Bloody Stumps Samurai* did not benefit from such cultural privilege. When the book was published in 1962, not only had manga yet to achieve popular cultural recognition, kashihon gekiga was seen as the absolutely most vulgar and harmful kind of comics. While some people welcomed the denunciation, removal, and destruction of such trash, no one stood up to argue otherwise. Behind this incident one thus catches a glimpse of the delicate issue of the internal "discriminatory structures" (*sabetsu kōzō*) of Japan's intelligentsia.

On the relationship between anti-discrimination activism and publishing, I would also like to point out the increasing

tendency among publishers since the '90s to attempt to circumvent the issue with stopgap measures. The most common tactic today is to include disclaimers in order to preempt criticism. Let me provide two typical examples. The Iwanami Bunko edition (1997) of journalist Shinoda Kōzō's *One Hundred Tales of Meiji* (*Meiji hyakuwa*, 1931) includes the following in its back matter: "Though the present text includes numerous discriminatory and prejudicial expressions, they have been kept as they appear in the original out of consideration for historical context." Similarly, the Iwanami Bunko edition (1995) of sculptor Takamura Kōun's *Reminiscences of the Restoration Era* (*Bakumatsu isshin kaikodan*, 1929) includes the following: "Though the present text includes inappropriate expressions towards the physically handicapped and certain races, they have been kept as they appear in the original out of consideration for historical context." Thus, simply by including back matter disclaimers of historical whatnot, books that could not have been published in

the '70s and '80s due to the severity of anti-discrimination activism can now be printed without any problems.

But is this really cause for joy? Of course, one is thankful for increased opportunities to read the original texts due to these perfunctory measures. However, they also serve to shield the fields of journalism and publishing from fundamental debate about the underlying issues. Can the fierce efforts of activists to "bring discrimination out into the open" really be written off with such insubstantial disclaimers? Below, I set out to question the historical responsibility of the intellectuals who have actively supported anti-discrimination movements these past 30-40 years, as well as the publishers who have surrendered to appease them.

Seirinkōgeisha first approached me about the reissue of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* in the spring of 2004. Though they only spoke vaguely about the possibility of doing it, I immediately recognized it as a project of great importance for not only the study of manga history, but also that of publishing in general.

It was thus, with two caveats, that I agreed to be involved. One: minimal redaction and explanatory notes. Two: as deep an investigation as currently possible into the circumstances surrounding the book's recall and cancellation. While the specifics of the former will be explained later on, the latter is something that I had thought was necessary for many years, due to the fact, mentioned earlier, that the book's history was buried beneath guesswork and misunderstanding.

The oldest example of this can be found in Ishiko Junzō's *Postwar Manga History Notes* (*Sengo manga-shi nooto*, 1975). (Please note that this Ishiko is different from the Ishiko Jun who appears below). In the chronology at the back of his book, he provides the following erroneous information:

March 1961: Hirata Hiroshi's *All Falls* (*Tsunde wa kuzushi*, Hinomaru Bunko) causes problems due to its depiction of burakumin.

August 1962: Hirata Hiroshi's *Bloody Stumps Samurai* (Hinomaru Bunko) is opposed by the Democratic Scientists Association (Minshūshugi kagakusha kyōkai) and the BLL.

Upon reading this, a reader is bound to conclude that Hirata repeatedly produced problematic representations of the buraku community. But that is doubly wrong. First, if Hirata drew in a way that lends itself to being misread, he did so only in the course of angrily criticizing buraku discrimination. Second, *All Falls* neither depicts burakumin nor was embroiled in any troubles for that reason. Ishiko is confusing the fact that *All Falls* was criticized by educators and other parties for its violence. Ishiko's *Postwar Manga History Notes* is a pioneering work in manga studies, written in the age when the field was completely undeveloped, but that is also why it contains such mistakes.

Sakurai Shōichi's *I Was the Mastermind Behind Gekiga* (*Boku wa gekiga no shikakejin data*, 1978) also comments on *Bloody Stumps Samurai*. Though many writers, including myself, have relied on Sakurai's book, one needs to verify the things he says. He writes, "Due to the insistent protests from the BLL, even the exceptionally exuberant president [of Hinomaru Bunko] succumbed to neurosis. Swallowing his tears, he fired the editor in charge, recalled the book from kashihon outlets across the country, and burned copies in the presence of members of the BLL." Since Sakurai was someone who drew manga for Hinomaru's anthologies, one would assume his words are based on things he saw and heard firsthand. On the other hand, considering that *I Was the Mastermind Behind Gekiga* is also a humorously-written account of the author's youth, one suspects a degree of exaggeration.

There is precious little in the way of public documentation to confirm what Sakurai claims. Thinking that the Osaka chapter of the BLL might have some record of the events, since it was directly involved, Seirinkōgeisha's Asakawa Mitsuhiro sent a letter of inquiry to

the organization but received no response. It has been more than forty years; they probably don't have any materials related to the incident anymore. If that's the case, then the only publicly available documentation that one can easily reference is a newspaper article in *Mainichi Shinbun* (Osaka edition, August 2, 1962) titled "'A Discriminatory and Prejudiced Manga': Protest Against a Supplemental Issue of the Magazine *Mazō*."

According to this article, the Osaka chapter of the BLL "launched into protest upon learning that a comic book filled with 'discriminatory' and 'prejudicial' sentiments towards the buraku problem was circulating throughout Japan." It then summarizes the manga's story as follows: "The lead character of the story, Inoko Gennosuke, an Edo period swordsman, is filled with resentment from the 'discrimination' he was subjected to when he was young. He masters the way of the sword with the goal of saving his community, but then begins killing those he hates one after another with the most brutal of means."

The article further states that the Osaka BLL found issue with the following three things.

1. The manga's explanation of the buraku community as having originated with "ex-convicts and *furōjin* [someone who absconds from their legally defined residence or occupation], those engaged in polluted occupations, or the descendants thereof" reflects prejudicial views that conflict with scientific historical evidence.
2. The depiction of burakumin as a violent people whose only recourse is revenge is a distortion of the buraku liberation movement.
3. By showing everyone happy after the protagonist dies, the manga leads readers to conclude that it is best if burakumin are simply killed off.

Concerned that "the influence upon young readers for whom the manga was drawn would be significant, due to their lack of proper understanding of the buraku problem," the Osaka chapter strongly protested to

「差別、偏見のマンガ」

雑誌「魔像」の別冊に抗議

部落解放同盟大阪府連

部落解放同盟大阪府連「本田（そつじ）正直委員長」は部落問題に對する「差別」と「偏見」に満ちたマンガ本が全国に流れていることを知り、このほど抗議運動に乗り出した。問題の本は大阪市南区安立寺「橋通」で、有限会社「日ノ丸文庫」代表取締役、山田秀二氏（せむし）から出版された月刊マンガ雑誌「魔像」別冊、血なまぐさい「落着き」平田弘史氏（せむし）で、高知県須崎市長平町の貸本店で同盟会員がみつづけたもの。

「差別」にいきなり、剣の道で身を立って、部落を救おうとはけりうち、偏見人たをむこたしいう方法をつづきに殺してゆくという筋書。

同府連が問題にしているのは「魔像」の起原について「脱獄者や浮浪人、または不潔な職業に従事した者、あるいはその子孫のことをいひ」とするなど科学的歴史観に反した偏見で書かれている。部落民は彼らうのため手段を過ぎはな残虐な人々であるとして部落解放運動をめぐめてとらえている。主人公を最後に死なせ、みんなその死を喜ぶなど、部落民が死にたえればいいという考え方を読者に与えている。

な。同府連は部落問題について理解の未熟な青少年を対象に書かれただけに影響が大きい」と問題点を重視、さっそく出版元の「日ノ丸文庫」に厳重抗議した。

抗議におどろいた同文庫の山田代表取締役は同府連に陳謝、問題の本を回収することとし、第一回分として百四十冊を同府連に引き渡した。

the publisher, leading Hinomaru Bunko “President Yamada [Hidezō] to apologize to the BLL, recall the book in question, and hand over to the BLL 142 copies as an initial settlement.”

Regarding the BLL’s three points of contention, I will have more to say later while referencing the manga itself. First, it is necessary to look more closely at the facts of the actual protest and recall.

What about the people in and around kashihon publishing and Hinomaru Bunko? What do they have to say about the events? I asked Asakawa to look into the matter.

First of all, a strong protest was indeed lodged by the BLL. Both Hinomaru Bunko and Hirata Hiroshi wrote apologies in response. Though the texts were previously known to have been printed in the back of Hirata’s *The Assassin and the Boy* (*Shikaku to shōnen*, October 1962), according to Naruse Shōsuke, a researcher of kashihon manga, they had already been published in *Mazō* vol. 56 that August. Apparently they apologized in multiple publications.

After expressing deep regrets about the three points raised by the BLL, the apology concludes by explaining that, “as we [at Hinomaru] are endeavoring to achieve a full recall of *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, we kindly request that you send any copies that you might have on hand to our company offices.” A second apology by Hirata explains that “I have recently produced a work that is guilty of grave errors that betray my own best intentions... due to my lack of study.” [For the full texts, see pages 148-9.] This reads like a standard apology, however. It is undeniably pro forma in nature. If Hirata even wrote it himself, he probably did so under the express direction of his publisher. Editor Nakamura Katsuichi took responsibility for the incident and was forced to quit Hinomaru, but we were unable to interview him as his whereabouts are unknown.

Next, the book’s recall and burning: lot of

vagueness here. It would seem that Hinomaru Bunko did indeed “hand over to the BLL 142 copies,” as claimed by *Mainichi Shinbun*. But whether these in fact represented “an initial settlement” is not clear. I personally doubt that the publisher would have continued handing over the manga in hundred-unit installments. Given how publishing and distribution worked in the kashihon market, a proper recall is hard to imagine. Upon receiving books, a kashihon outlet typically fortified them with clear vinyl covers and kite string punched through their bindings. It is unlikely any store owners would have returned a book on their own accord after going through with this process just on the basis of a formal notice. Naiki Toshio, the former kashihon outlet proprietor whose collection became the Gendai Manga Library, does remember receiving such a notice. The question is to what extent copies of the book were actually returned.

Both Yamamatsu Yūichi and Yamagami Tatsuhiko, two cartoonists who joined Hinomaru Bunko as editors in 1964 and 1966 respectively, recall large numbers of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* stacked in the publisher’s warehouse. Yamamatsu even remembers Yamada Hidezō, the company’s owner, angrily saying to him, “We’ll be in trouble if anyone finds out about this, so keep your mouth shut.” Furthermore, among the existing copies of *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, there are some with color magic marker markings on the text block, which indicates that they were *zokkibon* (clearance copies). Such *zokkibon* were typically returns and remainders that were sold at a low price to used bookstores and street stalls. If copies of the manga were resold as *zokkibon*, it means that the recall and destruction of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* was anything but thorough.

Given the above, it is likely that the recall was carried out only as far as needed to satisfy the BLL. If so, then Sakurai’s claim that Hinomaru “burned copies in the presence of members of the BLL” rings more than a little over-the-top. When told by Hinomaru’s president that he had “burned the hell out of

those books” (*seidai ni moyashita*), Tatsumi Yoshihiro, a cartoonist with a longstanding relationship with the publisher, recalls feeling suspicious about both the tone and word choice. Like the letter of apology, the book burning was probably largely a performance.

Suffice to say that Hinomaru Bunko, which probably had little understanding of buraku issues and was blindsided by the BLL’s indictment, wanted the matter over and done with as quickly as possible. They would have had no interest in arguing with the BLL over the specifics of their complaint, whether on the basis of the artist’s intention or the manga’s actual content. Such a response is hardly unique to early ‘60s kashihon publishing. It is no different from how the publishing industry and journalism has cowardly operated these past forty years, as represented by the established practice of avoiding doing anything of substance while hiding behind the afore discussed disclaimer, “out of consideration for historical context.”

Now let’s dive in to the manga itself, in order to think about its intentions and problems – something that hasn’t been done in the forty-two years since *Bloody Stumps Samurai* was published.

Bloody Stumps Samurai is a work that takes as its theme anger at buraku discrimination. Even if parts of the manga reflect inadequate understanding of buraku issues on the part of the artist, that the work is subjectively and objectively about anger against discrimination is readily clear even on first pass. When *Mainichi Shinbun* described the lead character as being “filled with resentment from the ‘discrimination’ he was subjected to when he was young,” who then “mastered the way of the sword with the goal of saving his community,” it was introducing the manga accurately.

That notwithstanding, allow me to reiterate what the BLL took issue with. 1: That the manga provides an incorrect explanation of the origins of the buraku community. 2: That it distorts the image of

buraku liberation by rendering burakumin as a cruel people. 3: By killing the protagonist and then showing everyone happy, the manga leads one to think that it is best if burakumin are simply killed off. It was on these three points that the BLL condemned both the publisher and the artist. While I will have more to say about issue no. 1 below, nos. 2 and 3 are patent misreadings of the manga, even if it would be going too far to say that they are intentionally so.

2: To say that depicting buraku revenge as overly cruel distorts the nature of the movement – practically any social movement could interpret things this way. Whether it be labor movements or environmental protectionists or whoever, if they were depicted this way in a work of literature or manga, they would inevitably be upset. Cases in which existing organizations are themselves depicted are one thing. It is beyond the pale of acceptable criticism, however, to take the fictional tragedy of one character from the Edo period and use that to say that an actual movement in the present is being misrepresented. As a personal opinion, fine, one might expect this. But to banish a work from society on this basis is simply unacceptable.

3: This is a flagrant misreading. Presumably it is referring to the manga’s final scene, which is obviously intended to create a contrast between the protagonist’s sublime and tragic death, and the ugliness of the crass men who laugh at him with relief. Taira Buzaemon, writer of *The Daruma*, the old chronicles in which the depicted events are said to be recorded, seems to be a stand-in for Hirata himself. It is this same Buzaemon who, alone among the vulgar disciples of the Ichiden School, does not “erupt with joy” upon hearing of Gennosuke’s death.

1: This is the only legitimate criticism of the three made by the BLL. However, considering that the manga was drawn in 1962, the explanation of origins that Hirata provides on page 52 reads like well-intentioned edification. He even sets out to correct popular

misunderstandings of the word “eta,” the kanji of which seem self-evident in their meaning, but which in fact were invented by “a Buddhist monk during the Ashikaga period (1336-1573)” who interpreted a mispronunciation of the term “etori” (bait preparer) as “meaning ‘much filth’.” Using the katakana syllabary characters “e-ta” instead of the suggestive kanji only became customary these past 20-30 years.

Of course, in an era like the ‘60s when buraku discrimination was still strong (compared with today), leaders of an activist movement would naturally want the injustices of discrimination to be at the forefront of any explanation. That said, recently there has been some concern that debates over the origins of the buraku community threatens to hamstring the movement. For example, take the text in the second panel of page 52: “The eta were the miserable byproduct of a caste system, instituted by the samurai, that divided society into such categories as warriors, peasants, artisans, and merchants.” One might complain that “miserable” hardly suffices to describe this system, since it rests on relationships between victim and victimizer that demand explication. Nonetheless, Hirata clearly intended to enlighten his readers with his description of buraku discrimination as a product of the Edo era feudal system.

This view, known as the “early modern political origins theory” (*kinsei seiji kigen-ron*), has many critics today. That the origins of the buraku community date back to even before the medieval period, or that they are rooted instead in religion and social customs, are among the theses put forth by recent historiography. Ironically, scholarly progress on this front is not necessarily to the benefit of the effectiveness of the buraku liberation movement. It is much easier for the movement to galvanize their followers and highlight the evils of discrimination by claiming that the buraku community was politically created by the ruling samurai class during the Edo period in an effort to justify the continuation of their rule.

Even within buraku liberation organizations, people have called for a sincere reckoning with this contradiction. While scholarship into the community’s origins must deepen, they say, combating anti-buraku discrimination can and should progress independently on its own terms. After all, the founding principles of modern society, not the historical origins of the community, are the core of anti-discrimination struggles. When you borrow money from someone, the reason you are expected to pay it back derives from the stipulations of loan agreements, relations of human trust between lender and borrower, and a sense of social responsibility. It has nothing to do with economic debates about the origins of money.

Of course, Hirata’s understanding of buraku issues was by no means entirely right. Strangely, *Mainichi Shinbun* fails to comment on what I take to be a rather serious prejudice in the manga. On page 55, incest is described as one of the tragedies befalling buraku communities. Because those within the community were not allowed to marry people outside of it, they were forced to marry their relatives (*kinshi kekkon*), with the result that “freaks (*kikeiji*) appeared amongst their offspring,” and thus the “entire village was despised by society.”

Here we see prejudice in its archetypal form. That consanguineous marriage (*kinshikon*) is rampant within the buraku community and thus deformities among children are common – is simply not the case. The logic is upside down. It is because the buraku community is discriminated against that they are looked upon through this kind of anti-scientific lens. Though it is true that the buraku community could not easily engage in normal marriage practices due to discrimination, that of course does not mean that it was engaging in incest. Within cities, just a single buraku community can have a population in the many thousands, while smaller communities in rural areas created bonds with other buraku communities precisely because they were discriminated

against by neighboring villages.

The very thought that consanguineous marriage leads to congenital deformities is a misunderstanding based on a kind of religious fear. Though the idea might be alien to Japanese, in Korea a Kim would never marry another Kim. The term for this is *dōsei fukon* ("same family name, no marriage"). Technically speaking, one can marry a Kim from another of the many Kim family lines. But as a general rule, marrying someone with the same last name counts as incest. One of the reasons that Koreans discriminate against Japanese is that not only will a Yamada have no problem with marrying another Yamada, but that even cousins marry one another in Japan.

That congenital deformities can result from incest has almost no scientific basis. Specific hereditary diseases can manifest when the trait is carried by both the man and the woman, but that is the only possible danger. There is no chance of a "freak" being born. Even among livestock and pets, where (unlike human society) intensive interbreeding is enforced to produce pure or improved breeds, congenital deformities are surprisingly rare.

Thirty-some years ago, when I first read *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, this was the part of the manga that I thought was bad news. I even felt that when Gennosuke makes the decision to alter his body on page 118, it evoked such "incest freaks." When, in my book *A Survey of Contemporary Manga* (*Gendai manga no zentaizō*, 1986), I wrote that "the story even deploys the [preposterous] motif of abnormal physical traits passed down among the burakumin," I admit that my compacted word choice is ambiguous, but I was referring to this same problem.

It is also necessary to talk about the general situation in and around manga when *Bloody Stumps Samurai* was published in 1962.

This was, first of all, four or five years before college students reading manga became a hot topic in newspapers. There were no signs yet that the general public was going

to bestow cultural recognition on any kind of manga other than old school adult humor cartoons or kids comics. At the same time, the gekiga artists who would later flourish within mainstream magazines were experimenting with new styles and accruing skills within the kashihon market. Most of those artists came from working class backgrounds and were sensitized to society's contradictions. That many of them rejected a prettified view of the world and preferred rough and wild drawing styles was only natural.

Meanwhile, novelist Nanjō Norio's *The Cruel Code of the Samurai* (*Bushidō zankoku monogatari*, 1963), the series *Stories of Cruelty in Japan* (*Nihon zankoku monogatari*, 1959-60), edited by ethnologist Miyamoto Tsuneichi, and Gualtiero Jacopetti's *Mondo Cane* (1962) all became topics of debate as part of a boom in depicting the "cruelty" (*zankoku*) lurking below tranquil daily life. One assumes that Hirata drew *Bloody Stumps Samurai* under the influence of this culture, as he did other works in which wildly zealous men are violently struck down.

Kashihon gekiga of this sort was never the subject of serious research or review. Forget criticism or even censure: gekiga was regarded with outright contempt and hatred. Take, for example, the Sunday edition of *Akahata* (*Red Flag*), the Japanese Communist Party's daily newspaper, from May 26, 1963. It features a special article, taking up more than half of the front page, titled "'Character Building' in Children's Comics: A Report from Your Neighborhood Kashihon Outlet." It levels specific attacks against manga with "war, murder, and life success stories" that "ruin children" and "function similarly to drugs." The body of the article explains, "The most popular manga in kashihon outlets today, Shirato Sanpei's *The Legend of Kagamaru* (*Ninja bugeichō*, 17 volumes), has such extreme scenes that it is likely to give even adults nightmares. For example, a female ninja is pursued by a group of other ninja, who cut off her arms and legs, then her head, then split her breasts and upper and lower



“Character Building” in Children’s Comics”
Akahata (May 26, 1963)

torso into three chunks of meat. This butchery is elaborately depicted over the course of 91 panels.”

It continues, “Hirata Hiroshi, who is also popular in kashihon outlets, is not to be outdone in horror with his *Bloody Stumps Samurai*. The lead character, ‘from a buraku community,’ gets angry after being disdained by his sword teacher and fellow disciples as ‘eta.’ He kills his teacher, cuts off the arms of many of his fellows, and is then handicapped when his own arms and legs are cut off, like a daruma doll. Even then, he refuses to give up on vengeance. He finds a rock on which to scrape his torso until it forms snake-like scales, attaches blades to his two stump-like

arms, and goes about killing his enemies by dropping onto them from trees. Finally, he is impaled from his mouth to his groin by a large sword. Anyway, go on, have a look. You’ll be surprised by how many manga of his sort you find in kashihon outlets.”

From its very first word, this article demonstrates zero interest in what can be called criticism or review. It doesn’t even bother explaining that the elaborate depiction of butchery is hardly the goal of *The Legend of Kagemaru*. And after disapproving of Hirata’s work for its horrors, under it to the right is another article introducing an exhibition of Maruki Iri’s work, who is famous for collaborating on *The Hiroshima Murals*, a

series of paintings that roiled the art world with its imagery of horror.

The article is signed by one Ishishita Gaku (“Studying under a rock”). I believe that this is actually Ishiko Jun (a different person from the Ishiko Junzō mentioned earlier). The argumentation resembles that in Ishiko Jun’s *What Should be Done About Children’s Manga* (*Kodomo no manga o dōsuru*, 1976), written during the author’s manga-bashing years, right before he started pretending like he understood comics. The unnuanced, poorly written passage describing the story of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* also resembles Ishiko Jun’s writing style. A letter was sent to Ishiko Jun (with a postage-paid return postcard enclosed) to confirm whether he used to use the penname Ishishita Gaku. For whatever reason, we have yet to receive a reply.

That aside, one can get a good idea of the reputation of kashihon gekiga in those days from this *Akahata* article. No wonder no one rose to the defense of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* when it got in trouble. No wonder either that not a single scholar or journalist recommended that it be amended and reissued. On the other hand, it seems that Hirata himself was quite fond of the work. I also imagine that he was bitterly disappointed that his creative intentions had been misinterpreted. Six years later, he redrew *Bloody Stumps Samurai* for *Comic Magazine* (Hōbunsha), with the new title “Hear Ye, Scoundrels!” (“Onorera ni tsugu,” 1968). It is one of the most polished of Hirata’s works, certainly far more so than the original version.

In 1964, two years after the *Bloody Stumps Samurai* incident, Shirato Sanpei’s *The Legend of Kamuy* (*Kamui den*, 1964-71) began serialization in the magazine *Garō* (Seirindō). Here, too, buraku discrimination is one thread in the web of the story. Perhaps because of what happened with *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, Shirato approached the topic with extreme care. Instead of the “eta buraku” in Hirata’s work, he depicts another kind of buraku community, a “hinin buraku,”



Premodern buraku discrimination in
Shirato Sanpei, *The Legend of Kamuy*
Garō no. 5 (January 1965)

and calls all burakumin “hinin.” Though this creates some awkwardness for Shirato’s story [because hinin did not typically engage in some of the trades depicted in the manga], it may have been a wise choice, designed to avoid exacerbating discriminatory consciousness.

Interestingly, Yamagami Tatsuhiko, who accidentally came across the recalled/withheld *Bloody Stumps Samurai* while on the editorial staff of Hinomaru Bunko, created an homage/parody to it twenty-some years later in 1989. Titled *Vicissitudes of the Demon Blade* (*Kijin ryūten*) and serialized in the magazine *Punchasaurus* (*Panchizaurus*) in 1989, it was collected in book form in 1990 and testifies to the impact Hirata’s manga had on this important artist when he read it at the age of nineteen.



Yamagami Tatsuhiro
Vicissitudes of the Demon Blade (1989)

Read with a judicious eye today, it is obvious that *Bloody Stumps Samurai* was not written with any intention to inflame discriminatory sentiments. Even if some of the passages are immature and inappropriate, in expressing anger at discrimination the artist was also depicting his own experiences of social hardship.

Hirata Hiroshi was raised in a household of ardent Tenrikyo supporters. He was a believer himself in his youth, but later began to question how the organization operated and eventually quit the church. Founder Nakayama Miki's teaching that "we are all brothers and sisters" (*ichiretsu kyōdai*), however, was etched deep into Hirata's heart. According to recent scholarship, like Ikeda Shirō's *Nakayama Miki and Discriminated Peoples* (*Nakayama Miki and hisabetsu minshū*, 2006), when Nakayama preached human equality, it is possible that she was

also referring to burakumin. Hirata's outrage at discrimination may also reflect the powerful influence of having grown up in this environment.

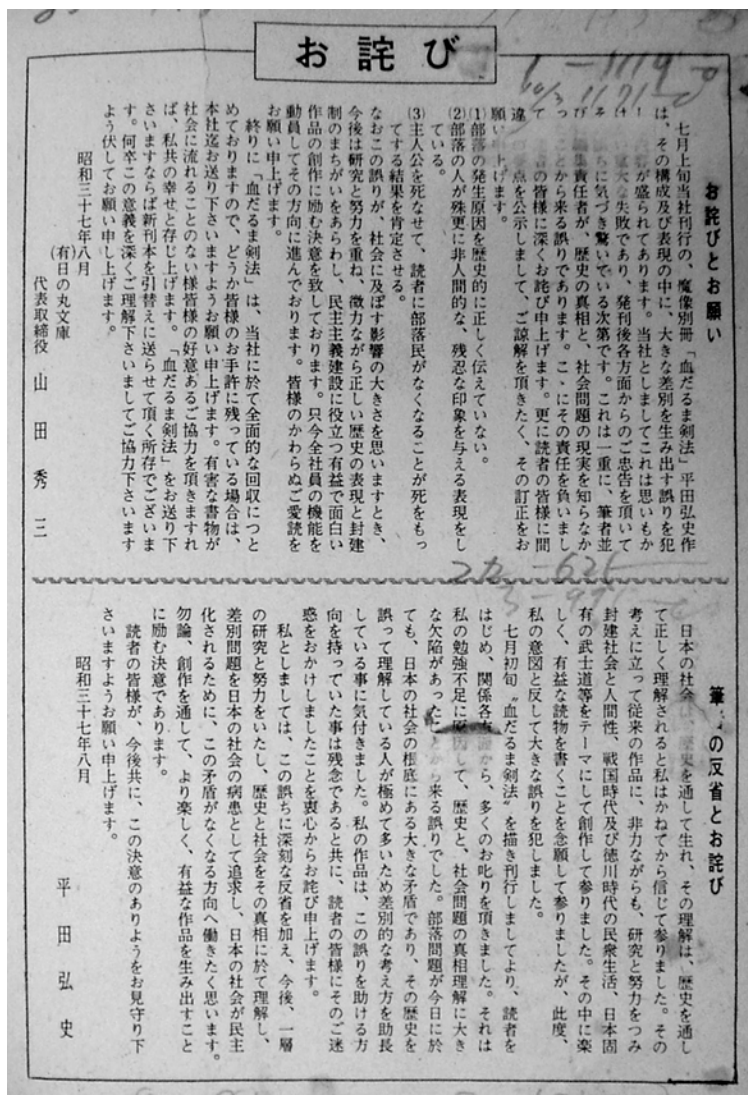
Discrimination against burakumin has yet to be eliminated today. It was important, therefore, in this reissuing of *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, to remove those portions that reinforce discriminatory sentiments. To that end, the following redaction marks have been used: ○○ for "eta" and △△ for "hinin." Hirata's confusion of the terms "eta" and "hinin" is part of the problem, but I won't go into that here. As for passages that are likely to lead to misunderstanding given the current state of publishing, they are repressed with Xs. The inadequate explanation of the buraku community's origins and the prejudicial comments about marriage and incest have been repressed entirely in this way.

Beyond this, as a basic rule, even the sort of corrections that are typical for reprints and reissues have not been made. For example, in the fourth panel on page 39, when the man yells, "What is he?!" [rendered as *dōyū yatsu*, rather than *dōiu yatsu*], the misspelling has been maintained since it reflects the level of Japanese language education of gekiga artists in that era.

As supervisor of this project, it is my desire that this reissue will lead to a proper appraisal of Hirata Hiroshi and *Bloody Stumps Samurai*. By "proper," I don't necessarily mean positive. Proper also includes negative criticism. I invite debate. What I fear most is that, in the absence of debate, the political forces of a specific age are allowed to banish forever a work in which an artist invested his heart and soul. What is discrimination? What does it mean to fight against it? What is humanity? Drama? Artistic expression? If this edition serves to inspire debate about such questions, I would be delighted. That such debates have not occurred these past forty-plus years is because *Bloody Stumps Samurai* has been banned. I imagine Hirata wishes for the same.

The Apologies (1962)

Soon after the Buraku Liberation League protested *Bloody Stumps Samurai* in July 1962, written apologies by publisher Yamada Hidezō and artist Hirata Hiroshi were printed in multiple different volumes of manga published by Hinomaru Bunko. While the following translation is based on the text of their appearance in Hirata's *The Assassin and the Boy* (*Shikaku to shōnen*, October 1962), as depicted below, they had already appeared previously in *Mazō* (*The Face of Evil*) vol. 56 (August 1962), as noted in Kure Tomofusa's essay. *Mazō* was the premier kashihon manga periodical dedicated to historical samurai and ninja fiction, and Hirata was its headlining artist. The below image is courtesy of Asakawa Mitsuhiro.



Apologies and a Request

Published as a supplemental volume of *Mazō* by our company in early July, Hirata Hiroshi's *Bloody Stumps Samurai* is filled, at the level of both composition and language, with content that is guilty of errors that threaten to cause serious prejudice. This was a careless but grave failure by our company. We were surprised to learn of this mistake upon receiving warnings from various parties soon after the book's publication. The error is purely due to a lack of knowledge about historical truth and the realities of social problems on the part of the artist and the managing editor.

Taking full responsibility, we express our deepest apologies to the offended parties. We also hereby inform our readers what specifically about the book is wrong, so that you may kindly revise your understanding.

1. The historical reasons for the creation of buraku communities are incorrectly represented.

2. Buraku peoples are depicted in a way that gives the impression that they are exceptionally inhuman and brutal.

3. Having the protagonist killed leads readers to agree that the disappearance of burakumin is to be achieved through their death.

Recognizing the magnitude of the influence that these errors can have upon society, we vow to commit ourselves to study and effort in order to better communicate, as best we humbly can, a correct image of history and the wrongs of feudalism, and produce works that both are entertaining and contribute positively to the building of democracy. We have already mobilized our staff to those ends, and ask for your continued support and enjoyment of our books.

Finally, as we are endeavoring to achieve a full recall of *Bloody Stumps Samurai*, we kindly request that you send any copies that you might have on hand to our company offices. Your generous cooperation in ensuring that this harmful book does not circulate in society would bring us great happiness. For every copy of *Bloody Stumps Samurai* we receive, we will send you a new book in return. Thank you for your careful understanding and cooperation in this matter.

Yamada Hidezō
President of Hinomaru Bunko
August 1962

Apologies and Regrets from the Artist

I have always believed that Japanese society is the product of history, and that a correct understanding of Japanese society must be based on history. Upon such principles, I have attempted in my work, the best I humbly can, through study and effort, to treat such themes as the relationship between feudalism and humanity, the life of common people during the Warring States [1467-1603] and Tokugawa [1603-1868] periods, and the unique bushido ethos of Japan. Though I have thus aspired to create stories that are both entertaining and edifying, I have recently produced a work that is guilty of grave errors that betray my own best intentions.

Upon the publication of my *Bloody Stumps Samurai* in early July, I received a large number of reprimands first from readers and then from offended parties. Due to my lack of study, I made errors that reflect a deeply faulty understanding of the truth of history and social problems. Even today, the buraku problem represents a great and fundamental contradiction within Japanese society. As there are a large number of people who understand the problem incorrectly, I came to realize that I was reinforcing discriminatory ways of thinking. I deeply regret that my work contributed to furthering the problem, and wish to apologize, from the depths of my heart, to my readers for any troubles I may have caused them.

Personally, these mistakes have led me to serious self-reflection. They have also inspired in me an even stronger desire to work and study and thereby achieve a better understanding of the truth of history and society, so that I may contribute to the interrogation of the social disease of discrimination, the furthering of the democratization of Japanese society, and the ridding of social contradictions. I of course vow to commit myself to the creation of works that are even more enjoyable and edifying.

Dear readers, I kindly ask for your watchful support as I carry out this vow.

Hirata Hiroshi
August 1962