

BOOK REVIEWS

GEORGE DE VOS & HIROSHI WAGATSUMA eds., *Japan's Invisible Race: Caste in Culture and Personality*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1966, xxiii+415 pp.

In December 1961, the Deliberative Council on Assimilation (*Dōwa*) of Burakumin was requested by the Prime Minister to formulate a plan for solving the social and economic problems in areas designated as outcaste communities (*buraku*). It was after nearly four years of deliberation that the Council, on August 11, 1965, submitted its report, a document which may be interpreted as important as the Emancipation Edict of 1871. In the two years following the report, however, the government did not create a constructive policy.

It has been many years since the question of outcaste communities was first brought up as a "subject for discussion." Nevertheless, the question has been approached so far only in the most tentative fashion in terms of both theory and action, because it involves the psychologically delicate matter of social discrimination and because at most it concerns only a regional phenomenon limited mainly to the western parts of Japan far away from the nation's capital. What is known as the "assimilation plan" has in fact been little more than a make-shift measure to appease adherents of assimilation, and even now implementation of assimilation policy is a local affair handled on the local government level. There is, in addition, only one research institute concerned with the question, and it is privately run under the sponsorship of the Buraku Liberation League (*Buraku kaihō dōmei*). Among the great number of universities throughout the country, only two or three introduce the subject of "education for assimilation" (*Dōwa kyōiku*) in their curriculum for teachers; no course devoted to the subject is given at any university. It is historians who play a leading role in the study of the problem, while only a few social scientists are interested in the field. The official report, in summing up the essential character of outcaste communities, states that the matter of assimilation concerns "the most serious and grave social problem, because discrimination originating in the hierarchical social structure formed in the course of the historical development of Japanese society has placed certain groups of the Japanese people in a lowly position, economically, socially, and culturally; and this discrimination still notably infringes upon the basic human rights of the members of these groups particularly since their civic rights and liberties are guaranteed only incompletely: while these rights and liberties are warranted to anyone as a matter of principle in modern society." If this summary provides an acceptable analysis of the problem, then indispensable for its solution, among other things, is a social-scientific analysis of the contemporary hierarchical structure of social status in Japan, though a

historical analysis may also be necessary. Certainly the question of Japanese outcaste communities is appreciably different in scale and depth from that of American Negroes; yet the subject of the outcaste in Japan has not been investigated to the extent that it deserves.

The present book is the first of its kind to be published in the United States. While there have been scattered articles on the history of Japan's outcaste communities and even monographs on a specific community, this volume has certainly broken ground with its systematic analysis of the subject, even though it consists of a compilation of related articles by a number of authors and is not free from some inconsistency among its contributors. The book is also a result of social-scientific studies of the sort that have not yet been published even in Japan. The book deserves credit for bringing, for the first time, a system of social science to the study of outcaste communities. It must of course be remembered that "social science" here refers especially to anthropology. Due to geographical location and a policy of isolation consistently maintained for a long period of time, Japan developed a unique culture on her own over a considerable period. The outcaste communities represent one product of this historical development. It must therefore be noted that the anthropological approach when applied to a historical society like Japan is inevitably subject to certain limits.

In studying the Japanese outcaste communities, difficulty lies not only in the futility of the social-scientific approach itself. It also lies in the fact that from the beginning research by Japanese in the field has been under pressure from the consciousness of a "problem" for which a solution is being sought. In other words, the study of outcaste communities by Japanese is directly connected to the existing movement for their liberation; because unless the researcher indicates understanding of and empathy with the outcastes, he will not be accepted within the community to a degree sufficient to permit him to carry out studies in depth. Thus, the study of outcaste communities is inseparable from the study of ideology for liberation. This makes the study of theories to serve liberation indistinguishable from the study of communities themselves, and the result is that the objectivity of the science is always at stake. In contrast, the authors of this work, being foreigners, can consistently maintain a stance removed from the issue, a fact which gives to their studies a feature absent in any Japanese study of outcaste communities, and which serves to enhance the value of the present volume. Also worthy of special mention is the fact that the present work is designed for a comparative study of similar phenomena in other Asian societies including India, Tibet, and Korea.

This work originated in an attempt at a comparative study of delinquency and social deviance in Japan and the United States, focusing on the question of whether or not the relationship between minority status and deviant behavior seen in the United States might also be found in Japan. (Preface) It was, however, essential for the authors to obtain a good understanding of the actual conditions of the outcaste communities as they form a minority

group in Japan. To this end, it was indispensable to trace the history of the communities, which are different in origin from minority groups in the United States. Therefore, Part One of this book ("Caste in Japan: A Descriptive Cultural Analysis"), devoted to an account of the present conditions of the communities, begins with a narration of their history ("Chapter 1. A History of Outcaste: Untouchability in Japan" by John Price). As this subtitle indicates, however, the author identifies untouchability as being the essential characteristic of outcaste status, and has almost totally ignored the status system (*mibun-seido*) created by the Tokugawa feudal regime. It is true, as is mentioned in Chapter V ("The Ecology of Special Buraku" by Hiroshi Wagatsuma and George De Vos), that the distribution of the communities at the present time is similar to that of estimated population density in the 10th century. Also there is no denying that the consciousness of discrimination is related to Shinto concepts of *kegare* (pollution), *imi* (avoidance), and *harai* (propitiation) associated with blood and death, and to the Buddhist precepts against killing and meat-eating. However, the major factors contributing to the contemporary social structure of Japan may be located in 1) the political and economic system of a country which has experienced an age of the "warring lords," an era characterized by a tendency for men of lower status to eliminate their superiors in status by force; 2) the consequent harsh repression by the Tokugawa shogunate and han; and 3) the necessity for modern Japan to enforce the building of a capitalist economy under pressure from the great powers. Without taking into account the course of these events, it would be almost impossible to come to an understanding of the existing problems of the outcastes. In other words, no working plan to solve the problem of outcastes could be made by an a-historical approach which perceives only *caste* in the outcaste communities, neglecting to take into account the concept of *mibun*—which is essential to an understanding of Japanese society. Thus, the book is open to criticism on the grounds that out of its total 384 pages, only one chapter is devoted to the history of outcastes, whereas an entire section of four chapters is devoted to an elucidation of the caste system. Even though the authors' anthropological interest in a comparative study of a phenomenon common among Asian societies is understandable, one purpose of the book, among others, is to throw light on the outcastes of Japan.

Now, if the outcastes represent a social problem, it is logical to discuss movements for the problem's solution or for the outcastes' liberation. Two chapters have been devoted to a consideration of liberation movements (one to pre-war, one to post-war movements, cf. Chapters II and III respectively.) The authors give a fairly accurate account of the role the Edict of Emancipation of 1871 played in the abolition of the status system, and consider in particular the economic effects of the edict, and later developments of the liberation movement which led to the rice riots of 1918 and the organization of Suiheisha (levellers). As for the post-war period, they mention the Grand March of Liberation sponsored by the Liberation League and the establishment of the Deliberative Council on Assimilation of Burakumin in 1961, with a

chronological table of relevant events appended at the end of the chapters. The historical section, which is more or less extraneous to the concept of untouchability-caste which forms the analytic basis and the theme of the work as a whole, draws a picture of the outcaste communities faltering between the alternatives of status system and class system. In Chapter IV, ("Non-Political Approaches: The Influences of Religion and Education" by Hiroshi Wagatsuma), the author discusses moves toward liberation in the two non-political aspects of religion and education and makes reference to the political role of Buddhist temples under the Tokugawa regime as well as the organization of sects, especially *Shinshū* of which the majority of outcastes were and are adherents. Also he notes that the outcastes in most cases came to be affiliated with the *Shinshū* sect because they were compelled to join that particular Buddhist sect by the political authorities. They then remained fixed in their affiliation because of the organization of such special institutions as the *etadera* (temples specified for the outcastes). Because they were thus incorporated into the mighty structure of the Tokugawa feudal system, the outcaste communities survive even to the present day, remaining a problem still to be solved in the year of the Meiji Centennial. Despite this, the relationship between outcastes and the status system is insufficiently discussed.

The third section, relating to the present conditions of the outcastes, is comprised of ethnographic studies, including Chapter V which discusses not only the distribution of the communities but such matters as intra-communal marriage, occupation, and poverty. Because available material was limited, the discussion is too fragmented to provide a good picture of community life. This section essentially discusses matters related to the topics on actual discrimination considered in the Report of the Assimilation Council. In the Report, "actual discrimination" means "the discrimination in the actual life of the residents in the assimilation districts." For instance, "the equality of opportunity in occupation and education is not guaranteed: the right to participate in government is hampered on such occasions as elections; the general administrative measures are alienated from their objects." "...the miserable living conditions, the limited variety of low-prestige occupation, the high percentage of people on relief or welfare—many times above the average, the strikingly low educational and cultural levels—all these phenomena pointed out as characteristic of the outcaste communities, are concrete expressions of discrimination." These facts of discrimination provide the basis for "psychological discrimination" latent in the people's ideas and consciousness. Accordingly the Report suggests assimilation policy should be directed mainly at efforts to end actual discrimination. The social-scientific approach to the outcastes is thus required to explain the factors lying behind actual discrimination and to identify those which hamper liberation. In Chapter V, however, only a very rough survey of these factors is given.

The following section of the book consists of three chapters, each a monograph on outcastes in a specific area of Japan. Of these, the studies by John Donoghue ("The Social Persistence of Outcaste Groups") and John B.

Cornell ("Buraku Relations and Attitudes in a Progressive Farming Community") have already appeared elsewhere in detailed monograph form, and their discussions are focused in this volume on such specific subjects as the social structure of communities and the attitudes of their residents. Effectively using materials made available through long-term observation and a number of free-structured interviews, both methods unique to anthropologists, the two authors have come near to disclosing the inner structure of the community, a subject in which Japanese students are weakest. Most interesting is Chapter VII on the Tōhoku Region. In this region, the number of outcaste communities has been limited, and because of their minority status, the liberation movement has never flourished. Consequently the assimilation policy of the government has not taken root to any significant extent. In the 1962 survey of the Deliberative Council, in the whole Tōhoku region, only two communities were recorded—in Fukushima Prefecture. In 1967, when the Assimilation Policy Committee (set up to work out a long-term policy based on the Council's report) was about to conduct a nationwide survey, the six prefectures of this region refused to take part in the program. This has made material on outcaste communities in the Tōhoku fragmentary, so that a study of the persistence of such a community in the Tōhoku, probably in Aomori Prefecture, would be particularly noteworthy. Chapter VIII, on the relations between outcaste communities and ordinary villages and the attitudes of outcastes in Okayama Prefecture, includes an important problem which has rarely been discussed by Japanese researchers. Chapter VI, on an urban outcaste community, is, however, insufficient in its analysis even though mention is made of those communities in the Kansai region which are more and more becoming slums. The urban outcaste communities in such large cities in western Japan as Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe, and Hiroshima, constitute the center of communities which absorb the local outcaste population and serve to create large mixed-residence quarters generally including great numbers of social failures as well. These are mixed outcaste-slum areas where the borderline between communities remains obscure and the origin of residents varies. These facts about the outcaste communities in the urban areas testify that Japanese outcastes are of a status which wavers between a *mibun* and a class, not a mere *caste* in the sense understood elsewhere. Regrettably no mention is made at all of this aspect of the subject in this book. Also, some doubt arises as to the degree of the authors' factual knowledge of the features of Japanese outcastes from the fact that no mention is made in the present work of the fishing communities of Kōchi Prefecture and the coal-mining communities of Fukuoka Prefecture where the outcastes are most seriously subjected to discrimination.

Chapter IX ("Little-Known Minority Groups in Japan" by Edward Norbeck) refers to such small groups other than the outcastes as *ebune* (migrant marine fisherfolk), *kijiya* (woodworkers), *matagi* (hunters), *tatara* (ironworkers), *sanka* (riverline migrants), and other quasi-religious itinerants. Certainly these are discriminated against to some extent, but these are vocational groups

which were not directly bound to the status system under the Tokugawa feudal regime. On the contrary, those whom the author includes in miscellaneous groups in secular occupations (such as *ombo*, *tonai*, *hachiya* and *shuku*) were more closely tied to that system. The degree of discrimination against the *ebune* is similar to that which was practiced against newcomers to rural agricultural communities by the long-term residents of those villages, particularly during pre-Meiji. If the concept of discriminated groups is expanded to that extent, it will have to include such people as the *kitsunemochi* of the Sanin region and the *inugami* of the Inlands regions. Without relation to the Shinto practice of avoidance or the Buddhist precept against killing, there would have been infinitely more examples of discrimination. It should be noted that this confusion results from the anthropological approach which seeks to understand the outcastes in terms of discrimination rather than in terms of the significance of their relation to the dominant social system of the time.

Most interesting, in one sense, to students of the outcastes in Japan may be Chapter X ("Japan's Outcastes in the United States" by Hiroshi Ito [pseudonym]). The fact that the author's name is kept secret suggests how difficult this study was. It is remarkable, though comprehensible, that an immigrant from an outcaste community can be identified to some extent in the Japanese communities in the United States; that his orientation to American society is not always strong; and that there is a degree of unity among the former outcastes which is far stronger than that observed among the ordinary Japanese immigrants. If there is anything in Japanese studies on the subject which may add to this invaluable report, it would include the following points: the outcastes, generally adhering tightly to their community, have rarely emigrated to other countries (except Manchuria and Korea where a good many of them settled during the war); only rarely have they emigrated to Brazil, though from Fukui Prefecture a fairly large number emigrated to the United States. (Although the total number of outcastes in Fukui Prefecture was small, some of them had already immigrated to the United States at the end of Meiji. The author considers it strange that, among the small total number of immigrants from Fukui Prefecture to the United States, the majority were outcastes. I think that this is one reason why the author chose the outcastes immigrated to the United States as the object of his study.) These emigrants from Fukui Prefecture are characterized, among other things, by holding an idea of "going out to work" in another country where they wish to save enough money to buy a house and land in their home community.

An approach to the socio-psychological aspect of the outcastes constitutes the fourth section on the study of present conditions of the communities, including chapters on "Socialization, Self-Preception, and Burakumin Status," "Group Solidarity and Individual Mobility" and "Minority Status and Attitudes toward Authority," all prepared jointly by George De Vos and Hiroshi Wagatsuma. This section is the most unique part of the whole study and covers the aspect of outcaste communities which has been least studied.

By use of materials derived from interviews with sources of information inside and outside the communities, the authors give a dramatic as well as poetic account of the tragic processes by which the personalities of the outcastes were formed, by which they became aware of their existence as outcastes and by which their inferiority complexes were shaped. Among the subjects discussed, the mechanism of "passing" mentioned in Chapter XII is open to some question. "Passing" refers to the process in which an outcaste slips out of his own group and seeks to establish himself as a "legitimate" member of the wider society. To this end, extreme self-reliance and individual merit are required. The ability to accomplish this is limited to a very few people. Further, even if an individual can successfully "pass," the community itself still remains. The problem of outcastes thus remains a dilemma between individual passing and mass emancipation which the Liberation League demands. In this very dilemma, as the authors rightly point out, lies the difficulty of solving the problem of the outcaste. At the same time, the problem of outcastes in Japan, particularly in the large cities, though originating in the social discrimination of status (*mibun*), today involves class relationships existing in the society. In so far as the outcaste community expands by continuously absorbing elements dropping out of the ranks of capitalist society, a solution will not be found in the direction of "passing." In Chapter XIII, the authors return to their main theme and seek to relate minority status to deviant behavior, finding phenomena common to Japan and the United States.

The Second Part of this work is a more general, comparative study of the caste system. Throughout this part, the problem of outcastes is subsumed under the broader discussion of caste system in general. It is true, the outcaste communities and their members have certain characteristics in common with "caste" as found in other areas. It may certainly be useful to understand the principles underlying the caste system for the purpose of solving the problem of Japanese outcastes. Nevertheless, an attempt to utilize a theory of caste alone as a means of interpreting the outcaste who emerged under the unique social hierarchy of the Tokugawa feudal system would, I am afraid, incur the danger of losing sight of what is essential to the problem. Social science should not be merely a discipline seeking classification of human societies. Since space does not permit me to discuss the matter in full, I only present the question, and refrain from commenting on Part Two. In any case, at a time when studies in and policies concerning the field of outcaste communities are moving to a new phase, the present work will provide quite a few suggestions for Japanese students of the subject.

(Noboru Yamamoto)