Living on the edge: Buraku in Kyōto, Japan

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Abstract
This article deals with the two districts in the southeast of the Kyōto city, which are known to have been settled by people who are marginalised for various reasons. The research is based on a short fieldwork focuses on two main groups living in the Kyōto *buraku* and near it: *burakumin* (*eta* people) and *zainichi* Koreans. It also presents their ways of living as marginal communities and the ways they cope with discrimination. The article also considers in greater detail the developments within the life in buraku, focusing particularly on the critical role of *machi-zukuri* in liberation movements over the course of the 20th to the 21st century.

KEYWORDS: marginality, buraku, burakumin (eta people), zainichi Koreans, machi-zukuri

Introduction
As we move into the 21st century, we might ponder the pithy and insightful epigram by Talleyrand, who asserted that the more things changed, the more they remained the same (in Dennis 2005), which means that despite the ideological and social structural tendencies of the evolving 21st century, where many of the inequities against the weak would weaken or disappear, not much has changed since previous centuries. In this fractured world, many remain unprotected or semi-protected: members of oppressed ethnic groups, women, the young, the old, the impoverished, the lower castes, outcastes or members of suppressed religions, and those who are otherwise persecuted.

Marginalised communities face problems all over the world, including in Japan. A significant amount of research on Japanese society has focused on marginalised communities, highlighting the diversity in the Japanese society and continuing to discuss former beliefs of a homogeneous Japan. As Iwabuchi Koichi (2005: 55) would say, '… no nation is pure or homogeneous in terms of race, ethnicity and culture'. The ethnically marginalised communities in Japan are diverse, with varying and complex backgrounds, histories, origins and circumstances. These communities include migrant (Brazilians, Chinese, Philippines, etc.) and indigenous (Ainu, *burakumin*) communities as well as

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former colonial populations (Koreans, people from Okinawa-Ryukyu). Together, they create a diverse mosaic of identities living within the nation state of Japan (Chapman 2008; see also Hicks 1997; Tani 2002; Weiner 2009) .

Marginalised communities in Japan often live in particular parts of big cities, usually on their outskirts, where members of oppressed ethnic groups, the impoverished or the lower castes live. Two such places are the districts called Higashi Kujō in Minami-ku, and the Sūjin area in Shimogyo-ku at the south-eastern part of Kyōto. This research based on a short fieldwork in those two areas focuses on two main groups living in those marginalised areas: the burakumin (also called *eta* people) in Sūjin area and *zainichi* Koreans in Higashi Kujō, who are facing similar discrimination in their everyday life. *Buraku* (hamlet) or *tokushu buraku* (special hamlet) are home to people with criminal backgrounds, criminal ancestors, people of foreign ancestry (especially Korean), people living in poverty or/and having an unclean occupation (or an ancestor with one). The oldest buraku neighbourhoods are believed to be in Kyōto, the ancient capital, and have a millennium of history.

The main focus of the article is an examination of these two communities living on the margins of the imperial city of Kyōto. After the necessarily brief introduction of the place and the term *marginality*, the article outlines the origins of the social phenomenon of buraku and zainichi Korean discrimination. Then, it considers in greater detail the developments and modernisation processes within the life in buraku, and discusses the important role of *machizukuri* in the liberation movement in the course of the 20th and 21st centuries. The question of why modernity symbolised by the dismantling of the outcaste status groups, the legislation of "equality", and progress towards a capitalist economy failed to do away with feudal prejudices and continues to push those people on the margins of the mainstream society even nowadays, remains vivid today. In addition, the article challenges the idea that negative consequences of marginality can serve as a starting point for innovation and potentials.

Outlining the problem

Kyōto (*Kyōto-shi*) is a city located in the central part of the island of Honshu in Japan. It has a population of close to 1.5 million and is the 8th biggest city in Japan. Formerly the imperial capital of Japan for more than one thousand years, it is now the capital of Kyōto Prefecture, as well as a major part of the Kyōto-Ōsaka-Kobe metropolitan area. Like other urban areas, Kyōto's history has been intertwined with stages of imperialism, colonialism, and industrial capitalism. Toshio Mizuuchi (2002) lists diverse typologies of cities and among them, Kyōto is classified as an imperial capital (*teito*), but it also has characteristics of an urban capital city, which means that capitalism has provided the urban space with an environment composed of towns of labourers and bourgeoisie, factories, and streets and canals that connect these locations.

The city was established as Japan's capital under the name Heian-kyō in the year 794, and became known as Kyōto around the 11th or 12th century. Although many transformations have taken place over the years, Kyōto has always adopted the most advanced standards of the times. It has greatly contributed to the nation's industrial, economic and cultural development and power. Heian-kyō was modelled after the Tangy

Dynasty Chinese capital of Chang'an (present-day Xi'an), although Heian-kyō lacked walls. The layout was plotted in accordance with the principles of geomancy as a square city with many gates at each side. (Ebrey, Walthall & Palais 2009: 103) Characteristically, Kyōto is home to several historical places and temples. The southern portion of Kyōto city (including Minami-ku) was sometimes referred to as Rakunan. This area is the only side of Kyōto not lined with mountains, a feature that historically made Rakunan important as a gateway into Kyōto (Minami ku 2013).

Those gates usually served as a border that divided the city into the inside and outside world. On this border, which belongs neither to the inner nor to the outer world, various kinds of people could meet. The space around the gate could also be one's home, one's occupation, and, as no man's land, it has the character of a threshold. In Kyōto, this place became home to people who were subjects to the liminal, such as impoverished working classes or foreigners. They lived on the margins of social life, and the area become known as buraku.

More people from the working class live in Minami-ku[1] than in any other Kyōto districts; many of them came from rural areas in search of employment, in addition to those who have emigrated for a variety of reasons from other regions. Besides restaurants and clubs, portions of the land near the Kamo River are lined with factories and industrial buildings. Residential areas include both standard houses and apartments, and occasional government-subsidised housing projects, where people with disabilities are also placed as well (Minami ku 2013). Because of the large zainichi Korean community, it is sometimes called Kyōto's only international town, and the term *dōwa chiku* (assimilation districts) is also used to describe it.

People on the Edge

Burakumin

Burakumin, who number about 3 million, or about two percent of the general population, are the largest discriminated-against group in Japan. They are not a racial or national minority, but a caste-like minority among the ethnic Japanese. This means that there is very little, if anything, that would visually distinguish them from the rest of the Japanese society (Mist 2012).

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[1] The place Minami or South Ward (南区 Minami-ku) is one of the eleven wards in the city of Kyōto in Kyōto Prefecture. In April 2008, the ward had an estimated population of 98,320 people. It is roughly bound to the east by the Kamogawa (Kamo River), to the west by the Katsuragawa (although it extends across the river in some places), to the north by Hachijō Street and the JR Kyōto line (leading into Kyōto station), and to the south by the Meishin Expressway (although it extends across the expressway in some places) (Minami ku 2013).

[2] According to Mist (2012: 6–7) during the Nara period (710–794) the Ritsuryo (legal codes) system was established within the Imperial Court. Within this system, there were slaves (who had become such because of things like crimes, conquest or debt), either owned by prestigious families of the Imperial Court or by public upper class communities, who were classified into five categories, known as goshiki no sen: tomb guards (ryōko), government cultivators (kwankō), temple and private servants (kenin), government slaves (kunuhi) and private slaves (shinuhi). Due to the regulations in the Ritsuryo system, the slaves were not allowed to marry ordinary citizens, i.e. the ryōmin, nor was marriage allowed within the first three categories or the latter two. Amongst the slaves, a community called bemin were assigned the task of agriculture for the Imperial Court but in other cases, they were required to perform other forms of tasks, such as weaving, smithery, pottery, and leatherwork.

While the roots of discrimination date from early human history,[2] the particular form seen in buraku discrimination had its beginnings in Kyōto from around the 10th century AD. Kyōto was the centre of power and culture at that time, and as society developed, the gap between those with wealth and power and those without widened. Those who could not pay the high taxes that supported the noble class were ostracised and forced to live in undesirable areas, such as in river flood plains or at the edge of the city. As Mist (2012) argues, it was the fear of such ostracism that encouraged the rest to endure the high taxes.

Things like occupation or a specific location played a significant part in the discrimination against the burakumin during ancient times. More closely, discrimination of the burakumin is religiously-sanctioned class discrimination. The key concept in understanding any such form of discrimination is that of "defilement". Something is defiled (*kegare*) when it is out of its "proper" place in society[3] (Mist 2012: 6; Boyle 1; see also Buraku Liberation League). Much like day labourers in modern Japan, those who were marginalised ended up doing the "3D" jobs (dirty, difficult and dangerous) that society needed to be done but that nobody wanted to do.

One such job was the disposing of dead bodies, i.e. a particularly "defiling" task. (Moreover, in the context of that ancient worldview, there was thus a second level of 3D: defiling, demeaning and despised!) In the year 1015, a plague struck Kyōto, forcing its society into crisis mode. Without the removal of dead bodies, there could be no return to normalcy, and so those who were already viewed as *kegare* were pressed into service as *kiyome* (purifiers). The undesirable land that was designated for them was thus not taxed and was viewed as simply "outside the system". This gradually led to the codification of a caste-like system that was the direct antecedent of buraku discrimination (Boyle n.d.)

These marginalided kiyome were further categorised into two separate groups, which later became known by the very derogatory terms of *hinin*, literally "non-human", and eta, literally "defilement abundant". The first basic distinction to be made was that between the disposal of the carcasses of dead animals and the bodies of dead humans, since the latter involved rituals of mourning and dignified burials. The kiyome who specialised in the handling of dead humans were the group from which the hinin category developed, while those who dealt with dead animals became the eta. This latter category was considered the more defiled, and so the eta category was more associated with kegare. The eta thus had a monopoly on animal skins and the production of leather goods. In fact, as their own separate society developed, and some became rather wealthy in their own right. This, however, was not a path to acceptance in the general society, as even a wealthy eta was still an eta (Boyle n.d.).

[3] This is, of course, related to the basic worldview that was common to almost all ancient societies, i.e. that the natural order of nature and its relation to human society are controlled by events in the realm of the gods and by the whims of the gods. Thus, placating these gods through magical incantations and ceremonies, together with "purifying" whatever is thought to be defiled, was of paramount importance in maintaining a stable society. Things having to do with death and blood were considered "defiled". Even such a joyous event as the birth of a child fits into this category, since it involved blood, and thus that too had to be purified (Boyle n.d.).

In his book, Uesugi (in Boyle 4) points out that a typical misconception of medieval societal structure actually comes from the misapplication of the terminology used to describe feudal Chinese society to that of Japan. Put into the diagram form that has typically been used, feudal society was often described as a pyramid with the samurai warrior class on top, with the layers of farmer, artisan and merchant below them. These, then, all rested on a base made up of the eta/hinin outcastes.[4] As the term "outcaste" implies, these people were actually entirely outside the "caste" system. He pictures it as two separate pyramids, with the main pyramid being topped by the emperor and other nobility, with the warrior class representing the top level below this "capstone". Below that, then, were only two basic categories, each put on more or less the same level — that of the "townspeople" (which included artisans and merchants) and the farmers. The eta (or *kawata*) and hinin, then, formed their own separate hierarchical "pyramid" society totally outside of regular society, with the eta above the hinin[5] and ruled by an *etagashira* (chief eta). This was despite the fact that originally the eta were considered the more defiled of the two groups. Below each of these pyramids, then, existed a variety of slave-like categories of servants. Even some of the wealthier eta owned their own "slaves" (Neary 2007; Boyle n.d.).

As the ruling class continued to manipulate this highly contrived system for their own benefit, the controls put into place to manage the system became increasingly oppressive. What later developed into the present-day koseki registration system was formalised in the early Edo period as a means to maintain social control. All persons had to register at the local Buddhist temple and so officially became "Buddhists", irrespective of actual belief. The net result was that Japanese became at least superficially adherents of both Buddhism as well as the native animistic religion of Shinto. According to Tim Boyle (2009), it was the koseki (family registry) system itself that is the main practical reason buraku discrimination has endured so long. He continues:

> The two main ways that *buraku* discrimination occurs in today's Japan is through marriage and employment discrimination. If someone of *buraku* descent intends to marry someone of *nonburaku* descent, the *nonburaku* person's parents often utilise a "background check" to determine ancestry, and if *buraku* roots are detected, they then put great pressure on the couple to break the relationship off. Companies also use such "background checks" to weed out "undesirables", of which *buraku* descent is high on the list, irrespective of that person's abilities. Needless to say, while the ideal is to have an egalitarian society that doesn't judge a person by his or her ancest-

[4] The shogunate of the Tokugawa period was adamant in keeping the fixed communities that the daimyo had organised intact. In order to do that, they constructed a strict system of social and legal status, often called the shi-no-ko-sho-eta-hinin (warrior – peasant – artisan – merchant – tanner – beggar) system, which placed the nobles on the same level as the warrior class. It classified the outcasts such as kawata as eta and the more mobile and diverse group of beggars and outdoor performers as hinin, and marked the two classes as of the lowest status (Mist 2012).

[5] Many of these were professional beggars or entertainers of some kind who gathered on the edge of entertainment areas such as Yoshiwara in Edo or Shimabara in Kyōto (Neary 2007).

> ry, one practical solution to the abuse of these "background checks" would be to make it much more difficult to do. The *koseki* system is what allows these ancestry checks, and while recent improvements have made it illegal for third parties to see one's *koseki*, the very existence of this information guarantees that those seeking to abuse the system will find a way. Japan's *koseki* system is a throwback to its feudal past, and its continued existence has been a major obstacle in the road towards eliminating another throwback — *buraku* discrimination. A major overhaul of this system would certainly go a long way towards reducing *buraku* discrimination.[6]

Under the Emancipation Edict in 1871, they were stripped of the terms eta and hinin, put under the same category and given a new name: *shin-heimin* (new commoners). One can only assume that their lives might have turned for the better, but did discrimination cease at this turning point in their lives? Despite the government issuing the Edict of Emancipation in 1871, declaring that the people of eta-hinin were no longer classified by their inherited status and caste and were therefore becoming members of mainstream society, it did not mean that the burakumin's initial discriminatory problems had been erased entirely, and their liberation movements remain very busy.[7]

Zainichi Koreans

The notion of ethnic Koreans residing in Japan challenges the assumption that Japan is "homogeneous" (see Hicks 1997; Ryang 2005) and also raises questions about what it means to be *Korean* or *Japanese*. Koreans constitute the largest "foreign" community permanently residing in Japan.[8] Despite their similarities in physical appearance and considerable acculturation to mainstream Japanese society, Koreans in Japan have been discriminated against by both the Japanese state and Japanese society. They continue to face and respond to numerous forms of discrimination, human rights violations and social injustice, as well as intra-communal political diversity, which is relevant to others' experiences in the West and beyond.[9]

Japan colonised Korea from 1910 to 1945, incorporating Koreans and other Asians within its expanding empire. Its empire-building coincided with its attempts at modern nation-building after the 1868 restoration of imperial order under Emperor Meiji. The Japanese in Korea, Taiwan, Okinawa, Manchuria and elsewhere sought simultaneously to establish their own privileged position and to assimilate the colonised people though the imposition of the Japanese language and education system (Ryang 2005). In the beginning, they were given Japanese citizenship, which however did

[6] The BLC's English newsletters are available on www.konkyo.org/burakukaiho/news/burakuhistory.pdf. See more in Boyle 2009. It is actually still possible to find a list of buraku on the web, as has recently been checked.
[7] For more on the liberation movement, see Mist 2012, Neary 2007, Buraku Liberation League.
[8] According to statistics from the Ministry of Justice, there were 565,989 Koreans in Japan in 2010. This figure does not include those who have adopted Japanese citizenship, which might be around 284,840 according to the figures from 2005. Added to this number should also be long-term visitors (82,666), Korean students in Japan (18,208), who make up 950,703 in total (Ministry of Justice 2010).
[9] For an in-depth account about the Korean minority living in Japan, see Visočnik (2013).

not protect them from discrimination, although the government tried to infuse the heterogeneous population with a sense of homogeneity and community (Weiner 2009: 1). In 1947, their citizenship was revoked; they were classified as aliens and given foreigner's passports. The Koreans were forced to work in mines and munitions factories (Fukuoka & Tsujiyama 1991) and the assimilation politics in that time extended to every aspect of life – political, religious and cultural. From 1939 onward, the *sōshikaimei*[10] policy forced many Koreans to adopt Japanese-style names and abandon their Korean names (Ryang 2005; see also Fukuoka 2000). Although, according to the Naturalisation Laws, Koreans are no longer required to adopt Japanese-style names, there is informal pressure for them to do so, as can be learned from many personal stories. This stems from the fact that, as Hicks (1997) has argued, in Japanese thinking, race and ethnicity are not separated. They are called zainichi[11] Koreans, but the term "Korean-Japanese"[12] is also in use, although is not officially recognised and has two essential characteristics, describing people who are of Korean descent and live in Japan.

Working low-paid jobs and settling at the edge of cities, they quickly became defined as "impure". Although no longer officially recognised after 1871, the idea of their being "dirty people" based on occupation such as the burakumin in feudal Japan and baekjeong in feudal Korea was to supply motivation for all members of Japanese society to maintain their own "purity" and avoid "dirt".[13] Thus, Koreans were cast in a similar role as dirty people, i.e. chosenjin-burakumin in Japan.

As eta people were already residing in Tokujo, Koreans came to Kyōto in the 1920s, at the time of large-scale construction of the Tokaido Line of Railways (Maekawa 1974), Higashiyama tunnel construction, river wall construction of Kamogawa and widening construction of Kujo Street, and the development of the Yuzen dyeing factory, when the need for workers was great. The Korean population of Tokujo increased significantly at the time of the large black market that appeared in the region (today's Kyōto Station). The market especially flourished after the end of the war, when many Koreans returned home and sold rice ("black-market rice") at the train station before leaving Kyōto. Those who stayed worked in the field spreading to the south. They also collected waste paper and scrap iron, old clothes and sold them in their shops. At that

[10] The term literally means 'create a surname and change one's forename' (Fukuoka 2000: 6).

[11] The term zainichi emphasises place of residence rather than bloodline. Since the late 1970s, the younger generation has used the term to emphasise their different approach to living in Japan to that of the first generation zainichi. This term also avoids the inclusion of nationality as a defining element in identifying this community (Chapman 2008; Inadsugi 2002).

[12] The term "Korean-Japanese" does not exist in order to keep the myth of racial homogeneity alive, and it is also a contradiction in terms, since a person can be either one or the other, but not both. This is hard for many Koreans to accept since they feel that retaining their cultural identity is a fundamental right. In relation to this, even today Japan refuses to allow dual nationality for its citizens.

[13] This dirtiness is usually associated with the fact that Koreans bred pigs, as pork was an important element of the Korean diet. It also associated with smell, because Korean people in the past were considered as "bad smelling", as the interviewees would say. Garlic, which was a very important ingredient in Korean cuisine (like kimchi (キムチ)) and which Japanese people did not use at all in their cuisine, also had a strong smell. Koreans were also excluded from the general housing market and forced to live in tenements and flop houses with poor sanitation and basic health care problems.

time, the population of Tokujo was about 30,000 people and among them, 10,000 were Koreans. They resided in a poor living environment in the so-called illegal housing; there were also frequent fires in which many people lost their lives.[14]

When Koreans immigrated to Japan, they joined the outcastes at the bottom of the industrial reserve army. When workers' movements began, the mechanisms for ideological discrimination and ideological suppression were developed. To combat the rising working-class consciousness after the Rice Riots of 1918, the Public Security Law was passed in 1925 to provide a legal framework for the suppression of communistic ideas. In the Marxist view, then, the structure of pre-war Japanese capitalism supported status discrimination in both its objective and its subjective aspects. In the post-war period, with the Fascist movement defeated and discredited, Japanese society underwent first a revolutionary and then a counterrevolutionary development. The essential forces underlying change in a revolutionary phase were pressures from below, from the progressive social forces of Japanese society, and the American Occupation operating under the principles of the Potsdam Declaration. The revolutionary period was marked by various reforms (Neary 2007).

Ruyle (1979) states in his article that their racial discrimination had its origin in the conquest of Korea and the promulgation by the ruling class of the idea that the Japanese were a superior race. The cultural identity and citizenship issues have been a major problem between the Koreans and the Japanese government, which remains unresolved today. The formation and transformation of ethnic identity and cultural diversity are concerns Koreans in Japan share with many other minority groups in contemporary societies. Japan's national identity is produced and reproduced by discursive strategies rather than by reality itself (see also Visočnik 2013). Although zainichi Koreans live in buraku together with burakumin, they are treated in a different way than burakumin. According to McCormack (2013), they are called "New Comers" or "Commoners" and are like poor labourers, orphans and discharged criminals. In the past, the differences were even greater, but today government's actions to improve the living conditions in buraku are becoming closer and similar to those of the burakumin.

Buraku as marginal space

Historically, this was a place where coexistence of and confrontation between the impoverished working class, minorities on one side and the majority, capital on the other side have been generated. Mizuuchi (2002) argues that this kind of confrontation caused urban poverty in the context of industrial capitalism, which represented economic poverty and feudal and classist marginality, and poverty determined by social status and ethnicity. Today the government is trying to eliminate discrimination in the entire region, but people living here are still struggling with it.

[14] There is another place near Kyōto, called Utoro, in Kyōto Uji Iseda town, where one community of zainichi Koreans lives. They moved there during the war to work in a military airfield the Japanese tried to build. In the mid-1980s, Nissan Motor Co., a successor to the war-time company, contrived to evict them from their homes by selling all of the village land. With much struggle in US courts and by going public, they won support for their cause, and awareness about the wartime compensation issues. The town is also connected with Tokujo, as they have performed in the Madang festival in Tokujo.

The intellectual context in Japan and the accompanying discourses have played a significant role in influencing how minorities and marginalised subjects have been perceived and treated (Chapman 2008; see also Tani 2002). In the past, official Japan denied the existence of these minorities. As a signatory to the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Japan submitted its first report in 1980, stating that 'minorities did not exist in Japan'. The Ainu and other minorities strongly protested this report and as a result the second report in 1987 stated that 'although minorities did exist, there were no minority problems' (Hicks 1997: 3). The reality is however slightly different, as is shown in the citations below and as it will be shown in the following study of one of the buraku in Kyōto:

> *Dōwa* (assimilation) problem is a major human rights problem specific to Japan in which a portion of the population, due to discrimination based on social status structures created during the process of Japan's historical development, were for a long period forced into conditions of economic, social and cultural disadvantage and suffer even now from obstacles in marriage, unfair treatment in employment and other forms of discrimination in their daily lives. Thus, the start of the 21st century was a major turning point both for those active in the liberation movement[15] and those involved in the administration of improvement projects. Important questions had to be faced about what, if any, prejudice and discrimination remained, and what, if anything, could or should the state, or anyone else, do about it? (Ministry of Justice in Weiner 2007).
>
> Discrimination is still there, but it is hidden. In buraku areas, the lifestyle is somehow different from lifestyle of people living in other sides of town. We can find employment and economic disparities, which reflect in poor living environment, hazard or unstable jobs, poverty (Yamamoto 2009: 37).
>
> The people living in Kyōto's buraku are even today telling stories about the ways of discriminations, although their living style has improved much. In 2006, 213 cases of discrimination regarding dōwa were reported, 130 cases against foreigners, and 255 cases against disabled people as well. All three groups were pushed to live in the buraku areas (Kyōto's Buraku Liberation League 2).

The people living in Kyōto's buraku are marginalised for different reasons. By analysing the status of these people, it is possible to gain insight into socio-cultural, political and economic spheres, in which disadvantaged people struggle to gain access (societal and spatial) to resources and full participation in social life. The marginalised people might be socially, economically, politically and legally ignored, excluded or neglected, and are therefore vulnerable to livelihood change.

[15] See more in Neary 2007; Mist 2012; Ruyle 1979; Mizuuchi 2002.

Marginality is primarily defined and described by two major conceptual frameworks, the societal one and the spatial one, and it is possible to find both of these frameworks imbedded in the case of buraku. The societal framework focuses on human dimensions such as demography, religion, culture, social structure (e.g. caste/hierarchy/class/ethnicity/gender), economics and politics in connection with access to resources by individuals and groups. In this regard, the emphasis is placed on the understanding of the underlying causes of exclusion, inequality, social injustice and spatial segregation of people (Gurung & Kollmair 2005: 10), which was how both the burakumin as a caste and zainichi Koreans as an ethnicity were marginalised in one sense. As both groups live in buraku, which is a place at the edge of the city, they are also spatially marginalised. The explanation of the spatial dimension of marginality is primarily based on physical location and distance from centres of development, lying at the edge of or poorly integrated into the system. With this concept, the aim is to gain insights into the influence of physical locations and distance on the livelihoods of individuals/groups and the space itself (Gurung & Kollmair 2005).

Marginality is also a process that emerges and evolves over time into various types and scales in socio-economical and geo-political environments. In this process, marginalised people are often condemned to making their living in marginal environments despite the fact that they are unlikely to have access to resources needed to overcome restrictions imposed by marginal environments (Gurung & Kollmair 2005). It is also a dynamic concept, since each region has the potential to overcome the situation that is perceived to be marginal or unsatisfactory. However, the negative consequences of marginality can even serve as a starting point for innovation and potentials. As Japanese innovation and development after World War II has illustrated, marginality can even provide an extra edge in starting development (Mizuuchi 2002; Gurung & Kollmair 2005).

The process of marginality is seen through the study of history of poor urban resident area buraku, when it was placed at the bottom of the class stratification that occupied particular urban space. Until the beginning of the 19th century, when various commercial activities encouraged urbanisation, the residential segregation generated within the class structure was further intensified among the classes. The idea of a class system and communities produced poverty, which reflects the dynamics of the concept. According to Mizuuchi (2002), during the Edo period (1600–1868) cities established their entities as castle towns (*jōkamachi*) in terms of scales and functions. The closed-door policy caused the market to become isolated from the rest of the world. Active transportation of commodities at the domestic level, however, helped castle towns to construct a basis for developing into commercial cities as well as industrial cities that encouraged the development of manufacture and crafts. At the same time, in the context of the class system composed of four social classes (samurai warriors, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants), castle towns used a segregation policy that spatially isolated the outcaste communities. Planned land-use controlled the processes of discrimination and poverty inherent in a classist society. The urban poverty of the outcaste was created in the limited urban space produced through classist social processes. Poor vagrant labourers were spatially constrained within neighbourhoods with many cheap inns in big cities, such as Edo (Tokyo), Osaka and Kyōto during the Edo period.

In the Meiji Restoration period (1868–1912), urban space experienced a drastic transformation along with revolutionary changes in spatial and social structures. The living space shared by factory labourers, an increasing number of urban miscellaneous jobs workers, and manufacturers unable to adjust to the progress of technology became the slum area. Accordingly, the view regarding the underclass, previously hidden behind the rigid class system, became more explicit in conjunction with the processes determined by the capitalist principle of competition in the Meiji period (Mizuuchi 2002).

The emergence of urban poverty made the historical past of the marginalised societies in cities, previously hidden behind the feudal class system, spatially visible. The congregation of urban miscellaneous jobs workers generated through the mechanism based on feudal classism that had kept the marginalised population and the concentration of female labourers in dormitories built in the context of the development of large-scale industry, produced residential space for the urban poor in various ways (Mizuuchi 2002). Regulations covering construction, hygiene and lodgings, combined with the land price and rent increases related to the emergence of an urban middle class, forced many poorer people to move from relatively central metropolitan areas into specific outlying districts. In the Kansai area, there was a pronounced tendency for the poorest people to be affected by such urban planning.

Since the Taisho period (1912–1926), people from colonised Korea migrated to urban areas next to minor factories, neighbouring these ghettos and neighbourhoods with many cheap inns, giving them an additional characteristic of spatial division among ethnic groups (Mizuuchi 2002). In the light of such social, geographical and historical contexts, a local improvement movement emerged among the bureaucrats at the Ministry of Interior, who cared about the underclass people and societies.

The periods after World War II have brought various changes to the policy of city planning and with them also care for the underclass people living on the margins in buraku, as will be explained later. Before this, two groups of the marginalised will be introduced in order to shed light on their way of life and their struggle for a better living environment.

Machi-zukuri in buraku: problems and solutions

In October 1951, a pulp magazine called *All Romance* published a story entitled *Tokushu Buraku*, whose author turned out to be an employee of the Kyōto city government. The story portrayed a community life with illegal sake brewing, violence, crime and black-markets activity. The local branch of the National Committee for Buraku Liberation (NCBL) complained both to the publishers and to the Kyōto city council because it gave a false picture of life in the buraku communities, which was likely to sustain prejudices. As part of their campaign, the NCBL demanded that the city council mark on a map those sections of the city that lacked public water supplies, sewage disposal and fire hydrants, and also all areas with inadequate housing, high rates of tuberculosis, trachoma and other public health problems, high absenteeism in the schools and high concentrations of families on relief. The result was a vivid demonstration of burakumin problems, since the marked areas fell entirely within the eighteen buraku of Kyōto and its environs. It

was clear that although life was improving for the average Japanese citizen, members of the buraku community were once more falling behind because they were living on the margins of the city (Neary 2007; Hasuda & Lim 2002).

Since the Meiji Restoration, there have been many attempts to improve the living environment in cities, as we have seen before. Uchida (1994) explains that urban planning after the Meiji Restoration was carried out together with the development of industrial infrastructure; new roads, ports and railways were built, and the main projects also included city planning and urban planning. The process of urbanisation has been especially strong since the 1960s, when the idea of machi-zukuri became a leading process. It was conceived as an ideological counterpart to conservative city planning. It literally means the creation of a town and was not intended as a legally implemented regulation but rather as a social contribution to the making of municipalities. It was predicated upon the idea that there is a need for the people who live in a village, a town, or a city to participate in its creation. People were thus able to be involved in the decision-making process related to the planning and construction of the place where they resided. Machi-zukuri, however, was a movement, a community-based and propagated ideological trend, which was only very slowly integrated into the state's city planning institution.

Machi-zukuri [16] refers to a diverse range of practices, and has multiple and contested meanings. Thousands of machi-zukuri processes have been established nationwide, in an enormous outpouring of local government into attempts to achieve more bottom-up input into local place management and management processes. These processes of social and political change are also widely seen as indicative of significant changes in Japanese society and politics (Sorens & Funck 2007). This cooperation led to the establishment of the primary role of community groups: improvement of their living conditions. Their goals were also '… a bright liveable community without discrimination' and '… construction of neighbourhood landscape surrounded by green parks' (Yamamoto 2009: 50). They wanted to create more liveable and sustainable cities that are economically vibrant, provide a high quality of life and health for their residents, and that contribute to long-term environmental sustainability through reduced consumption and waste production (Sorens & Funck 2007).

The central aspect of machi-zukuri is the attempt to strengthen and gain greater involvement of and legitimacy for local community-based organisations in managing processes of urban change. Such urban management is the responsibility of local governments, but in Japan particularly, the central government has been dominant. Changing conceptions of the role of civil society in governance have been central to

[16] This is quite a complicated term to translate; we can refer to it as community building, community initiative, and urban planning, bearing in mind that these translations are merely approximations. The term machi is a complex one, because it can refer to a town, an area of a city (an urban area or zone), a locale or locality. Furthermore, it frequently carries ideological connotations of community. The term zukuri (from tsukuru) simply means to build or to make, but when used with machi, it introduces a sense of plan or intention, which allows for machi-zukuri to take on meanings close to community initiative or urban planning. It is the multiplicity of meanings entrenched within machi-zukuri that renders it a powerful political tool throughout history. The complexity of the term has been used to produce a shift in focus away from social welfare and towards self-responsibility. In other words, responsibility is removed from the nation-state and attached to non-governmental individual or corporate groups. This is claimed to empower citizens for the good of the Nation (Abe 2006; see also Sorens & Funck 2007).

attempts at political reform in Japan, and one of the key areas of practical attempts to create new governance practices and priorities has been at the scale of the urban neighbourhood through the machi-zurkuri processes. (Sorens & Funck 2007; see also Uchida 1994)

It was not until the mid-1990s, shortly after the Great Hanshin Earthquake, that the government saw itself unable to cope with the crisis as efficiently as the local and regional Non-Profit (NPO) and volunteer organisations engaged in machi-zukuri. This was the beginning of a more serious consideration of the social aspects of community building on the part of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The most recent use of both the term and the concept by the government in power strikes one as truly intriguing. The LDP has not only adopted machi-zukuri as a part of its platform; it also appears to push it as a crucial element for the revival of the essence of the Japanese nation. The former prime minister Shinzō Abe (2006) played an important role in advertising the projects of machi-zukuri. This swing towards local community development has been perceived by the Japanese population with mixed feelings. Nevertheless, between 2002 and 2007 and particularly in the last two years of that period, machi-zukuri became a term that was impossible to miss, as one of the members of Kyōto buraku confirms,

> Everybody was talking about machi-zukuri everyday. In our community, we were having meetings, and we really wanted to contribute – it concerned our lives. Especially our community of burakumin had a lot of benefits from this process, and we could make a decision how and where we would live. We found a group called "Neighbourhood Association" and the local government listened to us very carefully and took us seriously.

As seen in the quote, the Neighbourhood Association, as an essential part of Japanese society, had an important role in liberation movements, especially for the rights of burakumin. However, other marginal groups such as zainichi Koreans benefitted from it as well. This form of community group has had a powerful impact on the style, form and operation of community organisation in Japan. Local government routinely expects neighbourhood associations to represent the opinions of member households (Sorens & Funck 2007). As Goto (2008) pointed out, within the process of machi-zukuri, many welfare centres or indoor sports facilities, nursery schools and settlement houses, learning centres and facilities for the handicapped have been built since 1960, as we can also see in Higashi Kujo. In addition to the improvement of living conditions through new housing and facilities, the resident movement in Kyōto has also had the power to preserve the Bank of Yanagihara, the only bank founded by burakumin people in the discriminated Sūjin area community in Japan. Hardly visible, the anti-discrimination "community liberation movement" in Japan has aimed at improving living conditions of communities, and this has been achieved to some degree through the Renewal of Housing Districts Act of 1960 (Hasuda & Lim 2002). The movement to preserve the Bank of Yanagihara created an opportunity for cooperation among the divided groups in the area.

Because of their historical experience and familiarity with segregation and self-governance, the burakumin become potential experts on local community initiatives. Only by looking at local histories of buraku communities rather than large histories of the nation can one acknowledge such transformations. Mizuuchi (2002) here points out that the history of struggle for a better life goes back to Meiji and Taisho periods, when

the government, in order to deal with the shortage of housing in cities, started to supply small-scale public housing in the form of model projects. The struggle continued through all the periods, but it became much stronger in the periods after WWII together with the empowerment of liberation movements.

A grassroots movement started in Osaka in 1957, when the burakumin in the squatter area in Nishinari-ward began demanding new housing as compensation for their eviction, because the restoration project was aimed at evicting them and using the area for roads and streets (Mizuuchi 2002). The same happened in Kyōto's buraku Higashi Shichijo, where people were evicted from their housing when a Shinkansen line was being built (Maekawa 1974). As a result, many barracks were built in 1960 and thus the problem of living conditions became much more vivid to the government than before. Since the beginning of the campaign movement for the acquisition of business opportunity, which was aimed at supporting the economic independence of buraku people, the Council for the Promotion of the Dōwa Project has been trying to develop a better relationship with the government. Consequently, the government decided to build apartments specifically for the dōwa district (buraku) residents. The national movement aimed at solving dōwa problems was so successful that the government enacted the Law of Special Measures for Assimilation Projects in 1969. Accordingly, housing improvement projects in dōwa districts were promoted for 28 years. This was a unique case in which certain urban regions received a considerable amount of national funds as the provision of the consumption fund (Mizuuchi 2002; see also Yamamoto 2009).

However, that was the case with the burakumin, which was different from the situation with the zainichi Koreans living on the margins of cities. In Osaka, for example, an ethnic enclave was reproduced in Ikuno-ward, which was dominated by zainichi people (Korean residents in Japan). The wooden tenement housing for working-class people was there, but there was also a number of public housing to which zainichi people had no access (Mizuuchi 2002). The situation in Kyōto was similar, with small private businesses, but resident buildings were not originally constructed for them, as one of the third generation of zainichi Koreans says:

> My family still has a Korean restaurant with traditional Korean food such as yakiniku and kimchi. As it is close to the Kyōto station, people like to come there to eat, especially in the evening, when they are returning home from work. We have a lot of Japanese costumers, as Korean food has been very popular in last few years. However, that was not the case when my parents had to struggle for their daily bowl of rice. We lived in very poor conditions, with no running water. I'm glad this time is over and today we can somehow live in the same conditions as the Japanese.

While the first-generation of zainichi people attempted to develop their own businesses without demanding rights as Japanese citizens, the second and third generation peoples insisted on their fundamental rights as permanent residents. Their movement addressed the severe reality regarding the violation of rights of foreigners who were permanent residents of Japan, and demanded institutional change. They refused to be fingerprinted, not necessarily because of the ideological antagonism between South

and North Korea, but because their demands derived from their daily lives. In the 1990s, zainichi people finally won rights for access to public housing and pensions. Moreover, they were now entitled to become government employees (see Weiner 2009; Ryang 2005).

The bubble economy gentrified inner cities, whose land represented an object of investment and speculation. Apartment and office buildings were built, changing the urban landscape previously dominated by grey, flat houses (Mizuuchi 2002). In cities, the areas of North and South Koreans and Okinawa people are no longer stigmatised but symbolise something attractive because of their ethnic and cultural flavours, like restaurants of ethnic food such as Korean *yakiniku*. Furthermore, dōwa districts have moved into the public limelight, having developed pioneering projects and welfare for the aged and handicapped as an experimental example of urban regeneration projects.

Because community initiative was not initiated through a legislation procedure but was rather introduced as an alternative comprehensive approach to city-building, it incorporated the thinking of the superstructure of a municipality and also of its soul (Hasuda & Lim 2002). That is to say, the machizukuri concept integrated the people of the community into its making. It was not, however, simply a matter of increased public participation. The movement towards machizukuri was viewed as a step towards the re-vitalisation of civil society in Japan, a form of decentralisation that worked towards the reconstruction of the notion of local community.

Concluding remarks

Today even the most radical of the burakumin activists would accept that the situation has improved over the last forty years. Discrimination is no longer as blatant as it was in the 1950s and before. Living conditions in buraku communities are no longer as impoverished as they were. Such improvements lead some to argue that the "problem" has been solved, although others suggest that discrimination is now taking on new, less obvious forms, such that more subtle policies are required to deal with it and more sophisticated research is needed to enable us to accurately assess the current situation.

The experience of segregation and discrimination and the history of local isolation have given the burakumin the capacity to live their lives as self-governing communities. This experience comes in handy today, when micro-enclaves are being proposed as parts of and responsible for the authority of the nation that is Japan. Buraku communities can and do offer their know-how when collaborating with cities as local self-governing establishments. It is because of their expertise but also together with the communities' own background and historical baggage that these localities can act as models for micro-national enclaves in Japan. Thus, by actively embracing local histories of spaces and peoples and in the context of contemporary movements towards decentralisation of authority, the buraku community examined in this study has managed to shift their positioning from the level of marginal space to that of space merged with the rest of the city. Not only do the people of these localities enjoy the position of equality with their surrounding neighbourhoods when it comes to *community initiative*; they are also capable of functioning as models of self-governance and authority.

These experiences also provide many benefits for other marginalised communities, such as zaninichi Koreans and the handicapped, who used to be forced to live together but

are today trying in various ways to get the best of such multicultural lifestyle. No matter how hard the Japanese would like to hide the diversity, it continues to be a social reality. Here, it is possible conclude that negative consequences of marginality served as a starting point for innovation and potentials. As Japanese innovation and development after WW II has illustrated, marginality can even provide an extra edge to start development and serve to connect people.

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Povzetek

Članek obravnava dve okrožji na jugovzhodu mesta Kjoto, ki sta znani po tem, da tam živijo ljudje marginalizirani zaradi različnih razlogov. Raziskava temelji na kratkem terenskem delu in se osredotoča na dve glavni skupini, ki živita v Kjotskem *buraku* območju in blizu njega: *burakumin* (ali *eta* ljudje) in *zainichi* Korejci. Prav tako raziskava predstavlja njihov način življenja kot marginalne skupnosti in načine, kako se spopadajo z diskriminacijo. Članek podrobneje obravnava tudi razvoj v *buraku* območju in se osredotoča predvsem na pomembno vlogo procesa *machi-zukuri* v osvobodilnih gibanjih v teku 20. in 21. stoletja.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: marginalnost, buraku, burakumin (ljudje eta), zainichi Korejci, machi-zukuri

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