Marriage Discrimination against *Burakumin* in Japan:
Prisoners of Public Stigma*

Abstract

There are minority people called as *Burakumin* in Japan. They are ethnically Japanese, so they are not an ethnic minority; rather, their marginalization is believed to stem from the especially oppressed status their ancestors held in the Edo era (1603-1867). Many *ippanmin* (non-*burakumin*) hold this historical memory and regard *burakumin* as different and stigmatize them. After the WW Ⅱ the social structure has since transformed and marriages between *burakumin* and *ippanmin* have increased. However, this has not meant the resolution of marriage discrimination. There are many *ippanmin* who still inquire about the identity of their children's marriage partners today and it is not uncommon for people to carry out a pre-marriage background check (*toigiki*). People can check the identity of others by making personal inquiries, hiring detective agencies and/or referring to the Buraku Location Registers made anonymously, in which the names and locations of *buraku* communities across the country are listed in printed or electronically.

This article aims to analyze marriage discrimination against *burakumin* in contemporary Japan. It consists of two parts. First, it aims to analyze the discrimination against *burakumin* in the mate choice and marriage referring to the results of some fact-finding surveys including Aoki's one. Although marriage between *ippanmin* and *burakumin* has increased, marriage discrimination against *burakumin* has increased too. On the one hand, it has increased the opportunity which young *ippanmin* has become acquainted with young *burakumin*. On the other hand, in Japan there has been a custom that the child has to obtain his/her parent's permission when he/she wants to marry someone. However, many parents have the traditional discriminatory feelings against *burakumin*. And so the child sometimes cannot obtain his/her parent's permission.

Second, this article aims to analyze the cultural background of *buraku* discrimination that captures parents' consciousness in Japan. There is the *ie* (family line) awareness which brings up the people's feelings of the family status in *seken* or public awareness. It is composed of the *ie* hierarchy in which each *ie* is ranked. And *burakumin ie* has been positioned in the lowest rank. *Ippanmin* believes that his/her *ie* rank will fall to the lowest if any member of his/her *ie* marry *burakumin*. This article

will make clear that the *ie* rank is decided based on the ideological genealogy of 'blood' or pedigree, that this is why marriage with *burakumin* is regarded just like taboo by *ippanmin*.

Key words: *Burakumin*, marriage discrimination, *seken*

1. Marriage Discrimination

Burakumin are ethnically Japanese, so they are not an ethnic minority; rather, their marginalization is believed to stem from the especially oppressed status their ancestors held in the Edo era (1603-1867).   Many *ippanmin* (non-*burakumin*) hold this historical memory and regard *burakumin* as different and stigmatize them. Hugh Smythe (1952) wrote, "Superficially *burakumin* appear to occupy an apparently undifferentiated position, but further examination reveals that they are socially excluded, economically depressed, and politically powerless" (p.196). Smythe's words are still applicable today. Why has discrimination against *burakumin* not disappeared as a feudal relic? Tsutomu Shiobara (1993) wrote, "*burakumin* are discriminated against based on *ie* awareness which was invented based on the feudal *ie* ideology after the Meiji era (1868-1912)" (p. 124). Under the new Civil Code of the postwar era, based on the ideology of democracy, the patriarchal *ie* system was legally abolished. However, marriage discrimination against *burakumin* remains pervasive in Japanese society.

Indeed the most severe form of discrimination against *burakumin* manifests in marriage. In pre-modern Japan, "the marriage barrier in the village [was never] breached and neither outcasts nor ordinary folk seriously challenged it" (Cornell, 1961, p. 292). The social structure has since transformed and marriages between *burakumin* and *ippanmin* have increased. However, this has not meant the resolution of marriage discrimination. There are many *ippanmin* who still inquire about the identity of their children's marriage partners today and it is not uncommon for people to carry out a pre-marriage background check (*toigiki*). One day a *burakumin* woman, whose son had met a Filipina at a night club in Hiroshima City and married her, admitted, "This time around was easy as I didn't worry about *toigiki*". People can check the identity of others by making personal inquiries, hiring detective agencies and/or referring to the Buraku Location Registers made anonymously, in which the names and locations of *buraku* communities across the country are listed in printed or electronically.

Moreover, every Japanese person, at birth, is allocated a *koseki* (family registration card) which, unlike a Western birth certificate, includes more information about the

individual as well as his/her extended family, including where they lived. Detective agencies were able to appropriate *koseki* information in order to inquire about someone's identity. In 1976 the Buraku Liberation League urged the government to prohibit access to *koseki* records to put a stop to this discriminatory use of it (Sato, 1981, p. 56). However, lawyers and judicial clerks have the professional privilege of access to *koseki* records. Detective agencies purchase copies of *koseki* records and sell them to clients to satisfy client demand for information. In this way investigators or employers can cross-check information regarding persons of interest. There are now an increasing number of local governments that notify potential victims of the unauthorized acquisition of *koseki* as a countermeasure to this particular form of discrimination (Yamashita, 2009, p. 9).

Nevertheless many of these inquiries end up in engagement termination particularly if a potential spouse is a *burakumin*. Typically, an *ippanmin* partner will say, 'I don't mind that you are a *Burakumin*, but my parents might.' The parents will say, 'we don't mind, but our relatives might.' Finally, the partner will say, 'I want my marriage to be blessed by all my family members.' As a result the marriage proposal will be cancelled. Then parents will justify their discriminatory attitudes by claiming, 'our child might be miserable if he/she also ends up suffering from   discrimination after marriage.'

This article aims to analyze marriage discrimination against *burakumin* in contemporary Japan. It consists of two parts. First, it aims to analyze the discrimination against *burakumin* in the mate choice and marriage referring to the results of some fact-finding surveys including ●●'s one. Although marriage between *ippanmin* and *burakumin* has increased, marriage discrimination against *burakumin* has increased too. On the one hand, it has increased the opportunity which young *ippanmin* has become acquainted with young *burakumin*. On the other hand, in Japan there has been a custom that the child has to obtain his/her parent's permission when he/she wants to marry someone. However, many parents have the traditional discriminatory feelings against *burakumin*. And so the child sometimes cannot obtain his/her parent's permission.

Second, this article aims to analyze the cultural background of *buraku* discrimination that captures parents' consciousness in Japan. There is the *ie* (family line) awareness which brings up the people's feelings of the family status in *seken* or public awareness. It is composed of the *ie* hierarchy in which each *ie* is ranked. And *burakumin ie* has been positioned in the lowest rank. *Ippanmin* believes that his/her *ie* rank will fall to the lowest if any member of his/her *ie* marry *burakumin*. This article

will make clear that the *ie* rank is decided based on the ideological genealogy of 'blood' or pedigree, that this is why marriage with *burakumin* is regarded just like taboo by *ippanmin*.

2. Existing Studies on *Burakumin*

There is a great deal of existing scholarship on *burakumin* in the West and in Japan. Early scholars explained marriage discrimination against *burakumin* as a result of the socio-economic status of *burakumin* which made marriage with *ippanmin* unviable (Smythe, 1952; Donoghue, 1957; Cornell, 1961). Others claimed that the outcaste status of burakumin became a strong deterrent to marriage (Berreman, 1967; Beer and Weeramantry, 1979; Fowler, 2008). Other pointed to a legacy of marriage discrimination that seems to have turned into a norm (Fowler, 2000). Others highlighted the role of *koseki* investigation in hindering mixed marriages and sustaining discrimination (Yoshino and Murakoshi, 1977; Hendry, 1981). Others focused on *burakumin* who hid their *burakumin* identity within marriage and passed as *ippanmin* (De Vos and Wagatsuma, 1967; Shimahara, 1971; De Vos, 1992; Cleveland, 2014). Other isolated three conditions that enable *burakumin* to marry *ippanmin*; the balanced position of families on both sides, a tolerant attitude on the part of the *ippanmin* family and a good education and/or decent job held by the *burakumin* (Morgan, 2007). Recently, there have been studies interrogating contemporary marriage discrimination. The social border between *burakumin* and *ippanmin* is becoming blurred, because many *buraku* communities are disorganized and the population flow has accelerated due to high economic growth. These conditions have generated an increase in intermarriage (Sugimoto, 1997; Davis, 2000; Neary, 2003). On the other hand, many mainstream Japanese are still committed to preserving their family lineage or *ie* (Rebick and Takenaka, 2006). There are increasing love matches in Japan. However, as Buckley argues, in many cases love is only play before marriage and marriage is regarded as a significant event that the whole family decides regardless of love (2009, p 26).

These studies treat marriage discrimination against *burakumin* as an isolated social phenomenon. They do not scrutinize the relationship between marriage discrimination and other social conditions: the transformation of the *buraku* community, family structure and the ideology of *ie* and *seken*. Moreover, most studies in US and Europe were not sufficiently verified by empirical data. They used the insufficient data obtained indirectly.

On the other hand, *buraku* studies in Japan have analyzed the multi-faceted aspects of contemporary marriage discrimination against *burakumin* and the social factors which have brought them forth (Akuzawa, 2010; ●● and Ito, 2007; Koyama, 2013;

Noguchi, 2001; Okuda, 2006; 2007; Saito, 2002; 2003;2005; 2007; Uchida, 2004;2005). These studies have led to a greater understanding of contemporary marriage discrimination. Some studies have referred to *ie* and *seken* in their analyses. However, they did not analyze the structure and function of *ie* and *seken* sufficiently and did not specifically refer to the tripartite relationship of *ippanmin, burakumin* and *seken* in marriage discrimination.

This article aims to compensate for the existing limitations in *buraku* studies in the West and in Japan so as to develop a clearer framework within which to analyze marriage discrimination against *burakumin*. It will systematically analyze current Japanese views on marriage and family referring to marriage discrimination and the relationship between social structure and marriage discrimination. Moreover, this article aims to contribute to the advancement of study on minority marriage in general. The analysis will demonstrate that marriage discrimination against minorities is deeply embedded in both cultural and social spheres in Japan. The analysis of marriage discrimination against *burakumin* is a particular case of marriage discrimination in minority studies.

This article uses data based on surveys undertaken in *buraku* communities. However, it is almost impossible for an individual researcher to carry out a quantitative survey on marriage discrimination against *burakumin*, because *burakumin* do not relate their painful experience of marriage discrimination to others. Therefore, about the quantitative data we are forced to rely on very limited data that have been supplied by local governments and/or the Buraku Liberation League. Further their reports do not contain detailed explanations of how the surveys were carried out. Therefore, we have no strict means of verifying the data. Notwithstanding this, all of the data point to the severity of marriage discrimination against *burakumin* in Japan.

3. Recent Marriage Discrimination

3.1. Characteristics of Marriage Discrimination

Marriage discrimination is defined as "behavior that indicates opposition to a family member's choice of a potential spouse, [and which] calls for a withdrawal of a marriage proposal or cancels marriage on the ground of   difference in educational background, family status, social status, ethnicity and so on" (Nakagawa, 2001, p. 286). Not all *burakumin* are discriminated against prior to or during their marriages. Many *burakumin* are happily married to *ippanmin* partners. According to a 2011 survey carried out in *buraku* communities in Fukuyama City, Hiroshima, among 652 respondents 41.3 percent had married *ippanmin*. Just over 50 percent of those indicated that 'neither the nuclear nor the extended family opposed our marriage'; 58.7 percent

responded that 'no one from the partner's nuclear or extended family declined to associate with the blended family' (Koyama, 2013, pp. 35-36). However, this still means that almost 50 percent of these 269.1 respondents faced some form of discrimination. In the same survey, 38.6   percent of respondents answered 'family and relatives opposed their marriage' and 22.8 percent responded that their 'partner's family and relatives refused to associate with my family' (Koyama, 2013, pp. 35-36). Notably, compared with Fukuyama City's 2003 survey, there was a decline in the number of respondents who claimed that there were no familial objections (70.8 percent in 2003); moreover, the number of respondents who did not answer increased (from 12.7 percent in 2003 to 18.3 percent in 2011). It can be inferred that among respondents who did not answer many might have faced opposition. They might not want to remember the sorrowful experiences of discrimination.

The ratio of respondents who experienced marriage discrimination is actually higher for *ippanmin* partners than for *burakumin* partners (Saito, 2002, pp. 92-98). Indications suggest that *ippanmin* are opposed their marriage with burakumin by their parents directly. Many blended couples never ended up making their way to the altar. According to a 2000 survey of Osaka *buraku* communities, 31.7 percent of respondents had parted ways prior to marriage (Okuda 2007, p. 36). Age was not implicated as this was the case across all age brackets. These findings demonstrate that the situation of marriage discrimination has not improved.   And in terms of opposition it would appear to have become worse.   According to a 2005 Osaka survey, 23.2 percent of citizens answered that they had heard of instances of discrimination in Osaka City' (Okuda 2006, p. 6). These may include cases of marriage discrimination against *burakumin* living outside *buraku* communities.

According to the 2000 survey cited above, the number of *burakumin* who had revealed their *buraku* identity to their partners had increased (52.7 percent) (Okuda, 2007, p. 30). Almost half of respondents (48 percent) had revealed their identity before their marriage. Younger respondents tended to reveal their identity more readily than elderly respondents (72.3   percent of those aged 15-29). Among all respondents (7,418 people) there were respondents (17.4 percent) who experienced the withdrawal of a marriage proposal by the *ippanmin* partners and almost one third of those (31.8 percent) believed that the withdrawal was because of discrimination. They claimed the following definite reasons for this; 'my partner became unfriendly after learning about my *buraku* identity' (16.8 percent), 'my partner began to worry noticeably after learning about my *buraku* identity' (12.2 percent), 'my partner withdrew the marriage proposal due to parental opposition' (40.5 percent), 'I was opposed to marry for some inexplicable

reason' (7.8 percent), and 'my partner would marry me only if I cut off my own family ties' (6.3 percent) (multiple answer) (Osaka Prefecture, 2001, p. 61). The *ippanmin* parents who opposed the marriage of their children with *burakumin* are presumably anxious that their children might face *buraku* discrimination after marriage. Ironically, or not, knowing such parental attitudes of *ippanmin*, the parents of *burakumin* likewise become reluctant to the idea of their children's marriage with *ippanmin*. The same fear is at work. They also are anxious that their children will face discrimination by *ippanmin* and their families after marriage.

Suicide, a drastic final solution chosen by *burakumin* suffering from marriage discrimination is the most miserable result of *buraku* discrimination. There are young *burakumin* who have been cornered to death much to the despair because of marriage discrimination, although the number is not large. However, as most suicide cases receive no publicity, we do not have data as to the exact number of people who have committed suicide. There seem to be many unpublicized suicides in reality (Aoyama, 2003, p. 31). Most *burakumin* endure the discrimination. Tomi Yoneda, a leader of the Buraku Liberation League between 1922 and 1988, inferred, "after the establishment of *Suiheisha* (National Levelers Association of Burakumin) which actively fought against discrimination in the 1920s, there were on average 15 to 20 *burakumin* committing suicides annually across the country. But the statistics do not tell the full story. According to Aoyama sources estimate that 150 to 160 *burakumin* committed suicide due to marriage discrimination over the last decade" (Aoyama, 2003, p. 35), but it is impossible to confirm this because of reasons mentioned above.

Finally, how did *burakumin* who had been discriminated against deal with it? According to the 2000 Osaka survey cited above, among *burakumin* who suffered from marriage discrimination, 36.2 percent had 'consulted family,' while 39.6 percent had 'not specifically addressed the discrimination.' The ratio of *burakumin* who had not openly protested against marriage discrimination amounted to 75.8 percent (Okuda, 2007, p. 41). The survey indicates that *burakumin* tend not to disclose their experiences to others for various reasons, including; reluctance to remember it, fear of the future, fear of people's reactions, fear of a loss of affection from their partner, reluctance to make the family worry or grieve (Okuda, 2001, p. 7).

3.2. Recent Trends

Marriage discrimination has changed in the general context of *buraku* discrimination. Referring to some surveys in *buraku* communities, it can be pointed to four key findings. First, mixed marriage between *burakumin* and *ippanmin* has increased; in particular, among young people (Table 1, Uchida, 2004, p. 13). The same trend has been confirmed

in other surveys (see Fukuyama City, 2005, p. 13) (Okuda, 2007, p. 17; Seminar Room of Sociology of Osaka City University, 2011, pp. 77-78). This fact has been interpreted as follows: First, the spatial movement of *burakumin* has proceeded in line with social changes generated by high economic growth. At the same time, the occupational status of *burakumin* has risen and the employment they undertake has diversified. Due to these changing conditions, the opportunities for *burakumin* and *ippanmin* to encounter each other have increased. Second, the number of *ie*-oriented arranged marriages in which parents engage matchmakers has decreased and individual-oriented love marriages have increased. Third, the attitude of young *ippanmin* to avoid *burakumin* has been mitigated, as they become individualistic, not aware of *ie* (Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, 2003, pp. 16-18; Uchida, 2004, pp. 9-14; Okuda, 2007, pp. 23-25).

Table.1 Mixed Marriage / Experience of Marriage Discrimination × Age

Age	-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 -
Both born in *Buraku*	14.2	24.8	38.4	61.2	72.7	84.6	87.6
One born in *Buraku*	75.1	70.3	57.2	36.1	23.5	12.4	9.1
Discriminated in Marriage	66.7	38.1	40.4	32.9	23.2	17.8	21.6
Unknown	7.1	1.7	3.0	1.6	1.7	1.7	2.1

(SBLI, 2003)

Nevertheless, marriage discrimination experienced by young *burakumin* has increased (Table 1). It is just that because there are actually more engagements, there is more discrimination. In contrast, elderly *burakumin* experienced less discrimination, because they tended to marry partners within the same economic strata resulting in a degree of homogeneity. The same tendency is confirmed in other surveys (Okuda, 2001, p. 14; 2007, p. 17). The key finding here is that the increase in mixed marriages between *burakumin* and *ippanmin* has not actually resulted in a decrease in marriage discrimination. The opportunities for *burakumin* encounter prejudiced *ippanmin* have increased and, in effect, *burakumin* suffering from prejudice has increased (Saito 2002, p. 91). In other words, *structural discrimination* has decreased but *behavioral discrimination* has increased (Uchida, 2005, pp. 15-18). "Even if *ippanmin* parents understand the affirmative qualities of their children's partners and accept their decision to marry, they tend to maintain prejudicial views against *burakumin*" (Saito, 2002, p. 101).

Katz and Hill (1968) pointed out that mixed marriage generally occurs under the

following conditions. First, eligible marriage candidate is selected on the basis of social norms on family. Second, marriage prospects rely on the frequency of interaction of the individuals involved and third, proximity of residence facilitates interaction (p. 501). In Japan *burakumin* and *ippanmin* have become spatially closer thus increasing opportunities to co-mingle which allows for possible romance.

The third reason for the increase in mixed marriages is that conditional marriage, that is, marriage which parents permit with a variety of conditions has increased. In Japan there is a social norm that 'discrimination must not be allowed', therefore *ippanmin* parents who are prejudiced against *burakumin* will not blatantly oppose their children's marriage to them. They oppose the marriage indirectly by saying things like, 'you might encounter a better partner in the future', 'you are too young to marry', 'You should not suffer from discrimination due to marriage to a *buraku* spouse', 'you can become friends but you must not marry', (Saito, 2004, pp. 74-75). Parents who are persuaded by their child might grudgingly accept the marriage. However, they may place some conditions on the marriage including; hiding the identity of the *burakumin,* moving out of the *buraku* community, changing the surname, cutting off ties with the partner's family, not joining the *buraku* liberation movement and not having children. On the other hand, according to Saito *burakumin* partners appear to be willing to accept such conditions (Saito, 2002, p. 98). However, the marriage conditions appear as a deterrent to future marriage discrimination.

Finally, the traditional *ie awareness* of young people has been diluted. It has changed to "the modernized *ie* awareness based on the individualistic love of parents and child" (Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, 2003, p. 2). There is an ideology of 'family happiness' at its core. 'I want my marriage to be blessed by my entire family.' Keeping this in mind, young people seek parental permission of marriage. They think that parental permission is an indispensable condition of a happy marriage. However, if the parents retain traditional *ie* awareness and know that their child's partner is a *burakumin*, they sometimes reveal the discriminatory   feelings and oppose the marriage sometimes by taking extreme measures; sending the child away, locking up the child up, pretending themselves sick, threatening to cut off parental ties and even pretending to commit suicide. The child who loves his or her parents may succumb to these tactics and abandons the idea of marrying a *burakumin*. "Today's marriage discrimination is thought to occur due to the ideology of 'happy marriage' which is the core of the modern family awareness based on affection and love for the family" (Uchida, 2005, p. 27).

3.3. 'Marriage is an Exception'

The family awareness of young people is entwined with parental *ie* awareness. Although the situation of the marriage has changed, marriage discrimination against *burakumin* has not changed as seen above. This is due to the stubborn prejudiced attitude of many *ippanmin*. According to a survey carried out of residents (mostly *ippanmin*) of Osaki-Kamijima Town in Hiroshima Prefecture in 2007 (●●and Ito, 2007), some important facts about mixed marriage were found. At first, the respondents were asked the question, 'Marriage is supposedly based on an agreement between two people, but opposition by the family or relatives sometimes ensues. What do you think about this?' The respondents (393 persons) answered as follows; 'the marriage should be based on the agreement of two people involved. They must not be bothered by the opinions of others' (13.7 percent) (Type A), 'although they may not be able to ignore the opinions of others, the feelings of the two central people involved should be respected first' (79.6 percent) (Type B), 'although the agreement of two persons involved must not be ignored, the opinions of others should be respected first' (5.6 percent) (Type C), and 'the marriage should be decided upon based on the opinions of others' (1.0 percent) (Type D).

Next, the respondents were asked the question; 'how would you behave if your family member wanted to married a *burakumin*?' The respondents (387 persons) answered as follows; 'I would agree to the marriage' (25.8   percent), 'I will eventually agree to the marriage if the two people involved felt strongly' (27.6 percent), 'I would oppose the marriage' (6.5 percent), and 'I cannot answer the question' (35.4 percent). Thus, the total figure of 93.3   percent of Type A and B, whose opinion was that the marriage should be individual-oriented was reduced to 53.4 percent of respondents who indicated that they would either agree or eventually agree. A breakdown of these responses is shown in Table 2.

The opinion of Type A was divided into 'I will agree' (38.9 percent) and 'I cannot answer' (31.5 percent). And almost the same tendency is confirmed in Type B. In other words, *the acceptance of an individual-oriented marriage in general is thwarted in the case of marriage of a family member with a burakumin*. Additionally, the respondents of Type A and Type B selected anti-discriminatory opinions in other questions on other human rights issues. However, those opinions were also upset or frustrated in the case of a marriage of a family member with a *burakumin*. Type B originally is understood as the opinion that the agreement of two persons involved should be respected, *although they cannot ignore the opinions of others*. In other words, as they do not have this opinion firmly, they cannot resist others that oppose *strongly* the marriage of family member

with *burakumin*. And the opinion that 'I will eventually agree if the will of two persons involved is strong' is no different to 'I may oppose the marriage *if their will is not strong*.'

In short, these views to varying degrees express an oppositional attitude to marriage with *burakumin.* The person who agrees firmly with the marriage with *burakumin* is only one who is Type A *and* who agrees to the marriage of a family member with *burakumin*. Even anti-discriminatory opinions in general were often mitigated in the end when a family member wished to marry a *burakumin*. The view then is that it's ok for others, but not for my own family. In 1965 the Governmental Advisory Council on Buraku Issues claimed that 'marriage discrimination is the final wall to be surmounted' (*Dowa Taisaku Shingikai* Report). This article argues that the situation of marriage discrimination has not changed over half a century.

Table 2. Opinion of Marriage in General × Marriage with *Burakumin*

	Agree	Reluctantly	Oppose	Other	No nswer	Total
Type A	38.9	27.8	0.0	1.9	31.5	13.7
Type B	24.2	29.1	6.3	5.6	34.8	79.6
Type C	18.2	13.6	22.7	0.0	45.5	5.6
Type D	50.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	1.0
Total	25.8	27.6	6.5	4.7	35.4	100.0

4. Structure of Marriage Discrimination

An *ippanmin* who wants to marry to *burakumin* might say, 'It's ok with me, but not with my parents.' His/her parents might answer, 'It's ok with us, but not with our relatives.' Finally, the relatives might say, 'It's ok with us, but *seken* might damage our standing'. In this manner an *ippanmin* might deflect his/her responsibility of discrimination onto others and finally escape to *seken* as the public opinion that has no entity and so irrefutable. In this way an *ippanmin* may simply cancel a marriage proposal to a *burakumin*.

Why would young people, their parents or relatives readily discriminate against *burakumin*? Marriage discrimination is related to four agents: the individual, the relatives, *ie* and *seken*. The relationships among these agents is called the *structure of marriage discrimination* in this article. It consists of two parts. One is the scene of discrimination in terms of an individual choice of mate. Another is the scene of marriage discrimination in terms of *ie*, realtives and *seken*. Figure 1 shows the structure of marriage discrimination carried out by four agents. Hereafter, marriage discrimination

against *burakumin* will be explained referring to this figure.

Figure 1. Structure of Marriage Discrimination
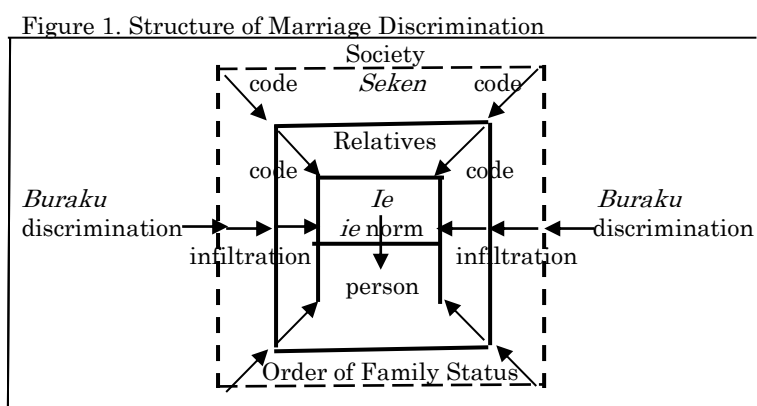
4.1. Mate Choice

Marriage Strategies of Young People

How do young *ippanmin* and *burakumin* get to know each other first? According to a survey of Yata Buraku District in Osaka City in 2010, the circumstances in which married *burakumin* got to know their *ippanmin* spouses are the follows; 21.7 percent of respondents said that their partners were introduced by family or relatives, 19.7 percent were introduced by friends, 26.4 percent met at work place and 27.2 percent met in other situations (Seminar Room of Sociology of Osaka City University, 2011, p. 82). The opportunities in which *burakumin* gets to know *ippanmin* has increased and diversified. At the same time, arranged marriage have decreased and love marriage have increased. Moreover, these two phenomena appear interrelated in that "the change of ratio of intermarriage or endogamy among *burakumin* and mixed marriage is almost parallel to that of arranged marriage and love marriage" (Uchida, 2004, p. 9). If this is true, can it be said that with love marriage increasing, marriage discrimination is being resolved? Unfortunately, no. As mentioned above, the experience that was opposed to marriage has increased among young people both of *burakumin* and *ippanmin*.

Moreover, there are three circumstances which give rise to marriage discrimination. First, marriage discrimination refers to the question of how arranged marriage and love marriage proceed. 'Arranged' and 'love' here mean only the first trigger of association between two young persons involved in the decision to marry. It is not uncommon that the intimate association starts after the formal arranged meeting and develop into a love relationship. In this case, in the beginning, parents, relatives or a matchmaker arrange the meeting of two young persons' taking into consideration the balance of various

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conditions, especially the *ie* ranking of both sides. In recent years, the introduction of marriage partner through the marriage business company has increased. However, "although the way to deliver the 'marriage information' is new, it does not always set the meeting of two young people independently from the traditional style of arranged marriage. The company sells the personal information on young couple, which was gotten through the territorial and kin before to the client" (Takeuchi, 1996, p. 242). The partner is selected in accordance with the wish of a client (his/her parent), and *burakumin* are excluded from the marriage candidate in this process. In the case of love marriage, two persons who love each other decide the marriage by themselves first. They then report their decision to their parents and ask for permission. However, there are many cases that the agreement of marriage is cancelled because the *ippanmin* parents oppose the marriage. That is why the child cannot go against the parental opposition.

These are the typical processes in which the arranged meeting and the intimate relationship are ended. "What we call love marriage should be paraphrased non-arranged marriage" (Ando, 2002, p. 101). Thus, arranged marriage is different from love one only in the first meeting. Both often end up to the same result that breaks off of the marriage story. On the one hand, "child and parents respect the intentions of each other and confirm to go through the procedure of orthodox arrangement for each other" (Kuwahara, 2010, p. 91). On the other hand, "it is oriented by the modern style of marriage harmonizing the intentions of parents and child by adapting to the real social situation, that is, by extracting the passionate factor of the love from love marriage" (Kuwahara, 2010, p. 91). Otone Kuwahara called it the Japanese version of the fraternity marriage. In these circumstances, there is little point comparing love marriages with arranged ones. "Arranged marriage is the marriage in which two persons involved get the social approval for their love backed by the matchmaker" (Kuwahara, 2010, p. 90).

Love Marriage and Like Marriage

Can love overcome discriminatory barriers to marriage? The nature of love must be questioned here. Romantic feelings tend not to occur in a social vacuum. "The happy love, that is, the love which is approved socially and therefore promised to lead to marriage means just the love to its own social fate. Such love makes two persons being destined socially associate each other with the seemingly accidental and arbitrary method" (Bourdieu, 2002=2007, pp. 228-229). In other words, romantic partners do not love each other unconditionally. "Through the education in the early childhood, a young girl is disciplined to find out her future partner and to accept him based on the social code approved by the whole community" (Bourdieu, 2002=2007, p. 61). Thus, "factors

such as the social status and the economic strength of the marriage partner is incorporated in the process of initiating romantic feelings" (Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, 2003, 11). As a result, love marriage becomes the blend to seek the similar tendency when choosing the partner." He/she does not love the person whom the parents don't like in the first place. 'I want to love the person with whom my parents are happy.' It is in this manner that *ie* penetrates the love. "The potential partner is screened carefully by taking into consideration the condition such as the educational attainment, economic resources and work prospects. Love plays the role of so-called oblate which wraps such rational mate choice" (Ando, 2002, p. 102). In general, *like marriage* or homogamy is penetrated by the principle of *within marriage* or in-group marriage which "forbids the choosing of a spouse from the out-group" (Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, 2003, p. 5). It is based on "the empirical fact that mutual understanding and adaptation encourage young person choose a partner from the same group than those from the different group" (Furuya, 1991, p. 23). Referring to the *like marriage*, there are many studies to claim the correlation between the educational career and the occupation, and the marital relationship (Imaizumi & Kaneko, 1985, pp. 11-12).

Marriage and Stability

Marriage discrimination in the present day refers to the fact that young people do not have traditional *ie* awareness but rather modern family awareness. At the core of modern family awareness, there is the attachment to the parents, that is, the family love. The child's happiness is thought to depend on the parent's happiness and vice versa. In the context of issue on marriage discrimination against *burakumin*, happiness means four kinds of stability in life (Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, 2003, pp. 9-11); first, the absence of discrimination, second, economic stability, third, an affirmative human relationship and fourth, stable parenting. The stability not to be discriminated against means not to be misidentified as *burakumin.* The stability of human relationship means to get married being approved and blessed by the *ippanmin* family. The stability in parenting means that the child born must not be discriminated against. *Ippanmin* keeps in mind these stabilities and chooses the partner with a rational purpose. He/she excludes *burakumin* from the marriage candidate. "Marriage discrimination is brought forth by the *buraku* discrimination *and* by the mechanism of mate choice" (Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, 2003, p. 11).

4.2. *Ie* and *Seken*

Burakumin spoke of their sorrowful experiences of marriage discrimination in the Fukuyama survey cited above: "Nobody in the partner's family and relatives attended the bridal ceremony," "When my son got married, the partner's parents opposed the marriage. And when the first baby died in the partner's womb, her mother told her that it's good the baby died," "Her parents opposed the marriage and made her go leave Fukuyama." In order to break off any association with *burakumin*, the hard-headed *ippanmin* parent may take ugly measures. Why are some *ippanmin* so determined to deny an *ie* to *ie* association with a *burakumin's ie*?   The following section addresses this question.

1) Structure of *Ie*
***Ie* awareness**: Kiyoko Nakagawa wrote, "the purpose of *ie awareness* is a family's continuity over generations, combined with the awareness of *iegara* (*ie* or family status). Although the traditional *ie* system was abolished by postwar amendments to the Civil Code, *ie* awareness goes hand in hand with *seken-tei* (*seken* awareness). In short, social norms of *seken* control Japanese behavior strictly". (Nakagawa, 2001, p. 287).

Continuation of Ie
In the postwar era the traditional *ie* system based on patriarchal authority and the dominance of the head *ie* over the branch one, was legally abolished. However, *ie* awareness still has ingrained deeply in Japanese society, although young people are losing the interest about *ie*. In contemporary Japan the *ie* member is expected to maintain their *ie* status in the community and pass it on to the next generation. Tadashi Inoue (2007) wrote, "Japanese depend solely on the *ie* as the fundamental unit through which life persists because the Japanese do not believe in any absolute God such as is the case in many Western religions, which have dominated the world" (Inoue, 2007, p. 86). For the Japanese, *ie* has been the spiritual community that was supported by its genealogical and generational continuity.

Ie status refers to a position in the *ie* hierarchy that is evaluated and shared ideologically and customarily by the community. *Ie* possesses authority depending on its position in the *ie* hierarchy. Therefore, the *ie* member is sensitively aware of how his/her *ie* is ranked in the community. By maintaining *ie* status, the *ie* member gets satisfaction from his/her *ie* continuing eternally. "*Ie* is recognized as the ultra-generational kinship group, its integrity and continuity are emphasized, and the family member regards existence as being subordinated to *ie* (Inoue, 2007, p. 86). The marriage

is regarded as the binding of *ie* with *ie* and the balancing of *ie* status with the marriage partner is strictly considered. "The first function of marriage is to guarantee the continuity of family without losing the integrity of homestead. Indeed, the most important homestead is the family name which is the index of the individual's status in the social hierarchy. As such, the family name becomes the source of prestige and a sign of faded glory state" (Bourdieu, 2002=2007, p. 24).

Ie and Discrimination: In the community an *ippanmin* who is prejudiced against *burakumin* stays away from *burakumin* as a *buraku ie* is considered outside the illusionary and normative community in which the ie hierarchy is ingrained. By doing so, he/she can maintain *ie* status and reproduce the *ie* hierarchy as a whole. Based on this discriminatory ideology, "marriage with a *burakumin* is thought to result in the lowering of the status of an *ie*'s evaluation and status in the community and so marriage with *burakumin* is avoided" (Noguchi, 2001, p. 60). As long as an authoritarian parent-child relationship continues and the parent has prejudice against *burakumin,* marriage discrimination will not disappear in Japan. In other words, the exclusion of *burakumin* will continue as long as Japanese privilege an inclusive *ie* system that disavows 'outsiders'.

Ie and Relatives: The *ie* system is extended to kinship groups. The continuation of *ie* across generations is accompanied by inheritance of so-called 'pure blood'. This notion is not based on any biological facts and is purely ideological. A fictitious and restrictive kin relationship is replicated the real kindred and is regarded as its extension. And its whole forms the *miuchi*, that is, the in-group relationship (Inoue, 2007, p. 113). The idea of pure blood is shared by the individual, family and relatives. It backs up the continuity of *ie*. The *ie* group belonging to the same genealogy is believed to have both common ancestors and destiny. The relatives are regarded as the guardians who monitor the individual *ie* destiny. The *ie* honor is regarded as the relatives' honor, and conversely damage also extends to relatives. Thus, for *ippanmin* having the prejudice against *burakumin*, marriage with burakumin must be blocked anyway, even if it is the marriage of the member of relatives. Therefore, the relatives intervene with the marriage. If they cannot stop the marriage, they will sever the association with the *ie* member who marries a *burakumin*. This is why parents object to the marriage proposal of their child saying 'It's ok with us, but not with our relatives,' even if there are no relatives who actually oppose the marriage. The relatives here are the extension of *ie* and the illusionary group as well as the real one. Thus the relatives exist between *ie* and *seken*. It may be called

the semi-*seken*.

2) Structure of *Seken*

Seken is the subjective world that determines the *ie* status shared by the community. It drives *ippanmin* to marriage discrimination against *burakumin*. What is *seken* in more detail?   There is no empirical study of *seken* in Japan, as it is so elusive in character. Nevertheless, it works to control Japanese behavior.

Characteristics of Seken: *Seken* is a pseudo living space that is characterized by four characteristics. First, *seken* is a notional entity, that is, the community recognized subjectively as 'my world' by people. The range of *seken* is "decided not by objective criterion but subjective ones, and it changes depending on the circumstances" (Inoue 2007, p. 266). Therefore, the scope of *seken* differs according to a given subjective experience of reference to it (Inoue, 2007, p. 99). It refers to "all human relationships which people think to have and to have an interest in at present and in the future too." (Abe, 2002, p. 26). "*Seken* refers to the human relationships in which people know each other through jobs, hobbies, birthplaces and alma maters and thus extends beyond the range of relatives" (Abe, 1992, p. 144). Kin'ya Abe (2002) describes the spatial breadth of *seken* as the range of sending new year's cards, summer gifts and year-end gifts (p. 26).

Second, *seken* is a normative entity which has a 'situational ethics' (Inoue, 2007, p. 68). "The energy to live by adapting to the *seken*'s standard has been one of the spiritual driving forces to the modern Japan" (Inoue, 2007, p. 51). *Seken* is the space that regulates the principles of Japanese behavior. "The fact that parents will interfere with their child's marriage suggests that parents and children do not live individually independently of each other" (Sato, 2001, p.56). For *ippanmin* who are prejudiced against *burakumin*, refusal to attend the marriage ceremony has a symbolic meaning in the public arena and can be seen as generated by *seken*. The ceremony is a sacred time and space, where the sacredness of an *ie* is confirmed by all *ie* members. Therefore, a deviation from the *seken* code is a *shame* for these *ippanmin*, because the sacred order in this world is being polluted. Because of this, the so-called deviant must be banished from the community. People "are afraid of bad rumor and are ashamed to face the public if *seken* is not honored" (Abe, 1995, p. 21).

Third, *seken* is a web of powers which strictly regulate the human behavior. This power derives from human relationships. "Even though it does not exist objectively, *seken* restrains us with a might stronger than the law" (Sato, 2001, p.82). This idea of

power is similar to the power theory of Michel Foucault. "Power is ubiquitous everywhere not because it oversees all, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1976=1986, p. 120). "Even if you resist [*seken*] only a little, you are strangled on the neck by silk floss as a deviant who has trampled the 'feelings of mutual aid and symbiosis" (Sato, 2001, p. 86).

Fourth, *seken* is exclusive. It consists of a hierarchy of status. People never forget or deviate from their positions in the social hierarchy such as superior or inferior, older or younger, richer or poorer and so on. "*Seken* is a space of exclusive and discriminatory configuration" (Abe, 2002, p. 47). As such, *burakumin* are excluded from *seken*.

Seken and Ie:

Ie is incorporated into *seken*. *Seken* is supported by the hierarchy of *ie* status: head *ie* and branch *ie*, old *ie* and new *ie*, and rich *ie* and poor *ie*. These entwined each other and the hierarchy of ie constantly is changed. On the other hand, *ie* is a unit of individual behavior. Person acts as an *ie* member. At the same time, the rule of *seken* always is preferred to one of *ie*. The *ie* member's standard of behavior is in *seken*. "When *ie* and *seken* were in conflict with each other, even the patriarch had to prioritize in conforming to the code of *seken*" (Inoue, 1977, p. 63). Further, "the *ie* awareness cannot exist without the pride and ambiguous feelings to *seken*" (Inoue, 1977, p. 66). "With the seken's codes, the individual watches him/herself in both of *ie* and *seken*" (Inoue, 2007, pp. 127-128). An individual is excluded from *ie* as well as from *seke*n if he/she deviates from the codes of *seken*. He/she has no place to live in *seken* and in *ie* as well. *Ie* does not protect the individual against *seken*.

Seken and Marriage: Marriage with *burakumin* is avoided in *seken*. In the 2000 Osaka survey cited above, the respondents were asked the questions; 'When do you think people in *seken* worry about and are conscious of *burakumin*? The respondents answered as following (multiple answers); 'when people get married to *burakumin*' (70.1 percent); 'when people live with *burakumin* in the neighborhood' (22.2 percent); 'when people hire *burakumin*' (21.1 percent); 'when my child goes to the same school with *burakumin*' (18.3 percent); 'not particularly conscious about *burakumin*' (19.5 percent) (Okuda, 2002, p. 16). As can be seen, the respondents who answered 'when people get married to *burakumin*' overwhelmed other respondents. The percentage of these respondents was 69.6 percent in the 1980 survey and 63.4 percent in 1990 survey (Okuda, 2001, p. 6). These demonstrate both that *marriage is exceptional* when it comes to discrimination against *burakumin* and that this discrimination has not diminished over the years.

Contemporary Seken: The scope of *seken* has changed with the times. In the past, it was equivalent to the village community. As human relations expand, *seken* also expands. With the spread of electronic media, the range of human association has extended beyond the physical space (broad *seken*). *Seken* is, with it, exposed, expanded and bloated it. However, the social function of *seken* to *ie* has not been changed. The form of *ie* awareness has modernized. Namely, it has changed from the patriarchal and authoritative *ie* awareness to one based on the individualistic love to the family especially among young people. However, the *ie* hierarchy still has functioned in *seken*. The *ie* codes have constrained the individual firmly. Namely, individualism does not negate the restraint imposed by the *ie*. At the same time, the obsession with *ie* ranking has increased, because *ie* has become the psychological cornerstone in the present day of individualism and anxiety. Such *ie* and the expanded *seken* have coalesced. A Buraku Location Register exposing the addresses of *buraku* communities across the country has been posted on the internet. Thus discrimination against *burakumin* has become more ubiquitous, indirect and invisible. The information is used especially to inquire into *buraku* identity before marriage. Now, the space of *seken* has expanded by the information media. However, the discriminatory function of *seken* has remained intact. Moreover, the words slandering *burakumin* are flooded in the society through the internet by the anonymous contributors. Sato wrote, "Although Japanese society technically got rid of the *seken* by modernizing, it only grazed part of the head of *seken* and did not change *seken* itself" (Sato, 2001, p. 99).

5. Resolution of Marriage Discrimination

Burakumin are negative about the future of marriage discrimination. According to the 2000 Osaka survey cited above, among 4,725 respondents 3.6 percent answered that 'the discrimination can be completely eradicated in the future', while 36.8 percent answered that 'this was substantially possible'. On the other hand, 59.1 percent saw no such possibility in the future (Osaka Prefecture, 2001, p. 52). As can be seen, many *burakumin* feel that marriage discrimination will not be resolved in the future.

An interesting question is how can marriage discrimination be resolved? The answer is that the illusion of *ie* and *ie h*ierarchy should be dismantled and exclusivity should be condemned. A rational individualism has to be privileged. This article has aimed to

contribute to answer this question by exposing the current state of marriage discrimination in Japan.

John D. Donoghue wrote, "If the employment of the Japanese economy is expanded, *burakumin* may disappear as an instinctive subgroup of the society" (Donoghue, 1957, p. 1017). In contrast, Hugh H. Symthe (1952) wrote, "Even where *burakumin* have achieved economic success and political acceptance, the social taboo on the marriage with them cannot be removed easily" (Symthe, 1952, p. 196). This article agrees with the latter vision as we can know from the explanation so far.

Burakumin do fight marriage discrimination through the use of some individual measures, for example, non-disclosure of his/her identity to their partner, reluctant acceptance of discrimination reluctantly, withdrawal of a marriage proposal, persuading the partner's family to permit the marriage, marrying over the objection, joining self-help groups (Research Society of Discriminated Experience, 2003, pp. 73-99). It is important for *burakumin* to devise strategies to overcome marriage discrimination. At the same time, *burakumin* do fight marriage discrimination through *buraku* liberation movement. It takes the key role to construct the society free from marriage discrimination against *burakumin*. And one more important thing is how to that urge people to make marriage discrimination against *burakumin*. The social conditions and strategies that enable Japanese dismantle it must be explored. This article is an effort to dismantle *seken* and *ie* hierarchy.

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