

CHAPTER 1

THE FORMATION OF THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL WARRIOR RULE

The Advent of Samurai in Japanese Society

What are samurai? The image of the samurai is perhaps different for every person. The typical image of a samurai suggests a warrior wearing a distinct hairstyle called a *chonmage*, dressing in a kimono, and wielding a sword in battle. One might recall the example of the free and masterless warriors, or *rōnin*, in Kurosawa Akira's movie *Seven Samurai*. Or, one might include ninja, who accomplish their impossible missions through superhuman abilities. Undoubtedly, there is also a dominant image of samurai as portrayed on television shows, such as *Shogun*, in which a united warrior group works single-mindedly to carry out their lord's commands. However, samurai defy simplistic definitions. Exactly what constitutes a "samurai" is technically problematic. A samurai is more than a warrior who simply carries a sword and fights. Farmers carried weapons and engaged in warfare, but they cannot be called samurai.

Samurai as Specialists in Martial Skills

Samurai were a hereditary group with special status as warriors due to their distinct skills in warfare that they transmitted to their offspring. This type of warrior appeared in Japanese society in the middle Heian period, around the tenth to eleventh century.¹ Warriors were originally members of the nobility. During the transition from the ancient to the medieval period, noble families specialized in distinct areas of expertise,

including law, literature, Confucianism, *waka* poetry, ceremonies, and the creation of official documents. Noble families adopting these occupations passed their special knowledge to their descendants, thereby facilitating occupational specialization. Warriors made their martial ability into an occupation and became a distinct social group in charge of police and military duties.

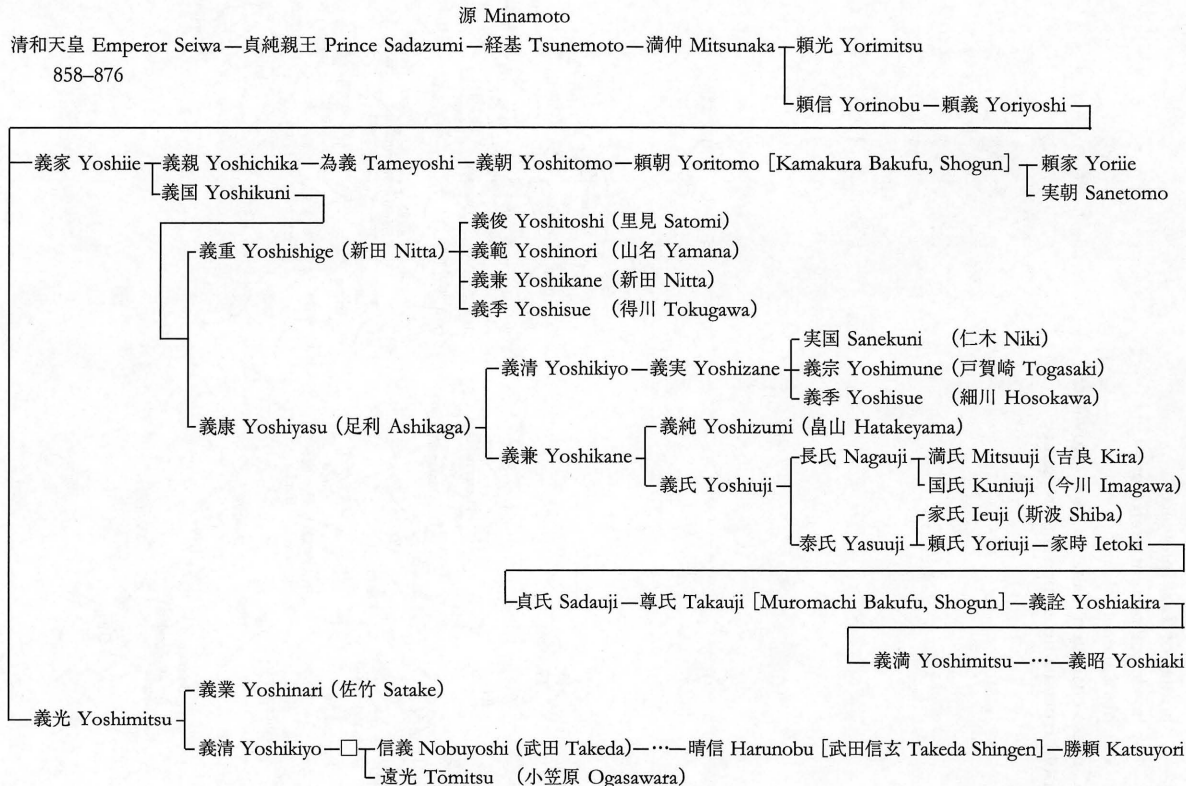
In the period that witnessed the appearance of samurai, as the name “mounted bowmen” (*kyūba no shi* 弓馬の士) denotes, using a bow on horseback was the samurai’s principle form of attack. Although they also entered battle wielding swords, samurai placed greater emphasis on their skills in riding and using a bow. Consequently, they garnered social standing as a distinguishable group.

To engage their enemies in combat required that samurai ride their horses skillfully and shoot their arrows at a gallop. This demanded a level of skill beyond the ability of conscripted farmers. Such skills were transmitted from father to son through the generations. Anyone engaging in this family occupation achieved mastery of his skills only by training from a young age. Samurai who made the art of military horsemanship their family’s occupation came originally from the ranks of the nobility in the ancient period and became consolidated as a group through a process of occupational specialization.

The most representative group of samurai was the Genji, the warriors who went by the Minamoto clan (*uji*) name. The Minamoto were descendants of Emperor Seiwa (d. 880). Emperor Seiwa’s grandson, Tsunemoto (d. 961), created a noble family called the Minamoto, separate from the imperial line. (See fig. 1.)

Minamoto Tsunemoto was an ordinary nobleman, not a warrior. Yet, the Minamoto retained local magistrates and others as their hereditary retainers. In the era of Tsunemoto’s son, Mitsunaka (d. 997), and Tsunemoto’s grandsons Yorimitsu (d. 1021) and Yorinobu (d. 1048), the Minamoto undertook campaigns against bandits in the Kyoto area and suppressed insurrections in the provinces, gaining recognition in society as warriors expert in the military arts. Consequently, their family came to be viewed as samurai.

Figure 1. Geneological Chart of the Minamoto Clan



Map 1. Japan in the Premodern Age

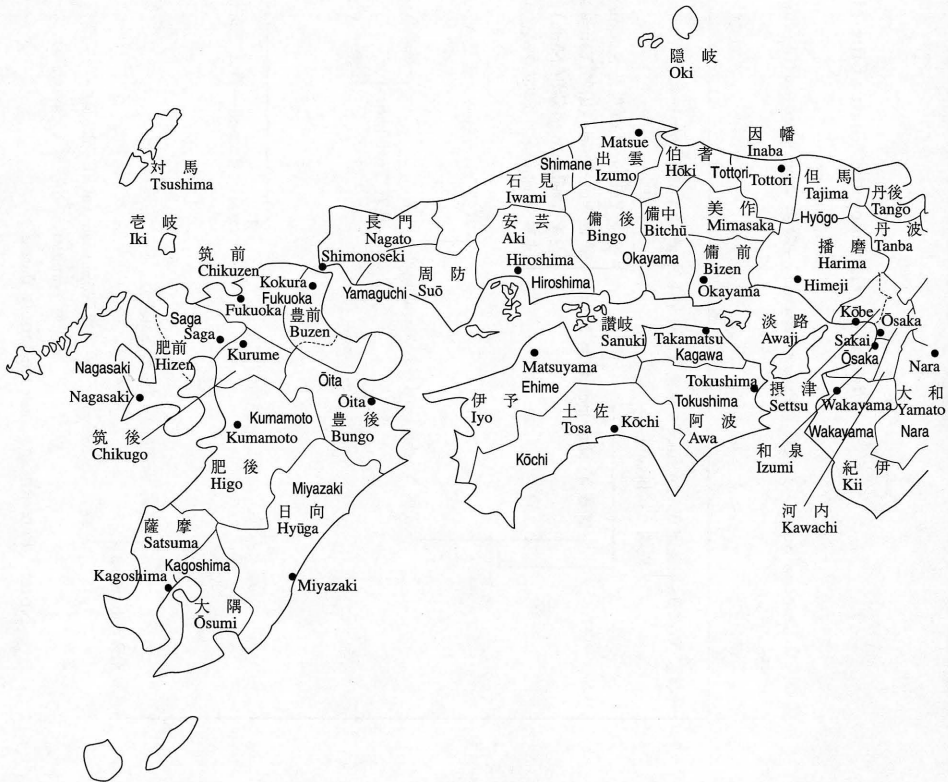
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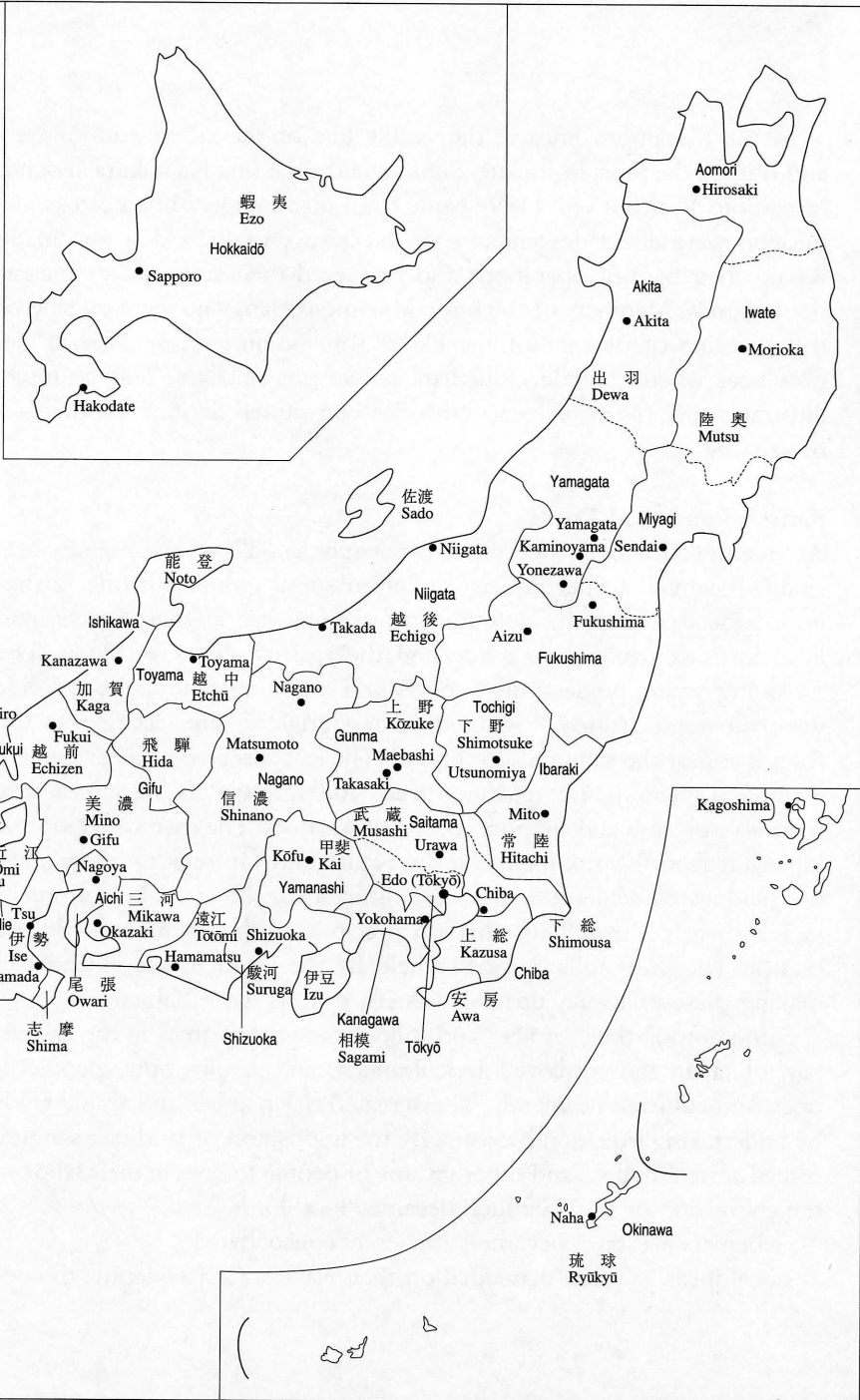
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In the Minamoto lineage, the family line of the eldest son enjoyed authority as the most legitimate. Subsequently, the first Kamakura shogun, Minamoto Yoritomo (d. 1199), came from that lineage. Minamoto samurai who were direct descendants of the lineage of the eldest son made Kyoto their base of operations and preserved their status as an ancient noble family. Members of the same Minamoto clan, who were outside of the mainline of descent of the eldest son, became entrenched in the provinces where they developed their own power bases. This example, illustrates that rulers of local territories constituted another subdivision of samurai.

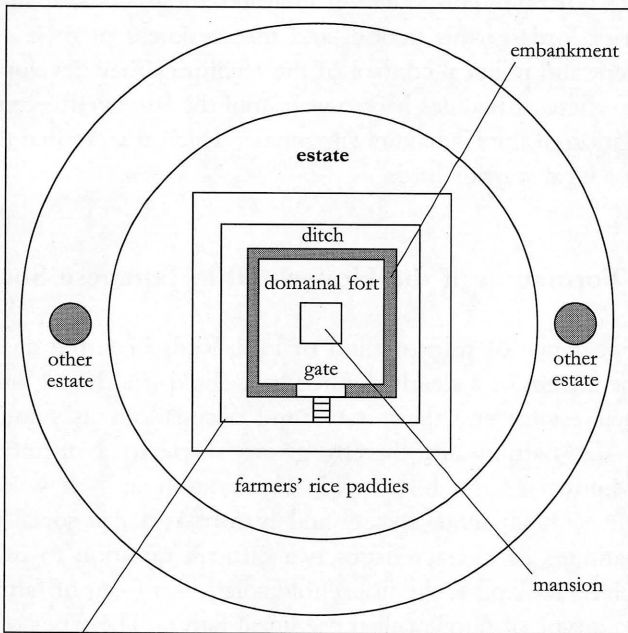
Samurai as Local Lords

As mentioned above, specialized occupational skills in the military arts enabled samurai to become a recognized social group, but one further important aspect of the definition of samurai lies in their function as local lords controlling an estate and the agriculturalists within it. The most important possessions for samurai and for samurai households were the estate (*shoryō* 所領) and its land rights.² The estate was the foundation of the samurai's livelihood. The estate served as a base where a samurai's family and retainers lived, and through its resources they were able to raise and support groups of warriors. The eastern regions of Japan far from Kyoto, including the Kantō and Ōu regions, were areas of uncultivated wilderness that were difficult for the central government in Kyoto to control. This situation precipitated the creation of private estates. The great military power held by the samurai was essential in making these politically unstable eastern regions more habitable.

Samurai took their families and followers to many areas in the eastern part of Japan and employed agriculturalists and various other people to open and cultivate new lands. They created rice paddies and arable fields by undertaking irrigation projects. By the imposition of land tax, samurai forced agriculturalists and other groups of people to devote their labor to the cultivation of land. Samurai became "local lords," *zaichi ryōshu* 在地領主, when their estates became sufficiently consolidated.

Local lords' survival depended on their estates. Consequently, to con-

control the cultivators and the territory of their estates, they erected domainal forts surrounded by ditches and stone walls as bases for their military groups (Fig. 2). The military potential of these samurai groups served to protect the estate they developed and enabled the mounting of successful defenses in border disputes with their neighbors. Due to the importance of the estates to warriors in establishing their local control, the pattern of regional territorial rule is generally referred to as the “system of local estate rule” (*zaichi ryōshusei* 在地領主制). In contrast to the overlords and the ruling nobility in the capital Kyoto who depended on the products offered in tribute from the provinces, the local lords directly controlled the agriculturalists and territory of the estates in which they were based.



Kadota (rice paddies) under the direct control of the lord)

Figure 2. Hypothetical Illustration of a Local Lord's Fortress and Estate

Nevertheless, political control of the developed estate and its economy was never completely secure from the standpoint of the local lord. There was always a fear that the harsh forces of nature would cause the developed territory to revert to wilderness. Conflicts with the agriculturalists over labor and irrigation and disputes over the possession of the estate and its boundaries continued unabated.

The most menacing threats to local lords were the provincial governors sent to the provinces by the central government in Kyoto. Provincial governors entered local estates to survey the arable, and they confiscated lands that were developed for cultivation without permission. Furthermore, when a new provincial governor arrived, the local lords did not know what kind of difficulties they would face under his jurisdiction. Verdicts that invalidated the possession of an entire newly developed estate were not rare. This situation indicates the low social standing of local warrior lords in this period, and the weakness of their economic management and political control of the territories they developed.³ The solution to these difficulties had to wait until the late twelfth century and the foundation of the Kamakura shogunate, which represented the group interests of local warrior lords.

The Formation of the Household in Japanese Society

The appearance of warriors and of local lords occurred at the same time as the advent of a clearly defined household (*ie*).⁴ Local lords transmitted their estates and their status and occupations as samurai from father to son patrilineally, thereby giving shape to a distinct familial structure known as the household. The household is a word deeply intertwined with Japanese society and history as a key social unit, but what constitutes its characteristics is a difficult question to unravel. In the first place, looking at the household solely as a form of family, the *ie* belongs to a type of family called the lineal family. The types of families in many different countries can be distinguished according to three major categories. The first is the nuclear family: a household consisting of

only the parents and their children. The second is a complex family, with parents, their male children, and their male children's nuclear families all living together. Finally, the third form, the lineal family, consists of parents living together with the nuclear family of only one of their sons.

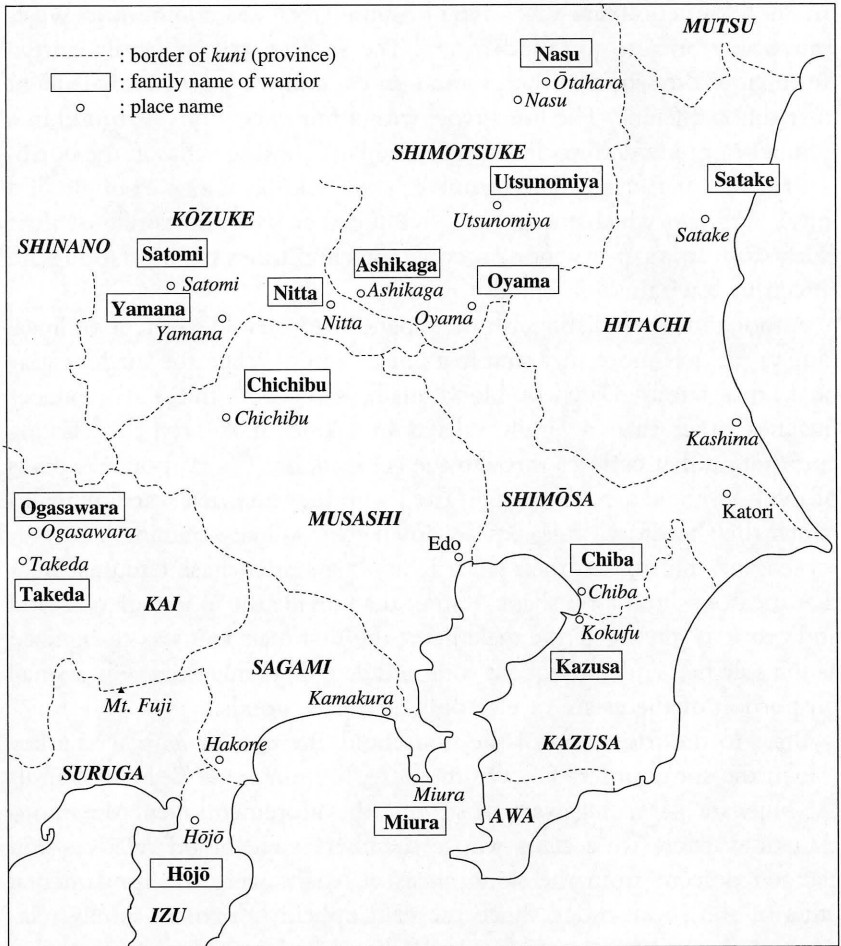
The first type, the nuclear family, is the most typical form of family in the modern period and was a type of family that was common in Western society prior to the modern era. The second type of family existed throughout the world in the premodern era and was particularly evident in traditional China. The third type, with a few exceptions, is found in a number of premodern societies including Japan and societies in the northern regions of Europe. The Japanese household (*ie*) is one example of a lineal family in which the parents live together with the family of their eldest son. In most instances, second sons and other male offspring are forced to leave the household.

Although we can distinguish the Japanese household as a type of lineal family, the *ie* is more than simply a lineal family. While the nucleus may be a lineal family related by blood, at the same time the *ie* also evinces qualities other than a family related by blood: it is a type of lasting corporation that endures through the generations. The corporate aspects of the household are intimately related with the ways that warriors maintained their territorial rule, passed down their military training, and preserved and transmitted their land rights. It is under these circumstances that the household took shape. Rather than divide the inheritance of land and property among all the male heirs, the first male son was recognized as the sole heir and subsequent sons and daughters inherited only a small proportion of the estate or else only moveable goods.

Prior to the formation of the household, the clan or *uji* played a key role in the social order. The Ōtomo 大友, Mononobe 物部, Nakatomi 中臣, Fujiwara 藤原, Sugawara 菅原, and the aforementioned Minamoto clan of warriors were clans whose members were blood relatives and claimed descent from the same ancestor. Clans were the fundamental units of the social order. Since the clan upheld horizontal family relations, the complex form of family predominated over the lineal family.

The clan system changed when warriors began to develop estates and

sought to maintain and transmit them to their heirs. Warriors who owned these estates began taking family names, such as Ashikaga 足利, Nitta 新田, Satake 佐竹, Shimazu 島津, Takeda 武田, and Ogasawara 小笠原, in addition to their clan names. While all of these families claimed descent



Map 2. Distribution of Local Lords in the Kantō Region During the Thirteenth Century

from the Minamoto clan, they took family names based on the locations of their estates. The Ashikaga derived their name from the Ashikaga estate (Ashikagashō 足利庄) in Shimotsuke province (modern Tochigi prefecture), the Nitta from Nitta estate in Kōzuke province (modern Gunma prefecture), the Satake from Satake district (*satakegōri* 佐竹郡) in Hitachi province (modern Ibaraki prefecture), the Shimazu from Shimazu estate in Satsuma province (modern Kagoshima prefecture), the Takeda from Takeda district in Kai province (modern Yamanashi prefecture), and the Ogasawara from Ogasawara pasture (Ogasawara no maki 小笠原牧) in Kai province. (See Map 2.)

The estates of local lords were often called “name lands” (*myōji no chi* 名字の地), referring to the original territory adapted for the family’s name.⁵ The term expressed that the land was the family’s original holding from the time of its founder. Clans first used this nomenclature as a way of distinguishing newly created estates, but the meaning changed when family groups established their dominant position in maintaining and continuing to hold the estate.

These family groups were households with the name of the estate becoming the name of the family. According to the logic of clan organization, the interaction and historical links among the members of a single clan, along with increased numbers and disbursement of descendants, were essential factors for a clan’s prosperity and lent a feeling of commonality among its members.

The organizational logic of the household, however, was premised on the transmission of the estate in its entirety, as the basis of a family’s wealth, with the intention of preserving and furthering the family’s occupation and mode of livelihood rooted in the estate.

Consequently, succession within the household came to follow patrilineal lines, limited to only one male as principle descendant. Collateral relatives tended to be excluded from the household. Second- and third-born males either established separate households after receiving a small part of the inheritance or were adopted by other households as heirs, or they were sent out of the household to work in some form of employment. Thus, the pattern of household succession that soon dominated

favored the eldest son alone. As successor to the household, the eldest son came to be recognized as the future family head.⁶

The head of the family received all of the family's assets, wielded tremendous power over family members, and had chief responsibility for the management of the household, but the meaning and existence of the household extended beyond the composition of the various family members. The household was originally established as an administrative mechanism for managing the agricultural development of its locus, the estate. Therefore, the members of the household were its staff in charge of managerial duties and responsible for the household's operations.

Accordingly, patrilineal succession within the household became dominant not simply due to the importance given to blood succession alone but because preservation of the household was itself paramount. Patrilineal succession was the optimum way to manage the transference of the household and preserve it, and patrilineal succession became dominant for that very reason.

The logic of blood succession gained currency through the household's patrilineal inheritance practices; but at the same time, since the preservation of the household was of utmost concern, importance was also given to the successor's potential talents in administration. Consequently, sometimes even legitimate offspring were excluded from becoming family head if they were unsuited to inherit the household. In cases where there were no offspring, an adopted son was chosen and even more emphasis was placed on his ability.

Patterns of Adoption in Japan

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the household in Japanese society was the distinct system of adoption. Even though adoption is evident in many different societies throughout the world, the adoption system in Japan was especially unique.

Adoption is widely evident in Western societies. In most cases, the purpose of adoption is to take in and raise children who do not have any relatives. Adoption is also used by childless parents who desire a child and consequently adopt one. In general, the reasons for adoption are

individual, and the practice may indeed be rooted in the benevolent religious ideals of Christianity.

However, the chief reason for adoption in East Asian societies is to continue the succession of a family's lineage. In China and Korea, under the influence of Confucianism, the social order is premised on patrilineal family lines, and adoption is carried out to preserve patrilineal lineages. Families take in an adopted son whenever a male son is not born, in order to preserve the family's bloodlines. Since the purpose of adoption in these societies is to continue male bloodlines, a prospective adopter who lacks a son and who adopts an heir must select from his male relatives, such as his nephews or the children of his male cousins.

This practice is termed "in clan-adoption." As a rule, for someone to become an adopted son he must have the same clan name as his adopting father. Wives and mothers are always from different clans, because marriage must be between members of different clans. Therefore, male members of the clans of female relatives cannot become adopted heirs since they belong to different clans.

Adoption in Japan took a different form than in China and Korea. In Japan, similar preference was given to selecting heirs from male relatives, but candidates from the mother's family and from different families were included. Moreover, a distinct characteristic of adoption in Japan is the practice of adopting a son-in-law as an heir. In the case of a family with only female offspring, a husband is brought into the household through marriage, and he simultaneously becomes the adopted son of his father-in-law.

The adopted son-in-law need not have any blood relation to the adopting father. (If he were a blood relative of his father-in-law, he might become an ordinary adopted son, not a son-in-law.) The choice of an individual for adoption is up to the complete discretion of the adopting father. Accordingly, this situation allows for choosing an adopted son predominantly on the basis of that person's ability.

Selecting heirs through adoption on the basis of their abilities suited the household system in Japan. In the Japanese household system, male heirs succeeded to the position of the head of the household. However,

as noted earlier, this practice was not simply to preserve the father's bloodlines. Instead, patrilineal succession proved to be the most strategic means for preserving the congruity of the household. The practice of adopting a son-in-law as an heir gave free reign to choosing someone on the basis of his ability and was therefore well suited for preserving the household and strengthened the function of the household as an administrative organ.

The Kamakura Bakufu and the Development of Local Warrior Rule

After the period of civil war in the twelfth century, local lords entered lord and vassal relationships as the housemen (*gokenin* 御家人) of the Kamakura bakufu headed by Shogun Minamoto Yoritomo. These local lords lived under the rule of the warlord Minamoto Yoritomo, but in actuality their lord and vassal relationship was a type of union. Prior to this period, local lords in the provinces did not enjoy a very high level of status, and their control and management of their domains were marked by instability. During the civil wars of the twelfth century, many sought affiliation with Yoritomo and became vassals of the Kamakura bakufu. These lords then succeeded in raising their political standing through military victories. Samurai also became military experts in charge of local defense and policing in the service of the imperial court and the central government in Kyoto. With the founding of the Kamakura bakufu in 1185, this practice came to be known as the system of estate managers (*jitō* 地頭) and constables (*shugo* 守護).⁷

The original meaning of the word *jitō* referred to a locality. At first the term referred to the warrior lord who developed land under the estate system and who then conveyed rights to that land to a noble or a religious institution in the capital of Kyoto to win tax protection for that estate. The term simply referred to the person in charge of overseeing the estate in the lowest level of the estate office. In the system established in the year 1185, the *jitō* gained public authority over military and

policing matters, thereby securing a public role in a countrywide system of rule.

This change marked a major turning point in the history of the development of local warrior rule. Previously, provincial governors curtailed the domination of local warrior lords over their estates. Governors caused difficulties by making various demands, such as for increases in the annual rice tax paid to proprietors. However, after 1185 the local lords won public recognition of their rights, opening the way for them to consolidate their positions as power holders in their territories. The shogun, Yoritomo, handed down military orders to the local lords, but refrained from entering into disputes over their estates. The head of the household had the absolute right to prevent trespassers on his estate, and even the shogun could not interfere with the political workings of samurai households or with problems governing the inheritance and dispersal of an estate.

Shugo, like *jitō*, were appointed by the Kamakura bakufu from among its vassals. Rather than control a landholding or an individual estate, the duty of the *shugo* was over an administrative unit of territory called a province (*kuni* 国). Japan was composed of about sixty provinces, such as Musashi and Harima. There was a *shugo* in each one of these provinces, chosen from the most powerful vassals in the Kamakura bakufu.

Shugo possessed military and police jurisdiction over their province, and they had the right to give orders to the vassals of the Kamakura bakufu living within the province. *Shugo* led the local vassals in battle, sought out murderers and rebels, and suppressed insurrection. They also transmitted orders to vassals from the Kamakura bakufu and performed a variety of duties, such as exacting tributes from vassals. The territorial and public characteristics of *shugo* authority transcended the powers of the *jitō*. Unlike the local lords functioning as *jitō* who had direct control of their own individual territories, the *shugo* possessed a higher level of ruling authority over the affairs of an entire province.

For samurai, the *shugo* system was fundamentally different from an individual lordship over a discrete territory which characterized the system of local territorial rule. The *shugo* system facilitated the development

of great domainal lords, or *daimyō*, who held public governing authority over local magnates. The system of local rule (*zaichi ryōshusei*) and the system of *daimyō* overlordship (*daimyō ryōshusei* 大名領主制) comprised two types of warrior territorial rule. As I explain later, both systems constituted a lasting dynamic at the countrywide level and endured alongside each other until the Tokugawa period. The nucleus for this situation can be found in the system of *shugo* and *jitō* of the Kamakura bakufu.

Regional warriors assumed military and police responsibilities in their roles as *shugo* and *jitō*, but through a succession of wars and rebellions, these warriors gradually won greater administrative authority beyond their military and policing powers including rights to pass judgments and levy fines in criminal and civil cases, to conduct land surveys, to undertake irrigation projects, and to control transportation routes and markets. The encroachment of regional warriors and the bakufu on the powers of the central government transformed the composition of the central government in the favor of regional lords.

The Kamakura bakufu was itself weakened and overthrown, and the succeeding Muromachi bakufu of the Ashikaga shoguns also became politically ineffective. Local lords extended their personal territories in the provinces through rebellion. The system of local warrior rule witnessed dramatic developments when warriors began acquiring public rights once associated with the central government. The battles in which regional warriors sought opportunities to expand their territory and political authority continued without abatement. The conditions of civil war and social and political unrest lasted for many centuries encompassing the War of Northern and Southern Courts (1336–1392), the instability of the Muromachi period (1392–1568), and the long Warring States (*Sengoku* 戦国) period (1482–1558).

Leagues of Local Warriors and Consolidation under Sengoku Daimyo

The Creation of Vertically Structured Organizations

In the mid-sixteenth century, the match lock gun, a new type of weapon, was brought to Japan by the Portuguese, and it transformed the character of warfare in Japanese society, bringing changes to the political structure as well. The match lock gun was a powerful weapon. It changed the basic mode of fighting from a contest of individual skill on horseback into one based on mobile group warfare. The size of battles also expanded. The custom of equipping foot soldiers, called *ashigaru* (whose name means to freely run around), farmers and other lower ranking warriors with guns became widespread. Groups of foot soldiers armed with guns had an increasingly important military role. Through these changes in the modes of warfare, military organizations in most provinces grew larger by incorporating local samurai, and by replacing the small bands of warriors composed of families and servants of local lords.⁸

Up to this point, although local lords fought one another, they also formed mutual alliances, worked together to combat outside aggressors, and pledged to non-military means to negotiate territorial disputes. In this period, the number of these associations gradually increased. The organizations used to resolve problems by negotiations were known as "large assemblies" (*shūchūdangō* 衆中談合), which is the root of the modern word "collusion" (*dangō*). The modern term has negative connotations, but the term's original meaning referred to resolving disputes by using reasoned arguments instead of force. This was the only method for leagues of warriors to maintain peace. However, alliances could quickly crumble irrespective of the participants' lofty motives if the original importance of the association was forgotten and members decided to take advantage of the terms.

The people who participated in these large warrior assemblies during the late medieval period were regional warriors responsible for maintaining the peace locally. Termed "men of the provinces," or *kokujin* 国人, they were the most powerful men in a province, and their leagues were

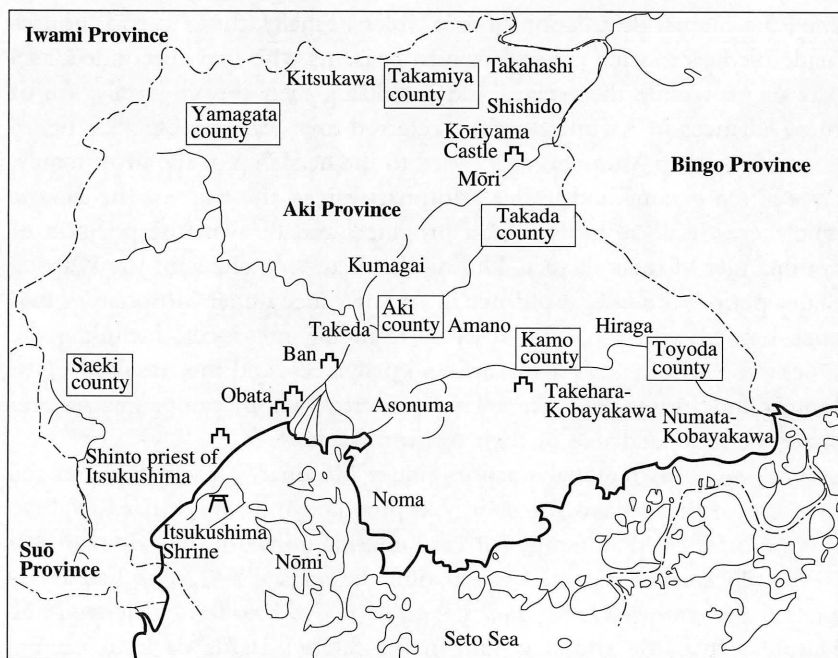
called *kokujin ikki* 国人一揆.⁹ The term *ikki*, or league, refers both to the movement of people working together for a common cause and to the group itself. These “leagues of men of the provinces” were unsuccessful in transcending the harsh military and political world of the Warring States period through their large assemblies alone.

Individuals who ignored the decisions of these conferences might abandon the battle lines at a whim, turn traitor, and attack. The leagues needed to successfully counter anyone who betrayed them, and they sought an organizational structure that would regulate the entire membership of the group. In sum, these leagues needed to create a strong, vertically structured organization that concentrated power at the center and enacted a hierarchy and a division of roles among the group’s members. These types of organizations were characterized by a centralized chain of command with the ability to enact decisions and orders and set conditions for rewards and punishments.

This necessitated changing the horizontal structure of the leagues of regional lords into a vertical structure based on a close relationship between the leader and his followers: a structure in which the lord’s orders would reach the lower level regional warriors as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Those who hesitated or rejected creating this type of vertical organization suffered defeat and were eliminated. Creating these types of rigid vertical organizations was critical to survival in the wars for unification of the Warring States period.

The Case of the Mōri Family

We will examine this trend in organization in the Warring States period through the case of the Mōri 毛利 daimyo house which dominated the Chūgoku region.¹⁰ The Mōri family was founded by Ōe no Suemitsu 大江季光, the fourth son of Ōe no Hiromoto 大江広元, who was Minamoto Yoritomo’s top advisor. He took the name Mōri from the name of the Mōri estate in Aikō district in Sagami prefecture. In 1336, Suemitsu’s grandson Tokichika received the *jitō* appointment of Yoshida estate in Takeda district of Aki province (Hiroshima prefecture), and he moved his residence there. He used that estate as a base for developing his



Map 3. Distribution of Local Lords in Aki Province During the Sixteenth Century

position as a local lord. In Aki province, there were other local lords who were vassals of the Kamakura bakufu besides the Mōri such as the Hiraga 平賀, Kumagai 熊谷, Asonuma 阿曾沼, Kobayakawa 小早川, Kitsukawa 吉川, Shishido 宍戸, and Amano 天野, all living in various places. (See Map 3.)

Although struggling with one another over the territories they controlled, at the same time these families created leagues with the purpose of stabilizing their hold over their land. Some of these leagues were military alliances against the power of the *shugo* who sought to control the local lords in the province and bring the entire province under his control. Others were peaceful alliances to negotiate a non-violent end to disputes over water rights, boundaries, and similar problems that threat-

ened the mutual destruction of local rulers. Finally, these warrior houses made pledges to each other to return peasants who had absconded, as a way of protecting themselves and stabilizing their power locally. All of these alliances in Aki province are referred to as *kokujin ikki*. (See fig. 3)

In 1523, Mōri Motonari succeeded to the headship of the Mōri family. As a gifted general and leader, Motonari gained the trust of the *kokujin* who were the local lords in Aki province, and he won the position of commander of their alliance. During the increasing chaos of the Warring States period, the *kokujin* alliance in Aki province under Motonari's guidance battled with the daimyo of surrounding provinces, including the Ōuchi 大内 who held Nagato and Suō provinces, and the Amako 尼子 of Izumo and Iwami provinces. They undertook both campaigns to preserve the independence of their territorial rule.

The league of regional warriors under Motonari's leadership met the invasion of the Amako forces in Aki province and fought hard to drive them out. The Ōuchi family suffered internal unrest in their domain due to the rebellion of the chief vassal, Sue Harukata 陶晴賢, who had assassinated the daimyo Ōuchi Yoshitaka 大内義隆. Motonari challenged Sue Harutaka in battle and slew him in the famous Battle of Itsukushima. Motonari then annexed the former Ōuchi domain.

Thus, Motonari proved his authority as a military leader. He sent off his second son Motoharu and his third son Takakage to the Kitsukawa and Kobayakawa families in Aki province to become adopted sons and

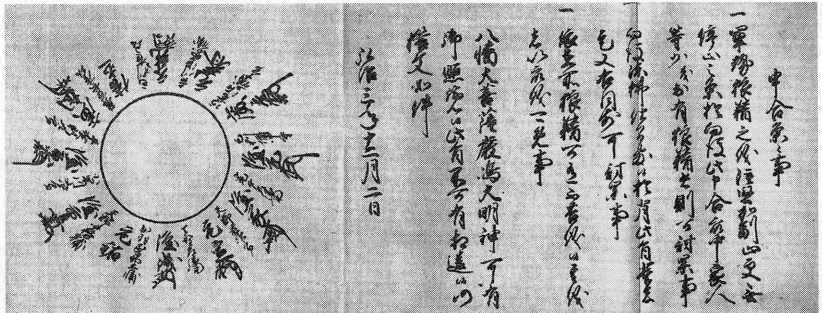


Figure 3. Contract of an Alliance Between Local Lords in Aki Province.

succeed to the headship of these *kokujin* houses. Motonari thereby succeeded in incorporating both of these powerful regional warrior families into the Mōri house.

He also gave importance to the houses founded by the illegitimate descendants of the Mōri family — those families founded by sons other than the eldest son — such as the Fukuhara and Saka. He assigned his hereditary vassals (*fudai*), including the Katsura, Kodama, Kurokawa, Kunishi, and Awatani to administrative posts throughout the provinces he controlled.

Through these steps, Mōri Motonari gradually rose above the position of leader of a league of provincial warriors to climb to a place of public authority administering the rule of an entire provincial domain. The local lords who had made up the leagues of regional warriors, the *kokujin ikki*, of Aki province were also given a place as Motonari's retainers. As a result, Motonari enjoyed great power within the Chūgoku region and became one of the major power-holders of the Warring States period.

The Fundamental Characteristics of the Japanese Household

As both a summary of the preceding discussion and to provide a basis for comparison with the family units and kin groups in other countries, the following section describes the various basic characteristics of Japanese households (*ie*).¹¹

Lineage

Lineage is a key characteristic not only for the composition of households in Japan but also for families and kin groups in other societies. A lineage usually originates with a male or a female ancestor or may be organized according to different principles. Each lineage expresses an organization of lineal relationships that include descendants up to the present.

Lineages may vary in their blend of truth and fiction about the ances-

tors included. Some genealogies of lineages that actually extend back no further than three generations, as in the case of a few Japanese households, may posit a family line that began with an ancestor in the distant past and then describe a continuous succession of generations up to the current descendants. Examples of these types of constructed lineages are found recorded in lineage charts and genealogies in premodern documents. Falsification of lineages demonstrates the importance of lineage relationships in the premodern era.

Various accepted symbols represented lineages, and these were honored by the people who invoked them. Lineage charts and genealogies were the most fundamental symbols, but family name, crest, death registries, mortuary tablets, and memorial days of an ancestor are all related symbols of lineage. These symbols allow the members of a given household to learn about the establishment and subsequent history of their household's lineage. They also inculcate a recognition of the meaning of the household as well as the roles of the various members in it. Finally, these symbols provide a mechanism for transmitting knowledge about the lineage to subsequent generations.

The concept of lineage may characterize most households, but it is especially necessary to probe the implications of lineages to understand the fundamentals of Japanese households. To that end, notions of lineage in familial and kin groups in societies and examples other than Japan should be considered. Within East Asia, consciousness of clan lineage is especially strong in China and Korea. Among royal houses and noble families throughout the world, lineages based on personal bloodlines are equivalent to political legitimacy, since lineage is seen as the fundamental underpinning of authority. But how do these examples compare with the concept of lineage in the Japanese household? In other words, what principles are used to structure lineages? And what does one succeed to within a lineage?

An understanding of the principle of lineage can provide a multifaceted means of approaching this issue. Such principles become evident whenever there is no legitimate successor in a lineage of given society. The principles governing lineages are expressed by the actions taken by

the group concerned to have another person succeed according to established precedents.

The use of adoption as a means to prevent a lineage from becoming extinct when there is no male heir is a practice not found in the West. In East Asia, however, adoption is an integral part of preserving the continuity of lineages. Since only men can succeed to a lineage, only men are adopted. A man is adopted as a substitute whenever a male offspring is needed.

While this principle is found throughout East Asia, there are great differences in the rules governing the choice of adopted sons in China and Korea on the one hand, and Japan on the other. The reason for this difference is found in the history of lineages in these societies which reveals key differences in inheritance. In contrast to China and Korea where patrilineal bloodlines are the basis for lineage continuity, in Japan, as demonstrated by the custom of adopting sons-in-law, lineage continuity is not based on the father's bloodlines.

In Japanese households, the family head is male, and that post is inherited by successive generations of males. Consequently, at first glance, the case of Japan appears to be no different from the patrilineal mode of inheritance found in China and Korea. However, this is only on the surface: inheritance in Japanese households is not according to patrilineal bloodlines, nor matrilineal, nor even by the bloodlines of relatives.

Lineal Succession

The distinguishing feature of Japanese households is the characteristic of lineal succession. In most cases, households consist of a "lineal family," consisting of a father, a first-born son, and a grandson, who together form a line of succession. The lineal nature of this household is evident: first, in the succession of the post of family head; second, in the fact that the household capital remains intact when transmitted from generation to generation; and, third, by the way in which lineal succession guides family structure.

In the first place, the lineal succession of the post of family head means that the so-called legitimate offspring, either the first-born son or

grandson, succeeds to the post of head of the household. The same person then assumes all the honors, rights, and political ranks due that position. In principle, individuals from collateral lines of the family are prevented from inheriting the family headship except when an appropriate heir is needed. In that case, someone from a collateral line might be adopted as a successor and thereby inherit the headship of the main family. Even in cases where brothers inherit the headship from one another, the older brother will adopt his younger sibling, allowing him to inherit the post of family head but preserving the premise of a father-son succession.

Second, in addition to the direct succession of the position of family head, the successor simultaneously gains sole control over all the assets of the household. In Japan, it was once the custom for brothers to divide the inheritance among themselves. But, as mentioned elsewhere in this text, there was a trend toward single inheritance of the family headship among samurai families, so that by the fourteenth century the eldest son controlled the inheritance. When the eldest son gained the post of family head, after the custom of sole inheritance of the household capital came to be recognized, all the property that he inherited came to be considered not as his personal goods but rather to belong to the household. Thus, inheritance was viewed as family wealth transmitted to descendants intact.

Third, the way in which lineal succession shapes family structure is a seminal element of the Japanese household. The household consists of three generations living together in the same dwelling: the parents and the family of their married children. However, it is important to note that only the family of one of the parent's children shares the household with the parents, and in most cases it is the family of the eldest son.

In summary, the lineal nature of succession within the Japanese household is evident in three characteristics: the lineal succession of the family headship, the integrity of the household capital as it is passed on from generation to generation, and the way in which this pattern of succession shapes family structure.

Lineal families (*stem families*) of this type are evident in parts of Eu-

rope, but it remains a point of debate whether these have the same characteristics as the Japanese household. In the case of the characteristic of sole inheritance of the family's property and wealth, in medieval England and other settings in Europe, it is apparent that the eldest offspring usually inherited most of the property.

And, it would belabor the point to say that lineal succession of the position of family head is a practice evident throughout the world. In this regard, the Japanese household need not be considered unique. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find complementary examples of households outside of Japan that possess all three of the aforementioned traits.

In the case of England, custom dictated that the eldest child inherited all of the family's wealth, but the family itself was organized as a nuclear family. Moreover, control of the family's assets was the sole prerogative of the individual inheritor. Whenever there was no legitimate heir to inherit everything, the entire estate was distributed among the relatives. The desire to preserve the integrity of the inheritance for future generations, as in Japan, is absent from this scenario.

In summary, a survey of the various civilizations of the world reveals that individual characteristics of lineal succession are widespread, but the Japanese household stands out as distinct for incorporating all three of these characteristics together.

Corporate Nature

Another fundamental characteristic of the Japanese household that requires mentioning is its corporate nature, which includes autonomy of control. As noted earlier, the structure of the household allows for the household capital to be transmitted intact through a lineally organized family. The household capital does not belong to the family head but is instead perceived to be the property of the household itself. Consequently, the household can be said to possess the characteristics of a corporation.

The corporate nature of the household is different from the concept of occupation. All households have their own distinct hereditary occupations, and production is carried out by the members of a household who

divide the labor following the directions of the household head. There are a wide variety of occupations, from the types found in households of the premodern nobility, which included poetry and government office, to those of the samurai who specialized in military skills, especially mounted archery, on the one hand, and involvement in economic undertakings such as the development and management of regional territories, on the other. In the Tokugawa period, samurai assumed political and administrative duties in addition to their military ones. In merchant families the household business was, of course, trade.

Such is the basis for the corporate nature of the household, and the members accordingly view their household's capital as inalienable. The household is also based on economic principles that governed occupation and trade, the use of capital to further business, and the saving of profits in the household coffers. The corporate character and economic nature of the household, as this book explains in detail in the chapters that follow, explain many of its attributes including the indivisibility of the inheritance, the use of bloodlines for succession, and the rights and powers accrued to the family head.

The head of the household inherits all of its capital and possesses the strict right to control the other members, but the head's great power is premised on his efforts to promote the household. If he deviates from that aim and uses the household's resources arbitrarily for himself, he will be punished by the other members and will have to forfeit his position. This fact stands in contrast to the apparent dominance of the household head, yet it is also part of the logic of authority of the household.

The corporate nature of the Japanese household has few parallels in other societies. This corporate character seems absent even in social groups in Asia. It has been noted that on Yap Island in Micronesia, the concept of residence, "*tabinau*," embraces the notion of the indivisibility of household property, and so this would appear to be close to Japan. In the West, the practices of private ownership of churches (*eigen kirche*) as well as donations to religious institutions and trust funds, and estates held in trust are similar to practices of Japanese households.

Yet Western society upholds individualism, meaning that it was difficult to create corporate entities and the economic groupings that derive from them, which by necessity superseded the rights of individuals. In the West, the fundamental form of business activity was the partnership. If the participants did not receive certain profits, then the partnership was dissolved, and the economic body would be disbanded. From the late medieval era to the early modern period, a progression of different forms of enterprises was created that included limited partnerships, limited companies, and joint stock companies. But, the corporation that maintained its capital in perpetuity appeared in the West only with the advent of capitalism in the modern period.

Independence

Households need to possess a degree of independence to have the political strength to overcome outside interference. They have the authority to provide asylum for their members and to give protection to someone from the outside who is seeking aid. On this point, the household of Japan resembles the household of feudal lords of the medieval West. In the case of the latter, the lord's household functioned as a unit of livelihood and was also a political structure. As noted by scholars, the medieval social order was linked to the reciprocal function of the authority of the lord's household to operate for its own end.

There are many parallels to be found between the lord's household in the medieval West and the household of the local warrior lord in Japan. However, when the distinct corporate nature and lineal organization of the Japanese household are considered, there are clear differences between the two.

The Western case lacks both of these salient features. Consequently, when there was no heir to succeed to the Western household, the capital including the property would either be divided among the relatives or else be usurped by someone powerful. The continuity and congruity of the household were completely destroyed in these instances. Only the feudal lord's title of nobility would be passed down to his family.

The preceding discussion attempted to illuminate the salient features

of the household, particularly the Japanese household. The author wishes to make the following observation from this discussion: that the concept of household can be reduced to several components, and that through comparative historical analysis of these components it is possible not only to grasp the characteristics of the household in Japan and its place in the field of world history, but also at the same time to argue that only the Japanese household possesses all four of the aforementioned traits, which means that its distinctiveness — indeed, uniqueness — can be ascertained.

The debate over whether the Japanese household — or for that matter Japanese culture as a whole — is particular or universal has grown stale with repetition. If the analytical approach outlined above is considered, it may be possible to escape from this pointless bifurcated argument. That is to say, when the four characteristics that compose the Japanese household are brought into focus, the universality of its nature will become clear with references to commonalities with different examples throughout the world, while at the same time, when these elements are considered in their totality, the distinctiveness of the Japanese household will also become evident.